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**GRAND CASINO MILLE LACS GRAND BUFFET RECEIVES “EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR” AWARD FOR HIRING EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES**

ONAMIA, Minn. – The Grand Buffet at Grand Casino Mille Lacs has received the Productive Alternative, Inc. (PAI) “Employer of the Year” award. Grand Casino Mille Lacs was one of 25 companies nominated for the award, which is given annually to a company that makes a strong commitment to hiring individuals with disabilities.

PAI is a nonprofit organization that works with individuals who have mental and/or physical challenges. In addition to selecting an employer of the year, in honor of PAI’s 50 years of service, the company also selected an employee of the year this year. Grand Casino Mille Lacs Grand Buffet Manager Tony Sanford, who was nominated by the Little Falls Productive Alternative Branch Manager Susanne Strack-Smith, received that award.

“We appreciate the opportunity that the Grand Buffet and Tony Sanford have given our clients by hiring them for various positions including cleaning, dishwashing, food preparation, and bussing,” said Strack-Smith. “This allows our clients a chance to perform the essential functions of a job and the accommodations they need to be successful.”

Grand Casino Mille Lacs has been affiliated with PAI for the past 12 years and has employed more than 25 persons with disabilities.

“We are honored to receive this award,” said Sanford. “I am proud to work for a company that gives me the opportunity to work with PAI clients. They are an important part of the team that makes the buffet a success.”

**About Grand Casino Mille Lacs**

Grand Casino Mille Lacs and Grand Casino Hinckley, which are owned by the Corporate Commission of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians, are two of Minnesota’s premier entertainment facilities, offering gaming, accommodations, dining, conference and banquet facilities, live entertainment, and the Grand Harmony Spa at Grand Casino Hinckley.

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