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"Some of those players are still to this day playing with us each Monday night," he said.

Bingo is regulated by the Missouri Gaming Commission, the same agency that is considering Cape Girardeau as a finalist for the state's 13th casino gaming license. It recently

held a public hearing at the River Campus. There are currently 350 licensed charitable bingo operations statewide, according to the gaming commission.

Eight organizations have bingo licenses in Cape Girardeau County: the Knights of Columbus Council 1111, Cape Girardeau Elks Lodge, Cape Girardeau Kiwanis Club, Knights of Columbus Council 6405 in Oak Ridge, Notre Dame Home and School Association and Notre Dame Athletics Booster Club, St. Mary Cathedral Home and School Association and the Jackson and Cape Girardeau Optimist Clubs. Most of them operate out of Bingo World.

"We are concerned for some of those groups that depend on bingo for profits to fund their local community projects," Basler said. "If they have to give up their night of bingo, they are unsure how they will fund those community projects."

Staffed by the organizations' members, bingo is the main source of revenue for most of them. Statewide bingo annual gross receipts have steadily dropped \$59.4 million since 2000, totaling \$102.4 million in fiscal year 2009, according to the gaming commission.

The gaming commission requires bingo licensees to report quarterly their sales of cards; miscellaneous sales of items like daubers; payouts; what they're depositing into the bank; and where money raised through bingo is spent, said Rachel Farr, acting charitable games manager.

Bingo is taxed at a rate of 0.002 percent per bingo card face. Pull tabs, sold by some organizations that also offer bingo, have a 2 percent tax on gross receipts.

In 2009, the state received \$2.1 million in tax revenue from bingo; \$50.4 million was awarded in bingo prizes; and more than \$10.5 million was donated to organizations and charities.

Kiwanis Bingo Committee chairman Dan Niswonger said that since the club started holding bingo, it has donated more than \$2 million to local organizations and projects, including the Network Against Sexual Violence, Mississippi Valley Therapeutic Horsemanship, Discovery Playhouse and children's athletic and educational programs. Kiwanis Park was developed with bingo revenue, he said.

"Kiwanis, Optimist, Elks, every penny we make goes right back into the community," Niswonger said. "It doesn't go into corporate coffers."

Bingo revenue from the St. Mary Cathedral Home and School Association provides funds for special projects the school couldn't otherwise afford, said principal Mary Straatman.

Since starting bingo when Bingo World opened in 2001, the revenue has paid for repairs, technology, furniture and equipment at the school. Bingo also helped fund the construction of a

Written by Administrator

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new addition at the school, Straatman said.

Tom Reinagel, who designed and built Bingo World, said he studied the bingo industry before marketing the venue to local groups.

If a casino did affect bingo, "I think it will be short-term," said Reinagel, who is no longer involved with the Bingo World facility but does volunteer with the Elks bingo on Tuesday night. "Bingo players are unique, and they're good people."

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