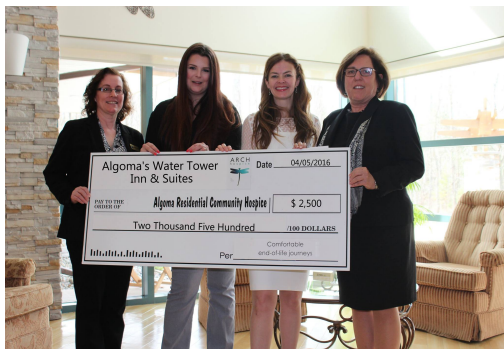


Nomination for 2020 HAC Humanitarian Award: JJ Hilsinger



WATER TOWER INN STAFF RAISE FUNDS FOR LOCAL CHARITIES

Staff at The Water Tower Inn present a cheque for \$2500 for the ARCH Hospice in Sault St. Marie. The money was raised at their 2019 Staff Awards Banquet. Each year they raise funds for a local charity.



SOUP KITCHEN FOOD DRIVE

An appeal from the local Soup Kitchen Community Centre inspired JJ to come up with a campaign that in turn inspired the community to donate food items to “Top up the Trailer”.

Top Up the Trailer

“Casey’s Grill.Bar (at the Inn) has stepped forward to partner with the Soup Kitchen and Rome’s Independent Grocer to organize and run an all-out fall food drive, running Sept. 20 to Oct 17. The goal is to fill a 2000 cubic foot trailer that will be parked on 2nd Line by The Water Tower for the duration of the drive. A banner on the trailer will mark the progress of the non-perishable donations Sault Ste. Marie citizens make to support their soup kitchen.” *The Sault Star*



ALGOMA FALL FESTIVAL

JJ and the Inn have supported this exciting annual art festival for over 30 years and the Inn has been a hub for the its smaller events, and for hosting performers.

ROTARY



JJ was active in Rotary for years. The Club still holds its weekly breakfast meetings at the Inn. He led the annual Community Parade, with his staff volunteers selling pieces of KFC along the way, all proceeds going to community projects.



TERRY FOX MARATHON OF HOPE

JJ hosted Terry for a week at the Inn. He also arranged accommodations at stops along the route from Sudbury to Sault Ste. Marie for the runner and his crew. Terry would run a 26-mile stint on his journey north to Thunder Bay, then come back to soak his weary self in the whirlpool spa at the Inn.

GIVE CLARA



Help us raise the \$15,000 Clara needs for a mechanical lift so she can get out of bed and be mobile again. The Water Tower Inn is pledging up to \$5000 in matching funds. (campaign poster)

(The campaign successfully raised \$15,000 and Clara got her lift.)

A LIFT!



THE UNITED APPEAL CHARITY FUNDRAISER
JJ and the Inn have extensively supported the United Way as the Presenting Sponsor for two of its annual events: Pedals for Possibilities and the Big Cup Scramble Golf Tournament. The Water Tower Inn and its staff were instrumental in the organization and revitalization of the 2019 charity golf tournament, raising \$60,000 for the United Way Endowment Fund, double the previous year's earnings.

JJ IS AN AVID CYCLIST, SKIER AND ADVOCATE FOR RECREATION AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.



In 1982 he initiated and established partnerships for the formation of Cross-Country Algoma as a way to extend and promote area trails and community participation. Likewise, in 1985, he motivated a group of local investors to save the failing area alpine ski area, Searchmont. It's loss would have not only hurt winter tourism dollars, but would end the 35 years of winter recreation Sault residents had enjoyed there.

As general manager, he built up the resort, repositioning it against the popularity of ski areas in northern Michigan with the motto "Mountains of the Midwest". With much hard work and his marketing and operational prowess, he built up skier visits by 75 percent, bringing in millions of dollars in revenues to the region, and from government for infrastructure. The resort added more runs, a quadruple chair, and an extensive ski base lodge with accommodations. He established school programs that would bring kids out to learn to ski.

JJ'S EXTREME BICYCLING AND FUNDRAISING TOURS

Cairo to Capetown



"...Most of all, even though we moved quickly along every day, I did have time to soak up some culture and understand some people and their challenges. I also got a sweeping, intense exposure to this incredible continent, Africa. Arriving at Moule Point at Seaport in Cape Town was indeed an arrival that gave new meaning to my life and may, in reality become only another beginning. Thank you for following my journey with Tour D'Afrique and please find time to use the website and donate to our charitable organizations, the Stephen Lewis Foundation for AIDS in Africa and the Algoma Regional Cancer Center." *From "He Conquered a Continent", Sootoday.com, May 16, 2005.*



*During his epic bicycle trip from the top to the bottom of Africa in the spring of 2005, J.J. Hilsinger raised money for two charities, one of them being The Stephen Lewis Foundation for HIV/AIDS in Africa. Since returning, he has been planning an event featuring this pre-eminent Canadian, Stephen Lewis. Stephen Lewis will attend a dinner and present on the subject of his recent CBC Massey Lecture Series and book currently in stores, *RACE AGAINST TIME!* Algoma's Water Tower Inn will treat those attending to an African inspired menu for dinner. Your \$100 donation to The Stephen Lewis Foundation will be transferred in its entirety with the Inn covering the cost of the food and with staff volunteering their time.*

Istanbul to Beijing



"At 7 p.m. this evening at Galaxy Cinemas in the Station Mall, JJ Hilsinger will premier his 2008 Asia Silk Route bicycle journey on the big screen.

Hilsinger traveled 11,000 kilometres by bicycle over 104 days from Istanbul to Beijing in an effort to raise global warming awareness and have supporters pledge to reduce CO2 emissions."

SooToday.com, March 10/2011

"The trek will take him through Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and China; through deserts, mountain ranges and natural geological depressions - all in the name of global warming. The challenge is to obtain enough pledges to save a total of 11,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions; one tonne for every kilometres traveled." From "JJ Hilsinger Rides Again", Northern Ontario Business, Nov. 19, 2011

Ethiopia



"JJ Hilsinger, president of The Water Tower Inn in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, bicycled from Ethiopia's Ethiopian Highlands (at an elevation of 10,000 feet) to one of the lowest spots on the planet, the Danakil Depression some 500 feet below sea level. "We went from the roof of Africa down to one of the lowest points on the earth, which is also the hottest," he says. An avid bicycle rider, Jim did the trip this spring for adventure and as part of a mission that raised \$8,000 for an Ethiopian Tree Fund Foundation project to plant 20,000 trees in the deforested country."

Lake Superior Magazine August 2011

Ruta Mayo



“Barb Harrison is committed to helping children in Kenya go to school and get an education. Harrison wants to raise funds to help build a small orphanage and a school in the poverty-stricken region. Joining Harrison in her efforts is well-known Sault Ste. Marie entrepreneur JJ Hilsinger.”

With Harrison at Algoma’s Water Tower Inn and Suites Thursday afternoon, Hilsinger announced he will help raise awareness and funds for the school and orphanage project by taking an intense 2300-kilometre bicycle trek across Central America.



Because Hilsinger will be bicycling an accumulated 130,000 feet of elevation on his journey, the effort has been called “Elevation for Education.” Hilsinger said “I happened to know Barb really well, so why not?” Hilsinger, who has cycled all over the world, including Africa, said “I’m really fond of the whole notion of Africa and its challenges, and where do you find a person like Barb who has lived in Sault Ste. Marie so long and donated so much of her life to her projects?”

From SooToday.com, Nov. 8/2012

LIGHTS FOR CHARITY

In 2010, JJ installed a \$30,000, computerized lighting system with the ability to light up the iconic water tower next to the Inn with different colour schemes. During the year, various local charity campaigns are highlighted with the organization’s colours.



“...Last evening, representatives from the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service were on Great Northern Road to light the City's water tower blue in recognition of the project (commemoration of fallen officers).

"[The water tower] is a significant focal point here in Sault Ste. Marie, whether you're a citizen seeing this over the Christmas holidays, or traveling along the Trans Canada Highway, this will be seen," Police Chief Bob Davies said during his address....”

From Hey, Water Tower. Why so blue?

Sootoday.com, December 12, 2012

FORT MAC FIRES

MacLeans Magazine May 2016

A nation responds to the Fort McMurray fire

...“In fact, many Canadians are learning to consider Fort Mac in a way they hadn’t before. News reports focusing on hard-hit evacuees humanized a city previously associated, for many outsiders, with images like photographer Edward Burtynsky’s aerial photos of epic-scale oil sands mining, which tend to suggest a ruined boreal landscape. “If I flew over it, I’d probably be appalled,” says JJ Hilsinger, owner of the Water Tower Inn in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. That didn’t stop Hilsinger, though, from spearheading a drive to get Soo businesses to create a pool of at least \$25,000, out of which they will match any individual donations from local residents to the Red Cross’s fire fund. His environmental misgivings? “It didn’t come into the equation,” he says. “You just saw that there were a whole lot of people in dire need, and going through a fearful point in life.”

AWARDS

2018 TIAO Lifetime Achievement Award



The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario has recognized Sault Ste. Marie hotelier J.J. Hilsinger with a lifetime achievement award. The association lauded Hilsinger as an active supporter of the Sault's growth for at least five decades.

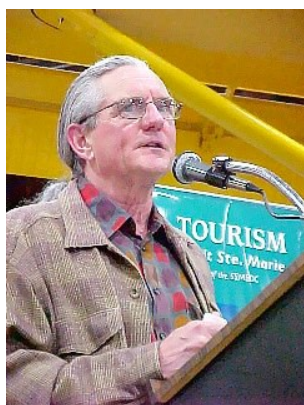
"J.J. Hilsinger has been an outspoken figure in Sault Ste. Marie's business and tourism community for decades," reads a writeup on the association's website.

In a special Lifetime Achievement Award Lunch held at Caesars Windsor on October 23 — during the 2018 Ontario Tourism Summit — Hilsinger was celebrated for his commitment to hospitality and community engagement. <https://www.facebook.com/thewatertowerinn/videos/743750612624669/>

2009 Paul Dalseg Award, sponsored by the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce.

“We are pleased to recognize Jim Hilsinger for his outstanding efforts, contributions, service and commitment to our community as well as issues with international and global scope.”

The Paul Dalseg Award recognizes a businessperson in Sault Ste. Marie who has demonstrated exemplary interest in the community, and in so doing, has made a major, outstanding and unique achievement or contribution to the life of the community. It is intended to recognize the leadership and community-mindedness of businessmen and women.



Sault Ste. Marie honours Jim Hilsinger

Jim Hilsinger, known for his five JJ's Chicken eateries and for building the landmark Water Tower Inn and its associated conference facility, was honoured last night with Sault Ste. Marie's first Tourism Award of Excellence.

May 4, 2003 12:29 AM By: David Helwig, SooToday

Additional Awards

2017 United Appeal Ted Brooks Award for Community Involvement

2003 Tourism Sault Ste. Marie Award of Excellence.

Sault Chamber of Commerce Tourism of Excellence Award

1987 Tribute from Hospitality and Tourism Sault Ste. Marie (HATS) for 3-years' contributions.

1988 Northern Ontario Business Entrepreneur of the Year

Sault Chamber of Commerce Doug Sykes Award for Community Excellence

Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce Award for Business Achievement

3-years Outstanding Contribution to Hospitality and Travel Sault Ste. Marie Award

TESTIMONIALS

"I worked with JJ for more than thirty-five years on various community projects, all of which were to benefit different segments of our community. Here are a few: assisting to stimulate our economic prospects; assisting the community organization in saving Algoma Steel; promoting our City in a multitude of ways including the Homecoming events in 1998; assisting in saving Searchmont Ski Hill; assisting in raising money for the Cat Scan; and more recently, assisting in raising money for Sault Area Hospital. There are so many more. JJ is a born leader with vision that is legendary. Many thought that these ideas were off the top of his head. However, the ideas did not come forward until he completed hours, days and often months of research, thought and comment solicitation. It is probably the biggest reason that so many succeeded."

Dr. Frank S. Sarlo QC PhD

"....Sometimes his vision was so grand and so singular– like the 1991 Winter Cities Conference – people today still stop me in Italy and Vancouver, BC and say – “Oh, Sault Ste. Marie, I was there for the Winter Cities Conference”.

When Jim owned and managed Searchmont Resort (1985 to 2000), it went from being a “ski hill” to being a “Mountain of the Midwest”. That was a typical scenario that JJ saw – opportunity was bigger, greater than we thought. People came for holidays, national competitions and events were held there.

It continues to be important infrastructure for tourism.

Jim's commitment to his businesses has been paralleled by his interest and commitment to the community. Fundraising with Dr. David Walde for the Cat Scan and the Sault Area Hospital were totally altruistic – he could make a difference – not just by lending his name, but by working and using 'shoe leather' to make sure the fund topped out. It did.

He gave to community; he has been dedicated to “being better, being the best” and I am pleased, honoured to support JJ's nomination for the Humanitarian Award.”

Helen Gillespie,
Sault Chamber President, Entrepreneur, Innovation Centre.

Jim Hilsinger has always had a large international network of knowledgeable, passionate visionaries and he was and continues to be one of them. When Algoma Steel and Abitibi Paper were floundering in the early 80s, it was Jim who became Sault Ste. Marie's visionary, selling the idea of promoting tourism opportunities in the beautiful Algoma wilderness.

Jim was the featured speaker at a Chamber of Commerce dinner, impersonating Mother Nature with a leafy, blossomed hat as he tried to convince local business leaders of the economic opportunities provided by the Algoma Wilderness.

He offered Hope to the community by gathering together many concerned people to form committees to identify local assets and opportunities, culminating in a dynamic Grassroots Forum conference and comprehensive report. Renowned speakers came from the United States and Vancouver to present new ideas that ranged from the murals of Chemanius to social planning that placed great importance on the quality of life.

Jim has a life-long, deep respect for the natural resources of the Algoma region and has spoken out often to uphold the integrity of responsible forest management and water quality and quantity. He was and still is a strong advocate in promoting the Agawa Canyon Tour, supporting local artists and photographers, or all-season wilderness experiences. He supported countless native arts and culture initiatives to help preserve our local history and celebrate our diversity.

JoAnne Fleming: Founder and Chair of The Sault is You City Beautification Committee, Chair: Chamber of Commerce Tourism Committee Early Mid 80s, Chair: Quality of Life Economic Development Committee Chair: Environment Committee for Grass Roots Forum

Sault Ski Runners

“JJ (& Donna Hilsinger) of The Water Tower Inn remain strong supporters of Alpine Ski Racing. We are proud to be associated with the Hilsingers and their organization.”

Sault Ste Marie Council Meeting August 27, 2007

Moved by Councillor T. Sheehan

Seconded by Councillor S. Myers

Whereas the Federal Government recently announced the cancellation of the One Tonne Challenge which was vigorously promoted by Rick Mercer; and

Whereas City Council had passed a resolution supporting the participation in such a challenge before it was cancelled by the Federal Government;

Now therefore be it resolved that the resolution in regards to the One Tonne Challenge be withdrawn and in its place City Council be requested to endorse local resident J. J. Hilsinger's www.youbetican.com carbon reduction campaign and further be it resolved that staff be requested to review possible ways for the Corporation to be involved in said campaign. CARRIED.

Paul Dalseg Award presentation

“We are pleased to recognize Jim Hilsinger for his outstanding efforts, contributions, service and commitment to our community as well as issues with international and global scope. Jim has maintained a reputation as a well-known and respected local business person for more than 45 years.

Jim’s commitment to his businesses has been paralleled by his interest and commitment to the community. Kiwanis, Sault Area Hospital and the Cat Scan fundraiser, Hospitality and Travel Sault Ste. Marie (HATS), SSM Economic Development Board, Cross Country Algoma, among many other agencies have all benefited from either his support, insights or fundraising efforts.

Algoma’s Water Tower Inn Trailhead program, positioning the hotel as a natural meeting place for those with a shared interest and love of outdoor recreation and as the base for exploring the Great Lakes Heritage Coast. Please join me in saying thank you to Jim Hilsinger for his strong dedication and valuable contributions to a variety of worthwhile and important causes.

“...In 1985, Jim, in his capacity as President of HATS, rescued Searchmont Resort from receivership. He then became personally involved as an investor and was instrumental in developing and expanding the resort in order to attract a larger number of skiers. Searchmont has accommodated over 100,000 visitors annually making it Northern Ontario's largest winter destination attraction.

In 1988, Jim was the recipient of the prestigious **Northern Ontario Business Entrepreneur** of the Year award.

His latest venture is the development of the Trailhead program which positions the Water Tower Inn as the base for exploring the Great Lakes Heritage Coast. The program has now been expanded to include the Mackinaw Trail, the Huron North passage, Manitoulin Island and the Chicheemaun Ferry.

Over the years Jim has been extremely active in community initiatives, which include Hospitality & Travel SSM, Sault Trails & Recreation Association, the Economic Advisory Council, the Community Action Team as well as the fund raising campaign to purchase a CATscan Imager and MRI for Sault Area Hospitals.

I'm proud to be able to present Jim with the **first Tourism Award of Excellence**.

Bill Durnford, Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, 2002 chair, on Jim Hilsinger:

Personal Projects: The power of one

By Sheri Gagnon, Canadian Geographic 2007

Some people go the extra mile when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions — JJ Hilsinger went an extra 6,835. The Sault Ste. Marie businessman participated in an 11,000 kilometre bike adventure across the Silk Route in China this past Fall and used his journey to raise awareness about carbon emissions, aiming to eliminate one tonne of CO₂ for every kilometre biked. Before leaving, he set up a website, www.youbetican.com, to challenge others to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. "I have a keen interest in sustainable global evolution," Hilsinger says. "I was encouraged because it seemed there was finally an awakening with the Al Gore media explosion (surrounding his documentary "An Inconvenient Truth") and many other publications talking openly about the hazards of global warming based on the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report."

TripAdvisor, Algoma's Water Tower Inn & Suites, Reviewed 24 July 2013

"Recently stayed there and have nothing but good things to say about the hotel and their staff! We had 20 rooms with them and everyone enjoyed their stay. A special shout out to the owner JJ for his wilderness tour he took the girls on, they are still talking about it!"

(JJ manages a 600 acre wilderness preserve on the city's northern boundary, and often takes guests and visitors to the city on nature hikes).

Kapuskaping Times 2009 Soo hoteliers want to save CBC

The proprietors of Sault Ste. Marie's Algoma's Water Tower Inn, in sync with the feelings of many other Northerners, have spearheaded a campaign to stop the radical reduction of staff at CBC North's headquarters in Sudbury Ontario. "Our local CBC provides vital information and direction for a region with stories and experiences to tell," says spokesperson JJ Hilsinger. "Our communities once had reporters assigned specifically to them, but this has been eroded over the past 10 or 15 years. We need to maintain what we have in Sudbury, and insist that new investments go toward greater coverage in future." A CBC North source has said that everyone from the station manager to the janitor is on the hit list. A petition to CBC Radio Canada is available to sign. Organizers hope that all communities in Northern Ontario will get on the bandwagon by visiting www.saveourcbcnorth.com.

Terry Fox's dinner and a movie with Donna Hilsinger SooToday.com,

"My dad called me one afternoon and said 'Would you like to take Terry Fox out for dinner?' I said, 'Oh my God are you serious? Of course I will,'" said Hilsinger.

Her father, J.J., had volunteered to find accommodations for Fox between Sudbury and Wawa. While in the region, Fox would be driven to the Water Tower Inn to sleep, only to be driven back to his last finishing point the next morning. "He would run his 26 miles and then come here. The next day he would drive out to where he stopped and then run his 26 miles," she said.

"The Water Tower Inn, the reception and the way they hosted us was amazing," said Bill Vigars, who travelled with Fox and handled public relations for the run. Their stay at the hotel offered rare comfort for Fox while on his cross-Canada journey.

“It was like having a base for like four or five days — which we never had on the run. This motel, next motel, sleep in the camper, go, go, go. And then for five days he was much more relaxed,” said Vigars.

Fox was suffering from aches and pains associated with his Marathon of Hope, which passed through the Sault on this day in 1980. “I remember watching him. He used to sit in the whirlpool here. He found it very relaxing,” said Hilsinger.

Vigars said the public mostly saw Fox's pain and determination, but he remembers another side of the runner. “I think people think of Terry with that face — the pain he was going through and the concentration. But after the end of the day we always relaxed and we always had a couple of beers. Terry would say ‘I’d have more than two but then I wouldn’t get up in the morning,’” said Vigars.

Vigars said their time in the Sault was among his best memories of the Marathon of Hope.

“There are certain times that stick in your mind — the kickoff at the football game and Toronto city hall, and in London near my home town — and then the Sault because we developed this incredible relationship with the Hilsingers and the people,” he said.

