



GEORGIA Amusement JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving the Georgia COAM industry
Endorsed by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association
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Cellular snafu disconnects site controllers

3G-to-4G transition cuts off communications for hundreds

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

An effort by communications giant Verizon to upgrade its network technology in Georgia from 3G to 4G shut down hundreds of COAM locations in mid-November, and problems were persisting into mid-December.

John McCormack, general manager in Georgia for Intralot, said about 470 COAM locations, or about 10 percent of the state's total COAM locations, were affected by the Verizon upgrade effort. Intralot manages COAM accounting and monitoring services for the Georgia Lottery Corp.

COAM locations use Intralot's site controllers that were running Verizon's 3G technology to connect to the state's Central Monitoring and Accounting System. When Ver-

izon began migrating its cellular towers from 3G to 4G last month, the site controllers using those towers lost connection to the central system. Verizon stopped its tower upgrades when notified of the problem, McCormack said.

Talking at a COAM industry meeting presented by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association in Lilburn Dec. 12, McCormack said many locations were still experiencing problems, but he added that Intralot had brought in "more technicians from out of state" to help "get those cleaned up."

The solution, he said, is to migrate all the site controllers in the state to 4G technology, adding that he hopes that effort is finished "completely by the end of the year."

See SNAFU Page 6



Paul Tash photo

JIM SISKIN offers his thanks to GAMOA after receiving its Operator of the Year award in September at the Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo as his wife, Dianne, watches.

Siskin a fixture in COAM industry

Editor's Note: The following story kicks off a new series of features coming in the next several issues of the Journal on the many impressive personalities that have helped shape Georgia's COAM industry. Look for the "Special Feature" tag in future issues.

By Jorie Tash, Georgia Amusement Journal

Jim Siskin, co-owner of Star Castle Family Entertainment Center (FEC) and Amusement Sales and Service in Savannah, has been a fixture

of the Georgia coin-operated amusement machine (COAM) industry for over 40 years.

A member of Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association
See SISKIN Page 10

A Journal special feature

Applications processed, revenue up

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Out of the 8,500 applications to renew COAM licenses received this year, 99 percent have been "completely processed," a Georgia Lottery Corp. official told a COAM industry meeting presented by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association Dec. 12 in Lilburn.

Mike Parham, vice president of the GLC's COAM Division, also said in his report to GAMOA members that COAM revenues continue to climb, with revenue from each machine averaging about \$95 per day, compared to about \$91 at this time last year. He said he hopes the industry cracks the \$100-per-day level in the next year.

"That would be monumental," he said.

The number of machines has grown to about 23,000 statewide, he added, and the number of locations has reached about 4,700.

"We want to see that continue," Parham said. "More locations, more

See MEETING Page 3



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Meeting

from Page 1

machines.”

To that end, he said, the Lottery is urging licensees to develop marketing efforts to promote more play. Those marketing efforts, including such items as banners and stickers, have to be approved by the Lottery, and that review process is outlined in the Location Licensees Guide available on the COAM website at www.gacoam.com.

“We welcome any marketing proposal,” he said.

If a licensee notifies the Lottery when an approved marketing effort begins, Parham said it can track the success of the promotions by “tracking revenue” from that date.

Decommissioning

Parham also urged master licensees to properly follow the procedure to decommission machines that is also available on the website (and in the sidebar story on this page). Incorrectly decommissioning machines “does affect revenue,” he said, so “it’s important that you do it correctly.”

On another topic, Parham said,

the Lottery is “keenly aware” of recent customer service issues, such as phone calls slow to be answered and technicians slow to respond. Intralot, the Lottery’s contracted provider for COAM reporting and monitoring, has been notified of the problems.

“They know it’s a big issue,” he said. “They will be making changes.”

Lottery and Intralot understand how poor customer service affects the industry, he said.

“We know it puts you in a bad position,” he said.

Know your legislators

Sheila Humberstone, the industry’s longtime lobbyist, urged all licensees to “get to know your state legislators.”

“The best way ... to improve the industry is getting to know your local representative,” she said. “Talk to them about your industry ... before they go into (legislative) session.”

GAMOA President Shawn Fellows then acknowledged the GAMOA legislative team of Sheila Humberstone and Les Schneider for the “great work they do at the Capitol.”

He said the two don’t just work during the legislative session, which convenes again Jan.

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.

13, but all year long.

“It’s an unbelievable task,” he said.

Finally, Fellows urged licensees to sign up for GAMOA’s popular text notification system by texting 770-203-1135. The text no-

tification service provides important membership information and also is used to communicate real-time updates in an emergency, such as a major power outage.

“It’s a good information source,” he said.

 2019 COAM location sweep and master push calendar 			
ACCOUNTING WEEK START	ACCOUNTING WEEK END	LOCATION SWEEP DATE	MASTER PUSH DATE
29-Sep-19	05-Oct-19	09-Oct-19	16-Oct-19*
06-Oct-19	12-Oct-19	16-Oct-19	22-Oct-19
13-Oct-19	19-Oct-19	23-Oct-19	29-Oct-19
20-Oct-19	26-Oct-19	30-Oct-19	05-Nov-19
27-Oct-19	02-Nov-19	06-Nov-19	13-Nov-19*
03-Nov-19	09-Nov-19	13-Nov-19	19-Nov-19
10-Nov-19	16-Nov-19	20-Nov-19	26-Nov-19
17-Nov-19	23-Nov-19	27-Nov-19	04-Dec-19*
24-Nov-19	30-Nov-19	04-Dec-19	10-Dec-19
01-Dec-19	07-Dec-19	11-Dec-19	17-Dec-19
08-Dec-19	14-Dec-19	18-Dec-19	24-Dec-10*
15-Dec-19	21-Dec-19	26-Dec-19*	02-Jan-20*
22-Dec-19	28-Dec-19	02-Jan-20*	08-Jan-20*

*Indicates sweep or push date has been changed to accommodate holiday

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.






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FEC Summit in Georgia Jan. 26-28

Operators of Family Entertainment Centers (FECs) from around the globe will gather for the IAAPA FEC Summit 2020 in Stone Mountain, GA, at the Atlanta Evergreen Marriott, Jan. 26-28.

The yearly event provides a great environment for operators to learn the latest best practices and share ideas to run successful FECs. Registration deadline is Friday, Jan. 17.

Why Attend?

IAAPA FEC Summit is an educational event for FEC owners and operators with a specific focus on building the skill sets necessary for success in the attractions industry. The seminars and sessions are particularly relevant to entrepreneurs.

What to Expect

Experience three days of learning and fun! Early registration is urged because registration requires approval. Facility operators will learn their status within 48 hours of registration. A limited number of non-sponsor manufacturer, supplier, and consultant registrations will be available.

Registration Fee

Registration fee includes admission for one non-sponsoring manufacturer, supplier and/or consultant bringing two qualified facility operators (must be an owner or senior manager of a Family Entertainment Center).

What is the IAAPA?

IAAPA, the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, is the premier trade association representing the diverse and ever-changing attractions industry. IAAPA, with over 6,000 member companies from over 100 countries, hosts global events and conferences that “spread successful ideas and practices,” its website says.

“We also provide valuable tools and resources that make all of our businesses smarter, safer, and more profitable while delivering guest experiences that surprise and delight.”

FEC Summit agenda

Sunday, Jan. 26

5 - 6:30 p.m. – **Registration Open**
6:30 - 9 p.m. – **Welcome Reception**

Monday, Jan. 27

7:30 - 8:15 a.m. – **Breakfast**
8 a.m. – **Welcome Remarks**
8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. – **FEC Keynote with Workshop | Scaling Up Profit Cash and Value**
1 - 2 p.m. – **Lunch**
2 - 8 p.m. – **Behind the Scenes at Andretti's Indoor Karting & Games**

Tuesday, Jan. 28

7:15 - 8:30 a.m. – **Breakfast**
8:45 a.m. – **Welcome Remarks**
9 - 10 a.m. – **Education Session | Launch into Arcade Panel**
10 - 10:30 a.m. – **Networking in Sponsor Zone**
10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. – **Education Session | 2020 Vision for Arcade Operators**
12:30 - 1:30 p.m. – **Lunch**
1:30 - 2:30 p.m. – **Education Session | Risk Management**
2:30 - 3:30 p.m. – **Education Sessions | Operators and Entrepreneur Panel**
3:30 - 4 p.m. – **Sponsor Zone Spotlight**
4 - 6 p.m. – **Farewell Toast**

Wednesday, Jan. 29

IAAPA FEC Summit Post Tour

- Axis Replay in Atlanta
- Malibu Grand Prix in Norcross
- Tiny Towne in Norcross
- Stars and Strikes in Stone Mountain
- Urban Air Adventure Park in Lawrenceville



IAAPA

The Global Association
for the Attractions Industry

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COAM calendar

— REPORTING DATES —

Dec. 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 —

Jan. 26-28: FEC Summit (IAAPA - Stone Mountain, GA)
March 9-11: Amusement Expo International - New Orleans, LA

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.

Journal Opinion

AMOA to ring in 2020 with key events

**By Lori Schneider
AMOA Executive VP**

AMOA will ring in 2020 and a new decade by conducting two important industry events during the first quarter.

AMOA will conduct its annual State Council Meeting at the Renaissance International Plaza in Tampa, FL, beginning Thursday, Feb. 13, and wrapping up Saturday morning, Feb. 15.

The annual gathering is one of the most productive meetings on the industry calendar and provides state leaders the opportunity to engage and share both challenges and opportunities in their respective regions. The annual AMOA event is open to state association executives and state association leaders across the country. States currently without a state association are encouraged to attend as well.



Lori Schneider

The annual gathering is one of the most productive meetings on the industry calendar

It's not too early to begin making plans to attend the 2020 Amusement Expo International happening March 9-11 in New Or-



AMOA is a national trade association representing the interests of operators, distributors, manufacturers and suppliers in the amusement entertainment industry.

leans, LA. That's right, AEI is heading to the Big Easy for 2020 with Expo Education Day taking place on Monday, March 9, at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside (AEI's headquarter hotel) and the Trade Show scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, and Wednesday, March 11, in the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center on Tuesday

For more information on either of these events, contact Lori Schneider at lori@amoa.com or by calling the AMOA headquarters at 1-800-937-2662.

Card technology



Paul Tash photo

MARC COHEN, left, and Adam Schmidt, middle, of Ultra Group of Companies, show Milin Patel of Ria Games how the company's card system works following a COAM industry meeting, presented by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association (GAMOA), Dec. 12 in Lilburn. The meeting featured a panel discussion on the benefits of the many available card systems in the Georgia COAM market. See Page 9 for more on the systems.

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SGS announces new distribution facility

In preparation for the New Year and upcoming product line, Southern Gaming Solutions (SGS) has relocated to a new facility in Austell at 6955 Oak Ridge Parkway.

Oak Ridge Parkway is located off Thornton Road and I-20, west of I-285 in Cobb County. The new facility is about 5 miles southwest of the company's former location in Mableton.

The new building offers a variety of convenient features, including rear-dock loading, rear drive in ramp, 18 feet of clearance height,



and ample parking, according to a press release. The facility also includes extra space for technical training classes and certification and more room for the repair center, parts support, and more product.

"The feedback received from both our valued customers and IGT has been great," said Lee Hunter, SGS president. "It truly has been a good move and prepares us to introduce a new cutting edge product

to Georgia in 2020."

Established in 2015, SGS is a licensed and exclusive distributor of IGT Class B coin-operated amusement machines (COAMs) in the Georgia market.

FDA's authority to regulate e-cigarettes upheld

Convenience Store News

A United States Court of Appeals ruled against a lawsuit challenging the Food and Drug Administration's regulatory authority over electronic cigarettes.

The court's decision Dec. 10 came in response to a lawsuit brought by Nicopure Labs and the Right to Be Smoke-Free Coalition, an e-cigarette industry group. The 2016 lawsuit alleged the FDA's deeming rule would subject electronic cigarettes and other vaping products to more onerous restrictions than combustible cigarettes under the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act.

In its court filing, Nicopure Labs said the FDA's rulemaking process violated the Administrative Procedure Act, and that the deeming rule violates the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

However, the unanimous three-judge panel said the FDA's application to e-cigarettes of rules governing tobacco marketing was rational because the new products "are indisputably highly addictive and pose health risks, especially to youth, that are not well understood."

"The First Amendment does not bar the FDA from preventing the sale of e-cigarettes as safer than existing tobacco products until their manu-

facturers have shown that they actually are safer as claimed," U.S. Circuit Judge Cornelia Pillard wrote for the court.

The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 gives the FDA the authority to regulate tobacco products. Its first actions centered around cigarettes – including banning flavored cigarettes.

In May 2016, the FDA released its long-awaited deeming rule extending its authority to all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and cigars. The authority also extends to hookah tobacco and pipe tobacco.

The rule went into effect in August 2016.



Paul Tash photo

INTRALOT GM John McCormack discusses problems created by a Verizon technology upgrade in November during an industry meeting Dec. 12 in Lilburn.

Snafu

from Page 1

McCormack emphasized that even when cellular connection is lost, "the financial data doesn't get lost" and is available to send to the central system when the site controller connection is reestablished. He said technician teams "worked overtime" in an effort to resolve the problems "within the accounting week."

Upgrading towers usually isn't an issue, McCormack said, because mobile-phone signals quickly find other towers when they lose connection to one. However, site con-

trollers are stationary and use specific towers for connection – when they lose connection to that tower, the connection is lost completely. Verizon overlooked the dependent connection site controllers have with individual cell towers, he said.

Regarding complaints that licensees did not receive much information when the connection problem first surfaced, McCormack acknowledged that Intralot could have been "more proactive in communicating" with master licensees. However, he said, the initial reaction of the company was "to stop the bleeding" as quickly as possible.

'Play Responsibly' decals available

Master License Holders (MLHs) must prominently display the "Play Responsibly" decals on each Class B machine. There is a new phone number for the Georgia Crisis and Access Hotline displayed on the "Play Responsibly" decals, which is 1-866-922-7369, and the decals are light blue in color (see image inset).

To get "Play Responsibly" decals, contact the COAM Retailer Services Helpline at 1-800-746-8546 or email COAMReporting@galottery.org with the subject line of "Play Responsibly decals." A PDF version of the "Play Responsibly" decal is also available at www.gacoam.com.





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- ✓ Combined card reader and bill acceptor
- ✓ Operator can apply credits to Titan card (tracks replays for sales tax savings) or choose to print a ticket



Redeem Award Credits															
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	Summary														
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Paul Tash photo

TAKING PART in a panel discussion about card-reader systems are, from left, moderator and GAMOA President Shawn Fellows, Jim Beck of Goldfinger/RKS, Steve Rogers of Primero, Marc Cohen of

Ultra, Alex Mithani of Zydexo, Bil Liusian of Surfnote, Mathieu Desmarais of Axes, and Steve Ranere of IGT/SGS. The discussion took place at a COAM industry meeting sponsored by GAMOA Dec. 12.

Panel focuses on card systems

Systems touted for compliance, player tracking

By Jorie Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Representatives from seven industry-leading gaming manufacturers participated in a panel discussion on card-reader systems and their benefits at a COAM industry meeting presented by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association (GAMOA) Dec. 12 in Lilburn.

Spokesmen from Primero, Zydexo, IGT/Southern Gaming Solutions (SGS), Axes, Goldfinger/RKS, Surfnote and Ultra answered questions from COAM industry about their respective card readers in what GAMOA President Shawn Fellows called a “master report” for licensees to better understand the capabilities of card readers, often called cashless systems. All panelists agreed that such systems streamline sales tax calculation, player tracking and COAM reporting and compliance, but they can provide even more potential business benefits.

Jim Beck, representing Goldfinger/RKS, emphasized that the company is “keep(ing) the system customizable as possible” while also reaching peak reliability, versatility and security.

“You decide how you want to run the system,” he said.

Primero’s Steve Rogers echoed this sentiment regarding their own system: “It’s entirely customizable,” he said, and added that they “developed the product to be long-

lasting.” Zydexo’s Alex Mithani agreed, as well, saying master licenses should “look at a system with flexibility,” since “the needs of machines and locations can change.”

Last month, an unforeseen Verizon outage took hundreds of machines offline and rendered data and revenue temporarily unavailable to licensees (see related story on Page 1), an event card systems could be able to alleviate by ensuring some form of access to data at all times, panelists said.

Ultra’s Titan system can incorporate messages and allow licensees to receive alerts when the system is accessed or when machines are down, among other scenarios, said Ultra representative Marc Cohen.

Data security

Steve Ranere, representing IGT/SGS, highlighted their system’s “mirror database” that, in the event of outages, “can redirect to another system and be back online in five minutes.” This ensures licensees are less likely to lose any reporting data or gaming revenue, or have delayed access to said data. The SGS system also allows remote access to machine data and provides multiple backups for maximum peace-of-mind.

Goldfinger/RKS’s system “makes sure (data) is all redundantly backed up,” as well, said Beck.

While the availability of data is crucial, all data must also be secure: the systems represented all take steps to keep location, machine and player data safe.

“As the industry evolves, site

controllers take the role of secondary connections to safe-proof data,” said Surfnote’s Bil Liusian, whose card reader sends all location data to the cloud for on-demand availability. Some of the systems back up to the cloud and are certified secure by Microsoft Azure standards.

For another security measure, Zydexo’s Mithani said his system allows licensees to assign specific clerks to machines and send monetary values to players’ accounts for maximum security; and Goldfinger/RKS’s system, similarly, can limit who can move around cash as well as how much can be accessed. Zydexo’s system comes equipped with a button for users to easily transfer all data to a zip drive, and Mithani said a cloud version will be released at some point, as well.

Card reading systems also seek to optimize the player’s experience, in addition to securing and providing access to data.

“The system has a subscription component,” said Mathieu Desmarais, representing Axes. “Loyalty (programs) need to be customized for rewards,” he added.

Player loyalty

The Axes system has a loyalty system that sends alerts when high-tier customers are currently playing and allows licensees to customize point-worth for prizes, among other loyalty perks.

Cashless systems can maximize player loyalty by issuing customers with a card that accesses their accounts at a single location, where they can choose to keep a cash value in their accounts for

play at a later time. The cards also allow players to move to different machines without requiring redemption in between. The cards themselves have no value, as the player’s cash value is secure within the system, ensuring the player’s security, but by providing access to an account, licensees are able to offer rewards and loyalty programs to repeat customers. The card codes can also be accessed via mobile phone in some systems, eliminating the need for a physical card altogether and streamlining the player experience even more.

Training available

All the card-system representatives say their companies provide training to personnel upon installation. Rogers said the Primero system “has a real short learning curve,” but the company offers training at the buyer’s location. Goldfinger/RKS, Zydexo, Titan, Surfnote, SGS and Axes all offer on-site training, and some offer different combinations of tutorial videos, on-call tech support, 24-hour call centers and remote training, as well.

Finally, the systems are all compatible with most manufacturers’ machines, and they all allow licensees to pick and choose the features they want for their locations.

No matter which cashless system a licensee chooses, it’s clear they all offer enhanced security, access to data, player retention and an all-encompassing, fully customizable business-management system that streamline the reporting process and ensure revenue and tax accuracy.

Siskin

from Page 1

ation (GAMOA) and a former member of the COAM Advisory Board, Siskin is well-liked and well-respected among his peers.

Siskin, originally from Chattanooga, TN, was named Operator of the Year in September at the Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo, sponsored by GAMOA. Describing Siskin in his announcement of the award, industry counsel Les Schneider said he embodies the true nature of a mensch, a Yiddish term for a person of “integrity and honor” and “high character.”

Even that term doesn’t describe Siskin fully, Schneider said then.

Siskin’s a “super mensch,” he said, adding that he has an “exhausting” work ethic, is “loyal to the core,” and offers “thoughtful deliberation” with a “blend of humility.”

First amusement center

Siskin first moved to Savannah in the early 1970s, as his first wife’s family was from the area.

“It’s nice here (in Savannah),” he said. “It’s slower-paced than cities like Atlanta. Everyone’s friendly, and it’s a good place to do business.”

He began his amusement career after a stint at his former father-in-law’s liquor store. As it turns out, the liquor business wasn’t for him, but the store featured a few amusement machines that piqued his interest in the COAM trade. In 1974, Siskin opened his first of many COAM ventures, then referred to as “automatic amusement centers,” where he offered games such as pinball and pool.

After a few years of working in the arcade business, Siskin was approached in 1978 by current Star Castle co-owner Rudy Bairas, who “knocked on my door and asked if I’d be interested in a partnership,” he said. Bairas, who also is a previous GAMOA award winner, has been working in the amusement industry since 1952, when he began installing juke boxes, pool tables and other arcade fixtures in Savannah. Bairas opened Amusement Sales and Service in 1965, one of the “largest and oldest” distributors of its kind in the area, Siskin said. Today, Amusement Sales and Service, an authorized IGT distributor, provides the Southeast with top-of-the-line pool tables, jukeboxes, arcade games and pinball machines, as well as Class B amusement machines.

After their partnership began, Siskin continued to handle day-to-day operations at the arcade, while Bairas tended to specific locations.



Jorie Tash photo

“Rudy always attended to the outside operations, going around to the different locations,” Siskin said. “He’s very well-known around the city.”

In 1984, during the peak of what’s known to experts as the “Golden Age” of arcades, Siskin opened his original Star Castle location. The business did well – so well, in fact, that he opened a second location in a strip mall in downtown Savannah in 1991, and then a third in Hinesville in 1993.

Industry survivor

In 1982, the arcade industry hit its peak revenue, generating between \$8 and \$12 billion in the United States alone, but that revenue plummeted to around \$100 million by 1985 (historians cite the recession, the rise of home game consoles and a period of just plain bad games as reasons for this decline). Thousands of arcades around the country shut their doors in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s.

That Star Castle not only remained open, but did well enough to expand during this time, is a testament to Siskin’s business acumen, as well as the role that Star Castle has played for 40 years’ worth of Georgia kids and teens.

One giant location

“I could see that to keep growing the business, it was better to combine the three locations into one giant location,” the likes of which hadn’t been seen in the area, Siskin said.

“The market wanted more than

just an arcade,” he said, so he and Bairas “decided to put all their eggs in one basket” and began planning the current iteration of Star Castle that met and exceeded those market demands.

Opened in 2001, Star Castle on Mall Boulevard boasts 28,000 square feet of family entertainment. Arcade and redemption games are still featured, but the two created a one-stop fun-shop that also included a massive skating rink, a laser tag venue, a food court and a two-story party hall. The medieval-themed FEC also boasts a STEM education program, which allows local students to attend the center on field trips to learn concepts such as the Science of Roller Skating, Motion and Rink Design and Music, Math and Roller Skating, all taught by professional educators.

“Over the years, we’ve given families in Savannah a nice place to go, that helps kids stay out of trouble,” said Siskin.

“We filled that void” of family-friendly destinations in the area, he said, adding that the FEC also features an adults-only night periodically.

Industry supporter

As a Georgia COAM veteran, Siskin has been “a strong supporter of the industry for decades,” and he joined GAMOA as soon as it was formed.

“We need an association to voice our concerns as a group, and we have great leadership under (GAMOA President) Shawn Fel-

JIM SISKIN stands in his Star Castle family entertainment center, a popular spot in Savannah since 2001.

lows,” he said. “Our industry partnering with the Georgia Lottery and our contributions to the Hope program have made the future look very good.”

Siskin also served on the COAM board from its inception until 2018.

“The first year was very interesting – no one had a clue how to navigate (the new division),” he said. “There were some good people on the board who worked very hard. I give Lee Hunter (of Southern Gaming Solutions) a lot of credit.”

Dancing and cars

Siskin enjoys ballroom dancing and has a passion for fast cars, particularly Corvettes. He is married to Dianne, a ballroom dance instructor, and had two sons with his first wife: his older son, Keith, was an acclaimed judge in Tennessee until his death in 2017 from complications from Crohn’s disease, while his younger son Brad works alongside his father, “mainly on the Class B-side of things.”

“He manages accounts payable and runs the showroom (at Amusement Sales and Service), which is very nice,” he added.

“I can’t imagine anything more exciting than to work in this industry,” Siskin said. “I’ve been a workaholic my whole life and have no plans to retire. It’s important to stay busy and engaged.”

“My partner Rudy has always thought that that’s the secret to health – working for a long time.”



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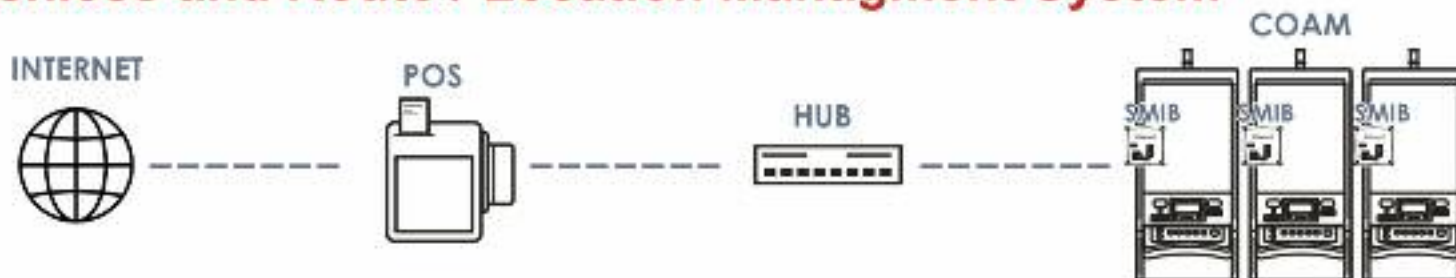


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