

New casino ready for gamblers

By Althea Peterson

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GOLDSBY, Okla.— Two weeks before the grand opening, gamblers are already being "swept away."

From recreational gambling to entertainment, the area's 219,000 square-foot casino, Riverwind, has it all. From slot machines to poker tables, to an auditorium and in-house horse race betting, the Chickasaw Industries newest casino that encourages gamblers to be swept away seems to cover all areas.

Casino officials welcomed the press this past week, hoping to generate some excitement before the Aug. 10-12 grand opening weekend. Judging by the parking lots, the word is already out. The casino at Highway 9 West and Interstate 35 is a traffic stopper.

Desiree Townsend, who stopped in the casino during her commute from Dallas to Oklahoma City, said she was drawn in by the building's design.

"The colors are so beautiful, so it's eye catching," said Townsend, who was visiting the casino for the first time. "I drive through here all the time, so it'll be a fun rest stop."

For Leila Williams of Dallas, the poker experience was unique.

"The dealers are very helpful, the people you're playing with aren't intimidating," Williams said. "This is just a lot more modern, more light. It's more of my idea of what Vegas might be like than other casinos I've been to."

Several visitors commented on the multi-colored wave design for lighting over the 2,220 electronic games and 72 blackjack and poker tables. The casino is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week

"Riverwind Casino builds on our steadfast commitment to quality," said Brian Campbell, chief executive officer for Chickasaw Enterprises. "From its unique design to the latest in gaming technology, Riverwind is focused on providing our guests a fun, lively and friendly experience."

The building was designed by The Hnedak Bobo Group of Las Vegas and Memphis.

"Unlike other casinos, which are more thematic and focus on a major city or an era in history, Riverwind's architectural theme is more abstract," said Nathan Peak, lead designer for HBG. "We gave a nod to the geographic location of the structure and came up with an ethereal prairie wind concept, which encompasses Oklahoma's native landscape."

The staff will include 1,800 full and part-time employees. Kym Koch, spokesperson for the casino, said around 150-200 of these employees already have experience working at some of the other 17 casinos operated by the Chickasaw Enterprises. Glenn Berglan, mayor of Goldsby, said this will be the beginning for employment opportunities in the area.

"In time, we're going to have some good commercial development around it," Berglan said. "It will really help us in the long run. We're all working together."

The surrounding communities also worked to provide additional fire and police support for the casino. In addition, a \$1.7 million sewage treatment plant for Goldsby and \$2.1 million water tower for Newcastle will help with the added business in the area.

"We worked together in putting a sewer trust and provided an additional water supply,"

said Nick Nazar, Newcastle city manager.

Some areas will not be ready until closer to the grand opening weekend, including the 1,500-seat Showplace Theatre and Traditions restaurant. Koch also noted that while McClain County is a dry county, beer is allowed inside the casino and wine will be available at a later date. The entire casino permits smoking, with a “good ventilation system,” Koch said.

Althea Peterson writes for The Norman (Okla.) Transcript.

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