









GEORGIA 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 November 2022 Vol. 6, Number 7

Advisory board creates panel to push card

By Paul Tash, Georgia Amusement Journal

The COAM Advisory Board agreed to form a subcommittee to work with regulators and industry representatives to help develop the evolving program that allows Lottery-branded gift cards to be used as COAM redemption at its quarterly meeting Oct. 18.

Board members did so at the request of Emily Dunn, board chair, who said a subcommittee could help clearly define the obligations of master

and location licensees in the gift card program, as well as discussing the potential of a "marketing component" to the program.

Dunn said she hoped the subcommittee would develop recommendations to bring back to the Georgia Lottery Corp..

The subcommittee's first meeting was later scheduled for Nov. 16.

John Heinen, COAM senior vice president, told board members the subcommittee would have the Lottery's full support.

"Whenever we can add value, certainly let us know," he said.

"I appreciate the Lottery's support on this," Dunn said, "and the encouragement I've gotten from John and Gretchen, because I think it's really important that they utilize the Advisory Board."

Gretchen Corbin is president and CEO of the Georgia Lottery Corp., which earlier this year extended the pilot program for the COAM gift card and opened it up to all 6,100 locations operating in the state. Emails inviting Master License Holders to participate in the COAM gift card pilot program "go out regularly" to enabled master license holders, Mike Parham, COAM vice president, told the Advisory Board.

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COAM VICE PRESIDENT Mike Parham, top, provides some licenserenewal statistics for the COAM Advisory Board Oct. 18 in Atlanta. Board member Hemal Patel, bottom, makes a point at the meeting.



DUNN

Eagle continues Georgia growth

By Paul Tash, Georgia Amusement Journal

Georgia-based Eagle Global announced last month that, through a combination of acquisitions and organic growth, it has more than doubled the size of its route in Georgia.

"We're here for the long haul," Craig Franklin, vice president of Eagle Global, told the *Georgia Amusement Journal* following the announcement.

Eagle, based in Norcross, is a woman- and minority-

owned company headed by CEO Michelle Franklin. Despite debuting in the Georgia market as a master licensee earlier this year with \$50 million in initial backing from Goldman Sachs Asset Management, the businesses within Eagle have been around for over 13 years.

"Our rapid growth is the result of our team's ability to serve our customers and to partner with operators who share our values and focus on compliance," said Sachin

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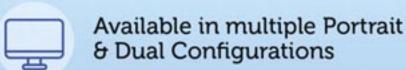


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Journal Opinion

Billiard Expo joins AEI next March

Lori Schneider AMOA Executive Director

Amusement Expo International (AEI) in September announced a major expansion of the core categories represented on its exhibit floor and educational program when the Billiard & Home Leisure Expo (BCA Expo) makes its debut as a new member of AEI's colocation family in 2023.

For the past 40 years, the BCA Expo has served as the premier show for everything from billiards to barstools, cues to casual furniture, Ping Pong to shuffleboard, and much more. Owned and operated by the Billiard Congress of America (BCA), the annual BCA Expo will unite with AEI for the first time during its event March 27-30, 2023, at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

"The BCA Expo is a perfect

fit for AEI," said Jeff Blair, AAMA president. "The products will complement our existing exhibit floor footprint, and the BCA and

neurial, always on the lookout for new opportunities and ways to diversify their business portfolio," said Tim Zahn, AMOA



Lori Schneider

The annual BCA Expo will unite with AEI for the first time during its event March 27-30, 2023, at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

President. "We're excited to add BCA Expo to the AEI colocation family. With the addition of BCA, attendees already operating retail locations will have the opportunity to get even more business done while in Vegas. The expanded exhibit hall provides new opportunities for everyone."

The addition of billiard and leisure sports products significantly expands AEI's offerings under one roof. Originally created as an event for buyers and sellers of amusement, music, and games - the coin-op business – AEI has broadened its reach in recent years via co-locations and alliances with related industry segments including Family Entertainment Centers (FEC), bulk vending, laser tag, virtual reality, Foundations Entertainment University. and now Billiard and Leisure Sports. Simultaneously, AEI has put greater emphasis on the development of a top-quality educational program for attendees and exhibitors.

other special show features will only enhance the overall experience for our customers."

"AEI attendees are entrepre-

ement

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COAM calendar

- REPORTING DATES -

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

- MEETINGS/OTHER -

Jan. 17: COAM Advisory Board, Lottery headquarters, Atlanta March 27-30: Amusement Expo, Las Vegas Convention Center April 18: 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.



Panelists offer hiring, retention tips

By Paul Tash Georgia Amusement Journal

As part of the Southern Convenience Store & Petroleum Show Nov. 10, a panel discussion titled "Human Resources: Human Needs" focused on helping retailers hire and retain "the best talent available."

Moderated by Terry McKenna, founder of Employee Performance Strategies, the panel featured Kelsey Ryan, a human resources manager for Love's Travel Stops, and Karen Malloy, a human resources manager for Kum & Go.

The country's retail industry, which includes convenience stores, has experienced an employee pool that "is shrinking at an alarming rate," said McKenna said. For example, he said, 649,000 employees left the industry last April, which represents about 2 percent of the 30 million people employed in the retail industry pre-pandemic.

This "great retail resignation," he said, has several causes, many pandemic-related.

Many people have left the industry during the pandemic's business shutdowns to go to school, start a home-based business, find a better-paying job, or enter the gig economy, such as driving for Uber, McKenna said.

"So what are we going to do," he said. "What are we going to do to address this issue."

One thing Love's is doing is improving the training of the company's "team trainers," Ryan said. She said the company learned that its store managers were using the team-trainer position "to basically to give somebody an extra buck," even though they might not be the best fit for the role or even understand the role. That dynamic led to a "vicious cycle" of managers continually replacing trainers because they weren't seeing positive results, she said, which in turn frustrated team members because the work environment didn't improve.

"If your team trainer doesn't know what's going on, how do you expect your team members to know what's going on?" she asked.

Then a leading district manager for the company started hosting weekly calls with team trainers to review specific KPIs (key performance indicators), such as speed of service, courtesy checks, and restroom cleanliness, so they knew what the measures were. Additionally, he emphasized why the metrics were important, Ryan said, which became a key in training.

The company discovered that when trainers understand why these metrics are important, not just how to do them, they are better able "to



Paul Tash photo

MODERATOR Terry McKenna, left, and Kelsey Ryan of Love's Travel Stops, center, listen to Karen Malloy of Kum & Go during a panel discussion on

hiring and retaining good employees as part of the Southern Convenience Store & Petroleum Show Nov. 10 in Macon. GA.

communicate that to team members."

Love's found that not only did the KPIs improve, but so did turnover, she said, because employees were less frustrated after seeing results of the training.

This change in training, she said, "has been huge for us."

"When you add the why, it provides meaning," McKenna added.

Kum & Go is working to

combat turnover through training, as well, Malloy said, by developing a program that cross-trains employees in different jobs. The program, which evolved from data obtained through exit interviews and engagement surveys that found that associates wanted more "career development," trains employees in both the retail (cashier) and kitchen segments of the stores.

The company "updated and overhauled" its onboarding process and also retrained existing associates "to make sure they have the skills and comfort to work on both sides of the store," Malloy said.

The company also created set schedules, she said, so employees can work both positions weekly "to maintain their skills and continue to evolve and work in both areas."

The cross-training effort has improved teamwork and has helped create "empathy our associates feel" for each other because they understand the challenges of both areas, she said.

Another program Kum & Go has developed is establishing "captainships" in key areas of the stores for associates. Associates participating in a captainship receive extra training in their key area. For example, a "cooler captain" would meet with the vendors or train other employees on cooler-related tasks, or a "make-days-better" captain would focus on customer service and loyalty programs. The captain-ships provide steps toward a leadership path, she said.

"It's definitely has improved our peer-to-peer leadership," she added.

Ryan and Malloy also touted employee-recognition programs.

"Employees expect more now than ever," Ryan said. "Our team members were saying pretty loudly, 'hey, we just want a pat on the back. We just want to be told, thank you."

An evolving Love's program provides a tool for store managers, who are their team members all

day, to recognize employees, Ryan said. The Golden Hearts program features a new "On-the-Spot Card" for employees that store managers throughout the day can add points to for a job well-done, she said. The card has a serial number that employees can use to access an online catalog and pick from thousands of products.

"We wanted to put recognition truly back in the moment," she said. "Employees are really loving the program," she said.











THE SOUTHERN CONVENIENCE Store & Petroleum Show took place Nov. 10 in Macon, GA. The popular event kicked off with the Bowling Blast that drew many enthusiastic participants, including (top left) Glenn Snow of Jett Food Stores, and (left) Jessica Macleod, left,

and Syreeta Ziegler, right, of Inamax. Macon Mayor Lester Miller (top) cuts the ribbon to open the event. Inamax (above) sent a big crew to the Show, including, left to right, Ali Kadri, George Schmidt, Rick Malsnee, Jeff Bolton, Macleod and Ziegler.





OTHER EXIBITORS at the Southern Convenience Store & Petroleum Show were Diamond Amusement's Shawn Fellows and Terri Spivey, above middle, and Phil Bowden, left, and Dylan Waddle, right, of m3t. Below is Magnolia Gaming's team, including Sam Westgate, center, and Chris York, right.



Eagle

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Malhotra, Eagle vice president, in information provided to the *Journal*. "We continue to be active acquirers of routes in our market, especially with like-minded operators."

"We're growing at a healthy clip," Craig Franklin said, "but we have also been selective in our acquisitions due to the strong pipeline we have. Additionally, we have some really good partnerships with master licensees who enjoy working with us, as they trust us and like our differentiated value proposition."

Eagle also announced the expansion of its executive team with the addition of Chief Operating and Financial Officer Michael Shanahan, who brings over 15 years of financial leadership experience as a banker, engineer, and operator to Eagle.

"We are thrilled to have Mike on board," said Michelle Franklin. "His background and experience operating high-growth businesses, coupled with his integrity, are just some of the reasons we are delighted to have Mike on our team,"

"The Eagle team has the talent, character, and strategic focus on growth that I see in successful growing organizations," Shanahan

said. "I'm excited to join the team along that path."

Eagle remains bullish on the future of the industry and is especially enthusiastic about the gift card, Craig Franklin said.

"We're big fans of the gift card," he said. "We like the numbers we're seeing. We're seeing a lot of interest across our entire portfolio."

Franklin also emphasized Eagle's "heavy focus" on compliance, which he said is at the "core of everything we do."

Securing a partnership with Goldman Sachs, one of the world's largest investment firms, helps Eagle stand out in the Georgia market, Franklin added. Goldman Sachs has provided the capital for Eagle to finance future expansion through acquisition of more distributed gaming providers and other growth capital expenditures.

"We are impressed by the performance of the Eagle team, their approach to disciplined M&A, in addition to their strong focus on compliance," Goldman Sachs said in a news release. "We look forward to our continued partnership with Eagle as they continue to differentiate themselves from other players in the space through their unique value proposition and strong management team that is helping expand their footprint."





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Board

from Page 1

"We're probably over-communicating, but for something as important as the gift card we want to make sure that everybody is sent that invite," Parham said.

After accepting the invitation, the master licensee begins a relationship with InComm, an Atlantabased payment technology company that is managing the gift card pilot program. The master licensees essentially act as resellers of the card for InComm. They will provide installation and service for the necessary equipment, distribute the gift cards to their locations, and train the Location License Holders (LLHs) on how to use the equipment and activate the cards. In-Comm will provide training for master licensees.

Licensees aren't required to go through the Lottery to provide gift cards – they can use a secondary vendor, such as W.L. Petrey. However, licensees using a secondary vendor won't receive the benefits available through the Lottery program. For example, master and location license holders participating through the Lottery will each receive 12.5 cents for every card activated.

Industry representatives have

said the gift card would provide convenient and easy non-cash redemption and would stimulate further growth by attracting new players, generating new locations, and marketing the COAM product more efficiently. That growth will in turn provide even larger industry contributions to the state's HOPE and Pre-K education programs.

Here are other aspects of the expanded pilot program:

- Locations aren't required to participate in the program.
- Only Lottery-branded gift cards can be used (not a restaurant or other retail gift card). The extended program will use up the remaining inventory of the current grey Visa gift card, and then provide a new MasterCard gift card branded with the COAM logo and the Georgia Lottery Corp. name at the top (see inset).
- The card will have a \$20 minimum load and a \$1,000 maximum, and each card has a \$2 activation fee.
- The gift card can't be used at ATMs, nor can it be used to redeem for alcohol, tobacco, or firearms, which follows current restrictions. It can be used anywhere Master-Card or Visa is accepted.
- Players must be 18 or older to use the gift card.
- All location licensees wishing to participate will need to have a



valid 2023 license.

- The cards are for Class B redemption only.
- Though signage at locations will state the program is for a "limited time," Lottery officials say pilot program will likely take a year or more.
- Master licensees are prohibited from buying cards for location licensees, which would be a form of illegal inducement.
- Signage for locations to promote the gift cards will be provided by the Lottery on the COAM website at www.gacoam.com.

In other action, Andrew Pippen, who now leads the COAM Division's inspections unit, reported that about 1,300 locations were inspected in the last quarter with 86 citations and 92 warnings issued. He said the COAM Division receives about 50-60 complaints a month from players, nearly all of which involve a disagreement over a redemption owed.

Though all complaints are answered by an inspector, Pippen said

the Division usually doesn't get involved in the disputes. When they do, the inspector works to get the player and location together to resolve the issue. He said inspectors have been visiting locations "and educating retailers" on some of the problems and "how they can address the problem."

"I would say about 98 percent of those issues are resolved," he said. "Kudos to the locations for getting involved and doing the right thing."

Dunn praised the efforts by inspectors to help with redemption compliance with more education and fewer citations.

"I really, really appreciate your efforts to educate," Dunn added.

On another topic, board member Hemal Patel noted that licensees have had some problems recently with installations. He asked that Intralot, the company that manages the COAM program for the GLC, "work together" with the industry to improve the process. Dunn added that having technicians show up late for installation appointments is "very frustrating."

John McCormick, the state's general manager for Intralot, acknowledged some difficulties with installs, noting that Intralot has

(Continued on next page)



(Continued from previous page)

experienced some staffing issues. He said Intralot will work to improve the installation process.

"We will follow up," he said.
Dunn said she appreciated Intralot's efforts to work with the
COAM industry.

"We do appreciate what you do," she said.

Earlier in the meeting,

Parham said renewal rates for 2023 "were better than last year." He said 96 percent of all COAM licensees, including master and loca-

tion licensees, renewed their license for the 2023 year.

"To see that many renew is a good thing," he said.

Aiding the renewal process, Parham added, was an email to master licensees that listed their enabled location licensees that had not renewed yet, so MLHs could encourage those locations to do so.

Dunn and Patel said that email was particularly effective.

"It was very helpful," Dunn said

Heinen said the renewal process overall went "better than any year that I can remember."

Parham also provided the following statistics for Georgia's COAM licenses. As of Oct. 18, the GLC had enabled:

- 2,108 Class A location licenses;
- 6,223 Class B location licenses:
 - 243 Class A master licenses:
 - 188 Class B master licenses;
 - 27 manufacturer licenses;
 - And three distributor licenses.

Revenues in the new fiscal year, which started Oct. 1, have been "very strong," Heinen said, with the average revenue per day per machine at about \$114 so far. Though that number is down a bit from last year at the same time, the drop can be attributed to the fact that about 2,000 more machines (about 32,300 total) have been placed in the market this year than last, Heinen said.

"The (overall) revenue numbers are higher," Heinen added.



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18-Sep-22	24-Sep-22	28-Sep-22	04-Oct-22
25-Sep-22	01-Oct-22	05-Oct-22	12-Oct-22*
02-Oct-22	08-Oct-22	12-Oct-22	18-Oct-22
09-Oct-22	15-Oct-22	19-Oct-22	25-Oct-22
16-Oct-22	22-Oct-22	26-Oct-22	01-Nov-22
23-Oct-22	29-Oct-22	02-Nov-22	08-Nov-22
30-Oct-22	05-Nov-22	09-Nov-22	16-Nov-22
06-Nov-22	12-Nov-22	16-Nov-22	22-Nov-22
13-Nov-22	19-Nov-22	23-Nov-22	30-Nov-22
20-Nov-22	26-Nov-22	30-Nov-22	06-Dec-22
27-Nov-22	03-Dec-22	07-Dec-22	13-Dec-22
04-Dec-22	10-Dec-22	14-Dec-22	20-Dec-22
11-Dec-22	17-Dec-22	21-Dec-22	28-Dec-22*
18-Dec-22	24-Dec-22	28-Dec-22	04-Jan-23*

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