

The Indiana Casino Gaming News

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Hoosier Park Casino opens its doors

Thousands of people flooded through the gates of the new Hoosier Park Casino on June 2, celebrating the grand opening of Indiana's first racetrack-affiliated casino.

The 92,000-square-foot casino – which soon will be followed by a casino at Indiana Downs in Shelbyville, dubbed Indiana Live! – opened with a line of several hundred waiting outside, according to *NewsLink Indiana*. By 4 p.m., more than 5,000 people already had visited, exceeding even the most vivid imaginations.



A pair of Vegas showgirls greeted guests at the grand opening of the Hoosier Park Casino, held Monday, June 2.

“It exceeded my expectations,” Jim Brown, Hoosier Park's general manager of gaming, told the Anderson *Herald-Bulletin*. “It was a Monday, and we had customers lining up before sunrise. More than 800 folks joined us within the first hour.”

Several of those in attendance talked about the proximity of the casino to Indianapolis and other central Indiana locations – noting that,

before this, they would drive to southern Indiana, or even fly to Las Vegas, in order to play the slots. By locating in central Indiana, Hoosier Park Casino is expected to draw three million visitors to Anderson each year.

And with all of those visitors, the casino will be a tremendous boon to the local and statewide economy. Brown said the effect would be in the neighborhood of 600 new

jobs, and \$80 million in taxes to the state of Indiana (on top of a \$250 million licensing fee).

Meanwhile, Madison County will collect about \$40 million each year, \$18 million of which will go to Anderson.

Anderson officials told *NewsLink Indiana* that they hadn't yet decided how to use the new funds, though a local scholarship program for high school students and several infrastructure projects have been discussed.

On Monday, though, they – like the thousands who came to visit the new casino – were focusing on the facility itself.

“It's a fantastic facility,” Brown told the Muncie *Star Press*, “and I know our customers are going to enjoy it.”

Construction on the casino began in September 2007, five months after the Indiana General Assembly voted to allow slot machine gaming at Indiana's two horse racing tracks, Hoosier Park and Indiana Downs in Shelbyville. Indiana Live!, the casino at Indiana Downs, will open this month.



Argosy expansion begins with new parking lot opening

Argosy Casino & Hotel cut the ribbon on the first phase of its expansion last month, opening a new parking facility that will hold an additional 1,500 vehicles.

The new parking area is expected to help alleviate current problems, which see casino parking overflow during about 10 peak times during the year (and forced Argosy to lose potential customers at

Focus On **ARGOSY**

those times). It also will allow the casino to serve a larger clientele once its casino expansion goes online in mid-2009.

Argosy's parent company, Penn National Gaming, announced the expansion in

2005, saying that the Cincinnati gaming market was “underpenetrated.”

“We wouldn't be making this \$300 million investment if we didn't think (the market) was underserved,” Larry Kinser, Argosy's general manager, recently told the Cincinnati *Enquirer*.

That \$300 million investment includes the parking expansion, a new, 125,000-

square-foot riverboat facility, and 45,000 square feet of development space. Those 125,000 square feet of new riverboat will include nearly 4,000 gaming positions, allowing the casino to serve up to 6,000 patrons at a time.

The new facility also will eliminate stairs and ramps, assist with ADA accessibility, and a state of the art indoor air quality system.

A fond farewell to a great Indiana senator

When Indiana swears in its new legislature next year, one face will be noticeably absent.

Senator Robert Meeks, R-LaGrange, announced his retirement May 14, effectively ending one of the most loyal and dedicated public service careers in Indiana politics. Meeks is seeking a well-deserved rest after 25 years in elected



office, and almost 40 years of public service. To say that he will be missed would be a tremendous understatement; all Hoosiers, including those of us in the gaming industry, owe Senator Meeks a tremendous debt of gratitude for his years of service.

I had the honor of serving with Senator Meeks in the legislature; I was in the House, he the Senate. He was first elected to serve District 13 in 1988, after serving four years on the Lakeland School Board. And for the next 20 years, he proved a great legislator, a strong leader (he served as assistant majority floor leader from 1995-96), and a true public servant.

He also was a great friend to the gaming industry, and for that I wish to thank him personally. In the past several years he worked to keep at bay many initiatives that would have harmed the industry and its employees. But more than anything, through the years, Senator Meeks has been someone who gets it when it comes to casino gaming. He understands the benefits we bring to Indiana; he understands the jobs, the taxes, and the funds that come in through Indiana's casinos. And he understands the importance of staying a step ahead of competition from other states.

For that, I'd like to say thank you, Senator Meeks. You truly have been a great friend, a dedicated public servant, and a strong legislator for the past two decades. We wish you the best of luck in retirement; you will be missed.

- Mike Smith, President

Industry News Update

Casino Attendance Dips With Economy

The number of Americans visiting casinos is falling with the economy.

Casinos across Indiana, like those around the country, are feeling the sting of a weakened economy, as food and fuel prices leave Americans with less disposable income. And, according to a story in the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, the increase in casino properties across the country has made the industry less resilient in the face of economic woes.

While the average American once lived about 600 miles from the nearest casino, that number now has dropped to about 200 miles. That means more casinos, which means

the customer dollar is spread thinner. So when fewer dollars are spent on gaming, casinos start to feel it.

According to the article, Midwest casinos still have a bit of insulation from the problem, due to their geographic isolation from other casinos. But, as Kentucky and Ohio consider gaming, and other states expand, Indiana casinos will need to create a strong competitive edge through non-gaming options and other attractions.

"(Gambling companies) are all feeling it – people are spending less," Charlie Rareshide, a gambling analyst with Coker & Palmer in New Orleans, told the *Enquirer*.

Let's Talk About Responsible Gaming

The American Gaming Association wants you to talk about responsible gaming.

"Let's Talk About Responsible Gaming" has been announced as the theme of this year's Responsible Gaming Education Week, scheduled for August 4-8. The idea is to focus on the role of gaming industry employees as ambassadors for the responsible gaming message, and to encourage discussion on the subject among colleagues, family, friends, and casino customers.

"This year's theme encourages our employees to begin a conversation about responsible gaming at home, on the job, and in the com-

munity," said Frank Fahrenkopf Jr., AGA Executive Director.

The week also will see the debut of a new brochure from the National Center for Responsible Gaming, aimed at helping parents talk to their children about gambling.

As in past years, the AGA will be distributing "Keep it Fun" wristbands, which – while no longer the focus of Responsible Gaming Education Week, remain an important part of showing employees' dedication to the cause. These wristbands are available for \$1 a piece, and are available in both English and Spanish. Proceeds support the National Center for Responsible Gaming.

Admission and Wagering Taxes

Admission Tax, May '08	\$ 6,870,695
Wagering Tax, May '08	\$ 74,641,907
Admission Tax, Fiscal YTD	\$ 73,752,149
Wagering Tax, Fiscal YTD	\$666,551,988

Total Admission and Wagering Tax **\$740,304,137**

*Fiscal Year Defined as July 1 to June 30



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A rendering of the new High Limit area at the French Lick Resort Casino.

French Lick upgrades

Newest casino to begin facility improvements

Nearly two years after opening its doors, the French Lick Resort Casino is going under the knife for a facelift.

“We’re doing a couple of different things,” said Brian Marsh, vice president of casino operations at French Lick. “First, we’re doing a small cosmetic change on the outside of the casino building to enhance the resort structure, because the casino does not look like it belong at this point.

“The whole resort is based off the finishes from the French Lick Hotel itself, which is an old brick finish, and everything except the casino was manufactured that way when we constructed it.”

That exterior finish work will be about a \$4.3 million project, Marsh said. The rest of the \$8.3 million in improvement underway will be inside: \$3 million for new gaming equipment, and \$1 million for interior finish work.

The interior work will include adding about 7,800 square feet of gaming space to the 42,000 square feet currently available. Part of that new space will be a non-smoking area.

“We’ve added two very large capacity air handling units to our existing (air flow) system,” Marsh said. “So with that, our smoking area is going to be greatly improved from an air quality standpoint. And we’re also offering a non-smoking area,

which will have its own separate wall and entrance.

“We’re not just taking our worst product and carving out a non-smoking corner like some do; we’re building a non-smoking facility that will have roughly 300

slot machines and about six table games. We’re actually going to give it a shot and try to make this thing right from a product standpoint and a comfort standpoint.”

Added comfort also will come into play in the expansion’s signature area: a new high-limit and VIP lounge. After spending some time in Las Vegas, Marsh and his colleagues decided to upgrade the high-end parlors, elevating them from the rest of the floor and creating a comfortable, luxurious environment.

The company also shut down its poker room recently - but managed to do so without cutting any positions. Marsh said that all poker dealers also were trained in dealing other games, and were moved to the main floor when the room closed.

Some of those employees also likely will shift into the new areas once they are completed.

“We hope to have the non-smoking section up and running by September,” Marsh said. “Then, we want to have the exterior done by October, and the high-limit and VIP areas by January.”

Focus On **FRENCH LICK**

Spotlight On **JENNY ARNOLD**

Deputy Director Indiana Gaming Commission

Jenny Arnold feels pretty lucky about her career.

After working for the mayor of Bloomington during her college career, she worked in the Indiana House of Representatives for two years. Then, she saw a posting for a government job she knew very little about.

“I saw a job posting, but I really didn’t know what the Gaming Commission did,” Ar-

Arnold said. “So I think I really lucked out; this is a great place to work - I’ve had the opportunity to work with a wonderful group of people, both among the commission and the riverboat licensees.”



Arnold took her job at the commission in March 1998 at the age of 24. She was hired as the director of external affairs - the commission’s official liaison to the legislature and the first point of contact for the media. But when the deputy director happened to leave, Arnold - whose office was next to the director’s - began assuming more responsibilities, until she simply was named deputy director herself.

“So now, as any good deputy will tell you, I do whatever the boss tells me to do,” she said. “I do policy-making, I serve as a contact to the local communities. I work out regulatory issues, deal with personnel issues, and still work with the legislature during the session.”

As of right now, she plans to stick with the job for a while. Arnold enjoys the diversity in her job; she likes dealing with regulatory issues, and keeping up with the latest technologies to help keep those regulatory issues up to modern standards.

“This is a place where you have to be open to new ideas,” she said. “I like to call us the un-government agency, because we always have to be enthusiastic and keep an open mind about our work.”

Inside our casinos



Neil Walkoff, assistant general manager of Caesars Indiana, served as a celebrity chef at this year's Chili Con Caesars charity event. Walkoff helped cook for the event, with proceeds going toward Life-Span Resources, operator of the Meals on Wheels program for five southern Indiana counties.



Bill Embry, co-owner of Got 2 Love it Bass Tournaments, Inc., accepts a check from Kelly Cuff, director of operations at French Lick Springs Hotel. Cuff was representing French Lick Resort Casino, who matched the tournaments earnings for the Indiana Children's Wish Foundation dollar-for-dollar.



A Caesars Indiana employee was honored this month as the only recipient of one of Harrison County's most prestigious volunteer awards.

Robert (RJ) Johnson, a facilities team member at Caesars since its opening in 1998, received the STAR Award from the Harrison County Convention and Tourism Bureau. Specifically, Johnson was awarded the Behind the Scenes Employee STAR Award, given to a non-management, back of the house employee at a business in the tourism industry.

Along with his work at Caesars, Johnson is a dedicated volunteer for the Harrison County Repair Affair and the Harrison County Habitat for Humanity.

National news

Horseshoe, Resorts Earn License Renewals

Two of Indiana's casino properties received license renewals this month, each good for another year of operation.

Horseshoe Casino Hammond received a one-year, before-the-face license renewal that goes into effect June 19, 2008, and runs through the same date in 2009. Meanwhile, Resorts East Chicago earned a one-year renewal through RIH Acquisitions IN, LLC. That renewal is good through April 14, 2009, and includes a provision to re-brand the casino.

By September 18, 2008, the casino must be re-branded in the name of its new owner, Ameristar. The property's new name will be Ameristar Casino East Chicago.

Caesars Re-Branding Scheduled for July 11

After the fall of Caesar – or, at least, his statue (see last issue) – the new owners of Caesars Indiana have announced a date for the property's re-branding.

As of July 11, Caesar's empire in Harrison County officially will fall, with Horseshoe Southern Indiana rising from its ashes. According to *Indiana Gaming Insight*, "patrons will find that the *Glory of Rome* will have undergone a total vessel renovation, with 2,500 slot machines and 250 table games moved, and the land-side facility will have completed a partial renovation."

Caesars was purchased last year by Harrah's Entertainment, Inc., which also owns Horseshoe Casino in Hammond, Indiana.

Belterra Masters Safe Food Handling

Last month, Belterra Casino & Resort held a full day class to teach real-world, practical advice about implementation of safe food handling practices. The training, attended by managers, supervisors, and culinary staff from food and beverage, ended with a certification exam, which led to 21 Belterra employees becoming certified food handlers.