

## ***Virgin River Director of Bowling Gary Higashi talks the talk, walks the walk***

As Director of Bowling Operations at the Virgin River, Gary Higashi may have one of the best jobs in Mesquite. A transplant from Seattle, he spends most of his time mixing company with happy people ages 60-80 who love to bowl.

Tired of the rain and gray skies of the Northwest, the 52 year-old Higashi is happy with the change he found by moving to Southern Nevada where he has parlayed his years in the pro shop business into a key position with Black Gaming's Virgin River Hotel Casino.

On one hand, Higashi is an excellent businessman and even more importantly, his outgoing and friendly nature makes him a natural for attracting customers.

Considering that he has drilled bowling balls for customers from 33 states and 22 countries -- not to mention recorded three 300 games along with one 299 -- it's easy to see that the man walks the walk and talks the talk.

"I had been looking for a change," Higashi said of his move from the Northwest to the Southwest in 1990," explained Higashi, who joined Black Gaming Sporting Events Manager Christian Adderson as transplants from Seattle. "I wanted to go where there was hot weather and not so much rain."

When his initial position in Las Vegas ended when Arizona Charlie's closed its bowling center, Higashi opened his own pro shop. Then when terrorists struck the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, he took a brief vacation to regroup before joining the Gold Coast, where he remained until 2008.

"People quit spending money for several months after 9-11," recalled Higashi. "I figured it was best to take a few steps back to relax for awhile."

Higashi jumped at the opportunity to join Black Gaming May 15, 2008.

Evidence that everything is going just fine in Mesquite is the fact that Higashi landed a Senior PBA Regional Bowling tournament July 6-8 at the Virgin River. The 24-lane bowling center landed a homerun with the Senior Tour event.

In a city with countless special events to draw tourists, the Senior PBA event is considered one more homerun on a long list of promotions generated by some of the hardest-working people in the country.

While the event is certainly a plus for Mesquite, it's an event bigger addition to the Virgin River and its bowling center.

"The bowling center and the pro shop are both doing very well," said the popular Higashi, who moved to Mesquite in 2009 after first living in Las Vegas. "When I moved to Las Vegas, I knew two people in town. From there, I just developed my friendship from clients and friends I met in the pro shop business."

While he is a long way from his home of Seattle, Higashi still lauds friend and associate Pat Johns for teaching him the pro shop business while also increasing his skills as a bowler.

"You never forget those who have helped along the way," Higashi said. "Pat taught me so much enabling me to climb the ladder in the bowling business."

CAPTION: Virgin River Director of Bowling Operations Gary Higashi not only runs a good operation but also serves as quite a bowler himself.

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