



GEORGIA Amusement JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving the Georgia COAM industry
Endorsed by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association
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A Tash Communications publication

July 2021

Vol. 5, Number 2

Gift card

Pilot ends, analysis begins

By Jorie Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

The data-collection period for the gift card pilot program officially ended June 30, and analyses of information gathered from participating locations should become available in August, said Georgia Lottery Corp. (GLC) Senior Vice President John Heinen at the July 13 COAM Advisory Board meeting.

A total of 151 locations from around Georgia that “were representative of the market in general” participated in the pilot program, he said, “which will give us some good statistical numbers” for analysis. As of June 30, Heinen said, just over 10,000 cards had been activated for prizes for a total of \$2.1 million. The average load on each GLC-branded gift card was about \$210 per card. Though data collec-

See CARDS Page 5



Paul Tash photo

STEVE MORTENSEN shows off some of the features of the new Golden Tee PGA Tour game at the Amusement Expo International

June 30 in Las Vegas. Mortensen will be at the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo to show the game Aug. 25-26 in Georgia.

Golden Tee aces new PGA game

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Golden Tee has partnered with the Professional Golf Association (PGA) to develop the first new Golden Tee arcade game in 16 years.

The game, called Golden Tee PGA Tour, will be available to see and play at the Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo Aug. 25-26 in Duluth, GA, and available for purchase in Septem-

ber or October, a spokesman said.

“We’ve made a lot of improvements,” said Steve Mortensen, sales manager for Incredible Technologies, which makes the Golden Tee game.

Mortensen was showing the new game during the Amusement Expo International trade show June 30-July 1 in Las Vegas. Golden Tee Live has been IT’s flagship game since 2005. The PGA partner-

See GOLDEN Page 3



Register now for ‘best ever’ Expo

By Paul Tash, Georgia Amusement Journal

With a record high number of exhibitors already committed and some new events planned, the Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo in August is “shaping up to be the best show ever,” organizers say.

“We have a record number of exhibitors, and we’re working on more,” said Christina Kaiser, executive director of the Georgia Amusement and Music Op-

erators Association, which is sponsoring the Expo.

The Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo is set for Aug. 25-26 in Duluth, GA. The Expo is returning to the same facility where it was held last year, which now is called the Gas South Convention Center (formerly the Infinite Energy Center).

Participants and vendors can register for the Expo on GAMOA’s website, www.gamoa.org,

See EXPO Page 3



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Expo

from Page 1

and Kaiser said opportunities for sponsorships are also available.

GAMOA representatives are excited about Casino Night Wednesday, Aug. 25, a new charity event that will benefit Burt's Big Adventure, a non-profit organization that sends terminally ill children and their families to Disney World for a five-day magical vacation.

"All registered attendees are welcome for Casino Night," Kaiser said. "There's going to be a DJ and other fun games that will benefit Burt's Big Adventure. It's going to be a fun night."

Attendees can purchase "fun money" for Casino Night during



CHRISTINA KAISER

online registration. "Come out and have a good time and support a great cause," Kaiser said.

The Expo agenda is chock-full. Exhibitors can set up beginning at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 24. At 5

p.m. GAMOA will host a reception in appreciation of the Expo's exhibitors and sponsors.

Following a quick membership meeting at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 25, GAMOA hosts a panel discussion on industry issues beginning at 9:15. The Expo floor will open from 10 a.m. to

5:00 p.m. with a silent auction running from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A reception begins at 5:00, when auction winners can pick up their items, and the popular awards banquet and live auction follows at

6:00. Then Casino Night takes center stage at 9.

The Expo opens again Thursday, Aug. 26, from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. A seminar featuring an update from the Georgia Lottery Corp.'s COAM Division has been tentatively set for 1 p.m. Thursday.

The Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo is working to become a regional show with attendees and exhibitors from all over the Southeast encouraged to attend. GAMOA is again hosting the event with two other organizations, the North Carolina Coin Operators Association and the North Carolina Citizens for Free Enterprise, a group of business owners and supporters working to create a fair skill-based game environment in North Carolina.

Register before Aug. 22 and receive a discount. Registration at full price will be available at the door. Nearby hotels Embassy Suites, Residence Inn and Courtyard are offering special rates for Expo attendees, though those discounted rates can't be guaranteed after July 25, Kaiser said.

Golden

from Page 1

ship, announced in December 2019, allows Golden Tee PGA to offer three actual PGA courses for gamers to play virtually – the TPC Boston in Massachusetts, Deere Run in Illinois, and Sawgrass in Florida – with the total number of courses available now at 89.

The famous 17th hole at Sawgrass, the Island Green, "just looks beautiful on this game," he said.

The "brand new cabinet design" features everything from a 55-inch 4K monitor and "brilliant graphics" to upscale lighting and cup holders. Players will find the playability similar to the original game, and Mortensen said player's accounts will easily transfer over to the new version. The new cabinet also features a rear-access door that provides technicians easy entry to the guts of the machine.

"We've been working for this for over a year now," he said, "so we're very anxious to get it out there."

Connect, power up machines

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.



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
11-Apr-21	17-Apr-21	21-Apr-21	27-Apr-21	10-Oct-21	16-Oct-21	20-Oct-21	26-Oct-21
18-Apr-21	24-Apr-21	28-Apr-21	04-May-21	17-Oct-21	23-Oct-21	27-Oct-21	02-Nov-21
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
30-May-21	05-Jun-21	09-Jun-21	15-Jun-21	28-Nov-21	04-Dec-21	08-Dec-21	14-Dec-21
06-Jun-21	12-Jun-21	16-Jun-21	22-Jun-21	05-Dec-21	11-Dec-21	15-Dec-21	21-Dec-21
13-Jun-21	19-Jun-21	23-Jun-21	29-Jun-21	12-Dec-21	18-Dec-21	22-Dec-21	29-Dec-21*
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

You'll Love The Classifieds

Journal Opinion

AMOA's leadership team takes over

By Lori Schneider
AMOA Executive VP

A new group of directors was elected during AMOA's Annual Membership Meeting in Las Vegas on July 1. The Class of 2024, consisting of eight operators and distributors from around the country, are:

• Chi Babich, Babich Interactive Group, Albuquerque, NM

• Bret Clostermery, Cash for Your Customers dba Modern Specialty, Madison, WI

• Michael Lee, Automatic Coin Vending, Chester, PA

• Jamie Meyer, JLM Entertainment, Gilbert, AZ

• Jeff Prescott, Valley Vending Service, Inc., Plattsburgh, NY

• Nick Sunday, Alpine Vending & Video, Inc., Avon, CO

• Philip Webb, PDQ Merchant Enterprises, Johnsbury, IL

• Jeff Whiteley, Pride Vending NW, Salem, OR

With the addition of a new class also comes a new set of principal officers to lead the 2021-2022 Board of Directors. The nine-month term of the association's "Top Four" began at the conclusion of the Amusement

Expo earlier this month. They are:

• President Sam Westgate of J & J Ventures, Effingham, IL

• First Vice President Tim Zahn of Ameri-

dustries Inc., Anaheim, CA

A heartfelt thank-you to all the AMOA officers and directors whose terms finished at the show for all their years of service to the board as well as to the industry. They will now join AMOA's Heart & Soul. AMOA's Heart & Soul includes generations of men and women who have served on the AMOA Board of Directors since 1948.

AEI in March next year

It's not too early to save the date for the 2022 Amusement Expo International! Next year's event will return to Las Vegas and will be conducted March 15-17. Stay tuned for details in future updates.

For more information on

AMOA, visit www.amoa.com or reach out to AMOA Executive VP, Lori Schneider at (815) 893-6010 or lori@amoa.com.

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.



Lori Schneider

AMOA's Heart & Soul includes generations of men and women who have served on the AMOA board



can Amusement Arcade, Bloomington, MN

• Treasurer Luke Adams of Pioneer Vending Company, Cincinnati, OH

• Secretary Michael Martinez of N2 In-

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A Tash Communications publication PO Box 4307 Butte MT 59702

A Tash Communications Publication

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Reprints of articles and back issues are available at a cost of \$10.

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Postmaster: Please send address change requests to P.O. Box 4307, Butte, MT 59702

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This publication endorsed by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association

COAM calendar

— REPORTING DATES —

Now: The COAM licensing application (www.gacoam.com) is open for the 2022 licensing period (07/01/2021 - 06/30/2022) for the following:

- Master Class A - NEW and RENEWAL
- Master Class B - RENEWAL
- Location Class A - NEW and RENEWAL
- Location Class B - NEW and RENEWAL
- Manufacturers, Distributors - NEW and RENEWAL

July 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.

Sept. 28: 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 2022 licensing period (07/01/2021 – 06/30/2022).

— MEETINGS/OTHER —

Aug. 25-26: Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo, Infinite Energy Center, Duluth, GA

Oct. 4-7: Global Gaming Expo (G2E), Las Vegas

Oct. 4-7: COAM Advisory Board, Lottery headquarters, Atlanta

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.



Cards

from Page 1

tion has ended, Heinen said, locations can still use the gift card inventory they have for redemption.

InComm, an Atlanta-based gift card program production company, implemented the pilot program, while KPMG International, a global auditing firm, will provide the final analysis of the program that will help determine the viability of the card.

“(KPMG) will present a statistical report to us sometime in August,” he said.

The final report will include information such as in-location sales, where winnings have been spent, and the economic impact on the state. Some information will be proprietary due to certain banking laws, but the GLC is confident the report will contain “good pointers for the direction we need to go,” Heinen said. The analysis will also attempt to provide “breakage” data, which refers to the amounts on gift cards that go unspent.

Heinen also said a survey of participating retailers regarding the COAM gift card has received good response, and the GLC will report those results in August as well. InComm has been “good partners” during the pilot program and has been “receptive to everything we’ve asked,” Heinen said. The GLC is “very appreciative of their efforts to put in the resources that they have” to provide crucial information for successful statewide implementation of the new redemption option, he said.

In other business, GLC officials provided statistics that showed “a pretty amazing year” for Georgia’s COAM market in Fiscal Year 2021, which ended June 30. Heinen said the number of Class B COAMs in Georgia reached 30,000 in over 5,700 locations by June 30. The number of COAMs in 2015 totaled about 20,000, so the growth is “pretty impressive,” he said.

COAM Vice President Mike Parham added that Class B COAMs brought in \$4.5 billion and paid out \$3.2 billion, while the average per-day yield was \$133 per machine. a number that has continuously increased from 2016’s \$88 per-machine per-day yield. The top 10 revenue days ever took place in March and April, coinciding with tax returns and stimulus checks, and nine out of the top 10 revenue months took place this last year, as well.

“It was a pretty amazing year from a revenue standpoint,” he said.

Parham also provided some information on licenses. The number

of enabled licensed as of June 30:

- Class A master – 271
- Class A locations – 2,243
- Class B master – 192
- Class B locations – 6,041
- Manufacturers – 21
- Distributors – 2

Ninety-three percent of renewals have been enabled, Parham said, and those who still need to renew must do so by Sept. 28 to continue to operate COAMs (other important dates and deadlines can be found on the COAM website).

GLC CEO Gretchen Corbin also addressed the COAM board, thanking location and master licensees for meeting the increased demand during the pandemic with “great professionalism.”

“We all very much benefitted from the additional moneys in the economy this year,” Corbin said. She also praised Gov. Brian Kemp for designating convenience stores as essential businesses and “keeping our economy open.”

“I want to commend and congratulate our entire industry for working together to have a great impact this year,” Corbin said.

In another report, Julie Barker, the COAM Division’s attorney, told the board that while arbitration hearings continue to be held remotely, a plan to develop a hybrid process is in the works that would allow participants to attend in person or virtually.

“The arbitration process has become more flexible since COVID,” said Barker, and providing a hybrid option should raise hearing participation and save on travel costs/time, she said.

COAM’s lead investigator Tony Williams provided compliance stats from the 2020-21 fiscal year: Williams’ team conducted 4,849 inspections, and the Georgia Sheriffs’ Association performed 2,626 addi-

tional checks. Williams said 250 citations and 519 warnings were issued.

“Due to COVID, a big part of our jobs this past year was assisting new applicants and reaching out to gift card program participants, making sure they had everything they needed in-store and to complete their applications,” Williams said.

The July 13 meeting was the

first that board members GLC staff have held in person since the pandemic began.

“It’s great to be here after a year and a half,” said Heinen, adding, “we hope we will allow the public to attend” GLC and COAM Advisory Board meetings as soon as possible.

The next COAM Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for Oct. 19.

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Journal Opinion

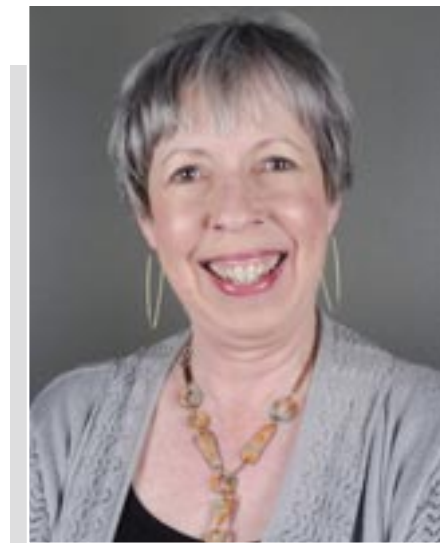
GACS convention roars back in 2021

The 2021 GACS Convention last month was a “huge success!” in the words of President Angela Holland. When you consider the numbers, success indeed defines the annual event, especially after a year’s hiatus due to the pandemic:

- More than 270 attendees;
- Ten elected officials;
- Seven education speakers;
- 20-plus attendees for the Young Professionals session;
- 36 sponsors;
- Over 40 exhibitors.

Education 2.0. Based on the feedback received and the requests for copies of presentations, this year’s education program was relevant and thought provoking. General session topics ranged from an outlook for the industry with respect to mergers and acquisitions; to finding, recruiting and retaining talent; and, a look at how emerging technologies will im-

pact retail business. Two popular breakout sessions were also on the agenda: One for the



Sharon Shuford

young professionals’ group that focused on the sea change and the new normal caused by the pandemic; and a second, for all attendees, on issues that keep us up at night, and how busi-

ness can move forward.

Networking 3.0. The GACS Annual Convention especially

GACS wants to thank all GACS members and guests for attending and supporting the association.

builds connections in the industry, as well as with representatives from state governance. Among those connections this year were the legislators and commissioners who attended

the events, networking with members and bringing their expertise to the table during a panel discussion.

A special thank-you to Speaker of the House David Ralston, Senate Pro Tempore Butch Miller, state Senator and Majority Leader Mike Dugan, Department of Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black, Georgia Insurance and Fire Safety Commissioner John King, state Representative & House Ways & Means Chairman Shaw Blackmon, state Representative & House Small Business Development Chair Mike Cheokas, state Representative & House Regulated Industries Chair Alan Powell, House Minority Leader James Beverly, and state Representative Billy Mitchell.

Finally, GACS wants to thank all GACS members and guests for attending and supporting the association.



GACS photo

MARK FAAS addresses an audience at the GACS Convention in June at Omni Amelia Island resort in Florida after being named as

the association’s retailer of the year. At right is GACS President Angela Holland.



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We also understand that we are not the only victims here. We know that some of you have been victimized and lost locations to bad actors running these illegal pirated games. We are taking decisive action to help you in this situation.

In order to hold the responsible parties accountable under the full weight of the law, including both criminal and civil penalties, we have retained counsel in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and other jurisdictions to prosecute wrongdoers. In these jurisdictions, we have also retained private investigators to help us gather evidence of locations and operators utilizing pirated versions of **FUSION 4**. We are also bringing this fight to the source and have retained counsel and initiated proceedings in both Taiwan and China.

We have already successfully prosecuted one company that was distributing these illegal games in North Carolina, and we intend to prosecute all others who are involved with pirated games. We will be prosecuting Distributors, Assemblers, Operators, and Locations, and we need your help!

If you know of the location of an illegal pirated **FUSION 4**, please let us know. Our dedicated illegal game hotline is open 24/7. Please call (252) 239-3695 and leave a message with the name and/or address of the location where an illegal pirated **FUSION 4** may be located. Your identity will remain anonymous – we do not need your name, address, or any other personal information.

We thank you for your continued business and are very grateful for any assistance you can provide. Pirated games harm the industry as a whole and it will take a joint effort to eradicate these illegal games from the market.

Sincerely,

Marc C Downing

Marc Downing
Chief Counsel

BANILLA GAMES, INC.'S INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INFRINGEMENT POLICY

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BANILLA GAMES, INC. WILL AGGRESSIVELY ENFORCE ALL GAME COPYRIGHTS AND TRADEMARKS AGAINST ANY INFRINGERS, AS WILLFUL COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT IS A FEDERAL CRIME

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Titles 17 and 18 of the United States Code contain the following provisions:

Under the Copyright Law, 17 U.S.C. § 504(In Part), any person who infringes a copyright shall be liable for either the copyright owner's actual damages and any additional profits of the infringer or statutory damages of up to \$30,000 for infringement, or for willful infringement, up to **\$150,000 per violation**. The court may also require an infringer to pay the costs of the lawsuit, including our company's legal expenses. 17 U.S.C. § 505.

In addition to the above civil penalties, **willful copyright infringement for commercial advantage or private financial gain is a federal crime**. 17 U.S.C. § 506. For infringing the copyrights of **FUSION 4**, perpetrators could be imprisoned for up to 5 years and fined up to \$250,000, or both. 18 U.S.C. §§ 2319(b)(1), 3571(b)(3). For subsequent criminal copyright infringements, under 18 U.S.C. § 2319(b)(2), perpetrators may be sentenced to a maximum of 10 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

Title 15 of the United States Code contains the following provision:

Under the Lanham Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1125(a)(1)(A), a company may sue a competitor when that competitor falsely associates an inferior product with the company's superior one. More specifically, the statute creates liability for any person who, "in connection with any goods . . . uses in commerce any . . . false or misleading description of fact, or false or misleading representation of fact, "which "is likely to cause confusion or to cause mistake, or to deceive as to . . . the origin." Those who violate the Lanham Act are subject to injunction, 15 U.S.C. § (1116), having their machines seized and destroyed, 15 U.S.C. § (1118), paying profits, 15 U.S.C. § (1114)(1)(b), damages, 15 U.S.C. § (1114)(1)(b), and attorney's fees, 15 U.S.C. § (1114)(2)(D)(iv).

*This law is being provided to you as a courtesy and does not change or supersede any of our terms of service, game end user license agreements, and any other agreements you may have with us.
You should consult an attorney with questions you may have about the law.*

Banilla Games, Inc. reserves all rights to aggressively enforce all game copyrights and trademarks against any and all infringers, **this includes locations, operators, those who install infringing copies into cabinets, and anyone else involved in the manufacture, or offering to the public, of the pirated versions of FUSION 4**. Every available legal action will be pursued to the fullest extent to protect Banilla Games, Inc.'s and its affiliates' rights. Anyone who purchases, offers to the public, and/or allows such copies to be placed in their locations risks availing themselves to civil and criminal prosecution.

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‘Bad day’ leads to life full of attitude

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

John Kriesel sums up his time in the Army as 10 years “of really good times” and “one really bad day.”

That bad day came on Dec. 2, 2006, when his Army unit was patrolling an area near Camp Fallujah in Afghanistan to protect the base’s water supply, a system of canals and pump stations bringing water from the Euphrates River.

Kriesel was riding in a Humvee when its left front tire hit an Improvised Explosive Device (IED), detonating 200 pounds of explosives and blowing the vehicle into metal scraps.

“I don’t remember flying through the air, and I don’t remember hitting the ground,” he said. “But I do remember waking up on the ground ... with rocks hitting the ground, rocks hitting metal. It sounded very much like a hail storm.”

Kriesel said he knew he was injured, but didn’t feel any pain. He then looked down and saw the extent of his injuries. Both legs, in a “twisted and contorted position,” were severely injured with bones sticking out, looking like they went through a “wood chipper.” His pelvis was broken, and one of his arms was broken in several places.

“I was pretty sure this is where my life would end.”

Instead of his life ending, however, his life was just beginning, Kriesel, 39, told a rapt audience during his keynote address at the Amusement Expo International June 30. Kriesel, from Minnesota, mixed emotion with humor (often relating his situation to his lifelong and often disappointing fandom for the Minnesota Vikings).

He awoke eight days later in Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and learned that he had been shocked back to life three times during those eight days. He also learned he had lost two of his best friends in the explosion. That news hit him harder than learning about the extent of his injuries, which included losing both his legs above the knee and part of his colon to shrapnel.

The loss of his friends pushed him to “absolute rock bottom ... the lowest I’ve felt in my life,” he said, but Kriesel credited his values learned in the military to overcome unimaginable hardship and loss.

Life in the military, he said, provides “the best preparation for adult life that there is.” Acknowledging that he was “a knucklehead” growing up, Kriesel said his



Paul Tash photo

JOHN KRIESEL, who lost both legs in an IED explosion in Iraq, talks about persevering through ad-

versity in his keynote address to open the Amusement Expo International June 29 in Las Vegas.

time in the service helped him change.

“I had very little parental guidance,” he said. “I got the guidance in the military. It taught me how to



be a responsible adult, a respectful adult. All the values the military teaches you translate right to civilian life.”

He very quickly came to understand that regardless of his injuries, the very difficult rehabilitation process to come, and whether he’d ever walk again, “I got a second chance in life.”

“What I don’t want is for you to look up here and feel sorry for me,” Kriesel said. “Please don’t. As crazy as it sounds, I’m happier now than I’ve ever been in my life.”

“It’s because I appreciate life,” he said to rousing applause. “Every day.”

“Adversity is one of the few guarantees that we have in life,” he added. “We will all face adversity in some point in our lives.”

He added that it doesn’t matter how large or small that adversity is, what matters is the “attitude that we bring to the table to help us overcome that adversity.”

“With a positive attitude and sense of humor and the ability to laugh at yourself, not only will you get through that adversity, you will thrive.”

“I didn’t want to be defined about what has happened to me,” he said. “I wanted to be defined by how I respond. Life is so good.”

Kriesel said he doesn’t spend any time wondering why tragedy befell him because he doesn’t have any control over that now.

“What I do have control over is my attitude today and my attitude going forward,” he added. “Attitude is a choice.”

What I do have control over is my attitude today and my attitude going forward.
– John Kriesel

John Kriesel’s lessons

Challenges. Everybody faces adversity. It doesn’t matter the size or scope of your challenge, it is the attitude that you bring to the table that will help you overcome that adversity and it will make you a stronger person.

Acceptance. You can’t begin to resolve your challenge until you accept it. John lost his legs and two buddies in Iraq explosion. Rather

than wallow in self-pity, he resolved to live his life to the fullest and to make the best out of his second chance at life.

Plan. Develop a plan to overcome your challenge, make it into an opportunity. When told he might not walk again and would be hospitalized two years, Kriesel doubled his physical therapy regimen, working himself to exhaustion. He walked out of Walter Reed Medical Center nine months later.

Humor. In his darkest moments, Kriesel found time to laugh. Always a lighthearted guy, he discovered laughter and not taking yourself too seriously are powerful medicine in any endeavor.

Support. Nobody does it alone. Friends, family and people you don’t know will help but you need to accept their help. Success is a team sport. Kriesel’s Army buddies in the field, medical staff in four hospitals, family, and scores of people,

many he never met, got Kriesel up on his new feet.

Share. Use your success to help others and you help yourself. The greater your success, the more you will enjoy sharing it by helping others beat their challenges, no matter how big or small those challenges may be.

Featured in a book titled “Still Standing,” Kriesel served in the Minnesota House of Representatives from 2011-13.

Virtual reality growing toward FECs

Ocular Quest provides VR's 'iPhone moment'

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

The virtual reality market is “now exploding” with companies recognizing that there’s money to be made in location-based VR games, an expert in the field told an audience at the Amusement Expo International June 29.

Bob Cooney said the Oculus Quest 2, a cheap, easy, portable VR system for the home with good content, was “the ‘iPhone moment for virtual reality.’” Popularity of the headset, released originally in 2019 with a successor (Quest 2) released in October 2020, has grown exponentially, he said, with nearly 4 million sold so far and 80 million estimated to be sold in the next five years.

Like the iPhone, the Quest was the “right product in the right market at the right time,” he said. The gaming market changes about every 15 years or so, Cooney added, as the market started with arcade games and cycled through console games, PC games, and mobile games.

“And now you’re seeing VR as the next gaming platform,” he said.

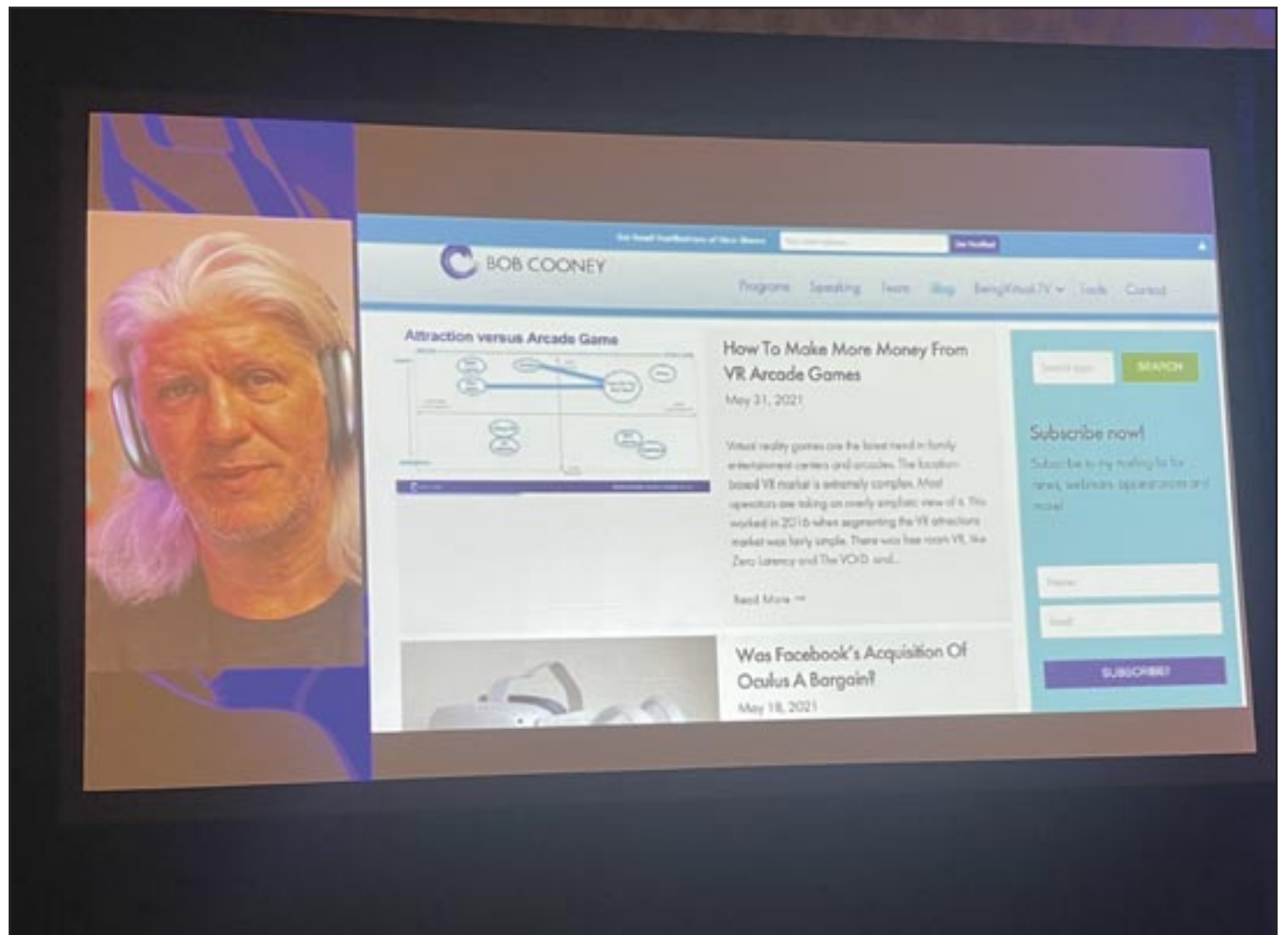
Cooney, the author of the book “Real Money from Virtual Reality,” is widely considered the world’s foremost expert on location-based virtual reality. He made his comments during his opening keynote for the VR Summit, part of the Amusement Expo International in Las Vegas. Much of the summit took place as a hybrid event featuring speakers in Vegas and virtually from around the world. Cooney, in fact, was streaming in from Australia to address the summit.

Cooney told his audience that by the end of this decade, the use of VR devices will be at the same level as game consoles, which number about 250 million currently. The VR platform could well be the most popular consumer gaming platform by then, he said.

Facebook is driving the VR train right now, he said, by partnering with Oculus and promoting it. And as the social media giant continues to grow, so will virtual reality, he added.

“They know how engaging and addictive VR can be,” he said.

In addition to promotion, Facebook is actually subsidizing the Quest hardware costs to help bring



Paul Tash photo

VR EXPERT Bob Cooney appears on screen to lead a session on virtual reality trends during the

Amusement Expo International in Las Vegas. Cooney was live-streaming from Australia.

the costs of the headset down, Cooney said, “so they can sell it for 299 bucks, which seems to be the sweet spot on price.”

Cooney said another “profitable ecosystem” has developed regarding content for virtual reality games. Sixty Quest games have made over \$1 million since 2020,

enough.

“It just won’t satisfy them,” he said.

So when will the hot VR trend for the home translate to location-based attractions? It’s gaining momentum now, Cooney said.

Meow Wolf, an arts production company that creates immersive, multimedia experiences for large entertainment centers, is providing “a glimpse into the future of what’s coming to our industry,” he said.

Area 15, an enormous entertainment center in Las Vegas, was currently hosting Meow Wolf productions of its “fantastic realms” for people to experience, he said, “and the reviews are off the charts.”

he said, and six have made over \$10 million. He added that “Walking Dead” made \$30 million, and “Beat Saber,” a VR rhythm game where the player slashes the beats of adrenaline-pumping music, “has done over \$40 million in downloaded soft packs alone.”

The makers of popular console games “Assassin’s Creed” and “Splinter Cell” are planning VR content soon, he added. In addition, “Medal of Honor” recently made its debut on Oculus Quest, while “Resident Evil” is also coming to virtual reality, he said, “which will be terrifying.”

Another element driving VR is its display, particularly the multi-dimensional immersion.

“So now we’re seeing virtual reality become the latest display technology,” he said. “People want more immersion.”

When people get used to VR, he added, the LCD screen won’t be

Now we’re seeing VR as the next gaming platform.

– Bob Cooney

In addition, he said, a VR attraction based on “Army of the Dead,” a Netflix movie, is currently touring in five different countries. The attraction was bankrolled by Netflix, which hired Greg Lombardo, formerly head of attractions for Fox Studios, to develop it.

“So you’re seeing studios bringing (content) out into the VR market to allow fans to connect ... with the experiences they love,” he

said.

Continuing improvements in immersive VR technology is also improving the development of location-based attractions, he said.

“It’s coming and it’s inevitable,” he said.

For example, he said, manufacturer HTC has recently launched its VIVE Focus 3 all-in-one headset for location-based attractions that doesn’t need to be tethered to a computer and features a 5K display (Quest has 4K) and 120 degrees field of view (the norm now is 89 degrees).

“I think this is going to be a game changer for our industry,” he said. “The early reviews ... are really positive.”

Cooney said the Focus 3 will become the game piece that location-based VR games will be built around in the near future.

Operators treat current VR games, such as Rabbit or

Kong, like regular arcade games, but not attractions, he said. Full VR attractions often generate more replays and therefore more revenue.

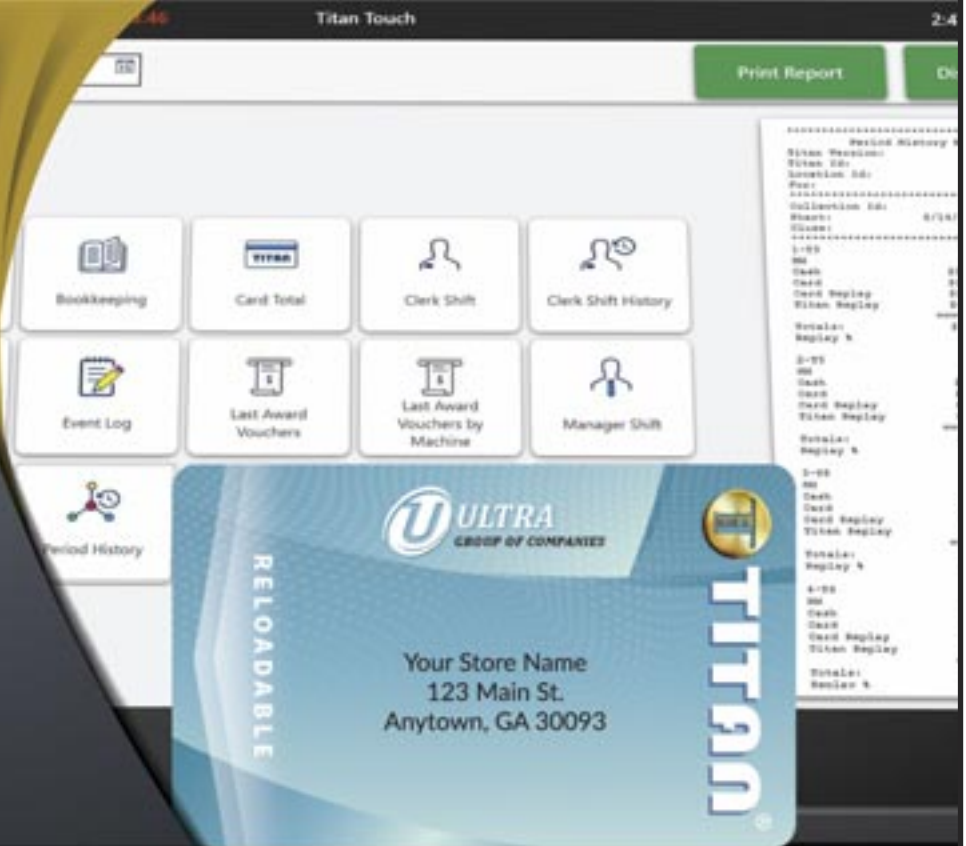
Operators have to “position these things differently so people get off the couch,” he said.

The future holds some interesting VR attractions, he said, including a virtual hang-gliding experience and one that features a virtual wind-suit that gives users “a feeling of human flight.”



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Loyalty programs can benefit FECs

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Rewards and memberships are becoming the rule more than the exception at many family entertainment centers around the country.

Rewards and membership programs are both “loyalty programs” that attempt to get customers to return more often and spend more, said Sherry Howell, who led a seminar on starting and maintaining loyalty programs during the Amusement Expo International in Las Vegas June 29. Howell is brand engagement director for Centeredge Software.

To start, she said, operators need to “do their research” and identify their target for the programs.

“Dig into your data,” she said.

How much are they spending? How often are they coming (the national average is 2-3 times per year)? Places to glean that data include customer sales receipts, game-card receipts and sale transaction reports, Howell said.

She also advised operators to think about what “they hope to change” with the program and what its revenue goals are. Successful loyalty programs “change consumer behavior” and don’t just offer “what they’d buy anyway.”

Strong loyalty programs, she added, are creative, but also easy to understand.

“Make it work for you,” she said.

Loyalty programs shouldn’t “give it all away,” Howell added, but still entice customers to join. For example, she said offering an early sign-up bonus is a good way to help get the program rolling.

In addition, loyalty programs should include a marketing plan that incorporates social media,

Make it work for you.

– Sherry Howell

email, text and in-store signage, Howell said. Staff training on the program is mandatory, she said, as is a way to measure the results. Once launched, the loyalty programs should provide daily and weekly stats for the entire program and for individual team members to gauge its effectiveness, she added.

Howell also provided an example of a successful three-tiered loyalty program for FEC operators:

The lowest-level program cost



Paul Tash photo

SHERRY HOWELL explains some successful loyalty programs during an educational session as part of Amusement Expo International June 29 in the Las Vegas.

\$8.99 per month and offered unlimited Ballocity play, 10 percent discount on games, and personalized offers. The next tier cost \$29.99 per month and provided unlimited play on Ballocity, tag, ropes and VR



Coaster, 10 percent off games and merchandise, and personalized offers. The highest tier, at a cost of \$34.99 per month, provided unlimited attractions on all games, 10 percent off games and merchandise, free kids’ meal, \$100 off a birthday party, and personalized offers.

She also advised operators to list the highest tier, “your Cadillac plan,” first in all marketing efforts because it has “a high perception of value” that consumers often go for.

Whatever the plan, Howell said, successful loyalty programs “reward desired behaviors” and “build strong, two-sided relationships” between facility and customer.

“You offer your guests the perfect opportunity ... to make memories with their families,” she said.

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