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From Putt-Putt to modern, multi-activity FEC

\$10 million investment makes DFW fun center the cat's meow

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

HURST, Texas — **Brian Smith** is celebrating a personal milestone.

Although the family entertainment center (FEC) owner's 25th year in the industry isn't filled with a blare of fanfare, there's plenty to make noise about — and it involves expansion. Lots of it.

Smith has invested around \$10 million in new activities, games, equipment and attractions, as well as the relocation of batting cages, at his FEC formerly known as **Putt-Putt Golf and Games**. The vastly improved property has reemerged as

Alley Cats.

"This has been a lot of years in the planning," Smith told *Amusement Today*. And it shows.

Smith became owner of the Hurst property — a closed Malibu Grand Prix location — with his father in 1993 while owning a different Putt-Putt not too far away that his dad had built in 1974.

For one season, the family operated the go-karts, batting cages, arcade and a handful of small rides as they continued running the Putt-Putt. They then opted to close their original FEC location and combine Putt-Putt with the new one.

► See **ALLEY CATS**, page 4



The name change from Putt-Putt Golf and Games to Alley Cats was prompted by the addition of 28 bowling lanes built on two floors. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Trade show returns to Las Vegas for 2018

Amusement Expo International to play up VR, out-of-home fun



Through educational seminars and a two-day trade show, AEI 2018 will continue to expand and embrace changes in the amusement marketplace during its Feb. 27 – March 1 run.

AT FILE

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Paradise Road will be alive with the mirthful sounds of bells, whistles, beeps and buzzers when **Amusement Expo International 2018 (AEI)** moves into the **Las Vegas Convention Center** and its adjacent host-lodge headquarters, the **Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino**, Feb. 27 – March 1.

After traveling to Dallas in 2017, the ninth edition of the event showcasing coin-op / revenue-generating arcade games, vending and location-based entertainment returns to Las Vegas, where it debuted in 2010 (and has been primarily held) as the combined trade show of the **American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA)** and **Amusement & Music Operators Association (AMOA)**. The two organizations

co-own AEI.

While maintaining its core focus on amusements, the diverse gathering has continued to expand and embrace changes in the marketplace through the years, with many features introduced since its inception.

In addition to annual colocations with the **National Bulk Vendors Association** and the **Laser Tag Museum**, AEI has placed steadily growing emphasis on the family entertainment center (FEC) sector of out-of-home entertainment, as well as education. It offers a full day of seminars and two full days of trade exhibition.

AEI is a prime opportunity to discover the latest equipment/services, issues, trends and companies shaping the industry. It offers pathways to profits as well as ideas for improvement for both attendees and exhibitors, and it makes

► See **AEI**, page 6

NEWSPAPER

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NEWTALK

EDITORIAL: Gary Slade, gslade@amusementtoday.com

FEC rollouts on the rise



Slade

Companies operating within the family entertainment center (FEC) and location-based entertainment (LBE) sectors must continually review their product offerings, and how effectively they're meeting the needs of their markets, in order to remain competitive.

Even before a new FEC opens, careful demographic research and community data analysis play key roles in ensuring success. And from what we've seen of recent FEC rollouts across the U.S., national, regional and local operators largely have been hitting their marks.

In the LBE sector, we're seeing observation wheels turning out crowds in key North American tourist locations. The Seattle Great Wheel alone, thanks in part to its waterfront setting at Pier 57, is drawing more than one million visitors annually.

Dallas, Texas-based Topgolf has exploded onto the scene as a must-do venue that caters not only to golf enthusiasts but to organizers of corporate outings.

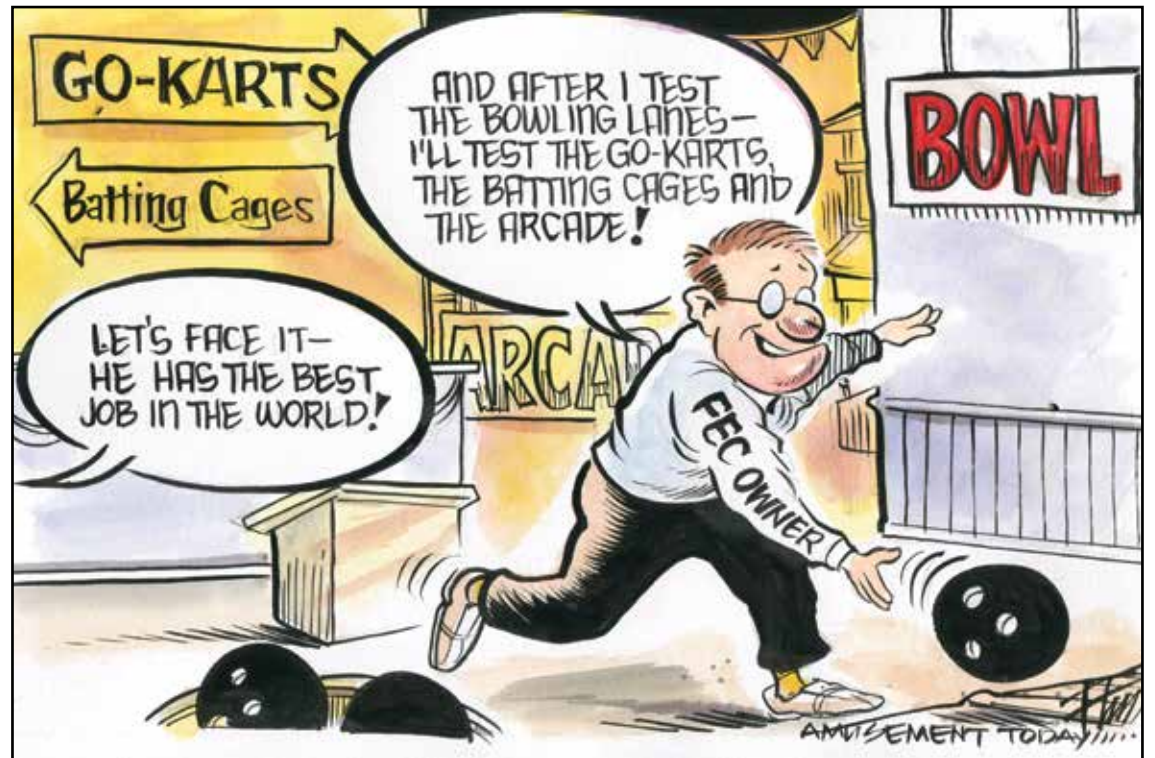
Andretti Indoor Karting & Games, which also enjoys strong group sales, recently grew from two thriving facilities in metro Atlanta to a third in Orlando (with two more under construction in Texas). The concept delivers a slicker, sports celebrity-branded go-kart experience sweetened with an appealing package of amusements, activities and amenities, including superior food.

Localized buildouts of national entertainment brands continue apace, as well — as evidenced by the expanding reach of the Lego Discovery Center and Crayola Experience concepts.

On the independent operator side, our lead story this issue looks at how a classic Putt-Putt in the Lone Star State spent \$10 million to transform itself into a modern, well-balanced FEC. The facility, renamed Alley Cats, now offers karting, games, rides, batting cages and, of course, bowling.

In sum: The FEC and LBE sectors are as strong and healthy as they've ever been. And as long as operators stay on top of customer demands, and industry suppliers help operators fulfill those demands by downsizing and adapting their product lines in budget-friendly ways, growth should remain strong for the foreseeable future.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY OPINION: Andrew Mellor, amellor@amusementtoday.com

Upping the game to stay in the game

I was interested recently to work on an article about older attractions at Quassy Amusement Park & Waterpark with the property's director of marketing and public relations, Ron Gustafson. It looked at some of the vintage diversions Quassy still offers its guests and which remain popular today.

Among these were a variety of games of different shapes and sizes, and providing a range of entertainment experiences, housed within the park's redemption arcade. Despite many of them having been around since the early part of the last century — the products included classics such as the Love Tester, the Rotary Merchandiser and Skee-Ball — they have continued to supply fun for many a visitor.

Such amusements obviously are becoming rarer these days; probably, there are very few working examples of these and other similarly dated machines around at all. They clearly work well in a traditional park environment such as Quassy's, where they are mixed in with newer equipment. But I wonder if they would draw much interest in a modern-day FEC where, of course, high-tech and fast-moving games are all the rage.

During IAAPA Attractions Expo 2017 in Orlando



Mellor

last November, I enjoyed a visit to the Andretti Indoor Karting & Games facility on Universal Boulevard. (See story, page 10.) Along with all the featured four-wheel fun on the track, there is an adjacent arcade incorporating simulators, laser tag, an XD Dark Ride, high ropes course and more — altogether a pretty comprehensive FEC-style experience.

But the place is not just about recreational gadgetry. There is a large bar area and a food menu that caters to most patrons' tastes and expectations — and probably exceeds them.

Elements enhancing entertainment and social value increasingly are in play at many such establishments. The FEC game, pardon the pun, has been "upped."

Andretti is just one example. Generally, the out-of-home entertainment sector has in recent years recognized that it must cater to the more discerning guest while also embracing new technologies and improving facilities overall for better experiences.

The days of simply offering a collection of arcade games and bowling lanes, along with pizza, beer and soda by the pitcher are past if an FEC is to become a viable, attention-getting center of leisure.

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Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader

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2 MINUTE DRILL



Lisa Rau, Silver Dollar City

Make no mistake about it: **Lisa Rau** is driven, energetic, passionate, and after nearly 30 years as a media professional, she still gets a rush landing a great headline. This all makes her perfect for her job as director of publicity and public relations for **Herschend Family Entertainment Corp.'s Silver Dollar City Attractions** in Branson, Mo. Lisa specializes in general publicity, product launch, brand management, and crisis management and she brings a previous background of television news and journalistic instinct to all she does at Silver Dollar City.

Title: Director of Publicity and Public Relations.

Number of years in the industry: 28 years.

Best thing about the industry:
Delivering on promises of excellence.

Favorite amusement ride: Silver Dollar City's Giant Swing, or the whole Pandora experience at Disney (yes, different choices, and both favorites).

**If I wasn't working in the amusement industry,
I would be ...**

Back in television news — I loved how curiosity would be the basis for many a story.

Biggest challenge facing our industry:
Because safety is so very critical, I can only answer that question with safety being the No. 1, on-going, non-negotiable for every layer of the industry.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ...

The energy! The uplifting excitement I hear every day as guests enter the park in anticipation of a festival, a ride, a specialty food item, a show or a visit with a "Citizen" of Silver Dollar City (the people are the true heart and soul of our park).

I could eat this every day and never tire from it: Homemade coffee ice cream at our ice cream factory.

Finish this sentence: YouTube is ... A great way to get the message out, follow trends and be entertained, but get the message out is #1.

Something I say I am going to do, but never do is ...
Truly be organized (oh, and go to Knoebels!).

I am in the best mood when ...
Our Springtime festival opens, Festival of Wonder ... PLUS this year TIME TRAVELER!

All-time favorite meal:
Spaghetti and clam sauce.

If I could do anything when coming home from work, it would be ... Reflect on a day of successful, solid actions/tactics that result in publicity headlines! Being a junkyard dog opportunity-driven publicist, there's nothing like a true homerun.



Lisa Rau celebrates the unveiling of Time Traveler during IAAPA. COURTESY HERSCHELD FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CORP.

What is your definition of fun? I know it when I feel it...and in fact, still, involuntarily do this little bunny hop of excitement (yes, odd).

If you could have a home with the most beautiful view in the world, where would it be?
Swiss Alps, Hawaii or the Greek Islands.

The last time I was really surprised was ...
Amount of love for a newly-born niece.

I feel most comfortable wearing ...
Black/black and lots of silver jewelry. Repeat.

I know I need a vacation when ...
I have no energy.

The celebrity I am most tired hearing about would have to be ...
Not saying, as I refrain from overtly publicizing politics.

Who would you rather be around: someone funny or someone smart? Tough one, but I deeply appreciate smart.

If I wrote a book, the topic would be ...
 "What Would Walter Cronkite Say" about the state of media today.

Chocolate or vanilla? Chocolate.

I do most of my heavy thinking in this spot:
At home, looking out from atop a mountain over
Table Rock Lake in the Ozark Mountains.

Something real that I wish was make-believe:
Turn that around to something make-believe
that I wish was real: It's a Small World!

**When I look out my front door at home, I see
... Beauty and another great day ahead!**

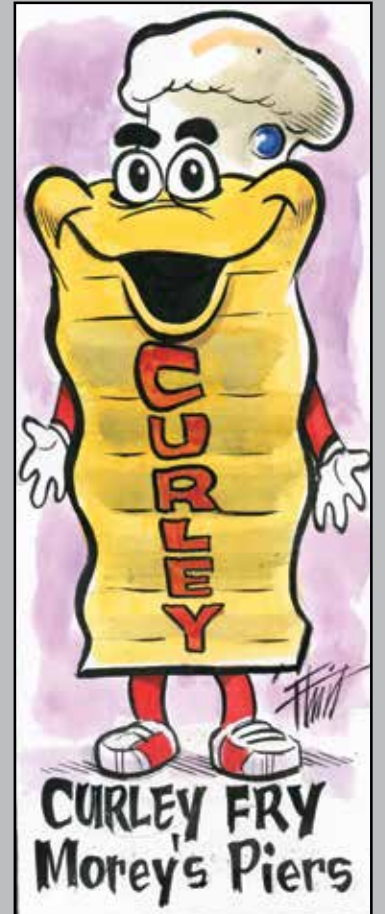
CHARACTER CORNER

Curley the Fry, Morey's Piers

Curley the Fry, one of Morey's Piers' mascots, was introduced to the park in 2004. Curley's Fries have been a staple at Morey's since 1974, when the first fry stand was introduced. Guests soon learned, however, that they weren't the only ones who loved the crinkly-cut potatoes. Wildwood, N.J.'s aggressive seagulls are known to swoop in and help themselves to any fry dropped on the ground or left unattended. It's no surprise, then, that Curley's sidekick is a seagull — Sunny C. Gull, to be exact.

The two mascots can be seen interacting with guests at all three piers. Curley also appears on the cups in which the fries are served and as a souvenir plush toy.

CARTOON BUBBA FLINT;
HISTORY JEFFREY SEIFERT



►ALLEY CATS

Continued from page 1

"We had about five acres of ideas and two acres of property," he said. In 2000, they expanded the building at the Hurst site from 8,000 to 24,000 square feet.

In 2007, Smith launched a new FEC concept called Alley Cats in Arlington. Soon afterward, he began investigating how to duplicate the success of that facility 18 miles away at his Hurst property.

To accommodate expansion in Hurst, Smith removed a bumper boat pond and, in order to make way for a roller coaster, eliminated a kiddie go-kart track. A laser tag arena encompassing 7,000 square feet on two levels was installed at the south



end of the existing indoor area.

On the north end, 28 lanes of bowling on two floors were added. The upper floor holds 12 lanes along with a dedicated bar and food service. This layout is very convenient for hosting corporate groups, private functions or 21-and-older patrons on weekends, allowing families to enjoy the lanes on the ground

floor separately.

The bowling lanes, with equipment supplied by Brunswick, AMF and QubicaAMF, officially opened Jan. 25.

Smith reported that food and beverage account for between a quarter and third of sales at Alley Cats. Lane service is available on both bowling levels, while a separate dining area serves the arcade and lower level. All food is made from scratch and most items are available throughout the facility.

Noting that his own favorite menu item is a hamburger, Smith indicated with a laugh that bacon-wrapped hot dogs are popular "because bacon makes everything better." Salads and healthier options complement comfort foods such as street tacos and quesadillas.

Outside, a new spinning roller coaster called The Rattler draws attention from adjacent Highway 820. Sold by Rides 4-U of Somerville, N.J., the SBF/Visa-manufactured attraction has been given its own thematic flair at Alley Cats — complete with a billboard-style scenery wall through which the ride vehicles travel.

Len Soled, president of Rides 4-U, told AT that sales to the FEC industry have been "extremely strong. You bring in a new coaster and people will come. The advantage [of the spinning coaster] is that a wide range of ages can ride it. Most coasters, even those that are gentle, start with a minimum height requirement of 42 inches; here, anyone from 36 inches up to 72 inches can ride. The free-spinning action causes different sensations, and people enjoy it so much that they want to ride it more than one time."

For Brian Smith, it was a matter of bringing variety to Alley Cats.

"We had the mini-teacup ride, the Mini-Himalaya and the Drop 'N Twist, but people love roller coasters," he said, adding that the ride caters to a broader demographic than the kiddie



New go-karts (above left) race on the outdoor course. Alley Cats new lanes feature bar and food service (above). The Rattler spinning coaster (below) was supplied by Rides 4-U. AT/TIM BALDWIN



go-kart track it replaced. "Other FEC operators told us they had real success with it."

New games from Bob's Space Racers also have arrived. Among them are new games for Smith, including Jersey Wheels, Gear It Up and a four-player Whack-a-Mole. A five-player Water Pixel, successful at the Arlington Alley Cats location, also has been

purchased for Hurst.

Final aesthetic touches to the facility were being applied as AT went to press. Completion of the expansion was expected by the end of February.

An Alley Cats all-you-can ride wristband that includes rides and go-karts runs \$24.95 for an adult and \$16.95 for a child.

• alleycatsbowl.com



Indoor activities include rock climbing and laser tag. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Chatting with Alley Cats' chief cat

While visiting the newly expanded Alley Cats family entertainment center (FEC) in Hurst, Texas, *Amusement Today* sat down with Brian Smith, who owns this facility and another Alley Cats location in nearby Arlington, to get his thoughts on operating within the FEC industry.

Which are more popular — games you "play" or redemption games?

Definitely redemption games. The arcade business has been changing over the past decades. Since the video boom of the 1980s, there are great video systems kids can buy for their house. It's harder to make an impact on just the video side. People like the redemption games; people like to win stuff. Where our arcades were probably 85 percent video and 15 percent redemption in the '80s, it is easily 65-70 percent redemption now.



Smith

With the expansion, how many people do you have on staff?

I think we are going to get to 200 to 250 employees. A lot of our employees are special events. We have a lot of young people who want to work part time to make money for their weekend fun.

Is it easier for an FEC to get employees compared to other job opportunities?

Absolutely. It's a lot more fun to work here than at a shoe store, retail or a fast food restaurant. It's a fun environment.

What do you feel is a typical amount an average FEC patron thinks they will spend?

That's hard. I think it is in the \$15 to \$20 range. An amusement park has a ticket to get in or a turnstile, while we don't have that.

How has the FEC industry changed — and what is the future?

We're getting bigger with more attractions. At Alley Cats, we feel really good that we have a great mix of indoor and outdoor attractions. There are a lot of places that have all the indoor stuff we have, but not many have the mixture of both. That's where we feel our niche is right now — being able to offer a large variety of entertainment, both indoors and out, depending upon the weather.

One reason we added bowling is that it is almost the ying to the yang of outdoor entertainment. If the weather is really good, they flock to the outdoor attractions. But the opposite happens in bad weather. Even in the spring and the fall, when it isn't too hot or too cold, you still get rain. Rain is like the best promotion ever for bowling. And bowling is a great attraction to level out our cash flow.

—Tim Baldwin

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The Spinning Times

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Arriving at Alley Cats of Hurtst, Texas, in 2018, the SBF/Visa Compact Spinning Coaster is guaranteed to deliver smiles and excitement to your guests.

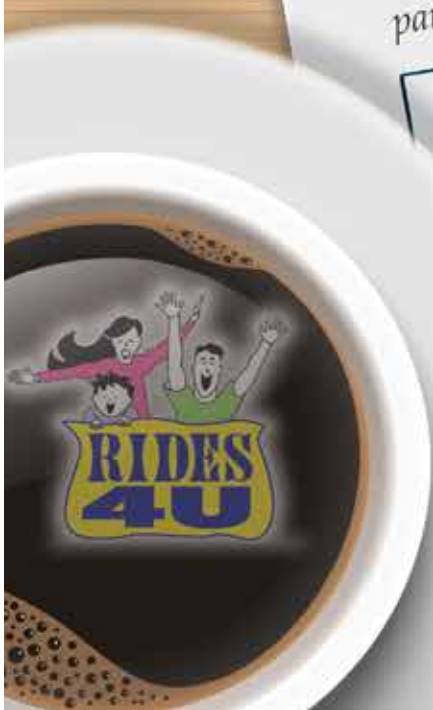
Available in a standard figure-8 track layout, or in a larger layout with an additional loop, there's a coaster perfect for your facility's space requirements!

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SUPPLYING AMUSEMENTS NEW TO USED



▶ **AEI****Continued from page 1**

peer-to-peer networking both productive and fun.

Expo Education Day, with a lineup of 24 presentations and panels, will be conducted Tuesday, Feb. 27, at the Westgate Resort, while the trade show will be open Wednesday, Feb. 28, and Thursday, March 1, in the convention center's South Hall.

On the evening of Tuesday, Feb. 27, buyers and sellers assembled for the event will attend the All-Industry Gala Reception at the Westgate Resort.

Bridging generations

Setting the tone for Expo Education Day at 8 a.m. on Feb. 27 will be keynote speaker **Meagan Johnson**, a noted generational expert, humorist and author (*Generations, Inc.: From Boomers to Linksters, Managing the Friction Between Generations at Work*).

Johnson will challenge attendees to think differently and act decisively with her take-no-prisoners Generation X attitude and point of view with her topic, "Zap the Gap!" The discussion will cover the multi-generational nature of today's workplace and how it creates greater opportunity for both collaboration and conflict.

After working several years in a sales environment, Johnson became discouraged when she experienced the negative perceptions of those in her generation — the 50 million people born between 1965 and 1980. She has spent two decades researching companies large and small to understand how multiple generations can work together and be successful.

"Every generation gets a negative label when it enters the workplace," Johnson said. "For example, baby boomers



AEI 2018's trade show takes over the Las Vegas Convention Center's South Hall 1 on Feb. 28 and March 1, with the adjacent Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino serving as the event's headquarters for its entire run. AT FILE; COURTESY WESTGATE LAS VEGAS RESORT & CASINO



were called trouble-making hippies when they first went to work. Once we take time to understand the motivations and mindset of each generation, then working with them, communicating with them and managing them becomes a more successful effort."

"Whether it's with our kids, parents or work colleagues, we have all experienced what we used to call the generation gap," said **Lori Schneider**, executive vice president of AMOA. "That gap seems to be widening, with more communication breakdowns and conflict, so this is a timely, key topic to address."

Added **Pete Gustafson**, executive vice president of AAMA: "When we show up at the office, factory, warehouse or route each day, we bring

our unique perspectives and personalities with us. If we can gain a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, the traits that define the different generations we interact with, it will be tremendously useful. This keynote promises to be a great way to launch our Expo Education Day."

Bringing VR into focus

This year, AEI is turning the spotlight on the burgeoning virtual reality (VR) entertainment ecosystem for the 3,000-plus industry professionals expected to attend the three-day event.

According to **Greenlight Insights**, a leader in VR and augmented reality market research, global spending on location-based VR entertainment will exceed \$8 billion by 2022, up from \$579 million in 2017. Location-based entertainment centers will continue to play a significant role in growing consumer awareness and mass adoption of VR technology.

AEI will offer a VR-focused educational track (requiring separate registration and a modest separate fee) on Feb. 27 as well as a new VR Pavilion on the trade show floor Feb. 28 and March 1. The aim is to educate traditional amusement operators about opportunities and products from the VR attrac-

tions market and give VR companies the chance to exhibit and connect with a large group of influential new customers.

Topics tentatively to be covered include VR history and trends, marketing VR attractions, developing the right VR operations mindset, and selecting the right VR content and equipment for a given audience.

"Arcades will continue to be where most people will first experience VR," said **Bob Cooney**, location-based VR guru, *RePlay* magazine contributor and curator of the VR education program for AEI. "Billions of dollars have been invested in virtual reality startups based on the expectation that the consumer market was poised to explode. However, with consumer adoption emerging slowly, companies are now flocking to location-based entertainment as a means to showcase their products and build consumer awareness."

Honors, an app and more

As in previous years, a number of awards will be presented during AEI 2018. Among them will be the AAMA Category Awards — voted on by AAMA members — for Manufacturer, Distributor and Supplier of the Year, plus the Lifetime Achievement Award. These will be handed out during the event's opening ceremony on Feb. 28 in the convention center's South Hall.

All exhibiting companies have been encouraged to register for inclusion in the Best Booth program, which recognizes excellence in the presentation of displays on the show floor. The honors are divided into three categories based on booth square footage; registered companies will be evaluated in areas such as design, creativity and branding.

Winners will be awarded a plaque and receive post-show recognition in press releases and other AEI promotion.

This year, all AEI participants and attendees can keep informed of scheduled seminars and happenings, and find out where everything is located, with a new mobile app sponsored by **Betson Enterprises**, specialists in location-based entertainment. Visit AEI's website for the free app download, and for all other information related to the event and accommodations at the Westgate Resort.

• amusementexpo.org

AEI at a glance...**Tuesday,
Feb. 27**

Registration Open
7:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Westgate Las Vegas Resort
& Las Vegas Convention
Center

Keynote Presentation /
"Zap the Gap!"
8 a.m. – 9 a.m.
Westgate Las Vegas Resort

Expo Education Day
Seminars
9:15 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.
(visit amusementexpo.org
for complete listing)
Westgate Las Vegas Resort

All Industry Gala
5:15 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.
Westgate Las Vegas,
Ballroom A

**Wednesday,
Feb. 28**

Registration Open
8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Las Vegas Convention
Center

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony
& Awards Presentation
9:45 a.m. – 10 a.m.
Las Vegas Convention
Center, South Hall 1
(entrance)

Expo Open
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Las Vegas Convention
Center, South Hall 1

Hesch Happy Hour
4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
AMOA Coin-Op Cares,
Booth #110

Hesch Memorial
Sponsorship Raffle
Drawing
5:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.
AMOA Coin-Op Cares,
Booth #110

**Thursday,
March 1**

Registration Open
8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Las Vegas Convention
Center, South Hall 1

Expo Open
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Las Vegas Convention
Center, South Hall 1

Hesch Memorial
Scholarship Raffle Drawing
5:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.
AMOA Coin-Op Cares,
Booth #110



Dynamic speakers appearing at AEI 2018 include generational expert Meagan Johnson, who will deliver the keynote presentation on Feb. 27, and VR guru Bob Cooney. COURTESY MEAGAN JOHNSON, LAWLESS MARKETING





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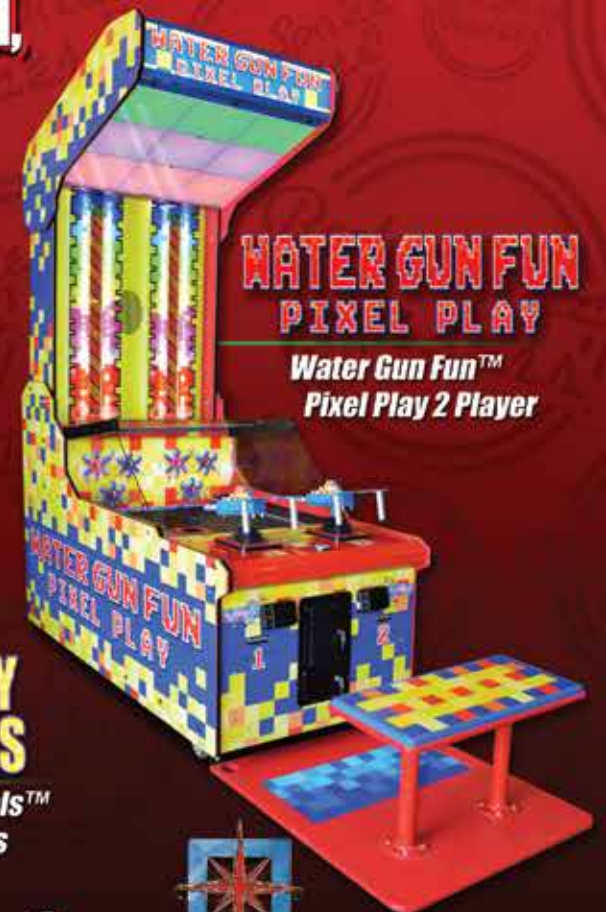


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Amusement Expo International 2018

Exhibitor Listing • Las Vegas, Nev.

Adrenaline Amusements.....	104	Escape VR.....	1114	PDQ Merchant Enterprises, Inc.	717
American Alpha, Inc.....	755	Expo Enterprise.....	1312	PinballSales.com.....	648
American Amusement Machine Assoc. (AAMA)	1427	Family Fun Companies.....	347	Play Meter Magazine.....	736
American Changer.....	405	FetchRev.....	1316	Play Time Toys, Inc.....	105
AMI Entertainment Network, LLC.....	327	Firestone Financial.....	827	Player One Amusement Group.....	841
AMOA - National Dart Assoc.....	1412	Fish Game Kings.....	1139	Primera Technology.....	1211
AMOA Coin-Op Cares Education & Charitable Foundation. . .	110	Foto ATM.....	1235	Primero Games, LLC.....	639
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Bob's Space Racers rolls out new arcade games for 2018

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Coming off a successful showing at **IAAPA Attractions Expo 2017** in Orlando last November, **Bob's Space Racers** is bringing its array of games to **Amusement Expo International 2018** in Las Vegas, Feb. 28 and March 1.

Among the company's newer offerings:

• **Water Gun Fun Pixel Play** — This two-player arcade game is Bob's latest water race ticket redemption arcade game. It features cutting-edge electronics and is specially designed and built to be as durable and maintenance-free as possible for years of revenue-generating game play. It also sports a bright, attention-getting LED and vinyl package.

• **Prize Wheels Game** — This completely skill-based game allows players to stop wheels, positioned on a tower, on winning slots to win prizes. Once an operator activates a player's prize wheel tower, the bottom wheel will begin to spin. Each wheel has "Winner" and "Miss" slots; if the player stops the wheel on the "Winner" slot, they will advance to the next wheel on the tower.

The higher the player can advance up the wheel tower, the larger the prize. If the guest stops the wheel on the "Miss" slot, the game is over.

• **Portable 3 in a Row Basketball Game** — This skill game allows for single-player action with a set amount of shots to get three basketballs in a row; it also allows two to three players to compete against each



other in trying to get three basketballs in a row on the attached ball box to win a prize.

The two-to-three-player game version requires both skill and strategy as players alternate turns to get three basketballs in a row to win the prize. The game was designed to be as portable as possible and contains everything needed for quick, easy set-up in high-traffic locations.

At last year's IAAPA Attractions Expo, Bob's Space Racers featured a com-

plete games area especially themed for the **Al Hokair Group** of Saudi Arabia. It showcased branding and theming for Al Hokair's Snowy Village and its characters. The exhibit illustrated for potential customers Bob's high level of customization capability and how it can be applied to their own unique locations.

• bobsspaceracers.com



The Water Gun Fun Pixel Play game from Bob's Space Racers features multiple targets, easily serviced electronics and a self-contained, easy-to-maintain water system.

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FEC chain sees greater 'vroom' for expansion

Managing success is key at Andretti Indoor Karting & Games

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ORLANDO, Fla. — Being a native Colombia, South America, **Eddie Hamann** admits to enjoying Central Florida's heat. And as a managing owner of **Andretti Indoor Karting & Games**, he loves being part of an enterprise — named for the famous former racing driver **Mario Andretti** and his family — that is, in a word, hot.

The family entertainment center (FEC) concept originated with **Andretti Thrill Park** in Melbourne, Fla. — a business that sprang from a friendship Hamann developed with Mario's nephew **John Andretti**, himself a top driver, after meeting him in Daytona Beach in 1997. Hamann, who had worked his way up through the management ranks at **Medieval Times** and had shifted to managing a go-kart facility at the time, helped the Andrettis open their own outdoor go-kart facility two years later.

While **Andretti Thrill Park** was a success, Hamann saw how much the weather impacted the numbers of operating days and visitors in a given year. Consultations with Mario and his family led to a new concept: taking the go-kart action inside.

In 2001, favorable demographic research and a healthy regional corporate event industry led them to Roswell, Ga., in suburban Atlanta, where they converted a former **Sam's Club** into what would eventually become known as the first **Andretti Indoor Karting & Games**. In addition to the go-kart track, it had 150 video games, a rock-climbing wall and a **Fuddruckers** restaurant.

Once again, the operation succeeded. And once again, Hamann and the Andrettis felt they could do better.

Together with financial partners of Hamann's, they chose another Atlanta metro city — Marietta — to test a next-level version of the indoor karting brand. The new **Andretti Karting & Games** prototype, featuring



Eddie Hamann

laser tag, a motion theater, a ropes course, racing simulators, bowling, bars and superior in-house food, plus 10,00 square feet of meeting space, opened in 2015.

The popularity of that location has led to Andretti's biggest hit yet — a 150,000-square-foot, \$32 million facility that opened last fall in Orlando's **I-Drive** corridor. It is "on track" to tally one million guests in its first year, with a third of its business coming from corporate events. Next up: new locations in San Antonio, Texas, this summer and Dallas by early 2019.

Amusement Today caught up with Hamann to learn more about how **Andretti Karting & Games** evolved — and the promising direction in which it is heading.

How does Andretti's operational philosophy differ from those of other FEC chains?

Whether it's **Dave & Buster's**, **Main Event** or any of the other concepts, I have to say that everybody is doing a great job. One day, I was talking to Mario about this and he basically said, "Don't worry about what happens outside. When we build our cars and we pick our drivers, we bring to the track our best equipment. And 99 percent of the time, you can come up to the top and win."

And that's what we do at our facilities. When people walk in — from the greeters to the kitchen to the track to the games, which are always clean and operating — we give them the best service. We appeal to everybody; in addition to our go-karts, we have all these things [competitors have] in one building: bowling, ropes courses, a

dark ride, laser tag. We offer more

The average stay in an Andretti facility for a family of four is five hours. That makes us different. We also have the name Andretti and our go-kart tracks take it to another level — they're like highways indoors. Our Orlando facility has the largest indoor go-kart track in the world, at a little over 3,000 linear feet, and it can be operated as three separate tracks or linked together as one.

Orlando has more than exceeded my expectations. It's a fantastic location near the **Orange County Convention Center** and next to **Topgolf**.

Did you have additional backing to move into Central Florida's international tourism market?

When we opened our Marietta location, we were noticed by a REIT [real estate investment trust] out of Kansas City [Mo.] called **EPR Properties**, which funds **Topgolf**. They thought the concept was great, so we got together with them and they funded our expansion.

Quite a few of the facilities we're opening, in fact, will be next to **Topgolf**, because there's a synergy — we've experienced it in Orlando — in having these two big concepts together. We can service very large groups of 2,000 or more together that we wouldn't be able to accommodate individually.

Beyond the iconic name, what do Mario and his family contribute to the operation?

I've gotten to know all the Andrettis. Mario, obviously, is the patriarch and boss. But they all have individual areas of expertise, and whether it's on the design or the financial sides, they are very much involved. Mario's sons, for example, have tested go-karts before we buy them.

When we built our true prototype in Marietta, we wanted to install the best racing simulators. The Andrettis led us to a company, [Los Angeles-based] **CXC Simulations**, which makes training simulators for pro race car drivers and now also makes them for entertainment, with virtual real-



Quality food and beverage in eclectically cool settings and electric-powered go-karts are Andretti hallmarks. COURTESY ANDRETTI KARTING & GAMES



ity added. Their simulators really immerse you in the experience. We have six of them in Orlando.

Mario himself is big into making sure we provide the best-quality food, and he insisted that our Andretti's Grill have a scratch kitchen. He has his own winery, so we exclusively serve **Andretti Wine**. He even comes to our locations occasionally and cooks the brick-oven pizzas himself. [laughs]

Your latest facilities feature go-karts fueled in part by solar energy. How important is sustainability to Andretti and its image?

It's important to us and to our customers. We've come a long way with electric go-kart technology; we don't have to worry about changing oil. And we have installed power surge systems in our facilities that save about us about 20 percent of [normal] electrical usage.

We also buy recyclable paper products and have installed low-volume toilets in all our restrooms. Our customers see that we're being responsible, and they support us.

How involved is your company with community outreach?

We are incredibly involved. There's a page on our website where donation requests can be submitted; we donate silent auctions and raffles to at least 20 organizations a month. We also work with an [Atlanta-based] company called **Goodr**, which picks up [non-spoiled] leftover food immediately after events for distribution to local shelters.

In addition, we're working on instituting a program at our indoor locations that we started in Melbourne. There, we distribute what we call a **Fun Card** through the schools. When the kids visit us and purchase wristbands, the school system gets two dollars back for each one. We've given in-cash donations totaling about

\$150,000 since we started the program about three years ago. The money is used to buy supplies and provide food for kids who are not able to bring lunch to school.

Aside from your forthcoming Texas locations, where else is Andretti looking to go?

Orlando got us onto people's radar; we're getting inquiries from a lot of municipalities. We've had to hire an independent company to look at them. We're actively working with sites in Tampa, Miami, Jacksonville and Charlotte [N.C.]. We're looking at another site in Georgia and at sites close to Washington, D.C. People from as far as Canada are approaching.

Building the facilities is not as difficult as finding people who know what they're doing. And with all these amazing FEC concepts growing at a fast pace, the competition for talented people is tough.

Is it fair to say that "Andretti" is synonymous with "ambition"?

We have to be smart about how we grow. Mario always says, 'You can build all these facilities, and they can be beautiful. But if you don't have the right people, you cannot duplicate yourself and elevate it.' You have to trust that those people are going to feel the passion of what you're doing and do their job; we don't micromanage our people.

It's going to become more difficult for us to be in 10, 12, 15 cities at a time, because we're a family business — the Andretti family business. In the last 20 years, I have lost my identity as **Eddie Hamann**; I love this family and what they stand for. They genuinely care about me and everyone in this company.

It shows in the product, which has been well received. And we're still learning every single day.

• andrettikarting.com



Andretti's latest facility in Orlando represents a turning point in the chain's growth. COURTESY ANDRETTI KARTING & GAMES

Annual IAAPA FEC Summit offers value in sharing, networking

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DANA POINT, Calif. — More than 160 family entertainment center (FEC) industry professionals from 32 states and eight countries convened in Southern California for **IAAPA FEC Summit 2018**, held Jan. 28-30 at the oceanfront **Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort & Spa**.

Billed as the industry's leading international conference for FEC owners and operators, the event is organized and hosted each year by the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)**. The sixth annual gathering doubled as the official kick-off of the organization's 100th anniversary year.

"It was another great year of collaboration, engagement and camaraderie among FEC owners and operators," said **Leslie Hutcheson**, IAAPA's senior manager of constituency programs and services. "They learned from one another and walked away with valuable strategies to apply to their businesses."

A Hawaiian-themed evening reception on Jan. 28, sponsored by **Sureshot Redemption**, sparked the networking that continued through two full days of seminars.



This sixth annual IAAPA FEC Summit drew attendees from around the world for informative seminars — including a bracing discussion titled "A Woman's Path to Success" led by **Beth Standlee of TrainerTainment**. A social highlight was an evening at **Boomers! Irvine**, where guests enjoyed '60s California surf-inspired music by **The Nocturnes**. AT/DEAN LAMANNA

A commanding lineup of speakers led attendees through a series of creative exercises designed to hone company philosophy and enhance management.

Bruce Cameron, owner of **Front Line Marketing**, guided event participants through his company's employee engagement process — inspiring them to formulate an action plan for their facilities to increase productivity without negatively impacting expenses. **Annika Chase**, vice president of marketing strategy for the **Disneyland Resort**, shared her destination's approach to attracting consumers with the

Disney brand through storytelling that engages consumers before, during and after their visit.

Additional breakout sessions covered industry-critical topics including human resources, risk management, sales, finance, and technology in food and beverage operations.

On the evening of Monday, Jan. 29, attendees were treated to a special networking event at nearby **Boomers! Irvine** — an **Apex Parks Group** property — in honor of IAAPA's 100th anniversary. A huge sheet cake decorated with IAAPA's centennial logo was served to guests, who also



enjoyed a buffet dinner, two open bars and free gaming cards for the park's well-stocked arcade. Entertainment was provided by the marvelous 1960s California surf music-inspired band **The Nocturnes** — fronted by lead vocalist / guitarist **Rick Bastrup**, a principal of **R&R Creative Amusement Designs, Inc.**, of Anaheim.

Post-event facility tours included visits to several local FECs, including **Mulligan's Round One**, **Big Air Trampoline Park**, and **Dave & Buster's**.

Attendees were impressed with the summit's offerings.

"I think we always need to learn; we never know enough," said **Evelyn Villame** of **La Boite Aux Enfants** in Paris, France. "The IAAPA FEC Summit taught us we should be asking, 'What can I do for you?' It's all based on relationships, not transactions."

"Really, for us from Latin America, it's interesting to see FECs in America," said **Cesar Largo**, executive director of **Mundo Cartoon Network** in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. "The information can be applied right into our industry at home in South America. We take all this useful information back to our companies and learn from the best practices."

Concluded IAAPA's **Hutcheson**: "The continued success of our annual summits reflects the sustained growth and expansion of FECs around the globe. We're proud to host this valuable event allowing colleagues to build and fortify relationships while expanding their industry knowledge to build their business."

IAAPA FEC Summit 2019 takes place Jan. 27-29 in Austin, Texas.

• iaapa.org



BRIEFS

Intercard installs in arcades, debuts RVSP system

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — Debit card technology leader **Intercard** has completed an arcade installation for **Round1 Bowling & Amusement's** newest FEC at **Crystal Run Galleria Mall** in Middletown, N.Y. It is the first of Round1's more than 15 U.S. locations to use Intercard technology. The Intercard system controls every aspect of arcade management, including card sales, redemption and service. It consists of more than 400 card readers, four iTeller kiosks, a redemption station with multiple iCashier terminals and two Intercard point-of-sale stations dedicated to membership sales. Similar Intercard systems will be installed at forthcoming Round1 facilities in Auburn Hills, Mich., Peoria, Ill., and Greensboro, N.C.

Intercard also has introduced Shindigger, an affordable, user- and mobile-friendly party and reservation system that makes it easy for FEC operators and their customers to book parties 24/7. Efficient and cost-effective, and hosted remotely, the system gives operators the power to schedule party activities, handle logistics, and accept payment without tying up employees' time or the FEC's phone lines. For those who have an Intercard system, Shindigger is fully integrated with the company's other FEC software.

Player One opens game room at The Park at Owa

TORONTO, Canada — In December, **Player One Amusement Group** opened a game room at **The Park at Owa** in Foley, Ala. It is the latest addition to the new 520-acre destination and features 50 pieces of amusement gaming equipment, including several interactive video activities, and a state-of-the-art redemption center. The arcade uses coinless play-card technology that enables players to move from game to game with ease and accumulate points. Players can purchase reloadable play cards onsite and redeem their rewards for a variety of prizes at the merchandise store. Player One is a division of **Cineplex**.

Coast to Coast throws in crane machine plush

LAKEWOOD, N.J. — **Coast to Coast Entertainment** is now offering its 36-inch Fun Zone crane machines with 100 pieces of generic plush at no additional cost. Designed for any family-friendly environment, including restaurants and movie theaters, the color-changing Fun Zone — the only linkable, licensed crane machine with color-changing and chasing LED lighting on all four sides — has a large claw with adjustable strength; a joystick; a high-security, three-point locking system; microprocessor control; a slide-out computer area for easy service; and custom graphics availability, among other features.

Kanopeo unveils mobile aerial adventure course

BASEL, Switzerland — **Kanopeo GmbH** has launched the Saferoller Ultimate Mobile Aerial Adventure (SUMAA) trailer, which it describes as the first single-operator mobile course on the market. Designed for special promotional events, music festivals, corporate seminars / team building, fairs, exhibitions and more, the portable activities unit offers eight to 12 obstacles — depending on trailer size — from a choice of over 150. An additional, optional, zipline exit up to 60 meters for the two larger models completes the circuit. The structure, which meets all applicable European (EN 15567) and American (ACCT) standards, is folding, telescopic and fully adjustable; it sets up in one hour using a hydraulic pump system. It has a throughput of 40 to 80 people per hour and comes in several sizes.

Family Entertainment Group buys Arizona FEC

ITASCA, Ill. — **Family Entertainment Group, LLC** (FEG), a designer, developer and operator of family-oriented entertainment and amusement gaming facilities, recently acquired **Freedom Station Family Fun Center** in Prescott Valley, Ariz. Freedom Station features an iconic facade, a game room, a soft-play attraction, a climbing wall, party rooms, a family restaurant and a mini-golf course. It joins other parks and FECs owned by FEG, including **Hollywood Park**, Crestwood, Ill.; **Bonkers Fun House**, Peabody, Mass.; **Funtrackers**, Corpus Christi, Texas; and **GameRoom Sawgrass**, Sunrise, Fla.

**VR ROUNDUP**

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Cashing in on Nevada lore rather than the cachet of the city that inspired it, **New York-New York Hotel & Casino** in Las Vegas has added a VR option to its Big Apple Coaster that offers an Area 51-themed storyline. The experience mixes actual footage of the Strip and the local desert with CG/3D visuals to send guests on an extra-terrestrial-fueled adventure. The overlay for the 4,777-foot-long, 67-mph, **Togo**-built ride, which opened with its host resort in 1997, was designed by **VR Coaster** of Germany. The roller coaster is the longest in the world to have received a VR application.

Award-winning location-based entertainment VR solutions provider **VRstudios**, headquartered in Bellevue, Wash., has partnered with Beijing, China-based **TPCAST Technologies** to deploy the latter company's wireless technology in a new product line to be announced. The forthcoming concept will complement VRstudios' existing VRcade Zone and VRcade arena systems.

A new spy mission-themed interactive VR attraction at Dubai's **Burj Khalifa**, the world's tallest building, showcases the innovative technology of London-based **Inition** in a way that capitalizes on the structure's height. The visceral, 360-degree adventure, called Mission 828, was customized for **HTC Vive** equipment and mixes CG imagery and 4D effects with actual drone footage of the building's exterior to emphasize its vast scale and jaw-dropping aerial views.

Mixed reality startup **Magic Leap** raised an additional \$502 million in Series D equity funding, pushing the Plantation, Fla., company's total past \$1.8 billion as of last fall. The new investors include Singapore-based global fund **Temasek**, **EDBI**; **Grupo Globo** of Brazil; and **Janus Henderson Investors**, based in London. Magic Leap, which announced a collaboration with **LucasFilm** in 2016, has been valued at about \$6 billion and reportedly is developing a headset for release this year designed to enhance the experience of augmented reality.

East Valley of Science and Fantasy, a sprawling, \$1.5-billion VR theme park still under construction by Shenzhen-based **Oriental Times Media Corp.** in Guiyang, China, will use the technology to immerse guests in both science-based and fantasy experiences the moment they enter its gates. Among the property's surreal structures is a 53-meter-tall statue of a Transformer character that required 750 tons of steel to build. The 2,000-acre park, which includes a VR filmmaking studio and development center, as well as China's first VR roller coaster, is said to be opening in phases.

Red Storm Entertainment, a division of gaming content creator **Ubisoft**, announced the launch of a special edition of **Star Trek: Bridge Crew** exclusively for **IMAX VR Experience Centres** globally. Called **Star Trek: Bridge Crew — Rescue at Persephis**, the mission accommodates up to four people per pod and is set on the U.S.S. Aegis, where players must figure out how to rescue Vulcan scientists from a space station that has been damaged. (Watch out for those Klingons...).

In other Ubisoft-related news, the company's Rabbids and Assassin's Creed brands are providing a VR attractions entry point for Montreal-based **Triotech**. A new attraction featuring that lively content combines complete immersion and interactivity — taking players into an engaging virtual adventure. The physical product is fully modular so that it can fit practically any space with a minimum of 10 square meters. It is powered by technology from **Asterion VR**, a leader in the development of indoor Walk VR experiences and a Triotech partner.

Columbia, Md.-based **Sensics** and VR Coaster have joined to create an all-in-one VR headset optimized for theme park use. Called RideVR, the product builds on years of experience to solve key operational challenges in the field — including issues involving ride throughput, hygiene, equipment overheating, battery management and content visual resolution. Select theme park customers were expected to roll out the new headset early this year.

Joel Zika, the Australia-based creator of **The Dark Ride Project**, an endeavor designed to preserve and recreate the experience of classic, endangered and defunct dark rides through VR and other visual technologies, was planning to debut the first episode of *American Dark Ride* — a proposed VR documentary series — in both VR and high-definition formats at the **SXSW** festival in Austin, Texas, this month. Zika is working with a production team from **Entertainment One**, which has offices in Los Angeles and worldwide, to gain greater public exposure for the series.

In a fruitful collaboration, **Sega Entertainment** and **StarVR** (a joint venture of **Acer** and **Starbreeze Studios**) are continuing to bring the wide-field-of-view StarVR headset to Japan's **Sega Game Centers** — with over 10 locations to be outfitted by year's end. Starbreeze's *John Wick Chronicles* and *The Mummy: Prodigium Strike* are the initial offerings of a measured arcade title rollout.

The Funplex in East Hanover, N.J., will open a **Hologate** VR attraction this month featuring the eponymous company's award-winning technology. The multi-user platform allows guests to enter a realm in which they can choose between several adventures of varying intensity — with action ranging from fighting off robots and dodging dragons to tossing a virtual snowball to a friend. The Funplex also has a **Lasterton** arena and a Triotech XD Theater, among many other attractions, at its 100,000-square foot indoor/outdoor FEC.

According to San Francisco-based **Greenlight Insights**, venture funding for VR/AR companies totaled \$1.9 billion last year — exceeding investment tracked in 2016. The number of companies raising venture capital also was up in 2017, according to an analysis of over 300 individual deals. Greenlight compiles and qualifies data from private and public sources across North America, Europe and Asia annually to assess the global venture funding landscape of the VR/AR industry.

Orange County Pinballs scores with coin-op game nostalgia

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FULLERTON, Calif. — It's been more than 40 years since pinball ruled the arcade scene. But thanks to enterprising enthusiasts such as Southern California resident **Evan Zelen**, the game is resurgent.

As co-owner with his wife of **Orange County Pinballs**, Zelen, 31, buys, rehabs and sells vintage machines and retails brand-new ones. His company serves as the regional distributor for **Stern Pinball** — the largest current manufacturer — and **Chicago Gaming Co.**, both headquartered in the Windy City metro area.

It takes a special kind of millennial to be trading in a pastime that's been around in one form or another since the late 18th century. Zelen, who grew up in Orange County, developed his love of pinball in the 1990s at the **Balboa Fun Zone** in Newport Beach.

"It was our tiny **Coney Island**, with lineups of pinballs," said Zelen of the local

amusement spot, where he pounced on games like *Tales from the Crypt* and *The Addams Family*. "I was part of the last generation to see these machines in arcades."

Landing successfully in the automobile detailing business, Zelen found his fortunes waning as the recession started to manifest in 2006. Working out of his garage, he began acquiring and cleaning up old pinball machines — finding that their collector resale value, fueled largely by nostalgic baby boomers, continued to increase even during the downturn years. He was restoring upwards of 20 or 30 vintage units at a time.

Now operating from a warehouse in Fullerton, Zelen has a seasoned independent technician on call and an additional assistant helping him return the machines to playing shape. Visiting his tidy workshop is a true nostalgia trip, or at least an arcade history lesson — as units dating to the mid-1900s from long-defunct manufacturers including

Bally, Gottlieb and Williams fill the space.

The smaller showroom area of Orange County Pinballs is devoted mostly to the latest machines by Stern. Powered by solid-state components and incorporating animations as well as the best light-and-sound elements of jukeboxes and video games, many of them sport themes licensed from hot film and TV franchises such as *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Star Wars* and *The Walking Dead*.

While reconditioned vintage pinballs can be had for well under \$4,000, the Stern premium models can start at twice that and go considerably higher. Secondary markets can be more profitable than initial releases for some machines if production is limited and they develop strong online word of mouth — like Stern's AC/DC rock group model, which originally debuted five years ago at about \$8,200 but now can command \$13-15,000 used.

Catering primarily to a high-end clientele — he will scour his network to fulfill




From man caves to the trendy "barcades" cropping up in metro areas nationwide, Evan Zelen is ready to help clients with their new or vintage pinball needs. AT/DEAN LAMANNA

specific pinball title requests — Zelen prides his operation on mobile servicing, national and worldwide delivery, and special event rentals (he has supplied machines for the **Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival** and tournaments at the **Museum of Pinball** in Banning, Calif., among others).

"Pinball has always held a place in people's hearts," he said. "It's fun to see it becoming popular again."

• orangecountypinballs.com




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INTERNATIONAL

► Alton Towers reveals wicked details of Wicker Man coaster from Great Coasters International — Page 16

First new attraction could open in 2020

Efteling applies for largest park expansion in many years

AT: Andrew Mellor
amellor@amusementtoday.com

K A A T S H E U V E L , Netherlands — Efteling theme park is submitting an application to expand by eight hectares (approximately 20 acres) and add a new attraction in 2020.

The expansion is described in the park's draft development plan, "World of Efteling 2030," and involves enlarging the eastern side of the property.

The area's municipal council is expected to sanction the development plan this summer. Efteling has made a request to advance one section in order to begin preparing the land for the first part of the project (covering about three hectares, or 7.5 acres).

Following years of careful planning and working closely with the municipality of Loon op Zand, the province of North Brabant, local residents and other stakeholders, Efteling submitted a formal request concerning the planned area in January, thereby making the application public knowledge.

"We are asking the municipality for additional time for construction," said **Fons Jurgens**, park president and CEO. "This is the first time in a long time that Efteling is planning to move its borders. It is a historic moment for us, as well as a challenge. More time is needed to prepare and construct an attraction. Ideally, we would like to welcome our guests to the new attraction located in the first section of the new site in 2020."

The park will release further details about the attraction it is planning at a



future date.

Efteling also has announced that a new interactive show called "Caro" will premiere this September. Directed by Dutch actor and director **Stanley Burleson** and created for an international audience, with minimal dialogue, it will be the first production of its kind to be presented at the park's on-site theatre.

"Efteling is famous for offering guests wonderful family theatre productions, and I am delighted to have been chosen to direct the new show," said Burleson, noting that the presentation — to feature stunning visuals, dancers, music and acrobats, as well as special interactive roles for children — was inspired by the park's 100-year-old carousel. "I look forward to sharing my acting and directing experience with the wonderful world of Efteling."

Efteling opened in 1952 as a sports and recreation park, with the Fairytale Forest — illustrating 10 traditional fairy tales — as its main attraction. In the early 1980s, the park added new and larger attractions to appeal to a wider visitor demographic.

The property has continued to grow over the years and currently is one of Europe's largest theme park resorts.

• efteling.com



Efteling opened in 1952 and today is one of Europe's largest and most popular theme park resorts. The planned expansion area at Efteling will provide an additional eight hectares (about 7.5 acres) of space on the eastern side of the park. COURTESY EFTELING



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Classic horror story inspires ride theming

Alton Towers reveals wicked details of Wicker Man coaster

AT: Andrew Mellor
amellor@amusementtoday.com

STAFFORDSHIRE, England — A unique thrill ride combining wood and fire is getting set to open in mid-March at **Alton Towers Resort**.

The Wicker Man wooden roller coaster, the first such attraction to be built in the U.K. in 21 years, will incorporate a giant, mystical, vaguely human-shaped structure standing six stories high, with the track traveling through the signature feature no less than three times.

The project, previously known as SW8, is the latest in a series of cutting-edge, and just plain edgy, attraction launches at the popular theme park. Technicians and craftspeople, led by the wooden coaster specialists **Great Coasters International** of Sunbury, Pa., were still working on the ride as *Amusement Today* went to press.

"We're delighted to finally be announcing Wicker Man as the latest ground-breaking thrill attraction from Alton Towers Resort," said **Bradley Wynne**, park creative lead. "Guests will be 'chosen' to take part in a celebratory 'rite of passage' as they race through



the flaming Wicker Man."

The multisensory experience offered by the coaster will draw visitors into the mysterious world of The Beornen, a shadowy group living in the woods surrounding the theme park. The storyline and elaborate theming were inspired by *The Wicker Man*, a classic 1973 British horror film starring Christopher Lee and derived from a 1967 novel called *Ritual* by David Pinner.

In development for four years, Wicker Man has a maximum height of 72 feet, is 2,028 feet long and represents an investment of \$22.6 million. The attraction sits on the former site of The Flume, a log flume ride that had operated at the park since 1981 and was decommissioned in 2016.

"We hope visitors will be blown away by this ride's

brehtaking scale, while the primal essence of the wooden coaster and astonishing effects will leave them delighted, exhilarated and eager to ride again," Wynne said.

•altontowers.com



Wicker Man, with elaborate theming inspired by the classic 1973 British horror film of the same name starring Christopher Lee, will mix traditional wooden coaster thrills with the element of fire and other atmospheric effects to create a multisensory experience.

COURTESY ALTON TOWERS RESORT; BRITISH LION FILM CORP. (FILM STILL)



Canadian, U.S. companies delivering amusements to China

Cavu Designwerks to supply flying theatre for new Chinese resort

VICTORIA, B.C., Canada — **Cavu Designwerks, Inc.**, specializing in the delivery of media-based attractions, is working with Beijing, China-based **Macrolink Group** to provide a flying theatre.

Called Beautiful Hunan, the attraction has been commissioned for the real estate developer's historic destination resort, **Tongguan Kiln International Cultural and Tourism Center**, in Changsha, China.

The project is slated to open in June.

By marrying tradition with technology, Macrolink is giving "wings" to a unique simulated flying experience exploring the natural beauty and historically important cultural locations of Hunan province.

From the ancient famous kilns of Tongguan, guests will explore breathtaking views of Hunan as they soar over the Wulingyuan (Avatar) mountains, Mt. Heng, historic **Yueyang Tower**, Mao Zedong's house, modern Changsha City and the new development at Macrolink's modern Tongguan Center.

Cavu has positioned itself as an extension of the client's team — sharing Macrolink's



efforts to explore the best solutions that balance costs and quality. The company's role as a global integrator, in which it selects the best experts for every aspect of the project, is crucial to the success of a flying theatre attraction because its many elements must work in harmony to create a memorable experience.

Recently, there has been a major push in China to draw more attention to the country's centuries-old historical sites and unique culture. Many Chinese companies are engaging western attraction providers to develop themed experiences with cultural significance.

•cavudw.com

S&S dual tower ride, air launch coaster headed to theme park

LOGAN, Utah — **S&S Worldwide, Inc.**, is supplying two 12-seat towers and an air launch coaster to **Sun Tzu Cultural Park** in China's Shandong province.



"S&S is excited be installing these two attractions at the Sun Tzu Cultural Park," said **Gerald Ryan**, executive director of sales for S&S. "The air launch coaster will be our fourth in China, and will have the longest track length of the four at 930 meters (3,051 feet)."

The air launch coaster, named **Lightning Speed**, also will be the tallest such ride in East China. Both S&S attractions will open this summer.

Sun Tzu Cultural Park is the first and largest military cultural theme park in China. It is designed to promote Sun-Tzu culture and create a related cultural tourism destination. The park features military cultural exhibition buildings and over 30 rides — ranging from amusements suitable for children to exhilarating thrill machines appealing to older visitors.

S&S has installed more than 450 rides in locations around the world.

•engineeringexcitement.com

Themed Mondial ride to highlight Tivoli's 175th anniversary

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — When the famous Tivoli amusement park opens for its 175th anniversary year this month, visitors will be able to sample a new ride that the park claims will entertain both thrill-seekers and families with children.

The new attraction, a Shake R5 named Tik Tak from Dutch manufacturer Mondial, will replace the Spinning Top, a Huss Breakdance that carried almost 14 million guests during its 29 years at the park.

Tik Tak is set to debut on March 24 and, as with all attractions at the style-conscious park, its theming was created by Tivoli's in-house design department.



The design is similar to that of the Star Flyer and Aquila in the area known as the Merry Corner, which is strongly inspired by the idea of a journey of discovery — whether in the world of science or among the stars.

Upon boarding Tik Tak, visitors will be seated among gears, gadgets and ingenious mechanisms, ready for a trip through space and time. They will then be rotated both vertical-

ly and horizontally at high speed, experiencing forces approaching 4G.

Housed within a canopied structure topping out at 26 feet, Tik Tak features 20 gondolas and has a seating capacity of 40 riders, providing an hourly throughput of 750 per hour.

Inspired by European pleasure gardens, park founder Georg Carstensen — with the Danish king's permission — opened Tivoli Gardens on Aug. 15, 1843. Today, it is Denmark's most popular attraction. Tivoli welcomed 4.6 million visitors in 2016.

—Andrew Mellor



Arriving in time to help Tivoli celebrate its 175th year, a Mondial Shake R5 thrill ride — shown in these renderings — has been custom-themed by the park's in-house design team and given the name Tik Tak. COURTESY TIVOLI





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WATER PARKS & RESORTS

► WWA announces June 21, 2018, as date of annual World's Largest Swim Lesson — Page 20

Breakers Water Park debuts ExplorAquarium interaction

MARANA, Ariz. — This past summer **Breakers Water Park** introduced an interactive experience that allows guests to experience stingrays and eels in a water park setting. For an additional fee guests could take part in an experience developed by **ExplorAquarium**. The interactive pool is a first-of-its kind for the state, and unique considering its location in the Sonoran Desert.

After a brief introduction, guests were escorted to a pool deck for a five-minute meet-n-greet with stingrays and eels in the pool. After getting comfortable with each other, the human guests slip into the 33-inch-deep pool where they can interact with stingrays and eels. General Manager **Steve Miklosi** stated, "It's unbelievable to see the excitement and joy young and old alike get out of interacting with these beautiful creatures. The hardest part is after 20 minutes clearing the pool for the next group to come in. Everyone wants to spend more time with the animals. At the end of the session almost everyone tells us thank you for the opportunity to have this wonderful experience."

ExplorAquarium developed this concept two years ago after observing the popularity of swimming with stingrays at the Cayman Islands. Outside of vacation areas like the Cayman Islands, Bahamas, or facilities like **Atlantis Resort** and **SeaWorld**, this type of aquatic life interaction was not available.

ExplorAquarium offers a complete turnkey attraction that can fit on as little as a 40-foot by 60-foot area. The package is complete with



ExplorAquarium guests start at the edge of the saltwater pool so they can get comfortable with the marine life (and vice versa). After about five minutes, they slide into the shallow water, where they can touch and interact with various marine life — including stingrays, eels and even small sharks. COURTESY BREAKERS WATER PARK/EXPLORAQUARIUM

pool, fish, specially designed aquatic filtration, all necessary start up templates, on site guidance from a marine biologist, aquarist, and operations technician — for less than the cost of most water-slide attractions. The package also includes documentation to get approval from various government agencies such as the local health department or the state department of fish and wildlife. The natural saltwater pool can be built in ground or above ground

and includes the proper equipment to keep the water safe and healthy for humans and marine life. The ExplorAquarium staff visit periodically to follow up and insure proper procedures and care are being followed. ExplorAquarium also provides a 24/7 internet hotline for emergency guidance and an aquatic veterinarian to maintain healthy fish.

The average admission price is \$10 per person for the 30-minute experience with

the capability of offering at least 16 encounters per day with a maximum of 25 guests per encounter utilizing only one employee to operate the attraction, for a total of 400 people per day. Adding a second employee to handle admission and introduction increases the capacity to 600 per day. A typical park should recover its investment and realize a profit during the first year of operation.

In addition, the attraction has proven to be popular

with school field trips, private birthday parties and corporate team building exercises in the off season to add to the revenue stream. Additional revenue can be generated by selling food to feed to the fish, plush marine-life souvenirs and photos of guest interacting with the marine life.

ExplorAquarium has developed additional programs to keep the experience fresh and new year after year to encourage multiple visits.

—Jeffrey Seifert

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World's Largest Swimming Lesson set for June 21, 2018

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — Registration for the 2018 World's Largest Swimming Lesson (WLSL) is open at WLSL.org. This year's event will take place on June 21. Organizers are urging aquatic facilities of all types to show their love for water safety and drowning prevention by registering as an official 2018 Host Location and sharing that love on social media.

The purpose of the lesson? Provide kids and parents exposure to life-saving water safety skills and build awareness about the vital importance of teaching children to swim to help prevent drowning. Program organizers are working to connect the dots between the real risk of childhood drowning and the need for basic water competency skills and crucial parental supervision to keep kids safe in and around the water. Research shows:

- The problem is life threatening for children: Per the CDC, drowning remains the leading cause of injury related death for children ages 1-4, and the second leading cause for children under 14. Internationally, the **World Health Organization** estimates drowning is one of the top five causes of death for people aged 1-14 in 48 of the 85 countries it monitors.

- Many lack basic swimming skills: In 2014, a survey completed by the **American Red Cross** found more than half of all Americans (54 percent) either can't swim or don't have all of the basic swimming skills.

- Parents don't recognize supervision is key: According to a 2016 Safe Kids Worldwide report, despite the fact that lack of supervision played a role in the majority of drowning deaths, less than half of parents (49 percent) indicate they remain within arms' reach of their child in the water.

More than 41,000 swimmers in 27 countries on six continents participated in 2017. Each location and tens of thousands of participants help spread the Swimming Lessons Save Lives message each year.



ExplorAquarium

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The World's Largest Swimming Lesson
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NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffery L. Seifert

jseifert@amusementtoday.com

Councilman-Hunsaker and the **National Swimming Pool Foundation** have announced a partnership to provide the aquatic industry with a digital web-based application designed to enhance the safety and sustainability of aquatic facilities: **Facility Manager**. The app is based on the **Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC)** and **NSPF's Pool & Spa Operator Handbook** to ensure code compliance. **Facility Manager** makes daily operations easier and more efficient. The app is accessible via computer and mobile device, allowing facilities to go paperless on all aspects of operational documentation, such as checklists, water balancing, and incident reporting. The app is customizable to ensure all reports are completed and filled out correctly by staff, and also generates alerts to keep facility managers aware of time-sensitive issues such as pool closures. Partners for decades, Councilman-Hunsaker and the National Swimming Pool Foundation are expanding their relationship to deliver cutting-edge technology to the aquatic industry.

The **Grove Resort & Spa Orlando** near **Walt Disney World** opened its gates to Florida's newest extreme water park on March 1. The property's much-anticipated **Surfari Water Park** includes seven acres of action-packed entertainment with two **FlowRider** surf machines, two-story water slides, a kids' area with a splash pad and zero entry pool and winding lazy river. The Grove's dual **FlowRider** will offer a year-round surfing experience adjustable to all skill levels. **Surfari's Longboard** restaurant will open in late April and feature delicious options for alfresco dining.

"We are extremely pleased to be adding the Surfari Water Park to our long list of amenities at The Grove Resort & Spa," said General Manager, **Bill Lee**. "Guests have so much to experience on property they never have to leave. The resort is the ideal combination of luxury, location and service and offers something for everyone. We are extremely pleased to be adding the Surfari Water Park to our long list of amenities at The Grove Resort & Spa. Guests have so much to experience on property they never have to leave. The resort is the ideal combination of luxury, location and service and offers something for everyone."

The Grove Resort & Spa Orlando is a 106-acre vacation home resort located on Lake Austin just a five-minute drive from Walt Disney World. Its 878 fully furnished two and three bedroom residential-style suites offer owners and guests the comforts of home, while the resort's extensive collection of amenities deliver the luxuries of a full-service hotel.

Silverwood Theme Park, Athol, Idaho, has been recognized with a **StarGuard Elite Safety Award** at the completion of the 2017 season based on unannounced audit evaluations of lifeguard performance, skills and scenarios, attraction dispatch performance, facility and operations, and management.

Sam Gage, director of operations at Silverwood Theme park, said that Silverwood

was excited to receive the award. He said that getting an award like this requires a passion and commitment to safety across the organization from management to every newly trained lifeguard. "We want our guests to have an amazing experience at our park, and keeping everyone safe in our pools and slides is a crucial part of that goal," Gage said.

StarGuard Elite was formed to provide a complete aquatic risk prevention and lifeguard training system for the industry.

Sandy Beach Water Park, Macon, Ga., is looking for a new operator and has been listed for "sale" by **Caldwell Banker Commercial**. The property is owned by **Macon-Bibb County** so the "sale" is actually a ground lease for a 20-year term. The water park operated in the 2017 season, and features a wave pool, lap pool, lazy river, children's water play structure and a slide tower. The water park is located within the Lake Tobesofkee Recreation Area.

Idaho's **Roaring Springs Water Park**, Meridian, Idaho, is on track to open Bearfoot Bay when the park opens for the season on May 13. The \$1.6 million expansion will add three new slides and more than 20 bear and animal-themed water play toys. In addition, **Wahooz**, the family recreation center next to Roaring Springs and operated by the same people, will expand its event space to 10,000 square feet and add a catering kitchen. The new **Galaxy Event Center** will seat up to 600 people for receptions, meetings, trade shows and other gatherings. That expansion, costing \$4.5 million, is scheduled to open in November.

The city of El Paso, Texas, has revealed plans to redevelop the former **Cohen Stadium** site in northwest El Paso into a multi-purpose urban plaza that would include a water park, athletic facilities, hotel, retail space and a media broadcasting studio. The stadium was once home to the **El Paso Diablos**, which was a member of the South Division of the **American Association of Independent Professional Baseball** from 1990 to 2013. The city is still identifying funding for the project, and the issue was expected to head to city council before the end of March. The water park portion of the property is already funded. Last December the city set aside \$7.7 million for a water park to be developed on site.

Camelback Resort has been awarded the prestigious "Platinum International Aquatic Safety Award." Earning this award demonstrates that the aquatic facilities they operate — **Aquatopia Indoor Waterpark** and the outdoor **Camelback Mountain Waterpark** — consistently exceed industry standards in risk management and epitomize aquatic safety excellence. International Aquatic Safety Awards are conferred to deserving aquatic facilities by **Jeff Ellis & Associates, Inc.**, international aquatic safety and risk management consultants.



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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Traders Village spins new Chance carousel — Page 24 / Fairs — Pages 28-35

SeaWorld San Diego wraps steel work on Electric Eel coaster

'Amp'-ticipation grows for Premier Rides thriller

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — **SeaWorld San Diego** celebrated a milestone in mid-January with the steel topping out of Electric Eel, set to become the city's highest and fastest roller coaster.

The planned summer opening of the triple-launch, multi-inversion thriller — SeaWorld, in early promotions, is having some fun describing it as offering "the only upside-down view of Mission Bay" — not only will complete the park's recently opened Ocean Explorer ride and animal exhibit area, but serve as a dramatic backdrop for it.

While showing *Amusement Today* around the periphery of the coaster's 1.2-acre site during a recent visit, **Dave Koontz**, SeaWorld's director of communications, noted that the 150-foot-tall ride creates a new landmark for the park — visible from two interstate highways — without standing out near the coastline like a sore thumb.

"You can see it easily from the 8 and 5 freeways," he said. "We're really pleased how [its blue color scheme] blends in with the sky as well as our Skytower and the rest of the park."

Night lighting, he added, will be limited to the base of the ride out of deference to the park's neighbors and city requirements — perhaps enhancing the after-dark thrill factor of the coaster's pulse-raising skyward launches.

Manufactured by **Premier Rides** of Baltimore, Md., Electric Eel cleared final project approval hurdles last August. Installation



Electric Eel is primed to galvanize SeaWorld San Diego's skyline when it debuts this summer. The triple-launch roller coaster, providing a dramatic backdrop for the park's recently opened Ocean Explorer section, will feature a train comprised of three vehicles — one of which was revealed in mid-January. AT/DEAN LAMANNA; COURTESY SEAWORLD SAN DIEGO (VEHICLE)



began in the fall after permits were secured.

"The weather has been great, so construction has been right on target," Koontz said. Work on the coaster's loading / launch station had started by the end of January; Koontz expected ride testing to begin this month.

Electric Eel's topping-out

news also brought the first media reveal of one of the color-coordinated, six-passenger vehicles that will comprise the ride's three-vehicle train. The train will reach speeds of up to 62 mph as it negotiates a loop and a heartline roll along 853 feet of twisting, vertically layered track.

Minimum passenger height

is 54 inches.

The area around the coaster also will feature an interactive learning experience called Mission: Deep Discovery. A California moray eel habitat, part of the new Ocean Explorer section that debuted last summer, is adjacent to the ride's entrance.

SeaWorld's staff is just as

enthusiastic as the thrill-seeking public over this wild addition to the Southern California amusement landscape.

"We're going to have the only major thrill coaster in San Diego County," Koontz said. "It has been exciting to watch its progress every day."

• seaworld.com



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Traders Village spins new Chance carousel

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — What's old is new again at the original **Traders Village**.

Following the addition of three new rides last spring, the 45-year-old flea market recently introduced a brand-new carousel from **Chance Rides, Inc.**, of Wichita, Kan.

According to **Tim Anderson**, president of Traders Village, the new carousel — a 36-foot-diameter Chance Americana model

featuring 30 animals plus two chariots — replaces a merry-go-round that had spun at the location for decades.

"The old one was just worn out," Anderson told *Amusement Today*. "It was used when Traders Village bought it 40 years ago."

The new carousel is "very popular" and "regularly runs completely full — including the chariots," he

said, adding that he and his staff had fun deciding which animals should be installed on the ride: "I especially like the rabbit and the rooster."

Traders Village offers 12 rides and a climbing / sliding activities area. Aside from the carousel, the past year has brought the Village Vortex (a **Larson** giant loop) and two other rides from Chance: Yo-Yo and Wipeout.

—Tim Baldwin



Replacing an older merry-go-round, this Chance carousel is the latest ride addition at Traders Village in Grand Prairie, Texas. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Legoland Florida closes Flying Island



"Island in the Sky has ended its 34-year run of entertaining millions of guests from around the world, first at Cypress Gardens, beginning in 1983, and since 2011 as part of Legoland Florida Resort," according to a statement from Merlin Entertainments. "While the iconic attraction will always occupy a special place in our history, we look forward to developing new and exciting attractions that will entertain Legoland guests for generations to come." The unusual ride was built by Intamin AG of Wollerau, Switzerland. COURTESY DAVID LIPNICKY; AT FILE

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Palace Playland purchases coasters; acquires housing

OLD ORCHARD BEACH, Maine — When **Palace Playland** opens for the 2018 season on Memorial Day weekend in Old Orchard Beach, Maine, long time park visitors will have two new coasters to enjoy.

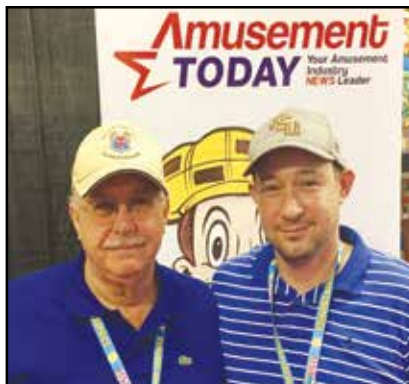
First up will be *Sea Viper*, a 70-foot-tall noninverting coaster from Italy-based **Preston & Barbieri**. The park purchased the coaster new direct from the factory.

The majority of the coaster has been erected, park CEO **Joel Golder** told *AT* at the **IISF Gibtown Show**: "All total it will have shipped over in 27 containers. We have five more we are waiting on which includes the station, controls and the 24-passenger train. To make room for the ride (210-foot by 90-foot footprint) we had to purchase an additional one acre of land."

Seeing a need for something a little smaller, the park also purchased the popular small Figure-8 Spinning Coaster from **SBF** from **Len Soled's Rides 4U**.



Palace Playland's Joel Golder (left) and Paul Golder stopped by the *AT* booth during the IISF Gibtown Show to talk about the park's two new coasters for this season, including this **Preston & Barbieri** coaster seen under construction at the park. COURTESY JOEL GOLDER



"We are excited for the 2018 season," Golder said. "We rely heavily on our J-1 visa students to work the summer season and we were able to also purchase a 24 room hotel nearby to house them in. We are remodeling

the rooms to accommodate 4 students per room giving us a 96-student capacity. So it's been a busy offseason for us."

—Gary Slade

Noland exits IAAPA to head Accesso

ORLANDO, Fla. — **Paul Noland**, president and CEO of the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** (IAAPA), has resigned to accept the role of CEO of Berkshire, England-based **Accesso Technology Group**.

Accesso provides technology solutions to the leisure, entertainment, hospitality and attractions markets, including the *LoQueue* virtual queuing product line.

Noland succeeds **Steve Brown** at the company effective April 9; at that time, Brown also will step down from Accesso's board of directors but will continue to serve as a transitional advisor through the end of the year.



Noland

Noland has built an impressive resume as a leader in the international attractions and entertainment industries. He served for 16 years in senior executive roles with **Walt Disney Parks and Resorts**, where he championed major growth initiatives across the company's properties and oversaw the financial planning, revenue management and pricing functions at **Walt Disney World Resort**.

In his role as IAAPA's president since 2013, Noland helped the organization continue its growth as the largest international trade association for amusement facilities and attractions worldwide. IAAPA represents more than 5,400 facility, supplier and individual members from more than 90 countries.

"We believe that Paul's unmatched track record, industry knowledge, relationships and passion for excellence make him exactly the right person to lead the next phase of our growth," said **Tom Burnet**, executive chairman of Accesso. "I look forward to working closely with him as we continue to execute on our ambitious plans."

Noland will work out of Accesso's office in Lake Mary, Fla.

IAAPA has tapped its CFO, **Hal McEvoy**, to serve as interim president and CEO of the organization. McEvoy's experience includes a 33-year career with **Busch Entertainment Corp./SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** and covers corporate finance, accounting, audit and operations.

IAAPA noted that it would begin a global search for a new president and CEO immediately.

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Chilly temps couldn't keep fans away

Talley Amusements debuts new Lamberink wheel in Fort Worth

AT: Pam Sherborne

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FORT WORTH, Texas — Cold temperatures during the 2018 Fort Worth (Texas) Stock Show and Rodeo, Jan. 12-Feb. 3, didn't keep fans from coming out to the show.

The event this year drew 1,214,800, a small dip compared to the 2017 attendance of 1,219,300.

Photos on the front page of local newspapers on Jan. 17 showed tiny Nubian goats and Nigerian dwarf goats huddled under heating lamps. The temperatures had dipped to 13 degrees that morning, the coldest it had been in Fort Worth in seven years.

The coldest days during the event, according to information on accuweather.com, were: Jan. 16, high 31 degrees and low 16 degrees; Jan. 17, high 36 degrees and low of 12 degrees, and Jan. 18, high 49 degrees and low 19 degrees.

Yet, the decrease in attendance was negligible, said Matt Brockman, communications director. And, certainly that could be attributed to many factors.

New to the midway this



New to the Fort Worth (Texas) Livestock Show and Rodeo, midway was the RL33 Lamberink BV Ferris wheel. Midway provider Talley Amusements debuted the 108-foot-tall portable wheel at the show. Also new to the Fort Worth event, which ran Jan. 12-Feb. 3 this year, was the Iron Dragon roller coaster, manufactured by Interpark.

AT/SAMMY PICCOLA;
GARY SLADE

year was the new portable Lamberink BV RL33 Ferris wheel brought in by midway provider Talley Amusements, who had just taken



delivery of the ride. The 108-foot-tall wheel features 24, six-person gondolas with a maximum ride capacity of 1,500 per hour. It also features thousands of program-mable LED lights.

Also new to the Fort Worth Livestock Show and Rodeo midway this year was the Iron Dragon roller coaster, manufactured Interpark (sold by Ital International) and bringing in even more thrills.

The Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo traditionally kicks off with the Stock Show Parade and this year was no different except for maybe the lower temperatures. Brockman said there were about 150 entries this year, which include horse-drawn carriages, marching bands and area riding clubs. There are no motorized vehicles in the parade, which is routed through downtown streets.

Famous for its rodeos, those at the Fort Worth event are: the Best of the West Ranch Rodeo, Best of Mexico Celebration, Cowboys of



Color, Bulls' Night Out, Fort Worth Super Shootout and PRCA rodeo.

"This was the 100th anniversary of our 'World's Original Indoor Rodeo,'" Brockman said. "While the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo is 122 years old, we held our first indoor rodeo in 1918 so our professional rodeo this year was celebrated this year."

Brockman said a new feature this year was the Vine 2 Wine, which had two fun components: "Wine Camps," which allowed guests to participate in interactive learning sessions with wine makers and other experts that were followed by a mix-and-mingle reception, and the "Sip & Shop," which enhanced guests' shopping experience in the main commercial exhibits hall.

"Sip & Shop guests had an opportunity to enjoy a selection of wines from one of several noted Texas wineries," he said. "Winery representatives were available to answer questions regarding wine-making and wine selections."

Another new feature this year came from, again, Talley Amusements. The carnival operator implemented the Magic Money digital payment system.

Four ride packages were available through a Magic Money wristband and downloadable app. Through the wristband, fans were able to board rides and purchase food at many of the food stands. The band is simply scanned by the ride or concession operator, and after the credits are depleted, visitors can reload it using the Magic Money mobile app, or with cash or credit card at a Carnival/Midway ticket booth or kiosk.

The system was used only on the carnival midway.

As far as what is happening on the fairgrounds, construction continues on Dickies Arena, which is scheduled to open for the rodeo performances in 2020.

"Currently, our Cattle Barn 1 and Poultry Barn are undergoing a renovation to be completed prior to the 2019 Show," Brockman said.



Talley Amusements implemented a new digital payment system for the midway from Magic Money. There were four ride packages offered through a wristband and downloadable app. AT/GARY SLADE

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MIDWAYLIGHTS

COMPILED: Pam Sherborne

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The title of **Thomas Wolfe's** novel published in 1940, *You Can't Go Home Again*, can certainly be described as a misnomer for **Chris Wiseman's** current position. He has, by his own admission, gone home again and everything is good.

Wiseman is interim general manager at the **Colorado State Fair, Pueblo**, until a permanent manager can be found to replace **Sarah Cummings**, who left that position earlier this year to become the executive director of the **Western Fairs Association**, headquartered in Sacramento, Calif.

Wiseman spent 18 years at the fair, first as assistant manager in 1998, then becoming general manager in 2004. He was in that position until 2015, when he was named deputy commissioner for the **Colorado Department of Agriculture**. He retired at the beginning of this year.

The Department of Agriculture is currently working through the hiring process.

"I look forward to facilitating things at the fair on a temporary basis," Wiseman said at the announcement of his interim position. "I've been associated with it throughout most my career and I enjoy the staff and atmosphere. It's like a second home to me."

The 2018 Colorado State Fair Aug. 24-Sept. 3. **Crabtree Amusements** provides the midway.

The **Kansas State Fair Board**, Hutchinson, announced at the end of January that **Bob Moeder** has agreed to assume the leadership position at the fair following the departure of General Manager **Susan Sankey**, who resigned after accepting a position with the **Kansas 4-H Foundation**.

Moeder will provide management services until the appointment of a new general manager is made following a search by the fair board.

Moeder retired in 2013 after a career that spanned 42 years with **Dillon Companies, Inc.** and **The Kroger Co.** Moeder has served as president of the **Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation** since 2016. In a letter to the board, Moeder considers the future of the fair critical and the contributions by Sankey as tremendous.

The fair board plans to move quickly in the search of a permanent general manager.

The 2018 Kansas State Fair is set for Sept. 7-16. The midway is provided by **North American Midway Entertainment (NAME)**.

Also at the end of January, the **Kentucky State Fair Board**, Louisville, announced a new interim CEO. **Don Parkinson**, secretary of the **Kentucky Tourism, Arts & Heritage Cabinet**, is taking over the position from **Mark Lynn**, a Louisville businessman who will remain chairman of the fair board.

Lynn had been serving double duty as CEO and chairman of the fair board since September, when **Jason Rittenberry** resigned abruptly, citing family reasons.

The Kentucky State Fair Board oversees **Kentucky Venues**, which manages the **Kentucky Exposition Center**, the **Kentucky International Convention Center** and the **Kentucky State Fair** in Louisville.

Lynn is stepping away from the CEO post to focus more attention on his optometry business, according to a news release.

The 2018 Kentucky State Fair runs Aug. 16-26. **NAME** provides the midway at this fair.

After 75 years of being held in September, management of the **York (Pa.) Fair** is considering moving the fair dates to July or August, according to an article that ran in the *York Daily Record* on Feb. 6.

The fair ran Sept. 8-17, 2017, and drew 565,483 people, with **Deggeller Attractions** providing the midway.

A consultant, paid for with a grant from the York County Tourism Fund, recently recommended the change as part of a strategy to expand net revenue opportunities and business lines.

While overall attendance figures vary year-to-year, weekdays are always a tough draw, according to fair management. But moving the fair to the summer might change that.

"I think the fair as it stands now in September, in many regards, is becoming an evening and weekend fair," General Manager at York Fair and York Expo Center **Michael Froehlich** was quoted as saying in the article. "I think by moving it into the summer months, especially without school being in session, it would definitely help increase attendance."

Another advantage of holding the fair in the summer is more hours of daylight, Froehlich said.

Froehlich feels looking at that possibility is a good idea, however, the article went on to report that not everyone agrees. Some opposition was brought out to August dates due to existing events already set in that month.

Potential changes, however, are not scheduled to happen overnight or this year. The 2018 fair is set for Sept. 7-16.

In the meantime, the fair plans to look at a number of factors, including livestock breeding schedules, availability of the ride company and food vendors.

A woman gave birth to a baby girl at the **Florida State Fair**, Tampa, on Friday, Feb. 9, according to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office.

Two deputies, **Roberto Ramirez** and **Henry Echenique**, heard **Kesha Martin** yelling for help shortly after 4 p.m. when her water broke.

Both deputies sprang into action and helped Martin's husband, **Lavaron**, deliver the baby near the fair's **Expo Hall**.

"The baby was halfway out," Echenique was quoted as saying in the *Bradenton Herald*. "At that point, I put on some gloves, and the baby came right out."

Echenique's main concern was the baby's health.

"I kind of rubbed the chest of the baby, so that gave me a sigh of relief that the baby was crying and opened her eyes," he said.

In all, 10 deputies helped with the delivery. Martin and her baby, who has been named **Lyric**, were taken to **St. Joseph's Women's Hospital** in Tampa. Both are doing well, according to officials.

The 2018 Florida State Fair ran Feb. 8-19.

Reithoffer Shows inks contract with Wilson County Fair

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GIBSONTOWN, Fla. — **Reithoffer Shows** will provide more than 50 rides including two roller coasters to the **Wilson County Fair**, Lebanon, Tenn., when the carnival plays there for the first time Aug. 17-25, 2018.

Wilson County Fair management selected Reithoffer Shows to provide the rides, games and some food for the 2018-2020 fairs, said **Rick Reithoffer**. The fair's contract with **Amusements of America** expired and the fair did not renew for another year with the company, which had served the Wilson County Fair since 2008.

"We're very pleased the fair selected our show," Reithoffer said. "It was a perfect fit, location and the fair wanting the best quality available. We were impressed with the fair's leadership — the directors are very committed, active and really involved in the fair."

"This is the largest and best fair in Tennessee and one of the

top 50 fairs in North America," he said. "We spent a lot of time reviewing operations, lot layout and discussing future plans. We want to be a part of their master plan to make the fair even better."

Randall Clemons, fair president, said the fair wanted to seek the best carnival available, more spectacular rides, electronic ticketing and creative thinking for the future.

"Our executive board did a thorough job of reviewing carnivals and, in the end, Reithoffer Shows was our best fit for the fair," Clemons said. "We liked the rides, staffing, new ticketing system, quality and cleanliness of the rides. We studied all areas of their business and Reithoffer had the entire package and they were available."

Located about 20 miles east of Metro Nashville, the Wilson County Fair is midway on the Reithoffer travel route from the **New Jersey State Fair**, Augusta, to the **New Mexico State Fair**, Albuquerque.

"It is not quite half way, but



Reithoffer Shows has landed the contract to be the midway provider for the **Wilson County Fair**, Lebanon, Tenn. The contract is for years 2018-2020. At the 2018 Wilson County Fair, set for Aug. 17-25, Reithoffer plans to bring in more than 50 rides and attractions including two coasters. They are the **Galaxy Coaster** by Interpark/Pinfari, and **Zierer's Indy 500**.

COURTESY REITHOFFER SHOWS

pretty close," he said. "The stars were aligned relative to travel and availability."

Attendance at the 2017 Wilson County Fair was 488,299. The 1,000-plus fair volunteers gave more than 77,000 hours to produce the fair, which encompasses 270 acres, 150 events and more than 14,000 exhibits.

A highlight of the fair includes more than 50 buildings of Tennessee history and lore called Fiddlers Grove. The latest addition to Fiddlers Grove

is the **Moss Feed Store**, constructed in 2017 by the Moss Family and the Wilson County Fair Board in memory of the late **Hale Moss**, who was a long-time president of the fair.

The Wilson County Fair is also the home of a new 78,000-square-foot expo center called the **James E. Ward Agricultural Center**, which was the dream of Moss and fair volunteers for more than 20 years.

The Wilson County Expo Center took the fair to another

level with competitive exhibits, fair pageants and Hometown USA located in the facility, according to Clemons.

The two coasters set to be on the midway in 2018 are the **Galaxy**, by **Interpark/Pinfari**, and **Zierer's Indy 500**.

Reithoffer Shows annually plays more than 50 events, including state and county fairs, festivals and corporate functions.

Reithoffer said the **Blue Unit** would play the fair.

PSACF/PSSA Convention, 50th anniversary for showmen

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HERSHEY, Pa. — The 106th annual **Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs (PSACF)** and **Pennsylvania State Showman's Association (PSSA)** convention took place again at the **Hershey Lodge and Convention Center** Jan. 17-20.

Over 1,500 attendees representing fairs, carnivals and manufacturers — plus others involved in the fair and carnival industry — descended on the venue, which has hosted the event for past 23 years. This year's theme: "Farms, Families, Fairs, Fun."

Keynote speaker for the opening celebration was **Aaron Alejandro**, executive director of the **Texas FFA Foundation**.

The convention brings together board members, volunteers and staff from most of the 109 county and local fairs held throughout the Commonwealth annually. It also provides an opportunity for a few dozen carnival/midway owners and operators, along with food/game concessionaires, entertainers and attraction suppliers to show off their wares during a two-and-a-half-day trade show.

This year there were 165 vendors in the 32,000-square-foot Great American Hall, down



Ben Pfeffer with **Tons of Fun Shows** and **Lindsay Galauge** at their show booth. (left) Ben is second generation with the show and will soon take over the carnival operation. The operation is based out of Douglassville, Pa. **Kerry and Christina Benner** (right) head up **Penn Valley Shows**, Middleburg, Pa. Christina spent countless hours repainting their Pepto pink horse into what was finally finished hours before the show floor opened, now in their show colors. AT/ B. DEREK SHAW



eight booths from last year. The Communication Exhibits — an aisle devoted to scrapbooks, advertising and memorabilia from 42 participating fairs held throughout the state — were located just inside the trade show entrance. The floor was brisk with activity throughout most of the hours it was open.

Harry Reffner, PSACF secretary and also representing **Bedford County Fair**, was pleased with the operation of the convention, "[It's] going very well," he said. "Our banquets are down a little bit. But we don't have 30 inches of snow like

we had two years ago!"

Reffner shared with *Amusement Today* some of his observations regarding the 2018 convention.

"We have several [new] seminars," he said, noting that he had met attendees from both within and outside of the state. "We have people in from IAFE, on safety along the seminar lines. I had a gentleman from West Virginia who wants to come up next year. He was at the **West Virginia State Fair Convention** trade show with only 15 people. We have quite a bit of attendance from out of state."

Exhibitor **Kerry Benner**, prin-

cipal with **Penn Valley Shows** of Middleburg, Pa., weighed the atmosphere.

"So far, we've had a lot of activity in our booth," said Benner, "but it's not just people searching for carnivals, it's also competitors who come with prepared notes and talk with us."

Pennsylvania's fair/showman convention is right up there with other events in the eastern U.S., including Ohio and Florida, added Benner. "Pennsylvania is well recognized — probably one of the strongest among the showmen organizations and the county fairs association. When I

talk to many of my competitors, they do other state fair meetings and they say none compare to Pennsylvania as far as attendance and participation.

"Pennsylvania is a big state, with a lot of county fairs. My competitors were telling me that in Texas — also a big state — they have no interaction with carnivals, almost like they are each the enemy. Here, all the carnival companies communicate and share notes as friendly competitors."

Additional carnivals representing at the trade show with booths included **C&L Shows**, **Dreamland Amusements**, **Houghton Enterprises**, **JCJ Amusements**, **Lisko Family Midway Amusements**, **Powers & Thomas Midway Entertainment**, and **Tons of Fun Shows**.

Some news circulated at the event.

Penn Valley, which is not introducing any new rides this year, is redoing its **Loop O Plane (Eyerly)**, umbrella ride (**San Antonio**) and **Round Up (Hrubetz)**; all are getting face-lifts. Electrical upgrades also are taking place in the off season. The company will soon take possession of two new concession trailers (**Gautier Fabrication**): one is a half-clamshell line game

► See PSACF/PSSA, page 33

2018 IISF Trade Show and Extravaganza draws higher numbers

27 new exhibitors
add to show increase

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GIBSONTOWN, Fla. — Attendance at the 2018 International Independent Showmen's Foundation (IISF) Trade Show and Extravaganza beat out last year's figure, drawing 10,141 attendees when it ran Feb. 5-9.

In fact, this attendance figure also was higher than the 2016 and 2015 shows. The 2014 show drew about 400 more than the show this year.

Teresa Rimes, a show organizer, said there were 27 new exhibitors this year and 20 major new rides. There were five wheels on the club grounds of the International Independent Showmen's Association (IISA). The IISF is the foundation arm of the association.

This was the 50th anniversary of the show. Dates were shortened by one day, four days instead of five.

"Most liked it," Rimes said. "But, vendors had to sign an addendum that they would give us a full day of operation on that Friday. Our last walk through was at 4:15 p.m. and there were at least 15 vendors that had already packed up. There were some that had already shrink wrapped their products and were just sitting there at their booths."

But, she said, all in all, she felt like it was a good show and she is already looking toward 2019.

Below is a sampling of some of the ride manufacturers on hand this year.

Amusement Ride Imports (ARI)

One of the 27 new exhibitors was this company owned in partnership between Kevin Exum and Mike Williams. The two industry veterans established the company in 2016, then spent time researching foreign ride manufacturing companies to find one they could work with and represent in the U.S.

"We found a company called Happy Rides, outside of Prague," Williams said. "It was an established company and we liked the price point. We are now exclusive representatives of Happy Ride Products in the U.S. We have been working with them on what is needed here in the states, such as ASTM standards and other safety standards based on our experience."

The company displayed a wheel and an Avenger ride called the X Factory. The 16-meter wheel, with a capacity of 40 riders, was purchased by Mike Featherston, Goldstar Amusements, and the X Factory, with a capacity of 18,



Wisdom Rides management was proud to debut its new Y-Factor ride at this year's IISF Trade Show and Extravaganza. Standing on the platform of the ride on the first day of the show are from left, Jared Davis, and Victor and Mai Wisdom. Davis is Wisdom's nephew. Along with his responsibilities at Wisdom Rides, Davis also runs rideparts.com, a separate company that sells ride parts for Wisdom rides.

AT/PAM SHERBORNE

is going to a family entertainment center in St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

A.R.M.

Mike Gill, president of the manufacturing company, also was at the IISF show. He said the Frenzy is a big ride for them right now and they have been heavily promoting it. Bingo Hauser, West Coast Amusements, already has purchased one.

"We also are continuing sales of our Rock Star and the Vertigo is still very good," Gill said.

Battech Enterprises

Albert Frieden, owner of this Salem, Ore.-based company, said business has been good, but he feels the limitations on the H-2B foreign temporary worker visa program will most likely have a negative effect on the industry this year.

Battech rides include Hog Rally, DownDraft, Cliff Hanger and Zero Gravity.



Mike Gill (left), president, A.R.M., said, at the 2018 IISF show, the company has had a very good year. Izabela Zamajka of Luna Park, stands in front of the company's wheel at the 2018 IISF show. AT/PAM SHERBORNE

Bob's Space Racers

Bob's Space Racers exhibited several of its popular midway games this year. Those included the Water Gun Fun, Whopper Water, Can Smash and Candy Drop.

This company has been providing games and services to the industry for more than 40 years. Along with the midway games, Bob's Space Racers also has product lines for parks, family entertainment centers and arcades. Many of the games can cross over from one industry to another.

Fajume

David Griffith exhibited the Fajume's Sky Chopper at the IISF show this year.

"Our company manufactured the Wacky Worm and we have sold 240 since we brought them onto the market," Griffith said. "I have had a few bites so far on the chopper. We will see."



Above is Gosetto's new Dracula Dark Ride. Gina Guglielmi, who represents Gosetto in North America said the company has already sold one of these to a Swedish showman. Guglielmi was on hand at the IISF trade with her catalogs of ride inventory. COURTESY OF GOSETTO



Len Soled, Rides 4-U, stands in front of the popular mini break dance ride, Crazy Cabs, by SBF/Visa. He said the IISF show had turned out to be a very good four days.

AT/PAM SHERBORNE

Gosetto/Intermark Ride Group (IRG)

Gosetto has had a stellar year, said Gina Guglielmi, who represents the Italian manufacturer and is the president of IRG.

Gosetto's new Dracula Dark Ride has been purchased by Swedish showman Tony Andreasson. It has 72 meters of track, and six cars with two seats each.

The company has sold its brand new Horror Hotel to Parque Atómico, Colombia, S.A.

"It is the first of its kind," Guglielmi said.

Participants walk through what appears to be a hotel of the past, with reception area, rooms, and hallways, all of which are themed in different horror scenarios.

Adventureland's suspended dark ride from Gosetto was scheduled to arrive last month. It was to be installed in March at the park's location at Long Island, N.Y.

A second suspended dark ride already is set to go into Hong Kong.

Bob Myers, an independent ride operator who purchased one of Gosetto's New York, New York dark rides, has purchased another

dark ride similar to the new Dracula Dark Ride.

Guglielmi said her sales of used rides also has been doing well. In the past year, among other sales, she sold a Zamperla Power Surge to Ed Burlingame, Pride Of Texas Shows. She sold a Caripro suspended coaster that came from a park in Europe to an entertainment facility in Indonesia. She sold a Mosier spinning ride to an operator in Pakistan. And, she is still selling off the estate of S&S Amusements.

Kolmax Plus

Irena Zvarova of this Czech amusement ride manufacturing company said her company has been very busy over the past several years after introducing themselves into the American market.

"We are selling about 50/50 now between the U.S.A. and Europe," Zvarova said. "It depends on the ride. We sell many tea cup rides to the U.S. and sell many bumper cars in England and Germany."

The company had both of those rides on display as well as

► See IISF, page 33



Kolmax Plus (left), a Czech amusement ride manufacturing company, exhibited eight rides at the 2018 IISF trade show. Bob's Space Racers (right) was on hand at the IISF trade show as it has been for many, many years. This year the company exhibited several of its popular midway games including this Whopper Water and Candy Drop. AT/PAM SHERBORNE

►IISF Continued from page 32

its dragon coaster ride, train ride, a carousel and a wheel. Two rides, the flying elephant ride and another wheel, were late arriving on the lot.

All of the rides at the show, except for the train ride, were pre-sold. The train ride did end up selling before the end of the show.

Some of the purchases included the flying elephant ride going to **Ray Cammack Shows**; a coaster going to **Deggeller Attractions**; carousel going to **Stewart Amusement Co.**, and wheels going to **All Around Amusements** and **Rainbow Amusement Co.**

Luna Park

Luna Park had its wheel and carousel set up at the IISF show this year. **Izabela Zamojska** said there has been a lot of interest in both pieces. Some previous purchasers of Luna Park's wheel include **James Gang Amusements**, **Mike's Midway**, **Fantasy Amusements** and **Sunshine Amusements**.

Some previous purchases of the company's carousel includes **Schmidt Amusements**, **Chant's Amusements**, **Frazier Shows**, **Hearts of America Shows** and **Mike's Midway**, the latter taking possession of the one at the show.

New for 2018 is a folding flying elephants ride.

"It should only take about three hours to set up," Zamojska said. **PBJ Amusements** has already purchased it and it should be ready within a year. Hopefully, we will have it set up here in 2019."

PWS Rides Ltd.

Andrew Preston from the UK-based PWS Rides company was having a good IISF show when **AT** stopped by. The company, in its first year at the Gibtown show, was exhibiting its mini paratrooper ride.

"I sold four in the first 45 minutes of the show," Preston said. "We got here the night before the show started and had to set up early the next morning."

The four mini-paratroopers went to **Reed Exposition Mid-**

way, **Fantasy Amusement Co.**, **All Around Amusements** and **Michael's Amusements** (Michael Albanese, Hebron, Ohio).

PWS Rides also displayed a sizzler ride called the Twist.

Rides 4-U

Business for **Len Soled** has been brisk. At the IISF show, he noted he had seen quite a few park representatives as well as the carnival owners. He said **Kissel Brothers** purchased the **KMG** speed ride he had on the lot and the **Track Family Fun Parks**, Branson, Mo., purchased the **SBF/Visa Circus Train**.

The Crazy Cabs ride, a **SBF/Visa Mini Break Dance**, was going to **Jolly Rogers Amusement Park**, Ocean City, Md. Two portable Crazy Cabs had been sold to **Majestic Midways** and **Eric Bates**, **Bates Brothers Amusement Company**.

Triple Treat Shows purchased the exhibited **SBF/Visa Drop 'n Twist**. The **SBF/Visa** mini pirate ship went to **Classic Amusements**.

"I am working on a few more leads," Soled said, adding, "the show is not over yet."

Wadkins Expo Wheel

Since 2006, **Sherwood Amusements** owner **Roger Wadkins** has manufactured and sold 25 Expo Wheels. That was the year Wadkins' carnival business bought out **Bob Childress'** business. Childress' business manufactured and sold the Expo Wheel as well as giant slides. Now Wadkins is doing the same. He stays very busy.

Wadkins was on hand at the IISF trade show exhibiting a wheel that belongs to **Skelly's Amusements**. **Michael Skelly** purchased it in 2016 and had it on the road for the full 2017 season.

"Now, he has bought another one," Wadkins said. "It is currently in the paint shop. It should be ready in May."

The Expo Wheel is 60 feet tall, has a capacity of 96 riders and fits on one trailer.

Wadkins said before Childress sold the business, he had put 21 Expo Wheels on the road.

"So, there are quite a few

out there," he said.

Wisdom Rides

"Well, there it is," said **Victor Wisdom**, as he stopped the operation of the company's awaited new ride, the Y Factor.

He was standing on the ride's platform at the controls, demonstrating its operation. The ride consists of two arms attached at the center hub. Extending down from each arm is a round modular with 12 outward facing seats for a total maximum of 24 riders. Riders are secured by over the shoulder lap bars.

As the ride begins, the center rises and begins to spin. The two arms then rise and the seating modulators begin spinning as riders are at an angle, looking straight down at the ground, then straight up as the modular spins.

Wisdom said the ride goes in a 65-foot circle and rises about 40 to 45 feet high.

"And, it is easy to set up," he said. "It takes about an hour with a couple of guys. It also is easy to operate."

It takes only one trailer to transport. The platforms are raised and lower with an hydraulic system.

Wisdom's new ride was purchased by **Dwayne James**, **James Gang Amusements**. Original plans had James taking possession of the ride at last year's IISF show. But, as issues arose, the completion of the ride was delayed.

"We wanted to take the time to make sure everything was as it should be," **Mai Wisdom** had said last November. "We are grateful for the support from **James Gang Amusements**."

Antonio Zamperla SpA

Company representative **Michael Coleman** said Zamperla rides have been selling well over the past years. The ride manufacturer is well-known in the industry.

"We didn't bring any rides to exhibit," Coleman said.

But, he said they did have the company's ride catalog and information on all the rides including best sellers such as the **Happy Swing** and **balloon ride**, to name a few.

►PSACF/PSSA Continued from page 31

trailer, while the other is a state-of-the-art duck pond. (The trailer wheels come off when on location, then it is lowered to the ground; the extra height is accomplished with telescoping panels.)

Educational seminars, daily workshops, breakfast table topics and banquets each evening rounded out the convention schedule. Informative sessions included "Live Your Brand," "Terror on the Fairgrounds: What to do with Livestock and People," "Marketing to Millennials and Volunteers, the Heart of the Fair. Table topics included "Alcohol on the Fairgrounds, Handicap Accessibility" and "Benefit Auctions and Other Fundraisers."

The evening of Wednesday, Jan. 17, presented an opportunity to showcase self-booking and agency-managed entertainment of all varieties, including musical acts, magicians, impersonators, western shows, comedians and clowns. Many of these same acts were on the trade show floor each day, either strolling or staffing their own booths.

Hospitality rooms were comfortable gathering places after the business of each day concluded. The PSSA, which has existed in Pennsylvania for the past 50 years, had a socially active room. Others were hosted by **PSACF**, **Variety Attractions**, **Dreamland Amusements** and **Tropical Amusements**.

A banquet held by **PSACF** on the evening of Thursday, Jan. 18, featured introductions of all 58 Fair Queens who are vying for the **2018 Pennsylvania Fair Queen** title. Remarks were made by **Russell Redding**, secretary of the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture**, and concluded with the announcement of the Fair person of the year. This year, **John McMullen** with the **Indiana County Fair** was the honoree.

The 50th anniversary PSSA banquet took place on the evening of Friday, Jan. 19, with over 800 in attendance. Five Presidential-level awards and 16 Supporter awards were among the various honor presented to numerous showmen for annual and lifetime contributions. **Mary Ott** of **Ott's Concessions** in Leighton, Pa., was named Showperson of the Year.

A raffle drawing for a **Kubota** utility vehicle was held, with **Christina Benner** of **Penn Valley Shows** holding the winning ticket. **Brenda Michaels Shimmel** of **Michael's Concessions** helped coordinate the half-century celebration banquet along with **Lisa**

Bartlebaugh of **Bartlebaugh Amusements**. "We put a big party on," Shimmel said.

A check was presented to the **Pennsylvania Farm Show Foundation** for \$17,650 — half the proceeds from the Showman's carousel and children's flat ride that operated during an eight-day farm show in early January. The use of a 1958 **Allan Herschell** three-abreast carousel was donated by **Mike Skelly** of **Skelly's Amusement, Inc.**, Williamstown, N.J., with **Powers and Thomas Midway Entertainment**, Wilmington, N.C., supplying a **Hampton** mini-tractor ride.

The PSSA presented eight scholarships totaling \$16,463 to students from their half of the farm how ride proceeds during the banquet. PSSA has raised and donated over \$225,000 in scholarships since its inception 14 years ago. The total amount of scholarships, including the **Farm Show Foundation** portion is nearly \$472,000. The banquet also featured the installation of the 2018 PSSA President **Leon Carachilo**, principal **Carachilo Concessions**, Hawley, Pa.

The evening of Saturday, Jan. 20, saw 847 people attended the 32nd annual Queen Coronation banquet. Since Pennsylvania has no "official" state fair, the banquet serves as the opportunity to announce the 2018 queen who visits any of the 109 fairs in Pennsylvania, upon request, during the upcoming season. Fifty-eight contestants representing their local/regional fair participated in three days of judging activities before a winner was selected and crowned. **Elizabeth Voight**, representing the **Lebanon Area Fair**, received the honor.

It was evident that the carnival industry is in the blood of **Leon Carachilo**, incoming PSSA president. Carachilo got his start at age 12 helping in various joints, then setting up rides; today his Carachilo's Concessions trades as **Leon's French Fries** and **Al's Steak and Sausage**.

"About six years ago, **Stephen Swika II** brought me into the Showman's club and said we needed new blood... and I'm president today," he recalled. "I just want to serve the people who put me here. It's my first time in my whole life — and I'm 61 — that I ever did anything like this. My friends said I could do it well, and I'm going to give it a shot. I'm just going to try to do a good job."

The PSACF and PSSA have a contract with **Hershey Lodge** and **Convention Center** to continue their convention through 2021. Next year's event takes place Jan. 23-26.

OABA members have a successful and enjoyable week in Florida

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

GIBSONTOWN, Fla. — The Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA) held several events during the week of the International Independent Showmen's Association (IISF) Trade Show and Extravaganza, Feb. 5-9.

On Thursday, Feb. 8, the OABA sponsored an event at Topgolf, Tampa, Fla. The event was a fundraiser to go towards sustaining OABA lobbying efforts for the federal H-2B foreign worker visa program.

Not only was it a fun event, according to Tom Gaylin, Rosedale Amusements, but it also raised more than \$100,000 for the fund.

On Friday evening, the OABA held its annual banquet, which celebrates the passing of the chair gavel as well as

award recipients. It was held at the Sheraton Tampa Brandon, Fla.

Jay Strates, Strates Shows, took over the role as chair for this coming year from E.J. Dean, Dean and Flynn Fiesta Shows.

The 2018 Hall of Fame recipients were: Patty Sullivan, Eli Bridge Co., and Jane Baxter Vivona, independent ride owner.

The 2018 Pioneer Award was given to Linda Brewer, teacher, Deggeller Attractions Midway Academy.

Marilyn Portemont, who owned Johnny's United Shows, with her husband, Johnny Portemont, was given a Lifetime Achievement

Award. This award is not an annual award but given when an individual is identified.

During announcements proceeding the meal at the banquet, Jay Strates addressed attendees on many issues including the organization's on-line education program.

"I feel we are really moving forward on this program," Strates said. "I think it will add to our membership."

He also said he felt that staying updated on state safety legislations will be important moving forward.

"Seven different states are proposing various new regulations," he said. "Some of these could be burdensome legislations that haven't been very well thought out."

Strates concluded by complimenting OABA President Bob Johnson and the OABA staff.



A powerfully packed table of ladies at the OABA banquet was this one. From left, are Annie Shugart, Allied Specialty Insurance; Jean Clair, Luehrs' Ideal Rides; Mary Chris Smith, Allied; Lorelei Schoendienst, Luehrs' Ideal Rides; Kristin Atkins, Luehrs' Ideal Rides; and Dennis Fraleigh F&W Concessions. AT/PAM SHERBORNE



Congratulating incoming OABA 2018 Chair Jay Strates, left, Strates Shows, is OABA President Bob Johnson. AT/PAM SHERBORNE



Jane Baxter Vivona was one of two 2018 OABA Hall of Fame recipients at the organization's banquet on Feb. 9. She is an independent ride operator. Seen with her here is her husband Phil Vivona, Amusements of America. AT/PAM SHERBORNE

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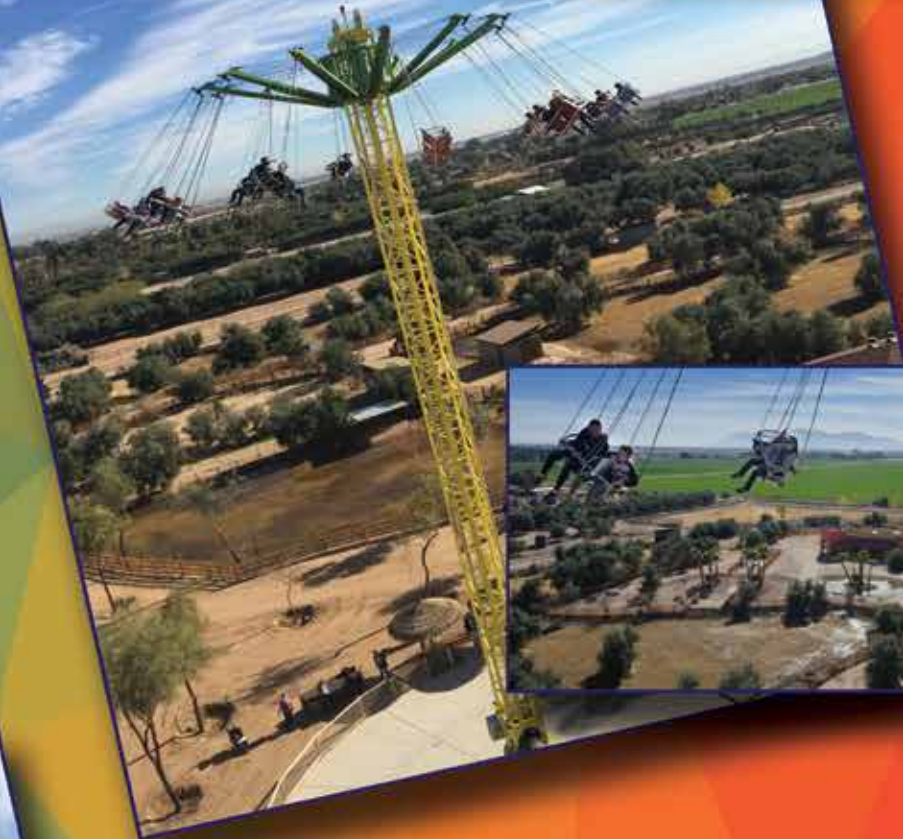
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Seen socializing during the OABA banquet on Friday, Feb. 7, are, from left, Sue Nichols, Amusement Today; Jim Strates, Strates Shows; and Jim Seay, president, Premier Rides, and his wife, Sara Seay. AT/PAM SHERBORNE

Patty Sullivan, left, Eli Bridge Co., was one of two recipients of the 2018 OABA Hall of Fame Award. Here with her is Marilyn Portemont, who received OABA's Lifetime Achievement Award. AT/PAM SHERBORNE





BUSINESS, SAFETY & CLASSIFIED

► MarketWatch — Page 37 / SAFETY — Pages 40-45 / NRCMA Progress Report — Page 46

New California lodge lowers drawbridge in late April

Coming Castle Hotel debut heralds big summer for Legoland

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

CARLSBAD, Calif. — Legoland California Resort is launching what is sure to be one of its busiest high seasons ever with the announcement that its second hotel is opening this spring.

Joining the 128-acre property's popular Legoland Hotel, the Legoland Castle Hotel officially debuts April 27. A hard hat tour of the elaborately themed new lodge was staged for the media on Jan. 25.

"Staying in a Legoland Hotel is an adventure in itself and only adds to the overall experience families are treated to at Legoland California Resort," said **Peter Ronchetti**, resort general manager. "Adding Legoland Castle Hotel proves how much we've become a multi-day destination for families with children ages two to 12 wanting to be fully immersed in the world of Lego."

The site tour offered a first look at the hotel, which contains 250 deluxe themed rooms (including 20 suites). It proceeded through the Grand Hall, Dragon's Den restaurant and Royal Courtyard. There also was a peek at the three available guest room themes: Knights and Dragons, Royal Princess and Magic Wizard.

While in the Grand Hall, Ronchetti and Legoland Hotel manager **Frank Idris** provided an overview of the lodge — describing key features of the building and discussing the local economic impact of the 200 new jobs it is creating. Details also were shared



about the large Lego Wizard model that will greet guests entering the Grand Hall, a fun slide that will connect the lobby and the first floor, and a "knock-knock door" that will entertain guests.

Additional insights were provided about the Dragon's Den, Legoland's only full-service restaurant. It will include an open kitchen for guests to observe chefs at work, Lego models, entertainers and locally-sourced food — creating a unique dining experience. Breakfast will be included with each guest's stay and will offer made-to-order items along with a buffet.

Outside, the Royal Courtyard is designed to envelop children in a fairy tale of their own creation with a Duplo play area for younger kids, larger play structures for older kids, a giant movie screen for nighttime movies, a stage for live plays and shows, a gradual-incline pool and a hot tub. The pool bar and grill will serve smoothies, sandwiches and salads prepared fresh to order.

The Legoland Castle Hotel also boasts 2,100 Lego models created from more than three million toy bricks inside the rooms and throughout the premises.

The new hotel is just one of several major developments at Legoland this year. In January, the park premiered



A January hard hat tour of the new Legoland Castle Hotel at Legoland California Resort also revealed the lodge's grand opening date. The whimsical property is filled with 2,100 Lego models and includes the Dragon's Den — the resort's only full-service restaurant (right, lower right). COURTESY LEGOLAND CALIFORNIA RESORT



Lego Ninjago — Master of the 4th Dimension, a 4D movie experience. And this summer will bring the opening of the Lego City Deep Sea Adventure submarine ride, the resort's largest-ever attraction investment.

In the meantime, Legoland's bed-and-"brickfest" accommodations continue to prove a hit in the San Diego-area tourism market.

"It's hard to imagine that, just five years ago, we were standing on a construction site just like this announcing North America's first Legoland Hotel," said Idris. "In fact,

[the original lodge] was just named one of Trip Advisor's top 25 hotels for families in the U.S. We've also become the first hotel in Carlsbad to achieve the Environmentalist level from the California Green Lodging Association

— thanks to additional conservation efforts implemented this past year."

Legoland Castle Hotel is accepting reservations; visit the resort's website for information.

• legoland.com

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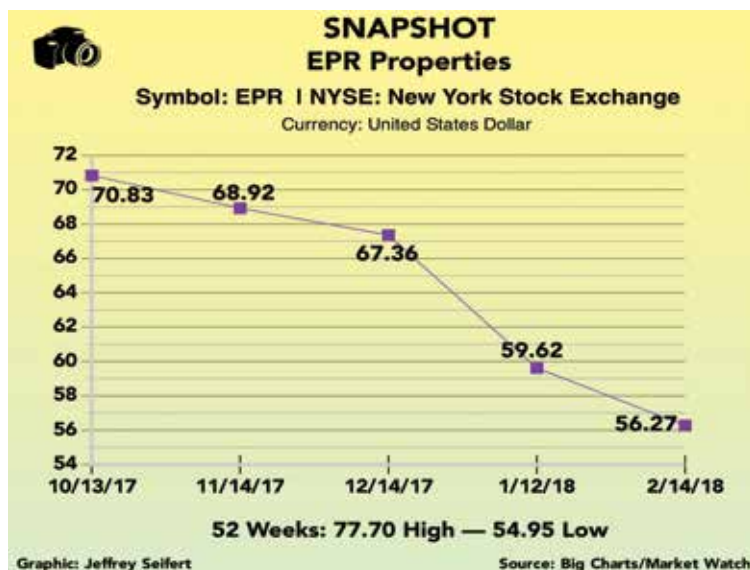


MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 02/15/18	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	34.61	37.52	28.45
Merlin Entertainments Group/ Legoland	MERL	LSE	340.50	537.50	317.10
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	68.52	72.56	59.66
Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	40.11	44.00	34.78
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	105.10	116.10	96.2
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.56	1.16	0.56
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	56.30	77.70	54.95
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	2664.00	3400.00	1900.00
Haicahang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	1.88	2.07	1.55
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	7.50	8.99	7.22
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	35.00	38.41	25.15
Parques Reunidos Servicios Centrales S.A.	ES:PQR	MCE	13.80	17.45	11.69
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	15.66	20.13	10.42
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	68.35	69.99	51.25
DreamEast Group Ltd.	HK:0593	SEHK	10.70	15.88	10.3
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	636.00	688.00	480.00
Village Roadshow	VRL	ASX	3.09	4.28	3.05

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

**DIESEL PRICES**

Region (U.S.)	As of 02/12/18	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.063	+\$0.498
Midwest	\$3.020	+\$0.533
Gulf Coast	\$2.851	+\$0.427
Mountain	\$2.972	+\$0.450
West Coast	\$3.107	+\$0.346
California	\$3.689	+\$0.732

CURRENCY

On 02/15/18 \$1 USD =	
0.8074	EURO
0.7183	GBP (British Pound)
107.20	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9323	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.2692	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.2561	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

Comcast, Universal earnings soar

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. — **Comcast Corporation** (NASDAQ: CMCSA) reported on Jan. 24, 2018, results for the quarter and year ending December 31, 2017.

Universal Studios theme parks revenue increased 8.7% to \$1.5 billion in the fourth quarter of 2017 due to higher per capita spending, reflecting the continued success of the The Wizarding World of Harry Potter attraction in Hollywood, which opened in April 2016, and the openings of Minion Park in Japan in April 2017 and Volcano Bay in Orlando in May 2017. Adjusted EBITDA increased 3.2% to \$661 million in the fourth quarter of 2017, reflecting higher revenue, partially offset by an increase in operating expenses.

For the 12 months ending December 31, 2017, revenue from the theme parks segment increased 10.0% to \$5.4 billion compared to 2016, reflecting higher per capita spending and higher attendance. Adjusted EBITDA increased 8.9% to \$2.4 billion compared to 2016, reflecting higher revenue, partially offset by an increase in operating expenses, including costs to support new attractions.

NBCUniversal is wholly owned by cable television giant Comcast Corp.

Six Flags Great Adventure goes solar

JACKSON, N.J. — **Six Flags Great Adventure** and its partner **KDC Solar** announced on Jan. 24 that construction will begin soon to make the New Jersey property the world's first solar-powered theme park.

"This is a proud day for our company. This project represents a giant step toward becoming a net-zero carbon facility," said Six Flags Great Adventure Park President **John Winkler**. "We are pleased that we were able to come to a satisfactory agreement with all parties involved."

The 23.5-megawatt solar project will include solar carports over select parking lots and 40 acres of ground-mounted solar panels. Six Flags expects construction to begin by March and for the solar facility to be fully operational by the end of 2019.

In addition to the production of clean energy and helping to limit the park's reliance on harmful fossil fuels, KDC Solar will use more than 99,000 hours of union labor in constructing this project. Clean energy is right for the environment and our future, and we look forward to decades of environmental stewardship with our partner, KDC Solar."

Disney offering staff \$1,000 bonuses

BURBANK, Calif. — **The Walt Disney Co.** will give more than 125,000 eligible employees a one-time \$1,000 cash bonus and invest \$50 million in an education funding program.

The media company said Jan. 23, 2018, the bonuses will go to all full and part-time non-executive employees, either hourly or salaried, who have been with the company since January 1, 2018, and are based in the U.S.

Nearly 88,000 hourly employees will be eligible for the education program which will cover tuition costs. Along with the initial \$50 million investment, the Burbank, California, company will provide up to \$25 million annually for the program.

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Fire strikes beloved bowling alley; crowdfunding push to aid cleanup

PORT JERVIS, N.Y. — **Minisink Lanes** bowling alley, a popular local establishment for more than four decades, was devastated by a fire on Jan. 20.

The fire occurred at approximately 3 p.m., shortly after Saturday youth bowling leagues finished for the day. The building was empty at the time and no one was injured.

The bowling alley is owned by Matamoras, Pa., resident **Raymond Willis, Sr.** The 72-year-old Vietnam veteran, who has operated the business for 45 years, is known for hosting fundraising events for charitable causes and families in need.

Jay Willis, Raymond's son and the proprietor of **Willis Amusement**, described the fire as "unexpected and tragic." He said his father is seen as "a pillar in the community, touching several generations — as many parents and grandparents would bring their children to bowl in leagues and tournaments."

Willis added that his father had discontinued hazard insurance on the building last year because of its increasing cost. Raymond Willis lost his wife and business partner, **Jamie Willis**, to cancer in 2015.

Raymond bought Minisink Lanes shortly after completed his 1969-70 military service, during which he served in active com-



bat in Vietnam.

During its heyday, the bowling alley boasted 20 lanes, a full bar, a snack bar, a pro shop and an arcade.

Inspectors said the fire started in the kitchen area but were still seeking a cause. The building is not salvageable. Demolition and cleanup costs could total as much as \$50,000.

Local residents have shown an outpouring of support. A GoFundMe page has been set up online with the goal to offset the cleanup expenses: gofundme.com/minisink-lanes.

—Dean Lamanna



Minisink Lanes was a vintage, locally popular bowling venue and fun center before it was destroyed by fire on Jan. 20. The community has stepped forward with support and an online fundraising effort. COURTESY JAY WILLIS



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Known globally for attractions design, PGAV reinvests at home

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — PGAV Destinations, a leading master planner and designer of theme parks, zoos, museums, aquariums and destination retail locations around the globe, is completing a five-month renovation of its studio on N. Broadway in Downtown St. Louis.

The \$3.2 million project represents a major reinvestment for the award-winning company in the city's central and creative corridors.

PGAV's clients encompass industry leaders such as **SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment**, **Bass Pro Shops**, **Ameristar Casinos**, **Universal Studios** and the **Saint Louis Zoo**. Assignments have included planning and design at many of the world's must-see destinations, including the Grand Canyon, **Biltmore Estate**, **Space Shuttle Atlantis**, **Chimelong Ocean Kingdom**, **Georgia Aquarium** and **Hoover Dam**.

The home-base renovation project significantly expands PGAV's studio layout while also creating an innovative workspace to accommodate a recent staff expansion. Designers have continued to work at full capacity throughout the renovation.

With a rapidly growing team, as well as a roster of diverse projects around the country, PGAV will nearly double its space in its current downtown location.

"It's been a thrilling time for our firm as decades of momentum have culminated in one of the healthiest growth periods in our history," said **Mike Konzen**, PGAV chair and principal. "It's important for us to celebrate and reinvest that success in St. Louis, which has been our home for more than 50 years and is our intended home for at least the next decade."

PGAV takes a holistic approach to creating experiences that exemplify its clients' mission, brands, and heritage — leveraging leading consumer insights and research. Its staff of more than 120 full-time dreamers, thinkers and makers includes planners, architects, brand specialists, earned revenue specialists, interior designers, graphic designers, landscape architects, artists and interpretive designers.

• pgavdestinations.com



The expertise of PGAV Destinations graces locations worldwide, including Chimelong Ocean Kingdom in Zuhai, China (left), and The Fudge Factory in Niagara Falls, Canada. COURTESY CHIMELONG OCEAN KINGDOM; PGAV DESTINATIONS

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PTC launches new website

HATFIELD, Pa. — In late January, **Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters Inc.** (PTC) launched a new website that has been in the planning process the past half year. **Tom Rebbie**, president of PTC, described the background leading up to the launch: "**Jeanine [Rebbie-Matcherz]** was diligently doing a lot of work for the kick-off. And as with any new website launch, there will be glitches here and there. They will get that straightened out."

There is a lot more information at visitors' fingertips with the new website, including products, services and a current list of projects in the works. The site allows for greater flexibility, with up-to-date content. "It's something we can change on a daily basis through the office, instead of going to a site manager," said Rebbie. The site was designed by **Duckpin Design** of Towson, Md.

Five people can lay claim to being in charge of the operation, starting with founder and first president, **Henry Auchy**, in 1904. Auchy was succeeded by **Herb Schmeck** in 1922, followed by **John Allen** in 1954, **Sam High III** in 1971, and Tom Rebbie — who took the helm in 1991. More in-depth information about each president, along with a company history section, can be found in the "About Us" section.

•philadelphiatoboggancoastersinc.com

S&S announces new website

LOGAN, Utah — **S&S Worldwide, Inc.** recently announced the launch of its new website. Not only does the site have a new address, but it also features a weasier navigation and a more streamlined look.

•s-s.com



SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & EDUCATION

Pa. Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board convenes, advises

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Once every quarter, 10 representatives from the amusement industry — along with community volunteers selected at large and a few appointed by the state governor — gather to discuss and either accept, conditionally accept, table or reject new ride approvals submitted by carnivals, amusement parks, water parks and family entertainment centers.

During the winter meeting of the **Pennsylvania Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board**, 10 different manufacturers with 23 different rides and attractions were brought forward during a four-and-a-half-hour session.

Manufacturers presenting at the meeting were **Cheer Amusement** of China; **Eldorado Climbing Walls**; **Fun Spot Manufacturing, LLC**; **Gravitykraft Corp.** (affiliated with The **Gravity Group, LLC**); **Oregon Dairy**; **Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium**; **ProSlide Technology, Inc.**; **Rascal Face**



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Walt Remmert, director of the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Ride and Measurement Standards**, explained that the volunteers "come together to provide better oversight, better regulatory enforcement. You have experts from every [corner] of the industry that offer value when we're looking at new rides and major modifications, and even when we're updating policies. It's a full-purpose board; they add value, with the ultimate approval authority being the Secretary of Agriculture or his or her designee, which at this point is me."

A conditioned approval, Remmert added, is one where the board believes the manufacturer or the owner/operator of the ride should consider "how it is operating or how it puts the ride in place. Under these circumstances, the recommending body might say to add seat belts or change heights, or that additional safety equipment may be required. We will get back to the applicant and determine whether they're willing to make these changes voluntarily before we finally decide on whether we'll allow a ride to operate."

Hersheypark is adding a **ProSlide Hydromagnetic Rocket** (named **Breakers Edge Water Coaster**) using **LIM** propulsion — a first for the park. The custom ride, similar to one at **Holiday World** in Santa Claus, Ind., will use the loading station from the former

Setpoint Roller Soaker coaster and send four-person rafts along a course with seven conveyor belts and three saucer elements. The park also is adding an **Octopusracer** (named **White Car Racer**). Both rides are bathing suit-only attractions expected to open in time for Memorial Day weekend.

Sesame Place in Langhorne, Pa., and The Gravity Group affiliate **Gravitykraft**, supplier of the park's forthcoming junior wooden family coaster, **Oscar's Wacky Taxi**, made a presentation based on their 406-page submission. The 41-foot-tall, 1,200-foot-long coaster, with a 40-inch minimum rider height requirement, will have two **Timberliner** trains and feature a magnetic braking system along with dual PLC controls by **Consign, LLC**. The coaster will undergo two separate accelerometer tests — one by the manufacturer and a second, independent one by **Brian King of Recreation Engineering Inc.**

"It was a very good and productive day," Remmert said of the lengthy winter session.

Although not yet seeking approvals, **Jeff Checcio**, director of facilities and safety for **Kennywood Park** in West Mifflin, Pa., offered a season-preview presentation highlighting four **Zamperla** rides, a spot play structure and other improvements. The park is expected to make a formal ride approval presentation at the next quarterly meeting, scheduled for April 17.

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SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & EDUCATION

NAARSO's Cajun-themed Safety Forum deemed a success

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

BATON ROUGE, La. — The National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials' (NAARSO) 31st Annual Safety Forum is now in the record books and, although attendance was down somewhat, organizers felt the forum was a success.

The forum was held Jan. 28-Feb. 2, at the **Baton Rouge (La.) Crowne Plaza**, with hands-on activities taking place at **Dixie Landin' Park**.

"We received a lot of positive feedback about the entire forum," said **Connie Patton**, a NAARSO forum organizer.

Attendance this year was 400, compared to 425 in 2017.

NAARSO is a non-profit association dedicated to the advancement of amusement ride and device safety. It offers this annual safety forum, among other educational safety classes throughout the year. The organization provides four levels of Inspection Certification and two levels of Operations Certification.

Patton said NAARSO forum planners made an effort this year



The National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials' 31st annual Safety Forum held its hands-on portion at Dixie Landin' park, Baton Rouge, La. The forum was held Jan. 28-Feb. 2. NAARSO at the Baton Rouge Crowne Plaza. Dixie Landin' Park contains about 80 acres featuring both amusement and water parks. It offers about 29 rides, including four roller coasters. AT/GARY SLADE

to create a more relaxed atmosphere while still providing professional classroom sessions.

"We especially made an effort to create a more relaxing and laid back atmosphere at our banquet,"

she said. "We called it Bayou Bash. We had no head table. We didn't have just one buffet line, but instead had stations. Our food was more regional such as shrimp creole. We had Zydeco music.

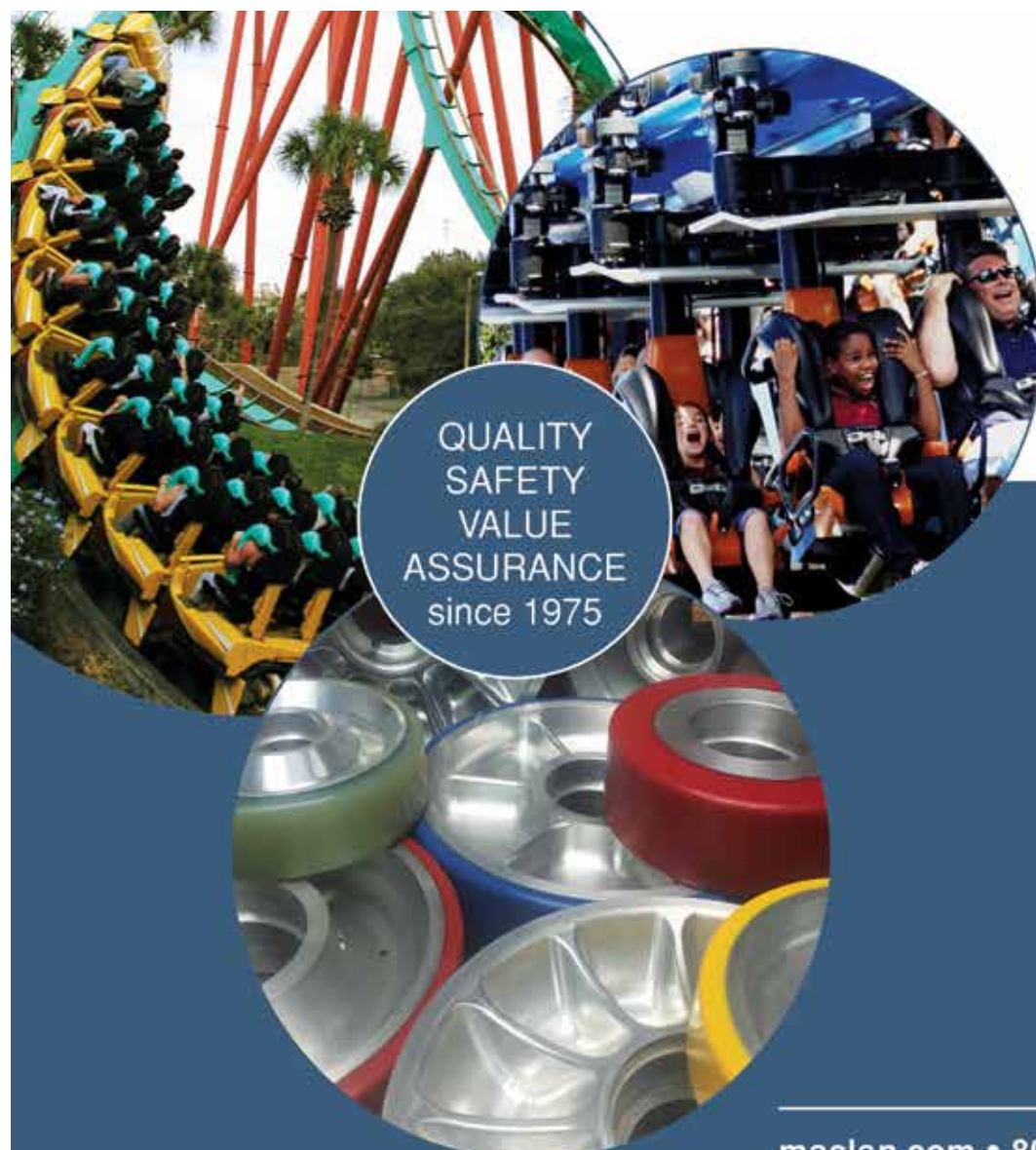


"I think this all really helped to get people talking and networking with each other more," Patton said. "That is what we wanted. We wanted to have more chatter between tables. We felt

like sometimes when it is a more formal banquet, people don't talk with each other as much."

Patton said the hands-on ses-

► See NAARSO, page 42



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SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & EDUCATION



Classroom sessions plays a large part of the NAARSO Safety Forum. NAARSO offers four levels of certifications, and dozens of classroom time and topics. Participants' paths are based on their level of experience and their years of experience. AT/GARY SLADE

►NAARSO

Continued from page 41

sions at Dixie Landin' Park was spectacular.

"We just, overall, had a lot of positive feedback," she said. "We had a lot of support from the Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal. They really helped pave the way for us to be there."

In addition, Visit Baton Rouge, the local visitors chamber, provided the local Zydeco music at the Bayou Bash.

"And we really appreciated what Dixie Landin' did for us," she said.

During the forum, classes are broken up into groups: Primary, Secondary and Operational. A participant's path is determined by previous training experience and/or years in the industry.

Classes include topics as: braking systems, inspector communications, comprehensive inspection points for traveling rides, comprehensive inspection points for permanent rides, electrical control systems, safety restraints, linear induction systems, miniature trains, go kart track inspection, hacking of ride control systems and rides, corrosion analysis, and arc flash safety.

Others this year included: non destructive testing, lubrication, visual weld inspections, responding to emergencies, and various round table discussion groups.

The NAARSO certification program is recognized and used by approximately 18 states or provinces (including Dubai, Canada, and Singapore) as an identifier of individuals authorized to provide jurisdictional or third party inspections.

The 2019 32nd NAARSO Safety Forum is set for Jan. 27-Feb. 1, at the Kingston Plantation Resorts, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

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SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & EDUCATION

Ride operators reconvene at Knott's for IRT/iROC coursework

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

BUENA PARK, Calif. — For the third consecutive year, **International Ride Training, LLC** (IRT) held its **International Ride Operator Certification** (iROC) school at **Knott's Berry Farm**. The program took place in the park and at the **Knott's Berry Farm Hotel** Feb. 6-9.

Students in the innovative “train the trainer” course, which is presented annually and is the only rider operator certification in the amusement industry, are given the opportunity to enhance their operational leadership and teaching skills, as well as to share work experiences and network with other industry leaders.

This year's gathering drew nearly 100 attendees — including ride operations trainers, supervisors, managers and directors — from throughout the globe.

iROC certification is based on IRT's proprietary “10 Critical Components of Safety,” which every ride operator is required to master prior to working a ride or attraction. The skills include professionalism, rider engagement, restraint device security verification, defined visual confirmations and preparedness.

IRT co-founders and managing members **Patty Beazley** and **Cindee Huddy** gave this year's program a “Lights, Camera, iROC!” theme that encouraged students to strive for showtime-level perfection in honing their leadership skills. Over 50 best practices were demonstrated; more than 30 specific ride operations hot topics were discussed; and over 65 teaching techniques were shared and/or practiced.

Dino Fazio of **Morey's Piers**, this year's iROC school director and a regular IRT volunteer, created a class titled *Kujenga*, which is Swahili for “build.” Using the game *Jenga* to build a “base of safety,” it challenged teams of students to determine which elements could be removed, or must be left in place, to maintain a smooth, safe operation.

The American Disabilities Act (ADA) and its operational applications were the focus of two courses conducted by **Erik H. Beard** of **Wiggin & Dana, LLP**. Referencing collected IRT audit data, Beard also presented a class highlighting industry strength / weakness trends in operator training and performance.

Anna Danau, owner of **Hospitality Intelligence**, generously shared her experiences in training ride employees, includ-

ing international students and first-time employees.

On the evening of Thursday, Feb. 8, student teams were out in the park. Knott's Berry Farm rides, included Charlie Brown's Kite Flyer, GhostRider, Hat Dance, Montezooma's Revenge and Silver Bullet, were utilized for showcasing specific teaching techniques.

At the GhostRider wooden roller coaster, **Celia Rossi** of **Morey's Piers** and **Patrick**

MacFarlane of **Elitch Gardens** challenged teams to conduct a safety restraint device security check in an efficient manner, while at the Silver Bullet steel inverted coaster, **Charles Mitchell** of Silverwood Theme Park led a discussion and demonstration in main control panel operator accountability.

Roger Brookes of **Kings Dominion** used the Hat Dance spinning flat ride to emphasize the critically important skill of

providing a final, defined visual confirmation.

Also during the event, **Sean Michael Sauve** of **Oxford Properties** instructed on how to teach both safety and directional spiels, and **Brian Oerding** of **Carowinds** showed the importance of shift meetings with ride operators and how they not only set the tone for the day, but create consistency in the field.

IRT rolled out two new prod-

ucts this season: an ADA FAQ guide and training dedicated to specific instruction in front-line team member development. In addition, IRT provides a program to help parks improve in the area of ride operations efficiency by studying data and practicing techniques in the field.

The 2019 iROC School will be held Feb 5-8 at **The Park at Owa** in Foley, Ala.

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Skyline Attractions hosts SKYnext

ORLANDO, Fla. — Skyline Attractions, LLC, will host its fourth annual SKYnext on March 2-3. The event welcomes young professionals who are seeking a career in the amusement industry.

Last year's SKYnext hosted more than 70 attendees from 24 states and four countries, including 55 college students or recent graduates, 13 professionals currently employed in a technical or engineering position, and two high school students. Attendees were treated to presentations from industry professionals, behind-the-scenes tours of Orlando-area attractions and extensive networking opportunities with other participants.

The 2017 gathering attracted a diverse collection of speakers from the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)**, **Ride Entertainment**, **Rocky Mountain Construction**, the **Themed Entertainment Association** and **Universal Orlando Resort**. The representatives talked about how they got into the amusement industry, their respective companies and what they were working on currently.

Event participants visited **SeaWorld Orlando** for a behind-the-scenes tour of the steel roller coaster Mako and **Fun Spot Kissimmee** for a construction tour of the wooden roller coaster Mine Blower — the latter led by the ride's designer and manu-



facturer, **The Gravity Group**. Participants had the opportunity to take photos, ask questions, and learn more about the construction and operation of a major attraction at both parks.

Confirmed speakers for this year's event include **Jonathan Smith** of **SeaWorld**, **Lexi Papadelias** of **Universal Orlando Resort**, **Franceen Gonzales** of **WhiteWater West**, and **Scott Fais** and **Alex Reszityk** of **Funworld** magazine and IAAPA. Other presenters are pending.

This year's event will include an evening visit to Fun Spot Kissimmee, where participants will be able to take an actual ride on the new Mine Blower coaster that was toured last March. A construction tour of SeaWorld's new Infinity Falls raft ride and a tour of Skyline Attractions' own facility also are scheduled.

Registration for SKYnext 2018 closed Jan. 31. For more information regarding future events, contact **Chris Gray**, vice president of Skyline Attractions, through the company's website.

• skylineattractions.com

SAFETY CALENDAR 2018

Pa. Amusement Ride Safety Seminar

February 27 - March 1, 2018
Red Lion Hotel, Harrisburg, Pa.
(717) 215-4316, Joe Filoramo or
(561) 758-3266, Phil Slaggert
www.paridesafety.com

AAMA/AMOA Amusement Expo 2018

Feb. 28-March 1, 2018
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www.amusementexpo.org

NAARSO 2018 Outreach Safety School

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and

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MARK THE DATES

Asian Attractions Expo, June 6-8

Conference: June 5-8
Trade Show: June 6-8
Hong Kong, China • www.iaapa.org

Euro Attractions Expo, Sept. 23-27

Conference: Sept. 23-27
Trade Show: Sept. 25-27
Amsterdam, Netherlands • www.iaapa.org

World Waterpark Assn., Oct. 23-26

(Trade Show: Oct. 24 & 25)
Las Vegas, Nev. • (913) 599-0300 • www.waterparks.org

IAAPA Attractions Expo, Nov. 12-16

(Trade Show: Nov. 13-16)
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2019

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MUSEUM PROGRESS REPORT

This space is provided courtesy of Amusement Today, a corporate partner of the National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives.

Historic Great Adventure photos included with Bob Minick collection



Six Flags Great Adventure's 19th century carousel was installed when the park was constructed in 1974. The carousel dates back to 1897 and was built in England by Frederick Savage for traveling showmen John Beach & Sons. In 1968 it was transferred to another English traveling showman, J. Williams. Warner LeRoy, who created Great Adventure, acquired the carousel in 1973 from Williams. Originally powered by steam, it has been converted to run on compressed air. The carousel features 24 jumping horses and 12 roosters. Having been built in England, the carousel operates in a clockwise direction, contrary to most carousels operating in North America. NRCMA/BOB MINICK COLLECTION

FROM THE ARCHIVES COLLECTION



1924:

A lucky young man poses in front of the **Silver Spray Pleasure Pier**, in Long Beach, California. The pier, which received its name in a contest in 1917, was adjacent to the Jack Rabbit Racer, considered the second largest racing coaster in the country. Opened in May 1915, **John A. Miller** was part of the design team with **Frederick Ingersoll** of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Rides and attractions were housed along a central midway on a 300 foot wide wooden platform. The coaster was replaced in 1930 by one of the most famous roller coasters ever constructed, the Cyclone Racer. Meanwhile the pier and park buildings only lasted until 1948. —Richard W. Munch

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Seven Seas food festival returns to SeaWorld Orlando

ORLANDO, Fla. – After last year's delicious debut, **SeaWorld Orlando's** Seven Seas Food Festival is returning for a second course this spring. The park will be serving all-new dishes and fan-favorites to accompany world-class entertainment each Saturday and Sunday from February 17 to April 15.



Like all food served at SeaWorld, each item at the Seven Seas Food Festival reflects the park's commitment to sustainable foods and farming. Beyond delicious flavors, guests will discover dishes that are crafted with organic ingredients, cage-free eggs, regional produce and sustainable seafood.

Two all-new culinary markets join last year's popular booths, offering more sample-sized dishes from around the world. A selection of menu highlights include:

- German Market – Weiner Schnitzel Slider
- All-American Market – Nathan's Chicago, New York, and Coney Island Hot Dog Sliders
- Asian Market – Peking Duck Lo Mein with Fresh Oriental Vegetables
- Mexican Market – Braised Chicken Adobo with Mole Sauce, Cheese and Mexican Rice
- Caribbean Market – Cinnamon Slow Roasted Pork Belly with Sweet Plantain Mash
- Florida Market – new Wild Boar Smoked Cheddar Sausage
- Mediterranean Market – Sea Scallops Provençal with Wild Mushroom Risotto
- North Atlantic Market – New England Lobster Roll
- Pacific Coast Market – Braised Pork Cheeks with Savory Apple Polenta
- Brazilian Market – Brazilian Churrasco with Chimichurri & Garbanzo Frito
- Polynesian Island Market – NEW Pineapple Tofu Poke Bowl
- Gulf Coast Market – Southern Creamy Cheese Grits with a Blackened Shrimp

Seasonal flavors will also take the stage during Seven Seas. Through March 25, specialty barbeque items will be available featuring the park's famous short ribs, brisket and chicken. New flavors will join the festival beginning March 31.

To accompany all of the savory and sweet samples sprinkled throughout the park, guests can choose from 70 beers and 50 wines to pair with the specialty food items. Five new beverage and brew huts stationed throughout the park will provide ample opportunities for guests to indulge during the festival. A complete menu of Seven Seas Food Festival dishes and drinks can be found online: SeaWorldOrlando.com/SevenSeas.

Busch Gardens Tampa spring festival returns with food & wine

TAMPA, Fla. — Busch Gardens Tampa Bay's most delicious event returns this March with tastes for every palate at the fourth annual Food & Wine Festival. Guests can sample delectable cuisines paired with a selection of 65+ wines, 50+ craft brews and specialty cocktails, while enjoying some of the biggest names in entertainment. The Food & Wine Festival runs Saturdays and Sundays, March 3 through April 29 and is included with any Annual Pass, Fun Card or daily admission to the park.

The Festival features all-new twists on cuisine at 13 culinary cabins, along with favorites like mango shrimp ceviche and beef brisket on a spiced corn waffle.



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