

Absecon Lighthouse with Jean Muchanic

Transcript

J: Hello and welcome to meet his newest podcast series, Atlantic City Voices. I'm Jessica Kasunich, communications manager with Meet AC.

K: And I'm Karina Anthony, marketing director with Meet AC. And we are official podcast hosts for Atlantic City Voices.

J: Throughout our monthly series of Atlantic City Voices. We will be interviewing various voices of Atlantic City who are important leaders in our community and destination.

K: The topics we discussed will vary but will mainly focus on important conversations around regenerative tourism and redevelopment and investment throughout Atlantic City.

J: We'd like to welcome and introduce our podcast guest for today. Jean Muchani Executive Director of the Absecon Lighthouse.

K: Hi, Jean. Welcome.

J: Welcome, Jean.

JM: Hello, ladies. How are you guys?

K: We're doing well. How are you doing today?

JM: All right. Thank you so much for having me on your podcast.

K: Of course. Jean, can you tell our listeners more about yourself and your journey with the Absecon Lighthouse?

JM: Wow. Well, thank you so much for this opportunity. It's nice of you to ask. I've been working in Atlantic City since 1981. At television station, casinos, the LPGA Shoprite Golf Classic, and most recently for the last 17 and a half years Absecon Lighthouse. So, I was on the board here and then the position became open, and the board invited me to take the position. And I was very interested to use marketing and communication skills to let our whole community know about Absecon Lighthouse.

J: Wonderful. Quite an extensive background. There you have Jean so many visitors ask why is it named the Absecon Lighthouse and not the Atlantic City Lighthouse?

JM: Yeah, that's a great question. It's because Absecon Lighthouse is located on Absecon Island which is an island that has four towns, Atlantic City, Ventnor, Margate and Long Port. So that's why the name Absecon Lighthouse was chosen.

K: It's a very historic lighthouse. Can you explain any of the history behind it, too?

JM: Yeah. So, Dr. Jonathan Pitney, a doctor from Philadelphia, came down to this region and thought that the Atlantic Ocean and the salt salty air would be very curative for his patients back in Philadelphia. So, we kind of founded Atlantic City he noticed there were many shipwrecks off the coast. So, we petitioned the United States Federal Lighthouse Commission for to construct a lighthouse here in Atlantic City. And finally, they agreed, and the lighthouse construction was overseen by General George Meade, who led the Union Army at the Battle of Gettysburg. And it was first lit on January 15th. 1857.

K: That's really interesting. I didn't know that about the shipwrecks.

JM: Yeah, there was a really bad shipwreck, the Powhatan and that was a I believe it was 1854 and 311 immigrants lost their lives. And some of them are actually buried up in an old graveyard up near the historic town of Smithville. And that was really sad. So that's when, you know, the tides turn, not to make a pun, but and they realized we really do need a lighthouse here because this is a tall coastal beacon. We're designed to be very tall, to keep the ships at sea away from the coast which is different than like a harbor light, which is designed to bring ships safely into harbor.

K: That's some great information. And also very culturally relevant to our seaside destination.

JM: Yeah, for sure. I feel that we're so lucky to be, you know, a cultural and heritage destination right here in Atlantic City. It's kind of an interesting mix, right? Like, you know, you've got Lady Gaga, or you have historic Absecon Lighthouse. But, you know, there's so much to do in Atlantic City. And I think that, you know, from your perspective, probably with conventions coming in and our perspective with wanting to host as many tourists as possible and expose them to the historic side of Atlantic City, that, you know, it's just a great gem of an icon to have in our town for visitors.

J: Absolutely. We love the mix of historical but also new and how Atlantic City continues to revolve and transform itself. So when visitors come to the Absecon Lighthouse, can you tell our listeners what else there is to do?

JM: Yeah, it's a really fun property. It's two acres, we have outdoor exhibits and an outdoor 21 bed community garden. Then visitors would come inside the museum, which is a replica of a head keeper's cottage. So, a whole family lived in the keeper's cottage and keepers cottage house back in the day before the lighthouse was decommissioned in 1933. So the replica now houses a beautiful museum and a very charming gift shop and it also connects through the passageway with the lighthouse tower itself so visitors don't have to climb the tower. They are invited of course, and there is a fee to go up, but for our differently able guests we do have a 55 inch television screen with about six different live shots from the top of the lighthouse, so you can always see what's going on at the top.

K: Now you mentioned your community garden and as you know we're focused on citywide sustainability and corporate social responsibility to regenerate our destination. How can volunteers or groups who are looking to achieve their CSR accreditation assist at the Absecon Lighthouse.

JM: So, we've had one group so far and they assisted with helping us weed the property and you know, being two acres and the wind around here is tremendous. So, a lot of times you'll encounter a little debris along a fence, and you know, some weeds are just pop up all over the place. And so, for its kind of like a beautification process here that would take place as a community engagement activity. We do have some railings that are in need of painting at time. So, it's really more of an outdoor fresh air type of

experience, but it's all for the good of the property because, you know, keeping an historic site looking good for the public is an ongoing endeavor, I can guarantee that.

K: Have you had any of the local casinos or other organizations help out at the lighthouse?

JM: Oh, definitely. We're part of the consortium of North Beach AC, and so we have you know, we're in partnership with Resorts Casinos, Steel Pier, Hard Rock Casino, Ocean Casino Resort, and Tennessee Avenue. So, the businesses along there so, they are they sponsor events for us so that kind of support and funding helps our general operation of keeping the property looking great. And we have Wyndham Hill, who they come with a group of employees we just had Spencer Gifts, Spirit Halloween come with a group to help plan some sun flowers for the summer. We're going to try and blanket Pacific Avenue along our fence with sun flowers and zinnias the summer.

K: That's great and it's wonderful to see the community working together.

JM: Yeah, Atlantic City is such a cool place. I mean, they, you know, we have so many great offerings in town and so much fun for people. There is Gardeners Basem and the North Beach Mini Golf and the Absecon Lighthouse and the whole boardwalk itself. And there's fishing and there's just so much to do when you come to Atlantic City.

J: Speaking of North Beach mini golf, do you see with that new attraction a boost in visitors coming through the uptick in Lighthouse?

JM: Well, they are having their grand opening this coming Saturday, along with our spring festival. So as they kick off their season, I imagine throughout the summer, well, we're already partnering on discount ticket for each you know, we're sharing a discount with each other for the summer. And yes, I see that that attraction being down in North Beach, along with our attraction and the water park that will open up and showboat, this could be an a whole new hub of fun for families down here in North Beach.

J: Absolutely. So diverse.

K: That's what we're hoping. We're hoping to get a diverse audience, as Jessica said. And, you know, the more attractions, the better.

J: As we wrap up, we have one final question that we like to ask all of our guests. What are your top three favorite restaurants to dinner in Atlantic City?

JM: Ok, so that's a tough question. All the other questions are easy so far. Well, you guys already know that Atlantic City is loaded with fabulous restaurants. So if I had to pick three top from I'm going to in no particular order Chard House has is at Golden Nugget has a fantastic view from the bay of the Atlantic City skyline so and within that you can also see the lighthouse so I love to go there for happy hour and they have great appetizers that they offer and just kind of like at the end of the workweek on Fridays hang out look over at the lighthouse and much all the fancy boats come in and out of the Farley Marina so that's a treat and then keeping with the bay seem the Back Bay Alehouse which is so fun you sit a picnic tables outdoors and get a great seafood meal or snack and have a great maybe Mason Jar cocktail as you watch the boats go in and out the Atlantic City Cruises, Cruising One boat is always coming in and out on their back bay tours and ocean tours. So, it's a lot of fun just hanging out that's a dog friendly place. So that's always fun. Which, by the way, Absecon Lighthouse were dog friendly to come bring your dog in the museum and then my last choice would be Knife and Fork because it is also an historic

location in Atlantic City. They have great photographs on their walls of all the different, you know, historic buildings and features and boardwalk scenes. Of Atlantic City and on the second floor they have an artist's interpretation you know, the word speakeasy came from when people would knock on the door of a place that was selling cocktails during Prohibition and the bar, the whoever was manning the door would open up a little slider and warn the people outside speak easy. Don't make a big fuss about trying to get in here. So that's where that word came from. So just for the pure fun and the history and they all have a fantastic happy hour down there. So those are my three choices. So, I think we should line up ourselves for a happy hour in Atlantic City. One of these Fridays. What do you say?

J: Yeah, we would love that. We think those are some excellent choices. Chard House has been a favorite among our podcast guests.

K: And Jean, I love how you're adding in all the little historical tidbits about Atlantic City. We need to bring you on as our Meet AC historian.

JM: Oh, boy. Oh, well, Heather Perez from Stockton University, she is loaded with information you know, about the history of Atlantic City. And I would be happy to join the conversation whenever you need me.

K: It's so interesting and a lot of people do not know about all the little culturally relevant, important facts that you mentioned here today. So, thank you. Thank you for that.

JM: Thank you. I just love letting wherever I can. People in the world know, you know, that this is a great destination. Put it on your list when you're coming to Atlantic City, whenever they you know, our guests come in the building, it's kind of the same reaction. They're like, oh, my God, this is beautiful. I had no idea. And, you know, hopefully this helps people, you know, add us to their things to do list.

K: Definitely. And we thank you so much for being a guest on Atlantic City Voices. We welcome all visitors to visit the iconic Absecon Lighthouse.

J: Thank you, Jean. We appreciate it. Thank you for listening. And stay tuned for next month's podcast to find out who is the next Atlantic City Voice will be.