



Contact: Sara Klebba
Cell: (231) 631-3039
Email: Sara@TimberRidgeResort.net

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NEW OWNERS REVITALIZING TRAVERSE CITY'S TIMBER RIDGE RV &
RECREATION RESORT
Highlights of the Whirlwind Renovation of "The Ridge"

TRAVERSE CITY, MI -- It's been just over a year since business partners Gordon Waggoner and Kristin Levesque determined to make major life changes. Kalkaska native Waggoner changed career direction and Rapid City native Levesque packed up her things and returned to Northern Michigan after a 23-year stint in warm and tropical climates. Together, they purchased what is now called Timber Ridge RV & Recreation Resort on Hammond Rd. in Traverse City.

"If you had told me two years ago that I'd be a resort owner, I would never have believed you," says Levesque, who was unofficially retired at the young age of 38. "But making this life change, taking on a completely unfamiliar business—it's all been so rewarding."

And a lot of hard work.

You'll rarely find co-owner Waggoner without some sort of tool or piece of equipment attached to his hip. "With constant renovations and our plan to expand this property into something even grander than it was, I've pretty much made my home literally in the trenches," states Waggoner, ankle-deep in mud while laying pipe for a new seasonal RV area.

Waggoner and Levesque officially took ownership of "the Ridge", as they affectionately refer to Timber Ridge, in May 2005. Prior to 2005, the resort was privately owned and dubbed "Timber Ridge Campground & Nordic Center"; from 1972 to 2000, the property was a classic Jellystone park.

Since the day of Waggoner and Levesque's purchase, the number of improvements, renovations, and modifications have been endless. The new owners of Timber Ridge seem to be ever energetic and optimistic in their quest to turn the resort into the type of property that rivals some of the best in Northern Michigan.

And Timber Ridge certainly offers some unique, family-friendly, and intimate features that you don't always find at a large resort. Cozy wood-burning and gas fireplaces in the lodge, banquet facility, and newly constructed canvas-covered back porch are always crowded with groups of friends and family, toasting marshmallows or simply relaxing in their warmth.

“Since we added the circular fireplace and back porch area, we’ve really seen a lot of campers and skiers alike start to mingle and interact,” adds Levesque. “It’s become the big hangout for our guests.”

Also new to the Ridge are two deluxe cabins and two bunkhouses, complete with bathrooms, microwaves, refrigerators, and kitchens stocked with cookware and utensils. “We’re finding that large groups like family reunions and church groups don’t have RVs, but this allows them to experience camping together.” says Levesque.

With the addition of eight new 50-amp patio sites and a new seasonal RV section, Waggoner and Levesque are hoping to attract a seasonal RV crowd that will “set up camp” for the better part of each summer. “It’s important to be able to provide all different types of campers and RV’ers with a variety of sites and cabins,” states Waggoner. “We’re really resolute on making sure that this park stands out for them, like adding patios, free wireless internet, and cable.”

With Levesque’s and Waggoner’s reinstatement of family and kids activities, including theme weekends like “Pirates of the Ridge”, a new dodgeball court, updated playground equipment, and 2 kilometers of new trails, Timber Ridge’s summer guests won’t be disappointed.

Byron Center resident Jackie Rookus has been an annual guest of the resort since 1988, when it was still a Jellystone park. “We’re so thrilled that Kristin and Gordon have brought back activities, including adding some like the Glow Parade and Haunted Cave. It’s like a wonderland for kids.”

Rookus’s husband John adds, “All this family fun makes for such a nice atmosphere. It’s a place where you can feel safe to let your kids explore on their own.”

The cold-weather months are proving to be just as busy for the new owners. With over 60 kilometers of state-owned VASA trails linking up to Timber Ridge’s groomed trails, the resort accommodates Nordic skiers, snowshoers, and ski walkers. Events like the North American Vasa ski race, the Iceman Cometh Challenge mountain bike race, and the Bigfoot Snowshoe Race are attracting hundreds of participants and spectators.

“We are excited to be expanding our events to include not only Timber Ridge as the host venue, but original Timber Ridge-created and managed events,” states new Marketing and Events Director Sara Klebba. “With events like Suds and Snow (a beer tasting and snowshoe event) and Wednesday Women’s Nights for skiing, we hope to attract a new clientele to Timber Ridge. It’s important that we spread awareness of our many features to the public.”

The past year and eight months have certainly proven to include momentous changes for Timber Ridge and its owners. With plans to expand the banquet facility, add outdoor tents for summer weddings and events, and create a climbing wall and zip line—just to name a few—Waggoner and Levesque are far from taking a breather. And it doesn’t seem as if they would have it any other way.

Timber Ridge RV & Recreation Resort is an all-season recreation resort featuring RV and tent camping; family fun activities; a banquet facility for weddings, events, and meetings;

access to the popular VASA trail system; and nationally renowned events like the North American VASA and Iceman Cometh Challenge mountain bike race.

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For more information or to schedule an interview with Kristin Levesque and Gordon Waggoner, please call Sara Klebba at (248) 302-6630 or (231) 947-2770.