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Journal marks  
four years  
- Page 4

# GEORGIA Amusement JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving the Georgia COAM industry  
Endorsed by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association  
paul@tashcommunications.com (406) 491-0100



A Tash Communications publication

May 2021

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## Bill provides for gift card

### Work left after '21 Assembly

By Jorie Tash

#### Georgia Amusement Journal

A lobbyist for the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association (GAMOA) reviewed industry-relevant outcomes from the 2021 Georgia Assembly that adjourned in early April, including an industry-supported measure that would provide for a gift card, at an industry meeting April 29 in Norcross.

GAMOA President Shawn Fellows began the meeting by urging members to utilize a QR code that directs users to a section of GAMOA's website where they can register for the organization's Action Center that helps them connect with their state legislators.

"It's vitally important to talk to your legislators," said Fellows. Those relationships members maintain with lawmakers "will help us through this next year and allow

GAMOA to communicate issues to those legislators," he said.

Les Schneider, a GAMOA lobbyist, agreed with the sentiment, telling members he could "point out times relationships have helped" block or buoy bills that affect the industry.

"Find out who your senator is, find out who your representative is, and develop some sort of a relationship with them," he said. "You are a constituent; they want to get to know you. I can't overemphasize how important it is."

Establishing a dialogue with lawmakers provides a level of "grass-roots politics that no lobbyist can overcome," he said.

Fellows also reminded everyone to input their home addresses into the linked tool instead of any business or P.O. box address when locating their legislators.



FELLOWS



Paul Tash photo

**CAM VOGEL**, right, sales specialist for Goldfinger, explains the company's new card reader to Piyush Dahiya of Infinity Amusement following the industry meeting April 29 in Norcross.

Schneider then gave attendees an overview of the work done on behalf of GAMOA during the 2021 Georgia Assembly. The 2021 session presented "a challenge," said Schneider, due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions at the Capi-

itol, but the industry "did a good job having a united front, and we made a great deal of progress," he said. Industry-relevant legislation introduced during the now-recessed session included House Bill 544,

See **SESSION** Page 3



## Registration open for GACS convention

By Paul Tash, Georgia Amusement Journal

Registration is still available for the Georgia Association of Convenience Stores' 2021 Annual Convention June 13-15 at Omni Amelia Island resort in Florida.

The theme, Convenience Never Stops, "reflects the extraordinary place we are today – both what was missed, when the pandemic brought so much to a halt, and what was accomplished, by your association and our members," according to the GACS convention brochure.

The convention will feature some familiar activities,

as well as some new ones. The education segment has been expanded to include more speakers and new, interactive workshops. The legislative panel is on the schedule again, reflecting the importance of the happenings at the Capitol. In addition, golf, fishing, networking time, a new-member reception, meals and entertainment are also on the agenda.

One of the unique events this year will be "a crazy take" on the traditional \$5,000 raffle: All tickets pur-

See **CONVENTION** Page 3



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# Session

from Page 1

Senate Bill 95 and Senate Bill 217.

## House Bill 544

HB 544, sponsored by Rep. Alan Powell, would allow the Georgia Lottery to use gift cards as a COAM redemption method, relax the penalty structure pertaining to the 50/50 rule, add a COAM-affiliated representative to the Lottery Board, and provide some other benefits to the industry. The industry-supported bill passed the House floor with a vote of 110-54 and will begin its journey through the Senate in the 2022 Assembly.

The Lottery is currently overseeing a gift card pilot program for the COAM industry. The program is scheduled to stop collecting data on June 30, and a data and analytics firm will then develop a report and present it to the GLC Board of Directors and COAM Advisory Board in late summer or early fall.

## Senate Bill 95

Another industry-supported bill, SB 95, sponsored by Sen. Frank Ginn, has been “basically stripped” but initially included provisions that would have been “favorable to the industry,” including a gift-card provision, Schneider said. The bill is currently sitting in the Senate and could be revived, he said.

“If these pieces pass (HB 544 and SB 95), we are going to get to the next generation for what this industry is capable of doing,” he said. “Knowing your senator and knowing your rep is the start” to getting involved with the legislative

# Convention

from Page 1

chased will be drawn down – some for prizes – and the last ticket will win the \$5,000 raffle prize. Proceeds support the GACS Education Foundation scholarship programs. Tickets are \$100.

Convention-goers have several options to relax and have fun. On Monday afternoon, June 14, they can choose to play golf at the beautiful Oak Marsh Golf Course, go fishing in the Atlantic Ocean or the backwaters of Amelia, or just enjoy the sun and surf and maybe a few adult beverages at a beach party.

Registration is available at [www.gacs.com/events](http://www.gacs.com/events). Fees start at just \$295 for members or \$365 for nonmembers. For more information on these and other registration options, or to learn more about the convention, visit [www.gacs.com/events](http://www.gacs.com/events).

process and getting industry-friendly bills passed.

## Senate Bill 217

SB 217, a bill opposed by industry groups, including GAMOA and the Georgia Association of Convenience Stores (GACS), sought revisions of some regulatory requirements that would have “create(d) a monopoly for a few masters in the COAM industry at the expense of location owners,” Schneider said. The bill also contained “conflict of interest” concerns, Schneider said. The bill, sponsored by Sen. John Kennedy, died in committee in February.

“Overall, it was a very good effort,” Schneider said of the industry’s legislative work. He also gave props to GACS for its heavy involvement in the legislative process and its support for provisions that would benefit both location and master licensees.

**In other action,** Marshall Hartmann and Cam Vogel from Betson-Goldfinger, the sponsor of the April meeting, showed off some new products, including a new Point-of-Sale (POS) system that has the capability to allow players to redeem winnings partially on a gift card and partially on a player card that’s “easy to use for attendants and players.” They then auctioned off one of the POS systems with two card readers and two 22-inch Betson monitors.



Paul Tash photo

**THE QR CODE** above directs users to a section of GAMOA’s website where they can register for the organization’s Action Center that helps them connect with their state legislators.

Phil Vance and Max Rudisser from the GAMOA-endorsed National General Health Insurance company encouraged members to contact them for estimates, which can be done online, by text or by call. A link to more information regarding the group insurance is cur-

rently on GAMOA’s homepage at [www.gamoa.org](http://www.gamoa.org).

“We’ve saved GAMOA members a lot of money,” Vance said, “and we want to help as many members as we can.”

Fellows then reminded attendees that elections for the GAMOA Board of Directors are coming up and nominations are being accepted until the end of May. GAMOA has 13 board members who meet four times a year, and members should reach out to Executive Director Christina Kaiser or nominations chairman Butch Foshee if they have interest in serving on the board.

Kaiser also informed meeting attendees that trade show spots for the upcoming Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo, set for Aug. 25 and 26, are almost sold out and that registration for attendance is open online. Some events new to the Expo this year include a wine toss fundraiser for Burt’s Big Adventure, a charity that sends terminally ill children to Disney World, and a casino night.

Also, Foshee addressed the meeting to thank those in the industry for their condolences in the aftermath of his wife Ginger’s passing in March. She loved attending GAMOA events, Foshee said, and the support he received from GAMOA members “says a lot about the industry and about humanity.”

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



# Journal Opinion

## Journal marks 4th year with industry

By Paul Tash

**GAJ Editor and Publisher**

As the world works its way back from the devastating effects of the coronavirus pandemic, we're increasingly amazed at the resiliency, adaptability and business acumen of the many folks who operate in the COAM industry in Georgia. Because individual COAM businesses were able to successfully adapt to a "new normal," the industry as a whole not only survived, but actually is on its way to a record-setting year.

The *Georgia Amusement Journal*, marking its fourth anniversary with the May issue, is proud to be a part of it. Despite pandemic-related losses in advertising, which is its sole revenue source, the *Journal* was able to publish on schedule without missing a single issue. We're especially proud of that publishing achievement because so many industry-related meetings and gathering were canceled, hindering our ability to gather information and present it to our loyal readers.

So you can count on the *Georgia Amusement Journal* to serve the state's coin-operated amusement machine industry and its related businesses with the same unwavering dedication our readers now expect and

appreciate across Georgia and beyond. You can count on us to deliver the information you need to run your businesses in the most cost-effective, compliant and profitable way possible, even in this difficult time. The *Journal* is proud to work with a strong COAM industry that



Paul Tash

greatly benefits the popular Hope Scholarship and Pre-K education programs, an amount that is expected to exceed \$100 million this fiscal year.

**The Georgia Amusement Journal** would not be the respected trade journal it has become without the support of the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association

(GAMOA). It has been a *Journal* advocate from the start.

"GAMOA has found the Georgia Amusement Journal to be a great resource for our members and non-members over the past year," GAMOA President Shawn Fellows has said. "When industry news

**D**espite pandemic-related losses in advertising ..., the *Journal* was able to publish on schedule without missing a single issue.

needs to be delivered to the entire industry GAMOA relies heavily on the trade journal for its independent and comprehensive reporting."

Whether GAMOA utilizes the *Journal* to post important dates or a call to action, he added, "the statewide distribution and ability to reach all licensees within the COAM industry is one of our most valuable tools."

The *Journal* is mailed free of charge to thousands in the COAM industry, including Class A and B master and location licensees, vendors, regulators, and others. With the endorsement of GAMOA, the *Journal* works diligently to provide industry-related news and features to help all licensees navigate state regulation and run their businesses more effectively and efficiently.

The *Journal* provides regular coverage of the GAMOA membership meetings and COAM Advisory Board meetings. The publication also features stories on industry leaders and regularly introduces new companies in the Georgia market place, as well as new products and services by the many successful firms already established here.

Wherever an industry-related event occurs, the *Journal* will be there covering it, from the Amusement Expo International in Las Vegas next month to GAMOA's Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo in Atlanta in August.

**In a continued effort** to meet the needs of a large and varied reader base, the *Journal* in the past year has expanded its coverage of some sectors,

See JOURNAL Page 8

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If you wish to begin receiving the *Georgia Amusement Journal*, send your name, mailing address, telephone number and \$35 for a year's subscription to Georgia Amusement Journal, P.O. Box 4307, Butte, MT 59702.

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## COAM calendar

### — REPORTING DATES —

- Now:** The COAM licensing application ([www.gacoam.com](http://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
- May 20:** Each monthly report should be submitted by Location License Holders in electronic format via the [www.gacoam.com](http://www.gacoam.com) website as required by the GLC by the 20th of each following month.
- June 1:** Deadline to apply for a new location license (Class A and B) and master Class A license for 2021 licensing period.

### — MEETINGS/OTHER —

- May 19** Industry social, Eclipse Di Luna, Atlanta
- June 13-15:** GACS annual convention, Omni Amelia Island Plantation, Amelia Island, FL
- June 29:** Amusement Expo International, Las Vegas
- Aug. 25-26:** Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo, Infinite Energy Center, Duluth, GA



# Journal Opinion

## AMOA looks forward to Real Life again

**By Lori Schneider  
AMOA Executive VP**

After months of conducting association business virtually, AMOA is thrilled to be Building Engagement in Real Life once again!

### State Council Meeting

Although postponed three months, another successful and highly interactive AMOA State Council Meeting is officially in the books. This year's meeting, themed "2021: Re-Assessing the Landscape," was attended by just under 50 industry leaders representing 19 states for the one-and-a-half-day event held April 22-24 in Mesa, AZ.

Sessions included an update from Washington, D.C., by AMOA's legislative firm Dentons; a review of lessons learned during the pandemic; legislative advocacy efforts at the state level; an overview of gaming present and future; and an open forum discussion on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead on the road to recovery.

In addition, attendees heard from AMOA's 3-star and 2-star Game Master factory panels about the industry's recovery and the challenge of rising shipping costs and shortage of materials in the near term.

Next year's program will return to its usual late January dates in Texas. Details coming soon.

### Legislative update

AMOA is set to conduct its next Virtual Day on the Hill on Thursday, June 10. If you have never participated, you are highly encouraged to take part in our day of industry advocacy at the national level. Meetings are conducted via Zoom, and you can participate in as many or as few as you want throughout the day.

To register, visit [www.amoa.com](http://www.amoa.com) or contact Lori Schneider at [lori@amoa.com](mailto:lori@amoa.com) for more information. Issues to be addressed include fair access to banking, updates to language in the BSA/AML Bank Examiners Manual, the acceptance of cash at retail, and the recovery from the devastating impact of the pandemic.

### Amusement Expo

The finishing touches for

the 2021 AEI "Game On – Reimagine Your Future" are just about complete, so make plans today to attend AEI Education Day Tuesday, June 29, at the Westgate Las Vegas and the AEI Trade Show June 30 to July 1 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, North Hall.

With just over a month to go, all signs continue to point to a successful Amusement Expo International in Las Vegas this

summer. With over 80 percent of available exhibit space sold, AEI's core exhibitors are back and ready to serve their customers! Attendee registration continues to be strong, and it remains clear, the industry is ready to get back to the business of providing fun!

Here's a glimpse of a few of the timely topics to be covered during AEI Education Day:

- Maximize your ATM Route for Better ROI
  - Business Resilience Built for the Future
  - Pinball 2.0: Creating Success on the Street
  - Security Preparedness ... Don't Get Caught Off Guard
  - Analyze This! Using Metrics to Improve Efficiency
  - Payment Options Come in All Forms, Are You Taking Full Advantage of Them?
  - Tips for Maintaining a Positive Reputation in the Digital World
  - And the highly popular Operator Round Tables

Visit [www.amusementexpo.org](http://www.amusementexpo.org) to register for this year's "don't miss" event.

### AMOA membership

The AMOA 2021 membership cycle continues with a "pay what you can" approach ... pay full/pay half/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 never been a member of AMOA, now is the perfect time to take AMOA for a test drive! And remember, AMOA members receive two free badges to the AEI trade show.

### Save the date!

Save the date for AMOA's On the Road Continuing Education Program to take place in the Chicago area on Oct. 20-21. Details coming soon!

For more information on these and other AMOA programs and services, visit [www.amoa.com](http://www.amoa.com) or contact AMOA at [info@amoa.com](mailto: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.**



Lori Schneider

With just over a month to go, all signs continue to point to a successful Amusement Expo International in Las Vegas.



Photo courtesy of AMOA

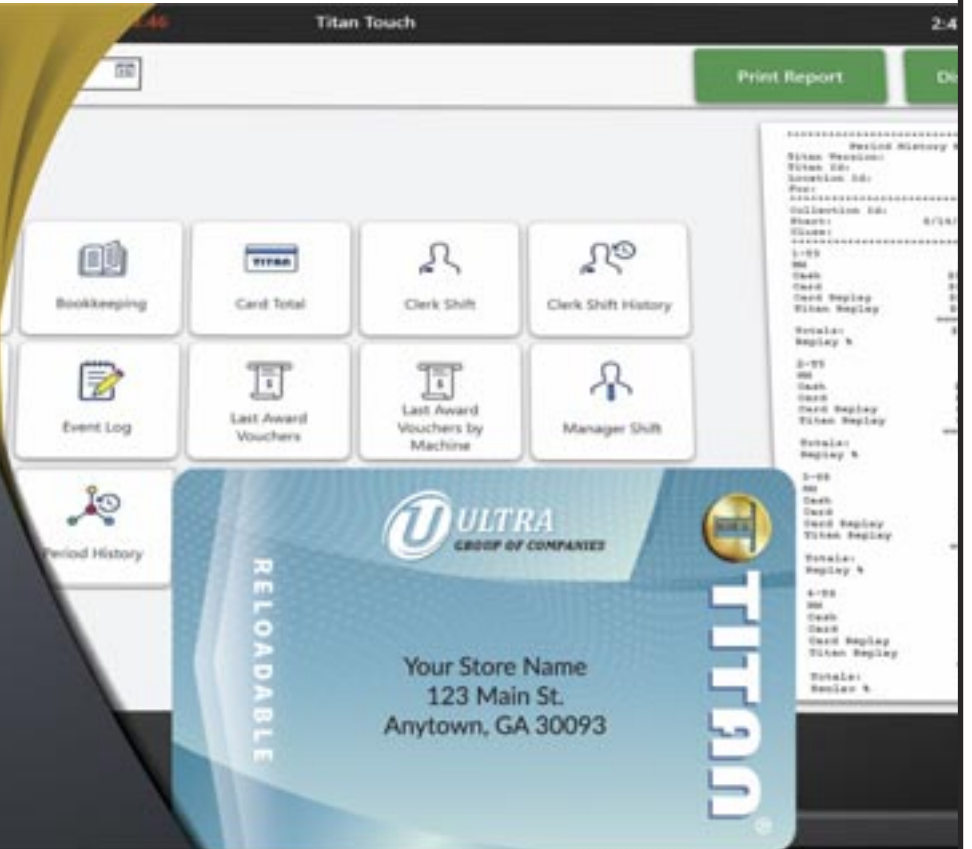
AMOA' STATE COUNCIL Meeting was well attended, as this AMOA photo shows. Front and center is current AMOA President Sam Westgate, who is a familiar face in the Georgia COAM market.





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	Summary
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Lottery	Lottery \$25.00
Gas	Gas \$32.75
	<b>Total: \$107.75</b>
	<a href="#">Redeem</a>

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# Journal Opinion

## GACS ready to expand '21 schedule

### By Sharon Shuford GACS Membership

It's time to up the game! After a year that proved difficult for non-profit organizations dependent on raising funds from networking events, the Georgia Association of Convenience Stores (GACS) is more than ready to expand its schedule for 2021. Here's just a glimpse of what's in store for the remainder of 2021.

### Golf tournament recap

GACS held its annual GAC-SPAC Golf Tournament last month, and judging by the response, everyone had a great time. Participation was back to pre-pandemic levels, so GACS is proceeding with more events and networking opportunities this year because members appear ready to network again.

### Convention

The annual convention, canceled in 2020, is a "go" for 2021. The 45th GACS convention will be held June 13-15 in Amelia Island, FL. The convention committee, chaired by Lynn Watson of Aden's Minit Markets, worked hard to provide great education opportunities and a lot of networking "fun" time. For information, or to register and book a hotel room, visit [www.gacs.com/events](http://www.gacs.com/events) or email Kevin Kirby, [kevin@gacs.com](mailto:kevin@gacs.com).

### Sporting clay competition

The GACS Board of Directors voted to host a sporting clay competition again in 2021. Tentatively scheduled for September, the event has been a popular sell out. Stay tuned to [www.gacs.com/events](http://www.gacs.com/events) for an announcement about the location and date.

### Southern Convenience Store & Petroleum Show

The annual Show will be held in Athens, GA, on Nov. 11. Retailers, mark your calendars today. Associates and suppliers should secure exhibit space soon, as it will be assigned on a first come, first served basis. Exhibitors can also book convention table-top exhibits at a low discount price at the time they reserve space at The Show. Visit [www.gacs.com/events](http://www.gacs.com/events) or contact

### Raffle tickets and prizes

The GACS Education Foundation's mission is to raise funds to support the GACS Scholarship Program. Each year, GACS provides employees and children of employees more than 20 scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,000 each. This year, GACS will hold a Reverse Raffle during the convention. In addition to a \$5,000 winner, ticket numbers will be announced and prizes will be given out throughout the night. Tickets can be purchased online on the convention registration form, from any of the Education Foundation or GACS Board members, or supplier committee members, or by contacting [kevin@gacs.com](mailto:kevin@gacs.com). Only 440 tickets will be sold.

### GACS Lunch & Learn and InStore events

The popular Lunch & Learn program will return later this year. These events provide opportunities for retailers to hear from regulators and other industry experts on a wide range of topics relevant to their businesses.

At the same time, GACS plans to re-launch the GACS InStore program, which brings local legislators and retailers together for a couple of hours of conversation and feedback. Announcements about these two programs will be forthcoming on the GACS website as soon as they are scheduled.

For information about these programs, contact GACS at 770-736-9723 or email [Kevin@gacs.com](mailto:Kevin@gacs.com) or [Sharon@gacs.com](mailto:Sharon@gacs.com).



Sharon Shuford

GACS provides employees and children of employees more than 20 scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,000 each.

[kevin@gacs.com](mailto:kevin@gacs.com) for information or assistance with your booth.

### Advertising

It's not too late to do some targeted marketing to over 4,500 convenience store locations in Georgia. GACS prints 20,000 magazines each year, delivered quarterly to retailers – both members and non-members – as well as to supplier partners. For information or to book space in the next issue, contact [publications@gacs.com](mailto:publications@gacs.com).



## Journal

from Page 4

including convenience stores and family entertainment centers. For example, the *Journal* now offers regular columns from the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) and the Georgia Association of Convenience Stores.

The *Journal* relishes its role as the industry's voice and takes every opportunity to highlight the benefits the COAM industry provides for the Georgia economy, and especially for state education through its funding of the Hope Scholarship and Pre-K program.

The *Georgia Amusement Journal* is able to perform its industry role thanks solely to the advertising dollars it receives.

An independent publication, the *Journal* receives no funding from any association and survives on the tremendous support of its advertisers. We thank all of them for recognizing its growing value as the outlet for companies to promote their products and services to those in the COAM industry. It's heartening to know our advertisers believe that marketing in the *Journal* consistently is a worthy

investment.

Finally, I'd like to thank the many dozens of individuals, from Lottery regulators to industry insiders, who continually provide the *Journal* staff their expertise in understanding Georgia's unique COAM industry. You all are greatly appreciated.

And to our readers, thank you for your loyalty – you can count on us, pandemic or not.

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## Retail Matters

# C-stores adapt to ‘digital experience’

By Jorie Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Online ordering, curbside pickup and even delivery are options pandemic-shaken consumers are looking more and more, and convenience stores are in a position to provide those options, according to a recent webinar that explored digital and online loyalty programs.

“Surveys show that consumers are still looking for digital experiences, and convenience stores are adjusting accordingly,” said Kiera Blessing, content specialist at Paytronix Systems, a digital sales company.

“Digital experiences” include online ordering and curbside (or pump-side) pickup as well as delivery options. Fuel sales have consistently fallen throughout the last year due to lack of commuting and consumers staying home more, said Blessing, pushing c-stores to implement or research the steps needed to implement these services to make up for the lost fuel revenue.

Blessing joined *Convenience Store News* editorial director Don Longo for the webinar April 7, sponsored by Paytronix, that discussed the current state of convenience store retail trends and consumer preferences one year into the COVID-19 pandemic as well as options c-store owners have to obtain higher revenue in the current retail landscape.

Blessing provided information on the results from two surveys that were collected by consultancy firm AlexPartners and a joint effort between Northern Illinois University and University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in early March 2021 and late 2020, respectively, and to speak on opportunities for increased sales and customer loyalty granted by the changes in consumerism caused by the pandemic.

Alexpartners reported that 26 percent of surveyed consumers stated they plan to stay away from c-stores completely for the foreseeable future, and 74 percent of surveyed c-stores re-

ported lower year-over-year sales in 2020. However, according to Blessing, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that sales of food and other in-store items have gone up, suggesting that “retail is a good way to offset falling fuel revenue,” she said, and that offering digital services is the best way to harness those increased sales.

“An Alexpartners representative told us that ‘as a megatrend, convenience is only going to get bigger,’” said Blessing, and more and more, customers expect purchased goods almost imme-

**Y**ou want the online ordering experience to be like coming into the store.

– Kiera Blessing

diately. With this in mind, she suggested efforts c-store owners may consider adopting to keep up with the changing market.

“You want the online ordering experience to be like coming into the store,” she said, with a well-organized and easily navigable menu that can include a large majority of inventory when correctly optimized. Since the relaxation of legislation across the country regarding alcohol delivery and off-premise purchases of such due to the pandemic, many c-stores have the opportunity to snag customers who go to c-stores only to buy beer or wine (c-store owners should check for new laws in their area on this issue and act accordingly, she said). One-quarter of consumers buy their alcohol exclusively at c-stores, and beer was the number-one growth driver in March-July 2020, she said, so being able to sell age-restricted items via app or webpage can be “a great revenue driver,” Blessing said.

First, c-store owners should consider adding a loyalty program or expanding their existing program to make it possible for loyalty points to be earned or redeemed during online ordering for both curbside pickup and delivery. Second, owners should decide whether to use a third-party delivery app or a service like Paytronix to create a store or brand’s own online ordering app and/or webpage.

Third-party apps may have a high overhead and might not be optimized to suit c-stores’ needs (as they have tons of inventory and age-restricted items for sale), she said, but they also outsize much of the cost of offering online sales and take some of the logistical stress off of the owner’s shoulders. On the other hand, having an in-house app or web page for delivery and curbside allows for more control and makes it easier to allow loyalty points to be earned or redeemed alongside off-premise buying (a feature that 50 and 60 percent of the 18-25 and 25-34 age demographics said was “extremely important,” respectively, according to Alexpartners, and Paytronix found that marrying online ordering and loyalty programs results in an 18% increase in sales).

Creating their own ordering platform also gives owners more control over the layout and user-interface as well as keeps them from having to share customer information with third-party delivery apps. A brand or store having their own app/webpage also keeps customers from logging onto a third-party app to order from a certain c-store and getting distracted by deals advertised by other brands on the platforms.

Most importantly, partnering with a company like Paytronix to create the right platform for a certain brand “isn’t one-size-fits-all,” Blessing said. Offering offsite buying options will surely be “a competitive differentiator” in the near future, she added, so c-store owners are urged to look into these options.

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# Licensing window for '22 now open

The licensing application process for Coin-Operated Amusement Machines (COAMs) is now open for the 2022 licensing period (July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022) through the Georgia Lottery Corp.'s COAM website, [www.gacoam.com](http://www.gacoam.com).

The GLC's COAM Division last year extended some renewal deadlines to help businesses manage the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Division is reverting to more traditional deadlines this year.

"We're going back to the deadlines and dates pre-COVID," said COAM Division Vice President Mike Parham at a recent COAM Advisory Board meeting.

The licensing application covers the following licenses:

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

The Lottery is not accepting any new Class B Master License applications. New Class B Master licenses are only available through an auction process for prequalified participants. The last auction was held April 28.

Following are important dates for licensees.

## 06/01/2021 (Tuesday)

Deadline to apply for a new location license (Class A and Class B), a new master Class A license, and a new manufacturer or distributor license for the 2021 licensing period (07/01/2020 - 06/30/2021). This deadline only applies to 2021 COAM licenses.

## 06/30/2021 (Wednesday)

Deadline for master licensees to purchase additional Class A and Class B decals or location licensees to add Class A and Class B machines for the 2020 licensing period (07/01/2020 - 06/30/2021). This deadline only applies to 2021 COAM licenses.

## 07/01/2021 (Thursday)

Date a \$1,000 late fee will be assessed to location Class A and Class B licenses, master Class A and Class B licensees, and manufacturer and distributor licensees that have not renewed for the 2022 licensing period (07/01/2021 – 06/30/2022). An existing COAM licensee will not be allowed to apply for a new license to avoid payment of a late fee.

## 9/28/2021 (Tuesday)

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). If a holder of a 2021 COAM license fails to renew its license, or its license application is not approved on or before this date, the person or entity will no longer be allowed to operate COAMs.

Deadlines and more information are available on the COAM website, [www.gacoam.com](http://www.gacoam.com).



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