

Bigfoot Bash Sept 2023

Hosted by Oscoda Ausable Chamber of Commerce

Chamber's Inaugural Bigfoot Bash "Tree-Knocking" Success

by Marilyn Trumper-Samra

Oscoda was "feeling kind of squatchy" this past weekend (Sept 29/30) as nearly 300 energized, enthusiastic bigfoot fans made their way into town for the Chamber's long-anticipated sold-out inaugural Bigfoot Bash.

An intimate gathering of 50 fans holding highly-sought tickets for the Meet & Greet got to rub shoulders and dine Friday night with the Bash's top-tier Bigfoot speakers – Cliff Barackman, Adam Davies and Matt Moneymaker, hosted at the VFW Post and Auxiliary #3735. The \$300-plus bar proceeds tallied at night's end went toward putting a new roof on the building. Fans of the three men – legends in Bigfoot circles – enjoyed an elegant spread of savory ribs, spicy chicken, salmon spread Bigfoot-shaped carrot cake and cookies – and more, all created by VFW Chef Vickie Ball.

As the sun began to set, a second group of fans – perhaps holding the event's most sought-after SOLD OUT tickets – headed in different directions each led by a speaker on a night hike into the Huron National Forest in search of the elusive, mystical beast. Hikers reported a full moon and fog added to the ambiance and set the tone. A knock was heard, from a distance what may have been a Bigfoot call, and perhaps even some Bigfoot "talk," drifting through the air, described by followers as sounding like "Samari talk" ever-present in the old 1960s Japanese movies.

Afterward, both teams gathered around the warmth of a crackling outdoor fire at the edge of the dark woods to share stories of their hike and enjoy the camaraderie.

"The overall experience was awakening to all your senses, even if you're not a Bigfoot enthusiast," said local realtor Imse Ockey, Bash sponsor and member of the Bigfoot Committee. *"Just walking around in the woods in the dark was incredible. I think people should do it more often. We tend to take the solitude, the serenity of Mother Nature for granted. It was a perfect evening with a full moon, good temperatures, and the landscape over one valley was breathtaking with the tree line as a backdrop and fog hanging low in the sky. Quite eerie, but magical."*

Did they find Bigfoot?

"At that location, we could hear as far as the edge of earshot a possible Sasquatch response call back. We have no idea what that was, but it has peaked my interest of the possibilities and I will absolutely want to experience that again," she said.

Jamil Cage and his 11-year-old son Logan, drove up from Rochester and participated in the Night Hike. *"It was great,"* Cage said. *"I've participated in several (Bigfoot Research Organization)*

expeditions in the past and my son was interested and wanted to see what it was all about. It was fantastic talking with the speakers – Matt Moneymaker and Cliff Barackman – and hearing their stories. He got to see Matt's drone! We were out in the woods for a few hours and even if nothing happened out of the ordinary – we still had a blast!"

Bigfooters on day two filled the Shoreline Players theatre on the former Wurtsmith Air

Force Base in what once was the local movie house for soldiers. Also a SOLD OUT event – they enjoyed talks throughout the day by the three speakers and learning about the legend which some say they know exists, others enjoy the possibility and still others pooh-pooh.

Quick-witted Master of Ceremonies Marc DeWerth, who hosts the largest Bigfoot festival east of the Mississippi in Salt Fork, Ohio, advanced the day with rousing introductions, jokes and fun giveaways that could erupt at any time to keep the excitement going. With his encouragement, Bigfooters boldly bid on an array of live-auction Bigfoot memorabilia including merchandise autographed by the speakers and a bright, autumnal-colored Bigfoot quilt made and donated by local quilter Tracie L. Harmon.

Vendors selling all things bigfoot, Michigan and nature reported a good day of sales, and all hailed the weather, warm with a gentle breeze and clear skies.

Guitarist “Mikado Mike” – Mike Derome from Mikado along with percussionist Mike Hough – kicked off the event with the official Bigfoot Bash Theme Song with Committee parody lyrics written to the melody from “Home on the Range.” A fourth lyric was chosen from competition entries – written by Oscodan Marie Gale – who won a Bigfoot figurine for her efforts.

Bash attendees hailed from seven states – Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Maryland, Ohio, South Carolina and Virginia. Only about 12-percent would be considered local, the balance traveling the distance from outstate or downstate.

Patty Warner from Howell, came as the guest of a friend from Taylor. A professional fund-raiser, she said she attends a lot of events and that the Bigfoot Bash hit all the high points.

“I love it when I go into an event and I am struck. I was struck! This was cohesive, the bigfoot backdrop at the Meet & Greet, the sponsorship photos on the screen (at the Bash) with bigfoot sleeping in a bed at the B&B – the night hike – it was all extremely well done.” And Warner reports, she’s entered the Bigfoot fold.

“I came as a skeptic, but I’m pretty convinced now (after hearing the speakers) and I have a new respect for the science behind the program,” she said, adding, “and, I think the Bigfoot song lyrics should be posted on the website. I think people will walk around singing that song it’s catchy.”

Oscoda-AuSable Chamber of Commerce Director George Samra came on board in mid-July and hit the ground running. None of this, he said, would have been possible without the help from generous sponsors and others in the business community, Oscoda Township government and civic organization all offering invaluable in-kind assists and insight.

“I was initially optimistic about the first Bigfoot Bash. I was looking forward to a new event in town, but I had no idea it would be so well received. The excitement of the participants in this event was electrifying. This is a real hit – almost like a sleeper,” Samra said. *“I received a lot of positive comments from people about how much fun this was, and asking if we’re going to do it again next year. And that’s not just from the out-of-towners. I have locals who are excited to the point where they want to start helping next year. I can’t emphasize how wonderful this event turned out to be, and that’s due to the Committee members who spearheaded this for the past 11 months. Every detail was looked at and analyzed and even though we look back now and we can see that some improvements can be made – it was truly a huge success for a first-time event. We’re looking forward to doing this every year – improving every year – and making Oscoda a destination.”*

