

# Resorts begin Asian American PR outreach

By Lisa Skriloff

The Poconos, long known as a family ski destination and for its honeymoon hotels with heart shaped bathtubs, will now see a pioneering initiative undertaken to begin outreach to Asian Americans.

A brand new hotel, Mount Airy Casino Resort, was built on the grounds of the Mount Airy Lodge, that quintessential Pocono Mountain hotel known from its heyday in the '50s and '60s. Mention Mount Airy to any boomer-aged New Yorker and you might get a spontaneous rendition of their ubiquitous TV commercial jingle, "All you need to bring, is your love of everything. Come to beautiful Mount Airy Lodge."

This summer, a Mount Airy ad is more likely to have a message in Chinese, beckoning visitors to the Casino, where, pending final regulatory approval, table games will be available, including Pai Gow poker, a table game favored by Chinese casino-goers.

Pennsylvania in January legalized table games. Mount Airy had their licensing hearing in April, was approved for a table game license and now has an anticipated opening

date of July 1. Since then, Mount Airy has been working with feng shui experts to make sure the Asian gaming rooms are designed with cultural cues in mind, such as no use of white color in the design and fish, not birds, as a motif.

*Multicultural Marketing News* sat down with George Toth, President & CEO, Mount Airy Casino Resort, to learn about marketing plans and structural changes to the Casino, all designed to attract and appeal to Asian Americans.

**How did you decide to target the Asian gaming community?**

One of the reasons we are going through this Asian market focus is because of our proximity to New York City. We are about an hour and 20 minutes outside of the Lincoln Tunnel, the closest Casino destination on the East Coast. In my past position as President of the Sands Casino Hotel in Atlantic City we had a large Asian player community and it is a significant and growing population.

**How is the Casino being changed to accommodate their interests?**

We are building an Asian room, which will contain 17 games including mini baccarat and poker. We are also in the process of opening a noodle bar which will open in the same time frame as the table games. Our feng shui consultant has helped us with the design, letting us know what colors are lucky, what symbolism is lucky and unlucky. We will use [suggested design elements such as] fish motifs on the draperies, carpeting, and we'll have statuettes located throughout [the room]. The dealers in the Asian pit speak fluent Chinese, as do the supervisors and Asian hosts.

**How are Asian Americans being targeted?**

We will have 5 members of an Asian marketing team which primarily goes to Asian communities in New York, Flushing and Brooklyn. While we will be marketing all over the country, we will have a significant



The Pocono's Mount Airy Casino Resort was built on the grounds of the famous Mount Airy Lodge. The resort was approved for a table gaming license in April.

position in that market. Specifically, we will be doing a number of things. We will have ads in Asian papers. We are doing relationship marketing. The team we have has 30 years doing this. They are the best Asian player development team and now they will be working for us. We will have Asian bus groups from Flushing and Brooklyn and we expect eight to 10 buses a day. And no one else in Pennsylvania will bring it to that level.

**How are you positioning Mount Airy against Atlantic City and the Connecticut Casinos?**

It is not a question of "Can we compete." This property is unique. You can't experience in AC what you get here. You are in the mountains; it's an active lifestyle. You also have tennis, golf, and whitewater rafting. I think the product is totally unique in the Northeast. ●

## PR services briefs

### PR WEIGHS IN ON IMMIGRATION REFORM

Burson-Marsteller's Prime Policy Group is repping the National Immigration Forum Action Fund, which is pressing both the White House and Republican leadership to move on immigration reform.

The Forum says its mission is to "embrace and uphold America's tradition as a nation of immigrants." It criticizes Arizona's new immigration law as one that "enshrines racial profiling" and believes its passage highlights the need for national reform before other states apply their own band-aid fixes.

The Forum praises Democratic Senators Reid (NV), Schumer (NY) and Menendez (NJ) for introducing a framework for reform legislation. It wants Republicans to review the Democratic proposal and put forth their own ideas in fixing the system.

Charlie Black, Chairman of PPG, is spearheading the Forum's effort on Capitol Hill. The GOP-connected Black advised Presidents Reagan and Bush I, and served as spokesperson for the Republican National Committee.