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Dale Moss | New casino chief undaunted by the task

Eileen Moore assumed people's first questions: Aren't you young for a job like this? Isn't it one usually for men?

They asked, instead, if she's happy, Moore said. Does she like it here?

Their care endears them to her, gives her all the more reason to be happy. At 38, Moore is younger than most casino bosses and is at a level mostly with men. But she's neither overwhelmed nor a token.

"It almost seems like effortless," Jerry Finn, director of the Horseshoe Foundation of Floyd County, said of Moore's leadership.

Moore will be happiest, though, when Harrah's Entertainment is even happier with its Horseshoe Casino and Hotel property that she manages in Harrison County. Hers is a business that measures everything possible, and Moore must take totals in the right directions.

In an atmosphere of chance, Moore leaves little to it. She inherited no mess, she said, but an all-day-every-day challenge.

"We need to reinvigorate service," she said.

Brought in last November, Moore has had 25 dinners with the casino's best customers to urge they be even better ones. She gave them her cell phone number, asked them to call whenever, about whatever. She's swapped 50 casino games, the beginning of a nearly \$5 million freshening to include the addition of a Paula Deen buffet and shop and a high-stakes gaming area that caters to Asian guests, among other things.

Moore's work week involves Saturdays -- long Saturdays -- that being when Horseshoe typically is busiest. She was there Christmas, and Thanksgiving. She has served drinks and has dealt craps, in uniform, better to get a feel.

Moore pops in occasionally on daily, 15-minute beginning-of-shift departmental meetings that are part information sharing, part pep session. That's Moore, in heels and pearls, dancing and clapping up a storm alongside cashiers and customer service representatives.

"We eat, sleep and breathe that, for sure," Moore said of efforts to keep her 1,700 employees pumped like she is.

As workers' performances improve - again, as gauged by numbers - they win points for prizes such as bicycles, TVs and golf clubs. They also evaluate Moore, results like the rest that are gathered to affect the future.

Moore has been in or around hospitality her lifetime, the daughter of hotel and airline employees. A native of Chicago, she holds degrees from Cornell and Northwestern universities and has helped run hotels such as the Waldorf Astoria in New York City. She joined Harrah's in 1999, and among her

roles was the executive assistant to Gary Loveman, now chairman and CEO. Moore was most recently assistant general manager at Harrah's casino in New Orleans.

Now she lives in Floyds Knobs - with husband Edward and their 4-year-old son, Eddie - and works in the suburbs of Elizabeth. Little wonder people are curious how she's adjusted. She needed little time, though, to recognize the best of both worlds that Southern Indiana affords.

"Our first week, we saw deer on the property," Moore said.

She is the sixth general manager in the complex's dozen years, yet Moore said she expects to stay awhile.

Judy Hess, in communications at the casino since its start, said Moore is approachable and real, and that helps her to lead. "She's just enjoyable to be around," Hess said.

Moore serves on the board of the foundation managed by Finn, who is impressed by how Moore juggles many responsibilities with poise and grace. "She's been so engaged in things from the moment she walked in the door," Finn said.

Horseshoe is among the top sponsors of Thunder over Louisville and the reason Moore met Mike Berry, president of the Kentucky Derby Festival. Berry noticed how quick a study she was about what matters around here. He's noticed, too, how effectively Moore and Horseshoe fuel their employees.

"They really have an esprit de corps," Berry said. "A lot of us could take some pointers from that."

Moore relishes the variety, wishes for more time away from the desk to interact. She said she appreciates being approached by staff and guests, wants to use her position to solve problems. While on the go, she e-mails reminders to herself.

The casino is neither the heavenly blessing some predicted nor the hellacious curse others expected. If nothing else, along with its taxes and employment, it has passed along \$156 million to foundations in Harrison and Floyd counties to aid community causes.

By now the casino is what it is - and what Moore can add to it. Whatever her age, no matter her gender, she is ready.

"There's definitely been some good time, good luck in there," Moore said of her career. "There's been hard work and results, too."

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