



GEORGIA Amusement JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving the Georgia COAM industry
Endorsed by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association
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GAMOA honors Butler, Patel

Banilla wins tech award at Expo

By Jorie Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

The Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association (GAMOA) honored two dedicated industry leaders during the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo Aug. 26, presenting Gaines Butler with its Lifetime Achievement Award and announcing Hemal Patel as Operator of the Year.

In addition, Banilla Games received the Cutting Edge Award, which honors the developer of a top new product or service, for its new Skyriser machine.

The presentations were made during the Expo's awards banquet. GAMOA President Shawn Fellows

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HEMAL PATEL, left, and Gaines Butler, right, were honored at the the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo Aug. 26 in Duluth by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association.

Patel dedicated to industry, community

By Jorie Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Hemal Patel is owner of Atlanta Game World, an active member of the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association (GAMOA), a member of the state's COAM Advisory Board, and a dedicated volunteer who serves communities both locally and internationally.

Now he is also GAMOA's Operator of the Year, an

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Paul Tash photos

Butler tuned in to life of achievements

By Jorie Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

A fixture of the COAM industry for over 40 years, a Georgia native and owner of Metro Distributors, Gaines Butler is this year's recipient of Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association's Lifetime Achievement Award.

"GAMOA blew me away with the award, because all I am is a jukebox operator," he said. "To be singled

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Expo trade show a success, vendors say

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

All the extra effort was worth it. The Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo that took place Aug. 26-27 at the Infinite Energy Center in Duluth earned an abundance of praise from exhibitors and participants. Expo organizers worked diligently to provide a safe

environment for everybody, said Christina Kaiser, executive director of the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association (GAMOA).

"I'm thrilled the Expo was so successful for exhibitors," she said. "A great deal of thanks goes to those exhibitors who supported the Expo in the current environment. I think they were rewarded."

The show translated directly to sales for everyone the Georgia Amusement Journal spoke to, and in some cases, significantly so.

"This was the best show that we've ever had," said Daniel Hartmann, president of Goldfinger. "It's been excellent and very

See SHOW Page 8



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Get to know legislators, GAMOA urges

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

The Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association (GAMOA) met Aug. 26 for the first time since February due to the coronavirus pandemic. A huge meeting room at the Infinite Energy Center allowed directors and members to participate in an in-person but socially-distanced meeting as part of the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo in Duluth.

With the next legislative session beginning in January, much discussion focused on the need for industry members to be proactive in the process and educate local legislators on the many benefits of the industry.

“Get out and support your local legislators,” GAMOA President Shawn Fellows said. “We need to continue to build those relationships.”

Fellows said those legislators need to know that the industry is contributing millions to the HOPE and Pre-K education programs in the state. That number was \$91 million in fiscal year 2020 and is expected to exceed \$100 million in the current year.

“We have an important mes-



Paul Tash photo

SHAWN FELLOWS, GAMOA president, addresses a meeting Aug. 26 during the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo.

sage,” Fellows said, referring to the industry’s immense educational contributions. “All of you need to tell it.”

If any GAMOA member has questions regarding upcoming leg-

islation, Fellows said GAMOA’s legislative team – lobbyist Sheila Humberstone and GAMOA attorney Les Schneider – “is always available” to answer questions.

In fact, Schneider addressed the

GAMOA meeting Aug. 26 and urged members to bring questions and concerns to the association, so they can be discussed thoroughly and industry-appropriate action taken.

“We are the number one success story of COAM associations in the country,” he said, “because we have listened to each other. We make a tremendous difference. We don’t want to sacrifice that.”

GAMOA works together “to enhance the industry” and “eliminate abuses,” he added.

“You’ve made investments in the equipment and improvements in your locations,” Schneider said. “Let’s continue to build on those foundations.”

In other action, GAMOA elected four members to serve as directors. Those elected to fulfill three-year terms are:

- Arif Alibhoy, Peachtree Amusement;
- Alan Joseph, Brewer Amusement Co;
- Weyman Moon, Mims Entertainment;
- Kyle Shepherd, Lucky Coin.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 15. Time and place will be announced.

Connect, power up machines, GLC says

To ensure accurate reporting of financial data to the Central Accounting System, the Georgia Lottery Corporation (GLC) says it is imperative the Location License Holders (LLHs) ensure all equipment remains connected to the site controller and powered up at all times.

The GLC maintains a record of those LLHs that are repeat offenders of failing to ensure the continuous connectivity and operation of Class B COAMs.

Failure to comply with these procedures may result in fines up to \$50,000, suspension and/or revocation of the license.



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CALENDAR



2020

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

* Indicates sweep or push date has been changed to accommodate holiday.
 Note: Holidays on a Thursday or Friday may delay the availability of the Location Period Accounting Report on the following Monday.

Journal Opinion

GACS offers signs, signs for everywhere

By Sharon Shuford
GACS Membership Strategy

With credit to *Five Man Electrical Band's* 1971 hit, "Signs, Signs, Everywhere a Sign," the Georgia Association of Convenience Stores has reminded C-Store locations that two new signs are required to be posted in every location.

Tobacco sign

Due to the federal age-minimum change from 18 to 21 to purchase tobacco/vape, the Georgia Legislature passed Senate Bill 375, making a corresponding required change to the tobacco-warning signage already in place. The new sign shows the minimum age to be 21. Signs have very specific printing requirements. They must be posted in a conspicuous place (defined as standing out so as to be clearly visible). Any store with a sign currently posted must change to the new signs because the older signs do not include vape or the age change.

COVID-19 sign

Senate Bill 359, also known as the "Georgia COVID-19 Pandemic Business Safety Act," provides protections for businesses from COVID-19 liability claims, unless the individual bringing the claim proves gross negligence, willful and wanton misconduct, or reckless or intentional infliction of harm.

If a business posts a very specific sign

outlining COVID-19 warnings, the bill creates a rebuttable presumption that the individual bringing the claim assumed the risk of contracting COVID-19. The bill does not impact any workers' compensation claims. The bill automatically sunsets, increasing the likelihood for renewal during the 2021 legislative session, should the pandemic con-



Sharon Shuford

GAACS strongly recommends the sign for all members and the industry at large, including stores, offices and warehouses

tinue to be prevalent.

The required COVID-19 sign also has very specific printing requirements. The sign is required to be posted at a point of entry to the premises. GACS strongly recommends the sign for all members and the industry at large, including stores, offices, warehouses, and any location where people enter or exit. It's already posted at the GACS headquarters office in Dallas, GA.

Optional tobacco sign

Another new bill passed this session

puts more of the onus on minors attempting to purchase tobacco/vape products. Individuals under the age of 21 years who purchase, attempt to purchase, or possess any cigarettes, tobacco products, tobacco related objects, alternative nicotine products or vapor products, OR who misrepresent their identity, or use false identification to

procure any of the aforementioned products, are subject to the following punishment:

- Requirement of community service not exceeding 20 hours that may be related to the awareness of the health hazards of smoking and vaping;
- Requirement of attendance at a publicly or privately sponsored lecture on the health hazards of smoking and vaping (lecture must be free of charge to the individual under 21);
- Failure to comply with such service or for the third or subsequent offense within the same year, the Department of Driver

Services may withhold or suspend the driver's license of the individual for a period of 45 consecutive days.

Additionally, it is unlawful for any individual to knowingly use a vapor product within a school safety zone. Any individual over 21 using a vapor product in a school safety zone shall be found guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of \$25 for the first offense and \$50 for a second offense.

To communicate this message, GACS offers a sticker sign that can be used in any

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COAM calendar

— REPORTING DATES —

- Now:** The COAM licensing application (www.gacoam.com) is open for the 2021 licensing period (07/01/2020 - 06/30/2021) 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
- Sept. 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.
- Nov. 30:** Last day to renew Location Class A and Class B licenses, Master Class A and Class B licenses, and Manufacturer and Distributor licenses for the 2021 licensing period (07/01/2020 – 06/30/2021).

— MEETINGS/OTHER —

- Oct. 7:** COAM Advisory Board, GLC office, Atlanta or conference call TBD
- Oct. 15:** GAMOA membership meeting, place TBD

Journal Opinion

AMOA eyes federal legislative issues

**By Lori Schneider
AMOA Executive VP**

AMOA continues to monitor the reopening of member businesses throughout the country. Although the re-opening of restaurants, bars and family entertainment centers has remained stagnant, with COVID cases beginning to decrease in many places around the United States, we hope to see some movement in re-openings again in the coming weeks.

Legislature

AMOA communicates regularly with its DC-based legislative firm Dentons LLP monitoring legislation impacting the industry. Banking issues remain front burner topics in addition to making sure our industry's voice is heard when it comes to COVID relief for small business.

As a mem-

ber of the Consumer Choice in Payment Coalition, AMOA continues working with the coalition in garnering support for both House Bill 2650 and Senate Bill 4145, the Payment

chase on amoa.com. The AMOA website also provides corresponding complimentary print-ready artwork for Safety Posters and Tent Cards.



Lori Schneider

The Amusement Expo International is scheduled for March 16-18 in Las Vegas. Visit www.amusementexpo.org for details.

Future programs

Plans for the 2021 Amusement Expo International (AEI) are underway. AEI is scheduled to take place March 16-18 in Las Vegas. For more information visit www.amusementexpo.org.

AMOA's board of directors will be meeting Sept. 11-15 to discuss plans for many of AMOA's 2021 programs. Stay tuned for details.

For more information on any of AMOA's programs and resources, be sure to visit www.amoa.com or email executive VP Lori Schneider at lori@amoa.com.



Choice Act. The bill prohibits retail businesses from refusing cash payments.

Safety program

AMOA offers machine Safety Stickers for pur-

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



GACS

from Page 4

location at a premises selling vapor products, inside or outside, to promote the "Try to BUY vape, say goodBYE license" campaign. While not required, this sign is recommended.

Required signs are available through a link on the GACS web page. Anyone who secures the link to print the signs should NOT change the font (type) size,

which is mandated by law for both the Tobacco and the COVID-19 signs. A change in font could negate the validity of the sign and lead to possible fines, or liability issues in the case of the COVID sign.

Signs can also be ordered using the Sign Order form available through the GACS web page at www.gacs.com.

Contact Kevin Kirby at kevin@gacs.com or 770-736-9723 for information or to place an order.



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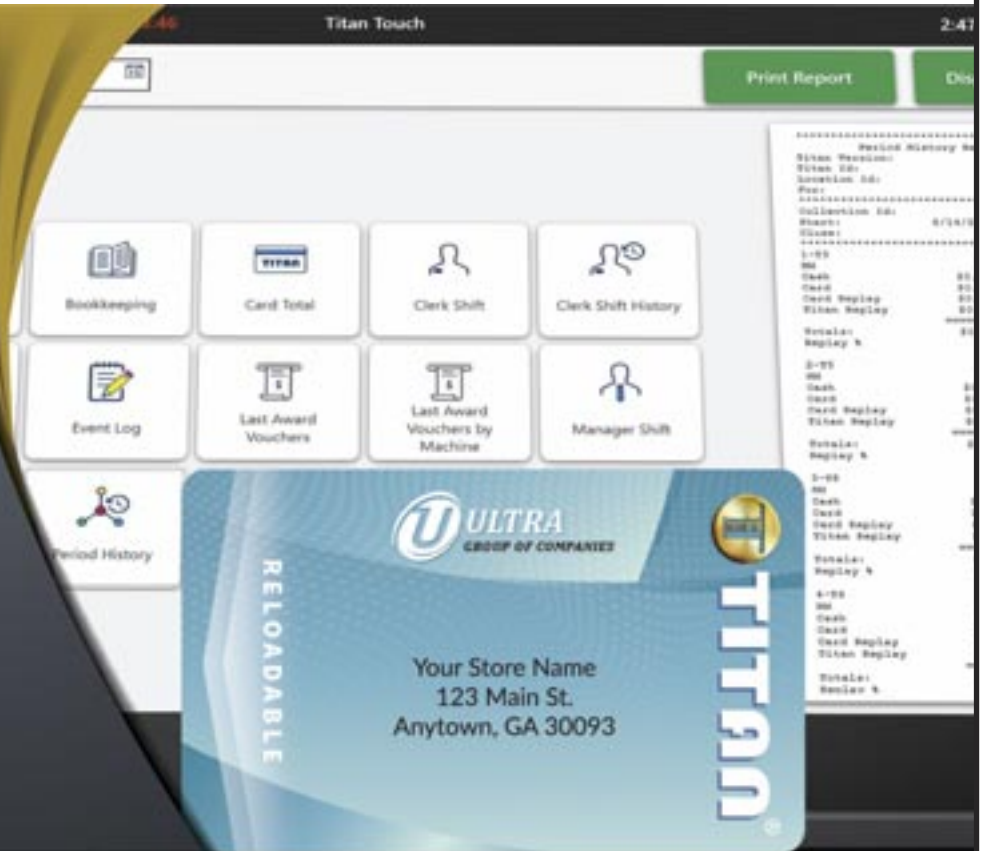
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Available Award Credit: \$140.00															
	Summary														
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Merchandise	\$50.00														
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Redeem															

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Banquet

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opened the banquet with a thank-you to all exhibitors and participants of the Expo that took place Aug. 26-27 in Duluth at the Infinite Energy Arena.

“Turnout was overwhelming, and we greatly appreciate your participation,” said GAMOA President Shawn Fellows.

Fellows also thanked organizers for the event, including GAMOA Executive Director Christina Kaiser and GAMOA Director Robert Aboujaoude, who Fellows said was instrumental in pushing the Expo to fruition.

Fellows then announced Patel, owner of Atlanta Game World, as Operator of the Year.

“It’s an honor as president to present this award,” Fellows said. “Over the past few years, I’ve gotten to know (Patel) as the most selfless person I’ve met in the industry. He’s humble, gentle, kind, genuine, and thoughtful in words, and while being an active volunteer, he finds the time to run two businesses and engage in this industry.”

On receiving the award, Patel said that he “thanks God for living in this country where dreams come true.”

“This industry has meant so much to me,” he said. “It’s in our hands to work together and take care of it.”

He also extended gratitude “to my family and my partners,” and added, “I dedicate this award to all those who have helped me grow.”

Fellows and GAMOA attorney Les Schneider then introduced Butler, owner of Metro Distributors, as the Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.

“A good Georgian, good American and a good human, his ability to lead is unprecedented, and he is always willing and able to help serve the COAM industry at the state and national level,” Fellows said.

Schneider said Butler “cares beyond his pocketbook and knows his success is all of yours and that we are only as strong as unity prevails.”

“We prevail because people like Gaines have stood tall to serve the industry – thank you,” said Schneider.

Said Butler on accepting the award, “This is for all of you. Thank you, and this wasn’t luck, this was all God.”



Paul Tash photo

GARRETT BLACKWELDER of Banilla Games accepts the Cutting Edge Award, which honors the developer of a top new product or service, from the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association for the its new Skyriser machine. Banilla received the award Aug. 26 at a banquet during the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo in Duluth.

(See features on Butler and Patel on Page 1).

The banquet also featured comments from Greg Trent, national AMOA president and owner of Beyer and Brown, a game-room supplier based in Florida. Trent thanked GAMOA

and others for organizing the Expo, which constituted the “first state (association) meeting after COVID.”

“It was a rough few months, and I’m grateful to be with you,” he said.

Trent praised organizers for their hard work in facilitating the event, which worked within the guidelines set by the state of Georgia to mitigate viral spread, a

feat made easier by the much-larger gathering space than previous years’ Atlanta Airport Marriott location.

“I’m thrilled for the chance to get to know you as AMOA president and a small-business owner myself,” Trent said. “It’s great to be in an industry where people are able to make things happen by working with (legislators) to protect businesses like ours.”

“It’s a great honor to see the success Georgia has had (in its COAM industry). Looking at Georgia, I’m able to see what Florida has the potential to grow into.”

Following the award ceremony was the auction, facilitated by Fellows, GAMOA Vice President

Adam Foust, and Director Allen George.

“Thank you to all of those who participated and provided auction items,” Foust said.

Auction items included three Banilla Skyriser machines, a Primero Rainbow cabinet, and a luxury trip to Mexico, among several other vendor-donated items. The lively auction raised a record amount of money for GAMOA’s

advocacy efforts and other costs. (Don’t miss next month’s issue for more on Banilla’s award-winning Skyriser machine.)

“It’s amazing how competitors join together for the good of the industry,” said Fellows at the conclusion of the evening.





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Show

from Page 1

positive.”
Hartmann said response to the company’s new POS system and card reader was especially good. Designed and manufactured in collaboration with Really Killer Systems (RKS), the Goldfinger POS and card reader system offers the “highest possible quality and security” available in the industry, he said.

The system allows customers to interact with games through the use of a traceable RFID card. Managers are provided with real-time visibility of all virtual and real currency transactions, reports, and control of the entire system, while employees are given limited access to sensitive information and controls. Depending on preferences, the system is configurable to the specific needs of the business environment.

Hartmann said Goldfinger donated one of the systems to the live auction held at the Expo awards banquet that raises money for GAMOA.

Angela Whitman, president of Southern Gaming Solutions (SGS), also praised the show.

“We’ve been busy,” she said. “The traffic has been good, and we’re making sales.”

SGS, the exclusive provider of IGT machines in Georgia, was promoting its latest Fort Knox game set, which has been a popular choice in the market.

Jeff Schwartz, director of sales for Cardinal, said he was excited to introduce Optimum 4’s new six-game suite at the show.

The suite includes two new games from Cardinal’s latest Flaming Jackpot Riches family – Emperor’s Dynasty and Classic Rush, which feature “our innovative and patented hold and spin bonus,” Schwartz said. In addition, two games from Cardinal’s “successful volatile game series” FU Gold – Dancing Lion and Dancing Dragon – and two new games optimized for frequent bonus rounds – Devils Money and Damn Wild – were recently introduced to the Georgia market, he said.

“The Georgia market has responded extremely well to our Optimum game packs, and we have every confidence that Optimum 4 will continue that success,” Schwartz said.

Lauren Fabbri, sales representative for Innovative Technology, a company offering cash-handling equipment and intelligent identification, said she was surprised by the amount of sales generated at the show.

“We’ve been incredibly busy,” she said. “We’re very happy.”

The Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo is becoming a regional show with attendees and exhibitors from all over the Southeast encouraged to attend. The Expo was sponsored by GAMOA with two other organizations, the North Carolina Coin Operators Association (NCCOA) and the North Carolina Citizens for Free Enterprise, a group



VENDORS at the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo were happy they participated in the event Aug. 26-27 in Duluth, even with social-distancing and mask-wearing requests. Those include, from top to bottom, Robbie Smith (left) and Jeff Schwartz of Cardinal, Angela Whitman and Bobbie Walker of Southern Gaming Solutions, Daniel Hartmann of Goldfinger, and Chad Belter (left) and Benny Rolin of Fish Game Kings. At right, Mike Macke (left) of Primero Games presents a \$25,000 check to GAMOA Director Paul Patel as a donation to GAMOA.

of business owners and supporters working to create a fair skill-based game environment in North Carolina.



Gift card on its way, Lottery says

By Paul Tash
Georgia Amusement Journal
Progress continues toward the development of a system for gift-card redemption for Georgia’s COAM industry, Lottery officials said during a virtual presentation at the Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo in Duluth Aug. 27.

“We are moving forward on the gift card,” said John Heinen, senior vice president of the Georgia Lottery Corp’s COAM Division.

The gift card system has no roll-out date as of yet, but Heinen said a “phenomenal” group formed to facilitate its development has been “working very, very, very hard” to get it done. A pilot program will be launched soon to test the system and will be “as representative of the market as we can,” he added.

Industry representatives have said gift-card redemption would stimulate further growth by attracting new players, generating new locations and marketing the COAM product more efficiently.

Heinen also reported that the COAM industry contributed about \$91 million to Georgia’s HOPE and Pre-K education programs. That’s a \$25 million increase over the previous year.

“I hope you’re proud of that,” he said. “I certainly am.”

Good start to year

Next year could be even better for COAM revenues and resulting educational contributions.

“We’re off to a good start (this year),” said Mike Parham, vice president of the Lottery’s COAM Division. “The numbers are looking excellent.”

Parham said Lottery is strongly urging master licenses “to recruit more machines” to continue the trend.

“You guys have had great success,” he said.

Though Master



JOHN HEINEN, senior vice president of the Georgia Lottery Corp.’s COAM Division, discusses gift cards Aug. 27 via video conference as part of the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo.

License Holders (MLHs) were encouraged to seek new locations for machines, Parham also urged them to educate potential locations on the rules and regulations of a location licensee, he said.

“Let them know what they’re getting into,” he said, because when problems occur, it often “delays revenue coming in” for masters and for the state.

On another topic, Parham said the Lottery has pushed some license renewal deadlines back as part of its response to the COVID-19 crisis. For those who have not renewed for 2021, a \$1,000 late fee began Sept. 1 (the usual date for the fee to begin is July 1). Licensees can still renew with the \$1,000 late fee until Nov. 30 (usually that last deadline is Sept. 28).

“After Nov. 30 they will not be able to operate,” Parham said. “So please get your information to us as soon as possible.”

Parham said this year’s deadline changes are only for the 2021 licensing year and will return to the usual dates for next year’s renewal period.

Parham also reviewed a list of reminders for licensees. Master License Holders were reminded to:

- Ensure potential customers watch the COAM video, read the laws, rules and regulations and read the Location License Holder Guide to determine if the COAM industry is the right fit for them;
- Periodically meet with owners of record for locations;
- Make sure COAMs are opera-

tional prior to installation and are serviced on a regular basis and upon request;

- Follow proper decommission procedures for COAMs with or without power;
- Understand that payment for additional decals or license reprints takes 7-10 days to clear third party payment vendor.

Location licensees were reminded to:

- File gross retail receipts reports monthly;
- Make sure Intralot equipment is connected and powered up at all times;
- Provide a clean and safe environment in and around the COAM play area;
- Watch out for any suspicious activity around the COAMs;
- Not redeem for cash, alcohol, tobacco or firearms.

He also reminded licensees to notify the COAM Retailer Services Helpline at 1-800-746-8546 or at about store closures, either temporary or permanent.

Game security

In another report, Chris Boncek, senior COAM operations specialist for the Lottery, urged licensees to take extra steps to provide “the most secure environment possible.”

He acknowledged that game security is “somewhat challenging” in the current social-distancing environment, but more necessary now than ever before.

“There’s been an uptick in theft

efforts,” he said.

Target cameras directly on machines, Boncek advised licensees, and “look for anything unusual.” And don’t stack inventory around the machines, he added.

“Protect your investment,” he said. “See something, say something.”

“Secure your investment by securing your machines,” he added.

Monitor emails

Julie Barker, the COAM Division’s attorney, provided some guidance on a variety of issues. Regarding the nine-month rule, she said, the submission date of a location license application “is key” to the clock starting on the nine months. The rule, which limits a location licensee’s ability to choose its master licensee, gives locations a choice to accept “assignment” of the previous contract in change of ownership, or wait nine months and then choose their own master, but forfeit the right to have COAMs for those nine months.

She also said it’s “very important” that forms are sent as directed on the forms. In addition, she said, any email communication to the Lottery should include relevant COAM license numbers “in the body of the email, preferably,” she added. Also, she advised licensees to monitor emails, which are GLC’s “main communication method,” she said.

“As always, you can contact the COAM helpline (1-800-746-8546) with any questions,” she said.

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Patel

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honor he received at an awards banquet Aug. 26 during the Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo in Duluth.

“I want to thank GAMOA for thinking about me,” he said about receiving the award that recognizes operators for outstanding contributions to the association and the industry. “It was an honor, and I’m very appreciative.”

Patel said the Expo itself “went very well ... considering COVID and everything else going on.”

“I’m glad there was a good turnout,” he added. “Thanks to all the exhibitors who worked so hard, and to the GAMOA folks for putting it on.”

Patel also expressed gratitude to all location owners for keeping their doors open during the lockdown and the Georgia Lottery “for the work they’ve done” throughout the pandemic.

“They’ve been open, helpful and always available to help location owners and masters to make sure the industry didn’t suffer,” he said.

Patel added that while COVID has affected his business some, mostly with suppliers’ difficulties getting their hands on necessary products, “compared to other industries, we’re a lot more blessed.”

A member of GAMOA for five

years, Patel stressed the importance

of getting involved with industry-relevant associations.

“The benefit is being able to help the industry move forward,” he said. “Since each person brings a unique talent, they’re able to share with the team.”

“Whatever you’re good at, you can use it to help the industry.”

Patel has also served on the COAM Advisory Board since 2018, an activity he described as “challenging, but good.”

“Working with a different set of folks and seeing things from their perspective helps to understand challenges from both the regulator and the industry sides of the fence and find balance in the end.”

That dynamic benefits both parties and increases HOPE and Pre-K scholarship dollars, he said.

The board is always looking for ways to enhance the industry, Patel added.

“I think the gift card will open up a new market in Georgia, add new locations across industries with a good form of redemption, help those new locations generate more money and brand and market the COAM product in a more efficient way,” he said.

Gift card redemption could also help the industry attract a new player base as well as open up new locations, such as car washes and restaurants, that currently don’t have COAMs. This will help

A Journal special feature

promote other Lottery-related products.

“I think redemption in the form of a gift card is critical (to facilitate further growth for the industry).”

Further growth would also mean more money for Georgia’s HOPE and Pre-K education programs. Last year the COAM industry contributed about \$91 million to those programs.

Patel said the industry should do whatever it can to grow and thereby increase its educational contributions to meet the expanding need of current and future Georgia students resulting from the population and economic growth of Georgia and the Atlanta metro.

“While Georgia becomes an economic hub, much of the workforce coming in includes families, as Atlanta is a great place to raise a family,” he said. “As people move in, there are more kids attending the great schools here, which puts extra pressure on HOPE to keep delivering more for the students.”

“To avoid compromising the amount that can go to each student, it’s important we keep up with the demand and maintain having the resources available and avoid reducing or becoming stagnant,” he continued.

Not only a proponent of Georgia education, Patel is an active volunteer with several organizations, including Metro

Atlanta Community Collab and DPH Charities, to help those in need around Atlanta as well as vision-impaired students in India receive basic necessities.

“We live in a privileged society, where we have access to the basic amenities,” he said, “so it’s important to give back and not be selfish. I honestly believe God has blessed me, so I believe it’s my duty to give back with no expectation of getting anything in return. I just want to help, which gives me peace.”

“If you have been blessed financially or with a special talent, you should give back – life is not about money all the time.”

Regarding the Indian students he helps support, he said he was “out there and saw a lot of those kids going to school without the resources that we have as seeing people in the Western world, and it kind of hurt me, and I felt that I should help.”

“It brought appreciation to me that I have so much that these kids don’t, but they’re so happy; even with their lack (of eyesight) they are enjoying life, so I said I need to help. Being able to help other people is a thing you can’t express; it gives great joy that money can’t buy.”

Patel, a business owner, active association participant, and a dedicated volunteer, also finds time to spend with his wife, 14-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son. He also enjoys playing cricket, tennis and pool.

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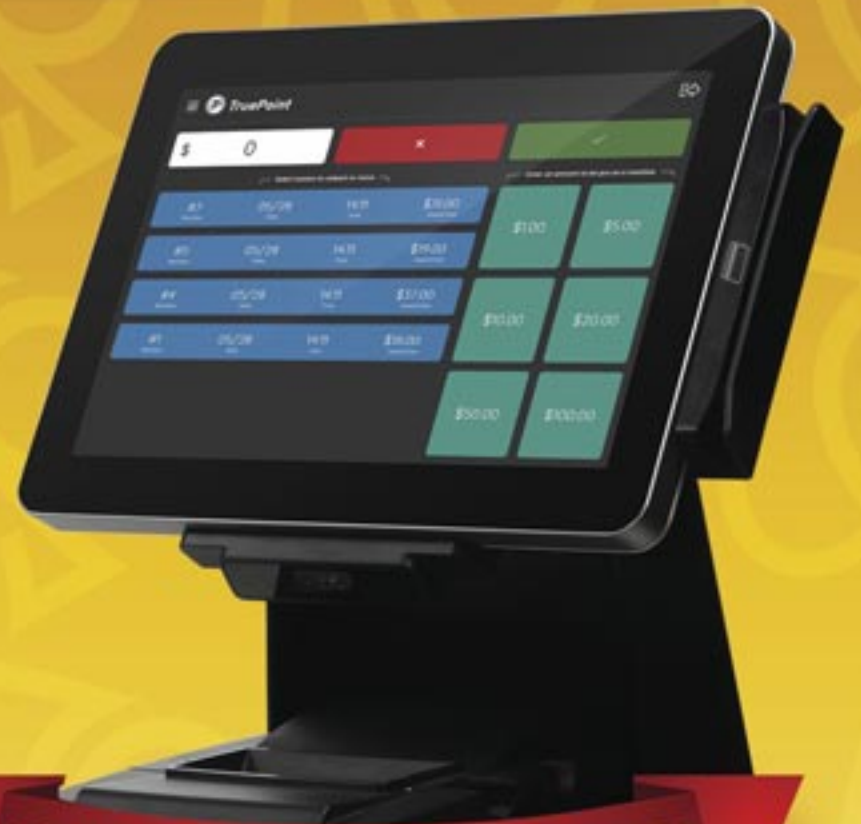


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Butler

from Page 1

out meant a lot to me.”

Butler received the award at a banquet during the Southern Amusement and Entertainment Expo in Duluth Aug. 26.

With over 1,900 TouchTunes jukeboxes in more than 1,450 Waffle House locations as well as other accounts, it’s safe to say Butler stays busy.

“From deciding on how many jukeboxes I’ll be buying, to sweeping the floor or helping technicians do service calls,” he does it all and more for the company he’s owned since 1995 and worked with since the ‘70s.

After graduating from Georgia Southern University, he joined the work force as a comptroller for a beverage company, but didn’t like it.

He quit and “walked the six miles to Metro, where I knew they had games in bars and restaurants, he said. Butler asked for a job, saying he’d “move equipment” until he found a better one.

“I still haven’t found a better job,” he said. “The industry gets into your blood and your mindset.”

That mindset was evident years later during a trip to Europe in 1991.

“I found myself in France in a place with jukeboxes and talked to the owner about it,” he said.

Metro at the time primarily distributed games, and their investors were concerned that the out-of-home gaming market “was starting to trail off,” Butler said.

“We did well, but weren’t putting much on the bottom line,”

he said, so he convinced Metro’s then-

owners to sell off the games and invest in jukeboxes instead.

“We made more money in three months than we had the previous year,” he said. “Then they decided in ‘95 to get out of the business and made me an offer (to purchase the company).”

Butler accepted the offer, and built Metro into one of the leading jukebox distributors in the Southeast.

Butler’s long tenure in the industry includes deep involvement in state and national industry associations, including the national Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA). He served as president of AMOA in 2016.

“We’re still active in looking for benefits for association members,” he said. “We’re just doing a whole lot more. We’ve lowered requirements for directors and tried to attract more people who wanted to make an impact.”

‘Amazing and humbling’

Serving as president for AMOA “was an amazing and humbling experience,” he said.

“All of us have a great industry, and as small operators, we don’t often get to see the greatness, the whole picture. We don’t see other states and their commitment and approaches. To get out there as president and meet some of the people in those states was just fantastic.”

AMOA is committed to industry education and sponsors the Wayne E. Hesch Scholarship Program, which provides about 50 \$1,000 college scholarships to

A Journal special feature

members of families working in the amusement industry, and the Notre Dame business program, which educates students who want to enter the industry. Butler, in fact, has completed the Notre Dame program.

“Having gone through the Notre Dame-AMOA educational deal, I was somewhat prepared for it,” he added. “It’s not just to teach you how to balance books, it’s going through and giving insights ... It was fantastic to get out there and meet all the people who were engaged in the industry to make it better through their state associations.”

As a member of GAMOA, Butler spoke to his individual experience as a part of one of those state associations.

“The sharpest people are either leaders or participants in organizations,” he said. “You don’t have to be on the board or be a leader, but you’d always be there, because you’d want to know what’s going on in the industry, how you can make the smarter move with equipment or how to run your route.”

Association-sponsored trade shows, workshops and education seminars are invaluable, he said, as are the networking opportunities with other operators.

“I’d come back with a legal pad full of ideas I’d pick up from other operators,” he said. “When I see Waffle House locations, I’d take notes on stuff from anyone from the carport to the warehouse operators – they’d have some tidbit to make my route better.”

Always looking for good ideas

means taking some unexpected turns, such as after Metro switched out Waffle House’s original, analog jukeboxes for the digital models in 2012. Butler ended up storing the old jukeboxes in the Metro warehouse – so many, he had to rent another one to hold them all.

Some months later, Butler was in the office with the chairman of Waffle House, who was going to give some money to someone looking for a donation, a frequent request of Waffle House. Butler in the past had donated a few jukeboxes to cancer charities and offered to sell the Waffle House chairman 10 of the old jukeboxes to donate. They make “a great novelty item,” Butler said.

The old jukeboxes made some money at a charity auction, Butler said, “and the next day he said he wanted 40.”

“It’s been a fantastic thing,” he said. “It helped me get rid of them” and raised money for charities.”

In addition to running his company, Butler has two daughters whom “I’m very proud of.” Kristen is an assistant director of Northside Hospital, married to Butler’s general manager and the mother of two girls, Amy, 6, and Lucy, 4.

They are “the apples of my eye,” he said about his granddaughters.

His younger daughter, Megan, is head of the Human Resources and Information Technology (HRIT) agency in Gwinnett County.

Butler, a proponent of staying active, rises at 4:30 a.m. most days to work out. The 68-year-old has also completed the AJC Peachtree Road Race, a 10-kilometer run through Atlanta, 35 years in a row.


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