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Gaming dollars continue to rise

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

Over \$5.6 billion has been fed into video gaming machines across Illinois since the first six months of this year.

That's equivalent to 11% of the state's fiscal year 2024 budget.

Since the first video terminals went live in 2012, Illinois had collected over \$4.1 billion in gaming taxes and another \$762 million has been distributed to the counties and municipalities where gaming is allowed.

At the mid-year mark, the Illinois Gaming Board (IGB) reports the state has collected over \$420 million this year, an increase of over 8.2% from the prior year.

The portion of the net terminal income collected by the state that goes back to the municipalities so far this year comes out to \$72.49 mil-

lion, a figure that represents around \$283,700 to local communities who put the cash toward town improvements and citizen assistance programs.

According to data provided by the IGB there was \$16.49 billion played from the initial \$5.6 billion player investment, an increase of \$6.19 million played. And, the increase of dollars going into the machines is up \$38.6 million from the same time frame in 2022.

For those lucky enough to hear the ding, ding, ding of the winning bell, the payout so far this year is just over \$4.15 billion, roughly 53% of the total payouts made in 2022.

The increases could be attributed to additional licenses and machines going on-line, amounts being played and cashed out. Whatever the reason, the state continues to cash in and that means local municipalities are too.

When it comes to the trio of towns that make up the Coal City area, the village of Carbon Hill has received \$15,635.52, Coal City has collected \$46,286.57 and the village of Diamond leads the pack in revenue at \$59,844.68.

IGB data shows a slight decrease in revenue for Coal City and it corresponds with initial investment and amounts played, but players took more home in the last six months than they did between January and June 2022.

Braidwood has collected \$43,736.10 so far this year and Wilmington's take of gaming revenue is at \$118,206.20.

Out of the 20 licensed establishments in the city of Wilmington, 32% of the revenue has been generated by two license holders—TA Operating on Lorenzo Rd. and Birdie's Cafe on West Baltimore.

The top gaming sites in the village of Coal

City and Braidwood are Emmy's Cafe and in Diamond that distinction goes to the new Gas N Wash that saw game play top \$5.6 million an initial \$1.8 million.

Each month, the IGB posted a gaming report that put the final totals on how much money went in, how much was played and the amount cashed out for the month. The data, as posted, provides an overview of the past six months.

Here's what is reported locally:

- Braidwood—eight establishments with 44 terminals. Amount in \$3,600,075, \$10,448,602.04 played, \$249,591.38 cashed out, state share \$253,669.34.

- Carbon Hill—two establishments with 11 terminals. Amount in \$997,157 in, \$3,145,351.45 played, \$684,647.54 cashed out, state share

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Team Rollin Coal makes its mark in Five-0 Race

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

What started out as a rough night on the race track, turned to gold for Brandon Larson and Team Rollin Coal.

Larson, a patrol officer with the Coal City Police Department, was behind the wheel of the #900 car in the annual Law Enforcement Torch Run Five-0 Racing event held at the Grundy County Speedway to benefit Special Olympics Illinois.

There were 26 cars registered in the July 22 race and Larson crashed just before lap two in his eight-lap preliminary heat.

Officer Mike Imhof, the second member of Team Rollin Coal, said Larson was running along the wall when he was pushed into it.

The vehicle sustained damage and just when it appeared that might be the only action Larson and car #900 would see that night, his crew took action.

Bob Davis and his team from Bob's Advanced Auto & Tire got to work and in short order had the damaged bumper off the car, banged out a few dents and even swapped out the battery for the one that was in Davis' tow truck to ensure Larson could get back to racing.

With the car in working order, Larson was able to get into the 25-lap main event and started in the back.

When the green flagged waved, Larson took off and when the checkered flag waved it was Larson crossing the finish line in first place to mark his racing debut.

The win came with a trophy and a place in the feature race.

Larson finished seventh overall and Team Rollin Coal was 15th in total fundraising with \$3,650 raised for Special Olympics.

The overall winner—racing and fundraising—was Illinois State Police Racing who collected over \$16,400 for the cause.

The event raised more than \$151,300 for Special Olympics Illinois, a not-for-profit organization offering



COAL CITY POLICE patrol officer Brandon Larson captured first place in one of the main races during the Law Enforcement Torch Run Five-0 Racing event to benefit Special Olympics Illinois. Larson [from left] was cheered on by a large group including Chief Chris Harseim and Team Rollin Coal teammate officer Mike Imhof.

athletic competition for more than 55,000 athletes with disabilities.

Coal City Police Chief Chris Harseim said everyone involved in the event had a great time supporting the drivers and a good cause.

In order to enter the race each participating car had to raise \$500 for Special

Olympics. The more money raised the higher starting position the car receives.

Grundy County Sheriff's deputy Ken Unland was sixth in fundraising with \$8,525 collected, securing him a spot in the final race. He finished fifth overall.

The Grundy County Sheriff's Office had two cars

registered in the event. The car driven by deputy Chad Hrechko finished ninth overall and 10th in fundraising with \$7,130 collected.

The vehicles entered by the Coal City Police Department and Grundy County Sheriff's Office were

SEE RACE, PAGE 2



RESIDENTS IN DIAMOND and Wilmington will see a specially outfitted van driving its streets next week. The digital survey vehicle will be capturing road data the towns can use to develop a pavement management plan. The cost of the survey is being covered through a grant received from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Pavement plan starts with road survey

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

A digital survey vehicle will be traveling the streets of Diamond and Wilmington in the coming week as it collects data for a road assessment and pavement management plan.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning [CMAP] is funding the study and plan development for the two towns.

"We are excited with the opportunity to create a pavement management plan professionally by experts in the field," Diamond Mayor Terry Kernc said.

The process is slated to begin next week so residents will likely spot the specially equipped van driving up and down city streets.

Data collected from the drive will be used to develop a plan the town leaders can use to schedule roadway upgrades based on pavement conditions.

CMAP has contracted

AECOM and Applied Research Associates, Inc. [ARA] to complete the roadway assessment.

ARA will conduct the evaluation with one of its high-tech evaluation vehicles.

According to a release from the company, ARA will navigate its way at posted speed limits through the streets of each town to "capture high quality digital images and laser data of pavement surfaces."

The data will then be used to perform an analysis of the condition of the roadways.

"Lasers on the digital survey vehicle can measure the change in road surface within two-thousandth of an inch or roughly 1/2 the thickness of a piece of paper in a single pass to identify cracking, rutting,

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