

THE SPIRIT MOUNTAIN CASINO FEATURE ISSUE

ACTING MARKETING DIRECTOR IS A FAMILY MAN

■ Tribal Member Adam Henny is an idea man who worked his way up through the ranks.

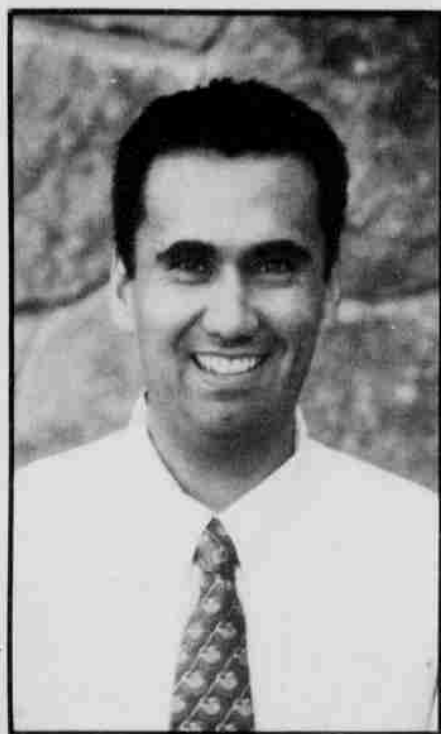


Photo by Peta Tinda

ADAM HENNY



Tribal member Adam Henny has his hands full. As Interim Marketing Director and Public Relations Manager, Henny leads a busy life and lately his personal life has added to the stress — but in a good way. Married, with one daughter, 4, and wife Julie expecting any moment, Henny came off a tad on the nervous side. The week of our interview Henny carried his cell phone with him, probably to the

shower even, eagerly anticipating the arrival of a new son (for the record, John Henny was born soon thereafter, weighing in at 7 pounds, 7 ounces).

Though Oregon State University is no more than a stone's throw away from Grand Ronde, marketing and public relations are worlds away from what he studied in Corvallis — Horticulture.

"Some day I'm going to use it," he said. "Some day."

That Bachelor's of Science might not get much use at Spirit Mountain, but his minor, business, undoubtedly will. And seeing that many of his duties include corporate giving, events and promotions, perhaps a little background in the area helps.

"I guess I'm part of the team that comes up with ideas," Henny said, in listing his duties.

That team spans three different departments (Group Sales, Marketing and Player Services) and includes a few dozen members. His job, and collectively *their* job, is to make Spirit Mountain known through whatever means possible. Those means include everything, from television ads to promotions to the website.

"The website has done great," he said. "We've been able to triple the number of hits because of our promotions."

Their television ads have also been respectable. Many readers will remember such ads as the rhinoplasty dig, or the green sandals, or the pink leather

hat. Billboards have also been abundant, peppering state highways as far south as Eugene.

"We always try to keep ads fresh," he said. "We try to keep them new."

Most ads demonstrate the Tribe's sense of humor, an important aspect of Spirit Mountain's philosophy, not only because they want to appear lighthearted, but such an approach also has appeal to younger audiences. As the average age of an SMC customer lingers around 51, the vein of youthful clients is still ready to be tapped.

"We've been reaching out to the younger crowd," he said. "We want them to know there's lots of fun things to do here. We just have to get them in the door."

Another of his current projects is working on a direct email campaign for Coyote Club members. It was the Coyote Club, in fact, where Henny got his start with Spirit Mountain, working in their marketing department on the graveyard shift. And over the course of a few years, he worked to his present position.

Henny understands that the goal of luring new customers is really an ongoing saga, requiring flexibility and in some degree, vision.

"The casino, when you think about it, is really just a form of escapism," he said, adding that that is an attraction in itself. "It's interactive entertainment, really."

Escapism has been an important com-

modity of note following the September 11 attacks. Since that date people have been doing less travel meaning more are ending up at Spirit Mountain than usual.

Superbowl parties and concerts, Henny said, are reliable draws.

Failed promotions have been few, according to Henny, probably because the marketing team has a fairly diverse background in its own right, meaning a constant stream of original ideas will likely keep trickling in. Which is good, because they need them.

"Our team is great," he said. "We've all sorts of backgrounds, all sorts of levels. It's exciting."

"But still, we have to change," he said. "You look at the Lodge. I mean that was just a dream once, but customers asked for it."

"Now it has some of the highest occupancy rates in the state," he added.

Deviation has become the norm then, really. Bob Newhart is coming January 24 and overall one can expect some experimentation, more comedy acts and pop musicians.

Eventually, Henny would like to go back to school. To study what, he doesn't know. He'd just like to go back. But for now he is genuinely pleased with his job, one that for him is really a double blessing — the opportunity to help the business and the Tribe at the same time. Try getting that out of Horticulture.

HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR WANTS TO TRAVEL, SWIM WITH THE DOLPHINS

■ Tribal Member Camille Mercier oversees a workforce not afraid to try new things.



Photo by Peta Tinda

CAMILLE MERCIER



Henny preferred to see himself as part of a team, and really, Spirit Mountain Casino embodies the concept. More than 1,500 employees, payroll in the millions, dozens in, dozens out, all in the course of a week — who's the Colonel in all this?

Answers will vary, of course, but never before was the need for people in charge of people more illustriously demonstrated. Somebody has got to keep tabs on all these people and that responsibility rests with the Human Resources Director, Tribal member Camille Mercier.

Born and raised in Lebanon, graduate of McNary High School in Salem, Mercier found herself drawn to the Tribe more than 10 years ago. And she has

been a fixture ever since.

She didn't start out in her present field, not unlike nearly every other person in this story. Rather her employment in Grand Ronde began with the Wellness Department, involved in prevention programs. It was during her first few years in Grand Ronde that she met John Mercier, now her husband. They live in Grand Ronde with their five year-old son, Kalim.

Mercier also gave self-employment a shot, for three years working as a freelance interior decorator. Just enough money came in, she said, to sustain the business, but obviously greener pastures lay elsewhere. Through Western Oregon University and George Fox University, Mercier was able to earn a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Organizational Management Development, making her ripe for the field of human resources.

Beginning as a receptionist, she worked her way up to Tribal Recruiter. There, her love for the field came into its own.

"I did everything," she said. "Recruiting, prescreening, building awareness for Tribal members. That's when I built up my experience."

"It gave me a good foundation of understanding," she added.

And it gave her the fast track for the next stepping stone: Employee Development Manager.

"That really gave me the experience

on a leadership level," she said.

Leadership is definitely an important quality, especially within an arena replete with issues that range from personal to conflict. And that was her job, setting a precedent for dealing with workplace conflict, deaths, drug screens, harassment, theft and above all communication.

"You have different challenges every day," she said. "And they always change in a business that never closes. Not predictable, not mundane — no two situations are ever the same."

The stakes have been upped a notch by her present position as Human Resources Director, but you won't hear any complaining. Though she misses the physical freedom of being able to roam the casino floor, her plate is full enough looking after benefits, compensation, recruiting (still), training, coaching, counseling and outreach to the community.

"Yeah sure, I miss being out on the floor, but I don't miss the disruptions in my life," she said. "I take a lot of pride in helping people get end results."

"As HR Director, you've got to look at problems as opportunities," she said. "Spirit Mountain Casino is not afraid to try new things."

"If your policies don't evolve with the market," she said. "Then you're in trouble."

One example of HR policy evolution might be the Bonus Pull incentive — a

pool of money winnable by employees with excellent attendance records. Or the Tribal Career Development Program that helps Tribal members at SMC explore other career options. Or the Tuition Reimbursement Program that encourages employees to pursue higher education. The list goes on and on, and like Mercier will gladly declare, workers at SMC are grateful for it.

"We used to get 200 applications a month," she said. "Now, we get 200 per week."

Would-be and actual employees can always point to the candlelight vigil held following the 9-11 World Trade Center attacks as epitomizing SMC's desire to reach out to workers. They even brought in a grief counselor for particularly bereaved workers.

Mercier is abundantly happy with her position and sees a lengthy career with SMC.

Mercier recently bought a horse, a gelding named Charlie. And she went skydiving. Already she is making some major travel plans, citing the Taj Mahal in India as her next likely destination.

"I would also like to go some place where I would swim with dolphins," she said.

For now, however, playing with the kids and reading occupy her spare time perfectly.

"I see myself staying here for a long time," she added.