

Gun Lake Casino Appoints Virginia Vanderband Executive Director of Operational Development and Training



Virginia Vanderband

Gun Lake Casino recently announced the promotion of Virginia Vanderband to Executive Director of Operational Development and Training.

“I’m excited to promote Virginia to the newly created role of Executive Director of Operational Development and Training,” said Sal Semola, President and Chief Operating Officer for Gun Lake Casino. “Virginia has a unique passion for working with and developing Team Members to be their best while connecting the dots for organizational purpose. This role will help her further contribute to the success of Gun Lake Casino and maintain our position as a premier employer in western Michigan.”

Vanderband is a proud citizen of the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi and started with Gun Lake casino over nine years ago as the director of training. Vanderband developed preopening plans for all training and onboarding programs from concept to implementation that became the foundation for Gun Lake Casino’s success. Over the course of nine years, Vanderband has contributed to the growth and development of each team member that has worked at the facility.

Prior to joining Gun Lake Casino, Vanderband worked at Principal Financial Group in Des Moines, IA where she successfully led relationship building training initiatives and developed new training programs to support business goals. Throughout her career, she has focused on training and development with a strong focus on customer relations, guest service, and leadership development.

In this new role, Vanderband will be responsible for strategic workforce planning activities, including the overall administration, coordination and evaluation of the professional development and staff training functions for Gun Lake Casino.

Pechanga Chefs Marlene Moore and Ronnel Capacia Honored by Temecula Valley School Board

Chef Marlene Moore of the Pechanga Food Court and Chef Ronnel Capacia of Journey’s End and the Coveside Grill were recently honored by the Temecula Valley School Board for their work with Temecula Valley High School culinary students during the 2019 Battle of the Burgers event.

Chef Marlene Moore and culinary student Kayle Carriere won the People’s Choice Award for Best Loaded Fries with their Surf & Turf Loaded Fries entry. Chef Ronnel Capacia



L-R: Allan Williams (TVHS principal), Chef Marlene Moore, Jadyn Hepler, and Chef Ronnel Capacia

and culinary student Jadyn Hepler won the Judges’ Choice for their Loaded Chicken Fries.

The Battle of the Burgers was held in late October 2019. The event brings together about a dozen restaurants from around Temecula to Pechanga to compete for the title of Best Burger. The second part of the culinary competition matches Temecula Valley High School (TVHS) students with professional chefs who work at Pechanga Resort Casino. The students, all studying culinary arts at TVHS, become the head chefs and the pro chefs become their sous chefs. Pechanga’s chefs help the students work through their loaded fries recipe creation, flavor profiles of the dish, presentation and more.

The 2019 Battle of the Burgers was the third year of the event and the second to be held at Pechanga Resort Casino. It’s open to the public and all proceeds benefit the Career and Technical Education programs across Temecula’s three high schools. The event raised more than \$8,000.

Bulletproof Announces Chris Johnston as New CEO



Chris Johnston

Bulletproof recently announced that Chris Johnston has been named Chief Executive Officer (CEO). A strong leader with a diverse background across several industries, in recent years Johnston has been integral in driving Bulletproof growth while leading the company’s sales organization. This change will mark a new chapter in this company’s story, with a future led by those who have helped build it over its 20-year history.

Long time Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder of Bulletproof, Steven Burns, will be stepping down as CEO and taking on the role of Chairman/Advisor. In his new role, he will continue to be a trusted advisor to the senior leadership team.

“I am extremely pleased to announce that Chris Johnston has been named as CEO of Bulletproof. Chris has been involved in our company for some 10 years and has a great

handle on who we are and, most importantly, who we can be. Chris has a strong vision for our future growth; leveraging the potential and momentum we've been able to generate over the last several years," said Burns.

James Maida, President and CEO of GLI Group and principal owner of Bulletproof said, "I'm very happy that we have been able to secure Chris Johnston in the role of CEO. Chris has been instrumental in the growth of Bulletproof over the past few years and has a deep knowledge of the company and its capabilities. It's very exciting for me to have Chris at the helm as Bulletproof embarks on a new era of growth and expansion."

Kohl-Welles Awards Martin Luther King Medal of Distinguished Service to Colleen Echohawk



L-R: King County, WA Councilmember Jeanne Kohl-Welles and Colleen Echohawk.

King County Councilmember Jeanne Kohl-Welles recently awarded Colleen Echohawk with the Martin Luther King Medal of Distinguished Service, an annual award that recognizes individuals whose work has answered the question asked by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – "What are you doing for others?"

"It's very rare to find someone so dedicated to working for the greater good, someone who sees value in all people and is willing to courageously fight for them every day," Kohl-Welles said. "Colleen Echohawk is one of those rare examples of someone who truly lives to answer Dr. Martin Luther King's question. I'm fortunate to have her as a constituent in District 4."

As Executive Director of the Chief Seattle Club and founder of the Coalition to End Urban Native Homelessness, Echohawk is committed to homeless advocacy and changing the trajectory of Native American and Alaska Native people living away from reservations in urban places and experiencing homelessness. An enrolled member of the Kithchaki Band of the Pawnee Nation and a member of the Upper Athabascan people of Mentasta Lake, she focuses on creating systems and structures that help facilitate wellness and encourage kindness and courage.

Named as one of Seattle's most influential people by

Seattle Magazine in 2019 and one of *Seattle Met Magazine's* 50 most influential women in 2018, Echohawk has also been awarded the Adeline Garcia Community Service Award (2018), Antioch University's Public Service Award (2018), and Crosscut Media's Courage Award for Public Service (2016). Under Echohawk's leadership, Chief Seattle Club was the winner of the 2017 Neighborhood Builder Award, and Municipal League of King County's Organization of the Year (2016).

BlueBird, CPAs Announces the Promotion of Sara Lee, Joshua Peukert, and Ying Vue to Junior Partner



Sara Lee

To further BlueBird, CPAs' growth and future expansion, the company recently announced the promotion of Sara Lee, CPA, Joshua Peukert, CFE, CIA, and Ying Vue, CPA to Junior Partner.

Sara Lee's areas of expertise include tribal and casino financial audits, employee development and training, and audit report technical review. Lee created and implements the BlueBird training program to help lower level

staff excel in tribal and gaming audits.

Joshua Peukert is one of BlueBird's MICS Compliance AUP specialists, managing internal audits, Title 31 Compliance audits, and various agreed-upon procedures engagements. Peukert frequently provides gaming related training sessions at tradeshow and conferences, and for the NIGA Commissioners Certification Training series.



Josh Peukert



Ying Vue

Ying Vue manages the audits of multiple tribal governments and casino properties and performs the quality and technical reviews of several engagements. With expertise developed throughout her time at BlueBird, Vue now serves as a leader who manages and guides teams of newer accountants to project success.

"We are excited to promote Sara, Josh, and Ying to Junior Partners.

During their time at BlueBird, each has displayed dedication in providing excellent client service, mentoring and training new staff, along with building long lasting relationships with our clients to help foster the firm's long-term success," said BlueBird Partner, George Metkovich. "We look forward to Sara, Josh, and Ying joining the partner team and bringing their areas of expertise to BlueBird in the coming years." ♣