

Westfield Happenings

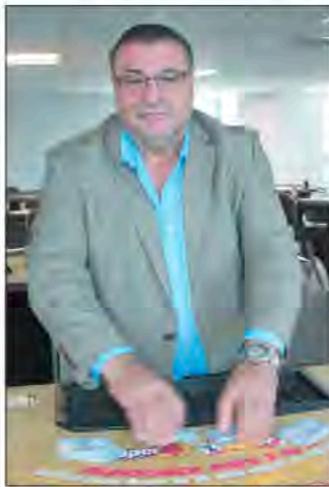
Casino school grads put local face on MGM

SPRINGFIELD — Luigi Calabrese recalled the anxious feeling he had on the first day of classes at the Massachusetts Casino Career Training Institute, which prepared area residents to work at MGM Springfield.

The Westfield resident had worked in the restaurant business for most of his life. He owned his own pizza shop. At 58, he was making a big move. Calabrese was going back to school to learn how to deal cards so he can start a new career at MGM Springfield.

When he walked through the doors of the school at 95 State St., Springfield, he recalled, "I was very nervous. I didn't know how I was going to come across. But from the minute they met us downstairs, they made us very comfortable, and I really felt at home. The instructors were amazing. I started learning how to deal blackjack, and I fell in love with it right away."

After he completed training for blackjack and three other table game classes, Calabrese went through an audition with MGM. The company offered him a full-time job. He will deal blackjack between 4 a.m. and



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Luigi Calabrese of Westfield is one of several local workers who attended the Massachusetts Casino Career Training Institute and now works at MGM Springfield, the casino opening this weekend.

noon, the shift he requested.

"I'm excited at my age to find a new career," Calabrese said. "I'm proud that I got four different diplomas and did well in my classes. I really wanted this. I really like the business, and I'm looking forward to it."

Calabrese was among the first group of job-seek-

ers to complete training at MCCTI in Springfield. Holyoke Community College and Springfield Technical Community College, in collaboration with MGM, created the training school to help people learn skills to work at MGM Springfield. The next round of classes will start Sept. 10. MGM, which officially opens this Friday, has hired 3,000 people, including several graduates from MCCTI.

MCCTI offers classes in blackjack, carnival games, roulette, mini baccarat, craps and poker. According to Michele Cabral, director of MCCTI, "Approximately 200 people started classes in the spring. Many took multiple classes. Over 80 percent received job offers, while others decided to pursue different careers or are planning to continue classes in the fall."

"We're proud of the MCCTI graduates who are starting new jobs at MGM Springfield," STCC president John B. Cook said. "It wasn't luck that got them hired. It was hard work and determination. We're thrilled that the gaming school opened the door to a new career

for so many people."

"One of our goals as community colleges is to provide a quality workforce for area employers," said HCC president Christina Royal. "HCC's collaborations with STCC make this a top priority and the MCCTI partnership with MGM Springfield aligns with our long history of helping people in the community find career pathways."

The trainees who earned certificates and were hired by MGM bring different experiences to the gaming floor. Some decided to change careers. Others are entering the job market for the first time. While they come from diverse backgrounds, they share a common purpose: to make sure customers have fun.

"It's all about customer service," Calabrese said. "You have to go above and beyond to make customers happy."

To register for gaming classes and find more information, visit www.mccti.org/school.html. Blackjack and roulette classes begin Sept. 10. Craps, mini baccarat and carnival game classes start in October. Scholarships are available.