

The Indiana Casino Gaming News

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New casino sets record with attendance

What do you get when you mix old Hollywood glamour with state-of-the-art entertainment?

Guests of the new Hollywood Casino & Resort in Lawrenceburg are finding out this month, after the casino threw open its doors in June. The casino, which replaced the existing Argosy Casino, opened quietly on June 25; barely a week later, on July 3, the Hollywood shattered the Argosy's attendance record by more than 20 percent.

"The record for the previous boat was roughly 19,000 through the turnstiles," said Tony Rodio, Hollywood's general manager. "That Friday – the day before the Fourth of July – we did almost 25,000 turnstiles, which is an increase of more than 5,000 from the previous record.

"And so far we are getting an incredibly enthusiastic response from our customers."

The new casino is more



than twice the size of Argosy; the old boat held about 75,000 square feet, but the Hollywood Casino is a two-story facility with 135,000 square feet in gaming space on the top level, and about 30,000 on the bottom level. Another 40,000 square feet on the bottom level remain unoccupied – the perfect opportunity for expansion, Rodio said.

The new casino also is

roomier; while there is more than twice the space, there are not twice as many gaming stations, making the new facility a more spacious, comfortable gaming environment.

But the real draw, Rodio said, is the atmosphere.

"The Hollywood Casino is a wonderful marriage of 1930s and 1940s classic Hollywood art deco architecture, married with state-of-the-art audiovis-

ual technology," he said. "We have 300 plasma screen televisions, a serpentine screen that greets you when you walk in and plays movie previews, videos, commercials – whatever we want to put on it that day.

"I love watching people's expressions as they enter the facility; the constant theme I'm hearing from customers is that they feel like they're in Vegas. It's like they take one step, and they go from Indiana to Las Vegas."

Now, Rodio and his staff are working on turning the rest of the property into a true Hollywood experience.

"The Hollywood brand is something our owner is looking to develop and grow nationwide," Rodio said. "This latest opening is the best and most detailed version of the new Hollywood look that our company is developing.

"And I truly believe it is a facility worthy of the strip in Vegas."

State's gaming issues about to move into the spotlight

Indiana's gaming industry will get a close legislative look over the next five months.

While gaming issues failed to make it onto the agenda for the legislature's special budget session, legislators did create a committee to study 17 separate gaming issues. The group will spend the next few months conducting its study, with recommendations due by December 1.

The committee was proposed as a compromise between those legislators who wanted to address issues in the industry, which generates

more than \$1 billion a year in state and local taxes, and others who wanted to keep issues that could be considered "diversions" to the budget out of the special session.

But, while the study will create progress on these issues, it is not enough for many.

State Sen. Earline Rogers, a Democrat from Gary, had hoped to discuss plans to move one of Majestic Star's two casinos to another location, which many hoped would generate additional revenue. But with such issues put on the backburner, Rogers

told the Associated Press she felt she could have T-shirts made that said, "My legislator went to Indianapolis and all she brought back was a lousy study committee."

"I still regret the fact that we weren't able to do as much for my community," Rogers told the AP.

Among the other issues cited for the study are Fort Wayne's proposal of a citywide referendum to gauge interest in gaming; possible relief for the horse track/casinos in Anderson and Shelbyville; and relief for French Lick because of

competition from Shelbyville and Anderson.

Casino Association President Mike Smith was quoted in the AP story as supporting the study committee. "It will be an opportunity for legislators to really look in-depth at some of these things," Smith told the AP. "It will be taking a look at the broad picture of gaming in Indiana and how we're going to be in a position to be competitive."

Notes from an ever-changing industry

The gaming industry is constantly changing.

That's the message I took away when I looked over the final version of this month's *Casino Gaming News*. There are, of course, the obvious changes; nearly every month, for example, it seems there are technological changes that affect our industry. There are



the big changes, like what's happening in Lawrenceburg this month with the opening of the Hollywood Casino. The Hollywood replaces the Argosy Casino, and offers a totally different — larger, more comfortable, and altogether grander — gaming experience.

And then, there are the slightly more subtle changes. These are the dynamic shifts that don't necessarily make headlines at first, but eventually can lead to news like that about Ellis Park (look down and to the right). Because other states — including Indiana — have been faster to respond to the changing gaming environment, one of Kentucky's tracks is on the financial ropes.

That's why it remains important that Indiana stay on top of our ever-changing industry, making sure we are in the best possible competitive position as states like Illinois expand gaming, and states like Kentucky and Ohio discuss bringing casino gaming within their borders.

Currently, there are several issues within our state that need to be examined. I won't list them here — that is what the article on Page 1 is for — but I do want to take a moment to applaud our legislature for creating a committee to study 17 gaming issues.

This group of legislators will look at the issues facing our industry, and report back to the legislature with their findings and recommendations. Those reports are due back by December 1.

It is my hope that their work, and their findings, will help move Indiana's casinos to the front of our changing industry — and give us the competitive edge we need to stay there.

- Mike Smith, President



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In Brief



Majestic Star honors fathers

This Father's Day, Majestic Star Casinos took time to honor fathers who often are forgotten: those currently living in local shelters.

The casino's annual reception, held on the property, this year honored men from two local shelters, the Salvation Army and Brothers Keeper. The shelters provide transitional housing for homeless men, as well as emergency shelter.

Before the event, Majestic Star team members purchased personal toiletries, donated clothing, and designed gift baskets to present to the men of the shelter. First, second, and third place trophies were awarded to departments with the most decorative baskets and most creative display.

Several community and business leaders also attended the event.

Kentucky racetrack on the ropes

At least one Kentucky racetrack is threatening closure if the state's legislature doesn't find a way to allow slots and casino gaming on its grounds.

Ellis Park, located in Henderson, Kentucky, just across the state line from Evansville (and Casino Aztar), opened its 88th season last week with owner Ron Geary saying it would likely be the last. Geary purchased the track in 2006 from Chur-

chill Downs, but has seen increased competition from states like West Virginia and Indiana (where gaming was added to horse tracks in 2008).

As a result, Geary said he has lost \$2.7 million in each of the last two years, and has cut Ellis Park's racing season from its usual 48 days to only 23 this year.

A proposal to expand gaming in Kentucky died without a vote in the legislature last year.

Admission and Wagering Taxes

Admission Tax, June '09	\$ 6,474,885
Wagering Tax, June '09	\$ 72,679,706
Admission Tax, Fiscal YTD	\$ 78,883,872
Wagering Tax, Fiscal YTD	\$796,795,854

Total Admission and Wagering Tax	\$ 875,679,726
Total Taxes Paid Since Inception	\$7,907,782,064

*Fiscal Year Defined as July 1 to June 30

Conference sheds light on addiction

Counselors, advocates, and other problem gaming workers from across the nation flocked to Indianapolis late last month, as the Indiana Council on Problem Gambling hosted its parent organization's 2009 national convention.

The National Convention on Problem Gambling, which was co-sponsored by the Casino Association of Indiana, was June 25-27 at the Hyatt Regency Indianapolis, with more than 400 people in attendance. The conference brings attention to problem gambling – and to make sure advocates in the industry have access to the best and newest treatment methods.

"We are one of those little-known organizations, and problem gambling is kind of a hidden issue," said Jerry Long, executive director of the Indiana Council on Problem Gambling. "Problem gambling only affects 3 to

4 percent of the people who gamble regularly, and there is no sign that people have this addiction – unlike other addictions.

"So we want to get more people involved in this issue, and make sure they know where to go for help if they or a family or friend have a gambling problem."

Each year, the national convention is in a different city, with several turning in competing proposals to host. Indianapolis landed this year's conference by bringing in more than \$67,000 worth of sponsorships – enough to cut the usual attendance fee from \$450 per person to closer to \$200 through sponsored scholarships.

Even so, attendance was slightly down, Long said, because of the economy. But the event remained a success because his target audience made it to the Hyatt to hear workshops on problem gam-

bling prevention and treatment, clinical training, legal and regulatory issues, and more.

"We had great attendance from the folks we really wanted to get here, which were the folks in Indiana working on this issue," Long said. "And we were able to raise some awareness of problem gambling in the area – I wanted to get the media here more involved in the issue, and we had a reporter here from the Indianapolis Star, and I did a radio interview with WIBC about the conference.

"So people in Indiana had the chance to hear what folks in other areas of the country are doing about problem gambling, and I think they walked away with some ideas about what they could be doing around here."

Next year's conference will be in Portland, Oregon, in early June.

Restaurant owner thanks casinos for dream come true

Cindy Kerr always wanted to be her own boss. Today, thanks to Indiana's casino industry, she is.



Kerr, a professional chef, began her culinary career in southeastern Indiana as the executive pastry chef at an area casino. However, from the first day, she knew what she really wanted: to own her own business.

In 2001, that dream became a reality, when Kerr launched Eat Desert First, a small pastry shop that she owned and operated. Her first space was a lease inside the casino where she had started her career; a year later, when she moved into her own building, Kerr's first client was the Grand Victoria Casino & Resort in Rising Sun, Indiana.

"I've had a great relationship with Grand Victoria," Kerr said. "The company has been a big part of my success. Coming from a casino background, I understand their needs regarding price point and quality."

Eat Dessert First is one of the many licensed women- or minority-owned businesses that partner with Indiana's casinos every year. And, like many of those businesses, the casino industry is among Kerr's largest clients – one that helps keep her business afloat. Eight years after opening, her business has grown from two employees to nine (all local). Her casino client base has expanded from only Grand Victoria to all but one of Indiana's southern casinos.

In fact, the business has become so large that she now is having to move once again – from her current, 1,100-square-foot facility to a 4,000-square-foot facility in the Rising Sun Industrial Park.

"We can't handle any additional volume in our current building," Kerr said. "But once we get into the new facility, we'll be looking to add more clients – including, we hope, the two racetrack/casinos around Indianapolis."



Rachel Freyberger of Reitz High School in Evansville won the essay division.



Brandon Ford of Harrison High School in Evansville won the poster division.



Jourdan Day, a sophomore at Ohio State University won the Essay Division College.

Two of Indiana's casinos have announced scholarship recipients for the 2009-10 academic year. In June, the Barden Gary Foundation awarded a total of \$50,000 to 24 Gary High school seniors during a luncheon.

Among those awards presented were three new scholarships: The Smokey Robinson Music Award, given to Christian Jenkins of Roosevelt High School; the Alana M. Barden Out-

standing Scholar Award was presented to Brittany Spiller of West Side High School; and the Don H. Barden Entrepreneurship Spirit Award went to Vinche Gray of Wirt High School.

Casino Aztar also presented its annual Project 21 Scholarships, each worth \$1,000, to those students pictured above. Robert Cullent Parrent of Reitz High School, who won the video division, is not pictured.

In Our Casinos



Belterra employees had the chance to cut loose last month, when the property hosted its annual Goodwill Games at Paul Ogle Park in Vevay, Indiana. Employees and their families participated in everything from rib cook-offs to sumo wrestling, creating a day of excitement for the whole family.



Team members from Ameristar East Chicago participated in the I Too Sing America Parade & Festival, held last month in the Chicagoland area. Volunteers rode on the Ameristar float and handed out candy along the route as they celebrated the contributions of African-Americans to music and fine arts.



Even the rain couldn't dampen the spirits of Hoosier Park team members who participated in this year's Relay for Life event, held June 19 at Highland High School in Anderson. While the event had to be moved inside to the gym, the result was the same: a terrific fund-raising event for the American Cancer Society, with Hoosier Park alone raising \$2,185 for the cause.

Belterra employees had the chance to "Ask Chef" last month. The event features Executive Chef John Geschrei, who answers employees' culinary questions and allows them to sample several dishes. This month, those dishes included Eastern Shore Crab Cakes, Duck Spring Rolls, and Coconut Shrimp.

