

The Indiana Casino Gaming News

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Majestic Star helps bring Magic to fair

With many Chicagoland businesses - like those across the country - struggling through difficult economic times, the Majestic Star Casino this month stepped in to help lend a hand.

The properties were a corporate sponsor of this month's Chicago Business Opportunity Fair - an annual event that aims to help minority businesses find their way.

"The Chicago Business Opportunity Fair is this area's oldest and largest trade fair," said Chareice White, corporate director of community relations for Majestic Star. "The fair is dedicated to bringing together minority entrepreneurs with corporate and government leaders for the purpose of creating business alliances."

This year's event was held at the Navy Pier, with a theme of "Today's Vision for To-



Chareice White (front left) poses with business leaders and Magic Johnson at this year's Chicago Business Opportunity Fair.

morrow's Business Growth." The keynote speaker, former basketball great Earvin "Magic" Johnson, spoke to business leaders about how they could be successful in the current economic climate.

"He has written a new book, entitled '32 Ways to Be a Champion in Business,'

White said. "So he focused on talking about small businesses during this economic time, and tried to inspire and enlighten them regarding how to succeed.

"The whole time, he was very personable; he did not give his presentation from the stage, but came out into the

audience and spoke directly to the people in attendance."

Overall, about 2,000 people attended Johnson's talk. Afterward, he joined with other corporate leaders, cut the ribbon for the fair itself, and spent more than two-and-a-half hours having his picture taken with attendees.

For the fair itself, White said attendance saw a slight dip from previous years.

"But was good to see the Fortune 500 companies there, being able to provide opportunities for attendees," White said. "The breakfast was enlightening, because it allowed small businesses to share information on strategic ways to develop their businesses right now."

Majestic Star has sponsored the event for several years, White said, because it offers "the chance to connect with some great vendors."

Hotels, convention centers lose cash from 'AIG effect'

Hotels and convention centers across the nation are taking a dramatic hit this year, as companies leery of being viewed as "extravagant" are cutting back on corporate conventions and retreats.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, U.S. companies canceled an estimated \$1 billion worth of conferences in the first two months of 2009 and trimmed back on others. Experts are referring to the cut-backs as the "AIG effect," after executives with that company spent \$443,000 at the St. Regis Resort last September, mere days after ac-

cepting an \$85 billion federal bailout.

"Corporations don't want to have to report lavish spending to their board of directors," Donald Wise, an investment banker specializing in hotels, told the *Tribune*, "even if it wasn't all that lavish."

The AIG effect is being seen at every type of convention site across the country - including casino hotels and venues like the convention center Casino Aztar in Evansville recently added. At the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, almost \$131 million in business

events have been canceled this year - a number that has forced the property, like many across the nation, to make cuts.

According to the Department of Labor, nearly 200,000 travel-related jobs were lost in 2008, and another 247,000 are expected to be cut this year. And because of the recent media attention to corporate outings, the *Tribune* reported that more than 20 percent of companies have canceled events.

The situation has led some companies to cut rates; the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co. is of-

fering to donate a portion of convention business earnings to charity, in the hopes that such philanthropic work would ease criticism of the events.

The U.S. Travel Association has taken notice of the decline, and it has launched a campaign to stem the tide (and, the hope, to ease criticism of corporate retreats).

"Our message is, 'Hey, let's tone down the rhetoric,'" Roger Dow, president of the U.S. Travel Association, told the *Tribune*. "If you want to lose a million more jobs, just keep talking."

What Casinos Bring to Indiana

One of my favorite things about the *Indiana Casino Gaming News* is seeing all of the things Indiana's casinos do for their communities.

Each month, I flip through the finished product, looking at how casinos contribute to Indiana. I see the folks at Majestic Star helping small businesses and minority-owned businesses as they navigate a difficult economy. I see the overwhelming generosity of Ameristar's employees, who have given more than \$75,000 out of their own pockets to help local charities (a number that crosses \$130,000 when the company match is added in). And I see how properties like Hoosier Park are giving back to the community through photos on the back page.

Many of these benefits are intangible - small things that, individually, may only impact a few people. But when you look at them all together - all of the efforts being put forward by all 12 CAI members - the impact is tremendous.

And then, of course, there are the tangibles.

Ameristar's Giving Campaign is one example of the philanthropic spirit illustrated every day by Indiana's casinos. All across the state, we have billboards that talk about this: the philanthropic giving, the jobs created, the investment in communities. And, of course, the tax dollars.

For those who wonder about the difference between an Indiana with casinos and one without, take a look at the story on Page 4. At the moment, Kentucky is struggling mightily; prosecutors in some areas are being forced to take three-week, unpaid furloughs, while officials are shuffling money around in the budget just to keep the public defender's office open through the end of the fiscal year in June.

Indiana's budget may have its issues this year - what state's doesn't? But can you imagine what it would look like without the millions in casino taxes?

I don't know that I want to try.



- Mike Smith, President



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Honor Roll

Food Bank Honors Ameristar

Ameristar East Chicago received special recognition last month, as the Food Bank of Northwestern Indiana took time out to honor some of their greatest contributors.

The groups were recognized at the Food Bank's annual luncheon, held at the Avalon Manor in Hobart, Indiana. The luncheon featured a variety of presentations from Food Bank Executive Director Angie Williams, and the recognition of Ameristar as the group's Corporate Sponsor of the Year.

From donating a new van to the organization during the Summer Concert Series, to hosting their annual retreat and participating in their Walk for Hunger, Ameristar has



continued to provide much needed support and resources in helping to feed the hungry throughout Northwest Indiana.

In addition, Ameristar team members pledged a total of \$17,341 to the Food Bank during this year's Workplace Giving Campaign (see page 3).

Grand Victoria Honors Shining Stars

Last month, the Grand Victoria Casino recognized six employees' as part of its Shining Star Award Program.

The program, which identifies employees' who have consistently demonstrated superior guest service skills. Winners receive gifts including monetary awards, preferred parking assignments, wine, custom floral arrangements and engraved personal awards.

At the April awards luncheon, held in the property's world class Wellington's Steak House, each of the recipients dined with the property's Leadership Team, while General Manager Steven Jimenez noted

the collective efforts of the group and their ability to effect change within their respective departments. Employees inducted into recognition program included:

- Mr. Jack Bursley, Marine Department
- Mr. Keith Kelly, Hotel Department
- Ms. Carla Auel, Table Games Department
- Mr. Alvin Wiley, Golf/Marketing Department
- Ms. Charity Lowe, Food and Beverage Department, and
- Superstar Manager of the Quarter, Terian Steele, Surveillance Department.

Admission and Wagering Taxes

The latest figures were not available at the time of printing.

Hoosier Park adds two gaming veterans to staff

Hoosier Park Racing & Casino added two gaming veterans to its team of directors this month, hiring Ralph Brown and Jason Hockwalt to oversee the property's finances and mutuels and simulcasting, respectively.

Brown, who has spent the last 11 years as the chief financial officer for Argosy Casino in Lawrenceburg, brings more than 25 years of experience in the gaming and entertainment industry to Hoosier Park. His hire was announced May 1 and he will oversee aspects of Hoosier Park operations that include casino cage, credit collections, purchasing, accounting, pay-



Ralph Brown

roll, and compliance. "My main focus is to provide management with the information they need to make the right decisions for the company," said Brown, who is from Shawnee, Okla. "I've never worked with a finer group of people. It also appeals to me to learn something new from the racing aspect of the business at Hoosier Park."

Hockwalt, a native of Anderson, Ind., has been with



Jason Hockwalt

Hoosier Park since 1996, when he joined the company as a camera operator in the audio/visual department. He later accepted a similar position at the Fort Wayne OTB facility owned by Hoosier Park, before returning to the main property in 2007 as the assistant mutuel manager. Since December 2008, he has been serving as interim director of mutuels and simulcasting. On April 22, the property announced his permanent pro-

motion to that position. As the director of mutuels and simulcasting, Hockwalt oversees the daily mutuel operations for the racing division at Hoosier Park. He also assists and secures venues taking Hoosier Park's live racing cards all around the world.

"Moving Jason into the director of mutuels and simulcasting position has been an easy transition for us," said Jeff Smith, general manager of racing. "Jason has been a member of our team for more than a decade, serving in several different capacities, so his knowledge of our company and the racing industry is very valuable."

Ameristar East's Giving Campaign

Charity	\$\$ Pledged	Company	CFN Match	Total
Sunshine Fund	\$20,684.96	\$10,513.18	—	\$31,198.14
Food Bank of NWI	\$17,341.06	\$8,813.64	—	\$26,154.70
Community Health	\$12,288.24	\$6,245.52	—	\$18,533.76
Rehab Institute of Chicago	\$11,321.02	\$5,753.94	\$11,321.02	\$28,395.98
Lake Area United Way	\$17,701.04	\$8,673.72	—	\$25,739.48
Total	\$78,701.04	\$40,000	\$11,321.02	\$130,022.06

This year, Ameristar East Chicago had its first Workplace Giving Campaign, raising \$78,701.04 for local charities. The campaign, which was one of the largest charitable giving campaigns ever held at the property, included a company match up to \$500,000, depending on the employees' contribution. In addition, the Craig H. Nielsen Foundation also offered to contribute a dollar for all contributions made to the Rehab Institute of Chicago. See the chart above to learn where Ameristar's employee dollars will go to help the Chicagoland community.

Online gaming debate heats up

Groups on both sides of the online gaming debate are staking out their turf this month, as the battle over the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act prepares to hit the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Congressman Barney Frank, chairman of the House Finance Committee, has unveiled new legislation that would overturn the 2006 law, which effectively makes the payment of debts from online gambling illegal. Opponents of the act have criticized it for being "vague" and "ineffective;" overturning the law could create an opportunity for states to legalize, tax, and regulate online gaming.

But the possibility of overturning the bill has created staunch positions on both sides. Among those in favor of maintaining the current legislation is the National Football League, which hired Jeff Miller, a top aide to Sen. Herb Kohl, as a lobbyist to represent the league position against overturning the act.

On the other side of the argument, online gaming publications – including the New Online Casinos publication – are speculating as to which state will be the first to "take the plunge." Speculation by that publication is that California, behind the leadership of pro-gaming Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, will be that state.

"Governor Schwarzenegger has shown already that he has no qualms about bringing casino gambling out in the open and expanding throughout his state," gaming observer Bill Stinsdale told New Online Casinos. "If ever there was a leader by example, it has been Schwarzenegger and California. He certainly has the resources to make online gambling a reality."

Hoosier Park Racing and Casino participated in the Homeward Bound Walk for the Homeless April 26. Ten people represented the facility by walking in the 5K event held at Millcreek Convention Center in Chesterfield, Ind.



Kentucky budget crisis fuels case for gaming

As Kentucky struggles to find the funding for everyday public services, legislators are once again expected to review proposals that would legalize casino gaming in the state.

With state prosecutors being forced to take unpaid, three-week furloughs, and Governor Steve Beshear being forced to shift \$2 million in his budget in order to keep the public defender's office open through June's end of the fiscal year, Kentucky's budget crisis is helping grow support toward expanded gaming. The idea is that casino tax revenues would create an additional method of funding government services now in jeopardy.

Expanded gaming has been discussed for several years.

"You may not approve of gambling," Hopkins County District Attorney David Massamore told Online Casino Advisory. "But it is better than raising taxes, and it would help solve the budget problem in the state."

Beshear has quoted economists as saying that, without new revenue sources, the state's budget deficit will continue to balloon. Expanded gaming has been discussed for several years in the Kentucky legislature, with each previous attempt failing. Most recently, an attempt last year failed to make it to the floor of the legislature before the 2008 session expired.

Kentuckians also currently are in the middle of a lawsuit to ban online gaming in the state – an effort that could be hindered by legalized gaming, as the courts could see it as a protectionist movement intended to block out competition. Such action is illegal under the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution.



Several East Chicago Team Members partnered with the city of East Chicago to help out the environment in celebration of Earth Day. Team members, including members of the Executive Team, rolled up their sleeves to help clean up Washington Park.



Majestic Star Casino & WVAZ Radio (Clear Channel) to host the Cool Gent Book Party, in honor of Radio Legend Herb Kent's new book, "The Nine Lives of Radio Legend."

