

Gambling gains addiction

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LAS VEGAS – 'Lady Luck' dived into American society with a vengeance. According to the National Council on Problem Gambling, 85 percent of Americans have gambled once in their lifetimes, while 65 percent have in the past year.

An American could only gamble in Las Vegas or at a track 35 years ago. Now, neighborhood casinos have been popping up, creating a new found profit area. Lottery is also present in every state except Utah and Hawaii. Gambling has slowly been integrated into the daily lives of every American.

Maybe gambling has been incorporated into our society from the start.

"Americans have descended from risk takers," said Keith White, a researcher for the gaming industry. "They gambled to find a new country, to find gold. In a way we're trained to recognize and take risks."

Las Vegas has become a booming industry of hotels, casinos and profits. One acre of land on the strip is now selling for \$25-\$30 million. The publicly traded MGM Mirage has taken advantage of the need to gamble. The CEO, Terrence Lanni, has led the company to the ownership of casinos and hotels all over the world, and the company currently controls 44 percent of rooming on the strip.

Sports have also diverged to create yet another option for gamblers. The recent Super Bowl 41 had casinos and houses overflowing with those hoping for some extra cash. According to a Federal Study, \$380 billion is bet on sporting events per year. Legally, only 1 percent is spent into either casinos or legal pots. The other 99 percent is spent under the table and is not seen by any official eyes.

Poker has gained the focus of the public as ESPN2 has aired National Poker Championships. This has led to an all out phenomenon in internet sites. Online poker games have grown significantly in popularity, from professional sites with real stakes to sites like addictinggames.com and pogo.com. The number of people accessing these sites has increased daily since poker games started airing.

Gambling can be considered a disease, parallel to that of alcoholism and gambling is a very addictive pastime. With the exposure to gambling in everything from supermarkets selling scratch tickets to TV commercials emboldening the saying "What happens in Vegas stay in Vegas", it is near to impossible for recovering addicts to stay away from

temptation. There is a number that addicts can call, the Compulsive Gambling Hotline at 1-800-522-4700 (this is the Colorado hotline), to receive help fighting their addiction.

American society has been instilled with the love of gambling. With over half of Americans gambling per year, it does not appear as if this problem will be solved anytime soon.