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# Business Monday

D | *The Republican* | MONDAY, APRIL 23, 2018

## Savoring the taste of success



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## ON THE COVER

# The taste of success



ANTHONY  
CARATOZZOLO



CHRIS  
SMIGEL



NATHANIEL  
WAUGAMAN



DAVID  
BENNETT



ANDRES  
GOMEZ

MGM Springfield offering delicious opportunities for culinary students

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**C**hris Smigel, assistant executive chef at MGM Springfield, moved up the career ladder at the soon-to-open casino before he was even hired.

A Westfield native who got his culinary training at Johnson & Wales University in Rhode Island, Smigel applied to MGM hoping for a job as a chef running one of its restaurants.

Instead, he was hired to oversee culinary operations for all MGM-operated facilities on the property in Springfield's South End. It's a step up for him, having worked for Hyatt Hotels for 10 years with stops in Austin, New Orleans and, most recently, Cambridge. The MGM Springfield job has allowed him to buy a home and move back to Westfield.

"This is an opportunity that didn't exist here," he said. "I never thought I'd get the opportunity to move forward with my career and do it close to home."

Five newly hired food and beverage executives sat down with The Republican recently to talk about opportunities at MGM Springfield as the \$960 million resort casino nears its expected September opening date.

They were:

- Smigel;
- Andres Gomez, director of restaurants;
- Anthony Caratozzolo, vice president of food and beverage;
- Nathaniel Waugaman, executive chef; and
- David L. Bennett, food and beverage project manager.

The interview was in part a recruiting pitch. Caratozzolo spoke of upcoming hiring events and Waugaman spoke of his growing relationships with area trade schools and MGM's work developing the Holyoke Community College MGM Culinary Arts Institute in collaboration with HCC. Some of the chefs that MGM has hired demonstrated their skills at the culinary center's grand opening



A grand opening celebration was held recently at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute in the old Cubit Building on Race Street in downtown Holyoke. (DON TREEGER / THE REPUBLICAN)



HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute student Heart Mosier gives a tour of the facility to Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito during the recent grand opening. See more photos online at [Masslive.com](http://Masslive.com). (DON TREEGER / THE REPUBLICAN)

last week.

The MGM food and beverage executives also focused on how much work they need to do, the hiring events coming up in May and June and how MGM Springfield will have a local feel, with New England seafood and local craft beer. Even the selection of cheeses will focus on New England products.

Besides, Smigel, Gomez and Bennett are also local. Gomez is originally from Puerto Rico and now lives in Ludlow. Bennett, a UMass graduate, lives in Longmeadow.

Gomez said the next step in his career journey simply didn't exist here before MGM Springfield. No other food operator was large enough to offer him an opportunity for advancement, he said.

"It would probably have meant me picking up and leaving the area," he said.

Caratozzolo said he has the biggest recruiting job in the organization, needing to hire 800 people before September.

He said the hiring events won't be like other job fairs. Prospective employees should expect an audition, with MGM bosses put-

ting a knife in their hands.

"There is a job for everyone at MGM," he said. "Every level of skill."

Caratozzolo, top man on the food pyramid here, said MGM Springfield is different from other MGM properties in that the company normally builds buildings from scratch. Here, MGM is renovating existing buildings.

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, he worked as a lead cook at MGM's Beau Rivage resort in Mississippi and was in Las Vegas before coming to Springfield.

MGM Springfield restaurants will have doors out onto the street, he said. That's not typical at casino properties.

He said food service will also be different in Springfield because staff will focus on both the customer who comes just to eat and the casino gambler whose food is comped. It'll be a fifty-fifty mix, he said.

That's similar to the Vegas business model, built on conventioners and tourists and different than most regional casinos where food staffers are told to prioritize the gamblers.