

## Tribe opens Oklahoma's largest casino

Posted 7/27/2006 10:26 AM ET

GOLDSBY, Okla. (AP) — Boasting a Las Vegas-style experience, the state's largest casino has opened its doors in central Oklahoma.

With its 219,000 square-foot building on 15.5 acres just south of Norman, Riverwind Casino is almost double the size of Las Vegas' Caesar's Palace and The Mirage casinos. The casino opened its doors July 17, and even without advertising, some 2,000 people were lined up outside the doors. A grand-opening ceremony is set for Aug. 10.

"We have the latest and newest games, and our goal is to create a quality experience unlike anything our customers have ever seen in Oklahoma," said Chickasaw Enterprises CEO Brian Campbell. "We're trying to achieve a Las Vegas-style experience."

The casino, the 18th for the Chickasaw Nation, will employ 1,800 full and part-time employees, and Campbell predicted a significant economic impact on local communities.

The casino's blue exterior and large flashing sign just west of Interstate 35 lures the eyes of travelers. The interior features a variety of abstract designs, an array of colors and flashing lights that surround the 2,220 electronic games and 72 black jack and poker tables. The casino also has a horse racing off-track betting room, which simulcasts races from across the country.

Inside, the casino holds two full-sized restaurants, a coffee shop, a food court with recognized favorites like Taco Bueno, Pizza Subs and Wings and Cinnabon, and a bar and lounge. Its Showplace Theatre will feature performances by artists like The Temptations, Jewel and The Beach Boys.

The theater seats 1,500 people and has three levels, including a mezzanine level with VIP sections.

Casino patrons said Riverwind is on par with casinos in Las Vegas.

Oklahoma City resident Brandi Murphy said she usually goes to Las Vegas a couple of times a year, as well as Tunica, Miss., and Remington Park. She also liked to go to WinStar Casino, another Chickasaw Nation casino near the Texas state line, but said it was too far to drive.

"This is great to have so close to the city," Murphy said. "The variety of slot machines is great. I don't really play the table games. I want to bring my parents to show them (the casino.)"

Another casino customer, Desiree Townsend of Dallas, said she was just passing through when she decided to stop.

"It's beautiful — really nice," Townsend said. "It's just like Vegas."

Townsend said she visits tribal casinos occasionally, but Riverwind has been the best she's ever seen because of the games and atmosphere.

The Riverwind name was inspired by the winds that blow across the Oklahoma prairies and the south Canadian River, and designers planned a unique look for the building, Campbell said.

"It's very abstract. We wanted to think outside the box," Campbell said, "and it's working."