



Carnivals, concessionaires and fairs continue to find creative revenue streams

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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UNITED STATES — The carnivals and concessionaires that rolled out portable food operations at their winter quarters, empty parking lots and other open spaces have been joined by others — even a trio of fairgrounds on the West Coast. While some of these culinary operations are open one day a week, others are around all weekend and some are going the distance seven days a week. All are getting positive encouragement and praise from those supporting their creative operations and traditional carnival food offerings.

In the California, The **Merced County Fair**, Merced; **Alameda County Fair**, Pleasanton; and the **Big Fresno Fair** have joined the ranks of those offering space on their fairgrounds to house food trailers. This enables food concessionaires to fill the public's appetite for fun, crave-worthy fair food while generating some revenue for providers.

The first to do so was the Alameda County Fair. **Jerome Hoban**, CEO, came up with the idea to help position the fair as top-of-mind for their community residents. The staff, working with their on-site concessionaire, **Comcast Spectacor**, developed a set menu that customers can order online all week for pickup on Friday. The first week, serving a BBQ ribs dinner, they projected 200 dinners, but 350 were actually processed. The second week, offering a beef brisket platter, the goal of 600 was easily broken. The contactless setup includes a food

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Promoting itself as providing drive-thru carnival food fun, Skelly's Amusements has four food trailers operating at its winter quarters in Williamstown, N.J. COURTESY SKELLY'S AMUSEMENTS



New owner steps in with four-year plan

More than hope for Indiana Beach

AT: Tim Baldwin

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MONTICELLO, Ind. — In a year of continuing unsettling news, bright spots are certainly welcome. The late April announcement that a buyer had stepped in to restore and reopen **Indiana Beach** was just the touch of optimism needed. The park has operated since 1926 and the February announcement that it would be closing permanently was a blow to the surrounding community and park fans everywhere.

New owner **Gene Staples** has found himself in the spotlight, immediately thrust into celebrity status. With a background in real estate development and hospitality, the businessman had the right tools to purchase the closed park from California-based **Apex Parks Group** and address its needs. Self-described as an amusement park junkie, Staples saw it more than just a business venture; he found it a cause to

preserve a piece of Americana.

"I have the opportunity to step in and make a difference," he said. "The family-run amusement parks are slowly becoming extinct creatures. The small parks and medium-sized ones such as [Indiana Beach] are becoming lost. This one hits a little closer to home, having been there as a child and taking my own four children there over the years."

Having watched a local children's park, **Kiddieland**, in Melrose Park, Illinois, close in 2009, he knew such places can't be replicated. Staples, who attended the auction, was sad to see it go. Had he the clairvoyance to know at the time that he would be later purchasing Indiana Beach, he admits he would have purchased some attractions.

To witness a second park closing was not going to happen on his watch.

"I had the means and ability to reach out to Apex. They did some amazing things with the park over the past few

years and invested a bunch of money into the infrastructure issues when they first got the park," Staples said. "They really wanted to see the park saved. It was viable with the right structure."

Staples examined the facility, its condition and the attractions and found it could financially work for him and his team. He also mentioned that he worked with White County officials and acknowledged them for stepping up and working with him on the project, aiding in completing some infrastructure issues Apex was not able to complete.

The emergence of the coronavirus outbreak put any official announcements on hold. During that time, social media posts sparked interest from the public. Staples was pleased by the response.

"We got a ton of feedback from the Indiana Beach Nation support group," Staples noted. "We read their comments and

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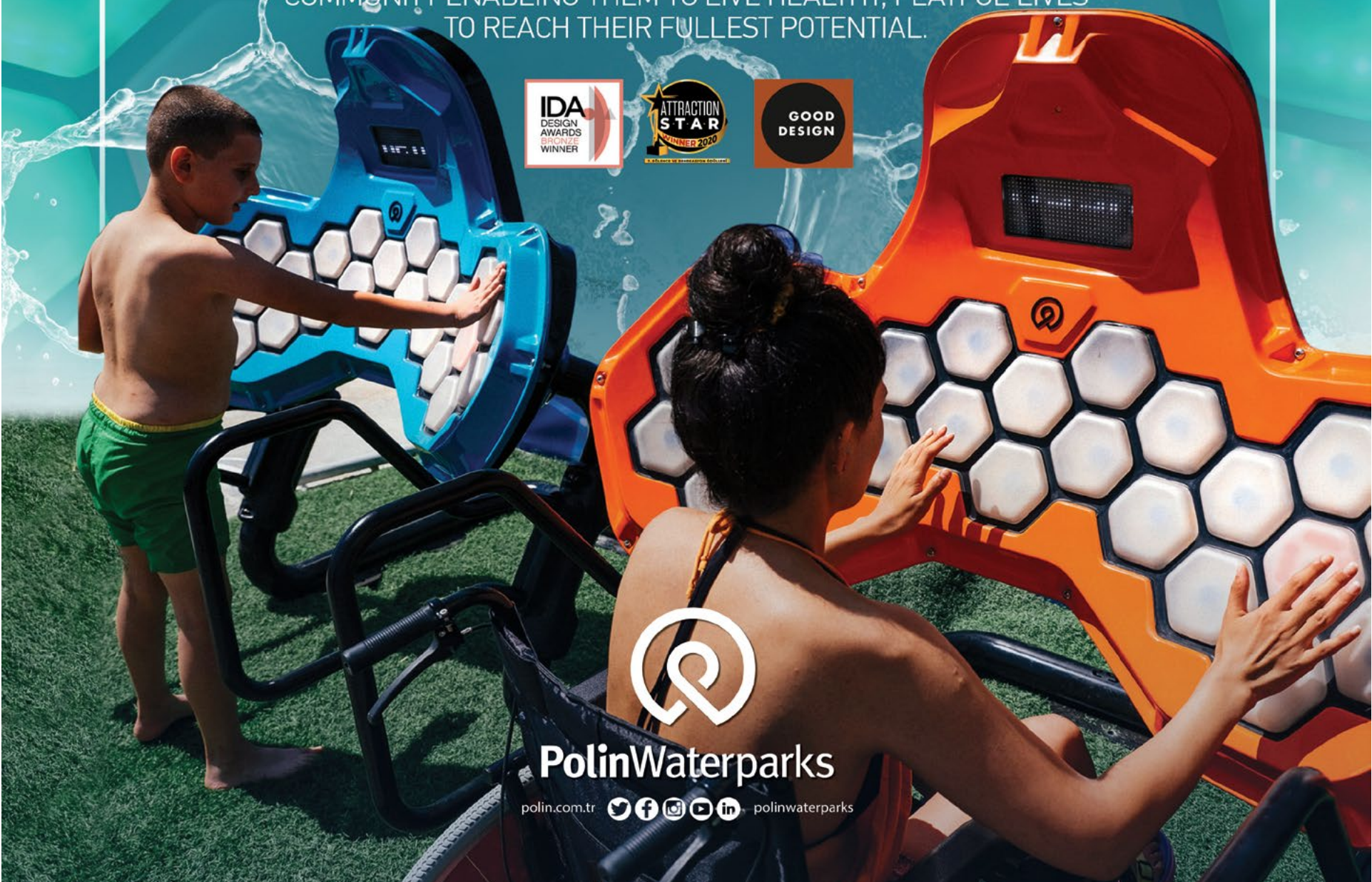
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At left, Molnar's Concessions, based in Austintown, Ohio, is a family-run business, known for their legendary cinnamon rolls. At right, positioning themselves at the intersection of two busy roads in Ruskin, Fla., is Big Easy Concessions, owned by George and Alieta Mitchell for 51 years. They sell a little bit of everything as evidenced in the picture. COURTESY MOLNAR'S CONCESSIONS, BIG EASY CONCESSIONS

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pick-up place, along with a separate beer and wine location. Local wineries have been brought into the mix, along with frozen margaritas and growler refills. The fair even provides "selfie-spots" so purchasers can immortalize this unique experience, while practicing social distancing.

"Fair-centric" is how Angel Moore, vice president of business development described the concept. "It's been great. It made us realize how much we miss them (fairgoers) and how much they miss us. This has been great for our team, an extra push, a breath of fresh air, an adrenaline rush."

Next on the food menu are corn dogs as customers are asking for this staple-of-the-fair food item. The fair is also exploring more drive-in options as the year continues.

"As fairs were canceling, we saw a need for our vendors. It is important that we keep them whole, as part of our fair family," explained Lauri King, deputy director, Big Fresno Fair. "This is how they make their living."

To try to ease the pain and help concessionaires survive during these hard times, Fair Food Feature! was created. "It

all started with Country Fair Cinnamon Rolls, which was a great success. Then we worked to expand it to include others. Our community loves their fair food — so this provides them a great opportunity to get their fair food fix while supporting local businesses. It's a win-win!" said King.

Each Friday through Sunday, the fair has anywhere from one to three participating vendors in the drive-thru only operation, set up in the area normally used for the carnival midway. Queuing that snakes through the grounds — and has taken up to three hours — does include a separate gate exit. Recently Lawson's Concessions' colossal corn dogs, Dippin' Dots, and Pepe's Mariscos fresh Mexican food were present. Over the recent Memorial Day weekend, Big Bubba's BBQ was added to the food mix. Originally designed as only a month-long event, the fair plans to continue to provide Fair Food Feature! as long as there is support and vendor participation.

King, when asked about community response said, "It has been amazing. We are giving people a little bit of sunshine at the end of the tunnel. It is flowing smoothly." Masks are worn and social distancing is

safely practiced.

It helps to have a food concessionaire live in a fair's neighborhood. That's how Fair Food Fridays came about for Teresa Burrola, CEO of the Merced County Fair. "Will you do it on Fridays only?" she asked her neighbors, Rawlings Concessions, who live a block away. They agreed, bringing in their Log Cabin Kettle Corn, with corn dogs, for a lower percentage, "pandemic pricing," as the fair calls it. "It was huge," said Burrola as 1,800 corn dogs were sold opening weekend. "It kinda took off. I can't wait until this weekend!"

The fair is keeping with offering only food specific to the fair, like County Fair Cinnamon Rolls, which were part of the second weekend's offerings, as well as funnel cakes, French bread pizza and of course, cotton candy. The fairgrounds are easily accessible, allowing cars to travel through. As they say on their Facebook page, "Just because there isn't a fair this year doesn't mean you still can't get your Fair Food fix!"

The Great New York State Fair, Syracuse, recently jumped into the food vendor ring with its New York State Fair Food Fest. This past month the venue's orange parking lot has been

home to three different drive-thru stands. Villa Pizze Fritte, a staple at the fair since 1960, usually operates out of their orange and yellow A-framed building. Joining them more recently has been Big Kahuna food stand and the Ashley Lynn Winery, all open from noon - 8 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

"It started as a Pizze Fritte revolution; now it's time for evolution," Grazi Zazzara Jr., a member of the family that owns the Villa Pizze Fritte stand, said in a news release. A Pizze Fritte (for those not in the know) includes two-foot long, sugar coated pieces of fried dough. "The community responded," Zazzara said. "People are interested and excited for this type of outing, and even more so now with so many summer festivals canceled or in question."

Masked servers walk up to cars and take orders as drivers and passengers are not allowed to leave their vehicles.

While the Martin County Fairgrounds, Stuart, Florida, is not a big venue, it has been home to three stands from locally based Deggeller Attractions, a floss, dough and grab. Their motivation for the operation was to keep employees working. "We took a shot. We've been able to give everybody a little bit

of work and are able to house them," said Cathy Deggeller.

Borrowing from the Chick-Fil-A drive-thru experience, the process worked. Those who stopped by "seemed to have enjoyed it. They had a lot of fun," said Deggeller.

Elsewhere in the Sunshine State, Big Easy Concessions, operated by George and Alieta Mitchell for 51 years, made use of a spot at the intersection of two busy roads in Ruskin, Florida. "We're trying to make ends meet, although it's not like being out," said Aleita. "As owners we have to continue on, anyway we can."

A selection of food and lemonade are the offerings available. "The people have been very, very nice and appreciative — [which is] very unusual," said Mitchell.

Perhaps the carnival may not be coming to every town this year; however, suburban Philadelphia carnival operator, Skelly's Amusements, is providing drive-thru carnival food fun at their winter quarters in Williamstown, New Jersey. The company began operations in mid-April with three trailers and basic food options, expanding selections each succeeding weekend. Since then, they have added a fourth unit. "We've had a very successful three weeks. This is a complete surprise — absolutely incredible! People are traveling to attend this event. It is a very, very nice surprise," said Mike Skelly, co-owner. "We have items that most restaurants don't have. Not too many businesses sell funnel cakes," said Skelly in a Courier Post article.

The layout is a loop around their operations with a 300-foot food area. Waits have been up to 1.5 hours, with 20 or more vehicles queuing on US 322-Glassboro



At night, Kenny's Funland is ablaze in lights. The operation is in LaFeria, Texas, about six miles north of the Mexican border. COURTESY KENNY'S FUNLAND

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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

AT NOTEBOOK: John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

Our destination is ahead



Robinson

Sad news has hit the industry the past couple months with countless fairs and festivals cancelled because of the COVID pandemic. Several amusement parks and water parks have announced they won't be opening in 2020 and are looking toward 2021.

The amusement industry has been on the edge of its seat, preparing protocols to be ready for reopening and, at the same time, wondering all along exactly when it will be able to reopen.

I remember the first time I drove to Cedar Point. The sun was setting as we got deeper into northern Ohio along our four-hour drive, and I kept thinking to myself, "I should be able to see the coasters by now." I was almost hungry to see the lights of a coaster hill illuminating the night sky and know that I was just minutes away from parking and walking through the front gates.

In so many ways, that's exactly where we are right now as an industry and a society. Since mid-March, when the majority of the major U.S. parks shuttered their front gates, we've been maintaining course under stay-at-home orders and waiting to know when we'd be close to the laughter, thrills and memories of an operating park again. In our journey, we're close enough that we know — at any minute — we're going to see the coasters operating just ahead in the distance.

Some states have already lifted their stay-at-home orders, and many others are gradually allowing businesses to begin serving customers again. Granted, they're all doing this with the reminders that social distancing protocols are still in order. But still, people are coming out of their homes and into the sunshine, visiting restaurants, city parks, aquariums and more.

Overseas, Shanghai Disneyland has opened its gates once again. Europa-Park and Efteling both announced opening dates for May. And, in the U.S., we're starting to hear opening dates for Holiday World, Mt. Olympus Theme Park, Kentucky Kingdom, even the now-saved Indiana Beach. With Tennessee lifting restrictions on capacity, effective May 22, it's allowing large attractions to reopen and Dollywood has already promised an announcement is forthcoming.

These are baby steps. However, they're still steps inching us closer to a 2020 park season and starting to reopen our beloved industry. It's been a long winding road to get this far, and not an easy journey, but the good news is that we're almost there. We're almost to that illuminated coaster hill operating in the distance and welcoming thrill-seekers and families alike.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Sam Zietz, CEO, Grubrrr

Safer navigation of parks in pandemic times

As we learn to live with COVID-19, amusement parks must consider how they will recapture the loyalty and trust of customers, whose fears of the disease likely will last long after physical distancing measures are lifted.

Parks can take advantage of their large amount of land and make careful, safety-minded decisions about the distribution of human activity in that space. Operators should target areas where customers and employees are forced to come into close contact, and then determine ways to mitigate the risk that contact poses. The obvious: everyone should be required to wear protective masks at all times unless impractical on certain rides, and recommended physical distances should be maintained in queues, ride vehicles and auditoriums.

While it may be impossible to do away with attraction queues even through the increased use of reservation systems, lines for food and beverage — and the usual human interaction during service and payment processes — can be greatly reduced and streamlined through self-service. As a payment technology company, Grubrrr (grubrrr.com) offers



Zietz

a cash-recycling self-service kiosk that eliminates extraneous human-to-human contact by replacing the cashier station. Kiosks can be spaced well apart and disperse the centralizing pull of a single cashier counter. In addition to reducing wait times and lines, they can be spread throughout the park and offer menus for multiple food locations — helping to reduce overcrowding at any one outlet.

Another solution is the QR (quick response) code menu, which allows guests to scan a code with a smartphone, download a menu and order food contact-free, without the exchange of cash or need to touch a kiosk screen. Grubrrr's app-based QR code system works with contactless mobile payment options like FreedomPay, Apple Pay, Google Pay, Samsung Pay, and credit or debit.

Park operators also may consider adding food lockers throughout their properties, enabling guests to place an order from any location, pay through a smartphone or at a kiosk, and then be directed where to pick up their food.

These and other available technologies can play a vital role in meeting the challenges of the pandemic.

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the columnist(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

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Observations from a social distance

Throughout this global pandemic, members of the amusement industry share with **Amusement Today** what's in their hearts.

"Two situations have been highly present in our working dynamic in the last many weeks: home office and full cooperation. Since the beginning of the lockdown, most of the Vekoma team members have been working remotely, a new situation for many. As a result, we have experienced a number of funny moments during video calls, including amusing background noises, unexpected appearances of family members and obviously the traditional 'tech challenges.' In the end, sharing laughs and fun moments with colleagues and friends help us to alleviate the unfortunate situation we are all facing worldwide and the anxiety it causes. Besides, although physically far from each other, it seems to me that our team members have been closer than ever, collaborating more than ever and excelling at the art of creativity and problem solving."

—Ricardo Etges,
Global Business Development Manager
Vekoma

"I think this crisis is going to cause our parks to be innovative and to approach things in fun, new ways. I think it is going to be fun to cover those innovations."

—David Mandt,
EVP Chief Engagement Officer
IAAPA

"I had the fortunate pleasure to speak on Amusement Pro and an IAAPA live video chat. I think this COVID-19 has created a lot of reflection for me and many others. It has certainly been an 'emotional roller coaster' for me in our industry. I feel that in many ways, though, this crisis has allowed our family and friends to focus on the real things that matter — each other. I have had amazing virtual happy hours with friends across the globe, via Zoom or HouseParty. I've been able to truly spend time with my two sons Ethan and Oliver (7 and 4). My wife and I get to have deep, real conversations we normally don't have time for. Perhaps this crisis has set the platform for all of us to have these special moments. I've realized life is crazy, life is short and life is precious. From friends working at hospitals holding a dying child's hand while the parents are not allowed into the room due to the current restrictions, I can't even compare to the real hardships life has given some. For those of us who are healthy, we are so fortunate. We truly need to look at this breakdown moment and create breakthroughs. We personally and professionally have been given a chance to make changes that impact who we are and those around us. I find it refreshing that I can call almost any of my industry friends and they will either pick up the phone or call back right away. In many ways this industry is my extended family. I'm so grateful for those who support me personally and professionally. Don't ever forget to hug those you love, call someone and tell them you love them and compliment those around you who make a real difference in your life."

—Phil Wilson, Executive Vice President
Extreme Engineering

"I continue to eat my weight in cookies just about every day. I've vowed to do no more baking until I lose the dreaded 'COVID 15.'"

—Martin Palicki, Publisher
InPark Magazine

"Thank you to the global attractions community for coming together... thanks not only to the committees in our global and regional associations,

but also to the individuals and entities who are working long hours to explore ideas and develop guidelines, technologies and best practices that have been shared around the world in an effort to ease the challenges of reopening. We are in this together."

—Sara Seay, Director of Sales and Marketing
Premier Rides

"Despite the entire world going through some unprecedented times these last few months, it is great to see so many come together to help find solutions on our path forward as an industry. These times will likely force many of us to reinvent how we do business, and I believe it's likely that through this innovation we will discover new ways that will be positive for everyone in the long term. From a personal standpoint, spending this much time at home has at least forced me to eat better and be more creative in getting fitness without having to go to a gym! I look forward to getting back out and riding some roller coasters as soon as possible!"

—Cory Patrick, Sales Executive
Leisure Labs

"International Ride Training, LLC, has been offering weekly Zoom 'Coffee Chats' every Friday since the first of April to give foresight to our industry based on our research during this unprecedented time. We are not only trying to assist our clients, but we have opened it to anyone in the amusement industry to get in touch with what our industry needs to do to survive when reopening with the COVID-19 virus still looming. We have offered topics such as Distance Training, Ride Operating Procedures, Ride Location Sanitization, How to Encourage Guest Distancing, and Employee Issues. We have had a multitude of attendees. Not only park management, but suppliers and manufacturers have joined us, as well.

With that said professionally, on a personal note, do you remember when you are on the road and get home and say, 'When I get some time off, I'll get to that'? It seems as if this is only a statement, as many things still linger at my house in Nashville. Or maybe my list is just very long."

—Patty Beazley, owner and managing member
International Ride Training, LLC

"I have been struck by the kindness of strangers. This pandemic has made the familiar suddenly unfamiliar, but in spite of, or maybe because of, this 'new normal,' it feels like we have locked arms to battle this thing together. I think we're seeing greater appreciation for our unsung heroes...the people who get up every day and go to work because patients need to be cared for, children and families need to eat and graduating seniors need to be celebrated. The drive-by parades and Zoom fundraisers and all of the various ways humanity is being displayed has made my heart glad. When COVID-19 is a distant memory — and let's hope one day it will be just that — I hope we don't forget that we really are our brother's keeper."

—Sandra Daniels, VP Communications
Six Flags Entertainment Corp.

"Having come through this, it has forced people to relook at technology or look at new ways of doing things and new ways to operate. That reinvigorates you to think about new things. If something like this happens again, instead of freezing and thinking, 'What do we do?' we remember those key learnings and move forward again. We're better prepared."

—Susan Storey, Director of Communications
IAAPA

—Compiled by Tim Baldwin

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

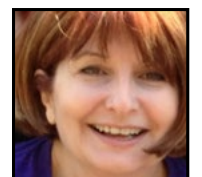
Trim 4 him



SOMERVILLE, N.J. — During the current stay-at-home restrictions, barbershops and salons throughout the U.S. have been kept closed as non-essential businesses. Len Soled, owner and president of Rides 4 U, resorted to desperate measures to finally get a long overdue haircut in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to maintain social distancing restrictions, a glove-wearing friend cut Soled's hair from within a portable privacy tent. Soled kept a mask and smock on throughout the trim.

COURTESY RIDE 4 U

Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

A tiger tamer's true stripes

The popularity of the **Netflix** docuseries *Tiger King* reminded me of a tiger tamer my husband, **Bob Minick**, hired for **Lion Country Safari** outside Atlanta, which operated 1970-84. Julius was his name. He was from Budapest and put on a great animal performance. However, Julius thought he was a comedian and would spend much of the show telling jokes. He was also in a volatile marriage.

With the tamer's wife walking out on him at least twice a month, leaving him without an assistant for his disappearing-girl tiger act, Bob volunteered me. On these occasions, I often found myself stuck onstage with a too-friendly tiger while Julius took his time finishing another joke.

When one of Julius's tigers had twin white cubs, not only did his wife skip town, but the mama tiger abandoned her maternal duties. Julius needed someone to care for the rare babies 24/7.

Once again, Bob volunteered me. I panicked initially. Fortunately, my own mother was visiting and fashioned a fabric carrier that enabled me to keep the furry newborns close. Mom wound up sewing together several carriers because the cubs vomited and pooped endlessly — leaving me stinky and gross.

Before long, I learned that Julius was shirking his surrogate tiger dad duties in order to practice his jokes for Bob in my husband's office. So I stormed in with the cubs, gently foisted one each on Julius and Bob, and wished the "new moms" good luck. I returned home for a long, hot, blissful bath.

Lottie Minick is a 46-year attractions industry veteran and co-owner of Dallas-based Minick Associates, a design firm founded by her late husband, Bob. Her monthly column features behind-the-scenes anecdotes of her own and from those who have worked in the business. Got a fun industry story? Email lottie@minickassociates.com.



A retail gift shop, working out of Kenny's Funland's balloon joint, recently opened (above left). Items include all types of plush, including fortnight llamas, along with water guns, sunglasses, plastic swords — anything that can be won at a carnival. Behind the boxes of Oreos is Amber Miller with Skelly's Amusements (above middle). Waits have been up to 1.5 hours for their carnival food treats. Kenny's Snack Shack (above right) operates out of Kenny Fox's hometown of Beardstown, Illinois. He alerts customers to the special of the day on Facebook 24 hours in advance. COURTESY KENNY'S FUNLAND, SKELLY'S AMUSEMENTS, KENNY'S SNACK SHACK

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Road. Of course social distancing protocols are in place.

"It shows you that people want to get out. People want to do something. They want to take their kids out. We have such a unique food item that they are going to end up enjoying it," said Skelly in a Fox 29 TV interview.

At the very bottom tip of southern Texas, six miles from

the Mexican border, the town of LeFeria is home to several carnival operators including Kenny's Funland. With two roll offs and a Hitchhiker corn dog stand, the Maples have been at it since the third weekend of March.

"We made a few bucks, then we had to shelter-in-place as the county got stringent," said John Maple, owner. They reopened at their winter quarters with funnel cakes and other standard carnival grab food a few weeks later.

Kenny's Funland offers a special of the day, every day.

Phase two of the operation includes a retail gift shop, working out of their balloon joint. Items include all types of plush including fortnight llamas, plastic swords — items people would normally win at a carnival.

"We've received a lot of community support from LaFeria natives," said Maple.

Kenny Fox has cooked for carnival people for more than

35 years, first with Archway Amusements, then Connor's Amusements and now, for the time being, on his own with Kenny's Snack Shack in his hometown, Beardstown, Illinois. "I'm not trying to make a lot of money, just make a living," said Fox. He offers his famous sausages in addition to other carnival staples seven days a week, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Fox offers fish every Friday and Saturday and set the prices of all food a third less expensive than if he were at a carnival or fair.

The operator has daily specials that are announced the day before on Facebook, to give supporters an idea of what to expect. "It's been a pretty good deal with a lot of repeaters. It's working out real good," said Fox.

The power of social media and a proven track record have led to phenomenal results for Molnar's Concessions. Based in Austintown, Ohio, the family-run business, known for their legendary cinnamon rolls and annual Christmas mail order business, successfully rolls on during these times. Operating on a Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. schedule, the operation takes place at their winter quarters with a full array of carnival food, drinks and treats.

Having 5,000 followers on Facebook hasn't hurt. "We only advertised on Facebook, with a boosted post, saying we are open," said Faith McGee, daughter of owner, Jim Molnar. They only had two food trailers operating, to minimize the number of employees needed to

staff them. "Everyone is wanting to get out." McGee uses a track phone for the number they listed on their Facebook post. The concessionaire has runners who deliver orders to waiting vehicles. "It is more chaotic for us," said McGee; however, the results have been worthwhile. "I thought I was at the Canfield Fair. We had one heck of a weekend. Good response."

McGee points out that there are a lot of franchises in their community; however, many residents tend not to go there. Instead, they have been coming out to support the local operation. She also is appreciative of her devoted employees. "My help is so loyal to me. They are anxious to get out, work and travel. They are ready to help me at any given time. This is one of those years that is going to be a struggle. This may be our only source of revenue this year. We have got to pay our bills."

The earliest reported creative revenue operation started March 15 in eastern Pennsylvania. Houghton Enterprises, Cochranville, is still going strong. They are now up to four locations including four food stands at Church of the Sacred Heart, Oxford, Pennsylvania. Penn Valley Shows, Middleburg, Pennsylvania, has tied in a vintage car cruise during their weekend operating hours. Now they are setting up food trailers at cancelled events where they were booked in May to help recoup some of the financial loss incurred.

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Day or night, the boardwalk is a colorful stroll. Hoosier Hurricane (top right) will have its first third retracked for the new season. Frankenstein's Castle (middle right) and Den of Lost Thieves (bottom right) are two signature attractions that make Indiana Beach special.

AT/GARY SLADE, TIM BALDWIN

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gained a huge understanding of how much this park was loved."

Prior to the pandemic outbreak, his team evaluated the property in February following Apex's announcement that the park would be closed. Through the due-diligence process, he was pleased with the current conditions, but also knew quick action was needed.

Apex filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on April 8.

"Once we went out and evaluated the park, we knew it was something we had to do," he said. "We worked with creditors of Apex and put together some amazing terms to assure it would be structured in a way to ensure

the longtime financial health of the park."

Staples remains hopeful that the park can still have some sort of season in 2020 even with the evolving situation of the COVID-19 crisis but is also prepared for the possibility that they might not debut the park again until 2021.

"We're not going to be Six Flags; we're not going to be Cedar Point. That's not what the park is. Our goal is to be one of the premier vintage amusement parks in America. With the right investments and the attention to detail, we could take what is there and create a four-year infrastructure plan and put the spit-and-polish back onto it, if you will," he shared with *Amusement Today*.

With his expertise in real

estate development, Staples is cognizant of the needs of each building. Noting some neglect in some areas, he hopes to quickly address those issues. Repairing a roof now may stem off having to replace a building later on. He understands that previous owners tended to invest in more visual impact that was marketable to guests, but the "necessary evil" of physical infrastructure is a top priority.

"Most people might overlook [some things], but I think what people will notice is we're taking what's there and making it as nice as possible. We're going to make sure we spend the money wisely to repair the infrastructure to ensure the long-term physical health of the park," he said. "That's Phase I."

Staples reports Phase II is looking at what can be added to the park to improve the park but still keep its charm.

Only a few items from the park had been sold off. The park's carousel was sold, and Staples is disappointed in that loss. The other three attractions were a simple flat ride, bumper boats and a kiddie ride, which he feels can be easily replaced.

He reports the coasters are in good shape. Indiana Beach has already been in contact with **S&S Worldwide** for parts to bring Steel Hawg, the El Loco coaster, to fully function within its maximum capacity. Approximately the first third of Hoosier Hurricane — the first of three wooden coasters built by **Custom Coasters**



Inc. at the property — is being retracked, with a completion date expected by July.

"Lost Coaster of Superstition Mountain is in excellent operating condition," he said. "Apex had realized the real issues with its operational problems and fixed that a year ago. I've been told it has been running well ever since."

More than 40 attractions are at the park. Along with the five coasters, the park also boasts a flume and several flat rides.

"All the other attractions are in good working condition," said Staples. "Some need some minor TLC, but our intention is to [preserve] those vintage rides that make it Indiana Beach."

Two fan favorites are the Frankenstein's Castle walk-through and Den of Lost Thieves dark ride. Among his personal favorites is a **Larson International** Flying Scooters called Air Crow. Like several attractions at the park, the ride is positioned on piers out over Lake Shaffer.

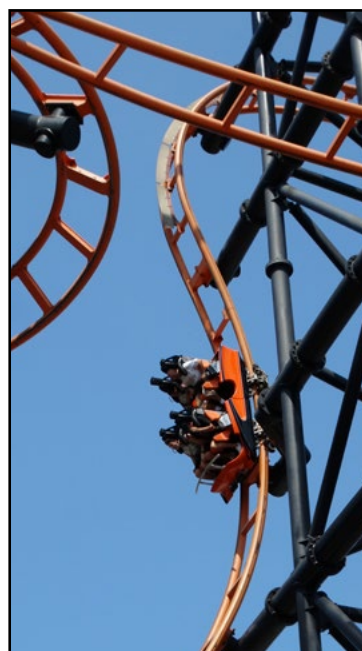
"The fact that Indiana Beach is going to be 95 years old shortly, it's irreplaceable. There is not another park that is like Indiana Beach with the stacking of the roller coasters overhead and the amount of fun and excitement shoe-horned in on the peninsula of Lake Shaffer. The way you walk on the boardwalk, the lights, the vintage signs mixed with the newer neon signs ... there's a certain romance and Americana to that park that can never be duplicated. You could try, but there's no way to duplicate the feeling that you feel when you stroll on that boardwalk, whether it is the middle of a summer day or better yet in the evening when it is lit up beyond belief," he said. "It's really one of a kind."

A hopeful reopening date of July 1 is a target, but management is aware of restrictions surrounding global events.

"We're shooting for that date until told otherwise," Staples said. "We anticipate all rides being 100 percent operational."



Gene Staples, right, looks over the infrastructure of Indiana Beach. COURTESY DON HURD



Steel Hawg is receiving new parts from S&S to increase its capacity. AT/TIM BALDWIN

PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

▶ Seabreeze's Jack Rabbit turns 100 — page 12 / Rides 4 U celebrates 25 years — page 23

Parks and attractions get creative during COVID-19 lockdowns

AT: Pam Sherborne

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UNITED STATES — Officials at amusement and theme parks across the U.S. have put their creativity skills to task since lockdowns and restrictions due to COVID-19 have kept their gates closed.

However, through technology, park teams have found ways to keep those sheltering at home, especially the children, engaged and excited about future park visits. They have created puzzles, coloring books, educational lessons and cooking classes either on their websites or Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.

Some have even found a way to, digitally, open their doors on time for the 2020 season like **Holiday World and Splashin' Safari** in Santa Claus, Indiana.

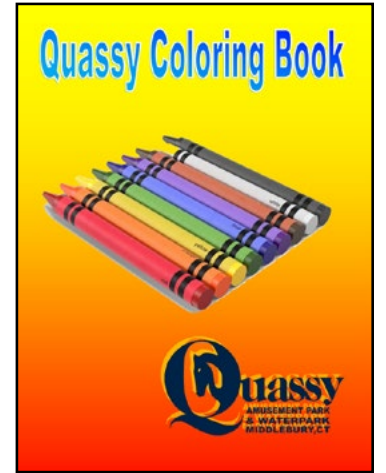
Officials there have traditionally looked forward to producing grand season openers for their guests. Realizing, however, the May 2 opener wasn't going to happen, park management decided the show must go. A digital park opening was created.

From 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., on May 2, a variety of videos were released on the park's website. Each hour, the videos changed and included park entertainment, cooking tutorials for making Holiday World food at home and interactivities and worksheets for children of all ages that could be done at home.

"Opening day is a special day that we count down toward every year," said Leah Koch, fourth generation park owner. "We can't wait until we can open our gates to guests again, but until then we're going to celebrate and help our guests bring opening day home."

Participating online guests were able to take part in a special chat with Park President Matt Eckert, Koch, and Lauren Crosby, another fourth-generation owner.

There was also an appre-



Holiday World and Splashin' Safari in Santa Claus, Indiana, created a digital grand opening (above left) for park fans since the restrictions have delayed actual park openings. **Cedar Point**, Sandusky, Ohio, has been offering virtual rides on all of the park's roller coasters including a ride on the **Magnum** (above middle). **Quassy Amusement Park and Water Park** in Middlebury, Connecticut, officials found numerous creative ways to reach out and stay in touch including this coloring book (above right) with outlines from actual park photos. COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD, CEDAR POINT, QUASSY AMUSEMENT PARK

ciation hour for all healthcare workers and essential workers.

The digital opening day event wrapped up with a fireworks show and a sweepstakes drawing for free park tickets.

Quassy Amusement Park and Water Park in Middlebury, Connecticut, has found numerous creative ways to reach out and stay in touch with their valued customers, friends and business associates by creating a variety of web-based stay-at-home projects for children.

The park staff created a coloring book with outlines from actual park photos. The coloring book could be accessed and downloaded from the park's website. A crossword puzzle was created, using the names of park rides and attractions as answers.

Quassy's in-house magician created a Quassy magic book. The staff used the park's map for a game of finding Splash the dolphin mascot that was hidden among other map details.

Officials at **Silver Dollar City**, Branson, Missouri, have released some of the park's coveted food recipes.

Recipes on Silver Dollar City's website showed fans how to make the park's popular calico potatoes dish, succotash

skillet and confetti corn salad, among others. Silver Dollar City also offered a number of children's stay-at-home activities.

Cedar Point, Sandusky, Ohio, is taking park fans on virtual rides until they are able to get on the real things.

Cedar Point, which marks its 150th anniversary season this year, has been offering virtual rides on all of the park's roller coasters including a few special night ride videos. A handful of bonus ride videos on attractions like **maXair**, **Power Tower**, the train and a few waterslides have been included.

Hersheypark, Hershey, Pennsylvania, also has been giving away virtual rides. Hersheypark coaster fans have been able to take a front seat ride on all of the 15 coasters, and that includes children of all ages because for the virtual rides there are no height restrictions. Park staff also have created a downloadable coloring book filled with some of Hershey characters. A download is available for fans to be able to design their own King Size Shake. A scavenger hunt was created to test park guests knowledge of the animals at ZooAmerica North America Wildlife Park. In addition,

animal experts have been bringing the zoo to life several times a week on Facebook Live.

And if it is animals someone is after, officials at **Jungle Island**, Miami, Florida, also has reached out to provide online educational and entertainment opportunities.

For the stay-at-home kids, **Jungle Island** has been offering new virtual online learning opportunities designed for children ages five years to 12. Each weekday, animal photos were being posted with information about each. The posts were being followed up by the lesson of the day on the park's Facebook or Instagram pages.

Themes and projects each

week have been ranging from making an alligator out of an egg crate for Everglades Exploration and building a nest while learning about birds during Spread Your Wings, Primate Practices.

Jungle Island's veterinarian, **Jason Chatfield**, the vice president of Zoological Operations, has been livestreaming via Facebook LIVE, showing off some of the facility's residents such as a baby capuchin monkey and an endangered black-and-white ruffed lemur.

The **South Carolina Aquarium**, Charleston, S.C., has been offering virtual visits by featuring programming opportuni-

▶ See COVID, page 10

Hersheypark, Hershey, Pennsylvania, has been giving virtual rides on all 15 of its coasters. COURTESY HERSHEY PARK



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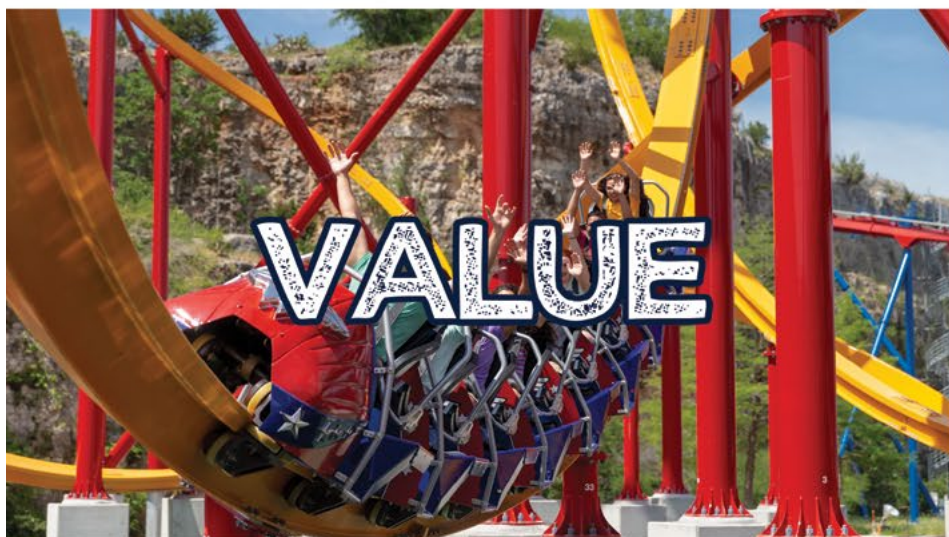


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► COVID

Continued from page 8

ties each week, which, so far, have included introductions to unique animals and habitats. Viewers are discovering how the aquarium staff cares for the animals. The facility has dedicated one day a week for Turtle Talk in the Sea Turtle Care Center.

DelGrosso's Amusement Park in Tipton, Pennsylvania, has not had to use technology to reach out to park fans. Officials there received an unusual opportunity on May 9 to use the park's parking lot to give out 4,800 gallons of milk. The milk was provided by the Blair County Farm Bureau in partnership with the American Dairy Association Northeast to host a milk giveaway. One thousand of those gallons were given away to food pantries and the remaining were handed out to anyone coming by to pick up a gallon.

The milk is produced by dairy farms seven days a week in Blair County. Organizers said there is an oversupply of milk, because of school and restaurant closures and an increased need by the communities.



DelGrosso's Amusement Park in Tipton, Pennsylvania, gave local farmers use of its parking lot last month to give away 4,800 gallons of milk. The park also has continued with its to-go lunches and dinners. COURTESY DELGROSSO'S AMUSEMENT PARK

While DelGrosso's is still not open for the season like so many of the country's amusement parks, management has continued to offer the park's Tuesdays and Thursdays dinners to go. The menu is posted online and guests need to pre-order either online or by phone. They are able to pay online or at one of the kiosks pay stations at the park.

Park officials have designed designated directions and lanes to pick up the to-go food to limit person-to-person contact. The food is given to customers in their cars.

Alabama Adventure and Splash Adventure in Bessemer, Alabama, has been constantly looking for ways to continue to interact with the local community while, at the same time, promote and practice social distancing.

To that end, the park participated in the Birmingham Mom Collective's Easter Egg Hunt project over Easter weekend. The egg hunt allowed families to hunt for eggs all around town without having to leave their cars.

Park management has kept all full-time staff on the payroll.

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Six Flags Great Adventure opens special Safari drive-through experience



JACKSON, N.J. — Six Flags Great Adventure announced that it will open its Safari adventure as a drive-through experience. This announcement follows New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy's executive order permitting drive-through events implementing social distancing guidelines. The Safari operated as a self-drive-through experience from 1974 through 2012. Since 2013, the park has offered guided truck tours of the Safari. Returning to a standalone, drive-through format enables guests to enjoy the Safari's 1,200 exotic animals from the privacy and safety of their own vehicles. To prevent overcrowding, the Safari experience requires advance registration. COURTESY SIX FLAGS GREAT ADVENTURE



DelGrosso's Amusement Park cancels 2020 season

TIPTON, Pa. — The Board of Directors of the DelGrosso Family of Companies announced on May 15 that it had decided to cancel DelGrosso's Amusement Park's 2020 season.

The board stated that many factors played a role in the decision. First and foremost, the safety of its employees and the park's guests was the top priority.

In addition, the uncertainty of when large attractions such as DelGrosso's Amusement park would be legally permitted to open was a factor. The board also stated that the social distancing protocols, reduced capacity and supply chain interruptions would combine towards making a fun,



memorable and safe guest experience very difficult to achieve.

The park's 2020 season passes and food vouchers will be honored for the 2021 season. In addition, all 2020 season pass holders will receive a bonus food credit of \$25.

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Seabreeze's Jack Rabbit wooden coaster turns 100 this season

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — Few parks can boast of a history spanning an entire century, but to have a roller coaster survive that long is exceptionally rare.

Seabreeze is one of 13 remaining examples of trolley parks. Built at the end of trolley lines to encourage business on the weekends when people weren't traveling to work, trolley parks dotted the landscape of 19th century United States. With the invention of the automobile — as well as the impact of The Great Depression, hundreds of trolley parks dwindled to the handful that remain. Seabreeze has the distinction of not only being one of the remaining examples, but one filled with charm, character and soul.

George W. Long, Jr. operated the park for the Rochester Transit Company until purchasing Seabreeze in 1946. Today the park is owned and operated by his grandchildren, the Norris family.

Jack Rabbit at Seabreeze remains the park's signature attraction, despite its age. Its first drop into a ravine and tunneled finale are what most riders admire and appreciate.

Seabreeze opened in 1879. Two wooden coasters were predecessors to Jack Rabbit's arrival in 1920. Neither of those, however, lasted even 20 years. The 100-year milestone makes this installation nothing short of extraordinary.

"Jack Rabbit has been our anchor ride for a hundred years now," said Rob Norris, president, Seabreeze. "It's been the longest-running ride at the park and is such a centerpiece and focal point to the park. Wooden coasters are like living beings — you just keep rebuilding them and refreshing them. Jack Rabbit is running today as good



Seabreeze's Jack Rabbit celebrates a 100-year milestone this season. The coaster is pictured above left in its opening year of 1920. It was the first coaster to feature underfriction wheels which allowed for higher speeds, more thrilling designs and increased safety. COURTESY SEABREEZE; AT/TIM BALDWIN

of honor in amusement park history as the oldest continuously operating roller coaster in the United States. It was also the first roller coaster to feature underfriction wheels, which ushered in a whole new world of taller and steeper hills, faster speeds and negative-G forces.

Built by Harry Baker and designed by John Miller, the coaster has seen very few changes over its 10 decades. Early on, a fire in 1923 destroyed part of the ride, along with the Old Mill, Dreamland dance hall and Hilarity Hall. The coaster and Old Mill were rebuilt and restored. In the 1980s, the trains were replaced with a new one built by Morgan Manufacturing, which still operates today. Norris feels that train has offered a smoother operation. Overall, however, the layout is one that has been enjoyed by multiple generations.

Standing 75 feet tall, Jack Rabbit's first drop plunges into a

ravine making for a larger-than-expected first drop. Track length of the overall ride is 2,130 feet, which was of respectable size for its time.

"Fortunately [most of it] is an out-and-back design with fairly straight track which makes it fairly easy to work on," said Norris. "We have a team that works on it two to three months each year. They do such a great job. It's in tremendous shape. There's not much on it older than 20 years."

In an interesting bit of irony, Jack Rabbit at Seabreeze shares a common trait with another Jack Rabbit. As noted in the MAY issue of *Amusement Today*, Kennywood's Jack Rabbit also shares a 100th anniversary this season. They are among the oldest existing coasters in the nation, if not the world.

Because of their age, as well as their iconic contribution to each park and the history of each city, both rides were designated as Roller Coaster Landmarks by American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE).

"In a time of all the new high-tech rides being built, Jack Rabbit gives us a glimpse into the past," said ACE Preservation Director David Dragun. "It's an amazing thing for Seabreeze to keep Jack Rabbit around and wonderfully maintained so future generations can enjoy it as much as past generations. It's really remarkable to have a coaster around for 100 years, and to have one this historically significant stand the test of time is incredibly noteworthy."

With such a significant

milestone, it is no surprise that Seabreeze would want to celebrate the occasion.

"We've been brainstorming ideas to celebrate the Jack Rabbit's 100th," said Scott Diamond, marketing manager, as spring was starting and prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. "As of now, we have created poster artwork and pushed the coaster facts out to social media. That artwork will likely translate over to merchandise in the gift shop. While we haven't officially set a celebration event in stone, we plan to do something commemorative at the coaster site. We've been collecting guest photos, videos and experiences through social media and will share them as buildup to opening day."

Since then, as the park works toward a revised timeframe to begin the modified season, a new idea is in the works. In recent weeks, the park has developed a sticker to acknowledge a child's first ride on Jack Rabbit.

"The 'FINALLY 48' sticker is a big rite of passage at Seabreeze! When a kid grows to 48 inches tall, they are officially big enough to ride the Jack Rabbit," said Diamond. "We created the Rabbit Riders Club to honor new inductees and celebrate the special moment. After a first ride, the guest would receive a sticker, and we also will have a photo spot/frame they stand in to have their picture taken for social media."

That photo op is being constructed now as Seabreeze gears up for the 2020 debut.



Jack Rabbit takes advantage of some ravines within the terrain (above left). At right, pictured is Rob Norris (fifth generation, his daughter (sixth generation) and his new grandchild (seventh generation). Seabreeze has been in the Norris family since 1946 when it was purchased by his ancestor George Long, who had been a carousel concessionaire at the park. The drive wheel from the coaster is now placed in the park's museum.

COURTESY SEABREEZE; AT/TIM BALDWIN



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Creativity, innovation bring in guests during restrictive measures

Drive Thru Zoo creates a revenue stream for San Antonio Zoo

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO — As Texas began its reopening process in early May, the **San Antonio Zoo**, with its large outdoor spaces, was confident it would be permitted to open following the shutdown owing to the COVID-19 crisis. To its dismay, the zoo was not included in Phase 1. The stumbling block? Handrails.

Quick thinking and a good helping of creativity offered up a Plan B. The park initiated a social media commercial on April 29. Drive-Thru Zoo was a concept that allowed visitors to experience the zoo but remain in their cars. The idea was to do it for that upcoming May weekend, Friday through Sunday.

"It sold out in less than 90 minutes," said **Tim Morrow**, president, San Antonio Zoo. "The initial reaction was way more overwhelming than we thought it would be. We knew people wanted to get out of their house, and a car was a safe way to do it, but we had no idea what the response would be. We quickly regrouped and decided to run this through the 17th. That takes us up to the Phase II of things opening."

Morrow credits his marketing team for the concept.

"We have a really fun, out-of-the-box group here. In fact, we don't even feel the box even exists," he said. "We have all kinds of crazy ideas all the time. I think you see that in our social media and PR wise."

Drive-through attractions



had proven successful in San Antonio during Christmas events in the past. Management went out and examined the available roadways and paths within the park. With substantial testing with various types of vehicles, the facility produced a viable route through the zoo. Morrow knew the route could have challenges. The zoo is more than 100 years old and is dotted with historic buildings and structures. Part of the charm of the property is to meander off the main thoroughfare onto some smaller pathways. However, when large attractions such as zoos and theme parks are designed, fire lanes are incorporated, and Morrow feels visitors in the Drive-Thru Zoo event are seeing the majority of the exhibits. The length of the entire drive is approximately 3,400 feet. Morrow estimates the length of the experience is about an hour.

"The perspective is really unique from a car," Morrow told *Amusement Today*. "We've added an audio tour to it. It's really educational. We're learning a lot about operating the zoo in a regular way from operating it as a drive-through zoo."

The zoo limits the amount of tickets sold online for each day to 600 automobile admissions. Exceptions to that are annual members and passholders who present their credentials at the zoo and can receive a discounted rate of \$32. The regular price is \$60 per car, regardless of how many people may be inside. The



Visitors to San Antonio Zoo enjoyed the animal exhibits from the safety and comfort of their cars. COURTESY SAN ANTONIO ZOO

size limit of the vehicle is clearly stated on the website.

Visitors can approach the zoo entrance from two directions. The **San Antonio Police Department** has assisted in directing the traffic into the main parking lot which serves as a "snake queue." Like a parade route, there is constant flow. From there, cars are ushered into six lanes where attendants check for tickets and see if families wish to pre-order snacks.

During the experience, an audio tour helps guests engage with the animals and environment. Throughout the journey, prerecorded tracks offer information about the animals and are peppered with "corny jokes," as Morrow calls them. They can play the audio right off the website and often people play it through the car speakers.

"The gibbons and small primates have really missed the guests and have noticed they are back," he said. "They get to show off and play with

them like when the guests are regularly here. They like that engagement, and they love getting a reaction from people."

Along the route are four snack stands where cars can pull over and receive the pre-ordered snacks or grab something on the fly. All financial transactions are cash free, reducing any tangible handling of money. Snacks include nachos, popcorn, cotton candy, pickles and drinks and come in prepackaged containers. Two restrooms are available. Guests are told ahead of time that to leave the vehicles they must wear masks and only one family is permitted in at a time.

For additional revenue, there are two small merchandise stands where visitors can purchase plush, adopt an animal, Mother's Day and Fiesta baskets and things of this nature that are quick to buy.

"At our final stop we have our mascot out there, kind of as a thank you," Morrow

said. "The response has been overwhelming with people saying, 'We came just to support the zoo and all the employees are thankful we're here.' Sometimes you take for granted what you have locally. Now that people have not had anything for six weeks, they are really appreciating the zoo. When you operate a big theme park or attraction, you never want to take guests for granted, but when you don't have any guests for six or seven weeks, it makes a big impact on your life. The mutual gratitude is really nice between everybody. Even with long waits people have been patient and thankful and very gracious."

While animal care has been ongoing during the shutdown, the zoo unfortunately had to furlough about 60 percent of the staff. This innovative concept of Drive-Thru Zoo has allowed the facility to bring back more of their employees, and they continue to add more.

Morrow noted the experience has offered the zoo itself some learning opportunities in how to engage guests. He has also found that guests who have been mobility challenged or don't tolerate hot temperatures well have been able to enjoy the zoo, which has been a nice asset.

When the state's guidelines for Phase II are determined in late May, depending upon restrictions such as 25 or 50 percent capacity, Morrow said the zoo will look at raw numbers and move forward with what offers the biggest impact in regard to both guests and financially. Drive-Thru Zoo could potentially extend for more weeks.

"We're having fun doing what we're doing."



The primates love showing off for guests (above left), whether up close or when in their cars. While driving through the zoo, visitors can hear audio tours through the car speakers or devices. COURTESY SAN ANTONIO ZOO

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Master of the band organ

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

EL PASO, Texas — At age 63, **Larry Kern** is living his childhood dream.

A retired fire chief for the **Department of Defense** at Fort Bliss, Kern no longer is chasing fires on the sprawling base that covers more than 1 million acres. Instead he is traveling up to six months out of the year with his trusted canine buddy, Pee Jay, and a classic band organ.

His love of carousel music and band organs dates back to his childhood days in Ohio.

"When I was a kid we went to the **Jackson Ohio Apple Festival** every year," he recalled. "The carnival at the festival was the **Gooding Amusement Company** out of Columbus, Ohio, and **Floyd Gooding** demanded a live band organ on every carousel he owned."

"One year my sister (**Christy**) and I were at the festival and Mom and Dad told us to meet them at the carousel at 10 o'clock to go home. Christy and I were there, but Mom and Dad were late," he said of that evening decades ago.

When their parents arrived a few minutes later, the siblings stood quietly in awe as they listened to the wonderful music coming from the carousel.

"Mom and Dad said, 'Let's go,' but we said, 'Wait a minute, we want to hear the rest of this tune on the carousel,'" Kern added.

His love affair with "The Happiest Music On Earth" had begun, and each year during his youth, he returned to the festival to hear the band organ play.

"It got in my blood," Kern added, "And both my sister and I love band organs to this day." Christy is a school teacher in Wellston, Ohio.

The music became such an obsession with him that he took a job at the annual festival helping to dismantle the carousel. That job led to another — tearing tickets on the ride's platform while it was in operation.

"As a teenager, I used to get in the car and chase that carousel to about four different locations. In my last year of high school, Gooding offered me a fulltime job so I went home and told Mom I was going to quit school," he said. An argument ensued; Kern lost and finished high school in Ohio.

It was also just after his discharge from the Air Force that Kern purchased his first band organ.

"That one was a junker, but I got it playing, traded it for another and got it going," he reminisced. "Mom said, 'I always knew you



Larry Kern tends to one of his prize band organs. COURTESY QUASSY AMUSEMENT PARK

would own one of those things."

Kern's love for band organ music was something he wanted to share with others, so he started taking a working machine to local shopping centers, grand openings and parties in Illinois and then the El Paso area. He was occasionally accompanied by his two sons at some of those venues.

In 1991, he purchased his pride and joy, a custom built Stinson 2000M from the **Stinson Band Organ Co.** of Bellefontaine, Ohio.

"This is the largest American band organ playing paper rolls in existence," he said of the road-worthy machine he has mounted in a 30-foot trailer. He has five other Stinson band organs in his personal collection, but the 2000M is largest at 16 feet long, eight feet high and six feet deep. To replace the huge band organ today would cost around \$200,000.

"It is a complete instrument in comparison to a marching band. Everything that is in a marching band is inside this instrument. It has drums, cymbals, flutes and trumpets," Kern noted. "Everything in a marching band is replicated in this machine in the form of a pipe or actual instrument itself."

With 100 music rolls in the trailer plus more than 3,000 tunes stored on a computer interface, Kern actually takes requests for songs during his annual six-month tour with the organ.

He tows the trailer from town to town, playing fairs, festivals, amusement parks and a half-dozen band organ rallies each summer. The rallies draw other organ owners and enthusiasts from throughout the country and are generally staged by the **Carousel Organ Association of America (COAA)**, of which Kern is vice president.

At larger fairs — where he has to tend to the organ up to 12 to 14 hours a day — he stays in the trailer that houses his treasured machine as he incorporated living quarters in the front.

Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

While the opening date of **Hersheypark**, Hershey, Pennsylvania, for the 2020 season is still unclear, construction on the park's planned expansion was once again underway during the first of May. Construction of the \$150 million Chocolatetown expansion had been put on hold in early April due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

Hersheypark officials said all enhanced health and safety processes and necessary operational protocols set by the state governor, the CDC and the construction industry are being carefully followed to ensure the safety of team members and the contractors on site.

The expansion encompasses several new attractions, such as a restaurant and food vendors, shops, relocated Hersheypark Carrousel and fountains. The park will also finalize their 15th roller coaster, Candyonium.

Prior to the shutdown of non-essential businesses in Pennsylvania, the original opening date for Hersheypark's summer season was May 1. Hersheypark's Springtime in the Park and the opening of the adjoining ZooAmerica were both canceled in March, and ticket holders for Springtime in the Park have been advised that their tickets will instead be honored during Hersheypark's summer season.

Officials at **Sam's Fun City**, Pensacola, Florida, were busy in early May finishing up new protocols and changes set to take place when the park opened for the 2020 season. The opening was set for May 22.

Some of these changes begin right at the gate of admission. For one thing, the park has been changed to a gated park with wristbands signifying guests have paid. Capacity has been cut to 25 percent of its limit. There is one entrance and one exit to the park attractions and all other doors will be monitored by staff. Ticket sales and wrist bands are being done from the outside ticketing booth.

In addition, guests are being screened before entering. This includes a health questionnaire, body temperature not greater than 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit and an O2 (pulse oximeter) saturation of not less than 95 percent.

Guests are to be registered and records kept in case of any necessary follow-up. Waivers excluding Sam's Fun Park from any liability regarding safety or COVID-19 are to be signed by guests.

Other changes park officials have made include additional hand-washing stations and a different pedestrian walking pattern created to help limit face to face contact.

Appropriate nose and mouth coverings must be utilized if guests are unable to social distance themselves.

At this time, the park will not reopen the high physical contact attractions such as the play zone, laser tag, and inflatables.

Prior reservations are preferable so guests are able to choose a date preference. If the reservations are not full for any given day, walk-ons are being excepted. Each group of guests are being guided by a designated ride attendant who is to ensure social distancing.

Prepaid online via credit card use will be the accepted method of payment.

In addition, guests are being provided with a menu to check off their choice of food items. It will be prepared and served to them outside to avoid lines.

Attractions of **Merlin Entertainments**, including **Legoland Resorts** and **Legoland Discovery Centers** across the globe, have shared messages of hope and gratitude to all of the essential workers on the frontline during this difficult time.

At **Legoland California**, Carlsbad, Master Model Builder **Tim Sams** used 640 Lego bricks created the words "thank you" in front of the park. The white mosaic with black script and a yellow ribbon spans more than three feet long and is nearly two feet tall.

A variety of content, along with the thank you Lego mosaic, can be found on a dedicated YouTube and Facebook page for "Making Magic With Merlin."

Officials at the **Metro Richmond Zoo**, Chesterfield County, Virginia, have begun to temporarily offer drive-through tours of the zoo on May 7.

The new tour lasts approximately one hour and allows for easy social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic.

Guests can enjoy a narrated, educational tour while in the comfort and safety of their own vehicles.

During the new experience, guests will see and learn about giraffe, cheetah, kangaroos, monkeys, chimpanzees, orangutans, penguins and many more animals.

Capacity is limited and guests must schedule visits ahead of time.

Plans for the new **Lost Island Theme Park** in Waterloo, Iowa, are moving forward. Owned by the **Bertch** family, grading and construction are underway on the \$100 million, 90-acre park. It is expected to open in 2020 with thrill rides and other family entertainment offerings.

The Bertch family also owns **Lost Island Waterpark** across from the site of the planned theme park. The water park hasn't opened yet for the 2020 season due to the coronavirus pandemic, but hopes are that it will eventually be okay to bring guests back.

Officials of the **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**, Santa Cruz, California, announced last month that the "Free Friday Night Bands on the Beach" event will be canceled this year due to COVID-19.

The company posted on its website: "We're sad to announce that due to COVID-19 the 2020 Free Friday Night Bands on the Beach concert series has been canceled."

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk offers a variety of special events throughout the year. All dates are subject to change.

The boardwalk has been closed since the county issued its shelter-in-place order and will remain closed until that order is lifted.

The boardwalk has been operating since 1907. Two of its rides are National Historic Landmarks, the 1924 Giant Dipper wooden roller coaster and the Looff Carousel.

Natural Bridge Caverns reopens, adds industry veteran Terri Adams

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Natural Bridge Caverns reopened its cavern tours May 8 after closing its doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 16.

Under Texas Governor Greg Abbott's plan to reopen Texas, the Caverns joined many businesses, including State Historic Sites and National Natural Landmarks, across the state in welcoming guests back in a safe and strategic manner.



Terri Adams

"There is no higher priority than the safety of our guests and staff. Since the onset of COVID-19, Natural Bridge Caverns has followed the guidance of federal, state, and local authorities and continues to monitor this ever-evolving situation," said Brad Wuest, president and CEO of Natural Bridge Caverns. "We are excited to resume daily operations and welcome our guests back, and we are taking every precaution needed to ensure guests and staff remain safe during their visit."

Some of the precautions included:

- Cavern tour capacities are limited to allow guests effective physical distancing between each family group.

- A dedicated cleaning and sanitation crew has been established to clean and disinfect all high touch surfaces throughout the park.

- Handwashing stations have been added around the park, and importantly, at the entrance and exit of the caverns, so guests can wash their hands immediately before and after their tour.

- Complimentary hand sanitizer is made available throughout the park and inside the cavern as well.

- Guests are encouraged to wear face coverings while they visit and to use handwashing stations and hand sanitizer.

- All team members are provided job-specific appropriate personal protective equipment (facemasks, gloves, safety glasses), have their temperatures checked before reporting to work and are always required to wear proper PPE as their position requires.

- New merchandise and food handling guidelines have

been developed.

In addition, Natural Bridge Caverns announced the addition of Terri Adams as general manager. Adams brings extensive experience in growing multifaceted family businesses into multimillion-dollar brands. The Wuest family, which has owned and operated Natural Bridge Caverns for 56 years, recruited her to assist them with future growth.

"Terri's long career in the hospitality industry makes her the perfect choice to lead us forward," said Wuest. "We were fortunate that she was available at a critical time in our growth strategy. Terri's experience working with a family-owned attraction and her experience with building a Texas brand, combined with her business acumen, capable leadership and industry insight will help with our immediate challenges and our plan for long term growth."

"Natural Bridge Caverns has been a family and fan favorite for the past 20 years," said Adams. "To have the privilege of working with this amazing family-owned business is a great honor, and I look forward to helping the team move into the next 60 years of discovery."

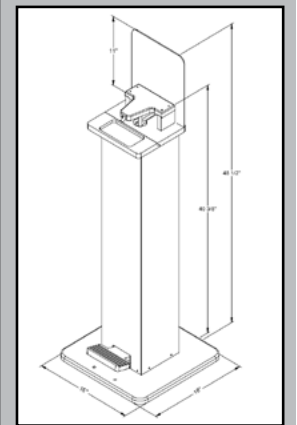
During Adams' 41 years in hospitality, she helped to grow Schlitterbahn Resorts and Waterparks from a small local waterpark to a five-city iconic Texas brand that was sold in 2019. She is the recipient of the prestigious Milton Guess Hospitality Award from the San Antonio Tourism Alliance, a recipient of the Tall in Texas Award and was inducted into the World Waterpark Association Hall of Fame.

Bob's Space Racers debuts Hands-free Sanitizer Station

HOLLY HILL, Fla. — With the world forever changing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bob's Space Racers felt the need to do its part to promote safety and hygiene within the attractions industry. Realizing that the safety of every individual is of utmost importance, Bob's Space Racers developed and manufactured the Hands-free Sanitizer Station. Made in the U.S., the only surface a guest touches on the Hands-free Sanitizer Station is the foot pedal.

With the high-volume operations of the amusement industry in mind, the stations are built to hold a refillable gallon container that can dispense more than 600 pumps of sanitizing solution when full. The fully-customizable station includes a large removable tray to prevent sanitizer solution from getting on the floor and allows for easy clean-up.

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GameChanger-XS introduced by Lagotronics Projects



THE NETHERLANDS — After the success of the regular-size GameChanger dark ride, Lagotronics Projects is now introducing the GameChanger-XS. It is an even more compact version of the GameChanger and specially designed for FECs, museums and shopping malls. A media-based, interactive dark ride, the GameChanger-XS offers interactive fun to visitors of all ages within a 400-square-foot space. The media content can easily be adapted to the audience (children/teens/adults) or be changed periodically to attract recurring visitors. In total, the GameChanger-XS comprises four sections. Every section facilitates two players, resulting in a capacity of 225 visitors per hour. After every scene, the platform moves to the subsequent scene and finally to the load and unload section. COURTESY LAGOTRONICS PROJECTS

University of Illinois offers rooftop miniature golf to its football players

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. — Adventure Golf Services (AGS) installed a rooftop miniature golf course atop the new Smith Football Center at the University of Illinois late in 2019 and recently spoke with the general trades contractor and athletic department about the concept and execution of the project.

"I think it was Josh Whitman, our director of athletics, who had the idea for including a miniature golf course on the rooftop," said Tim Knox, assistant athletic director, football operations at the University of Illinois. "We were trying to maximize our space.

"On most buildings this would be just wasted space. We felt there was potential to use that space to expand the footprint of the building without expanding the building."

"They were trying to be different from other universities," added Adam Hebert, project manager of the Petry Kuhne construction company who was awarded the contract for the project.

According to Hebert, adding a custom designed nine-hole miniature golf course to the rooftop of the new 112,000-square-foot Smith Football Center was a change-order to the original project, made possible by donations.

The entire rooftop was conceived as a player's lounge for relaxation. It consists of the miniature golf course, a partially covered steel trellis with furniture underneath, along with heaters. There is also a three-sided enclosed building that has airplane-like doors that open to the kitchen, sporting a 60-inch grill.

"It's actually a pretty cool structure up there," said Hebert.

While the \$79.2 million complex was originally designed by Architect HTNB with

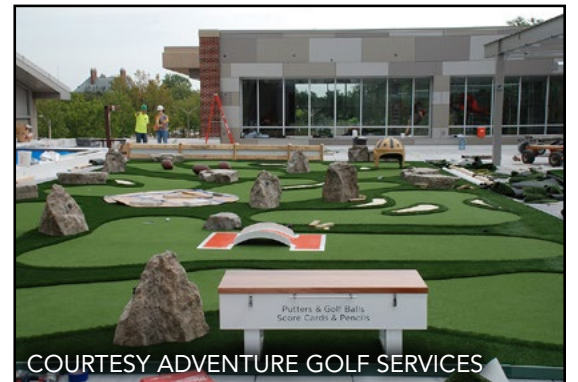
world-class player amenities to impact recruiting and support a successful football program at the university, the nine-hole miniature golf course was custom designed by AGS.

"We are seeing more interest and demand for miniature golf to be offered as an amenity from colleges and universities, not only from athletic departments, but also for upscale student housing," says Scott Lundmark, president of AGS. "Our products are a perfect fit for fun activities to take a break from sports or studies, and can be designed to fit any space, theme and budget."

AGS has more than 35 years' experience designing and installing permanent, custom modular or portable miniature golf courses in places ranging from municipal parks, family entertainment centers and commercial building rooftops to cruise ship decks and shopping centers.

At the Smith Center, AGS supervised the installation of the 1,800-square-foot miniature course using patented interlocking panels and anchoring the course to the roof pavers.

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FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson
jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

The Saugus, Massachusetts, Board of Selectmen held and continued a public hearing in April on a family entertainment center proposed for the first floor of the former **Sears at Square One Mall** that would include bowling, bumper cars, laser tag, go-karts, an arcade, sports simulators, ropes course, virtual reality games and a full-service restaurant and bar.

Apex Entertainment has submitted applications to operate a commercial recreational facility in the more than 100,000-square-foot building.

The first Apex Entertainment facility opened in Marlborough in 2017, followed by locations in Syracuse and Albany. **Kevin Eriksen**, general counsel for Apex Entertainment, said the company strives to set the standard for excellence when it comes to family entertainment centers. Eriksen stressed that Apex Entertainment creates an environment that is family-friendly and welcoming to guests of all ages.

Matthew McDonnell, the vice president of development for **Seritage Growth Properties**, said there is a lease agreement for Apex Entertainment to operate the entire first floor of Sears. As the landlord for the properties, McDonnell said Seritage can explore opportunities to lease out the second floor at Sears and adjacent Sears Auto building.

Sky Zone Fishers (Fishers, Indiana) has closed permanently, according to an announcement on the trampoline park's website, and a new family entertainment center is planning to move in.

The trampoline park had been in operation in Fishers for about eight years. The announcement of the closure first appeared on the website in late April.

The announcement stated: "We'd like to thank the community of Fishers for flying high with us over the last eight years. We've loved being a part of this community and hope the memories you've made with us last a lifetime!"

Adrenaline Family Adventure Park, a new family entertainment center, is renovating a space next door to the trampoline park for a May opening. The owners will add the newly available Sky Zone Fishers space to their project.

Adrenaline Family Adventure Park is set to feature 50,000 square feet of all-new ropes course and climbing attractions, a new soft play area, a ninja warrior course, trampolines and more.

Two Bit Circus Foundation, a non-profit educational organization, held the first virtual Cardboard Challenge, an online version of the original event started by **Imagination.org**, designed to encourage the worldwide STEAM community to come together in these uncertain times to embrace creativity and inspire the next generation of inventors.

The May 7 event was hosted on the Foundation's Twitch channel and welcomed

anyone and everyone who would like to join. Continuing its mission of promoting STEAM learning during this time of social distancing, the virtual Cardboard Challenge allowed kids, families, teachers and more to discover new ways to connect through creative play and engage in fun, educational activities using common household items, like cardboard.

"With the majority of people staying in their homes and schools transitioned to distance learning, the need for hands-on, accessible educational opportunities is more important than ever," said **Dr. Leah Hanes**, CEO of Two Bit Circus Foundation. "Parents and children now have the opportunity to take control of their education, so we hope this event offers them a fun way to do that while schools are shut down. Our goals for the virtual Cardboard Challenge are to encourage connection and the pursuit of learning through creative play, and to instill a sense of community that is crucial for the many children who no longer have the creative opportunities that are provided to them in the classroom."

Ultimate Air trampoline park in San Angelo, Texas, is ready to have children jumping again, but getting official permission to allow that to happen might take a while.

"We are hopeful to be open [by sometime in May] if not sooner," said Ultimate Air trampoline Park Manager **Michelle Kearby**. "We are prepared just in case the governor re-visits his order [sooner]."

On Friday, May 1, 2020, restaurants, and other retail outlets across Texas opened their doors to the public after being shuttered due to the coronavirus. Approval to resume business came from **Gov. Greg Abbott**, who announced the Texas economy would reopen in gradual phases.

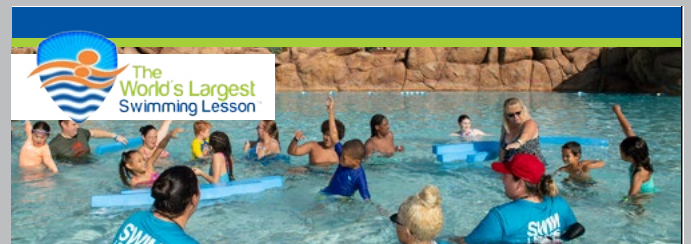
Bars, gyms, cosmetology salons and amusement venues — such as bowling alleys, skate parks and trampoline parks, like Ultimate Air in San Angelo — are part of what Gov. Abbott called "phase two" in the schedule to reopen Texas.

Stars and Strikes reopened its Georgia locations on Friday, May 8, with new operating procedures to meet government guidelines.

Some of the changes include closing every other bowling lane and limiting the remaining lanes to 50% capacity, limiting the number of guests in the arcade and for laser tag, reduced seating in the restaurant and bar areas and enhanced cleaning and sanitation measures.

"Since we learned of the opening of businesses in Georgia, we have been working diligently on new operating procedures to ensure proper social distancing and sanitation to help protect the health of our team members and our guests," owners **Chris Albano** and **Jack Canouse** said in a press release. "Each department has a detailed process manual that has been used to train team members."

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT MARKET PLACE



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The front entrance marquee stood as a beacon of fun to attendees and an attention getter for motorists driving by.



A portion of the outdoor portion of the 52nd annual International Independent Showmen's Foundation (IISF) annual Super Trade Show & Extravaganza is seen here.



The Keystone state was well represented with from I: Adam Swika, Adam Swika Shows; newlyweds Chase and Kaitlyn Benner and Christina Benner, owner, Penn Valley Shows. Chase and Kaitlyn got married Feb. 1 and spent the early part of their honeymoon in Gibtown before going on a cruise.



Ron Burback, principal of Funtastic Traveling Shows, visits with Amusement Today Publisher Gary Slade in the event room inside the IISA building.



Gina Guglielmi with Intermark Ride Group and Luca Gosetto, co-owner of Gosetto, S.r.l., in Guglielmi's booth. She reps for Gosetto, Fabbri Group, Martin & Vleminvix and Ride Engineers Switzerland.

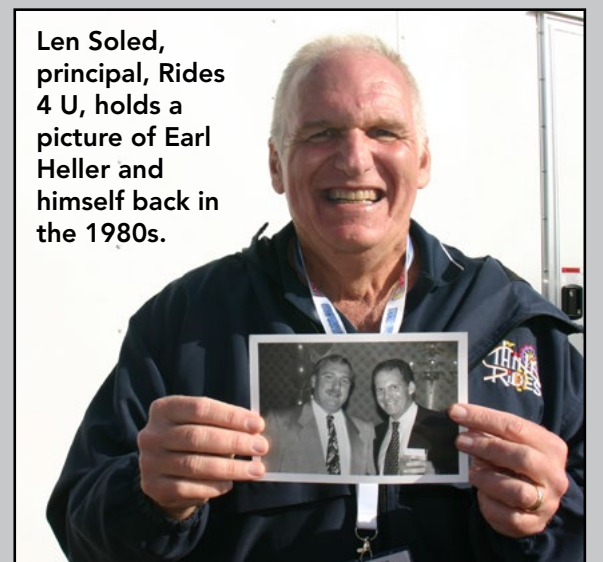


Known to many as the "Ice Tea Lady," Tammy Long points to a photo of her joint, Tiki Tea, Inc., as seen on the midway of a previous Florida State Fair. That image was used on the Amusement Today pull-up banner. Long will be president of the IISF in 2022.

ALL PHOTOS AT/B. DEREK SHAW



Al Frieden with Batech Enterprises, LLC enjoyed a successful run at the four-day trade show.



Len Soled, principal, Rides 4 U, holds a picture of Earl Heller and himself back in the 1980s.



Major, Family and Spectacular Rides



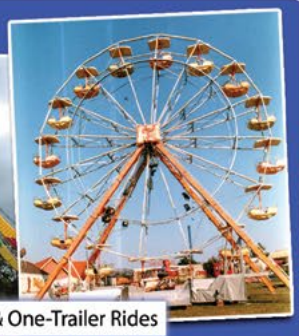
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OABA annual golf outing a success

GIBSONTOWN, Fla. — The TopGolf fundraiser and raffle on Feb. 6 during Florida Week is always a well-attended event. While more than 60 golf bays were in use throughout the evening, elsewhere in the building, a very successful Chinese auction was in progress. **Debbie Powers**, 2020 OABA chair and coordinator of the auctions, provided a recap:

"Our 4th Annual TopGolf fundraiser was a fabulous success this year. The best part was that it appeared everyone was having a great time. That always spells success to us. Our Chinese Auction was added last year as a supplement to the Silent Auction so that everyone could get involved. This year there were over 30 items donated by a variety of generous ladies starting with **Cathy Deggeller, Debbie Pugh, Candy Anderson** and so many more. The items ranged from a "Hairy" Chewbacca Apron, motor head books, jewelry, Legos, tee shirts and food. As the anxious participants were scoping out the various options to win something, carefully placing their tickets in the appropriate bags, Debbie Powers and other ladies were busy selling more tickets to give everyone an opportunity to win something.

"Towards the end of the night **Andy Deggeller** took the microphone and read off ticket numbers admiring the gifts with his uncanny humor keeping the crowd laughing.

"The silent auction had at least 40 items donated by a variety of folks starting with **Rick and Marianne Reithoffer**, our lobbyists, Gregg and John, **Allied, Bill Johnson, Rob Vivona**, the **Deggellers**, the **Powers**, the **Pughs, Larry Yaffe**, and so many more. The items ranged from sports paraphernalia to sunglasses to expensive wine and much more. It was a great success and we are grateful for all the support!"

—B. Derek Shaw



At the 55th OABA annual meeting on Feb. 7, there was representation from IAFE with Marla Calico as well as from the Eastern States Exposition with Gene Cassidy (inset). Above, some of the attendees visited at the OABA annual banquet. From left: McGowan Allied's Mary Chris Smith, Anne Shugart, Maggie Luehrs, Lisa Cummings and Lorelei Schoendienst. COURTESY SUE GALLOP/OABA





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MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Many county, state and independent fairs and rodeos across North America have been cancelling (and in some cases postponing) their upcoming event. As of press time, **International Association of Fairs and Expos (IAFE)** has tracked a total of 110 fairs have been shuttered in 2020. At least three fairs have been rescheduled for later this year. Many spring fairs in the Lone Star State have moved to the fall. When in doubt contact the venue's office or check out any online social media announcements they may have posted listing operational status. Beware: There have been a few fairs that have been subject to fake posts saying they are cancelling this year (**Minnesota State Fair** and **Bloomsburg [Pennsylvania] Fair** and sadly, probably more). Always consult official fair social media channels or contact their main office.

The **Maryland State Fair & Agricultural Society, Inc.** has provided the Fairgrounds Exhibition Hall to the **American Red Cross**, Greater Chesapeake & Potomac Region Baltimore Team, for three appointment-only emergency blood drives this month.

"The challenge for the local American Red Cross Blood Drive Team was to find a facility large enough to comply with Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic safe-distancing regulations," said Maryland State Fair & Agricultural Society General Manager **Andy Cashman**. "It is our pleasure for the 38,400-square-foot Exhibition Hall to be utilized for such a critical need and noble purpose."

Last month, **Joel Cowley**, CEO and president of the **Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo**, left the organization after 15 years of service, seven as CEO.

"While I will remain a lifelong supporter of the Rodeo and its mission of promoting agriculture and supporting education, I will be pursuing an opportunity that has a direct impact on the agricultural industry," said Cowley. "In doing so, I hope to provide the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo with an even better story to tell about advancements in the critically important field of agriculture."

Chief Mission Officer **Chris Boleman**, Ph.D., was promoted to the role of president and CEO, effective May 25.

"I appreciate the confidence that the Rodeo Executive Committee has in me to lead such an impactful organization that is aligned with my personal passions," said Boleman. "I am very grateful to Joel Cowley, who not only has been a tremendous leader of our organization but is also a trusted friend and mentor. I look forward to the challenge of following his legacy."

Dr. Boleman leads a full-time staff of 130 and a volunteer force of more than 35,000.

Cody Cashman has been named the new general manager of the **Red River Valley Fair**, West Fargo, North Dakota effective May 1. He comes from serving as director of business development since 2014 at the York, Pennsylvania Fair/York Expo Center

(becoming the **York State Fair** this season.) Cashman increased event sales revenue and instituted the York Fair scholarship foundation. Cashman is a graduate of **IAFE** Institute of Fair Management.

"We are very excited to have Cody Cashman as our new general manager. He is well-known throughout the fair industry, has a vast amount of fair experience, and we look forward to him growing the Red River Valley Fair," said RRVF Board President **Vern Hofman** in a statement. "He has the energy and excitement to bring to the Red River Valley Fair to the next level."

His father, **Andy Cashman** is the general manager of the **Maryland State Fair**, Timonium. The younger Cashman, in addition to overseeing the fair, also oversees the **Big Iron Farm Show** and other events throughout the year. As of press time, the six day fair, with the theme "Sun's out, funs out," takes place July 7-12, with **Crabtree Amusements** handling the midway.

The **New York State Fair** is cutting its general admission ticket price in half, from \$10 to \$5, while eliminating the sale of advanced, paper tickets through a retail sales program. The fair now offers \$3 online tickets that will be available even after the fair opens, through to Labor Day. According to fair records, this is the same price a fair ticket cost at the gate in 1980. This year there will only be one Dollar Day for general admission and no free days for Canadians or sports fans, however the fair is adding a fourth free admission Senior Day for folks 60 and older.

In the past, more fairgoers waited for promotional deals instead of buying the \$6 advance sale tickets through grocers like **Wegmans** and **Price Chopper**. The new online model allows the fair to access data before it starts the second Wednesday in August.

The **South Dakota State Fair** is continuing to plan the 135th fair, but the COVID-19 pandemic could alter this year's fair.

The fair is planned as the "Perfect Vision for Fun" since 2020 is the year and 20/20 is perfect vision. While it may have a different look, the state is hopeful for this year's fair.

"As South Dakotans continue to deal with the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19, the South Dakota State Fair is monitoring the COVID-19 situation on a daily basis," said **JaCee Aaseth**, South Dakota Department of Agriculture strategic communications officer. "For now, we keep our sights set on the 'Perfect Vision of Fun.'"

Governor **Kristi Noem** has mentioned in press briefings that county fairs and the state fair should continue to plan for 2020.

"Lieutenant Governor **Larry Rhoden** has been working on State Fair planning. We do hope to hold the South Dakota State Fair and plan to do so," Governor Kristi Noem said. "We're thinking out of the box on ways to continue on with the fair and still keep people safe and public health a priority."

25 years of attractions old and new for New Jersey's Rides 4 U

AT: Pam Sherborne
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SOMERVILLE, N.J. — As **Rides 4 U** slides into its 25th anniversary year, owner **Len Soled** feels he is ever closer to the goal set when the company began in May of 1995.

The goal for the founders — which included Soled, his wife, **Alexis Soled**, and industry veteran **Nancy Buckley** — was to be as diversified as possible to support every aspect of the amusement industry.

To that end, it is hard to find an area where **Rides 4 U** can't meet its own expectations. The company brokers new ride sales for **SBF/Visa**, **KMG**, **S & S Worldwide** and has relationships for new rides with other manufacturers such as **Moser** and **Majestic**. The company also sells used rides. It sells parts and LED lighting packages. It liquidates products for carnivals and parks, large and small. It can provide turnkey on projects.

Even with the unprecedented circumstances presented by the novel coronavirus this year, Soled said he is still busy. He has a trailer-mounted **SBF/Visa** mini break dance being delivered to **North American Midway Entertainment** this month.

"We had a new **KMG** Freak Out already delivered to **R.C. Cole (Cole Shows Amusement Company)**," Soled said. "We have a few new projects."

And Soled said the company has continued to ship out an abundance of parts to ride owners of all sorts. Because of the pandemic and lockdowns, ride owners and operators have found themselves with more maintenance time.

"I've had people tell me that their rides have never looked so good," Soled said.

With Soled's now 35 years in the industry, he also is able to value rides.



At left, some of the **Rides 4 U** team pose for photo during **IAAPA Expo 1999**. From left are **Dori Horvath**, **Len Soled**, a guest, **John Coburn** and **Nancy Buckley**. At right, a recent group shot of the **Rides 4 U** team shows, standing (l to r): **Earl Heller**, **Joe Migueles**, **Len Soled**, **Rich Madden** and **John Coburn**. Seated are (l to r): **Stephanie Magnani**, **Dori Horvath** and **Annie Bauer**. COURTESY RIDES 4 U

"There isn't a (Kelley) Blue Book for amusement rides," he said. "I feel confident enough now to do that. Not many people in this industry can."

Yet all this didn't come to **Rides 4 U** overnight. There have been bumps along the way, but Soled said there hasn't been a single time when he thought his business wasn't going to make it.

There have been changes, of course. The most significant was the retirement in 2012 of **Nancy Buckley**.

Soled met **Buckley** at **Zamperla** where he began his affiliation with the amusement business.

"I knew nothing about this business when I started with **Zamperla**," Soled said.

And that is what he told **Alberto Zamperla** during his interview.

"He asked me why I wanted to be in this industry," Soled said.

He told him: "Because I am a salesman and I can sell anything."

Soled also had a Master of Business Administration, which seemed to work to his advantage. He was offered a job.

His first job with **Zamperla** was to go to the **International Independent Showmen's Foundation** expo in **Gibsonton, Florida**. Known just as **Gibtown**, he was to go in with the technical team and set up five park model rides.

"Boy do I remember that very well," he said. "We had to go in two and a half weeks before the show started. The show back then lasted over a week. Then, it took us a week to take everything down."

He found himself up on the rides helping the technical team put the rides up. He definitely realized he had a learning curve ahead of him.

"I would be up on the ride with tools, my sleeves rolled up and someone would holler up to me and say, 'Hey, Len, aren't you glad you got that MBA?'"

"I remember getting on that plane to fly home completing exhausted," he said. "I thought, 'What in the world am I doing in this business?' I told myself I would never be back."

He has now attended 35 **Gibtown** shows.

After 10 years at **Zamperla**, he felt it was now or never



to start his own business. It was a hard decision because he liked where he was. He talked it over with his wife and with **Buckley** wanting to partner with them, he knew he was making the right choice. **Rides 4 U** opened up shop in **New Jersey** where they both lived and had been working.

"I remember us going to our first **New Jersey Attractions Association (NJAA)** annual dinner and dance as **Rides 4 U**," he said. "I was standing there, and here comes **Bob and Patty Bennett (Casino Pier, Seaside Heights, New Jersey)**. He said that he had three rides he wanted to liquidate. 'You sell them and tell me what they are worth.'"

Soled was thrilled. That same evening **Roy Gillian, Gillian's Wonderland Pier, Ocean City, Maryland**, came over and did the same thing.

"They told us that they wanted us to stay and be part of the future of the business. They wanted us to succeed."

In addition, **Rides 4 U** began to broker new rides with manufacturers. **Majestic** was first on board and then **S&S, Moser, SBF/Visa** and **KMG**.

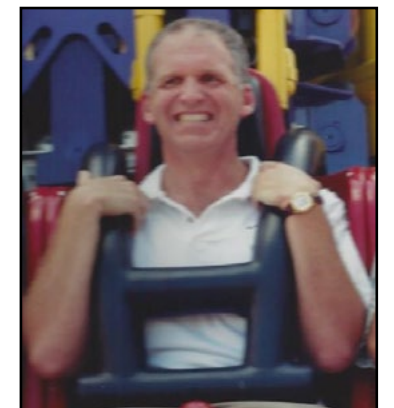
The company's first new ride sale was a **SBF/Visa** jeep convoy to **Nicholson's Pier**. The second was a **SBF/Visa** antique car ride to **Morey's Piers, Wildwood, New Jersey**.

Some of **Soled's** favorite memories throughout the 25 years include working with **Moser** on the drop tower and a creative deal he and **Buckley** put together for **Playland Park** in **Rye, New York**. Publicly owned by **Westchester County**, the two created a deal where they would lease rides to the park. They created a separate business entity, **Rides Plus**, and ended up with that deal for eight or nine years before **Westchester County** bought them out.

In the aftermath of **Hurricane Sandy**, which in 2012 struck the eastern seaboard, **Rides 4 U** was able to be there for many of their first customers. The company helped attractions' owners salvage what they could, sell off what they didn't want and buy new rides.

At the beginning of 2013, **Rides 4 U** was approached by the **National Football League**

► See RIDES 4 U, page 24



It is not always work at **Rides 4 U** as can be seen in the far left photo with **Annie Bauer**, left, and **Stephani Magnani**, dressed in costumes. But when they do work, they work hard, such as the time when the company set up and operated a 70-foot-tall slide in the middle of **Times Square** in **New York City**, second photo from left. **Rides 4 U** also keeps a massive parts department in the company's plant in **Somerville, N.J.**, as seen in the photo third from left. Even though **Len Soled**, far right, suffers from motion sickness, he does get to experience the thrill of the ride from time to time. COURTESY RIDES 4 U



At IAAPA Expo 2019, the Rides 4 U booth was a highlight of the exhibit floor. Featuring three flat rides encapsulated in the footprint of the new Big Air Coaster, the company midway was dubbed "Lennywood" by the Rides 4 U staff. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

► **RIDES 4 U**
Continued from page 23

(NFL), which wanted the company's help in purchasing a slide for Superbowl XLVIII to be held in New York City.

But that wasn't all the NFL wanted from Rides 4 U. The NFL wanted the company to set up and operate the ride on the street in the middle of Times Square. Soled brokered the deal between NFL and SBF/Visa for the 70-foot-tall slide. Then, he accepted the challenge of operating the massive undertaking.

"It was very exciting, but also very challenging," he said. "We operated it for four days and we had thousands and thousands of people on it. We were given 12 hours to set it up and then eight hours to tear it down."

Once the NFL was done with the slide, it still wasn't done with Soled. They got Rides 4 U to broker the resale. Soled sealed a deal with **Andretti Indoor Karting and Games**. As fate would have it, Soled ended up brokering a sale for a third time on this slide between Andretti's and the **Florida State Fair**, Tampa.



Rich Madden, left, and Earl Heller enjoy some time off together. Both work at the Rides 4 U offices (above right) in Somerville, N.J. COURTESY RIDES 4 U



Rides 4 U was tasked by the National Football League to set up and operate a SBF/Visa, 70-foot-tall slide in the middle of Times Square as part of Super Bowl XLVIII festivities. Here are, from left, Len Soled, his wife, Alexis, daughters, Samantha and Lauren and son, David. COURTESY RIDES 4 U

Soled feels one of the most important parts of any company is customer service. He likes to shake hands. So, over the years, he has traveled many miles. One annual trip he started taking in August of every year is now known as Lenny's Magical Mystery Tour.

It started out when KMG's **Peter Theunisz** wanted to travel with Soled to some U.S. attractions.

"He would spend two to three weeks with me on the road," Soled said. "We would visit one attraction and then be off to another. There wasn't

a lot of time to spend visiting any U.S. landmarks. During one trip, Peter said, 'You have to do me this one favor. I want to see Niagara Falls.'

"Well, I felt sorry for the guy," he said. "So, we went to the falls and had some lunch."

Another close associate of Soled's, **Paul Muller, OA Finance**, said he wanted to come along as well. For years now, Soled, Theunisz and Muller take Lenny's Magical Mystery Tour. Muller's son, **Wade Muller**, also has joined.

Soled said there is no way to have a successful business by yourself. His long-time and loyal employees and associates have made Rides 4 U what it is today. They are **Rich Madden, Earl Heller, Stephanie Magnani, Annie Bauer, Dori Horvath, Joe Migueles** and **Mark Blumhagen**. Outside technicians and associates are **Scotty Henderson and Cody Saldivar, John Yonkers, Jimmy Gibbs, Jeff Kagan and Jim Caskey**. **John W.C. Robinson** assists with the company's marketing efforts.

•rides4u.com



What Rides 4 U employees have to say....

"I began working for Len and with the Rides 4 U team in 2011. I feel so lucky and blessed to have come across this opportunity. We've all heard the saying and it's true, 'when you love going to work, it never really feels like work.' Len's work ethic and drive to provide every customer with the highest level of service is second to none. The Rides 4 U team shares the same passion and dedication as our fearless leader."

—Stephanie Magnani

"I started with Rides 4 U in January 2012 and have never been happier. I responded to the blind ad on Monster.com. I was brought on board to replace Len's partner Nancy Buckley, who retired shortly after I joined. I had no experience in the amusement industry at all. I have worked for several other companies that preached customer service but Len at Rides 4 U practices it. The phone rings off the hook for him and he takes every call. He bends over backwards to keep our customers happy and will take calls on weekends and get parts expedited to customers to keep them running. It is easy for me to see why Len has built Rides 4 U into such a great company to both buy from and work for."

—Rich Madden

"In the year of 2004, and while I was getting used to the benefits of my retirement, I had the opportunity, through a common friend, to get acquainted with Mr. Len Soled. Len told me that he was interested in getting involved with the export market and, taking into consideration of my previous experience on the field, plus the advantage of my knowledge of other languages, he thought that I'd be the right candidate for his project. Consequently, he offered me a position with his company."

After 16 years of an interesting and rewarding period of my life, I'm still associated with Rides 4 U to which I convey my gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to try to exercise my learnings."

—Joe Migueles

"I have worked with Rides 4 U for 22 years this August. The best part about working for Rides 4 U is that we are like a family. Our small group of employees is conducive to always chipping in and helping each other no matter what needs to be done. The perk to that is we truly care about each other as well."

—Dori Horvath

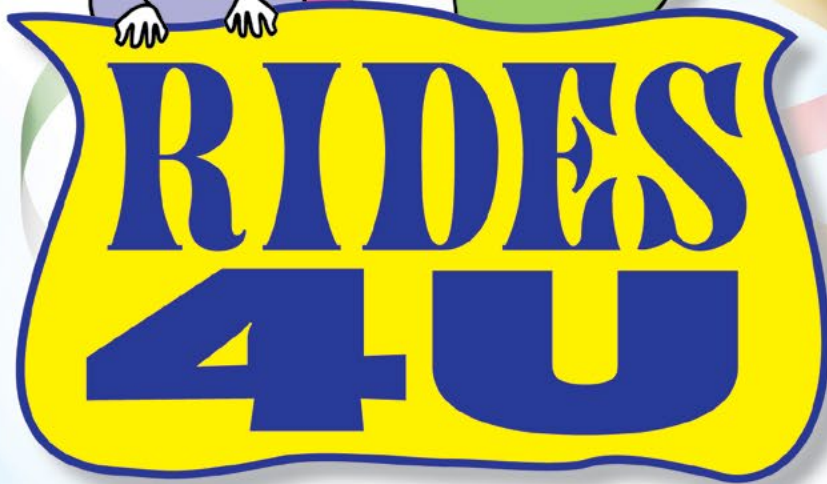
"All of us in the amusement business, whether acting as a supplier or in the position as the operator of an amusement facility, are in the business of selling fun. We are in the business of making people happy. Being fortunate enough to have been able to spend more than 40 years growing up in this industry, Rides 4 U has provided a unique opportunity to both make new industry friends as well as to maintain long time relationships. The excitement and satisfaction of being even a small part of the success of these parks, carnivals and family entertainment centers is an experience I will always treasure. I mean, after all, isn't working with friends what it's all about anyway?"

—Earl Heller

"I have worked for Rides 4 U for 14 years. It all started with an ad in the paper for a part-time parts person. It has turned into a full-time very rewarding job. We call ourselves the Rides 4 U Gang. Everyone here is really great. The amusement industry is like one big happy family. They are very caring people. Not a day goes by that someone doesn't want to know what's going on in my world. I had no idea that this industry even existed. I like my job and the people who I come in contact with very much."

—Annie Bauer

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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ News Splash — page 28 / Breaking news available at amusementtoday.com

White Water Branson waves in four decades of family fun

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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BRANSON, Mo. — What began in 1959 with the **Baldknobber Jamboree** has grown to more than 100 shows, 57,000 theater seats and entertainment covering just about every music genre. Often considered the live entertainment capital of the world, Branson's attractions are many and varied. Included in the mix and familiar to most readers is **Silver Dollar City**, an 1880s-themed park which has grown to become one of the finest theme parks in the nation, if not the world.

Along with the museums, restaurants shops, and campsites, Branson is also home to one of the world's first modern-day water parks. White Water opened its gates 40 years ago at a time when the purpose-built venues that we now perceive as water parks were still in their infancy.

Jack and Pete Herschend of Silver Dollar City Inc. saw how people were congregating around fountains and water attractions and noted how water was an important element to their guests at Silver Dollar City. They decided that a water park would be ideal in Branson. At the time, the city had no community centers and no public swimming pools. The only pools in town belonged to hotels, and although Table Rock Lake was popular with water sports, there was no swimming beach. Those who swam in the lake had to dive off a boat or private dock. The Herschend brothers, big on family entertainment, saw a water park as another opportunity to provide

a clean, wholesome venue for families to enjoy together.

Jackie Smith, who served as the park general manager in the 1980s until just a few years ago, told *Amusement Today* that **Jack Herschend**, **Rick Todd** and **Bill Smith** were instrumental in getting the park off the ground. The Herschends, along with Todd and Smith, travelled to **Disney's River Country** to analyze what was there, see what worked, and then decide what they could afford to create in Branson, not having Disney's budget. The Herschends acquired property five miles east of Silver Dollar City on the main Branson strip, State Highway 76, and constructed a new park. Fortunately, Silver Dollar City had its own fiberglass fabricating shop, carpenters, engineers and dozens of craftsmen whom they utilized to build the water park.

When White Water opened in 1980, it featured a modest number of attractions, but it had what was essential in setting it apart from the swimming lakes and parks that were starting to add waterslides. White Water had a wave pool — then a relatively rare feature — and a small current river which they called Restful River. The park featured two innertube chutes and two body flumes. It also had a kids' pool with early versions of water play elements such as squirt guns and water cannons. Ironically, the property the Herschends acquired was perhaps the only piece of relatively flat land along the strip. That may have been to the park's advantage, however, as the White Lightning body slides required a five-story slide



Since Day One, the 500,000-gallon wave pool (above left) has served as a key element of the park. AT/GARY SLADE

tower — which made it visible to everyone driving along route 76.

As water parks were a relatively new concept, particularly for Missouri, the marketing people had to make it clear what type of activities were available. As the Branson market was still a driving destination drawing from nearby cities, White Water found much success with television commercials in nearby markets.

White Water Director of Operations **Mike Woody** told *Amusement Today* that television was the primary medium because they needed to visualize to families what this park was all about. They used lots of footage of families enjoying the waterslides and the wave pool, while also conveying the safety aspect of enjoying these attractions by making sure scenes included lifeguards. The park proved to be extremely popular soon after its opening day. It would attract the attention of families heading to Silver Dollar City. According to Smith, there wasn't much beyond White Water, but Silver Dollar City was drawing good crowds even back in the 1980s. At first the park was populated with day trippers coming from nearby towns like Springfield, Tulsa and Harrison. Later, as the number of attractions in Branson grew, people would come for two- and three-day stays.

Initially, the water park was created with a wilderness outpost feeling. The colors were muted, mostly brown, but the idea was to create a space reminiscent of a lakeside outpost. Smith joked that she liked to refer to it as the mud-hole era.

Eventually as buildings

needed repainting and new attractions were added, Smith and Woody lightened up the colors and the theme developed into a tropical adventure in paradise. Flowers, shrubs, and trees were added to supplement the theme.

Smith conveyed that after the first couple of seasons, things evolved in a hurry. The park was so popular that they couldn't handle crowds. More body slides were added to help with throughput. As double-rider rafts became available, more tube chutes such as the Screamboast Ride and Bermuda Triangle were added to accommodate the new-style tube. Then in 1989 a family raft ride was added to further increase capacity.

Managing the daily parade of coolers became a challenge as personal food was allowed to be brought into the park. However, glass containers and alcohol were strictly prohibited so the coolers had to be inspected at the gate. The lines to get in would sometimes get very long, then once in the park, coolers and other picnic items started taking up too much deck and table space. Eventually the decision was made to provide a separate picnic area and encourage patrons to leave their coolers and picnic items in the car until they were needed. At the same time, a move was made to place more emphasis on food and beverage offerings within the park.

Because of the climate, the operating season was short. But, once it was discovered that a 100-day season could be profitable, Silver Dollar City Inc. decided to branch out. White

Water in Oklahoma City opened in 1981, followed in 1982 by White Water parks in Grand Prairie, Texas, and Garland, Texas, and then a fourth White Water in Atlanta in 1983.

The park has always had an emphasis on safety but back then, Smith told *AT* there was no **Jeff Ellis & Associates**, and the **World Waterpark Association** was still in its infancy. They followed the guidance and training provided by the **American Red Cross**. Fortunately, high school kids wanted to work at the park, as it was a fun and cool place to be over the summer, so recruitment and retention was not a problem — until the end of the operating season. During the last two weeks of operation as schools would start back up, the park started looking for those willing and able to work short-term. Even the Herschend family members, who had their lifeguard certification, would come to the park to pitch in. As the park continued to expand, a bus would operate daily allowing high schoolers from nearby Springfield to commute to the park.

Because of the emphasis on safety, White Water was very appealing to families. Mom could relax in a lounge chair and let the children run off and play knowing they would be in a safe environment. The park also attracted a large group business from nearby churches, as well as youth and sports groups.

In 1984 the park introduced a new concept called Night Water. For a reduced admission, guests could come in after 5 p.m. and enjoy dancing lights and a different kind of atmosphere until 10 p.m. The park even tried offering movie entertainment — long before dive-in movies became popular at water parks across the country.

In the late 1980s to early 1990s, the Herschend family decided to concentrate on its core parks, Silver Dollar City and White Water in Branson, and what became Dollywood in Tennessee. It was decided to sell off the White Water properties in Texas, Oklahoma and Georgia. The Oklahoma and Georgia parks are currently owned by **Six Flags** and continue to operate to this day. **George Millay** of **Wet'n'Wild** snagged the Texas

▶ See **WHITE WATER**, page 28



White Water Branson opened one of the first ProSlide Mammoth river family raft rides (above right). AT/GARY SLADE



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whitewaterwest.com



Aloha River offered an updated version of the requisite lazy river by adding a tropical theme and surprise elements. COURTESY WHITE WATER

▶WHITE WATER

Continued from page 26

parcs and operated the park in Garland for nearly a decade. However, the park in Grand Prairie was deemed too close to his Wet'n'Wild property in Arlington, so he acquired it only to close it down. The oft-repeated tale is that to ensure there was no competition, Millay had concrete poured into the recirculation pipes to make certain it could never again operate as a water park.

With additional capital and all of the attention turned toward White Water Branson, the park was gearing up for its biggest expansion since its 1980 opening. In 1992, the park added Tropical Twister, one of the first Mammoth River family raft slides from ProSlide. The slide was constructed in-house by Silver Dollars City's maintenance team, with ProSlide providing the fiberglass channel. The park also completed its two-year transformation into a Tropical Adventures in Paradise theme. The park featured new landscaping with palms, banana trees, elephant ears and flowering hibiscus shrubs. Forty carved Tikis dotted the 20 acres of the park, and the food outlets carried through the tropical theme with Caribbean-style concessions. The park also started marketing a combination ticket that included Silver Dollar City and the Grand Palace Theater — also owned by Silver Dollar City Inc. The attractions offered a discount for families wanting to see all three.

The turn of the new millennium brought another record-breaking expansion in the form of a million-dollar water play structure. Rain Tree Island is an interactive family attraction with water sluices, aquashooters, water blasters, splash geysers and elevated walkways all topped with a tipping bucket that intermittently douses

people on the attraction. The new water play structure added 20,000 square feet of activities to the park and offered additional capacity of approximately 800 people per hour.

As the decades marched on, White Water continued to keep the park fresh and relevant with the addition of new attractions. In 2001 Aloha River replaced the original lazy river which had seen several name changes and upgrades. The replacement was a tropical-themed, 800-foot river offering a faster current and the addition of unexpected twists and turns with fountains, misters, bubblers and geysers. Kapau Plummet, a pair of drop capsule slides were introduced in 2014, and a new play area for smaller children, Coconut Grove, was added in 2017. Coconut Grove adds small slides, bubblers, fountains and gentler water blasters designed for the little tykes.

Forty years ago, Jack and Pete Herschend saw an opportunity to bring a new type of family entertainment to the Branson area. It was not without risk as water parks were in their infancy, and the few successful ones such as River Country, Schlitterbahn and Wet'n-Wild were in Texas and Florida — areas of the country known for heat and humidity. But their creativity and tenacity paid off. The original Wet'n'Wild parks have been sold or closed, Schlitterbahn has been sold and River Country is closed. White Water Branson is one of the few from that era that has stood the test of time and remained in its original location under its original ownership — now known as Herschend Family Entertainment.

In speaking with *Amusement Today*, Woody reminisced, "Jack and Pete were stewards of the industry. Looking for the next big idea, they saw the water park as an opportunity to bring quality, safe fun to families. It was a great time to be in the industry."



NEWS SPLASH

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The troubled **Splash Kingdom Waterpark** in Redlands, California, suffered another setback in May when a fire ripped through the main building causing an estimated \$750,000 in damage. The 17-acre park originally opened as Pharaoh's Lost Kingdom and operated as a small amusement park for a decade. It had gone through multiple ownership changes, with the last owners, **Dan Martinez** and **Ryan Sauter**, removing most of the dry attractions and the Egyptian theming and operating it primarily as a water park and an indoor trampoline park.

Municipal swimming pools in Vienna, Austria, are expected to reopen May 29 with limited guest capacity. Tourism minister **Elisabeth Köstinger** revealed that hotels, zoos, swimming pools and other leisure attractions will also be allowed to to reopen May 29. Citizens are expected to keep one meter (three feet) away from those they do not live with. How that will be facilitated in a pool environment has not yet been made clear.

Austria has been spared the worst of the pandemic compared to some of its European neighbors, with 15,200 recorded cases and 569 deaths.

The **Waitaki Aquatic Centre** in Oamaru, New Zealand, is taking advantage of its forced closure by moving up plans for an extensive maintenance project. The project was originally scheduled to take place during the June and July winter season, but since the park is closed during the pandemic, the maintenance team decided to start right away. The aquatic center is given a maintenance overhaul about every five years.

The city of Irvine, California, has approved the terms of a lease with the owners of **Wild Rivers Water Park**, paving the way for construction of the park. The original Wild Rivers was forced to close in 2011 when **The Irvine Co., LLC**, owners of the land, refused to renew the park's lease in favor of a new apartment complex. Since that time, owner **Mike Riedel** has been working with city leaders to relocate the park. Several sites had been proposed.

The park will be built on a 20-acre site within the **Orange County Great Park**, an innovative public space of more than 1,300 acres. When complete, the park will feature a number of services, including athletic fields, walking trails, playgrounds and even a carousel. The Great Park, large portions of which are already open, is being developed on part of land that once housed the decommissioned **Marine Corps Air Station El Toro**.

An earlier location within the park that had been selected in 2017 was still under control of the U.S. Navy which has been cleaning up the site by removing potentially hazardous material for more than 20 years. In 2019, after being informed the Navy was unsure when it could turn over that section of land, the city council looked for a new location.

Under the terms of the lease, the city will receive 4.5% of the park's annual gross revenue as a lease payment, or a minimum of \$550,000 for that year.

Wild Rivers will pay for the construction of the water park, while the city will pay for and maintain a parking lot with over 1,200 spaces for Wild Rivers use during the summer. The lot will be managed by the city the remainder of the year.

The Wild Rivers park is one of the first major lease agreements negotiated in the Great Park, and, according to city staff, similar future lease agreements will help pay for the annual maintenance of the park's amenities.

The city council of Levin, New Zealand, has approved \$370,000 (US\$225,000) in funding to repair the **Levin Aquatic Centre's** hydroslide. Council is now seeking local businesses to carry out the work once lockdown lifts.

It is hoped the waterslide, which has been out of action for the past year, will be open by December. The slide itself is in good shape, but its handrails, floor plates and stairs need to be replaced.

At an online meeting in April, councillors were presented with three options on the future of the nearly 20-year-old slide: removing the slide, repairing the existing stairwell or replacing it.

Repair work is estimated to cost a district household an additional \$0.77 each year.

As a result of the global pandemic, Chicago-based **Great Wolf Lodge Resorts** has cancelled its plans to build a lodge in El Paso, Texas. **Great Wolf Lodge El Paso** was to include a 350-room lodge, convention facilities and the signature indoor water park. In addition to the expansive water park, the lodge was to include the typical Great Wolf attractions such as the Howlers Peak Ropes Course, MagiQuest, Build-a-Bear workshop, Iron Horse fitness center, Elements Spa Salon, as well as feature character appearances and bedtime storytelling.

The city had agreed to provide up to \$4 million a year for the first 10 years of operation. The agreement also promised property tax rebates, city hotel tax rebates and city sales tax rebates for at least 15 years.

The city had been negotiating with Great Wolf Resorts for five years and had hoped to open the lodge sometime in 2021.

Great Wolf Resorts informed the city on April 10 that it would be unable to move forward with the plan due to financial challenges stemming from the coronavirus pandemic.

"As a result, [Great Wolf Resorts] will be terminating our chapter 380 and 381 economic development incentive agreements, so that would include both the city and county," said **Jessica Herrera**, the city's director of economic and international development.

"This COVID-19 health crisis has brought a significant economic shift that has impacted the entire hospitality industry and has forced them to make several difficult business decisions such as this one."



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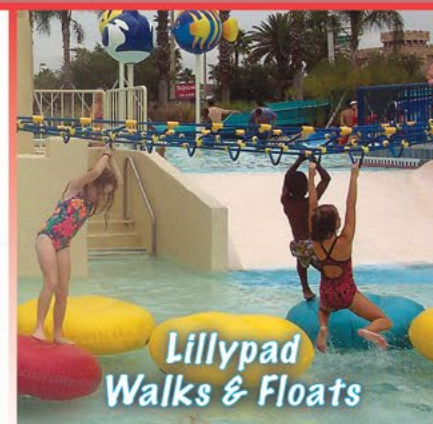
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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

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Esports attracts new fans, scores big in stay-at-home economy

AT: Dean Lamanna
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INTERNATIONAL — As exotic or on the fringe as it may sound to fans of traditional arcade amusements, esports — competitive, organized video gaming, often played before spectators — has been around in one form or another for almost as long as commercial video games. And it has continued to evolve with technology over the last several decades.

Whether played online at home, in neighborhood venues or in high-tech indoor arenas with giant, flashy video screens, esports is serious business. With heavily followed leagues and a global audience rising to 495 million this year, the esports market will surpass US \$1 billion in 2020 and is expected to triple that within two years. Professional esports athletes can win huge cash prizes competing in virtual, digitally created realms.

An opportunity for the greater growth and mainstream coverage of esports has emerged amid the tragedy of the coronavirus outbreak. Megan Van Petten, managing director of the Chicago-based Esports Trade Assn. (ESTA), told *Amusement Today* that between the temporary sidelining of traditional pro sports and stranding of students and workers at home, there is higher demand for new avenues of entertainment and social interaction.

"The pandemic has overturned the world as we know it," Van Petten said. "However, with traditional sports getting postponed or canceled for this season, esports may actually increase its growth exponentially — particularly as people look for a sense of community with stay-at-home orders in place."

Per ESTA's research, 39% of the industry's audience falls in the advertiser-coveted 25-34 age range and 70% percent of the



While esports arena events like the *Free Fire World Series 2019* finals in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, have been halted by the pandemic, competitive gaming is booming online — where popular titles such as Riot Games' *Valorant* (right) are drawing new enthusiasts. COURTESY GARENA, RIOT GAMES

viewership is male — though the female audience share, added Van Petten, has been on the upswing since 2016.

In March, when COVID-19 lockdown orders went into effect in many areas, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that up to eight million participants were logging in daily to play the universally popular *League of Legends*, introduced by Los Angeles-based Riot Games in 2009. Super League Gaming, an amateur esports platform headquartered in neighboring Santa Monica, saw new user registrations jump by 20% in March; previously, growth was 6-7% monthly. Of the approximately nine million hours of gameplay the company logged in the first quarter of this year, five million were in March.

During the third week of that month, the esports online platform UMG Gaming, a subsidiary of Toronto-based Torque Esports Corp., reported sharp spikes in website visits (52%), daily logged-in users (38%), and video views on its Twitter account (a whopping 3,600%).

Crossover between the traditional sports and esports worlds in recent years has also boosted the latter's expansion, with NASCAR and the owners of several NBA and NHL teams, including Mark Cuban, among those investing in the business and its player organizations. Pre-pandemic, esports events

in major stadiums that usually showcase traditional sports substantially raised the industry's spectator profile. Its exposure also has broadened from live streaming via platforms such as YouTube, Facebook Gaming and market leader (and Amazon subsidiary) Twitch — where tournaments have enjoyed support from major sponsors like BMW, The Coca-Cola Co., Intel and State Farm — to more regular appearances on television.

NASCAR's rollout of the virtual Dixie Vodka 150 race at South Florida's Homestead-Miami Speedway, for example, aired on Fox in mid-March. It featured pro racers competing through simulators from remote locations in what became a highly rated TV presentation.

A live esports racing program called *The Race All-Star Series — Fully Charged by Rokit Phones*, fast-tracked by Torque Esports to fill the content hole left by pandemic-caused cancellations of major racing events, debuted on ESPN2 and in the ESPN app on April 11 as part of a new partnership between Torque Esports and the Disney-owned sports channels. Through ESPN, the European TV sports network Eurosport and several dozen other channels internationally, the program — with participants including Formula 1, IndyCar Series and Indy 500 racing stars vying for prize money against



the top sim racers for charity — became the first broadcast esports racing event to reach more than 600 million homes worldwide, per its producer.

"We created the *All-Star Series* because, as a company, we're huge fans of both motorsport and esports, and we're in a time where there is a massive void for sports entertainment," said Darren Cox, president and CEO of Torque Esports, which in early May was completing a three-company merger to form a new multimedia esports production entity, Engine Media (with Cox serving as co-chief CEO). "Our agreement with ESPN, along with our entire international broadcast package, is taking virtual racing to an unprecedented global audience."

Born of blips and blasts

Esports certainly has come a long way from its earliest roots — which stretch to the early commercial years of the video game.

The first such coin-op machine, *Computer Space*, utilizing a black-and-white TV screen as a display, appeared in arcades in 1971, and the first home video system, the Magnavox Odyssey, showed up in living rooms a year later. The arrival of Atari, Inc.'s *Pong*, a basic but highly addictive ping-pong-style game, in arcade and home versions in 1972 and 1975, respectively, brought competitors — and the

video game industry took off.

Public burnout on the activity was becoming evident by 1977. But the next year, *Space Invaders*, a shooter-style arcade video game from the Japanese technology company Taito, reenergized gamers, created hordes of new fans and ushered in the golden age of the video game. The machines quickly multiplied beyond arcades into malls, restaurants, convenience stores and other locations.

Atari licensed the home version of *Space Invaders*, which quadrupled sales of the company's Atari 2600 video game console, introduced in 1977. In 1980, the company organized what has since become generally regarded as the first major mainstream electronic sports, or esports, tournament — the National *Space Invaders* Championship. Some 10,000 players competed in regional eliminations around the U.S., and at the New York finals, 100 gamers fervently worked the joysticks of Atari 2600 consoles attached to banks of TV sets.

The path to modern esports from there was mostly charted by new products and technology. Hit early-1980s arcade games such as *Pac-Man* and *Donkey Kong* led to world-record competitions, including the Video Game Masters Tournament, and even competitive TV shows in the U.S. and U.K. The arrival of the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), Super NES and Sega Genesis game system in the latter 1980s and early 1990s inspired championships and sparked rapid gaming advances.

As the 1990s progressed, personal computer (PC)-based gaming grew, and the blossoming of the internet enabled gamers to connect and compete globally. The first esports leagues formed during this period, with matchups featuring games such

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▶ ESPORTS

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as *Counter-Strike*, *Quake* and *Warcraft*. A *Quake* competition called Red Annihilation in 1997 saw 2,000-plus entrants compete via the internet, and 16 finalists played in front of spectators at the **Electronic Entertainment Expo** in Atlanta, a widely covered event that was key in setting the stage for latter-day esports. The **Electronic Sports League** (ESL) was founded in Germany in 2000; it remains the longest-running player organization and continues to host events globally.

The expansion of broadband internet and the introduction of higher-powered PCs, along with the popularity of shooter-style and fighting-themed games, in the new century further powered esports' growth around the world — especially in the internet cafes of South Korea. There, with the industry promoted and regulated with a dedicated association established by the country's **Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism**, contests created around **Blizzard Entertainment's** *StarCraft* were held in stadiums and aired on TV. Gaming swept much of the rest of Asia (except for Japan, which had concerns over esports-associated wagering).

A succession of watershed competitions over the last two decades accelerated a shift in participation from amateur players to professional gamers. Landmark events included the World Cyber Games, established in 2000; **Fun Technologies'** 2006 Worldwide Web Games, with a \$1 million grand prize; and ESL's 2006 Intel Extreme Masters, with a prize pool of more than \$1 million. Nintendo returned to the tournament spotlight with its Wii Games: Summer 2010 event, attracting about 9,000 participants to 24 contests around the U.S. — including eight matches held at **Six Flags** theme parks.

The arrival of Twitch's live-streaming platform in 2011 and more-recent advances in multiplayer mobile gaming gave esports ever-greater visibility — bringing games like *League of Legends*, **Activision's** *Call of Duty* and **Valve Corp.'s** *Defense of the Ancients 2* (commonly known as *Dota 2*), and their associated tournaments, millions of spectators.

Home game advantage

News on the esports arena front had been arriving fast and furiously in the months prior to the pandemic.

At the start of this year, work was underway in Philadelphia on **Comcast Spectacor's** 60,000-square-foot, \$50 million **Fusion Arena**, and

Torque Esports was undertaking an expansion of the **Allinsports** racecar driver training facility in Coral Gables, Florida, into a 12,000-square-foot venue with 30 globally networked racing simulators. In early March, the 3,800-square-meter **Ininal Esports Arena** — with broadcast studios, an audience capacity of 1,600 and a high-tech stage capable of holding 100 players at once — debuted in Istanbul, Turkey.

On the community level, entertainment center-style esports venues have been cropping up. **Ignite Gaming Lounge**, with locations in Chicago and Skokie, Illinois, offers food and drink along with the latest gaming technology within a comfortable social environment. **Waves Gaming** in Toronto, known for hosting major competitions, provides 14,000 square feet of gaming space with more than 100 PC and console game stations.

"These kinds of venues have allowed the industry to experience the enrichment of networks, as many people who've gamed together for years are finally able to safely meet in person," said ESTA's Van Petten. "It adds a whole new dimension to the entertainment value."

Moreover, commercial real estate owners are turning to esports to gentrify older retail malls and attract a completely different demographic. "There has been a retail reckoning, as many stores are losing out to Amazon and the other ecommerce behemoths," said **Aaron Meckler**, CFO of Toronto-based **Amuka Esports**, which recently acquired **Waves Gaming**. "Esports thrives on an in-person experience, and if done properly it can reverse the tide of many retail spaces."

Esports, which demands athletics-level mental acuity of its best players, also has been making significant inroads into educational institutions. The **National Association of Collegiate Esports** reports that more than 170 colleges have varsity esports programs, with scholarships totaling about \$16 million. And according to ESTA, 100-plus U.S. high schools have launched dedicated esports programs alongside their traditional sports teams. Socioeconomic and gender inclusivity — women presently account for 46% of all gamers, says ESTA — are part of esports' attraction.

Meanwhile, the public needs to keep itself amused — and for now, mostly at home.

"We're currently watching a drastic historical change in how a large part of the population entertains themselves," Van Petten said. "We know the esports industry will keep growing."

• esportsta.org



VR ROUNDUP

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Among the many attractions industry gatherings scuttled by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 edition of the global video game industry conference **E3** — a key product rollout event for **HTC**, **Oculus**, **Sony** and other VR developers — is a major loss for exhibitors and fans. It had been scheduled for June 9-11 in Los Angeles. A statement posted on the website of the **Entertainment Software Assn.**, which produces the show, indicated that the organization was "exploring options... to coordinate an online experience to showcase industry announcements and news" sometime in June. Check for updates at e3expo.com.

In a similar move, the annual **Game Developers Conference**, having already been postponed to early August at the **Moscone Center** in San Francisco and redubbed **GDC Summer**, has scrapped the idea of another onsite gathering altogether in favor an all-digital event under the revised name. Details for the remotely delivered educational, creative problem-solving and networking opportunity — long known for showcasing VR innovations — were still being worked out in early May.

The rise of home video-conferencing platforms such as **Zoom** in this era of social distancing has led some companies to explore and expand the potential of virtual meetings. **HTC**, for one, is launching a social VR platform of its own: **Vive Events**. The service aims to create a virtual exposition space for up to 5,000 simultaneous participants. The company promises that the platform will be affordable and allow users to join with or without VR headsets.

To help gamers defeat the coronavirus lockdown blues, **Arvi VR, Inc.**, a Ukraine-based global developer of multiplayer VR escape rooms and games with equipment in more than 150 locations and encompassing more than 25 languages, is making games available to users of the **Steam**, **Oculus** and **Viveport** online platforms. The company's direct-delivered games are available in single-player mode for home users, which allows location-based VR venues to remain the exclusive providers of Arvi's multiplayer game versions.

Earlier this year, **Triotech** of Montreal fired up the production line for **Storm**, its new coin-op VR interactive simulator, which the company successfully introduced last November at **IAAPA Expo 2109** in Orlando. For the first time in its 20-plus-year history, the company had to install an extra factory production shift to meet demand, and the first units began shipping in February. **Storm** is a competitive gaming experience that features two motion seats and combines special effects, including wind, with a system that reads user hand gestures as input.

At the end of April, Saratoga, California-based **Mojo Vision** had raised a total of more than \$159 million to fund the development of a new smart contact lens with a built-in microdisplay. Called **Mojo Lens**, the product was announced in January at **Consumer Electronics Show 2020** in Las Vegas. While commercialization of the lens is several years off, the company initially plans to make the product available to those with visual impairment — with its possible gaming applications to be explored later. The

technology is said to offer real-time contrast and scene enhancement designed to make navigation, obstacle avoidance and personal interactions easier. The lens reportedly packs 70,000 pixels into less than half a millimeter via a green monochrome microLED display at the eye's fovea, where visual acuity is highest.

Shark Reef Aquarium at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas is now home to the Ocean Explorer Virtual Reality Theater, an immersive attraction that takes guests on an underwater voyage via two live-action films and interactive exhibits. The theatrical component, featuring a 36-seat motion platform, showcases two presentations: *Swimming with Humpbacks*, following the journey and behaviors of mother humpback whales and their calves as they migrate during mating season; and *Shark Dive*, traveling to Tiger Beach, a mythic underwater strip in the Bahamas where tiger sharks and hammerhead sharks amass. **Shark Reef Aquarium** and **Immotion Group**, which has studios in California and the U.K., partnered on the project.

Montreal-based **VR Xtreme** has installed a venue at **Arizona Boardwalk** in the **OdySea** aquarium and entertainment complex in Scottsdale, Arizona. Appealing to gamers, sports enthusiasts and adrenaline junkies alike, the attraction features 10 games utilizing VR technology by **Immotion**. The experiences encompass competitive driving skills, marksmanship and an extreme roller coaster ride launching from the top of a skyscraper. **VR Xtreme** also will be available to host birthday parties and corporate team-building events.

Fort Collins, Colorado-headquartered **VRsenal**, a manufacturer of unattended VR arcade games, has announced two new distribution partners for the U.S. amusement market: **Shaffer Distributing** of Columbus, Ohio, and **American Vending Sales, Inc.** of Elk Grove Village, Illinois. **VRsenal** makes a self-contained, plug-in arcade game cabinet and fully-automated system for VR suited to the tighter space and budgets of family entertainment centers, trampoline parks, karting centers, high-traffic malls and movie theaters. The company's hardware is paired with *Beat Saber*, a globally popular VR game.

"Unattended virtual reality speaks to many operators, as they do not have to staff the attraction," said **Scott Shaffer**, Shaffer's president. "VRsenal's *Beat Saber* eliminates the staffing requirement, and the earnings are fantastic."

This past winter, **Dreamscape**, in partnership with **AMC Theatres**, launched a VR venue at the **Easton Town Center** in Columbus, Ohio — its third in the U.S. The first experiences offered by the location's three stand-alone adventure pods are among the company's most dynamic, including *Alien Zoo*, an epic quest through an ancient temple; *Curse of the Lost Pearl: A Magic Projector Adventure*; and *The Blu: Deep Rescue*, an underwater spectacle co-produced with **Wevr** studios. Based in Los Angeles, **Dreamscape** is backed by some of Hollywood's top studios and talent, including **21st Century Fox**, **WarnerMedia**, **Viacom** and filmmaker **Steven Spielberg**.

New protocols adopted by parks as some return to business

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SHANGHAI — All eyes were on **Shanghai Disneyland** May 11 as the theme park, one of the first major amusement facilities in China to close in late January as a result of the country's COVID-19 outbreak, became one of the first to reopen.

A limited number of reservation-holding guests wearing protective masks and submitting to temperature checks strolled through the gates to enjoy attractions with little or no wait times. Shops and restaurants operated under reduced capacity (the latter at 50%) and physical distancing was enforced by staff as well as signs, arrows and tape. Hand-sanitizing stations were in place at the exits of shows and rides, which also were running at substantially reduced capacity.

The park's normal daily capacity of 80,000 was cut to below 30 percent, at least initially.

The phased reopening of Shanghai Disneyland and its surrounding resort was widely seen as a trial run for the eventual reopening of other parks impacted by the now-global coronavirus pandemic, including **The Walt Disney Co.**'s still-shuttered properties in the U.S. and Europe.

"Everyone in our industry is currently looking to China as its theme parks and entertainment venues reopen," said **Michael Blau**, international board president of the **Themed Entertainment Assn.** and principal / vice president of business development at **Adirondack Studios**, an experience design firm based in Argyle, New York. "There will be valuable lessons to learn over the next months as our resilient, creative industry strives for recovery and the making of ever better and safer guest experiences."

Other theme parks began revealing COVID-19-era operational protocols by early May, and several announced plans to resume business before the end of the month.

Europa-Park in Rust, Germany, began a phased reopening of its hotel restaurants May 18, with its theme park and hotel room availability set to reopen May 29. The park, which will deploy enhanced sanitation, is making a limited number of reserved tickets for each day available online, and guests will need to wear protective masks (provided by the park, if necessary) in all covered areas and waiting areas, as well as on



After months of closure, several major theme parks in China and Europe, including Shanghai Disneyland, Europa-Park in Rust, Germany, and Efteling in Kaatsheuvel, Netherlands, were set to resume operation in May with reduced capacity and new health and safety rules in place. COURTESY SHANGHAI DISNEY RESORT, EUROPA-PARK, EFTELING

rides. Shows and theaters were to stay closed during the initial reopening phase, and the resort's **Rulantica** water park remained shuttered until further notice.

Scheduled for a phased reopening beginning May 20, **Efteling** in Kaatsheuvel, Netherlands, is following the advice of regional authorities and will operate the park at one-third capacity at first. As at Europa-Park, guests will need to purchase tickets in advance online. New hygiene measures at the park will include cleaning all points of contact, such as door handles, more frequently.

In Sevenum, Netherlands, **Toverland** theme park was set for reopening May 19. As of mid-May, staff was busy training in a new program the park calls "A Safe Day Out Together," covering three guarantees to park guests: to provide thorough information (e.g., through instructions and extra signage), deploy intensive hygiene measures and ensure that one-and-a-half meters of space is maintained between visiting household groups. The park also is implementing a reservation system for purchasing tickets.

Similar moves were under discussion by theme park companies stateside.

In addition to requiring protective masks, temperature checks, physical distancing in all areas, and increased and ongoing sanitation, Grand Prairie, Texas-based **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.** said its parks, which still had an indeterminate reopening date as of

mid-May, will implement virtual queuing, cashless transactions and mobile ordering. They will also reduce attendance. Six Flags season passholders and patrons surveyed by the company indicated that restricting the parks to 25% capacity would make them feel safer and more comfortable. Although the company had not settled on a park capacity reduction percentage, it is moving ahead with an online advance reservation system — the use of which will be mandatory for parking and admittance.

"In the current environment, we certainly want to take extra precautions to create a safe experience for everyone," said **Mike Spanos**, president and CEO of Six Flags, adding that the company's attendance management protocols are being set in accordance with recommendations by the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**. "By having guests preregister before they visit, we can plan ahead with proper staffing and sanitization measures, including ensuring that guests and team members maintain safe social distancing throughout the day."

During the online reservation process, the viewing of a short video outlining park health and safety rules, and the registrant's sign-off on the understanding of those rules, will be required. Season passholders and those on park membership plans will get first priority.

Some parks were weighing guidelines set by organizations in which they are members.



In Southern California, the **San Diego Tourism Authority** (SDTA) issued a health and safety plan for **SeaWorld San Diego**, **Legoland California Resort**, the **San Diego Zoo** and other attractions in the metro region. Apart from measures akin to those outlined above, the plan, which was crafted with the third stage of California Gov. **Gavin Newsom**'s gradual four-stage state reopening plan in mind, includes mandatory COVID-19 safety training for all employees, wellness checks for employees, having visitors open their own bags during security checks, implementing one-way traffic on narrow pathways and modifying photo opportunities with costume characters to maintain six feet of physical distance.

SDTA's protocols also call for staggered seating on each ride, frequent cleaning and disinfection of ride vehicles and queue railings, and instructing riders to wait in family groups when in queues.

"We have a dedicated team focused on finalizing plans to reopen our parks, including enhanced health and safety protocols that will meet and / or exceed government guidelines and provide the safe and clean environment our guests and ambassadors expect," said **Marc Swanson**, interim CEO of Orlando-based **SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.** "While we don't have any park opening dates to announce... we are in regular contact with local, state and federal authorities, and we look forward to opening our

parks and welcoming back our guests as soon as it's safe and permitted to do so."

Beyond receiving and / or already outlining in-house health and safety guidelines similar to those noted above, and with recommendations in hand from the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** (see story, page 38), **SeaWorld's** Orlando theme parks and the competing Central Florida theme parks owned by Disney and **NBCUniversal** were still uncertain as to their reopening status in mid-May while awaiting firmer state guidelines. State government, in turn, has asked the parks to submit their own reopening plans and target dates with approval from the mayor or another relevant official from their locality.

Retail locations and restaurants were cleared to reopen in Florida the first week of May. **Universal CityWalk** at **Universal Orlando Resort** reopened May 14 with new parking, managed visitor flow, instructional signage and protective mask rules in place, plus reduced operating hours. Mobile ordering was being encouraged where possible. **Disney Springs**, the food, retail and entertainment hub in **Walt Disney World Resort**, was set to begin a phased reopening May 20 under a number of limitations.

Sandusky, Ohio-headquartered **Cedar Fair Entertainment Co.**, has been working closely with local and state health authorities to determine the operating future of its parks in North America, but it did not anticipate reopening any of them in the near term. In addition to seeking input from guests in order to gauge expectation, the company was looking at health and safety enhancements that include an admission reservation system, expanded use of cashless transactions, the potential introduction of virtual queuing and the broader use of mobile ordering.

"Given the seasonal nature of our operations, with **Knott's Berry Farm** [in Buena Park, California] as our only park with year-round operations, it is important that we are able to restart the parks with a reasonable number of operating days remaining in the year," said **Richard Zimmerman**, Cedar Fair's president and CEO. "When we do reopen, we will have all aspects of our operations fully prepared to meet or exceed the health and safety expectations of our guests and the requirements of local authorities."

MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 05/14/20	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	50.60	64.97	33.00
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	24.52	64.86	13.00
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	35.76	47.74	31.70
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	105.91	153.41	79.07
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.14	0.24	0.09
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	24.85	80.75	12.55
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	2980.00	4830.00	2080.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.62	1.60	0.49
Lefoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	12.45	17.00	9.08
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	13.52	34.63	5.90
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	35.15	135.31	19.25
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	580.00	1265.00	490.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	12.82	36.96	6.75
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	18.61	59.52	8.75
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	682.00	788.00	550.00
Village Roadshow	AU:VRL	ASX	1.85	4.10	0.77

STOCK PRICES ABOVE ARE GENERALLY QUOTED IN THE FOREIGN CURRENCY IN WHICH THE COMPANY IS LOCATED

Worldwide Markets: ASX, Australian Securities Exchange; CSE, Copenhagen Stock Exchange; LSE, London Stock Exchange; NYSE, New York Stock Exchange; NASDAQ, National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; SEHK, Hong Kong Stock Exchange; SZSE, Shenzhen Stock Exchange; TSEC, Taiwan Stock Exchange, Corp.; TYO/TSE, Tokyo Stock Exchange

—SOURCES: Bloomberg.com; Wall Street Journal

BUSINESS WATCH

COVID-19 impacts Cedar Fair's first quarter

SANDUSKY, Ohio — For its first quarter, ended March 29, Cedar Fair Entertainment Co. (NYSE: FUN) reported net revenues totaling \$54 million compared with \$67 million for the same quarter in 2019. The drop resulted from a 239,000-visit attendance decrease and a \$3 million decline in out-of-park revenues — all related to the COVID-19-necessitated shutdown of the company's parks beginning March 14. Prior to the disruption, attendance was up 149,000 visits, or 19%, and revenues were up more than \$8 million. Early cost-savings measures implemented after park operations were suspended helped offset a portion of the decrease. Operating losses for the first quarter totaled \$184 million, compared with operating losses of \$85 million in the first quarter of last year. The company has secured incremental liquidity through a successful \$1 billion notes offering and a \$100 million expansion of its revolving credit facility.

Sinking numbers mark start of Disney's 2020

BURBANK, Calif. — The first three months of 2020 have been predictably tough ones for the theme park segment of The Walt Disney Co. (NYSE: DIS). Pandemic-spurred closures of Disney parks worldwide led to a 10% decline in the segment's revenue, to \$5.543 billion, and a 58% drop in operating income, to \$639 million. In mid-April, the company entered into a \$5 billion unsecured credit agreement in order to bolster its liquidity during the crisis, with Citibank N.A. serving as designated agent. Executive Chairman Bob Iger reportedly has given up his entire salary, while CEO Bob Chapek was said to have accepted a 50% cut and other executives are seeing a 20-30% temporary pay loss. The company suspended pay for more than 100,000 theme park and hotel employees — nearly half its workforce — in April, saving it as much as \$500 million a month. Meanwhile, analysts at J.P. Morgan estimate that the shutdown could lead to \$5 billion in lost revenue for the company's Disney Parks, Experiences and Products division in fiscal year 2020.

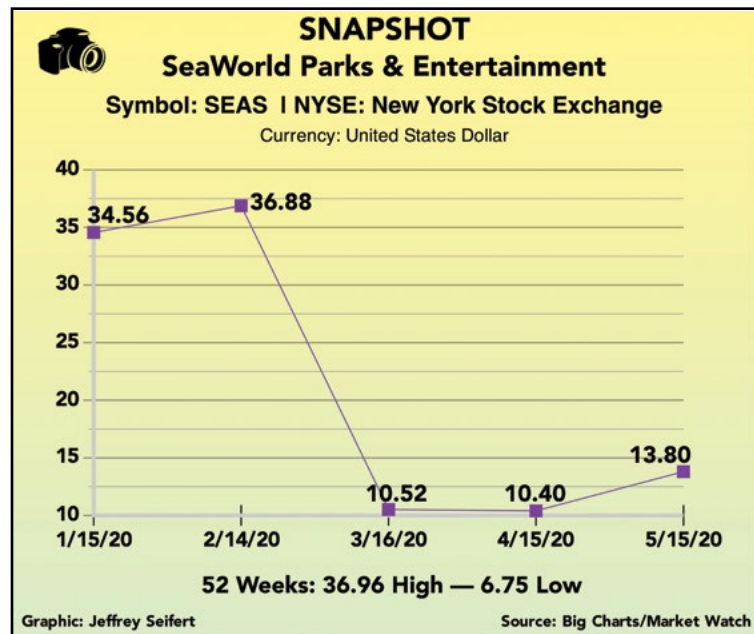
First quarter finds SeaWorld aswim in red ink

ORLANDO — First-quarter results reported by SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc. (NYSE: SEAS) revealed a decrease of 1 million guests, to 2.3 million, from the first quarter of 2019, and a \$67 million decrease in total revenue, to \$153.6 million, from the same quarter last year. Net loss increased by \$19.5 million, to \$56.5 million, from the first quarter of 2019. The declines were the result of the shutdown of SeaWorld's parks in mid-March because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The timing of the park closures fell during historically high-volume spring break weeks for most of the SeaWorld properties, adversely impacting the visitation mix for the quarter. Total revenue for the quarter decreased by \$67.0 million, or 30.4%, when compared to the prior-year quarter. On March 1, the company amended its credit agreement to increase its revolving credit commitments from \$210 million to \$332.5 million, and on April 30, it closed on a \$227.5 million private offering of 8.75% first-priority senior secured notes.

Six Flags suffers revenue, attendance drops

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — Six Flags Entertainment Corp. (NYSE: SIX) reported first-quarter revenue of \$103 million, with attendance at 1.6 million guests. The decrease in revenue of \$26 million, or 20 percent, compared to the first quarter of 2019 was primarily driven by a decrease in attendance of 584,000 guests, or 27 percent, because of the company's mid-March suspension of park operations. Prior to the suspension, attendance had increased relative to the same period last year by 255,000 guests, or 19 percent. The revenue decrease was also attributable to a \$10 million reduction in sponsorship, international agreements and accommodations revenue. The company's net loss during the first quarter of 2020 was \$85 million, an increase of \$15 million compared to the prior-year period. In April, the company announced that its indirect, wholly-owned subsidiary, Six Flags Theme Parks, Inc., closed a private offering of \$725 million aggregate principal amount of senior secured notes. The net proceeds from this offering will be used to repay indebtedness and the remaining amount for general corporate matters and working capital purposes.

The fleet of Walt Disney World transport buses sit idle waiting for the resort to reopen.
AT/DAVID FAKE



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S.)	As of 05/11/20	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$2.498	-\$0.766
Midwest	\$2.240	-\$0.806
Gulf Coast	\$2.178	-\$0.727
Mountain	\$2.346	-\$0.835
West Coast	\$2.557	-\$0.798
California	\$3.182	-\$0.954

CURRENCY

On 05/14/20 \$1 USD =

0.9256	EURO
0.8189	GBP (British Pound)
107.02	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9731	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.5530	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.4085	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

ON THE MOVE

London-based **Scruffy Dog Group Global Creative Services**, a design-and-build company, has appointed **Christian Angenvoort** as global business development director for themed production. Angenvoort brings considerable experience in the themed entertainment industry, having spent a number of years with **TAA Group** as vice president of marketing and business development and, more recently, with **Themebuilders Philippines, Inc.**, in business development for international projects. Since launching his career at **Warner Bros. Movie World** in Germany, he has been involved in several high-profile projects — including Bistrot Chez Rémy at **Disneyland Paris**, which was honored by the **Themed Entertainment Assn.** with a Thea Award for Best Themed Restaurant.

**Angenvoort**

American Pinball of Streamwood, Illinois, has hired **Dave Brennan** as technical services manager. With more than seven years of troubleshooting, fixing and restoring pinball machines of all eras, Brennan's expertise will ensure that all customer and distributor needs will be met through hands-on technical support and guidance. Among his immediate initiatives is to generate an ongoing series of instructional videos covering topics such as new game setup, how to update code, maintenance tips and more.

**Brennan**

Accesso, a Berkshire, U.K.-based provider of technology solutions for the leisure, entertainment and cultural markets, has promoted **Fern MacDonald** to CFO. Most recently senior vice president of finance for the company, MacDonald, who is both FCA and CPA qualified, previously spent eight years in various financial leadership roles at **ZeroChaos** (now **Workforce Logiq**), culminating with the position of executive vice president of finance. She was also a senior manager with **Ernst & Young**, working with public and private clients from the company's Dublin and Moscow offices. MacDonald has joined Accesso's board of directors in conjunction with her promotion.

**MacDonald**

Jessi O'Daniel, vice president of guest experience for **Kentucky Kingdom** in Louisville, has been appointed by the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** (IAAPA) to serve on the organization's North American Regional Advisory Committee. "As the youngest member of the committee, Jessi brings the voice of the 'new guard' into the mix at this long-established and respected international association," said **Ed Hart**, park president and CEO, who also pointed out that O'Daniel is in her second year of service with IAAPA's Young Professionals Committee.

**O'Daniel**

After enjoying a record year in 2019, Lenexa, Kansas-based **Redemption Plus**, a supplier of redemption, crane machine and merchandiser prizes that also provides redemption management training and technology solutions, has moved to a shared leadership model and implemented four additional role transitions. The moves are designed to enable the 24-year-old company to continue evolving its focus on prizes and services.

Christina Long and **Michael Tipton** have assumed the day-to-day operations at Redemption Plus in co-leadership roles.

Long, previously the company's chief culture and people officer, is now chief operations development officer. A six-year employee, she brings years of operations experience as well as a passion for developing employees in the areas of leadership, systems and processes.

Tipton, now chief operations growth officer after serving as vice president of sales and marketing since 2017, has spent years helping businesses

**Long****Tipton**

grow through sales development, organizational planning and digital marketing strategies. In his new role, he delivers innovation to the marketplace through e-commerce refinement, product and service offerings, and customer-facing technology.

Tabatha Bender, longtime content guru for Redemption Plus, was promoted to marketing manager. She is overseeing the marketing team and the implementation of marketing strategy. Bender was instrumental in seeing the company's proprietary service packages honored with an IAAPA Brass Ring Award in 2019.

Holly Shoaf was promoted to an account manager role. Previously, she had worked in customer service for four years. Shoaf is adept at solving customer issues and has a strong understanding of customer needs, and she is bringing her managerial expertise to a number of accounts.

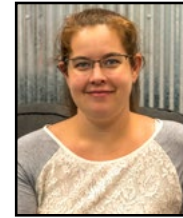
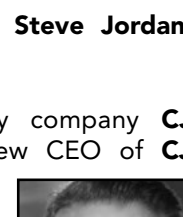
Sadie Barker now serves as human resources director for Redemption Plus. She joined the company in 2017 and has been active in employee engagement, workforce development and human resource efforts as a human resources business partner. In addition to handling various day-to-day operational needs, her new role calls for her to lead all strategic efforts as well as the culture team.

The company's CFO of nearly 20 years, **Steve Jordan**, retired at the end of 2019.

Seoul-headquartered cinema technology company **CJ 4Dplex** has tapped **Don Savant** as the new CEO of **CJ 4Dplex Americas**, its U.S. branch based in Los Angeles. Savant is responsible for growing the company's multisensory and premium motion picture formats, 4DX and ScreenX, in the region while continuing to collaborate with movie studios to deliver the best films in both formats to consumers. He previously served 19 years at **Imax Corp.**, where he led as president of global sales in 2016-18. During that time, Savant also saw Imax to unprecedented network growth with the development of 730 theatres while expanding the company's presence in North America, Europe and India, with continuing growth in China and Asia. Prior to Imax, he was senior vice president of sales and marketing at **Iwerks Entertainment** in Burbank, California, where he launched the company's first 4D theaters.

Len Turtora retired from **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.** on April 24 after 45 years of service. According to a letter circulated by Six Flags CEO **Mike Spanos**, Turtora enjoyed an "incredible history" with the company — serving in several high-profile roles, including director of finance at **Six Flags Great Adventure** (SFGA) in Jackson, New Jersey, and president of **La Ronde** in Montreal, where in 2001 he led the park's transformation into a Six Flags property. Turtora returned to SFGA and moved into the role of director of operations. In that capacity, said Spanos, "he took on the responsibility of leading the Operations Division for the entire company." He will continue to work with SFGA President **John Winkler** as a consultant.

The **World Association of Zoos and Aquariums** (WAZA), based in Barcelona, has appointed **Dr. Martin Zordan** as CEO. Zordan, a veterinarian, has a diverse professional background in science and conservation culminating in his role as executive director of the Las Condes, Chile-headquartered **Latin American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums**. That position was followed by his role as WAZA's director of conservation. For the past year, Zordan has acted as interim CEO of WAZA.

**Bender****Shoaf****Barker****Steve Jordan****Savant****Turtora****Zordan****OBITUARY****Arne Wilhelmsen, co-founder, Royal Caribbean Cruises**

PALMA, Spain — Arne Wilhelmsen, a founder of Miami-based Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd., passed away April 11. He was 90.

Wilhelmsen was a constant influence on the company from its founding in 1969, serving more than three decades on its board of directors. Together with Royal Caribbean's first CEO, Edwin Stephan, who died last fall at 87 (*Amusement Today*, March 2020), Wilhelmsen saw possibilities for the nascent cruise industry others did not.

"At a time when the rest of the world thought cruising was a niche use for old transatlantic liners, Arne was already seeing glimmers of the growth that was possible," said Richard Fain, Royal Caribbean's chairman and CEO. "He had a vision of the modern cruise industry when the 'industry' might have been a dozen used ships, total."

Wilhelmsen and Stephan's key insight: building new ships designed for cruising in warm weather. The industry did not grow from the traditional transit hub of New York; it emerged from Miami, helping its home region flourish as the public discovered a new way to take a vacation.

A believer in economies of scale, Wilhelmsen once recalled, "My initial challenge was to convince my partners and management in Miami to build bigger and more efficient ships in order to grow the company." True to his vision, Royal Caribbean now sails 61 ships calling on all seven continents.

Born in 1929, in Oslo, Norway, Wilhelmsen earned his MBA at Harvard Business School and worked as a chartering assistant for Norway's EB Lund & Co. and later as a shipbroker in New York. After joining the family business, Wilhelmsen & Co. AS, a leading Norwegian shipping concern, in 1954, he became the company's president in 1961.

In 2003, when Wilhelmsen was ready to step back, he was succeeded on Royal Caribbean's board by his son, Alex, who has carried the family's involvement in charting the company's course into its sixth decade.

**Wilhelmsen**

Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Powers Great American Midways is owned and operated by **Corky** and **Debbie Powers**. The carnival was founded in 1980 by Corky Powers, Rochester, New York. Growing the show one ride at a time, it now carries about 55 rides, 40 games and 20 food stands. The show primarily plays spots along the eastern seaboard coast including the **North Carolina State Fair**, Raleigh, which ranked 19th among the top 50 U.S. fairs in 2019.

Accomplishments and affiliations...

- Received Holmes McBride Award for Dedicated Service to Humanity, 2012
- Member, Showmen's League of America, president, 2017
- Member, New York State Showpeople's Association, first secretary, served for 15 years
- Member, Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA), current chair
- Member, North Carolina Association of Agricultural Fairs, served on board as associate (director)
- Member, Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association, International Independent Showman's Association and National Independent Concessionaire's Association

Powers' faith lights her way

LUMBERTON, N.C. — Debbie Heinrich Powers had more than a brush of exposure with the outdoor amusement business growing up in Orchard Park, New York, a tight-knit community just outside of Buffalo. As a young teen, she spent summers out on the road with extended family members on her mother's side working in their concessions business.

"From the day school was out for the summer until the day school started back, I worked on the road with them," she said.

Those extended family members were her grandparents and her cousin. And although Powers traveled the route with them, her parents did not.

Her mother, Betty Heinrich, was a dental hygienist. Her father, Reuben Heinrich, was a Buffalo fireman doing construction work on the side.

Powers loved the business, but she looked at it as part time employment. She excelled in school and her studies, being an overachiever from a young age. Her high grades and extracurricular school activities earned her a scholarship that took care of most of her college expenses. It was always her thought she would go on to college and have a career that would take her elsewhere.

She went on to college where she studied medical technology. After graduation, she was approached by Roswell Park Cancer Institute for employment. That hospital was and still is on the forefront of cancer treatments and cures. While employed there, her position consisted of working in their research facility for cancer cures. She spent many hours in a lab alone and, oftentimes, in a medical

library collecting data.

"I hated it," Powers said.

She found out in less than two years her heart was not in the medical field. She knew exactly where it was and where it had always been, the outdoor amusement industry.

"I'm glad I pursued a different path, because there are no 'what if's' in my world now," she said. "I really think it was a gift from God knowing your calling in life young."

By the time she was 20 years old, Powers had built her own chocolate nut sundae concession with the help of her father who actually hated the business. She worked the first few seasons herself while finishing school.

"I remember the first season I had my own stand," Powers said. "It rained 13 out of the 17 weekends of operation."

That was a lesson learned. And she was totally undeterred. It only seemed to make her stronger.

She also learned quickly that during that time in the early 1970s, booking a concession as a young single woman was not very easy. There seemed to be this unspoken rule of which she became keenly aware.

Upon retiring from the medical field at the ripe age of almost 22 years, she hit the road with two chocolate nut sundaes stands and a game trailer with two games in it. Her sister, brother and soon-to-be husband joined her. That was in 1977. She married her first husband, Charles Corl II, that year as well.

In 1979 Powers purchased a Fried Dough/French Fry trailer, a big investment for her at that time. She joined her long time friend Corky Powers who was traveling with a show that was struggling to stay afloat. In 1980, he



started his own show and Powers continued to travel with that new show.

Powers gave birth to two sons Charles "Dean" III in 1982 and Philip in 1984. She and her husband continued to travel for several years until her husband had a massive heart attack stemming from injuries during the Vietnam War and passed away.

But Powers kept doing what she loved. She didn't want to quit. She wanted to make it work. The industry had been good to her and her family. She had even bought her own home.

So she decided to stay on the show Corky Powers had started. As she grew stronger, so did her friendship with him. The two ended up falling in love and marrying in 1992.

"We worked so well together and we both loved the industry," she said. "God had found two dedicated vessels in us."

Together they grew Powers Great American Midways.

"We built a world-class show together from the ground up," she said. "It wasn't easy. I feel our success really

has hinged off our failures. But you just have to dive right in to the best of your ability. You will do some belly flops and it will hurt. But if you are not willing to take that chance, you shouldn't be in this business."

Powers is proud of their success.

"I have never felt it was a disadvantage of being a woman in this industry," she said. "I love being a woman. I think it actually has benefited me."

She also feels taking the reins as chair of the OABA during this difficult year was all in God's plan for her. She is the fourth woman to chair the OABA in the 55 years the organization has existed. She is very optimistic that the carnivals will be out on the road this season.

"I think God put me here during this time so I could be of help," she said. "I think those that I talk with need a shoulder or an ear. I have a positive attitude. I say, during difficult times, it is time to build up your courage muscles and your faith muscles."

There is certainly no doubt Powers has no fear to flex her own.

—Pam Sherborne

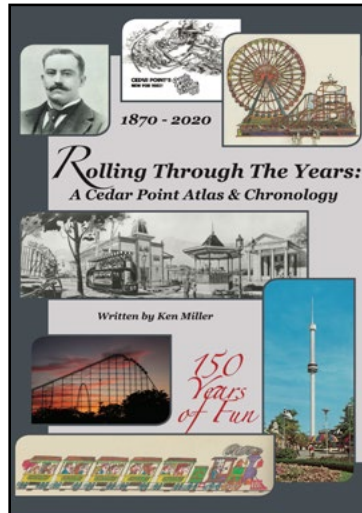
New book on Cedar Point illustrates park's 150 years of history

REVIEW: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

The amusement industry has seen a fair share of books and publications dedicated to many amusement parks and their unique histories. To reach a milestone of 150 years is a rare feat, but Cedar Point traces its roots back to 1870, making it one of the oldest amusement parks in the country. A new book has been published that captures a century and a half of details, stories and images on a colossal scale. It undeniably depicts what has been dubbed The Amusement Park and America's Roller Coast like nothing before.

Rolling Through The Years wasn't just thrown together in honor of the park's anniversary. Author Ken Miller has been accumulating an incredible amount of research for seven years [see sidebar] and the compilation is a masterpiece described as a Cedar Point atlas and chronology.

There are two main parts of the book. Its first half organizes an immense volume of material into groupings: historical markers, former and current rides, ferryboats and steamships, roller coasters, carousels, the Cedar Point & Lake Erie Railroad, major buildings, hotels and more. The orchestration of each topic not only makes it easy to find information, but also a pleasure for the reader to be drawn into the fine details he or she may remember or is learning



for the first time. With more than 1,200 images, the book captures Cedar Point in visual abundance. Photographs, artwork, brochures, advertisements and souvenirs vividly portray the park and its attractions with color and character. Some photographs have not been seen for decades.

The second section serves as a history of the park. Both a chronological timeline and an atlas that includes 75 maps, the reader is taken on Cedar Point's journey year by year. What was added that year? What was removed? *Rolling Through the Years: A Cedar Point Atlas & Chronology* answers each question. Miller explains part of the reason the book is so large — a gigantic 12 by 18 inches — is so the maps can be appreciated.

The book isn't just large in dimensions either. It is just shy of 400 pages, and with its hardcovers weighs in at almost 11 pounds.

During the last seven

years devoted to research, Miller has examined more than 100,000 newspaper and magazine articles and has spent hundreds of hours in museum archives. The atlas and chronology are a true testament to dedication, and the results clearly show.

The book is published by 1870 Publishing Group and is available through its website. The price tag is \$100, but the sheer bulk of the publication confirms it is worth every dime. Shipping is included in the purchase price (tax is additional).

The audience for this book is vast. Whether a seasonal employee who worked the park in his or her youth, an avid Cedar Point fan or a fellow colleague in the amusement industry, there is much to love by anyone who acquires this major accomplishment.

It is with sad cruelty that the coronavirus pandemic has the park postponing its full 150th celebration until 2021. "Our team determined that a celebration of this magnitude must be done right," said Park President Jason McClure in a May statement. With that in mind, this book helps carry the anticipation for the big event.

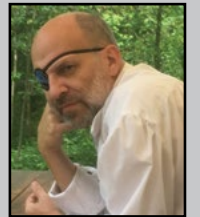
Not every park can boast 150 years, but every park has a unique history worthy of being told. Most amusement parks can wish that a book like *Rolling Through The Years* was created for their parks. Which begs the question, "Why aren't they?" This one shows how it can be done.

An interview with the author

Amusement Today sat down with author **Ken Miller** to talk about the major undertaking in creating the atlas and chronology.

AT: What is your relationship with the park?

Ken Miller: I'm actually a school teacher. In the year 2000, I started working at Cedar Point seasonally. I first started in merchandise and went to the front gate in admissions. They asked me if I wanted to cover a shift at the Town Hall Museum. It was 99 degrees heat, and steam was coming off the pavement after a rain. "Let me get this straight. You want me to sit in the air conditioning and answer some trivia and tell people where the closest funnel cakes are?" What was wrong with that picture? I have been there ever since. I think it is the best job in the park.



Miller

What was the process of organizing all this material?

This was a seven-year project. We started in 2013. I was working the museum, and there was some reference material there. There was a park timeline that was decent, but people would ask questions, and I would have to look in four or five different sources to give them the information. The game plan originally was to create a resource just for the museum itself. We were going to do three-ring binders and have the information at our fingertips. We would have all that information in one spot.

John Hildebrandt, the general manager at the time, was in the museum while I was working on this and saw the project. He basically said, "You need to publish this." He doesn't even recall the conversation, but he was the one that actually got me started on publishing it.

We started keeping folders on my laptop. One for every ride, one for every restaurant... Everything got kind of organized from the get go.

How did the two halves come about?

The book was designed in two sections mostly because of the maps. People would come in asking about their first visit or the first year their father had come. I wanted to make sure we had a lot of maps in this.

Was the book produced by the park?

The book is not funded by Cedar Point. We decided early on — and Cedar Point was fine with this — that we would set up 1870 Publishing Group as a new company to handle this. I had these ideas in my mind, and I really didn't want anyone to mess with that. I did a little marketing research on volume and distribution, and we decided the best way to fund this was to take pre-orders on the book itself. We had a really good response and printed 1,000 limited editions.

The problem is these books are so heavy, production can only do a couple hundred a week.

Did you have full cooperation from the park?

When I started, John gave me his blessing, but as he was about to retire, he encouraged me to talk to the new general manager. After he had been there a while, I sat down with [Jason McClure] and Tony Clark in marketing and received their blessing. They were comfortable with the format and gave me carte blanche to talk to the various departments. The main challenge was the graphics and design department was having personnel changes. Rob Decker was retiring. It became a matter of "Who is available?" But a couple people became very helpful. It was an open door. Several fans opened up their collections too.

Any surprises along the way?

Quite a few. Every time I opened up a [newspaper] page, it was like, "I really didn't know this!" There was an article about a fire in the Palace of Mystery and the Lady with No Head escaped through the back door. I didn't even know about a Palace of Mystery.

Magnum XL-200
1989

Steel Hyper Coaster

Size: 200 feet
Height: 200 feet
First Drop: 100 feet
Roller Height: 100 feet
Length: 2,000 feet
Speed: 70 mph
Inventor: 60 degrees
Capacity: 2 minutes, 20 seconds
Ride per hour: 1,800 per hour
Manufacturer: Cedar Fair
Designer: Ron Toomer
Location: Cedar Point, Amusement Over the Seaside Gate and Cedar Point Shores
Height Requirement: 48 inches

Opening Day: May 4, 1989

Cost of \$8 million. First Coaster to hit the 200-foot mark and go over 100 mph. It broke the previous height record of 175 feet by 25 feet. It held the height record until 1994.

Contains over 200 tons of steel and bolts and over 300 tons of steel. The lift chain alone is over 1000 feet long and weighs 7 tons. Each train weighs about 2,000 pounds. The train needs 400 feet to reach the top of the lift hill. The train system used a new design of polyurethane wheels to handle the friction caused by rough and the tracks. The drive wheels featured special fins to grip and the rollers. The drive wheels featured special fins to grip and the rollers. The drive wheels featured special fins to grip and the rollers. One month after the ride opened the lift chain broke and had to be replaced.

One of the most awarded rides in any amusement park and still wins top honors. "National Magnet" by some of the general public, but most coasters enthusiasts don't use the nickname.

The Magnum was the first coaster to hit the 200-foot mark and started the "Coaster Wars" between amusement parks about record setting coasters. When the Guinness World Book of Records was at the park to measure the coaster, they had to borrow the Kentucky Police Department equipment to measure the speed. The Magnum was the Amusement Today Magazine Golden Ticket Award for Best Coaster for the World in 1998 the first year for the award, 2000, and 2001. Even though the records have been broken, Magnum has usually placed in the top 25 list for the Golden Ticket Awards.

The fastest coaster for the Magnum was 1991 with 3,200,000 riders, over 20.4 million riders between 1989 and 1998. Magnum had over 230,000 riders in its first season of operation.

SPACE SHUTTLE DISCOVERY — 134.2 FT.
BLAZE — 109 FT.
MAGNUM XL-200 — 200 FT.

CEDAR POINT

1981 Season 112 "The Amusement Park"

Opening Day: May 24
High 82 degrees, rain, windy

Closing Day: September 20
High 80 degrees, rain, windy

COME JOIN THE FUN AT CEDAR POINT'S Bavarian Funfest
September 16, 17 & 18, 1991

Wirtwurst Beer Bands!

New Staff: The Union Station ride opened.

Food Sources: The Kiddy Kingdom Carrousel was restored. The Casanova roll bottles were moved from the 1st Street area to their current location on the southeast end of the Casanova and the Casanova 80 bottles were updated. A Baby King Parade was born at the Seaside Aquaparc, one of the first born in captivity.

February 20, Cedar Point Inc. agreed to sell 1/3 of the Cedar Point common stock to S. Pramon & Son Ltd. of England. The sale would give Pramon a 25% ownership of the corporation.

April 1, a group of Cedar Point Inc. stockholders filed a motion to block the potential sale of stock to S. Pramon & Son Ltd. A federal judge denied the motion on April 10 following the sale to an investor. Cedar Point Inc. added two more members to the Board of Directors, both of which were from Pramon. This move also gave Pramon two votes out of the five for the Board of Directors.

May 10, Hotel Shambles opened for the season.

May 23, the 13 Air Force (England) F-16 Eagle near the Giant Wheel for the second year.

May 27, Bavarian Oktoberfest at Cedar Point organized by the OABC (Ohio Association of Bavarian Oktoberfest). This was the fourth annual visit to the event and more than 1,000 guests with special needs from over 20 states, 49, and county organizations were in attendance.

June 25, Girl Scout Day.

June 25, the 12th consecutive All-Ohio Convention Day at Cedar Point with over 700 Conventers on display.

July 20-26, Frontier Days Cattle Festival on the Frontier Trail.

August 20, the front car of the Colossus roller coaster detached from the rest of the train due to a faulty fifth wheel. Two guests were slightly injured and sent to the hospital for observation.

September 16-18, Cedar Point hosted the Bavarian Funfest featuring "The King" Freddie Yankovich, All Stars & the Robinson Orchestra, the Brian Bennett Band, the Josef Wenzel Band, Zander Dee Music, and Cleveland German Bands. The park was partially open for the 1981-1983 and fully open for the 1984 and 1985. Attendance was 83,000.

September 17-20, the North American Fall & Power Boat Show returned to the Cedar Point Marina.

Cedar Point had over 15,000 applications for the 3,400 seasonal positions. Attendance was reported at 2,742 million guests.

Admission:
Adult: \$10.00
Junior (12-14): \$8.00
Senior (65+): \$8.00
Nightly Admission: \$40.00
Season Tickets (September 12 and 13): \$10.00
Bavarian Funfest: \$10.00
Children 4 and under were free

Live Entertainment:
Cedar Point Chorus
Cedar Point Showman
Carnival Theatre
Frontier Theatre
Red Center Saloon
Golden Palace Theatre
Mystery Bands
Opera Studios

Living Planet
Abraxas
America's Big
F1 Michigan Community
Red Center Saloon
Golden Palace Theatre
Cedar Point
Cedar Point
Cedar Point

Pages within the atlas contain year-by-year stats, artwork and organized information on numerous topics, along with more than 1,200 images. COURTESY 1870 PUBLISHING GROUP

►GUIDANCE

Continued from page 38

location, elbow-to-elbow, for an extended period.

4. A large percentage of attraction attendance is made up of family members and others who live in the same home and thus do not need to be physically distanced from each other.

These considerations regard operational adjustments for facilities to consider before reopening prior to the development of a treatment or widely accessible vaccine for COVID-19. They will be adjusted and simplified as time goes on, conditions improve, and new best practices are identified. These considerations are designed to be a proposed outline, subject to discussion and adjustment as needed with input from the local government agencies and health authorities where the attraction operates. If government guidance is more stringent, management should follow government guidance. IAAPA encourages members to share prepared documents with government officials to assist them in developing their guidelines for unique attractions.

Topline considerations for reopening:

- Allow healthy people to enjoy the facility and encourage

the use of masks/face coverings for guests and staff.

- Provide means to wash/sanitize hands frequently.

- Manage density of people within the facility to keep people or family units that have been isolating together six feet (two meters) apart. Physical distancing guidelines may vary by region and can be reduced by wearing of masks/face coverings — ensure your plan is aligned with local official guidance.

- Reduce touch areas where possible and sanitize high touch surfaces frequently.

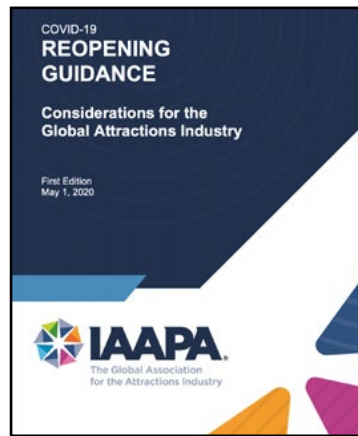
- Protect employees with various approaches, including barriers, protective coverings and distancing.

- Communicate with employees and guests effectively on how to prevent the spread of germs.

- Have a plan in the event a guest or employee falls ill on site.

The aspects of the guidelines have applications for members large and small, and all facilities, regardless of the type, should find some data and key thinking that should help each one.

“The document is not the only resource a member should use. It is one resource,” said Mandt. “They should look at resources provided by their health authorities, the **World Health Organization**, and the



Center for Disease Control. Look at what all is available. In some areas, there is more specialized information that goes into more detail than what IAAPA provides on certain topics. For example, we have a food and beverage section. A small facility will vary from a multilevel resort. In that case, there are other resources like the **National Restaurant Association**. But we have tried to address areas that are unique to the attractions industry.”

IAAPA’s document provides links to other resources.

Kansas-based **World Waterpark Association** has also reached out to its members. Among its top recommendations is communication, which it feels is key in any crisis. In order to reopen, operators are strongly encouraged to have systems in

place to share information with their employees and guests in an accurate and timely manner.

Communication with guests:

- Changes to existing park policies that enhance protection of guests and employees.

- Operational changes that impact the guests’ use of the facility.

- Actions guests can take to decrease their potential exposure to COVID-19.

- Development of pre-visit and on-park message delivery systems such as websites, advertising, signage and employee direction to ensure guests what is expected of them while at the facility.

For the full extent of information available, WWA members and industry professionals can go to the site: www.waterparks.org and look for the Resources tab.

Various regional organizations have been communicating and hosting online workshops with their area members. As parks reopen, sharing knowledge with each other will become the lifeblood to surviving the crisis.

The unprecedented challenge to the industry is one for the history books. IAAPA has taken the lead to offer first steps in reopening, including cleaning and sanitation, training and

equipping employees, communication and more. IAAPA hired an epidemiologist to make sure its principles are based in science.

“The front of the document shares some big principles to think about, and when you get into the various sections it talks about how to implement those principles in an operating environment,” said Mandt. “The public needs our industry today more than ever before. Being isolated has not been part of our human nature. People are anxious to reconnect. The amusement industry provides a way to do that.”

“Our industry is about connection,” said **Susan Storey**, Director of Communications, IAAPA. “It’s a personal connection when we’re in the park, whether if we are working or bringing our families. All that came to a stop. Everyone keeps saying ‘unprecedented’ — and it is — but it is also scary. This is also the time when I think the industry is at its best. We all make jokes about all the zoom calls and emails and texts, but they’re not jokes; it’s the fact we are reaching out to each other. Competitor companies are helping each other. There is nothing we want more than to be open again. Looking ahead, we are going to reopen, and we are going to make those memories again.”

►DISTANCE

Continued from page 38

safeguard guest and employee health. In a new report titled *COVID-19 Reopening Guidance: Considerations for the Global Attractions Industry*, the organization places effective management of physical distancing and capacity, and reduced and safer contact with surfaces, among its recommendations.

Spacing out

Moving beyond the more obvious solutions tied virtual queuing, capacity reduction, spacing and traffic markers, and reservation systems, U.K.-based experiential design company **Holovis** (holovis.com) has developed a mobile app designed to help venues manage physical distancing. Called **Crowd Solo**, the app features an attraction reservation and

queue-management system with the added tool of real-time proximity alerts — providing operators with instant insight into guest movements that can help prevent unsafe crowding.

Powered by the Holovis DeepSmarts data analytics engine, **Crowd Solo** allows operators to monitor how effectively their facility is handling guest flow, especially around attraction loading areas. Heatmap data is viewed in real-time to help manage capacity.

“Venues will have to adapt and learn to operate differently in order to give guests peace of mind and confidence to revisit,” said **Peter Cliff**, creative director for Holovis, adding that initial industry feedback has been positive. “**Crowd Solo** will help operators move quickly to reach optimal, safe venue capacities. [It is] able to provide guests and operator teams with a highly adaptive tool to enable safe visiting, predict and manage guest movements, avoid unsafe queuing.”

In facilities utilizing the system, guests will be directed



Grubrrr’s app-based contactless ordering solution, utilizing customers’ own devices, makes safe, convenient use of QR code menus and mobile payment methods.
COURTESY GRUBRRR

to download the mobile app on their phones for free and use it to book attractions for themselves and their family throughout their visit. By connecting every guest, the data presents a “state of the park” report through crowd position. Operators can act to divert and improve guest flow with situational awareness maintained across the networked system.

In addition, through the app’s tracking capability, guests will be made aware of their group’s social distance metrics in relation to all other visitors. The system provides both audible and vibration warnings if guests are too close.

No new physical hardware or changes to site infrastructure are required to enable **Crowd Solo**, as it leverages a combination of advanced positional tracking techniques already inherent in personal devices connected to standard park operating systems.

Holovis expected to make the app generally available around the start of June and was planning to offer it free to single-ticket admission destinations, such as theme parks, zoos, museums and cultural centers, that expressed interest. Add-on features for **Crowd Solo** include gamification, thermal imaging reports, ride popularity statistics and integration with exist-

ing cashless payment methods.

Beyond the surface

The high transmissibility of COVID-19 has spotlighted not only the need for increased personal hygiene and barriers such as protective masks and plexiglass shields, but for thorough sanitization and reducing direct contact with surfaces and items that are frequently handled, such as cash.

Goldfinger Monitors of Johns Island, South Carolina, with products distributed worldwide by **Betson Imperial Parts & Service** (betsonparts.com), offers infrared touch screens to the attractions industry that remove the need for direct skin contact. Applicable to amusements, retail locations, kiosks, ATMs, vending machines and more, the technology can be used with gloves, a stylus or a pen to enable safer use of a video or touch screen monitor.

“There is a lot of uncertainty right now for equipment manufacturers that typically require the use of skin-to-screen contact,” said **Daniel Hartmann**, president and CEO of Goldfinger. “Goldfinger monitors can give both manufacturers and end users a reason to feel safe.”

Aside from the benefit of doing away with direct skin contact, Goldfinger’s monitors are protected against scratches

and fingerprints. They wipe down easily with any recommended cleaning solution.

Grubrrr takes the mitigation of surface risk further with an app-based contactless ordering solution. Customers place their order from the safety of their own device by scanning a QR (quick response) code menu or ordering online through a website. They then pay electronically via debit, credit or another mobile payment method, and the food can be picked up at a locker, counter or other contact-free location.

The company’s Sam Zietz told *AT* that he has seen an exponential increase in demand for Grubrrr’s mobile, tableside and contactless ordering solutions, as well as its self-service kiosks, point-of-sale systems and food lockers, from both existing and new clients. And he was forthright in assessing the changes the industry is facing.

“Consumers will view standing near a cashier as a cardinal sin — and this pandemic will accelerate the obsolescence of cashiers, in particular,” Zietz said. “Businesses of every type are having dialogue around how they need to pivot their business models to conform to new consumer behaviors. These new behaviors will continue to exist even after the passing of this pandemic.”

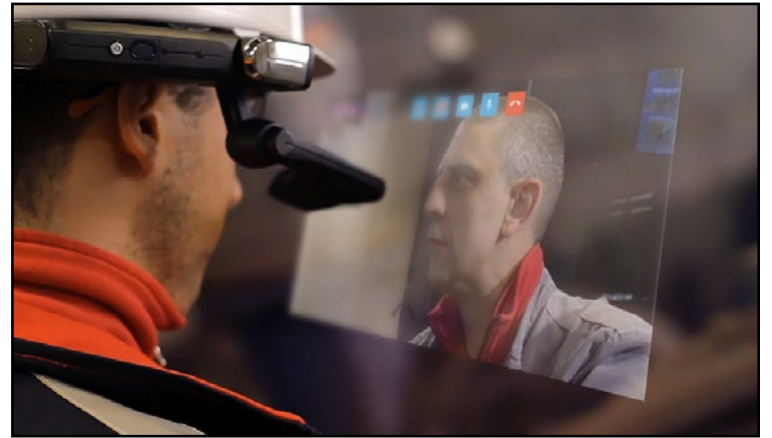
COVID-19 pandemic has not stopped Zamperla's customer service

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

VINCENZA, Italy — Despite COVID-19 limitations and travel restrictions, Italian ride manufacturer **Zamperla** has found a way to reinvent its customer care service utilizing a new remote assistance service.

In April, the Zamperla Care Team began using an extended collaboration software, which allows direct sharing of audio, video, remote augmented reality interactions and document sharing and gives instructions to assemble Zamperla's rides. The Augmented, Mixed and Virtual Reality solution was created to support the technician by improving his capabilities with content sharing and real-time manipulation by various users.

"The idea of starting a remote assistance service with AR system, mixed and virtual was born initially in October 2019, as a project to support Zamperla's technicians on the road," said **Roberto Dal Pozzolo**, Zamperla customer service director. "The COVID-19 emergency, travel restrictions and the obligation of social dis-



The Zamperla Care Team began using an extended collaboration software in April that allows direct sharing of audio, video, remote augmented reality interactions and document sharing and gives instructions to assemble Zamperla's rides. The software was first created to support those on the road, but with the travel restrictions and social protocols due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Zamperla found that it suits the company's needs. COURTESY ZAMPERLA

tancing have led us to rethink the system as a guide device for the customer, for the assembly of Zamperla's attractions."

The AR/MR/VR technology can be used by different types of devices currently on the market, each of which has different features, interaction type and user experience. Using AR, MR and VR in this area not only helps raise safety standards, but also improves the efficiency and quality of tasks performed, the margin of error, and the time it takes to com-

plete the task. It keeps track of completed tasks with the possibility of overlay texts, graphics and multimedia to the reality observed by the user, but also mixes digital objects to the real world and interaction with multimedia content.

Dal Pozzolo said Zamperla has carried out two testing experiences.

"The first one with a WindstarZ, installed in the Mandarin Plaza mall in Kyiv, Ukraine," he said. "The second with a Jump Around, Djurs

Sommerland Park, Denmark, providing remote assistance not only for the assembly of the attraction, but also for the testing of the machine. We have reinvented ourselves, changing the original goal of the service and adapting it to our needs in order to start a business that will allow us to create a real-time service system combined with the sale."

Company representatives are satisfied with these first tests, with the forecast of three more assists expected in

the short term for attractions' assembly in Russia, Canada/USA and the Philippines.

In other news for Zamperla, production fully reopened on May 4. The company is following all the security directions given by the Italian government and anticontagion measures recommended by the Higher Institute of Health, in accordance with preventive containment procedures to avoid the spread of the Covid-19 virus in the workplace.

•zamperla.com

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Post COVID-19 white paper released by the Thinkwell Group

LOS ANGELES — In a white paper published in late-April, the **Thinkwell Group** addressed seven areas for location-based entertainment owners and operators to consider when reopening their park, museum, attraction or entertainment venue in a post COVID-19 world.

Some solutions are already being developed with Thinkwell's global clients, highlighting the viability and adaptability of these solutions.

Park capacity will be a huge concern in a post-coronavirus world. Crowds on a scale typically seen in the mega parks on both coasts and internationally will need to be adjusted to allow for social distancing. While many theme parks and some larger museums have had success at shifting guests to ticketing in advance via an app or website, many smaller institutions have online ticketing rates at under 10% of all tickets sold.

Near-continuous and visually obvious cleaning of queue railings will be necessary regardless of what methodology is used for attraction queues. With pulsed queues, guests would be given a specific time to return, whether that's via an app, staggered entry paper ticket or text message.

Social distancing will need to happen in rides as well. Ride vehicles may need to be loaded with empty vehicles between guests, while coaster trains will need to consider empty rows and seats between riders and all vehicles will need extra time to have seats and touchable surfaces sanitized before boarding.

In a post-COVID-19 world, a heavy reliance on touch-based interactive screens is a thing of the past. There aren't enough staffers to constantly be wiping down touchscreens between uses, so these interactives will need to be removed, covered, or modified.

Will people want a device, like a virtual reality goggle headgear or 3D glasses at all so close to their eyes, noses and mouths after the world goes back to some form of normal? Even with obvious cleaning, that puts the technology and the multi-use headgear and goggles uncomfortably close to the guests' faces. What will happen with VR in public spaces?

As some parks consider canceling parades, shows and fireworks spectacles due to the density of guests for such presentations, there's hope for ways to allow these things to continue.

•thinkwellgroup.com

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Embed aims to relieve strain of COVID, offers free Mobile Wallet

SINGAPORE — **Embed**, a leader of the cashless business management systems and solutions for the amusement, entertainment and leisure industries, announced the Embed COVID-19 Relief Act as a demonstration of Embed's commitment to its customers and industry's recovery.

"At Embed, we want to do our part to support our customers as they prepare for their reopening day. We thought long and hard about how we can do this, and we decided to give away our latest award-winning innovation, the Mobile Wallet, free for one year to everyone. No app required," said **Renee Welsh**, CEO of Embed, during a webcast announcement to the industry on April 24.

On Mobile Wallet, a guest's virtual game card sits in the mobile wallet on their smart phone, allowing facilities to offer customers a contactless payment and FEC experience.

"We were able to get our foot in the door with the Googles and Apples of the world by saying to them: 'You have loyalty cards in your mobile wallets and you have all of finance, but you don't have the entertainment or attractions industry and its game card,'" explained **Sara Paz**, chief marketing officer for Embed. "By putting the game card into [a smart phone's] mobile wallet, that skips over the largest barrier of entry for the consumer which is having to download an app. At the same time, it gives operators real-time information on who is spending what, where and



Paz



The contactless Mobile Wallet system from Embed allows attraction customers to pay for attractions and reload gamecards all with their own personal smart phone, dramatically reducing the number of surfaces and employees guests must come into contact with. COURTESY EMBED

at what times. It ultimately future-proofs these businesses."

"Plus, we are in the process of adding capacity management to our Mobile Portal, which will also be included," added Welsh. "We are giving this to all our new and existing customers for free. Knowing how important it is to our customers to have contactless payments to safeguard their overall customer experience, we felt this would be the most powerful demonstration of our commitment to our customers and our industry's recovery. This is Embed's COVID-19 Relief Act. Make no mistake about it, we are going the social distance with [our customers]."

Embed has been working closely with its partners and customers, gathering insight on how the situation might evolve, profiling the actions and strategies to help cope and plan for reopening day, and what it means and how it impacts the FEC businesses. For the first time in Embed's company's history, they recorded and made these conversations and working sessions available to the industry via the EmbedLIVE series because Embed knew these authentic and transparent conversations would benefit everyone in the industry, reminding operators, manufacturers, and distributors that we're navigating this tough time together.

"A new type of customer will emerge from this pandemic. After a long-lock-down period, the surge of consumers will emerge and only go to businesses they perceive as safe," said Welsh. "They will be more conscious of hygiene, price and social distancing than ever before. It is unmistakable that people don't want to touch cash, coins, papers, or anything that transmits viruses. This acts as a forcing function for our industry to become tech-savvy overnight. Embed has the contactless solution (in the mobile wallet and mobile portal) that the industry needs to recover, so it feels right and good that we give it away for free."

New and existing customers can register for the free mobile wallet and mobile portal by simply going to Embed's website, embedcard.com.

—John W.C. Robinson



Welsh

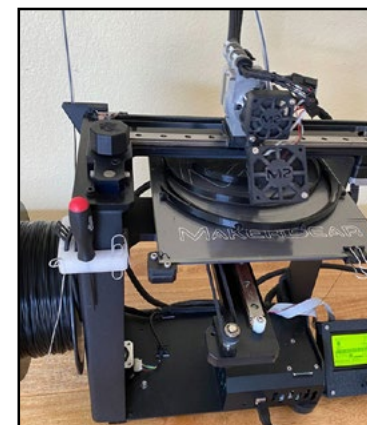
Universal Orlando Resort employs 3D printers amid shutdown

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO, Fla. — Combining technology and thinking out of the box is nothing new to **Universal Parks and Resorts**. The creative team has exhibited their inspired prowess for creating magic most recently at the **Universal Orlando Resort's Islands of Adventure** park with their highly lauded Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure in 2019. Fan blogs are in overdrive with buzz about **Universal Studios Japan's** Super Nintendo World, which was scheduled to open this year, and was nearing completion prior to the COVID-19 shutdowns. Then there is **Epic Universe** park, which was announced last year as the fourth gate for the Orlando resort, which even with few details officially released, is already expected to forever change not only Orlando's, but the world's expectations of the theme park experience. And while, even post-COVID-19, these products will surely continue to garner industry applause and financial success for Universal, there is another creative product of the Universal team that is equally deserving of praise and attention right now, mid-COVID-19.



Strips of plastic (left) are being used to create headbands for PPE. Extrusion 3D printers heat the material and lay it on the print surface one layer at a time. COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO RESORT



It all started with one team member recognizing a community need and creatively offering a solution.

In late March, weeks after the shutdown of Universal Orlando Resort to the public and Universal team members being told to stay home with pay and benefits, **Jessica Harned**, supervisor of Advanced Resort Technology for Universal, was already aware of the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as surgical masks and face shields in the U.S. At that time, it was only the beginning of "the curve" everyone was hoping to flatten by social distancing and closing the parks. She knew something needed to

be done. It was then that she text messaged her boss with an idea. She asked what her boss thought of the idea to 3D print bands for face shields for donation to healthcare workers in the Central Florida community.

"I was seeing a couple things around the makerspace of people helping out, and I just thought 'I could do that,'" Harned explained. "I'm home and I have a printer and I can maybe grab two more from the office and try to print some of these masks."

Universal Orlando uses 3D printers in a variety of ways from prototyping models to making small components like **Volcano Bay's** Tapu Tapu wrist-

bands. Then the work began. "The thing with printers is, it all sounds really exciting, but it's probably marginally more exciting than watching paint dry," she said. "They're very slow."

"This is where it goes way beyond me," Harned said. "I just started the ball rolling. Before any of this, I had already formed this unofficial 3D printing co-op with colleagues who I knew were 3D printing on property. We have people from Parks Technology, Creative, Entertainment Tech, the Creative Prop and Modeling Shop and Merchandise. We've got people from all over our parks who are motivated together around this common goal."

Working in socially-distanced shifts, the Universal Orlando team members, with Harned at the helm, have printed and donated over 3,200 face shield bands to healthcare workers in Central Florida as of mid-May.

So, while this example of being creative may not add to Universal's bottom line, it certainly does deserve the attention of the industry for its contribution to those heroes on the front lines fighting this pandemic. Proudly, this example is added to the list of the industry's unity in times of crisis and a shining example of what it means to be universally caring, universally human, universally one.



NEWS & NOTES

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Time to start planning for the 2021 AIMS International Safety Seminar

Despite the challenging times that are affecting us all, our staff is optimistic about the future and plans are underway for the **2021 AIMS International Safety Seminar**, which will be held in Galveston, Texas, January 10-15, 2021. As plans for the Safety Seminar unfold, AIMS staff will be considering ways to keep those who may not be able to travel connected, and will look to new technology tools to help reach those in the industry who are in need of education and certification, but may be unable attend in person. One of these tools, which is currently available at aimsintl.org/education, is **AIMS connectED**, the new online learning platform where amusement industry professionals can gain the education and CEUs they need to keep their certifications current. While we hope everyone will be able to connect, learn and network in person, rest-assured, we will put

together a comprehensive seminar that meets the needs and expectations of our industry.

Call for instructors and presentations for the Safety Seminar

In an effort to streamline and simplify the process of selecting courses for the upcoming seminar, the AIMS team has employed a new online tool for the sole purpose of soliciting, collecting and reviewing presentation proposals. The **Call for Presentations for the 2021 AIMS International Safety Seminar** portal is open now through July 17, and can be accessed visiting aimsintl.org/get-involved/be-an-instructor. Even presenters who already know that they will be unable to travel to the Safety Seminar in January are encouraged to submit proposals because we are considering ways to include presentations from remote locations, as well.

A big thanks to the people behind the scenes

As the amusement industry enters into what is shaping up to be a tumultuous and uncertain summer season, it's important to recognize the thousands of individuals who work in maintenance, operations, ride inspection and other areas of safety at parks and attractions. They work around the clock to plan and prepare for the safety and enjoyment of guests and other employees. A normally tough job becomes even more difficult with the challenges of keeping guests safely distanced and rides and facilities sanitized to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Their innovation and attention to detail will make all the difference in the safe and enjoyable experience that guests will have in their parks. We all owe them a great debt of gratitude and appreciation!

Many of these individuals have

demonstrated their skills and knowledge as AIMS Certification holders and AIMS International Safety Seminar students. The AIMS Certification Program is internationally recognized for accreditation of knowledge and experience in Ride Inspection, Maintenance Technician, Operations Technician and Aquatics Operations. A complete list of all AIMS Certified individuals can be found on our website at aimsintl.org.

AIMS International's mission: improve amusement industry safety through leadership in education

The annual AIMS International Safety Seminar is recognized by major parks and attractions as the worldwide leader for safety training and education. The next AIMS International Safety Seminar will be held January 10-15, 2021 in Galveston, Texas. For more information, visit aimsintl.org.

Space for this AIMS page is provided courtesy of *Amusement Today* as a corporate partner of AIMS Intl. Content is provided by AT & AIMS.



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Park sees drastic reduction in waste with innovative approach

Six Flags Over Texas produces a win-win with new trash system

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ARLINGTON, Texas — When it comes to innovative ideas, dealing with trash isn't the first subject to come to mind. However, Six Flags Over Texas is finding major success with a new system.

Operations Manager Matt Hughey became aware of a dramatic approach using bacteria being offered by Advetec, an England-based company. Given the green light to investigate, Hughey traveled to the U.K. to see the system firsthand.

"When it was first explained to me, it almost sounded sci-fi, but with future conversations, it made more sense," said Hughey. "Bacteria is on everything. It's on our bodies, our walls, it's on everything. There are all kinds of bacteria, and different types break down biological things better than others. Basically, the bacteria work at different temperatures."

Advetec is a specialist in the on-site reduction of solid and liquid organic waste. In 2017, the company launched an evolution of its bio-thermic digester technology. The Advetec XO system is designed to rapidly reduce the organic content within waste at the source, cutting off-site transportation and processing costs and helping companies achieve zero waste to landfill.

So how does it work?

"When you throw a trash bag away, it may be pretty full, but there is probably a lot of air in there," Hughey told *Amusement Today*. "In order for bacteria to be as useful



Workers load trash bags into the system via a conveyor belt. This drawing (inset) shows the layout of the XO system. COURTESY ADVETEC; AT/TIM BALDWIN

as it can be, it needs to get in and around as much trash as possible. So, the trash goes through an industrial grade shredder to begin the process. By breaking up that trash, you've already reduced what would be going to a landfill anyway. It's more compact."

Based upon the trash going into the machine past that point, heating elements "wake up the critters," as Hughey jokingly calls it, and also dehydrates the material. About every six hours, the machine introduces a new culture of bacteria, not only to replace those that eventually die off, but a larger culture works more efficiently in breaking down the waste material. If any cleaning products were included in the trash that might kill good and bad bacteria, the introduction of new cultures keeps the process working.

"The machine has two

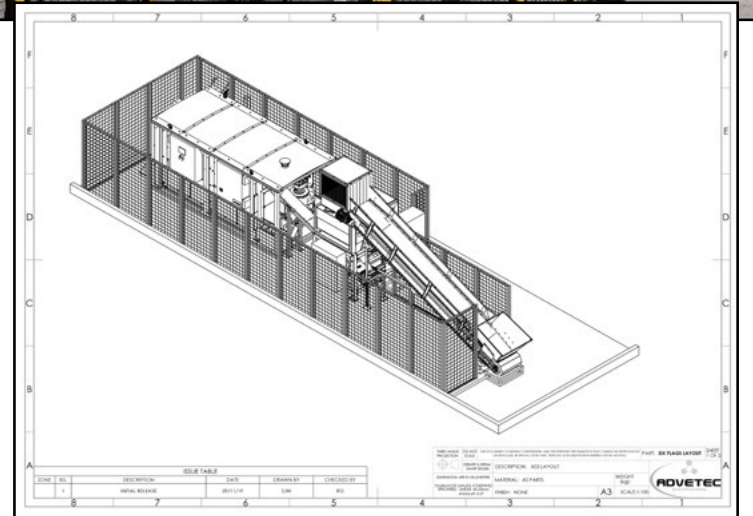
chambers," Hughey said. "What separates the two is a half wall at the bottom and then bars at the top. As the first chamber fills, turning arms inside of the chamber churn material both directions to help with dehydration and for the bacteria to start eating through it. It almost has an herbal smell, like a fruitcake."

Six Flags has seen the combination of the grinding away of the matter and bacteria eating it up results in a 90 percent breakdown on average.

"If you put ten trash bags in, one trash bag [of waste] comes out," Hughey said, simplifying the process. "It's pretty darn consistent. There's nothing special about the bacteria. They've found certain types work better on paper products, certain bacteria work better with plastic and foods and so on and so forth. The mixture of variety of bacteria in there work best in certain temperatures. The secret is not the bacteria itself, but a special solution that I call 'Red Bull' for bacteria. It causes the bacteria to breathe faster, and in so doing causes them to want to eat more."

The machine does the bulk of the work and registers more trash coming in and reacts accordingly. When the trash leaves the system, it is somewhat sterilized from the process. Any residual bacteria that remain pose no risk as it is natural bacteria that exists in the environment at all times.

Part of the service agreement finds Advetec coming out every 90 days to supply new cultures of bacteria and



plenty of stimulants. Six Flags is not required to order anything in advance.

When the process is complete, the sheer reduction of waste is the major win. But it doesn't necessarily stop there. Certain companies will be analyzing the resulting material from the park. If it proves suitable, then Six Flags can sell the material to the companies to be burned to produce energy. If this turns out to be the case, then it is a double win.

"Even if it isn't suitable, it is still way better to go to the landfill like that," Hughey said. "It's way better, period."

On an on-site visit, AT witnessed the process firsthand and found the process dramatically impressive. Of note are the safety procedures that make the home run a grand slam.

Only trained people can operate the machine. Several E-stops around the operation are in place, in case a worker hears something problematic, such as an unexpected large amount of metal cans. Those items can be removed. For the system to work, it requires an RFD tag by a trained operator.

For trash to be placed into the machine, a foot pedal is used for bags to be transferred up a conveyor belt, which creates an additional safety measure keeping all hands and body parts away from the machine when things are in motion. There are also E-stop wires all around the conveyor for any issues that arise when inserting bags into the shredder. A timer will also turn off the shredder once it detects no movement on the belt after a programmed period of time.

"The XO unit has a monitoring system built into it," said Hughey. "I can see what is going on with the unit, and [Advetec] is monitoring 24/7 as well. They might determine if it needs to be turned off before I do. They can turn it off via Wi-Fi. They can also make adjustments to speed up the process if they are seeing more trash than expected. There is a lot of options they can do."

When not being "fed," such as during the current COVID-19 crisis, Hughey reports the bacteria go into hibernation. When the park is not in daily operation, it doesn't pose any issues.



Operations Manager Matt Hughey sifts through the end material, the equivalent of approximately 70 garbage bins. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Date options announced for the World's Largest Swimming Lesson

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizers for the 2020 World's Largest Swimming Lesson (WLSL) have announced two new date options for this year's event. Host locations are encouraged to participate on Thursday, July 16 or they can host an event any day in June, July or August. The new date options offer more time and flexibility for facilities to take advantage of the WLSL program in their local communities and continue to send the vital Swimming Lessons Save Lives message.

"Safety is always the first priority for our aquatics community, and the WLSL program has been an important education and promotion tool for thousands of pools, water parks and learn-to-swim providers," said Rick Root, president, World Waterpark Association. "Whether they join us on July 16th or another date in June, July or August, we want to work with as many locations as possible to ensure children and adults are exposed to water safety and learn to swim messages this season."

The World's Largest Swimming Lesson serves as a platform for the aquatics industry to use one voice to send a message about the crucial importance of teaching kids to swim and the role of adult supervision to prevent drowning.

Per the World Health Organization, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury-related death, accounting for 7% of all injury-related deaths worldwide. In the U.S., drowning remains the leading cause of injury-related death for children ages 1 to 4, and the second leading cause for children under 14.

However, there is reason to hope. Since the WLSL launched in 2010, the Swimming Lessons Save Lives message has been shared with more than two billion people in the U.S. alone. Facilities of all kinds are encouraged to join TEAM WLSL in their mission to prevent childhood drowning through education and building awareness.

WLSL is being presented by the World Waterpark Association with support from American Red Cross,



Amusement Today, Aquatics International, Instituto de Natacao Infantil, Lifeguards Without Borders, National Aquatic Safety Company, National Drowning Pre-

vention Alliance, National Recreation and Park Association, Consumer Product Safety Commission's Pool Safety, Safe Kids Worldwide, Stop Drowning Now, Starfish Aquatics Institute, Swim Australia, USA Swimming Foundation, United States Swim School Association, Water Safety Products and many other organizations.
•wsls.org



Did you know that participation in formal swimming lessons can reduce the risk of drowning among children ages 1-4 by up to 88%? Learning to swim is a life-saving skill that every person should learn no matter their age. Help us put an end to drowning, the leading cause of accidental death for kids ages 1-4 worldwide, by spreading the word *Swimming Lessons Save Lives™*.

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BREAKING NEWS

Premier Service provides technology, reopening solutions



BALTIMORE — The Premier Service division of Premier Rides is working to provide 24-hour-a-day support for areas such as ride rehab video link support, real-time service bulletins and online training conferences. During the pandemic, Premier Rides has been able to remain open for business and fully operational. Even though the logistics of delivering service has become more challenging, the Premier team remains dedicated and has been both providing global support and expediting shipments of rehab product worldwide. Whether it be support related to maintenance inspections or providing guidance to socially distance riders on an attraction, the Premier Service staff is working to ensure clients get in business as quickly and as safely as possible. COURTESY PREMIER RIDES

International Ride Training unveils COVID-19 support

NASHVILLE — In response to the unprecedented challenges facing the amusement industry during the COVID-19 pandemic, **International Ride Training LLC (IRT)** has announced a bevy of new services to support of the industry as it moves toward pre-opening.

"IRT recognizes that many industry colleagues, and the wider community, are re-writing the traditional book on how to operate an amusement park or FEC safely for both employees and guests. IRT is devoted to assisting the development of these practices and supporting their implementation," said **Cindee Huddy**, co-owner of IRT.

IRT's new services include its International Ride Operator Certification ("iROC") Online Training, a 2.5-hour training course in ride operations safe operation fundamentals featuring streaming video, testing, an operator manual and automated electronic record-keeping for each participating facility. Unveiled to iROC facilities and IRT clients at the beginning of April, and available free of charge until July 15, 2020, to any park or family entertainment center that would like to use it, more than 200 trainees have already taken the course.

"The pandemic has created a necessity to approach training in a new, distanced way and has given us the opportunity to accelerate some of IRT's plans for service expansion into the virtual arena. The feedback on the iROC Online Training so far has been phenomenal, and we look forward to providing the training to the industry as we move towards reopening our operations," stated **Erik H. Beard**, IRT co-owner and general counsel.

"As the nature of our day-to-day lives shifts, IRT is virtual-ready and here to help navigate this new working environment. There are so many opportunities to push forward, to continue to improve and invent, and to emerge from this situation stronger than when we went in," said Huddy.

Other services that IRT is offering to support the industry's post-pandemic operations include its weekly Coffee Chat video calls. Since late March, IRT has hosted these weekly calls focused on topics such as distanced ride operating procedures, sanitizing practices, encouraging guest compliance with new social distancing measures, and changes in employment policies and procedures post-pandemic.

"We are not doctors and you wouldn't want us to sew masks for you, but if we can help the industry — whether they are an IRT client or not — get back on its feet, we've hopefully made a contribution that's meaningful," said **Patty Beazley**, IRT co-owner.

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