

Spirit of Sovereignty Slot Tournament Raises \$11,000 to Benefit Native Youth



Isaiah Vivanco, Vice-Chairman of the Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians, captured first place at the Third Annual Charity Slot Tournament to benefit the Spirit of Sovereignty, continuing Soboba's three-year run of success in the event. The tournament was held April 3rd during the 2019 Indian Gaming Tradeshow and Convention in San Diego. It was hosted by National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. in partnership with IGT on its IncrediBell! slot tournament solution.

The top three finishers in the event can donate their winnings to tribal college scholarships or reservation-based programs serving Native youth. Vice-Chairman Vivanco has directed his \$5,000 to be used for Native youth activities in Southern California, including a Youth Council End of the Year Summer Bash Event, and Youth Council Holiday Workshop.

Chairman Rodney Butler of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation finished second in the tournament and is directing his \$4,000 winnings to support United National Indian Tribal Youth (Unity, Inc.) "I truly appreciate IGT's partnership with NIGA to help coordinate such an impactful event," he said. "It provides an exciting way to raise money for our tribal youth and help build the future leaders of Indian Country."

Third-place winner Rjay Brunkow of the Indian Land Capital Company will donate \$2,000 to support scholarships at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in Minnesota. Brunkow has enjoyed playing in the tournament for the past three years. "Regardless of the outcome, it's always important to support higher education for our youth," he said.

"It's always an energizing event," said Spirit of Sovereignty coordinator David Garelick. "We are grateful to everyone who participated, but it was especially great to have tribal leaders join us this year. We would also like to give a special thank you to Chairman Stevens, Knute Knudson of IGT, Brian Sullivan at Clarion Events and all their associates who helped make the event possible."

Tournament participants included: NIGA Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr., and his special guest former NBA All-Star A.C. Green

(both sponsored by Indian Land Tenure Foundation); Chairman Rodney Butler, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation; Chairman Scott Cozart, Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians; Vice-Chairman Isaiah Vivanco, Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians; R. J. Brunkow, Indian Land Capital Company; Mary Kim Titla, Unity, Inc. (sponsored by Indian Land Capital Company); Paul Gordon, Rymax, Inc.; James Klas, Klas Robinson; Kelli Weaver, American Checked (on behalf of sponsor AGEM); and David Garelick, Indian Land Tenure Foundation.

Harrah's Cherokee Partner with Haywood Habitat for Humanity to Build a Home for Local Family



Harrah's Cherokee Casinos have been a long time partner with Habitat for Humanity, but this year the company is taking on a special project to support a local family in need by providing them with a place to call home.

Harrah's Cherokee Casinos began fundraising for this project in September of last year by selling two-by-four studs to its employees. Employees who purchased the studs were given the opportunity to write a special message to be built into the home. The event proved to be a huge success as it raised \$44,000. In addition to their fundraising efforts, Harrah's Cherokee has also organized volunteer days for its employees to go on site and provide hands-on assistance during the building process.

"As part of our commitment to our communities, we are always looking for the most effective ways to lend our support and efforts to make a difference," said Jo Ray, Regional Vice President of Community Relations and Employee Wellness for Harrah's Cherokee Casinos. "We have worked with Habitat for quite a while and felt it was time we took the step to sponsor a home and truly make a difference in someone's life. We look forward to continuing this relationship and building more homes."

The recipient of the home is Amy, a single mother who currently lives in Haywood County with her two children. Amy is thrilled to have been selected by Habitat for Humanity and is excited for her new 1,100 sq. ft. 3 bedroom, 2 bath home that is scheduled to be complete this fall.

A truss raising ceremony was held at the home site in March. During the event, Haywood Habitat Executive Director Jayme Sheppard said, "We are honored to partner with Harrah's

Cherokee. It's a great day when we are all working toward a shared belief that everyone deserves a decent place to live. We deeply appreciate that the employees and management of Harrah's are investing in our community and providing a hand up to those who need and deserve it."

Hard Rock Heals Foundation to Award Grant to Straz Center for the Performing Arts on Behalf of Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa



The Hard Rock Heals Foundation, in partnership with Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa, recently announced a \$5,000 grant to be awarded to the Straz Center for the Performing Arts as part of its commitment to improving the lives and resiliency of local communities through the power of music. The Straz Center for the Performing Arts is one of 50 local grant winners around the world to get support from Hard Rock International's charitable arm.

The \$5,000 grant will help support the music outreach component of the organization's 2018-2019 Straz Salutes Program, which is an initiative to honor and celebrate Tampa Bay's unique military community. The grant will assist in delivering music teaching artists and classes to youth in military families living at Tampa's MacDill Air Force Base, while also providing positive arts experiences for active and veteran members, caregivers and families that will help build bridges between civilian and military life through the arts.

"As part of our effort to improve lives through the power of music, our yearly grant program provides the opportunity for each Hard Rock team to nominate a charitable organization in their community. With properties in more than 75 countries, this process allows us to serve diverse, local communities through trusted partners that share our belief in the universal healing power of music," said Kellie Brown, Manager of Global Philanthropy for Hard Rock International.

This announcement marks the foundation's third consecutive year supporting community-run programs through grants that provide greater opportunities for those who share Hard Rock's passion for music. In 2019, the Hard Rock Heals Foundation will donate a total of \$250,000 to local charities in support of their music-related efforts.

Redding Rancheria Hosts Black & White Costume Party for 'A Year to Remember' Fundraiser



Lewiston Community Services District with the prize check given by the Redding Rancheria Tribal Government officials.

Approximately 500 community members came together and helped our Black & White Celebration for the 2019 Redding Rancheria's "A Year to Remember" annual fundraiser dinner.

"This year's event meant a lot to us. The fires of 2018 took its toll on so many in our community we wanted to make this event special for those who were affected. This year's event was extra special with the largest attendance, biggest auction and most sponsors. Together the event raised over \$52,000. We are grateful for the continued support we receive from the community in growing this beneficial fund. Thank you to all who were involved with the Redding Rancheria's Signature event. We can't wait till next year's event." said Tracy Edwards, Chief Executive Officer for the Redding Rancheria.

During the Black & White themed dinner, an additional gift of \$7,500 was awarded to two organizations who were affected by the 2018 Fires. All proceeds from the Redding Rancheria Community Fund Dinner will benefit the 2019 RRCF. The RRCF has donated over \$3million since its inception in 2002. 51 local organizations in Shasta and Trinity Counties received funds in 2018 totaling more than \$191,000.

Four Winds Invitational to Underwrite Pediatric Eye Imaging Equipment for Beacon Health System

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and Four Winds Casinos have announced that proceeds from the 2019 Four Winds Invitational will underwrite vital equipment for Beacon Health System – the purchase of pediatric eye imaging equipment for Beacon Children's Hospital.

The RetCam3® Pediatric Eye Imaging technology allows physicians to examine and evaluate the eyes of premature and full-term newborns for ocular diseases. Such images allow physicians to establish a baseline for future eye health. It also provides clear information that can be shared between physicians, ocular specialists and parents to make more informed decisions regarding the health of the child.

“To have this sophisticated technology in our facility will save parents and physicians untold amounts of stress by providing them with concrete information regarding the diagnosis and progression of their child’s ocular disease,” said Larry Tracy, President of Beacon Children’s Hospital. “Year after year, the Pokagon Band and Four Winds Casinos have put the health of children and adults of our region first. They support our mission to provide the best possible healing environment for our young patients and their families. We are grateful to the Pokagon Band, Four Winds Casinos, Blackthorn and all of the sponsors of the Four Winds Invitational whose efforts make all of this possible.”



“As a nation the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians are committed to the health and well-being of not just our own citizens, but to the health of the communities in which we live,” said Matthew Wesaw, Chairman of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians. “We share the core value with Beacon. It’s why we’re humbled to be in a position to support Beacon Health System through the Four Winds Invitational.”

“We are proud of the continued partnership we have with Beacon Health System,” said Frank Freedman, Chief Operating Officer of Four Winds Casinos. “It’s an honor to help develop projects and services that give back to the community in such an important way.”

American Indian College Fund to Continue College Access and Success Program with \$2.5 Million, Three-Year Grant

Native American and Alaska Native students are in a college-going and completion crisis. Research shows the national rate of all students going to college within six months of graduation after high school is 70%. For Native American and Alaska Native students, those numbers are closer to 20%.

The American Indian College Fund knows that education improves the lives of individuals, their families, and entire communities, yet scholarships are not enough for student success. It needed to create a college-going culture with prospective students to ensure the transition to college and support them while in college. Thanks to a \$2.5 million grant renewal for 36 months from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the College Fund will continue its work to increase college access and success through the College Fund’s Native Pathways to College Program.

The College Fund’s Pathways program is divided into four components working with students. The High School Admissions Pathway program works to increase the college-going rate of Native Pathways participants closer to the national college going rate. The College Bridge Pathway works to bring Tribal College and Universities (TCUs) and area high schools together to help prepare students for the academic and social environments at college. The Tribal College Transfer Pathway

aims to increase the retention rate of TCU students, increase the number of TCU graduates, and increase the number TCU graduates transferring to a four-year institution. The Student Success Pathway will support successful transition and increase retention of students who transition into a new institution of higher education.

The program will continue its work in broadening a college culture and college completion at more schools across the nation, with the goal of working with 90 reservation-based high schools and 30 TCUs in 11 states, impacting approximately 16,000 students. The College Fund will provide training materials and will work with students, staff, and community members on college access workshops, coaching, and events.

“The College Fund and the Andrew Mellon Foundation share a vision of equity that emerges when young people see themselves as having an education that leads to a better life,” Cheryl Crazy Bull, President and CEO of the American Indian College Fund. “Engaged, active citizenship rooted in Native identity is our goal. We know that all of society benefits from healthy communities, diverse knowledge, and improved economies. We are pleased that the Andrew. W. Mellon Foundation looks beyond the academy to the future of our society in our youth.”

Lake of the Torches Raises Nearly \$1,200 for The Salvation Army

Lake of the Torches and its guests recently rocked the night for The Salvation Army, raising nearly \$1,200 that will be used by the organization in the Northwoods, WI. The donation was the proceeds of the Boogie & the Yo-Yoz performance in the convention center. Boogie & the Yo-Yoz is a central Wisconsin band that plays all the hit pop, rock and country music from the ‘80s through today. Admission to the event, which included a dance floor and St. Patrick’s Day party favors, was \$5 with proceeds being donated to the charitable organization.

“We thank all of our guests who enjoyed themselves and who made this donation possible,” said Leana Schlecht, Director of Marketing at Lake of the Torches Resort Casino. “The Salvation Army provides the Northwoods community with critical assistance for those who need extra help making ends meet and those who have been devastated by a fire or natural disaster.”

The donation will be used to help the many programs The Salvation Army provides for local and Northwoods residents. One such program is the voucher program in which volunteers from throughout the area offer financial assistance for rent, utilities, transportation and other personal necessities to individuals undergoing financial hardship or similar circumstances. This program is run by volunteers in each county and Lac du Flambeau has had its own representative to help local residents for more than 20 years.

Others services provided to Northwoods residents include disaster assistance and providing food and beverages to first responders at major incidents, emergency housing for those undergoing financial hardship and youth programs. The donation from the concert will be used for these programs in the Northwoods. ♣