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Bill Rice, Jr., managing editor of The Independent, contributed to this report.

VictoryLand opens new West Wing, more to come!

"We're far from finished. We're in the process of making VictoryLand a world-class entertainment destination, and the West Wing is certainly a major step in that direction." - Milton McGregor

Oasis buffet restaurant will soon be joined with one of the region's biggest seafood and steakhouse restaurants. Contractors have been working on different aspects of the expanding entertainment venue for at least 34 months.

Facility now 'largest gaming complex of its kind in the world'

SHORTER -With the opening Monday of its new 56,000-square-foot West Wing, VictoryLand continued the expansion of its Quincy's Triple Seven complex, which moved into a gleaming new facility less than 12 months ago. The addition of the West Wing with its 1,500 gaming machines brings the total number of Class II bingo machines at Quincy's Triple Seven to over 6,000. VictoryLand now has the distinction of being the largest pari-mutuel and Class II charity bingo facility in the world.

The machines are the most modern in the world and utilize the highest levels of technology. The new wing also encompasses a nightclub featuring live entertainment and an ice cream shop called Luigi's. Many other facilities are on the drawing board as VictoryLand continues its expansion plan to become a world-class, multi-faceted entertainment destination. In ceremonies opening the doors of the new West Wing, Milton McGregor, president of the entertainment complex in Shorter, Alabama, said, "This complex represents a multi-million-dollar investment in the economy of Macon County and has been three years in the making.

"But we're far from finished. We're in the process of making VictoryLand a world-class entertainment destination, and the West Wing is certainly a major step in that direction," he remarked. "... I hope you like what you see" he told visitors and media members.

Huge expansion

on many fronts McGregor noted that in addition to its expansive new Quincy's Triple Seven gaming complex, VictoryLand has opened in the past nine months a Las Vegas style sports bar called the Sportsbook, Lulu's gift shop and a lavish buffet and restaurant called the Oasis. The Oasis features gourmet food selections, an upscale décor and top-tier service. In

the next few months VictoryLand will open other fine dining establishments including a steakhouse and a seafood restaurant.

In remarks to the media before Monday's ribbon cutting, McGregor said at 14,000-square foot restaurant will be one of the "largest oyster bars in America." He noted with a smile that he is a big fan of Appalachicola oysters.

World-class hotel, conference center in the works

A major addition to the rapidly expanding VictoryLand complex will be a new hotel with a conference center and a world-class entertainment venue hosting Las Vegas style shows and big-name entertainers. The hotel, called the Oasis, will be a nine-story, 300-room facility when it opens this fall. Future expansion calls for the addition of two 500-room towers. The conference center with an exhibition hall is slated to open in the spring of 2010. It will be followed by the opening of a 1,500-seat entertainment facility featuring amphitheater-style seating.

The Victoryland entertainment complex already features a giant parking lot and 1,000-vehicle parking deck. A new parking deck adjacent to the hotel and conference center will accommodate another 2,000 vehicles when completed.

McGregor thanked and praised his primary contractor Brasfield and Gorrie of Birmingham as well as the many sub-contractors. He said construction workers - as many as 200 at a time - have been working on various expansion and renovation projects at the site for 34 to 35 months "and this will continue."

History of major economic impact

Established in 1984 as a greyhound racetrack, VictoryLand has steadily expanded its entertainment offerings over the years. Simulcast dog and horse racing was added in the early 1990s. Through simulcasting, racing was televised live as it happened from tracks around the country. Patrons at VictoryLand were able to join patrons from other tracks in wagering for much greater payouts than could be offered at one track alone.

In November 2003, Class II charity bingo was added to the entertainment roster. While offering traditional bingo with cards and daubers, VictoryLand saw its electronic bingo on state-of-the-art gaming machines take off like a rocket. The growth has steadily increased as evidenced by the newly opened West Wing. Spurring the popularity of the facility are the large jackpots paying out as much as \$1 million for just one game. One recent winner took home \$650,000. There have been other huge winners, including one who took home over \$1 million. The VictoryLand complex of gaming, racing and dining employs over 1,600 people and expects that number

to increase to 2,250 when expansion is complete.

McGregor said that such impressive employment figures help reduce crime in the area, a fact he said has been confirmed by area law enforcement officials. High unemployment rates lead to higher crime, he noted. VictoryLand is the largest employer in Macon County and the largest payer of sales tax and ad valorem tax in the county. It will also be the largest payer of lodging tax when the hotel is completed.

A portion of the lodging tax will go to the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel to promote tourism throughout the state. VictoryLand also pays parimutuel taxes that go to the state's general fund. In addition, VictoryLand contributes thousands of dollars every week to 60 charities in the noted.