



# Press Release

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## The AAMA Celebrates Successful Annual Meeting and Gala, Welcomes New Leadership, and Honors Excellence

**Cary, IL – September 25, 2024** – The American Amusement Machine Association ([AAMA](#)) is pleased to announce the successful conclusion of its Annual Meeting and Gala, which brought together members, partners, and honorees for a memorable evening of recognition, networking, and celebration. This year's event, held September 17<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> at the Chicago Marriott Schaumburg, highlighted the achievements of the organization and its members, along with new initiatives that will shape the future.



### **Awards and Recognition**

During Wednesday's Welcome event, two prestigious awards were presented to honor those who have made outstanding contributions to the organization and the amusement industry. Jennifer Poythress of The Rabbit Hole VR was awarded the Shining Star Award and Beth Standlee of TrainerTainment was presented with the Joe Robbins Award.

At the Gala Dinner on Thursday, Ed Pellegrini of Team Play, was celebrated as the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award, for his exceptional leadership and service to the association and industry. Pellegrini delivered a heartfelt thank you speech, expressing his gratitude to the organization and reflecting on his illustrious journey in the amusement industry.

### **About Charitable Fundraising During the Annual Meeting**

The American Amusement Machine Charitable Foundation ([AAMCF](#)) raised nearly \$48,000 through the "Text to Give" campaign during the Gala dinner. That along with monies raised from the Lifetime Ad Journal and other fundraising efforts throughout the year resulted in \$50,000 donations made to our three main charity partners; [Sunrise Association](#), [KEEN USA](#) and [Ann & Robert Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago](#). Sunrise Association also received \$55,000 in designated donations. The Lifetime Achievement Award winner is allowed to designate 20% of the funds raised through the Lifetime Achievement Souvenir Ad Journal to charities of their choice. This year, Ed Pellegrini designated [Ronald McDonald House Charities](#) as the benefactor of the \$36,000 donation.

The Advisory Board, comprised of past AAMA Man of the Year Honorees donated a total of \$13,500 to various charities.

## **New Leadership and Board Members**



We are excited to announce Beth Standlee has been elected the new President of the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA), taking the reins from Jeff Blair of Sureway Gaming as we embark on another year of growth and innovation. Standlee's dedication and vision will be pivotal in driving the organization forward. Of the designation, Beth said, "I am very excited about the opportunity to serve the AAMA. I believe this organization is filled with an amazing group of people who have been amusement champions in this big wide world of entertainment for more than 40 years. It is my goal to work diligently to bring industry leaders and newbies alike into this great trade association to help us all grow and have as much fun as the law allows!"

New AAMA board members, Brian Cohen of Entertainment Properties Group and Adam Kleinhenz of Shaffer Distributing Company were also introduced; while Beth Standlee, Rich Babich of Game Exchange of Colorado and Allen Weisberg of Apple Industries were re-elected to three-year terms, ensuring a strong mix of fresh perspectives and experienced leadership. We welcome our new members to the board and look forward to their contributions in the years ahead.

The AAMCF also held their annual elections with Holly Hampton of BayTek Entertainment continuing as the President after her reelection alongside returning board members John Keys, with Embed; Paula Rinker, with Coast to Coast Entertainment and Jeff Blair. Newly elected charity board members include Brittanie Betti of Betson Enterprises, Amy Hedrick of CleanBox Technologies and Sara Paz of Embed. All will serve two-year terms.

## **New Initiatives and Engagement**

This year's event featured an exciting new education format, which was very well received by all. Attendees took part in engaging and informative workshop sessions that provided fresh insights and strategies to apply in their respective fields. New this year was an expanded product preview, spanning days rather than hours and afforded partners the opportunity to present their new wares.

Members were invited to attend the Government Relations luncheon which featured AAMA's lobbyist John Russell IV from the DGA Group in Washington DC. John gave an informative update on recent legislation and the nearing elections. This after committee co-chair Joe Camarota of Alpha-Omega spoke of the value of AAMA's [Code of Conduct](#) and [Parental Advisory System](#).



The 2024 annual meeting Keynote event was a packed house as members and guests settled in to hear insight and stories from industry veterans Nolan Bushnell, Eugene Jarvis, Joe Kaminkow and Gary Stern with Rich Babich acting as moderator.

The annual event closed out with the AAMCF hosted **KEEN Kids Arcade** on Friday, September 20. Local KEEN USA families were invited to an afternoon of free play games brought in for product preview and swag from Bandai Namco, Coast to Coast Entertainment and Embed. The arcade further solidifies our commitment to fostering an inclusive and family-friendly atmosphere at our events.

### **Networking, Fun, and Success**

The Annual Meeting and Gala once again proved to be an outstanding opportunity for members to network, learn, and celebrate. With a blend of professional development and fun, the event continues to serve as a cornerstone of the amusement community, bringing together people from all sectors of the industry.



AAMA Director of Operators and AAMCF Executive Director, Tina Schwartz had this to say “This year’s Annual Meeting was a tremendous success thanks to the many AAMA members and industry leaders who participated. Some of the highlights included a new format, workshops, and fun & exciting entertainment. We are so proud of the generosity of our industry in supporting our fundraising efforts this year, allowing us to make significant contributions to our charity partners and advisory board organizations. Personally, I was blown away by the surprise celebration of my 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with AAMA. Thank you to my industry family. You really know how to make a girl feel special.”

We extend our deepest gratitude to all who participated, donated, and supported this year's event. Together, we are making a difference and setting the stage for a successful year ahead.

For more information, please visit [coin-op.org](http://coin-op.org) or contact Melissa at [melissa@coin-op.org](mailto:melissa@coin-op.org).

### **About The AAMA**

The American Amusement Machine Association ([AAMA](http://AAMA)) is an international not-for-profit 501(c)6 trade organization representing the manufacturers, distributors, suppliers, professional service providers and location owner/operators for the coin-operated amusement industry. Our mission is to make the industry better through collaboration, education, advocacy and networking. We never stop playing!

### **About the AAMCF**

The American Amusement Machine Charitable Foundation ([AAMCF](http://AAMCF)) is a 501(c)3 organization that raises funds to support charities focused on children, education, and scientific research. Founded in 1983 by members of the American Amusement Machine Association, the AAMCF has made donations of over \$3 million dollars in support of nearly 150 charities. We inspire our community to support, bring joy, and enrich the lives of children and their families through our charitable activities. Together, we make our change matter for those who never stop playing.

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