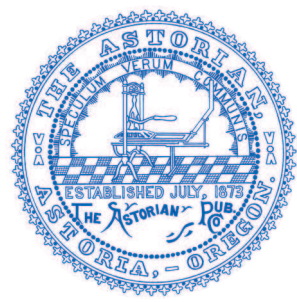


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW

Casino's opening is not likely to impact the North Coast

No matter how we may individually feel about the wisdom and social costs of organized gambling, there's no denying the April 24 opening of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's \$510 million Ilani Casino Resort gaming complex between Longview and Vancouver, Washington, is big news for the regional economy.

After becoming federally recognized in 2000, the Cowlitz set about obtaining reservation land and succeeded in 2010, in the form of a 152-acre La Center tract near Interstate 5, specifically intended for a casino. The tribe's 4,100 members are scattered around living productive lives, primarily in western Washington, and mostly will not reside on the reservation. Protracted legal battles ensued, with U.S. Supreme Court recently refusing a last-ditch effort by competing gambling interests to scuttle the resort.

Although it initially will not have an on-site hotel, the resort will include a performance venue and 15 restaurants, bars and retail stores, according to a news release. It will have 2,500 slot machines, plus a large area for seven different types of table games, including roulette, blackjack and craps. Running all this will require a staff of between 1,200 and 1,500, with most wages expected to cluster near \$30,000 a year plus benefits.

Jackpot?

Posing the headline question, "Ilani casino: A jackpot for region's economy?" an April 9 analysis by The Daily News in Longview came up with a somewhat nuanced answer. The number of jobs compares favorably to some of the largest developments in southwest Washington in recent years — for example 900 in a relocation of PeaceHealth corporate staff to Vancouver in 2012 and 500 in a Kelso chicken-processing plant in 1998. However, the casino's relatively low wages equate to an annual payroll total of \$30 million, which is dwarfed by PeaceHealth's \$130 million.

Other economic benefits include an estimated \$40 million a year to purchase locally provided goods and services, contribution of 2 percent of profits to arts and education programs, and help to state and local agencies in dealing with impacts. As a sovereign government, tribes aren't subject to state and local taxes, the usual mechanisms for making sure developers pay their own way for things like police protection.

Many of us don't regard gambling as a smart use of society's finite amount of money, but initial expectations are that the Ilani casino is more likely to sap money from other nearby forms of gambling, as opposed to sucking money from other social goods. It may be, for example, that Portlanders divert some of the money now spent on the lottery to instead visiting the casino. If enough do so, the lottery might not be able to provide as much as it now does for things like K-12 education.

In the immediate vicinity of casinos, researchers found a net positive economic benefits after everything settled out: Competing card rooms and restaurants may close, but the increased number of visitors and casino employees — all spending money in and outside the casino — tend to improve business conditions overall.

Little impact locally

What might all this mean for our coastal area, 75 to 100 miles away from this new powerhouse?

The nearest competing Indian establishments are the Shoalwater Bay Casino in northwestern Pacific County, Spirit Mountain Casino in Grand Ronde and Chinook Winds Casino (with no connection with the Chinook Tribe) in Lincoln City. They all are likely to be somewhat impacted by the Cowlitz's new facilities. However, none generates much tourist traffic through our area, so impacts beyond their own operations are unlikely.

Will money be spent at the Ilani that might otherwise be spent here? Possibly. It is one more attraction competing for dollars. But the coast and Astoria possess unique charms that can't be duplicated. Our "audience" is distinctive. And it's possible to imagine casino workers sometimes coming here to visit on their days off.

Will Ilani jobs worsen an already tight labor and housing market? Reports suggest it is in its vicinity. But the distance involved suggests little potential for such impacts to ripple all the way here.

It must be said the Cowlitz Tribe has been reaching out and doing good work here in the form of salmon habitat restoration. And few residents here, surely, will begrudge any Northwest tribe finding a path to financial wellbeing after centuries of harsh struggles. So good luck to them. It will be interesting to see how it all works out.

M.O.A.B.s



GUEST COLUMN

Way to Wellville tastes local flavor at gathering

By SUE CODY

Special to The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County's Way to Wellville has a chance to share the local flavor and scenery as it hosts fellow Wellville 5 communities from Tuesday through Thursday. The national gathering is a chance for the Wellville 5 to share successes, challenges and ideas, face to face.

"We learn from each other on how to build healthier communities," says local Wellville Strategic Council member Paulette McCoy. "Even though we are spread across the U.S., we all have similar goals and obstacles to face in making our communities better places to live and thrive as healthy people in mind, body and emotional health."

Muskegon, Michigan; Spartanburg, South Carolina; Lake County, California; and North Hartford, Connecticut; will each send five members to visit and become immersed in projects the local Way to Wellville has implemented.

The idea behind The Way to Wellville is to have communities combine their resources, cooperate and invest in healthy living rather than spending trillions of dollars on health care caused by unhealthy lifestyles.

The annual event helps participating communities share what works and get some coaching from founder Esther Dyson and the national Way to Wellville team of experts.

"The national team acts like a personal trainer, but for a community," says Dyson. "We advise, we remind, we introduce community members to sources of funding, technical experts, vendors, journalists and the like. But as with a personal trainer, the client is still in charge and owns the results."

"One of the principles we preach is that ideas and intent are not enough; you need engagement and commitment. The best way to make that happen is to do it with other people: to learn from them, to inspire them, to compete with them, to encourage them. As the saying goes: if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."

Last year, representatives met in Spartanburg. "That city did an amazing job," says McCoy. "We are both excited and anxious about the pressure of hosting The Way to Wellville national conference here."

Clatsop County will be new territory for each of the other Wellville 5 attendees.



Submitted Photo
 Students at Lewis and Clark Elementary School weed a garden as part of the Clatsop Kids Go program, implemented by the Way to Wellville.

"We are hoping we can have a bit of sunshine or at least a day or two without rain to show off our beautiful county."

'We learn from each other on how to build healthier communities.'

Paulette McCoy
 local Wellville
 strategic council member

Local flavor

Three areas of focus for the gathering are obesity/nutrition, economic development and early childhood education. Around these discussions, participants get to sample some local flavor, from a tour in Seaside and a crab feed in Warrenton to a trolley ride in Astoria.

Providence Seaside Hospital will host a lunch and demonstrate its food-focused wellness initiative. A panel discussion on food systems and obesity will follow, with Wellville 5 representatives discussing challenges and successes related to institutional food system improvements.

Dinner at the Bridgewater Bistro will demonstrate its farm-to-table

practices using its kitchen garden and local food producers.

Economic development and its role in community wellness will be the focus of Day 2. A tour of downtown Astoria and discussion of its remarkable turnaround will include a tour of the Astoria Armory as an example of public-private partnership.

A "pop-up" pay-what-you-can lunch will be held at the Baked Alaska Annex, followed by a screening of "Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope," at the Liberty Theater. The film is the follow up to "Paper Tigers," which addresses adverse childhood experiences.

On Day 3, a presentation and panel discussion will address trauma-informed care and early childhood education, which are focus areas for Muskegon and Clatsop County Wellville teams.

Rewards of gathering

"I believe it is important for each Wellville team to visit the other locations to observe each other in their own environment," says Jeff Doemland, the chief marketing officer for Way to Wellville.

All communities come together to see, teach and experience what the local environment has to offer.

Dyson says there are two huge benefits of the national gatherings: learning from each other and forming connections that last throughout the year.

Sue Cody, a former deputy managing editor of The Daily Astorian, works with Way to Wellville.

LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian. We do not publish open letters or third-party letters.

Letters should be fewer than 350 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone numbers. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy and verbal verification of authorship. Only two letters per writer are printed each month.

Letters written in response to

other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Disclosure should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner. Letters referring to news stories should also mention the headline and date of publication.

The Daily Astorian welcomes short "in gratitude" notes from readers for publication. They should keep to a 200-word maximum and writers are asked to avoid simply listing event sponsors. They

must be signed, include the writer's address, phone number and are subject to condensation and editing for style, grammar, etc.

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Delivered to the Astorian offices at 949 Exchange St. and 1555 N. Roosevelt in Seaside.

Or by mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103