

Rising Star Casino 'folds' on more than 400

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 02 April 2020 14:19 -

Rising Star Casino Resort in Rising Sun alerted state officials Friday, March 27, that it is eliminating 407 jobs as part of its closure under state actions to limit the spread of COVID-19, according to several sources.

The Indiana Gaming Commission ordered Rising Star and other Indiana casinos to close Monday, March 16.

Rising Star said it also closed its dining, golf, and other amenities at that time.

As a result, the company said it will terminate its casino, restaurant, and hotel employees on Tuesday, March 31.

It will keep 36 essential team employees, who will continue working on operations until the casino may reopen, the company said in a required layoff notice to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.

The company said if Rising Star reopens in the near future, it anticipates having positions for which most of its current employees may apply.

Although letters were mailed to casino employees, many workers found out about their fate via social media.

"I found out about the termination on our table games page," said Kimberly McAfee, who has worked for the casino since 1996 as a dealer and a supervisor.

Her husband, who also has worked there for more than 20 years, is part of the "lay off."

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They aren't sure what they are going to do. "I do not want to see it close permanently. I'm hoping that we can overcome this and come back strong," Kimberly McAfee said.

"What's so sad about it is we all worked really hard to get the license for Ohio County. It was a great company to work for as Hyatt."

Her heart is broken for the community, and all of the employees that worked there, she said.

"It could be an awesome place to work if we had someone to run it right. We have been loyal, and we have a great customer base. I'm going to miss all of my friends and my customers."

Another employee, who has worked for the casino since 2000 and wished to remain anonymous, also found out about her termination through the Internet. She didn't believe what she was reading at first, but received a letter in the mail the next day that read:

Dear Anonymous:□

Gaming Entertainment (Indiana), LLC, d/b/a Rising Star Casino Resort ("Rising Star"), furnishes this letter to you pursuant to the Worker Adjustment Retraining and Notification ("WARN") Act. It is written to advise you of the ongoing closure of Rising Star Casino and Resort, 777 Rising Star Drive, Rising Sun, IN 47040. Effective March 31, 2020, your employment will be terminated.

You have no bumping rights to another job with Rising Star; however, should Rising Star reopen in the near future, we anticipate we will have positions for which you can apply. If you are interested in applying for future employment opportunities with Rising Star, we encourage you to apply for available positions by contacting our Human Resources Department, located at 777 Rising Star Drive, Rising Sun, IN 47040 or visit www.risingstarcasino.com.

For further information, please contact a Human Resources Representative, at (812) 438-5125. We thank you for your service at Rising Star, and we wish you the best in this transition period.

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"This will affect me personally because I have stood behind this casino, even through the hard times," she said.

This year, her hours were cut, but she held onto hope that things would get better.

"As soon as they could, they let us go," she said.

Times already have been tough since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, but she thought she would at least have a job to return to.

"We will have to start from day one at another company," she said.

The woman has been applying for other jobs, but said, "it makes it hard when I have done something most of my life with the same people that are like family, but we have to move on."

She also said she feels like all of the family time that she missed over the years to work holidays was wasted. She said it is like the time she worked there never mattered.

"It's not right," she said.

A longtime Rising Star manager, who also wished to remain anonymous, was lucky enough to get a call from a director informing her of her termination.

Although her husband still is employed with another company, their income has been cut in half, causing a financial struggle in raising three children.

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"When you hear about what the other two casinos are doing for their employees it makes you question the company you worked for so long when they terminate almost everyone," she said.

She is heart broken for her workmates that she considers family, and said not seeing them every day is hard. "I talk to a lot of them almost every day, but it's just not the same."

A mother and father duo was affected by the casino's decision to terminate most of its employees, which comes as no surprise considering Rising Star is Ohio County's largest employer.

David Joe Colen and his wife Shawna were employed at the casino and are left without jobs.

"They pretty much just sent a letter saying we're all terminated, which surprised me really," said Colen.

"One thing I've found is that casinos do whatever they want with regard to employees, fair or not."

Colen said he probably will reapply if the casino reopens because it is close to home. In the meantime, he isn't sure what he will do to support his family.

Shannon Bradley had been a full-time bartender for almost eight years when she found out through the grapevine that her job was obsolete.

"Not one of our supervisors in the food and beverage department reached out to us," she said.

Bradley isn't sure just yet how losing her job will affect her, and said her husband continues to work because his job is essential.

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"I have thought more about all the ones that I worked with that don't have a husband or a significant other and solely depend on themselves to survive," she said.

"I'm mad and upset because, as of Tuesday, my fellow workers that carry their own insurance will no longer have any. How can a company do that in a time like this?"

Bradley said she plans on taking things day by day. As far as reapplying if the casino reopens, she said a part of her asks why she would want to work for the company again. "They took our pay raises away and we all still showed up to work and were good, reliable workers," she said.

"We give them our all, work lots of hours due to them being so short staffed, for them not to care about us."

She added that if she goes back, then it would be credited to the folks that she worked with. She said they were like one big happy family.

Rising Sun Mayor Steve Slack responded to the casino closure stating, "The GM of Rising Star Casino told me personally that they had no intentions of not reopening as soon as allowed to do so."

As far as the future of Rising Sun goes, "let's all be hopeful and have faith that we all stay healthy and do our best to stop the spread of this virus. That is the one thing we can all do," said Slack.

"All those whom have recently lost their jobs are in my thoughts and prayers. May God bless, and keep us healthy."

Managing Editor Joe Awad contributed to this story. □

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Read more <https://www.thedcregister.com/covid-19-news/rising-star-casino-%E2%80%99folds-%E2%80%99-more-400>