



The Journal



The Village that got its 1st Fridge
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Virginia’s First Full-Service; Rivers Casino Portsmouth Celebrates Grand Opening



April 1st, 2023 PORTSMOUTH, Va.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Rivers Casino Portsmouth celebrated its grand opening today —making history as the Commonwealth of Virginia’s first full-service permanent casino. The event kicked off with a special performance by Norfolk State University’s “Spartan Legion” Marching Band. The local musical ensemble recently appeared in the 2023 New Year’s Rose Parade. “We’re here to serve the community, our guests, and our Team Members”

The morning ribbon-cutting ceremony featured remarks from Roy Corby, general manager of Rivers Casino Portsmouth; Shannon Glover, Mayor of Portsmouth; Brian Donahue, director of Portsmouth Economic Development; Kelly T. Gee, executive director, Virginia Lottery; and Tim Drehkoff, chief executive officer of Rivers Casino Portsmouth and Rush Street Gaming.



“We’re excited to join such a vibrant community and to unveil this beautiful entertainment venue for all to enjoy,” said Tim Drehkoff, CEO of Rivers Casino Portsmouth and Rush Street Gaming. “We’re grateful to the community and to our Team Members for their support, and we’re looking forward to launching this strong economic engine for the region.”

At the ceremony, Rivers Casino Portsmouth was presented with its official casino operator's license by Gina Smith, deputy director of gaming compliance at Virginia Lottery.

Rivers Casino Portsmouth also announced a donation to three local charity partners from proceeds During gaming floor test events on January 19 and 21. Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters; USO Hampton Roads and Central Virginia; and Wesley Community Service Center each received \$170,000 — representing a \$510,000 total contribution from the casino.

Rivers Casino Portsmouth opened its doors to the public at approximately 10 a.m. on January 23, and guests in attendance were among the first to experience the casino's 1,446 slot machines, 57 table games, 24 poker tables and myriad onsite dining and entertainment options. Among several new restaurants are Admiral's Steak & Seafood for high-end dining; plus, casual fare at Crossings Café, Mian, Slice Pizzeria, Starbucks; and opening later this year, Yard House — offering the world's largest selection of draft beer.

At a preview event last Saturday, Portsmouth Mayor Shannon Glover, Senator L. Louise Lucas, and House Minority Leader Don Scott placed the ceremonial first wagers at the BetRivers Sportsbook adjacent to the gaming floor. The luxe sportsbook features club seating, a bar, betting windows, 27 self-service kiosks, and multiple upsized high-def screens for viewing.

A new Topgolf Swing Suite offers guests a bird's-eye view of the gaming floor and a virtual entertainment experience. Overlooking the BetRivers Sportsbook, the swanky lounge for links fans features simulated fairways on a big screen, with club seating for spectators. Adding to the grand opening festivities were roving magicians, jugglers, acrobats, stilt walkers cheerleaders, and other performers.

The Event Center, a 25,000 square-foot multipurpose grand hall and reception area, is now accepting reservations for weddings, corporate events, meetings, and more. On Monday, Jan. 16, the Epsilon Nu Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. held its 18th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Luncheon at The Event Center as the venue's first-ever event. Rivers Casino Portsmouth supported as the presenting sponsor.

"We're here to serve the community, our guests, and our Team Members," said Roy Corby, general manager of Rivers Casino Portsmouth. "We'll accomplish that mission by creating a stellar guest experience and becoming the entertainment destination of choice for Portsmouth, Hampton Roads, and visitors to our area."

Rivers Casino Portsmouth will operate 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Guests must be over 21 to access the gaming floor. The casino offers approximately 2,000 onsite, security-surveilled parking spots. A permanent City of Portsmouth police substation also has been integrated into the facility.



Oscarcartek Italia display series

S.B. Ballard Construction Company, based in Virginia Beach, along with joint-venture partner Yates Construction, are general contractors for the development. The Virginia Beach office of Kimley-Horn served as engineering consultants. Renowned gaming and hospitality designer, Klai Juba Wald is the architect of record; Jeffrey Beers International is the primary interior designer; and DMAC Architecture is the designer of interior venues.

Rivers Casino Portsmouth's Rush Reward Players Club is now open for guests to enroll onsite. This popular player loyalty program allows gamers to enjoy rewards such as free play, amenity and food comps, prizes, drawings, and more. There is no charge to join.

Rush Rewards Players Club benefits may also be enjoyed at other Rush Street Gaming properties including Rivers Casino Pittsburgh, Rivers Casino Philadelphia, Rivers Casino Des Plaines in the Chicago area, and Rivers Casino & Resort Schenectady in Upstate New York.

About Rivers Casino Portsmouth

Rivers Casino Portsmouth is a world-class destination—a \$340 million local investment—located along Victory Boulevard, south of I-264. As part of Portsmouth's New Entertainment District, the complex currently features a full-service casino, poker room, BetRivers Sportsbook, event and conference venues, premier restaurants, and more. Rivers Casino Portsmouth is Virginia's first permanent casino and the latest addition to Rush Street Gaming, one of the fastest-growing casino and entertainment companies in the country. Rush Street Gaming and its affiliates have developed and operate successful casinos in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Des Plaines, Illinois; and Schenectady, New York. All Rush Street Gaming casinos have been voted a "Best Place to Work" or "Top Workplace" by their Team Members. For more information about Rivers Casino Portsmouth, including ongoing career opportunities, please visit RiversCasino.com.

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The village that just got its first fridge

By Sanjoy Majumder

BBC News, Calcutta

Three-quarters of the world's homes have a fridge - an appliance that can revolutionize a family's life. A tailor in one Indian village has just become the first person in his community to own one - something he has dreamed of for 10 years.

Santosh Chowdhury is pacing up and down speaking into his mobile phone.

"How much longer? It's left past the auto-rickshaw stand, yes that's right," he shouts, and then continues his nervous pacing. It's a big day for him and indeed for the village of Rameshwarpur, just outside Calcutta in north-east India.

Santosh has bought a new fridge - not just his first but also the first in the entire community of 200 people. "Owning a fridge is quite rare in a village like ours," he says.

The lack of fridges in Rameshwarpur reflects the situation across the whole of India. Only one in four of the country's homes has one. That compares to an average of 99% of households in developed countries.

But change can be rapid when linked to an emerging middle class. In 2004, 24% of households in China owned a fridge. Ten years later this had shot up to 88%.

"Ours is the first generation to own a fridge in my family," says Santosh. "No one in my father's and grandfather's time had ever seen one." Rameshwarpur has a distinctly rural feel. People bathe in a pond in the middle of the village, children fly kites in the dusty lanes. The homes are little more than simple huts, made of mud and brick. But the village has electricity and many houses have televisions.

Santosh works as a tailor. He lives in a modest, two-room hut which doubles as his home and workplace. "I don't have a regular job as such," he says. "Sometimes I also work part-time in a factory. I make about three to four dollars a day." Life is quite hard, especially for his wife Sushoma.

She cooks lunch, stirring a pot of rice on a wood fire outside their hut. It's something she does every day because they have no way of storing leftovers. So Santosh has to go the market early each morning to shop for groceries.

He's always wanted to make life easier for his wife and has been dreaming of buying a fridge for 10 years. "Owning one will be so convenient," he says. "You don't have to buy vegetables every day, you can store food - especially in the summer."

So he's been saving hard, putting away a bit of money every month for a purchase that costs more than a month's salary. "I don't make that much money, that's why it's taken me so long. But now I have enough," he says, smiling.

At one of Calcutta's high street stores, about 15km from his home, Santosh had



several models to choose from. Peering inside, he ran his fingers along the side of a bright red model.

"It was quite confusing. It was my first time you know. I couldn't figure out which one to get," he says shyly. "My wife wanted a red one. I wanted one that will consume the least power. We need to keep our bills down."

Finally, the deal was struck. Santosh got a discount because it was the final week of the winter sales. The price was 11,000 rupees (£120) - but more importantly, he was able to pay in instalments, having paid just under half the money up front. "No one pays cash any more like they used to," says store manager Pintoo Mazumdar. "Everyone can get a loan from the bank or the store - all you need is a bank statement and ID. That's why so many lower income people can afford to buy a fridge these days."

FRIDGEONOMICS

Fridge ownership around the world : 76% Global average - 65% Asia Pacific - 99% Europe and North America - 87% Latin America - 63% Middle East and Africa -

Source: Euromonitor

Santosh's fridge finally arrives on the back of a cycle rickshaw. He walks along next to it with a broad smile. Many of the villagers come out on to the lane as well, craning their necks to get a better look. "Careful, careful," he cries out as a couple of them help carry the fridge into his house.

Then it's time for a religious ceremony. His wife applies a dab of vermilion to the fridge, to keep away evil spirits, and then blows on a conch shell to seek divine blessings and welcome the fridge into their home. The fridge has pride of place - next to Santosh's sewing machine and their tiny television set.

They simply cannot stop smiling.

"We've dreamt of this moment for so long," says his wife Sushoma. "Some of our neighbours have already asked us if they, too, can store some food in our fridge. "And I can't wait to drink cold water in the summer." As Santosh shows off his fridge everyone crowds around, excited. "Imagine, they won't have to shop for fresh vegetables every day," says one woman. "I'm thinking of getting one too," another man says.

It's a special moment for the Chowdhurys. This acquisition could potentially transform their lives. "I can focus on finding more work and not worry about buying food for the family," Santosh says. "My wife will get more free time and perhaps she can give me a hand as well." With those words, he opens his fridge and places the first contents inside - tomatoes, an aubergine, eggs and some milk.

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