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## **Small Businesses Win Big at ATIA VIRTUAL Convention**

### ***\$25,000 Cash Prizes Awarded at 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Alaska Tourism Shark Tank***

**Anchorage, AK** – Based on the reality TV show Shark Tank, the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) held its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Alaska Tourism Shark Tank competition on October 7 – this year with a *VIRTUAL* twist. Ten entrepreneurs from across the state presented live via Zoom in front of five Alaska tourism “Sharks”, hoping to win a cash prize to help turn business ideas into reality.

Participants were allowed 3 slides and 2 minutes to make their pitch. Ideas ranged from new products to market outreach. Alaska’s tourism sharks provided fin-tastic business advice, diving deep to “chews” their favorite.

Shark-selected winners were:

- Denali Hostel & Cabins, Denali National Park, \$8,000 to build an outdoor dining area (<https://www.denalihostel.com/>)
- Alaska Friends, Anchorage, \$7,000 to develop a website, expand social media marketing, and build out trip offerings
- Juneau Food Tours, Juneau, \$7,000 for *Taste Alaska!* food subscription program expansion (<https://www.juneaufoodtours.com>)

ATIA members also selected Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center as the “fin” favorite, winning \$3,000 for their animal food kitchen project courtesy of sponsor Alaska Railroad.

Other participating businesses included:

- The Alaska Experience Company, to develop new collaborative guided tour experiences
- Denali Photo Guides, to develop a new tour with Yamaha 4-seat side by sides
- ExhibitAK, to develop online guide training and cultural classes
- Go Hike Alaska, to purchase equipment for extended overnight hiking opportunities

*Alaska’s leading statewide nonprofit membership organization for the Alaska travel industry.*

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- Salmonberry Tours, for an espresso machine at their Independence Mine concession site
- Chugach Adventures, for a new October tour – *Belugas, Earthquakes and Bison* with videos and historical photos.

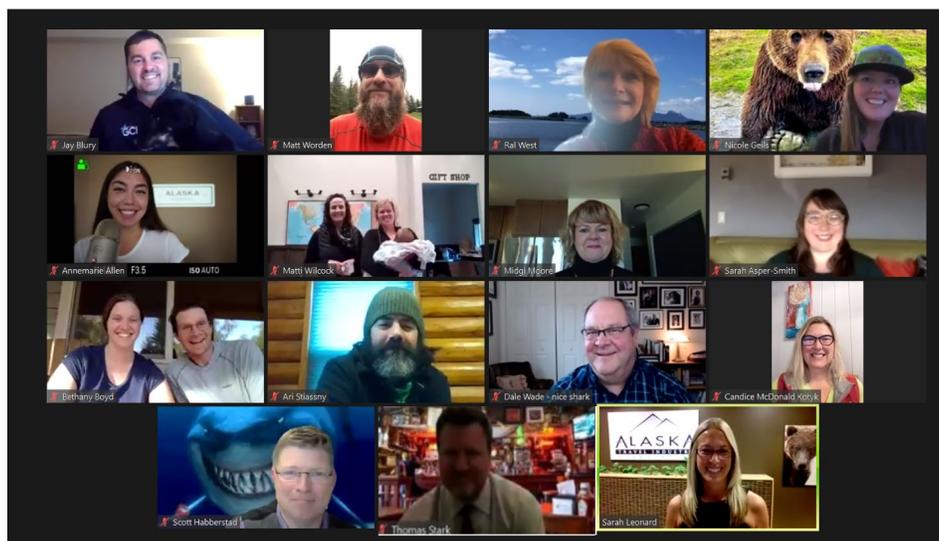
“This year was devastating for Alaska’s tourism industry.” Said Sarah Leonard, ATIA President and CEO. “We wanted this year’s Shark Tank to recognize business resiliency and innovation as we pivot to a new tourism operating normal. Our *VIRTUAL* Shark Tank gave us a bit of fun – while awarding real cash prizes for innovative COVID-19 has been a game-changer for many in our industry. We’re excited Alaska Shark Tank will be able to support these new and improved tourism operations!”

Scott Habberstad, Alaska Airlines; Dale Wade, Alaska Railroad Corporation; Jay Blury, GCI; Tom Stark, Wells Fargo; and Ral West, representing the Chuck West Family, served as this year’s Shark panel.

ATIA is Alaska’s largest statewide membership trade association for the travel industry and represents more than 600 members and businesses supporting Alaska tourism. ATIA promotes Alaska’s travel industry as one of the state’s major economic forces and advocates for the growth of the industry while remaining attentive to Alaska’s natural environment, diverse cultures, and unique quality of life.

For more information, visit [www.AlaskaTIA.org](http://www.AlaskaTIA.org) or contact 907.306.2331.

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