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BONNIE THEARD
Editor

We want to hear from you about any of the articles in this issue or topics you'd like to see.
E-mail:
(editorial@playmeter.net)

recently traveled to Thibodaux, La., to interview Donovan Fremin of Delta Music Inc., President of the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA). Among the many topics touched upon was the importance of involvement in associations, both state and national.

Fremin said something that resonated: "You may have a good idea that you keep to yourself. That idea could change the whole industry in your state. One idea can change your business positively or negatively. When you get everyone involved, there are better chances of coming up with ideas that will make your business better."

Then it was time to travel to the annual AMOA Council of Affiliated States Meeting in Phoenix, where a record 69 attendees came from 27 states. The whole point of this meeting is to exchange information, learn from your contemporaries, and return to your business with a fresh outlook and possible solutions to problems that others also face. It's a mind meld worthy of Mr. Spock.

Years ago I asked a number of operators for their New Year's resolutions. One of those operators told me his resolution was "to get out of the office more often." When you get out of your comfort zone and the daily routine of your business to attend events such as the AMOA State Meeting, you are making one of the best business decisions you'll ever make.

In addition to more ideas and a greater understanding of what is going on in our industry around the country, at this meeting you also begin new friendships that prove valuable. When you have friends in other states you can call them, commiserate, and brainstorm. You add to your support group with others who know what it's like to stand in an operator's shoes.

When I do my one-minute interviews in the aisles of trade shows, invariably I find a common thread in the comments: the importance of networking. Norm Farber of BFC Enterprises in Missouri said: "I come to the show to get ideas and to meet with other members of the industry, which I feel is more important than the equipment. It's the exchange with other people that matters most to me."

William Fannasy of National Novelty Co. in Pennsylvania said, "I place a high value on networking and fellowship at the trade shows." Mike Pappas of Fair Share Amusement Co. in Illinois said, "I do come to the show to look at the games, but that's secondary. I come for the camaraderie with friends and competitors in the industry." These comments at trade shows apply in spades to the AMOA State Meeting.

I've always said that this meeting is my favorite meeting of the year. Where else can you find the leaders of the industry gathered in one room unselfishly sharing all they know to help others and therefore help the industry?

Past AMOA President Howard Cole of Cole Vending said in 2007: "I've been coming to this meeting so long it doesn't seem like a meeting to me; it's more like a family reunion. The whole idea behind this meeting was to create continuity between the states and between the states and AMOA. It has turned into one of the most important meetings on our calendar; it's become a big event. Whenever I come to this meeting I go back home with good ideas and some new friends. It's a great tool for states to find common ground and share ideas."

If you have an opportunity to attend the AMOA State Meeting in 2013, take it. You'll be more than glad you did. ▲

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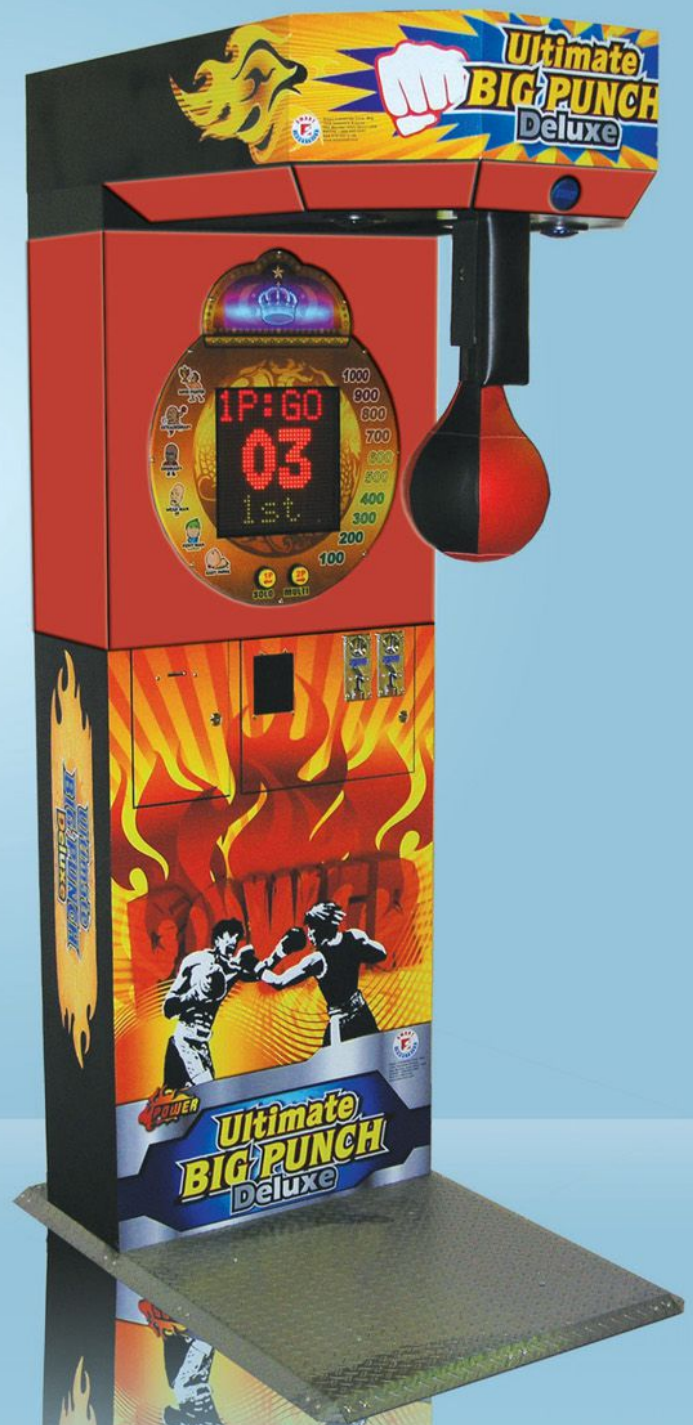
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Education game on

Sixty-nine attendees from 28 states gathered in Phoenix Feb. 9-11 for the annual Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) Council of Affiliated States Meeting at the Renaissance Phoenix Downtown.

The agenda was packed with state reports; two manufacturer panels; a legislative update from Michael Zolandz of SNR Denton; a report from the Jukebox License Office (JLO); and operator panels on gaming, leagues, healthy state associations, and state tournaments and promotions.

Additional activities included a management session for state association executives, a factory tour at the headquarters of Pyramid Technologies, a golf outing, a welcome reception, and a group dinner.

Attendees came from Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

AMOA President Donovan Fremin of Delta Music Inc. said, "This meeting has the best of every past meeting all rolled into one. Everyone has a positive outlook on the economy and the industry. We're accomplishing a great deal at this meeting. We have the largest number of new attendees we've seen in recent years. That's what we need: new blood."

Fremin added, "As I've traveled to state meetings across the country I



The theme "Getting and Staying in the Game" set the tone for this AMOA annual conference.

have noticed an increase in attendance, which indicates that operators are getting more involved in state events. That involvement will help them learn and survive. This full room is a testament to that involvement. Hopefully, this trend will continue all year long, reflected in increased attendance at the upcoming Amusement Expo, state meetings this year, and other AMOA-sanctioned meetings."

Fremin also said, "One of my catch phrases is 'Add value, add AMOA.' We

have to spread the word that you add value to your business by becoming a member of AMOA. AMOA has the resources and information to help you improve your business."

Newcomer Jeff George of Wyoming Amusement commented, "We are fight-



Andy Shaffer of Shaffer Services and Emily Dunn of Tom's Amusement Co.



Jeff George (l) of Wyoming Amusement and Nick Stratus of Top Music Co.



Gaines Butler (l) of Metro Distributors and Greg Trent of Beyer and Brown.

AMOA MEETING

ing smoking bans in Wyoming right now and it's good to see what's happening in other states. Networking is the bulk of the benefit of being here. I've learned a lot about how different states run their pool and dart leagues. I can take these ideas back with me to share with all the members of my association. It's been very educational."

Another first-time attendee, Nick Stratus of Top Music Co., said, "The

networking opportunities at this meeting are the most important, and hearing input from operators all over the country. Coming here has given me a lot of ideas I would never have thought of. I appreciate everyone being candid."

The meeting was in the able hands of Emily Dunn of Tom's Amusement, State Association Committee Chair, assisted by Hal Williamson of Gard-

ner's Up North, Mary Lavine of Bullseye Games, Larry Elbert of Camden Amusement, and Jerry Johnston of Amusement Unlimited.

Johnston commented on the value of the meeting: "There are a lot of things I don't have an answer for, but there is someone in this room who does. These meetings are terrific for networking and very good for the industry."

Lori Schneider, Deputy Director of the AMOA, made the preparations for the meeting. Each attendee received a binder that included helpful handouts on the legislative outlook for 2012, leagues and state tournaments, and state profiles.

Hallmarks of this meeting are the camaraderie and free-flowing exchange of information laced with humor, which makes for a memorable event that is highly anticipated every year.

STATE REPORTS

Larry Elbert moderated the state reports. "I am impressed by this large group," he said. "This is the meat and potatoes of the meeting. Each state will tell us about their experiences and what we can learn from them to take home to apply in other states."

The main topics of discussion were successful state dart and pool tournaments, smoking bans, excessive taxation, membership, Internet gambling, gas prices, DUI laws, and the spread of sweepstakes games.

Following are excerpts from the state reports:

Alabama: Nick Stratus of Top Music Co. said the smoking issue is surfacing in his area (Mobile), "We think a proposal may be coming to ban smoking in restaurants that serve food." The state does not have a state dart or pool event.

Arizona: Kris Gilmore of Troy Vending said the state association is small but still trying to get authorization to use Golden Tee LIVE for tournaments or contests. In addition, she



Mary Lavine (l) of Bullseye Games and Past AMOA President Marion Paul of Fannie Farkle's.



From left: Larry Bershtein of Capitol Amusement, Ron Ries of KD Amusement, and Jenny Duede of Iowa-OMA.



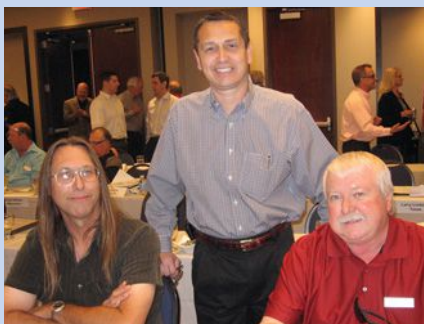
Karen and Donovan Molitor.



Bruce Dentice and Nancy Lucas.



Past AMOA President Gary Brewer (l) of Brewer Amusement Co. and AMOA President Donovan Fremin of Delta Music.



Seated: Mark Dittman (l) of North American Gaming and Alan Chaffe of A.A. Amusement; standing: Michael Martinez of N2 Entertainment.

said, "DUI laws have affected our business. We are now able to have card games on countertops in Phoenix."

California: Michael Martinez of N2 Entertainment said there is no state association but it is hoped that one can be established.

Colorado: Rich Babich of Game Exchange of Colorado expressed frustration with the lack of interest in forming a state association. The state's rigid smoking ban has been devastating to the amusement industry, meaning more equipment stored in warehouses. He cautioned, "If you don't reinvest in your business, your business may take a downward spiral. Excess equipment is not healthy."

Florida: Greg Trent of Beyer & Brown said the state does not currently have an active association. "We have sweepstakes games operating all over the state," he said, "and there is debate in the legislature about it."

Georgia: Gaines Butler of Metro Distributors said the top issues in Georgia are the continuing increases in licensing and permit taxes. There are two classifications of games: Class A for pinball, jukeboxes, and pool tables; Class B for machines that dispense any prize and opportunity to win something. Class B carries a hefty fee. Efforts are under way to move children's redemption into Class A.

Indiana: Kim Paugh of the Indiana Amusement and Music Operators Association (IAMOA) said that smoking bans have been proposed in the state legislature. A big issue in Indiana right now is the right to work issue. Membership is steady and the association is tournament-driven.

Illinois: Richard Mitchell of the Illinois Coin Machine Operators Association (ICMOA) said the licensing process is proceeding in the video gaming program approved but not yet implemented. He offered a caution for states that add a gaming program that partners operators with the state: "Don't take your eye off amusements."

He added: "Our challenges are the

impact of the smoking ban and our efforts to defeat sales taxes and other things that may affect our industry. Our state dart tournament numbers are up but pool is down and we're working to improve that segment. A strong board is essential; it makes a big difference. Our board members are all competitors but they come together for the association."

Iowa: Ron Ries of KD Amusement said that 60 to 70 percent of opera-

tors belong to the state association because it's a requirement to participate in the state tournaments. Ries said, "We're growing to the point where our problem is finding a big enough venue to expand."

In regard to legislation, Ries said the association has a lobbyist on retainer, which is a wise investment since he is "able to give us timely information." Ries added, "The legislation we're watching this year is Inter-



Bonnie Theard of *Play Meter* talks with Richard Mitchell of ICMOA.



John Schultz (I) of AAMA and Mike Maas of AMI.



From left: Bobby Hogin of Hogin Amusement, Donovan Molitor of Donovan's Vending Service, and Rob Whitehouse of PAI.



Denis Smith of Vend Music of Nevada and Kathy Oligmiller-Miles of Rushmore Amusement.



Lori Schneider of AMOA and Ted Furkin of Pyramid Technologies.



David Corey (I) of OCMA and Rick LaFleur of I.F. LaFleur & Son.

AMOA MEETING



From left: Carol and Jerry Johnston of Amusement Unlimited, Sabrina Mokuahi of Incredible Technologies, and Kris Gilmore of Troy Vending.



From left: Dave Courington of Valley-Dynamo, Past AMOA President Jim Stansfield of Stansfield Vending, and Dwight Wrangham of NDCOA.

net gambling. The state sees dollar signs if they can tax it. We're also looking at higher gas prices, which may make it harder for customers to decide if they are going to go out at night."

Louisiana: Mona LaCombe of the Louisiana Amusement and Music Operators (LAMO) said, "Once you become a gaming state there are never ending changes and interpretations of the laws and regulations. Gaming has reached its saturation point across the state. Louisiana has a state smoking ban but bars and casinos are exempt. The new approach is at the local level. Cities need to have that conversation before a proposal on smoking gets into the local agenda. After the smoking ban went into effect, restaurants with poker machines saw a drop of 54 percent in revenue."

Maryland: Larry Bershtein of Capitol Amusements spoke about the association's successful reception in Annapolis that draws half the legislature and helps make good contacts. The big issue in Maryland is sweepstakes games.

Michigan: John Pascaretti of Pascaretti Enterprises said the annual state dart tournament is a major revenue producer for the association. The state is in the second year of a smok-

ing ban. He said, "We're interested in the outcome of the smoking ban challenge in Ohio."

Minnesota: Tim Zahn of American Amusement Arcades said, "We have significant pool and dart tournaments. We still push for sales tax relief. There is talk about having a state-run casino in Minneapolis to fund a new stadium so we will have to be watchful."

Missouri: Norm Farber of BFC Enterprises said "We have a lobbyist on call all the time. It's been smooth sailing the last few years. We don't have a state smoking ban, but we do have local ones."

Montana: Tim Carson of Amusement Services said it's been an eventful year with line games approved for the state video gaming system. Implementation began the first of the year. Carson said, "We did extensive training and marketing. When you're launching something like that you need a positive outlook from the locations if you want good results."

He added, "As we go forward, our biggest concern as an industry is Internet gambling. We're hoping to work on an awareness program so people understand that gambling on the Internet is illegal."

New Jersey: Frank Seninsky of

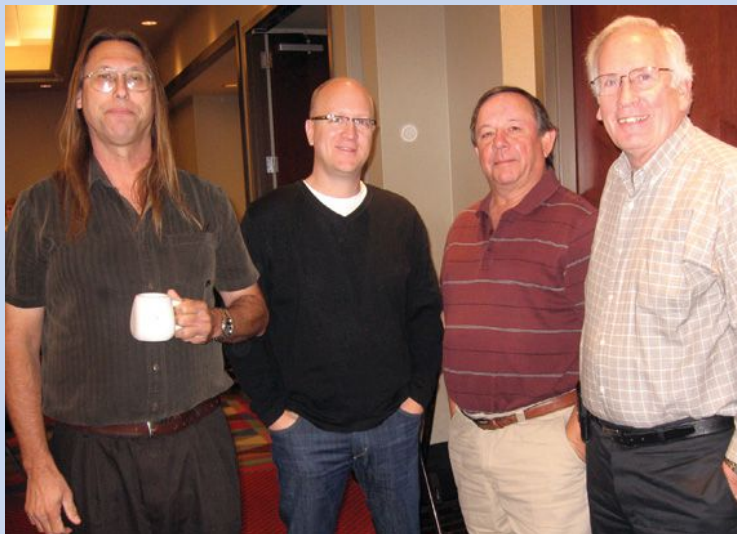
Alpha-Omega said, "Every single redemption game and crane in New Jersey is automatically classified as a gambling device since 1959. We have been able to get variance licenses for family entertainment centers (FECs)."

Nevada: Dave Palmer of Mountain Coin said, "Our state association membership is slim. We had a strong December; people are tired of holding back and are actually going out and spending money." A cautionary note on Internet gambling: "If gaming entities own most of the Internet gaming sites, it would be beneficial for them."

North Dakota: Dwight Wrangham of the North Dakota Coin Operators Association said, "Our association covers 90 percent of coin machine operators in the state. We're an active group. What keeps us together is paying attention to legislation and supporting our state tournaments."

Ohio: David Corey of the Ohio Coin Machine Association said the association has seen an increase in players for its state dart and pool championships. Sweepstakes games are becoming a problem in Ohio; it is hoped that regulations will stem the spread of the games.

The legislature authorized video lottery terminals (VLTs) to be installed



From left: Mark Dittman of North American Gaming, Tim Zahn of American Amusement Arcades, Larry Lindelow of Vending Resource, and Denis Smith of Vend Music of Nevada.



From left: Vince Gumma of American Vending Sales, AMOA President Donovan Fremin, Sam Westgate of J&J Ventures, and Tim Carson of Amusement Services.

in seven horse race tracks as an extension of the Ohio Lottery, and four casinos are coming on board: in June in Cleveland and Toledo and then in Cincinnati and Columbus in 2013. The casinos bought the racetracks and now two companies will own all 11 facilities.

Corey said, "When we talk to legislators about legalizing skill-based games with payouts and VLTs in bars, we emphasize that this would help out small businesses in Ohio." The statewide smoking ban is being challenged on constitutionality as a private business property rights issue.

Oregon: Jerry Johnston of Amusement Unlimited said the Oregon Lottery has confiscated countertop games from 12 companies, citing a statute from 1992. This has been a problem for three years. Interpretation of the statute is aggressive and selective. Johnston said, "We introduced a change in the statute and the governor would not sign it. Networking and contacts are important. Montana has an advisory panel that works with their lottery. In Oregon we've set up an advisory panel to work with legislators. Remember: When you need a friend it's too late to make one."

South Carolina: Ed Chermak of

Green Coin Machine said the association is a very small group. He said, "The video side of the business is dying on the vine. Thank goodness for digital jukeboxes; if not for them we would have a hard time staying in the coin-op business."

South Dakota: Kathy Oligmiller Miles of Rushmore Amusement said the state video lottery system is more than 20 years old, and is a major contributor to the state's general fund. The state smoking ban that went into effect in November 2010 has adversely affected machine revenue. Since only poker and keno were allowed on the games all this time, a regulatory change authorized line games in the hope of improving revenue.

Oligmiller Miles said, "It's been a grueling, arduous path to approval, certification, training, communication, and deployment. It's too early to gauge the impact of the line games. It's not taking off as we hoped it would. As the economy improves that could change."

Tennessee: Bobby Hogin of Hogin Amusement said the association achieved another victory regarding smoking bans, convincing the legislature to approve smoking in locations for patrons age 18 and over. He said, "We have a lobbyist who keeps moni-

toring legislative activity for us."

Gary Brewer of Brewer Amusement Co. said, "I'm sure every state here has outdated laws that affect our industry. States are watching these laws and using them as a revenue source as they write citations. If we continue to be passive, allowing these old laws to be on the books, they will come back to bite us."

Texas: Larry Lindelow of Vending Resource Inc. said, "The state budget has a shortfall so the state will come after everyone to raise more money." He said the local level is to be watched closely as well, citing the city of Houston's efforts to create a game room license.

Virginia: Charles Rowland of Games Games People Play spoke about sweepstakes games coming into Virginia from North Carolina. He also said that tobacco shops that make their own cigarettes in the store are now considered manufacturers and must get a manufacturing license, but the federal government has stopped issuing such licenses.

Wisconsin: Bruce Dentice of Sam's Amusement said membership is high for the association due to the fact that operators must be a member and buy a charter in order to participate in the



From left: Rick LaFleur, Hal Williamson, Donovan Molitor, Kristina Chevalier, Gaines Butler, and Ted Furkin.



From left: Mona LaCombe of LAMO, John Pascaretti of Pascaretti Enterprises, and Norm Farber of BFC Enterprises.

AMOA operators tour Pyramid Technologies

Pyramid Technologies is proud of what it has to offer the coin-op industry. Sixteen operators who attended the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) State Council Meeting in Arizona toured the facility to see what the hype is all about. *Play Meter* decided to tag along and find out just what makes Pyramid so successful.

Located in the Sonoran Desert in Mesa, Ariz., Pyramid has been building bill acceptors for over 20 years. Pyramid is the only bill validator that is made in the U.S. David Mays, Owner and Engineer, has focused on design, performance, quality, and customer service to bring Pyramid to the forefront of currency validation.

With six in-house engineers, two mechanical, two electrical, and two technical, Pyramid Technologies can provide great customer service and customize its product to any application that a customer needs. Presently, its bill acceptors are functional in 86 different currencies throughout the world.

"If our customer has a problem with a unit, we have a problem. We will put our heads together and fix it," said Pyramid's Ted Furkin.

He continued, "By having our engineers in-house we can get to work on the problem immediately. If we find a problem with our own unit, we call our customers and tell them about it rather than wait for them to run into problems on their own." Furkin adds that the company's Web site offers tutorials for those who would like to troubleshoot any problems.

"We have very low employee turnover and that is why we are able to put out such a superior product," explained Pyramid's Kristina Chevalier. Pyramid's employees are cross-trained to know everything necessary for quality control.

"We are a team working together," Chevalier said, "And we are an excellent team."

Attending operators enjoyed milling around the facility to see the many different production stations and the shipping department. If a station is not in use, Pyramid requires that it be fully covered in order that dust does not settle on the equipment and cause problems.

Rick LaFleur of I.F. LaFleur & Son in North Dakota commented, "This new bill acceptor is a beautiful piece. It is cost effective and most importantly, it works. The efficiency is impressive and that translates into the price."

Besides opening their doors to the AMOA operators, Pyramid hosted a lunch break at the nearby Painted Mountain Golf Resort.

For more information, call (480)507-0088; Web (www.pyramidacceptors.com). ▲

state dart and pool tournaments.

Wyoming: Jeff George of Wyoming Amusement said the state association, which started in 1993, is small but the state dart and pool tournaments have been successful. "For a state with a small population, we do well."

SPONSORS

Sponsoring companies and associations included: American Vending Sales, AMI, Arachnid, Amusement and Music Operators of Texas, Bay Tek Games, Ecast, Firestone Financial, Grand Vision Gaming, Incredible Technologies, Indiana Amusement and Music Operators Association, JLO, Louisiana Amusement and Music Operators Association, Minnesota Operators of Music and Amusements, Music and Vending Association of South Dakota, Montana Coin Machine Operators Association, North Dakota Coin Machine Operators, Ohio Coin Machine Association, Oregon Amusement and Music Operators Association, Pyramid Technologies, MEI, Moss Distributing, Payment Alliance, Raw Thrills, Sega Amusements, Shelti, Superior Plush, Tennessee Coin Machine Association, TouchTunes, Valley-Dynamo, and the Wisconsin Amusement and Music Operators Association.

For more information, call (800)937-2662; Web (www.amoa.com). ▲

Look for details on the operator panels next month.

Game maker sessions

Manufacturer panels answered questions that ranged from the economy to the keys to success.

Do you anticipate any drastic changes in the industry in the next 12 to 36 months?

Phil Cohn, TouchTunes: Consolidation continues, legislation is challenging, and it is more difficult to get revenue streams from venues. It will become even more important for us to communicate our value to the end users. It's all about competing for that entertainment dollar. Trends are driving consumer behavior, such as social networking. Those who are investing in research and development are really going to have a windfall over the next three years because consumers are going to demand it. Innovation is critical.

How has the current economic climate helped re-focus your business?

David Cohen, Firestone Financial: Despite the recession we are staying committed to your business. We've re-assigned staff and focused on our customers and the issues they face. We've kept in touch with customers to find out what we could do to help them. We offered restructuring programs and extensions on debt. We've changed from a transactional company to a more customer-focused company, and we've become more strategic about how we approach this industry.

John Margold, AMI: It's not just economic conditions that are affecting us; it's a combination of economics plus smoking bans and Angry Birds. I've seen consolidation in the operating community. Operators have to do more with less and they need help. We can help by reducing their operating costs, such as service costs, through our 24/7 tech support. We're reinventing ourselves with new revenue stream products and prices that make it attractive to upgrade.

What changes have you seen in the operating community?

Rob Whitehouse, Payment Alliance: When I set up ATMs at trade shows 12 years ago, 90 percent of the people who passed by were not interested. Now that has changed and everyone wants to know more about the ATM industry. The biggest difference today for ATMs is that there are a lot more rules to play by, such as requirements for ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act).

Sabrina Mokuahi, Incredible Technologies: Operators are really taking stock of their businesses, determining what's not necessary, tightening finances, and looking in warehouses to see what games they can trade for newer equipment. I see more operators networking, which is why everyone is here. We want to help you grow and promote your business.

What do you see as the keys to success for operators?

Dave Courington, Valley-Dynamo: Promotions, promotions, pro-

motions; also leagues, tournaments, and contests to maximize income from products you already have. It's all about providing entertainment value. Successful operators have foresight and flexibility. They don't sit home every night; they look at trends in their bars and design promotions such as Midnight Madness because today's generation does not come in until 10 p.m. A successful operator never had a failure; he had a learning experience.

Ryan Smith, Ecast: Re-evaluation, reinvention, and reinvestment. If the business is relevant, the return on investment is there. Opera-

tors have to look at their businesses with new eyes. They must embrace new technologies early on to beat their competition. The best operators are more proactive than reactive.

What role will national and state associations play in the future?

Chris Felix, MEI: Associations are a great benefit; they are what will help this industry continue on. Case in point: I have never seen a meeting like this. It's an incredible opportunity to find out what works and what doesn't, and what can be learned to improve your business.

Rick Rochetti, Bay Tek Games: I see things happening much quicker for state and

national associations. Operators must be prepared to go to war and fight for what is needed to keep our industry going.

Do you see any market trends or social changes that could have an impact on our industry?

Mark Struhs, Raw Thrills: Relevance is the key word. How do we say relevant as individuals and as companies? Today we have powerful, superior technology. Game play can be greatly enhanced by using social networking and offering credit card payment (a natural). We can use technology to make our jobs easier. Rather than be afraid of trends, embrace them.

What tools does your company use to attract new and talented people?

Pete Gustafson, Sega: "We are constantly looking for new ideas to add to our portfolio. Talent comes in all shapes and sizes. We continue to capitalize on that talent to add more lines that make us a one-stop shop, and to develop partnerships that result in games that are relevant and fun."

Tim Carson, Grand Vision Gaming: "We have an elaborate process for how we develop games. We're lucky with the talent we have on board. We're operators who build games to operate ourselves and sell to other operators. We recognize that we need to create products that will generate continuing revenue streams." ▲



Bruce Dentice (l) of Sam's Amusement Co., talks with Mark Struhs (c) of Raw Thrills and Rick Rochetti of Bay Tek Games.

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AE2400



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Goldfarb returns to Haiti: David Goldfarb, President of Prime Time Amusements, recently returned to Haiti to help with continuing efforts to restore basic services to the country, which is still suffering from the devastating effects of the earthquake that struck the country in January 2010. Goldfarb traveled with the United Nations and the Brazil army. This was his fourth trip in two years and he will return soon.

Goldfarb commented, "I have seen some progress but not really enough, especially with all of the money that was poured into Haiti. The most pressing needs at the moment that need to be addressed so they can move forward are the obvious: education, shelter, food, and sanitation. What needs to be implemented is, rather than just give them a fish, they need to understand how to catch a fish."

Goldfarb said that the best thing that can be done in the future is to support the right organizations. He mentioned (GLOBALDIRT.org), a group of doctors, nurses, and ex-military that work as a disaster response team in global relief efforts. ▲



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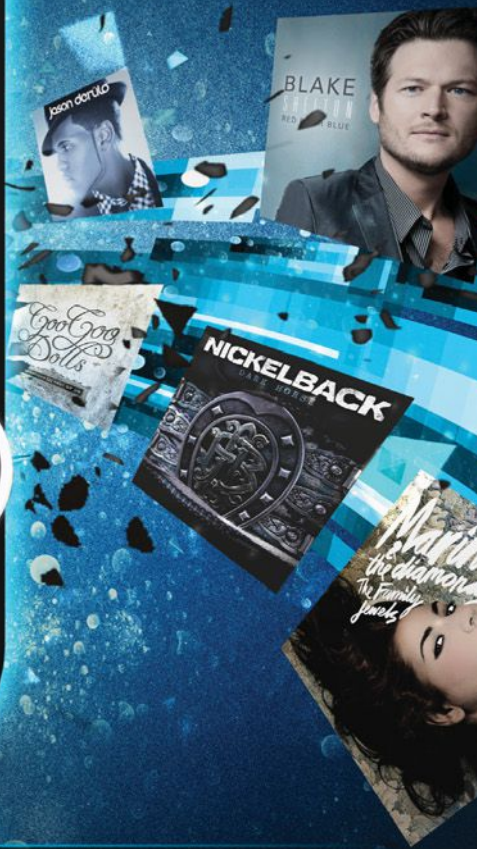
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During the period of March 17-23, 2012, participating operators are donating one penny for each paid play on selected machines to the St. Baldrick's Foundation.

AMOA thanks all the operators who have raised their hands in support of the St. Baldrick's Foundation and acknowledges AMI Entertainment, Ecast and Incredible Technologies, Inc. for their assistance in this program.



Austin, 5, (right) was diagnosed with bilateral Wilms tumor in July 2007. His father and brother shave in solidarity with him; Austin joined them in March 2011. Austin is one of five St. Baldrick's Foundation 2012 Ambassador Kids.

Photo courtesy of St. Baldrick's Foundation, taken by Kurt Shaffer Photographs.

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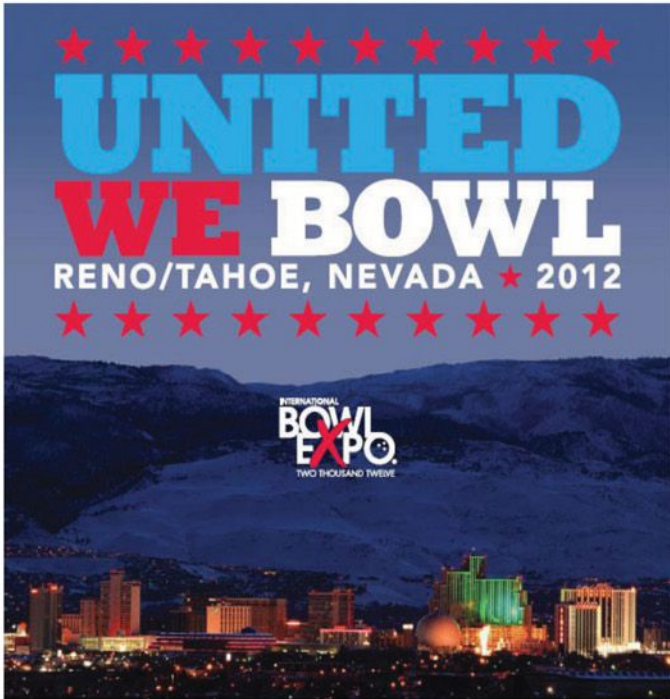
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Location Trade Show (LTS) Program

Registration form & details available at www.coin-op.org

What is the Location Trade Show (LTS) Program?



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TreePaad staff showing the gifts purchased for its annual Chamber Angel.

TreePaad Fun Center gives back

A shining example of how an entertainment center contributes to the character and values of a whole community.

By: Frank Seninsky and Tracy Sarris

We often talk about the benefits that family entertainment centers (FECs) bring to their communities. Whether through hosting charitable events, donating to various causes, providing jobs, supporting local businesses and schools, or just bringing families and communities together in a fun location, entertainment centers enrich our lives and give back in so many ways.

The owners of TreePaad Fun Center are a shining example of how an entertainment center can “pay it forward” and lead by example for future generations.

Patti Garrand and Candy Cross, Own-

ers of TreePaad Fun Center, a 25,000-square-foot FEC in Malta, N.Y., are in this business for all the right reasons.

Garrand said, “A lot of people open entertainment centers and it is just a business for them, but for Candy and me...this is who we are.”

The indoor center opened in 2007 in Glen Falls, N.Y., and was later moved to a larger location in Malta, N.Y., in order to accommodate the center’s expansion. Depending on the season, there are 40-46 employees on staff.

Attractions include Fort Ballocity (PrimePlay), a three-story, interactive, soft foam ball play arena and indoor

playground that is most likely the largest Ballocity attraction in the U.S.; Spider Zone (Extreme Engineering), a challenging climb through webbed straps that culminates in a ride down a large, 20-foot inflatable slide; Jump Shot, a vertical action sport that allows you to shoot hoops with an opponent on a unique trampoline platform; LaZer Runner laser tag; Extreme Rock Climbing; a 40-game video and redemption Game Zone that was laid out, set up, and programmed by Alpha-Omega Amusements & Sales/AEM, Fluff-n-Stuff (from Bears2Go); a soft-play toddler area; and Coliseum

Bounce, the newest attraction.

PARTIES AND STAFF

Of course, one of the most memorable activities at TreePaad is its full-service birthday party where the party group is in the hands of an experienced, fun, and enthusiastic party coach who leads the children into a magical birthday adventure.

Frank Price of Birthday University asked Garrand what she thought was the best part of the birthday parties her facility offers. Her answer was “the staff.”

“They are terrific kids,” Garrand said. “This age group is tough for a lot of people, but if you hire the right kids, they will find you more kids because they want to work with the best kids in the area. If you treat them right, they will go out of the way for you and do everything they can.”

TreePaad’s party coaches are given the freedom to design their own parties so they all bring a unique flair to the event. “Some like magic, some like jokes, some sing and dance. One of our guys comes out doing the Kazachok, a traditional Russian folk dance, which makes the parents laugh hysterically,” said Garrand.

Many of the kids working at TreePaad have been there since its opening five years ago. Upon leaving for college, Kate Silfer, an employee, wrote, “There are very few jobs available to teenagers that incorporate so much fun into each workday. I enjoyed every day I worked there, and have many friendships that I hope will last. I know I will be beyond lucky if I ever find another job as great as this one.”

What’s truly amazing is how much the young staff at TreePaad supported and was personally involved in the various community programs that the center sponsors. The staff raises money to pur-

chase gifts for an annual Chamber Angel, they bring in food items and do collections for local pantries, and have done fundraisers for lots of great causes that include: Junior Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), Youth Coalition, Water for Africa, To Love a Child, Team Teagan, Support one Family, Brave Will Foundation, Play for the Pantry, Osaka Benefit, March of Dimes, the Homeless Youth Coalition, and many more.

They have run as a team in the Relay for Life and several participated in the Susan G. Komen Foundation 5K run. In 2009, TreePaad and its staff hosted a benefit for a local family that lost all of their possessions in a fire. The benefit, and coinciding food drive, went so well that TreePaad and the very generous donors were not

only able to help the family with money, food, and supplies, but also helped another family who also lost everything in a fire.

These young men and women are learning about assisting those in need and building character during their time at TreePaad. They are finding out first-hand what their generosity can bring to the lives of others.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

TreePaad also participates in TAKE 25, a program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)



Deputy Traylor and Koda mingling with the children during the TAKE 25 event.



Mike Traylor, a Saratoga County Sheriff's Deputy, and K-9 officer Koda were on hand at the TAKE 25 event.



TreePaad staff with the food donations they collected for the Malta Food Pantry.



“Win it or Buy it Now” crane with Big Eyed Babies merchandise.

Built on a strong foundation of loyalty, Impulse Industries continues its tradition of quality.

Impulse Industries provides value



The Impulse Industries team, (l-r): Lydia Plescia, Vice President, Jim Plescia, President; Heather DeLuca, Business Development; Larry Fineman, Sales Director; Cecilia Fajardo, Merchandise/Logistics Specialist; Jon Sanborn, customer.

Commitment to detail and treating customers with honesty and integrity reflect the foundation of Impulse Industries. Based in Sun Valley, Calif., the company manufactures games, cranes, and quality plush and bulk items.

The company was founded in 1986 and is celebrating its 26th anniversary this year. Jim Plescia, President of Impulse Industries, started the company with his wife and soon began manufacturing “impulse games.” The company quickly grew and the array of offerings increased.

Play Meter spoke with Plescia to find out more about the company’s new products, services, staff, and what they’re doing to help operators.

What is the biggest difference you see in the market today compared to 1986 when Impulse opened for business?

In the ‘80s, operators could be successful offering just one category of coin-op vending such as video games, bulk vending, cranes, or jukeboxes.

Today, most successful operating com-

panies are offering many or all of those categories. Operators who have not diversified have found themselves only able to maintain smaller street locations.

Another big difference between the ‘80s and now is massive inflation. Amusement, bulk, and snack operators have hit a price point plateau of around \$1.

This is due to the logistics of customers not having more than three or four quarters to spend. Also contributing to the decrease in coin revenues was the introduction of public coin counting machines in most grocery chains nationwide.

As a result, it has been mandatory for operators to introduce bill acceptors and credit card payment methods on all forms of vending machines. Back in the

‘80s, most video games, bulk vendors, jukeboxes, and cranes only accepted coins. Today, operators report that bill acceptors and credit card payment methods generate more than 50 percent of their revenues.

How many products did Impulse offer at that time compared to the full product range you feature today?

As the name implies, our company and product line was fashioned around “impulse novelty games.” Impulse games specifically referred to grip testers, love meters, fortune tellers, and weight scales. The concept and mission statement that the company was founded on is “timeless themes built to last a lifetime.”

In the following years, Impulse strategically added such items as the stackable sticker machines, the Play More-Win

More interactive pinball vending game, designer bulk stands, balloon pump vendors, and the antique classic versions of the love meter, grip tester, and fortune tellers.

Soon after, Impulse introduced its first racing coin funnel, a themed coin wishing well which allows two players at a time to race coins down a hyperbolic funnel reaching speeds of 40mph. This is a perfect, no-maintenance unit for malls or other larger venues. Unlike all others of its type, it

capacity, and custom colors and graphics.

Impulse's newest addition to its amusement line is the versatile Flash Play skill game/prize merchandiser. Flash Play can be set up as a skill game prize merchandiser or an automated retail product dispenser.

As a skill game, Flash Play easily converts from one game to another providing a fresh new game and look. With its intuitive on-screen menu, Flash Play can be set up to award large, high value prizes and/or smaller, lower value prizes

Heather De Luca, Business Development Director for more than five years.

Our two top technicians, Willie Gutierrez and Mario Galvan, have each been with the company for over 12 years. Shipping and receiving has been done by Jorge Duran for more than 15 years



Impulse warehouse employees (l-r): Robert Aguirre, Production/Purchasing; Mario Galvan, Senior Technician; Willy Gutierrez, Senior Technician; Cruz Cristobal, Graphic Design.

is built entirely out of steel, making it virtually impossible to scratch or break into.

These innovations have allowed operators to diversify and grow in their existing locations, in many cases, without taking additional floor space.

Impulse introduced its first crane into the market in early 2004. Our goal was to design a U.S.-built high-end crane at a price just slightly higher than the imports.

Today, our cranes feature three exclusive game play options: "Xtra Play," "Winner Every Time," and "Win It or Buy It Now." These three features ship standard on all Impulse cranes, allowing instant changes to meet the needs of any location. Other benefits include all-steel construction, high product visibility and

in the same machine.

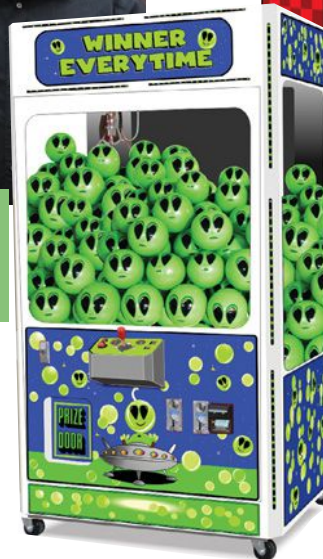
Flash Play set up as a merchandiser is named the IBIN-store. This is perfect for selling items like watches, jewelry, or bulk vending items. This creates a great way for bulk operators to diversify by selling bulk items for more than \$1 per vend.

How has the staff grown over the years?

Impulse is proud to recognize its dedicated staff, which have been with us for many years. Our sales staff includes Larry Fineman, Sales Director for 15 years; Cecilia Fajardo, Toy Expert and Logistics Specialist for more than seven years; and



iBIN merchandiser



"Winner Every Time" crane.

and route management has been Juan Coreas' job for more than 20 years.

Production and purchasing is handled by Robert Aguirre who also runs our

Sun Valley warehouse. Our talented graphic artist, Cruz Cristobal, took the position four years ago and is vital to our custom art themes.

In addition to our long time employees, Impulse has grown to include over 40 full time employees at our home office in Sun Valley. Impulse also employs several long time contractors for special projects. Impulse is proud to be growing its staff in spite of a tough economy.

Your wide range of product offerings includes themed cranes. What are some of the most popular themes today?

In an effort to break the old stereotype notion of never being able to win crane games, Impulse developed its “Winner Series” cranes. The first in the series to be introduced was the Xtra Play crane. This crane features a single claw concept that allows the players to try to win a plush prize but guarantees a smaller prize win every time.

The next crane in the winner series was our Winner Every Time crane. The specially designed claw and exclusive high capacity cabinet creates a “wall of balls” that kids can’t resist.

This design allows children of all ages to finally play a crane and win a high value prize every time. This crane has been well received by location owners that say the number of wins creates repeat customers. Parents like it, as it represents a fun time and a good value for \$1.

The most innovative and popular crane in our winner series is our Win it or Buy it Now crane. This feature allows customers to play the crane in a skill mode or purchase the item for a set price. Players can also build their credits to the purchase price in hopes of winning prior to reaching the purchase price. When the prize value is reached, a voice prompt tells the player “you’re in buy it now mode, play until you win.”

What makes our cranes so unique to the industry is that all of the “winner series” program settings are standard features that allow for easy conversion to any of the three “winner options” or straight skill play. Four program options are in every crane.

Our themed cranes are very popular, as we have always offered our custom graphics. We strive to create equipment that doesn’t clash with the location’s decor. This approach allows a route operator to present a full line of equipment designed to match the theme of any location. That is a competitive edge that can get the attention of location decision makers.

Are you seeing more interest from

the operating community in cranes, bulk vending machines, and novelty games as more operators diversify?

The National Bulk Vendors Association (NBVA) joining with the Amusement Expo is a natural evolution resulting from the growing diversification of route operators.

Operators have been diversifying consistently for the last decade. The bulk operators are turning to cranes and other amusement games while amusement operators are handling more bulk vending, as locations want to deal with one operator whenever they can.

In our opinion, it is an absolute requirement for bulk operators to expand their scope of offerings, as failing to do so will result in their ultimate failure.

As travel costs increase, developing more revenue from each location not only makes sense but also is a matter of survival. Operators can pick up three to five hundred more dollars per month in the same location with a crane and a bulk vendor than just bulk alone. The key to Impulse’s success is the ability for operators to continue to offer different forms of amusement vending that do not compete for the same coin.

Impulse began to design and import toys in 2004. Our initial efforts were

focused on the bulk capsuled toy segment. Our goal was to create high value mixes so that operators could still vend 1-inch toys at 25-cents and 2-inch toys at 50-cents.

Today, \$1 vends are showing increased success. However, we have still found that the lower price points produce the highest grosses. We will continue to design high value, 2-inch toy mixes that have a perceived value of \$1, with a price that allows operators to offer it at 50-cents.

Through the years Impulse has continued to improve its toy display manufacturing techniques from bright catchy graphic designs to professional clam packaging because Impulse realizes that great displays can make or break a good mix.

As we developed the “Winner Every Time” ball crane, we quickly realized the keys to the success of the program included a high value ball that attracts players while still being cost effective for the operator.

Another key is the complete rotation of new ball themes to keep it fresh and new. Additionally, it is very important to load the balls facing forward to show the entire collectible series

Playmore interactive pinball game



Coin Orbitor



Weight Scale



of balls. Displaying them in our exclusive high capacity Wall of Balls crane creates an amazing stop in your tracks impact.

The old school plush merchandising method of mixing generic and licensed plush in a 50/50 or 80/20 mix to keep costs down produced moderate results, at best. Also, the plush size and weight variations did not allow for easy stadium loading or consistent win ratios.

Faced with these challenges, Impulse entered the plush industry with the following goals in mind:

- Design a series of themed collectible plush, which are true retail quality at a generic price.

- Create name tags on each plush character telling a story or giving words of encouragement for the players.

- Manufacture each plush series with an exact weight of 140-150 grams. This ensures consistent win ratios for players and operators.

- Mechanically design plush to sit properly on the exclusive Impulse stadium display.

- Power Poster Program: Like any retail merchandise, advertising and display are key. All of our plush series offer large, colorful, attention-getting posters signifying a whole new series has arrived.

- Pre-package sets allowing fast and easy filling with the whole series in each carton.

What are some of your most popular toy items?

Impulse's plush toys are true retail quality. They include items like the Big Eyed Babies, the Belly Button Buddies, the Paw Pals, and the new Enchanted String Dolls.

They are mixed in pre-packaged sets to allow for fast and easy placement in the cranes. Our exclusive stadium boxes provide a stair-stepped placement of the plush toys so they are displayed in the very best way. An optional poster behind the plush toys adds to the marketing appeal, encouraging the players to collect all 12 of the characters in each series.

Our market tests have proven that a complete theme change, including the poster, creates a huge spike in sales. Sprinkling in new licensed pieces has never had this

kind of impact.

While our inflatable balls and plush toys are extremely popular for the cranes, we also design several of our own 1-inch and 2-inch toys in capsules.

The 2-inch Deadly Ducks are very popular and are hard to keep in stock. Our 2-inch Magic Tricks and Spy Undercover are also considered to be some of the best of this type of toy mix.

Are you introducing any new products at the Amusement Expo in March?

In our plush line, we are introducing our custom designed Enchanted String Dolls for the cranes. Each collectible character features its own positive words of encouragement, adding great value to this series. We also offer a large, attention-getting poster for this series.

We now have in stock our new Paw Pals, an 8-inch plush line, following the successful Big Eyed Babies. The adorable Paw Pals feature large eyes, large paw pads, and a collectable story with each piece.

What else will you have on display at your booth at the Amusement Expo?

We will also introduce the production version of our new Flash Play, a versatile skill game and high value merchandiser. Now designed with a bigger cabinet and larger merchandise capacity and display.

As a merchandiser, the IBINstore runs advertisements on the high-resolution display. Showing products animated on the screen adds tremendous interest and value to the featured products.

As a skill game, Flash Play has several



Love Meter



Voodoo Dolls



COVER STORY

games in one and can be changed to new games instantly.

What are operators telling you at trade shows about the types of games and supplies they are looking for?

The general consensus that operators are sharing with us at trade shows is their interest in finding machines that have long term earning potential. Many games and merchandisers start out strong, but the fad fades quickly. In some cases the earnings drop so dramatically within the first year that operators are reluctant to continue to expand in that category.

One of the cornerstones of our manufacturing philosophy is to design units that will stand the test of time and are built to last a lifetime.

Our new Flash Play is designed to address the concern of obsolescence with the ability to easily change games without buying a whole new cabinet. We might even say that Flash Play is a real “game changer” for our industry.

How important is your presence at industry trade shows?

Impulse feels that our presence at the trade shows is very important and allows us to introduce new products and meet with the many customers that have made us successful for over 25 years.

When customers purchase equipment, they want to be assured that they will get support for that machine for many years to come. We've been around for a long time and it is important to personally reassure customers that we will be around for a long time to come. We are very proud that all of our equipment is still manufactured by Impulse here in the U.S.

What advice do you give a new customer who is just branching out into the types of machines in your product portfolio? Do you help them make selections?

Everything is about location, location, location! Impulse assists operators in creating opportunities that will maximize the earning potential in that location.

We offer operators powerful tools to land new locations. As an example, we offer customized brochures with the operator's company name. We also offer

custom graphics that match the decor of the prospective location with their logo on the equipment. This gives the operator a competitive edge and creates far more interest from the location.

We make equipment and product recommendations based on the type of location the operator has or is looking to land. As an example, in a full size supermarket we would advise the following: a plush crane; a skill merchandiser Flash Play; a Playmore interactive pinball; a bulk and sticker rack; and a weight scale by the restroom.

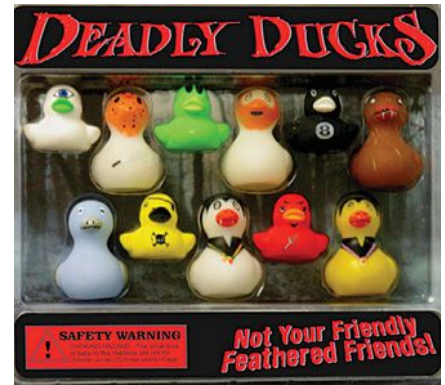
This power package offers a diverse equipment line and security that the operator will be the predominate service provider for that location.

New operators need to consider many factors when making their purchasing decisions. Here are some helpful considerations: Do they want to be involved in merchandise stocking and re-stocking such as cranes and bulk vending? Or would they prefer a merchandise free route such as weight scales.

A variation in this area would be the Playmore interactive pinball game as it only requires one product and can stay unattended for long periods of time. As an interactive ball vending game, players enjoy the challenge of trying to win more than one ball. This game has a fast return on investment, and is totally mechanical, making it ultra dependable. It is recommended for almost any location and like our other equipment, is often themed for the location.

Other considerations would include the distance to travel. As an example, a great location with a crane may require bi-weekly service. Another consideration would be the type of vehicle required to maintain their route. Larger equipment requires trucks with lift gates whereas a weight scale could be transported in a smaller vehicle.

One of the best bits of advice we can offer is that operators consider investing in equipment with long term proven track records of successful earnings. Cranes, bulk vending, and weight scales have been around for almost 100 years.



SUMMATION:

Impulse will be utilizing exciting new technologies as they become available. Some of the areas that Impulse is expanding into are cranes and merchandisers with Wi-Fi capabilities for reading coin meters, using smart phones or credit cards as payment methods, and color monitors offering advertisements of merchandise and interactive games.

Impulse sees these technologies bringing all vending information to the Internet, allowing operators ultimate real-time control and superior service to their vending program.

Finally, Impulse will continue to design new equipment and merchandise with its eye on the future while continuing to hold true to its commitment of long term earning performance.

For more information, call (818)767-4258; Web (www.impulseindustries.com). ▲

COVER STORY

Jim Plescia was born and raised in Southern California in the North Hollywood/Sun Valley area. The company's corporate offices still reside in Sun Valley today.

Jim has always had a passion for creating and inventing. His first vending machine was designed when he was only nine years old. The machine was made out of a cardboard box and dispensed small Halloween candy bars. The dispensing machine had two nickel-sized coin slots so that you could choose between two different candy bars. Jim designed the machine to have the coin slide down a cardboard chute, slip through a nickel size slot and release the candy bar.

The trick was to keep the nickel from dispensing with the candy bar. Jim perfected this by creating a slot just large enough for the nickel to fall through but not the candy bar. Jim later used this same technique to design his weight scale coin slide, which sorts all other coins from quarters. Today, Jim's company is the largest weight scale manufacturer in the U.S.

For Jim's eighth grade science project, Jim invented The Homework Machine. This electronic machine was a metal panel where you would insert homework questions and a light bulb would illuminate next to the correct answer. Jim got an A for this project. The true reason Jim built The Homework Machine was that he hated homework.

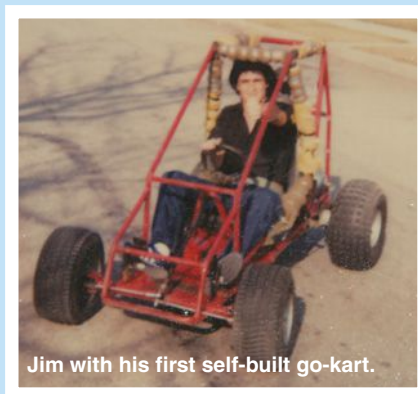
The next year, Jim took a metal shop welding class in school. He quickly earned a trip to the principal's office for cutting a penny on the metal cutter. That summer Jim's dad bought him a welding machine so he could build his first go-kart.

He later sold that go-kart for \$1,500. He used the money to move into his first apartment with his girlfriend Lydia Polise-na, whom he later married. Jim and Lydia have been together for 30 years.

Jim was first introduced to the vending machine business while still in 11th grade. He was shown the trade by Don Lemke of Advance

Manufacturing in Sun Valley.

Advance Manufacturing was a bulk vending manufacturer and toy distributor. Jim credits Don for much of his manufacturing experience and strong business ethics. While at Advance, Jim was promoted to general manager and equipment product development. Jim and Don worked on several projects together including the Advance sticker machine. Advance would later be sold to A&A Global which still produces the Advance sticker machine today. With Don's encouragement, Jim and Lydia began building their own bulk vending route.



Jim with his first self-built go-kart.

While Jim was working at Advance, Lydia worked on building the bulk-vending route. This allowed Jim the necessary time to develop his first Impulse games, Dr. Love and Gina the Gypsy. The feedback they got from operating the route would prove invaluable in developing equipment designed around the needs of locations and operators.

In 1986, Jim and Lydia founded Impulse Amusements, which would later become Impulse Industries. As the company grew, Jim and Lydia continued to play different roles. Jim was in charge of management, sales, and product development. Lydia worked on graphic arts, bookkeeping, and sales.

As Impulse continued to grow, it became apparent that the company needed to expand into manufacturing of

capsuled and crane toys to properly support its equipment line and route needs. Today Impulse offers a full line of exclusive bulk vending toys, crane balls, and plush.

Expanding past its bulk vending roots, Impulse has proudly entered into the amusement sector with its Winner Series Cranes in 2004 and more recently the Flash Play skill merchandiser.

Jim takes pride in the fact that many long time customer/operators have been very successful following the recommendations and suggestions made by Impulse. Following his passion, Jim has never seen his role in manufacturing as a job. It has truly been an expression of his creative talents.

Jim said, "What a profound world we live in where we have the opportunity to manifest our thoughts into reality. I love what I do. The machines I've dreamed up will likely be around entertaining people much longer than my stay on this planet." ▲



Jim and Lydia Plescia in 1982.



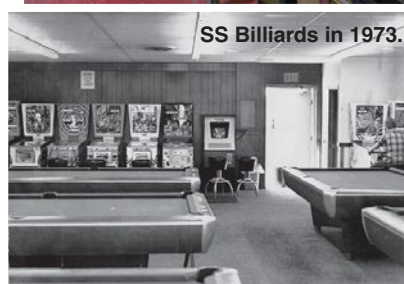
RIGHT: Jim at age 9 with his first candy-dispensing machine.



Jim and Lydia Plescia.

LAUNCHING THE RUBY GOOSE

SS Billiards Owner Lloyd Olson traces four decades of bringing pinball madness to the Twin Cities.
 By: Courtney McDuff



SS Billiards, located in Hopkins, Minn., is a pinball lover's haven. With the largest collection of publicly playable pinball machines in the Twin Cities, a host of popular and nostalgic arcade games, and five regulation-sized pool tables, the game room is a popular hangout for friends, families, travelers, and regulars. The relaxed atmosphere, unique game selection, and rich history have turned it into a local hangout and a genuine pinball destination.

This year marks the game room's 40th anniversary, an extraordinary feat for a location opened during a time when the average lifespan of a game room was only a year or two. Upon hearing of this milestone, *Play Meter* decided to chat with the owner of SS Billiards to find out about its history, secrets of staying in business for so long, and upcoming events.

Part of the appeal seems to lie in the community

atmosphere that permeates the place. Owner Lloyd Olson is a long time industry member who is also an active participant in

the pinball "community," a surprising network of people who share a common appreciation for both the sport and art of pinball. His welcoming attitude and love for the game, combined with a solid repertoire of exciting games, are other aspects of SS Billiards' staying power.

HISTORY

Olson's father became an operator after World War II and had a route in Minnesota until 1970. In 1972, with Olson's help, his mother, Mabel DeMar, purchased the game room from a man named Sam Snelling. Snelling owned and operated SS Billiards for two years with only six pool tables, a cigarette machine, and a pay phone.

The Hopkins City Council approved the license transfer at a meeting on the night of September 19, 1972. The mother-son duo opened the business the next day at 3 p.m. and the first customer came through the doors an hour later. He played two dollars worth of quarters and the business was off and running.

During the family's first years as owner-operators, they saw industry trends come and go. Air hockey was popular in 1972. A year and a half later, it was foosball. Meanwhile, video games were quickly gaining popularity. By 1979, the video fad was on.

DeMar sold Olson her interests in February 1979 and continued to help out until October 1987 when she retired. In 1983, the video game bubble burst and Olson described things as "lackluster" until around the 1980s when the industry began to pick up again. Beyond the resurgence in video games, pinball began garnering more interest and quickly became a bigger part of the business.

By 1990, pinball, according to Olson, was "probably at its zenith." During the '90s he gravitated towards a more niche market and by 2000 SS Billiards was predominately pinball oriented.

LAUNCH THOSE GEESE

For SS Billiard's 40th anniversary, Olson will be throwing the Ruby Goose Pinball Party. The goose theme shows up regularly in event names, game room merchandise, and on the Web site. And it has an interesting and funny back-story.

Olson explained, "The 'launch those geese thing' is a long story. I pretty much suck at playing the games. Helen Keller could beat my scores. In the mid 1970s the games didn't have battery back ups to retain memory the way they do today. If you unplugged a game, all scores would return to zero. With only three initials available to store names, I'd ironically put in 'LTG' for 'Lloyd the Great.' I was pretty far from great when it came to games."

He continued, "I was asked to choose a nickname when I began posting on Pinball News Room so I put in "LTG :)." I was asked many times what it stood for. Back in about late 2000 I had customers that screamed "let loose the ducks" and someone posted on Pinball News Room that LTG stood for 'launch those geese,' and it stuck."

March 2, 2011 marked the first of many pinball events held at SS Billiards. The first "Launch Those Geese" party was a hit that day and has since grown and evolved into many more pinball events. At this year's Ruby Goose Pinball Party, to be held Sept. 20, all pinball machines will be on free play. Soft drinks and hot dogs will be available along with Famous Dave's ribs and pizza from Pizza Luce. Other contests and tournaments will round out the excitement of the event.

40 YEARS OF BUSINESS

In a time where many owner operators are feeling the pressures of the economy, SS Billiards is celebrating its



ANNIVERSARY

40th anniversary. Olson claims that the key to his success lies in doing things a little bit backwards.

Olson said, "The industry used to have a seven-year cycle. We never came out of the one from the 1990s. I honestly think you do everything the opposite of everyone else. I've never advertised. I've never had a listed number. That has always worked for me."

Times have changed a bit and SS Billiards' number is now



available through a simple Google search. The game room's Facebook group, created by a regular patron and now moderated by Olson himself, has around 350 members. The social media platform allows regulars and those who wish to one day visit SS Billiards to communicate and stay informed about upcoming events and pinball news.

The game room has seen a wide demographic range within the past 40 years. Olson said, "I've been here so many years, I've seen a huge spread. We get a lot of business around the holidays when people are in town. We get a lot of travelers who drop the wife and kids off at the Mall of America and come here. Travelers have become a big part of my business."

Olson has maintained an array of pinball games over the years but some are always popular. Medieval Madness by

"I let people know that if anyone's been laid off or is unemployed to see me. I've let people in for free or cheaper."

Williams is a perennial favorite, along with Twilight Zone by Bally and Attack From Mars by Williams. There are currently 20 well-maintained games available for play.

While the nostalgic factor of the older games remains a selling point, pinball is far from dead. Olson said, "We're having some exciting times in pinball. Steve Ritchie is back with Stern Pinball. Jersey Jack Pinball is doing the Wizard of Oz pinball game. Now 12 years later, it's some of the most exciting times we've seen in pinball."

Though a pinball aficionado and regular attendee of the Pinball Expo, Olson doesn't have a personal collection. He does, however, have a favorite game, "My favorite pinball is Capcom's Kingpin. They built approximately 10. All Capcom games feature lamps so they do a hell of a light show. In sudden death, the flippers get sluggish and red lights come on. The game is gangster-themed; I just always got a kick out of playing it."

Another recurring event, Pinball Circus, is a two-night, tournament-heavy, fun-filled pinball extravaganza. The \$25 entry fee covers food, tournament entry, and all games on free play. Olson realizes that because the 'amusement industry' is always down with the economy, not everyone has the extra change for pinball these days. He said, "I let people know that if anyone's been laid off or is unemployed to see me. I've let people in for free or cheaper."

Through 40 years of ups and downs, Olson has remained in operation and continues to enjoy his work. He said, "My dad didn't want me to be in the industry. But I ended up in it and have been blessed to see so many great shows, technology, and good people. I've gotten to see a lot of great things."

For more information, call (952)938-9259; Web (www.ssbilliards.com). ▲

SAY WHAT?



10

second
interview
with...

Vince Gumma, President of American Vending Sales (AVS), got his start in the industry at a young age working for his father, Frank Gumma Sr. He is on the Board of Directors of the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) and currently resides in the Chicago area with his wife Ralene.

My first job was:

order picker at a warehouse/retail store.

My favorite type of music is:

rock/alternative.

I wish I had the nerve to:

skydive.

One thing I can't live without is:

friendships.

The last book I read was:

"The Girl That Kicked The Hornet's Nest."

One word that describes my personality is:

joyful.

The best advice I ever got was:

deny, deny, deny.

My favorite TV show is:

"Two and a Half Men."

If I could have dinner with a famous person that person would be:

Bono.

My most cherished inanimate possession is:

my cork screw.

REDEMPTION TICKETS

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On the Spot

Have you added a new category of equipment to your route, or expanded an existing one, and what are the results?



Mike Pappas • Fair Share Amusements • Orland Park, Ill.

After 50+ years as a street operator, we expanded into the redemption business during 2011. We have added cranes and merchandisers into our mix of equipment. I leaned heavily on the advice of my industry friends from around the country. Their advice helped me avoid a

lot of costly rookie mistakes. I also learned a tremendous amount from Frank Seninsky's redemption Webinar.

The results have been encouraging. I am seeing steady collections, my customers are very happy, and I can actually calculate an ROI...something that doesn't always exist with some of my amusement pieces. I believe that over the next 18 months, almost 100 percent of our tavern locations will have some type of redemption equipment.

William Fannasy • National Novelty Co. Harrisburg, Pa.

I have increased the number of ATMs on my route, put out more cranes, converted my league pool table locations to Diamond pool tables, and charged the location a greens fee for nights when there is a league. I'm getting great results from players.



Scott John • Amuseomatic Fredrick, Md.

Over the past few months Amuseomatic has added the TouchTunes new Virtuo digital jukeboxes to the music entertainment portion of the route. These impressive jukeboxes have been well received by our customers, resulting in a decision to purchase more machines in 2012.

The digital jukebox segment of the business continues to grow, and the added features through the new TouchTunes machines will promote this trend. We are a leader in our market area and continue to invest in entertainment machines that are profitable for our client companies.

David George • Bell Music Co. • Akron, Ohio

We added equipment in four places: skilled gaming, digital music, high prize value merchandisers, and ATMs. The results have been great, although it has provided no "net gain" to our revenue. It's just replacing money from categories that aren't producing. Video is dead, as are touch screens, and I don't see them coming back due to technology.

Rick Ellis • Ellis Amusement Inc. Meridian, Idaho

Since 2007 we have added ATMs to our amusement game route. The addition of ATMs has helped to diversify and add profitability to our company.

We also partnered with International GAMCO to provide logistical support for the Idaho Lottery's TabBoxx and TouchTab gaming devices. That program has continued to yield positive revenue streams, and we continue to grow our presence in the gaming sector of the entertainment industry. As always, we welcome new concepts, products, and opportunities within our industry when they become available.



Keith Myrmoe • Great Amusement Inc. Sioux Falls, S.D.

I did not add a new category of equipment in 2011. We focused on promoting existing equipment. However, my wife Pam and I attended the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) Notre Dame Management Program in South Bend, Ind., (a two-and-a-half-year program). During that period, an instructor named Brad Circone gave a class on a Promotional Menu for our business products. We brought these ideas back to our managerial staff.

One idea that a manager came up with was promoting our Golden Tee equipment by designing a league that worked very well, and after that a Players' Loyalty Program. Our involvement and networking with people in the AMOA and at Notre Dame have had a major impact on our business. It's a great experience.

Charles Rowland • Games People Play Richmond, Va.

We have not added any new equipment but we have made old drivers look like new drivers. If you take a \$400 driver and add \$800 in parts you can make it look like a new \$6,000 driver.

We changed two Cruisin' Exotica drivers from the 27-inch monitor to a 32-inch flat screen and added LEDs to the upper speaker grills. We also added LED lighting to the seat speaker grill and under the seat and used new chrome T-molding. We designed a metal enclosure for the flat screen, had a metal shop make it, and then had it powder coated. The game cabinets were cut to accommodate the flat screens. ▲



DIGITAL DC CENTRE

15th Anniversary



The Fold 'n' Go photo booth.



The Mega Strip photo booth.



The Wall Strip photo booth.



The Strip photo booth.

Digital Centre continues tradition of innovation

Digital Centre is a multinational company founded in 1997 that focuses on manufacturing photo booths at affordable prices. The company has factories and offices in both Europe (Barcelona, Spain) and North America (Miami, Fla.) and exports products to 45 different countries around the world.

Started with a small family investment, Digital Centre began in Spain after making a deal with SNK Corp. in Japan. After SNK Corp. filed for bankruptcy several months later, Digital Centre decided to stay in business by developing and manufacturing its own photo booths. The company currently has 19 employees.

Digital Centre has not only established itself as a leader in coin-op photo booths,

but it has done so through a strategy of steady innovation. Since debuting its first Dr. Face unit in 1997, the company has gone on to create such hits as Dr. Fashion, Crazy Doctor, Pix-Mix Factory, Photo-ID, Ping-Pong Kombat, Baby Boom, Instant Photo Souvenir, and New Generation Blue and Black. And then there are the event photo booths, like the Party'N'Go, Fold'N'Go, The Strip, The Wall Strip, the Mega Strip, and the Mega Strip Combo.

This year marks the company's 15th anniversary. To celebrate, Digital Centre will be introducing five new and versatile products. These photo booths include a wide range of features, such as gigantic photo strips, video confessions option,

real portable booths, new strip kiosk concept, customizable software, social network capabilities, and much more.

"The first unit was Dr.Face. It was a hit worldwide, you can find several units in operation still, in Dave & Buster's and other places," said Digital Centre's CEO, Josep Tarres. "It was a product where you could put your face on a different body, and it matched the skin color of the player with the one from the character in the picture."

In addition to the firm's unique software packages, another innovation in the Digital Centre equipment line-up was the company's use of non-traditional cabinet designs. Often looking more like video games, the cabinets have a smaller foot-

COMPANY PROFILE

print and offer attention-getting designs.

For instance, Digital Centre's heart-shaped Baby Boom, designed specifically to appeal to couples, offered a merged-photo option that simulated what their offspring might look like.

"Creativity and innovation have always been the strongest points at Digital Centre," said Tarres. "By manufacturing new ideas and innovations we want to take the industry to the next level. But we also believe in bringing the product to the operators at the right price, so they are able to make a profit and increase their business."

While the firm does produce a line of portable "event" booths, 100 percent of the firm's product line is still in coin-op. Digital Centre's New Generation line-up, while boasting a more traditional cabinet style, is packed with features.

Measuring in at a slim 29-inches wide by 39-inches long by 78-inches high, the unit weighs only 370 lbs. It also includes a host of programmable and automatic features, including the ability to offer time-released seasonal backgrounds for holidays such as St. Valentine's Day, Halloween, Christmas, and Independence Day.

Its sophisticated and ever-expanding software package also allows for a large selection of frames, customizable hair-styles, a choice of color, or black and white images, as well as a choice between vertical or horizontal formats. At the heart of the unit is a Windows-based

operating system powering a Mitsubishi dye-sublimation printer with 600 vends per roll of film.

"The industry has changed a lot. The new digital options brought a lot of new functions to the market," explained Tarres. "The most important has been the option to fully customize the units, and the Internet functionality to send the pictures to Facebook and others sites."

He went on to say, "Small-footprint photo booths are in demand for rentals but also for coin-op locations that only have limited space, or just don't want big structures blocking other income opportunities. The smaller units are giving photo booth opportunities to new locations like small retail stores, fashion stores, and event supermarkets."

More recently, the company rolled out its new "strip" line of photo booths, which include the Mega Strip, Fold 'N' Go, and Wall Strip. Each photo booth offers a unique design as well as the ability to print giant 6-inch by 16-inch photos. The most unique standout feature is the MEGA Strip, which measures six by 16-inch strips, as opposed to the more traditional two by 6-inch strips.

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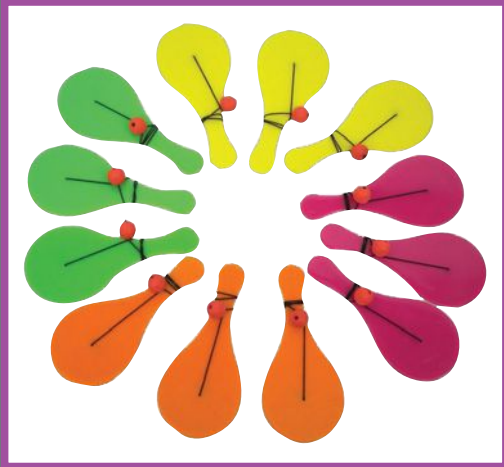
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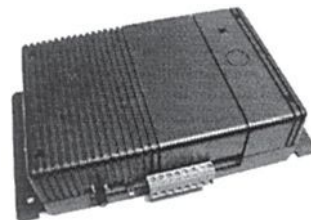
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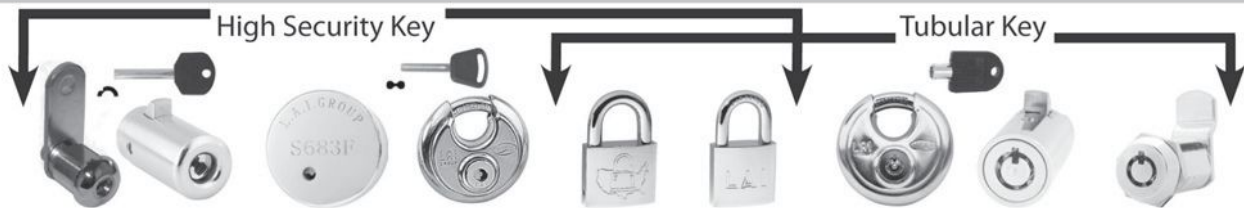
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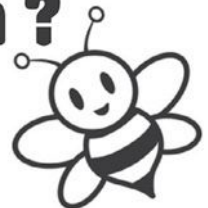
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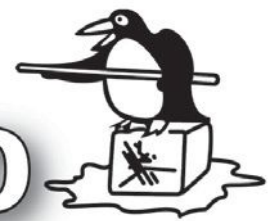
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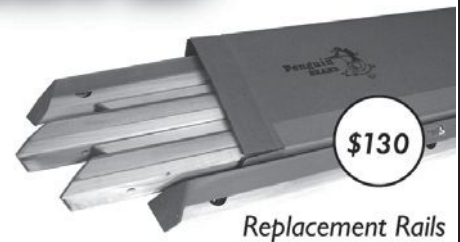
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