4th Quarter Superstar Celebration

The Jan. 25 fourth quarter Superstar Luncheon for 2000 turned out to be a little more exciting than planned. The food was terrific, the turnout was good, and the planning impeccable. No one could have anticipated, however, the lights going out in the middle of the ceremony!

Although the convention center was transformed into a "black hole" when the electricity went out, everyone sat quietly until the dim lights came back on. Even then it was too dark to see clearly, so Human Resources Director Phil Rilatos read the nominations with the aid of a flashlight and everything continued without a hitch.

The Superstar for 4th Quarter 2000 is Teri Tomlinson - Bingo! Several customers wrote nominations for this employee, including the following:

"She has to be the most gracious and helpful person in the department. She always has a ready smile and great sense of humor! We dearly love her and appreciate her wonderful thoughtfulness." "Has always been a very friendly and helpful employee." "Among your best casino representatives!" "You have an asset to your casino, she's definitely a star. **A big shining Superstar!"**

Tomlinson received a plaque, a fish pin, a check for $1,000, and a marble tile that will be displayed at the front of the casino in recognition of her achievement.

Superstar Teri Tomlinson (front row center) is surrounded by nominees (front row, l to r) Joe Padilla, April Murphy, Mike Blacketer, Ed Smock, and Lester Walters; and (back two rows, l to r) Jerry Marzan, Barbara Kellar, Logan Smith, Royce Johnston, Karen Vanderzanden, Rose Moon and Debbie Davis (upper right).

Others nominated for the Superstar award were: Royce Johnston, Security; April Murphy, Marketing; Mike Blacketer, Winner's Circle; Rose Moon, Winner's Circle; Logan Smith, Food & Beverage; Sandy Jess, Food & Beverage; Jerry Marzan, Transportation; Lester Walters, Food & Beverage; Edward Schmock, Facilities; Joseph Padilla, Bingo; Maria Watts, Food & Beverage; Debbie Davis, Guest Services; Scott Hansen, Food & Beverage; Karen Vanderzanden, Facilities; and Barbara Kellar, Guest Services.

To receive the "Superstar" award, an employee must perform his/her duties at a high standard of excellence on a consistent basis. He/she must exhibit above-the-norm internal and external customer service and be a team leader by example. Instances of exemplary performance must be documented. After a person is nominated for the award, the nomination goes through several reviews before the final selection is made. With more than 700 employees and only four of these awards given each year, it's a real honor to be chosen as the "Superstar."

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"It's really sad," she says. "They're really starving for it."

Bud Lane, a member who received a tribal grant to create regalia and who trained Brown, says without people like her stepping forward to help, the tribe would not be making the cultural recovery it is.

He speaks with pride about the large cedar dance house that took two years for the tribe to finish.

"Now the dance lines are so big we can't hardly get everybody in," says Lane.

The third aspect to Brown's business is social and, interestingly enough, the original inspiration for Water of Life.

A 20-year, self-professed "beading addict," Brown is also trained in alcohol and drug addiction counseling. Her passion is to combine her work with her play to help make a difference with young people in trouble with drugs and alcohol.

There are a lot of simple yet powerful lessons to be taught through beading, says Brown.

"When you do peyote stitch bead work, it's one bead at time which, because of my addictions background, is one step at a time," she says. "Sometimes you make a mistake. So you either have to figure out if you're going to go back and fix that mistake or not. And also how are you not going to make that mistake again in the future?

"It's a concept to problem solving for young people. And it's one that they understand."

Brown recently worked with a group of at-risk kids creating four directions key chains. The young people raised $350 for their youth group selling the key chains at conferences and ended up being assistant teachers at a summer culture camp.

"Projects that are easy and quick to finish are a priority for youth," she says. "By being able to complete the project in one or two sessions, youth gain a sense of accomplishment and increased self-esteem.

"Many projects use the four directions colors, plus blue for the sky and green for the earth, which teaches students about diversity and respect for all these things."

Brown's biggest goal is to develop a non-profit organization that would train individuals how to use art, sculpture, or bead work to do therapy.