



Local attractions in national spotlight on 'Today'

By RANDY BENSON

Holland and West Michigan stepped into the national spotlight -- for a few minutes, anyway -- Friday.

The area was featured in a travel segment on NBC's "Today" show.

"I thought it was good," said 18-year-old Sarah Baumgartner, who made a brief appearance in the segment. "I thought it made Holland look like a fun place."

The segment, originally scheduled for Thursday, was about five minutes long and showed scenes of Lake Michigan and its beaches along with Holland's Windmill Island, Veldheer's Tulip Gardens, Captain Sundae ice cream shop and the Crazy Horse Steakhouse & Saloon.

"This was great for West Michigan," Holland Mayor Al McGeehan said. "We could buy this kind of publicity, but at what price?"

"This is going to pay off for West Michigan for a long time to come. We might not see more people coming here this weekend or next month, but I think we will feel the effects of this for years to come."

That is important because tourism is the Holland area's second biggest industry behind manufacturing, McGeehan said.

Holland's portion of the segment included Dutch dancing at Windmill Island, wooden shoe making, lunch at the Crazy Horse and the locally famous Tommy Turtle sundae from Captain Sundae for dessert.

"It was fun for my staff to see," Captain Sundae owner Karen Van Dam said, adding that her entire crew watched the show together. "They all came over to our house for breakfast."

Baumgartner, a Hope College student, had a feature role, preparing the Tommy Turtle.

"I just happened to be the one working that day," she said.

An NBC crew led by producer Dee Dee Thomas visited Holland on June 28 to film the segment.

The segment originally was scheduled to air July 22, but then was moved to Thursday. It was bumped from Thursday's show, finally making it on the air Friday.

"We put our best foot forward," McGeehan said. "I would send the producers some wooden shoes, but they already have many pairs."

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