

Bingo returns to casino on May 18

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Starting at 8 p.m., blues great Curtis Salgado will entertain.

Then, on Friday and Saturday, May 16-17, comedian Dana Carvey and rock band Blues Traveler will perform the first concerts in the new 17,200-square-foot Entertainment Center, respectively.

Spirit Mountain Casino opened Oct. 1, 1995, to enhance the economic self-sufficiency of the Grand Ronde Tribe and create job opportunities for Tribal members and the surrounding communities.

The first major expansion occurred in May 1998 when gaming space doubled. Spirit Mountain Lodge opened in December 1998 and the lodge more than doubled in size in April 2005 to 254 rooms.

In September 2006, The Peak opened, offering slots and table

games in more than 16,000 square feet of space.

The southern expansion adds 135,396 square feet to the casino, including the 1,800-seat Events and Entertainment Center, new buffet and conference rooms. The new Events and Entertainment Center also will double as the new bingo hall, with afternoon and early evening games Sunday through Wednesday beginning Sunday, May 18. Bingo sessions will be at 2 and 6:30 p.m. Sunday and 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 and 6:30 p.m. Monday through Wednesday.

The casino's Human Resources Department and Gaming Commission offices moved into the second floor of the southern expansion in February.

The southern expansion also increases casino parking by 700 spaces to 3,600.

Besides offering entertainment like other Oregon casinos, the southern

expansion will allow Spirit Mountain to attract convention and trade show business.

"We need to grow our business, offer more amenities and provide an all-inclusive entertainment center," Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said.

Events Center Manager Kendra Johnson said business is already "rolling in."

"December is almost completely filled with Christmas parties," Johnson said. "We've booked a lot of high school reunions for the summer, along with conventions, trade shows, conferences and a couple of weddings and birthday parties."

The Cedar Plank Buffet, which opened to the general public on May 12, features seven chef stations featuring international, pizza, seafood, carving, American, Asian and bakery cuisine.

Other concerts scheduled for this

summer include country singers Clint Black on July 25 and Wynonna Judd on Aug. 15, and comedian Dennis Miller on Sept. 12-13.

"The latest expansion project takes us to an ever higher level of guest service with state-of-the-art facilities that create a relaxing and comfortable environment," Casino General Manager Roy Rhode has said.

"As the premiere entertainment and dining destination in the region, we will continue to improve and upgrade this property. It's a very exciting time to be part of Spirit Mountain Casino."

Additional upcoming improvements to Spirit Mountain Casino include a covered valet station in front of Legends Restaurant, remodeling the old buffet into a sports bar, moving the Arcade into the free-standing Playworld, moving both gift shops into the old arcade space, and adding a fitness center in one of the vacated areas. ■

Fund value declines cause concern

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back 4 percent, or two-thirds of what it had lost in the first three months."

Citing a long-term approach, Barnum said the Tribe's investments have averaged a 6.62 percent return annually since the portfolio was restructured in September 2001, and have made a high of 8.08 percent in 2004 to a low of 5.59 percent in 2007.

"Our goal," Barnum said, "it to beat inflation by 5 percent or 6 percent over a long period of time."

Barnum said it costs the Tribe seven-tenths of 1 percent of the portfolio's value for UBS to manage Tribal investments.

Tribal member concerns concentrated on the recent stock market fluctuations — mostly downward — that have affected the trust funds of Tribal members about to turn 21 years of age.

In October 2007, the Dow Jones Industrial Average hit an all-time high of 14,164.53, dropped in value to about 12,000 in March and then rebounded to a value hovering around 13,000 in recent weeks.

Tribal member Brenda Gray asked if it was possible to transfer trust fund money of Tribal youths approaching 21 into more conservative investments so they don't see a dip in the value of their accounts just as they are about to access them.

Barnum said it would be possible, but that it would double the cost of managing those accounts. And, he pointed out, such a policy could be a double-edged sword.

What if, Barnum said, a youth's account, as a matter of Tribal policy, was moved to a more conservative investment, such as bonds, during a time when the stock market was increasing in value by double-digits. That youth would be missing out on significant increases in their account as they approached 21.

"The current policy is to invest for the good of all," he said, adding that the average return on that Tribal



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Mark Barnum, senior vice president of UBS Institutional Consulting, talks to Tribal members about the Tribe's investment philosophy at the General Council meeting in Grand Ronde on Sunday, May 4.

youth fund money has been 10.4 percent over the past five years.

Other Tribal members suggested the Tribe offer classes to Tribal youth about to receive trust fund money so they make wise financial decisions.

Tribal Investment Manager Jeff Valentine said the Tribe will begin offering in May a four-class Internet-based personal finance course to Tribal youth 17 to 20 years of age. However, there is no penalty if Tribal youths decide not to take the course.

"We have an obligation to show our kids what to do with a large sum of money," Tribal member Patsy Pullin said.

"This is sacred money," Tribal member Maxine Rock said. "We need to spend this money righteously and teach what this money means. A lot of people have sacrificed their lives for this."

Rock suggested increasing the trust fund payout age to 25.

Tribal Attorney Rob Greene said Tribal Council is examining the process for paying out Tribal youth trust funds, such as possibly start-

ing payments at 18 years of age for Tribal youth who take and pass the personal finance test.

Barnum held out hope that the recent downturn in the stock market is over and the Tribe should see its investments increase in value through 2010.

"We think stocks will do well over the next three years," Barnum said. "Bonds are not going to be a good place to be."

Wood Village casino proposal postponed

After Barnum's presentation and a Cinco de Mayo-themed lunch at the Tribal Community Center, Tribal lobbyist Justin Martin repeated the Off-Reservation Gaming Opposition presentation from February's General Council meeting (*Smoke Signals*, Feb. 15, 2008).

Martin also announced that one of the three threats is off the table for now. The private party casino proposal for the Multhomah Greyhound Park site in Wood Village will not appear on the November ballot, he said.

Private investors have proposed

building a 175,000-square-foot resort with a \$500 million casino on the site, but would need an amendment to the Oregon Constitution to make it happen. The time window for investors to collect more than 110,000 signatures to put the constitutional amendment on the ballot was quickly closing.

"They are not going to go this time," Martin said. "They will wait until 2010, but it's important to know it's inevitable."

On May 2, investment adviser Bruce Studer and lawyer Matt Rossman told *The Gresham Outlook* they will not attempt to collect the required signatures, citing controversy surrounding the Warm Springs and Cowlitz Tribes attempts to build casinos closer to the Portland metropolitan area in Cascade Locks and La Center, Wash., respectively.

"While we were hopeful that we would proceed with our signature-gathering efforts this year, we realized that the pending Tribal casino proposals ... need to be vetted through the Bureau of Indian Affairs decision-making process before we can proceed successfully," Studer said.

"Our campaign team believes that the proper timing to pursue approval of our commercial taxpaying casino ... should commence once Oregonians know the outcome of the La Center and (Cascade Locks) proposals."

After Martin's presentation, Tribal member Sabrina McDaniel suggested that the Tribal Council continue investigating ways to diversify Tribal business operations.

Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom said Tribal Council continues to investigate different economic ventures.

"We're worried and concerned, and looking into them now," Tom said.

The next General Council meeting for the purpose of Tribal Council nominations will be held 11 a.m. Sunday, June 29, in the Tribal Community Center. ■