



Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff

The premiere of Southwest Michigan's Pure Michigan commercial is shown Thursday at the Hilton Garden Inn in Benton Harbor. The ad will be shown in Chicago and Detroit, and could go national in 2017.

# Gearing up for the national stage

Pure Michigan ad highlights region's fall attractions

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**BENTON TOWNSHIP** — Southwest Michigan tourism boosters, who are ready to launch a regional Pure Michigan commercial extolling the area's fall charms, are already planning to see the message go national.

"The caliber of this commercial showcases our corner of paradise like nothing else before," said Millicent Huminsky, executive director of the Southwest Michigan Tourist Council, following the premiere Thursday of the ad narrated by Michigan native Tim Allen. "Don't you agree, this story needs to go national?"

Her question was met with an enthusiastic ovation from the large crowd who came to the Hilton Gardens Inn to see the commercial, which will be shown in Chicago, Indianapolis and possibly Detroit. It can be viewed at the Travel Michigan website beginning Wednesday.

The project came together two years ago when the 22 members of the Shoreline Hotel/Motel Association agreed to raise their bed tax from 2 percent to 5 percent to fund the partnership with Pure Michigan, said Mike Patel, co-owner of Hilton Gardens and other properties.

The goal was to raise \$250,000, that would be matched with \$250,000 from Pure Michigan, the statewide tourism



Dave Lorenz, vice president of Travel Michigan, talks about the Pure Michigan campaign before the premiere of Southwest Michigan's Pure Michigan commercial Thursday at the Hilton Garden Inn in Benton Township.

office. Patel said Southwest Michigan plans to have a five-year partnership with Pure Michigan.

That amount was raised ahead of schedule, which allowed tourism officials to bring in Pure Michigan and McCann marketing last fall.

Chris Cannon, creative director with McCann, said the idea was to highlight the autumn attractions in an area already well-known for its summertime draws.

Cannon said his creative team toured such locations as the Silver Beach Carousel, "breathtaking beaches," the Benton Harbor Arts District,

the Round Barn Winery and "a certain golf course that kicked my butt again today."

All of those spots and others make an appearance in the 30-second commercial. Allen's narration says that all of these are a reminder "of how important it is to make time for life," from "nature at its most brilliant to people at their most friendly."

Cannon called it a place "where you want to take the scenic route."

Phil and Janet Dykstra, whose caramel apples at Kilwin's make a

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cameo appearance, gave the ad two thumbs up.

Patrick Bosse, president of Holt-Bosse marketing, explained that in order to send out the ad nationally, starting in 2017, the community needs to raise \$250,000 in addition to

the \$250,000 from the bed tax. That will be matched by \$500,000 from Travel Michigan, for a \$1 million promotional push.

The tourist council and area businesses are teaming up in other ways to make Southwest Michigan a well-known brand.

Christian Moersch, general manager of the Round Barn Winery in Baroda,

announced the creation of the Makers Trail, which will highlight the region's wineries, distilleries and breweries.

Moersch pointed out that Berrien County is within a three-hour drive for 25 million people.

Mike Nadolski, executive director of Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center and a board member of he

tourist council, said LMC is building a culinary and hospitality education center along Empire Avenue that will supply the growing hospitality industry with highly trained professionals. The college also started a wine making program this year, he said.

David Lorenz, vice president of Travel Michigan, said that for every dollar

spent through Pure Michigan, another \$7.60 is returned to the state's economy, and adding tax revenue for education, roads and other needs.

"It's good for tourism, it's good for business, and it's great for community-building," Nadolski said of the promotional efforts.

Huminsky said the campaign will put Southwest

Michigan, which has already gained a reputation as a destination, on the map.

"Thirty-five years ago, people didn't take our little corner of the state seriously.

It as a pass-through location or a rest stop" for visitors heading to other places. "Today, they take us seriously."

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