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Digital Edition

IISF Super Trade Show & Extravaganza: the show must go on

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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GIBSONTOWN, Florida — The 53rd annual **International Independent Showmen's Foundation (IISF) Super Trade Show & Extravaganza** takes place February 16-19. This four-day buying bonanza for rides, games, trailers, plush, insurance and ancillary products and services will feature a diminished trade show and attendees as the coronavirus pandemic rages on. European ride manufacturers are forbidden to fly into the United States at this time.

"Florida Week," as participants refer to the various scheduled events and activities, will feature a scaled down itinerary. Due to **Super Bowl LV** occurring in nearby Tampa during the usual timeframe, the trade show, produced by the IISF, the fundraising arm of the **International Independent Showmen's Association (IISA)**, was moved back a week. The **Florida State Fair**, always



a popular option for attendees, has moved to dates not yet determined in April due to COVID-19 considerations.

Organizers decided to stay the course with the dates that were set. The IISA website said,

"After much thought and consideration, the supervisors of the IISF Super Trade Show and Extravaganza have decided to move forward with our scheduled event." Moving later, to perhaps coincide with the 2021

Florida State Fair dates, was not an option as the facility closes each year the third week of March since many carnival operators will likely be on the road.

When asked about vendor participation, **Teresa Rimes**,

trade show secretary for the IISA, said, "[It's] somewhat down but understandable." The association has reduced vendor booth rental fees by 50% this year. "Please understand that things will be different this year in regard to locations. Our plan is to utilize the middle rows for inside vendors and work our way out in regard to placement as not to utilize the entire building. Social distancing will be put into place. Outside booth placement will be at the exit of the trade show building," as explained on the website.

The association is beefing up safety measures. "[It is] our responsibility to protect ourselves and our members," said Rimes. From the IISA website: The following mitigations will be in place for the 2021 Trade Show:

Temperature checks — Anyone having a temperature of 100.4 or higher will be required to have secondary screening. If occurrence continues, that per-

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AIMS propels into the future with the first AIMS Virtual Seminar

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — **Harold Hudson**, president and CEO, **AAPRA Associates**, gave the keynote address at this year's first virtual AIMS Safety Seminar. In his address, entitled *Words of Wisdom in Changing Times*, the long-time industry veteran emphasized several points by using quotes from several famous Americans.

His favorite was from Henry Ford: "Whether you think you can or think you can't, you are right."

It turned out to be very apropos for the 2021 seminar as the organization embarked on a new way to present its safety education. By all accounts, the seminar, held Jan. 11-15 with on-demand access through the end of the month, was deemed a success.

"And now it has given us a new tool for our shed and will propel AIMS to wherever we want to go," said **Eric Fluet**, AIMS marketing.

"We received some great feedback," said **Mary Jane Brewer**, AIMS executive director. "But I think the thing I heard the most was 'thank-you.'"

Hudson has been in the industry for over 40 years. He spent more than 21 years with **Six Flags Theme Parks** as the senior vice president of engineering and development. He also is a founding member of the **ASTM F24 Standards Committee**.

"I found this seminar to be inspiring," Hudson said. "I know we don't want to have to do things virtually forever, but this was very nicely done."

There was a total of 160 hours of content presented this year. There were 278 attendees that were not connected to the seminar in any other way but getting instruction. There were 101 presenters, some of whom were also students. There were 45 student moderators and 27 sponsors that had at least two representatives enrolled.

"With the board members and several other special members, the total number ran between

470-475," Brewer said.

AIMS coordinators including Brewer, **Eric Fluet** and **Rick Achard**, **Coulter Associates**, saw registrants coming on board the day before the seminar, after it had already started, and, with the on-demand feature running through the end of January, people were still registering the week of Jan. 18.

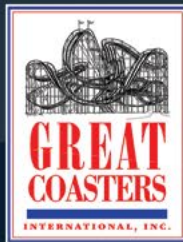
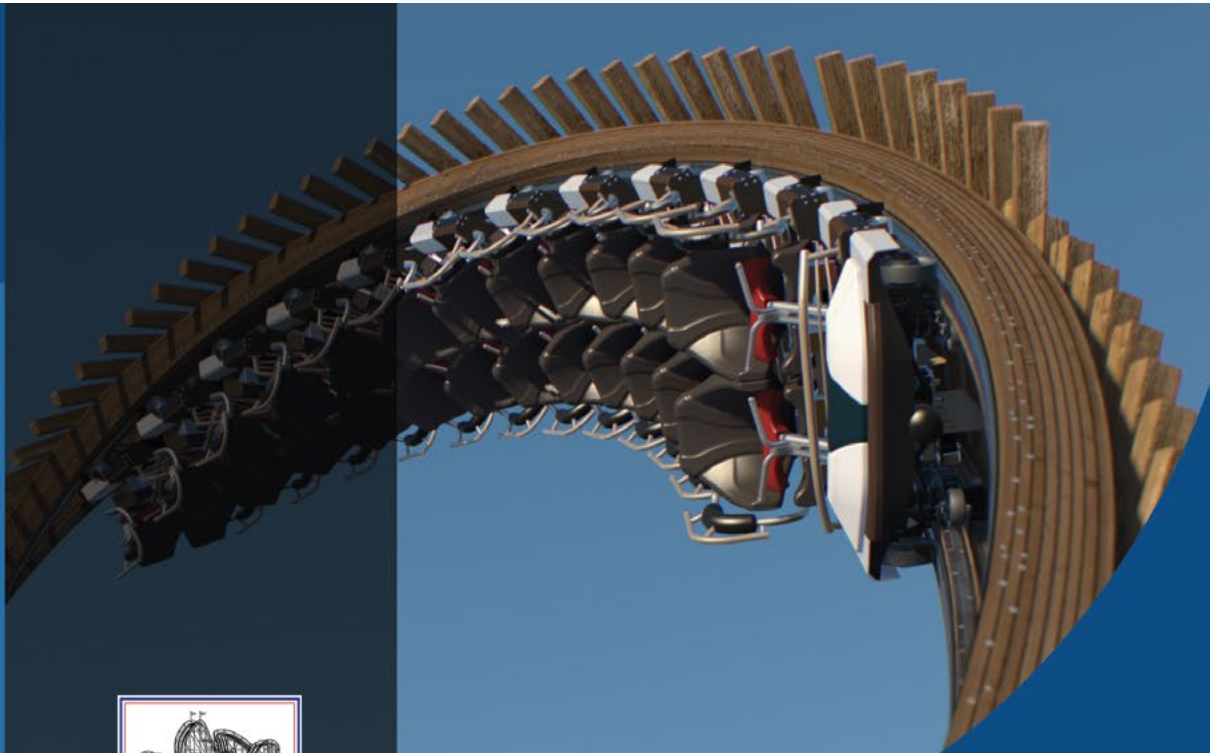
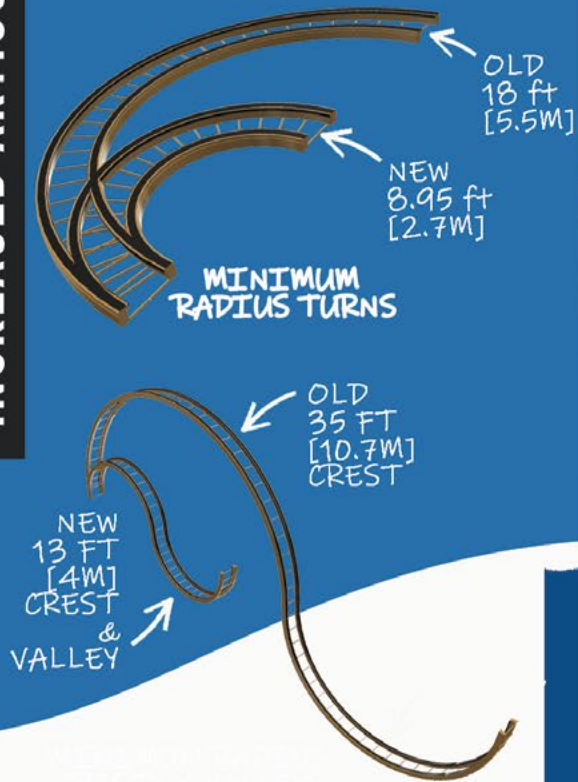
The AIMS Board of Directors made the decision last August to hold the 2021 seminar virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event was to run Jan. 11-15 in Galveston, Texas. By October, AIMS seminar coordinators had hired an outside virtual event production company, **O'Design**, and added three first-time features. One was bringing **Ellis and Associates** on board to deliver the seminar's aquatics curriculum.

The other new feature was 20 hours of content delivered entirely in Spanish for a separate

► See AIMS, page 8

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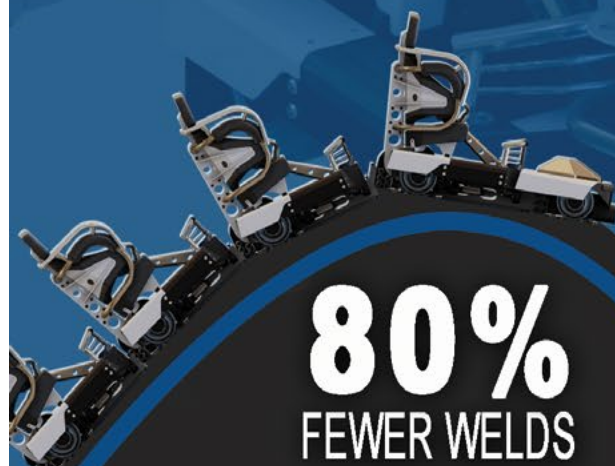
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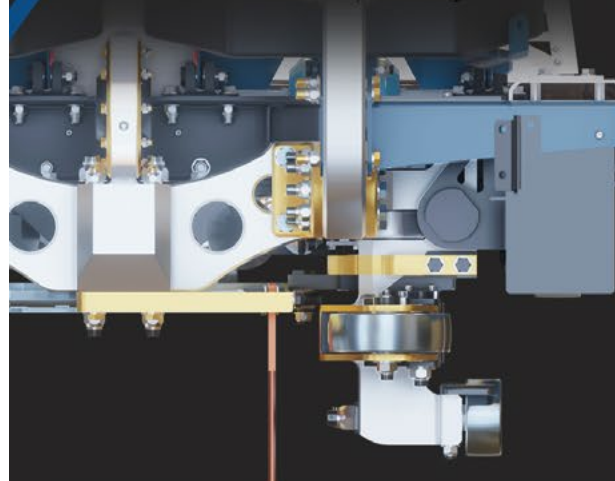
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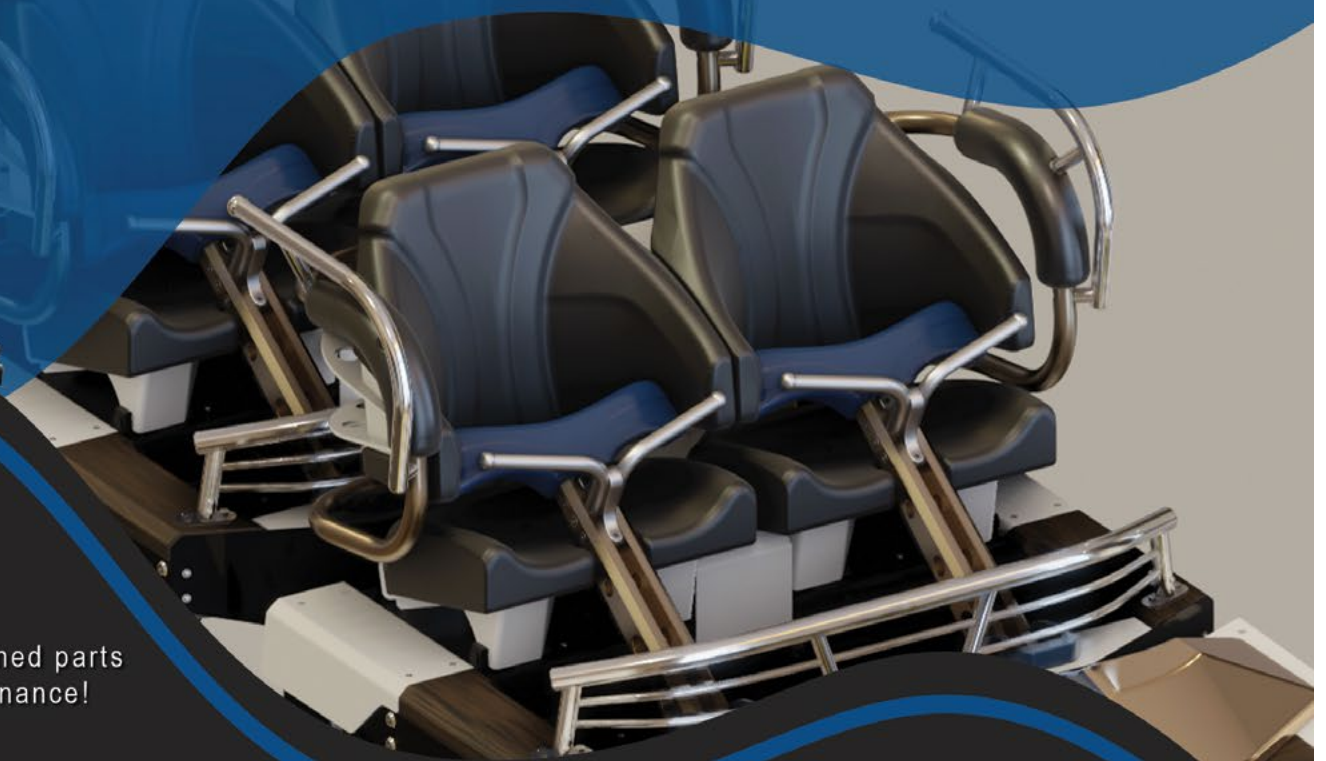
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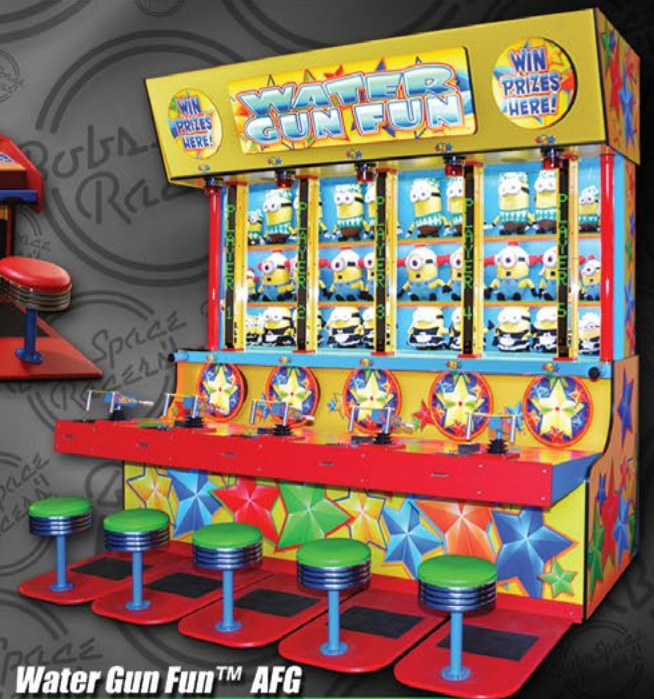
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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint

FECs step into spotlight



Robinson

As a kid, I remember my father explaining how the wild roller coaster ride at Coney Island in *The Sting II* was really Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk and its popular Giant Dipper. After visiting the park not long after, I remember my excitement when I recognized the boardwalk and its rides on the screen in *The Lost Boys*.

Since then, I'm hard-pressed to think of a time an amusement ride hit the local theater and I didn't try to place where the ride was located or who manufactured it. From Coney Island's appearance in the climax of *Spider-Man: Homecoming* to Kennywood acting as *Adventureland*, amusement rides and parks have been a constant presence on the silver screen for all kinds of adventures. Even the American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE) has its roots in a promotional event for the thriller *Rollercoaster*.

With family entertainment centers more popular and prolific than ever — and a generation of children who grew up having birthday parties at Chuck E. Cheese and Showbiz Pizza — it's only natural that FECs are being featured more and more as a setting for on-screen stories. The fictional Golf-N-Stuff played a minor roll in the original *Karate Kid* movie, but it has returned as a major recurring setting in the film's sequel series *Cobra Kai*. Neil Patrick Harris' Barney Stinson on the series *How I Met Your Mother* made no secret of his love for laser tag FECs.

Most notably in recent years, the popular video game franchise *Five Nights at Freddy's* sees players fighting for their survival against FEC animatronic characters come to life.

This concept is taking the next step, and putting FECs into the spotlight cinematically, with the forthcoming release of the Nicholas Cage flick *Willy's Wonderland*, the trailer for which was released in January. The horror/comedy takes the haunted house tropes and applies them to a classic FEC environment.

All of this helps to remind this industry how much a part of everyone's day-to-day lives the world of amusement parks — and now FECs — truly is. They provide settings that everyone can recognize with ease and characters to identify with.

With the struggles the past year has brought to the world around us, it's refreshing to realize just how intertwined the amusement industry is to society and pop culture. The world is waiting for midways to light-up, coasters to roll and go-karts to race in full force once again. As we take steps back toward normalcy — and reopening — our guests are waiting for us.



INDUSTRY VOICE: Deno "D.J." Vourderis, Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park

Reflecting before a new year

History will remember us all based on what we do now. It isn't the pandemic that will define us; it is how we unite in its aftermath. We will start listening, and learn to accept each other, even when we disagree. We will realize that just as COVID doesn't care where we're from, where we pray, or who we love, neither should any of us. And most of all, we need to enjoy the little things more. A hug from someone you love, holidays with family, a night out with friends. So many things we had taken for granted. So many joys of life put on hold.

Once we get back to these moments, let's appreciate one another more, love less conditionally, be more accepting, understanding and forgiving. Because after all we've been through, together, our differences don't seem as extreme, or important enough to lose even one second of time being angry. Life is short, and for too many people this past year, tragically too short. Let's build a more considerate world in their memory. Let's be better than we have been. Let's listen, forgive and heal



Vourderis

together. We ended the year 2020 with a catastrophic pandemic about to devastate the world. We will respond with a roaring '20s that bring about peace, prosperity and compassion. The eyes of generations to come will be watching what happens now. Let's show them who we are.

We are all part of a one-of-a-kind community. Our industry provides a place where people, who half a world away are at war, can stand next to each other in line, their children smiling at each other with mutual excitement, before stepping into a ride together. And as long as we remember who we are, we will always provide a place for people — for all people — to come and play. It is in the parks that the troubles of our time can be forgotten. When the politics of the world divide us, places like amusement parks are essential in bringing us back together.

I ask that we all have hope, because that's our greatest weapon. Have hope in each other, in science, and know that this too shall pass.

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

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Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader

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National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives

2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Phil Wilson, Extreme Engineering

For **Phil Wilson**, a love of the amusement industry is all in the family. He started **Extreme Engineering** with his father in 1995, and today the company is known the world over for its family coasters, adventure rides and engineering design. Phil is immersed in the industry as an active volunteer, has chaired several committees and is a member of the board of directors for **IAAPA**. His positive attitude, zest for life and passion for relationship building are a winning combination ... and good for business. When Phil is not working, he enjoys traveling, cooking, wine, a great IPA and being with his family.

Title: Executive Vice President.

Number of years in the industry: 26.

Best thing about the industry: The lifelong relationships I have made is what makes the amusement industry extra special. Our industry is full of kind and genuine people, many of whom I consider like family.

Favorite amusement ride: Only one? I'd say our Cloud Coaster, but don't want to be biased. If I had to choose one, I would say Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure at Universal's Islands of Adventure in Orlando.

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

Biggest challenge facing our industry is ... 2020's disaster will make 2021 incredibly challenging for most. Our industry will have to reinvent itself in many ways. All constituencies will need to embrace change, support each other financially and understand that patience will need to be the key toward recovery.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ... Seeing the excitement on peoples' faces as they queue up at a park's entry gate, preparing for opening.

When I want to really relax, I ... Like to decompress with my family or go on an epic date night with my wife. The best way for me to ultimately relax is go on vacation with my wife in Europe, a family trip to Hawaii or theme park with the kids.

The celebrity I would most like to hang out with would have to be ... Will Ferrell. It would be crazy just to have an hour with the guy.

My Mom always told me ... Since she is Brazilian, the American clichés never come across correctly, however she always told me "when you are happy, life is a piece of pie." She replaces "cake" with "pie." Not sure why she can't stop saying pie. She doesn't even like pie.

The first thing I do when I get home from work is ... Leave home. I work from home. I need to get away from it.

I am most comfortable wearing ... A Member's Only jacket and jorts....ok, maybe not the jorts.



Extreme Engineering co-founder Phil Wilson is immersed in the amusement industry. COURTESY EXTREME ENGINEERING

When I was 10 years old, I wanted to be ... Older. Now that I am, I want to be 10 again. Don't grow up people.

My all-time favorite summertime song is ... Justin Timberlake's "Can't Stop The Feeling!"

If I were to set a Guinness World Record, it would be for ... Logging my kids into Zoom class meetings during virtual school.

Dream vacation: Two months in Australia or Italy. I've gone regularly to both, while living in Australia. I can't get enough of these places.

You are going to the moon. The three things you would take on the Space Shuttle are ... A single seater space shuttle to go back to earth, unlimited wifi hotspot to video chat with my family and friends, 10 gallons of beer or wine.

The thing I most dread is ... Sunday. Sunday is the worst. It's like a minimum day off. Sunday is like IAAPA Expo prep.

Favorite dinnertime meal: I'm the cook in the family so this is hard to choose one item. I love to cook Italian.

When friends come to visit me, I always take them here ... Usually wineries, since we live in wine country. I have over 60 wineries within 15 miles from the house. We are so lucky to be in this part of California (the pretty part).

Take your pick: an afternoon at a winery or an evening at a brewery: Depending how the weather and day is, winery hands down.

The professional athlete I most admire is ... FedEx delivery guys. Sorry, but they are the real heroes. They deliver my packages, run up my stairs and drop off heavy packages.

Favorite rainy day activity: If it's cold, I have a fire and we watch movies. If it's not, I actually like being out in the rain under our gazebo and watching it pour.

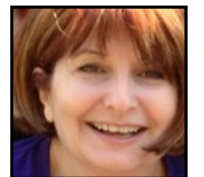
THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Masked Mardi Gras



SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Six Flags Fiesta Texas kicked off its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Festival on January 16. It continues throughout February. With masks and social distancing in place, the event features entertainment, decorations and themed food such as beignets and crabmeat mac and cheese. Park President Jeffrey Siebert (right) fell under the event's spell, grabbing a photo with a costumed shaman. COURTESY JEFFREY SIEBERT

Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

Porking fun at work

This month's tale comes from **Carey Don Risinger** who began his career at **Six Flags Over Texas** and retired from **The State Fair of Texas**.

In 1968, I was a stand manager in food and beverage at Six Flags Over Texas. Surviving the long summers, working with 600 teenagers and running a key revenue department could be challenging at times. Most of the locations did not have any air-conditioning, something that many couldn't even imagine today.

There was a small food location called Little Sausages that backed up to the LaSalle Riverboat ride. Along the ride was some very simple animation to add to the adventure for kids traveling the river. Right behind the Little Sausages was a gate that provided access to the river path to allow for servicing the animation. It was the perfect temptation for food folks to get in trouble, if they got caught. The particular scene behind the stand contained French explorers firing rifles across the river at their rivals. The rifles had bayonets, which happened to be the perfect fit to hold a sausage wiener. This was often an opportunity for giggles for our staff.

On one particular occasion, while the sausages were being placed onto the bayonets, a riverboat rounded the corner and its passengers were on the verge of catching us in the act. Panicking, we couldn't think of anything else to do but freeze as the boat passed. The staff of Little Sausages was left wondering what a boat full of park guests thought when they sailed by and saw two guys — wearing chef coats, white pants and white scarves — posed frozen.

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.

► **IISF**
Continued from page 1

son will be asked to leave and [seek] medical attention.

Hand washing & sanitizing — Hand washing and sanitizing stations will be located throughout the facility.

Face masks — Face masks must be worn and will be strictly enforced.

Social distancing — We encourage social distancing with additional signage and floor and ground markings.

Bathroom cleaning — **Potillo Sanitation Service** will be on site fully disinfecting with Electra Static Ionization for Microbial Bacteria, following CDC guidelines and protocol. Bathroom urinals will be disinfected daily.

"We are totally positive. Better to move forward than not at all," said Rimes.

There are four new vendors, in a total field of 60, that are participating in the trade show. They include: **Elite Trade Show Services/Marquee; Encore Concessions – Fab Metals; Mid-America Engine and Urethane Specialties.**

The week of activities for the IISA begins Sunday, February 14, with "Celebrating Gibtown 2021," featuring a live band and hors d'oeuvres. Monday is the 11th annual Big Hearted Jerry Memorial golf tournament. The next four days, the trade show is open from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.. The first evening, February 16, is a trade show kickoff party with snacks, finger foods and a band. Wednesday evening is the annual Jamboree fundraiser steak dinner and auction benefiting the museum building fund. On Thursday during the trade show will be



The show is on. The 53rd annual International Independent Showmen's Foundation (IISF) Super Trade Show & Extravaganza takes place February 16-19. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

another live band. Rounding out the activities on Friday will be the Shriner's annual meeting and the Cemetery Association Memorial service at the carousel pavilion with mass to follow.

For the second year, NAARSO will again be offering inspector certification exams for

level one inspectors. This will take place on Tuesday with a two-hour study and review followed by a two-hour exam.

Workshops, always an integral part of the event, continue this year. Some are free, while others require a registration fee. For food handlers, a four-hour certification in the ServSafe program will be offered, Tuesday – Friday.

On Wednesday, "Reopening during a Pandemic" will feature two different sessions: "Creative Ways to Produce Revenue During a Pandemic," and "Events That Operated During the 2020 Pandemic." Later that same day, "Dealing with State and Local Health Departments During a Pandemic," and "Overcoming the 'No You Can't Open.'"

Thursday the **JKJ Workforce Agency** and the **Small Business Workforce Alliance** will be conducting two sessions on the "H2B Balancing Act: Practical, Political Strategies for Survival in this New Abnormal."

Rounding out the week on Friday is a session on "Industrial Truck/Forklift Training." It ends with on-site outdoor training.

Here's a brief rundown on activities conducted that week by other organizations:

Kicking off the week, is the always popular **NICA (National Independent Concessionaires Association)/Fare Foods** food show and other events. **Audrey Poole**, vice president of business development for Fare Foods, explained what will take place at the **Sheraton Tampa Brandon Hotel**: "This year's theme is Movin' Forward. The event will begin on Tuesday, February 16, with NICA's Business Expo. NICA will debut its website-based Peer to Peer Resource Center which we are all excited about. NICA will also be hosting several workshops that attendees will find very informative.

"Then it's on to the Fare Foods Food Show. This year's food show will be held one day only from 1:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. on February 16, with 55 participating vendors. On Wednesday, February 17 at 5:30 p.m., the NICA annual general member-

ship meeting will be held in person as well as virtual, so all members across the country can participate. The virtual meeting will mark a milestone in NICA's history. NICA's incoming board of directors will be installed, introduction of the hall of fame winner, **Greg Miller CCE**, as well as other exciting surprises," said Poole.

This year's food show will have three, two-hour time blocks for attendees. The change was implemented to follow social distancing guidelines and to avoid large gatherings. All attendees will be required to wear a mask to enter and participate in the events. Exhibitors will be located throughout the hotel allowing an enhanced traffic flow avoiding larger crowds, all designed to promote safety for attendees.

"Our industry is about networking. What a great opportunity to see so many of the faces you haven't be able to see in months. Travel safe and see you in sunny Tampa," said Poole.

The **Outdoor Amusement Business Association, (OABA)** has a full schedule as President and CEO **Greg Chiecko** explained, "Our board of directors have not met in person since last February. The general consensus is they want an in-person meeting and have many important issues to discuss. It was a very difficult year in 2020 for our industry and we want to make sure that our members have all the tools they need to have a safe and profitable year in 2021. We have a very dedicated board of directors that look out for our entire industry."

Chiecko continued, "We intend to update our strategic plan, discuss our membership, contribution fund and Jamboree Committees. We will also honor our hall of fame and pioneer award recipients at our 56th annual member meeting and chair reception. Also, educational programs will be held at the club in Gibtown."

The **Showmen's League of America (SLA)** is planning on having its usual meetings. "During that week, we have our long-range planning meeting, scholarship meeting, nomination meeting and a board meeting," said **Cindy Henning**, secretary/executive director. "However, the Executive Committee just decided [on January 25], we will not hold meetings in Tampa this year. They felt it was better to be on the safe side and have Zoom meetings instead."

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2021 IISF Super Trade Show schedule

Sunday, February 14
Celebrating Gibtown 2021

Monday, February 15
12 p.m. - 11th Annual Big Hearted Jerry Memorial Golf Tournament
Summerfield Golf Course
Same-day registration at golf course: \$75.00

Tuesday, February 16
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Trade Show
Trade Show Kick Off Party Night - Snacks, Finger Foods, Band

Wednesday, February 17
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Trade Show

6 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Jamboree Fundraiser/

Auction - Museum Building Fund (steak dinner available)

Thursday, February 18
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Trade Show
Trade Show - Band

Friday, February 19
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - Trade Show

10 a.m. - Shriner's Annual Meeting- IISA Main Meeting Room

12 p.m. - Cemetery Association Memorial Service Carousel Pavilion (mass to follow)

Wednesday, February 24
6 p.m. - Installation of IISA Officers

OABA's Florida Week events

Wednesday, February 17

8 a.m.-11 a.m.

OABA Government Relations Committee Meeting
Sheraton Hotel

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Creative Ways to Produce Income During a Pandemic
Carousel Pavilion on the IISA grounds

1 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

Case Studies – Events That Operated During the 2020 Season, an Open Discussion
Carousel Pavilion on the IISA grounds

3 p.m.-4 p.m.

Reception Honoring 2021 Hall of Fame & Pioneer Recipients
IISA Carnival Museum, second floor

Thursday, February 18

9 a.m.-12 p.m.

OABA Board Meeting
Sheraton Tampa East Hotel (Salon 2 & 3)

12:30 p.m.-2 p.m.

MAI, Inc. OABA-Duke Smith Memorial Education Fund Board & Scholarship Meeting — Sheraton (Palm)

7 p.m.-11 p.m.

5th Annual OABA
Top Golf H-2B Advocacy Fundraiser – Tampa

Friday, February 19

6 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

OABA's 56th Annual Member Meeting and Chair's Reception
Sheraton (Ballroom) — **R.S.V.P. is required**

IISF 53rd annual Gibtown Extravaganza

February 16-19, 2021

Exhibitor Listing

5centride.com Non-Exhibiting Supplier
Action Lighting Inc. 509-510
Aeriai JKJ 727-728
Amusement Devices & Mfg. Llc Outside Space
Amusement Today **601**
Audio Innovators, Inc. 725-726
Bj Toy Company, Inc. 518-520
Berk Concession Supply Non-Exhibiting Supplier
Best Toy Mfg. Ltd. Non-Exhibiting Supplier
Bob's Space Racers, Inc. Outside Space
Burton & Company, P.A. Non-Exhibiting Supplier
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Carnivalwarehouse.Com Breezeway Space
Carolina Atm Services Llc 622-623
Cavallaro Concessions Outside Space
Chester Built Trailers Ltd. Outside Space
Chestnut Identity Apparel Inc. 615-616
Circus And Traveling Shows Retirement. Non-Exhibiting Supplier
Classic Embroidery Designs 718
Cmd Enterprises Llc 413
Dalton Kid Rides Rebuilders Inc. Outside Space
Designs In Motion 407
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Elaut Usa Inc./Coast To Coast Ent. Outside Space
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Fabbri Group. 702
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Waterloo Tent & Tarp Co., Inc. Non-Exhibiting Supplier
Waymatic, Inc. Non-Exhibiting Supplier
Whirley Drink Works 515-516
Wisdom Rides Of America Outside Space
Worldwide Safety Group 303-304
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▶AIMS

Continued from page 1

educational track. That Spanish track was delivered by **Loyola Hugo, Fantasilandia, Santiago, Chile.**

Brewer said Hugo put together 11 instructors. Attendees for the Spanish track were from Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Spain and Italy.

The third was a new specialty track.

Two new tracks were added to the existing ones of maintenance, operation, inspection and aquatics.

Including those represented in the Spanish track, there were a total of 15 countries involved in this year's seminar.

"This has really pushed us forward in talking about presenting tracks in other languages as well," Brewer said.

Sessions were delivered in a simu-live format with instructors prerecording their classes, then being on-hand afterward for live questions and answers.

As the dates to the seminar approached last fall, Brewer said they were informed that they would need a moderator in each session. In other words, they needed someone online in the virtual rooms during each hour of presentation.

Through one of AIMS supporters and past president, **Linda Freeman, Rockwell Automation**, she reached out and connected with a mechan-



ical engineering student from **Georgia Tech**, located in Atlanta, **Samantha Bershik.**

"She called and said she wanted to be involved," Brewer said. "She was able to pull together 45 students for us."

That is something that has produced more conversation.

"Perhaps we should have a young professional's club," she said.

Brewer, Fluet and Achard along with three members of the O'Design Firm monitored all of the sessions including the networking sessions. They spent the week popping in and out of the sessions, the networking events and answering questions at the virtual help desk.

And, yes, there were a few glitches, many of them where attendees found the content was buffering too long. Also, at one point, the wrong session was put into a slot but it was caught quickly.

One of the features that Hudson liked was the chat function that enabled students to ask questions while the sessions were going on.



Harold Hudson, president and CEO, AAPRA Associates, gave the keynote address at this year's first virtual AIMS Safety Seminar. The seminar was held Jan. 11-15 live with on-demand access until the end of January. He spoke to the almost 475 attendees about best practices, change and success. COURTESY AIMS INTERNATIONAL

"I thought that was very informative," Hudson said. "I think it all was fantastic. To me, it was all just unbelievable. I just think AIMS is a great organization and it is very important to the industry for two reasons. They are the heart of the industry and safety is at the top of what they are thinking."

Fluet said they found attendees loved connecting and being virtual didn't stop them.

"We had a 30-minute coffee chat sessions every morning when attendees could get on-line and speak to each other live," Fluet said. "These were extremely popular. MJ

had to go on a few times and kick people off because the next events were starting."

"We had so many good things come out of this seminar," Brewer said. "Many things we didn't even expect. And now we are full steam ahead."

AIMS provides certifications in the areas of maintenance, inspection, operations and aquatics. Brewer said earlier they had found a virtual platform for the Level One operations certification exams. Plans for regional live testing in 2021 have not been set as yet.

• aimsintl.org

AIMS Virtual Safety Seminar by the numbers

- 160 hours of content
- 278 attendees for instruction
- 101 presenters
- 45 student moderators
- 27 sponsors
- 15 different countries represented
- Between 470-475 total attendance (as of January 20), including AIMS board members and other special guests

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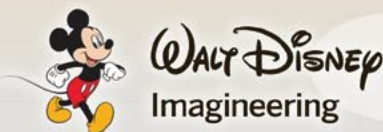
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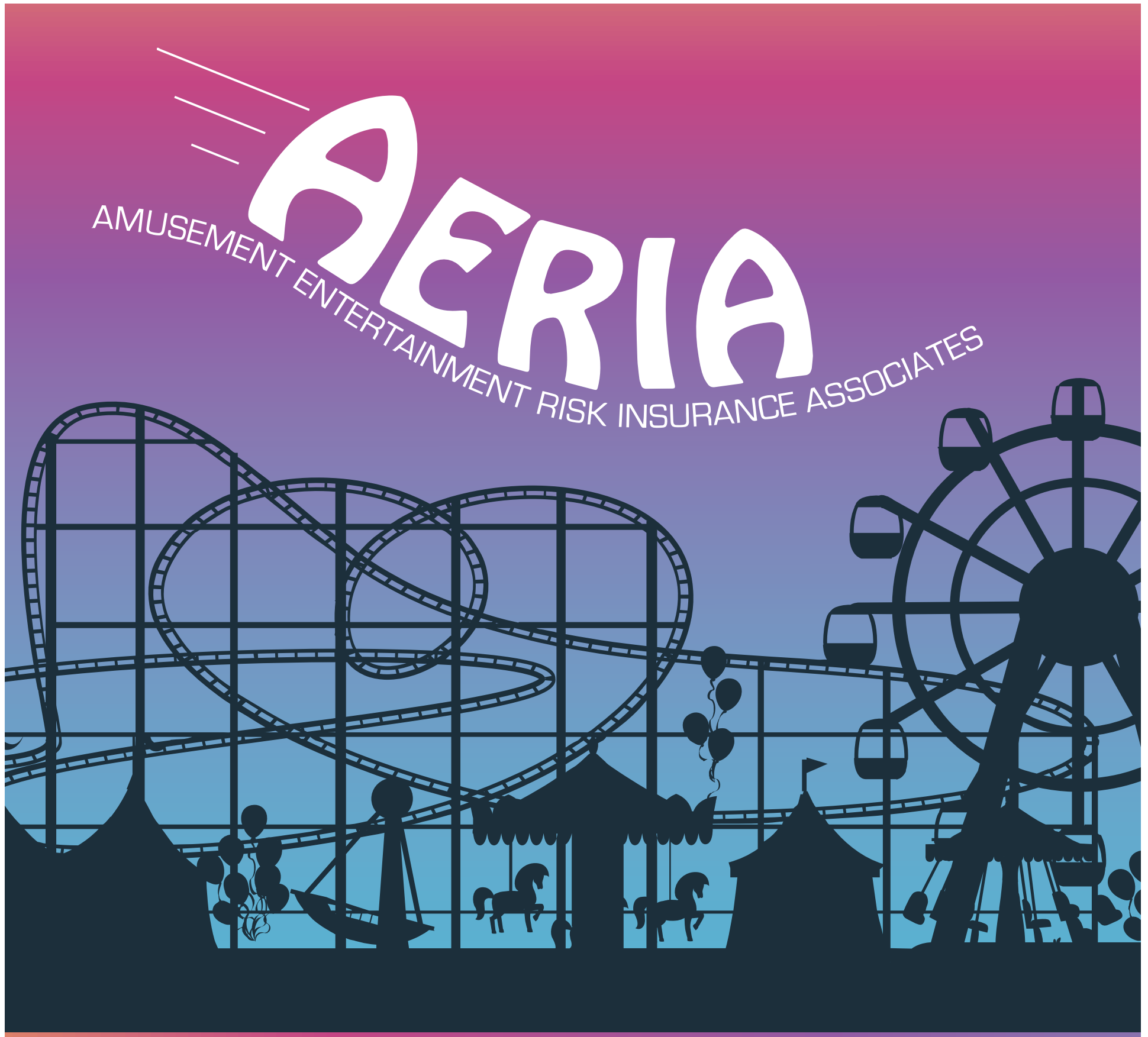


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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Mack Rides offers new twist for coasters — page 16 / Luna Park expansion — page 20 / FAIRS — pages 24-28

Zamperla supplies captivating thriller: Dare Devil Dive

Six Flags Fiesta Texas opens the first new ride of 2021 season

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO — Management at Six Flags Fiesta Texas knew a good angle when they saw one. Following a year-long retheme of the park's dark ride throughout 2018, Pirates of the Deep Sea opened just after midnight on Jan. 1, 2019. It kicked off the park's venture into year-round operation. At that time, the new ride was the first of new additions for that season.

With 2020 being an unusual operating season owing to COVID, several parks held off on opening — or completing — the new attractions planned for the year. Fiesta Texas kept tinkering away a little at a time. By fall, Dare Devil Dive Flying Machines was completed and ready to operate. With restricted attendance and the big upcoming draw of Halloween and Holiday in the Park, it made marketing sense to hold off on the new ride until 2021 — barely.

"Opening a ride following fireworks and just after the stroke of midnight — you don't get to open a ride on that scale very often. We've done it in the grandest of ways," said Chris Ozimek, marketing director, Fiesta Texas. "We introduced it to our diamond and diamond elite members first. They are very excited about it, and we are as well."

Supplied by Zamperla, Dare Devil Dive Flying Machines is a Super Air Race, the tallest version of that model of ride. Once in motion, the ride system rises up, flipping riders upside down 50 feet in the air. The motion of the ride gives it great spectator appeal from two directions within the streets of Crackaxle Canyon. While the hardware alone makes for an



Dare Devil Dive Flying Machines adds a captivating attraction for spectators. Flames add a dramatic flair to the ride both during the day and night (above right). COURTESY SIX FLAGS FIESTA TEXAS



iconic addition to the park, Six Flags Fiesta Texas took the project much further than simply adding a flat ride.

"We work with our Six Flags partners and develop an overlying concept and theme with direction and style," said Six Flags Fiesta Texas Park President Jeffrey Siebert. "Then it's up to the park team to take that to fruition and the next level that we all agree upon."

"It's always fun working with Jeffrey and his team at Fiesta Texas," said Michael Coleman, North American sales manager, Zamperla. "Their ability to elevate an installation through creative ways certainly shines, or in this case, blazes through to enhance the guest experience."

"I think as spectacular as the ride experience is, what it does visually and the storytelling aspect brings the ride experience together," said Jeff Filicko, marketing and communications manager, Fiesta Texas. "Once you enter the queue line and go through all the effects of the storytelling moments to the time when you get on the ride and see the fire and the lights

and the fog, it all comes together and creates a truly immersive ride experience."

Adopting a steampunk theme, which is a gradual overlay to the Crackaxle Canyon section of the park, the queue building features an assortment of inventions, all of which eventually go wrong. Ideas of air conditioning and electricity are demonstrated in the exhibition hall (of the queue) and work fine temporarily until things go awry and fog blasts out and sparks fly and lights flicker. The final invention is aviation and flight. And in true form to the storyline, the aircraft spiral out of control.

During Halloween, the park introduced Steam Punkins into the new feel of the area.

"I think [the theming] is very quickly becoming signature Fiesta Texas in the way we are involving guests into the ride experience from the moment you get in line until the moment you get off the ride," added Filicko. "I think it makes it all a more cohesive experience and our guests are coming to appreciate that. We're really starting to focus on



Signage adds to the reimagining of the area into its new steampunk ambience. COURTESY SIX FLAGS FIESTA TEXAS

those details."

"One of our strategies over the past several years is to go themed area by themed area and bring new life and excitement, not only by reimagining what was originally built in 1992 but really pulling out the attention to detail and the artistry of the thematic elements of when the park was beautifully built and then enhancing it," said Siebert. "This year we've taken Crackaxle Canyon and elevated it to a higher quality. Not only is Dare Devil Dive our new focus, but we're also adding new thematic area ID

signs and spinning gears and fog effects to Crackaxle Canyon Steampunk District."

"The Super Air Race alone provides stop-and-stare moments, but when combined with the pyrotechnics and quality audio of the installation, you might as well pull up a chair while you observe the guests screaming their way through the ride cycle," said Coleman. "In comparison to our standard Air Race, the additional height of the Super Air Race provides an opportu-

► See DIVE, page 12

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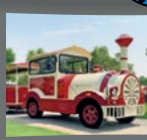
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Six Flags Over Texas celebrates with Fire and Ice Festival



Six Flags Over Texas' Fire and Ice Festival climaxes with a fireworks display on Saturday evenings.
COURTESY KRISTOPHER ROWBERRY

ARLINGTON, Texas — **Six Flags Over Texas** is introducing the Fire & Ice Winter Festival to kick off the park's 60th anniversary season in 2021. Open weekends and holidays in January and February, the all-new event features a high-energy ice carving show, an extended run of The Frosty Snowhill and a climactic fireworks display on Saturday night.

"We are thrilled to begin our 60th anniversary season at Six Flags Over Texas with a winter festival for guests to enjoy," said Six Flags Over Texas Park President **Ron McKenzie**. "Now, more than ever, families and friends are looking for opportunities to create special memories together, and this event offers a fun, thrilling, and safe experience for guests of all ages."

As a nod to the park's 60th anniversary, having first opened its gates on August 5, 1961,

guests can purchase one-day admission for just \$19.61 throughout the duration of the Fire & Ice Winter Festival.

As the sun sets, the park lights up with millions of twinkling lights, including the Fire and Ice Light Show which captivates guests as the entire area illuminates to the beat of music. Each Saturday, guests can wrap up their day at the park in unique fashion by watching fireworks being launched from the iconic 300-foot Oil Derrick tower. Tasty libations and treats round out the festival, including unique fire and ice-inspired cocktails, frozen treats and savory snacks.

The Fire & Ice Winter Festival began January 9 and runs weekends through February 28, plus Jan. 18 and Feb. 15. The festival is included with park admission.

•sixflags.com/overtexas

▶ DIVE

Continued from page 11

nity to showcase an experience as close to flying an actual plane as you can get in the form of an amusement ride."

Dare Devil Dive Flying Machines features six arms, with aircraft on each arm seating four. Once rising into the air, the planes soon start swinging and spiraling in the air, turning thrill seekers upside down at least a dozen times. The experience is accented with bursts of flame and musical audio.

"Each plane is programmed differently," added Siebert. "Great hang time and weightlessness."

Perhaps the most striking element to the ride is its sheer beauty. Painted in maroon, gold and black, it fits perfectly into a steampunk vibe. Props in the surrounding area fit the style, and even the ledges within the queue sparkle with fiber optics.

One of the park's partners used for various projects — fireworks, haunted attractions and thematic aspects — is **Magic in the Sky**. Siebert cred-



Theming in the queue unfolds a tale of inventions that have questionable success. AT/TIM BALDWIN

its them for helping to create the thematic experience seen in the queue. The ride entrance was designed by **Creative Design Solutions**. Bold and colorful, the sign features a spinning propeller.

Six Flags Fiesta Texas is in the middle of a preview schedule of rolling out the ride in stages to its various levels of memberships and pass holders throughout January and February and will welcome all riders when March arrives and spring break crowds are expected.

Because of the design of the vehicles and spacing of riders, all seats can be used with proper safety protocols.

"The great news is we did bring the ride to completion in 2020 and we did take a pause to see what was really happening with the pandemic," said Siebert. "We actually modified the queue to add physical barriers to make it COVID friendly. This is the second time we used the New Year's approach, and it has served us very well; it's wildly popular."

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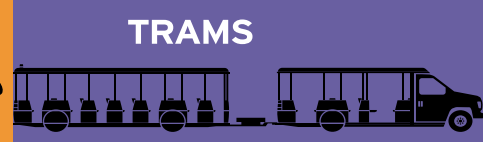
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Six Flags' Holiday in the Park events prove to be a lasting gift

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

ARLINGTON, Texas — Officials at the country's amusement and theme parks found they had to pivot and reinvent their 2020 holiday celebrations due to COVID-19 restrictions — such was the case with some of the Six Flags Entertainment parks.

The resourcefulness of these park officials was rewarded with successes and extensions of the event dates into January.

Sandra Daniels, spokesperson, Six Flags, said they were very proud of the way the parks reinvented themselves to be able to lift spirits for the holidays.

"We had several variations of Holiday in the Park," Daniels said. "Some parks offered the traditional Holiday in the Park events with rides, decor, holiday-themed entertainment and food. Parks that weren't technically open, due to government regulations, were able to create magical drive-through or walk-through experiences to our guests' delight."

While many of Six Flags parks were not able to hold traditional Holiday in the Park events, these parks held drive-through events, called Holiday in the Park Lights: **Six Flags Magic Moun-**



Six Flags Great Adventure's drive-through Holiday in the Park Lights celebration began in November and was extended through January 17, 2021. COURTESY SIX FLAGS, LINDA WEISENSTEIN

tain, Valencia, California; **Six Flags Great America**, Gurnee, Illinois, and **Six Flags Discovery Kingdom**, Vallejo, California. **Six Flags New England**, Agawam, Massachusetts, held both walk-through and a drive-through.

"The novelty really resonated with our guests and team members," Daniels said. "When do you get to drive through your favorite theme park? Our collection of roller coasters and attractions provided a really neat backdrop and our teams went all out to create winter wonderlands with massive light shows and holiday decor.

"Everything was done with great attention to detail and the safety of our guests and team

members," she said. "During a year like 2020, people needed a respite; a way to connect and share happy memories."

Six Flags Magic Mountain announced in early November that it would hold a drive-through event. The original dates ran Nov. 20-Jan. 3, on select dates. It was extended to run weekends through the end of January.

Six Flags Great America's Holiday in the Park Lights was to end with December. It was extended to run the first three weekends in January.

Six Flags New England, Agawam, Massachusetts, debuted its drive-through Jan. 7-10, 2021. It also ran Jan. 13-18.

Six Flags New England announced its walk-through Holiday in the Park Lights would run through the end of December. Park officials then extended it to Jan. 3, 2021. Afterwards, the walk-through event was changed to a drive-through. That event ran for the next two weekends in January.

The parks left the holiday decorations up even through January. Some added different music while others hung onto the holiday themes.

Six Flags Great Adventure, Jackson, New Jersey, and **Six Flags Fiesta Texas**, San Antonio, offered both a traditional holiday experience and a drive-through

option on nonoperating weekdays in December. Great Adventure extended their drive-through event weekends through January 17.

The main difference between the events held up to Christmas and those extended into January was Santa Claus' presence. Santa Claus spent January in a snow globe on his tropical staycation.

Daniels said it was obvious that everyone was happy, safely celebrating the holidays with their families in such a unique way. The drive-throughs received positive comments from visitors.

"The drive-throughs provided a really unique way to experience our parks and it was just so much fun," she said.

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Mack Rides offers new twist on its existing launched coasters

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

WALDKIRCH, Germany — Reacting to a global health crisis and the impacts it has brought upon the entire amusement industry, parks are evaluating the availability of new attractions. Mack Rides has developed a solution for facilities to update an existing attraction to add a new marketing spin. At the same time, the concept can elevate an entirely new attraction in the planning stages to a whole new level.

Mack Rides refers to it as a Hybrid train.

“This adjustment to our Mega/Launch Coaster train is bringing the spinning option to many of our rides,” said Maximilian Roeser, head of marketing. “We can either equip some of our existing roller coasters with an adjusted spinning back row or build a new layout with this already in mind. You get two ride experiences with one track. Our first installation will be our bluefire layout coming to Dreamworld Australia. Here we will have one Hybrid train that offers a spinning experience on this



Comfortable seating allows for a more floorless feel during the spin. The Hybrid train was tested on Europa-Park’s bluefire coaster (above right). COURTESY MACK RIDES

layout. The car itself is created in order to have standard seats facing forward and the back row to be spinning.”

Mack Rides refers to the seating concept as a z-axis. Compared to the back-to-back seating of the four-seater cars on the Xtreme Spinning Coaster, this back row features two seats at a slightly reclined position.

“The pitch is used to reduce the reach envelop as

the guests will sit slightly higher than the other guests in the launch coaster seats,” Roeser said.

“We had the tests on bluefire at Europa-Park, as this is again something new,” Roeser told *Amusement Today*. “Also the track is slightly different compared to the Launch Coaster and the Xtreme Spinning Coaster. We think this is a great option to create a

new ride sensation after several years of operation to a ride or to offer it as a new claim for the marketing of the parks. Either way, it’s a great addition, and I was very impressed with the ride physics.”

The seating utilizes the same comfortable restraints that are seen on the Xtreme Spinning Coaster and bluefire models.

“We just don’t want it to spin too crazy, but the test

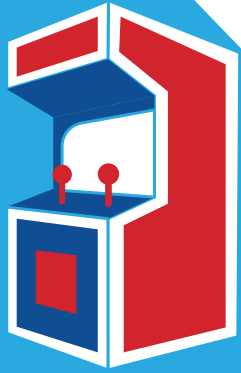
with the bluefire train didn’t show any sign that this would occur,” Roeser noted. “The rotation will also be dampened like with our Xtreme Spinning Coaster but also free spinning depending on the weight distribution. So even a much lighter person together with me did not spin in a completely wild fashion, and it was still an enjoyable ride.”

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Phoenix will take flight over a new area of Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park. COURTESY VEKOMA

Deno's Wonder Wheel park to add thrilling Vekoma coaster

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

BROOKLYN — There's nothing like the disappointment of planning a big party and then having it rained on. **Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park** was poised to celebrate 100 years in 2020, but then ... well, COVID-19. New York was shut down, and amusement industry locations in the state had to write the year off.

With hopes of a brighter 2021, the famed Coney Island park known for its iconic Wonder Wheel has even bigger plans. A Family Thrill Coaster from **Vekoma** will rise 68 feet tall. It is the park's largest investment.

"We wanted something special, something unique and something that would complement — and not compete — with our friends and neighbors at Luna Park," said **Deno "DJ" Vourderis**, a third generation member of the family that owns and operates the park. "Vekoma has built some great rides, especially lately, and we felt they offered exactly what we wanted, a Family Thrill Coaster that will appeal to everyone."

The owners have decided to call the ride The Phoenix.

"We decided to theme our new roller coaster after the mythical Phoenix," Vourderis said. "Yes, it is a suspended coaster, so the theme of flight works. But more than that, Phoenix will symbolize rebirth into a more accepting and loving world. New York City is known for its ability to take a punch and bounce back, I don't think any other place on earth does this better. And Coney Island is its greatest example of resilience, even in the darkest of times. It is a place people have always come to find comfort, and to remember what it feels like to smile. We need this now more than ever."

The coaster will soar over a newly acquired lot. Previously, abandoned rides were deteriorating on the site for years. One was a prefabricated ride called Ghost Hole. The Vourderis family was able to restore some of the props and incorporate them into the park's classic 1955 dark ride, The Spook-A-Rama.

Passengers will ride in a train that seats 20, situated in 10 rows of two. Top speed will be 34 mph. The owners wanted a thrilling ride but not an intimidating one.

"The Phoenix is our latest design of our Suspended Family Coaster model," said Ricardo Etges, global business development manager, Vekoma. "We have successfully worked hand in hand with the Vourderis family to custom-design a layout that optimizes the real estate, while maximizing the opportunities of this ride system. A variety of ride elements have been nicely packed together into its compact layout to generate an exciting and fast ride experience, with several tight turns and feet chopper effects, as the train flies closely past the ride structure. Our objective has always been to incorporate the right dose of thrill, with tight turns and high G forces, while keeping it also attractive and not intimidating to the family demographics. This is particularly true for the "near-inversion" 115-degree horseshoe banked turn, which will nicely serve also as an iconic portal welcoming visitors to the main walkway."

Amusement Today asked Vourderis about the decision to proceed with investments following a year of closure, when the delayed 100th celebration could have sufficed.

"It was a tough year for so many. And during this time we didn't know what to do; we only knew what we could do. We know how to make people happy," he said. "When the world is ready, we will open our gates and provide a safe place for people to come and remember what it feels like to smile again. Yes, there are some businesses choosing to leave New York, but we know better. I don't believe these are uncertain times for us. They are critical, and painful and trying, but we will, most certainly, rise from the ashes and give birth to the best of times."

Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
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Busch Gardens Williamsburg, Virginia, is operating during the winter months for the first time since the park opened in 1975.

The theme park, which was closed for much of the regular operating season last year because of the coronavirus pandemic, is looking at ways to rethink its operations by having smaller, limited-capacity special events.

The plan is to operate on certain weekends during the first three months of 2021, having already started that in January with Winter Weekends. The Busch Gardens Winter Weekends ran from Jan. 15-24 and gave patrons the opportunity to stroll through villages and ride 13 popular attractions, including three roller coasters and Sesame Street Forest of Fun. Guests were able to get up-close encounters with animals such as a capuchin monkey, baby kangaroo, gray fox, crested porcupine and an alligator. There also were interactive musical performances as well as food and beverages for sale.

Mardi Gras started Jan. 29 and will run through Feb. 28. Visitors can explore eight villages filled with Cajun food, cocktails, and live entertainment and music. Thirteen roller coasters and attractions, including Sesame Street Forest of Fun, also will be available.

St. Patrick's Day Celebration is set to start weekends from March 5 through March 28. Details of this event are still being worked out.

These new events are a continuation of similar limited-capacity events that the Williamsburg theme park held in August (Coasters & Craft Brews), September (Taste of Busch Gardens), October (Halloween Harvest) and in December and early January (Busch Gardens Christmas Celebration) that were popular among guests.

Reservations must be purchased in advance.

Having 4,000 people per session has helped make the event more economically sustainable. Before the state changed the rules, entertainment venues, including amusement parks, could operate at 50% capacity or a maximum of 1,000 people.

Being opened in January and February has been a request of patrons for years, according to park officials. The park typically opens in mid-March for the beginning of the season.

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, the parent company of Busch Gardens, operates several parks including **SeaWorld Orlando**, **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay**, **SeaWorld San Diego** and **SeaWorld San Antonio**.

The **Mob Museum, the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement**, Las Vegas, Nevada, launched a self-guided audio tour taking guests on an auditory journey through and beyond the Museum's four floors of exhibits. This new resource provides an eye-opening deep dive into some of mob history's most fascinating events and personalities.

With a running time of up to 85-minutes, the tour offers more than 40 audio stops featuring intriguing tales narrated by long-time museum volunteers, as well as insider anecdotes from former mob defense attorney and Las Vegas Mayor **Oscar Goodman**.

The audio tour allows guests to select the length of their experience with the ability to start or stop at any time, whether they seek just the tour highlights or want to dig deeper. Topics include untold stories about **Al Capone's** prison band, lethal love affairs of the "Kiss of Death" girl, stories from the Prohibition era, from bootleggers and rumrunners to flappers and jazz greats and details from the notorious St. Valentine's Day Massacre, including an examination of evidence from the crime scene, saw enforcement's most effective methods of taking down the Mob and unsolved murders of **Bugsy Siegel** and **Jimmy Hoffa**.

Guests can add the audio tour to any museum ticket for \$8 per individual or \$7 for groups of 10 or more.

After months of being closed due to Hurricane Zeta that hit in October, **Margaritaville**, Biloxi, Mississippi, is looking forward to welcoming guests again. Plans are to reopen the resort March 10, 2021, in time for spring break.

The resort sustained a lot of water damage during Hurricane Zeta, making repairs to the exterior of the building a focus.

Being closed for the holidays was tough, according to officials.

Once Margaritaville reopens, officials will once again return to work on phase two of the expanding resort. Developers plan to build an amusement park along with a new parking garage. The plan was to get the phase two up and running in 2021, however, that is unlikely now. Construction has not only been delayed due to the hurricane, but also to the COVID-19 pandemic.

No new date has been set for when the expansion will be complete.

As of now, guests will notice some changes when Margaritaville reopens in March, including fresh paint and carpet, along with 80 new games in the family entertainment center.

Beginning last month, **Legoland Florida Resort**, Winter Haven, Florida, officials began installing a new shade structure over the top of its popular Miniland USA.

This transformation is just a piece of the park's plans to celebrate its 10th birthday this year.

Along with other parts of the celebration, annual pass pricing will be reduced, which includes 12 months admission, admission to select annual events and discounts on other Legoland Florida events.

The resort also announced new entertainment options coming this year. The new show "Brickbeard's Watersports Stunt Show" begins February 12 at the park.

There are other new attractions set to be offered in 2021.

Planet Play, a new hands-on, interactive area at the **Kennedy Space Center Complex**, Merrit Island, Florida, has opened. The new area has three levels connected by ladders, climbing nets and kid-sized staircases, which weave together the solar system's planetary bodies.

Planet Play is the latest addition to the center. Immersion and interactivity are key for the new play area geared toward ages 2-12.

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New coaster from Intamin headlines new ride lineup

\$30 million expansion brings nine rides to Australia's Luna Park

AT: Tim Baldwin

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SYDNEY, Australia — As 2020 was winding down, Luna Park, an iconic destination to visitors and locals to Sydney, announced big plans. An AUS \$30 million expansion will bring nine new rides to the park.

"This is the largest investment in [Luna Park] since its reopening in 2004. It is the largest installation of new rides in the park at one time since 1935, the park's original opening," said Phillip Shumack, marketing manager.

Headlining the nine-ride expansion is Big Dipper. Provided by Intamin Amusement Rides, the first-of-its-kind coaster from the manufacturer will feature a single rail and riders will be seated single file on trains seven cars long. Of note, it will be the first launched single rail coaster in the world.

Called a Hot Racer model, the genre is one of four new concepts Intamin unveiled in the summer of 2020.

"The Big Dipper will be an Australian first — and the world's first single rail launch roller coaster," said Shumack.

"We are very excited about our Hot Racer product," said Sascha Czibulka, executive vice president, Intamin. "I'm looking forward to seeing a significant number of Hot Racer coasters in operation in the coming years. The combination of launches on a single line coaster with Intamin's state-of-the-art trains — using the very same seat and restraint system as we do on our LSM Launch Coasters, which is currently the most comfortable seat in the industry — and our smooth track system has already created a lot of attention, even before the first one started operation."

Two tire-driven launches will send riders around the sinuous course at close to 45 mph. Features include a non-inverting loop — the ride's tallest point — a sidwinder inversion and a flat spin corkscrew, along with several banked turns and airtime moments.

"I think spectators will find the biggest cool factor to be the combination of many different elements together with the launch sequences," said Czibulka. "In the case of



New additions from Zamperla, Intamin and Gerstlauer will breathe new life into a back area of the property. COURTESY LUNA PARK

Luna Park Sydney's Hot Racer, it is, in particular, the combination of inversions right after the second launch, namely the non-inverted loop and the sidwinder loop, which will captivate the spectators."

Although Luna Park will have bragging rights for having the first such coaster from Intamin, the manufacturer has already indicated to *Amusement Today* that two more such rides have been contracted to follow in the future.

As for the Australia installation, the new coaster is exceptionally compact, with even its station on top of a building. Luna Park's footprint dictates several space restrictions that make the addition of this new marquee coaster, as well as eight other rides, quite the feat.

"Luna Park was looking for a coaster featuring a number of exciting elements, ideally with launches and all this in consideration of the limited space and very tricky site situation. And not to forget the — as always — not unlimited budget," said Czibulka.

Big Dipper is a name that will be familiar to residents of Australia, as two previous coasters by that name were the headline attraction. From 1995 to 2001, a 131-foot-tall, Arrow, two-inversion thriller was on the property. Prior to that, a wooden coaster that ran from 1935 to 1979 was the crowd-pleaser. It was damaged in 1979 by a fire started in another attraction. Luna Park seems fond of the name and plans to keep it around.

"The Big Dipper is a state-of-the-art 'one seat wide' train that is smaller and faster than the original two Big Dippers at Luna Park. It has been specifically designed to ride very low to the terrain where appropriate, in harmony with the historic landscape features of the site," noted Shumack.

Because of its location to several downtown buildings, the park has been very cognizant of being good neighbors.

"Like every other single ride at Luna Park, the Big Dipper will meet the very strict existing regulations relating to noise, height, lights and hours of operation that have been in place since 2004," Shumack said. "Overall, Luna Park has a great relationship with our neighbors. 89% of the local suburb are in support of Luna Park."

Zamperla is another principal supplier of the Luna Park expansion.

"We are happy to say that

we're involved in the project and that we have supplied six of the nine rides included in the expansion," said Michael Coleman, North American sales manager, Zamperla. "Luna Park is going to offer a wide range of new attractions for guests. There really is something for everyone."

The Zamperla additions offer family-friendly options — Crazy Bus, Jump Around, Jumpin' Tower, Mini Ferris Wheel and Samba Balloon — along with a thrill-seeker enticement, Discovery Revolution 360, which turns riders upside down.

"Luna Park has a mix of guests from young families to thrill seekers," said Shumack. "Our upgrade to our children's rides allows for parents to now ride and enjoy the experience with their children. And for the thrill seekers, Luna Park will now be a four-roller-coaster-park. Who doesn't

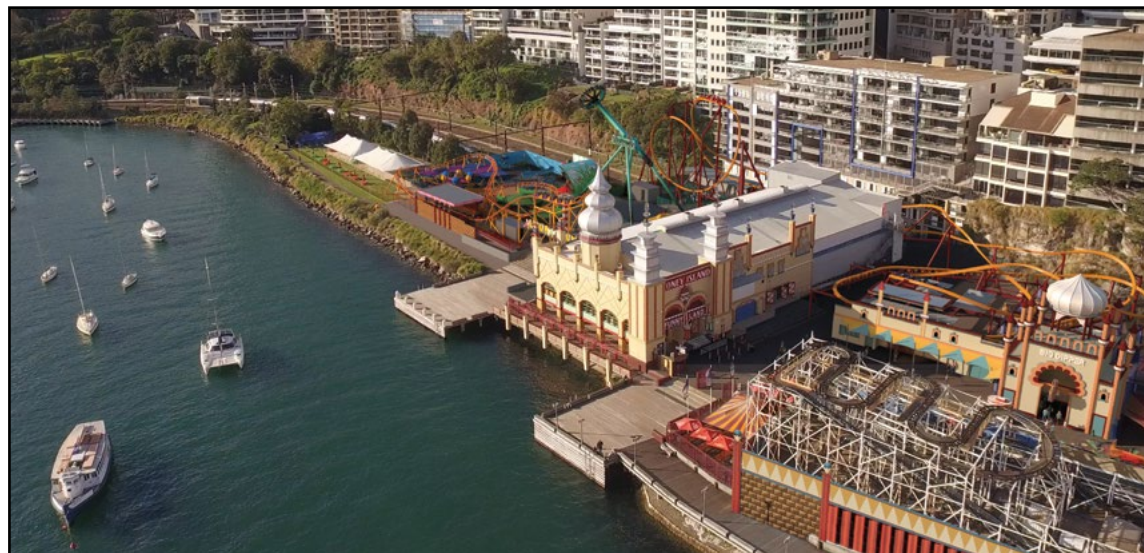
love a roller coaster?"

Two other coasters will join Big Dipper. A family shuttle coaster will be ideal for those looking for milder thrills. This coaster is supplied by Gerstlauer. Another kiddie coaster will be added as well. The manufacturer isn't known to AT as of press time. The three new coasters will join the popular wooden Wild Mouse coaster already at the park.

To accomplish this huge task, the park ceased operation on January 27 and will be closed for approximately five to six months, opening later in 2021. Park management is committed to retaining the heritage of the park's beloved history.

When asked if the COVID-19 health crisis made for an opportune time to close down, Shumack told AT:

"This upgrade has been in the pipeline for several years, well and truly before the pandemic hit."



Nine new attractions will add a major punch to the allure of Luna Park to both tourists and local residents. COURTESY LUNA PARK

AGS mini golf construction system used for new tree-lined course

GEORGETOWN, Texas — **Cen-Tex Mini Golf** sits on 2.5 acres and offers mini golfers a course filled with native oak trees providing tons of shade in the summer, along with water features and obstacles that are challenging but encourage players to return and play again. The course is located just outside of Georgetown, Texas, which is characterized by long, hot summers and cooler, mild winters. Average summer temperatures typically reach 100°F for several days during July and August.

"In central Texas, no one wants to stand in the boiling sun, in the pasture basically, and play miniature golf with no trees," said **Audrey Anderson**, co-owner/operator of Cen-Tex Mini Golf. "So we had all these trees on the property we purchased to build the course on, and the Modular Advantage system from **Adventure Golf & Sports (AGS)** became a huge benefit to us. It could make what we envisioned happen."

Being new to the miniature golf industry, Anderson — along with her husband, **Ted** — researched several companies online before selecting AGS.

According to the Andersons, the Modular Advantage system allowed this landscaped mini golf course to be built up right against the trees on the property.

"We didn't have to dig in the ground and cut into tree roots," explained Anderson. "So we were able to tuck this course under the trees. We only have two holes in the sun. Everything else is shaded. And shaded is something we can sell."

"It's so much easier to be able to work with whatever Mother Nature gives you, and then let Adventure Golf do their work," Anderson explained there were economical advantages of AGS modular system: "You have no initial expense of having to excavate or doing extensive prep work. And it doesn't take nearly as much time for installation and completion."

AGS designed the Cen-Tex course with water features that blended into the landscape and the entire course is ADA accessible. The course also features resort-style lighting where tree canopies are illuminated and pathway lights make evening play a completely different experience. Given the dramatic nighttime lighting, the Andersons



The Cen-Tex miniature golf course was designed and constructed using the Modular Advantage Mini-Golf system. COURTESY ADG

have promoted some adult-only evenings on occasion.

The Andersons bought the property in February 2020 and took control of it July 1. The AGS crew of four men, including supervisor **Russell Ferrill**, arrived August 23 and completed installation of the course by September 15.

"When the crew arrived, COVID-19 protocols were in place," recalled Anderson. "We had sent them pictures of the house and we were able to put each gentleman in their own room, provide a large common area and all the comforts of home, including an outside grill. I had a cleaning company

come in each week during the day when the guys were out working on the course and they sanitized everything from the ceiling to the floor. We wanted to be sure the guys were safe."

According to AGS, the Modular Advantage mini golf system uses flexible, patented interlocking panels pre-cut to fit a client-approved design. The system also offers green benefits since the panels are made of recycled materials and are permeable for water drainage. In addition, a Modular Advantage course can be installed where ground remediation may be too expensive. The versatile system can also be moved, but once in

place, it is solid.

The Cen-Tex course starts out featuring a large pond holding approximately 5,000 gallons. "It looks like it belongs in central Texas," added Anderson. "(AGS) included some big rocks, streamed water under a bridge they built, and it flows over to a small waterfall. It looks like a natural stream and the stream interacts directly with several of the holes."

The house that was on the property has been remodeled and is being used as a clubhouse along with office and meeting space. One side of the house is the check-in area.

"You come out the entrance door and there are two 400-year old Oak Trees," said Anderson. "We call them Lucy and Ethel. You go to hole one and make your way through the water feature and continue to the rest of the holes under the oak trees, then end up at the eighteenth hole on the same side of the house as you started. We have had nothing but positive and exciting comments about the course from all who have seen it in person and on social media," stated Anderson.

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The centerpiece attraction for Planet Lazer Kelowna is a 6,000-square-foot, dual-level Extreme Lazer Tag arena which can host up to 38 players per game.

COURTESY PLANET LAZER KELOWNA

Semnox's RFID solution for Planet Lazer Kelowna

KELOWNA, Canada — Planet Lazer Kelowna selected Semnox's RFID Parafait System after operating for almost 25 years without one. Owner Jenna Boyo could not be happier. Boyo had been running the FEC store in British Columbia, Canada, since 1996 on tokens and paper tickets.

A mix of laser tag, video games, redemption, party rooms, as well as food and beverage service, the facility is a premier location for family entertainment in the area. Promoted as the Okanagan's "largest indoor facility," the FEC features a 6,000-square-foot, dual-level Extreme Lazer Tag arena which allows up to 38 players in each game. Its fully interactive arena offers more than 30 different play options, making every game a new experience. Boyo touts the facility with the slogan "You don't play the game, you are the game!"

"The decision to go cashless was an ongoing internal debate for over a two-year period," Boyo explained. "We approached several companies to discover which solution would make the most sense for our business and Semnox was hands down the best choice for what we needed."

"We really liked its tap-to-play readers, its flexible software capabilities, as well as its All-In-One Complete Kiosk which allowed us to save necessary space and provided a self-serve option for our customers, freeing up employees from selling cards or attractions. Our guests were extremely quick to adapt from tokens and tickets to cards, utilizing RFID technology and the Parafait Beam Readers," said Boyo. "Installation was made during COVID-19 pandemic so this decision was also based on eliminating excess touch points for safety and sanitary reasons."

Semnox was pleased to add Planet Lazer to its growing family of operators. "It's always great whenever you can have a friend as a customer and that is especially true with Boyo," said Brian Duke, senior sales partner of Semnox Americas. "However, this would not even have been possible if it were not for all the products and services we provide. Our ability to run every facet of her business through our system's cloud-based management software was a huge factor that sealed the deal."

Semnox Solutions LLC provides venue management technology and creative solutions for the entertainment and amusement industry. The company's Parafait suite of products are operational at over 2000 sites spread across more than 50 countries worldwide.

• semnox.com



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson
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Main Event Entertainment has hired a new chief operating officer as the industry continues its resurrection following the pandemic.

The Plano, Texas-based company appointed Tony Wehner as its new COO. Wehner joins Main Event after a year-long stint as the CEO of another Dallas-based family entertainment company, BigShots Golf. In his new role, Wehner will be responsible for the end-to-end customer experience at all Main Event locations.

"The role that Main Event plays in the lives of families has never been more important and I can't wait to bring our unique brand of entertainment to millions of guests across our great markets," Wehner said.

Chris Wink, co-founder of Blue Man Group, announced the opening of "Wink World: Portals Into The Infinite" at Area15. The attraction opened to the public on January 7.

This immersive art experience represents Wink's most ambitious art and entertainment project since departing Blue Man Group in 2017. Drawing upon his skills as an experience designer, a music composer and purveyor of high-impact visual entertainment, the 1,500-square-foot experience takes the entertaining fusion of whimsy, color, art, technology and music he pioneered with Blue Man Group to the next level.

Wink World is comprised of six infinity-mirror rooms, each one showcasing a production number drawing upon Wink's love of blacklight and other stage effects designed to inspire wonder.

"Wink World is a manifestation of my life-long fascination with the transcendent power of the playful interaction of light, color and music," said Wink. "I'm delighted to introduce everyone to this brand-new, multisensory art and entertainment concept."

Art-FX Studios announced Hourglass Escape Rooms is opening its doors as the newest escape experience in Tallahassee, Florida. The Hourglass location debuted January 21, 2021 and will also serve as a flagship location for Art-FX Studios line of Escape Theory attractions. The company will be welcoming operators from around the globe to visit and tour the flagship Hourglass location.

"We're thrilled to have a physical location where operators throughout the industry can come to try our attractions first hand," said Nic Hanzelik, vice president of Art-FX Studios.

Hourglass features the full Escape Theory line-up of attractions and serves as a beta testing site for new rooms and product launches. Featured experiences include: Secrets of the Pharaohs, Murder in London, and the new experience, Wizard's Tower, will be coming soon.

For over 35 years, Art-FX Studios has been specializing in creating themed environments for customers worldwide from laser tag arenas to mini golf courses, dark ride murals, custom 3D props and accessories, canvas backdrops, fine art projects, as well as integrated interior and exterior lighting.

In late 2019, Tad Gordon made a major investment in the Countryside Cinema movie theater in Maryville, Missouri, and — just as he was about to push through with the new focus — the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Reopening as The

Hangar, Gordon pioneered a dinner theater environment, a first in the region, and staff members served full meals to patrons watching movies.

With Hollywood not releasing new movies in early 2020, it was impossible for The Hangar to stay open. Gordon decided to take advantage of the copious amount of space he has and shifted his plan. With hopes of becoming an oasis of entertainment for families of all sizes, he has created space utilizing technology that opens up the facility for people to gather while still being able to social distance.

Reopening in January as an entertainment center, the arcade and lobby now allows for an open pizza kitchen where a New York brick oven has been installed. While The Hangar is no longer a restaurant, Gordon noted that it is now serving New York style 10-inch personal pizzas for families interested in an indoor location for their children to play games and have a meal or those wanting to take it into a theater.

The lobby now allows for a family dining area, expansion of the arcade and even a new Beam interactive laser projector that projects a game onto the floor for children to play. Gordon noted that there are numerous active games they can choose, from kicking around a digital soccer ball to stomping on coconuts in Cooconuts, among many other options.

After being fined nearly \$10,000 for reopening before they were allowed, Altitude Trampoline Park and Fitness Center in Spokane Valley, Washington, is open again.

After receiving warnings, a visit from an inspector and then fined thousands of dollars, the family entertainment center continues to test the limits of the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries.

"There's not really a good basis for us not being considered an essential business and we are," owner Brandon Gadish said. "We definitely feel like we're open legally."

Owners claim it isn't fair they are still forced to be closed because they maintain all distance regulations, hired a full time staff member to clean constantly, and have a full auditable safety program.

Gadish is continuing to fight back against Washington Governor Inslee's coronavirus reopening plans. He said the recreation center opened on January 6, despite being prohibited by the government. The business couldn't reopen legally without a license saying it was a fitness center, so owners got one.

Businessman Ross Squires took to Facebook to announce that popular indoor entertainment center Axtion closed its doors for good on January 17, 2021.

Squires admits the pandemic and public health requirements to prevent the spread of the virus proved too much for his business, which was located in the Newfoundland and Labrador province of Canada.

Squires made the announcement via Facebook, generating an outpouring of sadness from families in the area. There are few facilities available in the province that can accommodate large groups. Each Christmas, Axtion would be booked solid with corporate and children's Christmas parties, but all that is gone now.



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Previewing early season fairs

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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ANYWHERE, U.S.A. — A new year brings a new batch of fairs across the country, however in the age of COVID-19, it brings modified events and in some cases postponement or cancellations. Here is a run-down of those AT is aware of that are scheduled to take place.

The first fair out of the gate for 2021 was the **Manatee County Fair**, Palmetto, Florida. During the January 14-24 outing, masks were not required to enter the fairgrounds, however they were required to enter buildings. **Belle City Amusements** provided the ride midway.

The **South Florida "Mini" Fair**, West Palm Beach, Florida, is an adaptation of the full fair. It took place January 15-31 and was outdoors only. Kiddie rides, provided by **Wade Shows**, were the only ones offered to fairgoers. The full-size fair, with the theme "An Earthly A-Fair," takes place May 7 through 23, with 200 rides and games.

In a normal year, the **Florida State Fair** occurs for 12 days in mid-February, coinciding with the **International Independent Showmen's Foundation (IISF) Super Trade Show & Extravaganza**, Gibsonton, Florida, along with other "Florida Week" activities presented by **NICA, OABA, SLA** and others. Organizers decided to move the fair to dates in April this year.

The **San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo** is still taking place February 11-28, however without any carnival rides. Executive Director &

CEO **Cody Davenport** said on its website, "The health and safety of our community is of utmost importance, and we greatly appreciate the support and understanding of the community as we navigate these unprecedented times."

These fairs are scheduled for February and March (all are in Florida):

Charlotte County Fair, Port Charlotte

January 29 to February 7

Belle City Amusements

•

Martin County Fair, Stuart

February 12 to 20

Deggeller Attractions

•

Highlands County Fair, Sebring

February 12 to 20

Reithoffer Shows

•

Osceola County Fair, Kissimmee

February 12 to 21

Strates Shows

•

Hendry County Fair, Clewiston

February 9 to 14

Belle City Amusements

•

Pasco County Fair, Dade City,

February 15 to 21

Wade Shows

•

Southwest Florida & Lee County Fair

Fort Myers, February 20 to March 7

Reithoffer Shows

•

Saint Lucie County Fair, Fort Pierce

February 26 to March 7

Strates Shows

•

Florida Strawberry Festival, Plant City

March 4 to 14

Belle City Amusements

•

Central Florida Fair, Orlando

March 4 to 14

Wade Shows

•

Bradford County Fair, Stark

March 9 to 14

Deggeller Attractions

•

Okeechobee County Fair

Okeechobee, March 16 to 21

Modern Midways

•

Collier County Fair, Naples

March 18 to 28

Reithoffer Shows

•

Miami-Dade County Fair and Exposition

March 18 to April 11

NAME

•

Putnam County Fair, East Palatka

March 19 to 27

Deggeller Attractions

•

Sarasota County Fair, Sarasota

March 19 to 28

Belle City Amusements

•

Citrus County Fair, Inverness

March 22 to 28

Belle City Amusements



Talley Amusements worked to rebuild its 2020 season by operating in malls and privately owned properties since June 19. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Outdoor Amusement Business Association looks back at 2020

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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WEST SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — The 2020 season is something most would like to forget. It was difficult to navigate the COVID-19 waters. While most carnivals put the season on hold, some did forge ahead, while others became busy with creative revenue generation.

The **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)** maintained a list of nearly thirty of its member carnivals that did play last season. There may have been more, however these are ones the OABA were aware of. They include: **Amusement Attractions, Amusement Management, Inc., Bates Brothers Amusement Co, Belle City Amusements, Bishop Amusement Rides, Brown's Amusements, B-Thrilled Attractions, LLC, Carnival Americana, Carnival Midway Attractions, Crabtree Amusements, Fantasy Amusement, Fountain City Amusements, Gold Star Amusements, Kissel Entertainment LLC, Lauther Amusements, North American Midway Entertainment (NAME), Powers Great American Midways, Ray Cammack Shows (RCS), Reithoffer Shows, Rockwell Amusements, Skelly's Amusements, Strates Shows, Talley Amusements Inc., Thomas Carnival Inc., Wade Shows, Wagner's Carnival LLC, Wood Entertainment and Wright's Amusements.**

It should be noted that Wade Shows played at least seven spots that were reported to the OABA office.

"Knowing the resilience, ingenuity, [and] dedication of our members, I'm confident a good handful not on this list played in some modified capacity," said **Tim Kwiatkowski**, director of sales and membership services.

President and CEO **Greg Chiecko** was proud of the members. "Our industry is an amazing industry. The determination and can-do attitude follow the motto 'The show must go on.' The carnivals that did open in 2020 showed mixed results. It appears the geographic location dictated how well they did. In some cases, I believe operators wanted to prove that they could open safely. The fact of the matter is our industry can operate safely and within establish protocols. The carnivals that opened proved this and pave the way for the rest of our industry to open in 2021," he said.

Looking ahead for the early 2021 season, Chiecko said, "It looks like the early season is off to a slow start. As COVID-19 cases surge in many parts of the country, some events are canceling or postponing their date a few months down the road. However, there are a few events that are going forward with the original dates. With the vaccine distribution underway, there is definitely a light at the end of the tunnel. Most anticipate their late Spring and early Summer events to [go] off as planned."

•oaba.org

The Florida State Fair moved from its early February dates to April. COURTESY STEVE O'DONNELL



The Charlotte County Fair is the third fair to be held this year. COURTESY STEVE O'DONNELL



Guests enter the 2020 Southwest Florida & Lee County Fair. COURTESY STEVE O'DONNELL



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Independent Showmen's Museum continual work in progress

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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GIBSONTON, Florida – David “Doc” Rivera is a busy 73-year-old man on a mission. He has been the year-round curator and executive director of the **International Independent Showmen's Museum** since 2013 and shows no signs of slowing down. During the 53rd annual



Rivera

International Showmen's Foundation (IISF) Super Trade Show & Extravaganza, the museum he oversees will be even busier with extended hours.

The 52,000-square-foot building located directly across Riverview Drive at 6915 is a treasure trove of all things carnival, circus, wild west shows and more donated by many contributors over the decades. The facility houses numerous exhibits, artifacts, rare photographs, ephemera, antique circus wagons and trailers with ornate facades and an archival research library on the second floor.

“With COVID-19, we haven't done too much. We can't do anything elaborate,” said Rivera. The last big project was restoring the searchlight used by **Royal American Shows** when they were in operation and traveled by rail, which ended in 1985. That was unveiled at the 2020 show.

Lately, Rivera and his handful of volunteers are working on small projects that haven't been attended to, until now. Nearby carnivals are handling projects for the museum in their winter quarters, helping extend (at least temporarily) museum resources. Recently they took possession



The 52,000-square-foot museum located directly across the road from the Showman's Club opened to the public in 2013. All things that are circus or carnival related can be found in the museum including banner, clothing, pictures and memorabilia for the Joie Chitwood Thrill Show (below left). The Viking Giant mannequin stands nearly nine feet tall and has the original clothing worn by Johann Petursson, the real-life Viking Giant (below right). COURTESY INTERNATIONAL INDEPENDENT SHOWMEN'S MUSEUM



of a half-dozen wooden spoked wagon wheels and soon they will be receiving scenery from an antique carousel.

There are hundreds of exhibits within the museum, each unique and interesting. Rivera likened the place to a smorgasbord: some things you may pass on — not everyone is drawn to the same things.

Museum highlights include the 1931 **Royal American Shows** Publicity and Public Relations wagon that visitors can walk inside. “It's like a time capsule in there,” said Rivera. One of

the centerpieces is a working 1903 **Conderman** Ferris Wheel, which was one of the first production wheels. A 1910 fire at the factory closed the company for good. Rides are not given due to insurance constraints. Adjacent to the wheel is a 1950 **Allan Herschell Company** American Beauty Carousel donated by **Jim Frederiksen**. This is a two-abreast model. Another exhibit highlights the show painters of the past when everything was hand drawn. **Dave “Leather Fly” Knodder** and Doc Rivera are working together on an old lithograph display of carnival and circus posters.

Then there's the outfit worn by **Johann K. Petursson**. Known in the circus community



as the “Viking Giant” Petursson stood nearly nine feet tall and weighed 425 pounds. The boots he wore daily are the size of a small child (size 24.) The rings he wore could fit a half dollar through them. Other notable exhibits include a sideshow display, the strangest couple in the world, and Father Mac, the Carny Priest.

An on-going project is digital transferring of vintage photographs, graphics, correspondence, and other items in the archival library, located on the second floor. All this is being done to preserve the history of the outdoor show and what it is.

To keep the museum going, all this work is privately funded. This is accomplished

through donations, admission fees and fundraising events like the Jamboree fundraiser steak dinner and auction to benefit the museum building fund on Wednesday, February 17. “We just work with the nickels and dimes we get,” said Rivera. Earlier that same day, the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)** will hold its reception honoring the 2021 hall of fame and pioneer recipients on the second floor of the museum. They have been holding this special event there since 2015.

Looking ahead, there are two to three projects in the works including the pouring of 10 concrete slabs to showcase some of the acres of restored circus wagons, in an outdoor display, complete with color-coordinated canopies to protect them. Also, the construction of an additional metal building behind the existing museum, hurricane resistant with a four-inch concrete floor is in the planning stages. This building will house more than 40 circus wagons the museum has in its possession.

When asked what his job entails, Rivera said, “Everything from cleaning toilets to building exhibits!”

•showmensmuseum.org



The center area of the main floor features a Conderman Ferris Wheel and Allan Herschell carousel (above left). A sideshow exhibit is housed in the museum (above right). COURTESY INTERNATIONAL INDEPENDENT SHOWMEN'S MUSEUM



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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Will it stay or will it go? That is a "wheely" big question. The 150-foot **SkyStar Observation Wheel**, operated by **SkyStar Wheel, LLC** was installed last March for the 150th anniversary of Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, has sat unused for much of 2020 owing to COVID-19. It may remain in place beyond this spring, however, the **Sierra Club's San Francisco Bay Chapter** and **Golden Gate Audubon Society's** San Francisco Conservation Committee wants it taken down before the bird migration season, due to the bright and unshielded light.

The wheel's grand-opening, slated for April 4, was postponed because of COVID-19. It finally opened October 21, when cases declined. However, that was short-lived, with another shutdown on November 29.

The **San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department** is proposing an extension which would also help the vendor recoup its initial investment.

This is the first time an observation wheel of this size has operated in the park since the **Midwinter International Exposition** of 1894, when the **Firth Wheel** stood 120 feet high for about six months.

Ketcham's Concessions, a fair and festival games and food concessionaire based in Amity Township (Berks County), Pennsylvania took a leap of faith and it worked. Since they only played one event after COVID-19 hit, the family got creative and set up its games and food stands amid Christmas trees they offered for sale this past holiday season. A renewed interest in real trees made inventory tough to line up.

"Well, it's a little bit different than what we are used to, but we are having fun with it and people seem to like it," employee **James Garrone** told **WFMZ-TV 69** news.

The Christmas tree carnival drive-through was open through Christmas Eve.

Those who prefer tactile things are out of luck, at least with the 2021 **International Association of Fairs & Expositions (IAFE)** directory. That is right — the paper directory request forms that typically arrived in IAFE members' mailboxes have gone the way of the dinosaur. Members can update their organization's membership information at any time, online at fairsandexpos.com

In late November, the Pennsylvania legislature passed and the governor approved a bill that amended the **Pennsylvania Agricultural Fair Act of 1986** by creating the **COVID-19 Emergency Agricultural Fair Grant Program**.

The program provides continued state funding for fairs who were forced to cancel annual events as a direct result of the COVID-19 emergency. The total grant dollars for eligible fairs are equal to the amount they received the previous year.

Later this month, **Jim MacArthur** gen-

eral manager of the four-day **Medicine Hat Exhibition & Stampede**, Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada, is retiring. He will leave after serving nearly 23 years spread over two different stints at the top, four in the 1980s and 18 more in 2002 until present.

Other events at the site include a spring rodeo, chuckwagon races, Olde Tyme Christmas, and a pen (livestock) show in December.

All events in 2020 were either canceled or held in COVID-friendly fashion. MacArthur told **Chat News Now!** when people ask how the Stampede plans in the middle of a pandemic, he tells them it is a lot of planning, unplanning and then replanning.

MacArthur sees the Stampede facility as a community builder and likens the grounds to a small-town community hall that hosts hundreds of activities each year, everything from trade shows to weddings. "I can remember kidding around with someone and saying that you could get a flu shot or buy a truck at the Stampede grounds all in the same visit," said MacArthur.

The 132nd Stampede takes place July 28-31 with **West Coast Amusements** providing the midway rides.

The **OC Fair & Event Center**, Costa Mesa, California, was recently honored with eight Achievement Awards by the **Western Fairs Association**. This annual program recognizes innovation and excellence among fairs and festivals in the western U.S. Despite most fairs facing canceling across the nation last year, the WFA felt it was important to continue the program, "showcasing not only the creativity of member fairs and service members, but the perseverance and dedication of the industry to our communities."

OC Fair & Event Center received six first-place and two second-place awards. The 2020 Virtual OC Fair, which was held exclusively online and via social media from July 17 through 26, received top honors and was named Judges Choice. The virtual fair's auction component also received first place honors.

The popular Fair Food Drive-Thru event that took place on the fairgrounds from August through October received top honors. An entry outlining the community service programs OCFEC has implemented during the pandemic received first place, Judges Choice and the Merrill Award nomination. Programs included in the entry were the **Power of One Foundation's** emergency community food distribution program at the fairgrounds, **Centennial Farm's** produce donations to local food relief efforts, the Market Match program set up by Centennial Farm for the farmers market to assist low-income residents in obtaining fresh produce, and **Orange County's** COVID-19 testing program.

Second-place awards went to OCFEC for a virtual contest held during the Fair Food Drive-Thru, as well as the drive-through concert series.

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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ Alabama Adventure announces Rocket Racer — page 30 / News Splash — page 30

Interlink to provide SuperFlume Attraction for Qatar water park

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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LUSAIL CITY, Qatar — Among the multitude of spectacular attractions being constructed at the water park at Qetaifan Island North is a new immersive super flume. Built by Interlink LG Ltd of the United Kingdom, with theming provided by British company Sarnier International, the groundbreaking, educational ride will take guests on an engaging journey as they witness the story of the transformation of Doha over the last 100 years. The ride is being designed in cooperation with experts and curators from the world's leading museums to ensure the authenticity of both the science and the history.

The expedition begins shortly before the discovery of oil in Qatar in the 1930s. Guests board 20-passenger themed boats and are taken back 100 years. Along the voyage, riders learn how oil is formed, located, drilled, extracted, transported and used in today's world. The story is told through the use of special effects that include 3D mapping, animatronics, projection, theatrical lighting, heat, vibration, drilling machines and fog screens.

The journey takes riders through various lifts and drops as the story unfolds in the different themed zones. The experience culminates with the boat entering the focal point of the ride — the cracking tower, where it slowly rotates as it rises up a vertical lift with various special effects, emerging into the daylight and plunging down a 53-foot chute, ending in a spectacular grand splash before heading back to the station.

The experience begins and ends inside a fully themed building, that houses several immersive theatrical environments. The ride also takes guests outside the building at stages, as well as into a tall ride tower. These buildings are being designed in coordination with design, engineering, and project management consultancy Atkins.

Interlink's Commercial Director John Davies commented: "We are delighted to be involved with such a prestigious project like Qetaifan Island North's water park. This unique, one-of-a-kind SuperFlume ride is set to



The 320-acre resort will include a 350-room ultra-modern, luxury hotel; beach club and retail area (above). Although the bulk of the water park will be on the mainland, several slides will be attached to an iconic oil-derrick-themed tower located in the middle of the bay (below left). This artist's rendition of the SuperFlume highlights the splashdown finale (below right). COURTESY QETAIFAN PROJECTS



become something really spectacular and will surely prove to be a truly exciting family ride for visitors to the water park."

H.E. Sheikh Nasser bin Abdulaziz Al-Thani, head of business development at Qetaifan Projects, said: "We are thrilled to be adding the SuperFlume ride to Qetaifan Island North's water park, and we are confident it would work to attract the largest number of tourists of different age groups, especially those interested in exploring different cultures. The safety and security standards come on top of our interest in designing and constructing the water park and accordingly, we have chosen the best companies in this field to

work on implementing and managing the water park."

When completed, the water park will cover nearly 137,000 square meters (34 acres) with 36 waterslides and rides, several of which will be situated on an iconic 80-meter tower. The tower, located on a small island in the middle of the bay, will be linked to the main park by a bridge over the water. All the rides within the water park are inspired by Qatari culture; complementing the theme of the oil and gas industry. The water park will be surrounded by six beaches and a 350-room hotel, beach club and retail area. It is just one attraction of Qetaifan Island North, an entertainment

and tourist island that spans 1.3 million square meters (321 acres) and includes luxurious hotels, gardens, pedestrian-friendly streets, entertainment attractions and restaurants. The water park, hotel and beach club will be managed and operated by Rixos International Hotels Group — the operator behind the Land of Legends Waterpark in Turkey.

Qetaifan Island North is part of Lusail City, a planned community taking shape along the coast, about 14 miles north of Doha, the capital, and most populous city in the State of Qatar. Qatar is a small peninsular nation that juts into the Persian Gulf between Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

It shares a southern border with Saudi Arabia. Much like the several other nations in the region, Qatar is trying to position itself as a tourist destination.

Abdulaziz Al-Thani stated: "This cooperation comes as a continuation of the realization of the company's vision to make Qetaifan Island North the first entertainment destination of its kind in Qatar. This matter is of great importance, and we consider it a national duty due to the contribution it will add in the sectors of tourism, hospitality and entertainment, not only that but in terms of competitive international standards that express the concerted efforts exerted in promoting Qatari tourism."

Rocket Racer set to debut this summer at Alabama Adventure

BESSEMER, Alabama — Work is progressing on a new six-lane racing slide at **Alabama Adventure & Splash Adventure**. Standing more than 50 feet tall with a slide length exceeding 400 feet, Rocket Racer will occupy a section of the park that has gone unused for some time. Supplied by **WhiteWater West** of British Columbia, Canada, the new attraction will — according to the park — become the biggest slide in the state. The addition will also make Splash Adventure the largest water park in Alabama with dozens of water attractions offered to guests.

The slide will introduce a new area to the water park giving it expansion space and allowing guests to spread out and soak up the Alabama sunshine.

Riders on the six-lane slide are dispatched into enclosed high-speed AquaTubes that bend alongside each other through a 360-degree loop before a surprise drop into open lanes. The slide then finishes with side-by-side racing.

Alabama Adventure & Splash Adventure opened as Visionland in 1998. Led by former Birmingham Mayor **Larry Langford** as a joint project involving 11 communities, the park struggled for its first few years, declaring bankruptcy in 2002. It changed hands a few more times before being acquired in 2014 by **Koch Family Parks**. Under the leadership of CEO **Dan Koch**, his sister **Natalie Koch** and family matriarch **Pat Koch**, the park has enjoyed continued success over the last six seasons, adding new attractions every year.

— Jeffrey Seifert



Shown here is a nearly identical slide at Silverwood Theme Park in Idaho. Representatives from Splash Adventure visited Silverwood before making the decision to invest in a slide for their park. COURTESY SILVERWOOD

Surf coming to Switzerland

SION, Switzerland — Another **Wavegarden** cove surfing lagoon is preparing to open in April, making it possible to surf on ocean-like waves in landlocked Switzerland. Following five years of planning and 12 months of construction, **Alaïa Bay** started being filled with water in December. The wave generating machinery started testing in January and is expected to continue through this month. During this phase, the settings will be fine-tuned to configure the 20 types of waves that will be on offer to the public.

Josema Odriozola, Wavegarden's creator, explained, "It is a crucial phase. The calibration and testing phase is a technical challenge for our teams in weather con-

ditions that we have never experienced before. This project represents a wonderful showcase for our company, as it is the fourth project to open to the public, after England, Australia and South Korea."

In March, the site is planning to welcome its first surfers for exclusive test sessions — the perfect opportunity for Alaïa Bay's 60 staff members and 20 surf coaches to test ride the waves. Surf stars, local surfing associations, and partners will be invited to catch the inaugural waves and relish a unique experience in Switzerland. Upon completion of the project, Alaïa Bay will be the first Wavegarden cove in mainland Europe.

— Jeffrey Seifert



NEWS SPLASH

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The \$100 million indoor water park at the **Showboat Hotel** in Atlantic City, New Jersey, has been given land-use approval by the **Casino Reinvestment Development Authority**. The Showboat, however, is still waiting for a decision on a 20-year tax incentive that is key to making the project work. The development authority is expected to consider that request in the coming weeks.

The project, announced last summer (*Amusement Today* — August 2020) will be developed and operated by **American Resort Management (ARM)**.

The former Showboat Casino was recently converted into a non-gambling hotel and the developer is seeking to add more family-friendly attractions. Atlantic City is home to several family attractions such as a small amusement park, observation wheel, aquarium, **Ripley's** museum, shops, malls and arcades, but the city still remains geared toward adult gamblers. Several failed casinos, including **Trump's** billion-dollar **Taj Mahal**, have proven that Atlantic City needs to be more than just a gambling town.

The Mason City, Iowa, city council approved plans to recondition the **Mason City Aquatic Center**. The upgrade, which includes refurbishing and resurfacing the existing slides, is in addition to previously approved plans for a new aquatic playground. New picnic tables and locker room benches are also included in the project. Restoration of the slides was contracted to **Fischer Bros. LLC** from Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin.

The city council of Idaho Falls, Idaho, is reviewing plans to replace the former **Reinhart Park** swimming pool with a splash pad. **Stratton and Bratt**, a construction company from Pleasant Grove, Utah, was selected to design and construct the splash pad, and the council is expected to approve plans within the coming weeks.

The pool, which had been built in the 1950s, was last operated in 2013 and was eventually condemned after a large crack formed in the bottom of the pool. The site languished for several years, and local citizens tried repeatedly to get a replacement. The pool was finally demolished in 2018 and the site levelled. Since that time, local citizens continued to petition for some type of water recreation area. Now, almost three years later, and nearly eight years after the original pool closed, a \$300,000 splash pad project looks like it could finally happen.

Cincinnati's **Coney Island** is keeping its plans to open a massive floating obstacle course in its Sunlite Pool. Dubbed Challenge Zone, the **Aquaglide** course — said to be the largest in the United States — was scheduled to debut last May, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, the attraction was never installed. Current plans call for having the course in place in time for a May 2021 opening.

Challenge Zone will feature more than 150 feet of climbing obstacles, slides, monkey bars and balance beams. The floating ob-

stacles will be arranged to form two courses. Challenge Zone will be included at no additional charge to guests with daily admission tickets or a season pass to Coney Island's Sunlite Water Adventure.

"Our team is excited to introduce this new attraction for the 2021 season. It's a fantastic addition to our world-famous Sunlite Pool and will be great for both kids and adults, making it perfect for families," stated **Rob Schutter**, president and CEO of Coney Island Park. "We're always searching for new ways to make summer even more fun."

After having been closed for nearly a year, **Walt Disney World's** Blizzard Beach plans to reopen on March 7. The water park closed last year in response to the global pandemic. Disney reopened its Florida theme parks mid-July but both water parks remained closed. Other central Florida water parks including **Universal's** Volcano Bay and **SeaWorld's** Aquatica opened in July as restrictions were lifted. Disney's Typhoon Lagoon water park will remain closed with Disney indicating it will share details about its reopening at a later time.

As 2020 came to a close, a new inflatable water park opened in Central Otago in New Zealand, just in time for Boxing Day, a public holiday celebrated on December 28.

The 10,000-square-meter (2.5-acre) park was installed in Lake Dunstan near the city of Cromwell. Co-owner **Emily Rutherford** said the water park sold out its first two days of operation.

"It's been absolutely amazing. We have completely sold out today which I never expected," said Rutherford. "I thought we might get 20 people a session, but we are getting 100 I'm overwhelmed. I can't believe how popular it's been," she added.

A memorial splash park and playground that has been in the works for nearly three years may finally come to fruition. The park, in the city of Massillon, Ohio, received a funding boost of \$500,000 from the state.

The Massillon Recreation Board unanimously voted in 2018 to endorse the **Jake Roberson Memorial Park** to honor a talented local high school springboard diver who drowned in California, and to bring awareness to mental illness. Roberson's talents earned him a scholarship to **Drexel University** and landed him a gig as a diver at **SeaWorld Ohio**.

While living in California, Roberson was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and during a difficult night he wandered into Pyramid Lake. His body was found the next morning.

The city and the Roberson family decided to honor Jake by jointly raising funds to build Jake Roberson Memorial Park on the northern section of Reservoir Park. The family donated \$100,000. The city has been seeking grant funding and personal and business donations to get the park built, but efforts were hampered in the last year during the COVID-19 pandemic.



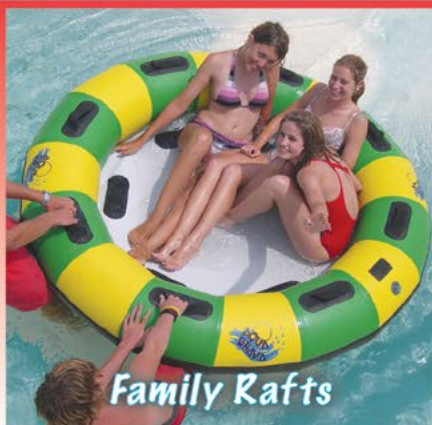
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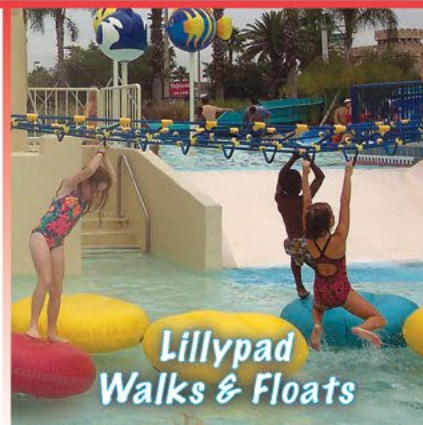
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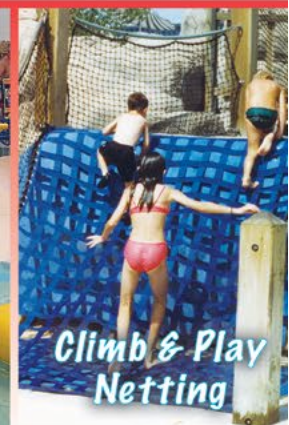
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► Carnival owners eager for 2021 — page 34 / Book series spotlights Waldameer Park — page 38

Skyviews Miami has added new spinning icon to the city's skyline

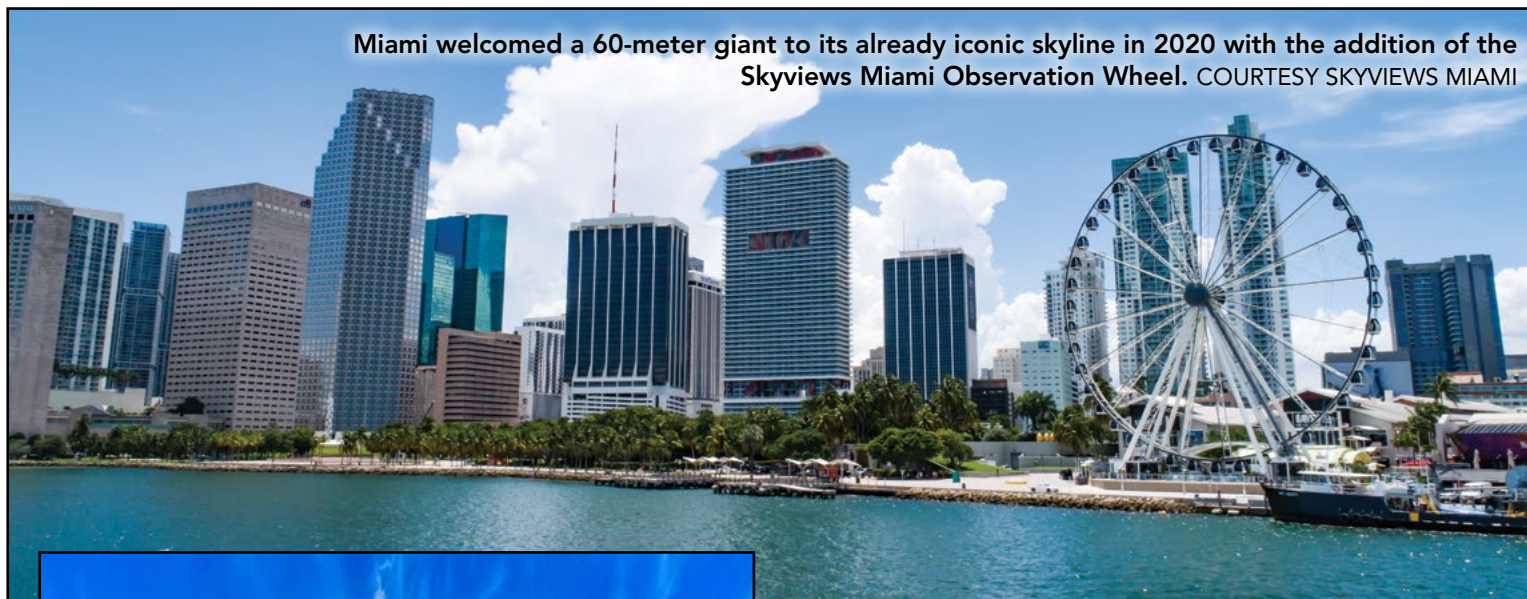
AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

MIAMI, Fla. — After nearly four years in the making, the 176-foot-tall **Skyviews Miami** Observation Wheel, which towers with postcard-perfect grace above Miami's famous Bayside Marketplace, is now open and operating on a regular schedule.

The observation wheel was originally projected to open in October 2019, but construction on the project only commenced in December of that year. It was then hoped that the opening would be in time for Super Bowl XLIV, which was played in Miami in early February 2020. Unfortunately, the wheel would only be ready to open in March 2020, but then COVID-19 had other plans — a six-month shut-down of Miami Dade County. Skyviews Miami finally opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 28, 2020.

"(It cost) a million dollars to give people, who pay just a few dollars, multi-million-dollar views to our city," City of Miami Mayor **Francis Suarez** said of the project upon its opening. In its entirety, the privately funded project actually cost a reported 18 million dollars. One of the setbacks the project encountered in 2019 was obtaining permitting and final approval by leaders of the unique city/county government. Before the final approval was granted by the Miami City Commission in a vote of 3-1 to approve the observation wheel, it was agreed upon that the city would receive 10% of Skyviews Miami's gross ticket sales as well as 6% of Bayside's cut of gross revenue.

"It's not only creating 70 permanent jobs, [...] we share in the revenue and we also are getting a tremendous branding and marketing opportunity," said Mayor Suarez on opening day.



Miami welcomed a 60-meter giant to its already iconic skyline in 2020 with the addition of the Skyviews Miami Observation Wheel. COURTESY SKYVIEWS MIAMI



Miami Dade County was hit particularly hard by the coronavirus, and because of the unique city/county governmental structure, it made opening the attraction particularly complicated. **Guy Leavitt**, who along with his wife, **Charlene Leavitt**, own Skyviews Miami, said of the delayed opening, "We were scheduled to open three times since March, but with both a county mayor and city mayor, one would finally open back up, and the other would shut down. I have never operated in that type of environment before, but we are glad to be open."

Skyviews Miami is more than just a typical Ferris wheel found at any amusement park. This observation wheel is a work of art designed by esteemed engineer and designer, **Ronald Bussink**, world

renown for his Observation Wheels. It is designed with 42 climate-controlled gondolas with seating for up to eight persons per gondola. And while the Swiss-based **Bussink Wheels** designed and built the R-60 model wheel, it was manufactured in the USA by **Chance Wheels of America**.

The Gondola cabins include music and video capabilities, but guests may likely be too distracted by the views outside to notice. The beauty of the Miami Skyline, the tropical Bayside Park, and the spectacular views of the Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean that are certain to impress.

Skyviews Miami also has a designated VIP gondola which features posh stylings including Ferrari-style leather bucket seats, a custom LED light show, and a glass-bottom floor. The

VIP gondola is designed with romantic proposals, anniversaries, birthdays and other special celebrations in mind.

Skyviews Miami saw some 3,000 riders on its opening weekend; then approximately 300-400 during the weekdays and a couple thousand over the weekends, thereafter.

"Miami residents are excited and enthusiastic. Our employees say people keep passing by wanting to know when we will finally open," said Ms. Leavitt. "The community has been very welcoming towards us."

Since opening in October, that local market has become the key factor for the initial success of the operation, whereas original forecasts for ridership and revenue were based almost exclusively on tourist dollars, especially from foreign travelers. That change in market has been a direct result of the pandemic, the subsequent shutdowns and travel restrictions have had an extremely profound impact on the Port of Miami, where Skyviews Miami sits within the Bayside Marketplace.

"Our location and the adjoining mall are not generally a place

where Miami locals go. It's a highly tourist driven area with cruise industry tourists along with a large South American tourist representation. The area is geared to that clientele because it sits across from the cruise line docks. So, we expected to get a constant flow of guests coming in on water taxis from the port, but we haven't been there [with no cruises operating] yet in the time we've been open," said Mr. Leavitt.

Sister Companies to Skyviews Miami also owned by the Leavitts are **Sky Views of America** and **Ray Cammack Shows**.

Under Sky Views of America, the Leavitts currently own and operate three additional portable 50-meter observation wheels. The company is also currently installing an 80-meter observation wheel in Meadowlands, N.J. at the 3,000,000-square-foot American Dream mall and entertainment complex. The new observation wheel is projected to open later this year.

2021 marks 60 years in the industry for the Leavitts. The outlook for this year promises to be "better," says Mr. Leavitt, "but with 80% of the show's business in California, we'll have to play it by ear and see."



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Carnival midway owners eager to get back on the road in 2021

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

The impact felt from the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns in 2020 impacted every business in the U.S., but for some of those businesses those shutdowns meant no business at all or very little.

Such was the life for many carnivals last year.

When **Ron Burback's Fantastic Traveling Shows** finally hits the road this summer, it will be close to two years since the carnival played a date.

"We shut down for the season in September of 2019," Burback said. "We haven't been able to open back up. And it is looking like it may be June or July before we are able to."

Burbank understands confusion surrounding the coronavirus in the early months of 2020. It was a new virus. He said, several weeks ago, that he didn't want to lay blame on anyone or anything regarding the management of the pandemic as well as the vaccine roll out.

Yet that confusion certainly hasn't helped. He is still waiting to get an appointment for his first vaccination shot, but he has no idea when that will be.

"At my age, I should be right near the top," he said. "But there doesn't seem to be even enough vaccine right now."

Burback has decided not to attend this year's **International Independent Showmen's Association (IISA)** trade show set for Feb. 16-19,

at the club's showgrounds in Gibsonton, Florida.

"I won't be there having a beer with friends and other carnival people," Burback said. "I will miss that, but I felt it was the right decision for me."

Burback does feel the business he owns with his wife, **Bev Burback**, is still in good shape, but if his events are slower to open or don't open at all, things could change for him. At this point in his life, that is something he thought he was past.

"We have very little debt," he said. "But I do worry about my friends who are not in that kind of shape."

Conversations with colleagues bear that out. Carnival owners and operators who took on debt before the pandemic are having a hard time paying it off now.

Joey Gaylin, Rosedale Attractions, said his family's carnival has been still since they shut down in April 2020. They did get some 2020 dates in, but not many.

Right now, Gaylin said, they are proceeding as if all their dates are back online.

"But we really don't know how it will happen," he said.

They have been busy calling all their fair boards and event committees to find out what are the current COVID-19 mandates and protocols.

"We are having to look at it all as 'what if,'" he said.

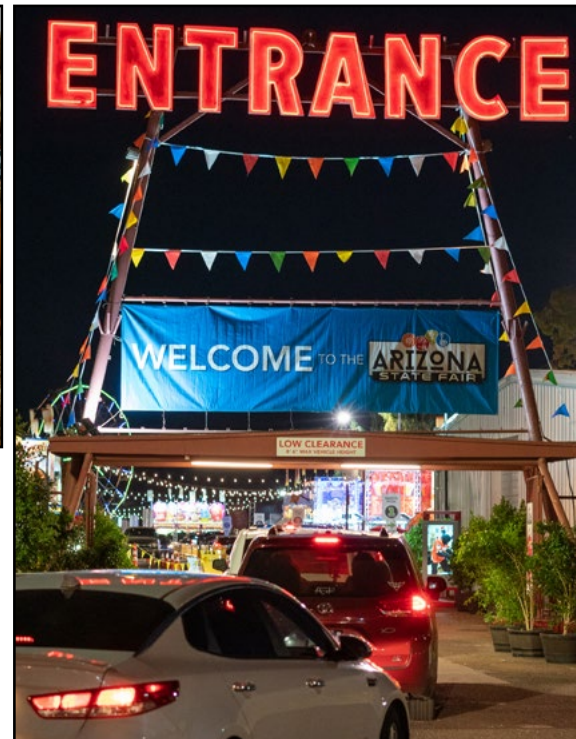
"There are so many different COVID restrictions and mandates in different states and every county in those states. So, if we plan to play



In the fall, **Ray Cammack Shows** created an event called **RCS Pumpkin Patch Carnival** in Mesa, Arizona, where they supplied rides, games and food for a mini carnival (above).

RCS also participated in several food drive-through events; the most successful was the event at the **Arizona State Fair, Phoenix, in October** (right).

COURTESY RAY CAMMACK SHOWS



a date with a certain amount of equipment and restrictions change, we will just need to figure that out as we go along. We could have already committed equipment elsewhere."

But however they have to do it, Gaylin said they will be happy to hit the road again. The family does plan to attend the IISA trade show. They also are sort of looking around at equipment.

"We are not in the market for any new rides, but may consider something used," he said. "This is a good time to buy used. Many people are looking to sell some of their rides right now."

Gaylin said the impact of the pandemic shutdowns is still very troublesome.

"I just pray for this whole industry to survive and keep going," he said.

Ray Cammack Shows was nine days into the 2020 **Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo**, Houston, Texas, when the event closed. That was in March.

"All of our fairs, one by one, canceled throughout the summer," said **Charlene Leavitt**, Ray Cammack Shows owner along with her husband, **Guy Leavitt**. "Presently, we don't know what 2021 will be like. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo has postponed its event from

March to May. That is the only fair at the moment that has announced its 2021 dates."

Leavitt said with their events canceled, they turned their attention to some out-of-the-box events to keep employees working and some rides operating.

The carnival supplied a Big Wheel, games and food to the **Sturgis Bike Rally** in Sturgis, South Dakota, last August.

In the fall, they created an event called **RCS Pumpkin Patch Carnival** in Mesa, Arizona where they supplied rides, games and food, more of a mini carnival.

The carnival also participated in several food drive-through events where patrons were able to get their carnival and fair food even though the events had been canceled.

The food drive-through at the **Arizona State Fair**, Phoenix, was the carnival's most successful. It was held during the dates the fair would have been open in October.

Others included the **Orange County Fair**, Costa Mesa, California, the **Pima County Fair**, Tucson, Arizona and **Cheyenne Frontier Days** in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

The show also participated in a drive-through holiday event at the Arizona State Fair called **Ho Ho Ho**.

"In addition, we sold Teddy bears at sites around Phoenix," Leavitt said. "We also opened an online store to sell carnival food treats for families to make at home."

Belle City Amusements has opened for the 2021 season. The first date was the

Manatee County Fair, Palmetto, Florida, Jan. 14-24. It will run its Florida schedule and owner **Charles Panacek** is happy to be back on the road.

"But we have certainly made changes to our midway," Panacek said.

They have added more spacing between rides and attractions on the midway. There is new signage. There are markings on the ground for queue lines so patrons stay distanced.

"We are cleaning our rides and we have had to create physical distance on some of our rides," Panacek said. "All of our employees wear masks and we have signs asking all guests to do the same. And for the most part, they have."

The carnival played some early dates in 2020 before the shutdowns.

Panacek said they were also able to play two dates in the fall and both did very well. Those dates were the **Georgia State Fair**, Hampton, in October and the **Gateway Fair**, Lake City, Florida, in November. Because of that, Panacek said he feels they are positioned well to go forward.

"I feel we were lucky to have had those post-COVID dates," he said. "We were able to set up our changes and get a better idea of how to go forward."

Of course going forward is still sort of an unknown.

"We are figuring it all out as we go," he said.

Although Panacek said they are in a holding pattern as far as making any purchases, but they have continued with upgrades.

MANATEE COUNTY FAIR

Date	Gate Hours
January 14 Thurs.	5PM - 10PM
January 15 Fri.	5PM-10PM
January 16 Sat.	12PM-10PM
January 17 Sun.	12PM-10PM
January 18 Mon.	12PM-10PM
January 19 Tues.	5PM-10PM
January 20 Wed.	12PM-10PM
January 21 Thurs.	5PM-10PM
January 22 Fri.	5PM-10PM
January 23 Sat.	12PM-10PM
January 24 Sun.	12PM - 7 PM

Daily Adult \$10 (13 & Up)
Daily Military \$6 (with Active Status I.D.)
Children \$6 (6-12)
Children (5 & Under) Free

Belle City Amusements has opened for the 2021 season. The first date was the **Manatee County Fair, Palmetto, Florida, January 14-24.**

COURTESY BELLE CITY AMUSEMENTS

Bob's Space Racers reinvents its theme park game concessions model

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — For over 50 years Bob's Space Racers has been providing fun and excitement to arcades, FECs, theme parks, and traveling shows. Now, the company is offering the Attendant Free Midway, a re-envisioned operation model for games concessions at parks of all sizes that includes a new approach to some of its well-loved skill and group race games.

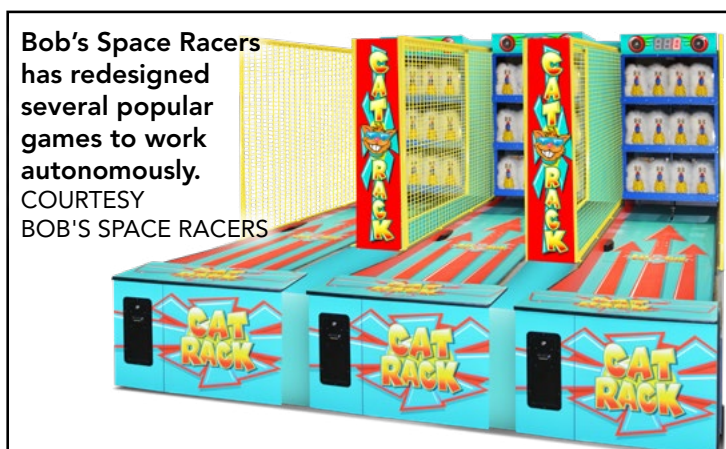
Within the amusement industry, Bob's Space Racers is synonymous with games and game management of exceptional quality. To the patrons of the company's clients, the company name itself may not be as recognizable as their products, but you would be hard-pressed to find anyone who does not immediately recognize the name "Whac-A-Mole" when brought up in conversation. The company's market share is quite impressive, yet its success cannot be exclusively attributed to its quality games and superior service but also is a result of the company's willingness to adapt to changing times.

This past year, Bob's Space Racers, like all companies in the industry, was challenged to reevaluate its products and services in relation to new health and safety requirements, automation and rising minimum wages.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the company switched gears and began production and sales of innovative, stand-alone, hands-free sanitizer dispensing stations. The product was a huge success for Bob's Space Racers that earned the company revenue to offset the loss while games sales slowed. The product also generated awards and media recognition.

With the COVID-19 vaccines in wide distribution, as well as the promise of the return of FEC and park patrons on the horizon, Bob's Space Racers is returning to what it does best with the introduction of the Attendant Free Midway. The new concept reintroduces a wide array of the company's skill and group race games in a new format that requires little to no human interaction between patrons and attendants, yet still delivers the same fun and excitement of traditional midway games and that coveted big prize trophy.

Bob's Space Racers designed the Attendant Free Midway to utilize a balanced



mixture of both group race games and skill games that would require minimal labor to operate, essentially allowing the games to be fully automated or allow one operator to efficiently operate multiple games that do require labor to function. Most games also have the capability of easily switching from a no-operator mode to a traditional attendant mode to maximize revenue during peak operating hours and to enhance customer interaction.

The company worked extensively to provide true and proven midway games that function the same as current manual operating procedures, knowing that simply replacing operator driven games with standard arcade games was not an option to protect revenue levels of parks.

Bob's Space Racers' president, Jack Cook, said, "It is important that you have the right mix of skill and group games. So, we developed about seven to eight skill games to go along with the group games. You want a good mix of 10 to 15 in an area centered around a redemption center, where an attendant can exchange the winning ticket for the prize. The right number of games will vary depending on the size of the park," Cook added.

A key feature of the fully automated games is that the midway operator/attendants (aka, barkers) have been replaced by sensor-driven audio tracks to attract players, provide instructions to the guests on how to play the games, and inform them where to take their winning tickets. These tracks interact with guests in real time. The audio versions can be upgraded to audio/video "barkers" utilizing TV monitors at an additional cost.

Some changes were necessary to make the concept work. For instance, the new version of Balloon Bust and Water Race do not utilize balloons in the same manner as before. Gone are the

latex balloons that are popped or inflate until they burst. The automated versions use plastic or digital "balloons" that electronically or audibly "pop."

In some ways, the Attendant Free Midway functions in a similar manner to that of the FEC or arcade model, which Bob's Space Racers has been automating with attendant-free games for eight years and has proven to generate high revenue while at the same time reduce or eliminate labor costs. The common feature of both is a redemption center for prizes, but the Attendant Free Midway operates on a much larger scale.

Cook is very quick to point out that where the Attendant Free Midway differs the most is that it meets the greater need of parks. The new park version provides larger, two-by-four-inch game-specific tickets. So, instead of redeeming a couple of tickets for a piece of bubble gum, or hundreds of tickets for a larger prize at an arcade or FEC, winners on the Attendant Free Midway exchange one ticket for a traditional midway prize.

Cook explained, "Since you wouldn't get the same perceived value of prize for [winning] Whac-A-Mole as you would for Ring Toss, the game-specific tickets would allow guests the ability to exchange multiple Whac-A-Mole tickets for a prize of a higher perceived value."

Bob's Space Racers already has multiple parks in negotiation to purchase and install Attendant Free Midways in 2021. Cook expects this model to remain popular with parks even beyond the current pandemic, because even without the effects of COVID-19, it was already becoming difficult for park's games operations teams to find and afford enough labor to operate midway games at full. Bob's Space Racers hopes to help alleviate much of the labor burden parks and games managers are experiencing with the Attendant Free Midway.

Dippin' Dots presents Ultimate Brownie Batter



PADUCAH, Ky. — Dippin' Dots Ice Cream is baking up fun in 2021 with a new flavor: Ultimate Brownie Batter. The new treat was unveiled during the IAAPA Virtual Education Conference in November. A combination of brownie batter ice cream and rich brownie batter bits, Ultimate Brownie Batter is a chocolate lover's dream come true. COURTESY DIPPIN' DOTS

U.S. Government re-opens PPP lenders to help small businesses

WASHINGTON D.C. — The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), in consultation with the U.S. Treasury Department, re-opened the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan portal to PPP-eligible lenders with \$1 billion or less in assets for First and Second Draw applications on Friday, January 15, 2021. The portal then fully opened on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 to all participating PPP lenders to submit First and Second Draw loan applications to SBA.

The SBA granted dedicated PPP access to Community Financial Institutions which include Community Development Financial Institutions, Minority Depository Institutions, Certified Development Companies and Microloan Intermediaries as part of the agency's ongoing efforts to reach underserved and minority small businesses.

On January 15, SBA continued its emphasis on reaching smaller lenders and businesses by opening to approximately 5,000 more lenders, including community banks, credit unions, and farm credit institutions. Moreover, the agency had dedicated service hours for smaller lenders.

On January 22, IAAPA and national accounting firm Withum held a webinar to help amusement industry small businesses strategize the best ways to maximize federal relief coming out of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

This law not only added additional funds for PPP, but made significant changes in the program and tax law which may be helpful to amusement industry businesses. IAAPA member businesses with 500 or less employees were encouraged to attend.

On a related political front, IAAPA was one of 387 organizations that signed on to a letter drafted by the Alliance for International Exchange to President-Elect Biden urging the rescission of Presidential proclamation 10052 shortly after Biden's administration takes office. Presidential proclamation 10052 banned the issuance of visas for cultural exchange participants like the ones used in the J1 Summer Work Travel Program.



Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Sara Seay is the director of marketing and sales for **Premier Rides, Inc.**, headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland. Premier, founded in 1995, is a designer and supplier of cutting-edge attractions.

Seay has been with Premier for 16 years. She began her career in the amusement industry when she was 14 years old at **Lagoon Park**, Farmington, Utah.

Accomplishments and affiliations...

- Recipient of the NEAAPA Paragon Award for excellence in marketing
- IAAPA Certified Attractions Executive
- Rising Star, Living Classrooms Foundation
- Sponsor, Give Kids the World Foundation
- Member/Supporter of IAAPA, Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), Australian Amusement Leisure & Recreation Association (AALARA), China Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions (CAAPA), Philippine Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions PhilAAPA, Malaysian Association of Amusement Theme Park & Family Attractions MAATFA, Cámara Argentina de Parques y Atracciones (Argentine Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions) AAPA, New England's Entertainment Association (NEAAPA), Pennsylvania Amusement Parks & Attractions (PAPA), New Jersey Attractions Association (NJAA), California Attractions & Parks Association (CAPA), ASTM F24: Amusement Ride & Devices, AIMS International: Amusement Industry Manufacturers & Suppliers

Many paths led Seay to her home

BALTIMORE, Md. — Sara Seay has walked down many different paths. Some she chose. Some were chosen for her. Some were good, and some not so good.

But each and every pathway taught her lessons of life and family and career.

"I feel they all brought me to where I am today," Seay said.

Seay was born in Centerville, Utah, along with her brother who is 11 months older than she. Besides the town of her birth, she also lived in several other Utah cities, Bountiful, Salt Lake City and Farmington.

To say Seay was an overachiever is not a stretch. She studied hard. She made good grades. She graduated from high school early. She took college-level math and biology courses. She received college scholarships to the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, and Utah State University, Logan.

She also, at the age of 14 years, started working at Lagoon, a family owned and operated amusement park in Farmington. She was working part time then. She couldn't have guessed, at that time, she would start full-time employment there in three years, the beginning of a 10-year stint.

She had made plans for herself. She wanted to attend Utah State and wanted to major in mechanical engineering. She was on that track and felt positive about her decisions.

But at the age of 15 years, an event occurred which turned her world upside down. On a trip to Salt Lake City from Bountiful, her mother, brother and cousin were in a horrific car accident.

This accident would forever

change her life, her brother's life and especially her mother's life.

All three sustained significant injuries with her mother's most damaging injury taking several weeks to show up. She ended up with an injury to her brain and lapsed into a coma. She awoke, but would never live at home again.

"She had to learn to speak again," Seay said. "She lost most of her hearing. Her mobility wasn't good. My world changed tremendously in an instant. Our roles reversed. I became my mom's support. It changed everything."

For one thing, Seay spent much of her spare time at the nursing home with her mom. She became her advocate and, as she could, she would take her mom out on special occasions.

It wasn't always easy. "I noticed how people would talk over mom to me because of her impaired speech," Seay said. "I think that was why helping people with disabilities during my time at Lagoon was so important."

"Those experiences continue to motivate me to really listen to and work to communicate directly with clients around the globe, particularly when English is a second language and accents are thick."

The accident also altered her decision for college. Instead of going to Utah State, she decided to stay close to home and attend the University of Utah.

And that accident could well have been the catalyst for her to change her college major from mechanical engineering to hospitality management.

"I was sitting in class one day and I looked around me and thought, you



Sara Seay
Director of Marketing and Sales
Premier Rides
Baltimore, Maryland

know, this isn't what I really want to do," Seay said. "I was way too social."

"I felt I always had to work twice as hard to prove my worth," she said. "I was the youngest in the class. I was a woman in a male-dominated field of study. At that moment, I chose another path. Still today, I face the challenge of being a woman in a man's environment. With time I've learned to navigate it, to know my own worth and to find pathways to success."

Seay was already working full time at Lagoon. She threw herself into her work. She grew into her job eventually holding the titles of manager of guest services as well as being a park director.

She loved her job. She loved her team. She learned from her general manager, who was at the time Clark Robinson. Robinson later left Lagoon to become president of IAAPA.

She also was good at her job. Part of that job included handling complaints. Her colleagues told her they had never seen anyone who could say "no" to someone and be thanked for it.

But, handling complaints for 10 years began to take a toll on her outlook. She applied for another position at the park that was set to come open. She got it, but, at the last moment, the

person vacating the position had a change of mind and decided to stay.

"I was so excited about being able to move to another position," she said.

Mentally, she was already in that other position. It was hard for her to go back. She decided to leave Lagoon, taking a job at Hogle Zoo for one year.

But, as so many people need to do to at some point in time, she took that leap of faith, which ended up propelling her to the east coast where she visited the offices of IAAPA in Arlington, Virginia.

She also visited her former general manager Robinson. She was looking for employment. Robinson pointed her to Premier Rides, which turned out to be another turning point in her life.

She found that she settled well into marketing at Premier. She also found her future husband, Jim Seay.

And, now, 16 years later with more than 25 years in the industry, she knows her home.

"I have made some wonderful friends all around the globe," Seay said. "They are my family. I am grateful to travel all over the world to develop relationships, to meet with clients and visit their facilities and, of course, to sell Premier Rides attractions."

—Pam Sherborne

MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 01/21/21	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	65.22	65.75	33.00
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	41.76	55.97	13.00
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	48.88	52.49	31.70
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	173.64	183.40	79.07
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.08	0.20	0.08
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	33.64	73.59	12.55
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	4705.00	5450.00	2080.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.47	0.94	0.38
Lefoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	19.20	23.05	9.08
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	31.06	33.78	5.90
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	72.82	131.43	19.25
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	602.00	916.00	490.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	30.15	36.96	6.75
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	37.62	39.79	8.75
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	706.00	788.00	550.00

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



Still shuttered due to COVID-19 restrictions, SeaWorld San Diego recently announced the Sesame Street Parade of Lights drive-thru experience. The unique event will repurpose themed floats produced by 3dx Scenic of Cincinnati, Ohio.
COURTESY 3DX SCENIC

BUSINESS WATCH**Dollywood Foundation CEO has new role**

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — **Dolly Parton** and **The Dollywood Foundation** announced the tapping of **David Dotson**, the current foundation CEO, to pursue important future projects for the performer and her companies.

Dotson has been instrumental in shaping the Dollywood Foundation, especially the **Imagination Library** program which currently gifts a book each month to 1.8 million children. Since its inception, the Imagination Library has gifted more than 150 million books to children in five countries.

"My role at the Dollywood Foundation and the Imagination Library has been a dream come true," said Dotson. "Leading the Imagination Library from Sevier County to being a worldwide inspiration for children has given me great joy, however I look forward to this new role and new challenge with great anticipation."

Parton and the Board of Directors also announced the promotion of **Jeff Conyers**, the current president of The Dollywood Foundation, to assume the leadership role of the organization.

Gateway makes list of best places to work

GILBERTSVILLE, Pa. — **Gateway Ticketing Systems** has been named one of the Best Places to Work in Pennsylvania for 2020 by **Team Pennsylvania**. The company was named one of the top 20 companies in the Medium Employer Category. This is Gateway's eighth time receiving the award and — at #16 — the highest it has ever ranked on the list, which was designed to identify, recognize and honor the best places of employment in Pennsylvania that are benefiting the State's economy and its workforce. In 2019, Gateway was ranked #21.

"Ranking this highly as a place of employment in Pennsylvania is humbling, particularly because the ranking organizations are determined largely through employee feedback," said **Michael Andre**, president and CEO of Gateway Ticketing Systems. "2020 posed some different challenges, but we continued to strive to build a company culture focused on employee well-being and job satisfaction."

Universal Resorts files new patents

ORLANDO — **Universal Orlando Resort's** parent division **Universal Parks & Resorts** has a pair of patents that show new theme park ride and queue technology that guests may see in the future. The patents are for a flying-simulator ride vehicle and a virtual queue system.

The patent for "Ride Systems Having Dynamic Ride Vehicle Movement" allows for each ride vehicle to include a support to carry a rider, a support actuator coupled to the rider support and a base of the ride vehicle that can move the rider support relative to the base, as well as a system to move the ride vehicle relative to a ride area.

A virtual queue patent — "Systems and Methods for a Smart Virtual Queue" — determines a reduction in capacity of a theme park attraction, identifies each guest in the virtual queue and gives them a new time slot.

The patents do not explicitly state where or how the technology can be used in its theme parks.

Dave & Buster's suffers during fourth quarter

DALLAS — **Dave & Buster's Entertainment, Inc.**, in a business update to January 3, reported that income remains severely impacted by the pandemic.

The update, taking in the first nine weeks of the company's fiscal fourth quarter that began on November 2, 2020, and continues until the end of January, showed that the company had 104 venues open, or 75% of its operation. The company reported that this was later reduced to 89 open, or 65%, as of January 3 through a renewal of the operating restrictions by many jurisdictions.

"Fourth quarter business trends have been consistent with commentary we provided in December in conjunction with our third quarter results," said Brian Jenkins, the company's CEO. "After a strong recovery through the end of the third quarter, we experienced a temporary setback with the recent Covid resurgence, which resulted in the re-closure of 15 stores and a reduction in the sales index of open stores and overall comparable store sales. Early January sales trends are improving, and we have resumed store reopenings as certain local jurisdictions have lifted operating restrictions."

DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 1/18/21	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$2.747	-\$0.328
Midwest	\$2.632	-\$0.305
Gulf Coast	\$2.461	-\$0.336
Mountain	\$2.603	-\$0.407
West Coast	\$2.804	-\$0.402
California	\$3.448	-\$0.418

CURRENCY

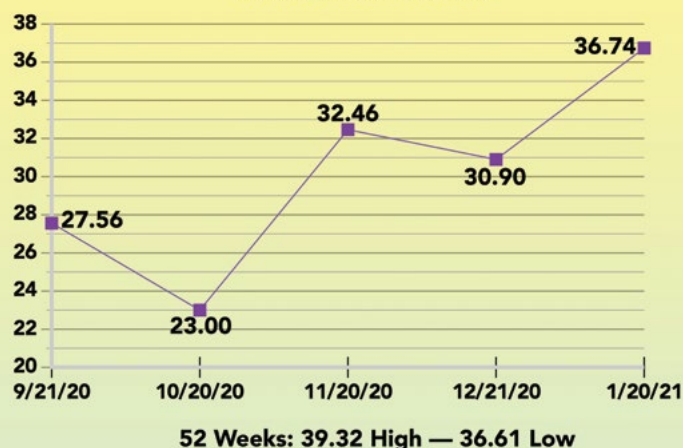
On 1/20/21 \$1 USD =

0.8253	EURO
0.7344	GBP (British Pound)
103.93	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8890	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.2977	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.2731	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

SNAPSHOT**EPR Properties**

Symbol: EPR | NYSE: New York Stock Exchange

Currency: United States Dollar



Graphic: Jeffrey Seifert

Source: Big Charts/Market Watch

Unique book series spotlights Waldameer Park

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

At the close of 2020, Waldameer released its third book in a series of fictional stories aimed at elementary kids. The title of this one is *The Curious Clues*.

"Nancy and I are very proud that our son David has successfully published three books. One of his goals in life was to be an author," said **Steve Gorman**, general manager. "To have him choose the setting of Waldameer makes it even more special to the family."

David Gorman is one of three children. While one of his siblings works at the park, David does not. However, having grown up with the park, he finds inspiration from the ambiance he loved as a child.

"I grew up loving books," he said. "I read voraciously, and I always wanted to write one. I studied creative writing. My mother suggested I write a book that included Waldameer. I think she had a picture book in mind, but I wanted to do something a bit more substantial. I wasn't sure if it would take off, but here we are."

Written at a third-grade level, the

series of books engages elementary children. The characters are kids solving mysteries. Gorman capitalizes on the local nature of the location, even beyond the park with such Erie landmarks as Presque Isle and Perry's Monument.

"I grew up at the park, so it's near and dear to my heart," David said. "I love the idea of setting it at the park. It's such a rich meaningful place to so many people."

"[David] goes back to the local schools and speaks to the students in the classrooms. He talks to them about the process of writing a book and what it's like," said his father. "It's a great experience."

"It's fun for kids to be able to talk with an author from their hometown — just so they can see it as a possibility," David said. "Some kids struggle with reading, so [it's nice] to have a book set in their hometown at a place they love that would keep their interest and get them excited about reading."

To aid teachers, the book includes discussion questions and activities in the back.

"We have had many of our guests ask us 'When is the next book coming



David Gorman enjoys the park's train ride. COURTESY DAVID GORMAN

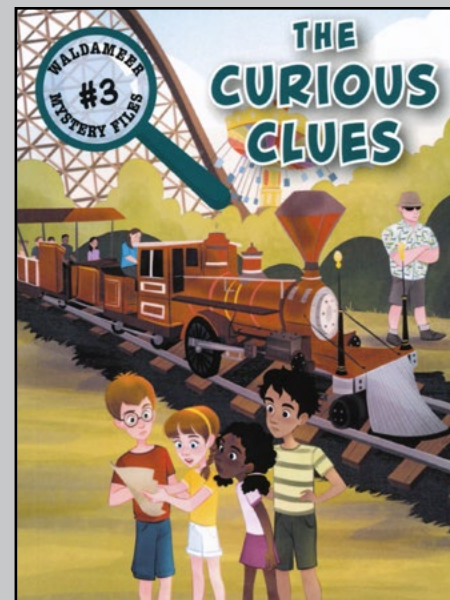
out? My child loved reading the last one!' The book series adds another facet of our park for our guests to enjoy," Steve said.

From his own experiences overseas and teaching English as a second language, Gorman includes many cultures and ethnicities into his characters, which further helps all students identify with the text.

"I love culture and learning from people who are different from me," he said.

With Waldameer as the primary setting, *Amusement Today* asked management if they had any influence with the stories.

"We stay away from that," said



Paul Nelson, owner, Waldameer. "It's his prerogative."

Gorman feels the energy to add a couple more books to the series eventually. "Summer is only three months. So it is a fun souvenir that during the winter you can have a taste of summer."

The books are available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and the park.

•waldameermysteryfiles.com



COURTESY
WALT DISNEY WORLD

Walt Disney World golf courses unveil Robo Carts

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — **Walt Disney World** is continually looking for ways to enhance its golf experience and its latest innovation is turning heads up and down the fairways. Disney robot golf carts have been introduced at the resort's golf courses.

The Robo-Carts, designed by **Club Car**, are also equipped with all of the amenities that golfers need — beverage cooler, cup holder, sand bottle and even a USB port to charge to a smartphone while they play. The front of the cart has a color GPS screen that gives all of the standard yardage information typically available on full-size riding golf carts. The robotic carts use GPS and Bluetooth technology to transport clubs around Disney's Palm, Magnolia and Oak Trail golf courses.

Golfers clip on the cart's small transmitter, load their golf bag onto the cart and then the autonomous cart follows a few paces behind them wherever they go. If the golfer stops, the cart stops. When the golfer starts walking, the cart starts moving with a max speed of approximately 7 m.p.h. The Robo-Carts rent for only \$10 in addition to the golfer's green fees.

Club Car's Tempo Walk model used by Walt Disney World is its latest design. The cart weighs 95 pounds and can cover 36 holes per charge.

The carts are popular at **Disney's Oak Trail** golf course, a nine-hole walking course that appeals primarily to families and younger golfers. They are also available at the 18-hole **Magnolia** and **Palm** championship courses.

•golfwdw.com

Lagotronics provides equipment, technical dark ride upgrade for the Railway Museum

VENLO, The Netherlands — **The Railway Museum** in Utrecht illustrates the vital link between the railways and society at large. The museum preserves and manages railway-related heritage in the Netherlands. Through its stories aimed at a wide audience, it reveals the significance of this heritage in connection with technological and economic development in the past, present and future.

15 years ago, The Railway Museum introduced the dark ride named *Stalen Monsters*. In the dark ride, visitors take an adventurous ride through the attraction in a vehicle on real train rails. It is one of the most popular and surprising parts of the Railway Museum.

As a cultural organization, the Railway Museum is in the midst of society. It tell its story and manages the collection in a way that is relevant and authentic. The museum connects the activities to its function as a museum. An upgrade of *Stalen Monsters* dark ride ensures that the visitor experience is optimized. After all these years, the dark ride is due for a major upgrade. Lagotronics was commissioned to make the technology up to date. In addition, it was also asked to renew and optimize the total experience of



The Railway Museum's *Stalen Monsters* dark ride was given a full upgrade by the Lagotronics team. COURTESY LAGOTRONICS

the dark ride.

"In a very short time, we gave our dark ride *Stalen Monsters* a technical and experience upgrade," said Jan Bergen, head of operation for the Railway Museum. "The project was a great collaboration between our own Technical Service and the specialists of **Lagotronics Projects**. Lagotronics Projects clearly understood what was important to us: because we are a museum, we have to work in the immediate vicinity of unique collection items, and it is also important that the show elements

are truthful."

The technical equipment, the hardware and software were considerably outdated. As a result, it was decided to renew the entire show control, audio control and the lighting. Now, the show can be operated via a single control panel.

The entire lighting plan in the ride has been overhauled and Lagotronics Projects used RGB LED lighting. The lighting is very energy efficient and offers great atmospheres which can be created with mixing colors.

•lagotronicsprojects.com

OBITUARIES

Founder, owner Mark Fanelli's Traveling Amusement Park passes

RINDGE, N.H. — **Mark A. Fanelli**, age 60, of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, founder and owner of **Mark Fanelli's Traveling Amusement Park**, passed away on Jan. 1, 2021, after a long battle with heart and kidney disease.

Born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, on Nov. 27, 1960, Fanelli was the son of the late **John and Gina (Perone) Fanelli**, of **Fanelli Amusement Company**, on which Mark Fanelli began working when he was very young.

Fanelli stayed with the family business until about 1988, when he broke away and started his own show, which he built from the ground up.

Fanelli was very much family oriented. When his children were younger, if he wasn't working, he could be found setting up the latest carnival ride in his driveway for his daughters and their friends. He also could be found at his children's basketball games, doing magic tricks at his children's birthday parties, cooking up delicious Italian food or playing Santa Claus on Christmas Eve.

He loved talking to his kids about his formative years, from painting on a mustache in order to get served at the local watering hole to his many adventures around the neighborhood, known as "The Patch."

Among his many talents, Fanelli served as general contractor for the building of all three of his residences over the years, most recently having built a beautiful home on an apple orchard, where he had hoped to live out his days farming.

He was very proud of his Italian heritage and enjoyed visiting relatives in Italy.

Fanelli leaves behind the love of his life and soul mate, **Kendra Fleming**, three daughters, **Nicola Melehov**, **Giavana Moretto**, and **Emilia Fanelli**, and **Nicolas Larkin** and **Joseph Fanelli**, who were like sons to him. He also leaves behind four grandchildren, **Madeline** and **John Melehov** and **Benjamin** and **Olivia Moretto**, his mother **Gina Fanelli**, and six siblings, **James**, **Jack**, **Rachel**, **Mary**, **Margaret**, and **Kathryn**.

He is also survived by many aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, and close friends. He was predeceased by his father, **John Fanelli**, in 2013.

A private funeral Mass was held Friday, Jan. 8, 2021, at **St. Anthony De Padua Church**, Fitchburg. Interment followed in **St. Bernard's Cemetery** followed, also located in Fitchburg.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that people consider making a memorial donation to the **American Kidney Foundation** or the **American Heart Association**. A celebration of life will be held at a later date.

Claudio Tosato, "Magician of jukeboxes"

RUBANO, Italy — **Claudio Tosato**, whom it has been said knew more about the jukebox business in Italy than any other operator, passed in December from complications with COVID-19. He was 62.

Tosato developed a passion for jukeboxes from his father who was a pioneer of amusement games in Italy. Claudio rapidly became well known in Europe after he started to repair and restore jukeboxes of all ages from Rowe Ami, Wurlitzer, Rockola, Seeburg and NSM.

Employed by Elmac, Tosato was a familiar character at trade shows on both sides of the Atlantic and had a personal collection of more than 600 jukeboxes. Among them is a Wurlitzer 1015 of 1939. Other rarities include the Continental 1 Stereo of 1960. He also had a collection of 680,000 vinyl records of both 78 and 45 rpm. Those who knew him commented that Tosato was able to recognize and name every song and artist from within his collection.

Tosato's funeral was held at the cathedral of Castelfranco Veneto. He is survived by his wife, daughter and two sons.



Fanelli



Tosato

ON THE MOVE

In January 2021, ride manufacturer **Zamperla** announced that **Antonio Zamperla, Jr.**, grandson of founder **Antonio Zamperla** and son of President Alberto Zamperla will be the new CEO. The company appointed Antonio Zamperla, Jr., who was previously Chief Innovation Officer, as CEO in an effort to be prepared for the changes of the next socio-economic situation. He will be joined by **Valerio Ferrari** as chief sales officer and **Adam Sandy**, sales and marketing director of the strategic roller coaster division.

Antonio Zamperla, Jr., has been working alongside his father Alberto for the last twenty years, a time marked by considerable economic growth, the introduction of artificial intelligence and robotics in the design and manufacturing processes, as well as the incredible relaunch of Coney Island through the U.S.-based company **Central Amusement International**.

"Today we can proudly say that there is no amusement park in the world without at least one Zamperla ride. However, the near future, following the global pandemic that has hit us, needs extraordinary interventions to be able to change gear, manage the next challenges and push innovation to the maximum," said Alberto Zamperla. "I think that the appointment of Antonio as CEO, the return of Valerio and the arrival of Adam are exactly the extraordinary interventions that our company needs."

With a degree in Mechanical Engineering, Valerio Ferrari was most-recently the co-CEO for **Intamin**, but he is not new to Zamperla. Valerio is one of the managers who contributed to the growth of the Zamperla company from 1991 through 2018 and scored important successes including the realization of the first Zamperla amusement park in Central Park, Victorian Gardens NYC, the reopening of Coney Island and the relaunch of Minitalia Leolandia in Italy.

Adam Sandy has spent his entire career in the entertainment industry with 20 years spent at **Ride Entertainment**.

"I am thrilled to be joining the Zamperla team, a company that has played a vital role in the entertainment industry around the world," offered Sandy. "I am delighted to be part of this new chapter in Zamperla's history that will bring innovation, technology and creativity to the roller coaster industry."

Beginning a new chapter, **Ed Hodgdon** has opened a new business, **Hodgdon Consulting**, focusing on marketing, advertising, and public relations for businesses in any industry.

Hodgdon has spent the past two decades as part of the team at **Funtown Splashtown U.S.A.** He began working at the park in 1998 in the Points of Sale Department. In 2001, Hodgdon moved to year-around employment with the park, working in group sales and marketing. Most recently, he served as the park's marketing and IT manager.

"I had a great experience working at Funtown

Splashtown USA over the last 20 years, but it was time to branch out on my own," said Hodgdon. "I want to take the knowledge I acquired from working at the park to other businesses."

Hodgdon will continue to work for the **New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (NEAAPA)** with an increased focus on state-level advocacy.

Airparx, specialist in the design, manufacture and installation of FEC attractions, has added **Daniel Billington** to its team as the company's new global head of accounts.

Airparx's expertise spans inflatable parks, trampoline parks, soft play areas, ninja warrior courses, high rope adventures, fun climbing walls and bouldering wall experiences, with the company currently expanding into indoor mini-golf courses and tenpin bowling. This is familiar ground for Billington whose previous experience was working with **Rugged Interactive**, an active play company.

Djuan Rivers, vice president for **Disney's Animal Kingdom** theme park has announced his retirement. He has been with the **Walt Disney Company** for 30 years and has been in charge of Animal Kingdom since 2014.

Among the other positions, he has served as vice president for hotels and business solutions at **Disneyland Paris**; vice president of **Disney's Aulani Resort & Spa** in Hawaii; vice president of **Downtown Disney**; vice president for new business development for **Disney Parks**; and general manager of **Disney's Wilderness Lodge**.

Under Rivers' watch, the popular Pandora — The World of Avatar expansion was completed at Animal Kingdom.

"I am moving to Paris to start chapter two of my life, which will involve exploring the world full time," stated Rivers in a January 13, 2021, Facebook post.

"Djuan is a people person, warm, outgoing, plain-spoken and ready to laugh. I don't know all of his next adventures, but for someone who has already run a marathon in Antarctica and done a high altitude-low open parachute jump over Mt. Everest, I'm sure it's going to be impressive," said Disney Imagineer Joe Rohde on an Instagram post acknowledging Rivers's retirement.

The 42-year **Walt Disney Company** veteran Imagineer **Kevin Rafferty** announced his April 1, 2021, retirement in a post on the **D23** website.

Rafferty most recently helped oversee the development of Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway at **Disney's Hollywood Studios**. He also worked on many now-classic Disney attractions, including The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror at Disney's Hollywood Studios and Cars Land at **Disney's California Adventure**.

Speaking on his four-decade-long career at the company, Rafferty's post on D23 offered fond recollections of Cars Land: "There are more than 280,000 square feet of hand-sculpted and hand-painted rockwork, and I see all of the blood, sweat, and tears and love that went into that land and how it evolved and how it really happened."



Zamperla



Ferrari



Sandy



Hodgdon



Billington



Rivers



Rafferty

SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

▶ Hitch-Hiker launches portable hand washing stations — page 44 / Amusement Expo delayed — page 46

COVID-19, consumers make contactless payment permanent trend

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

The technology for contactless payment systems has been around for years. In fact, the amusement industry is no stranger to this form of payment. But a surge in its popularity has been clearly visible in 2020 with the global COVID-19 pandemic resulting in business owners and operators struggling to find a more hygienic means for customers to buy.

According to research published in December, 2020, by **Digipay**, a supplier of contactless payment systems located in India, 51% people in the U.S. had resorted to using mobile wallets like **Apple Pay** and other tap-to-go credit cards. The report also stated that about 58% of the people in the United States are now more likely to use contactless payment methods than they were before the pandemic.

As contactless payments gain popularity, financial institutions all over the world are increasing their CVM limit to enable customers to successfully make transactions during lockdowns with utmost safety.

In Germany, contactless payments boomed from 35% to more than 50% due to the pandemic, according to the Digipay research. China saw the highest adoption rate where e-wallet purchases were 23% higher than that of the cash purchases.

"Everything is about 'low-touch' and contactless," **Embed's Kathleen Goy** said. "In fact, the pandemic has forced the world to enter the 'low-touch economy.' Every individual on the planet is more conscious about hygiene than ever before."

Embed focuses its contactless payment business model on family entertainment centers (FEC) primarily. That com-



Convenient, smartphone-based payment methods, such as Embed's Mobile Wallet, have helped make contactless payments an immutable force around the globe. COURTESY EMBED

pany's research has shown that 82% of people view contactless and low-touch as the safest way to pay.

"Consumers have peace of mind and feel more secure keeping their mobile phones clean and hands sanitized than trusting a surface area has been cleaned by a business with high foot traffic," Goy said. "Mobile usage, including payments, is an immutable force around the globe."

Kiran Karanki at **Semnox**, located in India, is seeing the surge, too.

"European countries that were adverse to shifting from notes/coins are showing increased interest and we have won a number of projects," Karanki said. "There is greater awareness, which will increase the adoption of these technologies."

Before the global pandemic, Karanki saw that purchasers would cite customers were not comfortable with the shifts.

"But COVID-19 has changed the customer habits/preferences as well as has increased the awareness regarding the contacts and spread of germs via contacts," he said.

As a result of the spike in contactless pay, certain areas of product development at Semnox had to be ramped up and certain areas de-prioritized. For example, Semnox has seen quite a lot of increase in the adoption of the company's SmartFun mobile app, which allows most of the functions to be made self-service. Similarly, there is a push to go to technologies that reduce the contact and interactions with the staff at a retail establishment.

Brian Whitney, **Appetize**, a company based in Atlanta, Georgia, that provides a fully cloud-based point of sale (POS), digital ordering, and enterprise management platform, said contactless payment systems won't disappear after the pandemic.

"As we start to enter a post-COVID marketplace, consumers who started using contactless for safety, now embrace it for the ease and speed," Whitney said. "We're actually seeing customers asking brands to support contactless actively. Furthermore, we recently published a nationwide survey that showed 77% of Americans will prefer contactless payments even after the pandemic ends. It's here to stay."

Even before COVID-19, retailers and customers were beginning to see the advantage of contactless pay. Whitney said his clients had noticed that their customers were more likely to buy an item because it was so easy to simply hold up their phones to make a purchase.

Some research has shown customers that continue to have to dig through their pockets or through a bag to find payment were far less likely to do that

over and over again.

Transactions made by contactless payment take a shorter amount of time, especially when compared to PIN-based transactions.

"This keeps people moving through the lines quicker, meaning shorter lines and less line-abandonment," Whitney said.

With social distancing, lines tend to be much longer. A long line may also block consumer traffic.

Embed has used feedback surveys to make sure clients' needs are being met. They have taken feedback from their clients who have purchased their systems, on-site operators who are using them and families who are making the purchases. What they have found is a plethora of positive reactions.

From the clients using contactless payment systems, Goy said they have appreciated the 100% transparent spend and game data. That data can be used to offer promotions that drive return visits. They also have found a reduced cost of overall operations with no coins, tickets or game cards to process and maintain.

On-site operators have noted efficiency, shorter lines at kiosks and an improved traffic flow. Patrons can reload from anywhere, anytime via mobile and no more lost game cards empowering the consumer to keep track of their balance driving return visits.

Parents that have brought their families to the FECs have found peace-of-mind with the systems, because it is low-touch and safe for their children. They also can keep track of the children's whereabouts.

An extra community benefit, Goy said, is COVID tracking. If an operator is alerted a

▶ See PAYMENTS, page 42

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Prospering Through A Pandemic

There's no doubt that businesses have to adapt to a post-pandemic world and the new mindset of visitors. No one is going to a business they deem unsafe, they need to be reassured with the measures the operator takes to mitigate risk, keeping their employees, consumers and community safe. Consumers are worried about keeping their families COVID-free. They don't want to handle cash and coins that have been touched by hundreds of strangers (and carry living germs and living virus for days) or wait in lines to make withdrawals or top up their game card. A simple Google Search reveals the recent dramatic spike in mobile payments.

Embed is helping the industry to keep their guests safe and happy, so they will return again.



“It's clever and very convenient; there is no need to visit a kiosk or a staff member. Guests can do everything from the comfort of their phone. By September our revenue was over 100% yoy, signalling a certain recovery.

Doug Roth, President & CEO of Scary Strokes.



“The biggest improvement that helped our business is installing the Embed Kiosk. With smaller staffing needs during this time, this machine has been so valuable for us. It takes the pressure off our staff in busier times. It's the best investment machine I have purchased.”

Luke Phillips, Owner, Ticket Time Australia

“Embed's kiosk is a life-saver. Given the physical distancing measures in place, our employees had to have less interaction with the guests, but the guests experience is not compromised because the guests could easily reload their game cards without having to queue.”

*Leroy Dijkstra,
Operations Manager, Gamestate, Netherlands*



Scary Strokes in Waldorf, Maryland, USA, was the first to offer Embed's Mobile Wallet to their customers (as part of Embed's COVID-19 Relief Act, FREE Mobile Wallet for a year for the industry, not just Embed customers). With Mobile Wallet, Scary Strokes is able to offer safe, contactless gameplay and redemption options. As part of its commitment to providing COVID-19 relief for operators, Embed has now also added a QR system to the Mobile Wallet solution, allowing operators to track customers who visit their locations and the games they play. It also tracks who played the same games afterwards. This enables operators to easily track and trace guests in the event of a breakout.

Let us help take your business of fun to the next level!
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►PAYMENTS

Continued from page 40

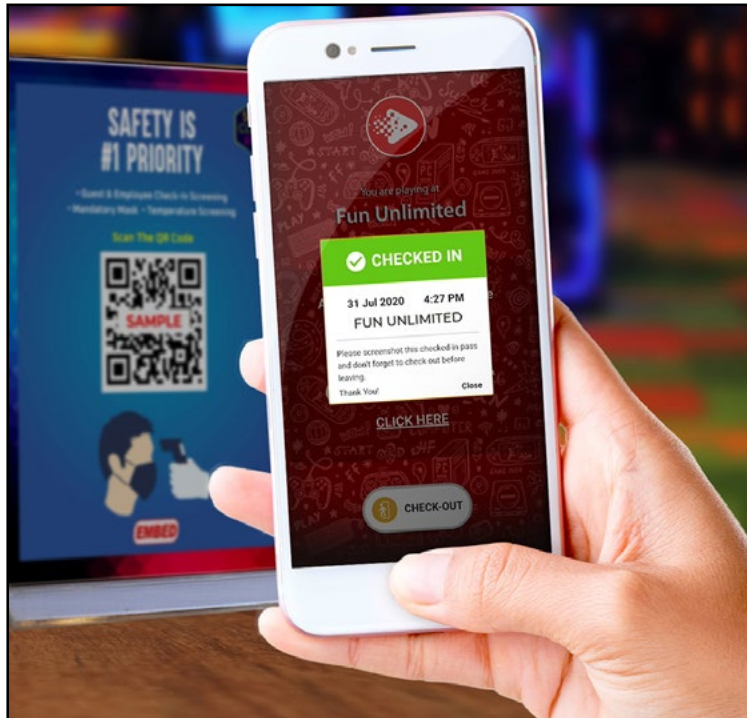
patron who visited their business tested positive for COVID, the operator is able to identify what games the patron played at what time, and who played it afterward, for tracking and tracing purposes.

"This is a very powerful measure intended to keep employees, customers and the community safe," she said. "And there's tremendous peace of mind knowing you have that capability at your fingertips."

Whitney said Appetize has been supporting contactless payment for many years now. In fact, for most of Appetize's customers, all they had to do was to let them know contactless was an available option.

"What's been interesting in the market is that now we are seeing new payment providers entering with a contactless strategy," Whitney said. "The ability to enter as a payment provider without having to produce and distribute millions of plastic cards, as well as bypass some of the 'traditional' credit platform, is bringing new options to consumers."

In April 2020, despite the ongoing pandemic, Embed implemented Embed's COVID-19



COVID-19 has changed customer preferences as it has increased the awareness regarding contacting multiple surfaces and the spreading of germs via those contacts.
COURTESY EMBED

Relief Act, which offered the company's latest innovation, the Mobile Wallet, to everyone for free for one year "as a demonstration of our commitment to our industry's recovery," Goy said.

"Embed is the only FEC business solutions provider to partner with Google and Apple to gain compliance approval," she said.

This made Embed, she said, the only non-banking finance-payment or loyalty card business and brand card that sits in the mobile wallet.

"There's no app download required, so guests add the virtual game card to their Mobile Wallet and play," she said. "To date, we are still receiving enquiries

on how they can embark on this contactless journey with Embed."

In November 2020, Embed gave free Mobile Wallet printed assets to help their customers successfully launch the Mobile Wallet and drive uptake and adoption.

Semnox, primarily, has been focusing on three things regarding the company's contactless payment system. Those things include the Luminous Reader, a new generation Linux-based operating system reader. This gives a number of additional functionalities to enable the contact less payments.

Semnox's SmartFun app allows customers to finish their purchases as well as complete the payment via the app itself. And with the introduction of Semnox's Kinetick and Komplete Kiosks, Karanki said the number of use cases that the kiosks cater to has increased manifold.

"We have seen surge in the demand for these products and we continue to invest in building these out," Karanki said.

In late 2020, Magnetic Cash, a company based in Argentina, offered the FEC industry interest-free financing on its cashless system. The company's system is designed and built specifically for the FEC business. The company offered the software

with zero per cent interest from six to nine months to help businesses open back up after an extended pandemic lockdown.

Contactless payment system executives suggest that businesses, if they aren't already, should get ready for the contactless trend.

As more and more companies and consumers increase their usage, so are card brands.

A story published on USA-bank.com in July 2020, stated that, indeed, card brands began noticing even before the pandemic. According to that July report, Visa Inc. announced that in the last quarter of 2019, 100 million Visa-branded contactless cards were issued in the U.S. with plans to surpass 300 million issued by the end of 2020.

Goy feels there isn't a single business that should ignore this coming trend if they expect to stay in business.

"And if you have outdated technology or no technology, it is an unequivocal fact that you'll be out of business before you know it," she said.

The theory is simple. "If hardware, like your mobile phone, has to be updated every three years, then surely your business software should be refreshed every once in a while to remain relevant to customers."

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International Ride Training announces Ride Camp 2021

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — **International Ride Training, LLC**, a provider of comprehensive ride operations safety consultation, training and certifications, announced that registration is now open for Ride Camp 2021. For the first time, the event will feature the choice of five regional locations as well as a virtual-only option.



Ride Camp 2021 begins February 23-25 at **Carowinds** in Charlotte, North Carolina, providing instructor certification and ride operations educational sessions.

Additional in-person Ride Camps are located throughout the U.S. in March and April 2021. Regional Ride Camps will be held at **California's Great America** (Santa Clara, California), **Nickelodeon Universe at Mall of America** (Bloomington, Minnesota), **Kings Island** (Mason, Ohio), and **Nickelodeon Universe & Dreamworks Waterpark at American Dream** (East Rutherford, New Jersey).

International Ride Training will have strict COVID-19 safety practices in place at all Ride Camp locations in accordance with applicable state and local requirements.

Ride Camp 2021 in-person and virtual educational sessions will focus on topics including: The 10 Critical Components of Ride Operator Safety; Guest Service and Efficiency; Operations in a COVID-19 World; Accessibility and the ADA; Hiring and Staffing Strategies; Motivating Ride Operators; Training Tools and Techniques; and Incident Response and Investigation. There will also be sessions which give participants the opportunity to share best practices, discuss industry hot topics as well as learn directly from one another. Both in-person and virtual Ride Campers will have access to more than 30 on-demand courses available from February 15 through March 31, 2021.

•ridetraining.com

Hitch-Hiker, Personal Protected launches line of portable hand washing stations

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

NEW MIDDLETOWN, Ohio — Last March COVID-19 reared its ugly head just as **Hitch-Hiker Mfg.** was starting to deliver trailers, the company's bread-and-butter product line. Mobile food concession trailer manufacturing ceased last April. To stay afloat, owner **Jeff Swartz** had to create something that would still allow them to keep manufacturing, while contributing to help diminish the effects of the coronavirus.

In a casual office meeting, the group brainstormed and came up with a way to promote safe hand washing and social distancing at the same time. The result: a four-person hand washing station portable unit that provides distance barriers between users and quick, easy access to keeping hands clean. **Personal Protected, LLC** is the name of the new division of Hitch-Hiker, which specifically created this new venture.

Swartz with a knowledge of how to provide products for large venues, was able to incorporate social distancing and hand washing — two of the three new mandates — and was



Youngstown State University ordered ten units. COURTESY PERSONAL PROTECTED

PERSONAL PROTECTED™

able to sketch out the Quad-Sink as a solution for the challenges of getting people in gatherings back together again. The hand washing stations are touchless and can service 6,000 people or 1,500 in each of the unit's four washing stations. This is all before service is needed.

With the new company also came patents and new marketing strategies. The 52-year-old company also went through a restructure and retooling of the facility to accommodate this new product line. The number one priority was to create a product to help people have accessible hand washing and to continue giving employees stable work.

The 2020 fair season quickly canceled or postponed before Personal Protected started marketing to that industry. In the meantime, the Quad-Sink showed to have a broader scope of application. "The first sale of our Quad-Sinks were to Youngstown State University for their 'Return to school Safely' program. **Jim Tressel**, YSU President, visited the business and viewed the first ones in person and immediately purchased ten that are now across the YSU campus," said Swartz.

Through some relational

sales, colleges, K-12 schools, government entities and private sector businesses began ordering and receiving hand wash stations. Purchasers of the Quad-Sink are promoting their new purchase through their websites and social media platforms to create an awareness for safe return to their guests, fans, students, employees and staff.

Expo Square, Tulsa, Oklahoma, recently took delivery of ten Quad-Sinks to be ready for their 2021 events. "Tulsa's Expo Square has taken a proactive approach focused on guest safety. Working with Personal Protected, a partnership was created to have 10 Quad-Sinks customized, emphasizing mobility and maximizing sanitation opportunities. These innovative units provide an additional safety measure, building a foundation to continue events in a safe and responsible way," stated **Amanda Blair**, COO – Expo Square.

Hitch-Hiker Mfg., based in northeast Ohio, is a nationwide company that has been building mobile food concession trailers for the amusement and state fair industry.

•personalprotected.com



Personal Protected was born as a division of Hitch-Hiker Mfg. With the new company also came patents and new marketing strategies. COURTESY PERSONAL PROTECTED

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U.S. DOT issues new regulations for drone flight

WASHINGTON D.C. — The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced final rules for unmanned aircraft (UA), commonly known as drones. The new rules require remote identification of drones and allow operators of small drones to fly over people and at night under certain conditions. These rules come at a time when drones represent the fastest-growing segment in the entire transportation sector, with currently over 1.7 million drone registrations and 203,000 FAA-certificated remote pilots.

"These final rules carefully address safety, security and privacy concerns while advancing opportunities for innovation and utilization of drone technology," said U.S. Secretary of Transportation **Elaine L. Chao**.

Remote ID is a major step toward the full integration of drones into the national airspace system. It provides identification of drones in flight as well as the location of their control stations, providing crucial information to national security agencies and law enforcement partners, as well as other officials charged with ensuring public safety. Airspace awareness reduces the risk of drone interference with other aircraft in addition to people and property on the ground.

Equipping drones with remote ID technology builds on previous steps taken by the FAA and the drone industry to integrate operations safely into the national airspace system. Part 107 of the federal aviation regulations prohibits covered drone operations over people and at night unless the operator obtains a waiver from the FAA. The new regulations jointly provide increased flexibility to conduct certain small UAS without obtaining waiver.

"The new rules make way for the further integration of drones into our airspace by addressing safety and security concerns," said FAA Administrator **Steve Dickson**. "They get us closer to the day when we will more routinely see drone operations such as the delivery of packages."

Global standards organization **ASTM International** and **RTCA** announced a collaboration allowing for the joint development of consensus standards for drones. The collaboration would focus on an aviation system to provide detect and avoid (DAA) capability for drones operating beyond visual line of sight.

•faa.gov

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BREAKING NEWS

Wonderla Bangalore becomes first theme park in India to get COVID-safe certification

BENGALURU, India — Wonderla Bangalore announced on January 19 that it has secured the COV-Safe certification from Bureau Veritas India.

The Managing Director of Wonderla Holidays Limited, Arun Chittilappilly, received the certificate from Benny John, the regional general manager south for Bureau Veritas India on January 15.

The company claimed that it was the first theme park chain in the country to receive this highly coveted certification that would further help reduce the risk of the pandemic for visitors and park employees.

The COV-Safe Hygiene Assessment is designed to reassure visitors and employees entering the premises about the good practices in place to prevent contamination during the unlocking phase of any business premise with large people movement.

The certification will help Wonderla Bangalore as it has taken into consideration areas contributing to lack of hygiene and



Wonderla Bangalore became the first amusement facility in India to receive the nation's COV-Safe Hygiene Assessment certification. COURTESY WONDERLA BANGALORE

supporting in mitigating risks, ensuring compliance, prompt procurement and infrastructure planning and employing sanitization measures. COV-Safe Hygiene Assessment is based on the parameters of leadership, risk management, compliance management, personal hygiene, facility hygiene, monitoring measurement and analysis.

As part of the procedure,

Bureau Veritas first assessed Wonderla Bangalore remotely followed by an onsite audit for the hygiene management system. Wonderla Bangalore has been awarded a Diamond grade certification for meeting the required standards. The certificate is valid for a year, and during this period, the theme park will be reassessed for certification every four months.

•wonderla.com

Amusement Expo International shifts 2021 date pattern by one day



MOKENA, Ill. — To provide an extra setup day for Amusement Expo International (AEI) exhibitors, the dates for this year's AEI in Las Vegas will move ahead by one day, with the education program and Gala set for Tuesday, June 29, and the exhibits open on Wednesday, June 30 and Thursday, July 1, 2021. The move allows those companies exhibiting in the Bowl Expo in Louisville added time to ship, travel and set up their booths in the Las Vegas Convention Center. The adjacent Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino will serve as the headquarters hotel. To give all attendees and exhibitors peace of mind when making plans to participate in this year's AEI, event owners American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) and AMOA have extended the cancellation date to May 27, 2021. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

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McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance brings together an unmatched team of risk management professionals with over 35 years of expertise. Since 1983, we have been solely committed to the Amusement and Entertainment Industries. We have dedicated our professional lives to the safety and security of our clients and the industry. The culture of 'safety first' is a given in all we do.

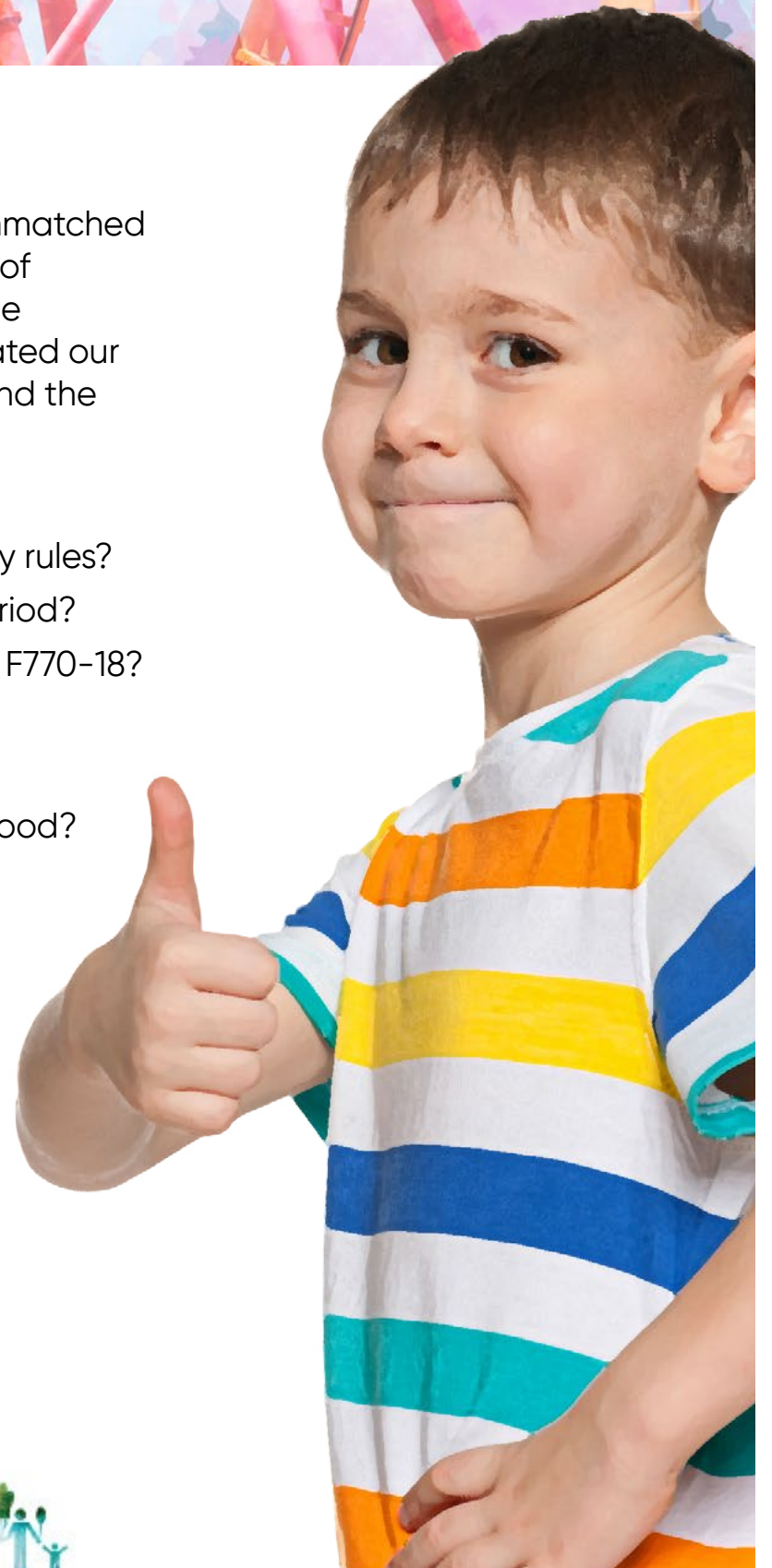
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- Are your ride operators following the manufacturers safety rules?
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- Are you following your responsibilities as outlined in ASTM F770-18?
- Are you a member of ASTM?
- What safety signage do you have in place?
- Is your signage placed appropriately and clearly understood?

At McGowan Allied we often provide safety audits with our clients so that you can have another set of eyes on your park or midway, ensuring that you are as safe as can be for your guests and staff. We also have many safety resources on our website that we would love for you to check out. We are your partner in safety!

So, give us a call and let us show you how we can help!

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