

Inspiring Persona/Independence

3225 Hospital Dr, Suite 300, Juneau, Alaska 99801, 1-800-478-SAIL, ph/tty: 907-586-4920, fx: 907-586-4980

Kim Kiefer
City Manager
City and Borough of Juneau
155 S. Seward St.
Juneau, Alaska 99801

December 23, 2012

Re: Request for Marine Passenger Fee funding

Juneau Accessible Tourism Training and Services - \$48,000

Dear Ms. Kiefer:

Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) is submitting this request for Marine Passenger Fee proceeds for the period July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014.

The goal of SAIL's Accessible Tourism Program is to help Juneau become the top destination in the country for safe and accessible travel for people with disabilities. SAIL will partner with the cruise industry, Juneau Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Tourism Best Management Practices, to achieve this vision.

Consider that:

- More than 5,000 passengers in wheelchairs will visit Juneau next summer on board cruise ships, and many more will have another form of mobility, visual or hearing impairment or other disabling condition;
- Growing numbers of other visitors to Juneau with similar disabilities will be contacting hotels and tour operators for their accessibility needs;
- Nationwide, consumer research suggests that up to 25 million people with disabilities desire expanded travel opportunities if adequate information and services were provided, and Alaska is a top destination;
- One Juneau-based whale watch operator receives approximately 10 percent of its revenue from passengers (and associated traveling companions) with disabilities;
- Last summer an interior Alaska zipline operator was almost put out of business as a result of one staff person with inadequate training who improperly turned away a client with a visual impairment;
- The aging Baby Boomer demographic is one of the fastest-growing segments of the travel industry, and is experiencing significant increases in mobility and cognitive impairments, blindness or significant visual impairment, and hearing loss.

An Aging and Disability Resource Center and Partner Agency of United Way of Southeast Alaska

Information: 907-586-4920 (TDD) / 907-586-4920 (Voice) / 907-586-4920 (Fax)
1000 Hill Street, Suite 300, Juneau, Alaska 99801

www.sailinc.org

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This project is being launched this year with cooperation from the Juneau Convention and Visitors Bureau, Princess Cruises, and the McDowell Group, with start-up funding provided to SAIL by the Rasmuson Foundation. This funding has two components:

1) Training Program, open to all industry participants. SAIL will provide a series of 2-hour trainings to employees and volunteers in the cruise, transportation (bus and taxi), hotel/accommodation, and tour operator sectors. \$11,000 will fund 6 trainings for up to 300 participants total. The training will focus on addressing the safety, participation, and satisfaction of cruise passengers and other visitors with disabilities.

2) Providing services to increase safety and participation of cruise passengers and other visitors. SAIL will provide a web site and email and phone contact and make it available through multiple cruise line, visitor bureau, and other industry connections to reach passengers and other visitors before they come to Juneau. SAIL will offer information on serving individuals who use wheelchairs and with other disability needs to safely access docks, downtown destinations, appropriate bus and taxi transfers, and accessible tour options. SAIL will also provide direct communications to visitors with special needs to help them plan and safely complete their Juneau visit. SAIL can deliver assistance for dockside wheelchair transfers, provide volunteers to assist with shore-side options, and make custom arrangements as needed. SAIL staff will also work with Juneau-based tour operators to provide appropriate information on accessibility of their tours, and will help develop better, safer, and more diverse shore excursion opportunities for people with disabilities. Total cost to SAIL for staff support, volunteer coordination, and information services: \$37,000

By addressing the safety and satisfaction of people with disabilities and their traveling companions, SAIL will be providing a benefit to everyone in the business community and local population associated with tourism. We are excited by this opportunity provided by the Marine Passenger Fee program and look forward to your response.

If you have questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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Joan O'Keefe
Executive Director

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