

Rivers Casino Portsmouth bustling for charity ahead of grand opening to general public

Written by Administrator

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13News Now spoke with players on the gaming floor who said the casino's arrival carries a deeper meaning for the community.

PORTSMOUTH, Va. — Just days away from the grand opening of [Rivers Casino Portsmouth](#), and the wins are already coming.

Scores of invited guests filed into the \$340 million facility for the very first time Thursday night.

It was for the first of two installments of invitation-only charity test-run nights, so that casino executives can ensure their gaming equipment works up to part while donating earnings to charities in the region.

13News Now spent approximately an hour on the gaming floor, speaking with players, charity partners, representatives and more. The atmosphere was electric, and the energy stayed high among the large crowd.

"It's exciting. It's a vibe," said Tammy Boone, a Hampton Roads resident.

The casino is Virginia's first full-service permanent casino, a venue for gaming, dining and entertainment.

"We've been waiting on this for a very, very, very long time, and this is exactly what the city needs," said Coley Cole Wigfall, another Hampton Roads resident we met on the gaming floor. "We love Rivers Casino coming here to Portsmouth. It's magical in the air right now."

"Now I don't have to travel out of town to Dover and Foxwoods and all those other places," Boone added. "So, this is great for Portsmouth."

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And great for three local nonprofits, who stand to benefit from a series of exclusive invitation-only test-run nights. The casino held the first event on Thursday night, and another will be held Saturday.

Players, of course, collect their winnings. However, test event proceeds will go to the following organizations.

"This helps us support the service members and their families around this whole area. We operate six centers here in the Hampton Roads and Central Virginia area. And then we operate many off-site programming and events for them throughout the course of the year," said Kenny Miller, center operations and program manager with USO Hampton Roads and Central Virginia.

"We're actually rehabbing our building for our free head start program, so this will go toward that rehab," said Renyatta Banks, executive director of Wesley Community Service Center. ["This is awesome. This is like going to Disney after winning the Super Bowl."](#)

"We're part of a community and the community is out in full force to really welcome and embrace us. It's spectacular," said Rivers Casino Portsmouth General Manager Roy Corby, who shared his reaction to the turnout Thursday night.

Corby reflected on the journey to reach this point.

"408 days ago, it was me and a shovel and four other people. I was the only employee of Rivers Casino Portsmouth," he said.

About 1,100 employees are now on board, Corby told 13News Now, and while he wants to see another couple hundred join the team, he said things shaping up well for a successful grand opening to the general public.

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"On Monday [January 23], everyone can come out and everything will be open," said Corby.

By the numbers, Corby explained the multi-million dollar facility includes 1,448 slot machines, 57 tables, 24 poker tables and several restaurants and bars.

At the center of it all is the biggest sportsbook in the state, Corby touted.

Initially slated to open earlier this month, the casino did hit a delay in opening to allow more time for equipment tests.

However, with the grand opening just days away, Mayor Shannon Glover of Portsmouth called it all a "dream come true."

"This place is everything we thought it would be and more," he said. "It can continue to attract folks to come to our city and see everything we have to offer."

13News Now Anchor David Alan recently traveled to Rivers Casino Pittsburgh, the model for what is being debuted on Victory Boulevard.

See what we found in our special [Rivers Casino Portsmouth: Betting Big](#) . You can watch it below.

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