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STATE FAIR PARK MAKES SWITCH TO PHILADELPHIA-BASED COMPANY FOR FOOD AND CATERING

YAKIMA, Wash. — The board of directors of State Fair Park, home to the Yakima Valley SunDome and several other facilities, has chosen Spectra by Comcast Spectacor to provide food and catering services for all its facilities and events including the Yakima SunDome and the Central Washington State Fair.

The food services and hospitality division of Spectra works with sports arenas, stadiums, casinos, convention centers, cultural attractions, fairgrounds and other specialty venues nationwide, serving about 40 million guests at more than 250,000 events a year, fair officials said in a news release.

Central Washington State Fair President and General Manager Greg Stewart said the organization, which until recently had done its food services and catering in-house, had been looking at different food service and catering companies over the past few years before settling on Spectra.

“Catering and food service concessions, it’s a specialized business and ever-changing; it requires continued development in personnel, menus and philosophies,” Stewart said in a phone interview Friday. “We realized pretty soon if we’re going to continue to grow, we need to step up. We were fortunate to get a company like Spectra that has a tremendous record.”

At State Fair Park, Spectra plans to make several improvements including upgrading kitchen equipment, creating new menus for both catering and concession areas and implementing custom concepts, officials said. The company plans to incorporate locally made items in its menus, including produce, beer and wine.

But Spectra’s current focus is to get acquainted with the community and State Fair Park’s existing relationships, including with food and beverage suppliers, said Phil Hossler, who recently started as Spectra’s general manager at State Fair Park.

Spectra also will retain the existing 60 to 70 food service and catering employees at State Fair Park, including head chef Doug Moultray, Hossler said.

“To step into a facility and do a great job, you have to have a good understanding,” said Tony Hendryx, Spectra’s regional vice president of venue management, food services and hospitality, who is based in the Portland area and is in charge of overseeing operations at facilities in the western U.S. “(State Fair Park) officials have a great wealth of knowledge. We help bring resources and pull their ideas and blend those ideas with capital.”

Hendryx said final figures for planned improvements are still being determined, but estimated initial investment at just over \$250,000.

State Fair Park officials in recent years have been searching for opportunities to generate additional revenue. Most recently, they embarked on a project to install a new state-of-the-art kitchen in an

effort to expand the SunDome's catering business. Stewart said the kitchen is in the design phase and hopes to have it up and running by the 2018 Central Washington State Fair.

Members of the Yakima Valley business community will have an opportunity to learn more about Spectra and State Fair Park's food service and catering offerings at a private Aug. 15 event, During the event — VIP Party at the Park — attendees will get to sample food items and browse fair venues.

"We really want to showcase what we can do," Hendryx said.

For Stewart, it's an opportunity to show the impact Spectra could have on the food service and catering offerings in the region.

"This company will be a game changer for the catering and concession business in this area," he said.

Spectra is part of Comcast Spectacor, which also owns the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team and the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. Comcast Spectacor is part of parent company Comcast, known for its operations of the Comcast cable company and the NBC Universal media company.