



TOWN OF PARADISE VALLEY

# INDEPENDENT

Vol. 26, No. 44

Wednesday, November 11, 2009

www.newszap.com

## ONE YEAR IN THE BOOKS Montelucia hopes to attract more locals

**By Zach Colick**  
Independent Newspapers

It's been more than a year since the InterContinental Montelucia Resort and Spa opened in Paradise Valley — and its managing director says more can be done to attract locals to experience what the Moroccan-inspired resort is all about.

From the award-winning Joya Spa and five pools to the multiple dining and restaurant options, including Prado Restaurant and Mbar, managing director Valeriano Antonioli is torn when asked what resort guests should take advantage of while vacationing.

"We want to be a major destination in many people's lives, and a place they can be proud of," he said.

"There's still so much to show the residents. That's been a big challenge of ours."

Mr. Antonioli said out-of-towners from across the United States and throughout the world have been eating up what Montelucia has to offer.

It's paid off; in the past year, the resort has garnered a great amount of national and international media attention and won numerous accolades, which was Mr. Antonioli's goal all along.

Locals have dined at Prado and received body treatments at the Joya Spa, but Mr. Antonioli admits support from local residents isn't as strong as he had hoped.

"Some people have never heard

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Independent Newspapers/Zach Colick

### Candidate files necessary petitions

Resident Larry Fink submitted the necessary paperwork last week to make him an official candidate for the Town Council. See story on Page 4.

# Montelucia

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about us," he said of many Paradise Valley and Scottsdale-area residents. "We're still very much new, but we need to get the word out about the incredible experiences offered at Montelucia."

Some of the same issues resort officials were dealing with in November 2008 continue to remain a year later.

Montelucia opened in November 2008, at a time when the economy had sunk to lows not previously seen. In February, Eurotypo AG filed a notice of default against Crown Realty and Development Corp., which owns Montelucia, forcing the resort into foreclo-

sure proceedings.

Unlike the now finalized foreclosure proceedings at the W Scottsdale Hotel, talks have still not been put to bed at Montelucia. Once solved, InterContinental would still oversee the resort's day-to-day operations.

Mr. Antonioni understands perception is everything in today's marketplace and believes the negative connotations synonymous with foreclosure proceedings may be having an impact on resort visitation.

He said the resort averaged occupancy levels between 58 percent and 59 percent during the Valley's hot summer months. The resort had a 75 percent occupancy rate in March and a 62 percent occupancy rate in April.

Town Manager Jim Bacon has commended what Montelucia has been able to

accomplish during its first year in operation, saying resort officials are doing everything they can to attract a diverse clientele for the resort and community's benefit.

Mr. Bacon said a successful Montelucia is beneficial to the town. Sales and bed tax figures generated from Montelucia into the town's pocketbook are an extra financial windfall for Paradise Valley.

"The town is glad to have Montelucia online," Mr. Bacon. "We have appreciated the resort's efforts to reach out to town residents and the surrounding neighbors."

Mr. Antonioni acknowledged having the InterContinental brand can do wonders to attract locals and out-of-towners regardless of the weather, economy or the resort's financial straits.

"It's built-in and nice to have," he said.

"We're part of a longstanding luxury brand, though our resort is the first of its kind."

Like other Valley resorts, special room rates have been in place throughout the calendar year to draw out-of-towners to the 293-room resort. Resort officials continue to promote Wednesday night live jazz series, Tuesday and Thursday afternoon happy hours at Joya Spa, as well as a Dec. 1 tree-lighting ceremony, mid-December holiday market and New Year's Eve celebration.

Festivities took place last week to mark the resort's one-year anniversary. The We Are One Celebration featured a live performance by the Gipsy Kings and DJ Rani "G" spinning all night, a champagne toast and raffles for vacation giveaways.