



Schenectady ARC's Pine Ridge Industries and Rivers Casino & Resort Schenectady announce community recycling partnership

SCHENECTADY, NY (Jan. 26, 2017) – [Schenectady ARC](#) and [Rivers Casino & Resort Schenectady](#) announced today that they have established a bottle redemption/recycling partnership whereas Schenectady ARC's business component [Pine Ridge Industries'](#) Bottle Redemption Center will facilitate the collection, sorting, counting, recycling and redemption of all Rivers Casino's empty privately-labeled water bottles at the new Las Vegas-style casino, which opens February 8, 2017.

"Schenectady ARC is thrilled to be partnering with Rivers Casino to provide the recycling for their water bottles at the new casino in Schenectady. This partnership will provide good employment opportunities for adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities who work at Pine Ridge Industries, and it will provide a valuable service to the casino operations. We are especially grateful that Rivers Casino was willing to donate back a share of its recycling fee in order to make this collaboration economically viable," said Kirk Lewis, Executive Director – Schenectady ARC.

Pine Ridge Industries is a certified redemption center that assists the community and organizations with recycling needs at all levels. The casino estimates using 48,000 water bottles per month, which equals \$3,600 in monthly revenue for Pine Ridge. With the Rivers Casino/Pine Ridge bottle redemption arrangement, the casino will get one cent back per bottle and Pine Ridge will receive 7.5 cents per bottle. In the commercial bottle redemption industry, containers are valued at 8.5 cents each; versus the typical five cents allotted per container to New York State (NYS) residents who redeem empty bottles and cans.

There is very little profit margin in bottle redemption and given the sporadic nature of the business, Pine Ridge had been considering shutting down its redemption program. The partnership with the casino enables Pine Ridge to have a consistent stream of revenue and work to schedule employees around.

"Rivers Casino & Resort is committed to providing an exceptional guest experience, as well as being a great community partner. I'm happy to say these goals overlap in this initiative," said Mary Cheeks, General Manager of Rivers Casino & Resort Schenectady. "We are proud to work with a group like Schenectady ARC, an organization with a long track record of serving the community."

Pine Ridge is considered a “sheltered workshop” which NYS made a decision to close by 2019, eliminating any funding that is provided to support workers in them. NYS has given “sheltered workshops” the opportunity to convert to “integrated businesses.” Schenectady ARC has been working on transitioning Pine Ridge since 2012 in response to requests from the people that they employ.

The Pine Ridge/Rivers Casino agreement will keep the bottle redemption center open, **save approximately five to six part-time jobs** and also maintain existing partnerships with local school districts (Niskayuna, Scotia-Glenville, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake), the Animal Protective Foundation and the Jewish Community Center, all of whom have come to depend on Pine Ridge for their organizations’ bottle redemption needs. Additionally, this partnership with Rivers Casino also increases the community’s awareness of Pine Ridge Industries and gets them involved with the newest employment industry in Schenectady.

“We are truly excited about this opportunity; the timing was perfect. The casino had a need, Pine Ridge had a need and we were able to come together to develop a new partnership that will literally save jobs and benefit one of the largest not-for-profit organizations in Schenectady County. In meeting with the team from Rivers Casino, it was clear that they were impressed by the employees at Pine Ridge Industries and enthusiastic about a partnership that would support employment for people with developmental disabilities,” said Jennifer Cole, Associate Executive Director for Employment and New Initiatives.

Pine Ridge Industries, is located in Scotia, NY and has been operating at that site since 1986, providing a wide range of light manufacturing, assembly and packaging services. The bottle redemption program, which began in 2011, also offers convenient curbside assistance and an easy to locate drop-off location for residential recycling needs where their employees sort, count and provide partners/clients with full refunds.

A primary goal for Pine Ridge is to offer a variety of work opportunities with and for an integrated workforce to help build work skills that will increase success in future competitive employment not operated by Schenectady ARC. “Since we can no longer rely on public funds to offset the costs of business at Pine Ridge we need to ensure that the cost of doing business pays for itself,” said Cole.

In addition to the bottle redemption center, Pine Ridge is currently home to several small businesses that employ people with and without disabilities. Pine Ridge has other partnerships with community businesses that send materials to Pine Ridge for employees to assemble, package and ship. Pine Ridge is also home to a supported employment department which provides people with job discovery, job development and job coaching support for community based employment.

“Schenectady ARC is proud of the many partnerships we have with the business community, and we hope this venture with Rivers Casino is just the beginning of a great relationship with one of the newest members of our community,” said Lewis.

For more information about Schenectady ARC and Pine Ridge Industries please visit:
www.arcschenectady.org.

For more information about Rivers Casino & Resort Schenectady please visit:
www.riverscasinoandresort.com.

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About Schenectady ARC: *Founded in 1952, Schenectady ARC provides person-centered services and supports to over 1000 individuals and families with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Capital Region. Schenectady ARC brings staff, families, and the community together to encourage dreams and respond to each person's life choices. Schenectady ARC is a chapter of NYSARC, Inc. and a member of the Arc of the United States.*

About Rush Street Gaming: *Founded by Neil Bluhm and Greg Carlin, Rush Street Gaming and its affiliates have developed and operate successful casinos in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Des Plaines, IL (Chicago area). By placing an emphasis on superior design and outstanding customer service, Rush Street Gaming has become one of the leading casino developers in the United States. Existing casinos generate over \$1 billion in annual gaming revenues, and all Rush Street Gaming casinos were voted a 2015 "Best Place to Work" or "Top Workplace" by their team members.*