



IN BUSINESS Las Vegas

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DIVERSITY

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PUBLISHER

Bruce Spotleson bruce@gmgvegas.com

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT Terry Martin (990-2443)

EDITORIAL

SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS EDITOR Rob Langrell

STAFF WRITERS Alana Roberts

Brian Sodoma

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS Danielle Birkin

Lisa McQuerrey

CREATIVE

EDITORIAL DESIGNERS Adam Bucci

Bradley Samuels

ADVERTISING CREATIVE DIRECTOR Thomas Jackman

ADVERTISING

SALES MANAGER Debbie Donaldson (990-2457)

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES Allen Grant (990-8991)

Kelly Behrens-Keidel (990-8969)

Bessy Lee (990-8948)

Carol Skerlich (990-2503)

ACCOUNT COORDINATOR Sue Sran (990-8911)

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Steven R. Wilson

PRODUCTION MANAGER Blue Uyeda

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT Marissa Gable

Cindy Johnson

TRAFFIC COORDINATOR Janine Hughes

SYSTEMS MANAGER Nick Scheib

CIRCULATION

VP OF CIRCULATION Kris Donnelly (990-8994)

CLIENT RELATIONS MGR. Rhona Cameron (461-6434)

ROUTE MANAGER Lindsey Chapter (990-8187)

CIRCULATION ASSISTANT Doris Hollifield (990-8993)

GREENSPUN MEDIA GROUP

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD Daniel A. Greenspun

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VP OF FINANCE Steve Gray

HUMAN RESOURCES John Ottone

DIR. OF PUBLIC RELATIONS Kelli Maruca

BRAND MANAGER Amy Dye



From the Editor



Dear readers,

Look around the next time you're at a shopping mall or a grocery store. You'll see just how diverse our community has become.

For the first time, we've dedicated one of our special publications to the topic of diversity. Local companies have begun paying attention to this issue — and that's a good thing. Having a diverse workforce in Southern Nevada

is important.

In this publication, we have a story that addresses the importance of diversity and what some of the valley's businesses are doing to accomplish its goals in these areas. Diversity isn't about having quotas or preventing discrimination. It's something companies want to do in today's workplace.

Additionally, we have provided a look at some of the faces that comprise

our diverse business base. Enjoy reading profiles of some of the people who represent the different backgrounds and beliefs that make all of us unique.

Rob Langrell

Special Publications Editor
rob.langrell@gmgvegas.com
(702) 990-2490

From the Sponsor



Dear IBLV readers,

On behalf of our nearly 2,000 team members in Southern Nevada, Wells Fargo is proud to support this In Business Las Vegas special section promoting diversity.

Wells Fargo has supported diversity since our earliest days. During the late 1800s, Wells Fargo's rules and instructions to employees stated: "The most polite and gentlemanly treatment of all customers ... is insisted upon.

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What better time to celebrate the value diversity brings to our community than Diversity Month! As we continue to learn about our friends, neighbors and coworkers, our connections to each other grow — and the vitality of our community grows with us.

Thank you to In Business Las Vegas for publishing this special section, and to you, the readers, for taking the time to celebrate diversity and share its importance throughout the year.

Doris Charles

Southern Nevada Community Bank Regional President
Wells Fargo

**WELLS
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Southern Nevada companies evolving to meet needs of diverse community

By Lisa McQuerrey
Contributing writer

Diversity. It's a word so commonly used that many say its true definition has been lost.

The word itself, simply put, means difference. Diversity is mistakenly compared in many ways to affirmative action, introduced in the 1970s and defined as policy designed to redress past discrimination against women and minority groups through measures to improve their economic and educational opportunities.

In today's society, diversity is holding a more far-ranging meaning, expanding not only to color of skin, ethnicity or gender, but to marital status, sexual preference, age and physical capability. What do individuals of different backgrounds bring to the

workplace? For many local businesses, both large and small, diversity is not simply a matter of creating social equality — it's a calculated business decision.

Diversity in gaming

As the largest employers in the region, Southern Nevada's gaming properties have all taken proactive roles in putting formal diversity initiatives in place. While none admit to radically changing hiring policies, taking "head counts" or setting internal hiring quotas, most say the process is more about creating awareness of and respect for the differences found among its employee base.

MGM MIRAGE is perhaps the most notable large company in the state proactively promoting diversity in its workforce, its vendors and its contractors. Noted by many gaming properties as being

the "gold standard" others strive to emulate, MGM MIRAGE has not simply enacted a corporate-wide diversity initiative. With a mission statement that "acknowledges and values the contribution of all people," the company has ingrained that underlying policy into every aspect of its operations.

"Quotas focus on counting heads," explained Punam Mathur, MGM MIRAGE's senior vice president of corporate diversity and community affairs. "What we're talking about is developing a value system in which heads count. We're not just creating a color palette. The dimensions of diversity are far greater than the days of affirmative action."

MGM MIRAGE created its Corporate Diversity and Community Affairs Department in 2001 and has expanded to include a diversity

DIVERSE FROM PAGE 3A

committee within its board of directors as well as a corporate diversity council comprised of major executive department representatives. The company also boasts purchasing and construction diversity councils as well as its own in-house Diversity Champion Training

minority subcontractors," said Rizzo, noting diversity initiatives in place include workshops, recruitment, outreach and establishment of a business advisory council that helps minority contractors with business-related issues.

"We have to tap every resource possible to get this done," added Rizzo, who said his company was not aware of the vast array

Boyd Gaming Corp. has historically encouraged and promoted diversity in hiring and in its vendor base, but just recently formalized its practice.

"Sam Boyd was one of the first to hire women dealers when he was general manager of The Mint," said Boyd Gaming Corp. spokesman Rob Stillwell. "We've had an unofficial approach to

multi-lingual interpretation, translation and language skills assessment services. Company professionals help clients measure the language skills of their employees and work with human resources departments to institute appropriate training programs to ensure a person can do his or her job effectively. Company president Maria Marinch explained that certain words

"... diversity, to me, is basically a sensitivity to differences. That's what good diversity practices need to be. It's a matter of executing strategies and policies that respect those differences."

Chrysanthé Georges Sawyer, President, Georges Marketing

Program, which strives to create a deeper understanding of issues related to diversity of staff and of customers.

"We share fiduciary responsibility to our shareholders," Mathur explained. "We want people to see the connection between our success and our diversity."

Mathur noted it's not enough to make the effort to embrace diversity — the effort must be sincere to be effective. "You have to align everything you do to walk the talk."

An example of how MGM MIRAGE's diversity efforts have paid off from a business perspective can be found in the property's attraction of high-end Asian players. Thirty years ago, the company was one of the first properties to recognize the potential in this market segment and made efforts to attract high-level play by educating employees about Asian culture and language. Understanding everything from cultural superstitions about certain numbers to the art of feng shui, the property achieved its goal of attracting and retaining key business.

"We have a high percentage of Asian employees," Mathur said. "It's not tokenism. It's good business."

In late April, the company appointed a national diversity sales manager to develop and implement a business strategy to attract diverse markets and consumers. In early May MGM MIRAGE hosted its third annual Diversity Expo, which presented vendors and business owners with the opportunity to meet key purchasing agents and gain a better understanding of the protocol for forming relationships with the company.

For MGM MIRAGE, diversity initiatives aren't just about social responsibility — they say it's also business strategy. MGM MIRAGE asks its contractors to join in diversification efforts as well by recruiting certified minority-owned business to work as subcontractors. "It's a unique opportunity," Mathur said. "The largeness of us in the community allows us to bring others along. It uplifts the community ... all they need is a shot, and we've been able to help them rise to higher aspirations."

Perini Construction is the general contractor on MGM MIRAGE's \$70 billion CityCenter project. Perini Chairman Dick Rizzo is spearheading the firm's diversity efforts.

"It's a challenge, as the contractor, to look outside the box to increase the percentage of

of resources available within the minority contracting community until it joined MGM MIRAGE's diversity initiative. "Now that we've started doing this, it's a big benefit to us."

Harrah's diversity program covers a wide range of categories, counting among its diversified vendors the traditional minority and women-owned businesses and disabled veterans as well as nonprofit entities and Historically Underutilized Business Zones, or HUB, a Small Business Administration program that helps provide federal contracting opportunities for small businesses located in "distressed areas." The company recently hosted the third annual Harrah's Alliance Day in conjunction with three local area chambers of commerce. The event allowed minority vendors the opportunity to meet with purchasing representatives from Harrah's properties.

Station Casinos provides certified minority businesses with one-on-one access to purchasing representatives, information sessions and workshops to provide certified vendors with a host of information ranging

diversity since the early days, but in 2004, we formalized the program. Today it's becoming a more important aspect of business. The true meaning of diversity is about far more than race and gender."

Throughout its 19 properties in six states, Boyd had a year-end 2005 minority representation rate of 49.8 percent. "We look for a fair and balanced workforce representative of the communities where we operate," said Stillwell. "In the future we'll look for opportunities to grow our diversity initiatives. We're focusing on establishing individual diversity committees at various properties that report back to our diversity council."

While certainly the most prominent, gaming properties aren't the only Las Vegas businesses diversifying their workforces.

Asked to define the term, "diversity," Diane Pollard, co-owner of Rainbow Medical Centers, said, "An inclusion of all people at all levels, from entry through management."

"People relate to people who look like them,"

and ideas don't translate from one ethnic group to another, so part of her company's process involves vocabulary building and training to build skills and develop both spoken and written clarity. Language Sources also provides public relations and marketing services geared toward the Hispanic market.

"Some find it harder to penetrate the Hispanic market," Marinch said. "But it's a trust-building process. The market is broad and there are segments within segments. Tactics have to be long-term to maximize impact."

"The term diversity is overused, but that's OK," said Chrysanthé Georges Sawyer, president of Georges Marketing. "It creates an awareness. It's a practice all companies need to employ as we have an increasing number of immigrants, and the children they have will become players in the work world."

Added Sawyer, "Diversity, to me, is basically a sensitivity to differences. That's what good diversity practices need to be. It's a matter of executing strategies and policies that respect those differences."

Georges Marketing focuses on providing services related to strategy and marketing plan development, integrated communications design and new business development. Sawyer noted there's a big difference between naiveté and ignorance — just because someone doesn't know how to fill out a standard English-language job application doesn't mean they don't have exceptional skills and the ability to do the job. "Our population of Hispanics is growing exponentially," Sawyer added. "We can't deny they're here. They cling to their language and their culture and we have to be willing to embrace that."

In terms of issues related to the hotly-debated hiring of illegal immigrants, Sawyer said while she sees most companies doing a good job of ensuring employees are appropriately documented, at the other end of the spectrum are undocumented workers with lower educations getting taken advantage of in the marketplace.

Sawyer said she sees diversity efforts as a challenge for business owners, particularly small ones. "You want to diversify for the sake of employees, customers and for good citizenship, but it's more of a challenge for small businesses. Small businesses can't afford to hire for ethnicity over skills."

Large parts of diversity initiatives focus on understanding the cultural nuances of various ethnic groups — both those a company employs and those it serves. Sawyer noted that some ethnic groups integrate themselves into American culture, "assimilating" to a point where they abandon their cultural heritage in favor of melding into their new environment. Others, such as the Hispanic population, "acculturate," — become part of another culture while clinging fast to beliefs, cultural traits and heritage.

"One of the most important things in



From left to right: Diane Pollard, Valerie Murzl & Chrysanthé Georges Sawyer

from procurement strategies and the bid process to networking and securing contracts.

"Having a diverse workforce in our company is important to us because it allows us to match the demographics of community with our 14,000-plus team members," said Valerie Murzl, vice president of human resources for Station Casinos. "And it's a great retention tool for us as well. In fact, *Fortune* Magazine, which ranked us for the second year in row as one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For, also recognized us among the most diverse companies on the list, with minorities making up 48 percent of our U.S. workforce."

noted Pollard, who said she's proud of the fact that Rainbow Medical Centers have a very diverse staff, even though it hires strictly on skill set. Ninety percent of Rainbow offices have a Spanish-speaking person on staff, and medical literature is available in several languages.

The business of diversity

Diversity is actually becoming big business, with many consultants developing companies designed to help businesses of all size integrate their workforces, better understand minority markets and fully see the business benefit of embracing change and accepting a culturally evolving community.

Language Sources Inc. provides clients with

communicating with Hispanics is to have an understanding of cultural nuances,” said Sawyer, using the Hispanic market as an example while noting that other ethnic groups have unique and individual cultural idiosyncrasies as well. “For example, when a Hispanic customer goes to buy a home, a decision is made by the whole family. When they go to the doctor, the whole family makes decisions. A business owner who knows that will have three or four extra seats available.”

Advocates of diversity: The chambers

Las Vegas is home to more than a half dozen chambers of commerce representing an array of minority business professionals.

“The gaming industry has stepped up to the plate, but before 2000, there was very little commitment to diversity,” said Louis Overstreet, director of the Urban Chamber of Commerce. “Fifty percent of today’s kids under age 5 are minorities, so we need to take a look at changing future demographics and develop our future workforce. Smart companies are aware of that fact.”

“If we didn’t have diversity of our workforce, this town wouldn’t work,” said Otto Merida of the Latin Chamber of Commerce. “The number of Hispanics working in the gaming industry is huge and the gaming industry is the backbone of this state.”

The Latin Chamber assists members in business start-up and provides information on how to get loans, gaming and commercial contracts. The organization recently participated in the third annual Harrah’s Alliance Day, designed to introduce the company to diversified suppliers.

“I think we’re moving forward,” said Sandy Saito, director of business development for the Asian Chamber of Commerce. “Though



some say not as fast as we should be. It’s a delicate issue.”

Saito said a large part of understanding diversity is in gaining a better awareness of cultural differences, including protocols, gestures, procedures and behaviors, recognizing that what might seem “ordinary” in America — a handshake for example — may be deemed offensive by another culture.

The Asian Chamber of Commerce helps its members connect with purchasing departments of large companies. It also participated in Harrah’s Alliance Day. In addition, the chamber works with Nevada Small Business Development Center and provides right-to-work materials and other literature in various languages.

The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce (LVCC), the area’s largest chamber with more than 6,800 members, represents a broad cross section of businesses valleywide. LVCC Public Relations Director Cara Roberts said that as the business community has grown and diversified, so too has the make-up of the organization’s membership. Internally,

the LVCC boasts female executives in its top management positions, including CEO, COO and senior vice president.

“The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce

is proud to represent businesses of every ethnic background,” Roberts said. “We are heavily involved in issues related to education and workforce development, and diversity initiatives are a large part of those processes.”

The LVCC is encouraging businesses to participate in the Student to Teacher Enlistment Project(STEP).CollaborationbetweentheClark County Education Association Community Foundation, the Clark County School District, Community College of Southern Nevada and Nevada State College, STEP is committed to increasing the number of minority students who embark on teaching careers.

“As a business organization that’s nearly 100 years old, we’ve seen a significant evolution of our business community over time,” Roberts added. “Southern Nevada business owners, large and small, have proven their willingness to be proactive leaders.”



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Terry Johnson

DIVERSITY
PROFILE

Labor administrator finds opportunities within state

With more than 10 years of experience in state government, Terry Johnson has found many opportunities to advance.

He said those opportunities have been especially bountiful for himself and others under the administration of Gov. Kenny Guinn. Guinn appointed him director of the Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation in late 2004. Johnson is a graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and has a degree in political science.

"In terms of trying to move your way up, I think you can do that if you bring with it the ability and aptitude, especially with this governor," Johnson said. "I think he has done

an admirable job in seeking people from diverse backgrounds."

Johnson, who is black, said there are many others like him.

"He appointed me as the first black labor commissioner," he said. "He appointed

Michael Douglas to be the first African-American judge on the Supreme Court. He has done a really good job."

In his role as DETR's director, Johnson manages about 850 employees across four divisions and oversees \$151 million in

"...We weren't willing to be rolled over by the status quo. We didn't duck any fights, we stood our ground. I had five cases heard by our Supreme Court. Four of the five decisions that went to the Supreme Court were upheld."

Terry Johnson



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combined budgets. Before that he served as labor commissioner enforcing the state's labor laws.

He is also overseeing the building of a \$17 million southern headquarters for his agency.

Johnson attributes his success to the guidance provided by Rose McKinney James, a member of the board of directors for MGM MIRAGE; Bob Bailey, a performer and Nevada's first black television personality; and Doris Femenella, a community activist.

"I wouldn't be here without them," Johnson said. "Those three were instrumental in getting me to a position where I could advance. Hopefully, we'll have a next generation that will continue to help develop others."

In his role as labor commissioner, which he began when he was 33, Johnson acted as an administrative law judge in labor disputes. He said he faced a steep learning curve when he first began because of the legal nature of the job. However, he overcame that and when his decisions were challenged many were upheld by the courts.

One of his most significant decisions was one he made in favor of a group of illegal immigrant construction workers. The workers complained that they weren't paid what they should have been on a public works project. The company appealed Johnson's decision, and in 2005 the Nevada Supreme Court sided with Johnson and the workers.

"I was the most (challenged) labor commissioner out there," he said. "We weren't willing to be rolled over by the status quo. We didn't duck any fights, we stood our ground. I had five cases heard by our Supreme Court. Four of the five decisions that went to the Supreme Court were upheld."

Johnson said he plans to remain within the public sector for a few more years, but he hopes to eventually attend the William S. Boyd School of Law at UNLV. He said he might also consider running for public office in the future. He declined to say which one.

"We'll see what happens after law school," Johnson said.

— Alana Roberts

Donna Lattanzio
Jennifer DeHaven

Pair of businesswomen operate with 'golden' touch

DIVERSITY
PROFILE



The "golden rule" reins supreme at Millenium Staffing Services, a 100 percent woman-owned company in Las Vegas.

"The golden rule is the number one principal in our company," said Jennifer DeHaven, a co-owner of Millenium Staffing Services. "We treat others with the same respect and dignity as you would want to be treated. We do that not only with our client companies, but also with our temporary associates and our internal team. That promotes loyalty."

That golden philosophy has contributed to a growing amount of green for the company. The company, which was founded in 2001, has seen its revenue increase ten-fold since then, DeHaven said. She added that the firm helps place thousands of workers each year.

Millenium Staffing Services has evolved from staffing for the skilled trades and clerical industries into other areas like convention services, culinary, light industrial, medical and executive recruiting.

The company, which has grown to 19 employees, was recently honored by *Entrepreneur* magazine in its 12th Annual Hot 100 listing of fast-growing new companies. MGM MIRAGE leaders also spotlighted Millenium Staffing Services as one of its diverse suppliers at its annual diversity report event.

The staffing firm counts as clients a variety of large and small corporations.

"We're blessed with having

partnerships with companies of all sizes," DeHaven said.

Although the firm was launched following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, it found success during the ensuing economic downturn.

"We had a lot of people say, 'What are you doing? Sept. 11 happened, how can you be starting a new business,'" DeHaven said. "We felt that the time and the climate was right for a company to come in and bring best practices to our industry."

Donna Lattanzio, co-owner of Millenium Staffing Services, said the company's success is also derived from

but keeps them accountable for those decisions.

"It promotes creativity, it also demands they look at all aspects of the decision," DeHaven said. "(Under that style) people thrive, that's why we have such low turnover. We promote this very creative environment. I can't remember the last time someone left. People come and they stay."

Another key to the company's success is the fact that supplier diversity has become a major business imperative for many local corporations. Meanwhile, more women are starting their own

"Being women business owners helps us get our foot in some of the doors," DeHaven said. "But it's the quality of our internal team and the temporary associates they send out that makes the difference. It all goes back to quality and customer service, which keeps us there."

Jennifer DeHaven

their combined experience in the staffing industry. DeHaven, 44, has 14 years of staffing experience and Lattanzio, 51, has 22 years of experience.

"We have taken best practices from other firms and combined them and put them together," Lattanzio said. "That has a distinct advantage."

She and DeHaven said those best practices have contributed to making the company's staff loyal. Those best practices include a management style that allows managers to make decisions

businesses in the Las Vegas Valley, Lattanzio and DeHaven said. They note that being women has helped with obtaining business opportunities.

"Being women business owners helps us get our foot in some of the doors," DeHaven said. "But it's the quality of our internal team and the temporary associates they send out that makes the difference. It all goes back to quality and customer service, which keeps us there."

— Alana Roberts

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Louisa Mendoza

'Chandelier girl' turns home cleaning service into success

Louisa Mendoza, owner of Keep it Clean Janitorial Service, started her business in 1999 with \$16.17 and a desire to be self-sufficient.

"I was creative enough to buy a bucket, some rags and some dish soap," she said. "My first job was residential. That's how I started, baby sitting kids and taking care of houses."

A Mexican immigrant and a single mother, Mendoza, 35, said when she first moved to the United States at age 18 she had limited English-speaking skills. She eventually overcame that barrier by watching soap operas and using children's books to learn to read, write and speak English. Along the way she also obtained permanent residency in the United States.

"I knew when I had my kid I had to learn English," she said.

She started her business in order to support herself and her son, who is now 13. She also said the business helped her to become a homeowner.

"I was able to sustain my kid and myself from Keep it Clean," she said.

But language wasn't the only challenge Mendoza faced. She also lacked the skills necessary to launch a successful business. However, networking efforts within the business community allowed her to meet people who could help her learn the ropes. She said leaders at organizations like the

Nevada Microenterprise Initiative helped her learn not only how to properly run a business but also how to grow her business.

"I have to admit there's a lot of good people in town," Mendoza said. "People believed in me, they trusted me and they gave me the opportunities. They believed in me because I performed."

Anna Siefert, operations manager for the Nevada Microenterprise Initiative, said Mendoza has overcome the challenges many immigrants face when trying to launch their own businesses.

"Her determination to be self-sufficient and mostly her commitment to herself to make it in the business had taken her from where she was to where she is," Siefert said.

The company has since evolved into commercial cleaning and construction cleanup services. Keep it Clean Janitorial Service's Las Vegas operation now boasts 10 employees; a second location in Tucson, Ariz.

has four workers.

The company has performed construction cleanup services for Fashion Show Mall, The Boulevard Mall, Galleria at Sunset and the Las Vegas Outlet Center.

Mendoza got one of her biggest breaks at a networking event where she happened to sit next to a diversity representative for MGM MIRAGE. She eventually earned a contract to clean chandeliers at the Bellagio in 2003. She said the company took a chance on her because she had no experience with chandeliers.

"I gave Kenyatta Lewis (supplier diversity manager for MGM MIRAGE) my card. I said, 'I'm a small person.' She said, 'No one is too small for MGM.' She called me the next day. Now I'm in charge of 619 chandeliers (at the Bellagio). Everybody calls me the chandelier girl."

— Alana Roberts



DIVERSITY
PROFILE

Jamie Yoshizawa

Developer fits right into male-dominated field

As a graduate of the University of Hawaii's civil engineering program, Yoshizawa is also quite accustomed to working in a male-dominated field. "It's kind of like the Mars and Venus thing, men see the big picture and want to kind of plow through things. Women tend to be more detail-oriented. I think you need both."

After arriving in Las Vegas in the mid-1990s with no ties to the community, armed with only her engineering degree and a huge desire to succeed, Yoshizawa used simple hard work to establish her company, which has developed and owns The Cauldron Tavern at Russell Road and I-215, and is developing several other projects throughout the valley.

"I showed up in Las Vegas and met all of these great people just by calling classified ads. These people have become my mentors, partners. I've been very fortunate," she adds. "My parents always said I could do whatever I wanted. I think so many of us come from immigrant families. Our parents or grandparents came here with nothing. And what they wanted for us was to get an education. An education is what my parents could give me."

Yoshizawa enjoys the development side of her multi-faceted business the most. "You really can't go to school to learn development. There are so many things to look at and take into consideration, the location, the tenant's needs ... there's so much emotion and other factors," she said.

Some of Pacific's current projects include: The Village at the Cauldron, a retail complex

If you mention the topic of diversity to Jaimee Yoshizawa, you may get an odd look at first. Don't confuse it with a lack of understanding of her own Japanese/Hawaiian roots or ambivalence to the subject.

The 36-year-old president of Pacific Concepts, a Las Vegas-based real estate development, brokerage, civil engineering and property management company, simply enjoys the people she works with and has a tendency to not dwell on differences.

"When people say diversity, I actually

"I think so many of us come from immigrant families. Our parents or grandparents came here with nothing. And what they wanted for us was to get an education. An education is what my parents could give me."

Jamie Yoshizawa

have to stop and think about it," the energetic Hawaiian said. "I look around me and realize it. My fiancé's a six-foot-seven-inch white guy, my business partners are Cuban, Jewish ... It's one of those things that I don't really think about, but then you mention it and it's like 'oh yeah!'"

that will surround the Cauldron Tavern; Mountain Dream Center, a mixed-use project in Henderson; and The Gables, a residential subdivision also in Henderson.

— Brian Sodoma

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Young contractor seizes opportunities

Erick Sanchez



P&S Metals and Supply Corp., Sanchez received a hands-on business education while participating first-hand in the development of the famous Las Vegas Strip. Through the years he worked as a welder and in other areas of steel fabrication for P&S, which has built the metal structures underneath the elaborate signs in front of many Strip casinos. Some big names include: Bellagio, Wynn Las Vegas and New York-New York.

After spending some time working for another local contractor and engineering firm, in 2001 he took over General Design and Construction Co. Inc., a small extension

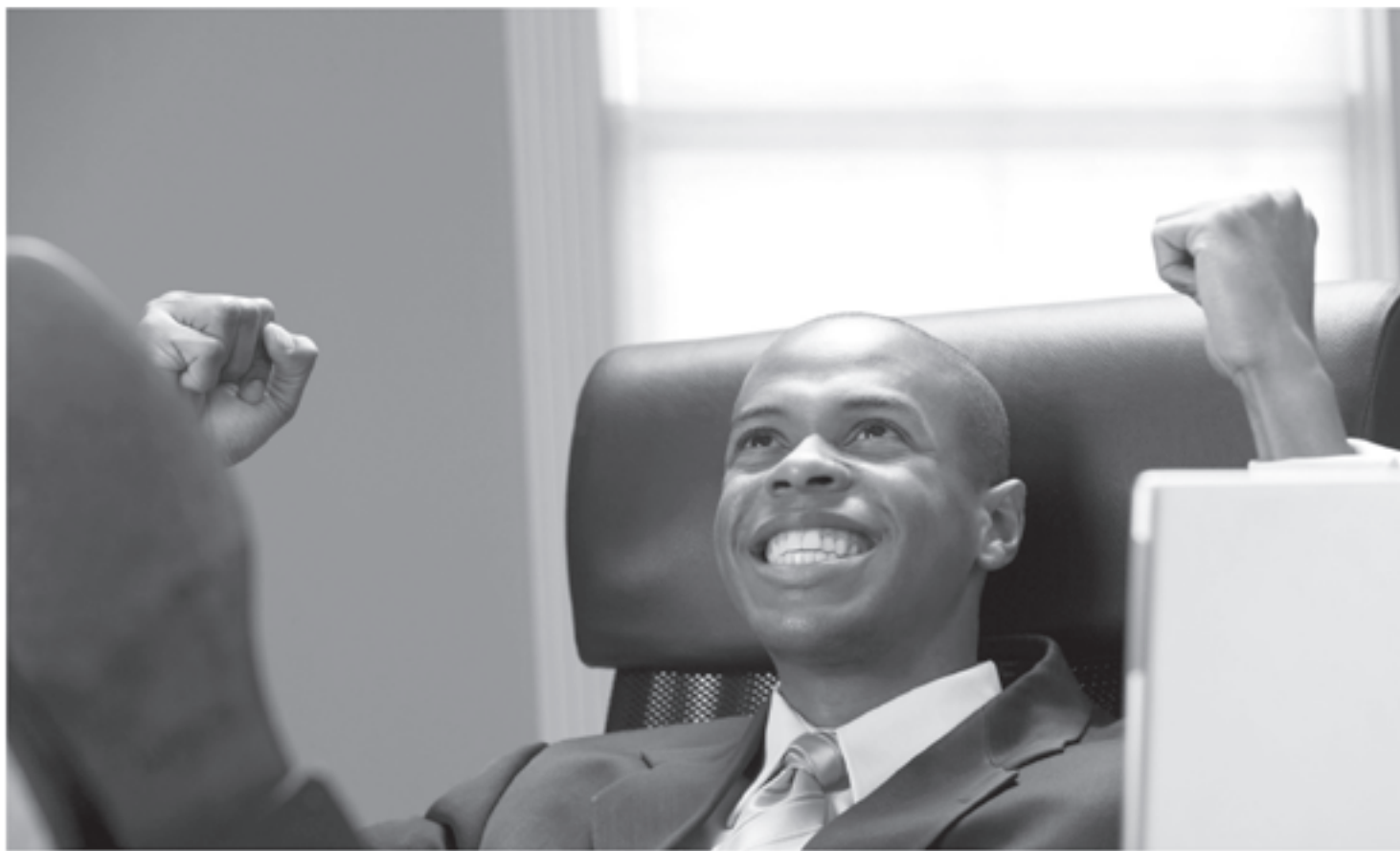
of his father's company at the time. "When it was created in 1996 our intention was to focus on building our own warehouses and doing small projects for existing customers. We had no intention of seeking out business," he said. Now, General Design — with a staff of eight — bids on many of the retail and hospitality projects around town and inside casinos.

Sanchez has also served on the board of directors for Hispanics In Politics (HIP), a local group dedicated to increasing the presence of Latinos in political positions. He is still actively involved in the group, but has changed his tune about future political

aspirations. "Maybe in the past I might have thought about it. ... Right now I'm pretty focused on the business."

Sanchez has good memories of watching his father build his company, and says Las Vegas still seems open to all types of business owners. "Even back then, 30-40 years ago, when my dad came here, it was a close network, but once you get in you're alright."

— Brian Sodoma



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It could be said that Erick Sanchez has experienced his share of discrimination from prospective clients for his Las Vegas-based commercial contracting business, General Design and Construction Co. Inc.

However, his struggles had more to do with his boyish looks than his Mexican heritage. "It definitely happened a lot in the beginning. But as you gain more experience, all that stuff kind of goes by the wayside," said the 27-year-old Sanchez.

After five years, General Design now has roughly 100 projects under its belt and billings of more than \$3 million per year.

Sanchez, however, holds no grudges about being questioned early on when, at 22, he took over his father's company. He even openly admits that his first-generation Mexican-American background has helped him to get his foot into doors. "No question, it's really helped ... and once you get in there, then you just have to prove you can deliver, and we have," he says. "I think now is a time when there are a lot of good opportunities for our (minority-owned) businesses. There are a lot of success stories now because of some of the great programs in place today."

Growing up in and around his father Ramon's Las Vegas steel fabrication business,

DIVERSITY
PROFILE

Ruth Cardenas

Cardenas receives welcome in role with Station Casinos

DIVERSITY PROFILE

Ruth Cardenas, an employment recruiter at Station Casinos Fiesta Henderson, has imparted a meaningful message over the years to friends, family and co-workers.

"They've learned that I don't give up and where there's a will there's a way," said Cardenas, who has spina bifida and was forced to permanently replace her crutches with a wheelchair more than 10 years ago, at a time when society's perception of people with disabilities was not as progressive as it is today. "If they saw someone handicapped they thought 'they can't do anything and they'll just use up welfare or Social Security' and that's not true. When I first went into my chair it was so hard to get around but as time goes on they're making it easier for us and it's just going to get better as people understand and learn more about things that we are able to do to be part of the community."

Cardenas said she was a stay-at-home mom for two decades before re-entering the job market, previously working at a small construction company in her native California before relocating to Las Vegas six years ago and assuming her current post at Fiesta more than two years ago.

She admitted her foray into the professional world was fraught with misconceptions and discrimination because of her disability.

"Before I came to Stations, I went on more than a dozen other interviews and I could tell right away by the look on (the interviewers') face they thought it would be a problem," she said. "Usually what happened was I would put in a résumé and they would call and say 'your résumé looks great and can you come in for an interview?' — they didn't know I was in a chair. And then I'd get that 'look' when I got there and I could tell automatically that I didn't get the job. I was kind of angry because I just wanted the opportunity to show that I could do it."

It was a different story at Station Casinos.

Cardenas applied online for the position of employment recruiter and was understandably apprehensive when she went "But it went fine, and it was like they didn't even see my chair, and that made me feel great, because they were judging by merit and not by disability," she said, adding that Fiesta management was quick to accommodate her needs. "Some (disabled workers) need special equipment and places like Stations are willing to get that equipment so people can do their job."

Cardenas now handles recruitment for all positions at Fiesta Henderson as well as Stations' Magic Star property.

"I've had quite a few people tell me that I've got guts," she said. "Usually they have a family member or maybe somebody they know (with a disability) who is ready to give up and when they see me they have something positive to tell them."

— Danielle Birkin

Director navigates maze of Medicare/Medicaid

Marilyn Wills

DIVERSITY PROFILE

Marilyn Wills is committed to helping Nevada's senior population battle the bureaucratic maze of Medicare and Medicaid — and the 60-year-old Denver native doesn't plan on abandoning her pursuits any time soon.

Wills is director of the State Health Insurance Assistance Plan (SHIP), an organization that receives an annual grant of roughly \$200,000 from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, funds that are administered through Nevada's Division for Aging Services. About 100 SHIP volunteers provide free one-on-one assistance, counseling, education and outreach with respect to issues regarding Medicare, supplemental health insurance and long-term care options. Wills said there are some 303,000 Medicare beneficiaries in Nevada, up from less than 200,000 when she came on board in 2001.

"We're one of the fastest-growing senior populations here in Nevada so that means we have a lot of work to do," Wills said, adding that many of SHIP's volunteers are themselves seniors who must undergo intense training in the complexities of Medicare and Medicaid. "Most of our volunteers are seniors who have retired and it's interesting because these people want to remain extremely active and feel like that's what's keeping them younger-feeling. These are the kind of people who don't want to sit around and watch television."

Wills, in fact, forfeited retirement prior to assuming her current post. The former owner of a manufacturing company in Texas, she sold her interest in the business in 1996 because she said

it was a stressful environment and she was ready to do something different — such as retire.

"That (retirement) lasted about six months, and I got too antsy and needed to be working, so I started teaching at a community college before I moved here in 2001 to be with my parents, who are in their late '80s," she said, adding that her father might serve as something of an inspiration for the elderly generation.

In her position with SHIP, Wills said she has noted that people are working longer than they used to for a number of reasons. She said older people tend to be healthier than in years past because of advances in medicine. She also said Social Security laws have recently changed and many people are no longer eligible for full retirement at age 65.

"My Social Security won't be available until I'm 67 and that doesn't even seem realistic that I'll be ready to retire in seven years — I'm thinking somewhere in my 70s," she said adding that there is also a mindset that people don't necessarily look forward to age 65 anymore as a magic number. "I really enjoy working and just the feeling of having someplace to go to and something that's meaningful. Besides, I tried retirement before, and like my dad I like the activity and the challenge of working and being around people and learning new things."

— Danielle Birkin

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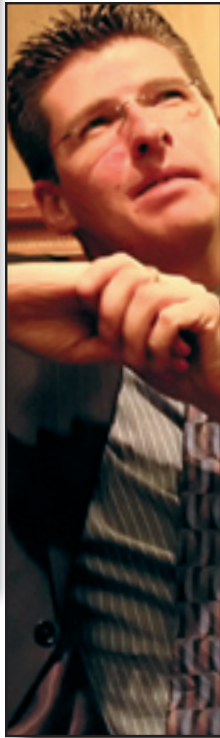
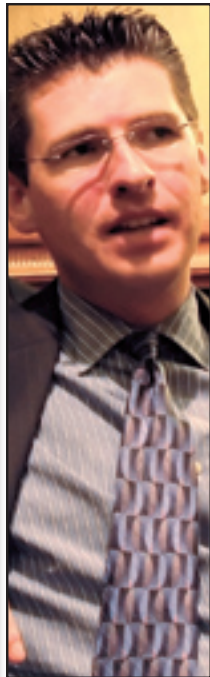
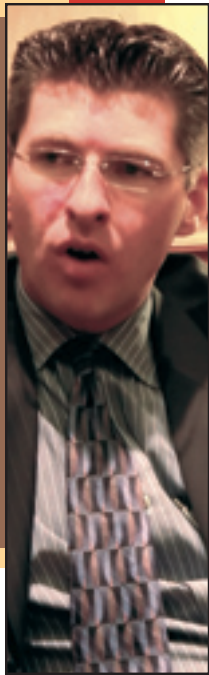
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James Healey



Las Vegas showing more hospitality to gay community

For New York-New York hotel-casino executive James Healey, a good workplace is one where people can be themselves.

Healey, an openly gay man who has worked for MGM Corp. for 13 years, said the company's approach to its employees has kept him loyal. It's this approach, he added, that allows the gaming giant to get the best out of its workers.

"We want to create an environment where people feel they can express themselves," he said. "That's where the talent comes from. If companies want to retain the quality employees, they have to have policies in place that allow employees to be comfortable."

Healey said the company's tolerant approach to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community has allowed him to grow, not only as an employee, but also as a person.

Healey has risen quickly within MGM MIRAGE. He began his career in 1993 as a supervisor of the MGM Grand hiring center when it first opened. Five years ago Healey, who is now 32, said he became one of the Las Vegas Strip's youngest directors, when he took the job of director of hotel operations at New York-New York. He is now executive director of housekeeping at the property.

He said the company's welcoming attitude to diversity has helped him to become comfortable enough with himself to not only be openly gay but to become an activist in the LGBT community.

"I've been comfortable to be out (since) I started working (for MGM MIRAGE) when I was 20," he said.

Healey is a past president of the Southern

Nevada Association of Pride Inc. and a co-owner of a local Hamburger Mary's Bar & Grille, a chain of restaurants that caters to the LGBT community. He is also one of the founding members of the Human Rights Campaign, a civil rights group that focuses on LGBT issues. He said MGM MIRAGE supports the gay community not only through its human resources policies, but also in its advertising, marketing and philanthropic efforts. Other companies in Las Vegas have also caught on.

"The key executives of all industries understand, or they hear that gays and lesbians spend money," Healey said. "It doesn't matter if you support our lifestyle; you have to find people who support your business."

MGM MIRAGE and Harrah's Entertainment Inc. both ranked highly on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index, a ranking of top employers. Further, the San Francisco-based gay marketing firm Community Marketing Inc., found Las Vegas as a destination ranks second only to New York in popularity among gays. He said as a result, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority is actively working to attract more visitors from the LGBT community.

"Las Vegas was never known as being a welcoming city to the LGBT community, but Las Vegas is the number two market (for that community)," Healey said. "Our community has a bigger spend per average household, we typically have dual incomes, we spend and we shop. Everything Las Vegas has is what the gay and lesbian population wants."

— Alana Roberts

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2005	Workplace Awards Finalist	Out & Equal
2005	Top 50 Companies, Wells Fargo ranked 23rd for being progressive in hiring women engineers	Woman Engineer Magazine
2005	Top 100 Companies: Honored for providing the most opportunities for Hispanics	Hispanic Magazine
2005	Optimas Award: Recognized for general excellence	National Federation of the Blind
2004	Corporate Equality Index: Wells Fargo received a score of 100%	Human Rights Campaign Foundation

