

## **For Immediate Release & Consideration**

Contact: Mike Jones, The Dunes Resort Saugatuck/Douglas, MI 269-857-1401

THE DUNES RESORT: COME JOIN THE PARTY, IT'S A CELEBRATION!

“Celebrating 30 years of being Gay!”

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It's not a boardroom, there's no conference table or uncomfortable chairs and there are clearly no suits. It's just another day in paradise. It's Douglas, Michigan, a hot September day and three friends are unwinding after a day of moving furniture. Of course, there are the requisite margaritas and pizza underscoring the brainstorming and the abundance of laughter.

From this fun infused “What if?” backdrop would emerge a life altering idea. It was this setting, this day in 1998 when partners Mike Jones, Danny Esterline and Greg Tryzbinski came up with the idea to buy a gay bar.

Many dream but few dare and margaritas add the needed perspective. According to Jones, "We were at points in our lives where it just seemed right. Maybe you shouldn't eat pizza, drink margaritas and try to plan your life, but you just never know what's going to happen."

The next day, idea in mind, no plan on paper, and amazingly hangover free, the three amigos called their friend, and realtor, Lynda Holmes who began moving their idea towards realization. The rest of their lives were about to change, as was the gay scene in the Midwest.

Nine months later, on May 26, 1999, the trio took ownership of The Douglas Dunes, renaming it The Dunes Resort and now referred to by most as simply The Dunes.

Today, 30 years later, through hard work and an unwavering dedication to providing the best in service, hospitality and perpetuating a gay safe haven, The Dunes Resort is the largest gay resort and entertainment complex in the Midwest, and no doubt one of the five biggest in the United States.

In the summer of 2010, Bump! (Logo TV's first gay and lesbian travel and lifestyle TV series) visited and toured the communities of Saugatuck and Douglas and then told their audience of more than 30 million viewers that The Dunes is, without question, western Michigan's premier gay and lesbian vacation destination while being the pinnacle of the gay Saugatuck/Douglas community.

The Dunes Resort is a popular destination with most guests coming from Chicago, followed by Indianapolis, Detroit, Milwaukee and St. Louis. Located two and a half hours by car from Chicago and three hours from Detroit, the Dunes complex sprawls over 22 acres, with 81 hotel rooms and six bars, including western Michigan's largest gay dance bar and a cabaret with live

entertainment and a game room, plus a fantastic view friendly outdoor patio bar and a larger than large pool and pool bar.

“The Dunes can be a lot of different things for a lot of different people. To me, it's a little slice of heaven in the middle of western Michigan where it's traditionally pretty conservative,” said Jones.

They're a diverse trio, personal and professional partners, who work together like a well-tuned machine to make The Dunes a great place. Jones, 44 is an Indiana native, who earned a hospitality degree from Purdue University, then lived in Chicago and worked at a design magazine before spreading his entrepreneurial wings. Esterline, 47 has a political background and serves as the “I can fix anything man.” Trzybinski, 50, comes from a banking background and takes care of everything financial. "

In addition to being considered a gay institution in the Midwest, The Dunes Resort is also a family affair. Sharon Dils, Mike's mom is Head of Housekeeping, and makes certain good order is kept and the premises immaculate. Of course, all the time beaming with pride over what her son and his partners have accomplished

Jones, with a ready smile and enthusiasm shining from behind his eyes, sums it up simply by saying, “It all works.”

Almost 80 percent of the clientele is gay men. During the two annual women's weekends, the mix changes and the resort become about 90 percent women. All in all, the normal mix is 50 percent singles, 50 percent couples. And, yes, that includes straight, gay-friendly customers—especially since The Dunes regularly hosts events for various communities, ranging from leather to lesbian.

Guests at The Dunes are truly a rainbow with every flavor represented: circuit kids, couples, retirees, twinks, bears, lesbians and so many more. "At the end of our first summer , I got emotional. I was looking around, everyone was having fun and then I thought, 'Wow, this is ours.' That was a little overwhelming," Jones said

The Dunes Resort is a special gay getaway “People from all walks of life come here to find themselves, lose themselves, but most importantly, to be themselves. You can be gay, straight, old or young, and feel comfortable here,” Jones commented.

"We have a lot of stories of people who have met their partners here and now plan their vacations here on an annual basis," Jones said. "Whether 21 or 85, it's home, it's welcoming and anyone can come to The Dunes and have a good time. For the local gay community The Dunes is Ground Zero, it's home.

The resort offers a kaleidoscope of entertainment, from raucous to romantic. From strippers to live entertainment and cabaret to great DJs to a quiet romantic weekend, The Dunes makes it happen for their guests. The variety of offerings tailored to varied tastes, is among the many reasons people return year after year after year.

The Dunes Resort kicks off its 2011 season—its 30th year—in early May with the Black & White Anniversary Party and Masquerade Ball. Every weekend in the sunny summer months create a reason to be at the Dunes. For those looking for the biggest crowds, the big three include Memorial Day weekend with DJ Roland Belmares and DJ Brett Locascio is the seasons first, followed the annual Red White on Blue Star event, held over Independence Day weekend, which features appearances by DJ Tony Moran , DJ Paulo and Chi Chi LaRue at the pool with hot bods from Club Channel One. Lastly the Summer's Going To Come Again party over Labor Day weekend will incorporate Lydia Prim, Joe Gauthreaux and more Club Channel One Studs. However, every weekend in the Spring Summer and Fall guarantees a good time.

It's a really great place where life is lived and enjoyed without pretense. Speaking for the partners, Jones truly believes that "everyone who comes here feels good and feels comfortable. You can be sitting at the bar with lesbians on one side, a cross-dresser on the other side and everyone is just having fun. "He went on to say that "This is a very welcoming place, regardless of what you like, what you don't like, how much money you make, how much money you don't make, what you're wearing, etc."

Today's Dunes Resort is rich with history from the original Douglas Dunes which was opened in 1981 by Carl Jennings and Larry Gammons to welcome curious gay men and women to Douglas (Saugatuck) Michigan. What grew into The Douglas Dunes was an idea that took shape at what was the drive-in Amity Motel. Today's Dunes, a continuation of the good memories, is much different than the original 22 hotel rooms, restaurant, and lobby bar with summer-only outside dancing.

The current partners hold Carl and Larry in high esteem and believe it was their love for the area combined with a desire to have people explore and visit this beautiful little community that was one of the basic reasons for creating The Dunes.

Jennings and Gammons still reside in the Douglas community. Throughout the years, under their guidance, entertainers in fields spanning every format from pop and porn have appeared. Answering varied tastes has resulted in a nightlife that defies eclectic and a dance floor running the gamut from progressive to hard-rock music.

Expressing the thoughts of his partners, Jones said, "Our guests are very important to us, they are the backbone of our business and because of them our business has grown every year. We listen to what they tell us and use their thoughts to make our product better every year. Absolutely, it can still be stressful at times, but it's still so much fun. I wake up every morning and just think that I'm so blessed."

And with one last thought, Jones commented, "Come join the party... it's a Celebration."

**BUMPTV/Logo Travel Show on Saugatuck/Douglas & The Dunes Resort @**  
<http://www.logotv.com/video/episode-3-season-5-saugatuck-michigan/1658500/playlist.jhtml>