





**Atlantic City Mayor Frank Gilliam and Miss New Jersey Kaitlyn Schoeffel head out into the water with Atlantic City Beach Patrol to lay a ceremonial wreath in the ocean as part of an event that marked the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City's donation of new lifeboats. (Courtesy Tim Louie)**

Most of the media attention and fanfare has been on the June 28 grand opening of the new Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City with all its amenities and glitz. Understandably so.

Hard Rock renovated the former Trump Taj Mahal to the tune of \$500 million. Carrie Underwood and Pitbull were scheduled to appear. The property features 20 restaurants, a 120,000-square-foot gaming floor, 2,100 slot machines, 120 table games. You get the idea.

But leading up to the opening, Hard Rock officials also forged a partnership that will make guests safer on the beach and in the waters outside the property.

To coincide with Memorial Day weekend, Hard Rock and city officials joined with the Atlantic City Beach Patrol on May 28 to launch a custom-made lifeboat. The boat is one of two that were donated by the Hard Rock to be used off the beaches at Maryland and Virginia avenues for the summer season. Their purpose is to "guard the beach," along several city blocks, much of it in front of the new Hard Rock.

"Atlantic City has a unique demographic of visitors," said Atlantic City Beach Patrol Chief Steve Downey. "There tends to be a lot of non-swimmers, and the beaches are dense [with people]."

He said the boats are used to rescue swimmers who are caught in the rip tide, among other potentially dire situations. The boats carry a two-person team, including a rescue swimmer. The boat is decked out in collage-inspired "Born to Defy" Hard Rock colors, also featuring Atlantic City Beach Patrol lettering along the side.



**Pictured with members of the Atlantic City Beach Patrol are Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City President Matt Harkness (suit jacket), Atlantic City Mayor Frank Gilliam and Miss New Jersey Kaitlyn Schoeffel. (Courtesy Tim Louie)**

Downey, who has been chief for four years and in Atlantic City for 30 years, said the donation by Hard Rock marks the first new boats his department has had in 11 years, due to tight city budgets.

"[The new boats] have been met with much joy," Downey said. "Just the Hard Rock coming here - this end of town has been quiet for awhile ... it's going to breathe a breath of fresh air into this part of town."

Those at the event made note that the donation was a gesture that showed the Hard Rock is interested in being a part of the Atlantic City community at large.

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City President Matt Harkness said it was a way to promote the "altruistic and philanthropic" work Hard Rock is doing.

At the Memorial Day christening, Atlantic City Mayor Frank Gilliam and Miss New Jersey, Kaitlyn Schoeffel, took a short ride into the ocean with Beach Patrol to lay a ceremonial wreath marking the occasion and partnership.

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