

Sonny Johnson Appointed Vice President of Gaming at Turning Stone



Sonny Johnson

William “Sonny” Johnson has been named Vice President of Gaming at the Oneida Indian Nation’s Turning Stone Resort and Casino in Verona, N.Y., overseeing each of the casino’s games departments.

Johnson has more than 20 years of experience in casino gaming management. Before joining Turning Stone, he served in various capacities at MGM/Mirage, Inc. including Casino Manager of the Golden Nugget in Laughlin, Nev., Director of Table Games at Beau Rivage in Biloxi, Miss. and Director of Table Games at Gold Strike Casino Resort in Tunica, Miss. Johnson began his career with MGM/Mirage in Las Vegas where he worked for five years, first as a casino dealer and then in numerous floor and management positions at The Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino and The Mirage.

Johnson attended the University of Arkansas, where he earned dual bachelor’s of science degrees in marketing and finance. He also graduated from the University of Nevada Las Vegas with a bachelor’s of science degree in hotel administration.

Executive Chef Michael McFarlen Joins FireKeepers Casino



Michael McFarlen

FireKeepers Casino has five new dining options, Nibi, Café 24/7, Mijem Buffet, Chi Mon-ee’s and Amazen Blazen Grab & Go. Under the leadership of Executive Chef Michael McFarlen, the restaurants will offer a wide variety of fresh and flavorful dishes, incorporating local, sustainable ingredients into their menus.

“Michael brings sound culinary experience to FireKeepers Casino,” said R. Bruce McKee, General Manager for FireKeepers Casino. “He’s spent much of his career at notable casino properties, but also has an intimate knowledge of local Michigan flavors and tastes. We could not have found a more perfect executive chef for FireKeepers and our restaurants will surely set a dining standard in the community.”

McFarlen’s extensive experience includes time as the Executive Sous Chef for The Cove-Atlantis and as the Executive Chef for MGM Grand Casino in Detroit, Mich., the Detroit Yacht Club and the Wyndgate Country Club in Rochester, Mich. Prior to joining FireKeepers, he served as the Executive Chef for Ameristar Resort Casino Spa in St. Charles, Mo. He is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America.

“I’m excited to be at FireKeepers, and back in Michigan. I’m developing menus that our guests will enjoy and whet their palate with innovative cuisine,” said McFarlen. “Fire-

Keepers is integrating locally grown and produced foods like fish, dairy products, microbrews and vegetables to ensure that our guests receive the highest quality and the best flavors while benefiting our local economy.”

Paragon Announces Appointment of New Vice President



Joey P. Barbry

Executives at Paragon Casino Resort in Marksville, LA., announce the appointment of Joey P. Barbry as Vice President of Hotel Operations. Barbry previously served the casino for 3.5 years as the Director of Hotel Operations. He has been a Paragon Casino Resort associate for over thirteen years.

“We are pleased to announce this appointment,” stated Paragon’s Assistant General Manager, Marshall Sampson, Sr. “Joey is a dynamic and proven associate whose experience in the hospitality industry will be a strong addition to our executive team as we continue to grow our property. His experience and professionalism is well known and will serve as a great asset to our leadership team.”

As the Vice President of Hotel Operations, Barbry will direct all hotel activities in the over 500 room capacity hotel, indoor and outdoor tropical pool areas, exercise facility, and Paragon’s RV resort.

Barbry is a native of Mansura, LA. He attended Louisiana State University in Alexandria. Barbry currently serves as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana Tribal Council, Paragon Casino Resort Donation Committee, and also served as President of the Tunica Biloxi Tribe Economic Development Corporation.

Harrah’s Cherokee Casino & Hotel Names New Vice President



Jo Blaylock

Harrah’s Cherokee Casino & Hotel has named Jo Blaylock, enrolled member of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation, to the position of Vice-President of Human Resources and External Relations. Blaylock has been serving the casino and tribe as the Director of Human Resources leading the employment, compensation, training, employee relations and benefits departments. With her new position she will lead the communications,

community relations and public relations departments as well. Blaylock will continue to report directly to General Manager Darold Londo.

Blaylock began working for the tribe’s casino in 2000. After an intensive training period in the Cherokee Development Program she became one of the first enrolled members to be promoted to a senior management position as Director of Human Resources in 2003. During her time as Director, Blaylock continued her studies and development in the field

of management obtaining her Doctorate in 2008.

Blaylock is active within the community, serving on the Tribal Investment Committee and on the Board of Directors of the Cherokee Historical Association. She is also a member of the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual as an accomplished basket maker.

Brian Schack Joins Coshatta Casino Resort Team



Brian Schack

Brian Schack has been named Director of Food & Beverage at Coshatta Casino Resort in Kinder, Louisiana.

Schack comes to Coshatta with over 15 years of experience in casino food & beverage management, serving at Caesar's in Indiana, Jack Binion's Horseshoe and Sam's Town in Tunica, Mississippi, and most recently as Executive Chef at French Lick Resort in Indiana. He is a graduate

of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York.

A Chicago native, Schack grew up in the Houston, Texas area and will use his broad range of culinary expertise to oversee the casino's dining operations, servicing Coshatta's culturally diverse clientele.

Yavapai Prescott Tribal Elder to Receive 6th Annual Spirit of the Heard Award



Ted Vaughn

Ted Vaughn, Yavapai, an elder of the Yavapai Prescott Indian Tribe and a Prescott resident, has been chosen as the recipient of the 6th Annual Spirit of the Heard Award. The ceremony will be held October 2, 2009 in the Steele Auditorium at the Heard Museum in Phoenix. During the ceremony, Vaughn will be presented with a Pendleton blanket, a plaque and a turquoise necklace, and he will also be honored in a special photo exhibit at the west entrance to the Steele Auditorium.

Each year, the Heard Museum's Board of Trustees American Indian Advisory Committee honors an individual who has demonstrated personal excellence either individually or as a community leader with the Spirit of the Heard Award.

"The Heard Museum is honored to recognize the lifetime achievements of Mr. Ted Vaughn and his grassroots efforts to preserve Yavapai language and culture," said Heard Museum Director Frank Goodyear, Jr. "Mr. Vaughn truly merits this prestigious award."

MPI Welcomes Sandy Lavery as Regional Sales Manager

Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is proud to announce the newest member of their regional sales team, Sandy Lavery, Regional Sales Manager for MPI in



Sandy Lavery

the northeastern U.S. region. Sandy will be responsible for strategic partnerships, sponsorships, website advertising, MPI digital and advertising for the award-winning One + magazine. Sandy brings more than 20 years of marketing and advertising experience to her position. Prior to her time with MPI, Sandy served as Director of Sales and Marketing at the Park Hyatt and Mayflower Hotels. She has been distinguished

with multiple honors and awards in her field.

President Obama Awards Medal of Freedom to Joe Medicine Crow - High Bird

On August 12, President Obama awarded the 2009 Presidential Medal of Freedom to 16 deserving recipients, including Joe Medicine Crow - High Bird.

Dr. Joseph Medicine Crow, the last living Plains Indian war chief, is the author of seminal works in Native American history and culture. He is the last person alive to have received direct oral testimony from a participant in the Battle of the Little Bighorn: his grandfather was a scout for General George Armstrong Custer. A veteran of World War II, Medicine Crow accomplished during the war all of the four tasks required to become a "war chief," including stealing fifty Nazi SS horses from a German camp. Medicine Crow was the first member of his tribe to attend college, receiving his master's degree in anthropology in 1939, and continues to lecture at universities and notable institutions like the United Nations. His contributions to the preservation of the culture and history of the First Americans are matched only by his importance as a role model to young Native Americans across the country.

Of the 16 recipients, President Obama remarked, "These outstanding men and women represent an incredible diversity of backgrounds. Their tremendous accomplishments span fields from science to sports, from fine arts to foreign affairs. Yet they share one overarching trait: Each has been an agent of change. Each saw an imperfect world and set about improving it, often overcoming great obstacles along the way. Their relentless devotion to breaking down barriers and lifting up their fellow citizens sets a standard to which we all should strive."

Walt Sheffler Tapped to Lead Strategic Contracting Function for Avendra

Avendra recently announced changes to the senior management team. Scott Hollis, Senior Vice President of Strategic Contracting, and Bill Tilghman, Deputy General Counsel and Vice President, both of whom have been with the company since its inception, plan to retire at the end of this year. Succeeding Hollis will be Walt Sheffler who has been promoted to Senior Vice President of Strategic Contracting. Jerry Kraisinger was named as General Counsel of Avendra in May and has assumed leadership of the company's legal department. ♣