

A PUBLICATION OF THE GREATER AUSTIN MERCHANTS COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

GAMA Supports Austin Police Operation Blue Santa

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BOIL WATER ORDINANCE

A six-day tap water ban in Austin provided GAMA a chance to prove its resilience in the face of disaster

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EDITOR'S NOTE



SHAILA ABDULLAH
Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to the first issue of this year's quarterly *GAMA Times*. The year ended with a stressful time for retailers as the government shutdown affected consumer spending. The shutdown left roughly 800,000 federal workers without pay, and U.S. consumer confidence fell in December by its largest amount in three years. But it wasn't all bad news. GAMA and its vendors held a successful Blue Santa toy drive, bringing joy to hundreds of families during the holiday season. The Aga Khan Foundation Gala in November also was a success, raising more than \$132,000.

Last fall, the City of Austin declared a boil water advisory following heavy flooding, impacting both retailers and residents alike. The GAMA Warehouse rose to the challenge and delivered 40,000 cases of Rising Star water to area businesses throughout the six-day ban.

Did you know that it costs an employer more than \$3,000 to find, hire, and train a new employee? The start of the year is always a good time to assess your staffing needs. We interviewed GAMA COO Shane Walker to hear his take on hiring and retaining quality employees. For more information on the topic and tips on how to retain your best employees, read the related article on page 10.

We are proud of our partnership with long-term vendor and supporter Red Bull. We recently had the chance to interview Andrew Havens, regional account manager, to gain his insight into what makes the partnership between the two organizations so valuable.

We welcome your feedback on this quarter's issue. If you have an exciting tip or news item to share for the next issue, please send it on to shailaabdullah@gmail.com.

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The Second Annual Blue Santa Toy Drive

In December, GAMA partnered with Brown Distributing to conduct a toy drive for Austin Police Operation Blue Santa. The program, which launched in 1972, provides toys, gifts, and gift cards for holiday meals for families in need. Each year, the Austin Police Department partners with local organizations to identify kids that may need some holiday cheer. The program serves over 6,000 families and 14,400 children.

Many GAMA vendors, including Coca-Cola, High Brew Coffee, HeyDay Cold-Brew Coffee, Shade Tree Lemonade, Frito-Lay, Teavana, Rockstar Energy Drink, and Yumi Ice Cream, contributed generously to the effort along with members of the community and GAMA staff, leaders, members, and customers. Children were able to take pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus and their float. Snacks and drinks were provided by GAMA vendors, and radio station KOKE FM broadcast live during the event.

In addition to collecting toys, GAMA and Brown Distributing donated \$3,500 to the cause. Thanks to the work of several fine people and organizations, thousands of kids experienced a brighter and merrier Christmas. 🌟

For more information about Austin Police Operation Blue Santa, please visit austintexas.gov/page/austin-police-operation-blue-santa-program.





A view of the Longhorn Dam captured by the Austin Fire Department's Robotics Emergency Deployment team on Oct. 16 (posted by the Austin Fire Department on Twitter)

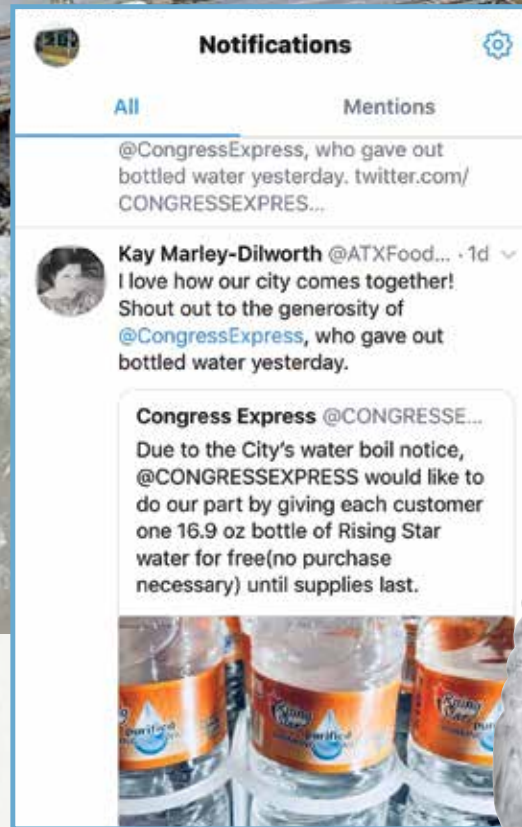
Rising Star Water Rises to the Occasion

IN OCTOBER 2018, AUSTIN RESIDENTS FACED AN unprecedented emergency when officials issued a citywide boil-water ordinance asking residents to boil their water and cut back on their consumption in the wake of historic flooding that filled the lakes that feed the city's supply with silt, mud, and debris. The six-day ban prompted a rush at grocery stores, where shelves of bottled water were emptied quickly.

The GAMA Warehouse was inundated with orders to replenish bottled water at stores across town. "The GAMA Warehouse sold over 40,000 cases of water, with 65% just in the first two days following the order," said COO Shane Walker. "The warehouse staff had to rally together to accomplish this as

orders were coming in to be delivered, and we had constant flows of cash-and-carry business. But we never ran out of stock of Rising Star bottled water."

GAMA staff members were eager to lend a hand where needed. "Accountants were moving cases and condensing pallets in the front," said Walker. "Buyers on forklifts were bringing pallets to the front, HR staff were guarding water pallets in the staging area and directing traffic, and drivers were loading customers' vehicles after they finished their routes. Our trucks delivered water all six days, making numerous trips to meet the shortage. GAMA-member stores were able to keep their shelves stocked, meeting the high demands of city residents."★



MEET THE DIRECTOR

Rizwanali Maredia



RIZWANALI MAREDIS THE DIRECTOR OF TRAINING AND education at GAMA. By organizing timely seminars, trainings, and learning sessions, he helps GAMA members grow professionally, understand the inner workings of the c-store industry, and enhance their ability to compete with other businesses. Maredia's strength lies in his ability to research and devise innovative solutions to combat complex business problems. He has over 20 years of experience in the c-store industry.

Born in Pakistan, Maredia moved with his family to the United States when he was 14. He earned his bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2006. He owns two c-stores, one in Temple and the other in College Station. He lives in Austin with wife, Samreen, and son, Ubaid. He enjoys the great outdoors and playing cricket. ✨

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Austin AKF Gala Lights Up the Night

Did you know that each year, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) reaches 1 million children under 8 years old? Over 2 million students benefit from AKDN education programs annually, and 10 million people benefit from the electricity the organization helps provide. AKDN also provides quality health care to 5 million people.

MORE THAN 220 GUESTS ATTENDED THE AGA KHAN Foundation's first annual Austin Gala on November 17. The event brought together key civic, community, and philanthropic members to raise more than \$132,000 for the Aga Khan Foundation. As part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), the Aga Khan Foundation breaks the cycle of poverty by making long-term investments in people, communities, and livelihoods. AKDN works in over 30 countries around the world, mostly in poor areas of South and Central Asia, Eastern and Western Africa, and the Middle East. Other programs, notably in education and culture, operate in Europe and North America as well as in Asia and Africa.

The AKF Gala took place at the Austin Central Library, which is a LEED-certified six-floor building with 200,000 total square feet of space. It was named one of the "World's Greatest Places"



by *TIME* Magazine in 2018. To determine this, *TIME* editors sifted through more than 1,200 nominations to find destination spots that are “breaking new ground, leading industry trends, and offering visitors an extraordinary experience.”

Salim Bhatia, director of the Aga Khan Academies, served as a keynote speaker. He is responsible for leading the establishment of this integrated network of world-class residential schools across Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia.

Co-hosts for the event included Pooja Sethi, an Austin-based attorney and founder of Immigration for All, a nonprofit law firm that specializes in immigration law, and Sahar Ali, who has built a career in communication through stints in mainstream media and nonprofit development organizations.

The gala included a delicious four-course meal prepared by an award-winning caterer, a silent auction, an aerialist, and music from the local band Raag of Ages. ✨

DONATE: Your contribution goes a long way. Find out how you can donate at akfusa.org/get-involved/donate.

VOLUNTEER: Reach out to Ahmed Moledina at austinevents@akfusa.org to become a volunteer for the golf, gala, and other outreach events,

Employee Retention for Small C-Stores

An Interview with Shane Walker

We had a chance to sit down with GAMA COO Shane Walker and pick his brain about the No. 1 problem facing the c-store industry nationwide: how to hire and keep quality employees.



Q. What barriers do small c-store owners encounter in being able to hire quality employees?

A. It's really a couple things. The first is not having a good working process in place for hiring, and the second is that there is just a general concern among people about workplace safety at c-stores.

Retailers need to have a hiring process in place that governs how the job is posted and where. Having a detailed job description is essential to show the expectations of the role and what the needed skills are. With unemployment being at its lowest in decades, candidates have options, so you have to convey what makes you a desirable employer. Lastly, you can't rush the hiring process just to fill the position. I know this means the owner may have to run the register temporarily at times, but it's better to get the right person than to have to go through the process over and over because employees keep quitting.

Negative perceptions of working at a c-store keep good candidates from inquiring about such jobs. The news channels only show robberies and shootings in c-stores, conveying the general impression that the environment is unsafe at such workplaces. Clean, safe, and inviting stores attract not only customers, but also qualified job candidates.

Q. In your opinion, what is the reason for the high turnover rate in the industry?

A. There are typically three reasons why people quit their jobs:

- They don't like the company.
- They don't like their manager.
- They don't like the culture/environment.

Quality employees look for opportunities to grow within a company, not just in terms of compensation, which is a given, but also in terms of advancement. Even your most hardworking employees may leave when their patience runs out or their ambition kicks in unless you chart a plan of growth for them.

Q. How can members retain quality staff?

A. Once you find a qualified person, retention can be difficult if staff are not managed correctly. Your employees look to you initially to clearly indicate their areas of responsibility. They not only want direction, communication, and feedback, but also need to be treated respectfully, fairly, and professionally. Training is a very large piece of all this, and it needs to start with onboarding and be ongoing. Provide positive reinforcement, praise your employees' efforts when things are done well, and continue to train and coach them.

Setting correct expectations for the job right from the interview process is important. A candidate accepts a job based on what they are told about the role and responsibilities. If you change the expectations after hire, it often isn't received well.

Q. What traits should retailers look for when interviewing potential employees?

A. Start your observation of the candidate the moment you set a date and time for an interview. There

is great value in candidates being on time and dressing appropriately. Did they show up on time or early for the interview? I grew up being taught, “If you aren’t early, you’re late,” and I still live by those words today. How were they dressed when they came for the interview? Were they in presentable attire, or were they wearing torn-up jeans and a sloppy t-shirt with a baseball cap? First impressions are everything, and you have to ask yourself: Will this person represent my business and me in a professional manner?

The interview will allow you to understand the inner workings of the candidate. Having a good personality and being comfortable while conversing are important traits in retail. These people will be the face of your store. If they don’t seem personable during the interview with you, do you think they will care about your customers?

The mechanical skills of the trade such as using the POS, stocking shelves, and cleaning are all trainable; however, if someone has past work experience using these skills, that is an added benefit.

Q. What are the three questions retailers should ask every candidate?

A. Here are a few questions that should be asked of all candidates:

- **Do you fully understand the job description and expectations of this position?**
By asking this you will ensure the candidate fully understands what the job entails and is comfortable with the job duties.

- **What are your short- and long-term goals?**
This will allow you to see what the candidate hopes to be doing in the next few years. Does what you have to offer fit into these plans? This question also may help you find out how long the candidate plans to stay with the job if hired.
- **What traits do you believe are needed for this position?**
These traits could vary based on the position, but if you are hiring for a cashier, you want to hear things like being friendly, honest, trustworthy, customer service-oriented, etc. If the candidate lists the traits needed for your position, this will show he or she understands both what you need and the job description.

You need to ask both general inquisitive questions and behavioral questions. It is important to learn about both the candidate’s background and past work experience.

Q. What are the best avenues to explore when searching for new candidates to hire?

A. There are so many avenues, and some are free and some are not. Don’t let the ones that cost you money deter you from using them. Use reputable sites like Indeed.com and LinkedIn to post your positions. Think about the time it takes to train someone and the loss to your business and your time when they don’t work out. Your time is money too, and a bad employee can cost you customers and money.



I suggest always carrying your business card with you. If you come across a promising contact or potential candidate, hand them your card and let them know that you are looking for someone to fill a position.

Post the opening at your store. Make a professional sign and give some details about the position. You have hundreds of people entering your store on any given day, and those people know other people and may know someone looking for a job. Even chain stores do this, most notably Buc-ee's.

Do you have a store Facebook or Twitter account that your customers know about and use? If not, you should take advantage of those free and valuable avenues.

Indeed.com will provide you with several promising leads, but you have to spend the time to go through them and narrow them down.

Once you have a short list, conduct some phone interviews and ask general questions before narrowing down the list further for face-to-face interviews.

Remember that you as an owner are also making a first impression on a candidate. How you look and dress and treat your other employees will let the candidate know about your business, personality, and work ethics.

Q. Once a staff member is hired, what training should he or she receive on the first day or in the first week?

A. Depending on the position and the person you are hiring, training will be different. It is important, though, that you have an onboarding procedure with schedules, timelines, expectations, and follow-ups. New employees should be made to feel comfortable so they can ask questions. They should be informed about the mission, vision, and values of the company and how these affect their work. Training has to be more than just saying, "Do this and that," pointing, and then coming back in a few days. Following up, managing, and leading people takes time, effort, and a whole lot of patience. ★

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NACS: 19 Recruiting Strategies to Try in 2019

- **REFERRAL PROGRAM.** Offer employees “lightning” or “supercharged” referral bonuses, especially for positions or stores that are harder to fill.
 - **BOOMERANG RECRUITING.** Whenever employees leave, ensure them that they are always welcome back.
 - **CAR FLYERS.** Some businesses operate their third shifts behind locked doors. Capture this employee group’s attention by putting flyers on car windows.
 - **FRIENDLY COMPETITION.** Incentivize current employees with a recruiting challenge among stores. The one with the most referrals wins a prize, such as a branded item or party.
 - **APARTMENT WELCOME PACKETS.** Many apartment complexes offer welcome packets when new tenants move in. Inquire to see if you can include a job posting.
 - **CULTURE.** Create a positive, welcoming, and fun environment where people want to work.
 - **STAFF RETAINMENT.** The biggest thing you can do to keep current employees is to make them feel valued. Recognize them in meaningful ways and offer them opportunities to build a career with your company.
 - **STORE SIGNAGE.** More than 40% of new hires learn about job opportunities through signage, including road signs, in-store signs, and signs on the pump.
 - **INTERNSHIP PROGRAM.** Attract employees and establish positive opinions early in the game. Interns can be retained during the academic year on a part-time basis and offered full-time employment at the conclusion of their internship or upon graduation.
 - **WORKFORCE PROGRAMS.** Developmental resources and tools help job seekers improve their résumé and skillset while connecting them with compatible employers.
 - **EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY WORK PROGRAMS.** Opportunities such as Community Life programs help disabled individuals obtain work experience. Take caution to meet the U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division requirements.
 - **COMMUNITY REFERENCES.** Maintaining positive relationships with leaders in your community is influential.
 - **SEASONAL WORKFORCE.** Reach out to students, teachers, and other professionals who may need jobs in the summer or stay-at-home parents who may work during the school year.
 - **SOCIAL MEDIA.** Share employee-generated content on social media channels, such as Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.
 - **DIGITAL DELIVERY.** More than 80% of c-store applicants apply via a mobile device. Add video job descriptions to your website to make it easy to explore.
 - **RECRUITING CARDS.** Pass these out everywhere you go. The best employees may have jobs already but might consider a change when they learn about an appealing opportunity. Be ready to share what your store has to offer.
 - **TRENDING CALENDAR EVENT.** Host a “national hiring day” to create buzz for your brand or choose a recurring day and time each week when people can inquire about jobs. Make sure it is visible to the public, not just customers.
 - **BENEFICIAL TURNOVER.** When a competitor announces it’s going out of business, contact the store and its employees to tell them you are hiring.
- These strategies can help retailers build an outreach program with ongoing recruiting pipelines:
- **CAREER EVENTS.** Partner with local high schools, community colleges and universities, technical schools, and community-sponsored events. Understand the recruiting programs they offer and participate in on-site or virtual career fairs.

Keeping Your Star Performers:



Things Small C-Stores

Need to Know to Retain Quality Employees

When your employees are happy, they are more motivated and provide better customer service. Without good customer service, your c-store won't be in business for very long.

IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY, NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT than your employees. They're the ones who complete all the tasks that keep your c-store running smoothly, from serving customers to restocking shelves to handling the money. Ultimately, they are the face of your business.

Nonetheless, too many c-store owners don't focus on keeping their employees happy. Employee turnover is one of the most pressing issues plaguing the c-store industry today.



It is more than a hassle; it's costly. You have to advertise the position, screen applicants, and conduct interviews. Once you decide to hire someone, you have to complete mountains of paperwork, determine the starting date and work schedule, and provide training. Current employees may have to help out a little more, potentially leading to resentment or burnout. Once the new employee is onboard, it takes time to get up to speed, resulting in lower productivity.

1

It's a tight labor market

Unemployment rates are reaching record lows. As of December 2018, the unemployment rate was 3.9%, up from November's 3.7%, the lowest level since 1969. The economy has recovered from the last recession, and that means competition for employees is tight. You're not the only one hiring right now. Unlike 2010, when the unemployment rate hit double digits, you're going to have to work to hire every new employee. This means you have to look at how you can make your store and your openings more attractive than the other options out there. Instead of focusing all your efforts on creative ways to recruit new employees, it's a good idea to think about how you can keep the high performers you already have.

2

What you pay matters

Let's be blunt: You have to offer a fair wage. As the minimum wage increases throughout the country, the retail industry must adjust and respond. Thirty states now have a minimum wage that exceeds the federal government's minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. In Texas, the minimum wage matches that of the federal government—but there are other factors to consider when setting your hourly rates. According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator, a

single adult needs to make \$11.05 per hour in Texas to make a living wage. That means they need to make that much to meet their basic needs, such as housing, transportation, and food. If what you're offering won't allow your employees to cover the bare necessities, they won't stay with your store for any significant period of time.

3

Benefits make them stay

Salary is important, but perks can play a big part in retaining a valued employee. Offering a good benefits package is a great way to keep employees happy. In addition to paid time off and health insurance, benefits may include dental insurance, vision care, a retirement plan, and store discounts. While finding affordable benefits packages can be a challenge for small c-store owners, it pays off in the long term through increased employee retention. Don't forget about the unexpected benefit for you, too: Studies show that employees with health insurance are healthier and take fewer sick days..

4

Attitude rules

Even though salary and benefits are important, the fact of the matter is that nothing contributes more to employee dissatisfaction than bad management. According to Gallup, 50% of Americans have quit a job because of their manager at some point in their career. Managers can make or break a work environment. When they're supportive and encouraging, they can improve employee satisfaction; when they're not, they can damage employee morale and productivity. While some employees will stay regardless of a bad relationship with their manager if the salary and perks are good enough, many will opt to put their own happiness first and find a new job.

Employee turnover is one of the most pressing issues plaguing the c-store industry today. If you're more focused on finding new employees than keeping the ones you have, your strategy needs to change.

By the Numbers C-Store Staffing/Turnover



2.8

MILLION PEOPLE

work in the c-store and
fuel industry



\$10.19

AN HOUR

is the average pay
of a store associate



\$3,328

REPLACEMENT COST

to find, hire, and train someone
to replace a retail employee

5

Perspective is important

Generally speaking, children don't grow up dreaming of working in a c-store. C-stores aren't exactly viewed as exciting workplaces—and when they are, it's probably due to a news story about a recent robbery. To keep your employees from finding other, more glamorous employment, you have to show them the benefits of working in the c-store industry. More than 85% of Americans who have worked in a c-store say the experience helped them develop a foundation for their careers, according to NACS. Even if your employees don't see themselves staying in the industry, they're more inclined to stay longer if they see the value their job offers. Helping your employees develop their customer service, interpersonal, and leadership skills can go a long way toward increasing their satisfaction.

6

Employees must feel valued

Employees don't want to feel like a cog in the wheel. They want to feel valued. According to Gartner, employees feel happiest and most engaged when they understand what's expected of them, have the tools they need to do their best, and feel like they have a voice in the company. When employees feel appreciated and confident, they are more likely to stay with your store. Spending time with each of your employees, getting to know them, and letting them know you appreciate their hard work are small actions that can make a huge impact on employee satisfaction and ultimately retention.

7

Feedback helps

Performance reviews have gotten a bad rap over the years. Managers often envision their employees groaning inwardly at the thought of a face-to-face meeting on their performance, but in fact, employees want and need feedback. They like to hear that they're doing a good job, and they welcome the opportunity to discuss any thoughts or concerns they may have. It doesn't all have to be positive feedback, either. If there are issues with an employee's performance, it's important to talk about them and provide specific action steps the employee can take to fix them; it's possible the employee isn't aware anything is wrong. Effective feedback shows employees that you're invested in their growth and success.

8

Training is essential

In the c-store industry, training is a must. If you want your employees to do their job well, they must be shown how. But there are other benefits as well. Training can help new employees develop relationships with those training them. They learn not only how to run the cash register, but also where they fit in with team. They can see how their role affects the entire store. When employees understand their responsibilities and goals, retention rates go up. It's important to remember that training should be ongoing and even long-term employees should be offered opportunities to learn and grow. This increases engagement—and engaged employees are more likely to stay with their current employer.



Creative Strategies for Retaining Your Employees

It's not always easy to offer a higher salary or better benefits. Here are a few creative ways you can retain your top performers.

- 1 / ESTABLISH A MENTORING PROGRAM.** Providing not just a job but a career is key to employee retention. Through a mentorship program, high-performing employees can learn how to take their career to the next level. You're helping your employees grow and develop—and ensuring a pipeline of qualified candidates for future opportunities within your store.
- 2 / OFFER FLEXIBLE WORK HOURS.** In the service industry, more than two-thirds of all employees are under 35 years old. Most of them are millennials, who are known for valuing flexibility in the workforce. Respecting your employees' desire for work-life balance and allowing flexibility when building schedules will help keep your employees loyal.
- 3 / INCENTIVIZE PERFORMANCE.** Everyone likes to be recognized for a job well done. Your employees want and deserve to be rewarded for going above and beyond or hitting specific benchmarks. You may not be able to offer monetary incentives such as bonuses, but a small token of your appreciation or even a simple "Thank you" can go a long way.
- 4 / CREATE A WARM, INVITING, AND SAFE WORKPLACE.** People spend a lot of time at their jobs. If you want to keep your employees, your workplace needs to be as warm and welcoming as possible. In addition to ensuring your store is clean, think about how you can build a fun environment that values teamwork. In the c-store industry, it's especially important to ensure your employees feel safe and secure as well.

Q&A with Andrew Havens

Regional Account Manager, Red Bull

Q. GAMA has a deeper connection with Red Bull than just a vendor/client relationship. What do Red Bull and you in particular value most about your association with GAMA?

A. At Red Bull, we know that partnering with retailers on helping them develop their overall business is a winning proposition for all. Over the years, GAMA and Red Bull have built a partnership that spans the organization, from the corporate office to the individual members. The shared vision of GAMA and Red Bull results in wins for both brands and ultimately benefits customers served across the greater Austin marketplace. The mutually beneficial partnership ensures both companies can maximize the value of the relationship.

Q. How old is GAMA's relationship with Red Bull as a vendor? What is the common thread that you feel ties the two entities?

A. The partnership with GAMA began in 2001 when Red Bull launched in the greater Austin area. A promise of exceptional service and offerings to customers has been the common thread that has tied the two organizations together since day one. Consumers today are looking for functional products, and Red Bull's premium offering provides GAMA members a high-profit

opportunity. Red Bull further seeks ways to partner with GAMA members to offer programs that provide customers a compelling reason to shop more often.

Q. Tell us more about the philanthropic endeavors of Red Bull.

A. Making a positive impact on the Austin area is important to both Red Bull and GAMA. GAMA has provided multiple ways for Red Bull to support its local charity efforts, such as the yearly golf tournament and other events.

Apart from that, Wings for Life was founded in 2004 by Red Bull founder Dietrich Mateschitz and his friend Heinz Kinigadner with the mission to find a medical cure for spinal cord injuries. Today, Wings for Life is among the world's leading funders of research projects into cures for spinal cord injuries, including 20 active projects in the United States. The foundation's annual event to raise money and awareness for the cause is the Wings for Life World Run, the only global simultaneous race where participants compete against others from around the world and one global winner is named. Whether walking, running, or rolling in a wheelchair, everyone can participate via an app. For further information and to register for the next race on May 5, visit wingsforlifeworldrun.com.





Q. What can a GAMA member do to ensure the success of the GAMA-Red Bull association?

The energy drink category will continue to provide big growth for packaged beverages, and Red Bull is the No. 1 energy drink brand in the United States. GAMA members should make sure they capture their fair share of this growth by working with their sales rep to discuss ideas to increase sales and benefit from promotional programs to grow business. GAMA members have an opportunity to tap into POS at retail capitalizing on Red Bull's involvement with local events such as Moto GP, the Austin City Limits Music Festival, and the annual F1 race.

Q. What sets Red Bull apart from the competition? What value does it bring to the table for GAMA?

A. Red Bull is the original energy drink brand, having created the category more than 30 years ago. Red Bull has a legacy with strong growth year over year, innovation that leads, and partnership opportunities for retail that make a real difference to store customers. Red Bull's premium brand and functional offering provides retailers with consistent growth and higher profitability.

Q. Does Red Bull need any support from GAMA in the coming months?

A. Red Bull closed out 2018 with strong growth across the brand's entire portfolio. In 2019, GAMA members can expect accelerated growth and more product innovation than ever before from Red Bull. Two new Red Bull Editions offerings are launching January 28 (the Red Bull Peach Edition and the Red Bull Pear Edition Sugarfree), both in 12 fl. oz. single-serve cans. Providing an additional choice for consumers looking for smaller servings, the Red Bull Blue, Yellow, Green, and Coconut Editions will be sold in 8.4 fl. oz. single-serve cans alongside 12 fl. oz. single-serve sizes. And, building on the success of the Red Bull Summer Edition offerings, Red Bull Summer Edition Beach Breeze will launch nationwide on April 29 for a limited time to give wings to the 2019 summer season. The Red Bull Editions continue to stand for taste and choice and are consistently a vital contributor to overall energy drink category growth. These new product offerings along with Red Bull's limited edition special cans are a great opportunity for GAMA members to drive incremental sales in 2019. Reach out to your sales rep regarding opportunities to leverage these new SKUs and for ways to capture full portfolio growth! ✨

Photo captions: David Coulthard in action at the Red Bull F1 Show Car run at the state Capitol in Austin in August 2011; attendees at the Austin City Limits Music Festival in October 2017; Neha Husein of Just Drive gives her presentation with mentor Paco Kuhlmann at the Red Bull Launch Institute during SXSW in March 2018; Red Bull offerings; official Red Bull logo.

Industry Update

by STEVE KOEBELE



THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA informed you that the Texas Legislature arrived at the Capitol in Austin and “began” work back on Tuesday, January 8. Sure, that is when the regular legislative session formally

began. However, the more precise timing of actual work is much different.

Throughout 2018, all of the standing committees of the Legislature received information and testimony during hearings that helped members develop their legislative bills. Also, the committees recently published reports that show their findings and analysis on matters of public policy. These reports forecast both direction of sentiment and the substance of forthcoming legislation. For example, the Central Texas area served by GAMA members received historical amounts of rain during the last 12 months. So, focusing on natural disasters and heavy flooding, various committees made interesting recommendations:

- The state should continue to invest in improving and maintaining infrastructure. The devastating effects of flooding activity provides a rare opportunity to combine state and federal funding to make critical investments in flood control and mitigation projects that will reduce the impact of future storms.
- Create regional recovery directors to coordinate with the Texas Department of Emergency Management for essential service remediation (e.g., debris and waste removal) during a federally or state-declared state of emergency.
- Allow automatic suspension of local homeowners association covenants and restrictive bylaws during the period of a federally or state-declared state of emergency and continuing through a recovery period of one year post-declaration.
- Offer Good Samaritan protections to members of response teams requested by local officials following a disaster, without regard to the status of the declaration. This would increase recovery team membership, aiding reconstruction in the event of a natural disaster.
- Consider increasing the funding of the Texas Division of Emergency Management to allow for the employment of skilled recovery experts to enter a devastated area and work to mitigate suffering while FEMA ramps up its services.
- The Legislature should examine efforts to require all residential maps to be updated to reflect current flooding models that clearly indicate the area’s flood-risk level rather than its mere location in the floodplain.



Austin flooding
Photo Credit: City of Austin



Although many areas of the state are not likely susceptible to flooding, homeowners should still be made aware of any potential flooding risks.

- The Texas Department of Transportation must coordinate with the Legislature to ensure the proper infrastructure exists to provide safe avenues for Texans to safely travel during evacuations.
- A single, web-based source of comprehensive information that outlines state emergency operations during times of disaster and emergency, managed by the Texas Department of Information Resources, may become a valuable and useful instrument government officials have to effectively communicate with their constituents.
- Overall, businesses in the community treated Texans fairly in the wake of the Hurricane

Harvey disaster. Because future disasters are inevitable in Texas, the Legislature must continue to ensure that the Office of the Attorney General has the tools and resources necessary to educate businesses and properly enforce consumer protection laws, including the price-gouging statute.

With a membership exceeding 500 stores and spanning multiple Central Texas counties, the GAMA member geographic footprint includes significant flooding, hail, and water exposure. During the next several months, GAMA will continue to provide you with information on state legislation of specific interest to your business and family. As always, the GAMA board and staff will closely monitor new laws, policies, and other matters that are important to you. 🌟

Steve Koebele is a principal lobbyist at Texas Counsel and provides public policy representation, counseling, and advocacy for a diverse range of clients composed of market leaders in their respective industries.



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What's HOT What's NOT



1 / Giant 'Hires' Robotic Assistance

Giant Food Stores thinks "Marty" is quite the employee, so much that the company is putting the autonomous robot in 172 locations, the Washington Post reports. When Marty finds a spill or hazard, the robot verbally communicates to human workers and customers about the potential danger. The robot also scans shelves for missing items and preforms price checks between the shelf ticket and product bar code, said Patrick Maturo, manager of store optimization at Ahold USA. Stores in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia will receive their own Marty robot. Giant's parent company has plans to add around 500 robots to Martin's, Giant, and Stop & Shop locations over the coming months. At Giant, the robots will be in place within six months.

Source: NACS | nacsonline.com

2 / Buc-ee's Opens First Store Outside Texas

A company known for its massive c-stores has come to Alabama to open its first location outside of Texas.

Buc-ee's unveiled its new location on Interstate 10 near the Alabama coast Monday. Buc-ee's founder Arch Aplin attended the opening. He tells WKRG-TV the company is looking at additional sites in Alabama east of Birmingham in Leeds on Interstate 20 and in Auburn on Interstate 85.

The company was founded in 1982 and is based in Lake Jackson, Texas. Its 34 other stores are mostly clustered around cities in eastern Texas, particularly Houston.

Source: CBS-Austin | cbsaustin.com



Photo Credit: Buc-ee's

3 / Kraft Opens Grocery Store to Support Government Workers

Kraft opened a grocery store pop-up for four days in January in Washington, D.C., to support a program called "Kraft Now Pay Later" that helps federal government workers during the government shutdown. Kraft stepped in to help them stock up on staples like Kraft Mac & Cheese, Kraft Natural Cheese, Kraft Singles, Kraft Salad Dressings, Kraft Mayo, and Kraft BBQ for their dinner tables. In return, Kraft asks workers (if they can) to pay it forward by donating to their charity of choice or someone in need once they are able to do so. An estimated 800,000 government workers were impacted by the government shutdown.

Source: CSNews | www.csnews.com

4 / Who Has America's Best Customer Service?

With more Americans than ever working in retail than in any other economic sector, Newsweek examined the "more personal factor in business success: the

ways in which many companies nurture their relationships with consumers.”

The survey, conducted with global research firm Statista, analyzed data in 141 retail categories, including c-stores, supermarkets, and drugstores, to find the companies with the best customer service. The top three companies in the c-store, pharmacy/drugstore, and supermarket channels were QuikTrip, Wawa, and Sheetz.

Source: NACS | nacsonline.com



5 / Investing in Employees

In December’s episode of Convenience Matters, “Employee Training for Success,” hosts Carolyn Schnare of NACS and Donovan Woods of the Fuels Institute talked with Jeff Kahler, president of Ready Training Online (RTO), about the importance of consistently training new employees.

With customers in and out of a convenience store in less than four minutes, it’s even more vital that retailers maximize the guest experience. From an operational standpoint—the guest experience—employees need to know how to handle the kinds of issues that come up during a shift, such as when to open a new cashier line, how to greet them with eye contact, etc. Ongoing training beyond onboarding also tells employees that you care about their career development. “Training really runs hire to retire, so that employees of all levels are always learning,” Kahler said.

In November’s episode of Convenience Matters, “Rewarding Work Featuring Mike Rowe,” NACS hosts Jeff Lenard and Carolyn Schnare discuss jobs

with Mike Rowe, CEO of mikeroweWORKS Foundation, at the NACS Show. Part of Rowe’s passion in life has been to remind America about the “number of people who are doing things that are out of the limelight and spotlight who are actually satisfied in their work and engaged in their work.”

The c-store industry isn’t often thought of as a starting point for someone’s career or as a full career, but it should be. “I think your industry—and really every industry—can do a better job of telling its own story,” Rowe said, reminding listeners that “where a person’s career starts is absolutely as important as where it ends up.”

The podcasts can be downloaded on iTunes, Google Play, and other podcast apps. You may also listen and subscribe at www.conveniencematters.com.

Source: CSNews | www.csnews.com

6 / Americans Ready to Eat 1.3 Billion Chicken Wings

The National Chicken Council projects that Americans’ consumption of chicken wings will hit an all-time high at 1.38 billion wings during Super Bowl LIII weekend, as the Los Angeles Rams and New England Patriots battle for the Lombardi Trophy. This figure is up 2%, or about 27 million wings, from 2018.

In addition, American adults say they will spend an average \$81.30 for a total of \$14.8 billion as they watch the Super Bowl. “You don’t have to be a football fan to celebrate the Super Bowl,” said NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay in a press release.

Source: CSNews | www.csnews.com

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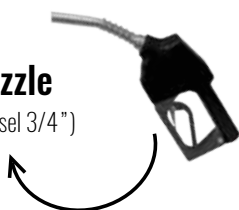


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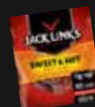
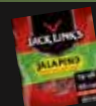
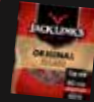
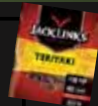


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