

Leadership comes to forefront of 2020

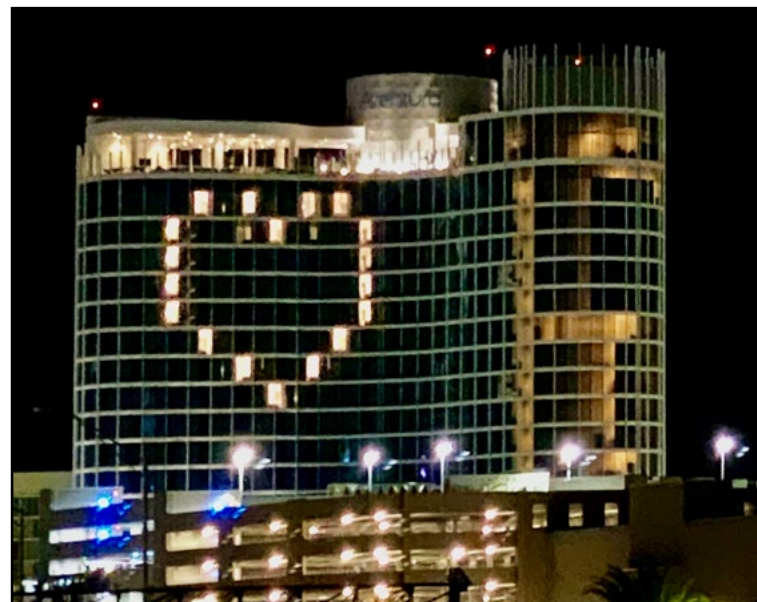
## Golden Tickets recognize guiding lights during a year to remember

No matter where a person lives, there is always a particular summer or winter where the weather causes residents to say things like: "Remember the summer of \_\_\_" or "The winter of \_\_\_ will never be forgotten." 2020 will unquestionably fall into that category but for different reasons. Mother Nature won't be to blame.

As the coronavirus pandemic impacted every aspect of individuals' daily lives — and quickly! — people banded together. The globe responded and sentiments of "We're all in this together!" permeated the airwaves. There was strength in unity as people hunkered down and worked toward safety. The "Best of the Best" in 2020 were those people and companies who strived to be guiding lights.

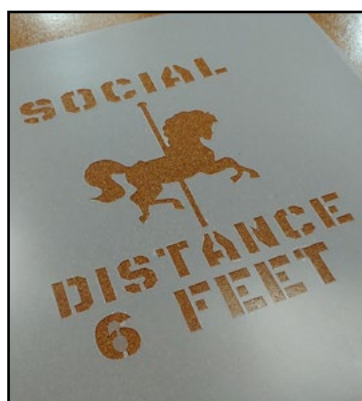
Hospital workers, first responders, delivery people and grocery workers were instantly regarded as heroes. Our amusement industry also found its place in helping however it could. Disney parks, Six Flags parks and SeaWorld / Busch Gardens parks were among those that immediately began donating food. Companies such as Premier Rides, Extreme Engineering, Larson International and Daniels Wood Land were just a handful among those that helped create personal protection equipment and donated it all. State fairs stepped up to become donation and testing centers or temporary hospitals. Airlines, hotel/hospitality, bars and restaurants, live performances, cruise ships ... the brutal impacts were apparent. Among those groups was the amusement and attractions industry.

The world scrambled to gather data, analyze it and then use it for the best course of action. Fear became replaced by plans, often based on science, but some-



2020 was filled with images of the amusement industry combating the COVID pandemic. Riders wore masks while riding the new Orion at Kings Island (above left). Orlando resort hotels lit hearts in their windows to inspire the world just days after the shutdowns began (above right). When guests were welcomed back, masked staff and plastic barriers were in place for protection (bottom right), many ride manufacturers had installed similar barriers on existing attractions (bottom middle) and social distancing markers were commonplace throughout midways (bottom left).

AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON, DAVID FAKE; COURTESY ZAMPERLA, ROCKEN GRAPHICS



times not. While regulations were inconsistent from state to state, businesses muddled through baby steps to find their paths. Any day was declared a victory when one park or facility could open in some form or another.

Within this shuffle was the opportunity for all businesses to take a step back. What could be done differently? What could be done better? Amusement parks and other operators took a close look at cleanliness. Best practices soon adapted to reducing touchpoints and creating cashless opportunities. Operators began sharing data. Organizations met

together though the new normal — the Zoom meeting.

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions jumped into action, as did many regional associations. IAAPA, in its representation for all its members, initiated communication and recommendations to help each property steer through uncharted waters.

"There is no other industry in the world whose sole purpose is to provide safe, fun and memorable experiences. Our passion for making people happy, combined with our industry's ability to adapt and innovate, is a strength that will never change," shared

Hal McEvoy, president and CEO, IAAPA. "We have never before experienced a challenge like COVID-19, but I am confident we will find ways to move forward together, learning from these difficult experiences and using that knowledge to make our industry stronger than ever before."

Through gloom and despair, the industry found innovative ways to think outside the box. Many steps entered the virtual world of doing things. Safety got ratcheted up a notch. Patience and understanding became vital.

2020 will indeed be a year remembered quite darkly, but it did present an opportunity

for each facility, owner and operator to hit reset, step back and look at the big picture. Bright spots emerged along the way.

This year's Golden Ticket Awards have worked to recognize those bright spots, those facilities and companies that have stepped forward in this time. As current events, politics and natural disasters have diverted the narrative to other things, it would be beneficial for everyone to be mindful once again: We're all still in this together.

All stories this issue  
 by Tim Baldwin  
 unless otherwise noted



# GOLDEN TICKET AWARDS

**AT NOTEBOOK:** John W.C. Robinson, [jrobinson@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jrobinson@amusementtoday.com)

## Take the lead, earn gold



Robinson

No one foresaw the 2020 season playing out as it did. One moment, the industry was full steam ahead for new attraction openings and parks welcoming guests again, and — the next moment — parks were suddenly vacant and lifeless on Memorial Day and throughout June. The unexpected happens, that is for certain.

However, it is what one does in those unexpected moments that makes the difference for tomorrow. Its rides may have been motionless, but this industry never sat still.

*Amusement Today* was honestly concerned for a moment or two as mid-March brought excessive park closures and fair cancellations. There was an initial fear that with such limited operation, there would not be sufficient news to even remotely fill the pages of each issue. However, that brief uneasiness was quieted almost instantly — and nonstop — as the amusement industry persevered. The industry not only found ways to stay afloat and eventually open, but also to help local communities and to aid each other throughout the pandemic.

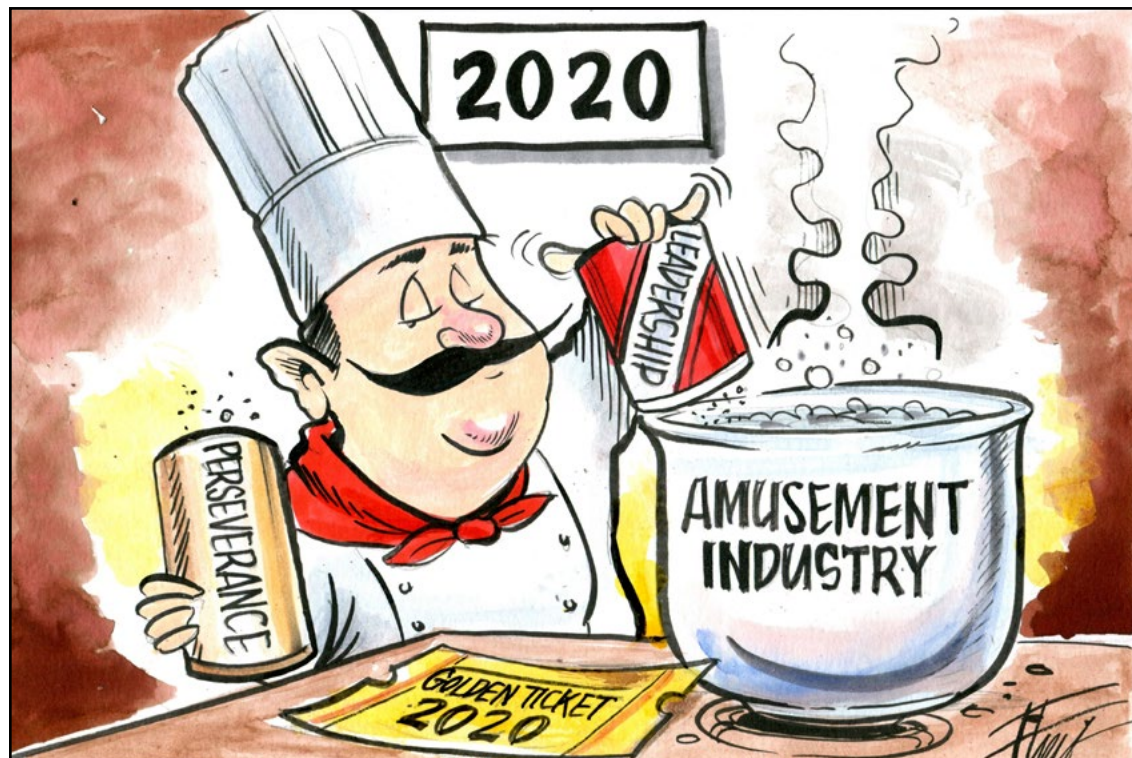
In a time when guests could not walk through the gates, parks pioneered ways to engage families at home and remind them that better times were ahead. When games and rides were not the products in demand, suppliers developed new offerings that would help facilities reopen. With no precedent to fall back on for guidance, competitors worked together and associations banded groups across state lines to develop plans of action.

Sometimes, putting on a smile and holding onto a positive attitude is all that is needed to be a leader. For others, it requires developing a whole new way of thinking and doing things to aid in piloting out of the darkness. Often, it just takes the belief, perseverance and heart to know one has to grit their teeth for a while before coming out the other side.

The Golden Ticket Awards have always celebrated the "Best of the Best." In 2020, that tradition continues as we recognize the leaders, innovators, creators and believers who have worked these past several months or more to ensure that the sun did not set completely on the 2020 amusement season.

As always, all Golden Ticket winners and Honorable Mentions will be listed on [GoldenTicketAwards.com](http://GoldenTicketAwards.com).

**FLINT'S VIEW:** Bubba Flint



**AMUSEMENT VOICE:** Tim Baldwin, Golden Ticket Awards Communications Coordinator

## Bright lights in a time of darkness

I received a few communications from devoted Golden Ticket voters expressing concern that they hadn't received a ballot this year. I've always been impressed and inspired by the passion of our enthusiast panel. Their support of the amusement industry is unmatched. As I communicated the perspective of altering our normal procedure, they easily understood that 2020 was an unprecedented year and most of them had a hunch that was the case. It was not a year to vote on who was the Best of the Best when so many parks were struggling to even open and find their way in uncharted territory.

But even within the darkest of times, there are lights shining rays of accomplishment, encouragement and leadership. With *Amusement Today's* core award categories temporarily placed on hold, there was still an opportunity to honor and acknowledge parks and individuals within the industry deserving of accolades for their efforts. Our staff opted to explore a new, special way to



Baldwin

convey recognition.

In this ugly time of a global pandemic, the amusement industry banded together to work toward the greater good, even when parks, manufacturers and businesses were facing hardship. While our traditional categories may be absent in 2020, *AT* has introduced a special selection of Industry Leader Awards to recognize and champion the work and perseverance this industry can exhibit. Paired with the Publisher's Picks, the 2020 Golden Ticket Awards are pleased to shine a light on the good that is still evident every day. We just need to take a moment to stop and see it.

As we take time to reset as many park seasons have come to a close — that is, for those parks that were able to open in an era of COVID-19 — be sure to check on each other and make those personal connections.

From the staff of *Amusement Today*, continued wishes for the industry to be safe, stay healthy and find the footing to climb higher than ever before.

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



Call **(817) 460-7220** for advertising, circulation or editorial inquiries



*Amusement Today* is an independent, privately-owned trade newspaper published 14 times per year by Amusement Today Inc., P.O. Box 5427, Arlington, Texas 76005. The entire contents of this newspaper, and its related websites, are Copyrighted and Trademarked 2020 by Amusement Today Inc., all rights reserved.

**Address:**  
P.O. Box 5427,  
Arlington, Texas 76005-5427, USA  
**Deliveries:** 2004 E. Randol Mill Road #502,  
Arlington, Texas 76011, USA  
**Phone:** (817) 460-7220  
**Fax:** (817) 265-NEWS (6397)  
**Websites:**  
[www.AmusementToday.com](http://www.AmusementToday.com),  
[www.GoldenTicketAwards.com](http://www.GoldenTicketAwards.com)

**Founder & Publisher**  
Gary Slade • (817) 460-7220  
[gslade@amusementtoday.com](mailto:gslade@amusementtoday.com)

**Accounting & Classified**  
Sammy Piccola • (817) 460-7220  
[spiccola@amusementtoday.com](mailto:spiccola@amusementtoday.com)

**Assistant Office Manager, Circulation**  
Savannah Breen • (817) 460-7220  
[sbreen@amusementtoday.com](mailto:sbreen@amusementtoday.com)

**Advertising**  
Sue Nichols • (615) 477-5432  
[snichols@amusementtoday.com](mailto:snichols@amusementtoday.com)

**Editorial**  
Tim Baldwin • (972) 697-9745  
[tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com](mailto:tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com)

Dean Lamanna • (817) 460-7220  
[dlamanna@amusementtoday.com](mailto:dlamanna@amusementtoday.com)

Jeffrey Seifert • (817) 460-7220  
[jseifert@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jseifert@amusementtoday.com)

B. Derek Shaw • (717) 843-3050  
[bdshaw@amusementtoday.com](mailto:bdshaw@amusementtoday.com)

Pam Sherborne • (615) 308-3310  
[psherborne@amusementtoday.com](mailto:psherborne@amusementtoday.com)

**Editor & Production Manager**  
John Robinson • (513) 256-1441  
[jrobinson@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jrobinson@amusementtoday.com)

**Monthly Contributors**  
David Fake, Bubba Flint,  
Lottie Minick, Richard Munch,  
Janice Witherow

**Association Memberships**  
ACE, AIMS International, ASTM, IAAPA, IISF,  
IRT/iROC, NAARSO, NEAAPA, NJAA, OABA,  
PAPA, PACE, SLA, TTIA, WWA

**Industry Affiliated Charities**  
Give Kids the World Village, Morgan's Wonderland,  
National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives

**Amusement**  
**TODAY** Your Amusement  
Industry  
**NEWS** Leader  
**PRESENTS**



**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL**

**WINNERS**

**AND**

**HONORABLE MENTIONS!**

**VISIT [GOLDENTICKETAWARDS.COM](http://GOLDENTICKETAWARDS.COM)**

**FOR VIDEO OF ALL AWARDS**

**AND A COMPLETE LISTS OF WINNERS THROUGH THE YEARS!**

# Europa-Park honored with Renaissance Award for Pirates in Batavia

There are many reasons why an attraction may be brought back after a certain amount of time. It may be because of public outcry. It may be in honor of a significant anniversary. In the case of **Europa-Park**, it was tragedy. When a fire broke out in the spring of 2018, it destroyed the gigantic Piraten in Batavia (Pirates in Batavia) dark ride attraction and damaged the neighboring area and adjacent attractions. Grateful to firefighters and first responders that no lives were lost and no injuries occurred, park management had the daunting task of re-evaluating the future. Plans that were on the books were put on hold.

Any park could lament the loss of a popular attraction and decide to move on. The overwhelming support from the public firmly implanted on the minds of top personnel that the attraction was beloved by a wide demographic. No matter the age of the guest, fond memories of Pirates in Batavia made it a top priority to bring back.

The park soon found itself in the no-win situation of appeasing loyal fans who wanted it returned exactly as it was and meeting the demand of those who awaited something completely new. With the park having the business savvy to create the right balance, devoted fans found favorite scenes returned, while a new storyline, theming and elaborate sets brought it into the next century. An improved ride



COURTESY EUROPA-PARK

system, new effects and dramatic scenery and an engaging tale — all draped in opulence and spectacle — created something grander than before but still ultimately familiar. A long-loved attraction of the 1980s found a new reimagining in an ultra-modern 21st-century vision.

Each member of the **Mack** family found a merging of its two businesses, Europa-Park and **Mack Rides**, and made his or her contribution to the new Pirates in Batavia attraction.

Updated with state-of-the-art safety systems, the re-envisioning served as a superior example to the industry in restoring a lega-



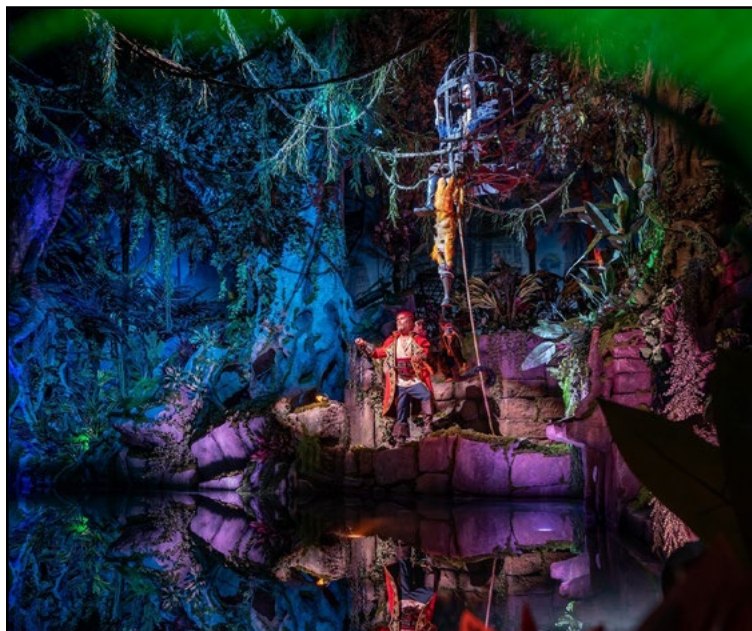
cy attraction to its greatest potential. Behind-the-scenes technology brought about an extraordinary guest experience built to the highest standards. Along the way, the park did not lose a day of operation owing to the fire and has since brought back to life all affected areas better than before.

By listening to its guests and embracing the support from all those outside its gates, Europa-Park's Pirates in Batavia was brought back



into existence following horrific circumstances. For its respect for its roots and commitment to the guest

experience, Europa-Park is the 2020 recipient of the Golden Tickets Publisher's Pick **Renaissance Award**.



Elaborate and opulent are words to describe the theming put in place on the re-envisioned Pirates in Batavia. In addition to state-of-the-art safety systems, the new ride boasts experience enhancements such as scents, fog and projection mapping. More than 200 loudspeakers and 80 animatronics immerse riders in the new tale. Mack Rides included a new ride concept — the Rocking Boat system — into one of the thematic sets. COURTESY EUROPA-PARK

**EUROPA PARK**  
THEME PARK & RESORT

**PIRATES IN BATAVIA**

**WINS PUBLISHERS PICK  
RENAISSANCE AWARD!**

Thank You Amusement Today!

The Mack Family and over 1,000 workers and suppliers would not surrender to the loss of the original Pirates in Batavia and have built a Bigger & Grander version of the 1987 classic ride!

[europapark.com](http://europapark.com)



**245 YEARS OF HISTORY,  
TRADITION AND INNOVATION**

Be part of our adventures: [adventure-club.de/en](http://adventure-club.de/en)



[macknext.com](http://macknext.com)

**Mack**  
INTERNATIONAL

MACK RIDES PRESENTS

# THE PIRATES ARE BACK



Congratulations to the whole team of Europa-Park, MackNeXT and MACK Rides. You brought to life what so many families missed after the loss in 2018.

With great pride we present to you the reimagined Pirates in Batavia featuring our free flow boat ride technology and also our most recent creation: the Rocking Boat by MACK Rides.

Now it is time to set sail again and follow Bartholomeus van Robbmond on his epic adventure. Get on board landlubbers!

**MACK**  
RIDES GmbH & Co KG

[mack-rides.com](http://mack-rides.com)

## PUBLISHER'S PICK

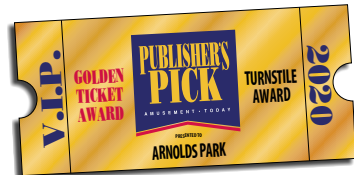
# Arnolds Park receives Turnstile Award for its historic enhancements

In the late 1980s, **Arnolds Park**, located in a town of the same name, closed for a year. In the next decade, its future was uncertain and considered tentative at best. The lakeside park on Lake Okoboji looked to be gone for good when a 1999 newspaper reported "It's a Done Deal" as its headline. After a century of entertaining families, its replacement with ubiquitous condos and apartments seemed imminent.

After community leaders launched a "Save the Park" campaign, the groundswell of support raised more than \$7 million in a mere six weeks. The park would go on.

Established as a non-profit, the **Iowa Great Lakes Maritime Museum** oversaw management. In the two decades since, Arnolds Park has not only been supported by the surrounding community but embraced by it. Matching funds from caring donors have brought in a combined total of \$12 million in recent years. The management changed its name to **Historic Arnolds Park, Inc.**

The leadership set out to make Arnolds Park a place worthy of the dedicated investment. Three museums now grace the small property. Rides preserved from other parks have found a new home and continue to delight families. In recent years, the wooden roller coaster has been fully retracked into a smooth, crowd-pleasing beauty. The Rooftop Garden, once a successful venue for big band and rock and roll, was completely rebuilt after the former was lost to fire in 1988, along with the park's funhouse.



Arnolds Park has accentuated its pavilion area, now hosting weddings, and big band music returned. Also, outdoor concerts have a grander greenscape to welcome music lovers (when pandemic conditions allow).

A newly built landscaped promenade now beckons town visitors to the park and the lakefront with nine lighted arches and floral displays.

This year, a renovated boardwalk brought new splendor to those enjoying the lake from the water's edge or catching a ride on the *Queen II*. A new pier has been built spotlighting the



A completely enhanced, landscaped boardwalk area welcomed back guests in 2020. Arnolds Park features a nostalgic throwback to simpler times and its own history. Preserved rides such as the *Mad Mouse* (above left), which previously operated at Joyland Park, offer visitors classic thrills. COURTESY ARNOLDS PARK, TOM NICKERSON, IRM

Iowa Great Lakes area within the 5,500-square-foot plaza. Dramatic lighting and artistic sculptural works bring guests to the facility whether they be parkgoers or not.

The multiyear efforts have culminated in bringing guests

back time and again with a respect and love for the park and the area. As all funds are raised privately; there is no debt to pay. The park's goal of maintaining the facilities for future generations keeps visitors returning for a multi-fac-

eted stay in the community.

For embracing and preserving its past and instilling a new generation of family loyalty, *Amusement Today* is inspired and honored to recognize Arnolds Park for the Publisher's Pick **Turnstile Award**.

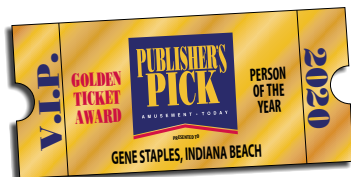


A new artistic pier (above left) joins three museums on property to offer tourists a wide range of activities centered around the lake area. A restored Rooftop Garden (above right) brought back live music to the park following the destruction of the original venue in the 1980s. COURTESY ARNOLDS PARK

# Gene Staples, Indiana Beach savior, awarded Person of the Year

It's not everybody who has the opportunity to step into immediate greatness. People forge their successes over time, building careers and networking among people. Fate has a way of thrusting individuals into an unexpected spotlight.

Enter **Gene Staples**.



After the terrible announcement of **Indiana Beach** closing for good as winter was ending, both the amusement industry and enthusiast community were rocked with such horrible news, not to mention the surrounding tourism community. The loss of any park is tragic, but Indiana Beach had a nostalgic character all its own. Positioned not only adjacent to Lake Shafer, but partially on it, the park offered charm to the many visitors who enjoyed visiting the property with its many signature attractions.

Staples had visited the park with his family in years past. A self-proclaimed park fan himself, he had seen other parks around him close down forever. Staples saw preserving Indiana Beach as much more than a business venture; it was an opportunity to save a piece of Americana.

"I have an opportunity to step in and make a difference," he told *Amusement Today* in the spring.

Establishing a structured four-year plan, Staples



After facing an uncertain and grim future, Indiana Beach was brought back to life. Self-proclaimed park fan and new owner Gene Staples (right) pilots the Thomas Spackman Express train ride through the park. The train was named for Tom Spackman, who owned and operated the park during its heyday. COURTESY ALEX RIGSBY, DON HURD

was dedicated to making it work. Fully understanding that COVID-19 could potentially prohibit the park from opening at all this season, his perseverance moved forward, and by early July, the lights turned on at Indiana Beach once again.

With a background in real estate development, Staples boldly decided to not just patch up the holes in the infrastructure, but to invest in the property's long-range future. More than 48,000 square feet of roofing was replaced. Plumbing, painting and electrical improvements totaled in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Trackwork

on the park's biggest coaster, Hoosier Hurricane, returned it to a rideable operational status again.

Working and partnering with the county, Staples lived up to expectations.

The park's previous owner had sold off a few attractions, meaning Staples had to find replacement rides. In so doing, Indiana Beach welcomed visitors back with a full complement of offerings. Among those that came to enjoy the park were some first-time guests who did not want to miss out again on this lakeside gem and traveled to it from across the country.

At the park's reopen-



ing, Staples addressed the crowd gathered: "We didn't purchase this park to make a fortune. We did it to save the park."

With unlimited potential as the park will continue to

improve and grow and evolve in the years ahead, *Amusement Today* recognizes Gene Staples for his admirable dedication and vision as AT's Publisher's Pick for **Person of the Year**.



Substantial work on Hoosier Hurricane, which celebrated its 25th season last year, and fresh paint throughout the park welcomed back visitors (above left). New owner Gene Staples (middle) speaks at the park's reopening in June 2020. Riders enjoyed a smoother and more brightly colored Hoosier Hurricane over the summer (above right). COURTESY RENDELL BIRD, DON HURD, TOM NICKERSON





THANK YOU FROM ALL OF US  
PERSON OF THE YEAR

**GENE STAPLES.**

**CONGRATULATIONS.**



[WWW.INDIANABEACH.COM](http://WWW.INDIANABEACH.COM)

# Great Coasters International continues to deliver during its 25th year

Wooden roller coasters have entertained thrill-seekers since the 19th century. The staple attraction in amusement parks worldwide is one steeped in cherished history. Along with Ferris wheels and carousels, wooden coasters capture the essence and character of an amusement park like nothing else.

Founded in December 1994, **Great Coasters International, Inc.** (GCII) began its first project immediately in the winter of 1995. As the company's first project — Wildcat at **Hersheypark** — rose into the sky, construction captured the attention of the industry with a style and character that looked both fresh and nostalgic.

A quarter century later, GCII has made its mark on the global attractions industry with installations in England, Finland, Poland, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and China, in addition to numerous installations across the U.S.

To meet the needs of the compound curves in the company's designs, GCII introduced its own brand of train, the Millennium Flyer,, that once again captured the charm and character of a bygone era. The single-bench cars gracefully navigated the coaster supplier's curvaceous creations. As coaster design evolved into the new century, GCII recently introduced Infinity Flyers, a new class 5 train capable of inversions on a wooden coaster.

One of the most groundbreaking breakthroughs in coaster innovation is the use of South American ipe wood



The GCII team poses for a shot along the track of Texas Stingray early in 2020 (above). Texas Stingray (below) was one of the handful of new coasters to open in 2020. GCII had it ready to roll in February. AT/GARY SLADE; COURTESY SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO



with its strength and durability. During IAAPA Expo 2019, the company revealed new steel track sections intended for high-stress areas.

"I think the new inventions that we have now — with the steel track and steel structure and the ipe — we're going to see a pretty good future," Co-founder and President **Clair Hain, Jr.**, told *Amusement Today*. "Parks look at the maintenance needed on a wooden coaster, which is why we have come up with new features to prevent unscheduled maintenance — things we can do to solve those problems."



The company has also made significant contributions making repairs, refurbishments and solving problems in existing rides.

In spite of the impactful coronavirus, GCII diligently worked on its 2020 project and opened Texas Stingray at **SeaWorld San Antonio** early enough to beat the onset of the global pandemic. It was a fitting accomplishment for the company's 25th year.

For its innovative designs, hard-work ethic and continuous push in the evolution of the wooden coaster, *Amusement Today* recognizes Great Coasters International, Inc., with the Publisher's Pick as **Supplier of the Year** on its 25th anniversary.



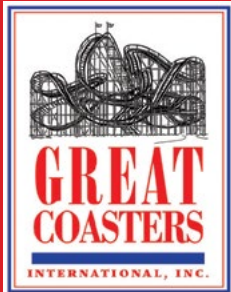
Clair Hain, Jr., founded GCII in 1994. AT/GARY SLADE



Wildcat at Hersheypark, constructed in 1995 for a 1996 debut, was GCII's first project. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

# GREAT THEN GREAT NOW

*Smooth – Thrilling – Economical – Proven*



*The Highest Quality  
Wooden Coasters  
in the World*



**Lightning Racer - Hershey Park 2000**



**Thunderhead - Dollywood 2004**



**Woodan - Europa Park 2012**



**Gold Striker -  
California's Great America 2013**



**White Lightning - Fun Spot Orlando 2013**



**Ghost Rider - Knott's Berry Farm  
(complete refurb) 2016**



**Mystic Timbers - Kings Island 2017**



**Jungle Dragon - OCT Happy Valley  
Chongqing 2017**



**Desert Rally -  
OCT Happy Valley Chengdu 2017**



**Texas Stingray - Seaworld Texas 2020**

**Great Coasters International, Inc.**

2627 State Rt. 890 • Sunbury, PA 17801 • 570.286.9330 • [www.greatcoasters.com](http://www.greatcoasters.com)



# Pamela Landwirth recognized as a Golden Ticket Award Legend

When **Pamela Landwirth** was handed the reins of the **Give Kids The World Village** 25 years ago, she knew she had found her calling.

After 16 years with the **Walt Disney World Company** and additional consultant work with **Hard Rock Café**, Landwirth's expertise boasted an acumen in human resources, strategic planning and operations management, among other talents in her skill set.

She began her career at **Give Kids The World, Inc.**, in 1992. Inspired by the mission set in place by her husband, **Henri Landwirth**, she was chosen to lead the Village, located in Kissimmee, in 1995. While the couple's marriage did not remain intact, their vision and lifelong friendship remained strong. When Henri stepped away from the board in the late 1990s, he knew Pamela would steer the Village in the direction it needed to go.

Under her leadership, Give Kids The World Village has seen exponential growth, and each expansion brings further happiness to challenged families. Growing from 32 to 84 acres, the number of family villas has increased from 56 when she stepped into the role of president and CEO in 1995 to 166 today. Eleven new venues have been added, including Julie's Safari Theatre, Matthew's Boundless Playground, the Amberville Train Station and Towne Hall. What she finds most rewarding is the number of families served at the facility each



year, which has almost doubled under her tenure.

"Pam never asks anyone to do something she wouldn't do herself," said **Susie Storey**, director, global communications, **IAAPA**. "It's not unusual to see Pam making pizzas for families, working alongside volunteers or assisting the housekeeping team. Pam's heart and soul is at Give Kids The World and she works to inspire her team while giving hope to the wish families who stay there."

Each year, as **IAAPA Expo** begins, Landwirth is one of the principal speakers addressing the industry during the Kick-Off Event. Her poise and smile exemplify the welcome to industry attendees who have traveled from around the world. Serving on numerous nonprofit boards, she is a highly sought-after speaker in the nonprofit world.

"Pam's leadership through this difficult year has been essential to the Village," said Development Director **Steven Amos**, Give Kids The World Village. "Her positivity and ingenuity has kept hope alive for wish children waiting for their wishes, our staff and volunteers. She continues to innovate, thinking of new and creative ways to inspire hope for our fami-



Pamela Landwirth has been president and CEO of Give Kids The World Village for 25 years. COURTESY GIVE KIDS THE WORLD VILLAGE

lies through her Boxes of Hope, personal FaceTime calls and postcards. We're honored to have her leading our team through this time."

Contrary to many typical CEOs, there is no job Landwirth will not do. Her

unfailing dedication serves as inspiration not only to her staff and corps of volunteers (which have quadrupled under her direction), but to the industry at large. For her exemplary dedication in sharing the amuse-

ment industry to families so desperately in need of it, coupled with her leadership through the most trying of circumstances, *Amusement Today* honors Pamela Landwirth as a **Golden Ticket Award Legend**.



Eleven new venues have been added to the Village under Landwirth's tenure. The unique, 84-acre nonprofit resort hosts 7,600 families a year. COURTESY GIVE KIDS THE WORLD VILLAGE; AT/TIM BALDWIN

# Amusement**TODAY**

Your Amusement Industry **NEWS** Leader

SALUTES

**PAMELA LANDWIRTH**

OF

**GIVE KIDS THE WORLD VILLAGE**

CONGRATULATIONS ON BECOMING A

**GOLDEN TICKET**

**LEGEND!**



# Food events bring Golden Ticket Award to Knott's Berry Farm

Shutting down was harsh. Being forced to stay closed was agonizingly infuriating, even though the scope of the pandemic painted in broad strokes a clear picture of why restrictions were in place. Of the regulations in the U.S., California's were among the strictest.



Unable to open as a park, **Knott's Berry Farm** and its team worked at bringing in guests within acceptable boundaries. Food events brought in revenue while also delivering a morale boost to staff and residents eager to be out of their homes and feel a hint of normalcy.

Called Taste of Calico, the first food event took place in a limited area of the park. Despite its sold-out popularity, attendance was set so that spacious distancing was still attainable. Safety practices

► See **KNOTT'S**, page 15



Introduced in July, Knott's Berry Farm's series of themed food events has been serving up relaxed, safety-minded ambience — and satisfying leisure-hungry guests — without rides and shows. Boysenberry-flavored drinks and eats, along with limited-capacity retail outlets, are the main attractions. AT/DEAN LAMANNA; COURTESY KNOTT'S BERRY FARM



# An industry we all love. A season we'll never forget.

## KENTUCKY KINGDOM AND HURRICANE BAY



# Thank you.



**LEADERSHIP AWARD****►KNOTT'S****Continued from page 14**

were skillfully implemented, and between the food event and merchandise sales in the Marketplace and Ghost Town areas, revenue — limited as it may be — was a welcome sight. In conjunction with the food events, the **Knott's Berry Farm Hotel** began welcoming guests again, many checking in for the dining event packages.

Taste of Calico was followed by Taste of Knott's. The expanded event included the Boardwalk area and spotlighted the boysenberry flavors celebrated by the park's Boysenberry Festival.

"We've received a lot of positive feedback from our guests stating how wonderful it is to be able to step out of their homes safely and in a controlled environment," said **Kevin Wynne**, vice president of sales and marketing. "Guests have also graciously shared that Taste of Calico made them feel a sense of normalcy — but above all, it made them feel closer to our theme park."

This was a dual win for both the park and the public. In conjunction with the events, it brought further foot traffic to the

resort's Marketplace. Even with-in mandated guidelines, shopping while attending the events expanded the revenue streams and offered patrons another layer of normalcy in a region that was starved for diversions.

Continuing on this success, more is to come. Through October, Knott's introduces a new food and retail event: Taste of Fall-O-Ween. In a year when numerous Halloween activities are heavily restricted, the event will offer guests a place to immerse themselves in Halloween and harvest décor, and engage in activities such as a trick-or-treat trail, an "Into the Fog" art show and a local crafters' exhibition of their wares.

Although the rides were silent, visitors were still able to enjoy Knott's Berry Farm despite restrictions — and will continue to do so in the future. Looking for solutions in challenging times, the park satisfied the demand of people needing entertainment out but did so in a safe and creative environment that met government and health guidelines. *Amusement Today* recognizes Knott's Berry Farm as the **Industry Leader: Park** for its creative solutions and work within the community.

**Honorable Mentions****Gatorland (Orlando, Fla.)**

Throughout the almost 10-week pandemic shutdown, the park maintained its employee payroll and benefits at 100%, issuing no layoffs. Additionally, during the closure, the park's social media team created an educational and fun online video series, "School of Croc," for children and the young at heart. Staying true to its brand, Gatorland created a Social Distancing Skunk Ape to remind guests to stay six feet apart. Most importantly, park leadership lobbied the state to quickly create and issue the necessary health and safety requirements for reopening. By their preparation, management was able to open Gatorland within 24 hours of being granted state approval. The Orlando facility was one of the first major attractions in the U.S. to return to business.

**San Antonio Zoo (San Antonio, Texas)**

Expecting to be among the first facilities to reopen because of being outdoors and spacious for social distancing, the **San Antonio Zoo** was denied approval. As a nonprofit not funded by the city, management quickly put their minds to work to produce a solution. In a creative move, the facility introduced Drive Thru Zoo as a special event. It immediately sold out. The popularity of the event continued and helped provide an operational revenue stream to the nonprofit operator in both attendance and sales opportunities. The move was so influential that other zoo operators came to investigate and implement the process. Even after restrictions were lifted, the Texas facility offered the event periodically as a safe alternative for family fun out for those who had to continue to be particularly cautious because of underlying health conditions.

**Kentucky Kingdom (Louisville, Ky.)**

As the pandemic rocked the nation, **Kentucky Kingdom** led the way in actively forming a plan toward reopening. To entice patronage, the park lowered admission prices for the abbreviated 2020 season even prior to having an opening date. The park campaigned vigorously in the state of Kentucky to be able to open and worked with the state government. Through its efforts, it was one of the first parks in the country to reopen with clear safety protocols established and communicated.

**Quassy Amusement Park (Middlebury, Conn.)**

**Quassy** was the first park to actively engage guests during the COVID-19 shutdown. It used coloring pages, constant press teases and information about a new attraction arriving to keep its audience involved even when guests were not permitted to walk through the gates. The park's efforts kept pushing a positive and uplifting reminder to families throughout the shutdown via its social media channels and news releases.

# AFFORDABLE FUN NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE!

**THE GRAVITY GROUP**



# Knott's BERRY FARM®

## CONGRATULATIONS

Knott's Berry Farm for finding safe and innovative ways to serve up some FUN during unprecedented times.





# THANK YOU TO OUR GUESTS, ASSOCIATES AND SUPPLIERS FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN 2020.

**Together we brought the  
FUN while staying safe.**

This was a year like no other, and we were proud to deliver many unique experiences like:

- An exhilarating thrill ride on Kings Island's new giga-coaster ORION®,
- Iconic in-park and curbside eats plus food festivals at Knott's Berry Farm,
- An all-new fall festival at Cedar Point,
- All the fun at Michigan's Adventure and Schlitterbahn water parks, and
- A summer of family traditions at Dorney Park and Worlds of Fun.

To our guests and associates at the parks that were not cleared to open: **We've missed you, and can't wait to see you again in 2021!**

**Cedar Point**  
Sandusky, Ohio

California's  
**Great America**  
Santa Clara, California

Canada's  
**Wonderland**  
Toronto, Canada

**Carowinds**  
Charlotte,  
North Carolina

**Dorney Park  
& Wildwater Kingdom**  
Allentown,  
Pennsylvania

**Kings Dominion  
& Soak City**  
Richmond, Virginia

**Kings Island**  
Cincinnati, Ohio

**Knott's  
Berry Farm**  
Buena Park, California

**Michigan's  
Adventure**  
Muskegon, Michigan



**SCHLITTERBAHN.  
WATERPARK**  
Galveston, Texas  
New Braunfels, Texas

**Valleyfair**  
Shakopee, Minnesota

**Worlds of Fun  
Oceans of Fun**  
Kansas City, Missouri



**Cedar Fair**  
Entertainment Company

cedarfair.com

# Urban Air Adventure's steady direction wins Leadership: FEC award

Reaction. That's what **Michael Browning**, CEO of **Urban Air Adventure Parks**, was focused on when the COVID-19 pandemic struck.



At the beginning of the shutdown, Urban Air executives immediately took a pay decrease to continue to employ as many personnel as possible. Browning didn't take a salary for a few months. He enrolled everyone on his team in a smart money program to help them adjust to using their salaries more efficiently in uncharted times. As a result, even in the midst of the pandemic and a pay cut, his team had collectively paid down personal debt by \$20,000 thanks to the smart money initiatives.

"My view and strategy on it was we're all going to have to suffer a little, so that no one person — whether it be a guest, franchisee, team member or shareholder — has to suffer a lot," Browning said. "We tried to lessen the burden across everyone. There is no playbook."

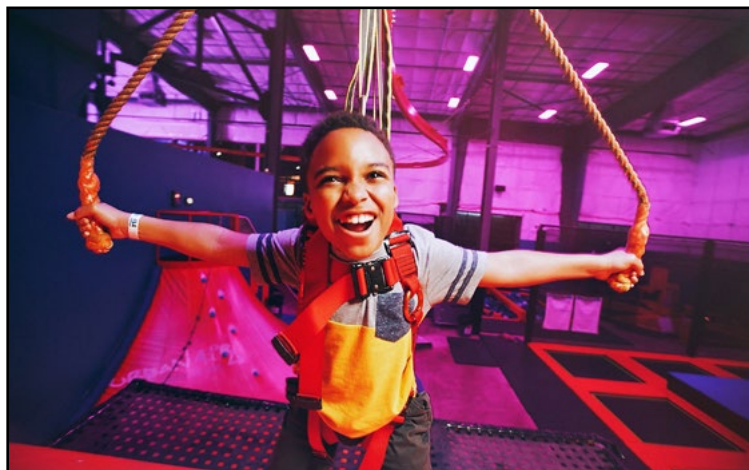


**Browning**

Browning felt the direction was to be quick and swift with decision making. With information on the virus moving so quickly, he felt confidence moving forward was the right thing. Using an analogy of a squirrel running into the middle of the street and hesitating if it should go back, he didn't want to be a "flat squirrel. We're just going to go." From there, they could



Urban Air offers numerous physical activities for kids and families. COURTESY URBAN AIR ADVENTURE PARKS



approach the next day from a different direction if needed.

The swift reaction included listening to safety protocols from experts in the time of shutdown, making the right moves to shore up the company's liquidity and not being afraid to be wrong.

Looking at the perspective of the customers, Browning knew that emotional attachments are a part of the FEC experience. "Do what's right from the beginning," he said. Birthday parties were either rescheduled or fully refunded, knowing families needed

that money. According to Browning, 14% of new memberships being signed since reopening are from guests who had previously canceled but appreciated how the situation had been handled. When doors were closed, he did not want kids to feel forgotten, so the company implemented a program where hundreds of children were called per day wishing them Happy Birthday. As that initiative grew, a ser-



vice allowed Urban Air to wish tens of thousands of kids uplifting wishes during the COVID shutdown.

**Appetize** was a new touch-free system installed that minimized touch points. This was a result of guest surveys and listening to concerns families had. Once facilities reopened, they drove cleaning and sanitizing activities through periodic songs and activities. The results were exemplary net promoter

scores on follow-up surveys.

"We're not without our battle scars," he told *Amusement Today*. "We're bullish on the industry as a whole for the future. We're built and designed as human beings to have relationships and experiences."

*Amusement Today* recognizes Urban Air Adventure Parks as the **Industry Leader: FEC** for its swift commitment to families and safe entertainment.

## Honorable Mentions

### Scene75 Entertainment Centers (Dayton, Ohio)

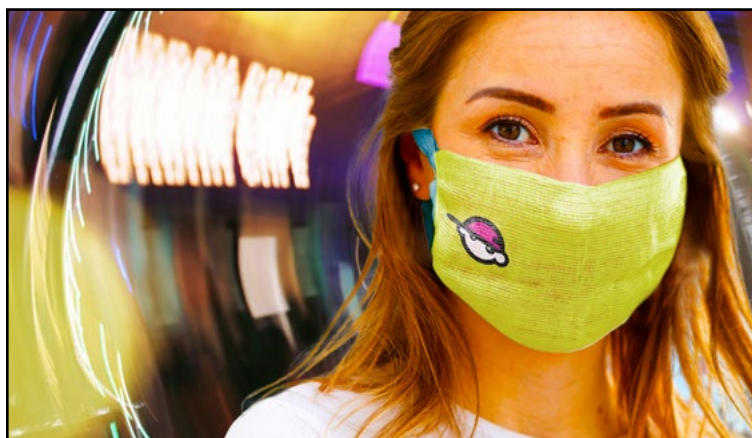
Scene75 locations closed willingly prior to government-mandated shutdowns but retained full-time staff as long as possible. Scene75 was one of the first large FEC chains to reopen with more stringent precautions and set the "gold standard" for FEC operation during the COVID-era with its *Stay Safe Playbook*. To encourage guest spending, the chain introduced a Gold Member program.

### Funplex (East Hanover, N.J.)

Despite the industry-wide shutdown and struggles to reopen as an FEC in New Jersey, Funplex announced that a new location in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, from the chain would be on its way in 2021. While many chains — of all kinds — pulled back on expansion plans, Funplex moved forward with its grandest yet.

### Funspot (Laconia, N.H.)

As the largest arcade in the world, Funspot used the shutdown time to install upgrades at its facility and rebuild attractions on its property. Among other enhancements, the facility painted a new mural and deep-cleaned many games and activities.



Face masks are now required at all Urban Air Adventure Park facilities. COURTESY URBAN AIR ADVENTURE PARKS



# urban Air

## ADVENTURE PARK

would like to thank Amusement Today for voting us  
**Industry Leader in the  
Family Entertainment Category.**



Visit us at [UrbanAirParks.com](http://UrbanAirParks.com)



# WHY PLAY ANYWHERE ELSE®

INDOOR GO-KARTS  
MULTI-LEVEL LASER TAG  
STATE-OF-THE-ART ARCADE  
DROP TOWERS  
ROLLER COASTERS  
FOOD TRUCK ALLEY

MINI-GOLF COURSES  
BUMPER CARS  
MOTION SIMULATORS  
CENTER BAR  
BATTING SIMULATORS  
VIRTUAL REALITY



**SCENE75 ENTERTAINMENT CENTERS**  
5 Award Winning Locations in Ohio & Pennsylvania  
[www.Scene75.com](http://www.Scene75.com)



GOLDEN TICKET AWARDS HONORABLE MENTION  
**“INDUSTRY LEADER”**



## STAR ATTRACTIONS TO TAKE AN FEC OUT OF THIS WORLD!



Supplying Amusements New to Used

(908) 526-8009  
[www.Rides4U.com](http://www.Rides4U.com)



# Going The Social Distance!

At Embed, we believe the most powerful demonstration of our commitment to our industry's recovery is by giving away what the industry needs most now, proving that actions are stronger than words.



Thank you Amusement Today and Golden Ticket Voters for choosing Embed to fuel the business of fun with you.

## FREE. Contactless Mobile Wallet

Get the award-winning Mobile Wallet for Free. No app required. The virtual game card sits in the mobile wallet so you can offer your customers a fully contact-free payment and FEC experience.

## The New Approach To Hygiene Protection

Join the fight against COVID-19 with Embed Hygiene Defence. Stronger than industrial cleaners without the toxic health risks: 100% Natural, Non-toxic, Safe for Family and Kids.

## Insights, Ideas & Inspirations Sharing

### EMBED LIVE

IN CONVERSATION WITH

A company first, EmbedLIVE records working sessions with our industry partners and customers, who share their insights, winning tactics and advice, including knowledge-sharing and cross-pollinating ideas to survive COVID.

## FREE. Downloadable Re-opening Creative Toolkit

Use these free creatives to communicate all your safety measures, steps to mitigate risk, instructions, etc. From eDMs to social media posts, store-front posters to floor stickers, sanitiser and restroom hand-washing decals. Simply, put your logo on the creative, and you are ready to go.

Learn more at [embedcard.com](http://embedcard.com)

# Gateway Ticketing's webinar series lands company a Golden Ticket

When Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania-based global ticketing software solutions company **Gateway Ticketing Systems, Inc.**, attended a conference in Los Angeles hosted by the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)**, the business of fun was on the cusp of capsizing.

On March 11, the first day of the three-day summit, the **World Health Organization** officially declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. Two days later, **President Donald J. Trump** announced a national emergency in the U.S. Within seven days, California and its many parks and attractions would be on lockdown, with others elsewhere following suit.

"That was the week where I really felt that the world changed," said **Randy Josselyn**, principal, wildlife and conservation, at Gateway.

While Josselyn and **Matthew Hoenstine**, principal, destinations, at Gateway, were not expecting a shut-



Randy Josselyn

down of the U.S. economy, they were not completely caught off-guard by the news that rattled the IAAPA conference. Since early winter, the colleagues had been monitoring the outbreak's overseas impacts.

"Because parks in Asia had already begun to shutter, we started to understand their needs," Hoenstine said. "Being onsite with attractions in California that week enabled us to help them with some things that they would need to wrap up to



Matthew Hoenstine

effect a closure."

Before departing the conference, the Gateway team powwowed on a formal plan to communicate what it had already learned about coping with the coronavirus in a business environment to attraction operators comprising its clientele.

A live-streamed, 90-minute weekly webinar was the chosen format. And just days later, on March 18, Gateway's Webinar Wednesdays series was launched — with industry veterans Josselyn and Hoenstine hosting remotely. The interactive crisis-management series proved interna-



tionally popular at the outset and has continued biweekly.

"Our customers were really receptive to this opportunity to share," Josselyn said. "After our first webinar, we said, 'Let's open this up to everybody.'"

Added Hoenstine: "We wanted to use all of our learnings and make sure everyone in the industry had all the tools they might need."

In addition to providing

key takeaways from seasoned industry panelists, the webinars, which the company is archiving at gatewayticketing.com, have served a valuable moral support function. Topics have run the gamut: strategizing reopening, transitioning to a capacity-managed attraction, generating revenue outside the box, managing pass updates, analyzing consumer surveys and more.

For both showcasing and embodying the industry's spirit of service, innovation and resilience, Gateway Ticketing Systems takes the Golden Ticket for **Industry Leader: Supplier**

—Dean Lamanna

## Honorable Mentions

### Embed (Dallas, Texas)

Because of safety concerns of touch points during the pandemic, Embed provided its new service "Mobile Wallet," a money management system, free to the industry to help reduce contact for customers and staffing. The company developed its own line of cleaning products, Hygiene Defence, which it promoted as being stronger than harsh industrial cleaners without the toxic effects and health risks. Embed has taken a proactive leadership role throughout crisis, which included offering webinars and industry tips.

### Zamperla (Altavilla Vicentina, Italy)

In order to increase capacity, the ride supplier designed distancing plexiglass dividers on its biggest-seller lineup and continues to design such enhancements for its portfolio. Zamperla offered these safety and capacity improvements free of charge. They were designed for easy installation so that parks felt comfortable in installing them, but the company also provided the service if needed. Customer service was improved with remote assistance service using augmented, mixed and virtual reality to meet clients' needs when travel restrictions became problematic. Zamperla developed no-touch maintenance assistance and coaster wash to sanitize rides.

### Bob's Space Racers (Holly Hill, Fla.)

Bob's Space Racers worked to develop affordable and comprehensive hand-sanitizing stations for parks, turning a major negative of the pandemic into a chance to create a new and viable product.

### Firestone Financial (Needham, Mass.)

Firestone Financial improved terms and helped industry members trying to survive 2020. The company initially offered a three-month deferral on existing loans for all who contacted them requesting assistance due to the effects of COVID-19 on their businesses.

Strategies for reopening attractions and outside-of-the-box ideas for generating revenue are among the hot topics covered by Gateway's webinars, which are being archived on the company's website for industry reference.

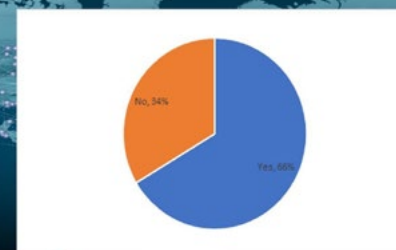
COURTESY GATEWAY TICKETING SYSTEMS, INC.

### Outside the box revenue generation idea

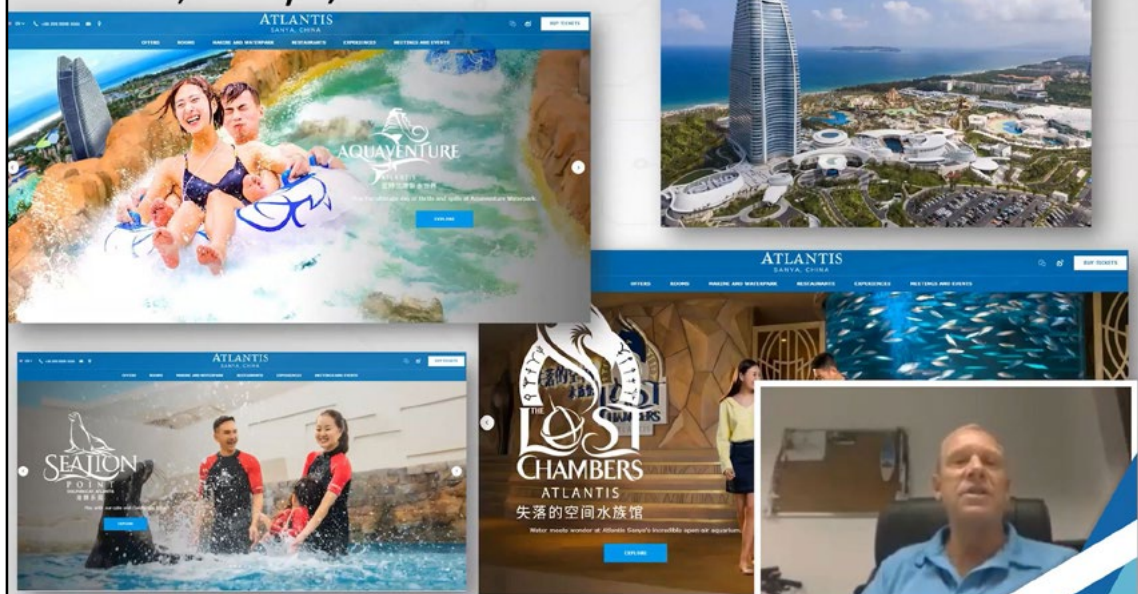
- Brooklyn Children's Museum leasing space to the Brooklyn Library for \$200k a year.



### DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH YOUR PRICING STRATEGY WHEN YOU REOPEN?



### Atlantis, Sanya, China



Gateway's May 27 webinar, "These Attractions Have Already Reopened — Here's What They Learned So Far," discussed the strategies and experiences of Atlantis Sanya resort on Hainan Island, China, with Alan Mahony, vice president of marine and water park operations (lower right in webinar screen view). COURTESY GATEWAY TICKETING SYSTEMS, INC.

# THE GUEST EXPERIENCE SOLUTION FOR THE NEW NORMAL

Sell capacity and timed tickets through an online web store.

Scan guests with contactless admission control at your gate.

Unify your in-venue profit centers.

Send pre- and post-visit targeted marketing campaigns  
with an integrated CRM.

Collect all this transactional data and use  
it to personalize every experience.

**Gateway**  
TICKETING SYSTEMS®

Supporting the attractions industry for 32 years.



GatewayTicketing.com +1 610.987.4000 info@gatewayticketing.com

Thank you for your business  
and your trust.

# CELEBRATING CUSTOMERS FOR 55 YEARS

Since 1965, Firestone Financial has been committed to strengthening and supporting the industries that make us who we are.

To see how we can help, contact  
**Rich Gockelman:** 617-641-9214  
[rgockelman@firestonefinancial.com](mailto:rgockelman@firestonefinancial.com)

## Proud recipient:



# **FIRESTONE FINANCIAL**

A Berkshire Bank Company

[firestonefinancial.com](http://firestonefinancial.com)

Firestone Financial is an affiliate of Berkshire Bank (Member FDIC)



**LEADERSHIP AWARD**

# Talley Amusements emerges as a leader, receives Golden Ticket

With the cancellation of the majority of fairs this year, outdoor entertainment suffered major blows.

Coming from a long line of generational amusement ride operators dating back to the 1990s, **Tom and Mary Talley's** families have more than 200 years of combined experience. Their children serve as a fifth generation within the family business.

**Talley Amusements** was one of many carnival providers drastically impacted by the global pandemic. The **Ohio State Fair** and the **State Fair of Texas** were two of the operator's largest sites. Talley Amusements operates the Texas Star, one of the largest Ferris wheels in North America. It has been owned by the Talley/Brown family since it debuted in 1985 and is the most popular ride on the midway. After fairs were suspended, Mary Talley sought out alternatives to the scheduled dates that were unfortunately canceled.

"In the span of just a few



Talley Amusements has been owned by the Talley/Brown family since 1985, with matriarch Mary Talley (above, fourth from left) leading the operation. The midway provider's efforts helped traveling amusement operators find some traction amidst the pandemic.

AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON, COURTESY TALLEY AMUSEMENTS

short weeks, the ability to earn a livelihood in the fair and outdoor entertainment industry has completely vanished," Talley stated earlier in the summer.

She released an open letter urging government

officials to re-analyze and re-evaluate restrictions prohibiting operators to reopen and for the fairs to take place. Her open letter speaking out on behalf

► See **TALLEY**, page 27



**TALLEY**  
AMUSEMENTS, INC.

**BRINGING THE BEST  
CREATING THE FUTURE**

Embracing the tomorrow of the amusement industry with innovative technology - Talley Amusements is one step ahead in capturing the next generation of entertainment seekers!

Look for us online at  
[www.talleyamusements.com](http://www.talleyamusements.com)

**V.I.P.**  
PRESENTED TO  
**MARY TALLEY,  
TALLEY  
AMUSEMENTS**

AmusementTODAY  
**GOLDEN  
TICKET  
AWARD**

**INDUSTRY  
LEADER  
OUTDOOR  
AMUSEMENT  
BUSINESS**

**2020**



**(908) 526-8009**

*Supplying Amusements New to Used*

**www.RIDES4U.com**



## LEADERSHIP AWARD

## ►TALLEY

Continued from page 25

of the industry helped rally support. In it, Talley encouraged all her colleagues — while competitors — to join together and let their collective voices be a unified front. Talley's article made it to **Greg Abbott**, the governor of Texas. By working with his policy advisors, the outdoor entertainment industry gained some traction.

Talley Amusements opened carnival rides in Texas independently, placing her



employees and attractions on a local tour to keep operating. Beginning June 19, Talley sent rides and staff on the road, utilizing malls, shopping centers and privately-owned venues to create a Plan B.

Part of the success of this endeavor is owed to the comprehensive COVID-19 plan in place that addressed safety

protocols. Handwashing stations positioned on the midways, social distancing markings and signage addressed safety concerns to both officials and visiting families. Sanitization of rides became routine.

"We had very little negative pushback from the public," said Talley.

For her perseverance in representing the value and importance of carnival operators, *Amusement Today* recognizes Talley Amusements as an **Industry Leader: Outdoor Entertainment**.



Beginning June 19, Talley sent rides and staff on the road, utilizing malls, shopping centers and privately-owned venues to create a Plan B. COURTESY TALLEY AMUSEMENTS; AT/TIM BALDWIN

## Honorable Mentions

**Sky Eye/Biggest Wheel, LLC (Winter Park, Fla.)**

Since its debut in 2016, the **Sky Eye** has toured under the claim "North America's Largest Traveling Ferris Wheel" at 46 meters. **Trimper's Rides** kept Sky Eye/Biggest Wheel, LLC, turning safely during the ongoing global situation when touring was not possible. The traveling wheel found a temporary home at Trimper's and operators used forward-thinking sanitization protocols to clean, disinfect and test.

**Rides 4 U (Somerville, N.J.)**

As the crisis hit the country and began to evolve, **Rides 4 U** maintained its delivery of new attractions to midway operators. The company sent its own staff out to assure rides could be set up in a timely manner, with no issues, so that when operators were given the green light they would be ready.

**Rocken Graphics (Riverview, Fla.)**

**Rocken Graphics** developed affordable spray stencils for social distancing as an alternative to the standard stickers, providing a perfect solution for traveling shows. It was implemented by multiple operators as they conducted business under the recent COVID-19 protocols.

**Delaware State Fair (Harrington, Del.)**

In a year when almost all fairs were canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Delaware State Fair** opened and operated safely. Featuring wider midways and social distancing, other state fairs sent representatives to the operation to observe protocols and procedures as they evaluated their own plans.

OUR CLEANING & DISINFECTING  
PROCESS KEEPS THE  
SKY EYE WHEEL  
TURNING FOR GUESTS!

THANK YOU TO  
**TRIMPER  
RIDES**  
FOR PARTNERING WITH US!

MIDWAY  
**SKY EYE WHEEL**



**BIGGEST WHEEL, LLC • WINTER PARK, FLA. • EMAIL: WOODENTCO@GMAIL.COM**

# Hodgdon steers NEAAPA through crisis, earns Leadership award

As the nation was brought to its knees in a matter of mere days and the world was put on lockdown, the **New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** (NEAAPA) leapt into action. It was not a time to hole up and get lost and swept away in the deluge of ever-changing information.

Almost immediately, there were weekly NEAAPA Zoom meetings connecting parks not only in the New England states, but also neighboring ones like New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. The networking video calls built bridges between an array of members — theme park chains, family-run parks, water parks, suppliers, casinos, FECs, zoos and more. It was about communication and working together to find best practices.

"Anyone in the industry anywhere was always welcome to call in and participate," said **Eric Anderson**, president, **Quassy Amusement Park** and NEAAPA president. "New England is branching out a little bit because of that. It was a lot of collaboration and a lot of good ideas."

Captaining the ship of video conferencing was NEAAPA Secretary **Ed Hodgdon** of **Funtown Splashtown USA**. In addition to setting up, organizing and moderating the meetings, Hodgdon shared information weekly following the scheduled Zoom meetings, consistently updating members. People gathered information and began formulating their own plans in finding a path through the crisis.

"Ed was close friends



Ed Hodgdon

with Alan Ramsay before his untimely passing. After that, Ed made it his mission to continue the extensive work Alan had begun in the NEAAPA Secretary's office. There is so much more to the job than just taking meeting notes, and Ed had excelled in the role," said General Manager **Cory Hutchinson**, Funtown Splashtown USA. This was highlighted this last spring as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world and throughout the industry. "The hours spent coordinating Zoom calls, setting up contact between members with questions and those with the answers — and so much more — was incredible. Ed's attention to detail and time management skills were key in making difficult and confusing times something manageable."

"During the spring and summer of 2020 COVID-19 crisis, as secretary of NEAAPA, Ed Hodgdon organized weekly conferences for our members and the entire amusements industry to discuss the industry's



reaction and response to the many challenges with which we were, and continue to be, faced," said **Paul Cavanaugh**, director, **Daly Cavanaugh, LLP**. "These meetings, thanks to Ed, NEAAPA and the many participants, were invaluable to the industry as it worked on coping with how to respond to the crisis."

"He is a truly genuine individual who cares for every aspect of the New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions," said **Christian Gainer**, general manager, **Santa's Village**. "Ed is always there to listen ... and eager to offer comfort and advice. His warm personality makes him the perfect leader to bring different individuals and groups together for NEAAPA."

In late spring, when certain states were granting permission for businesses to reopen, participants on the calls commented that they felt NEAAPA members were ahead of the curve because of the collaborative efforts that had been ongoing for several weeks.

"Despite the fact that Ed's own park and family were facing the same fears and challenges as other members, Ed stood up and became the calm, pragmatic leader who could still convey hope and optimism," said **Sara Seay**, director of marketing, **Premier Rides**. "He coordinated

regular email communications, coordinated an array of guest speakers and set up a committee to draft reopening guidelines."

"Ed is such an easy guy to work with," added Anderson. "There's no doubt NEAAPA is stronger because of Ed's efforts. [They] go way beyond his secretary duties. He's a historian of everything in the past, so we don't [repeat] mistakes. He helps board members as they come on board. He's an all-around great leader for the organization. He is so valuable to the association, it's almost a lifetime position as no one ever wants to see Ed move on."

"Ed puts everything he has into everything he does," said **Erik Beard**, managing member, **International Ride Training**. He is one of the hardest working and most dedicated individuals I have the pleasure of knowing and working with. Ask Ed to do anything and you will get everything he's got. Every time. With a smile and genuine concern. In the midst of the unprecedented challenges this year, Ed has worked tirelessly to keep the industry informed, support the reopening effort both in New England and across the country, and inspire optimism even during the hardest times. Simply put, he's the very top of the top-notch."

"It has been an absolute pleasure working alongside Ed for the past two decades at Funtown Splashtown USA," said Hutchinson. "Watching his growth and development from a teen-aged cashier to a vital part of the organization has been

amazing. Aside from his title as groups sales and marketing key team member, Ed is our go-to-guy for anything office related. From front office reception, to all tasks I.T., to helping run the cash office, Ed does it all. The best part is he does it with knowledge, efficiency, effectiveness and, most importantly, with a smile."

"The good thing about the New England [Association] is that in addition to all the members, you have a lot of manufacturers involved, too," said Anderson. "It's important for the connection with all of them, and that's where Ed really shines getting all those people together to share ideas. They offer a wealth of knowledge, too. We have a lot of New York members that were reaching out. Ed spearheaded that to help them get open. He went down to Coney Island to meet with the press."

"Even before the pandemic hit, he has demonstrated years of dedication, volunteering countless hours of his time to support NEAAPA [and IAAPA] members," said Seay. "Ed's passion for the industry and for the members of NEAAPA is an inspiration."

Numerous regional associations worked to help their members through challenging times. *Amusement Today* applauds the concentrated efforts of the New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions for blazing a trail. *AT* recognizes NEAAPA and Ed Hodgdon with a Golden Ticket Award for **Industry Leader: Association**.



At left, Ed Hodgdon checks in members at the NEAAPA luncheon at the 2018 IAAPA Expo, along with President Dorothy Lewis and Vice President Eric Anderson. Middle, late NEAAPA President and Secretary Alan E. Ramsay poses with Hodgdon, who now helps coordinate the annual presentation of the Alan E. Ramsay Safety Award in honor of his contributions to safety within the industry. At right, Hodgdon is seen at work with NEAAPA News Editor Ron Gustafson at NEAAPA's booth. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON

# Congratulations!

## NEAAPA Secretary Ed Hodgdon



Ed Hodgdon



Selected by



As Recipient Of 2020 Golden Ticket Award -  
Industry Leader/Industry Association

*To You We Say:  
Well Done!*

NEAAPA Board Of Directors  
& Association Members



# Innovation of the Year split in tie vote — Six Flags takes dual win

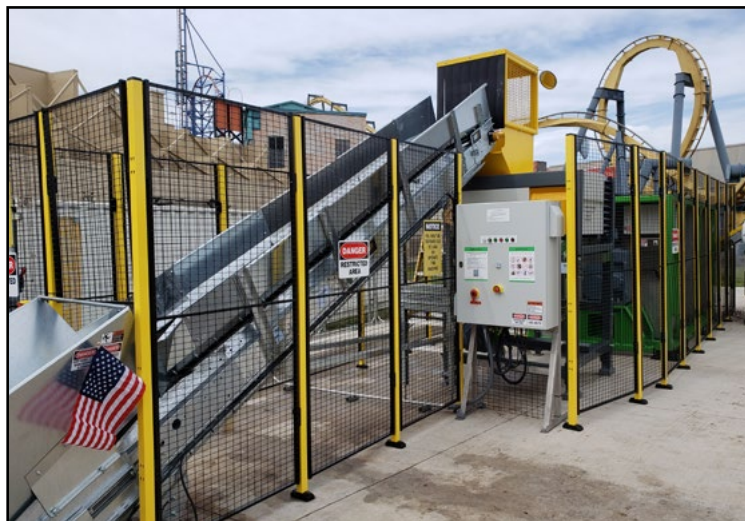
Introduced last year as an industry-voted category, **Innovation of the Year** allowed forward-thinking decisions to share some of the spotlight, recognizing advances in the world of attractions.

With COVID-19 placing shackles on the feasibility of traditional Golden Ticket voting, the *Amusement Today* staff offered observations for 2020 they felt demonstrated innovative thinking. After team discussion of the pros and cons of each, votes were cast. The results were a tie — and both were related to **Six Flags**.

With two unique advancements benefitting the industry, *Amusement Today* agreed to honor both innovations.

## Six Flags Over Texas — Trash Reduction System

By the close of 2019, **Six Flags Over Texas** began investigating a new system supplied by U.K.-based **Advatec** that reduces trash and waste by up to 90% with a safe, clean process of simple natural-occurring bacteria breaking down the garbage and transforming it into a new state that can be repurposed as a fuel source. Even if the



The waste reduction system supplied by Advatec (above left) helped Six Flags Over Texas substantially reduce its trash volume by 75-95%. A new metal detector system (above right) scanned guests as they walked through with no physical contact or need to remove any items, making for faster entry. AT/TIM BALDWIN



new material is not sold, the sheer reduction in trash and waste is a win. Couple that with the savings the park enjoys by not having to pay for the necessity of the trash to be hauled away, and it is a dual win.

The compact machine employs numerous safety procedures, is enclosed and can be remotely monitored 24/7

from around the globe. Six Flags personnel and Advatec officials are able to make any adjustments that sensors indicate are needed. The park began reaping benefits following the first day of installation.

The park jokes that no matter what trash they put in, the end result smells like fruitcake.

"We had been looking for ways to cut the rising costs of waste removal and, at the same time, reduce our carbon footprint," said Park President **Steve Martindale**. "In low-volume tests, this system so far has checked all the right boxes. Our next step is determining the true scalability that will hopefully enable us to channel all of our waste through this very environmentally friendly and cost-efficient system."

"I hope what we've done inspires more companies to look for alternatives to help our planet," said **Matt Hughey**, park operations manager, Six Flags Over Texas. "I'm still surprised by the amount of trash it holds before it gets full enough to discharge. With a 75% to 90% reduction on what goes in versus what comes out, it is still very impressive."

"Our park has historically been at the forefront when it comes to innovation," said **Sharon Parker**, public relations manager. "We're thrilled to be leading the way with this unique and environmentally conscious effort."

## Six Flags Theme Parks — Entrance Improvements Initiative

Operating a park in the world today, there are specific safety protocols and procedures that must be implemented. Under the direction of



new CEO **Michael Spanos**, **Six Flags Entertainment** is taking new steps to improve the guest experience. The first fruits of these efforts are now in play.

"Even before the pandemic, we were looking for ways to streamline our operations to allow guests to enter the park efficiently and as unobtrusively as possible, but still protecting the patrons and team members. None were as efficient as the one we chose," said VP of Safety, Security, Health and Environmental, First Aid, Safety and Risk Management **Jason Freeman**. "The equipment we chose is 'one-stop shopping,' if you will. It covers both metal detection and x-ray in one sweeping move."

**Evolv Technology** provided the metal detection. With the arrival of the global pandemic, temperature screening became a necessity and **Unified Command** supplied a rapid temperature detection unit. In so doing, guests go through multiple screenings just by walking through a tunnel, eliminating the need to remove phones and other metal objects, as well as handheld temperature checks.

"You can just walk through," Freeman said, praising the initiative. "We were looking for A-I intelligent, which means it figures out what's a cell phone compared to an item we don't want in the park. Evolv has been around since 9/11 and this system had everything we wanted. Unless the system identifies something, they just keep on moving. We can put through 7,000 people an hour."

Even with the COVID-19 pandemic, entrance to the



parks is currently faster and more efficient than in previous times using older systems for metal detection. No longer needing to remove articles has reduced serious pinch points.

"With or without COVID, this all started with Mike Spanos and the arrival experience. How can we get guests through the front gate as quickly as possible to get in and enjoy their day?" said **Chris Baker**, director of operations, **Six Flags Over Texas**. "Metal detection and security screening is certainly a bottleneck, so there was a desire to address that from the beginning."

Six Flags Over Texas is so pleased by the efficiency that the park is looking to double its capacity to prepare for heavier attendance days once capacity restrictions are lifted.

"We made the investment for walk-through temperature scanning," Freeman said. "We wanted ease for entrance for our guests, but also we don't know where the world will lead us after COVID. We are strategically ready if temperature scans don't go away."

Safety videos were released to the media prior to the park's reopening so that guests would know what to expect with the new safety protocols.

"First and foremost, we want our guests and team members to know and feel that Six Flags is safe," Freeman told AT. "We wanted the public to know what was put in place when they come visit us or work for us."

## Honorable Mentions

### Embed (Dallas, Texas): Mobile Wallet

The mobile wallet system from **Embed** allows guests at FECs to play games and activities without the need to use cash, touch any card machines or download apps. Visitors simply use their phones to load money onto their account and then check balances and redeem tickets strictly through the system, typically using QR codes. Parents can add money to their children's cards if those individuals do not own phones.

### Ralph S. Alberts (Montoursville, Pa.): Bactiblock

**Ralph S. Alberts Company** introduced a virus-fighting product, BactiBlock. The product is designed for long-term application on restraints and grab bars.

### Chance Rides (Wichita, Kan.): Plexiglass dividers for C.P. Huntington

**Chance Rides** provided plexiglass dividers for its C.P. Huntington trains. These additions allowed for greater capacity during the pandemic on the facilities' existing trains.

### Zamperla (Altavilla Vicentina, Italy): Coaster wash

**Zamperla** designed a coaster wash system that sprays coaster trains periodically. It can even be done while passengers are on the brake run, sanitizing them as well. The "tunnel" can also be used as a cooling tunnel. In addition, the company designed plexiglass dividers for its most popular rides to allow for full capacity.



# Six Flags®



59 years of creating safe, thrilling experiences for guests of all ages! Thank you Amusement Today for this honor!



# Amusement TODAY

Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader



Thank You for supporting Amusement Today and the Golden Ticket Awards for over 20 years!



The Industry News Leader!

• 14 digital issues per year!

• Read by over 9,000 industry creatives!

• More than 4,000 email subscribers!

• More than 17,000 social media followers!



(817) 460-7220 • [www.AmusementToday.com](http://www.AmusementToday.com)

Subscribe for FREE at [amusementtoday.com/subscribe!](http://amusementtoday.com/subscribe!)