



GEORGIA Amusement JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving the Georgia COAM industry
Endorsed by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association
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COAM legislation stalls out

It's status quo for operators

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Despite discussing several COAM-related bills over the course of the just-concluded General Assembly session, legislators

didn't approve any of the legislation.

House Bill 1424, which included adoption of a gift card, passed the House but stalled in the Senate. A Senate bill by Clint Dixon (SB 536) similar to HB 1424 also stalled in the Senate.

In committee hearing testimony March 24, Rep. Alan Powell, R-Hartwell, the House bill's chief

sponsor, said gift cards would discourage store owners from paying cash to prize winners, which is illegal in Georgia.

"This takes away any rationale for a merchant to pay out cash money," he said.

Legislation that would have increased the value of merchandise for prizes from Class A machines to \$50 from \$5 also stalled, as did a

proposal to exempt fraternal and veteran's organizations from a requirement that locations hosting Class B COAM machines derive at least 50 percent of their income from the machines.

So, it's status quo for operators for now. The *Georgia Amusement Journal* will have an in-depth look at the legislative session in next month's issue.

GAMOA social



Paul Tash photos

GAMOA'S SOCIAL during the Amusement Expo International in Las Vegas is becoming a can't-miss event. Above, Varsha, Vaishali, Krishanal and Binal Patel of Blue Sky Amusement enjoy themselves at the social last month. At right are Marc Downing and Jeff Gaddis of Banilla Games.



Eagle enters COAM market

By Paul Tash, Georgia Amusement Journal

Making its debut in the Georgia market, Eagle Global recently acquired two Class B COAM operations in the state that will make it "one of the leaders" in the state's coin-operated amusement machine industry, the company said.

Eagle revealed the acquisitions in a March announcement that also included news of a \$50 million financial agreement with investment firm Goldman Sachs. The Goldman Sachs support will also allow Eagle "to finance future expansion" through the acquisition of "additional distributed gaming providers in the region and other growth capital expenditures."

Eagle Global, based in Norcross, is a woman-

See EAGLE Page 8

2023 licensing period opens May 2

The licensing application process for Coin-Operated Amusement Machines (COAMs) will open Monday, May 2, for the 2023 licensing period (July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023) through the Georgia Lottery Corp.'s COAM website, www.gacoam.com.

The licensing application covers the following licenses:

- Master Class A – New and renewal
- Master Class B – Renewal only
- Location Class A – New and renewal
- Location Class B – New and renewal

- Manufacturer – New and renewal
- Distributor – New and renewal

The Lottery is not accepting any new Class B Master License applications. New Class B Master licenses are only available through an auction process for prequalified participants.

Following are important dates for licensees.

05/31/2022 (Tuesday)

Deadline to apply for a new location license (Class A)

See LICENSING Page 8



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Industry gathers to celebrate Hunter legacy

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Stories were shared and memories revisited March 30 during a well-attended affair to celebrate the life of Lee Hunter, who speakers said played a starring role in the success Georgia’s COAM industry enjoys today.

“His vision for the industry ... set us off on a path that changed (the industry) tremendously,” said Angela Whitman, president of Southern Gaming Solutions (SGS), which Hunter founded.

Hunter, 49, died in January from cardiac arrest.

Whitman said Hunter served not only as a mentor since he hired her nearly 20 years ago, but became part of her family, as well.

“He was fearless, intelligent, hard-working, dedicated, genuine, quick-witted and driven,” she said. “He commanded a room when he walked in the door.”

SGS became Georgia’s exclusive distributor of IGT machines in 2015, and Tim Shortall, regional



Paul Tash photos

ANGELA WHITMAN, president of Southern Gaming Solutions, pays tribute to her former boss Lee Hunter (left) at a gathering to honor the COAM legend. IGT’s Tim Shortall, center above, and friend Butch Foshee also addressed the crowd.



LEE HUNTER

vice president of sales for IGT, called Hunter “an incredible partner.”

“He was so good for IGT, and so good for this industry,” Shortall said.

“There would not be a COAM industry in the state of Georgia if it wasn’t for Lee Hunter. We know that.

“He was a great man, and I en-

joyed spending time with him.

There was not a day that went by when I was in his company that I wasn’t having fun ... or felt like I wasn’t being challenged.”

Shortall said Hunter “pushed us so hard at IGT to do what was best for this industry.”

“We are in a better place at IGT and the COAM industry because of Lee Hunter.”

Butch Foshee, a longtime COAM operator, said he and Hunter became “very, very close friends” during the years working on legislation that ultimately would

become House Bill 487, which regulated the COAM industry in 2013 under the Georgia Lottery Corp.

“Lee was a major force behind 487,” Foshee said. “He took a lot of hits ... but it wouldn’t have happened without Lee, and that’s an indisputable fact.”

Foshee also marveled at Hunter’s ability to get things done.

“Lee did stuff,” he said. “A lot of people ... we’re going to die with dreams, but Lee died with memories.

“It’s something to be learned for all of us about how to live life.”

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Journal Opinion

GACS to resume popular programs

By Sharon Shuford
GACS Membership

The popular GACS Lunch & Learn programs are returning this year. These events provide opportunities for retailers to hear from regulators and other industry experts on a wide range of topics relevant to their businesses. The programs will be offered virtually and in-person.

GACS is also re-launching the GACS InStore program, which brings local legislators and retailers together for a couple hours of conversation and feedback.

Lunch & Learn

In April 2019, GACS kicked off a series of Lunch & Learn meetings across the state. The format was created to ensure education opportunities are more available and accessible to members closer to their places of business. They are designed to provide industry-relevant information in settings that give attendees access to experts in key subject matters.

The Lunch & Learn format exceeded expectations. More than 120 retailers attended in 2019, and no one left disappointed! Feedback was consistently positive:

“The contacts I made were more than worth the time



Sharon Shuford

spent.” – retailer, VP operations

“I learned some things I did not know and look forward to the next one.” – retailer, VP marketing

Although GACS planned to expand the series to 10 meetings in 2020, COVID brought a halt to indoor gatherings and the series went on hold. Now GACS is confirming Lunch & Learn programs for 2022 with new topics, locations and dates. Programs will be live and in-person starting in July. ZOOM access will be provided for anyone unable to be present. See the schedule below.

GACS InStore program

The convenience store industry is one of the most regu-

They are designed to provide industry-relevant information in settings that give attendees access to experts in key subject matters.

lated in the country. Whether we will be successful in part depends on the legislative process – how legislators and representatives in the state Capitol and D.C. perceive the industry and respond to issues that impact our business mightily. Our representatives need to know us, and we need to know them.

To help build strong legislative connections at the grass roots level, GACS in 2019 launched GACS InStore, a program that brings convenience industry retailers together with their communities and members of the state legislature, offering lawmakers the opportunity to learn first-hand about C-Store operations on location. While the program was paused during

in 2020 during the pandemic, GACS now plans to conduct four InStore events across Georgia this year in conjunction with the Lunch & Learn programs.

2022 schedule

July 13 – Atlanta Metro, RaceTrac hosting. Topic: What to expect next from GEFA. GACS InStore program at RaceTrac location follows the Lunch & Learn.

Aug. 10 – Forsyth, GEMA hosting. Topic: Emergency Preparedness. Note: This is a full morning workshop, including a facility tour with speakers from GEMA and the Department of Agriculture and will conclude with Q&A over lunch.

Sept. 14 – Flowery Branch, Clipper Petroleum hosting. Topic: UST Compliance. GACS InStore program at Clipper location follows the Lunch & Learn.

Oct. 13 – Dublin, Friendly Gus hosting. Topic: FDA Roadmap. GACS InStore program at Friendly Gus location follows the Lunch & Learn.

Dec. 7 – Waycross, Friendly Express hosting. Topic: Nuclear Verdicts. GACS InStore program at Friendly Express location follows the Lunch & Learn.

In addition, GACS will hold the Southern Convenience

See GACS Page 5

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COAM calendar

— REPORTING DATES —

April 20: Each monthly report should be submitted by Location License Holders in electronic format via the www.gacoam.com website as required by the GLC by the 20th of each following month.

— MEETINGS/OTHER —

April 19: COAM Advisory Board, Lottery headquarters, Atlanta
June 5-7: GACS Convention, Omni Grove Park, Asheville, N.C.
Aug. 24-25: Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo, Gas South Convention Center, Duluth, GA

Write us

The *Georgia Amusement Journal* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters must include the writer's name and address. The word limit is 300. Mail to Georgia Amusement Journal, P.O. Box 4307, Butte MT 59702, or you can email us at paul@tashcommunications.com. The Journal reserves the right not to print letters it finds objectionable.

Banilla sues VA locations for counterfeit games

Banilla Games, Inc. announced March 9 the filing of nine federal lawsuits against locations in Virginia that are profiting from counterfeit games. Together, the suits are asking for damages totaling a minimum of \$18 million.

"These complaints we filed today on behalf of Banilla show Banilla's unwavering commitment to protecting its intellectual property, including its copyrights and trade secrets," said Stephen Faraci, partner and co-chair of Whiteford, Taylor, and Preston's Business Litigation Section. "Obviously, Banilla

is very serious about protecting its intellectual property."

On Dec. 6, 2021, a Greenville County Circuit Court Judge entered a preliminary injunction prohibiting Virginia's enforcement on the ban of skill-based games relating to certain devices.

"Since then, a number of bad actors have proliferated in Virginia, using counterfeit Banilla games, therefore undermining the reputable distributors and operators,"



said Brooks Lee, vice president of sales for Banilla. "We are fully committed to

prosecuting not only the locations, but also those operators who placed these counterfeits in these stores. We're not going to stand for it."

"These complaints seek not only to protect our intellectual property rights, but also to remove

unauthorized, counterfeit skill-based games from the Commonwealth," Lee added. "The marketplace needs to know that it is unacceptable to try and monetize someone else's intellectual property, such as copyrighted game content. Not only is it just not right, it is also theft of another company's valuable property."

Banilla is headquartered in Greenville, N.C., where it produces award-winning skill games, sold predominantly in the Georgia COAM market, which is regulated by the Georgia Lottery Corp.

GACS

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Store & Petroleum Show Nov. 10 in Macon.

For information about any of these programs, or to host a Lunch & Learn or InStore event, contact GACS at 770-736-9723 or email Kevin@gacs.com or Sharon@gacs.com



GACS photo

A FULL ROOM of attendees listen to a presenter during a 2019 Lunch & Learn in Waycross.

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Eagle

from Page 1

and minority-owned company headed by CEO and co-founder Michelle Franklin. She has extensive experience in retail with a focus on operations and supply chains in various industries across the country. Her husband and co-founder Craig Franklin brings a background as a private equity investor to the Eagle team, while corporate officer Antonia Malhotra offers strong operations experience.

“We have a complimentary skillset,” Michelle told the *Georgia Amusement Journal* recently. “Our management team is focused on growth and on helping other COAM operators with the various tools each of our skillset brings through operations, finance, legal, etc.”

Craig Franklin agreed.

“We get involved in our businesses and help in any way we can,” he said. “We want to really make a difference financially and operationally to help them scale.”

“That’s our approach here and

one of our key differentiators,” he added.

He said Eagle’s focus is on organic growth and acquisitions.

“We’d love to talk to folks if they’re looking for alternatives,” Craig said.

Eagle can be reached through the contact information on its website, www.eagleglobalinc.com.

Michelle said she is “proud of the team” that has grown Eagle Global in the 12 years of its existence and expressed optimism about Eagle’s future in the COAM business.



FRANKLIN

“We are ... thankful for the support of our customers, our team, and the Georgia Lottery Corp. whose steadfast leadership has helped

our industry while simultaneously serving the needs of thousands of Georgia residents through their commitment to the various educational programs such as the HOPE and Pre-K scholarships here,” she said.

Michelle also said the fact that the COAM industry provides millions to support state educational programs each year is “awesome.”

“When I went off to college and grad school, scholarships really

helped me,” she said. “It’s good to give back to the community.”

Craig said he’s witnessed “a lot of passion” about the education system in Georgia from friends who’ve gone to school in the state, something he hasn’t seen in many other states.

“The heavy emphasis on education and giving back is very appealing to us,” he said.

Michelle also said she understands the important role she has as a rare female business owner in the industry and hopes to inspire other women, “even my own daughter,” to follow suit.

“It’s something I continuously strive for,” she said.

The Georgia Lottery Corp. with President and CEO Gretchen Corbin at the helm and other leaders, such as attorney Julie Barker, are other examples of strong female leadership in the industry, Michelle added.

Goldman Sachs said in the March announcement that it is looking forward to working with Eagle Global.

“We are excited to partner with Michelle, Antonia, and the Eagle team, who we believe embody the qualities we seek in strong management teams,” it said. “Through their customer value proposition and focus on compliance, we see a compelling opportunity for the company to continue to grow both organically and through acquisitions to increase its competitive footprint in the COAM market.”

The Eagle team extends to a strong group of technicians and support staff across legal, compliance and finance, Michelle and Craig Franklin said.

“They are very loyal, dedicated and great to work with,” Michelle said.

With a route that extends to almost every corner of the state and a team with over 40 years of industry experience across operations, private equity, and retail, Eagle is ready to serve the needs of hundreds of customers, the two said.

“We are different,” Craig added. “I think Goldman saw that in us, and the industry benefits from it.”



Licensing

from Page 1

and Class B), a new master Class A license, and a new manufacturer or distributor license for the 2022 licensing period (07/01/2021 - 06/30/2022). This deadline only applies to 2022 COAM licenses.

06/30/2022 (Thursday)

Deadline for master licensees to purchase additional Class A and Class B decals or location licensees to add Class A and Class B machines for the 2022 licensing period (07/01/2021 - 06/30/2022). This deadline only applies to 2022 COAM licenses.

07/01/2022 (Friday)

Date a \$1,000 late fee will be assessed to location Class A and Class B licenses, master Class A and Class B licensees, and manufacturer and distributor licensees that have not renewed for the 2023 licensing period (07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023). An existing COAM licensee will not be allowed to apply for a new license to avoid payment of a late fee.

9/28/2022 (Wednesday)

Last day to submit a renewal location Class A and Class B license, master Class A and Class B license and manufacturer and distributor license for the 2023 licensing period (07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023). If a holder of a 2022 COAM license fails to renew their license, or their license application is not approved on or before this date, the person or entity will no longer be allowed to operate COAMs.

All deadlines and more information are available on the COAM website, www.gacoam.com.

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IT'S IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

Retail Matters

C-store sales tick up in '21, though traffic down

Convenience Store News

Convenience stores saw the average number of weekly in-store buyers decline 14 percent in 2021 compared to the pre-pandemic weekly average in 2019, despite a modest recovery relative to 2020, according to research conducted by VideoMining. Major factors that had a negative impact on in-store traffic included continuing work-from-home trends and high gas prices.

Despite the lower level of in-store traffic, average weekly sales per store for the convenience channel were up 4 percent compared to 2019, according to VideoMining's C-Store Shopper Insights Tracker. This is partially a result of inflation and partially due to c-store shoppers' healthy appetite for buying a range of in-store products, adding up to \$58,456 in sales per store per week, excluding fuel.

Shoppers are now very comfortable visiting and shopping at convenience stores based on their overall behaviors, such as spending more time (over three minutes)

Shoppers are now very comfortable visiting and shopping at convenience stores

shopping in-store, VideoMining reported.

Observed shifts in behaviors and trip missions in the convenience store channel include the breakfast daypart gaining significant share of trips in 2021 compared to the previous year. This is largely due to more of the workforce starting to return to the office and resuming their morning commutes. This was particularly beneficial to product segments such as coffee, energy drinks and prepackaged food, which all performed exceptionally well in the morning daypart.

Shares for the foodservice and beverage categories were up year-over-year while tobacco and alcohol trip missions were down, according to the C-Store Shopper Insights Tracker. Key growth categories included refreshing beverages such as sports drinks (+24

percent share) and water (+13 percent); snack options such as cereal bars (+15 percent), meat snacks (+12 percent) and candy (+9 percent); as well as fresh food options such as roller grill (+13 percent) and prepackaged food (+6 percent).

Gains in these segments reduced the dominance of those that held up through the pandemic, including cigarettes (-7 percent) and beer (-6 percent.)

As fuel prices continue to rise, in turn affecting overall store traffic, the good news for operators is that a majority (72 percent) of visitors to c-stores in 2021 were non-fuel buyers.

The conversion rates trend for 2021 highlight specific opportunities in the convenience channel, especially for improving pump-to-store conversion rates for fuel buyers who pay at the pump, which was nearly 26 percent below

the conversion rates in 2019, VideoMining found. Other opportunities to improve in-store conversions abound, especially as shopper dynamics of the channel continue to shift. Last year saw further gains in the proportion of younger shoppers in c-stores, with members of Generation Z and millennials now making up more than 53 percent of the shopper base.

In-depth analysis of product segments also revealed patterns that indicate shifts in shopper preferences, such as moving from traditional beers to hard seltzers and ready-to-drink cocktails. As such, even as store heat maps continue to turn more red after the pandemic-driven blues, there are plenty of opportunities to fine-tune merchandising and marketing strategies to connect better with today's c-store shopper and boost in-store performance.

VideoMining helps retailers and consumer packaged goods companies optimize retail performance and experience by decoding in-store behavior.

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02-Jan-22	08-Jan-22	12-Jan-22	19-Jan-22*
09-Jan-22	15-Jan-22	19-Jan-22	25-Jan-22
16-Jan-22	22-Jan-22	26-Jan-22	01-Feb-22
23-Jan-22	29-Jan-22	02-Feb-22	08-Feb-22
30-Jan-22	05-Feb-22	09-Feb-22	15-Feb-22
06-Feb-22	12-Feb-22	16-Feb-22	23-Feb-22*
13-Feb-22	19-Feb-22	23-Feb-22	01-Mar-22
20-Feb-22	26-Feb-22	02-Mar-22	08-Mar-22
27-Feb-22	05-Mar-22	09-Mar-22	15-Mar-22
06-Mar-22	12-Mar-22	16-Mar-22	22-Mar-22
13-Mar-22	19-Mar-22	23-Mar-22	29-Mar-22
20-Mar-22	26-Mar-22	30-Mar-22	05-Apr-22
27-Mar-22	02-Apr-22	06-Apr-22	12-Apr-22
03-Apr-22	09-Apr-22	13-Apr-22	19-Apr-22
10-Apr-22	16-Apr-22	20-Apr-22	26-Apr-22
17-Apr-22	23-Apr-22	27-Apr-22	03-May-22
24-Apr-22	30-Apr-22	04-May-22	10-May-22
01-May-22	07-May-22	11-May-22	17-May-22
08-May-22	14-May-22	18-May-22	24-May-22
15-May-22	21-May-22	25-May-22	01-Jun-22*
22-May-22	28-May-22	01-Jun-22	07-Jun-22
29-May-22	04-Jun-22	08-Jun-22	14-Jun-22
05-Jun-22	11-Jun-22	15-Jun-22	22-Jun-22*
12-Jun-22	18-Jun-22	22-Jun-22	28-Jun-22
19-Jun-22	25-Jun-22	29-Jun-22	06-Jul-21*

*Indicates sweep or push date has been changed to accommodate holiday
Note: Holidays on a Thursday and Friday may delay the availability of the Location Period Accounting Report on the following Monday

Keep COAMs connected

To ensure accurate reporting of financial data to the Central Accounting System, the Georgia Lottery Corporation (GLC) says it is imperative the Location License Holders (LLHs) ensure all equipment remains connected to the site controller and powered up at all times.

The GLC maintains a record of those LLHs that are repeat offenders of failing to ensure the continuous connectivity and operation of Class B COAMs.

Failure to comply with these procedures may result in fines up to \$50,000, suspension and/or revocation of the license.

Decommission COAMs correctly

The proper procedure to decommission coin-operated amusement machines (COAMs) can be found on the COAM Division website, www.gacoam.com. The COAM decommission procedure should be followed when there is:

- A change of master, change of ownership, or cancellation letter received by GLC;
- A COAM game board swapped out with a different game;
- A COAM malfunction.

To proceed with the decommissioning:

1. Call Intralot before disconnecting the COAMs from a location and removing those COAMs. The Master License Holder (MLH) needs to contact the Intralot Hotline at 877-261-6242 to properly decommission COAMs. The COAMs must be connected to the site controller at this time.

2. Intralot will let you know when the COAMs are decommissioned. The Intralot representative will perform steps on the Intralot system that prepares the COAMs for the decommission. Once the steps are complete, Intralot will notify the MLH the machines have been decommissioned.

3. Disconnect decommissioned COAMs from the site controller.

Decommissioned COAM(s) now can be removed from the location. It is imperative MLHs follow all operational and technical procedures in order to ensure accurate reporting of financial data to the Central Accounting System.

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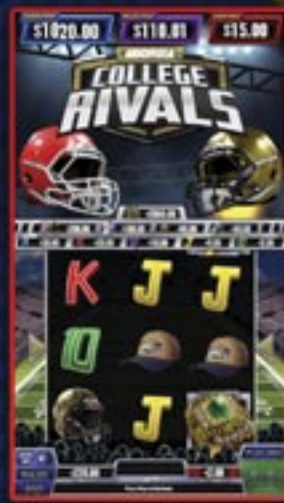
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