

Good deal! Casino fans hail reopening

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 10 June 2020 11:26 -

VERONA — After months of being away due to the pandemic, residents lined up in socially-distanced droves this morning to be some of the first back inside the Turning Stone Casino since the closing.

Turning Stone Casino officials say the reopening follows months of extensive planning and coordination with neighboring municipalities. The Oneida Indian Nation implemented new safety protocols, enhanced cleaning policies, additional precautionary protocols, and some restrictions during phase one of its reopening process.

“This situation we’re all in is going to take a lot of work and a lot of thought and that’s what we were going for,” Oneida Indian Nation CEO Ray Halbritter said.

To that end, Oneida Indian Nation properties have initiated the following protocols:

Limit access to guests who travel from within 120 miles within New York with valid New York State issued driver’s license or non-driver ID

All employees are required to have daily screenings, including temperature checks. Employees who handle commonly touched items with guests are required to wear gloves, including in all restaurants, at registration desks and on the gaming floors

Guest and employee entry and ID verification protocols that allow for contact tracing, if necessary

Mandatory face coverings for all employees and guests, as a condition of entry, even in administrative areas

Occupancy limits and distancing in all restaurants, lounges, and smoking areas.

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Enhanced cleaning measures include new technology that alerts guests with an on-screen notification of the exact time the slot machine was last sanitized. The new Automated Game Sanitization system also notifies the casino cleaning staff when a guest finishes playing on a machine so the slot machine can be cleaned.

“We’ve been planning, thinking, and considering all of the advice from health officials and the government,” Halbritter said. “Obviously, we had a desire to open; everybody does. Everybody wants to get to a sense of normalcy.”

Anne Yacco, a resident of north Utica, said she had arrived before 5 a.m. to be first in line for the Turning Stone — a line that stretched from one end of the parking garage to the other.

“I love it [at the Turning Stone],” Yacco said. “I’d come here about three or four times a month.”

Once the pandemic hit and everything started locking down, any weekend plans at the Turning Stone were canceled. And at the front of the line, Yacco said she was excited to be back and couldn’t wait. “I really missed the BINGO,” she said. “They have fantastic BINGO here.”

Another resident waiting in line was Binghamton resident Phil Pickering, who was happy to see not only the casino open up, but its restaurants.

“I love the buffet up here,” Pickering said. “It’s probably the best casino buffet that I’ve had. I’m originally out of Oklahoma City and I’ve been up here now 12 years. The Turning Stone Casino is the best place to eat that I can find.”

Oneida Indian Nation properties are doing what they can to combat the Coronavirus and Halbritter is confident in the steps being taken. “We’re just opening up but I’ll think we’ll find, as they did in Vegas, that [it all] becomes the new normal,” he said. “You can get back to where you want to be and still enjoy yourself. And everybody wants to do that.”

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Laura Hitt, a resident of Walton, agreed with the CEO.

“I’d come out to the Turning Stone about once a month and we missed it,” she said. “Everybody has been stuck at home and we need to socialize with other people. We don’t socialize anymore. It’s all become social media and the internet. People need to get out. They need the community.”

For more information about the Oneida Indian Nation’s health and safety plan as it reopens, visit <https://www.turningstone.com/page/health-and-safety> for more information.

Read more <https://romesentinel.com/stories/good-deal-casino-fans-hail-reopening-new-safety-protocols-enhanced-cleaning-in-the-cards-at,99216>