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The Half Corked Marathon is so popular that participation is by winning a lottery. (Dan Walton photo)

Watermark Beach Resort, Half Corked Marathon nominated for tourism awards

By Keith Lacey

A luxury Osoyoos resort and a unique sporting event that has become a “must attend” event for wine lovers across B.C. – and many other parts of Canada – have been nominated for prestigious national tourism awards.

The Watermark Beach Resort in Osoyoos has been nominated by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) Canadian Tourism Awards for the prestigious Air Canada Business of the Year Award.

Meanwhile, the Half Corked Marathon, which is organized by the Oliver Osoyoos Wine Association, has been nominated for the Metro Toronto Convention Centre’s Event of the Year as part of the same awards.

Ingrid Jarrett, the general manager and vice-president of business development for the Watermark Beach Resort, said she and the entire staff are thrilled to have been nominated for the prestigious national award.

In a phone interview from England, where she is on vacation, Jarrett said this nomination is shared by every

manager and employee at the Watermark Beach Resort.

“Every year we have an employee evaluation and consistently we have 90 to 95 per cent of our employees who say they love working at the resort,” she said. “This contributes greatly to an outstanding resort experience for our guests.”

Well-respected websites like Hotels.com and Trip Advisor have consistently praised the resort as one of the best in Canada and this surely caught the eye of the judges for the Canadian Tourism Awards, said Jarrett.

Management at the Watermark pledged when it opened almost a decade ago to invest in the community and the resort consistently supports community events and has staff commit volunteer hours, she said.

“Being named a finalist for the Business of the Year in the tourism industry in Canada certainly came out of the blue and we had no idea it was coming, but I can’t tell you how honoured, thrilled and humbled we are to be recognized by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada.”



The Watermark Beach Resort has been garnering rave reviews since it opened. (Richard McGuire photo)

The South Okanagan is truly one of Canada's most beautiful regions and this nomination will send a message to the rest of Canada that we live in a very special and beautiful part of this amazing country, said Jarrett.

The annual Half Corked Marathon weaves racers through the beautiful vineyards of the Oliver Osoyoos Wine Country, sampling wines and fine food along the route.

Created by the Oliver Osoyoos Winery Association, and inspired by the legendary Medoc Marathon in Bordeaux, the Half Corked Marathon pays homage to one of Canada's most decorated wine regions; a celebration of the Golden Mile and Black Sage Road benches connecting the communities of Oliver and Osoyoos.

"We take great pride in the Half Corked Marathon, our flagship event of the year and one of the hottest tickets in the country," explains Tony Munday, executive director of Oliver Osoyoos Winery Association. "The race not only showcases our incredibly beautiful and diverse region but also shows what can be achieved, when tourism and wine industries collaborate to create an event that's incredibly unique and special."

The Watermark Beach Resort has been garnering rave reviews since it first opened its doors on the shores of beautiful Osoyoos Lake a decade ago.

Being nominated for Business of the Year, which many consider the most prestigious of all the awards that will be handed out in Quebec in November, is an honour, said Jarrett.

The other finalists in the Business of the Year category are the Brentwood Bay Resort and Spa in Victoria, B.C. and Vancouver International Airport in Richmond, B.C.

The Canadian Tourism Awards are presented annually by TIAC to celebrate success, leadership and innovation in Canada's travel and tourism industry and recognize those who go above and beyond to offer superior tourism experiences in Canada.

This year, there were over 130 submissions and a panel of expert judges narrowed down the list of finalists

that were announced last month.

Since its inception in 2003, this gala evening has become a highlight of the TIAC Tourism Congress.

The Air Canada Business of the Year Award will be presented to a tourism business that exemplifies industry best practices in all aspects of its operations, and is thus an example of all-round business excellence in the tourism industry.

The Event of the Year Award will be presented to an event or festival that exemplifies industry best practices in all aspects of its operations, and thus serves as an example of excellence to other events and festivals and the greater tourism industry.

The nominee should be an event/festival that attracts visitors, participants and/or spectators, and may be (but is not limited to being) an event/festival of the following types: cultural, historical, musical, arts, sporting, culinary, literary, general interest, amusement, or other.

Alongside the Half Corked Marathon, the two other category finalists are: The Canadian Soccer Association: FIFA World Cup Canada 2016; and Winnipeg's Folklorama.

"We are in fantastic company – congratulations to all finalists," said Munday.

The Canadian Tourism Awards recognize those people, places, organizations and events that have gone above and beyond to offer a superior tourism experience to travelers in Canada. On Nov. 30, The Canadian Tourism Awards winners will be announced in Gatineau, Quebec, at the TIAC Tourism Conference.

For more details about 2017 Half-Corked Marathon, visit www.oliverosoyoos.com/events.

The Oliver Osoyoos Winery Association is a non-profit organization with a goal to develop the wine industry in Oliver and Osoyoos through education and promotion. Founded in 2007 as the South Okanagan Winery Association, the Oliver Osoyoos Winery Association (OOWA) was renamed in 2011 to better reflect its geographical boundaries and now has grown to include 39 member wineries.



Osoyoos potter Lucy Stoppler “throws” a bowl in preparation for Desert Sun Counselling and Resource Centre’s Empty Bowls Fundraiser. Guests take home their unique bowls after the event. (Richard McGuire photo)

Potters prepare for Empty Bowls event

By Richard McGuire

Pottery wheels are spinning as organizers get ready for another Empty Bowls Fundraiser for Desert Sun, an organization serving Oliver and Osoyoos.

Last year’s event for Desert Sun Counselling and Resource Centre was so successful that it will be returning this year.

The event takes place on Friday, Nov. 4 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Watermark Beach Resort in Osoyoos. Tickets are limited and are on sale now.

Once again, the Osoyoos Potters Club is busy producing the one-of-a-kind bowls that participants will receive to sample soups made by some of the top chefs in the area.

The event was inaugurated last year to replace the long-running gala A Grand Night, which was Desert Sun’s main fundraiser for the previous decade.

Last year’s Empty Bowls Fundraiser brought in just under \$20,000 to support Desert Sun’s programs.

“I like the fact that it’s combining so many different artisans,” said Sandy Summers, who is again organizing

this year’s event. “It combines the local artists making the bowls and putting their time and energy into it, it involves the chefs who are using produce from the fall harvest, and then the wines and ciders as well are all local and the breads are from local bakeries.”

Tickets for the event are \$49 and guests can keep the ceramic bowl they choose when they arrive.

This year’s event will be similar to last year’s, but there are some minor changes, said Summers.

There will be added seating, she said, noting that last year there was a shortage of seats and this was hard for some seniors.

Guests sample their soups at a long communal table, getting up to fill their bowls and often finding a different location to sit and eat, meeting new people.

“The room’s not that big so we can’t have complete seating,” said Summers. “It’s supposed to feel like more of a walkabout.”

The event is also being shortened by an hour to three hours instead of four.

“Last year it went on a little too long,” said Summers.



An array of empty bowls greeted guests at last year's event. It's hard to choose. (Richard McGuire photo)

"We were a little bit tired by the end and it is a lot of soup."

Instead of an auction this year, participants will have a chance to purchase a spoon with a number on it for \$20. Afterwards, they'll pick up a wine bottle corresponding to the number on the spoon.

"Desert Sun was the recipient from an anonymous donor who donated some of his wine cellar to us," Summers explains. "The wines come from across Canada."

There are wines from Ontario, Nova Scotia and of course B.C., and some are older vintages.

Instead of bidding on an auction, or drawing for a raffle, everybody who purchases a spoon is guaranteed a bottle of wine – they just don't know which bottle until they pick it up at the end of the night.

Summers said it was decided not to charge more for the bottles in order to make it accessible to all and because guests are already spending nearly \$50 to attend the event.

There was a different demographic attending last year's event than the gala Grand Night, where people were more willing to bid on an auction, she said.

"It was a lot more people who came on their own and was a much more affordable event," she said of last year's Empty Bowls.

Participating chefs have not yet been confirmed, but once again guests will vote on which soups they like the best. The winning chef will be awarded a Golden Ladle.

People last year loved the handmade ceramic bowls and the fact that they got to choose their bowl, said Summers. They also loved the competitive element between the chefs and being able to sample different soups they had never tried before, vote on them and meet the chefs.

"I think people liked the casual part of it that it wasn't a sit-down dinner," she said. "It was a nice way to sit because of the communal table and you get to meet new people."

When people take home their bowls, it's a reminder of those in the community who have less, said Summers.

"You go to some wine and food events and you may

get a wine glass and stick it in the cupboard," she said. "But you know somebody took the time to make that bowl, it's an artistic product and it's one of a kind. Nobody else has that bowl. Mine sits filled with nuts on my counter, so every time I fill it up, I know the bowl was made with love from the community."

The number of tickets is limited to 200 due to capacity of the room. Summers said many tickets have already sold.

Tickets are on sale now and can be purchased on the Desert Sun website at desertsuncounselling.ca.

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Osoyoos Coyotes Junior B hockey team plays October home games on Saturday, Oct. 8 (Princeton), Friday, Oct. 14 (Chase), Friday, Oct. 21 (Summerland), and Sunday, Oct. 30 (Kelowna). Game times at the Sun Bowl Arena are at 7:30 p.m.

The Artists of the South Okanagan-Similkameen would like to invite the public to their show at the Nest and Nectar restaurant in the cannery building at 1475 Fairview Road in Penticton. Show runs until Dec. 19.

Legendary blues and boogie woogie piano master Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne performs on Friday, Oct. 7 at 7:30 p.m. at Frank Venables Theatre in Oliver. Tickets at www.venablestheatre.ca.

Artists on Main present an exhibition of their work from Oct. 8 to Nov. 5 at the Osoyoos Art Gallery, 8713 Main Street in Osoyoos. Hours are Tuesday to Saturday, noon to 4 p.m.

Wine Country Racing Association hosts the last drag race of its 2016 season on Sunday, Oct. 9 at Osoyoos Airport. Gates open at 9 a.m. Racing starts around 1 p.m. Go to www.winecountryracing.ca for more information.

The Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen is very pleased to invite you to the 17th Annual Community Foundation Comedy Festival on Oct. 15 at the Barking Parrot in Penticton. Tickets are only \$65 including dinner, an amazing auction and all three shows. Get your tickets at the Lakeside Resort front desk.

Oliver Market and Kids Swap Meet is Saturday, Oct. 15 at Oliver Com-

munity Rec Centre from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Presented by Valley Discovery Learning Community.

Oliver Grandmothers for Africa Fall Frenzie will be at Medici's Gelateria in Oliver on Friday, Oct. 21 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sale of exotic African handicrafts. Proceeds support the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

Frank Venables Theatre presents the Lorne Elliott Comedy Show on Saturday, Oct. 22, 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available online at venablestheatre.ca, or in person at Beyond Bliss or at Frank Venables Theatre on Mondays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Osoyoos Royalty Fall Fair and Tea is Saturday, Oct. 22 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the upper hall at the Royal Canadian Legion. Free admission and tea is \$5.

Osoyoos Concert series starts the year off with the Derina Harvey Band on Oct. 27. Season tickets now available at Imperial Office & Sundance Video for \$80 for all four concerts. Individual tickets \$23 in advance or \$25 at the door. Shows start at 7:30 p.m. at the Osoyoos Community Theatre.

SOAP Theatre presents Boeing, Boeing at the Frank Venables Theatre in Oliver from Thursday, Oct. 27 to Saturday, Oct. 29 at 7 p.m. This is the first of three plays in SOAP's 2016-17 season. Check www.venablestheatre.ca for ticket information.

Art and Music Night at Jojo's Café is Saturday, Oct. 29 at 7 p.m. Open mic.

The Empty Bowls Fundraiser for Desert Sun Counselling and Re-

source Centre is Friday, Nov. 4 from 6 – 9 p.m. at the Watermark Beach Resort. Gourmet soups prepared by local chefs, artisan breads, regional beer, wine and cider. Tickets are \$49 and are available online at www.desertsuncounselling.ca or by phone at 250-498-2538.

Bingo every Thursday (changed from Fridays) at the Osoyoos Elks Hall. Doors open at 6 p.m. early bird starts at 7 p.m. Crib on Tuesday nights 7 p.m. 8506 92 Ave., Osoyoos.

Need help with math, biology, chemistry, physics, English, socials? Certified teachers are volunteering their time and expertise for school after school tutoring. Monday to Thursday from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Osoyoos Baptist Church. For further information call David Adamson at 604-352-0076 or email schoolafterschool@gmail.com.

The Osoyoos Wellness Clinic is now open on Thursdays. Come and get your health monitored at the Cactus Centre (off Kingfisher Dr.) from 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Cost is \$1 with refreshments available.

Storytime is free at Osoyoos Library on Thursdays starting at 10 a.m. from Sept. 22 and running until Dec. 15. There will be lots of stories, puppets, songs and crafts.

Send your events to:
events@osoyootimes.com