

Thursday, March 26, 2009

## Putting chips down for cause



From left, Edward Gardella, John Piccolo, Mary Caputo, Christina Andrianopoulos, Hank Stolz and Jeff Dill. (TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF)

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Go ahead. Snap your fingers a few times, sling that jacket over your shoulder from just your index finger, and set that fedora at a jaunty angle, OK. Now you're ready to sing: Oh, luck be a *la-dy* tonight ...

Or maybe a city councilor, former police chief or radio talk show host.

You can try *your* luck against a slew of wheelin' and dealin' local celebrities Friday night at a Las Vegas style casino fundraiser at the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts.

The event, to benefit Preservation Worcester, will feature local luminaries serving as casino dealers in the theater lobby before and after a performance of "The Rat Pack is Back," a singing, wisecracking nightclub quartet in which actors evoke Las Vegas' four favorite sons: Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Dean Martin and Joey Bishop.

All right. So our local celebs aren't as famous as those late great Vegas veterans, but it still might be fun to try to beat someone like, say, Robert Moylan, Worcester commissioner of public works and parks, at

blackjack.

Just be warned. If you want to win, you'd better practice. He has been coached by a pro, Brian Mitchell of Creative Event Services of Marlboro, a company that puts on Las Vegas nights and other themed events. Actual training sessions have been held at Preservation Worcester for Moylan and all the other celebrity dealers and volunteers, including John Piccolo, owner of Piccolo's Restaurant; city councilors Joe Petty and Rick Rushton; Gus Giordano, owner of Maxwell Silverman's Toolhouse; Edward Gardella, former Worcester police chief; and TV and radio personalities Hank Stolz, Peter Blute and Christina Andrianopoulos.

They have practiced their card shuffling and chip counting, and they are ready to deal.

"We had training wheels on them, but they're ready to take them off," Mitchell joked, as the celebs took their final training Monday night.

On Friday, at least, your loss is a good cause's gain, and ... who knows? You might win — especially if you're lucky enough to buy the right vowel, because in addition to blackjack and roulette, our celebs will be spinning the Wheel of Fortune.

What? No Vanna? No problem. The lovely Karon Shea models will be floating about to fill the letter-flipping gap. The casino will open at 6:30 p.m. and continue until a half-hour after the show.

The event marks a departure from Preservation Worcester's "Dancing with the City" spring fundraisers the past two years, which were modeled after the popular "Dancing with the Stars" TV show.

The look will be vintage Vegas, but the event will be retro in more ways than one.

"There used to be a lot of casino nights, but there haven't been so many recently, so I think people are excited about it," Packard said.

Tickets for the show, at \$27 to \$57, are available through the Hanover Theatre Box Office. It is only the casino aspect that benefits Preservation Worcester, which works to preserve the buildings and sites that represent the culture, history and architecture of Worcester.