

Amusement TODAY

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS!

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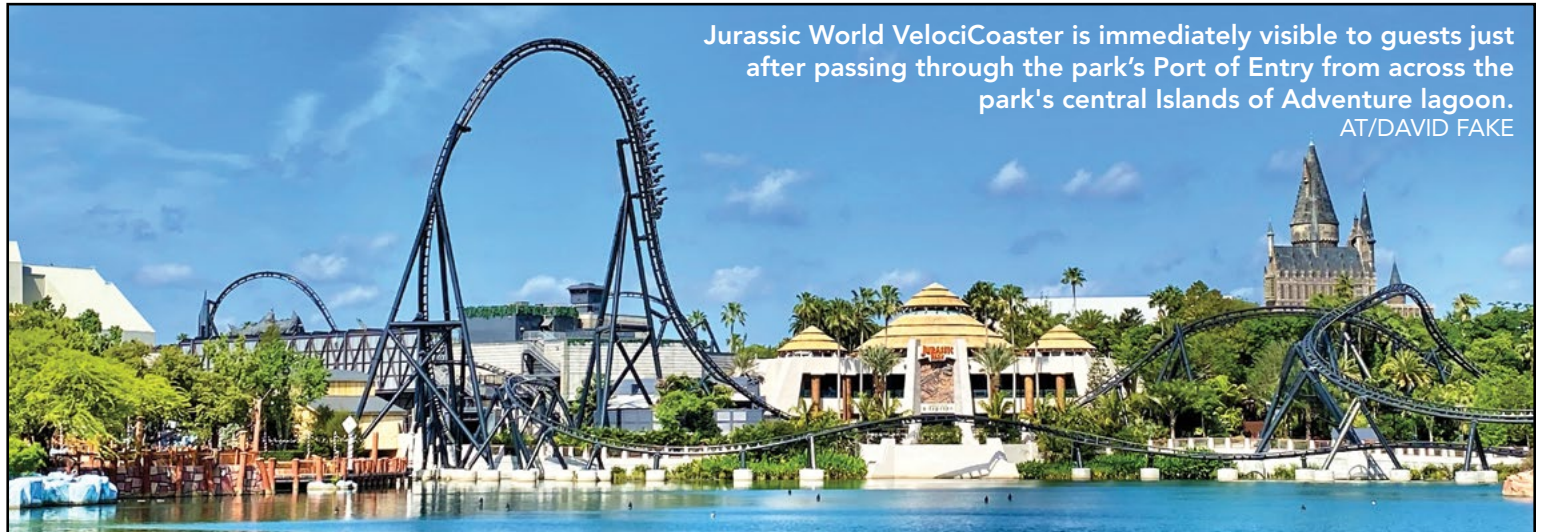
June 2021 | Vol. 25 • Issue 3

Digital Edition

Universal Creative hypes, delivers with Jurassic World VelociCoaster

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — Jurassic World VelociCoaster, the much-hyped velociraptor-themed roller coaster at Universal Orlando Resort's Islands of Adventure has been uncaged. The Universal Creative and Intamin Amusement Rides collaboration had big shoes to fill as a follow up to their 2019 collaboration, Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure, which early on was fraught with technical issues, but, ultimately, incredibly well-received. Jurassic World VelociCoaster's early reviews from guests and media who have had the opportunity to experience the attraction ahead of its official opening, consis-



Jurassic World VelociCoaster is immediately visible to guests just after passing through the park's Port of Entry from across the park's central Islands of Adventure lagoon.
AT/DAVID FAKE

tently suggest that the highly competitive Orlando market may just have a new contender for the most exciting and thrilling themed coaster.

After holding a media sneak

peek and an Annual Passholder preview period from May 2-5, Jurassic World VelociCoaster soft opened in technical rehearsal, unannounced, to all resort guests for the first time on May 7. This

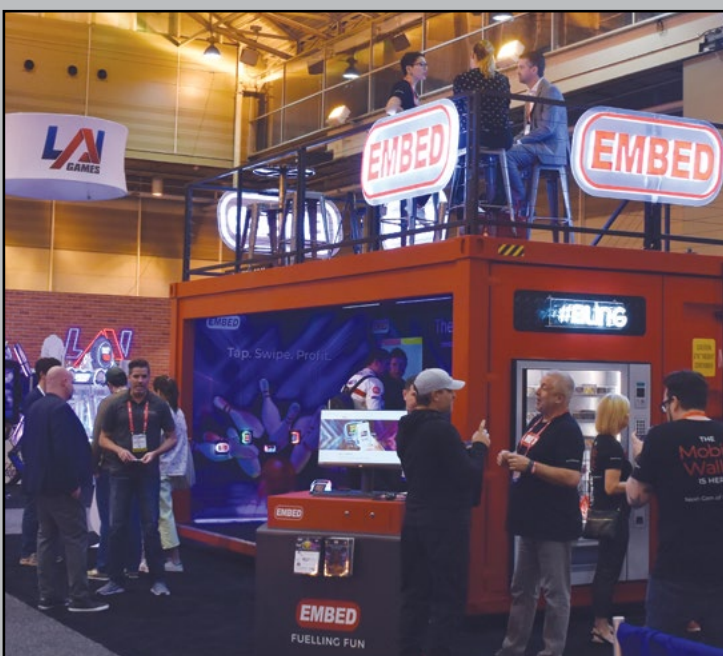
news came over a month ahead of the previously announced official opening date of the attraction slated for June 10. During this technical rehearsal period all major components are installed

and operational, but some tweaks, changes, and updates may occur prior to the official opening.

Soft openings, depending

► See JURASSIC, page 8

Amusement Expo organizers, attendees excited to get face to face



Amusement Expo 2021 will be a return to in-person meetings and exhibits for the amusement industry. The 2020 event (pictured above) was one of the final expos held prior to the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown of most in-person events. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Organizers of the upcoming Amusement Expo International (AEI) have every reason to believe the event, set for June 29-July 1, will be a success.

"We are up over 50 percent in registration the same number of days out from the convention this year over 2020," said Peter Gustafson, in mid-May.

Gustafson is the executive vice president of the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA), one of the two co-sponsoring organizations.

"Part of this is probably because we are in Vegas this year, but also people are just ready to get back together," Gustafson said.

He has vivid memories of last year's AEI in New Orleans.

"You know, sometimes when you are attending a convention, you sort of get in a bubble," Gustafson said. "Last year, it was like I left to go to the convention one day and returned home to a totally different world because of the pandemic. I got on an airplane on March 12, 2020, to come home and I haven't been on an airplane since."

The AEI is an annual convention featuring and showcasing vendors, developers and businesses for the coin-op and revenue-generating amusement, music and family entertainment industry. The AAMA is a trade organization representing the manufacturers, distributors, suppliers and location owner/operators for the coin-operated amusement industry.

The Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) is the other co-sponsoring trade association. It is an advocate for those individuals and companies engaged in the currency-activated amusement, vending, music and family entertainment equipment business.

Traditionally held in March of the year, AEI planners moved the show to late June. The rationale for the rescheduling is that it would provide additional time for attendees, exhibitors and all involved to recover and resume business operations that have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to pushing the dates back, the event management company, W.T. Glasgow Inc., has planned for additional safety by moving the show into two halls allowing for wider aisles to

► See EXPO, page 6

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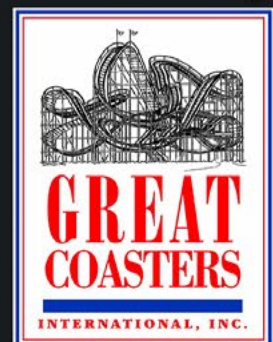
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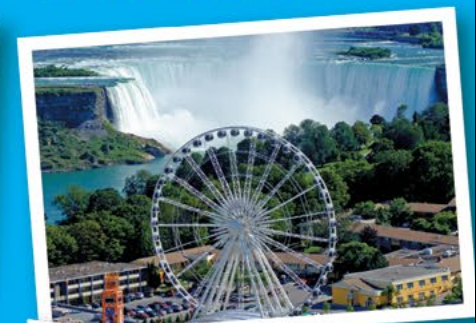
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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint

Amusement returns



Robinson

March of 2020 was a tale of two worlds. As it started, things were looking up like never before. While attending the Amusement Expo International 2020 in New Orleans, there was a vibe of positivity. The industry as a whole was looking forward to the year to come, excited about new products and new ideas. The shadow of COVID-19 had not really been cast yet, just a mildly talked about new virus that was making a couple headlines. We'd been through the Swine Flu, West Nile and others. There was no suspecting this was anything more.

Flash forward about 24 hours from the end of AEI 2020, and the world had started to turn sideways. Attractions were shutting down, expos and fairs were being postponed or canceled, and there was more change looming.

Amusement Today has covered extensively the adaptability of the FEC industry. They are attractions ready to pivot as the world demands. That flexibility allowed many FECs to prosper even during the heights of the pandemic.

Now, Amusement Expo International 2021 is just on the horizon. It required adapting to occur, changing its scheduled dates multiple time and planning ahead to promote an environment all attending would be comfortable in. However, it's happening. An in-person industry expo is welcoming attendees onto an indoor showfloor to start promoting the future of the business of fun once again.

We have — finally — come full circle.

With crowds starting to fill open parks, many facilities dropping outdoor mask requirements, new-for-2020 attractions finally debuting and now the return of in-person expos, the industry is starting to feel a long-awaited rebound from the unprecedented 2020 pandemic. And the family entertainment center side of the industry is leading the way.

Want proof? Funplex has opened an all new location in Myrtle Beach. The Veltmeijer Group has opened more than a dozen of its branded FECs in the past 12 months. Scene75 is about to add a location in the Chicago area. Revenue at Urban Air Adventure Parks is up, setting numbers higher than in 2019.

The sun is setting on the challenges of the past year, and the new dawn is loaded with the promise of possibility and hope ... and families eager to return to the entertainment attractions that deliver smiles, escape and innovative fun for everyone.



INDUSTRY VOICE: Michael Browning, CEO & founder of Urban Air Adventure Parks

The importance of play

Without a doubt, it took a Herculean effort to reopen all 154 Urban Air Adventure Parks across America. As a parent of three young children myself, I witnessed the negative effect the pandemic had on my own kids during the shutdown. I wondered just how severe the removal of unstructured playtime impacted other families.



Browning

Last week our company confirmed my suspicions. We conducted an independent third-party survey through Kelton. The survey was fielded among 500 nationally representative American parents with children under the age of 18 in the United States. The survey was done online during the period of April 29-May 7, 2021 and has a margin error of +/- 4.4%. The results were jaw dropping. 99% of the moms and dads who participated told us the lack of free play caused their child to feel isolated and lonely.

From our humble beginnings, Urban Air's mission has always been to prioritize less screen time and more fun play with peers because we know it sparks creativity and

builds confidence. So, this survey lit a fire under my staff. Our teams worked tirelessly to safely open our doors to guests again. And now we are back to miles of smiles offering birthday parties, indoor skydiving, ProZone Performance Trampolines, Warrior Courses, Battle Beam, Dodgeball, Go-Karts and our signature Sky Rider just to name a few.

One of my proudest moments to date was reporting to our staff that in April 2021, typically one of our slowest months systemwide, our revenue was up over 2019 pre-COVID revenues by an average of 28%. This told me something. Children who were forced to adapt to an ever-changing world brought on by COVID were being supported by their parents to interact with other kids again giving them the freedom to explore like they did prior to the virus spread.

Urban Air proudly follows your lead America... We support those families in their pursuit to let loose.

As we say at home, let 'em fly!

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

AmusementTODAY
Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader

Amusement Today is an independent, privately-owned trade newspaper published 14 times per year by Amusement Today Inc., P.O. Box 5427, Arlington, Texas 76005. The entire contents of this newspaper, and its related websites, are Copyrighted and Trademarked 2021 by Amusement Today Inc., all rights reserved.

Address: P.O. Box 5427, Arlington, Texas 76005-5427, USA

Deliveries: 2004 E. Randol Mill Road #502, Arlington, Texas 76011, USA

Phone: (817) 460-7220

Fax: (817) 265-NEWS (6397)

Websites: www.AmusementToday.com, www.GoldenTicketAwards.com

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

Founder & Publisher

Gary Slade • (817) 460-7220
gslade@amusementtoday.com

Accounting & Classified

Sammy Piccola • (817) 460-7220
spiccola@amusementtoday.com

Assistant Office Manager, Circulation

Savannah Breen • (817) 460-7220
sbreen@amusementtoday.com

Advertising

Sue Nichols • (615) 477-5432
snichols@amusementtoday.com

Editor & Production Manager

John Robinson • (513) 256-1441
jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

Editorial

Tim Baldwin • (972) 697-9745
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Jeffrey Seifert • (817) 460-7220
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

B. Derek Shaw • (717) 843-3050
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Pam Sherborne • (615) 308-3310
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

Monthly Contributors

David Fake, Bubba Flint, Lottie Minick, Richard Munch, Janice Witherow

Association Memberships

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

Industry Affiliated Charities

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



2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Michael Goss, Austin's

Michael Goss and the folks at **Austin's** (near Austin, Texas) have hit a home run in their approach to perfecting and modernizing family entertainment centers. Already a popular destination with classic go-karts, miniature golf, bowling, arcade games (and more), Austin's recent expansion features a super-cool social club called REVL where guests can find billiards, darts, ping pong and even curling ... all while enjoying craft beers and a tasty menu. Michael has come a long way since his first job in the industry working a mirror maze at the age of 10!

Title: President/Co-Owner.

Number of years in the industry: Lifelong. My first job was working a mirror maze at 10 years old on a family owned pier in the U.K.

Best thing about the industry: The people. Our guests who look to us for amusement and creating memories, our team members that hopefully realize a passion for the business, and your peers that share the same passion.

Favorite amusement ride: The Waltzer.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ...
6 feet under!

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Government oversight and regulations. But the industry as a whole will rebound to be bigger, better and stronger after overcoming the past 18 months.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ... Sensory overload ... laughter and screams ... sweet and savory ... throngs of happy people.

If I had to appear on a reality show, it would be ...
American Restoration.

It's June! My ideal meal for a summer "grill out" is ...
Anything off a smoker and all of the fixin's.

Favorite ice cream flavor:
Dulce de leche.

Cooler television doctor: Doogie Howser.

The one sports team I always root for is ...
The Cowboys!

Ten years ago, I was ...
Not as smart as I am today.

I would love to vacation here:
The Maldives.

In one word, living near Austin is ...
Fantastic!



Michael Goss has been a part of the family entertainment center industry since age 10. He is currently the owner of the recently expanded Austin's, an FEC near Austin, Texas. COURTESY AUSTIN'S

My idea of relaxing is ...
Being in, on or by a body of water.

Favorite summertime drink:
Ice cold beer.

My last good night's sleep was ...
In 2019.

The most interesting person I have ever met would have to be ...
I can't really narrow that one down. I find that through conversation everyone is interesting.

If I could "do over" something from yesterday, it would be ...
In 1997 somebody suggested I buy stock in a "new online bookstore." I laughed.

When my alarm goes off, I ...
Try to dislodge from being surrounded by a canine or two.

Favorite place to hang out and think:
The outdoors.

Technology ... love it or loathe it?
Love it ... until it doesn't work, then I loathe it.

My favorite year in high school was ...
Senior ... I only had half-days and played golf every afternoon.

The web site I am most often on is ...
Amazon

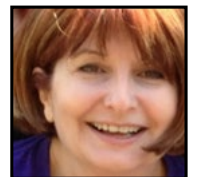
THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Florida birthday fun



TAMPA, Fla. — Mary Chris Smith threw a special over-the-top birthday celebration for her sister, Annie Shurgott. The evening included music by local band Pirate Flag, with several local boats lined up on the water enjoying the music. From left: Jim Seay, Lisa Cummings, Shurgott, Smith and Tom Sheehan. COURTESY TOM SHEEHAN

Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

Free cigarettes and information

September 1979, **Bob Sonnamaker**, a talented showman, called and asked if I'd like to work with him and his sister **Linda** handing out free cigarettes at the **State Fair of Texas**. I agreed.

The first day of the fair, Linda went out for food, which left Bob and I by ourselves when **Robert Halford**, the fair's public relations director, noticed us and walked over to our booth to say hello.

We visited and Halford said, "I've started an information booth and would love you two to come run it. How much are they paying you here?" Bob answered some ridiculous amount per hour, to which Halford replied, "I'll double it." Bob immediately started stuffing the free cigarettes down his shirt as we left.

The information booth was located below Big Tex's outstretched right hand in Big Tex Circle. We started our shift not knowing where most of the rides and attractions were, but Bob would give me the look, and I'd tell our guests to start their search at the back of the park. Amazingly, no one came back to complain.

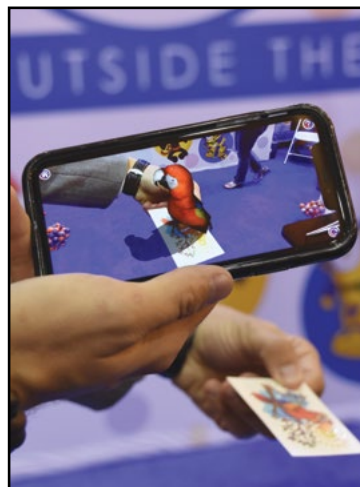
Not too long thereafter, we realized we'd left without a thought for Linda. When we remembered, I told Bob, "She's going to hurt you."

He replied, "And you."

"Nope, I can run faster than you and I shall," was my answer to that.

It all turned out okay in the end, however. Bob Sonnamaker became the voice of Big Tex the next two years. Linda became executive assistant to the general manager of the fair. Linda and I are still friends and Big Tex remains my favorite boyfriend ever.

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 minickassociates@gmail.com.



The Amusement Expo features cutting edge VR exhibits (above left), innovative ideas such as augmented reality temporary tattoos (above middle) as well as gaming classics such as video games and pinball cabinets (above right). AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

EXPO Continued from page 1

accommodate social distancing.

Ann Purpura at Glasgow Inc. expects the show to draw about 2,500 attendees, which is just about on par with the show's traditional attendance. In mid-May, there were about 130 exhibitors, making it about 80 percent full. Purpura felt positive they would reach the same mark as last year.

"We always have a number of exhibitors that wait to register, same for attendees," Purpura said.

Lori Schneider, executive vice president, AMOA, was excited at the strength of registration so far. But she did say she wouldn't be surprised if their numbers were down a little.

"We are having a lot of interest with things opening around the country," Schneider said. "People are really looking forward to getting back together. Pushing the dates from March to late June, I feel, was a very positive move. The timing is good to reconnect and to move forward."

The AEI combines educational sessions as well as a trade show. Educational sessions run the entire day on Tuesday, June 29. They will be held at the **Westgate Las Vegas Resort and Casino**, which is the headquarters hotel for the event.

The trade show will run 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, June 30, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on July 1. It is being held in the North Hall 1 of the **Las Vegas Convention Center**, which is conveniently adjacent to the Westgate.

Both Gustafson and Schneider are looking forward to the educational sessions.

"We have 22 sessions planned for that day," Gustafson said. "We have a full slate."

Gustafson said they have expanded the educational series to five tracks. Those tracks include COVID-19 recovery, sale and operations, people, industry trends and virtual reality.

Schneider is looking forward to the sharing of ideas both during the sessions and on the trade show floor.

"The COVID-19 pandemic presented a lot of challenges for us as an industry, but it also expanded some opportunities," Schneider said. "With all the technologies that were used during the past year, there will be a lot of shared expertise and changes to business operations."

Gustafson said he saw many business owners and operators become very creative during the 2020 shutdowns to make it through the year.

"It will be interesting to hear about some of those things they did," Gustafson said. "I think many of these things will remain."

He gave an example of how some pinball machine owners were able to pivot during 2020.

"Some pinball machine owners that normally rent out their machines to facilities such as FECs and bowling alleys instead did home rentals," he said. "People didn't want to stop playing. Instead of spending say \$10,000 on a machine, they could pay a monthly rental and not leave their homes."

"I am very optimistic about this industry as a whole," Gustafson said.

AEI will kick off on Tuesday, June 29, with a keynote address by **John Kriesel**, a motivational speaker. He will speak on Lessons to be Learned. Kriesel plans to share how to overcome challenges by hard work and acceptance of situations.

In 2006 Kriesel had a near fatal incident from the explosion of a 200-pound roadside bomb in an Iraq battlefield as a member of the U.S. Army. He went through 35 surgeries to save his life and months of recovery. He ended up losing both his legs.

Kriesel is the author of a book, written along with author Jim Kosmo, titled "STILL STANDING: The Story of SSG John Kriesel."

Educational sessions will

run through 3:45 p.m. that day.

Some of the topic titles include: Analyze This! Using Metrics to Improve Efficiency; Financing and Real Estate in Post COVID World: What's Changed; Pinball 2.0: Creating Success on the Street; eSports, It's Time to Pay Attention; Top Tips for Maintaining a Positive Reputation in the Digital World; COVID Confessions: Lessons Learned and New SOPs; Payment Options Come in All Forms, Are You Taking Advantage of Them?; Maintaining the Experience, Continuing the Game after They Leave Your Location and Security Preparedness...Don't be Caught Off Guard.

The All-Industry Gala Reception will be held that evening, also at the Westgate.

The exhibit hall will be open the next day, and that afternoon the Industry Rewards and Beers and Cheers Reception has been scheduled.

Thursday's exhibit hall time



2021

CONFERENCE: JUNE 29
TRADE SHOW: JUNE 30-JULY 1

AMUSEMENTEXPO.ORG

LAS VEGAS CONVENTION CENTER, NORTH HALL 1 & 2 // LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Game On: Re-Imagine Your Future

will close out the event.

Gustafson said all the heavy players will be on the floor exhibiting their products. International companies are not expected to be there as travel restrictions are still in place.

Some of this year's exhibitors include: **Apple Industries, Art Attack, Bad Dog Games LLC, Axalta Coating Systems, Battle Company Laser Tag, Bay Tek Entertainment, Betson, BMI Merchandise, Creative Works, Delta Strike Laser Tag, Embed, Elite Gaming Technology, Firestone Financial, Intercard, LaserBlast, Magnetic Cash, Omega Carpet Patterns**

and **Peek-A-Boo Toys**.

Other exhibits are: **LAI Games, Rhode Island Novelty, TrioTech, Zydexo, SMART Software, and Inovative Technology Americas Inc.**

The AEI is co-located with the **Laser Tag Convention**, which offers seminars for both the current laser tag operator and developing entrepreneurs.

It also is co-located with **National Bulk Vendors Association (NBVA)**, a trade association comprised of the manufacturers, distributors and operators of bulk vending machines and products.

•amusementexpo.org

Amusement Expo International 2021 schedule of events

Tuesday, June 29

7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

AEI Education

Registration Open

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Registration Open

LVCC, North Hall 1 & 2

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Opening Keynote:

Still Standing. Still Smiling

9:45 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Education seminars

12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.

AEI

Education Day Luncheon

4 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Closing Session:

Leadership During Crisis

5:15 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.

All-Industry

Gala Reception

Wednesday, June 30

8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Registration Open

LVCC, North Hall 1 & 2

10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Exhibit Hall Open

Room: LVCC, North Hall 1 & 2

5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Industry Awards Presentations

Beers and Cheers Reception

AEI Town Square, Booth 909

Thursday, July 01

8:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

AMOA Breakfast and

Membership Meeting

Westgate Hotel, Pavilion 2

8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Registration Open

LVCC, North Hall 1 & 2

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Exhibit Hall Open

LVCC, North Hall 1 & 2

Amusement Today will host 2021 Golden Ticket Awards online

ARLINGTON, Texas — *Amusement Today* Publisher **Gary Slade** has announced that the 2021 **Golden Ticket Awards** voting would return to its normal selection of categories and a special presentation event will be held online.

"After an extensive search to find the right location for our annual in-person event, it became clear that our industry is still in recovery mode," explained Slade. "Our staff thought it was best to hold off on the in-person event for one more year."

"We are hard at work to get our in-person event back on track in 2022 and hopefully that will be in San Antonio as originally planned for 2019 before the pandemic hit."

Slade continued, "As parks ramp up for summer operation, recent labor shortages have made multiple shift operation difficult. While industry suppliers have reported strong spare parts sales, new ride



sales remain low as our industry slowly returns to form."

Once the 2021 Golden Ticket voting has concluded, *Amusement Today* will announce the winners via taped programming on the web similar to how the awards were announced in 2020. The **National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives** in Plainview, Texas, will serve as the backdrop for this year's winning ticket announcements, showcasing to the industry the progress that has been made on the facility.

The class of 2021 Golden Ticket Awards winners will be announced online on Friday, September 9, 2021.

• amusementtoday.com
• goldenticketawards.com

Nominations for 2021 Golden Tickets

In addition to the multiple core categories of the Golden Ticket Awards, a group of specific awards will reflect advancements in the industry. With the pandemic having significant effects on the 2020 season, both 2020 and 2021 will be combined in certain categories. *Amusement Today* is seeking nominations of worthy recipients. Nominations can be made by any industry professional: park employee or operator, manufacturer, consulting firm, etc. All nominations should be sent to Golden Ticket Awards Communications Coordinator Tim Baldwin at tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com. Use "Golden Ticket Nominations" as the subject line. Nominations must be received by June 30.

Nominations are being accepted for:

Best Innovation of 2021

This award acknowledges any new product, service or procedure that demonstrates innovative improvement, safety or an increase in customer service, the guest experience or sales.

Leadership Award

A park, company or individual may be nominated for efforts in successfully addressing an industry issue, weather crisis or world event, an improvement in training or raising standards within the industry.

Best New Show of 2021

Nominations for this category must be a recording of a show that can be sent via a video transfer service. Each entry must be a completely new show for this season (not just a new cast).

Breakout FEC of 2020/2021

This category recognizes family entertainment centers who have expanded, made improvements or implemented marketing strategies that have resulted in increased attendance.

Best New Ride Installation for 2020/2021

This award is a comprehensive acknowledgement of ride experience, theming, inclusion into the area, impact on the park's audience, re-rideability and operational reliability.

The 2021 Golden Ticket Awards will be announced on September 9, 2021.

Amusement Expo International 2021

June 29-July 1, 2021, Las Vegas, Nevada

Exhibitor Listing

3XE	315	Embed	676	Patriot Gaming	1041
AC Radiocom	933	exA-Arcadia	338	Payment Alliance International, Inc	433
Adrenaline Amusements	129	Financial Systems Corp.	974	PB&J Industries, Inc.	417
AEI Town Square	909	Firestone Financial	561	Peek-A-Boo Toys	817
American Alpha, Inc.	125	Fish Game Kings / Bubba Technology Group	759	PhoenixDarts US	1040
American Changer	362	Fun Express	551	Primer Games, LLC	329
American Engineered Products	115	Game Time International	775	Prominent Gaming	215
AMI Entertainment	437	GameBox Builders, LLC	767	Pyramid Technologies, Inc.	334
AMOA - National Dart Association	1031	Gold Standard Games	941	Quattronics	867
Amusement & Music Operators Association (AMOA)	909	Gulf Coast Initiative, LLC	924	Redemption Plus	937
Amusement Connect	826	Hoffman Mint	360	RePlay Magazine	330
Amusement Source International	668	Hownd	117	Rhode Island Novelty	275
Amusement Today	429	IAAPA	231	S&B Candy and Toy/ St. Louis Game Company	715
Andamiro USA Corp.	637	ICT	325	Sacoa Cashless System	407
Antique Games Ltd.	674	Ideal One Amusement Software	928	SafePark USA	728
Apple Industries	751	IGPM Group	224	Sega Amusements International Ltd	339
Arachnid 360	237	Incredible Technologies	151	Semnox Solutions LLC	617
Art Attack	776	Innovative Concepts in Entertainment Inc.	451	Shaffer Distributing	165
AstroSystems, Inc.	525	Innovative Technology Americas, Inc	431	Silent Partner Software, LLC	559
ATM Merchant Services	555	InterCard	839	Smart industries Corp.	641
Aurora Technology, Inc. (ATI)	517	Ivey Promotions	768	Smart Software	207
AVS Companies	235	Jennison Entertainment Technologies	157	Stern Pinball, INC	267
Axalta Coating Systems	515	KioSoft	618	Sureshot Redemption	725
Bad Dog Games, LLC	415	KLOPP: Money Handling Equipment	424	Sureway Gaming	717
Bandai Namco Amusement America	139	Komuse America, Inc.	175	The Really Big Crane Company	631
Banilla Games	660	LAI Games	465	TouchMagix Inc.	528
Battle Company Laser Tag	265	Laser Tag Museum	1067	TouchTunes	650
Bay Tek Entertainment	735	LaserBlast	475	Tourist Attractions & Parks Magazine	574
Betson	351	Laserforce	876	Toy Factory, LLC	825
Big Daddy Games LLC	261	LaserTag by Zone	729	Trainertainment	233
Bissell Commercial	976	Lock America Inc.	342	Trestle	516
Blacklight Attractions / Halloween Productions	507	Lyte	967	Triotech	375
BMI Merchandise	736	M3t	309	TrustWorkz	874
Bowling Center Management	831	Magnetic Cash	714	Univest Capital	935
Captains Auction Warehouse	724	McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance	616	US Bowling Corporation	419
Cardinal Xpress	317	Meridian Equipment Finance	824	Valley Dynamo	251
Coastal Amusements	539	Minigolf.io - Transforming Mini Games	307	vectorwrx studios	607
Coin Op Marketplace LLC	514	Moss Distributing	833	Venco Business Solutions	425
Complete Signs	818	Nayax	332	Virtuix	532
Creative Works	625	NoahTronic International Limited	814	VRsenal	225
Cypress ATM	626	North American Dart Organization	214	We Create Entertainment	517
Delta Strike Laser Tag	624	Omega Carpet Patterns	374	World Plush Inc.	109
Elaut Group USA	740	Pace-O-Matic	531	Zydexo	614
Elite Gaming Technology, Inc.	524	Party Center Software	718		

► JURASSIC

Continued from page 1

on delays and complications may not be offered for all new attractions, and even when they are, they are rarely promised. As such, there is no guarantee that Jurassic World VelociCoaster will be open at any given time or day between now and its official opening. There is no set schedule, and each day the attraction may only open for a short period of time, all day, or not at all depending on necessary tweaks and required changes. An example of this is Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure, which had no period of soft opening prior to its official opening in 2019. The ride continued to be tweaked for months after it opened.

In contrast, Jurassic World VelociCoaster, has been almost continually running in various stages of empty, with water dummies, or with park/manufacture team members since last fall, all the while teasing guests, enthusiasts and industry insiders who could barely wait for their opportunity to experience the attraction for themselves.

Throughout the testing period, Universal remained mum as to an opening date, as well as most other aspects and features of the ride. This silence created an immense buzz of speculation surrounding those details. The enthusiast and influencer blogs all had their theories and ideas of what the ride would (and should) ultimately become; consistently posting, commenting, and debating the facts versus speculation surrounding the ride.

Parks delight in this level of chatter and buzz, and often go to great lengths and expense to encourage it. Still, on occasion this excitement and anticipation ends up backfiring on the park and the attraction. This most commonly occurs when speculation spirals out of control, and the end product, once revealed, does not live up to the level of



From the moment they enter the attraction, riders will be confronted by velociraptors from Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment's blockbuster *Jurassic World* films (above left). Designers also had the foresight to install electronic lockers for loose articles in the queue just before the boarding station (above right). AT/DAVID FAKE

expectation created by its buzz.

There appears to be no such reason for concern on the part of the Universal Creative Team in terms of artificially high expectations leading to disappointment when it comes to Jurassic World VelociCoaster. Especially considering the wildly positive reviews pouring in from those fortunate enough to have already raced with the raptors, over the three-plus weeks of soft opening so far for the coaster.

So, what is so amazing about Jurassic World VelociCoaster?

It all starts just beyond Islands of Adventure's Port of Entry, where guests arrive at the central point of the park's Islands of Adventure lagoon around which the eight themed "islands" are situated. The Jurassic Park area is directly opposite of the Port of Entry, and it is impossible to miss Jurassic World VelociCoaster's 155-foot-tall top hat element rising majestically on the far shore of the lagoon, strategically placed with the Jurassic Park Discovery Center building as its backdrop. It is truly a magnificent post card-worthy photo spot.

But the real excitement comes in experiencing Jurassic World VelociCoaster. That experience is more than just the ride itself and begins immediately upon approaching the attraction's queue after passing beneath two large velociraptor statues on pedestals on the pathways lead-

ing up to the ride's entrance. Universal Creative designers have explained these statues were designed to pay homage to the original entrance of the now-defunct Dueling Dragons coaster.

In the queue is a unique meet-and-greet where guests come within feet of muzzled velociraptors in a futuristic stable-like room. Again, the creative team effectively creates an atmosphere that suspends disbelief, this time using audio-animatronics.

Upon reaching the child swap and non-rider waiting area, guests are treated to another unique and practical queue design feature. Here Universal Creative had the foresight to install electronic lockers for loose articles and metal detectors just before guests reach the final show scene and then the boarding station. These same lockers are then able to be accessed by guests from a second door on the reverse side, which faces the ride's exit area just after disembarking. This feature is a particularly clever means of allowing guests the ability to utilize their smart phones and maintain possession of other, small, loose objects throughout their wait in the queue. This ingenious design is certain to be replicated in future attraction installations at parks even outside of the Universal umbrella.

Throughout the queue, guests learn about the cutting-



edge new coaster, which Jurassic World is touting as its newest "carnivore expansion" from Dr. Wu (**BD Wong**). And in the final show scene of the ride's queue guests are greeted by Claire Dearing (**Bryce Dallas Howard**), where she offers some words of reassurance. It is also here that Owen Grady (**Chris Pratt**) sounds a few final words of warning, "What could go wrong?"

Upon arriving at the ride's airport-terminal-like station, which offers incredible views of the coaster's first half inside the spaghetti-bowl paddock, guests board modern, gorgeously designed and stylized trains that are aglow with blue onboard lighting. The cars have low profile sides and raised seating that leaves most guests' feet dangling off the floor of the sleek train cars. And when taking a closer look at the trains, it is noticeable that their beauty is marred with velociraptor scratch marks — just another intentional detail that the Universal Creative team did not overlook.

Boarding and dispatch of the trains is fluid and quick, thanks to a single lap bar restraint (no shoulder harnesses here!). While the use of only a lap bar is uncommon on a roller coaster with inversions, and safety is not compromised, it does permit greater upper body movement — a feature that is lauded by enthusiasts, yet creates an additional level of uncertainty, fear

and foreboding for many members of the general public.

Featuring dual launches, a 155-foot top hat, an 80-degree drop (Universal's steepest drop yet), and even a span of track where riders pass inverted over Universal guests and pathways, Jurassic World VelociCoaster delivers a ride that is an expertly calculated and engineered manipulation of forces. The grand finale moment of its 4,700 feet of track is the mosasaurus roll. This unique element creates yet another few moments of extreme airtime, but this time while upside down just feet above the waters of the lagoon and making riders wonder if they are about to go for a swim.

Guests and enthusiasts across social media have described Jurassic World VelociCoaster in such powerful words as, "Exhilaratingly thrilling," "Relentless Fun," "Non-stop excitement," "Orlando's Best," and "utterly terrifying!"

There is no doubt that the Universal Creative Team behind Jurassic World VelociCoaster put much thought, research and ingenious engineering into what they were creating. Attractions this unique, well themed, exciting and comfortably engineered require much effort, time and deliberation; they do not "just get lucky" or "just happen." In fact, attractions this flawlessly executed do not happen often at all.

•universalorlando.com



Jurassic World VelociCoaster, Florida's fastest and tallest launch coaster, features dual launches, a 155-foot-tall top hat, inversions and other intense elements throughout the heavily themed coaster. COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO; AT/DAVID FAKE

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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Paultons Park opens Tornado Alley — page 20 / Attendance down at Florida State Fair — page 32

New Funplex lights up Myrtle Beach sky, delivers unique thrills

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — When the story is told, it will seem more like fate built the new **Funplex** amusement park that opened May 21 along Ocean Boulevard in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. But make no mistake, fate may have let the players collide, but being able to fit seven rides, a restaurant and other parts and pieces needed to operate an amusement park into 18,000 square-feet of space was sheer determination.

"I'll have to say that I was a little challenged with the size," said **Brian Williams**, CEO, Funplex. "It took a long time to find a good mix of rides to fit into this area."

There were other challenges as well. Construction plans were set to start in October, 2020, just when another COVID-19 wave was hitting the U.S. Completion was expected to be Memorial Day weekend 2021.

In addition, just like others in the attractions industry, restrictions and closures were hitting the company's other two locations hard. Both loca-



The new Funplex in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, has certainly made a huge splash along Ocean Boulevard. COURTESY FUNPLEX

tions are in New Jersey, one in East Hanover and the other in Mount Laurel.

There were numerous discussions. But, at the end of the day, owner **Randy Lahn** pressed the go button and that was that.

Funplex Myrtle Beach opened May 21 with seven

rides from kiddie to thrill rides in an 18,000-square-foot area right across the street from the Atlantic Ocean.

"My relationship with them started at the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions Expo (IAAPA)** in Orlando in 2019," said **Len Soled**, **Rides 4 U**, which, among other things, represents **SBF/Visa Group** in the U.S.

All seven rides are SBF/Visa and were brokered through Rides 4 U.

"That was the year I had the air coaster there," Soled said. "Randy had come by the booth and was interested in it. And then he just kept coming back and looking at it."

"After the show was over, I sort of forgot about that," he said. "About 60 days later, I got a phone call. He had gotten some land and wanted me to work with them to get the rides."

It seems that Lahn happened to meet the land owner while golfing in Myrtle Beach.

"I have to tell you, I don't

think we could have squeezed anything else in there," Soled said.

Ridewerks Inc. did all the installs on the rides at Funplex. **Joe Cadmus**, Ridewerks president, agreed the Funplex space was a little tight but said it worked.

"There has been a lot of interest in the park with people stopping by and asking us when we are going to open," said Cadmus, still on the site a few days before opening. "It seems the market will support it."

The mix of rides at the park are: Fun in the Sun air coaster; Mach Fun, a 50-foot-tall tower plane ride; Hook and Slice, a mini reverse; Sky Velocity, a 70-foot-tall drop tower; Up and Overboard space gun ride; Hang 10 Silly Cups, a tea cup ride and a Sunny Day swing ride.

It all worked. In fact, when visitors walk under the entrance gate, they also are walking under the roller coaster.

Williams said there is an



exciting lighting package on all the rides, but he is very excited about the extra lighting detail they are using.

"We have purchased a programming tool that allows us to synchronize all the rides for light shows," he said. "It is beautiful."

The food location also is a new concept for Funplex. Called Off-the-Coast Beach Bar and Grill, it offers something for everyone. From sea food dishes to hamburgers, wings, shareables, funnel cakes, fried Oreos and chicken in a cone making it easy for visitors to carry.

Williams said they also have a grilled cheese sandwich with a variety of different options.

"And we have a full bar," Williams said. "We have 15 beers on tap and the whole selection of cocktails."

There is a variety of frozen specialties as well.

The restaurant has seating for 20 at a bar and another 40 at tables and chairs.

"It is all under a really cool pergola that opens and closes depending on the weather," Williams said.

And, because the park is a pay-as-you-go park, visitors don't pay an admission if they are just interested in eating.

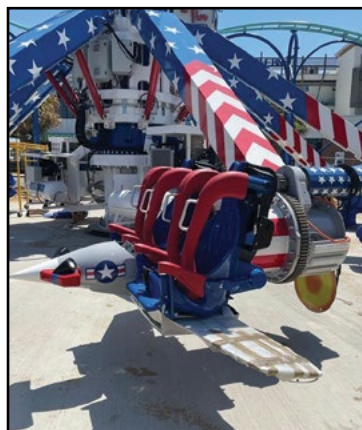
They have created optional pay packages for the rides and are using **Embed's** RFID card system.

Williams said regular hours for most days at the Funplex Myrtle Beach will be 10 a.m. until midnight.

•thefunplex.com



The Fun in the Sun coaster is a Big Air Coaster from Visa (above left) and features two "Hamster Wheel" cars in addition to multiple spinning cars. Funplex's Mach Fun, a 50-foot-tall SBF/Visa tower plane ride (above right) is the first of its kind in North American and presents a great visual. COURTESY FUNPLEX



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Miler coaster to see new life as Prairie Screamer at Traders Village

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — Over the past decades, Traders Village, a year-round flea market, has continued to increase the size of its amusement offerings. Covered children’s play equipment became accented by children’s rides. Family rides were added to the mix, and eventually some thrillers offered some authentic screams. Now Traders Village is going big. The facility just recently announced Prairie Screamer coming this fall. It’s not just the park’s first roller coaster; for this type of setting — it’s big!

Traders Village will be the newest home of a fan favorite from the West Coast. Scandia Screamer originally operated for 25 years at Scandia Amusement Park, a family entertainment center in Ontario, California. When that property closed in 2019, disappointed fans pondered the fate of the beloved coaster. Manufactured by E.F. Miler, Screamer was the largest model the company had built. Widely



Screamer operated in California for 25 years. Once refurbished, Texas will be its new home.

AT/TIM BALDWIN

known for zippy, incredibly popular children’s and family coasters, Miler constructed Scandia Screamer at a towering height of 87 feet, which is sure to give a huge presence to not only the rides area of the flea market but the neighboring roads and highways as well.

“I became aware this ride was out there and being marketed, and with the pandemic and everything and prices

dropping, it kind of became the right time, the right place and the right ride for us,” said Tim Anderson, Traders Village president.

At 2,600 feet of track, the ride is no slouch, particularly for a fairgrounds style of coaster. It features numerous drops that deliver exhilarating airtime, the largest of which is 80 feet. Enthusiasts praised the ride for its snappy curves and thrilling




drops. The announcement of the relocation instantly generated nationwide buzz within the fan-based communities.

“The footprint of the ride is a little larger than a football field,” said Anderson. “We’re a big place and we have the room. We tore down three retail buildings and are building three brand new ones.”

Prairie Screamer will join

a mix of rides that include Pharaoh’s Fury, Yo-Yo and Wipeout from Chance Rides; Star Dancer, Village Vortex (Fireball loop) and FleaFall (drop tower) from Larson International; an Eli Bridge Scrambler and an assortment of children’s rides and play activities.

► See SCREAMER, page 13





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► **SCREAMER**

Continued from page 12

"I've been thinking about a roller coaster for about five years," Anderson said. "When I was at **Kemah Boardwalk** and we put in that coaster, we tripled our rides sales, so that has been on my mind. We've eased a little more into the ride business at Traders Village the last few years. It's not a huge business to us; it's more than an amenity than anything else. People really like the rides, and it gets them to stay longer. If they stay longer, they spend more money with our retailers, which is what it is really all about."

He feels it sets Traders Village apart from other retailers. Commenting on the decline of brick-and-mortar places, Anderson feels it is beneficial to create experiences. "The rides, the special events, the food — it's just another piece to the puzzle," he said.

Currently, ride wristbands are \$13.99. Combined with no gate admission and a parking fee of only five dollars, the family-friendly value is in place.

The coaster has been on-site since the close of last year. Right now, the attraction is in the process of being refurbished. **Talley Amusements** has partnered in sandblasting and painting the ride.

"**Joe Bixler** of **International Leisure Consulting** is the lead consultant on it," said Anderson. "He's making sure we do all the correct things. I've talked to **Fred Miller** almost every week. There are a number of enhancements he is doing to it. We're completely rebuilding the trains from scratch. We are upgrading the padding and adding a new restraint system."

The new trains will operate with seatbelts and a lap bar.

Anderson notes that as the property is open 52 weekends a year, there is no real "season" for a target opening. Traders Village is taking the proper steps to do the relocation and installation safely and correctly. "It will open when it is ready," he said. Currently, the projection is for late summer or early fall.

"It's going to offer families another [big] ride option. If you are going to be in the ride business, then you really do need a roller coaster at some point. It's going to make us more of a complete package."



Traders Village is open 52 weekends a year. A roller coaster will bolster the property's ride lineup. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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Wisdom Tornado touches down at Knoebels Amusement Resort



AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

ELYSBURG, Pa. — On May 6, **Knoebels Amusement Resort** installed its latest family thrill ride, a park model **Wisdom Rides of America Tornado**.

The 32-passenger ride was supposed to be a new park attraction in 2020, however the pandemic delayed the installation one season. Originally purchased at the 2019 IAAPA trade show, the

A 32-passenger Tornado ride from Wisdom Rides of America has arrived at Knoebels Amusement Resort for the 2021 season. The ride was purchased during IAAPA Expo 2019 for the 2020 season, but its arrival and debut were delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. COURTESY KNOEBELS

new ride is located right beside **Stratos Fear drop tower (A.R.M. Inc./Larson)**.

The eight cars hold up to four passengers each with individual seats facing the inside of the car. Once the ride reaches the operating speed of 10 RPMS, moving in a circle, **Tornado** lifts 7½ feet and tilts 20 degrees. Hourly capacity is more than 650 people.

According to Knoebels' park president, **Dick Knoebel**, there's another aspect of the ride that will likely be the favorite for many riders.



"Guests seem to get a great thrill from rides that they can control part of the experience such as **Flyer, Looper and Antique Cars**," said Dick. "Riders will be able to spin the cars themselves, choosing their thrill level."

Brian Knoebel, a fourth-generation co-owner, explained how that particular ride was chosen. "Allow me to hit rewind to November 22, 2019. **Rick, Dad, and I** were on the floor of IAAPA Expo 2019 and Dad said to us, "Ok, what's next?" I replied, "I think we need to buy a ride. We are removing the 1001 Nights and raising our Pay One Price. I feel our guests will be upset unless we offer a new ride to them." Dick said, "Ok, what ride?" I said, "I like the **Wisdom Tornado**, it's nostalgic and something we've discussed through the years." Dick quickly answered, "Ok, let's go buy a **Tornado**." And we did!"

Brian had nothing but praise for the ride manufacturer. "Working with **Wisdom** was as easy as Sunday morning and they were open to all our suggestions."

For 18 months, **Tornado** sat in an off-site warehouse until its installation in May.

Brian feels it will be a big hit with guests. "We are very excited for this ride to open and anticipate it will be a wonderful addition to our lineup this year."

The ride, the larger of two available models, was scheduled to be in operation Memorial Day weekend.

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\$165 million in additions, improvements for Fort Edmonton Park

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

EDMONTON, Canada — Excitement is building as Edmonton families begin to look ahead to the reopening of the renovated **Fort Edmonton Park**, set for Canada Day, July 1.

The \$165 million enhancement, which was government-funded, includes new features, new exhibits, new attractions on the midway and a new and updated front entry plaza and admissions area. New attractions also have been added to the Johnny J. Jones Exposition. Upgrades to the park's infrastructure also were completed.

The new Indigenous Peoples Experience is the signature exhibit. This will be an area where visitors will be able to gather and explore life through the diversity of First Nations' and Métis peoples' histories, cultures, experiences and perspectives. The stories, music, artwork, and text in this experience comes from local indigenous perspectives, voices, and sources, gathered through engagement with local Indigenous communities, historical documents and research.

Guests to the park's mid-



A popular attraction at the Fort Edmonton Park, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, is the 1919 Baldwin Steam engine and train (above left). One of \$165 million worth of additions and improvements at the park is this new Eli Bridge Ferris Wheel on the midway (above right). COURTESY FORT EDMONTON PARK



way will notice a new ride and other new attractions. The new ride is an **Eli Bridge #16 Electric Rim Drive Ferris Wheel**, said **Rosa LaClare**, director, marketing and communications.

"It's approximately 57 feet high," LaClare said. "The ride is a 16-seater and could hold up to 48 passengers if we operated three passengers per seat. This Eli Bridge Ferris Wheel replaces our previous Eli Bridge Model #5 cable drive Ferris Wheel, which had 12 seats and a capacity of 24. It

was approximately 44 feet high."

The new wheel will join the park's existing rides, a carousel and a Chair-O-Plane swing ride.

Other new attractions also have been added to the midway. Those include a fun house, an outdoor maze and Cabinet of Curios exhibit. In addition, the games area has been expanded and carnival-style food and drink will be abundant.

"We can't wait for Edmonton to see what we've been building," said **Darren Dalgleish**, president

and CEO, **Fort Edmonton Management Company**. "It's going to be a totally new and immersive experience. We're so proud of the new 30,000 square-foot Indigenous Peoples Experience and the midway will really be a chance for families just to have some old-fashioned fun, which we could all use this summer."

The Fort Edmonton Park closed in September 2018 for the renovations. It was a huge project and the management company knew it would take

a while to complete. However, the COVID-19 pandemic definitely threw a wrench into the construction schedule.

Fort Edmonton Management Company partnered with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and the Métis Nation of Alberta to build the Indigenous Peoples Experience.

Guests will need to pre-book tickets for the park to be able to comply with local COVID-19 restrictions.

•fortedmontonpark.ca



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Martin & Vleinckx constructing new wooden coasters for 2021

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

MONTREAL, Quebec, Canada — Wooden coasters have had a history within the amusement history for more than 135 years. Even with a variety of styles of steel coasters, the wooden genre still enjoys a loyal fondness from park visitors. Thrills blend with nostalgia with the installation of a new wooden coaster.

Martin & Vleinckx has been involved in ride construction since the 1980s. The company is busy working on the 2021 debut of two dynamic wooden coasters. The first of this pair of new rides is located in Jinan, Shandong, China, and is ready to open. The second will follow this fall on the Gold Coast, Australia.

The wood coaster installation at **Jinan Sunac Land** started in 2020 and is now complete. This new coaster has a height of 75.5 feet (23 meters), a length of 2,644 feet (806 meters) and will reach a top speed of 46 mph (74 kph). The statistics on this ride hit the sweet spot of big thrills but also fall within that family demographic that all ages enjoy.

"The coaster's ride profile and speed are expected to bring



Leviathan's trains provided by GravityKraft will feature intricate detail (above left). Dragons Roller Coaster (above right) stands just over 75 feet tall and features a fast layout. COURTESY SEA WORLD; M&V

an extraordinary ride experience," said an M&V statement. "Martin & Vleinckx is extremely proud of its local Chinese team that managed the installation despite the COVID-19 pandemic."

It was just over a decade ago that Martin & Vleinckx brought the very first wood coaster to China. The Jinan Sunac coaster is now the 13th addition to the M&V wood coaster presence in China. May 29 was the projected opening day.

The name of the ride is Wooden Dragons Roller Coaster. The layout maintains its exhilarating speed with high speed curves and smaller airtime hills following the big drop. While zipping along, rid-

ers race around and through themed elements.

Wooden Dragons Roller Coaster operates with two Timberliner trains from GravityKraft. Each train seats 24.

This fall, **Sea World** in Queensland, Australia, will open its own woodie named Leviathan. Currently under construction, this coaster stands taller at 105 feet (32 meters) and will deliver a length of 3,281 feet (909 meters). Leviathan is expected to offer a thrilling ride experience with its record-breaking crossovers. Top speed will be 50 mph (85 kph). Leviathan is the first new traditional wood coaster to open in Australia since 1985. This

interwoven marquee attraction is expected to be opened to the public by the end of 2021.

"So many crossovers means riders will be traveling through tight openings with speed and often with diving or turning movements, which can be pretty intense with one after another," said **Chuck Bingham**, senior vice president of marketing, M&V.

Leviathan will also feature two Timberliner trains, but unique to this installation is that the last car of the train is turned backward, delivering a completely different ride experience.

Martin & Vleinckx partnered with **The Gravity Group** on both projects for layout design.

"The train theming is absolutely stunning!" said **Chad Miller**, engineer and principal, The Gravity Group. "We're lucky to have a very talented artist right here near Cincinnati that creates all of our custom fiberglass pieces and paint schemes. This one, obviously in the form of a Leviathan (a sea dragon), is the most elaborate we've ever done. Not only is the Leviathan's head incredibly detailed, but the rear car — which is oriented facing backward — sports a large tail fin."

Bingham agreed. "The front coach has always been the chosen [favorite] and described as the best seat on a coaster," he said. "But with the backward last coach, it creates an experience everyone wants just like the front coach," he told *Amusement Today*.

"Leviathan is just a beautiful coaster in a beautiful setting. But behind all those gorgeous twists and turns is one of the most complicated designs we've ever taken on," said Miller. "It's an incredibly compact and twisted-up layout, and on top of that, it's designed for hurricane force winds since it's right on the coast."

•martin-vleinckx.com

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Flying Theater's soundtrack being produced in Nashville

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — North America's first flying theater to open since the start of the pandemic, **SkyFly: Soar America**, is finalizing its soundtrack in Nashville, Tennessee. The attraction, scheduled to open this summer, will be a cornerstone attraction at **The Island** in Pigeon Forge.

A full orchestra of 70 musicians recorded the music for the attraction recently at the legendary **Ocean Way Nashville Studio**. **Brian Yessian** of **Yessian Music**, the chief creative officer for the attraction's sound, stated that Tennessee musicians are critical to creating the right sound. "We are fortunate that some of the best musicians in the world reside close to SkyFly's location, making this a truly home-grown experience."

The flying theater attraction is being created by **Dynamic Entertainment**, a subsidiary of **Dynamic Technologies Group**. Sister subsidiary **Dynamic Attractions** supplied SkyFly's flying theater. Yessian added, "Anytime we get to work with the team from Dynamic, we know it is going to be a hit."

The attraction will be filled with music from the moment guests enter the lobby, into the theater and finally the retail area. "The sound is built in a way to take guests on a journey connecting one area to the next and supporting the arc of the attractions story," said Yessian. "Every detail in sound design, music styles and thematic compositions are used to form a complete guest experience."

"Each theme was carefully crafted to complement the stunning visuals of majestic American landmarks, explained composer **Nathan Padgett**. "The music intensifies each rise, turn and drop, and makes the grand landscapes larger than life."

SkyFly: Soar America is Dynamic Technologies Group's first co-venture attraction; The Island in Pigeon Forge is its partner. Dynamic has an option to purchase 50% of this co-venture.

•dynamictechgroup.com

Adventuredome adds first Zamperla NebulaZ on the West Coast



LAS VEGAS — **Circus Circus Las Vegas** introduced its newest thrill ride at **The Adventuredome**, NebulaZ. It's the first installation of the **Zamperla** attraction on the West Coast and the newest addition to the park since it added an **El Loco** coaster (**S&S-Sansei**) in 2014.

Manufactured in Italy, NebulaZ is a 34-foot-tall thrill ride that features four arms, eight gondolas which carries four riders each and spin at 14 rotations per minute. Riders catch negative Gs with amazing views as they fly over the top of the ride. The hypnotic circular movement of the NebulaZ makes the attraction as much fun to watch as it is to ride.

A popular Las Vegas family attraction since 1993, The Adventuredome features 25 rides and attractions including **El Loco** and **Canyon Blaster** roller coasters along with rides and games.



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Spinning coaster from Mack Rides leads new lineup

Paultons Park opens Tornado Springs with multiple new attractions

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SOUTHAMPTON, England — Having opened in 1983, Paultons Park has stayed true to its original focus — the family. As amusement parks naturally grow, often the target audience changes with monstrously huge rides aimed at daredevil thrill-seekers. In contrast, Paultons Park has embraced such areas as Peppa Pig World. The beloved children’s cartoon television show has found a charmingly whimsical home at Paultons Park. Staying true to the younger demographic, with just enough excitement for kids of all ages, Paultons Park has made its largest investment yet. An entirely new themed land called Tornado Springs opened on April 12.

“We are so pleased to finally welcome guests to explore Tornado Springs, our largest single investment here at Paultons Park,” said **James Mancey**, operations director, Paultons Park. “We wanted to introduce a spectacular and immersive themed area and asked **Leisure Expert Group (LEG)** to help with the design alongside **MK Themed Attractions**. We are so pleased with the final product and have enjoyed seeing the smiles on our guests’ faces as they have experienced the new Midwestern themed area.”

Taking top bill is Storm Chaser, a free-spinning coaster from **Mack Rides**.

“Our spinning coasters are a great example for thrilling rides that still are extremely family friendly,” said **Maximilian Roser**, marketing leader, Mack Rides. “With just one meter of minimum height, the audience for this ride is really wide, but the ride itself is still perfectly fun. The layout we proposed for Storm Chaser has been built already [at Knott’s Berry Farm] and was a great reference for



Storm Chaser (above), a Mack Rides spinning coaster is the marquee attraction to the new area. Tornado Springs is themed to the American West in the 1950s. A Zierer family drop tower is seen in the background (below left). The Cyclonator, (below right) provided by Zamperla, is another thrilling addition to the park. COURTESY PAULTONS PARK



the dynamics: a great mix of helices and direction changes that is perfect to make use of the spinning gondolas. As the site is quite compact you get a lot of interaction between the train and the track going beneath or above you.

“In the last five years alone, Mack Rides had ten installations of spinning coasters and therefore are experts in this field of rides,” Roser told *Amusement Today*. “Our broad lineup with back-to-back seating versions, controlled spinning, the Xtreme

Spinning coaster, the Hybrid Train option we are now using for our new coaster at **Dreamworld** in Australia and the version in Tampa with a vertical lift — we have all the options covered.”

Other rides and experiences on offer are The Cyclonator, a **Zamperla** spinning pendulum; **Al’s Auto Academy**, featuring 30 electric cars by **Formula K** on a track designed by the park; **Windmill Towers**, a family drop ride from **Zierer**; and two attractions from **Metallbau Emmeln**, the Buffalo Falls waterslide and



Trekking Tractors. Two children’s playgrounds were supplied by **Eibe**.

The theming and storyline of Tornado Springs is a Midwest desert resort town in the American heyday of the 1950s. In addition to the new rides, the area also features the obligatory gift shop (where kids can purchase their own drivers licenses) and **Route 83 Diner**.

Danish company **MK Themed Attractions** was a partner on the project.

“I have to say that it has

been a pleasure working with Paultons Park. From the very beginning, the visions and ambitions Paultons Park had sounded exciting, and a project we at **MK Themed Attractions** have loved being a part of,” said **Lars Nielsen**, themed attractions specialist. “We look forward to following the launch of the area and seeing the impression of the many guests, eager to create new fun memories.”

“We had always wanted a

► See PAULTONS, page 22



Al’s Driving School (above left) puts all ages in the driver’s seat. Children can purchase drivers licenses in the giftshop. Playgrounds aimed at two different age groups provide a lot of recreation, no matter the children’s age (above middle). Trekking Tractors from Metallbau Emmeln is a fun family ride (above right). COURTESY PAULTON’S PARK



FAMILY SPINNING COASTER



With Storm Chaser the British theme park Paulton's Park opened 2021 the newest family spinning coaster from MACK Rides. Free spinning gondolas, a high-capacity train design and a balanced layout design are the cornerstones of this popular family attraction from 40 inch rider height. For more please visit www.mack-rides.com

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►PAULTONS

Continued from page 20

'Western' themed area, however we recognized that this had been done time and time again, so we wanted to put a unique twist on it. In partnership with **Leisure Expert Group** (LEG), we devised the Tornado Springs concept, a small roadside town in the heart of Tornado Alley set in 1950s/60s USA," said **Richard Mancey**, managing director, Paultons Park. "This theme gave us so much to work with, and the tornado 'twist' allowed us to install unique theming elements such as Mabel the cow stuck on the Storm Chaser station! When you walk through Tornado Springs, you really feel like you have been transported across the Atlantic to a dusty roadside town."

In addition to the Western look, several of the ride's take advantage of the tornado aspect.

"With Paultons we already had good relations with Richard and John Mancey before the project started," said Roser. "As a longtime British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions member, [Mack Rides was] always in contact with then chairman Richard



The park's train travels right through the fun of Tornado Springs and beneath the winding layout of the new Storm Chaser. COURTESY PAULTONS PARK

Mancey earlier. As soon as the Peppa Pig World at Paultons Park was initiated and we supplied the round boat ride for that area, the project start for Tornado Springs was also happening. As it seemed to be a perfect fit for a such themed area like Tornado Springs, we were happy to offer a family spinning coaster, mimicking the spinning forces of the winds in those areas. Working together with Paultons, a wonderfully themed car was created to give the ride the look and feel of

wind collectors on the chase of a roaring tornado."

The western children's play areas cater to different age groups. Tornado Springs houses two new playgrounds, one for children aged up to five years of age and another for children six to 13. Both areas have accessible play elements, climbing structures, swings, slides and roundabouts. Parking Lot Tots is for younger children and with a set of swings, a small climbing structure and musical instruments, children love

spending time here. Junkyard Junction includes a large climbing play structure on which children enjoy scaling and taking the slide back down to the bottom. There is also a rope bridge, ladders and interactive play features.

In just the short time since the area has been open, park officials have been delighted with guest response and reviews on **Tripadvisor**.

"We have been blown away by the support from our guests and are thrilled to

have received such positive feedback on Tornado Springs. Since we reopened on April 12, we have received over 100 five star reviews across Google and Tripadvisor," said Richard Mancey. "We are surprised to see how many of our younger guests are enjoying The Cyclonator — definitely the most thrilling ride in the park! With a 1.2-meter height limit, we have seen children as young as six years old on the ride absolutely loving it — often a lot more than the parents are!"

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Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

Officials at **Santa's Village** in Jefferson, New Hampshire, have launched a program in partnership with **Sensory City** to help address guests with invisible disabilities like autism, dementia, ADHD and others.

Park managers are receiving sensory guides and awareness training to include best practices when speaking to those who have communication disorders, understanding what communication devices are, and strategies for de-escalation of a sensory meltdown.

In addition, with that awareness training, they are able to give suggestions to guests about areas they want to avoid as well as areas that may be more tolerable.

Santa's Village is family-owned and operated since its founding in 1953.

SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment is again offering its U.S. military promotion called **Waves of Honor**. The program, which began April 27 and will run through June 27, offers a free one-day admission for an active or retired military person and up to three family members.

Since its launch in 2005, more than 10 million guests have taken advantage of the **Waves of Honor** program.

Storyland Studios located in Lake Elsinore, California, has been hired to design a series of new location-based entertainment concepts for **Grupo Cataratas**, one of the largest tourism operators in South America. The South American company currently operates six attractions in Brazil.

Grupo Cataratas has hired the California-based **Storyland Studios** to help them grow immersive experiences and attractions in South America.

Some of Grupo Cataratas' current attractions in Brazil include: **BioParque do Rio**, a reimagined zoo experience which focuses on research, education, and conservation; **AquaRio**, which features immersive exhibitions and 350 aquatic species; **Paineiras Visitors Center** at the base of Corcovado mountain, where more than two million visitors per year travel to see the famous statue of Christ that overlooks Rio de Janeiro; **Marco das Três Fronteiras** tourist complex, located at the meeting point between Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina featuring historical sites, regional fare, and an immersive educational experience in the Parana region; **Iguaçu National Park** and its visitors' center, where travelers may discover natural wonders such as the Iguazu Falls and **EcoNoronha** park, a preserved, government-protected series of islands.

After not opening for the 2020 season due to the coronavirus pandemic, **Sylvan Beach Amusement Park**, located in Sylvan Beach, New York, will reopen with limited hours this

month. The historic amusement park, along the shores of Oneida Lake, plans to open the weekend of June 26 and 27 and then begin the season operating July 1-5.

As of now, park officials have decided to take their reopening slowly and add more days as needed. It will operate Thursdays through Sundays and on holiday Mondays.

A Facebook post stated: "If more demand requires, we will add days and operating hours accordingly, working our way in reverse starting with Wednesdays and so on as needed."

During the closure, the park has made a number of restoration efforts and additions.

A new sightseeing platform on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada, is set to open this summer near the Malahat summit.

The 10-story **Malahat SkyWalk** is slated to open in July and will give visitors a chance to climb a spiraling tower that overlooks the Saanich Inlet.

On the way down, guests will be able to opt to take a 20-meter (approximately 65-foot) spiral slide to reach the forest floor.

"Malahat SkyWalk will provide British Columbians with a new, world-class tourism experience to enjoy right in their own backyard," said **Ken Bailey**, SkyWalk general manager, in a release last month.

Also in the release, Bailey said local guests will be given the first opportunity to enjoy it.

The Malahat SkyWalk, once completed, will stand 250 meters (820 feet) above sea level. To reach its peak, guests will climb an accessible walkway of 600-meters (1,968.5 feet).

Once at the top, visitors will have access to a 360-degree views of both the Canada and U.S. coasts, including views of the Saanich Peninsula, Gulf Islands, San Juan Islands and Mt. Baker.

The SkyWalk is located on the traditional territory of the Malahat Nation. Indigenous stories and culture are an integral part of its design.

An exact opening date will be released soon. Once the doors open, organizers say the Malahat SkyWalk will be open 365 days a year.

Dreamworld and WhiteWater World theme parks in Brisbane, Australia, could soon have a \$75 million resort, **Dreamworld Resort**, and tourist park across the road from the park.

The company entered a non-binding agreement with accommodation developer **Evolution Group** to fund and build the resort on the land owned by the theme park's parent company **Ardent Leisure**. The hotel would include 240 four-star rooms, 40 bungalows and a five-star tourist park with 100 powered sites and restaurants, conference facilities, pools and a gymnasium.

A new attraction is set to open along the Strip in Las Vegas, Nevada, this September.

Called **FlyOver Las Vegas**, the attraction will have tourists dangling their feet over the Grand Canyon, Lake Tahoe and other landmarks of the American West, while never leaving Las Vegas Boulevard. An immersive flight-ride experience, it will include mists, scents and motion effects.

Lisa Adams, vice president of **FlyOver Attractions**, was quoted as saying to a local news agency, it took 14 months and more than 100 hours in the air with an actual helicopter to gather all the video footage.

It will be located next to the Hard Rock Cafe on Las Vegas Boulevard.



Hersheypark has contracted with RWS Entertainment to handle all of the park's live entertainment, including costumed characters. COURTESY RWS ENTERTAINMENT

RWS Entertainment Group partners with Hersheypark

NEW YORK, N.Y. — **RWS Entertainment Group** announced it will partner with **Hershey Entertainment & Resorts** to manage live entertainment for **Hersheypark** amusement park in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

"For more than a decade, we have trusted RWS to help us conceive and produce dozens of live stage shows and events for visitors to The Sweetest Place On Earth," said **Vikki Hultquist**, general manager of Hersheypark. "We are looking forward to expanding our partnership with this award-winning organization as we continue to innovate our entertainment department with new and exciting programming."

The 2021 summer season at Hersheypark — which began April 30 — spotlights performers who auditioned for the roles of Hershey characters, with more themed backdrops and locations throughout the park. Hersheypark is the only amusement park where guests can meet and mingle with 15 unique Hershey characters. Future entertainment plans will include strolling musicians, live shows and character events.

"Our team is honored to be Hershey's choice for live entertainment," said RWS Entertainment Group Founder and CEO **Ryan Stana**. "My own history includes performing on stage at theme parks at a young age. It was a magical beginning to an amazing, international career. Nothing makes me happier than extending that opportunity to new talent while giving our clients and guests a reason to cheer a little louder."

In the past five years, RWS Entertainment Group has experienced significant growth in fully outsourced entertainment programs allowing theme parks, hotels, resorts and cruise lines to save time and money, placing their live programming in the hands of branded-entertainment experts. The company's services include everything from full entertainment concept and development to choreography, music, lighting, décor, costuming, recruitment, staffing, training and compensation. Original and licensed characters, storylines and scripts are customized to meet venue and budget needs of every size.

• experiencerws.com



Meet and greets with the 15 unique Hershey characters are popular at the theme park. COURTESY RWS ENTERTAINMENT

Lake Compounce celebrates 175 years with additions, renovations

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

BRISTOL, Conn. — On October 6, 1846, thousands of onlookers gathered on the banks of **Lake Compounce** to watch local scientist **Samuel Botsford** conduct what was described then as "a series of beautiful experiments in electricity."

Amidst the beauty of the woods and water, the onlookers, said to have numbered up to 3,000, witnessed the demonstrations. The final experiment entailed Botsford "blowing up, from shore, two huge jugs of gunpowder tied under a raft in the middle of the lake," according to historical documents.

The finale fizzled, but it did set off a spark with landowner **Gad Norton**. He watched those thousands moving between the beauty of the lake and the mountains and knew that he was witnessing something special.

He jumped into action. He put a path around the lake, set up picnic tables, allowed public swimming and rowing on the lake. He built a gazebo for lakeside band concerts.

Lake Compounce was born.

What was described as a "picnic" park, was graced with much success in those early years. Small activities began to arise such as a hand-powered revolving swing and Connecticut's first ten-pin bowling alley with adjoining pool tables.

In 1851, **Isaac Pierce** joined with Norton and the two continued to create a picnic environment.

In 1895, a casino with a restaurant and ballroom was built becoming the first permanent building on the property. That building later housed the Star-



light Theater, a tremendously popular place to hear and dance to the big band sound.

In 1911, the two owners purchased a carousel for \$10,000. It was designed and hand-carved by **Timothy Murphy** of Savin Rock, Connecticut, who assembled four master carvers and fitted the carousel with a Loeff mechanism. This carousel still operates in the park and is undergoing a major revamp.

In 1914 the Green Dragon, Lake Compounce's first electric-powered roller coaster, opened. It was later torn down to make room for the Wildcat coaster, which opened in 1927. It was designed by **Herbert Paul Schmeck** and built by **Philadelphia Toboggan Company**.

It also still operates today, but has undergone renovations and updates over the years. The last was in 2017 when it was retracked by **Martin and Vleminckx** and obtained new trains by **Great Coasters International**.

There is no denying that Lake Compounce is steeped in history, not only in the state of Connecticut but in all of North America. This park is the oldest continuously operating park in North America.



Lake Compounce's brand new ride is the **Venus Vortex** manufactured by **WhiteWater West Industries** (inset). Standing right in the center as visitors enter is a 15-foot-tall carousel horse made by **3Dx Scenic**, just one of the new surprises for guests at Lake Compounce for the 2021 season (above). COURTESY LAKE COMPOUNCE

So every birthday at Lake Compounce is a happy day. But one year after the start of a global pandemic and with the park turning 175 years old, this was cause for a big celebration and current owners **Palace Entertainment** thought so, too.

"No matter where you stand in the park, you see something different," said **Amy Thomas**, marketing director. "The improvements start in the parking lot with a brand new structure and new flags showing our new logo. The flags also help protect visitors from the rain."

From the parking lot, visitors pass through a tunnel that is donned with new greenery and signage. On the other side of the



Lake Compounce's 1911 carousel was purchased by park owners for \$10,000. The horses are currently undergoing renovations. Above is a completed horse. COURTESY LAKE COMPOUNCE

► See **COMPOUNCE**, page 26



The **Wildcat** (above left) opened to the public in 1927. It was built by **Philadelphia Toboggan Company** and designed by **Herbert Paul Schmeck**. The original trains also came from **Philadelphia Toboggan**. The coaster has undergone renovations at several different stages of its history. Lake Compounce's **Zoomerang** (above right), built by **Vekoma**, opened in 1997. In the foreground can be seen **Zoomer's Gas n' Go** ride, which was manufactured by **Morgan** and opened in 2007. COURTESY LAKE COMPOUNCE





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► COMPOUNCE
Continued from page 24

tunnel is the park entrance and there in the center of that area is a 15-foot-tall carousel horse made by 3Dx Scenic with new landscaping surrounding it.

"Larry (Gorneault, park general manager) told me that people's jaws drop when they walk in and see that," said Mark Rosenzweig of 3Dx. "That, of course, makes us feel really good."

Rosenzweig said he and 3Dx were excited to be part of the park's transformation. The company also provided the park with a new marquee for the Boulder Dash roller coaster, as well as another marquee.

The park surprises don't stop at the main gate.

"We have painted so many things," Thomas said. "We have used so much paint. I can't even imagine. We painted the Saw Mill Plunge. We painted the Zoomerang, our water slides and lazy river.

"We have a new sign over our Main Street entrance and festival twinkling lights there," she said.

And, of course, one can't help but notice the new six-story-high Venus Vortex manufactured by WhiteWater West Industries. The new ride is located in Crocodile Cove water park, which is set to open over Memorial Day weekend.

"They told me it was huge," Thomas said. "And it is huge. It looks awesome from the road."

So many of these additions and improvements were done in just the last four months.

"I would come into the park some days and there were painters and contractors everywhere," Thomas said. "It was really fun."

Lake Compounce opened May 8 for the 2021 season, it opened three days prior to season pass holders

"We're ready to celebrate our nearly two centuries of history this summer at Lake Compounce," said Gorneault. "The transformation we've undergone this offseason embraces our past, while creating a more



Above is an overview of Lake Compounce, showing the changes over the years. In the older photo (top), the parking lot was directly adjacent to the Wildcat. COURTESY LAKE COMPOUNCE

inviting and exciting amusement park for our guests."

There also is a new dining area called Timberjack Chowhouse, serving customizable burgers and offering outdoor seating.

Crocodile Cove is sporting not only new paint, but

also an updated bath house and restrooms.

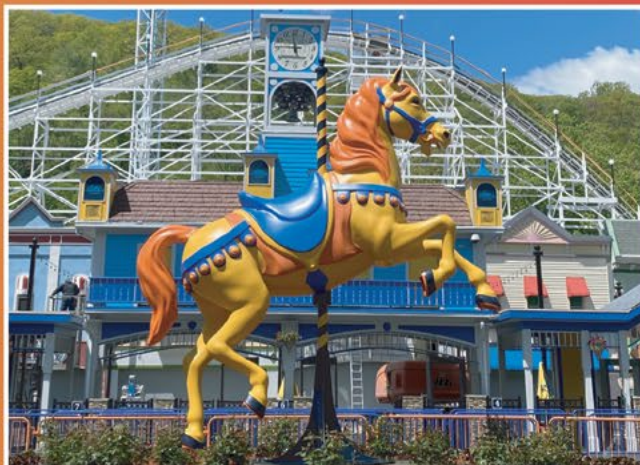
Lake Compounce is anchored by the signature rides of a family amusement park, with four roller coasters, classic attractions and a child's area called Circus World.

•lakecompounce.com

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Hot Ice returns to Blackpool Pleasure Beach with Euphoria show

BLACKPOOL, U.K. — Blackpool Pleasure Beach's popular Hot Ice show returns for 2021 with a new production called Euphoria. The world's longest running ice show, Hot Ice, opens for the summer season on July 8 and will run until September 11, 2021.

The updated show features everything that is trending hot in ice skating with top performers from around the world taking to the ice in over 400 glittering costumes to a whole collection of music, state-of-the-art lights and explosive pyrotechnic effects.

Hot Ice has been a fantastic place to see some of the world's best skaters. Numerous national, world and Olympic champions have performed in the show since its inception. The proliferation of well known champions in its cast has made Hot Ice one



Blackpool Pleasure Beach's fabulous Hot Ice show is the longest running ice show in the world and returns in the 2021 season with the production Euphoria. COURTESY BLACKPOOL PLEASURE BEACH

of the world's best known and most beloved ice skating shows with a reputation for amazing choreography and stunning costumes.

This year's new production, Euphoria, is a fast-mov-

ing live performance designed to keep guests on the edge of their seat.

Blackpool Pleasure Beach's **Amanda Thompson** OBE has been both producer and director of the Hot Ice Show for over

20 years. In 2005, she also took over as managing director of Blackpool Pleasure Beach and has managed to successfully combine the two major and demanding roles.

The show is choreographed

by **Oula Jaaskelainen**, a former Olympic athlete and Hot Ice cast member, who creates excitement by encouraging the performers to skate at high speeds with intricate footwork and impressive jumps.

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JRA designs Hongkong Land's Kidzplorer children's attraction

CHONGQING, China — Hongkong Land has officially opened Kidzplorer, a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) oriented play-center which is fully integrated into a commercial development project in Southwest China known as The Ring, Chongqing.

Over the next five years, a \$33 million investment will be rolled out to other cities across China. Kidzplorer is a value-added enhancement that underlines Hongkong Land's commitment to innovation, and an encompassing future for the attraction. The experience is one that is designed to inspire the community and visitors, who can subsequently inspire an even better tomorrow in the years to come.

In collaboration with Star Group, Cincinnati, Ohio-based JRA provided master planning and design for Kidzplorer children's attraction at The Ring, Chongqing. Offering nine unique play zones, across 32,000 square feet, Kidzplorer is an impressive STEAM edutainment play center. The area of-

fers a STEAM classroom, a family café and party rooms. There is also a retail store featuring a range of STEAM concept toys and products. Kidzplorer uses the latest technology to ensure the ultimate experience for all visitors, including smart location wristbands worn by children visitors that support real-time tracking.

"JRA was honored to work on this unique project with Hongkong Land and Star Group," said JRA Senior Project Director, Matthew Wheeler. "Our goal was to create a unique guest experience that will enhance children's development in all areas while creating opportunities for young visitors to learn more about the greater world around them through STEAM activities."

Featuring edutainment as its core concept, Kidzplorer is a STEAM-oriented play centre developed by Hongkong Land, supporting children's learning and self-fulfilment through customised scientific installations and fun entertainment facilities. By integrating popular science with play, Kidzplorer helps par-

ents discover their children's creativity and potential.

"With a history of more than 130 years, we constantly seek the next opportunity to respond to the changing preferences and demands of our tenants and customers by in-

troducing innovative concepts and fresh offerings, with a view to elevating the value of our portfolio for the Chinese mainland and across the region," said Robert Wong, chief executive of Hongkong Land. "Kidzplorer represents Hongkong

Land's breakthrough in providing innovative family-friendly amenities into our retail experiences, answering the needs of today's customers, many of whom are parents who visit along with their children."

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Arcade makeover gives New Jersey's Fantasy Island a fresh start

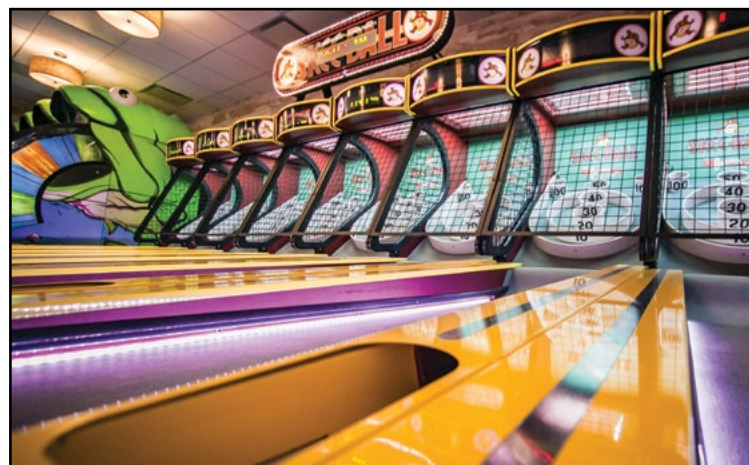
AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

LONG BEACH ISLAND, N.J. — With evolving restrictions and public uncertainties, the 2020 season was a mixed bag for most of the parks in New Jersey. For 2021, **Fantasy Island Amusement Park** is seeing a great start to the season.

The park was established in 1985, which included the arcade as a Jersey staple. For this year, the 12,000-square-foot arcade received a total makeover.

"It's the same structure; we didn't change any building," said **Matt Freed**, general manager. "It's something we've been wanting to do. The arcade has been around for quite some time. We've been wanting to bring it up to date and make it relevant for the new generations. We tried to make COVID into an opportunity whenever we could. It had been chaotic for so long. We decided to seize the time. We felt it was the greatest way to give a 'Welcome back.'"

"It's new carpet, new lighting, new wall coverings ... it's completely fresh. It's a lot more open, a lot brighter," said



A new, brighter refresh to the arcade launches the 2021 season at Fantasy Island. In addition to vintage classics, the arcade offers the latest games. COURTESY FANTASY ISLAND

Jen Quinn, marketing. "We're receiving incredible feedback from our guests."

"We stay up to date on the latest industry arcade games," said Freed. "I've had nothing but great feedback, people love the [new] games."

Modern-day Skee-ball, Connect 4 Hoops and Nerf Arcade are highly interactive games. Monopoly Roll and Go and Whack a Clown (**ICE**), Flintstone coin pusher game (**Elaut Group**) and Power Roll (**Sega**) are among the newest offerings. The park worked with **Betson** for many of its

new offerings in the arcade.

The arcade reopened on May 1. Fantasy Island opens the arcade every weekend year round and has daily operation from mid-June to mid-September. While the play mix offers considerable redemption games, standard arcade games are still on offer.

"When we outlined the new floorplan to the arcade, we tried to group things together to be make sure people could find what they are looking for," said Freed. "We do have a complete section of the arcade dedicated to our

vintage arcade games."

The arcade features 155 games with 210 player stations.

"We have several local vendors that are always great partners," Freed told *Amusement Today* when asked if the project was done with outside contractors or done in house.

Working with **Intercard** and **Centeredge**, Fantasy Island has made the game play experience less cumbersome. The new arcade features ticketless redemption. Fantasy Island is hoping the lack of need to keep up with tickets will encourage return visits as

all winnings are stored on a single card.

The outdoor amusement park opened for the season on May 22 and continues into October weekends. New for this year are three new rides to replace some retired offerings. The biggest is a Himalaya. There are 18 rides in total. A revamped ice cream parlor is also new for 2021 following an unfortunate fire last season.

Long Beach Island is an established tourist destination. Freed feels the outreach can stretch up to a four-hour radius.

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FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

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

Empire Adventure Park just signed a 10-year lease for a 35,572-square-foot family entertainment center at **Samanea New York**, a mall in Westbury that is less than an hour-long drive from midtown Manhattan.

Construction on the property is expected to kick off in January of 2022, with an expected opening date later that year.

The destination is Empire Adventure's very first, and it will include trampolines, ninja obstacle courses, a ropes course, climbing walls, augmented reality games as well as other indoor attractions.

ESJ Capital Partners, an Aventura, Florida-based commercial real estate firm and a registered investment adviser, has secured the final approvals necessary to move forward with developing an eco-adventure destination and hotel on 18.5 acres of prime waterfront in Miami.

The \$300 million project is an ambitious reimagining of the historic **Jungle Island**, a zoological theme park and botanical gardens built in 1936 that once boasted the largest and rarest collection of exotic animals and birds. It is located on Watson Island, roughly five minutes from both downtown Miami and the world-renowned South Beach neighborhood of Miami Beach, surrounded by the waters of Biscayne Bay.

LAI Games has reinvented its classic basketball game, Slam 'n' Jam.

A 32-inch monitor is the new backboard for the game, with a progress metre and scoring system, plus game timer and target read-out for the player to achieve the next level.

The new cabinet has LED lighting and the all-steel net will appeal to the old-school street basketball fans. There are modern sound tracks and commentary.

It was announced in early May that a bowling alley in Poway, California — a casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic — has been purchased to create a mixed-use development that will feature luxury apartments and commercial space.

The former **Poway Fun Bowl** property was part of 6.6 acres across two parcels bought by Fairfield Residential to be turned into a mix-use development, featuring 212 apartments, more than 11,300 square feet of retail and nearly 10,000 square feet of public plazas.

The Poway Fun Bowl was a family entertainment center with 32 bowling lanes, an arcade, seven pool tables and a sports bar. It could hold up to 700 people in a normal year but, due to the coronavirus pandemic, it sat empty for nearly a year.

The business had finally started to see growth before the pandemic hit, but the uncertainty of the future of businesses put the longevity of the business into question.

Stern Pinball starting production of its next cornerstone game, Star Wars: The

Mandalorian. With the phenomenal success of *The Mandalorian* on **Disney+**, anticipation is already high for the new pinball offering.

The Mandalorian game will have Pro, Premium and Limited Edition models. Stern Pinball is maintaining its cadence and schedule — new cornerstone titles in the beginning of the year, in the spring and in the fall. The company has increased its production 20% and will increase another 25% over the next few months.

Production of The Mandalorian Pro games will begin late May. In early June, Stern will begin the Limited Edition production. The Premium production will start late June. In the meantime, Stern will also continue manufacturing many other games.

Wilderness Resort has been operating mini golf for many years in the Wisconsin Dells and the attraction has always been a staple of their guest experience. To take its course to the next level, the team at Wilderness Resort hired **Creative Works** to completely renovate the course with new props, stories, murals, and the company's patented Electric Edging.

Electric Edging is a patented interactive technology that creates glowing edging along each hole, replacing the traditional brick edging found in most courses. "The Electric Edging is really what sold us on the product. Bricks are good, Electric Edging is better," commented Wilderness Resort's Attractions Manager, **Trevor Hirst**.

The nine hole, blacklight mini golf course was recently completed and installed at Wilderness and is now open to play. The course features many ocean props and murals, including fish, octopuses, eels, jellyfish, columns, oysters and more fun underwater themes.

Valo Motion has announced the first-ever Active eSports League for mixed-reality trampoline and climbing wall: ValoLeague.

Valo Motion is on a mission to create the world's most fun and groundbreaking active experiences that empower people to find the joy of movement. Players of all skill levels can exercise and play across various games on ValoJump for trampolines and ValoClimb for climbing walls.

By merging digital and physical sports with the added competitive play element, ValoLeague adds now another layer of game experience to create fun experiences that players want to live again and again, a fun adventure they want to share with their friends and family.

ValoLeague is connecting the community of Active eSports enthusiasts that love sports and gaming, and available for ValoJump and ValoClimb. As a companion, the company is launching ValoApp, the official mobile and web application of ValoLeague that allows players to connect and compete globally.

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT MARKET PLACE

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Attendance numbers were down at delayed 2021 Florida State Fair

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

TAMPA, Fla. – The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the 118th Florida State Fair by two months to April 22 – May 2. “Weather is usually cool during February, that is why historically we have a 117-year history in February. I think the warmer temperatures in April certainly had an impact on attendance, especially with having to wear a mask in the heat,” said Cheryl F. Flood, executive director.

Frank Zaitshak, owner of Wade Shows, Inc., the carnival provider, felt the same way. “Attendance was softer. The senior snowbirds had already gone home.”

Final (unaudited) attendance count for the 11-day run (one less than usual) came in at over 292,000. This figure is 35.9% less than last year. “The Tradition Continues” was the theme of the 2021 fair.

The April move generated both good and bad outcomes. On a positive note, with more time for fairgoers to get vaccinated, this provided them more confidence in attending a larger event. “Safety is number one priority, and postponing was the right thing to do from a safety standpoint,” said Flood.

The two month delay also had drawbacks. The heat in April is hotter, snowbirds are already north, two holidays were lost (President’s Day and Student Day) and the fair had one less operating day.

Wade Shows again had the midway contract, working with at least a half dozen other operators including Powers Great American Midways. There was



Wade Shows and other operators yielded an 82-ride midway at the 188th Florida State Fair. All rides featured hand sanitizing stations at both the entrances and exits. COURTESY COREY DARNELL/FLORIDA STATE FAIR AUTHORITY

a total of 82 rides (down from 91 in 2020), of which 33 were kiddie rides. New this year was Sky Hawk (A.R.M. USA) and the Dragon Coaster (Wisdom Rides of America). The three most popular rides were Sky Tram (Wade Shows), Sky Eye Giant Wheel (Biggest Wheel LLC) and the Giant Slide (Florida State Fair Authority). Wade Shows, which first started as an independent ride operator in 1992, now serves as the midway manager, a role it has played the past seven years.

It was a very challenging year, however. “With help from a lot of people (additional operators), we put together a good line-up. Rides per capita every day, except one, set records,” said Zaitshak. An open space was created in the kiddie area making more seating possible. “Many open seating areas, four seating tops and misting fans were well received by the public.”

Midway revenue came in at \$3,591,693.

“We have enjoyed a long-

term partnership with Frank Zaitshak, owner of Wade Shows. He and his team did an excellent job given the challenges with labor, COVID protocol, etc. Wade Shows always does a great job for us and we expected nothing less this year,” said Flood.

“We are the first state fair of the year and we normally are the first fair to watch on what is new and different. With COVID being on the forefront of everyone’s planning, we certainly had a lot of visitors from other fairs across the country seeing how we handled things,” said Flood.

Safety remained paramount when planning for the 2021 Florida State Fair. This included masks indoors and outside, wider aisles at indoor exhibits, hand sanitizer stations throughout the grounds and cashless payment was encouraged.

Zaitshak said all employees and contractors wore masks or face shields on their ride midway.

The fair continued with numerous time-honored special promotions such as Hero’s Day. Free admission was offered for



law enforcement, first responders, active or retired military, doctors, nurses, hospital and emergency clinic staff with valid ID on that day.

Other promotions included discounted admission for seniors age 55+ on any Monday – Thursday; Homeschool Day, (free admission for homeschool/virtual student under the age of 18 with a paid adult admission); \$2 Tuesday (\$2 admission, \$2 select rides and food items after 2:00 p.m.); Thrill Thursday Ride-A-Thon with \$15 ride armbands after 3:00 p.m. and Kids Day (free admission for kids under the age of 18 until 6:00 p.m. with a paid adult admission. Adult supervision was required after 6:00 p.m.).

New this year was a Fair Food Tour, a self-guided tour of all the new foods in 2021. Guests could participate by picking up an information card at Guest Services that detailed all the foods, their location, and how to vote for their favorite. Twelve food items were included. Some of the favorites were: The Pig Rig by Low N Slow Concessions — BBQ Pulled Pork sandwich stuffed with Mac and Cheese; Gelato Nachos by Funky Flamingo — Gelato nachos and tacos made with a Dutch waffle cone recipe from the Funky Flamingo; the Pickle Pizza by Angela’s Pizza — a white garlic sauce base, topped with mozzarella cheese and dill pickles then garnished with ranch and dill seasoning after it comes out of the oven; Loaded Tater Burger by Carousel Foods — a hamburger topped with shredded toasted cheese, stuffed with cottage fries and bacon, then topped with a ranch dressing, chives and choice of lettuce, tomato, pickle, and onion; as well as the Flaming Hot Cheeto Funnel Cake by The Best Around Concessions — which added cornmeal, spices, fresh jalapeños and crushed flaming hot Cheetos to cake mix, poured through a funnel

and fried up crunchy. It was topped with nacho cheese, and more Cheetos.

When asked about any fair firsts, Flood said, “Planning a fair during COVID-19 I consider a first. This by far was the most challenging fair under my tenure to plan for. Thankfully, fairs like Delaware State Fair welcomed us and we took pieces from them, theme parks and others who had opened before us to assist with our planning.”

“We had a safe fair with great customer satisfaction,” said Zaitshak. “Hats off to Cheryl Flood and her team. They went at it full strength. Advertising and social media were outstanding. I can’t say enough good about how they attacked everything.”

Zaitshak talked about his operation. “We are glad to be back on the road. It’s not over (COVID-19). A significant amount of our employees took advantage of the vaccinations offered. It’s a long road back. We are traveling that road and making gains every day.”

Summing things up, Flood said, “Planning for the 2021 Florida State Fair, we did not anticipate for it to be a normal year and financially planned for the unpredictability. The Florida State Fair has been blessed in that we have not had to cancel or go a year without hosting our state fair. We certainly felt if we could host the Florida State Fair safely, we should proceed. Safety remained our top priority in all of our planning. In addition, we also recognized nationally fairs needed us to open, and we knew the industry desperately needed to get back to work, so if we could do it safely and financially cover our expenses in April, we needed to move forward, and so we did.”

The 119th edition takes place February 10-21, 2022.

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York welcomes IAFE Zone annual meeting in mid-May

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

YORK, Pa. — More than 90 **International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE)** Zone 1 members spent May 13-15 in York, the site of their annual meeting. Organized by the staff of the **York State Fair**, events were held on the fairgrounds and the **Wyndham Garden Hotel**.

Thursday evening was primarily a social time as attendees were arriving. Friday offered four presentations including one during lunch with IAFE president and CEO, **Marla Calico** talking about "Life is full of If's" to the assembled crowd.

"We talk about the word 'if,' that little two letter word that is in the middle of [the word] 'life.' It's about possibilities — it's a word that can paralyze us, that can make us stop dead on our track when we think about 'what if, what if, what if.' **Walt Disney** said, if you can dream it, you can make it happen," said Calico. "I tried to really get people to reposition their thinking because it certainly has been 14 months of traumatic what-if thinking. We have been paralyzed. We've been held hostage and our industry brought to a dead halt. Hopefully just a few words that got everybody to think about those instances when we use that little word, 'if only, what if, if the' that can help us look at the future with a little bit brighter perspective."

Other presentations that day were "Getting It Done in 2021 — Fairs That Opened and How," presented by **Jessica Underberg, Erie County Fair**, Hamburg, New York; "Persevering in Trying Times," **Marlene Pierson-Jolliffe, Virginia State Fair** and "Livestock Shows — Post Pandemic," **Kelly Tuckwiller Collins, State Fair of West Virginia**. The afternoon was filled with a visit to the **York Agriculture and Industry Museum**. People could also visit historic downtown attractions like the **Golden Plough Tavern, Central Market** and the **Colonial Courthouse** (a reconstruction of the building where the Articles of Confederation were signed), along with other shops and stores. Concluding the escape was a motorcoach tour of the York State fairgrounds before dinner followed by entertainment that evening.

Saturday offered a full day of presentations. The half dozen included "Carnival Operations" with **Jay Strates**, "Government and Community Relations," **Rick Pickering, California State Fair**; Sacramento and "The Economic Importance of Fairs," **Gene Cassidy, Eastern States Exposition**, Springfield, Massachusetts. Cassidy is also the current IAFE Chair. "Event Security," **Rick Trout**, Chief of Police, York State Fair and "Sparking Joy — Rediscovering Your Passion & Reenergizing Your Team," **Jennifer Giesike, Washington Town and Country Fair**, Missouri. The luncheon keynote speaker was **Jeremy Parsons, Clay County Fair**, Spencer, Iowa, who spoke on the topic, "Take Care."

When asked about fairs in 2021, Calico said, "When the fairs can happen, where they happen, I think they're going to be very successful. There's a pent-up demand. People want to get back, and fairs are perfectly positioned to give them that sense of normalcy."

There were many takeaways. One speaker said this is the year you may want to get rid of some of the sacred cows in your operation. Change things. The general public will give you a free pass, due to the pandemic. This is the year to get things done that you may have wanted to do for quite some time.

Another speaker talked about how other large-scale entities were able to navigate COVID relief and navigate it well. Her one slide said, "Accept that agricultural fairs do not carry as much 'clout' as college sports, large entertainment venues, convention centers and theme parks, but keep a seat at the table."

Usually, the event features two workshops concurrently, however, organizers had no idea how many people would attend when the zone meeting was being crafted. The coordinators felt having everyone participate in one session would work best this time. **Bryan Blair**, York State Fair CEO, explained the purpose of zone meetings, from his perspective: "It's an opportunity for the fairs of a particular region or zone to gather and to learn and exchange ideas and to communicate and be together. This year, that's bigger than anything — just the fact that people have been separated for a year, for 15 months. Now you're getting people to reconnect."

The meeting was a welcome event as Calico explained, "We are family no matter where we are. No matter what language we speak, believe me it's the same all over the world and to be with fair people, face to face, it's just been such a wonderful experience."

The 2022 Zone 1 meeting will be combined with Zone 2 and the **Florida Federation of Fairs** convention, May 12-14 in Naples.

•fairsandexpos.com



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Scammers never sleep. Currently there are two scams targeting **IAFE (International Association of Fairs & Expositions)** members. The first one is contact from a marketing specialist selling an "IAFE Email list." The IAFE never sells lists of members with the complete data information that is mentioned in the email. Messages from the IAFE always come from an official **fairsandexpos.com** email. The other scam involves IAFE attendees and exhibitors being contacted by third parties claiming to be booking rooms for the **IAFE Annual Convention and Trade Show** this November in San Antonio. The only way to book rooms for the event is through information and hotel website links provided by IAFE. This information and the links for booking hotel rooms will be posted on **iafeconvention.com** starting in late July.

There will be a **Crawford County Fair** in Meadville, Pennsylvania, this August, however without amusement rides or scheduled grandstand entertainment due to Pennsylvania's COVID-19 regulations. The fair board voted in April to move forward with the August 21 – 28 fair but at a reduced scope. The 2020 edition was to be its 75th anniversary — the pandemic forced a cancellation. Fair admission will be free to all attendees in 2021.

The fair has been in discussions with **Variety Attractions**, its booking agent, and **Powers & Thomas Midway Entertainment**, the carnival provider, in an attempt to work out an operating plan for 2021.

Grandstand entertainment acts have indicated a willingness to go on hold again for 2021 and return for the 2022 fair.

The board has about \$560,000 in concert costs plus another \$130,000 in its ride contract for 2021.

Other contracted events scheduled for the 2021 fair that won't take place include the annual demolition derby, truck and tractor pulls, a wrestling show and **Zerbini Family Circus**.

There's a new organization that recently formed designed for the circus industry. The **American Circus Alliance** is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization that invites anyone who works in and supports the production and presentation of a circus in the United States to join for free in 2021.

Launched online on April 22, the organization is an all-volunteer group representing a broad spectrum of circus genres. The ACA began as a task force responding to the COVID-19 crisis, meeting informally throughout 2020. The group is open to anyone in the industry: circus performers, creators, educators, producers, designers, technicians and administrators.

The organization offers free membership the rest of this year.

Forever Young Amusements, a family-owned and operated traveling carnival

based out of Conley, Georgia, is ceasing operations. The carnival has over 30 years of experience in the industry. On its Facebook page, **Angel Young** said, "The fairs, festivals and civic organizations we have served in Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky have been our greatest joy. We will cherish the memories made with all our friends and all the great times we had with you over the years. Our most sincere respect and wishes for the future to all our committee members, employees and guests."

Forever Young had provided amusements for fairs, festivals, corporate events, rentals, along with TV and film productions.

Reopening fairs is quite a challenge after the past year all endured. Some IAFE members are in need of talented individuals to assist them during their annual fair. Informally, fairs have conducted a "Job Swap" where staff and volunteers from one fair will travel to another fair to assist them where needed. The job swap experience provides individuals the opportunity to travel to member fairs, learn new processes, network and engage in an activity that will benefit their own organization.

Member fairs complete and submit the job swap request form at **fairsandexpos.com/Job-Swap**. Information will be provided to IAFE members in the "members only" section of the website. Members are encouraged to visit the job swap site and connect themselves with the appropriate organizations.

This interesting concept could prove invaluable and something carnivals, amusement and water parks could organize as well.

In mid-May, Ohio Governor **Mike DeWine** signed Senate Bill 109 into law. The bill provides the **Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)** \$4.7 million in grant funding to distribute evenly to all 94 county and independent agricultural societies. As a result, ODA is allocating \$50,000 to each agricultural society to be used on operating expenses, projects, or any other items related directly to their fair.

"Ohio's fairs not only provide us fond memories of our childhood, they are also important to our local communities and provide a valuable forum for the next generation of responsible food producers," said **Dorothy Pelanda**, Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, in the release. "We sincerely thank Governor DeWine and the General Assembly for this generous support of our fairs that have lost significant revenue and have struggled over the past year. It is my hope that this funding can help breathe new life into our fairs as they move toward a successful 2021 season."

All fairs are expected to receive funding within the next month. There was no application, reporting or project closeout requirements associated with this state funding.

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SeaWorld's Aquatica Orlando opens Riptide Race from ProSlide

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO, Fla. — This spring **SeaWorld's Aquatica Orlando** debuted its new slide, **Riptide Race**, a dueling, racing waterslide. The **ProSlide Technology Inc.** dueling PIPEline model gravity racing ride is the world's tallest of its kind.

Aquatica Orlando describes the waterslide as a "dash to the splash" as guests compete in a side-by-side raft run through high-speed tunnels, twists, and turns that starts atop a 68-foot tower. It is the second tallest slide in the park. Only Ihu's Breakaway Falls, a tower of four different ProSlide SuperLOOPS, has a larger drop size.

To get to the top of the tower, riders ascend 116 steps. Once there, guests have a few moments to take in an incredible panorama of not only the colorful slides of Aquatica Orlando and also a picturesque backdrop of roller coasters at **SeaWorld** just across the street. But guests cannot take in the view for however long, because "what goes up, must come down." On Riptide Race it is via a two-person raft. When both sets of racers are in place and the green all-clear is signaled, the riders enter the first of several high-speed tunnels as they descend and duel along the 650-foot slide.

In addition to the excitement of the tunnels, twists and turns, Riptide Race features four sections of ProSlide's patented "RallyPOINTS"



At 68 feet tall and 650 feet in length, Riptide Race is the world's tallest dueling pipeline slide and only the second in the U.S. AT/DAVID FAKE

where riders in opposing tubes get as close as possible thanks to low walls between the opponents, allowing them to see and hear their competition and intensifying the head-to-head racing sensation before crossing the finish line into the next generation of ProSlide's ProSplash finish.

And after guests are done cooling off, or if they simply need to refuel between races, they can slide into Ke-Re's bar and Papa's Cantina for some delicious snacks and drinks. The open-air bar and brand-new dining experience for 2021 are the perfect excuse to relax on island time, soak in the sun,

enjoy unbeatable views of the park or even catch a game on the flat screen.

"We are thrilled to introduce Riptide Race, an experience you won't find anywhere else in Florida. Aquatica is the first water park in the state to have a dueling racer and we know our guests are going to love the fun of challenging their friends and family in a race to the finish," said **Kyle Miller**, park president. "Riptide Race is the perfect addition to our attraction portfolio, complementing what is already one of the most family-friendly waterslide lineups in Orlando. Health and safety continue to be a top priority

for our parks, and we can't wait to see our guests enjoy this new ride."

Riptide Race features a height requirement of only 42 inches, which makes it appealing to families with children.

"This ride is a great family thrill experience. So, one thing that we love is that the sheer scale of the tower and length of the slide are on a grandiose scale but can still be experienced by some of our younger guests. That means moms, dads, brothers, sisters, get to ride together or duel against each other," says **Conner Carr**, Corporate Ride Engineer. "It has a wide range of audience and can be expe-

rienced by a lot more of our guests than some of the more extreme ones."

The dueling slide was originally slated as a "new-for-2020" attraction. However, in March 2020 construction was paused at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, causing over a year delay in the opening. "We were just days away from turning the water on and testing the slides," said Aquatica Orlando's Vice President of Operations **Brad Gilmour**. Construction recommenced in December.

ProSlide has a time-tested relationship with SeaWorld and Riptide Race is the 56th high-performing water ride on which the water ride manufacturer and SeaWorld have collaborated over their decades-long partnership.

"SeaWorld is one of our longest-standing partners" says ProSlide Senior Vice-President of Global Strategic Partnerships **Jeff Janovich**. "Over three decades we've brought a multitude of innovative ProSlide water rides to all their parks — high-performance ProSlide rides that are still going strong! Now we're thrilled to continue that track record by bringing the competitive experience of the largest outdoor Dueling PIPEline to their park at Aquatica Orlando. This is an iconic water ride by ProSlide that will give Aquatica Orlando's guests an unparalleled racing experience and keep them coming back again and again for that first-place finish."

•aquaticaorlando.com



In addition to tunnels, twists and turns, Riptide Race features four sections of ProSlide's patented "Rallypoints" where riders in opposing tubes get as close as possible, allowing them to see and hear their competition and intensifying the head-to-head racing sensation before crossing the finish line into the next generation of ProSlide's ProSplash finish. COURTESY SEAWORLD ORLANDO; AT/DAVID FAKE



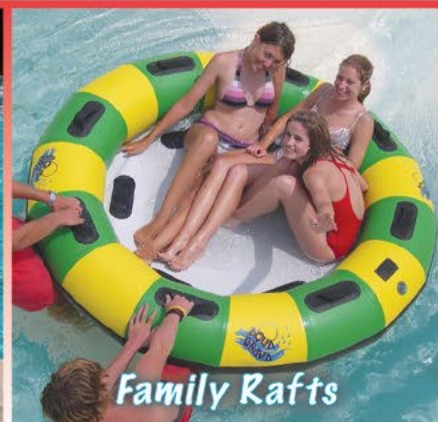
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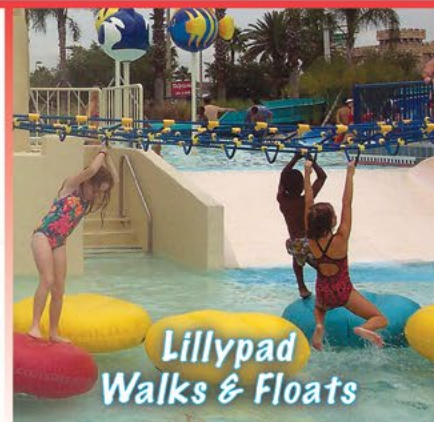
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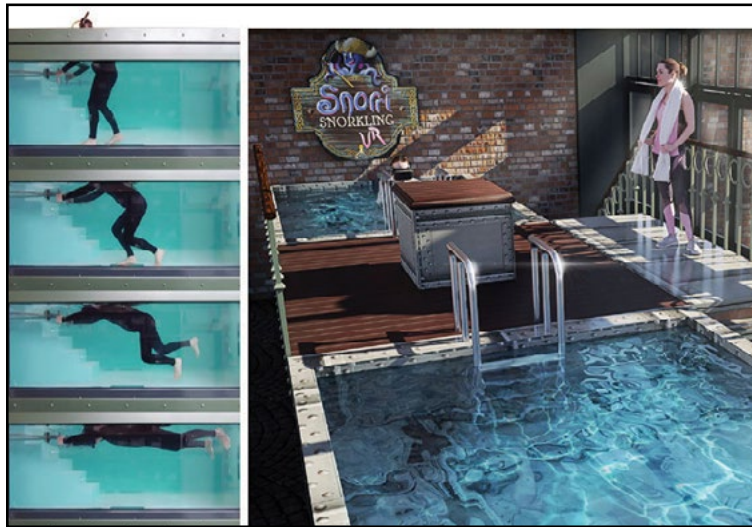
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With Snorri Snorkling VR, guests dive into the spectacular underwater world of Rulantica.
COURTESY RULANTICA/EUROPA-PARK

Rulantica to premier Snorri Snorkling underwater VR

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

RUST, Germany — Once the **Rulantica** water park at **Europa-Park** is able to reopen, guests will have the option to partake in a unique underwater VR experience — **Snorri Snorkling VR**. Equipped with VR goggles and a snorkel, adventurers will be able to follow Snorri Touren, Rulantica's playful, six-tentacled Octopus mascot, on a spectacular underwater journey.

The development of a diving theater as part of the **Swim VR** product family has been ongoing for several years. The concept was designed and implemented in cooperation with **MackNext** and **VR Coaster**. VR Coaster, a subsidiary of the **Mack Group**, introduced the world's first virtual reality roller coaster together with Europa-Park. VR Coaster received a Brass Ring Award in the "Best New Product Concept Award: Other Products/Services" category during **IAAPA Expo 2018**. Since that time the product has been adapted for underwater use, overcoming the challenges of safely submerging image-generating electronics.

With Snorri Snorkling VR, guests can literally dive into Snorri's world for a unique underwater tour alongside the popular park mascot. Swimmers put on a virtual reality headset through which they experience the virtual environment. After attaching a snorkel, they enter a small current pool, and submerge themselves face down. A handlebar at the front of the pool makes sure the current does not carry the swimmer away. During the journey, Snorri serves as the guide, and takes guests through his realm to explore the fantastic underwater world of Rulantica as well as shipwrecks and underwater castles. During the finale, explorers come face to face with one of Rulantica's sea monsters.

By tilting one's head, the swimmer can look around and water jets create authentic, noticeable water flow that is synchronized with the film. Other 4D effects include air bubbles during particularly exciting scenes. An underwater sound system completes the experience by providing a soundtrack and quasi-dialogue (Snorri can't speak but he can make sounds).

The Snorri Snorkling VR experience will last five to six minutes, with the underwater portion about three minutes long. The attraction takes place in two separate pools in Rulantica opposite the themed area Skog Lagune. Each pool accommodates two swimmers.

The attraction is priced extra at €7 (US\$8.44), two of which are for single-use snorkels that the swimmers keep and are able to take home with them as a souvenir. Guests can make a purchase online when they buy their admission tickets, or, depending on availability, at the front desk. The new attraction will be available as soon as Europa-Park and Rulantica reopen. Due to current restrictions by the German government, the park remains closed until further notice.

This attraction is the first installation of the **Diving Theater**, which will be offered as complete turnkey solution with integrated water treatment, temperature control and all the equipment necessary for operation. Along with the Mack Group's in-house creative team, personalized VR adventures can be created to fulfill individual customer requirements. The special Swim VR glasses offer high-resolution 4K optics and are designed for comfortable wearing during underwater use.



NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

Kingfisher Waterpark in Mandla, India, has implemented the Tixera suite of **Semnox Products** to run the operations and implement contactless solutions at its facility.

Tixera covers all facets of the park operations in one integrated system, from multi-channel sales, access control, over-the-air software updates, cashless solutions, RFID lockers, inventory management, food & beverage sales and even maintenance.

Guests are issued silicon wristbands which they can then use to activate turnstiles, access lockers and make food, beverage and souvenir item purchases. Large readers with a full-screen tap area make it easy for guests to touch and go, or touch and pay.

Founded in 2008, India-based Semnox has been providing automated solutions to the leisure industry for more than a decade. Semnox currently has more than 2,000 clients across 50 countries. Over the years Semnox products have garnered several **IAAPA** Brass Ring awards.

Responding to complaints from neighbors, the **Thunder Bay Splash Pad** in Thunder Bay, Ontario, will remove its popular-but-controversial tipping bucket and replace it with a water wheel.

Shortly after the bucket was installed, neighbors complained that screams from children who reacted to getting doused with water every five to eight minutes was a constant annoyance.

The city is spending \$10,000 on a water wheel feature which looks similar to a Ferris wheel and will spray water continuously instead of allowing it to build up.

"Rather than it being an intermittent type of feature where it's building up for five, 10 minutes and splashing a large volume of water, getting a real reaction out of the splash pad users, it would be a more constant source of water," said **Cory Halvorsen**, the city's manager of parks and open spaces. "It should have less of an impact on the space with respect to sound levels."

The city hopes to repurpose the tipping bucket feature at another city-owned splash pad that is not as close to neighborhood houses.

The new AU\$10.2 (US\$7.92) million **Corowa Aquatic Centre**, New South Wales, Australia, opened to the public in April. The center replaces the old Corowa pool that was built in 1956 and had reached the end of its operational life. The new all-abilities facility includes a 50-meter outdoor pool, 25-meter indoor pool, splash park and café.

The pool was identified as needing refurbishment or replacement more than 22 years ago, and since that time a number of feasibility studies were conducted before it was determined that replacement was the best option. The studies also concluded that the facility should include more than just a pool replacement and that a water-play area was essential to attracting users to the facility. Although referred to as a "splash park" the facility contains an inter-

active waterplay structure with a tipping bucket and small waterslides.

"Our new centre is beautiful and fun, but it also features a full array of accessibility features making it a place for everyone to enjoy," said Federation Council Mayor **Pat Bourke**. "The aquatic centre will be an asset not just for the community today but will meet our communities' needs for the next 50 years."

Despite efforts by locals to waylay plans for Great Britain's first **Great Wolf Lodge**, the project has been given approval to proceed. Responding to an appeal, the district planning commission overturned the decision made last November by the Cherwell District Council to reject the proposal. The 498-room resort with indoor water park will be one of the largest hotels outside of London. It will be situated on the edge of a village with only 800 inhabitants. Opponents felt the area did not have the infrastructure to support such a massive project and were concerned that county roads were not designed to handle the influx of cars that were expected once the facility opened.

PAW (Parishes Against Wolf) — an alliance of 36 local parishes was set up to fight the plans, and a campaign called Stop the Wolf garnered more than 2,000 signatures.

Responding to the decision, the planning inspector cited the widespread economic benefits of the project, including the direct provision of up to 600 jobs to run the park, and the contribution of £23 million per annum to the local economy. The inspector also mentioned that the social benefits of a leisure facility appealing to young families were judged important and not to be underestimated.

The Great Wolf Lodge is to be located in Chesterton, England. It will include an indoor water park and family entertainment center similar to the facilities that have become extremely popular in North America. The Chesterton project is **Great Wolf Resorts'** first venture overseas.

Big Surf Waterpark in Tempe, Arizona, will remain closed for the 2021 season.

"Due to the uncertainty of where the global health crisis and the associated social distancing that is currently going on, Big Surf Waterpark is announcing that it will remain closed for the 2021 season," said a news release posted to the park's website.

The statement added that Big Surf was very concerned with how the social distancing guidelines would significantly affect the quality of the Big Surf Experience and limit interaction with many of the attractions.

The park was closed all of last year so this year's decision marks two back-to-back seasons that the park will remain closed. Big Surf has indicated that it does plan to open for the 2022 season.

Other water parks within the state such as **Six Flags Hurricane Harbor**, **Golfland Sunsplash**, **Great Wolf Lodge** and **Oasis Water Park** are already open or plan to open this year.

World's Largest Swimming Lesson to be held on June 17, 2021

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — Now in its 12th year, **The World's Largest Swimming Lesson (WLSL)** serves as a crucial platform for the aquatics industry to build awareness about the fundamental importance of teaching children to swim. With a whole year of learn-to-swim programs having been lost in 2020, the need to provide children with access to formal swimming lessons this summer has become more important than ever.

"A dire consequence of the pool closures created by the 2020 pandemic is that millions of children did not have the chance to begin swimming lessons as they normally would," said **Rick Root**, president of the **World Waterpark Association**, the founding organization of the World's Largest Swimming Lesson.

This year's WLSL event will take place over the course of 24 hours at host locations that are able to reopen on Thursday, June 17, 2021.

Local WLSL events take place at waterparks, aquatic centers, swim schools, YMCA's and other water leisure venues. Traditional and socially-distanced lesson plans will be available.

The WLSL is unveiling a new #21in21 campaign to encourage host locations of all sizes to get back on deck for the WLSL's June 17.



The massive international World's Largest Swimming Lesson event returns on June 17. COURTESY WORLD WATERPARK ASSOCIATION



Whether facilities are able to host just 21 swimmers and their parents due to social distancing protocols or 2,100 because the whole community is in full-swing, organizers are encouraging as many locations as possible to participate in this year's program.

"Over the last 11 years of hosting the WLSL event, we've learned we can make a real difference in our communities if we all work together," said Root. "By committing to the #21in21 campaign, we can get kids and families back on track to being water aware by participating in life-saving swim lessons."

Aquatic facilities and trainers in the local community are encouraged to help parents connect the dots between learn-

ing to swim and staying safer in and around the water. Registration for host locations opened April 1 at wsls.org.

The purpose of the event is to provide kids and parents exposure to life-saving water safety skills and build awareness about the vital importance of teaching children to swim to prevent drowning. Aquatic venues are joining the WLSL in its mission to spread the message "Swimming Lessons Save Lives" to kids and adults to help prevent drowning.

Per the **Center for Disease Control**, drowning remains the leading cause of unintended, injury related death for U.S. children ages one to four, the second leading cause

for children under 14 and the fifth leading cause of unintentional injury deaths for all ages in the United States. Drowning is an even greater threat in other countries around the world. According to the **World Health Organization**, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide, accounting for 7% of all injury-related deaths.

Participation in formal swimming lessons can reduce the risk of drowning among children ages one to four by up to 88%.

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

Parental supervision can be key to safe swimming. According to a 2016 **Safe Kids Worldwide** report, despite the fact that lack of supervision played a role in the majority of drowning deaths, less than half of parents (49%) indicate they remain within arms' reach of their child in the water.

Since its inception, more than 320,000 children and adults have participated in life-saving WLSL lessons, generating more than two billion media impressions about the vital importance of learning to swim.

•wsls.org



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event on June 17, 2021 and help us put an end to drowning by spreading the word that *Swimming Lessons Save Lives™*.

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Register As A Host Location Starting April 1, 2021

Gaylord Palms water park adds Crystal River Rapids action river

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — **Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center** opened its **Cypress Springs Water Park** in 2012 and expanded it 2016. It includes multiple body slides, a water play structure, a FlowRider surf simulator, and a zero-entry swimming pool. This year the resort is expanding its water park once again with the addition of Crystal River Rapids.

Aquatic Development Group (ADG) worked hand in hand with the Gaylord Palms to design and create a new ride with thrilling water play elements with a natural Florida feel. The ADG team worked diligently to bring the vision of the new action river to life, creating an incredible attraction that appeals to families looking for a vacation getaway, as well as business travelers who are looking to rest and relax after a meeting or convention.

The new action river attraction was inspired by Florida's spring-fed rivers. With an average speed of three and a half feet per second, guests will be taken on an exhilarating ride twisting and turning through changing currents past roaring waterfalls and crumbling limestone walls. Exciting water activations designed to delight guests include a cave masked by cascading waterfalls, a leaky ruinous wall, and seven sprinkling overhead giant leaves. The attraction is augmented with a state-of-the-art sound system, and heated water will provide year-round enjoyment. Crystal River Rapids is the key attraction of a whole new area that includes Crystal River Refreshments — a new food venue with a grab-n-go menu featuring specialty cocktails, comfort food, flatbreads and



Encounters along the new Crystal River include rock formations with waterfalls (above). Private cabanas come with a lounge area, refrigerator and flat-screen TV (right). COURTESY ADG

sandwiches. Also new to the area are two heated spas with massage jets and 360-degree views of the water park. The new area includes additional private cabanas that come with a lounge area, refrigerator and flat-screen TV. Pay-extra upgraded seating is also available in the form of day beds that can accommodate two adults; exclusive sun deck chairs overlooking Crystal River Rapids; and premium pool seating that guarantees a spot with a front-row view of the pool.

The Crystal River addition is part of the resort's \$158 million expansion — it's largest to date. Opening in phases, the addition includes 302



rooms in a new Gulf Coast Tower along with 96,000 square feet of meeting and event space. Also included is a new 12,000-square-foot event area, Mangrove Lawn, which allows for unique group events that can include access to the river or the nearby South Beach Pool.

"We can't wait to debut this elevated attraction to our already thrilling Cypress Springs Water Park," Gaylord Palms General Manager

Johann Krieger said in a statement. "Everyone can find something they love; whether it's our relaxing South Beach Pool, the daring drop and racing slides, the multilevel water playground, the FlowRider Surfing Experience or this new action river; there is truly something for every member of the family."

Gaylord Palms opened in February 2002 as a sister resort to the **Gaylord Opryland**

Resort & Convention Center in Tennessee. Originally to be called the Opryland Hotel Florida, Gaylord decided to give the hotel its own regional theme and brand. As with three other Gaylord properties, the Palms is built around a massive 4.6-acre glass covered atrium and is divided into four areas, each with its own theme, activities and guest rooms.

The resort targets groups of more than 1,000 that prefer a hotel that provides meeting spaces, entertainment options and multiple restaurants all under one roof. Prior to the global pandemic, competition for guests in Central Florida had increased over the years with hotels providing more leisure offerings on property to attract guests and give them plenty of entertainment options without having to leave the resort.

In 2012, **Gaylord Entertainment Company** became **Ryman Hospitality Properties** and management of the hotel division was sold to **Marriott International**, while Ryman maintained ownership of the properties. That same year, ADG designed and built the original aquatic resort area called Cypress Springs Water Park. It included a multilevel tree house playground, zero-entry family swimming pool, relaxing South Beach Pool and pool-side restaurant called The SandBar. The second water park expansion was completed in 2016 and added The Wake Zone Double FlowRider surf simulator, two racing slides and an AquaDrop slide from **WhiteWater** for guests who love adrenaline-filled activities. The Cypress Springs Water Park is only available to guests staying at the hotel or groups using the event space.

This 2021 expansion brings the total room count to 1,718 and increases the convention space to 462,296 square feet, making it the one of the largest convention hotels in the entire state. Within that space is 178,500 square feet of dedicated exhibit space — the largest in-hotel exhibition hall in all of Florida. The Osceola Ballroom includes a permanent 100-foot-by-40-foot theater-style stage complete with a green room and connecting dressing rooms.

The resort has implemented a number of health and safety measures as part of Marriott's "Commitment to Clean" initiative. Measures include social distancing and frequent cleaning throughout the day.

•marriott.com



Two heated spas feature massage jets and 360-degree views of the water park (above left). Reserved premium seating avoids the hassle of searching for empty chairs and guarantees a front-row view (above right). COURTESY ADG



"Our team holds no boundaries at the WWA Show as key learnings are the star of the show. Our teams are anxiously anticipating this one-of-a-kind industry collaboration, in person."

- EVAN BARNETT, PRESIDENT/
GENERAL MANAGER, TYPHOON TEXAS



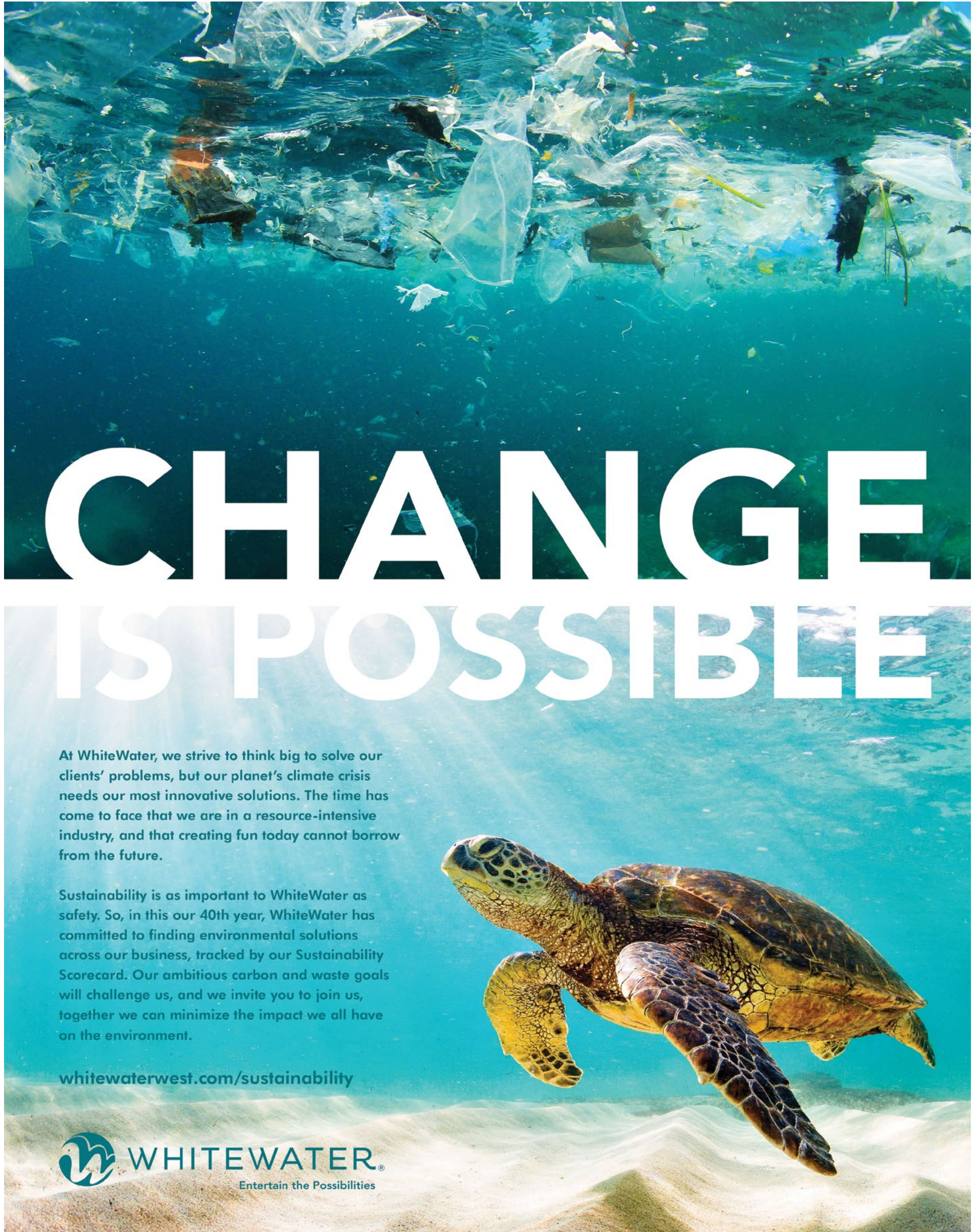
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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

▶ Disney Wish cruise ship unveiled — page 44 / Former Schwarzkopf employee, Gerhard Klein passes — page 49

Veltmeijer Group sets table for success, expands during pandemic

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

THE NETHERLANDS — 2020 was an unexpected year filled with challenges the industry never saw coming as well as severely handcuffing the way of life for so many across the globe. Many began 2020 with the highest of hopes and the **Veltmeijer Group** was no exception. Based in The Netherlands, the family entertainment center giant — which operates **Gamestate**, **Gamecity** and **Gametown** locations throughout Europe — was poised for major expansion prior to the pandemic.

"In early 2020, we set out our plan for the next three years — including which **Holiday Park** locations to restyle into **Gametown** locations," said **Roger Tubée**, Veltmeijer Group's CEO. "It consisted of planning for **Gamestate**, and the remodelling of **Gametown** and **Gamecity**. Then, of course, in March 2020, the first lockdowns came."



Tubée

Despite the lockdowns, Tubée and Veltmeijer Group were able to work at keeping their plans on track. "For 15 months, we [were] closed for over 50% of the time. Nevertheless, we managed to open up one **Gamestate** in 2020, and another, just recently, in 2021. We also remodeled seven **Gametown** and **Gamecity** locations."

"We [were] a very healthy company from a financial perspective," said Tubée. "This made it possible for us to continue with our plans during the lockdown. The **Holiday Parks** had some big refurbishments, and we were able to remodel our arcade into our **Gametown** model."

The **Gamestate**, **Gametown**,



The Veltmeijer Group was able to expand its business base during the pandemic trials and shutdowns of 2020, adding two new **Gamestate** locations in the past 12 months (inset).
COURTESY VELTMEIJER GROUP

and **Gamecity** teams took advantage of the lockdown and hustled together, getting themselves ready to open one location after another as soon as the restrictions eased.

"We used our downtime for maintenance, to make sure we are 100% ready for reopening and to future-proof for the coming years," explained Tubée. "Despite the challenges that we face during the pandemic, we are fortunate we could proceed with our robust expansion plan across Europe. We are proud of our team's effort and our collaboration with **Embed** to make all the opening of our new venues possible and seamless."

However, the Veltmeijer Group did not just expand their location-base, they improved



their location by performing updates and maintenance throughout the pandemic.

"The pandemic brought about a transformative shift in technology. Scanning temperatures, QR-code check-ins and contactless transactions became the norm and technology has taken its place as a fundamental lynchpin of the industry's future," detailed Tubée. "We are proud of our team's effort and our collaboration with **Embed** to make the opening of our new venues possible and seamless. We are pleased to have **Embed's** cashless technology in our venues, especially now that cashless payment solution is rising as it ensures guests' safety."

Veltmeijer Group installed **Embed's** award-win-

ning **smartTOUCH** readers, which included a customized message: "Please Clean This Game After Use." **Embed's** self-service kiosk helped the company during this period as well as its **FEC** guests.

"Without a system such as **Embed's**, money collection out of machines can take almost half a day," stated Tubée. "[We] get daily reporting on machines in terms of ticket payout, gameplay and sales. In the past, with our own system, we had this only once a month."

"We are extremely proud and excited with all the recent openings of **Gamestate**, **Gametown**, and **Gamecity** amusement centers across Europe," said **Daniel Hudson**, global head of sales for **Embed**. "The

smooth and successful implementation of **Embed** integrated solutions at these respective sites is fundamentally due to the great collaboration we have with the Veltmeijer Group. We look forward to many years of fueling fun in their venues, supporting them to improve and achieve success at every step, from their venue renovations to their ongoing expansion plans."

The Veltmeijer Group is also keen to use **Embed's** **Mobile Wallet** as the company views itself as a technology pioneer in the industry. It is exploring more hands-free solutions at its venue due to the **COVID-19** pandemic.

"As the landscape shifts, seeing changes in consumer behaviour and adapting the core business to meet evolving customer needs is key," said Tubée.

With **Mobile Wallet**, its customers will no longer have to buy and carry a game card as their mobile phones are always with them. **Embed's** **Mobile Wallet** was offered for free to all customers in order to help the industry shift to cashless and touchless payment options.

"We first saw the **Mobile Wallet** at [IAAPA Expo 2019], and we were very enthusiastic about that technologically," said Tubée. "Since then, we have been working hard to ensure we are able to incorporate the technology. We are now ready to [roll out] **Mobile Wallet**. Within a few months, we will have it in all the **GameState** locations, with the **Holiday Park** locations to follow."

As the world slowly begins to exit the recent pandemic and with advancing technology as one of its cornerstones, the Veltmeijer Group shows no signs of slowing down.

"We are optimistic for the future and expect big things from European markets this year," of-

▶ See **VELTMEIJER**, page 44



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Disney Wish cruise ship unveiled virtually, donation to Make-A-Wish

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

CELEBRATION, Fla. — On April 29, the **Walt Disney Company** announced a \$1M donation to the **Make-A-Wish Foundation** simultaneously with a virtual showcase and grand reveal of the cruise line's fifth ship, the *Disney Wish*, which will set sail in summer 2022. The name *Disney Wish* carries a powerful meaning, evoking all the wonder and optimism of a wish come true, presenting an opportunity to connect this timeless theme to the invaluable work Make-A-Wish does every day to support children with critical illnesses.

"Making wishes come true is a big part of Disney's DNA, and on World Wish Day, I want to say how proud we are to partner with organizations like Make-A-Wish," said **Bob Chapek**, chief executive officer, The Walt Disney Company. "When we join forces, we're able to make magic happen and be a source of hope and optimism for others, and we look forward to working together to create



Setting sail in summer 2022, the *Disney Wish* will be a celebration of Disney's rich legacy. Guests will be immersed in "The Wonderful World of Mickey Mouse" animated shorts aboard the first-ever Disney attraction at sea, AquaMouse. COURTESY DISNEY CRUISE LINE

even more special moments for deserving wish kids and their families in the years to come."

"Knowing that Disney's next cruise ship will be the *Disney Wish*, I can't help but think of the countless children who have experienced the power of a wish come true to help them overcome so many challenges," said **Richard Davis**, president and chief executive officer, Make-A-Wish America. "Make-A-Wish gives families hope when it matters most, and that hope is needed now more than ever."

The cruise line's *Disney Wish*, however, will be granting wishes for many others, as well. During the showcase, many of the ship's unique and exciting features and amenities were unveiled. These offerings include "Arendelle: A Frozen Dining Adventure," and "Worlds of Marvel." These dining adventures are Disney's first-ever Frozen and Marvel-themed dining experiences and will theatrically bring the world of Arendelle to life with immersive live entertainment infused with Nordic influences, and

immerse guests in an interactive, action-packed Avengers mission inspired by the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

The *Disney Wish* will also offer another first for kids at heart with its Star Wars: Hyperspace Lounge, another richly themed, immersive experience that will be reserved for adults every evening. The lounge will provide interactive tasting experiences and signature beverages inspired by Star Wars destinations such as Batuu, Tatooine and Mustafar.

For thrill-seekers, the AquaMouse water coaster will be the company's first fully immersive "attraction at sea" and combines, a Mickey Mouse short film with show scenes, lighting and special effects, and will be heavily themed in the vein of the 2020 attraction, Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway, at **Disney's Hollywood Studios** in Florida. This water ride will zig, zag and zoom through 760 feet of winding tubes suspended high above the ship's upper decks. **Whitewater West** is the manufacturer of both the AquaDunk and AquaDuck, the significantly less themed water rides on other Disney Cruise Line ships. And while neither the manufacturer nor Disney have yet to confirm, it is likely they will also collaborate on AquaMouse.

The showcase concluded with a stunning rendition of "When You Wish Upon a Star," performed by **Disney on Broadway** star and international performing artist **Sydney Winters** who has a personal connection to Make-A-Wish.

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Blackpool Pleasure Beach opens coffee shop

WG Bean's is now open at Blackpool Pleasure Beach and will be serving freshly ground coffee and snacks every day throughout the 2021 season. The new coffee shop is named after the park's founder and is located at the front of the iconic Casino Building, close to the park's main entrance. Although currently only open for takeout, WG Beans has seating for more than 80 customers across its two floors. COURTESY BLACKPOOL PLEASURE BEACH



VELTMEIJER Continued from page 43

ferred Tubée. "We want to take more GameState arcade locations to Belgium, namely Brussels and Antwerp, and also Germany. Having now completed a project at the Westfield, which is a landmark in that it is the first one in The Netherlands, we probably will [be adding] more Westfield locations worldwide.

"What we are looking to do in the future is expand the arcade part, especially in the Gamestate locations. We are looking for locations with bigger square footage to see if we can build it up to where we can operate bowling, food and beverage, and virtual reality," detailed Tubée. "If you

Embed's SmartTOUCH system was part of the advancing technology that helped Veltmeijer Group navigate the pandemic and continue its expansions. COURTESY EMBED



go to markets abroad, you have FECs that include everything, so that's what we are aiming for." Tubée summed up Veltmeijer Group's success in 2020 with the following: "If you are a healthy company in the arcade and leisure industry, you know that when you open your doors,

cash will flow again. So it's more about waiting to come through that difficult period. Once we are through, we will have very strong businesses. Altogether, as we come out of lockdown we will open as a bigger and stronger company than we were in early 2020 when we first closed."



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A view from the top...

Scene75 is a family entertainment center (FEC) company owned and operated by **Les Sandler** and his son **Jonah Sandler**. The company opened its first location in 2012 in Dayton, Ohio.

With the success of that facility, the Sandlers went on to open a second Scene75 in 2015 in Cincinnati, Ohio, a third in 2017 in Cleveland, Ohio, a fourth in 2018 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and a fifth and largest location in 2019 in Columbus, Ohio.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in shuttering the Pittsburgh location. But the company is currently constructing a location in Chicago, Illinois.

Maggie McCartney began with the company with the opening of that first location in Dayton. Of the 150 hired in the originally recruitment, two are still with Scene75. She is one of the them, and she has been growing and learning and developing a passion for the attractions industry since.

Accomplishments and affiliations...

- Member, International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)
- Member, American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE)
- Member, Great Ohio Coaster Club

McCartney enjoys ride of her life

DAYTON, Ohio — It would be easy to say Maggie McCartney, at 29 years old, is a newcomer to the attractions industry. In fact, that is actually how she feels. She is still learning about the industry. She is still growing within the industry. She still has that excitement.

But, looking closer, at 29 years old, McCartney has spent almost one-third of her young life working for the family entertainment company Scene75.

Like many in the attractions industry, she started part time with an entry level position. She was 20 years old at the time and was attending Wright State University in Dayton, going after a Bachelor of Fine Arts. She wanted to be a graphic artist.

"A friend of mine at school told me she had gone to interview for a job for this new business," McCartney said. "She told me I should, too. I did and got a job as an attraction attendant working at the laser tag."

She said the interview process took place in a hotel across the street from the new Scene75 in Dayton. The building wasn't finished, but they did walk over and take a look.

"There were wires hanging from the ceiling and building materials everywhere," she said.

She had no idea what she was really getting into. But she knew it would give her some extra money while attending school. And she couldn't let go of the passion shown by owners Les Sandler and his son Jonah Sandler.

"They really believed in what

they were doing," McCartney said. "There were people who didn't think this center would make it. But they believed in it."

And it wasn't long before she did as well.

McCartney was born and raised in Dayton. Never one for organized sports, after-school clubs or social clubs while growing up, she spent much of her time playing with graphics and design on the computer.

"My older brother kept putting all these Adobe products on the computer," McCartney said. "I taught myself how to use them and loved it."

She was 10 years when she started that.

She did not grow up in a family associated with the attractions industry. Her father, Dennis McCartney, was a carpenter who loved boats. Her mother, Mary Harsacky, was in the U.S. Army before she married Dennis McCartney.

"Sometimes my mom would say things that would remind us she was in the military at one time," McCartney said. "I remember when she would bathe us and soap would get in our eyes, she would tell us to blink real fast, 'that is what they taught us if we were ever to get sprayed in the face with chemical,' she would tell us."

So, at 20 years old in 2012, she started with Scene75. She worked alongside the owners, who were and still are, she said, very hands-on.

"They have always been so supportive and have empowered so many young people," she said.

Maggie McCartney

Director of Marketing and Branding
Scene75 Entertainment Centers
Dayton, Ohio



When the Sandlers realized that McCartney was in school for graphic design, they asked if she would like to do some design for them. She jumped at the chance and soon was so entrenched, she put school on hold and began working full time.

In 2015, McCartney was promoted to art director, responsible for theming out the attractions in the new centers Scene75 was opening. She was learning on the job.

"Sometimes I just wasn't sure if what I was doing was right or not," she said.

That was when she decided to go back to school and to hone and further develop her skills. She continued full time with Scene75 while attending Modern College of Design in Kettering, Ohio, just about 15 minutes south of Dayton. She was there to get an associate degree in Applied Business in Design.

She received her degree in 2019 and is thankful she went back. It not only taught her new ideas, but it also gave her more confidence in her work.

"I found out that I was actually

doing some things right," she said.

She had been working on the theming and graphics for Scene75's largest FEC, the 200,000-square-foot store in Columbus, Ohio, which opened in 2019.

She themed that center's SBF/Visa spinning coaster into the Nuclear Rush Coaster, giving it energy and attractiveness to all ages. She themed the Moser Drop Tower there, as well as the laser tag and the other attractions.

"It was a really fun project," McCartney said.

Last year, McCartney became the director of marketing and branding.

"I love it all," she said. "I have such a passion for this industry. I can't believe it was something I didn't know anything about just a few years ago. But I now have this wonderful direction for my career."

She loves the people in the industry. She loves going to the IAAPA Expo and feeling the excitement there.

She loves riding roller coasters. And it is probably a good thing, because it seems she is on the ride of her life.

—Pam Sherborne

A Ride Through Time looks at Kings Island's 50-year history

REVIEW: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Kings Island has opened for its 50th season, soon to celebrate its half-century anniversary. In that time, the park has seen its share of history-making memories. Outside of the Disney parks, fan loyalty of that level is hard to achieve, particularly for a regional park. Perhaps it is owed to visits from the Partridge Family and Brady Bunch in the 1970s, but the southern Ohio park was beloved from the very beginning.



In *Kings Island: A Ride Through Time*, author Evan Postingle traces the park back to its roots, but it is done with great backstory. Many people know of the park's origins of Coney Island being faced with numerous floods, but the decision to relocate and become a new, big theme park is recounted with insight and little-known details that make the first section of the book very engaging.

The author separates the book into sections categorized by ownerships. The first section — a lengthy one — takes place when the park was under the Taft Broadcasting umbrella.

As much as the book embraces the park and cherishes its history, nothing is candy coated. Escaped baboons, operational problems and unfortunate incidents are not swept under the rug. It's that type of storytelling that gives the book gravitas and an honest aura of authenticity.

Other sections of the book are devoted to Kings Entertainment, American Financial, Paramount Parks and Cedar Fair. The section dealing with Paramount Parks offers intriguing scrutiny as it deals with the mixed bag of national IP branding with the departure from the park's original heritage. Varying opinions from industry insiders with public reaction makes for a fun read. Installations of *Outer Limits: Flight of Fear* and *Son of Beast* are recounted with fascinating detail.

As the book reaches its conclusion, Postingle clearly notes the current ownership (Cedar Fair) and its direction in returning the park to its original glory by restoring the details and heart that made Kings Island such a beloved part of the community from its very beginnings.

Longtime fans will enjoy the chronological look back, while industry professionals will relate to names and manufacturers involved, as well as last-minute touch ups and fixes just before media day. This book has broad appeal for anyone who has visited and loved the park.

As well-researched and professionally done as *Kings Island: A Ride Through Time* is, it would be a mistake to not mention a note about the author. A reader might think Postingle is a long-time worker at the park or a historian in Cincinnati lore. But no. He is about to enter college and works in one of the park's shops. For a youthful writer to invest such incredible effort to get the details right, conduct 43 interviews and craft it all so well makes the book even more impressive.

An early park map shows the early years of Kings Island, profiled in *Kings Island: A Ride Through Time*. COURTESY KINGS ISLAND



Cincinnati-area amusement industry holds Give Kids The World benefit

CINCINNATI, Ohio — On Monday, May 24, 2021 (after a rain out caused a postponement from the originally planned May 17 date), the Cincinnati/ Northern Kentucky chapter of **Give Kids The World** (GKTW) hosted a golf outing fundraiser at **Summit Hills Country Club** in Crestview Hills, Kentucky.

After serving on the IAAPA-GKTW sub-committee together, **Walt Bowser (Baynum Painting)** and **Chloe Hausfeld (JRA)** opted to create the 1st Annual Give Kids The World Charity Golf Outing as a local fundraiser for the charity.

"What better way to support Give Kids The World, a place 'Where Happiness Inspires Hope' and bring friends and colleagues from the amusement park industry together again," Hausfeld stated.

The event succeeded in doing that very thing. A silent auction and chance auction were also part of the event, which sold out all 72 of its golfing slots. Grossing more than \$18,000 for GKTW, the event brought together staff and support from **Dynamic Attractions, The Gravity Group, International Theme Park Services, William H. Robinson, Inc., 3dx Scenic** and other local industry suppliers. As one of the first industry in-person events held since the recent pandemic shutdown, players and guests were ecstatic to see one another and exchange handshakes and hugs once again.

"This is just the beginning," added Bowser. "We see this becoming an annual event and growing each year."



The golf outing was hosted by Chloe Hausfeld of JRA and Walt Bowser of Baynum Painting. COURTESY MICHAEL GRAHAM



Cincinnati & Kentucky area flair were in full effect at the event's silent auction. Items included a basket of Cincinnati flavors as well as classic bourbon offerings. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



Jonathan Woche, Brian Kosmac, and Michael Graham of The Gravity Group get ready to roll out onto the course. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

3dx Scenic's Mark Rosenzweig prepares for his day on the course. COURTESY MICHAEL GRAHAM



Chris Baynum of Baynum Painting warms up before teeing off. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



Give Kids The World President Pamela Landwirth welcomed golfers and thanked everyone for their support of the popular charity. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



Hugs, handshakes and conversations with industry friends was a highlight of the day for many in attendance. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 05/19/21	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	87.56	91.41	49.26
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	46.22	52.50	22.81
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	54.24	59.11	37.77
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	169.27	203.02	108.02
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.08	0.16	0.07
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	46.92	51.84	20.62
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	5090.00	6500.00	2611.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.59	0.89	0.38
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	15.85	23.05	13.60
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	39.28	42.74	14.65
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	83.99	99.24	40.35
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	836.00	869.00	538.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	52.36	57.57	13.37
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	41.71	51.75	16.06
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	832.00	850.00	620.00

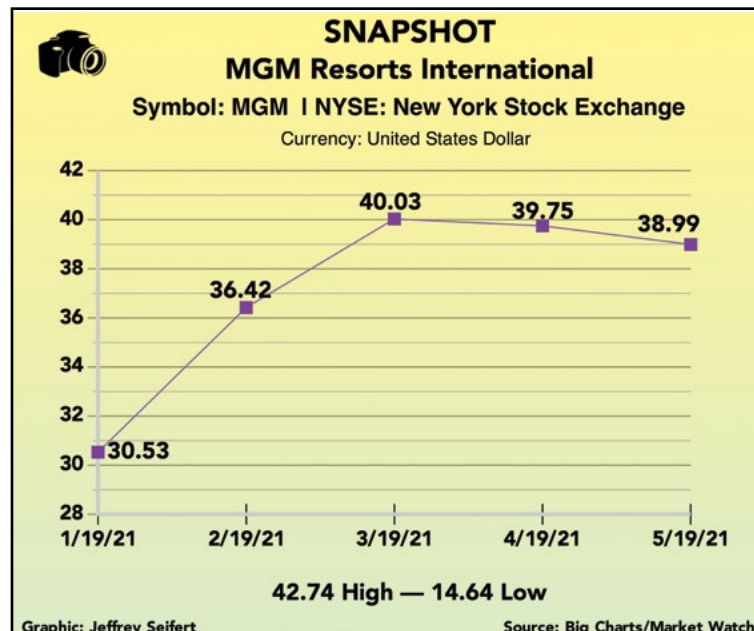
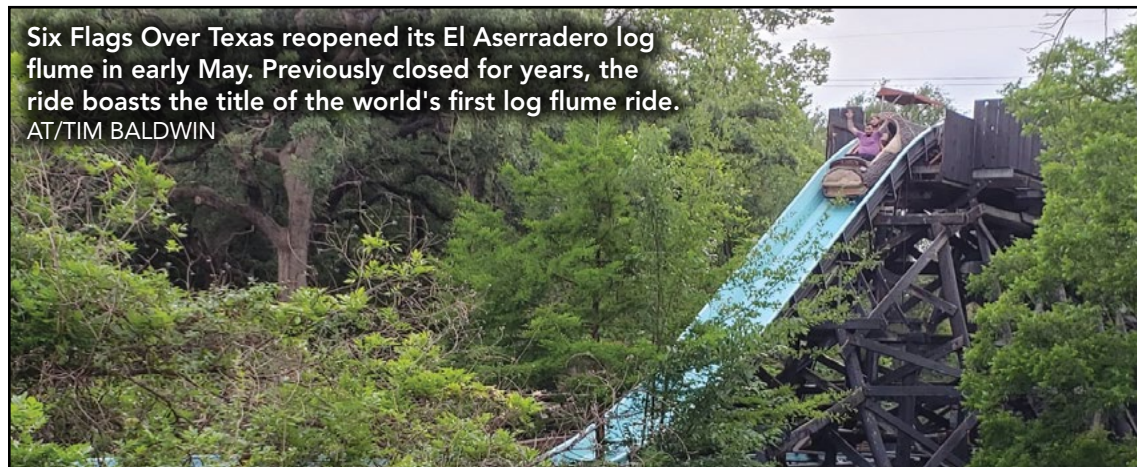
STOCK PRICES ABOVE ARE GENERALLY QUOTED IN THE FOREIGN CURRENCY IN WHICH THE COMPANY IS LOCATED

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

Six Flags Over Texas reopened its El Aserradero log flume in early May. Previously closed for years, the ride boasts the title of the world's first log flume ride.

AT/TIM BALDWIN



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 5/17/21	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.228	\$0.737
Midwest	\$3.197	\$0.968
Gulf Coast	\$3.029	\$0.854
Mountain	\$3.361	\$1.023
West Coast	\$3.383	\$0.840
California	\$4.029	\$0.858

CURRENCY

On 5/20/21 \$1 USD =

0.8189	EURO
0.7062	GBP (British Pound)
109.02	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9004	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.2893	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.2091	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Cedar Fair reports first quarter results

SANDUSKY, Ohio — Cedar Fair Entertainment Company announced results for its first quarter which ended March 28, 2021.

"In our business, few things are more exciting and rewarding than reopening our parks each year for another fun-filled season," said Cedar Fair President and CEO **Richard A. Zimmerman**. "We are pleased that all of our U.S. properties are ready to reopen in May, and we can't wait to welcome back our guests, including our loyal season pass holders, many of whom may be returning for the first time since 2019. We anticipate strong pent-up demand for close-to-home, outdoor entertainment, and are committed to resuming normal park operations as quickly as possible so friends and families can enjoy our unique brand of large-scale entertainment."

For the quarter ended March 28, 2021, net revenues totaled \$10 million versus \$54 million for the first quarter of 2020. The decrease in net revenues was the direct result of a 936,000-visit decrease in attendance and a \$2 million decrease in out-of-park revenues due to COVID-19-related park closures and operating calendar changes in the first quarter of 2021.

Because amusement park operations were suspended in the first quarter of 2021, there was no in-park per capita spending for the period. In-park per capita spending was \$45.95 for first quarter of 2020, which reflected the COVID-19-related park closures beginning March 14, 2020.

Six Flags financials suffering from pandemic

ARLINGTON, Texas — Six Flags Entertainment Corporation reported revenue of \$82 million and attendance of 1.3 million for first quarter 2021. Results for first quarter 2021 are not directly comparable to the same prior year period due to the company's COVID-19 related suspension of operations and operating restrictions beginning on March 14, 2020. The company believes it is most relevant to compare its results in the first quarter of 2021 to the first quarter of 2019, in addition to the first quarter of 2020.

As anticipated, the company reported a decline in attendance for first quarter 2021 as compared to the same periods in 2020 and 2019. Because of fewer operating days and capacity restrictions, total attendance for first quarter 2021 declined 15% compared to 2020 and 38% compared to 2019.

"I am extremely proud of the way our team members have maintained the readiness of our parks so that we can quickly ramp up to entertain our guests and capture the strong consumer demand for regional, outdoor, out-of-home entertainment," said **Mike Spanos**, president and CEO. "Our focus is on safely re-opening all of our parks and working with local health officials to eliminate capacity constraints so we can delight the millions of people who count on Six Flags to deliver fun for all."

Universal parks stable in Comcast financials

PHILADELPHIA — Comcast Corporation reported results for the quarter ending March 31, 2021.

"We are off to a great start in 2021. Our entire company performed well across the board, highlighted by another strong performance from cable, which posted its third consecutive quarter of double-digit Adjusted EBITDA growth, while adding the most quarterly customer relationships in our company's history," commented Brian L. Roberts, chairman and chief executive officer of Comcast Corporation.

"Our theme parks once again reached breakeven, excluding Universal Beijing Resort reopening costs; and — to the delight of our guests — we successfully reopened Universal Studios Hollywood on April 16th. Across all parts of the company, our teams are executing at a high level and collaborating to drive growth and innovation."

Revenue for the first quarter of 2021 increased 2.2% to \$27.2 billion. Net Income Attributable to Comcast increased 55.1% to \$3.3 billion. Adjusted Net Income increased 8.1% to \$3.5 billion. Adjusted EBITDA increased 3.5% to \$8.4 billion.

ON THE MOVE

Negin Singh is stepping away from her duties as executive director at **Santa Monica Pier Corp.** in June to start "on an exciting new chapter" but has not specified what that will be or who will replace her.

"I am so proud of what my team and I have been able to accomplish over the last few years," Singh posted on her LinkedIn profile. "Building meaningful programs with purpose, serving locals and the 10+ million visitors per year, and reimagining the role of public space and landmarks (especially during COVID) has been a life-changing experience."



Singh

Singh was hired in January 2018, after an eight-year stint serving as artistic and executive director of **cARTEL: Collaborative Arts LA**. The Montecito Heights-based production company put on Brokechella Music + Arts Festival and The No Budget Film Festival of Los Angeles.

Singh's departure comes as the businesses on the 111-year-old pier are trying to make the best of the pandemic, which left the area completely shuttered from March 15 to June 24.

Scruffy Dog Creative Group welcomed **Sean Cai** as general manager for Asia. Having worked for a top tier Chinese entertainment design company in the past, Cai brings with him a wealth of knowledge.

In his previous role, Cai was involved in many different aspects of the business including office operation, design, business development, and managing projects in mainland China.



Cai

"Sean will strengthen our Business Development and Project Management team in this region," said **Joe Bright**, CEO, Scruffy Dog Creative. "This appointment is key to our growth in this region, as Cai will not only strengthen our existing client relationships, he will also extend our reach with new connections and projects in this region."

Cai, who received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from **Jilin Architecture**, has participated in many successful projects in previous roles such as **Shanghai Disney Resort, Shanghai Smurf Theme Park, Wanda Octonauts Theme Park, Evergrande Water Park** and **Tencent Little Penguin FEC**.

Polin Group aims to strengthen its presence in Western Europe through its new company **Polin West Europe SAS**, which was established in Paris in 2019.

Emin Berk Baltaoglu (General Manager of Polin West Europe SAS) manages the region from Paris in coordination with the Headquarters of Polin Group. His vast knowledge and experience about the region, the cultures, and Polin products contribute significantly to matching the right solutions with the expectations of customers. A network of partners has been established covering Portugal, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Spain, and Northern Europe.



Baltaoglu

Polin's regional border across Western Europe extends to the United Kingdom

where technical product support comes from **Okyay Halavurt**, regional business development manager. Mr. Halavurt is widely recognized as a strong, reliable source of technical solutions in Western Europe and the U.K. He provides support from the West Midlands in England.



Halavurt

Polin Group also welcomed **Gabriele Geraci** as business development manager for Italy. Mr. Geraci brings unique experience in thematic products and will be the point of contact for potential customers in Europe within the scope of Futuraform, as well as Polin Aquariums products and services.



Geracy

Whitewater's Endless Surf has added **Baptiste Caulonque** as chief commercial officer to work alongside President **Paul Chutter**. Well known within the industry as a consultant to several mixed-use surf park developments, Caulonque became a convert to Endless Surf technology when he was introduced to it as part of his responsibility to source the technology solutions for **La Vague Grand Paris**. He remains a project director for this development, which will bring this enormous board sports park to the people of his homeland, France, in 2024. He then introduced Endless Surf to the development team of **Los Vientos**, an over 1,000 key resort development in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, where he is responsible for the aquapark and surf park components.



Caulonque

"There have been pivot moments in my career and being introduced to Endless Surf 18 months ago was one of them. From the start, I was impressed with the professionalism of the team and blown away by their wave technology — I consider myself very lucky to be joining what I'm confident will be the undisputed leading technology and operators' top choice for surf pools," commented Caulonque.

The company has also added **Andrew Thatcher** as its new vice president of business development. A South African surfer (based in San Diego) and board sport venue expert, Thatcher has been in the artificial wave industry since 2000 first with **WaveLoch** and for the last 20 years with **FlowRider** where he has helped create successful surf bar venues across Asia and the Americas. Having worked with hundreds of aspiring entrepreneurs, Thatcher also brings a wealth of wisdom to those looking to create profitable board sports venues.



Thatcher

Triotech announced the appointment of **Louise Murray** as chairperson of the company's board of directors. Murray has a depth of experience in the entertainment, hospitality, media and sports industry having held key positions at top-tier global innovative organizations such as **Disney, Cirque du Soleil** and **Thinkwell**.



Murray

OBITUARIES**Gerhard Klein, longtime employee of Schwarzkopf and Gerstlauer, passes**

MUNSTERHAUSEN, Germany — Germany-based Gerstlauer Amusement Rides GmbH has announced that its long-time former employee Gerhard Klein (head of vehicle construction) passed away on May 4, 2021, at the age of 80.



Gerhard Klein

Klein was born in Sudetenland, East Germany (now known as Sternberg of the Czech Republic) on September 4, 1941. Having to leave his homeland with his mother and sister with nothing except what the family was wearing, Klein arrived in Münsterhausen around 1945 after World War II.

Throughout his entire professional life, he was solely involved in the leisure industry and especially constructing and building coaster cars, trains and gondolas for Giant Wheels, Polyp, Enterprise and various other round rides.

His professional career began in 1955 at the age of 14 with an apprenticeship at the Anton Schwarzkopf Company where he worked his way up to become head of vehicle construction. He was with the company until its bankruptcy in 1983. Klein stayed with several companies which followed Schwarzkopf, overseeing the construction of an estimated 149 Schwarzkopf roller coaster vehicles and trains. Klein is credited for being involved in both the very first to the last trains and cars for all coasters and ride vehicles delivered under the Schwarzkopf name.

Klein joined the Gerstlauer team as head of vehicle construction in 1995. In 2006, after more than 50 years of professional activity in the industry, Klein retired from Gerstlauer and the amusement industry as a whole.

"Gerhard was a perfectionist in whatever he did and we all learned more from him than we ever could give back," said Franz Maier, longtime friend and fellow Gerstlauer employee. "He dedicated his life to working on ride cars, trains and gondolas. His expertise was so great that we called him 'the living dictionary.'"

In his free time, Klein enjoyed gardening. He was preceded in death by his wife, Maria, in 2017. The couple had no children.



Gerhard Klein (middle) seen in 2006 at his retirement party from Gerstlauer with Hubert Gerstlauer (right) and Siegfried Gerstlauer (left). COURTESY GERSTLAUER

SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Amuse Rides refurbishes rides, coasters — page 52 / 2021 Pa. Ride Safety Seminar recap — page 54

Staffing shortages plaguing amusements throughout the U.S.

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

UNITED STATES — Some people just have that natural talent of being able to use few words to, like the old adage says, hit the nail on the head.

Kimberle Samarelli, the executive director of the **New Jersey Amusement Association (NJAA)**, seems to have that talent.

"It's bad," Samarelli said, in response to the lack of workers needed for amusement attractions in New Jersey.

As an example, officials at **Morey's Piers and Beachfront Water Parks**, Wildwood, New Jersey, reported to local ABC news affiliate on May 5 they still had 1,500 job openings. That was three days before the park opened on May 8. Officials there had increased the wage to \$15 an hour for seasonal ride operators, well above the \$12 an hour minimum wage in New Jersey.

New Jersey is not alone. And, of course, it is not just in the amusement industry. All across the board, it seems, most businesses need workers.

Yet, when ramping up to open for summer operations, amusement and theme parks and attractions hire and train thousands in a very short time period. With the fluidity of COVID-19 mandates limiting capacities, it is like a moving target for many attraction business.

Experts point to a myriad of reasons for the current labor shortage. Some would-be employees are, most likely, still feeling cautious about the transmission of COVID-19 and its variants. Some experts point to the extended unemployment benefits under the American Rescue Plan signed into law by President **Joe Biden** on March 11. Those fed-

eral benefits were extended until Sept. 6, 2021.

Other experts point to the lack of childcare and the fact that many students are still learning virtually.

Then, there is the J-1 Visa program, a federal program for foreign exchange visitors upon which many attractions rely to fill some of their seasonal jobs. Due to the global pandemic, some U.S. embassies that process these applications in other countries are still closed. There are still some travel restrictions as well.

Yet, after a year of opening and closing and opening again, park officials want and need the public back in their parks. And the public seem to be clamoring to be there. The attractions opening are giving a population a feeling of normalcy after over a year of being cooped up because of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

With the parks opening for the season, however, it is not always good news.

Cedar Point, Sandusky, Ohio, opened the weekend of May 17. At the time of opening, the park was still under COVID-19 restrictions that included a capacity limitation and online guests reservations.

A local news reporter was on hand for the exciting re-opening of Cedar Point. But guests that weekend began lodging complaints on the company's Facebook page. The grievances ranged from long lines for some of the coasters and food outlets in some parts of the park not being open.

Gary Rhodes, corporate director, communications for **Cedar Fair Entertainment**, owner of Cedar Point, said, after that first weekend, they continue to ramp up hiring.

"As we're seeing across a



Carowinds of Charlotte, North Carolina, opened May 22 (above). The accompanying **Carolina Harbor Water Park's** opening had to be pushed back to June 12 due to staffing shortages. In the north, **Morey's Piers and Beachfront Water Parks of Wildwood, New Jersey** (left), also has been affected by the current national labor shortage. That park upped its wages to \$15 an hour, well above the New Jersey minimum wage of \$12 an hour.
COURTESY CAROWINDS, MOREY'S PIERS

wide range of industries, the availability of labor has been a challenge," Rhodes said. "In response, we have ramped up recruiting efforts and taken steps to ensure we are providing competitive wages and benefits. Our goal is to strike the appropriate balance between our operating calendar and the availability of seasonal labor and the anticipated demand from our guests."

On May 21, Cedar Point announced they were increasing pay wages to \$20 an hour, with perks. Officials also announced a change in the June scheduling. Normally the park would open full time, every day, after Memorial Day weekend. But, due to labor shortages, the park will close on Tuesdays and Wednesdays until June 29 and 30.

Park officials also have

become creative with their recruiting efforts. **Scene75**, an entertainment center company, held recruiting or hiring parties. Applicants came in, filled out their applications, were interviewed, and then were given tickets to the games and other activities as well as food and drink.

Some parks held drive-

► See STAFF, page 51

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LEGACY RIDE REHAB/UPGRADE
PICTURED: HONKER DINGER DERBY, SESAME PLACE

► **STAFF**

Continued from page 50

through job fairs. **Knoebels Amusement Resort**, Elysburg, Pennsylvania, which opened April 24, was one of them. The event there happened on April 10 and it was reported that just under 100 people applied for positions.

Great Escape in Queensbury, New York, which opened May 1, held two drive-through job fairs in April 17 and April 24. It was reported by a local Post Star reporter that the park netted nine employees of the 1,500 they needed. Park officials hoped the second event would net more.

Great Escape is owned by **Six Flags Entertainment**. **Sandra Daniels**, the company's vice president of communications, said on May 23 that Six Flags has been on a hiring push across the country.

"We think the opportunity to work where you play is a big incentive, particularly in the current environment when people have been cooped up for months," Daniels said. "Working for Six Flags is not only fun, but it's safe."

Daniels said over the last year and a half, the company has updated grooming policies

to be more inclusive and gender neutral; committed to creating diverse workplaces that reflect the communities; increased wages across the board with wide-ranging opportunities for leadership positions and boosted employee perks.

In addition, Six Flags Entertainment has been using a virtual hiring process.

It seems park officials are doing what they can and using all forms of communication available. Whether all this is making a significant difference, only time will tell.

Lake Compounce, Bristol, Connecticut, boosted the pay wage to \$15 an hour for seasonal employees 18 years or older. The park opened May 8, and it was reported at the end of April, there was still a need for 900 workers.

Carowinds, Charlotte, North Carolina, opened May 22. The accompanying water park was set to open over Memorial Day weekend, May 29. But staffing shortages pushed the water park opening to June 12.

On the positive side here, the latest report on the staffing at Carowinds is that they were starting to overcome it. Carowinds officials announced in April they were offering a \$500 bonus for all seasonal hires.

Great Escape in Queensbury, New York, opened for the 2021 season on May 23. At right is one of the park's hiring leaflets promoting the fun at working at the park. COURTESY GREAT ESCAPE

Busch Gardens and Water Country USA, Williamsburg, Virginia, also offered a sign-on bonus ranging from \$200 to \$500 and increased wages.

Island Water Park in Fresno, California, opened May 22. But officials there reported they would open only on weekends for the first few weeks due to labor shortages. On opening day, that park had 200 employees instead of its normal 400.

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, Santa Cruz, California, created a Work and Play Program. Employees could work 10 shifts and, for that, receive a bonus of six Boardwalk season passes. On the park's website, the deadline to apply for this program was May 14.

It seems to go on and on, in every U.S. state. Park officials hope as more time passes, more applicants will start showing up at their doors.

By May 21, about 20 U.S. state governors had an-



nounced they were ending the extra federal unemployment benefits sooner than the September expiration dates. The rationale of doing this is hopefully to get people back into the labor force.

The show must go on, but

safely. That means there has to be enough employees with the dedicated hours of training.

Going back to Samarelli and those few words: "Opening will happen, but there may be limited hours. Our places don't close."

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Amuse Rides busy refurbishing wooden coasters, park attractions

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho — A park's off-season becomes busy in different ways than those during daily operation. Refurbishment, repair, upgrades and more take place to prepare the park for returning guests once the season begins anew.

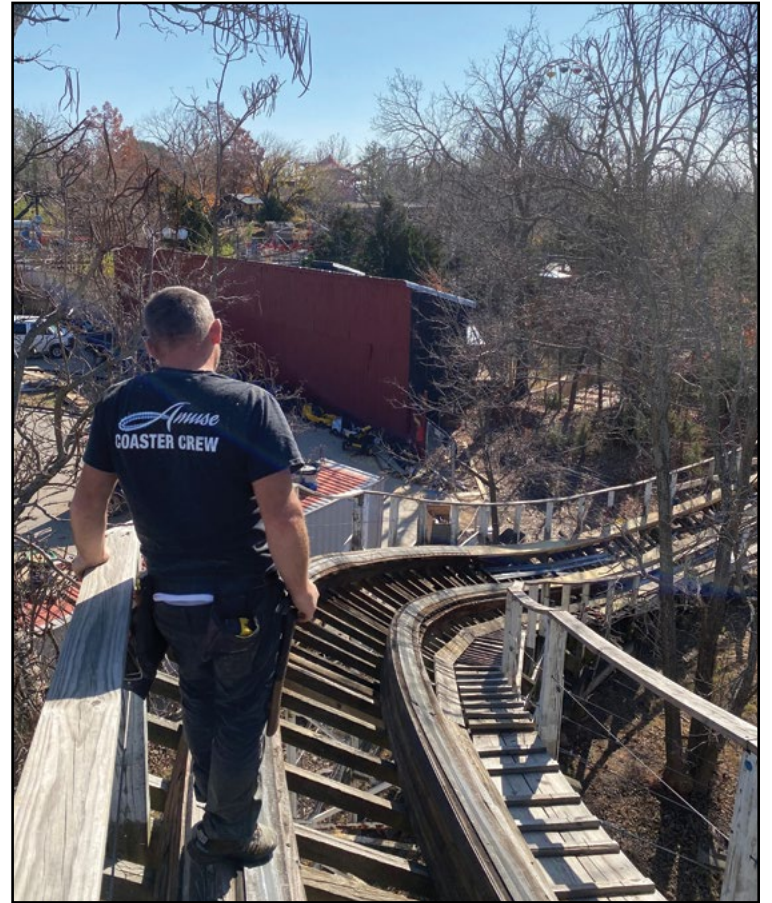
Amuse Rides has been exceptionally busy. As experts in wooden roller coaster repair, ride structures and other engineering projects, the company has had a full calendar over the winter and spring.

"With COVID, we're dealing with a lot of new customers," said Brandon Paul, president. "We've added a lot of new parks [as customers]."

Among the projects the company has worked on this past off-season are those found at Splish Splash in New York, Wild Waves in Washington, Frontier City in Oklahoma, Storyland in New Hampshire, Raging Waters in California and Idlewild in Pennsylvania.

Splish Splash was one of the larger projects for Amuse. The work involved removing an aging slide tower and installing a new slide tower with two sets of staircases, along with decking, handrails, and some structure repairs on slides.

Some simpler repairs were done at Idlewild on the 1938 Rollo Coaster to enable the ride to be ready once the season started. One of the more beneficial aspects of the project was the installation of an observa-



The Amuse team reinspects Roar-O-Saurus at Storyland following refurbishment work weeks before in snowy conditions (above left). The curving turnaround on Frontier City's Wildcat is seen in the early stages of repair (above right).

COURTESY AMUSE RIDES

tion and inspection deck on the lift hill of the coaster. "By doing so, they are able to see what's going on with their chain and wheel," said Paul. "We beefed up the lift hill structure. It's real stout now."

"We've been really trying to value engineer what we can do to get them through this season," said Paul. "Parks are in the process of digging out of a hole from the pandemic last year and now need to open the parks and don't have a plethora of money. We're getting the rides to where they are safe and manageable and

then project in the future to do more work."

Another smaller project was some upper layers of wood replacement on Frontier City's Wildcat last November.

While working on the Oklahoma City project, the team also heading over to Plainview, Texas, to volunteer some work at the National Roller Coaster Museum in assembling some exhibits.

Amuse is doing multiple things at Raging Waters, from concrete footings to slide replacement to decking and handrails and making parts and

pieces for slide repair. "We've got a decent size crew there to get them open," Paul said.

Track work done on Timberhawk at Wild Waves is another project. "I've walked it twice now in the last two years," said Paul. "Last year everything got stopped. I looked at it again a few weeks ago. Again, we're making it safe for this season and then will come back in next season to do what needs to be done."

Preservation of wooden coasters is vital not only to safety but also popularity of the ride. Paul is disheartened

when there is a loss of a good wooden coaster that could potentially be great again.

"We want to educate parks. It's not just maintenance, sometimes it's attributed to repairs. Sometimes they think putting new wood on a coaster is fixing the coaster. A lot of times, they are taking care of the spiderweb and not the spider," he illustrated. "But coming in and adjusting ledgers and seeing why the coaster is hitting hard ... by reprofiling a bit, it is just

► See AMUSE, page 53



Splish Splash required several days to work on repairing slide structures, removal of a slide tower and the addition of new staircases. COURTESY AMUSE RIDES

Urban Air Adventure Park get s creative with storage space



CINCINNATI, Ohio — As more and more FECs repurpose previous retail buildings into family attractions, space is always a concern. At Urban Air Adventure Park of Cincinnati, Ohio, owner Thomas Payne used the space creatively. Guest storage cubbies mount flush with the walls near attractions, and can be pulled out by staff members to allow for easy access to supplies or to inspect and maintain attractions from all sides. This innovative idea allows for no part of the available space to go unused.
AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

►AMUSE Continued from page 52

going to make it last longer," Paul said.

His team has seen success in previous projects where a coaster was breaking bolts, and with corrected engineering, problems are resolved, and coasters are no longer breaking bolts in former problem areas.

"There is definitely a science behind wood coasters," he said.

Work demands on the Amuse Rides team are often in single-digit temperatures over the winter. Snow and ice can be a recurring obstacle as workers forge to get the work done. Ironically, on a return visit to Storyland to check on the ride as trains were being put back on in the spring, the team of workers found construction debris that had been covered by snow, so they were pleased to be able to clean that up. At Splash Splash, the team

had to rent a snowplow just to get through three feet of snow to get to the job site.

"They're troopers. Not a lot of people can work in those conditions," Paul said in praise of his workers.

Some projects don't require the off-season. In the past, they have built eateries and such for parks. Amuse Rides will be spending much of this summer dismantling Cheetah at **Wild Adventures** in Georgia. The wooden coaster is being retired. However, it was built with a steel structure.

"We're saving everything for them — all the bents and the structure, as well as the chain and the motor," Paul told *Amusement Today*. "I'm taking it down carefully; I'm not going to destroy it. I'm going to backward build it by removing all the track, then disconnect all the bents and then stack it up for them."

He teased that the structure could be used for a new

attraction in the future if they decided to do so.

The station is to be repurposed into an observation deck for the wild animal park, as well as the transfer track, which will be transformed into an entertaining area for viewing the park. Other parts of the structure will be reused as shelving and in maintenance shops. "They are being very smart with it. They are not just trashing everything," Paul said in regard to their forward-thinking initiatives.

"[After that] the rest of the year is going to be full-blown busy," Paul said, looking ahead. "We're going to be back to all the parks we've worked with. We'll be headed back to **Kentucky Kingdom**. **Six Flags Magic Mountain** and **Six Flags Over Georgia** have called. It's a good sign for the industry. There is life coming back. I think the next years are going to be good for the parks. We're still grateful to be serving the industry."



One of the safety benefits to the work on Idlewild's Rollo Coaster is the addition of an inspection platform on the lift hill. COURTESY AMUSE RIDES

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Modified Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar features 200 attendees

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HARRISBURG, Pa. — It has been 15 months since the last **Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar** was held due to the pandemic. Organizers were committed to make it happen, albeit a modified format, along with three date changes. In a normal year, participants select the courses they want to take over a three-day time frame with eight different classrooms at the **Red Lion Hotel & Conference Center**.

This time training was spread over a five-day schedule, May 10-14. There were four fixed-classroom sites, using the largest rooms available at the venue, while shrinking classroom size to accommodate social distancing. Class tracks were pre-scheduled. Students stayed in one room all day with instructors rotating as needed. Box lunches were served in the same room with breaks staggered to reduce congestion in hallways and restrooms. Temperature checks were taken each morning and attendees were asked to wear masks. All this was done with guidance from the **Pennsylvania Governor's Office** and the **Pennsylvania Department of Health**, while practicing **CDC (Center for Disease Control)** guidelines.

The first two days of the week were for those inspectors involved with inflatables, walk through attractions, water attractions and go karts/bumper boats. The last three days were for Class 1 and Class 2 inspectors and independent inspectors with both operations and maintenance tracks and extreme sports (outdoor aerial adventure) and extreme sports (indoor trampoline and adventure parks.)

Seminar classes featured a wide range of topics included rigging safety, pneumatics, hydraulics, electrical, NDT, welding, active shooter, disaster recovery, emergency planning and weather impact on outdoor events. Attendees came from, (in addition to Pennsylvania) Colorado, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas. There was approximately a 60/40 split between



Leonard Adams, Jr., conducted a session about the Pennsylvania Amusement Ride Safety Act and inspector qualifications in one of the socially distanced rooms (above). Adams is a quality assurance inspector for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Some of the staff of the Amusement Ride Safety Division are pictured below left. Seated: Joe Filoramo, director; Yvonne Brown, administrative assistant and Leonard Adams, Jr. Standing: Randall Arndt and John Jardine. Adams, Arndt and Jardine are all quality assurance inspectors for Pennsylvania. Lance Miller (below right) conducted a seven-session class on trampoline courts service tech program. Miller is the principal of Miller Safety Inspections & Consulting, Inc., based in Parker, Colorado. AT/B. DEREK SHAW



new and renewal inspectors.

A fifth room was used by the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Bureau of Ride and Measurements Standards, Amusement Ride Safety Division**. This was for inspector questions, registrations and renewals, photographs and license information. **Joe Filoramo**, supervisor, described the operation. "We are sitting in here socially distanced, six feet apart, six feet away. People at the front desks have masks. We have a virtual station with a person from our office, working from her home with a video connection. She's able to look things up and give them [inspectors] answers, make adjustments that need to be made, updates to contact information and so on."

The 54 instructors and support staff are all volunteers from across the country with a wide spectrum of specialties that impact the amusement industry. Testing was pro-

vided for Class 1 and 2 ride inspectors, general qualified inspectors and specialized inspectors. The Pennsylvania certification is recognized in many states, including RCMT, (Recognized Certified Maintenance Technician), the program in place in New Jersey.

Phil Slaggert, owner of **Mobile Midway Safety Institute, LLC**, who coordinated the training as a third-party vendor for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, was asked if a virtual or combination virtual/in-person training seminar was ever considered, "This program was set up to be done in a face-to-face format. We found that our attendees prefer that type of format, therefore it really wasn't an option that we considered for this program."

Organizers were pleased with the outcome. "It went amazingly well and smooth. We had to make some adjust-



ments to the program, overall, it has been fairly well-received by the students. They have been able to exchange information, get some updates and hopefully learn a few things along the way, which is what this program is all about," said Slaggert. Filoramo agreed. There was a good mix of information for newcomers and people that were doing continuing education too."

Slaggert is quick to recognize assistance provided from the commonwealth: "All credit to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and their staff, to director **Walt Rimmert**, supervisor Joe Filoramo, and his Q&A guys. Without their help and support, we couldn't have put this program on. They were very helpful and encouraging along with their peers from the Pennsylvania Department of Health to work within the guidelines and create a program that we

could present to our inspectors — a program that's done safely with the current guidelines and still be able to present a program that works for attending inspectors."

Plans are already in the works for the next seminar, as Slaggert explained. "At this point we're looking at having a normal program in the fall, but if circumstances dictate, we can keep this format as an option. Again, it will just depend on the regulations and how the pandemic continues to evolve in the United States."

The next Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar is scheduled for November 2 - 4 at the Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, just off I-283 on Lindle Road. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has inspected and registered amusement rides under the Pennsylvania Amusement Ride Safety Act since 1984.

•paridesafety.com

ASTM International committee revising ride standard regarding record retention

W. CONSHOHOCKEN, Pa. — ASTM International's amusement rides and devices committee (F24) is revising one of its key standards to include a new section requiring owner/operators to have a documented record retention program.



The standard (F770) outlines information and establishes procedures for the operation, maintenance, inspection and training for amusement rides and devices.

According to ASTM International member **Tony Claassen**, the language in the new section will be a start-

ing point, creating a foundation for more specific and prescriptive updates.

"While many jurisdictions around the world have a legal requirement for owners and operators of amusement rides and devices to maintain certain records and docu-

ments, it is inconsistent from jurisdiction to jurisdiction," said Claassen, maintenance support, **Silver Dollar City**. "This has made it challenging for inspectors and authorities to investigate incidents when an owner/operator may no longer have the documentation in question."

Claassen notes that the regulators, owners, and operators will benefit most from the proposed revisions to F770, as the groundwork is established for a consistent record retention program throughout the amusement industry.

astm.org

First Option Software launches Cmd-Ctr after success at Paulton's Park



HAMPSHIRE, U.K. — Following the successful delivery of a bespoke system for command center and operations teams at **Paultons Park** in 2020, **First Option Software** has announced the launch of Cmd-Ctr as a cloud-based system for other visitor attractions to benefit from.

Despite there being a wide range of systems available for retail, ticketing, human resources and maintenance, there appears to be very limited options for systems that all amusement park operations teams to manage ride operations, enforce processes and capture metrics. With most parks still operating on a paper-based system, Cmd-Ctr brings efficiency and oversight through automation and workflow management across its suite of apps designed specifically for key members of the operations team.

"With our skills in streamlining business processes, we've proven at Paultons Park that we can deliver a measurable difference to their daily operations and now we're excited to see how we can do the same for other parks around the world," stated **Matt Clarke**, director of First Option Software.

For management, Cmd-Ctr's web-based portal provides a simple and intuitive interface for senior staff members to configure their workflows, users and training programs. Live dashboards provide instant oversight of the key metrics captured throughout the day, from queue time and throughput to closures and spot checks, everything is captured and stored for live review and historic audit.

For supervisors and team leaders, Cmd-Ctr's dedicated ride monitoring app provides ride and operator oversight with performance notifications and direct communication with ride operators.

For operators and attendants, Cmd-Ctr's easy-to-use app helps them capture key metrics without distracting them from their responsibilities to visitor safety and experience. From opening checks and logins, to queue times and throughput, the ride app communicates instantly with Cmd-Ctr's central database to provide live access to essential data and metrics.

Cmd-Ctr is launching at a second theme park in Spring 2021, and advanced conversations continue with a number of parks worldwide.

firstoptionsoftware.com

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Ride Entertainment announces Ecological Laboratories partnership

STEVENSVILLE, Md — Ride Entertainment announced a new, strategic partnership with Ecological Laboratories, creators of the Microbe-Lift/WR biotechnology products. The partnership brings an innovative and cost-effective clean water technology to Ride Entertainment's clients with water-based attractions, lagoons and ponds.

"This partnership with Ecological Laboratories allows our customers to obtain and maintain water quality in their parks," said Ed Hiller, CEO of Ride Entertainment. "The only thing our customers will be sweating over this summer will be the warm temperatures."

Founded over 40 years ago, Ecological Laboratories Inc. has developed and manufactured novel, proprietary, liquid microbial formulations that have solved some of the most challenging environmental problems facing the world today.

Ecological Laboratories' Microbe-Lift/WR is a break-



through in biotechnology.

It represents an all-natural, non-chemical water enhancement restoration process that is safe to pets, animals, humans and the environment. The novel bio-enzymatic process eliminates problematic waste organic matter, related odor, i.e., hydrogen sulfide and related corrosion.

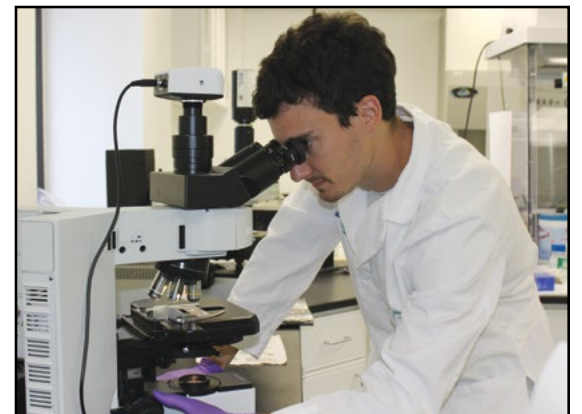
The enzymatic microbial process can be used in multiple water systems to include hotel and restoration effluent streams as well as all filtration or aeration water system. When applied according to instructions, users may expect to see naturally clean, clear water within seven to 14 days with odor abatement within eight to 24 hours.

Microbe-Lift/WR is a 100% natural solutions that is manufactured in the U.S.A.

•rideentertainment.com



Ride Entertainment is partnering with Ecological Laboratories Inc. on a cost-effective clean water technology for water-based attractions. The laboratories have developed and manufactured novel, proprietary, liquid microbial formulations that have helped to solve many challenging environmental problems. COURTESY RIDE ENTERTAINMENT



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Time to start planning the 2022 AIMS International Safety Seminar

Despite the challenging times that have been affecting us all this past year, our staff is optimistic about the future, and plans are underway for the 2022 **AIMS International Safety Seminar**, which will be held in Galveston, Texas, January 9-14, 2022. As plans for the Safety Seminar unfold, AIMS staff will be considering ways to keep those who may not be able to travel connected, and will look to new technology tools to help reach those in the industry who are in need of education and certification, but may be unable to attend in person.

One of these tools, which is currently available at aimsintl.org/education, is AIMS connectED, the new on-line learning platform where amusement industry professionals can gain the education and CEUs they need to keep their certifications current. While we hope everyone will be able to connect, learn and network in person, rest-assured, we will put together a



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

Call for Instructors and Presentations for the Safety Seminar

In an effort to streamline and simplify the process of selecting courses for the upcoming seminar, the AIMS team has employed a new online tool for the sole purpose of soliciting, collecting and reviewing

presentation proposals. The Call for Presentations for the 2022 AIMS International Safety Seminar portal is open now through July 31, and can be accessed by visiting aimsintl.org/get-involved/be-an-instructor.

AIMS International Annual Safety Award nominations now being accepted

The AIMS International Safety Award is presented annually to the individual or organization that demonstrates leadership, innovation, and foresight in improving safety in the amusement industry. With safety as the industry's number one concern for guests and employees worldwide, efforts in improving safety are shown in many forms: the design and implementation of new products and technology, the development of safety education programs and training, and by exemplary leadership in influencing others.

Nominations for the AIMS International Safety Award can be submitted via email to info@aimsintl.org. Please include the name and contact information of the nominee, in addition to a short description of why the nominee deserves to be recognized. The winner will be selected by a vote of AIMS International's Board of Directors and presented during the 2021 Golden Ticket Awards in September. The deadline for award nomination is July 15, 2021.

The mission of AIMS International is to improve amusement industry safety through leadership in education.

The annual AIMS International Safety Seminar is recognized by major parks and attractions as the worldwide leader for safety training and education. The next AIMS International Safety Seminar will be held January 9-14, 2022 in Galveston, Texas. For more information, visit aimsintl.org.

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