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Digital Edition

## Santa Cruz County suffers from fires for 37 days



The California wildfires, prompted by a local lightning storm, loomed over area attractions for more than a month, threatening some and irreparably damaging others.  
COURTESY SFGATE

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. — **Tom Canfield**, whose family owns and operates the **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**, was just one of thousands watching as lightning bolts streaked the sky in the hours before dawn on Aug. 16.

It lasted for about three hours over his home located on 80 acres of land on a ridge above Santa Cruz. When it was over, he, his wife and son went back to bed.

They were to find out later that there had been between 10,000 and 11,000 strikes of lightning within 72 hours in Santa Cruz County as well as other counties to the north. Called a dry storm, the lightning wasn't accompanied by rain. It streaked the night sky striking the ground that had been scorched by a very hot and dry summer.

On Aug. 19, the Canfields were awakened at 2 a.m. with the county sheriff banging on their door. They were told it was time to evacuate. Fires created by that storm were on the way.

"We had seen a fire over on the ridge north of us at the state park," Canfield said. "The fire had started on the northern county line and was burning south."

Canfield felt they were in pretty good shape to sustain the threat of fire. He had taken some preventative measures after a fire had advanced on the property in 2009 including installing a 20,000-gallon water tank.

"My brother-in-law, **Montiel Tremaine**, lives on our property," Canfield said. "He had been a front line guy fighting fires his entire life."

They had worked together after the 2009 incident.

► See WILDFIRES, page 6



The Vekoma flying coaster and the Rookburgh area are thematically intertwined.  
COURTESY PHANTASIALAND

Vekoma's flying coaster integrates into steampunk area

## Phantasialand astounds guests with record-breaking coaster, Rookburgh

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

BRÜHL, Germany — Much to the surprise of local residents and coaster fans everywhere, the highly themed **Phantasialand** unveiled its long-awaited new area and new coaster in the middle of September. With close to four years in development, the steampunk-themed area, Rookburgh, and its iconic attraction, F.L.Y., was met with rave reviews over social media following the soft opening.

In addition to the coaster, the incredibly immersive land offers a new restaurant, a candy store and the new Hotel Charles Lindbergh.

Front and center, however, is the unmistakable tangle of maroon track that soars and dives throughout the area. Coaster historians know that **Vekoma** manufactured the first flying coaster in the year 2000.

Now two decades later, the company has come full circle reimagining the genre into a sleek, fluid crowd-pleasing thriller.

"The flying coaster has always been a very challenging ride position with lots of room for improvement. Working together with Phantasialand, our goal was to create a pure flying sensation with the best possible passenger experience," said Sales Manager **Stefan Holtman**, Vekoma. "With F.L.Y., we have created a totally flying experience like never seen before in the world."

Park officials reported to *Amusement Today* that the vision of the Owner and Managing Director **Robert Löffelhardt** was to create a theme world that is truly self-contained. Rookburgh is to be a world into which one can completely immerse oneself by day and night. Where everything merges together, from the theming to the food

and the experience at night. Over time, this has led to the planning of the Rookburgh theme world with the flying launched coaster, F.L.Y., in perfect harmony with the Hotel Charles Lindbergh.

"The decision to cooperate with Vekoma was primarily based on their willingness to fully engage with us," said **Sarah Collas**, communications/marketing, Phantasialand. "We needed a partner with whom we could develop a completely new system — according to our specifications, requirements and wishes. As always at Phantasialand, we didn't want to create an 'off-the-shelf' coaster, but a completely new roller coaster experience. In the case of F.L.Y., it is a flying experience like no other flying coaster in the world. This required a completely

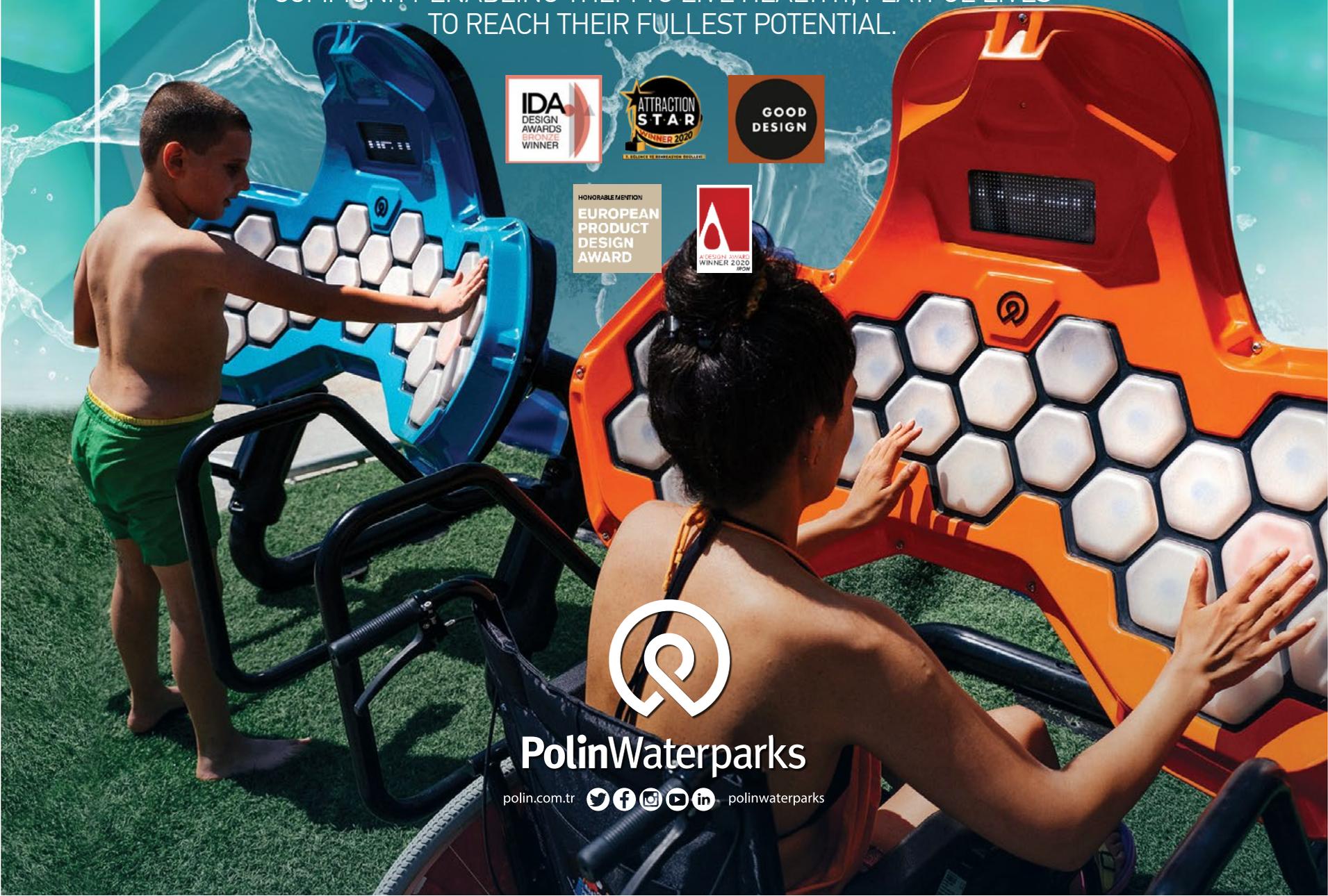
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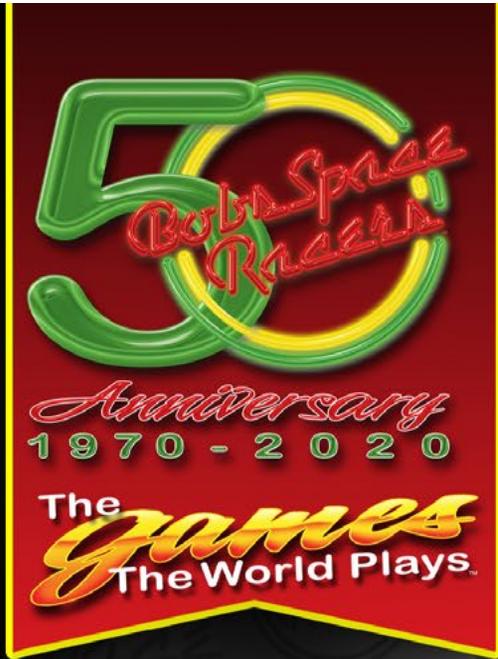
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# AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

## Eyes on better tomorrow



Robinson

It's just not a November, not remotely normal, without the IAAPA Expo happening. Having attended IAAPA Expo since I was a kid, this time of year feels truly odd to not be planning a trip to Orlando. The Expo is always scheduled right around my birthday, so even when I did not attend, I remember my father planning and loading for the Expo and finding a way to celebrate before he left town.

The entirety of the 2020 season just wasn't what most of us would've ever expected it to be. Nothing has symbolized just how much our industry is struggling right now than the cancellation of IAAPA Expo 2020.

However, just like much of these past several months, we get through it by sharing with family and keeping our eyes on the better days that lie ahead. We're looking forward to the time we can do things again like we've done them for years, even decades, prior.

And, in this industry, we're all family.

So, I'm looking ahead to IAAPA Expo 2021. I'm looking ahead to spending time with my family. I'm looking forward to the little traditions of the Expo. I'm keeping my eyes on thoughts of raising a toast with the rest of NEAAPA in remembrance of Tom Morrow, to stepping on the gas in a go kart race at Fun Spot America with the team from Rides 4 U, to walking the showfloor in a neck tie made from the artwork of Skyline Attractions' Chris Gray.

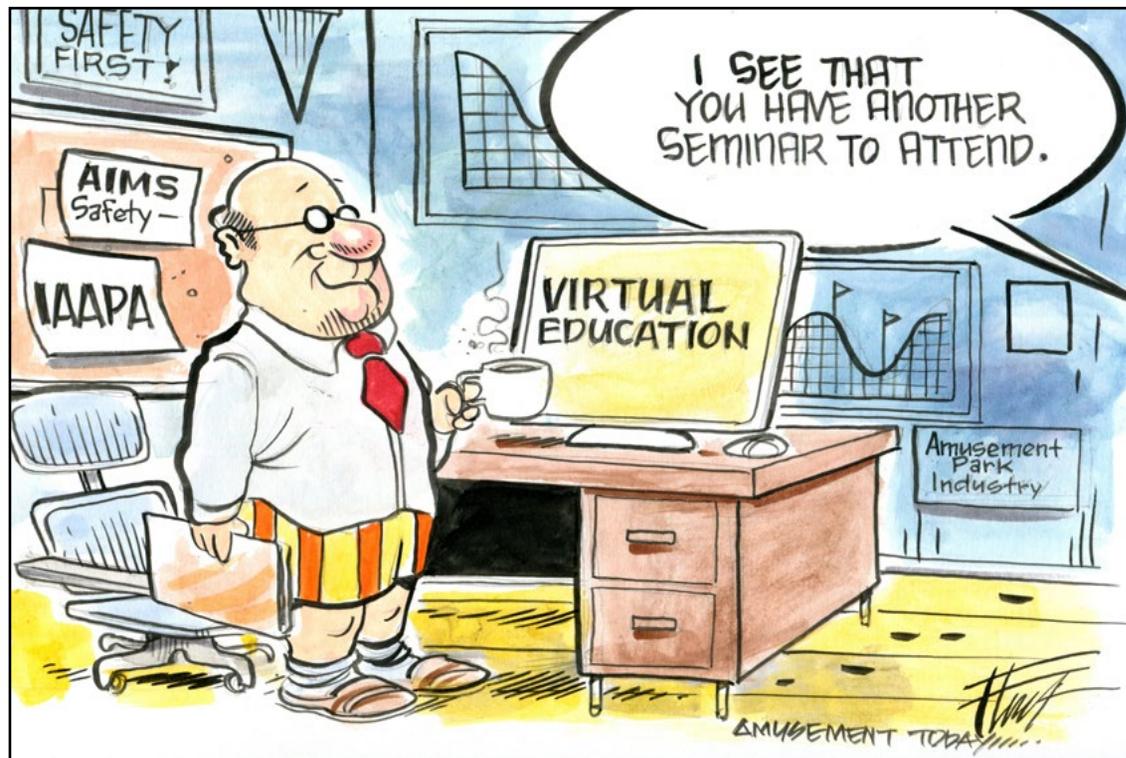
Most importantly, I'm not taking those moments remotely for granted again and I'm planning to be part of creating new ones.

Every IAAPA Expo for the past several years, I've wanted to run the Footprints From The Heart 5K to benefit Give Kids The World Village. In 2021, there'll be no sleeping in or double-booking myself. I'll be at the start line and crossing the finish line.

After more than 20 years of thinking about it, I used the time during this pandemic to finally earn my motorcycle endorsement on my license. At IAAPA Expo 2021, I'll be coming into Orlando early specifically to partake in the 10th Annual Motorcycle Ride also benefitting Give Kids The World Village.

Most of 2020 was not what any of us had planned on or hoped. What 2021 is like, however, that we still have some control of. We can look forward to it, make the most of it and plan to make it — and every year, every Expo to follow — better than ever before.

**FLINT'S VIEW:** Bubba Flint



**INDUSTRY VOICE:** Hal McEvoy, President and CEO, IAAPA

## How will you reset your playbook?

It's hard to believe that it is already November, and we continue to work through the impacts of COVID-19. Normally, the IAAPA team and members from around the world look forward to November as a time to come together and celebrate during IAAPA Expo and I still find it hard to believe we will not be together this year. However, I am still filled with hope. All year, the IAAPA team has remained connected with members as we all shared tough news, collaborated, and advocated on the industry's behalf, and found positive experiences and learnings to share with each other.

Our industry continues to demonstrate our unwavering commitment to safety. Facility members have quickly adjusted protocols and procedures to ensure safe experiences for their guests and employees. Manufacturer and supplier members pivoted to make personal protection equipment, new supplies to aid in physical distancing measures and to find new ways to use technology to enhance the guest experience. And the IAAPA community came together to write global industry reopening guidelines to help to provide a united voice and



McEvoy

to be shared with governments and health authorities around the world as we readied to reopen. We have accomplished a lot under unprecedented circumstances.

And we have not slowed down. We continue to listen to and connect with members and focus on helping guests feel confident to travel and return to parks and attractions. IAAPA is hosting our first ever IAAPA Expo | IAAPA Virtual Education Conference Nov. 16 – 18. The incredible program will bring our industry together - digitally - for a virtual learning experience complete with the education, information, and connections our industry expects from us. We are also moving forward with plans for in-person events in 2021. This includes new events, new opportunities, and new ways to help keep the members connected. No one knows what the future holds, but I know our industry will continue to innovate, learn, and adapt. We will work together to come out of this year stronger than ever. For more than 100 years IAAPA has served and supported the global attractions industry. We will continue to work for you to continue the legacy of successfully entertaining generations to come.

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



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# 2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

## Hal McEvoy, IAAPA

**Hal McEvoy** is known for his leadership style, business sense and calming approach with people ... all important traits when leading a global association. As president and CEO of **IAAPA**, Hal brings vast industry knowledge and experience to the job as he enjoyed a previous 42-year career with **Busch Entertainment Corporation** and **SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment**. During this time, he was an active member of IAAPA task forces, panels, audit committee and chaired several different committees.

**Title:** President and CEO.

**Number of years in the industry:** 45.

**Best thing about the industry:**

Seeing smiling guests and families making memories together and having fun!

**Favorite amusement park ride:** I have had the opportunity to see and experience many world-class attractions, and that makes it hard to pick a favorite. Our industry has so many creative, innovative and amazing attractions.

**If I weren't working in the industry, I would be ...** Retired – and spending my time with my wife visiting parks and attractions around the world.

**Biggest challenge facing the industry:**

All of us have been affected by COVID-19 and are dealing with so many economic and even personal challenges. I think our industry has done an incredible job pivoting and adjusting operations to include new safety precautions. Now I believe the challenge is focusing on regaining consumer confidence. We are ready to have our guests safely return to us. We just need them to now feel ready to come back.

**The thing I like most about amusement park season is ...**

I am always inspired by how parks adapt along with the seasons and add to their experience with cultural events, food festivals and events celebrating Halloween, Christmas, New Year's and other holidays.

**My go-to quarantine clothing was ...**

An IAAPA logo polo shirt and shorts.

**Favorite kind of snack:** Cheese and crackers.

**The last concert I went to was ...**

Billy Joel at the Amway Center in Orlando.

**My ideal day off is spent ...**

Boating and fishing.

**The thing I will miss most about the IAAPA Expo is ...**

Seeing friends and colleagues from around the world in person and meeting new ones.

**In one word, sum up 2020:** Unprecedented!

**The last time I went swimming was ...**

Sunday, September 27, in my backyard pool.



**Hal McEvoy brings vast industry knowledge and experience to his duties as CEO of IAAPA.** COURTESY IAAPA

**Do you eat out or cook at home most often?**

My wife and I like to cook, so most often at home...but a meal out is excellent!

**My next vacation will be ...**

No telling at this time. It seems like every day presents new challenges to overcome.

**My mother always told me ...**

My mother was a good Italian mother. She always said, "If you are eating, then you are happy and healthy."

**Favorite drink in the morning:**

Starbucks Grande Pike coffee with cream.

**If I could watch only one TV show, it would be ...**

Don't really have a favorite...seem to do a lot of channel surfing.

**Biggest recent splurge**

Home improvement at our house.

**What part of the day do you feel most creative?**

I am an early riser and look forward to what's next all day.

**The song I can't ever seem to get out of my mind is ...**

"Bitter Sweet Symphony."

**Favorite sports team**

I don't really have one. I do enjoy watching football, hockey and soccer.

**My childhood ambition was to ...**

Be an accountant and business executive like my dad.

**When I say politics, you say ...**

God bless, America!

## THE INDUSTRY SEEN

### New home, new fun



**KINGS MILLS, Ohio** — Industry veteran Mark Rosenzweig of 3dx (a scenic fabrication company) recently relocated to the Cincinnati area. His family is enjoying having the wild coasters of Kings Island virtually in their backyard. His daughter Sydney (right) overcame her fear of loops and conquered the seven inversions of the park's Bolliger & Mabillard inverted coaster, Banshee. COURTESY MARK ROSENZWEIG



## Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

### Elephantine affections

In 1978, my husband **Bob Minick** and I relocated to Stockbridge, Georgia, to run **Lion Country Safari**, which operated 1970-84. Emily, the park's six-week-old elephant, stole our hearts immediately. Bob, in turn, caught Emily's fancy.

Bob designed a new pachyderm information booth large enough to incorporate a playground for Emily. It allowed guests to observe her closely, though not touch her. Whenever we entered the backstage area, Emily rushed to Bob and lifted her trunk for him to pet her tongue, usually nudging me aside. After a few visits, she finally turned in my direction and I was thrilled — until she bopped me on the head with her trunk.

Bob kept handfuls of monkey chow in his sports coat pockets, which Emily explored with her snout. Combined with elephant mucus, the animal food created a gummy goop that was hard to clean from fabric. Our dry cleaner told me it would not accept my husband's coats unless I scraped out the mess.

One day, as we were walking Emily back to the barn, Bob paused to talk to a guest. And suddenly, Emily bopped me on the head. She then turned to Bob, nosed into his pocket for some monkey chow and lifted her trunk for a tongue petting.

The sight of Emily's big eyelashes when she turned and winked at me both softened the knock and served as an indelible reminder: Even while administering bops, elephants should know only love and treats.

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

## ► WILDFIRES

Continued from page 1

That evening when they were all alerted Tremaine told Canfield "to get as much fuel away from the house as possible."

So, Canfield hooked up his boat to one of his trucks and drove it to a safer location. He was having his main driving truck worked on and he was able to get that truck and drive it back home.

Canfield had grabbed the family's documents and paperwork. His wife, **Xochitl Canfield**, grabbed some pictures, as many as she could. Their 15-year-old son, their youngest child, was the only child at home at the time. He was able to grab some of his things.

He drove his truck and his wife drove the Subaru. His brother-in-law was the last to leave the area, driving their mini van out.

"My brother-in-law watched his own place burn down while he was trying to save mine," Canfield said. "No one came. No one came to help with the fire.

"We got our cars out," he said, along with more of an ironic chuckle than an actual laugh. "We didn't get near enough. I didn't get the silver coins that I was collecting for my children. I didn't get the silver dollar of my grandpa's. I didn't get my grandpa's tools that he had kept in pristine condition and that I was still using. My wife didn't get so many of things that belonged to her mother."

Their oldest two children, both daughters, were away when the fire broke out. One is in college and the other living in a small apartment elsewhere. The daughter in college had actually packed a "ready bag" full of childhood and teen memories just for this emergency. But, she went away to school without telling her parents she had done so. The bag didn't make it out of the home.

Their older daughter, an artist, had left much at home including artwork for her portfolios.

Canfield, his wife and son went to a motel and then to another motel. A few days later when they were allowed back onto the property, everything was gone. The hot fire had turned their home and everything in it to ash.



The Swanton Pacific Railroad trains were built for the 1915 Pan Pacific International Exhibition. They are maintained by the Swanton Pacific Railroad Society, which is connected with Cal Poly. COURTESY CHARLIE CRABB

This was the C.Z.U. Lightning Complex Fire, named after Cal Fire's three-letter call sign for its San Mateo-Santa Cruz unit. It raged on for a total of 37 days ravaging more than 86,000 acres of land. News agencies reported that the flames destroyed over 900 residences, damaged another 90 and threatened more than 3,800 in Santa Cruz County.

Although not the largest fire ever reported, the fire is being described as the 11th-most destructive wildfire in state history. Of the more than 7,500 structures that had been destroyed or damaged in California by wildfires this year up until the C.Z.U. fire, a fifth of those 7,500 structures came from this fire not only in Santa Cruz County but north of the county line as well.

In addition, the county infrastructure sustained significant damage including electrical utilities and the Santa Cruz County septic system. The loss of so much mountainous vegetation could result in mudslides with damage to more buildings and roads.

The fire didn't threaten the City of Santa Cruz. But the thousands that had been evacuated found themselves in the city's hotels and motels.

The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk became a staging



area for some first-responder agencies.

Students from **California Polytechnic State University**, San Luis, California, in Santa Cruz County, had been evacuated and many came into town. Normally, that would have been a bigger hardship on the city but many of the students were taking virtual classes.

Plus, county officials had asked all guests to leave to accommodate evacuees.

**Marq Lipton**, a Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk spokesman, said the catering crew came to the park and used the park's large kitchen.

"They provided meals for the students as well as the community," Lipton said.

No fire damage was reported on the campus of the California Polytechnic University, but there was damage to the university's research facility, **Swanton Pacific Ranch**, located right outside Davenport, California, also in Santa Cruz County. And, unfortunately, the historical **Swanton Pacific Railroad**, located on the same grounds, also was damaged. The fire damaged or destroyed the

Roundhouse, Car Shop, Car Barn and Cal Barn. The Machine Shop, Train Station and picnic grounds were spared any damage.

The 1913 and 1914 steam locomotives were badly damaged by the fire but university officials are optimistic that they can be restored. All of the passenger cars were lost and most of the maintenance of way cars also were lost.

The 1912 steam locomotive was off-site having a new boiler installed and the 502 diesel locomotive was in the Machine Shop.

The Swanton Pacific Railroad trains were built for the 1915 **Pan Pacific International Exhibition**, San Francisco, California.

The railway is scaled to one-third of the standard size. They were built by **Louis MacDermot**. MacDermot, who passed away in 1948, was an inventor and mechanical engineer from Oakland, California. The trains were created as the **Overfair Railway** and were a part of the **Panama-Pacific International Exposition** of 1915.

After the exposition, the locomotives ended up being

stored on MacDermot's estate and would not run again until the 1980s.

**Al Smith**, former mayor of Los Gatos, California, had once worked for the **Southern Pacific Railroad**. He decided to purchase the locomotives from an auction, because of his love of railroads. In 1979 he began laying the rails with the help of volunteers to create the Swanton Pacific Railway.

The railroad is maintained and run by the **Swanton Pacific Railroad Society**, which is connected with Cal Poly. They have launched a Go Fund Me to help raise funds to get the train running again.

It will take years before the damage and loss of the C.Z.U. Lightning Complex Fire can be turned around. For some, like Canfield, things will never be quite the same. They do plan to rebuild on their 80 acres. They are renting a home in the southern part of the county where Canfield said he feels they will be there for at least the next two years.

The house they will most likely build will not be as large as the one destroyed by the fire. By the time it is finished, all their children will be living their own lives. Plus, they are thinking about a one-level.

"You know, when these things happen, you make yourself move forward," Canfield said. "You just start taking each step. What's done is done. I think we have just been in shock. My wife and I were both of the same notion that our house would be okay."

He said there is already vegetation growth on the land where his home sat. The Naked Lady Lilies are doing great, he said, although he is not sure why. There also are new branches sprouting off the tree trunks.

But as a reminder that one has to take the good with the bad, Canfield said the poison oak also is coming back strongly.

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# California's park reopening guidelines keep large attractions shuttered

ANAHEIM, Calif. — California's major theme parks such as **Disneyland** and **Universal Studios** will have to wait longer to reopen under guidance released by the state on October 20.

Larger theme parks will only be permitted to reopen in counties that have reached the least-restrictive, or yellow, fourth tier of the state's reopening framework, and even then, capacity will be limited to 25%. Orange County, home to the Disneyland Resort, is currently in the second, or red, tier of that matrix. Los Angeles County, home to Universal Studios, is in the most-restrictive, or purple tier of the state's framework.

Smaller, more localized theme parks will be able to open outdoor attractions in counties in the third, or orange, tier of the COVID-19 roadmap. Smaller theme parks are considered those with a capacity of 15,000 or fewer.

Reopening guidance from the state has been a long time coming. All of the Disney parks around the world have been open for months, with mostly good results and few reported



Recently announced theme park guidelines from the state of California may keep Disneyland shuttered until as late as the summer of 2021. AT/TIM BALDWIN

cases among employees and guests. As far as is known, no infections have been linked directly to the theme parks. In this age of social media, the public would have certainly heard the complaints from employees and visitors if infections were pervasive.

Theme park executives from Disneyland, Universal Studios Hollywood, **Legoland** and **Cedar Fair** — which operates **Knott's Berry Farm** — came together on October 21 to decry what they see as an edict handed down by

the State of California and **Governor Gavin Newsom**. Officials say the state guidelines make it nearly impossible for them to reopen. Some hinted at legal action.

When asked about legal recourse, **Erin Guerrero**, executive director of the **California Attractions and Parks Association** told local news sources, "I think that all options are open at this point. Our number one goal is to reopen responsibly."

Governor Newsom sent a small delegation to **Walt**

**Disney World** in Orlando, Fla., in late September to see the policies, procedures and implementations Disney and other operators had put into practice during their reopening under COVID-19 guidelines.

"In my opinion, this was a 9th inning move, far too late in the ball game," stated **Dennis Spiegel** of **International Theme Park Services** in an open letter to the media. "If analysis was required, the California Government should have had staff in Florida three months ago to see the initiatives Disney and the others put in place, and how well they were executed by the parks and received by the guests."

Once the theme parks are allowed to reopen, they will still face restrictions. All parks will be required to implement advance ticket sales to allow for contact tracing, and attendance will be limited to 25% of capacity. The wearing of face coverings will be mandatory for all guests, except those eating and drinking in specifically designated areas, and physical distancing measures will be required.

"We have proven that we can responsibly reopen, with science-based health and safety protocols strictly enforced at our theme park properties around the world," said **Ken Potrock**, president of Disneyland Resort.

"Pushing us into Tier Four behind other businesses that have already reopened makes no sense," said President & COO of Universal Studios Hollywood **Karen Irwin**.

"It is estimated that Orange County, California, has lost over \$5 billion USD in revenues as a result of poor governmental planning relating to theme park closures," added Spiegel. "Disney alone in Orange County has lost over \$2 billion and is estimated company-wide to lose more than \$10 billion by the end of 2020. Disney, Universal, Cedar Fair, **Six Flags**, Legoland, and SeaWorld live by the Industry motto, 'safety and security first.' None of these organizations would jeopardize their company's reputations for revenues, nor would they jeopardize their employees' or guests' safety for revenues."

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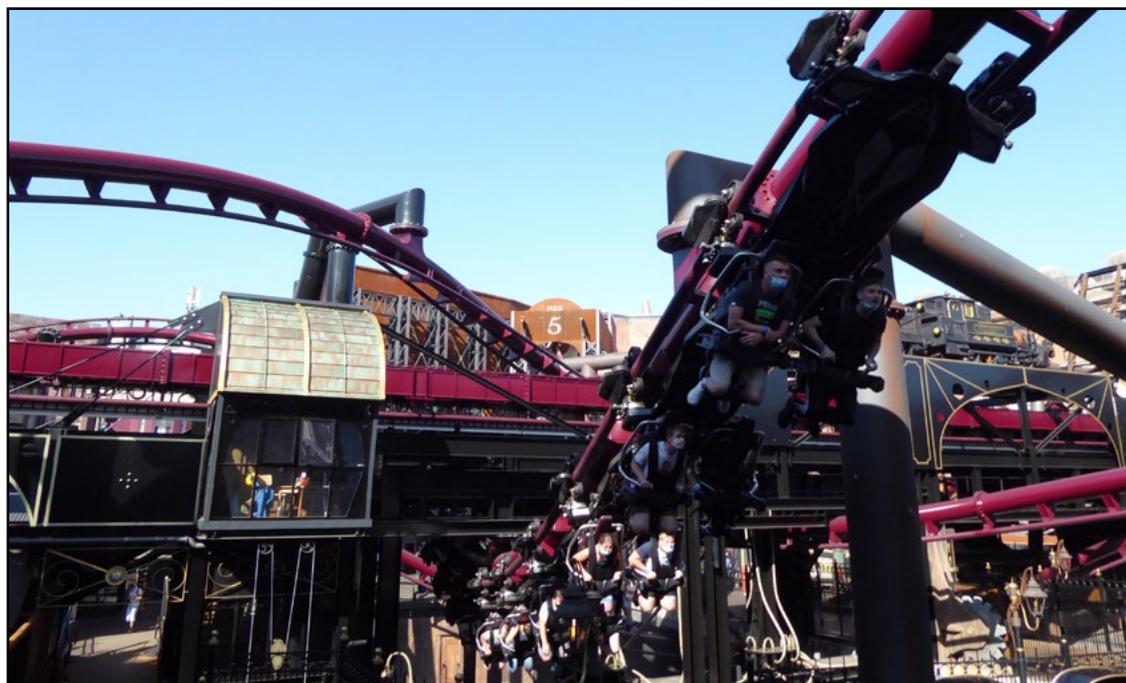
new seating system, a new technology and a special track layout. We knew that, and that was our declared goal.”

Many of the ride’s attributes are hidden from view, most notably the station. The ride’s ingenious secret is concealed. The loading process finds the track twisted 90 degrees. Passengers board and exit from an upright sitting position.

“During the discussions with Phantasialand about the flying coaster, we all were never satisfied with the loading position,” said Holtman. “While we were testing the flying and lying position on a mock-up in our factory, the idea was born to turn the vehicles 90 degrees and [the rider’s] back to the track.”

After dispatch, the vehicles turn forward while the track twists into a traditional placement gracefully placing riders comfortably in the flying position. Shortly thereafter, trains enter a launch sending riders out into the sky and over the streets of Rookburgh. No logical description can convey the ride’s layout as its entanglement with the entire area is a masterpiece of spectator appeal. The snarl of track soars above and dives below Rookburgh’s walkways and interacts brilliantly with the steampunk theming. After hitting the final brakes, the train keeps on slowly running and as swiftly as passengers turned into the flying position, the seats turn back upright, as does the track. In the exit station, the restraints open and riders simply step forward and leave.

“[Vekoma] knows and appreciates our commitment and expertise and knows what can become out of it,” said Collas. “Hardly any other company is involved as inten-



Many of F.L.Y.’s attributes are hidden from view, most notably the loading station.

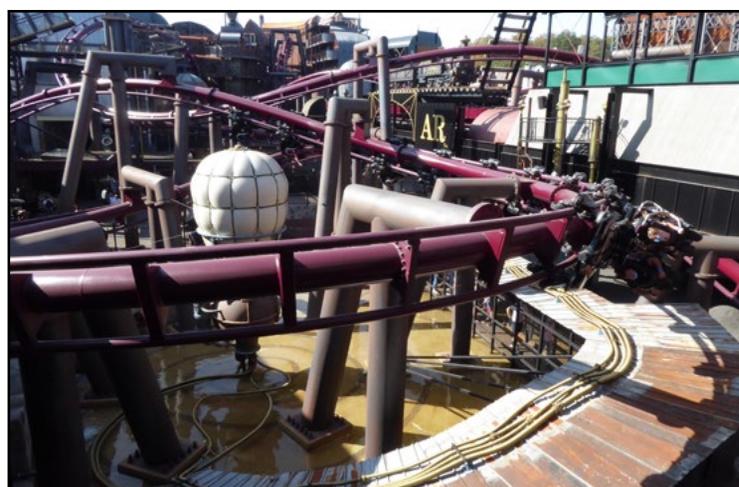
The ride’s layout is an entanglement with the entire area and a masterpiece of spectator appeal.

COURTESY RIK ENGELEN

sively as Phantasialand. Such a close cooperation is rare in the development of a roller coaster. Together we have created a completely new roller coaster experience. This was only possible with this close cooperation with Vekoma involved with us.”

“In order to improve the comfort of the passengers, we have modified a number of things on the train,” said Holtman. “We tilted the passenger seats 15 degrees away from parallel in order to have a better forward view. This spreads the weight over the whole body. The leg restraint is completely modified for better support. The pitch between passengers is increased 30cm which creates a very open and individual feeling.”

Boasting of the record for “world’s longest flying coaster,” Phantasialand has kept the



ride’s stats of length — as well as height and speed — close to the vest. Numbers remain secret, but the park notes the length at just under 1.3 kilometers (4,265 feet). Whatever the actual figure might be, the previous record holder was just over 3,600 feet.

Four trains of 20 keep the queue moving.

Holtman is particularly proud of Vekoma’s track work. “Regarding the track design and fabrication, we are using state-of-the-art 3D CNC bending machines, which are specially developed for Vekoma. This, together with a G-force based design tool and special procedures on track assembly, can cre-

ate a constant and very smooth ride experience,” he said.

The Hotel Charles Lindbergh is the property’s third. In contrast to the Hotel Ling Bao and Hotel Matamba, which showcase Far East and African theming, Hotel Charles Lindbergh immerses guests into deeper storytelling. The hotel itself is unique as all rooms sleep two in cylindrical spaces like an airplane carrier. The immersion is carried throughout from check-in to the hotel’s bar and other spaces. Only hotel guests can enter the facility, and one of the bigger perks is the overview of the entire Rookburgh area.

According to the park, the

new hotel being merged into the new area was a challenge which they had not faced before. Construction was quite complex with the special architecture of the hotel with its five buildings, six levels and special cabin design, not to mention the enormously tangled track right through the middle of the themed world.

Bar 1919 is exclusive to hotel guests and the storytelling is in full force with the steampunk atmosphere. Restaurant Uhrwerk is open to all guests during the operating day but caters exclusively to hotel guests in the morning and evening. From crunchy pastries to traditional pasta to the Rook-Burger, Uhrwerk offers handcrafted cuisine with dishes made with culinary inventiveness.

“Just like the food of Rookburgh, or rather the Taste of Rookburgh, our colleagues from our gastronomy department have developed all the culinary delights in the Uhrwerk restaurant, the sandwich shop Zum Kohleschipper and Emilie’s Chocoladen & Candy Werkstatt especially for us — with our own recipes, home-made dishes and high-quality ingredients,” press representatives said.

The Rookburgh themed area extends from the Berlin section where the park has offered “The Magic Rose – Spirit of Light” final show during the park’s Wintertraum winter season. That show had featured a steampunk vibe, and Phantasialand carried this theme to greater levels with the new section. According to the park, the intention was “to create a world in which industrial tones and the theme of aviation were central, while innovative yet charmingly old-fashioned characteristics of steampunk shaped the

► See FLY, page 9



The elaborate steampunk theming carries into the hotel bar and restaurant (above left and right). Soaring over the midways and interacting with the theming makes for an increased sense of speed (above middle). COURTESY PHANTASIALAND; VEKOMA

**►FLY****Continued from page 8**

design and spirit." Spectators have been impressed by the attention to detail with the numerous gears, pipes, smoke and fog, inventions and industrial surroundings.

"No other theme park in the world uses the theme of steampunk in such a tangible and detailed way. Rookburgh became a world of explorers and adventurers, of aeronauts and free spirits — but also of craftsmen and workers. It is where the sky is conquered and amazing machines are invented. This is who we are at our core. At Phantasialand we enjoy creating our very own worlds with a 'wow factor,'" press officials proudly stated.

"We are very proud to have successfully completed this project that shows a masterpiece of engineering," said Holtman. "Together with Phantasialand, we succeeded to create a ride that is one of a kind in the roller coaster industry."

When *AT* asked if there were any surprises once the land opened, Phantasialand management stated: "The complete immersion — which was our declared goal with Rookburgh

— is felt so intensely by the guests, and they become so much a part of Rookburgh and its stories. That really surprised us — and we love it! That our ideas and stories of Rookburgh would be felt this way was our hope, and that our guests now formulate and experience this so intensely is, of course, something we are very excited about. It's also surprising that for many Rookburgh visitors, the overall experience is more important than the coaster — even if it's what we wanted to create. Many guests first talk about their experiences with the restaurant Uhrwerk or their astonishment about the design of the world or their experiences in the Hotel Charles Lindbergh before they address their flight with F.L.Y., so it is a little upside down to a 'normal' perception of a coaster and a themed world. Most of the time, a coaster is the focus of attention. The fact that our theme world as an overall experience, in which hotel, coaster, design and enjoyment merge completely with each other, works out so well and that our guests literally become "Rookburghers" themselves, has surprised and inspired us anew every day."



**Hotel Charles Lindbergh (above) is the park's third hotel. A throwback air carrier theme immerses hotel rooms in storytelling (inset).**

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# PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► GCII's steel track on Fun Spot's White Lightning — page 14 / Universal announces VelociCoaster — page 22

Enchanted Tale of Beauty and the Beast dark ride takes top bill

## Tokyo Disneyland reopens, adds its largest expansion to date

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

TOKYO — Asian theme parks were among the first to experience closures owing to the COVID-19 crisis. Since those first shutdowns, all Disney parks have reopened with the exception of the two parks in California. Guests clamoring for some Disney magic are finding it in big servings at Tokyo Disneyland.

On September 28, the largest expansion in the history of Tokyo Disney Resort made its debut. New additions stretching across three lands not only included new attractions, but also restaurants, shops and more entertainment to engage guests in a grand way.

With three years in development, the most elaborate of them all is Enchanted Tale of Beauty and the Beast. Housed within the enormous structure stylized to the Beast's castle is a delightful queue, a captivating preshow in stained glass atop a beautiful staircase and a dark ride in which guests board bowls and saucers to be whisked away through various scenes in a retelling of the Oscar-nominated movie.

"Dark rides have been a part of the Disney experience since the opening of the very first Disneyland in 1955. They've evolved significantly both technically and experientially since then, but the focus on story and bringing these stories to life for our guests continues to be our priority," said WDI Executive Creative Director, **Ted Robledo**.

The looming castle housing all the fun is intricately themed throughout. As guests enter, the corridors that form the queue provide glimpses into the happenings in the castle and feature characters that are quick to elicit smiles from both young and old.

Once in the main room, groups are socially distanced for



The ride's preshow is told through the stained-glass window at the top of the staircase, as well as two intricate animatronics (above left). Trackless vehicles themed to bowls and saucers are a perfect way to say "Be Our Guest" (above right). COURTESY DISNEY



the preshow. As lights dim and the movie's soundtrack escalates, eyes are drawn to the stained-glass window at the top of the staircase. The window comes alive with images summarizing the prologue, followed by heroine Belle and the Beast emerging on upper-floor balconies via impressive animatronics.

After doorways open, detailed hallways allow guests to see the castle kitchen as they are guided to the ride loading area. A grouping of trackless ride vehicles rounds a corner. Each "bowl" seats 10 passengers with a front row of four and a back row of six. Plexiglass currently separates riders during the pandemic. With a chorus of "Be Our Guest," six vehicles are dispatched at once.

Riders enter a dining room to see Belle sitting at a long, empty table. Bowls turn toward Lumiere for a moment only to turn to see dancing objects now on the table. As passengers turn to take notice of dancing dishes in cabinets, they rotate back to see the same table now overloaded with food, enchanted objects and more. The scene culminates with passengers in their bowls dancing and gliding around the room.

"Unique to this ride is the vehicle that moves and 'dances' with the music of the show, con-

necting our guests to the songs and story they love like never before," said Robledo. "In some scenes, the vehicles dance and move as a group, further enhancing the experience of celebrating the music together as a shared experience. Not only do the vehicles carry our guests to characters and moments in the story, but they also bring guests in different vehicles together by coordinating moments where they come together like two dancers would. We like to think that what we've achieved with Enchanted Tale of Beauty and the Beast is not just a 'ride,' but a 'ride musical.'"

Transitions between scenes continue to tell the tale. Those familiar with the story — and who isn't? — embrace the surroundings, whether it be eavesdropping on the twosome falling in love, the villagers storming the castle or the moment when the Beast transforms back into the prince. The latter is particularly impressive in a multi-sensory illusion. Just as he transforms, the castle around the riders is also magically restored. To try to pinpoint the techniques in which it is done is stripping away the magic; passengers just take it in.

"Along with our sophisticated and life-like characters, our illusions team have created moments where not only

do characters transform, but entire spaces as well," Robledo told *Amusement Today*. "In other scenes of the ride, we combine traditional theatrical and illusion techniques, visually and audibly, with the latest technology to bring the enchanted objects and areas of the castle to life from the very first moment they enter the castle. In a sense, the attraction — character moments, atmosphere, and environment — starts in the queue and doesn't end until the guests leave their vehicles."

The final room allows the six bowls of guests into the grand ballroom where riders in their dishes dance along with the beloved couple and around the ballroom. The animatronics here are notably impressive as onlookers can see the prince's legs dance.

"One of the pillars of the *Beauty and the Beast* film is the music and lyrics written by **Howard Ashman** and **Alan Menken**. Nearly 30 years after the original film was released, the music they created remains a key component to the storytelling," said WDI Executive Creative Director for Music **John Dennis**. "When we started the project, we knew the music had to deliver the same spirit and feeling as the original film music."

Once moved into a garden, the bowls rotate to the unload-

ing station. From preshow to ride finale, the experience is around 15 minutes, with close to eight minutes being in the dark ride itself. The attraction is on the Fastpass system and also offers a single rider line.

As outstanding as it is, the dark ride is just one of the new additions. The themed surroundings outside the Beast's castle let people see villagers as well as Maurice's cottage. Guests enter first at the village, and the roadway travels into the forest where the Beast's castle stands almost 100 feet, towering above it all.

"The music team was also presented a few unique opportunities in the attraction," said Dennis. "Unlike the film, in this experience the guests get to spend some time outside the castle near the forest then make their way through the castle before Belle arrives. Arranger **Mike Tavera** adapted and arranged the music in these areas to set the mood for the guests as they first see the Beast's Castle and then make their way through the castle until we come upon Belle and we all meet the Beast for the first time."

The entire Beauty and the Beast area, while supposedly an extension of Fantasy Land, stretches into a midway of its

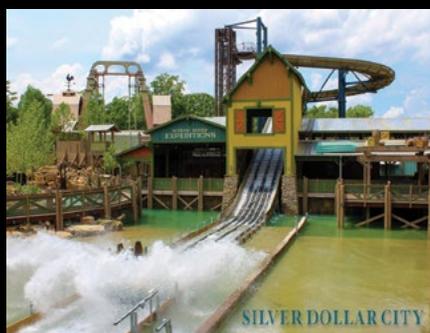
► See TOKYO, page 12

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## Lagotronics Projects launches fourth generation interactive technology

NETHERLANDS — After years of development, **Lagotronics Projects** has introduced their latest innovation in the field of interactive systems for theme parks, FECs, museums and other LBE venues. The new technology is a completely in-house developed positioning system similar to GPS, but specifically designed for indoor and outdoor leisure areas. The system opens up countless opportunities, now and in the future, for new interactive attractions and experiences.

Lagotronics Projects' interactive systems are very different from other systems available on the market. The technology behind the interactive systems is intricate, but its goal is simple, offering operators a system with the highest uptime and almost no maintenance. No cameras, mechanical wearing parts or lasers are used which makes the tech more reliable, more durable and safer. The systems can be used in virtually all attractions and experiences, even outdoors. To ensure an optimal guest experience, the systems are also extremely accurate and data communication is extremely fast.

The first systems were developed to interact with scenery and trigger sound, lighting, animatronics or SFX. With the growing demand for media-based attractions Lagotronics Projects started developing a new interactive system which makes it possible to interact with media on monitors or video projections.

This new interactive technology has huge potential, explains CEO of Lagotronics Projects, **Mark Beumers**: "Knowing the exact position of the interactive device and — at the same time — the pointing direction and entering this into a digital 3D environment makes this the ultimate interactive system. Imagine the endless opportunities this creates for interaction between guests and literally anything. Every object or component in the attraction, area or room can be made interactive or functioning as a target. Targets can even be variable and easily change locations over time creating multiple experiences in one. We can even interactively work with moving live actors."

•[lagotronicsprojects.com](http://lagotronicsprojects.com)



Supplied by Zamperla, Happy Ride with Baymax is a family friendly flat ride, the first to be themed to the *Big Hero 6* movie. COURTESY DISNEY

### ► TOKYO Continued from page 11

own. However, Tomorrowland and Toontown also boast something new.

Happy Ride with Baymax is the first attraction to be themed to the movie *Big Hero 6*. Much like Alien Swirling Saucers at **Walt Disney World's Disney Hollywood Studios**, guests are spun and whipped in circles. As with the variation in Orlando, this new addition to Tomorrowland was supplied by **Zamperla**. Lights in the ceiling

"scan" for happiness.

Other additions include Minnie's Style Studio in the park's Toontown section. Inside, guests can do a meet and greet with the famous mouse as she creates her own flair in her fashions. As guests enter, they see magazine covers on display featuring the mouse fashionista. Visitors hoping for a photo op can soak it all in when they get to meet Minnie herself.

Village Shoppes feature La Belle Librairie, Little Town Traders and Bonjour Gifts. Guests will recognize details from the movie in the library and will also recognize music from the movie. Inside Little Town Traders, village craftspeople sell their wares, including handmade toys, candlesticks and dishware. Bonjour Gifts is a clothing store.

In terms of food, La Taverne De Gaston offers indoor dining nearby Enchanted Tale of Beauty and the Beast. True to the setting, the menu is French. The counter service restaurant seats about 200 guests and is decorated like the tavern from the famed film. Adjacent to it is Le Fou's. This small outlet sells a single item: apple caramel churros. Tokyo Disneyland Resort is well known for its flavored popcorns (to where the park even offers a map of all the locations!). A French-themed popper is in place, bringing the total of specialized popcorn outlets in the park to 16. Among them is a larger new outlet, Big Pop. Located in Tomorrowland, it sports a cosmic vibe and is the first shop themed specifically to popcorn.

Prior to the global pandemic, the resort had hoped to open the new additions in April. Among them were Fantasyland Forest Theater, set to host performances of the new show, "Mickey's Magical Music World." However, owing to the health crisis, the indoor theater is the remaining component yet to open.

Having been permitted to reopen at the beginning of July, Tokyo Disneyland now delivers the goods to entice devoted fans to return to the park once again.



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# Silverwood adding Rocky Mountain single rail-coaster for 2021

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ATHOL, Idaho — Silverwood Theme Park's skyline is set to change once again. Located adjacent to Highway 95 in scenic northern Idaho, the park will be debuting its newest roller coaster in 2021. Stunt Pilot will be Silverwood's wildest ride yet.

On tap for this new creation is **Rocky Mountain Construction**, based just mere miles down the road. In comical irony, it will be the shortest delivery the company will have to make for one of its designs. RMC and Silverwood have enjoyed a long partnership. Multiple attractions have been erected by the company, and RMC has used its Topper Track to smooth out some rough spots on the property's two highly regarded wooden coasters.

In contrast to many theme parks, the "theme" to Silverwood is "vintage." When opened in 1988, the park capitalized on the throwback nostalgia of classic main streets, historic trains and daredevil stunt pilots of yesteryear. Today, the beautifully landscaped park has grown from those early years. The 413-acre property boasts more than 70 rides, slides and shows.



For eight years, the park offered daring stunt pilot shows to thrill audiences. An unfortunate accident at an air show in Spokane prompted the decision to no longer feature them at the park. Reaching into the park's historical roots, management is capturing that ambience with Stunt Pilot, its newest, state-of-the-art coaster.

"I always enjoyed the adrenaline rush of opening our airshow with a 350-mph low pass down the runway in my P-51 Mustang followed by a steep pullup and roll," said Owner **Gary Norton**. "Stunt Pilot will allow our guests to experience that 'Need for Speed' sensation of being an air show performer."

Stunt Pilot will be only the fourth single-rail Raptor Track coaster constructed by RMC. The first two prototype coasters of this genre opened in 2018 at **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** and **California's Great America**. The third — also under construction — will debut next summer at **Six Flags Great Adventure**.

Silverwood reached into its historical roots for the theme of Stunt Pilot, a Rocky Mountain Construction coaster debuting in 2021. COURTESY SILVERWOOD THEME PARK



"We've had a long relationship with Silverwood," said **Jake Kilcup**, COO, Rocky Mountain Construction. "[RMC] has essentially installed every coaster they have and a lot of the waterslides as well. We finally get to put one of our rides in the park 10 miles up the road. We love the theme; we think it pairs nicely with the ride."

Stunt Pilot will stand more than 106 feet tall and feature a near-vertical first drop. Throughout its wild acrobatics, riders will soar through three inversions. The structure and trains will sport a red-and-white color scheme.

The layout of the ride is closely modeled after the first two mirror-image prototypes.

"Riders will be speeding through some obstacles that

we are designing," said **Jordan Carter**, director of marketing, Silverwood. "That's going to make our version a little different. We are also using a moving station."

A significant difference is that the coaster will sport 10-vehicle trains. The original two operate with eight-car trains.

"In order to lengthen the train, we did have to go through and make some adjustments to the track. We wanted those two additional back seats and to fall within the ASTM limitations," said Kilcup. "Although it may look identical, it actually is different — there are some subtle changes. And we've worked on some improvements since those prototypes. We had great partners that first time around, and we worked really hard to make them

happy and improve the operations. The mechanical equipment has been reworked and the trains have been completely redesigned in how they function."

During times of economic uncertainty owing to the global health crisis, RMC admits that the surprise project is a true benefit. Some of the company's upcoming projects have been placed on hold.

"This is as spontaneous as it seems," Kilcup told *Amusement Today*. "In these days, it's really exciting to land a new [project]. It will be very good for us to be able to take clients just 10 miles up the road to put them on one of our rides. Silverwood is also allowing us to keep our guys working and be at home to where they don't have to travel. Things came together very quickly."



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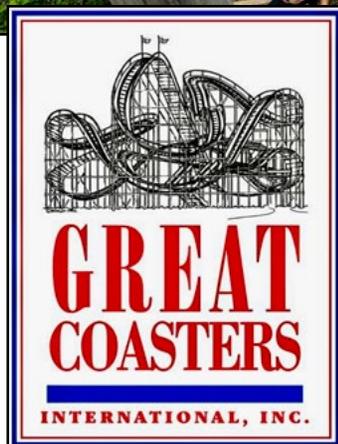
# Great Coasters International readies to offer steel track flexibility

AT: David Fake  
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — In early October **Great Coasters International, Inc.** (GCII) wrapped up a several-day, practical test of its new steel track design after retrofitting it onto a section of **Fun Spot America Orlando's White Lightning**, GCII's 19th coaster. It opened in 2013. This test came less than a year after the 2019 IAAPA Expo, during which GCII's president and cofounder, **Clair Hain, Jr.**, unveiled the steel track prototype as part of the company's 25th anniversary celebration (also at Fun Spot America Orlando).

It was during this surprise unveiling, that Hain announced that a steel track option would be added to the GCII's portfolio. At the time of the announcement, however, it was not made known the full scope and vision of their design. It is only now that the breadth of flexible options for parks that this new steel track presents. Those options are presented on three fronts: 1) Parks looking for a completely new, exciting and smooth coaster; 2) Parks with existing coasters seeking new thrills (including elements and inversions), but not the investment of an entirely new coaster; and 3) Parks looking to make adjustments, or reprofile a current coaster, but desiring a long-term solution that requires minimal ongoing maintenance.

The entire process of installation and testing was able to be completed within a remarkably short, four-day period, which was minimally invasive to Fun Spot America. In fact, GCII installed the 55-foot section of steel track on **White Lightning** in less than two-and-a-half days.



GCII retrofitted a 55-foot test section of its new steel track onto a section of **Fun Spot America Orlando's White Lightning**, GCII's 19th coaster that opened in 2013. COURTESY GCII

stated. He went on to explain that he can say this confidently because of GCII's patent pending process of fabrication and installation.

The biggest reason Hain believes GCII's steel track is better than others in the market is their patent pending no-weld process of fabrication, which gives the track added durability and strength. Unlike wood, which changes dramatically and deteriorates over time with exposure to the elements, or welded steel, GCII's riveted steel track can maintain its shape and strength without heat-affected/compromised zones created by welding. The process also creates less warp-page during fabrication, resulting in less misalignment on site. This no-weld process also means there are no complicated NDT requirements for the life of the track, and repairs can be done by any competent technician without requirement of advanced certifications. Riveted

construction also makes visual checks and repairs easier and less complicated.

Another plus to the steel track is that it can be precisely manufactured off-site and delivered to a park, ready-to-install on either a wood or steel structure, greatly reducing the install time on-site, and therefore, reducing the installation cost.

Another unique aspect of GCII's steel track is the ability to install only a segment of steel track on a wood coaster, as was done with **White Lightning**. This is made possible by a section that creates a virtually seamless transition from wood to steel and back again. "Hot-swappable," is the term Hain uses. This allows for quick, long-lasting repairs to problematic track sections, and the possibility of adding elements or inversions to existing coasters without retrofitting or re-tracking the entire coaster.

In addition to the practical

test of the steel track performed on **White Lightning**, a three-foot section of track was galvanized and sent to a test lab for a long-term weather and erosion analysis to determine how the track will hold up over a 20-30 year period. This testing process can be performed in only a 10-15-day period in a lab. The results of the erosion tests will be returned to GCII at the end of October or early November. Hain expressed his certainty that these results will also yield positive proof that the track weathers just as it was designed.

Up next will be a test of the steel track on a coaster built by a manufacturer other than GCII. "Come spring we will be installing and testing on a coaster in New York to see how the track performs when installed on a coaster manufactured by a company other than us," Hain explained. "Unfortunately, this test was previously delayed due to park closure and restrictions related to the pandemic."

As should be expected, the overall cost of GCII's steel track is more expensive than that of traditional wood, but when factoring in the added durability, longevity, and reduced maintenance, there is a significant savings that a park can expect over time," Hain said. "We have already received multiple inquiries about the steel track for both installations and conversions. We are excited about the new opportunities that have been created due to the steel track."

AT caught up with Hain to talk about the testing and inquire about what makes GCII's steel track different from their competition's, and he was quick to say that GCII's steel track is far more than just an alternative to other steel coaster track manufacturers.

In response to testing results, Hain expressed he was "very pleased" with the extremely positive findings. He said, "[The track] did everything it was designed to do. It's working like a champ."

As far as what sets the steel track apart from the competition, "It is superior," Hain



GCII's patented "boot" (above left) is fitted to the wood track on either end of the steel track allowing for quick, long-lasting repairs to problematic track sections, and the possibility of adding elements or inversions to existing coasters without retrofitting or re-tracking the entire coaster. Above right is an aerial view of the 50-foot wood-to-steel-to-wood track section installed on **White Lightning**. COURTESY GCII



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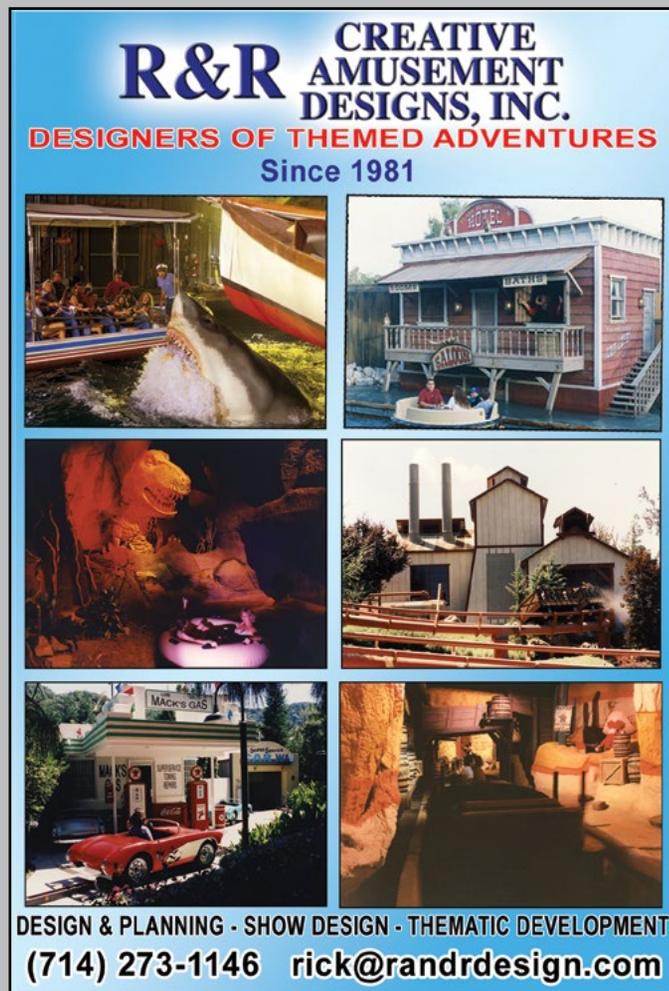
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## Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne  
[psherborne@amusementtoday.com](mailto:psherborne@amusementtoday.com)

It looks like the 71st season of the **Santa's Workshop**, North Pole, New York, theme park is going to be able to roll out its holiday festivities this year after being closed for its regular operating season due to the on-going pandemic.

Plans were still being worked out in October as to when and what restrictions will be in place. The theme park normally starts its holiday celebrations two weeks before Thanksgiving, but officials said that will be delayed a little this year.

General Manager **Matthew Stanley** said the park has obtained state guidance on how to finalize a compliant plan to do safe, limited walkabouts throughout the season.

Stanley added they have a lot of hiring and training to do before they reopen. Santa's Workshop normally employs about 144 full- and part-time workers for the holiday season. When the announcement was made mid-October, there were just six employees on hand.

**Central Amusement International (CAI)**, which operates **Luna Park**, Coney Island, New York, has asked the city of New York, which owns the land, for a contract extension until 2040. The current contract is due to expire in 2027.

Because of the current Covid-19 pandemic, Luna Park has not opened for the 2020 operating season. CAI has reported that the closure has created millions of dollars in loss revenue.

A lease extension, according to CAI, which is owned by the **Zamperla** family, would help offset the 2020 losses. It also would allow time for the company to see a return on investments already made to the facility in upgrades and expansions. Investments includes \$13 million already spent for a new segment of park that was set to open this year. Construction has been halted on the new segment and its future is uncertain at this time. In addition, CAI completed a major expansion just two years ago that doubled the size of the park.

City officials have said that a lease extension without a competitive bidding process could raise issues of fairness.

CAI and other attraction owners in the area have reached out to the governor's office in hopes of being able to produce a plan to safely reopen for what is left of 2020. As of press time, there had not been any word.

**Enchanted Kingdom**, Laguna, Philippines, opened last month for weekends only and at 50% capacity in compliance with government guidelines. **Cesar Mamon**, founder of the park, said during a virtual media launch that the half capacity restriction holds attendance to 8,500 at any given time throughout the day. If the park gets to capacity during operating hours, park-goers remain outside the

park gates until other people leave.

Park officials are still planning on daily operations for the holiday festivities, tentatively scheduled Dec. 14 through Jan. 3. Those dates are subject to change.

Park-goers have been urged to book online on the park website or through the park's travel agent partners.

In addition, management has taken measures to ensure the safety of visitors amid the pandemic. Some of those protocols include requiring face masks and full face shields, limiting the age of visitors from 21 to 59 years old and temperature checks before entering the parking area.

Not all attractions have been reopened. Theaters have remained closed and will remain closed pending medical grade filtration systems, which may be installed as early as this month. Restaurants and gift shops are open, but also with reduced capacities.

A former theme park designer engineer and an immersive entertainment industry professional have come together to form **Pseudonym Productions**, a new company focusing on new online experiences that dabble in virtual scares. **Ricky Brigante**, the immersive entertainment industry professional, and **Sarah A.S. Elger**, a former **Disney** Imagineer that designed popular attractions like Skull Island: Reign of Kong and Volcano Bay at **Universal Orlando**, decided to come together to bring virtual scares to those who love to scream.

Their first effort for **Universal Orlando's** Halloween Horror Nights online. Called Virtual Frights, the online platform shared video walkthroughs of five years of Halloween Horror Nights haunted houses using easy-to-navigate videos sourced from local vloggers and media sites. Visitors were able to control their journeys through the virtual haunts with full screen or cinema modes and could walk, hurry or run through the houses.

The company plans to create more of the genre.

The future **Legoland New York** in Goshen, New York, is steadily progressing toward a 2021 opening, even as the park's parent company negotiates with regulators over new penalties for serial pollution and the pandemic wallops its finances.

Workers have erected all of Legoland's main buildings and its 250-room hotel, while interior and façade work are being done, road work on a new Exit 125 for state Route 17 is nearing completion and rides are being installed, Legoland New York spokesman **Matt Besterman** said last month.

It's too soon to say when the \$500 million park will open, but it will debut in 2021, becoming the largest of U.K.-based amusement giant **Merlin Entertainments'** eight Legolands worldwide, Besterman said.

With the pandemic delaying a scheduled July 4 debut and the park's season running from April to October, Legoland could open in the spring or early summer at the soonest. But state leaders will have a major say because they've largely limited amusement parks' operations due to the coronavirus.

The \$15 million "Into the Deep: Exploring our Undiscovered Ocean" exhibit is set to open in 2022 at the **Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute**, Monterey, California. The exhibit, when completed, will be the world's first large-scale exhibition of deep-sea life.



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# S&S - Sansei adds new experience for its portfolio of tower rides

AT: *Tim Baldwin*  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

LOGAN, Utah — If there are silver linings to find during the global pandemic, one would be the opportunity for creative people to think outside the box.

The engineers and management at **S&S - Sansei Technologies** knew this was an ideal time to offer something new, but also be cognizant of park operators' financial challenges during the health crisis.

"With the devastation caused by the pandemic, I challenged our team to come up with an attraction that our customers could offer their guests," said **Tim Timco**, president and CEO. "It had to be something that was exciting but didn't break the bank. I think our guys knocked it out of the park. I am beyond excited to bring this attraction to the market."

S&S is introducing Spin Shot. The new ride concept utilizes the famous tower rides that exist around the globe and brings a refresh to them. This offers parks the opportunity to present a new ride to its guests, while not having to invest in an entire ride structure.

Spin Shot replaces the former ride carriages on the Space Shot, Turbo Drop and Double Shot towers. By adding a new seating configuration made from the company's popular 4D Free Spin Coasters, thrills are amped to a higher level. Currently, S&S has more than 150 towers in operation around the world. This new upgrade has no limitations in regard to the tower height. Seating around the tower can be 12 or 16 seats.

"We are so stoked about this ride. We have a lot of towers out in the world. I am pumped to show people the limitless ways this can enhance their existing tower," said **Paul Lattin**, director of engineering. "Parks could even retheme and rename their towers to really hit on the new ride experience for their guests."

In contrast to the 4D Free Spin Coasters that flip freely and use magnetic plates to initiate flips, the Spin Shot is completely controlled mechanically to ensure a comfortable ride. But more importantly, it gives both operators and guests the ability to choose the experience that is right for them.

"We realized [the pandemic] was going to be a pretty serious



The new Spin Shot concept brings a refresh to S&S's popular tower attractions. COURTESY S&S - SANSEI

issue for the parks. We started looking at ways we could help and make something viable but exciting and compelling for the next couple of years and the immediate future," **Josh Hays**, executive director of sales and marketing, told *Amusement Today*. "The park can have an infinite number of programs depending on how aggressive or nonaggressive they want to offer. There can be choices between stationary to multiple levels of insanity. We think it will be really fun, and it's a reasonably priced upgrade."

Ride experiences can differ from tower to tower, for special thrill events or from one ride



cycle to the next.

The new refresh begins with the initial phase of the ride experience where the ride vehicle is being weighed. Riders are rotated into different positions. Once launched, the sightlines can change from being inverted staring down at the ground to looking skyward as riders flip.

"Can you imagine the comments people are going to make when they see this run!? This will be as much fun for people watching as it will be for the riders," said **Lars Lenders**, European director of sales.

Executives estimate the ride can be ready as quickly as fall of 2021.



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## Movie-themed coasters unveiled for Dubai's Motiongate Theme Park



DUBAI — A new report brings details and concept art for a *Now You See Me* ride (above left) and a *John Wick* roller coaster (above right) at Motiongate Theme Park in Dubai, where Lionsgate already has a *Hunger Games*-themed attraction up and running. High Roller, based on *Now You See Me*, is set in a casino and guests will be able to take part in a grand heist arranged by the franchise's Four Horsemen group of master illusionists. The *John Wick*-themed coaster dubbed Open Contract offers riders a choice as they board: to help John Wick or to hunt him. Riders will get a different experience based on which queue they choose to enter, but everyone will be funneled through a scaled version of the lobby of movie's Continental hotel. Both additions are scheduled to open at Motiongate sometime in 2021. COURTESY MOTIONGATE



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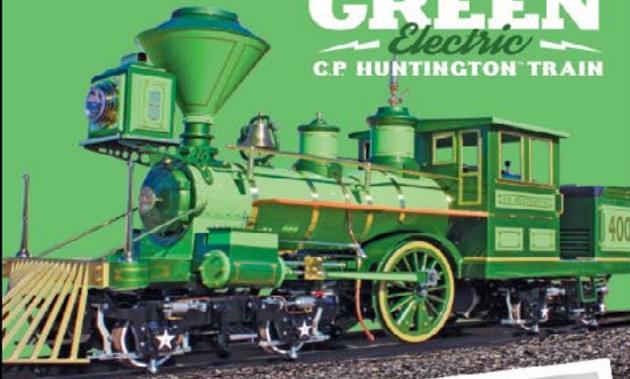
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# Universal Orlando announces a new 'species' of roller coaster

AT: David Fake  
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — Universal Orlando Resort has finally officially announced Jurassic World VelociCoaster, their not-so-secret movie-themed roller coaster that has been taking shape at Universal's Islands of Adventure. And while the announcement of the new project may not have been a surprise, the details released about the Intamin Amusement Rides coaster has the amusement industry and enthusiasts speculating that the 2021 coaster may be Universal's best yet.

Jurassic World VelociCoaster will be a highly-themed, multilaunch coaster attraction based on the blockbuster franchise and features an original story line that expands upon the thrills, dinosaurs and environments fans have seen on the big screen. The attraction will have guests join the original cast of the films as Jurassic World unveils the next evolution of its "carnivore expansion": the VelociCoaster, where riders embark on a high-speed chase and feel the rush of the



The massive VelociCoaster at Universal's Islands of Adventure is set to debut in 2021. COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

hunt while racing alongside a nimble Velociraptor pack.

VelociCoaster, at more than 4,700 feet in length, will rival SeaWorld Orlando's Mako (Bolliger & Mabillard, 4,760 feet) and IOA's Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure (Intamin, 5,053 feet) to become Florida's third longest roller coaster. The ride's two launches will hit speeds of 70 mph in just 2.4 seconds, but will not quite beat the expected 76 mph of Busch Garden's Tampa's Iron Gwazi, an also-new-for-2021 Rocky Mountain Construction coaster.

In addition to the theming, speed and length of

VelociCoaster, what has enthusiasts and the industry talking is the coaster's layout, elements and expected air time. The ride's signature element will be a towering top hat, which propels riders 155 feet in the air and then immediately into an 80-degree drop (Universal's steepest yet). Riders will also experience a total of 12 seconds of airtime, a 360-degree barrel roll just inches above Islands of Adventure Lagoon, and a zero-gravity inverted stall that will send riders upside down across 100 feet of track in a maneuver that is the first of its kind. These elements along with near misses with rock formations and, of course,



velociraptors will be experienced in custom Intamin 24-passenger trains utilizing only a lap bar restraint.

The coaster, which sits on the edge of the Islands of Adventure Lagoon and directly opposite the park's Port of Entry, has been under construction throughout 2020. Because of the attraction's placement in the park and the sheer size of

the coaster, it was obvious what the park was building, but Universal remained mum about the project until the recent announcement.

VelociCoaster will be the first new coaster at Universal Orlando Resort since 2019's Hagrid's Mysterious Creatures Motorbike Adventure, another Intamin collaboration.

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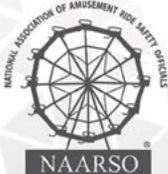
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## Triotech brings interactive walkthrough to China



MONTREAL — Triotech announced a new project with OCT Group for the installation of a double walkthrough attraction in Fantasy Valley, Xiangyang, in the Province of Hubei, China. The walkthrough attraction will offer each guest an immersive and interactive multi-sensory experience. It will be themed to Space Pirates and guests will be on foot, going through a series of distinct zones each with its specific immersive and interactive elements. Guests are divided into two factions: Pirates or Bounty Hunters. The opposing teams are presented with conflicting goals which raises the stakes and encourages competition. The swashbuckling adventure's climax will alternate based on which team performs the best. COURTESY TRIOTECH

## Falcon's Creative Group set to create animated series based on Katmandu

ORLANDO — Falcon's Creative Group, a design and animation company for the themed entertainment industry, has teamed up with Eric Calderon, a veteran animation executive and writer, to adapt Katmandu Group LLC's theme park intellectual property into an animated series.

The Katmandu brand — which combines interdimensional fantasy with steampunk and Himalayan influences to create its own universe of mythic adventures — is being simultaneously developed with transmedia storytelling activations in new global entertainment destinations, immersive attractions and branded merchandise.

Since Katmandu Park & Resort launched in Mallorca, Spain, in 2013, millions of international visitors have experienced its immersive entertainment and beloved characters.

"We are thrilled with the vision that Falcon's has for expanding Katmandu's IP and creating new forms of media that will have global reach," said Scott Demerou, chief executive officer of Katmandu Group, LLC. "It's also fantastic to see Eric Calderon recognize the strength of our IP as a standout from the crowd."

"As we at Katmandu, along with our partner, Meliá Hotels International, expand the Katmandu universe beyond our parks into a resort-style hotel brand, kids' camps and themed experiences, we are incredibly excited to move forward with world-class animation development from these imaginative leaders."

"Katmandu's lore and strong storytelling



Katmandu Group and Meliá have recently announced two new entertainment destinations under development. COURTESY KATMANDU GROUP

foundation create the perfect jumping off point to provide audiences with a new way to connect to their characters," said Cecil D. Magpuri, president and chief creative officer at Falcon's. "We are so thrilled to have Eric on board to push this forward. With his established industry background, we are firmly positioned to bring this fascinating universe to life."

Katmandu Group and Meliá have recently announced two new entertainment destinations under development in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, and Tenerife, Spain, that will welcome millions more guests to the wondrous realms of Katmandu. Falcon's is providing master planning, attraction design, 4D immersive ride experiences and next-generation interactivity for both sites.

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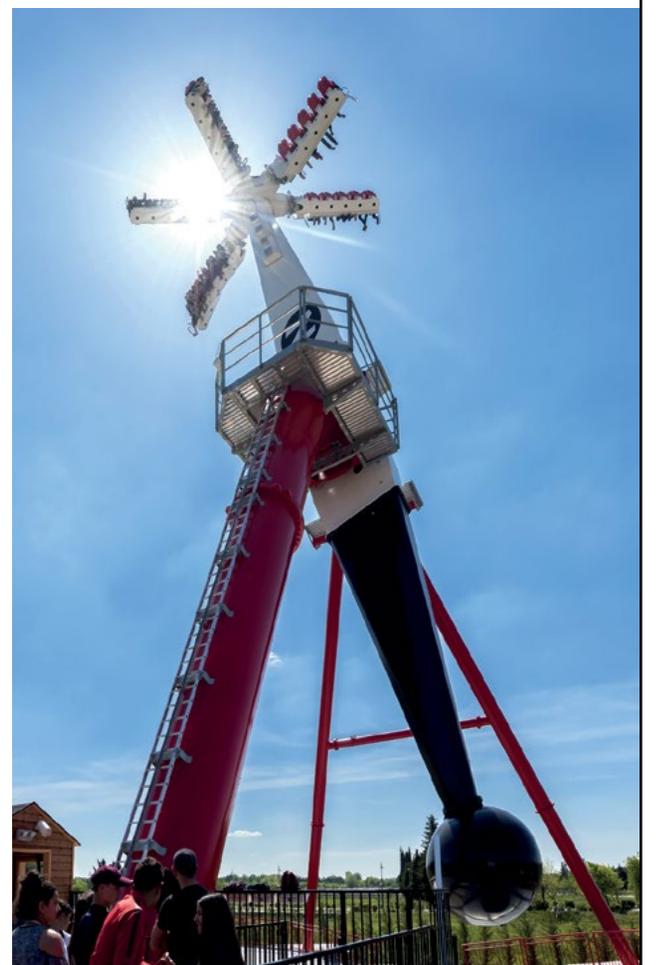
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# Urban Air Adventure Park debuts its Cincinnati location to eager guests

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

CINCINNATI, Ohio — **Urban Air Adventure Parks** have quickly made a name for themselves across the U.S. Starting as a trampoline park, the facilities have grown into the largest FEC franchise chain in the nation, offering a variety of attractions and pioneering innovations. In 2020, the chain earned the Golden Ticket Award for Industry Leader: FEC for its efforts in navigating both its parent corporation as well as its franchised locations through the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown and reopening.

The chain's expansion may have slowed during the pandemic, but new locations are still opening up and welcoming guests who are eager for Urban Air's unique brand of fun.

**Urban Air Adventure Park Cincinnati** opened its doors in September. The second Cincinnati-area location for the chain, this one faced the challenges of opening amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and setting up shop within the downtown Cincinnati-area.

"We did not want 500 people waiting outside our doors during our grand opening event," explained **Thomas Payne**, owner of Urban Air's Cincinnati location. "We made the decision to open quietly for a few weeks while promoting the grand opening. Essentially, we made our opening an extended event. This allowed us to give the park a bit of a shakedown with smaller, more COVID-capacity-friendly attendance. By the time we had our Grand Opening, we had a steady flow of customers but no giant push



Thomas Payne

all at once. We also were much better at operating the park and managing capacity limitations."

The park opened with a full array of attractions, including Urban Air's signature SkyRider, multiple warrior courses, a suspended ropes course, nine climbing walls, WipeOut, basketball dunk, BattleBeam, DodgeBall and children's Adventure Hub play area. Unique to this location is the Climbing Hill attraction, a colorful and padded cone that provides a climbing attraction for younger guests who might be intimidated by the larger climbing walls. For those who make it to the top, a fun slide awaits to return them to the bottom.

"Urban Air is not only a second career for me, but in many ways, a completely second life. I spent almost 25 years traveling the country in technology sales. It was financially rewarding," added Payne. "Moving to Urban Air was a huge pivot. I was looking to move to something fun and different. My wife and I have two kids, 10 and 13 years old. This was something that I knew they could get excited about as well."

The new endeavour had been in the planning for a while, with Payne first approaching Urban Air Adventure Parks about adding a Cincinnati location in the summer of 2018. As the new entertainment center prepared to open, COVID-19 threw in one last hurdle.

"We actually completed the financing process [in late 2019] and began construction in late February. In many ways, we had no choice but to keep moving forward. But I also saw the timing with a silver lining attached," stated Payne. "As we grow, and COVID eventually ends, we see Cincinnati and our location as a central destination for adventure seekers. So far, this has been validated by the healthy demand for our park."

Payne's Urban Air is the second to call the Cincinnati-area home. Urban Air Adventure Park Hamilton opened earlier this year, less than 20 miles from the new location. However, Payne and his team view Hamilton's proximity as an asset, with the Urban Air family working together.

"With Cincinnati, we have made great progress, but we are still finding our way," said Payne. "I know the Hamilton location and their ownership team very well. They are a fantastic group always willing to help when we need it. Once Cincinnati gets our legs under us a bit more, I can see us partnering with Hamilton on all types of initiatives."

At a time when many attractions are struggling to reopen, Urban Air Cincinnati has had solid success with its opening. The location's limited capacity is consistently sold out since unlocking its doors.



Urban Air Adventure Park Cincinnati opened its doors with a full playground for guests including climbing walls, trampolines, free fall and a ropes course 20 feet above its food court. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



## FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

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

As part of their strategy to acquire high quality assets in heavily trafficked destinations, **Family Entertainment Group** has acquired the Orlando, Florida, **Arcade City** game room and **7D Dark Ride Adventure** from **Face Amusements**.

The attractions are a dynamic part of the entertainment complex which is the home of the **Wheel at ICON Park**.

Over the next few months Family Entertainment Group will expand the offering and amenities in a brand new 7,000-square-foot space located within the wheelhouse and rebranded as **In The Game Icon Park**. In The Game is expected to open in February 2021 and the family entertainment center will feature attractions for visitors of all ages including the latest games and prizes, an interactive mirror maze, themed escape room, virtual reality, a **Bob's Space Racer** game and 7D Dark Ride.

Arcade City will continue to operate and provide exceptional entertainment under their current business names until the remodel and rebrand is complete.

**Manchester United**, in partnership with **Harves Entertainment**, unveiled the name of its new entertainment centers, the first of which is currently nearing completion in Beijing.

The facility near Tiananmen Square will be called **Theatre of Dreams**. It is the first of five Theatre of Dreams centers to be built in cities across China in the next year, including in Shanghai, Shenyang and Changsha, creating exciting new opportunities for Chinese fans to connect with the Club.

Theatre of Dreams centers will offer multiple activities and state of the art attractions designed for fans and families.

**AREA15**, the immersive entertainment and art complex in Las Vegas, invited guests to don their scariest and most creative costumes on Halloween for a weekend full of spirited festivities for all ages.

Over the two-day holiday, AREA15 hosted ScAREA15 and Future Carnival themed events with unique attractions and food from **The Beast Pop-up** by **Todd English**.

Also getting into the holiday spirit is AREA15's newest tenant to open its doors, **Rocket Fizz**. The nationwide soda pop and candy shop made its grand entrance at AREA15 on Halloween weekend. Rocket Fizz handed out complimentary pieces of taffy candy to all visitors in costume who stopped by their shop.

**Apex Entertainment**, based in Marlborough, Mass., announced the forthcoming opening of its newest location in Virginia Beach, Virginia, in late 2020.

This will be the company's fourth location, and first in the Mid-Atlantic region. The 84,000-square-foot, multi-level Virginia Beach location was formerly a Dick's Sporting Goods. It will offer indoor go karting, bowling, laser tag, escape rooms, ropes courses, arcade, sports simulators, axe throwing, mini golf, bumper cars and virtual reality.

"Our teachers are certified. The teacher aides have various backgrounds but the aides are usually going to school for teaching," explained **Paul Krause**, general manager of the Urban Air Adventure Park.

"Apex Entertainment is excited to be working closely with **Armada Hoffer Properties** and honored to be coming to the Town Center of Virginia Beach," said **Marcus Kembrowski**, chief operating officer of Apex Entertainment. "Our mission is to create a memorable experience for all guests and have a strong presence within the community."

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# South Dakota State Fair enjoys near perfect weather during run

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HURON, South Dakota – Mid-1970's rocker Meat Loaf once sang, "Two out of three ain't bad." Those words were amended for the South Dakota State Fair as four out of five days brought decent weather. "Fortunately, this year Mother Nature provided us with good weather until the final day (Labor Day) of the fair when it rained," said Candi Briley, South Dakota State Fairgrounds assistant manager. The final attendance was 107,992, down from 205,172 in 2019. "We knew the pandemic would impact attendance, but we're very pleased with these numbers," said Peggy Besch, South Dakota State Fairgrounds manager.

20/20 Perfect Vision of Fun was the fair theme. Briley explained what that meant. "This year our focus was having the event for families and friends to celebrate achievement, youth and South Dakota heritage."

During this pandemic year, GoldStar Amusements partnered using a different strategy. "It was Pat Crabtree's idea to reach out to the other guys [owners]," explained Mike Featherston, owner of GoldStar. Crabtree Amusements had the contract for the Sioux Empire Fair, Sioux Falls; the following week Armstrong Shows had Brown County Fair, Aberdeen, and GoldStar had the State Fair, in Huron, all South Dakota. The three shows combined their ride arsenal and played as one unit. The Central States Fair, Rapid City, South Dakota, lost its provider, so the trio was able to pick up that date right before Huron. It was a win-win-win for all involved providing six weeks on the road, when each would have had only a week to 10 days total for the season.

GoldStar and the other



two carnivals, each brought in 10 rides. The package consisted of 10 spectaculars, 10 majors and 10 kiddie rides. Wagner's Carnival, LLC also helped with some of the rides for Armstrong's portion. There were a total of 20 games and six food stands brought in by the three main providers.

The top three grossing rides were the Century Wheel (Chance Rides), Himalaya (Wisdom Rides of America) and 2Xtreme (Technical Park Street Fighter). New rides for the South Dakota State Fair included Zero Gravity (Battech Enterprises, LLC), Vertigo (A.R.M. USA Inc.), Samba Balloon (Zamperla Inc.), Charly Chopper (Majestic Manufacturing Inc.) and Cliff Hanger (also Battech). According to Mike Featherston, owner of GoldStar, the ride midway gross was 50% off from the previous year. Part of the problem was the schools told their students if they went to the fair, they could not participate in after-school activities for two weeks. This helped contribute to the decline in attendance.

South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem and Lt. Governor Larry Rhoden took time from their schedule to visit the fair. "They stopped to visit and we were able to personally thank them for allowing the fair to happen," said Featherston.

For 15 years GoldStar Amusements has worked with the South Dakota State Fair. When asked about their relationship, Featherston said, "Fantastic! It's been a really



In the fair's socially distanced midway, there were 10 spectaculars, 10 majors and 10 kiddie rides. The top three grossing rides were the Century Wheel, Himalaya and 2Xtreme. COURTESY GOLDSTAR AMUSEMENTS

good asset for us. We work well together." Briley had equally positive words about their ride provider. "GoldStar Amusements always does a great job for our fair. This year they used a different carnival structure that included multiple carnival companies coming together to meet our needs. That strategy worked very well. In addition, we had positive feedback from fairgoers regarding cleanliness and sanitization procedures."

COVID-19 procedures included signage on all ticket boxes, sanitizer used on all games, food and rides, along with disinfectant tables throughout the midway. "Temperature checks of employees were taken and logged. Employees all wore masks and we had a 'Clean Team' patrolling the ride area throughout the day," said Featherston.

The fair did its part as well. This included placing hand

sanitizing and hand washing stations throughout the fairgrounds, along with signage reminding people to wash their hands, use hand sanitizer, and social distance. They spread seating out. All tickets for grandstand events were sold as general admission to allow people to social distance.

"We didn't know what to expect and won't know the full impact until we have final attendance numbers. What we do know is that we worked hard to give fairgoers a great fair experience where agriculture and youth were celebrated," said Briley.

One of the new food items that people sought out was lobster mac and cheese available at food vendor, Coast to Coast.

"All fairs are unique. What sets the South Dakota State fair apart from others is its value and entertainment variety," said Briley. "Our gate admission offers a great value, giving

fairgoers access to all the fair has to offer, from entertainment to livestock buildings to vending and static exhibit buildings and everything in between. In addition, we have six stages of free entertainment to keep people entertained all day long.

That entertainment included hosting the Big Air ATV Tour and Laser Light Show and Fireworks in the grandstand, both being offered for free. The fair also hosted fan favorite Tuff Hedeman Bull Bash.

The fair used a mixture of traditional advertising methods including radio, television, print and digital. This year they had a stronger focus on digital advertising.

Briley concluded, "A highlight of the fair was simply watching people enjoy the fair with their friends and family after such a complex year."

The 2021 edition is scheduled to take place September 2-6.

•sdstatefair.com



Even the governor attended the South Dakota State Fair (above left). Left to right: Governor Kristi Noem, Mike Featherston, Connie Featherston and Lieutenant Governor Larry Rhoden. COVID-19 signage was on all ticket boxes and throughout the midway (middle). Starflyer (above right) was one of the 30 rides brought in via three carnival operators: GoldStar, Crabtree and Armstrong. Wagner also helped with a few rides.

COURTESY GOLDSTAR AMUSEMENTS; SOUTH DAKOTA STATE FAIR



## MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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The **Tulsa State Fair** is home to a blue metal giant that only operates 11 days each year-during the fair. At 90 feet tall, 2,000-feet long, the SkyRide (**Von Roll, Ltd.** 101) provided 65,000 fair attendees rides during the 2019 edition. This year there was no fair in Expo Square due to the ongoing pandemic. There also is no contractor to run the ride in the future, as the contract with **Don McClure's** company expired last year. By both sides' accounts, things ended on friendly terms.

The SkyRide first appeared at the fairgrounds in 1965 with **Bell's Amusement Park** buying the ride in 1971. The park closed in 2006 and management changed to another company. The most recent operator has the Minnesota State Fair SkyRide operation as well.

In an interview with **KOTV News on 6, Amanda Blair**, Expo Square COO said, "Right now, we're still evaluating everything and just taking it one moment at a time. With it being a pandemic year, you know everything's somewhat turned upside down; so, we're taking it one moment at a time and looking at how we can transition into future."

Back in the 1960s through early 1980s, Swingin' Gyms (also known as Flying Cages) were popular on carnival midways and amusement parks. **Willow Mill Park**, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, and **Knoebels Amusement Resort**, Elysburg, Pennsylvania, are two parks that had installations. **Amusements Unlimited**, Chesterton, Indiana, and **Grover Watkins** (also known as **Venture Rides & Hi-Lite Rides**) were two of the many manufacturers.

**Tons of Fun Shows**, based out of Douglassville, Pennsylvania, plans to refurbish the one it owns during the off-season. For the past 31 years, the ride has sat idle in bushes at the winter quarters. "This will be our vintage show piece restored to pay tribute to the past," said **Ben Pfeffer**, co-owner of the show with his father **David** on a recent Facebook post.

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. An unlikely revenue stream is helping the **Pacific National Exhibition**, Vancouver,

B.C., keep the lights on: film production. The pandemic has brought the tourism industry to a standstill, devastating places like the PNE, known for its amusement park and live events, both of which have been hard hit.

The assets that are not being utilized this year are being used by film production crews. "Yeah, you know, the film industry came up really strong. As soon as our phase two [of the pandemic reopening plan] opened up, we've been thrilled to have so many productions come back up to [British Columbia]," said **Shelley Frost**, president and CEO of the PNE in an interview with **Marketplace**. "You know, film space is absolutely at a premium. Most places are turning film clients away, and ... right now is not enough set deck space, or film production or office space, really in the Lower Mainland."

**Jolly Shows**, an Annapolis, Maryland-based carnival operation has been hit just like all the other operators with shutdowns due to COVID-19. In addition, the pandemic also took a toll on the **Joseph** family with two of the owners, **Robert Joseph**, 77, passing in July and son **Peter**, 56, passing in September. Peter's brother **Paul** will continue to run the show with his sister-in-law, **Rhonda**.

Some of the younger Joseph family will take on expanded roles, including **Dominic**, Peter's son and his nephew, **Mark**, along with several nieces. They all have management experience on the show. Since the 1950s, Jolly Shows has been owned and operated by the Joseph Family, entertaining families in the Baltimore region including Maryland and Virginia.

**Earl's Rides, Inc.**, Weyauwega, Wisconsin, has decided to pull the plug on their operation, effective immediately. They were a 3rd and 4th generation owned-and-operated, carnival that had been a Wisconsin tradition since 1932.

A message with the headline, "The end of the road," was posted on Earl's Rides' website in October.

"We look back fondly on the memories of the years and the many miles that we have traveled in this state."

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# WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ Endless Surf coming to the Dominican Republic — page 34 / News Splash — page 34

## Great America's South Bay Shores to make its debut in 2021

AT: Jeffrey Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Last year, California's Great America announced the expansion and transformation of the Boomerang Bay water park into South Bay Shores for the 2020 season. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the park to change those plans as California enacted strict guidelines that has kept amusement parks closed since March.

Following a brief shutdown, construction at the park was eventually able to resume and California's Great America is looking forward to presenting South Bay Shores to parkgoers at the start of the 2021 season.

In addition to receiving a new-theme makeover, the water park is getting seven completely new attractions, new and upgraded food and merchandise locations, more lounge chairs, premium cabanas and shaded seating areas. Huge shade sails will be added to areas around the Otter Trotter spraypark and Pup's Pier waterplay fortress.

The 2020/2021 expansion will increase the water park's acreage by close to 50% and almost double the attractions from 10 to 18. The new theme reflects the excitement and fun of the Northern California Coast and Santa Monica's South Bay region. The top-to-bottom transformation into South Bay Shores will include makeovers of existing slides as well as new names. Guests will enter through a brand-new entrance and be greeted with a new family changing facility.



Lush landscaping with native plants will be added. Cabanas will be upgraded to include free Wi-Fi, charging stations, ceiling fans, televisions and dedicated food-and-beverage service.

"South Bay Shores represents the newest phase of a multiyear revitalization of California's Great America, building on our nearly 50-year heritage of giving Bay Area residents even more reasons to call the park their favorite destination for fun," said **Manny Gonzalez**, vice president and general manager of California's Great America. "Along with the water park, recent investments such as the innovative RailBlazer roller coaster, new dining venues and general park improvements are showing guests and the community that the park's transformation is fully underway here in the South Bay."

Pacific Surge will be a new slide complex featuring multiple attractions. Shark Reef Plunge offers four, six-story drop capsule chambers that send riders on a near-vertical plunge and then through s-curves and flat loops. The structure also features Feeding Frenzy and Barracuda, two raft slides that send single or double



Six slides wind their way down from one central tower on the new Pacific Surge complex supplied by WhiteWater West. COURTESY CALIFORNIA'S GREAT AMERICA

riders through an enclosed tunnel and intense drops from a height of five stories. The new six-slide complex was supplied by **WhiteWater West**.

Milder fun is on tap for the younger set with Tide Pool, a new family lagoon with eight kid-sized waterslides that line the perimeter of a zero-depth-entry pool. Parents and adults can relax under shade structures in an oversized lounge and sun deck area.

Barefoot Beach is a new sand and beach area for children to play in.

In addition to fun attractions, dining options will grow from one to three within the water park. Pier 76 Café will offer fish tacos, fried shrimp and perennial park favorites

like chicken tenders and waffle fries. Sand Bar features cool drinks and California-inspired menu items in a friendly beach-like atmosphere.

"Cedar Fair continues to dial things up at all of their parks," said **Andrew Moffat**, executive vice president of sales, WhiteWater West. "A main focus is us providing attractions that deliver fun-filled capacity and iconic impact for their guests."

Under the Paramount name, Great America opened Crocodile Dundee's Boomerang Bay in 2004, capitalizing on the 1986 movie. It was the first water park in the state integrated with an amusement park. Owing to its popularity, the water park was expanded

in 2005. Following Cedar Fair's purchase of Paramount Parks in 2006 and loss of the IP, the name was shortened to Boomerang Bay for the 2007 season, but the Australian Outback theme remained. Now with the 2021 transformation, Australia is out and California is in. The transformation continues the park's commitment to more California-centric theming. The 2013 Gold Striker wooden coaster was themed to the early California gold rush. Railblazer, built in 2018, resembled off-road all-terrain vehicles like those found at the state and national parks. Last year the Intamin drop tower, once themed to stuntmen, received a new paint scheme to make it represent a giant Redwood tree.



Once complete, the new front gate (above left) will set the tone for the new California theme. This final drop on Barracuda will make for a thrilling finale (above middle). Construction is nearing completion on the eight children's slides bordering the new Tide Pool (above right). COURTESY CALIFORNIA'S GREAT AMERICA



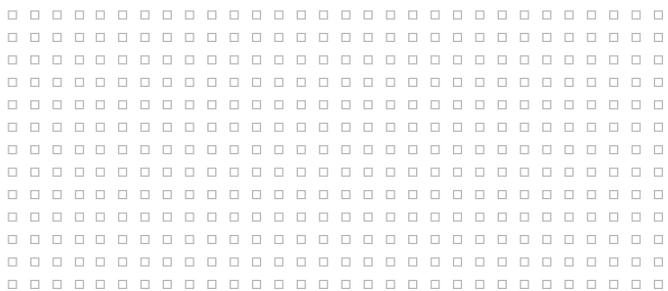
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Preliminary concept art shows the massive Endless Surf 4800 pool integrated within a water park that will include high-profile attractions such as a Master Blaster, AquaLoop, Constrictor and Rattler slides. COURTESY WHITEWATER WEST

## Massive Endless Surf set to be centerpiece for resort

PUNTA CANA, Dominican Republic — As surf parks are becoming more popular throughout the world, tourists are seeking out world-class parks and resorts are taking notice.

Los Vientos, a new resort taking shape at Macao Beach in Punta Cana, will feature two WhiteWater West Endless Surf pools along with a full-fledged water park.

The project is being developed by Pegasus Lodges, which has built resorts at some of the world's most remote surf destinations. However, Pegasus founder and CEO Ryder Thomas knows that a far larger audience wants to experience incredible surf in amazingly beautiful, but more accessible, locations. With Endless Surf it is now possible to bring the surfing to the resort, rather than the other way around.

"The magic of Pegasus is the intimacy of a few guests doing something soulful and active in these breathtaking remote locations. But the reality is that trips to the edges of the Earth are not practical for everyone. More people deserve to experience the magic of destination surf travel, and Los Vientos is going to elate tens of thousands of guests a year," commented Thomas.

Three iconic hotel brands totaling more than 1,800 rooms along with chef-driven restaurants and world-class nightclubs will comprise the Los Vientos resort.

Guests staying at the most exclusive side of the development will have sole use of a dedicated Endless Surf 2400 with a Pegasus Lodges-curated surf experience, while the rest of the guests and general public can access the largest pool in the product line, the ES4800. Waves nearly seven feet high will travel the length of the 900-foot pool providing a 25-second ride. With waves pumping from both pools there will be a wave variety and capacity to offer nonstop surfing to satiate the most dedicated surfer.

"We selected Endless Surf because, like partnering with the world's most capable hotel operators, we wanted the credibility of a supplier with proof they can deliver projects of this scale. Endless Surf comes with WhiteWater's quality, reliability and understanding of what makes venues work," said Thomas. "Just as importantly, we feel strongly that the Endless Surf program provides the ability to create a surf experience closest to an authentic beach environment, which is the heart of what Los Vientos represents."

Thomas is excited to bring the Pegasus Lodges experience closer to home. The Caribbean location will give convenient access to a U.S. audience as well as international guests. Punta Cana is accessible via a two-and-a-half-hour flight from Miami, or a four-hour flight from New York City.

"Hospitality is going through a metamorphosis because people recognize that experiences enrich them more than traditional notions of luxury. Surfing isn't just a sport, it is a lifestyle that changes how people see themselves, each other, and the world around them. Los Vientos will provide a true surf experience that can also entertain a surfer's entire family," said Thomas.

—Jeffrey Seifert



## NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

Big Rivers Water Park and Adventures in New Caney, Texas, has decided to keep the gates open all the way through Thanksgiving weekend. The park wants to give people back a little bit more of the summer fun that was taken away by the COVID-19 pandemic. With new safety features and guidelines in place, the park will be open Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. weather permitting.

Australia's Orange Aquatic Center in New South Wales has reopened in time for the down-under summer season. Restrictions in place will keep the capacity of the complex limited to 450 guests. The center is encouraging guests who are wanting to swim laps to call and book a lane in advance.

"We'll be keeping a close eye on the restrictions as we head into summer and we hope we'll be able to accommodate everyone, but in the meantime please be respectful and understanding of the government-imposed caps on numbers," said Jason Hamling, chairman of Orange City council sports and recreation.

The Typhoon Texas Waterpark in Pflugerville, Texas, has opened a seasonal "eater-tainment" experience known as The Patio. Located adjacent to the water park, the outdoor dining and entertainment venue will feature classic starters like fried pickles, onion rings and egg rolls; along with handcrafted cocktails. Entrees include a grilled chicken salad, chicken-fried steak, chicken & waffles and bacon grilled cheese sandwiches. Everything can be enjoyed with live music, outdoor games and a giant children's sandbox.

"The Patio is the perfect blend of classic food, refreshing cocktails, music and fun," John Pham, marketing director of The Patio, said in a prepared statement. "Our plan all along has been to add a dining and entertainment experience during the waterpark's off-season. Plus, it's a great perk for our season passholders."

Typhoon Texas season passholders will receive a discount on their purchases — 10% for 2020 passholders, or 15% off for those who have already purchased a 2021 pass.

The water park has closed for the season, but The Patio will remain open Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings through December.

The popular tipping bucket attraction at the North End Rec Centre splash pad in Thunder Bay, Ontario, is getting dumped for another water feature. Neighbors have complained that children playing underneath the big yellow bucket were too noisy when they get doused with water. The city will dismantle the tipping bucket in the upcoming weeks and are hoping the bucket can be relocated to another splashpad within the city.

Neighbors have been complaining since the park was opened in 2017, and the city responded by installing noise barriers. Sadly, the park did not even open this past year, so the tipping bucket noise complaints date back to 2019. The city has not yet indicated

what will be installed in place of the big yellow bucket. It should be noted that the North End Rec Centre was the busiest splashpad in the city and its tipping bucket was touted as the showpiece of the park.

Those frequently utilizing the park, some of whom are in the adjoining neighborhood, have said that the city did not ask for input from the people who use the park and believe the city placed too much emphasis on a small handful of complainers.

Councilman Andrew Foulds, who represents the Current River ward said, he did hear complaints when the park first opened, but recently most callers have been supportive of the park. He added, "This particular bucket ... I mean the kids really loved it. There's no question of that. And, so the decision has been made to switch it, which, I'm not sure I'm particular happy with."

"It is certainly my expectation that whatever feature they switch it out with better be good. And it better bring the same level of joy and excitement to the kids that this last feature did."

The newest Kalahari Resort in Round Rock, Texas, is set to make its debut on November 12. The indoor water park, being touted as one of "America's largest," will feature more than 30 waterslides along with 20 pools and whirlpools. The 350-acre resort itself is expected to have 975 guest rooms, five restaurants, 10,000 square feet of retail space and a 200,000-square-foot convention center.

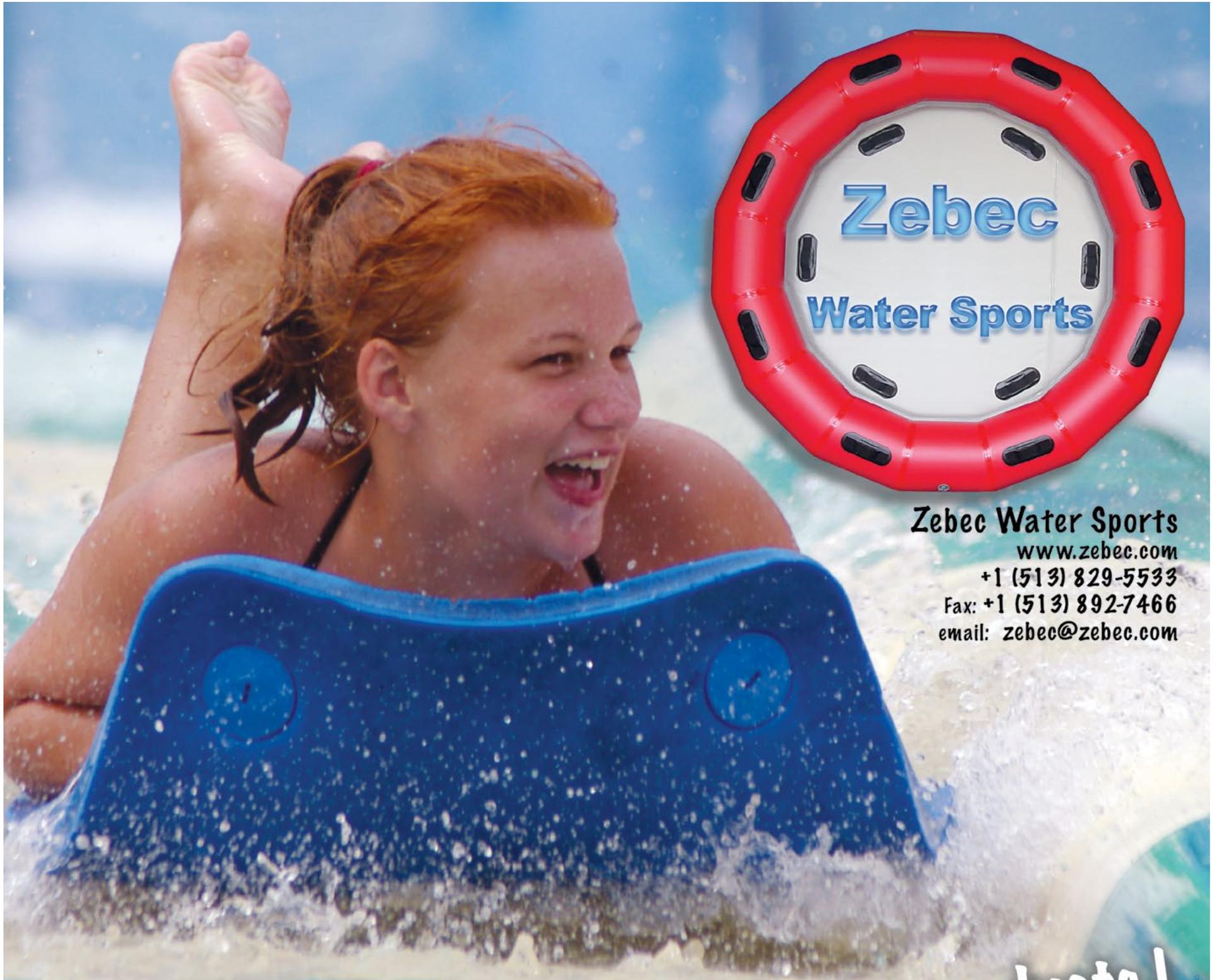
The Texas Kalahari will be the fourth resort from family-owned Kalahari Resorts & Conventions and will become the company's largest.

Expect to see full coverage in the January issue of *Amusement Today*.

The city of Welland, Ontario, is looking for a new water park operator to provide a floating obstacle course next July. PT Watersports, which had planned to install a water park this year, was facing significant impacts due to COVID-19, which included closing all of its facilities in 2020. PT Watersports told the city it would not be able to install the park next year. With the loss of revenue for this season, they would be unable to invest in new equipment for the 2021 season.

The city is considering the possibility of running the park on its own, buying the equipment directly from Wibit. The city already owns the waterway, and the Community Boathouse where the park is to be installed, is already staffed as it is used for kayaks, paddleboats and canoes. The city would have to hire managers and lifeguards.

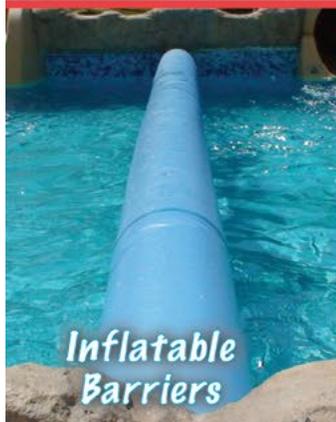
Welland is home to the Welland Canal, the waterway that connects Lake Ontario to Lake Erie, allowing boats to bypass Niagara Falls through a series of seven locks. The canal has been rerouted several times, and the old portion that runs through the heart of the city is now used for recreation instead of shipping.



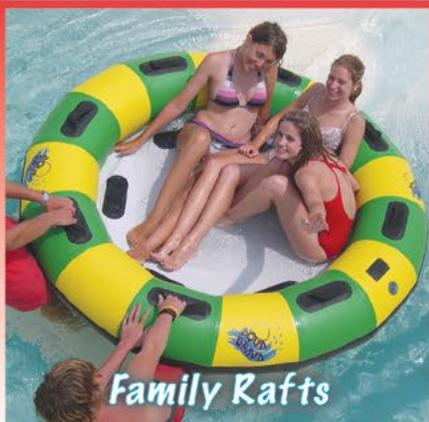
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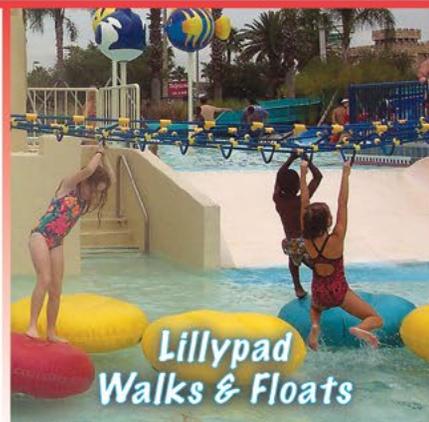
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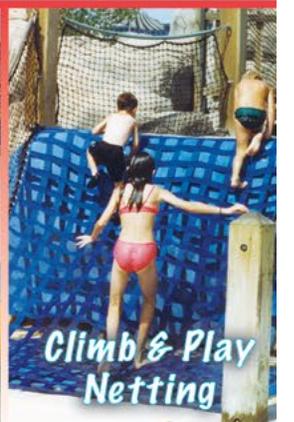
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# BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Six Flags rolls out contactless payment — page 39 / Women of Influence: Renee Welsh — page 46

## Rave reviews for WWA virtual symposium

AT: Pam Sherborne

[psherborne@amusementtoday.com](mailto:psherborne@amusementtoday.com)

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — Like so many organizations trying to safely present educational and networking opportunities for its members during the health pandemic that hit in 2020, the **World Waterpark Association (WWA)** delivered its annual show experience virtually.

The **WWA40 Virtual Show** was presented Oct. 6-8. It brought together water park and aquatics professionals working around the globe. The program featured a well-planned mix of pre-recorded educational sessions and live, interactive sessions featuring dozens of relevant topics that matter to owners, operators, designers and developers working in parks of all shapes and sizes.

"We were certainly disappointed that we couldn't bring our industry together for our in-person Symposium & Trade Show, something we've done for 40 years," said **Rick Root**, WWA President. "However, from what we've seen so far, pivoting to a virtual show program was just what our industry needed. Attendees from 17 countries have already spent thousands of hours watching all of the outstanding educational sessions offered by our industry thought leaders, and we anticipate the interaction with our show program to continue throughout the next few months."

Chase Singleton, assistant general manager, **Wilderness at the Smokies**, gave the WWA kudos for the job the organization did on the virtual event.

"I thoroughly enjoyed this year's virtual show and the best part of it is I have the opportunity to attend the sessions I missed through March 2021," Singleton said. "It's hard to beat on-demand waterpark industry education. Great work, WWA."

**Emily Polinsky**, executive assistant and digital media manager, **Wet 'N Wild Water World**, echoed Singleton's sentiments.

"In a year like no other, the WWA pulled out all the stops and gave us a show like no other," Polinsky said. "Each presentation was thoughtfully put together and gave unique insights into what to expect for the coming seasons. I left the show with more than a dozen new ideas to bring to our park next year."

"Only the WWA could find a way to virtually bring us all together while still providing top notch education and networking opportunities," said **Jen Gerber**, **Water Technology, Inc.** "We're grateful to be part of the best industry in the world with some of the most passionate leaders and teams."

**Jessica Mahoney**, **Aquatic Development Group**, said the virtual event was great, just what she expected from the WWA.

"This year's show provided us with a platform for sharing key learnings and experiences, bringing us all together with informative sessions and live Q&As that provided us all with valuable opportunities to once again connect and interact with our peers in the industry," Mahoney said.

Highlights of the virtual event included seven live feature presentations, eight live Ask The Experts Q & A panels, nine live hosted Connect and Chats sessions, 40 pre-recorded breakout sessions featuring more than 100 speakers and three live General Session and Awards presentations.

Highlights from the educational program included the

► See WWA, page 38

## COVID-19 impacts IAAPA Expo 2020

AT: Pam Sherborne

[psherborne@amusementtoday.com](mailto:psherborne@amusementtoday.com)

ORLANDO — The **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)** fell in line with other industry associations announcing on Sept. 4 the cancellation of IAAPA Expo 2020 in Orlando. Yet, while the expo is canceled, IAAPA officials announced at the same time the launch of a new virtual conference for global attractions industry professionals so that they can take part in many of the education sessions originally planned to take place at IAAPA Expo.

"IAAPA Expo serves as the global marketplace for the attractions industry," said **Hal McEvoy**, IAAPA's president and CEO. "We recognize this year there are many challenges facing our members from around the world.



McEvoy

Together with input from members, exhibitors, the IAAPA Board of Directors and our team, we have decided to cancel this year's Expo due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. The continuing barriers to international and domestic travel coupled with the evolving guidance on mass gatherings and members' need to focus on their businesses helped lead to this decision.

"The IAAPA team has already pivoted to address find-



Over 25 sessions planned for IAAPA Expo move online.

VIRTUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Nov. 16-18

ing new ways industry manufacturers and suppliers can connect with their customers to promote their products, discover new trends, and make plans for the future," he said.

**IAAPA Expo Virtual Education Conference** will take place Nov. 16-18, the same dates that the in-person expo was to take place. Participants will be able to virtually attend 25 sessions and two keynote presentations. Keynote presentations will be presented by **Josh D'Amaro**, chairman, **Disney Parks, Experiences and Products** and **Andreas Andersen**, ICAE, president and CEO, **Liseberg**.

The sessions to be presented were part of IAAPA Expo's conference program and feature leading industry professionals. Additional details and registration is available online.

"While we are disappointed we are unable to meet in-person this year, we are already looking ahead to IAAPA Expo 2021 in Orlando," McEvoy said.

McEvoy said that the patience, support and commitment from dedicated IAAPA Expo exhibitors has been encouraging.

IAAPA is planning to host

### Featured Speakers:

- Andreas Andersen, President /CEO, Liseberg
- Josh D'Amaro, Chairman, Disney Parks, Experiences and Products
- Pamela Landwirth, President, Give Kids The World
- Rick Hunter, President /CEO, ProSlide Technology, Inc.
- Sharon Aguillen, President, TCB Productions
- Sarah Cole, President and CEO, Glazer Children's Museum
- Tilak Mandadi, Executive Vice President, Digital & Global Chief Technology Officer, Disney Parks, Experiences and Products

**IAAPA Expo Asia 2021**, scheduled to take place in Macao, China, June 7-10, **IAAPA Expo Europe 2021** in Barcelona, Spain, Sept. 28-30, 2021, and **IAAPA Expo 2021** in Orlando, Florida, Nov. 16-19, 2021.

Participation in IAAPA Expo Virtual Education Conference qualifies for 14 hours toward IAAPA Certification.

• [iaapa.org](http://iaapa.org)



Although IAAPA Expo 2020 has been canceled, the event's informative education sessions will occur online during the IAAPA Virtual Education Conference. AT/TIM BALDWIN

# 2020 IAAPA Virtual Education Conference daily course schedule

**Monday, Nov. 16**  
 •9-9:15 a.m.,  
 IAAPA Daily Highlights  
 •9:15-10 a.m.,  
 Keynote Presentation, Josh D'Amato, Chairman, Disney Parks, Experiences, and Products  
 •10-10:15 a.m., Entertainment  
 •10:15-11 a.m.,  
 3 Concurrent Education Sessions  
 —Employee Development: Simplifying Customer Service  
 —Food and Beverage Infrastructure and Restaurant Design: How to Serve Crowds  
 —We're Waiting...Creating Entertainment Experiences in Your Ride Queue  
 •11-11:15 a.m., Break  
 •11:15-11:30 a.m., IAAPA Updates  
 •11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.,  
 3 Concurrent Education Sessions  
 —How to Optimize Your Social Media Presence  
 —*Funworld* Presents: The Journey to Find Rulantica!  
 —Sourcing: Improving Purchasing and Expanding New Product Development for Games and Merchandising  
 •12:15-1 p.m.,  
 Keynote Presentation, Tilak Mandadi, executive vice president, digital and global chief technology officer, Disney Parks, Experiences and Products  
 •1-1:30 p.m., Lunch break  
 •1:30-1:45 p.m., IAAPA updates  
 •1:45-2:30 p.m.,  
 3 Concurrent Education Sessions  
 —Break the Rules of Entertainment Engagement with VR and Esports Attractions  
 —How to Thrive in Times of Change  
 —Predicting and Analyzing Visitor Behavior: Using Big Data for Success  
 •2:45-3:30 p.m.,  
 Networking Event

**Tuesday, Nov. 17**  
 •9-9:15 a.m.,  
 IAAPA Daily Highlights  
 •9:15-10 a.m., IAAPA Hall of Fame Awards Presentation  
 •10-10:15 a.m., Industry Entertainment  
 •10:15-11 a.m.,  
 3 Concurrent Education Sessions  
 —Leveraging Pricing and Promotions as Marketing  
 —Putting "Amusement" into Parks and Attractions  
 —Creating Retail Experiences That Extend the Guest Experience  
 •11-11:15 a.m., IAAPA Updates  
 •11:15-11:30 a.m., IAAPA Service Awards Presentation  
 •11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.,  
 3 Concurrent Education Sessions  
 —Human Factors and Attractions  
 —Voice of the Visitor: Learn

Guests Opinions, Attitudes, and Expectations  
 —The Leadership Advantage: Cultivating Leaders Within Your Park  
 •12:20-1 p.m., CEO Speaks, moderator:  
 Matt Heller, founder, Performance Optimist Consulting  
 •1-1:30 p.m., Lunch Break  
 •1:30 -1:45 p.m., IAAPA Young Professional of the Year Award Presentation  
 •1:45-2:35 p.m.,  
 3 Concurrent Education Sessions,

—How to Measure the ROI of Your Marketing Strategies  
 —Documentation Best Practices for Ride Operations  
 —Creating Worlds: Writing and Installing Audience Driven Immersive Entertainment  
 •3:45-4:30 p.m.,  
 Networking event

**Wednesday, Nov. 18**  
 •9-9:15 a.m.,  
 IAAPA Daily Highlights  
 •9:15-10 a.m., Game Changer: The Power of Purpose, Pamela

Landwirth, president and CEO, Give Kids The World  
 •10-10:15 a.m.,  
 Industry Entertainment  
 •10:15-11 a.m.,  
 3 Concurrent Education Sessions  
 —What Happens if You Don't Listen to Your Guests?  
 —ASTM Standards in Your Facility  
 —21 Trends on Accessibility, Sustainability and Technology  
 •11:15-11:30 a.m., IAAPA Updates  
 •11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.,  
 3 Concurrent Education Sessions

— Fix it When its Broken: Is Your Family Entertainment Center Under Performing? Fix it With Proven Solutions!  
 —Creating Positive Practices to Reduce Unconscious Bias  
 —Strategies for Maximizing Food and Beverage Revenue  
 •12:15-1 p.m.,  
 Keynote Presentation: Changing Attractions Change the World, Andreas Andersen, ICAE, president and CEO, Liseberg  
 •1:45-2 p.m.,  
 Conference Closing

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## ► WWA

Continued from page 36

following featured presentations such as WOW! Service Excellence Revelations, Marketing 2020 – What In The World Happened and What's Next In 2021, What Medical Experts Can Tell Us About Waterpark Operations in 2021 and Operations In a COVID Environment – Learning From 2020 To Succeed In 2021, just to name a few.

Other timely topics covered at this year's show included reviving work ethic in a post-COVID world, rebuilding your marketing plan for 2021, increasing seasonal staff retention rates and taking control of your social media presence.

"None of us have experienced a year quite like 2020 and we need to work closely together if we're going to push through these uncharted waters," said **Aleatha Ezra**, WWA director of park member development.

"Next year will hold many unknowns for all of us, but we don't have to go into it alone."

Ezra said the live sessions this year offered attendees the chance to bounce ideas off each other and gather new ways to operate more safely so that guests feel good about coming back out to visit parks.

Just spending some time with the WWA community brought some normalcy for many that attended the virtual event. That was one thing that gave **Marci Blevins**, owner, **Splash Kingdom Waterparks**, encouragement.

Blevins enjoyed "spending a week in October with the WWA community, seeing faces and hearing familiar voices working together as a team to continue to educate, highlight achievements, provide resources and just to lift each other up."

Safety, human resources, operations and marketing were all covered during the education program.

In addition, this year's virtual program delved deeper into the topics relevant for this time such as how to keep guests and employees safer.

"The WWA Show never disappoints and this year was no different," said **Taryn Eisenman**, general manager,



### SplashDown Beach Water Park.

"The adapted virtual show provided a unique opportunity to connect live with fellow industry experts and friends, while the new format allowed us to consume more content than ever before. It was a game changer."

**Tamara Lawson**, sales manager, **Soaring Eagle Waterpark and Hotel** said she appreciates being able to review the material until March 2021.

"It also was reassuring to see everyone in the Connect and Chat sessions," Lawson said. "I met some new contacts and look forward to virtual chats on our own."

"Ours is an industry that doesn't stand still even during the most challenging times," said **Damien Latham**, chair of the WWA's board of directors. He felt it was important to stay focused and acknowledge the best and brightest leaders of the industry this year by presenting the WWA Board of Directors Awards and all other awards the WWA present annually.

"We continue to see our fellow colleagues innovate and lead the way to the next 'est,' whether that's biggest or fastest or safest," he said.

For those water leisure professionals who missed the WWA40 Virtual Show, nearly all of the educational content has been recorded and archived and is still available to purchase through March 1, 2021.

The World Waterpark Association's 41st Annual Symposium & Trade Show, set for October 19-22, 2021, in San Antonio, Texas.

"It's been more than a decade since the WWA Show has been hosted in San Antonio," **Root** said. "Since that time, Texas has continued to welcome the opening of many new water parks, aquatic centers, waterpark resorts and spray parks making this state the perfect place to bring our industry back together for in-person learning, shopping and networking."

• [waterparks.org](http://waterparks.org)

## WWA award winners and sponsors

### Best Speaker Award

Shaun McKeogh, Attractions Academy

### WWA Hall of Fame

The WWA inducted two individuals into the WWA Hall of Fame, which honors the water leisure industry's most important and visionary pioneers and innovators.

This year's honorees were:

- Jim Basala, Deep River Waterpark
- Jim Dunn, Aquatic Development Group

### Wave Review Awards

Multi-category winners were:

SoundWaves at Gaylord Opryland Resort, Nashville, Tennessee; Adventure Park Geelong, Wallington, Victoria, Australia, and Typhoon Texas Waterpark, Katy, Texas. (The full list of Wave Review winners is available on the WWA website.)

### Board of Directors' Awards

The WWA Board of Directors recognized the exceptional accomplishments of 35 recipients in 2020 including:

#### • Al Turner Memorial

**Commitment to Excellence Award:**  
George Deines, Councilman-Hunsaker, Richardson, Texas

#### • Executive Board Award:

Kari (Tjader) Manev, Liftoptia, Inc., Orlando, Florida

#### • Kelly Ogle Memorial Safety Award:

Wess Long, StarGuard ELITE, Orlando, Florida

#### Leading Edge Award:

Adventure Bay, Xiangyang, China and China Creative Entertainment Co., Ltd, Shenzhen, China and WhiteWater, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada for "Turbo Shuttle;" Europa Park / Rulantica GmbH & Co Mack KG, Rust, Germany and API WATER FUN GmbH, Fulda, Germany, AQUARENA GmbH, Jettingen, Germany, aquila wasseraufbereitungstechnik gmbh, Wertheim, Germany, MACKNEXT / Mack Solutions, Rust, Germany, MurphysWaves Ltd, Glasgow, Scotland-UK, PGAV Destinations, St. Louis, Missouri, and ProSlide Technology Inc, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada for their work on Rulantica; Grupo Vidanta, Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico and Murphys Waves Ltd, Glasgow, Scotland-UK, Riverflow Pumps by Current Systems Inc., Ventura, California, Water Technology, Inc., Beaver Dam, Wisconsin and WhiteWater, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada for their work on Jungala Aqua Experience; Park of Poland, Wr cza, Poland and Murphys Waves Ltd, Glasgow, Scotland-UK and Polin Waterparks, Kocaeli, Turkey for their work on Suntago Water World; Pirates Bay Waterpark, Baytown, Texas, and NINJACROSSTM Systems, Overland Park, Kansas, and Progressive Commercial Aquatics, Inc., Houston, Texas, for "NINJACROSSTM;" Royal Caribbean

International, Miami, Florida, Martin Aquatic Design & Engineering, Orlando, Florida, and WhiteWater, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada for their work on the "Perfect Storm Slide Complex;" Wilderness Resorts and Waterparks, Sevierville, Tennessee, Architectural Design Consultants, Inc., Lake Delton, Wisconsin, Aquatic Development Group, Cohoes, New York, ProSlide Technology Inc., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, Rain Drop Products LLC, Ashland, Ohio, USA Inc., Downers Grove, Illinois, and Water Odyssey™ by Fountain People, Inc., San Marcos, Texas, for their work on Soaky Mountain Waterpark.

### 2020 WWA Sponsors

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#### • Gold Sponsors

Daldorado, LLC, Global Management Amusement Professionals, HDC Products and Water Odyssey by Fountain People

#### • Silver Sponsors

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#### • Bronze Sponsors

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# Six Flags rolls out contactless payment; benefits parks, customers

**AT:** Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

AUSTELL, Georgia — Even before the global health crisis put contactless transactions at the forefront of doing business, **Six Flags Theme Parks** were already investigating a new initiative to change how payments could be handled.

**Six Flags Over Georgia** began discussions in the second quarter of 2019.

“We had those conversations here in Atlanta, which led to us doing a pilot in just a small section of the park during Holiday in the Park in 2019,” said **Jeff Harris**, senior director of finance, Six Flags. “We wanted to test it really small and see what our guests thought about it and see how our team members felt. As a management team, we wanted to see how we felt about the results and see if it would be something we’d like to explore down the road.”

With positive feedback from all involved, management had the confidence to do a bigger test. When **White Water** opened in late June, the Georgia team expanded the program to make the entire park’s transactions contactless.

“The real emphasis for this

is to improve the guest experience,” said Harris. “The industry knows that credit transactions are easier to process than cash transactions — anywhere from five to 15 seconds faster. Multiply that out by thousands of guests and you can see the improvement of line speed, especially in food service where we wanted to speed the lines up.”

For the guest, the initiative is termed Card and Mobile Payment Program. Those guests carrying only cash can use machines placed in the park to convert bills into prepaid debit cards. Following the park visit, any balance can be spent anywhere that accepts Visa.

“Communication and awareness are key,” said **Gene Patrick**, director of marketing, Six Flags Over Georgia. “We have learned that through our trials. We communicate the Card and Mobile Payment Program through our website, our e-newsletters and significant in-park signage. We really want to communicate that this program is for the benefit of our guests.”

Six Flags is creating messages for its in-park radio and queue line television segments. It’s important for guests to understand there are no fees to



**In-park signage (above) communicates the program to guests. Multiple units throughout the park convert cash to debit cards for guests with no fees involved (right).**

AT/TIM BALDWIN

transfer money to the card nor to use it.

“It’s a much safer and faster method of payment, and what a better time to introduce it than in the era of COVID,” noted Harris. “The acceptance rate is very positive. Naturally, folks are gravitating toward non-cash purchases in the environment.”

Further advantages involve eliminating counting errors or any temptation for staff theft.

“The chance of that hap-

pening now is zero. Also, the training time is significantly reduced,” added Harris.

“There is a lot that goes into paying for cash processing. All of those costs are now removed,” Harris told *Amusement Today*. “The net of it is a positive financial impact. Those outweigh the rental costs of the units and credit card fees.”

A service agreement with the machine providers takes



care of installation, training, maintenance, loading of cards and handling the cash pull.

“It’s completely hands off,” said Harris. “All we have to do is provide a place and the guests. We’ve completely removed armored cars, cash processing and reconciliation. That all goes away and has completely funded the program.”

•sixflags.com

# The Walt Disney Company announces 28,000 cast member layoff

**AT:** David Fake  
Special to *Amusement Today*

LAKE BEUNA VISTA, Fla. — With lower than expected attendance post coronavirus closure at its Florida parks and the California Parks only expected to reopen in late November, the **Disney Parks, Experiences and Products** division of **The Walt Disney Company** announced it would be permanently laying off 28,000 cast members before year-end, with most layoffs affecting U.S. parks and resorts. This figure represents slightly more than 25% of the 100,000 cast members employed by the company across the U.S. parks and resorts.

Chairman of Disney Parks and Experiences, **Josh D’Amaro**, broke the news in a public statement regarding the employment status of its cast members in the domestic Disney parks. In that statement D’Amaro said that he wrote and sent a letter to each of the division’s employees. He added, “[The company has] made the very difficult decision to begin the process of reducing our workforce at our Parks, Experiences and Products segment at all levels, having kept non-working Cast Members on furlough since April, while paying health-care benefits. Approximately 28,000 domestic employees will be affected, of which about 67% are part-time.”



**Disney**  
Parks, Experiences  
and Products

**Disney Parks, Experiences and Products** division said it will reduce its workforce by approximately 28,000 domestic employees, or “cast members,” as the company refers to them, in the coming months. Many of those affected are parks cast members at Walt Disney World Resort in Florida and Disneyland Resort in California.

COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD

The letter, which was provided to *AT* by an affected cast member, included these words from D’Amaro: “Thank you for your dedication, patience and understanding during these difficult times. I know that these changes will be challenging. It will take time for all of us to process this information and its impact. [...] For those who will be affected by this decision, I want to thank you for all that you have done

for our company and our guests. While we don’t know when the pandemic will be behind us, we are confident in our resilience and hope to welcome back Cast Members and employees when we can.”

In the days immediately following the announcement, 6,700 cast members, who were mostly already furloughed but had not yet been called back, received the call. Then, just over a week later the union

representing **Walt Disney World** cast members announced a deal had been met with Disney. The resulting agreement indicated that 8,857 part-time union employees would not be returning to their jobs. The layoffs are effective December 4.

“It’s devastating,” said **Eric Clinton**, union president of Unite Here Local 362. “There’s no other way to feel about all of this.”

•thewaltdisneycompany.com

## MARKET WATCH

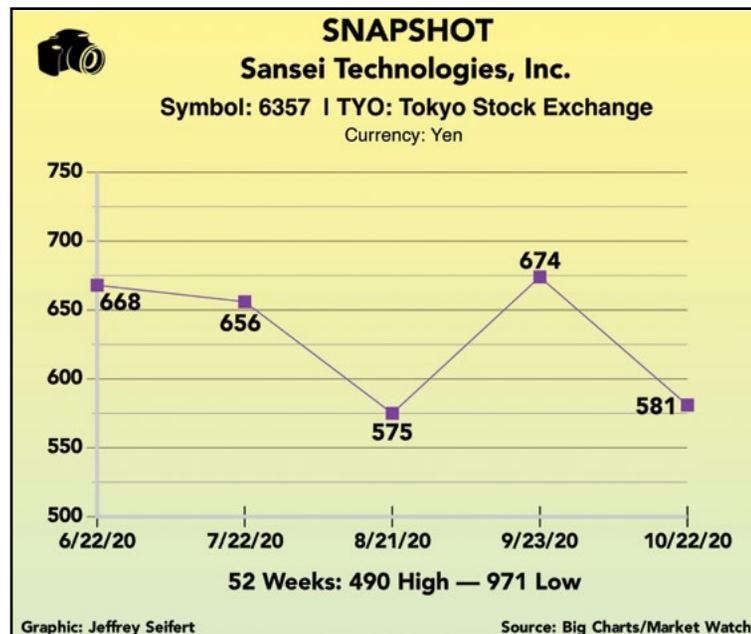
COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 10/21/20	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	54.44	64.97	33.00
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	25.41	58.73	13.00
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	44.52	47.74	31.70
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	126.63	153.41	79.07
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.12	0.22	0.09
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	23.78	79.80	12.55
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	4455.00	4485.00	2080.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.41	1.09	0.38
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	21.70	22.10	9.08
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	21.41	34.63	5.90
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	60.69	135.31	19.25
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	588.00	971.00	490.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	22.76	36.96	6.75
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	20.12	48.25	8.75
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	672.00	788.00	550.00
Village Roadshow	AU:VRL	ASX	2.18	4.10	0.77

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

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



The nighttime spectacular Cinematic Celebration returned to Universal Orlando on October 24. COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO



## DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 10/19/20	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$2.465	-\$0.580
Midwest	\$2.269	-\$0.688
Gulf Coast	\$2.143	-\$0.659
Mountain	\$2.326	-\$0.718
West Coast	\$2.542	-\$0.748
California	\$3.239	-\$0.741

## CURRENCY

On 10/21/20 \$1 USD =

0.8471	EURO
0.7723	GBP (British Pound)
105.54	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9081	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.4189	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3160	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

## BUSINESS WATCH

### Cedar Fair updates liquidity position

SANDUSKY, Ohio — Cedar Fair Entertainment Company (NYSE: FUN), provided preliminary operating results for its third quarter ending Sept. 27, 2020, and, in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, updated the market on its current liquidity position.

Attendance in the third quarter totaled 1.3 million guests, a decline of 11.9 million guests from the third quarter of 2019. The attendance decline was largely due to six of the company's 13 properties being closed in the quarter, while its open parks offered only limited operations due to the pandemic.

As of Sept. 27, 2020, the company had cash on hand of approximately \$215 million, compared with a balance of \$301 million as of June 28, 2020. Including \$359 million available under its revolving credit facility, net of \$16 million of letters of credit, the company had total liquidity of approximately \$574 million as of Sept. 27, 2020. Based on this level of liquidity, the company anticipates it will have ample liquidity to meet its cash obligations through the end of 2021, even if operations remain disrupted.

"The actions we've taken to date to manage our cash burn rate and improve our capital structure provide us with the necessary financial flexibility and balance sheet strength to manage through this pandemic-related disruption," said Cedar Fair President and CEO **Richard A. Zimmerman**. "Given the ongoing uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, we will continue to explore ways to further enhance our liquidity position and reduce cash outflows."

### Disney reorganizing to focus on streaming

BURBANK, Calif. — In one of **Bob Chapek's** first big moves since taking over as chief executive, the **Walt Disney Company** announced a realignment of its business divisions that placed the focus squarely on **Disney+** and its other streaming services as the future of the company's creative efforts.

The reorganization essentially creates three divisions that will focus on content, and another that will handle how it is distributed.

"Given the incredible success of Disney+ and our plans to accelerate our direct-to-consumer business, we are strategically positioning our company to more effectively support our growth strategy and increase shareholder value," stated Chapek, who succeeded **Robert A. Iger** as chief executive in February, said in a statement. "Managing content creation distinct from distribution will allow us to be more effective and nimble in making the content consumers want most, delivered in the way they prefer to consume it."

In a new role created by Chapek, **Kareem Daniel**, a 14-year veteran of the company who most recently ran the company's consumer products division, will become the chairman of media and entertainment distribution. That division will oversee all distribution of content globally, while also housing the company's streaming services, which will be led by **Rebecca Campbell**. Before leading the consumer products division, Daniel oversaw Disney's Imagineering operations, where he was responsible for transforming the company's properties into park attractions like Toy Story Land at **Walt Disney World** and Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge at **Disney World** and **Disneyland**.

### Gateway Ticketing Systems honored

GILBERTSVILLE, Pa. — **Gateway Ticketing Systems** has been named the 22nd fastest growing company in 2020 by **Lehigh Valley Business**.

The Lehigh Valley Business Fastest Growing Companies awards program celebrates the Greater Lehigh Valley's most dynamic companies who progressively contribute to the success of the region's economic growth and stability. To qualify, companies had to meet selection criteria based on dollar growth and percentage growth over the past three years.

"As Gateway Ticketing Systems enters our 32nd year in the Greater Lehigh Valley providing ticketing and guest management solutions to visitor attractions around the world, it is a privilege to be recognized for our growth over the last few years. It is an honor to be awarded alongside so many other forward-looking companies," said **Michael Andre**, president and CEO of Gateway Ticketing Systems.

Creativity, innovation and a dash of brashness spark a formula for success

## New Trimper Rides team brings fresh ideas to 130-year-old property

**AT:** Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

OCEAN CITY, Md. — A new team stepped in to lead the way at **Trimper Rides of Ocean City** as 2020 got started. The property, which dates back to 1890, has decades upon decades of history. Founded by **Daniel B. Trimper**, various branches of the family tree have managed the park for more than a century. At the helm as president now is **Antoinette Bruno**, **Daniel Trimper III**'s daughter. Bruno noted it as a "return to the original family."

Bruno will be the first to admit that new ideas aren't always welcomed among those set in their ways, but it was her moxie and flair for thinking outside the box that helped the facility weather the storm in what could have been a tumultuous year.

Bruno noted that the amusement park had been losing money over the last decade. The park is part of four related companies, the others being an arcade, a property management company and the roller coaster. She felt the arcade and the property management company was supporting the existence of the amusement park. It was her goal to turn things around.



Bruno

"I pitched to the shareholders to look at our results and understand we couldn't keep going the way things were going. I wanted to be the person to make things change," she said.

Bruno was persuasive enough to get 54% to agree.

Before spring even officially arrived, Bruno was at the helm for one week when the nation entered a shutdown. "It's not a great way to start a new job," she laughed.

However, the health crisis turned out to be a blessing in disguise in some ways. The new team knew they had a lot of work to accomplish. The park needed a serious cleaning, the pavement was damaged in places to where she felt spots were unsafe. Some older rides needed to be removed.

"I didn't have any idea what I was getting into,"



**Wood Entertainment** worked in partnership with **Trimper's** to operate its 150-foot wheel (above). Underneath the many rides set up by **Deggeller Attractions**, **Trimper Rides** boasts a new pavement surface to the outdoor ride area (right). COURTESY TRIMPER RIDES

Bruno said. "I understood the big picture — for years, my dad had sat down with me, teaching me to understand the financials and how the park made money — that was all great *on paper*. I had to take all that understanding of finances and figure out an execution plan to get the park to a healthy place."

A close examination of the state of the park indicated to her why numbers were down. She walked the park with the shareholders to help them understand the magnitude of the situation.

Because of COVID-19, the park was handed three months to get things to the conditions envisioned. Thanks to PPP, employees were brought back on, not as ride operators but as cleaners and painters and repairmen. New blacktop was poured. A new POS sys-

tem was installed to eradicate problems of the past.

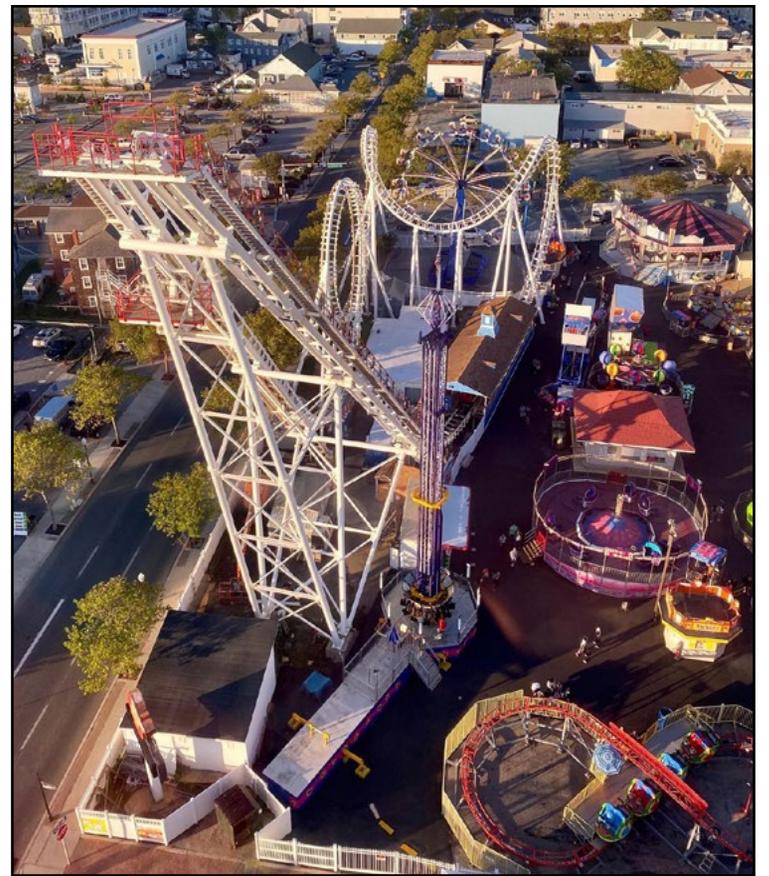
"The thinking was 'How do we provide family fun and put smiles on the faces of our guests? Who is our staff and how are they trained? How do we deliver the customer experience we can be proud of?' All of those things took time. We managed to renovate and clean the park," Bruno said.

With the park in much better condition, the first primary obstacle had been overcome. A bigger one remained — the park couldn't open.

Bringing in a farmers market in the spring, there was at least a tad of revenue sharing, even though the rides were prohibited from opening at that time. Bruno became active in approaching government officials. When June arrived, she knew the park was approaching a do-or-die situation.



Clever events like this car show (above left) brought in good crowds to boost revenue. To fill the absences of rides that moved to the fair circuit, **Trimper Rides** brought Halloween to Ocean City (above right). COURTESY TRIMPER RIDES



"We're moving full steam ahead trying to make the park a better place so that when we can open guests will want to come, but at the same time COVID is happening. The governor put [amusement parks] in Phase 3, and I'm wondering if we will ever get to Phase 3," she said.

Writing letters, working with local stations, talking with the governor and actively campaigning via social media, Bruno was a vibrant voice in getting facilities reopened and worked up a 40-page safety measure plan.

The green light came as schools were letting out in June. The park had to act quickly and formed a great partnership with **Deggeller Attractions**. The

carnival operator was equally strapped with events canceled so the joint effort to set up 10 new rides for **Trimper's** worked well. The midway operator was able to provide staffing, which help both companies. Other carnival operators approached **Trimper Rides** and the facility was able to put staff members to work. Bruno was grateful to work with these partners, as outside operators provided about a quarter of her staff.

Another player, **Michael Wood** of **Wood Entertainment**, brought in his 150-foot-tall Big Wheel, which gave **Trimper Rides** an iconic showpiece.

"We did the deal in 24 hours," Bruno said. "From

► See TRIMPER, page 42



## ▶TRIMPER

Continued from page 41

the time we spoke, the wheel was here and up and running a week later. It has been a fantastic partnership. He's enjoyed being in Ocean City."

Things looked bright for a while when operations resumed.

"We haven't done anything the way things are supposed to be done. Part of that is because I didn't know how things were supposed to be done," Bruno laughed. "Part

of that is I am willing to fail if that means taking a chance and learning."

Her ability to think outside the box proved valuable. The next challenge was quarantine restrictions placed on tourists from neighboring states at the end of July, which affected Maryland's tourism. Attendance dropped significantly.

To make things efficient, Bruno first consolidated operating hours to the park's most primary times. Conveying the changes through all platforms, they communicated the new

operations and found it successful. To further bring in crowds, creativity became a godsend.

"We were able to adapt as things went wrong," she said.

Theme nights became a new approach. Karaoke, a concert series, ticket specials and flash sales helped drive revenue.

September weekends became a welcome hit. Capitalizing on city events and festivals that were canceled — car shows, motorcycle shows, craft festivals — Trimper Rides orchestrated its own variation and guests com-

ing to town could still meet their own expectations of a weekend getaway. In 2020, the facility more than doubled its September revenue compared to previous years. The city allowed the park to close the adjacent street to accommodate these festivals. People were still coming. Without the actual festivals, the park gave them something to do similar to what they were expecting.

A final hiccup came when carnival operators were able to resume scheduled locations. When Deggeller removed its

10 rides for the fair circuit, it took a lot of the adult rides Trimper's had to offer.

"It looked like a bomb had exploded," Bruno said of the open space. "There was nothing there. I still had a month to bring in revenue. I sat down with my staff and asked, 'How are we going to reinvent ourselves?' The staff started spitting out ideas."

With Halloween events being canceled for Ocean City, Trimper Rides returned fall fright to the city. Hay bales, apple cider, corn stalks, scare actors and the like brought Halloween back. Each weekend was given a name like Zombie Dance Party Weekend.

"The best part of the whole thing was that we didn't have to share revenue," smiled Bruno. "We did it all ourselves. Thinking outside the box has been a profitable experience."

One bold idea the new regime made was to remove all high fructose corn syrup in the park. There are no sodas, no prepackaged items and nothing made from mixes. While fun food is still on offer, it is taken to a higher level and made fresh at the park. "At the end of the day, we are stewards of families," Bruno said.

Even with all the new ideas, the park still boasts a long-running constant. The 1892 **Armitage Herschell** Grand Carousel is a beautiful piece of American history. It is the oldest carousel in the nation and the third oldest in the world, according to the park.

"We cherish it. We've had the same painter restoring the carousel for 30 years," said Bruno. "Because of COVID, she had three straight months to be able to work every day, which she has never been able to do. She repainted almost every animal. She then started on other rides and murals on the walls."

As the season ended, management is now poised to confront 2021 head on.

"The biggest strength of the family that is now running the amusement park is that all of us worked here as kids. This park has been a part of our family and history," said Bruno. "We weren't a part of the previous management, so we don't have the baggage of 'This is how it's done.' We aren't afraid to fail; we aren't afraid to learn. We aren't afraid to try new things. I think the new American amusement park needs to be flexible and adapt to survive."

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## COVID-19 impact on industry revealed in new survey results

NEEDHAM, Mass. — **Firestone Financial**, a subsidiary of **Berkshire Bank**, announced the results of their amusement industry survey, including purchasing needs and industry event attendance plans over the next year.

“Our customers and industry partners have faced their greatest challenges this year — from shutdowns to shifts in consumer behavior to changes and limitations in facility operations,” said Firestone Financial’s EVP, Chief Operating Officer **Michael Smith**.

“Firestone has always prided itself on supporting the amusement industry. In response to the uncertainty COVID-19 has caused in the industry, we want the survey results to be used as a resource to understand where our customers are, what their plans are over the next 12 months, and how we can best service those plans.”

### Survey highlights

- Of those surveyed, 65% plan to purchase equipment for their business over the next 12 months.
- 47% plan to finance up to \$50k in the next 12 months.
- Due to COVID-19, 45% of respondents indicated they are no longer making planned purchases.
- 59% do not plan to attend any in-person events in 2020 or 2021.

The survey was distributed to Firestone Financial’s amusement, location-based entertainment and vending customers, as well as others in the industry.

Questions related to their purchasing plans over the next 12 months and the impact of COVID on those plans and their business were asked of respondents, as well as their plans to attend industry events over the next year.

132 surveys were completed during September 2020.

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

## Amusement Expo International announces change in 2021 show dates

MOKENA, Ill. — As uncertainty about the marketplace and the status of COVID-19 lingers, the sponsoring organizations of **Amusement Expo International** (AEI) have opted to move the startup of the spring event to May 5-7, 2021, still at the **Las Vegas Convention Center** in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Originally, the spring gathering for the out-of-home entertainment industry was set for March 16-18, 2021, but concerns about business conditions and the facilities in Las Vegas prompted the decision to delay it briefly.

“We’ve been closely monitoring the situation and our thinking, at this point, is the prudent thing to do is to push back next year’s AEI and grab open dates a bit later, but not out of the traditional spring cycle the show has been on since its inception in 2010,” said **Joe Camarota**, president of the **American Amusement Machine Association** (AAMA), one of AEI’s two co-sponsoring organizations.

Under the revised AEI 2021 schedule, the event will shift by one day to a Wednesday through Friday pattern, with the comprehensive educational program to be conducted on Wednesday, May 5, and the exhibition to take place on Thursday, May 6, and Friday, May 7.

“It’s important for our industry to meet face to face in 2021 not only to reflect on where we’ve been but, more importantly, to share how this experience will change the

manner in which we conduct business moving forward,” stated **Amusement and Music Operators Association** president **Greg Trent**. “Moving AEI to May provides additional time for exhibitors and attendees to get back on their feet so they can be in Vegas and engage in the conversation.”

AEI continues to evolve as an important gathering on the industry’s annual calendar, with its reach extending beyond traditional coin-op and amusements to include segments such as family entertainment centers, bulk vending, laser tag and virtual reality.

“The **National Bulk Vendors Association** (NBVA) looks forward to its continued collocation with Amusement Expo International in 2021,” said NBVA President, **Scott Ausmus**. “By moving the NBVA Conference and Trade Show to May, both bulk vending suppliers and operators will be in a better position to attend our annual event when we come together and strategize how to move towards profitability again. We will not allow COVID to stop us.”

The Laser Tag Convention, co-located along with the AEI is excited about the new dates for the spring show. This will provide a greater opportunity to allow the industry to move forward and bring family fun back to a nation that needs to have some excitement and adrenaline that only the family entertainment industry can provide.

•[amusementexpo.org](http://amusementexpo.org)

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## OBITUARIES

**Rev. John A. Vakulskas Jr., carnival priest**

SIOUX CITY, Iowa — The Rev. John A. Vakulskas Jr., 76, passed Sept. 27, 2020, at Mercy One Siouxland Medical Center, following a seven-month battle with pancreatic cancer, which was accelerated by the coronavirus.

Bishop Joseph M. Mueller ordained him a priest for the Diocese of Sioux City on May 24, 1969, at Cathedral of the Epiphany.

On July 4, 1969, Father Vakulskas began his ministry to carnival workers when he was called by Jennie Klein to the Plymouth County Fairgrounds in Le Mars to minister to her husband Henry Klein, owner of the carnival that was in town. The Kleins suggested the priest take on the special ministry to those individuals in an industry that was constantly on the move but in need of the sacraments.

Pope St. John Paul II appointed him International Coordinator of Carnival Ministries in December 1993 and the United States Catholic Conference approved a similar national appointment in the spring 1994. Father Vakulskas was the only member of the U.S. clergy with a permanent ministry to carnival workers. In 2012, he was recognized for his service to carnival workers by Pope Benedict. Pope Francis honored Father Vakulskas in 2016 for his ministry to migrants and itinerant people at a Vatican Mass celebrating the carnival industry.

Father Vakulskas was a member of the Outdoor Amusement Business Association, Hot Springs Showmen's Association, Midwest Showmen's Association, Miami Showmen's Association, Showmen's League of America, Chicago and St. Louis Chapters and Royal Hawaiian Showmen's Association. In 2016, he was named to Showmen's League of America Hall of Honor. For more than 45 years, Father Vakulskas hosted pilgrimages all over the world, sharing his insights with thousands of world travelers.

**Judson Green, former Disney Parks president**

ORLANDO — On August 31, Judson Green, who served as the head of Disney's theme park division in the 1990s, passed at the age of 68.

Green was born in Quincy, Illinois, where he grew up and, following in his father's footsteps, achieved the rank of Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America. He played piano, starting at age 4, and French horn, aspiring and training through his college years to become a professional musician as a jazz pianist and composer. While his career ultimately followed a different path, music had a defining impact on Judson's life, and he used it and the lessons he learned through music in everything he did.

Green was Disney's Chief Financial Officer from 1989 to 1991, when he was elevated to president of what was then-called Walt Disney Attractions. There, he oversaw day-to-day operations of Disney's theme parks. He continued in that position until 1998, when he replaced Dick Nunis as Chairman of Walt Disney Attractions. He held that position until 2000, when he left Disney to oversee Navteq Corp.

Under his watch, Walt Disney World opened Disney's Animal Kingdom in 1998 and Disneyland Paris debuted (as EuroDisneyland) in 1992. In recent years, Green had been treated for leukemia and lymphoma.

**Laurie Bujalka, owner Glory Amusements**

CHICAGO — Laurie Bujalka, age 75, beloved wife of the late George Bujalka, show owner of Glory Amusements and concessionaire who operated in the Chicagoland area, passed away September 28.

Laurie Bujalka grew up on the north side of Chicago with her parents and two sisters. The family had been involved with the carnival business since her father started working with it at 15 years of age. As a result, Laurie grew up working in the business. She met the love of her life, George, at the Axel Roller Rink in Norridge.

The pair married on March 18, 1967. George ended up starting his own business primarily with carnival games booking into to other shows, but eventually owned his own show in the 1980s and 1990s. Laurie Bujalka continued to work for the carnival into her 70's, only taking a break when the couple's three children were young.



Vakulskas



Green



Bujalka

## ON THE MOVE

**Betson Enterprises** of Carlstadt, New Jersey, a division of **H. Betti Industries, Inc.**, has promoted **Britannie Betti** from equipment sales account executive to business development manager and Northeast regional sales manager. In this dual role, she will work with **Rick Kirby**, regional sales director and executive vice president of gaming, to manage the Northeast region, and, together with **Jonathan Betti**, senior vice president of sales and marketing, she will manage the company's sales organization and business development efforts. Her additional responsibilities include developing growth strategies and plans, managing and retaining relationships with existing clients, increasing the client base, and identifying and mapping business strengths and customer needs. Britannie joined the family business 12 years ago, initially working in customer service and financial services.



Betti

**Kennywood** amusement park in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, made two major leadership hires over the summer.

**Mark Pauls** is the park's new general manager. Pauls brings an extensive attractions industry background, most recently serving as park president at **SeaWorld Orlando** and **Aquatica** and previously as corporate vice president of operations for **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment**. He also served as vice president of operations at **Busch Garden Tampa Bay**. Prior to his time in Florida, Pauls spent 37 years in Williamsburg, Virginia — most notably serving as vice president of operations at **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** and vice president of **Water Country USA**.



Pauls

In June, Kennywood also brought on a new food and beverage director, **Lenny Freund**. He is an industry veteran whose experience includes serving in similar director roles at **Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom** in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and **Schlitterbahn Waterparks & Resorts**, as well as general manager at **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.'s Frontier City** in Oklahoma City and **Wild Waves Theme & Water Park** in Federal Way, Washington. Freund founded **Freund Family Foods** and operates a consulting firm, **North Star Food and Beverage**.



Freund

The **Fort Wayne Children's Zoo** has added **Rick Schuiteman** as the executive director.

"It's a great privilege and honor to be only the third executive director of the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo," said Schuiteman. "I'm excited to lead the team into its next phase of growth as we continue to focus on connecting kids and animals, strengthening families, and inspiring people to care for the wild world we share."



Schuiteman

Schuiteman has more than 30 years of leadership and experience having served in park operations, entertainment, guest services and park development for **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment**.

Schuiteman served as a vice president at

**SeaWorld San Diego** until recently when he moved to a more global role which directly impacted in-park branding, messaging and the park visual experience at **SeaWorld Orlando**, **SeaWorld San Antonio**, as well as both **Busch Gardens** parks.

In November, **Chuck Fawcett** of **Animax Designs** will become the new international board president of the **Themed Entertainment Association (TEA)**, succeeding **Michael Blau** of **Adirondack Studios**.

Thirty-one years ago, as he was graduating **Vanderbilt University**, Fawcett was starting **Animax**, which is headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. The company designs and manufactures animatronic figures, interactive characters and puppets for themed and location-based entertainment.



Fawcett

"I've been absolutely amazed at how much our industry has changed and grown in three decades," stated Fawcett.

"One of my key personal passions is bringing people together and making new connections, and in TEA we do this on a global stage. The TEA has given me a tremendous opportunity to exercise this passion, where I have learned so much about our business and the critical nature of people and meaningful relationships. As TEA president, I look forward to doing even more of that on behalf of the association and our members."

**Herschend Enterprises**, the parent company of **Adventure Aquarium**, has named **Vince Nicoletti** the senior vice president of marketing for **Herschend Enterprises** in Peachtree Corners, Georgia. Most recently, Nicoletti was the Aquarium's executive director.



Nicoletti

Nicoletti has served as the Aquarium's executive leader since 2015. During his tenure, the Aquarium realized record-setting attendance and has added more than \$10 million of capital investment to modernize and improve the facility.

"We've seen a great deal of progress in such a short time at Adventure Aquarium. This isn't the same Aquarium that many of us remember," said Nicoletti. "If you haven't been recently, it's virtually a new experience."

Nicoletti will be succeeded at the Adventure Aquarium by industry-veteran, **Molly Deese**, a 30-year attractions executive and operator currently serving as vice president and general manager for **Herschend Enterprises' Wild Adventures** in Valdosta, Georgia.



Deese

"I have no doubt that the Aquarium and our team will continue to flourish under [Deese's] leadership," said Nicoletti. "She brings everything to the table that one needs to make a positive impact in this role."

Deese has served as **Wild Adventures'** general manager and vice president since 2012. Her career spans three decades including stretches at **Carowinds** in Charlotte, North Carolina, and **Kings Dominion** in Richmond, Virginia.

**ON THE MOVE****Disney's Swan, Dolphin hotels add new area general manager**COURTESY  
WALT DISNEY WORLD

BUENA VISTA, Fla. — With a more-than-three-decade career in the hospitality industry — starting during his youth in his family's New York restaurant — **Sean Verney** has been named the area general manager of the **Swan and Dolphin** hotels at the **Walt Disney World Resort**.

Verney oversees all aspects of the 2,270-room resort with 333,000 square feet of meeting space and all cast members. He is also responsible for managing the resort's expansion, a 349-room, 14-story tower scheduled to open in 2021.

He has recently spent more than a decade as the general manager at multiple New York and New Jersey hotels, including **Sheraton Parsippany Hotel**, **Westin New York** and the 1,780-room **Sheraton New York Times Square**.



Verney

**Sally adds new chief operating officer, treasurer and controller**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — **Sally Dark Rides** has added **Rolf Paegert** as its new chief operating officer (COO). Additionally, **Victoria Lane** has been brought on as treasurer and controller, after the retirement of **William Coleman**.

"Rolf and Victoria are leaders in their respective fields. And, they are terrific complements to our organization and the culture we've created," stated **John Wood**, CEO and chairman of Sally Dark Rides. "We know Rolf and Victoria are going to be huge assets to our company's future. They'll help ensure Sally Dark Rides provides world-class service to our partners around the globe for years to come."

In more than three decades of executive management experience, Paegert has demonstrated a dedication to improving customer relations, quality, service, and organization profitability. Prior to joining Sally Dark Rides, he served as the COO of **Parques Reunidos'** United States division, which involved the strategic planning and operations of 22 theme parks. Before that, he served as the corporate vice president of theme parks and capital management for **Palace Entertainment**. He also worked in executive leadership and management roles for **Castle Park** and **SeaWorld San Diego**. Paegert is fluent in German and earned his B.A. in International Business from **San Diego State University** and MBA from **University of San Diego**.

A native of Long Island, New York, Lane has a proven track record in cost accounting, payroll, budgeting, taxes and insurance, benefits, compliance and human resources, among others. Her more than two decades of experience includes work for national technology leaders including **Ezassi**, **OnSite-Physio** and **InHouse**. She earned her B.S. in Organizational Management and Accounting from **St. Johns River State College**.



Paegert



Lane

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— Eric Anderson,  
President, NEAAPA

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# Women INFLUENCE

## A view from the top...

**Renee Welsh** is currently the CEO for **Solutions Group**. That company, a part of **Helix Leisure**, is the umbrella for **Embed** and **Booking Boss**, the latter a company founded by Welsh and her husband, Andy Welsh. Helix purchased Booking Boss and one year later offered Welsh that position.

She always had an entrepreneurial spirit and, with her husband, there was no doubt that they would create a success.

## Accomplishments and affiliations...

- Named "Entrepreneur of the Year" in 2016 by *Travel Weekly*
- 2014 Australian Business Award winner for "Best Software Product of the Year" (Booking Boss)
- 2016 Silver Award winner at New South Wales Tourism Awards (Booking Boss)

## Welsh helps industry shine

SINGAPORE — Renee Welsh's career seems to have taken a natural progression. But by no means does "natural" mean she just sat and waited for success to come her way. It just means her studies in travel, tourism and commerce marketing was a solid base for her current position as CEO of a technology company that serves amusements and attractions.

Her success came from a passion to create and a drive to push the envelope.

Welsh was born and raised in Sydney, Australia.

"I was born to hardworking, blue collar parents and family," she said. "I got my work ethic from my parents, as well as my discipline and drive."

She studied travel and tourism at Williams Business College in Sydney and then went on to Sydney's Macquarie University. There she received a bachelor's degree in Commerce Marketing in 2000.

"I've always been ambitious and self-driven, always considered myself an entrepreneur and will push boundaries whenever I can," Welsh said.

So, the year after her graduation she ended up on the founding team of a company called RedBallon, an online provider of personal and corporate experience gifts.

In 2005, she created another startup called GoDo, an instant online booking software for activities and tours in Australia and New Zealand. Then, in 2010, she became a general manager at Wotif Group, a website that provides a reservation service for hotels in Australia and international destinations across the globe that had become overseeing the operations of GoDo.

During these early experiences, Welsh began to notice a growing problem, however. There just seemed to be too many tourism businesses still working from diaries and

spreadsheets. She became aware that with the trending shift to offer online business, many of these companies would struggle.

She and her husband, Andy Welsh, a software engineer, started looking into how they could help these businesses help themselves. They also both shared that drive to create.

"We share an entrepreneurial spirit, so it wasn't a matter of starting a company, but rather which company idea," Welsh said. "Like breathing, we had no choice but to do it."

What they ended up with was a company called Booking Boss, a cloud-based reservation software designed specifically for attractions, tour operators and activity providers. It was capable of managing ticketing and bookings centrally and could reduce queues and streamline processes.

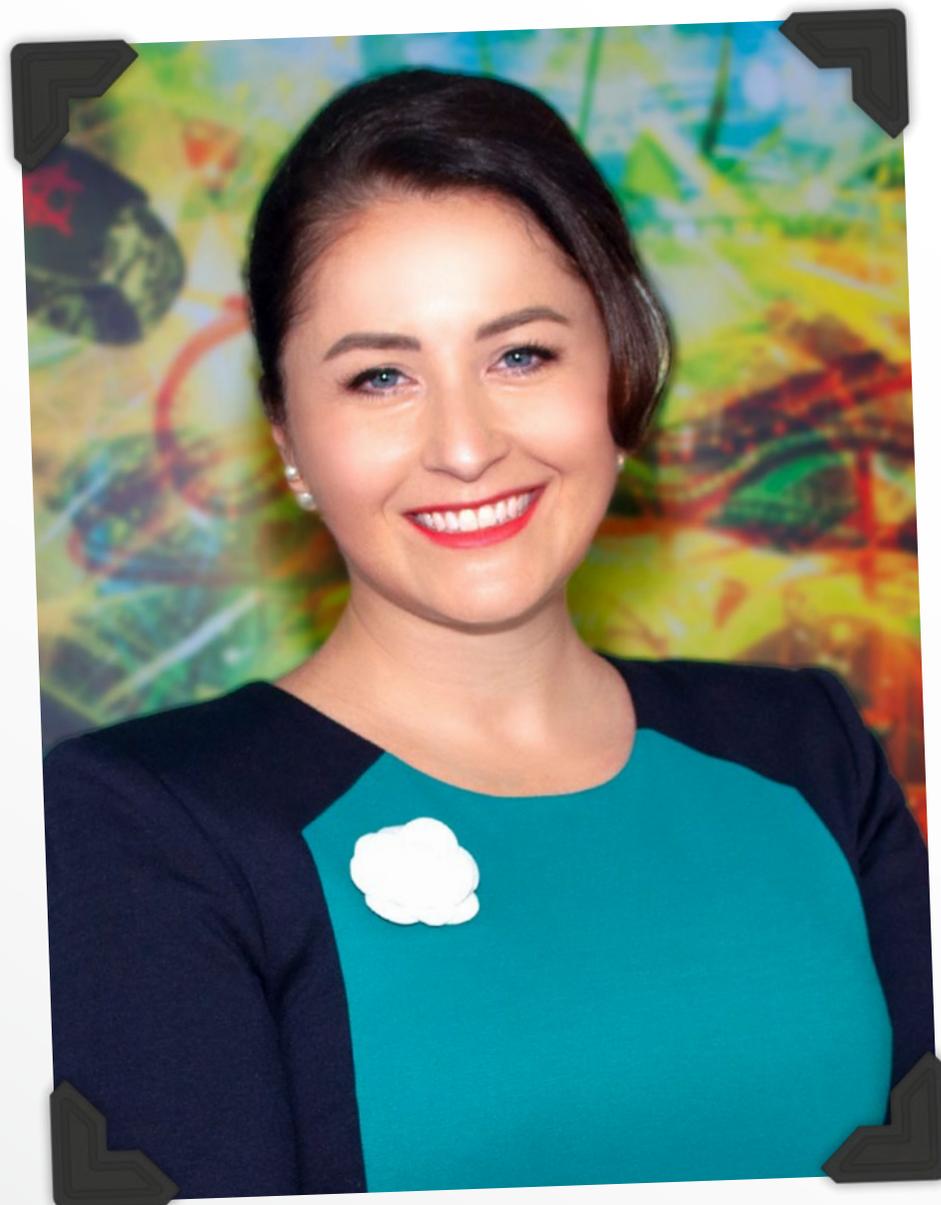
The company quickly showed signs of success, winning Best Software Product of the Year in the Australian Business Awards in 2014 and winning Silver at the New South Wales Tourism Awards in 2016. The company's recognitions were definitely getting noticed.

In 2017, Helix Leisure approached the wife-and-husband team about purchasing their company. They had a decision to make and ended up agreeing to sell.

"It was not an easy decision," Welsh said. "But I knew it was the right decision for the company and the brand. Helix Leisure is a well-respected, family-owned business. It shares very similar values and had a legacy of innovation."

She knew that Booking Boss would benefit from the existing operations and strength of Helix as well as an established client base and global base. Helix has five offices globally.

**Renee Welsh**  
CEO  
**Solutions Group**  
Singapore



"It was clear what Helix Leisure would be for the brand," Welsh said.

But, as is common, life takes many twists and turns. One year after Welsh sold the business to Helix, Helix came back to her and offered her the position of CEO for one of its companies, Solutions Group. And, it just so happened that Solutions Group was the umbrella for Booking Boss and Embed, a leader in cashless business management systems and solutions for the amusement, entertainment and leisure industries.

It seemed to be a perfect fit. The position didn't require her to move from Australia to Singapore, but was part of the options. To Welsh, it was all part of the adventure for which she was ready.

Welsh is very proud to be the CEO of a technology company. She also is proud to be part of an executive team that boasts a 50% gender parity.

"Only 17% of Fortune 500 CEO's are women and only one in four startups has a woman on the founding team," she said.

The gender disparity is

something that she would like to help turn around.

Welsh is enjoying getting to know the amusement industry better with Embed. Her first impression of the industry was an industry on the cusp of an exciting transformation.

"Anyone looking at this industry and assuming it is a sunset industry or an old economy category, 'the arcade,' is missing the obvious opportunity," she said.

She also is committed to the industry. When the pandemic hit earlier this year, Welsh made sure that Embed reached out to offer support to keep the industry going. She said they kept the lights on.

Her favorite part of her position is working with the company's partners in the industry.

And, she said, that includes "our high-tech partners at Apple, Google and Amazon, who take us on their dreams of the future, our customers, the Fun Crusaders, and Embed employees. It's the people who make the industry of fun so extraordinary."

—Pam Sherborne

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# Companies and attractions celebrate Golden Ticket Awards 2020

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ARLINGTON, Texas — On September 23, *Amusement Today* honored parks, individuals and companies around the country — and world. In contrast to the annual live ceremony, owing to the global health crisis, the Golden Ticket Awards were announced online throughout the afternoon.

Temporarily stepping away from the core categories that have made the Golden Ticket Awards famous worldwide, the opportunity to recognize professionalism within the industry was still vividly present. In challenging times, *AT* felt a reaffirming spotlight was a much-needed positive boost.

"It was such an honor to receive the Golden Ticket Award. It meant a lot to the team," said Cofounder and CEO **Michael Browning, Urban Air Adventure Parks**. "We had a celebration where we gathered around our celebration bell in the office and had a great time ringing it and cheering!"

**Europa-Park** was the recipient of the Publisher's Pick Renaissance Award for the triumphant reimagining of the park's enormous Piraten in Batavia dark ride following a



Socially distanced, the team at Give Kids the World Village take a group shot with Pamela Landwirth (center), seen holding her cake (inset). COURTESY GIVE KIDS THE WORLD

terrible 2018 fire. In a press statement from Europa-Park, **Roland Mack**, park cofounder and owner said: "The loss of the unique attraction had torn a deep hole in our hearts. The sympathy of the industry and the visitors was overwhelming. This memorable award has great emotional significance for me."

"We were so excited to receive that award and were thankful to *Amusement Today*," said **Paul Plumb**, marketing director, **Arnolds Park** and recipient of the Publisher's Pick Turnstile Award. "We have been getting calls from our local radio stations

asking about it and wanting to talk about it. We had a great response from the local community here. We treasure that award and it felt like a great accomplishment following the summer of COVID."

**Gateway Ticketing** was one of the new Industry Leader acknowledgements in the category of Supplier. The company's Facebook page stated: "This award is a testament to the hard work of our team at Gateway and the willingness of the industry at large to come together, share best practices and help everyone make it through this pandemic."

In the middle of the announcements, a surprise or two took place.

"I knew the Golden Tickets were being announced, but I planned to get the recaps later in the day to find out if any of the winners were NEAAPA members," said **Ed Hodgdon, New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** secretary. "I was floored when the texts started arriving congratulating me. At first, I didn't know what was going on, so I made a couple of phone calls, and that is when I realized that I had received this award. Explaining to people outside of this industry what this award means, I likened it to winning a Golden Globe. It's an incredible honor to be recognized for your work within your industry."

The award for Industry Leader: Association went to the New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, the recipient of the award being Hodgdon for steering the organization's educational and updated communication in the ongoing pandemic.

"When the world came to a stop, that is when NEAAPA shifted gears keeping

our members informed about the constant changes affecting the industry," said Hodgdon. "I felt that a heightened level of communication was one of the most important things I could do. The tight-knit bond that NEAAPA members share is what makes this association strong and successful. With the association's more-than-100 years of service to the attractions industry, it is important to remember that we are nothing without our members."

Others were touched on a more personal level. **Pamela Landwirth of Give Kids the World Village** took her award as an Industry Legend to heart.

"What an incredible surprise and tremendous honor! I am truly speechless ... and for me, you know that is odd," Landwirth told *AT*. "I cannot begin to thank you enough for this amazing recognition of what our Village family has been able to accomplish with the help of so many generous partners. It is humbling!"

Prepared to surprise

► See GTA, page 49

## Golden Ticket Awards mailbag

Just a quick note to say how impressed I am with all the hard work and effort that was put into the virtual Golden Ticket Awards. I watched the videos last night and enjoyed the stories. Obviously, the live event format is the gold standard we look forward to each year but a big "Good Job" from us on the 2020 Golden Ticket Awards!!!

—**Chip Cleary, Europa-Park**

I love, love, love that you all chose Pamela Landwirth to receive the Legend Award. She is pure magic. I damn near tear up just at the thought of her and all she and her team do. She holds a very special place in my heart. Ramon and I are bummed that we were not all together in San Antonio to present her with the award. Thank you for honoring this incredible and compassionate woman.

—**Michael Coleman, Zamperla**

I wanted to take a moment and give you guys kudos for a wonderful job. I know it was not your first option for hosting this event, but it was very well done. We're honored to have been recognized during the ceremony.

—**Sharon Parker, Six Flags Over Texas**

I don't even know where to begin to express my heartfelt gratitude for the incredible honor you bestowed upon me. Each year as I sit in the audience and watch the Golden Ticket Awards Legends being recognized I am in awe of their contributions to this amazing industry we are all blessed to be part of. I never in a million years thought my name would be mentioned in the same breath. I am truly humbled that you would choose me.

—**Pamela Landwirth, Give Kids the World Village**

Thanks to the staff at *Amusement Today* for the wonderful presentation of the Golden Ticket Awards. They were so much fun and informative. The variety was impressive. Nicely done!

—**Cheri Armstrong, American Coaster Enthusiasts**



Ed Hodgdon shows off the Golden Ticket for Industry Leader: Association. COURTESY NEAAPA



At left, Six Flags officials accepted the Golden Ticket for Innovation of the Year in response to the chain's entrance improvements initiative. Pictured (l-r) Tim Baldwin, Golden Ticket Awards Communications Coordinator, *Amusement Today*; Randall Wilke, corporate director safety and security; Bonnie Weber, senior vice president park operations; Jason Freeman, vice president safety and security; Jeffrey Seifert, *Amusement Today*. Middle, Urban Air CEO Michael Browning is flanked by *Amusement Today*'s Tim Baldwin and Sammy Piccola. At right, Innovation of the Year was tied between Six Flags Over Texas and Six Flags Theme Parks. Pictured here are outgoing SFOT Park President Steve Martindale, new Park President Ron McKenzie, Operations Manager Matt Hughey, Operations Director Chris Baker and *Amusement Today*'s Tim Baldwin. Martindale and Hughey had investigated a trash reduction system that proved incredibly beneficial to the park and environment. COURTESY SIX FLAGS; URBAN AIR ADVENTURE PARK; SIX FLAGS OVER TEXAS

## ►GTA Continued from page 48

Landwirth at the moment of the announcement, the Village team had a cake prepared featuring the Golden Ticket created in icing. Before slicing into it, the team had arranged a socially distanced group photo.

"I'm deeply humbled and honored to receive this Person of the Year award from *Amusement Today*, **Gene Staples**, the new owner of **Indiana Beach**, told *The News & Review*, an Indiana newspaper. "However, It took hun-

dreds of Indiana Beach staff members to make this season happen. And I want to share this recognition with each of them. Because without their tireless efforts we would not have been able to serve our loyal Indiana Beach fans this year. I'd also like to share it with our visitors and supporters of the park this season. If we didn't have their love and support, Indiana Beach would have just been a fond memory for thousands of fans."

"The Person of the Year award was a befitting honor for Gene. Not only

did he purchase a 95-year-old amusement park, but he purchased it during a worldwide pandemic. Talk about fortitude and vision," said **Don Hurd**, president & CEO, **Hoosier Media Group**. "I see under Gene's leadership and future plans, Indiana Beach is going to prosper and grow for many more decades. This will only help the local community to grow and prosper too."

During the afternoon of the announcements, each award recipient had a video presentation scheduled

throughout, making it easy for each winner to share that specific award via social media. "The Golden Ticket Awards event is traditionally a celebration of the industry at the close of the summer season," said John Robinson, editor and production manager of *Amusement Today*. "It was important to us that Golden Ticket Awards still be a feel-good moment in the year. The video announcements we produced allowed the winners and honorable mentions to still celebrate their honors with the social media follow-

ers and community."

The full video presentation can be viewed at [goldenticketawards.com](http://goldenticketawards.com).

The traditional categories of the Golden Ticket Awards are expected to see a return in 2021. *Amusement Today* will continue to watch developments in the upcoming months.

"We are hopeful to have a live ceremony and event next September," said **Gary Slade**, publisher. "It's just a matter of staying on top of the information and making the best decision next spring."

# WILLIAM H. ROBINSON, INC.

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## Maurer Rides delivers indoor spinning coaster to the Ukraine



KIEV, Ukraine — The Blockbuster Mall shopping center in Kiev combines shopping and entertainment. The shopping mall was opened in 2019. Dubbed “Galaxy Park,” the nearly 270,000-square-foot amusement area inside the mall debuted September 5, 2020. The main attraction in the mall’s indoor amusement park is a spinning coaster provided by Maurer Rides. Despite coronavirus conditions, Maurer Rides managed to build and commission the ride with help from the client. The ride — whose name simply translates to “Roller Coaster” — features a track tailored to the architecture of the shopping center. The structural conditions were a challenge.

The coaster starts on a mezzanine level above the first floor of the mall. Underneath it is a go-kart track with some columns that the coaster’s path needed to wrap around. The coaster’s eye-catching vehicles which were artfully created by an airbrusher in colorful bear, cheetah, parrot and snake designs. COURTESY MAURER RIDES



## Pair of new observation decks take it to the 'Edge' in the Big Apple

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

NEW YORK CITY — New Yorkers and visitors to the Big Apple are getting two new observation areas, one that recently opened and one just around the corner.

COVID-19 curtailed the continued operation of the Edge New York Observation Deck at Hudson Yards. It opened March 11, only to be closed two days later. Edge just reopened September 2. The observation deck, billed the highest outdoor sky deck in the Western Hemisphere, rises 1,100 feet above the street, extending out 80 feet from the 100th floor of 30 Hudson Yards. The 7,500-square-foot unenclosed outdoor space includes a 225-square-foot glass floor looking down to the street, angled glass walls and corners for photographs, offering stunning, unobstructed 360-degree views of the New York City skyline. There are two viewing areas, an outdoor deck and an indoor space accessible by a staircase.

Edge contains new safety measures introduced because of the pandemic. Developed in partnership with Mt. Sinai Hospital, they include con-



The Edge is billed the highest outdoor sky deck in the Western Hemisphere. It rises 1,100 feet above the street in Hudson Yards, providing stunning, unobstructed views of the Big Apple. There are two viewing areas, an outdoor deck and an indoor space accessible by a staircase. COURTESY OF RELATED-OXFORD

tactless thermal temperature checks, social distancing signage, along with a 75% capacity reduction. Staggered entry and timed tickets are in use. Even the 52-second elevator ride has social distancing, allowing only four people at a time.

Recently the Edge introduced one-hour yoga classes in partnership with Equinox Gym. The ticket costs \$50. Safety measures include: signing a printed health declaration and having a temperature check; face coverings required at all times, only being removed during class on your mat that is spaced six feet apart from the next one.

Adult tickets are \$36 (\$34 New York City resident.) All healthcare workers and paramedics can get free tickets through the end of the year as a thank you for their services. Edge is open from 8am to 12 midnight, 365 days per year. There is no time limit, however most visitors spend about one hour. The building is owned by The Related Companies.

An observation deck is slated to return to the Chrysler Building in mid-town Manhattan as part of plans to overhaul the Art Deco designed skyscraper—drawing inspiration from the 77-story office



tower’s once famous prohibition-era speakeasy. The observation deck of the 405 Lexington Avenue property will be housed on the 61st and 62nd floors of the 1928 building.

The viewing deck, approved by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, requires erecting glass panels on the north and south terraces of the 61st floor and adding doors so visitors can access the deck from the building. The new deck will take advantage of that floor’s setbacks to create an outdoor space. The project also calls for adding restaurant space, mim-

icking the “Cloud Club” that used to sit on its 66th and 68th floors in the 1930s. It closed in 1979. At one point, the building also contained a planetary-themed observatory, dubbed the Celestial, on the 71st floor that closed in 1945. The Chrysler Building is the tallest brick building in the world with a steel framework.

RFR Realty bought the building for \$151 million last year. The new owner plans to return the building to its former glory. There is no timeline for the observation deck opening.

•edgenyc.com  
•chryslerbuilding.com



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# SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Premier Rides rapid response assists Park at Owa — page 56 / Morey's Piers upgrades Boomerang — page 58

## AIMS International plans first ever virtual safety seminar for 2021

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Doubts about being able to present the 2021 AIMS International Safety Seminar in person began last spring among AIMS board members and executive staff. The global health pandemic seemed to be settling in around the world. Those doubts only grew throughout the summer.

The writing was on the wall and by August the decision was made. The in-person seminar was canceled and AIMS announced the organization's first ever AIMS Virtual Safety Seminar, set to run January 11-15, 2021.

Mary Jane Brewer, AIMS executive director, said, although it is a given that a virtual seminar could never duplicate the in-person event, they still have set the bar high to create and deliver a high-quality and easily-accessible virtual educational program.

They all hit the road running. By mid-October, there was a tentative time schedule with proposals to run between 120-160 hours of content for the week. There was a keynote speaker announced, Harold Hudson. He will speak during the lunchtime hour the first day of the virtual seminar. The AIMS board awards will be announced right afterward.

There were even two new features announced. Those include Ellis and Associates delivering the seminar's aquatics curriculum and 20 hours of inspection and maintenance education



Loyola Hugo of Fantasilandia will be offering 20 hours of inspection and maintenance education delivered entirely in Spanish during the 2020 virtual safety seminar. COURTESY AIMS INTERNATIONAL



delivered entirely in Spanish by Loyola Hugo, Fantasilandia, Santiago, Chile.

Board members also hired O'Design, a virtual event production company that will fully produce and provide the video player and platform for a "simu-live" seminar.

"I went online and started searching companies to present this for us and getting recommendations," Brewer said. "We wanted to make sure that the platform used would give our members the opportunity to talk to each other."

The way the schedule has been created offers five educational tracks with each having 20 hours of content. Aside from the aquatics and Spanish tracks, there will be operations, maintenance and inspection.

Emails were sent out to class instructors asking them if they wanted to teach again.

"If they do, we asked them to submit their class proposals electronically," Brewer said.

The AIMS Curriculum Committee members, led by Rick Achard, were taking the electronic proposals, going through them and selecting the topics to ensure all core curriculum requirements are met.

Brewer said she felt they would have the schedule complete by the end of this month.

Class sessions will be pre-

► See AIMS, page 54

### Schedule of live events

Times and topics are the same all week, except where noted. Three classes run simultaneously.

#### Monday-Friday, January 11-15

- 9-9:45 a.m.  
Maintenance, Operations and Aquatics
- 10-10:45 a.m.  
Maintenance, Operations and Aquatics
- 11-11:45 a.m.  
Maintenance, Operations and Aquatics
- 12-12:45 p.m.  
Monday, Jan. 11, live keynote address given by Harold Hudson as well as the presentation of the Safety Award.
- Tuesday-Friday, Lunch and Learn Vendor Classes
  - 1-1:45 p.m.  
Maintenance, Operations and Aquatics
  - 2-2:45 p.m.  
Inspection, Safety and Spanish
  - 3-3:45 p.m.  
Inspection, Safety and Spanish
  - 4-4:45 p.m.  
Inspection, Safety and Spanish
  - 5-5:45 p.m.  
Inspection, Safety and Spanish

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Mary Jane Brewer



Joe Stefanyak



Matt Heller

► **AIMS**  
Continued from page 53

recorded and the session will be available on demand for 30 days to those who weren't able to take the time off during the week in January.

"We are asking all instructors to keep their sessions to between 30 to 45 minutes to allow for live interaction time periods to take place between the instructor and students," Brewer said. "We also will have networking opportunities at the beginning and at the end of each day."

Brewer said they are very excited about having the Spanish track this year.

"We really feel having classes being taught all in Spanish will allow more people to participate," Brewer said.

Joe Stefanyak, Ellis and Associates, said that his company and AIMS have talked and gathered tentative topics. They are now reaching out to instructors to coordinate the aquatics portion.

"We have had some so-

licitations for topics as well," Stefanyak said. "We already do some of our training virtually. We are happy to do this. We have worked with AIMS on other projects."

Matt Heller, Performance Optimist Consulting, is another regular AIMS volunteer. Heller will teach one class during the virtual seminar and will be involved in the CEO Speaks panel discussion.

"Doing business virtually has been easier than we thought it would be," Heller said. "But this will never take the place of the in-person experience. People need the human contact."

Heller feels that when the pandemic is over and people feel safe getting together that a new normal might be some blended seminars and training sessions, both virtual and in-person.

"Things we do in the amusement industry are so hands-on," he said. "We can do some initial training virtually, but you can't teach someone to operate a ride that way."

Heller is pleased that

AIMS decided on the virtual seminar instead of canceling altogether.

"It is like someone said to me once," he said. "Of course, you always want a 10, but if you can't have that, wouldn't it better to have a six or seven instead of a zero?"

When and how the certification exams will be given have not been finalized. Brewer expects that AIMS will set up exam opportunities in different areas across the country, possibly up to five different locations.

Brewer said they will all be glad to be back together in 2022. And the AIMS seminar will be back at the Galveston Island Convention Center, Galveston, Texas.

"We really didn't expect to be back there after 2021," Brewer said. "But we were under contract through 2021. If we had canceled completely, there would have been a cancellation fee. So, we negotiated with them."

The negotiations resulted in AIMS going back in 2022 and 2023.

• [aimsintl.org](http://aimsintl.org)



The popular AIMS International safety seminar courses are being taken out of the classroom and into the living room for the 2021 virtual seminar which will feature both live and recorded courses, as well as interactive question and answer sessions. AT/ PAM SHERBORNE

## Keeping the focus on safety



David Bromilow (right), director, parks and attractions for Mobar, comments on the 2021 AIMS International Virtual Safety Seminar. Mobar is the Platinum Sponsor this year. AT/GARY SLADE

"I am personally delighted at the news that the AIMS International team are able to deliver the annual Safety Seminar virtually this January.

"This announcement comes at a time when it is more important than ever to keep the focus on safety in the amusement industry, making this exciting news most welcome. Continuous education and competency certification must continue even in this virtual environment to ensure we maintain our very high standards of safety. I am so happy to see that AIMS is providing this opportunity despite the travel and budgetary restrictions that are plaguing the attraction owners and operators today.

"I understand that the entire AIMS team and board have been working on this for months now. It will ensure this very important educational program is available and delivered to amusement industry technicians and other professionals in need of continuing education to maintain their industry certifications. Without this valuable virtual program, many would find it difficult, if not impossible, to participate in the courses they need to stay up to date on the most current safety trends in the industry.

"Having seen many of the presentations that have been prepared for the virtual seminar, I am confident, as are the entire AIMS team, that the quality and depth of content for the seminar will be outstanding and a great value for its customers.

"The entire team at Mobar is very proud to be a part of the AIMS Safety Seminar. AIMS has always been a great forum to meet like-minded industry colleagues with a genuine interest in improving safety in the amusement industry through leadership in education. The virtual platform provided by AIMS can still deliver this as attendees participate from the comfort of their own homes and/or workplaces around the world.

"As a sponsor, we see tremendous value for what our sponsorship dollars will help create. We are proud to support the overall goal of increasing safety awareness and technical skills across the attractions industry, as safety is at the very core of what we do at Mobar.

Additionally, with our highly active connection and network in the industry, we naturally have a fundamental desire to contribute actively to the industry's general development and knowledge-sharing.

"Since Mobar's core values align so closely with those of AIMS International, we felt it was a natural fit to offer our support. We are excited to be an integral part of their efforts to deliver what many consider to be the gold standard in amusement industry safety education."

—David Bromilow,  
Mobar Park





## NEWS & NOTES

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### AIMS International Virtual Safety Seminar registration now open

#### Save lives with safety education and training

As the amusement industry, and indeed the world, still grapples with the changes brought on by the COVID-19 global pandemic, continued attraction maintenance and inspection, as well as employee training and education, are the best ways to ensure that facilities are equipped to prevent accidents. The **AIMS International Safety Seminar** is a once-a-year opportunity to learn from industry experts in a week-long educational setting. What sets AIMS apart from other programs is the unique opportunity students have to customize their experience by choosing from approximately 120 different safety courses in the core areas of maintenance, inspection, operations and aquatics.

New this year will be a Spanish-language track in which maintenance and inspection courses will be created

and delivered by Spanish-speaking amusement industry experts. Additionally, all aquatics courses will be coordinated and hosted by AIMS International's education partner, **Ellis & Associates**, the aquatics industry leader in risk management and safety.

Everyone responsible for the care and safety of amusement industry guests will benefit by attending the AIMS International Virtual Safety Seminar, which will be held January 11-15, 2021. There will be a variety of live and on-demand courses available through our state-of-the-art virtual conferencing platform where students can learn and earn the continuing education units needed to from the comfort of their own home or workplace. It is now easier than ever to participate in this highly rated attraction safety education event. Professional networking opportunities will also be available during seminar week.

#### The AIMS International Virtual Safety Seminar is for suppliers too

The best of the best manufacturers and suppliers in the amusement industry attend the AIMS Safety Seminar to learn about the latest issues and practices in safety and security. They know they'll benefit by learning from the industry's top experts and gain valuable information and feedback from people who maintain and operate their products and services on a daily basis.

Early-bird registration for the 2021 AIMS International Virtual Safety Seminar is now available for \$495 for a limited time. The full class schedule will be available soon. Register at [aimsintl.org/aims-international-safety-seminar](http://aimsintl.org/aims-international-safety-seminar), where you can also sign up to renew your maintenance, inspection, operations or aquatics certifications.

#### Be a sponsor

AIMS is recognized by the IRS as a non-profit association dedicated to improve industry safety through leadership in education. Our seminar sponsors help us provide enhanced learning opportunities for students. In addition to exposing your company's product or service to our students and instructors, as an AIMS Safety Seminar sponsor, your company demonstrates support for our work to improve amusement industry safety. Sponsor benefits include prominent logo placement on our virtual conferencing platform landing pages and on individual courses throughout the virtual seminar, the opportunity to post 15-second videos prior to pre-recorded video presentations, educational track naming-rights and recognition on our website and other channels throughout the year. For more information on sponsorship, contact Mary Jane Brewer at [mj.brewer@aimsintl.org](mailto:mj.brewer@aimsintl.org).

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



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## Premier Rides provides rapid response to The Park at Owa

FOLEY, Ala. — Premier Rides, known for the design and supply of worldwide attractions, dispatched its Rapid Response Service Team to provide reopening support to the Park at Owa located in Foley, Alabama, following Hurricane Sally. The area took the brunt of the category-2 storm — the first hurricane to make landfall in the state of Alabama since Ivan in 2004 — with widespread wind damage, storm surge flooding and over 20 inches of rainfall. Several tornadoes also occurred as well. The Park at OWA contacted Premier Rides after Sally had finally traveled beyond the park. The Premier Service Rapid Response team traveled to the park to perform inspections of all 22 rides and attractions at the park to identify damage sustained from the hurricane, to work with the maintenance team to perform simple repairs and to determine any other necessary repairs to be completed prior to the park's reopening. In addition, the park's parking lot became ground zero for the regional recovery effort with more than 1,400 linesmen from all over the Southwest setting up fully operational living quarters. The Park at Owa reopened to the public just 16 days after Hurricane Sally passed.

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## Arihant offers COVID-era water park training program

MAHARASHTRA, India — Arihant Waterpark Equipment together with Arihant Water Park Academy is working to guide waterparks and facilities in jumping back to business. Utilizing a campaign to reach out and help more than 500 parks in India and neighboring countries, Arihant has already conducted four editions of the “Re-opening.....Re-imagined — Virtual Knowledge Sharing” webinars in just the program's first month. Park owners, operators and managers participated with zest.

Difficult times riddled with uncertainty has greatly affected the leisure sector. Arihant's campaign aims to educate parks to operate in the “New Normal” and equip them with risk mitigation strategies so that they can be ready to welcome guests as soon as local regulation permits. Understanding that it has been a tough time financially for park owners, the sessions are absolutely free for participants.

The session's contents were derived from the knowledge and experience gained first hand by Arihant



Waterpark Equipment while operating its own water park — **The Great Escape** (Mumbai) — as well as interactions with global clientele who have opened their parks with COVID-19 safety measures.

The sessions included sharing of ideas on COVID safety to keep the guests safe in a waterpark, cost cutting measures and some new revenue generation opportunities.

The 90-minute sharing session was split into three parts where the panel speakers guide the attendees on topics such as park reopening strategies, slide maintenance and park maintenance.

More knowledge-sharing sessions are planned for the future, with Arihant aiming to create a platform for knowledge sharing where park owners and operators can come and share their ideas and knowledge digitally and benefit from peer learning.

• [arihantwaterslides.com](http://arihantwaterslides.com)

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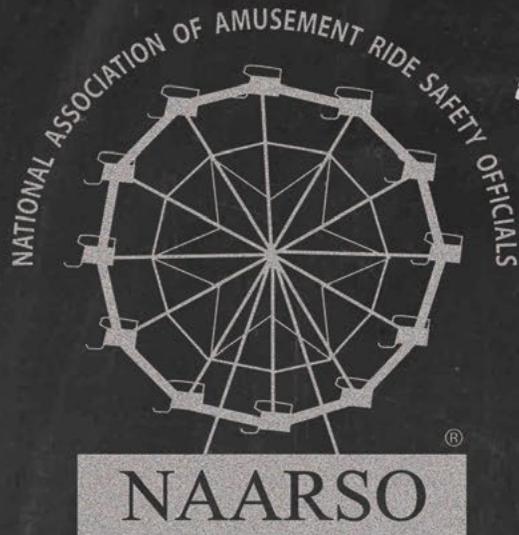
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# Morey's Piers, Vekoma partner for improvements to first U.S. Boomerang

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

WILDWOOD, N.J. — When the first Vekoma Boomerang roller coaster in the United States opened in 1984, it would have been unlikely to predict that the production model would become an incredibly popular product that would eventually see more than 50 manufactured. As the compact shuttle coaster populated the globe, the earliest models have showed their age.

“The original Sea Serpent was state of the art when purchased, but over time, new standards come into play, particularly with items such as magnetic brakes and control systems,” said Jack Morey, owner, Morey's Piers. “With some of our older rides that still have strong market appeal, we continually upgrade them with whatever is state of the art at the time. In this case, we opted to replace lift hill No. 2 with a new quieter train trough, switch to magnetic brakes, upgrade the control system and swap out the vehicle bodies to improve the redundancy of the harness system. The new trains are also more comfortable.”

Morey attributes that comfort level to ergonomics. He



New vehicle bodies on the Sea Serpent make for a more comfortable ride. Morey's Piers invested in a new lift No. 2 on the park's popular boomerang coaster. COURTESY NEWJERSEYCOASTERS.NET

feels it not only fits more body types, but the harness is less restricting. Riders will appreciate restraints that are further from their heads, with no chance of any banging.

The steps began last fall after the close of the 2019 season. Everything was planned. COVID-19 was not.

“Work on the various upgrades was started in the fall of 2019, and our expectation was to open the ride for Easter of 2020,” said Morey. “Things were going great until March of 2020 when COVID forced us to restrict the number of mechanics on the job. Then a government order forced a construc-

tion shut down. Upon return to work in late May, we completed all tasks that we could, but the recommissioning had to be done by Vekoma, and the travel ban forbid the technicians from the Netherlands to travel to the USA. We ultimately found a way to get the technicians here via a two-week quar-

antine in Aruba (which is Dutch owned) and then permitted into the country as Aruba is not considered part of the European Union. Our piers did not open until July 3. By the time all the above was worked out, the Sea Serpent finally opened on August 9.”

Morey took a trip to Belgium to test out the ride with his father, Will Morey, Sr., in 1983. If they were successful, it would be among the first looping coasters built at a seaside park.

“I remember the trip like it was yesterday,” Jack Morey commented. “It was the most expensive ride ever built on the boardwalk. On the flight home, we sketched out plans for how to make it work financially on the back of an airplane sickness bag.”

When *Amusement Today* asked if this procedure increased the lifespan of the ride, Morey said, “Rides are a little like an old car. If you take care of them, they will continue to run and run. Vekoma has been a leader in the marketability of rides, so as long as the ride stays popular, we will continue to invest in state-of-the-art upgrades that will hopefully continue to increase the lifespan.”

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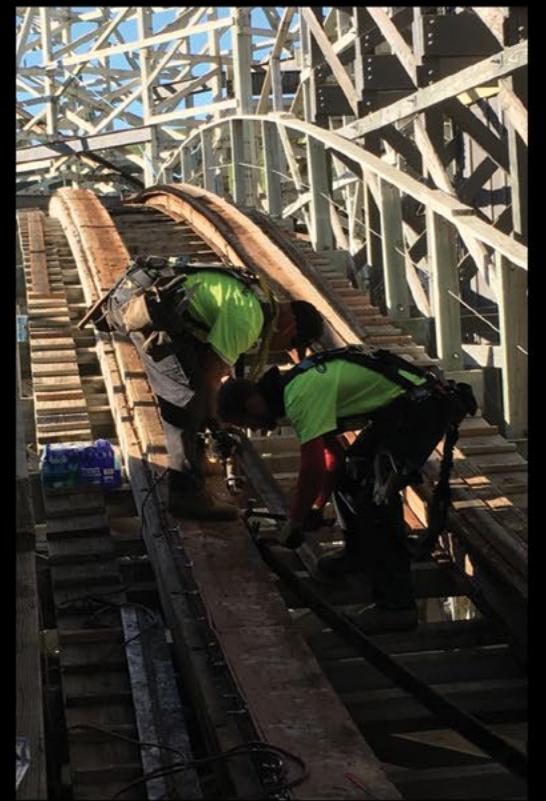


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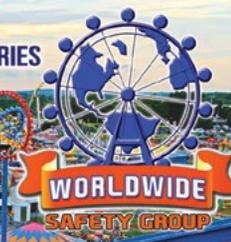
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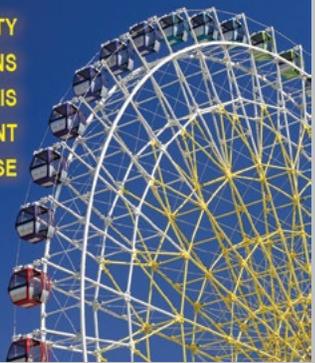


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LAKE MARY, Fla. — As the tourism industry reopens amid COVID-19, **Accesso** noticed the far-reaching impacts the pandemic carried for attraction operations and management's focus on reimagining the guest experience. More than ever, there is a need to rethink and adjust operations, balancing both safety and revenue generation as top priorities, while striving to provide the guest experience visitors came to know and love in a pre-pandemic world — a daunting task for any operator.

To help ease the burden facing many operators in the challenging time, **Accesso** — a technology solutions provider — has created a free step-by-step guide to pilot operators in the creation of a safe, but enjoyable, environment for returning guests, while also giving them the tools they need to regain traction and customer trust as the industry moves into a new era.

The e-book — *Re-Imagining the Guest Journey in the Age of COVID-19* — outlines data-backed concepts for venues of all markets and sizes, showcasing how guest expectations have changed during the pandemic and how operators can adjust to meet (and exceed) those new expectations. This is accomplished while building guest loyalty, driving revenue and delivering a quality guest experience through the power of technology such as virtual queuing, mobile F&B, contactless guest interactions and more.

**Accesso** is providing this free guide as a resource for the industry with the goal of helping to overcome the challenges of today while reimagining the guest experience of tomorrow.

• [accesso.com](http://accesso.com)

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**BREAKING NEWS**

# Ferrari World Abu Dhabi launching new roof walk and zip line experiences

ABU DHABI, U.A.E. — Ferrari World Abu Dhabi is introducing two state-of-the-art thrilling experiences, the Ferrari World Abu Dhabi Roof Walk and Zip Line, on November 5. The two new additions will bring the park's entertainment count to include over 43 Ferrari-inspired attractions for both adults and younger guests.

With the Ferrari World Abu Dhabi Roof Walk experience, guests will embark on an adventure allowing them to scale the signature Ferrari World Abu Dhabi red roof and take in spectacular vista views of Yas Island.

Guests looking for more adrenaline-fueled action can try the new Ferrari World Abu Dhabi Zip Line. A first-of-its-kind attraction on Yas Island, guests can expect Ferrari-inspired thrills as they zip from the heart of Ferrari World Abu Dhabi through the Flying Aces roller coaster loop. For those seeking to embark on an adventure with family and friends, the dual racing challenge onboard the Ferrari World Abu Dhabi Zip Line is not to be missed.

"We're delighted to launch the new Ferrari World Abu Dhabi Roof Walk and Zip Line experiences at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi in line with the 10th anniversary celebrations," said Bianca Sammut, general manager at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi and acting head of Yas Theme Parks. "These experiences complement the thrilling mix of activities that



The Ferrari World Abu Dhabi Zip Line sends guest through the loop of the Flying Aces roller coaster. COURTESY FERRARI WORLD ABU DHABI

guests can enjoy when they visit the theme park. As we hit our 10-year milestone we have evolved so much at the park, but one thing that hasn't changed is our promise to continuously elevate our world-class guest experience. We can't wait for our guests to experience it all and create unforgettable memories at the Ferrari-inspired Park."

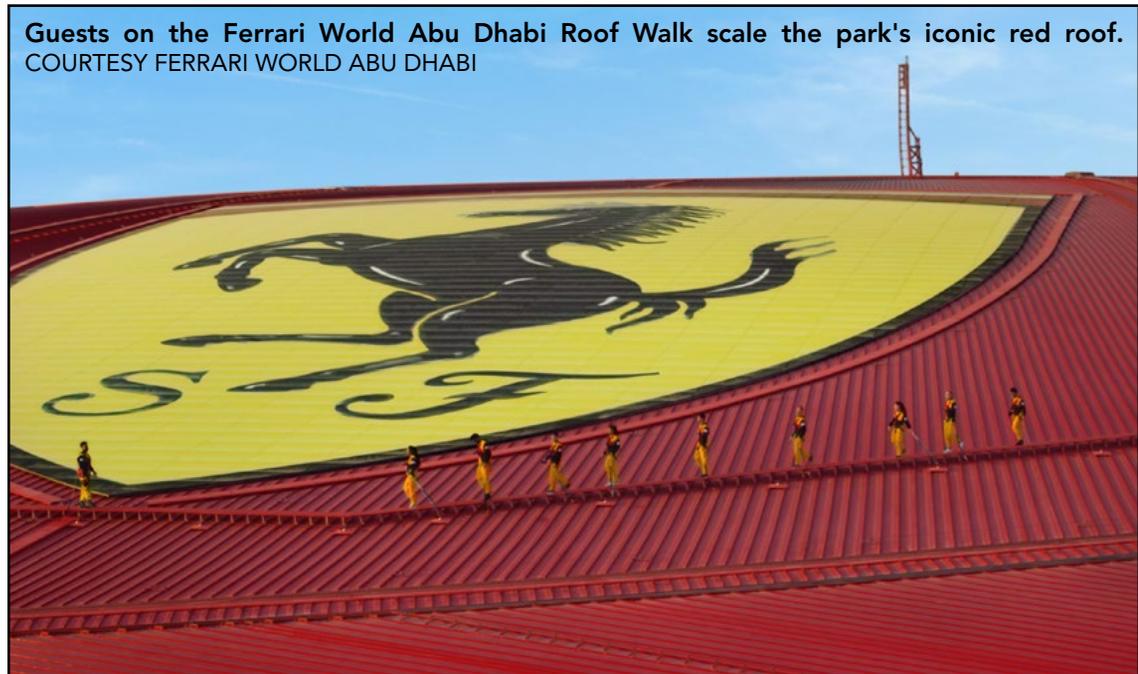
In addition to launching the Ferrari World Abu Dhabi Roof Walk and Zip Line experiences, the park previously introduced family-friendly attractions, such as the Family Zone and the Hypercars Exhibition, earlier this year. These additions come as part of the park's commitment to adding new offerings that complement its Ferrari-inspired adventure.

Ferrari World Abu Dhabi is also home to a variety of eateries, including Mamma Rossella. The signature Italian restaurant is known for its authentic piz-

zas and pasta and even offers a special kids menu designed exclusively with the appetite of younger guests in mind.

Ferrari World Abu Dhabi has worked alongside the relevant authorities to implement stringent precautionary measures throughout the park including mandatory online booking to ensure that the limited capacity is adhered to, thermal screening cameras, safe distance markers at all rides and outlets, modified ride capacity as well as modified dining and shopping experiences.

As a direct result of its efforts, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi was awarded the 'Go Safe' certification by the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi). The program aims to enforce global standards for safety and cleanliness across all tourism and retail establishments in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.



Guests on the Ferrari World Abu Dhabi Roof Walk scale the park's iconic red roof. COURTESY FERRARI WORLD ABU DHABI

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