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A Tash Communications publication

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Vol. 4, Number 9

Gift card

Pilot program starts slow, but improving

By Jorie Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Though the gift-card pilot program “started a little slower” than anticipated, momentum is growing and Georgia Lottery officials remain confident the necessary data will be collected to analyze the effectiveness of the card.

Lottery officials discussed the gift-card program at the quarterly COAM Advisory Board meeting held via conference call Jan. 12. The program was launched in late November with plans to test the card in over 320 locations with coin-operated amusement machines (COAMs) in 195 cities over a 4-6 month period. At the time of the meeting, only two convenience stores were using the Lottery-

See BOARD Page 7



Photo courtesy of Primero Games

MIKE MACKE stands in the Michael Mayo Macke Great Hall in the Tellus Science Museum in Cartersville, GA. Macke recently donated \$750,000 to the facility.

Macke gives 750k to museum

Continuing his family’s legacy of giving, Mike Mayo Macke donated \$750,000 to Tellus Science Museum in Cartersville, GA, the largest donation the museum has received from one person.

Macke is owner of Primero Games, one of the largest manufacturers of COAMs in Georgia.

“Having grown up as a curious child with my grandfather as a role model, I was always fascinated by the geological sciences and exploration,” Macke said in a Tellus news release. “Following in his footsteps, I wanted to support Tellus Science Museum, which will be a source of inspiration for

the children growing up in Georgia.”

“Open-minded curiosity is the basis of science,” he added. “Museums help create a future Newton or Einstein, who will help the civilization at large to increase their appreciation of the universe a bit more than what we know now. I am proud and humbled by the lasting benefits and enjoyment this gift brings my family, friends and the visitors of Tellus Science Museum.”

An expansion of the former Weinman Mineral Museum, Tellus is a program of Georgia Museums

See DONATION Page 3

Growing United Gaming gets Elite

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

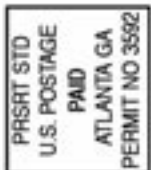
United Gaming, one of the largest operators of coin-operated amusement machines (COAMs) in Georgia, recently acquired Elite Amusement as part of a major expansion effort that will be funded in part with a newly acquired \$250 million line of credit.

The \$250-million multi-draw “credit facility,” with a New York-based investment group acting as agent, involves incremental committed borrowing available for future expansion, United Gaming said in a press release in mid-December. The use of proceeds were to cover “fees, refinancing of an existing facility, ac-

quisitions, capital expenditures, and general corporate purposes,” the release said.

“This new facility was structured to meet UG's upcoming needs to manage and implement its extensive growth plans with several intellectual property projects, continue its consol-

See UNITED Page 3



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Donation

from Page 1

Inc. The venue became a Smithsonian affiliate during its opening year in 2009.

“Mike and I had been discussing a possible gift for a while,” said Jose Santamaria, Tellus’ executive director. When Macke recently announced the amount of the donation, Santamaria shared he was both “delighted and speechless.”

“Mike’s gift has become part of our long-range plan to sustain the programs and activities at Tellus that mean so much for our students and families,” he said, adding “As a nonprofit, we thrive on the generosity of many and we appreciate every donation large or small. When we receive a gift of this caliber, it is truly an honor to be recognized for what we do by a member of this generous family that has supported us for three generations.”

To recognize Macke’s gift, Tellus renamed its Great Hall the “Michael Mayo Macke Great Hall.

“The centerpiece [of the hall] is the largest exhibit we have – the 82-foot-long brontosaurus,” Santamaria said. “This is the most utilized space in the museum – everyone goes through it to get to any of the galleries and planetarium.

“During special events, the Macke Great Hall is full of hands-on activities. We have had banquets for more than 400 people in the space. There have been at least 15 weddings in front of the big dinosaur. It’s a great mingling space for evening cocktail events and we can set up a bandstand and dance floor. In short, it’s our most versatile and busiest space at Tellus.”

Macke represents the third generation of his family’s venue, which began with Macke’s grandfather, Atlanta native Frank Mayo. Mayo was a chemist and passionate mineral collector who picked up many treasures during his travels around the world with his wife Winnifred “Winnie” Layton Mayo. When Winnie passed away in 1984, Frank honored her memory by funding the expansion of the Weinman Mineral Museum, predecessor to Tellus, that added a gallery for international gems and minerals and a library.

After his death, Frank’s passion for philanthropy and science was passed on to his four daughters Bebe, Vesta (Mike’s mother), Carolyn, and Charlotte, who continued their father’s legacy of financial support for many years until they

too passed away. In addition to annual contributions, Mike’s mother Vesta bequeathed \$100,000 from her estate to Tellus in 2017. In 2018, the Mayo family was awarded the Patron of the Year award from Georgia Association of Museums for their ongoing support of Tellus Science Museum.

Macke is a successful businessman in Georgia, influenced by his grandfather’s passion for curiosity, science, and business. A serial and



self-made entrepreneur, he used his computer programming skills to be-

come a pioneer in designing, manufacturing and distributing innovative electronic gaming equipment. He has captured industry recognition for his innovations, understanding of emerging technology, and anticipation of new trends and growing markets during his 35 years in the gaming industry. He is also a real estate investor with multiple high-profile investments across the globe.

Spanning 120,000 square feet, Tellus is comprised of four main galleries – Collins Family My Big Backyard, Millar Science in Motion, Weinman Mineral Gallery and the Fossil Gallery – a 120-seat digital planetarium, solar house and observatory.

United

from Page 1

idation plans to build the enterprise value, and establish a robust management team for future scale,” said UG CEO Bunty Doshi in the release.

UG acquired the assets of Elite Amusement, Inc., including its entire team of talent, as a strategic investment in a legacy company. Adam Foust, former president of Elite, now joins UG as a chief revenue officer, to help “grow the UG brand and overall footprint, leveraging his relationships and over three decades of experience in the market.”

“I have been amazed by the vision and potential of UG,” Foust said, “and I look forward to starting a new chapter to transform the overall industry.”

Foust told the Georgia Amusement Journal just before deadline the Georgia COAM market “has really matured” since its regulation in 2013 and is primed for tremendous COAM growth and technological advancement.

“I think you’re going to see some big changes coming soon,” he said.

United Gaming’s long-time senior counsel, Paul Oeland, said in the UG press release that many factors are aligning that signal a grow-

ing, and changing, COAM market in Georgia.

“Bunty recently represented UG on the Georgia Senate Study Committee tasked to examine the current COAM industry regulations ... to determine what, if any, additional regulations or laws would facilitate industry growth,” Oeland said. “We see a radical transformation going on with the Georgia distributed gaming space because of the maturity and sophistication institutional investment like this recent facility is bringing to the market. This will be a completely different industry in a few years.”

The release added that despite the pandemic, “UG has restabilized its business and is well-positioned with ample capital to advance its goals for 2021.”

About United Gaming LLC

Founded in 2009, UG is a Georgia-based distributed gaming company that holds nine Master Licenses issued by the Georgia Lottery Corp. and operates over 2,500 COAMs. UG also has targeted acquisitions in the near-term pipeline that will add to these totals. In less than a year, UG has more than tripled its customer base, doubled its employee count and expanded into rural areas throughout the state. Learn more at www.UnitedGamingLLC.com.

COIN OPERATED AMUSEMENT MACHINE LOCATION SWEEP AND MASTER PUSH CALENDAR 2021							
ACCOUNTING WEEK START	ACCOUNTING WEEK END	LOCATION SWEEP DATE	MASTER PUSH DATE	ACCOUNTING WEEK START	ACCOUNTING WEEK END	LOCATION SWEEP DATE	MASTER PUSH DATE
27-Dec-20	02-Jan-21	06-Jan-21	12-Jan-21	27-Jun-21	03-Jul-21	07-Jul-21	13-Jul-21
03-Jan-21	09-Jan-21	13-Jan-21	20-Jan-21*	04-Jul-21	10-Jul-21	14-Jul-21	20-Jul-21
10-Jan-21	16-Jan-21	20-Jan-21	26-Jan-21	11-Jul-21	17-Jul-21	21-Jul-21	27-Jul-21
17-Jan-21	23-Jan-21	27-Jan-21	02-Feb-21	18-Jul-21	24-Jul-21	28-Jul-21	03-Aug-21
24-Jan-21	30-Jan-21	03-Feb-21	09-Feb-21	25-Jul-21	31-Jul-21	04-Aug-21	10-Aug-21
31-Jan-21	06-Feb-21	10-Feb-21	17-Feb-21*	01-Aug-21	07-Aug-21	11-Aug-21	17-Aug-21
07-Feb-21	13-Feb-21	17-Feb-21	23-Feb-21	08-Aug-21	14-Aug-21	18-Aug-21	24-Aug-21
14-Feb-21	20-Feb-21	24-Feb-21	02-Mar-21	15-Aug-21	21-Aug-21	25-Aug-21	31-Aug-21
21-Feb-21	27-Feb-21	03-Mar-21	09-Mar-21	22-Aug-21	28-Aug-21	01-Sep-21	08-Sep-21*
28-Feb-21	06-Mar-21	10-Mar-21	16-Mar-21	29-Aug-21	04-Sep-21	08-Sep-21	14-Sep-21
07-Mar-21	13-Mar-21	17-Mar-21	23-Mar-21	05-Sep-21	11-Sep-21	15-Sep-21	21-Sep-21
14-Mar-21	20-Mar-21	24-Mar-21	30-Mar-21	12-Sep-21	18-Sep-21	22-Sep-21	28-Sep-21
21-Mar-21	27-Mar-21	31-Mar-21	06-Apr-21	19-Sep-21	25-Sep-21	29-Sep-21	05-Oct-21
28-Mar-21	03-Apr-21	07-Apr-21	13-Apr-21	26-Sep-21	02-Oct-21	06-Oct-21	13-Oct-21*
04-Apr-21	10-Apr-21	14-Apr-21	20-Apr-21	03-Oct-21	09-Oct-21	13-Oct-21	19-Oct-21
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25-Apr-21	01-May-21	05-May-21	11-May-21	24-Oct-21	30-Oct-21	03-Nov-21	09-Nov-21
02-May-21	08-May-21	12-May-21	18-May-21	31-Oct-21	06-Nov-21	10-Nov-21	16-Nov-21
09-May-21	15-May-21	19-May-21	25-May-21	07-Nov-21	13-Nov-21	17-Nov-21	23-Nov-21
16-May-21	22-May-21	26-May-21	02-Jun-21*	14-Nov-21	20-Nov-21	24-Nov-21	01-Dec-21*
23-May-21	29-May-21	02-Jun-21	08-Jun-21	21-Nov-21	27-Nov-21	01-Dec-21	07-Dec-21
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20-Jun-21	26-Jun-21	30-Jun-21	07-Jul-21*	19-Dec-21	25-Dec-21	29-Dec-21	05-Jan-22*

*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

Journal Opinion

AMOA revises program dates

**By Lori Schneider
AMOA Executive VP**

AMOA continues to adapt to the challenges the pandemic has placed on conducting its in-person programs for 2021. Below are new dates for programs typically conducted during the first quarter.

AMOA State Council Meeting – Although AMOA has experienced success with hybrid events in recent months, with the increase of COVID hot spots throughout the country and Arizona being one of them, AMOA leadership decided to keep everyone safe and postpone the meeting until April 22-24 at the Sheraton Mesa in Mesa, AZ. In the meantime, AMOA will be hosting a Zoom meeting in late January providing state leaders the opportunity to collaborate on current events.

Amusement Expo International – The dates of the 2021 Amusement Expo International (AEI) have moved to June 28-30, 2021 in Las Vegas. Education Day will take place Monday, June 28, at the Westgate Las Vegas, and the trade show will take place June 29-30 in the North Hall of the Las Vegas Convention Center. Visit

www.amusementexpo.org for up-to-date information.

In addition to the above, AMOA continues its mission of building engagement in real life through other programs and services.

Membership – It has never been more

never been a member of AMOA, now is the perfect time to take AMOA for a test drive.

Legislative Advocacy – AMOA continues to be a strong advocate for the industry working with its Washington, DC-based legislative team, Dentons. Issues currently at the forefront include COVID relief for our members, continued bank account issues, and consumer choice in payment, cash at retail legislation. AMOA will be conducting another virtual AMOA Day on the Hill during the first quarter of 2021 and strongly encourages members to take advantage of the opportunity to participate.

Education – AMOA offers new and ongoing On Demand education to its members. All sessions are recorded and available online exclusively for AMOA members to access at their leisure.

For more information on these and other AMOA programs and services, visit www.amoa.com or contact AMOA at info@amoa.com or (815) 893-6010.

AMOA is a national trade association representing the interests of operators, distributors, manufacturers and suppliers in the amusement entertainment industry. GAMOA is an active participant in the AMOA State Council. Visit www.amoa.com.



Lori Schneider

Issues currently at the forefront include COVID relief for our members, continued bank account closures, and consumer choice in payment.



important for members of the industry to stay engaged as we continue to navigate these uncertain times. That is why AMOA set up its 2021 membership cycle with a “pay what you can” approach – pay full, pay half or pay zero. Whether you’re a member renewing, or a member joining our mission, we encourage you to stay engaged to access goods and services regardless of your ability to pay. If you have

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COAM calendar

— REPORTING DATES —

Jan. 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 13: COAM Advisory Board (GLC headquarters or conference call to be determined)
April 21: GACSPAC Golf Tournament, Stone Mountain, GA
June 13-15: GACS annual convention, Omni Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island, FL
Aug. 25-26: Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo, Infinite Energy 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.

Journal Opinion

Outlook hopeful for '21 GACS events

**By Sharon Shuford
GACS Membership**

GACS members convene regularly to share and celebrate success in service to their customers and communities. While COVID-19 caused many in-per-

• **Bowling Blast** – *the night before the trade show, Nov. 10, 2021, at Showtime Bowl, Athens, GA.* Held for the first time in 2020, it proved to be a hit with members. Bowling “levels the playing field,” giving



Sharon Shuford

No matter where the location or what the nature of the event is, GACS members can be counted on to have a great time together.

son activities to be put on hold, rescheduled or cancelled in 2020, the outlook for 2021 is more hopeful.

Pending the impacts of a vaccine, and with plans for continued social distancing and other CDC-recommended best practices in place, planned in-person events for 2021 include the following:

• **Annual January Legislative Reception** – cancelled for 2021 due to health and safety concerns at the state Capitol.

• **GAC-SPAC Golf Tournament** – April 21, 2021, at Stone Mountain Golf Club, Stone Mountain, GA. Proceeds from this annual tournament benefit the GACS PAC. Fees cover golf cart, greens fees, range balls, and a post-tournament reception with awards. Members always have a great time. Hole Sponsorships are available.

• **GACS Annual Convention** – June 13-15, 2021, at the Omni Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island, FL. A flagship event for GACS, this key networking opportunity includes education, recreation, entertainment, and ample opportunity to relax and share updates with associates and friends. Exhibit and sponsorship opportunities are available.

members plenty of time to socialize while social distancing, and to enjoy the other games available at the venue. Lane sponsorships are available. This event will sell out.

• **Southern Convenience Store & Petroleum Show** – Nov. 11-12, 2021, The Classic Center, Athens, GA. A showcase event for GACS and a major opportunity in the region to discover new suppliers and meet new customers. Booth sales are already open.

• **Lunch & Learn programs** in various locations statewide – will be scheduled mid-2021 for various locations across Georgia. Please watch the GACS web page for updates.

• **GACS In-Store programs** in various retail locations statewide – due to be rescheduled mid-2021. Please check the GACS web page for updates.

No matter where the location or what nature of the event is, GACS members can be counted on to have a great time together.

Registration information is available on our website at www.gacs.com/events or by calling the office at 770-736-9723.



Photo courtesy of GACS

BRIAN GRIFFITH of Golden Pantry, who sits on the board for the Georgia Association of Convenience Stores (GACS), picks up some golf goodies during check-in of GACS' annual golf tournament last fall from volunteers Mallie Bragg (left) and Regina Robuck. This year's event is scheduled for April 21 at the Stone Mountain Golf Club.



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Parker's establishes \$20M fund for charities

Parker's will support its communities with a record \$20 million donation to support charitable initiatives throughout its operating footprint in Georgia and South Carolina.

The Parker's Community Fund will be administered by the Savannah Community Foundation and will support a range of causes across the region.

A new Community Impact Committee is being formed to make decisions regarding how to allocate the funds strategically to make the biggest impact, the convenience retailer stated.

"At Parker's we have a profound commitment to giving back to the communities that

have supported us over the years," said Parker's founder and CEO Greg Parker. "This initial gift of \$20 million is the beginning of a fund that we intend to grow. The new Parker's Community Fund will allow us to make an even bigger impact in the future, supporting important causes that matter most to our customers."

The donation follows other significant charitable moves from Parker's, including its endowment of the Parker's Emer-

gency and Trauma Center at Memorial Hospital in Savannah and a \$5 million donation to the Parker College of Business at Georgia Southern University.



Additionally, the company donates a percentage of gas sold at all locations on the first Wednesday of the month to its Fueling the Community program.

"The Parker's Community Fund stands apart as the largest single donation to the Savannah Community Foundation in our 65-year history," said Savannah Community Foundation President Russ Simpson. "We're incredibly honored that Parker's selected the Savannah Community Foundation to manage this donor-advised fund. It will be exciting to see how this fund will support so many organizations in Georgia and South Carolina in the future."

Savannah-based Parker's operates 66 stores in coastal Georgia and South Carolina.

Board

from Page 1

branded Visa gift card, but 77 were expected to come online within the next 10 days.

"It started a little slower than anticipated," said COAM Senior Vice President John Heinen, "but I am so optimistic that this thing is really going to kick off. We've been building momentum very quickly, and the number (of participating locations) is starting to rise. With the holidays and the election over, more locations will jump into the mix."

The COAM Division has emailed participation letters to the 322 locations originally chosen to participate and will soon send Master License Holders (MLHs) a list of their locations that haven't signed up yet so they can reach out to them. The Division is also working on sending out packages that include marketing materials and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to participating locations. It also plans to distribute decals advertising the gift cards as a form of redemption to place directly on machines.

"We felt there (should be) more ads," said COAM Vice President Mike Parham. "(The decals) are very well done, the colors are very apparent."

Licensees will be able to acquire more stickers at the retailer services hotline.

Getting the program off the ground is "a process," Heinen said.

As the COAM Division continues to work in the coming weeks to get more locations on board, Heinen said Lottery will rely on master licensees "to be a conduit to the locations." He urged master licensees to reach out to their locations, even physically checking locations that have yet to respond to the participation letters, and to

email locations with the sign-up link.

"It's going to take work to get locations on board," said Heinen, but he assured the Board the Lottery will take the time necessary "to get meaningful data" for an outside consulting firm to review and analyze to help determine if the card is viable for statewide implementation following the pilot program.

The length of the pilot program is tentative, but Heinen said they expect a "rolling time period" of three or four months for each location after it comes on board.

"We're not going to set random dates," Heinen said. "If it takes longer, it takes longer – we want it done right."

Board Chair Emily Dunn agreed that "meaningful data" is the ultimate goal, even if it takes longer than expected to get it.

"I don't think we're in a big hurry," she said.

In other business, Heinen released second-quarter COAM statistics that show "incredible growth" in the Georgia COAM market. The number of machines have increased to about 27,000, compared to 24,000 at this time last year, while the number of locations has grown to about 5,700, compared to 4,800 last year.

"It's a tremendous start to what I think will be a great year," Heinen said.

The average per-day earnings have reached \$124 per machine, about \$30 higher than at the end of the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2020. In addition, the increased play has resulted in about \$20 million more in contributions to the HOPE and Pre-K education programs than at this time last year.

"I sit here with a smile on my face when I look at these numbers," said Heinen. "Congratulations to the collective group that made that happen."

Parham agreed, adding that

he's "very impressed" with revenue numbers and how proactive the master and location licensees have been in growing their COAM businesses. Parham also thanked licensees for "renewing in a timely manner." Renewal deadlines were extended in 2020 to compensate for COVID-19-related issues, but Parham said deadlines for 2021 will revert to the original deadlines, barring any unforeseen circumstance.

In still other business, COAM attorney Julie Barker reported that COAM and arbitration hearings have been taking place virtually since the pandemic hit, and the process has gone smoothly.

"We've mastered that process," Barker said.

In fact, she said, the Lottery is expected to offer virtual hearings, depending on the severity of the violation, even after the pandemic ends. Barker said virtual hearings have the potential to allow more people to participate.

The Board also welcomed new member Mills Fleming, who is filling a vacancy left by former member Butch Foshee.

Further, Board member Hemal Patel suggested the Division consider allowing temporary

licenses to be printed online so locations can post them quicker. Patel said some locations have experienced license-delivery delays because the U.S. Postal Service is so bogged down, another result of the ongoing pandemic.

Dunn agreed that printing temporary licenses could be helpful – an example of "effectively utilizing technology" to help licensees "work smarter."

Heinen said the COAM Division would try to review the possibility, but cautioned "I'm not sure we can get there" anytime soon, especially since so many Division resources are now going toward implementing the pilot program. He encouraged licensees to call the Lottery "to get individual help when special circumstances arise."

Finally, Patel thanked Georgia Lottery Corp. CEO Gretchen Corbin for comments she made during a recent Zoom conference of nationwide Lottery CEOs, when she highlighted the success of the Georgia COAM industry and its contributions to education.

"It was easy to brag (on COAM success)," Corbin said, "and I appreciate the partnership of the industry for making it so easy."

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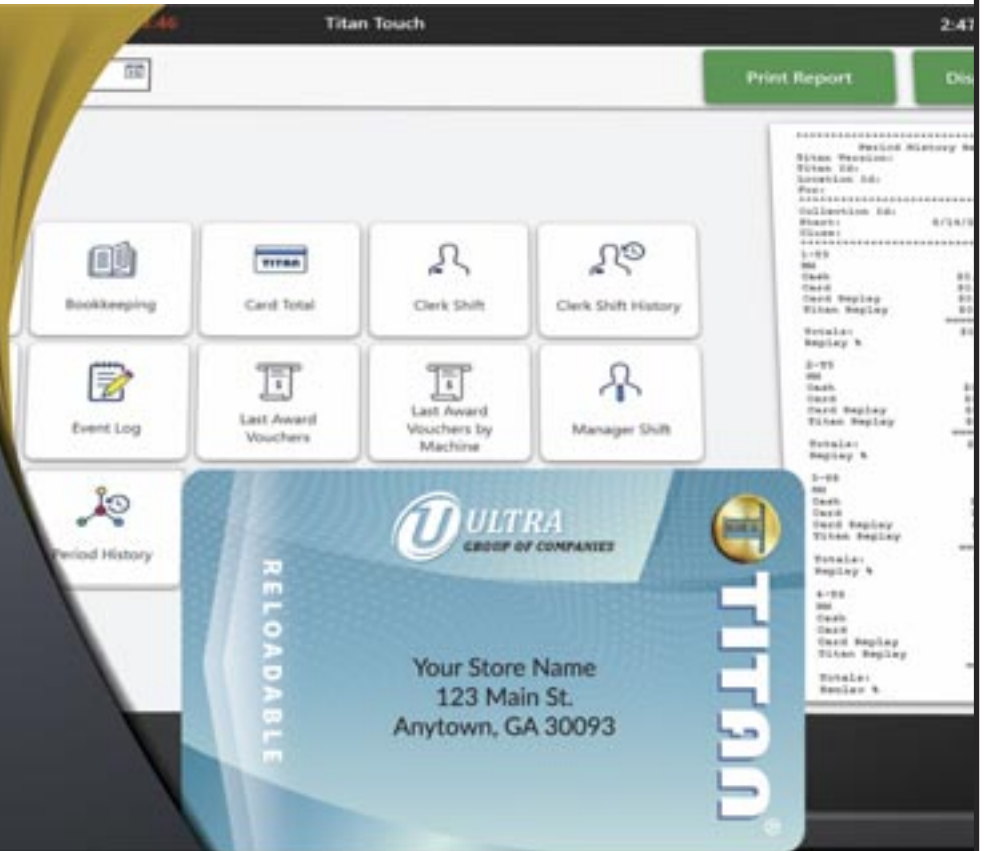
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Available Award Credit: \$140.00																	
<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Merchandise</td> <td>\$50.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lottery</td> <td>\$25.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gas</td> <td>\$32.75</td> </tr> </table>	Merchandise	\$50.00	Lottery	\$25.00	Gas	\$32.75	<table border="0"> <tr> <th colspan="2">Summary</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Merchandise</td> <td>\$50.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lottery</td> <td>\$25.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gas</td> <td>\$32.75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total:</td> <td>\$107.75</td> </tr> </table>	Summary		Merchandise	\$50.00	Lottery	\$25.00	Gas	\$32.75	Total:	\$107.75
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- ✓ Reduces risk of improper redemptions/fraud/theft
- ✓ 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

Improves Player Loyalty and Store Profitability

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C-stores can fight human trafficking

National organization teams with C-store group in effort

By Jorie Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

On the final day of the Southern Convenience Store & Petroleum Show in November, Cheryl Csiky, executive director of In Our Backyard (IOB), educated attendees on how they can help “stop this atrocity.”

IOB has partnered with Convenience Stores Against Trafficking (CSAT) to fight against human trafficking.

“I’m thankful to be here with you,” Csiky said. “Georgia has been a good partner in the fight, and I’m proud of how many C-store owners and managers have stepped up.”

Csiky began the presentation with some statistics about human trafficking and its victims: 600-800,000 more people are trafficked every year, including 199,000 children, all over the world.

“It doesn’t need to cross borders to be trafficking,” she said. Human trafficking includes debt bondage situations, working for little or no pay, and forced prostitution, all situations wherein many victims never leave their home states. Further, one out of three runaway children will be trafficked

within 48 hours of leaving home, and they are often kept in the same general areas they initially left. When the moving of victims to a second location occurs, it usually comes later, Silky said.

In sex trafficking cases, victims are rarely left alone, and direct attempts to help them often fail.

“It takes an average of seven community attempts to reach the victim before they flee their situations,” she said.

While victims often appear relatively inconspicuous to those who only interact with them once, they often utilize convenience stores in

ways that are unusual – they will rarely be alone, they may purchase items

like contact solution or toothpaste on a regular basis, their interactions might sound rehearsed, or they may be accompanied by someone who speaks for them. Noticing these signs and the people who exhibit them and those who accompany them can help convenience store workers identify traffickers after victims have been liberated from their circumstances. Survivors of human trafficking have said they visited the same convenience stores every day, she said.

“You guys are our eyes and



Jorie Tash photo

CHERYL CSIKY, executive director of In Our Backyard, makes a point during a session on human trafficking during the Southern Convenience Store & Petroleum Show in November.

ears,” Csiky said.

Since 2011 IOB has manufactured stickers featuring the trafficking hotline to be placed in bathrooms, one of the few places where victims are likely to be alone and able to take down the number for later use. CSAT and IOB distribute the stickers for free to participating convenience stores, and CSAT, which has members in 47 states, also trains convenience store employees on the signs of traffick-

ing and ways to safely intervene. Convenience store operators can request freedom stickers at www.inourbackyard.org, where they can also find out more information on CSAT, including how to join and benefits of joining.

“I can’t thank you enough for participating,” said Csiky. “Education empowers you to empower your staff, and we want to partner with you – as community leaders, you can help stop this atrocity.”



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