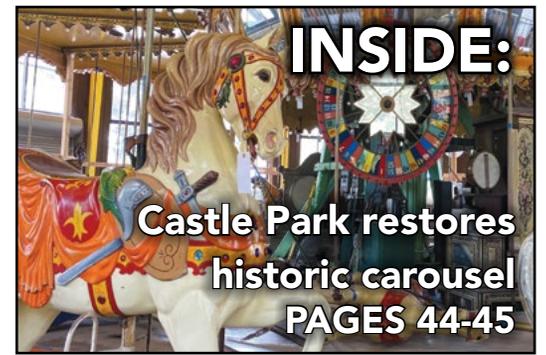


# Amusement TODAY CELEBRATING 25 YEARS!

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Digital Edition



Phoenix family thrill coaster is located very close to the iconic Wonder Wheel. COURTESY DENO'S WONDER WHEEL PARK

## Phoenix rises at Deno's Wonder Wheel

AT: B. Derek Shaw  
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — The July 4th holiday weekend marked the opening of a family-style **Vekoma Rides Manufacturing BV** suspended roller coaster aptly named Phoenix, as it is meant to symbolize rebirth into a more accepting and loving world. The project took the better part of three years as a lot of different pieces had to be put in place.

From opening day remarks at the ribbon cutting festivities, third-generation family member **D.J. Vourderis** said, "New York is known for its ability to take a punch and bounce back; I don't think any place on earth does this better. And Coney Island is its greatest example of resilience, even in the darkest of times. It is a place people have always come to find comfort, and to remember what it feels like to smile. We need this now more than ever. I don't believe these are uncertain times for us. They are critical and painful and trying, but we will, most certainly, rise from the ashes and give birth to the best of times."

To make the project happen, land acquisition had to occur. "The property that we purchased is adjacent to the Wonder Wheel and had shared a fence with our existing park. We always had it in our sights, as it would make a perfect addition to Deno's," explained Vourderis.

Next came the discussion on what to do with the new parcel. "We sat down as a family

and discussed all the different options we had. We talked about everything from go-karts, flat rides to, of course, roller coasters. In the end we felt a single major attraction would be best. We wanted something unique to the area, and therefore decided a suspended coaster would be perfect. We also wanted something that fit well with our park. As we are a more family-oriented park, a family thrill coaster made the most sense," said Vourderis.

The park owners did their due diligence when it came to research. "We talked to several manufacturers and received lots of ideas and interesting concepts. We went to **Dollywood**, **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** [and] **Fun Spot** and rode different coasters from different manufacturers. We even sought input from the roller coaster enthusiast community."

Vekoma from Vlodrop, Netherlands, was the company selected for the job. "The custom design they created for us is not only accessible for all ages but thrilling and packs a serious punch! This roller coaster was going to sit, (and dive under) the official New York City landmark Wonder Wheel. It had to be unique and worthy of such a historic location. I asked Vekoma to build something enthusiasts would enjoy but wouldn't scare younger children. I think we got exactly that. You're never sure with custom designs, but we are extremely happy with how

► See PHOENIX, page 6

## New offerings spotlight Cedar Point's long history

*Throwback ride, parade celebrate anniversary and delight guests*

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SANDUSKY, Ohio — Patience is a virtue, or so it is said. The milestone of a 150th anniversary is quite simply a century and a half in the making. 2020 was to be a big celebration for Cedar Point. Unfortunately, masks, social distancing and limited attendance didn't exactly scream "party." Last summer, park officials made the call to host the festive event this year. By moving it to 2021, the anniversary extravaganza could be done right.

"It's time. We've all waited more than a year to share this momentous occasion, and we couldn't be more excited," said **Carrie Boldman**, vice president and general manager.

While there are many components to the actual celebration (see page 38), two big additions for this season rise to the

top. Snake River Expedition is a throwback to a beloved (and missed) family attraction. For summer nights, the park has dazzled crowds with the Celebrate 150 Spectacular, a parade with massive floats that culminates with a street dance party.

Debuted in 1960, the Riverboat Cruise took passengers on two stern wheelers around the park's lagoon. Over time, the sets and animatronics — as well as the route, owing to additions to the park's real estate — changed quite a bit. With alterations to the attraction came name changes, and many longtime fans of Cedar Point will remember a journey or two on the Western Cruise or Paddlewheel Excursions. The final trip of that attraction was taken in 2011. While Snake River Expedition will entertain many first-time passengers, there are still some nods to the Western Cruise and Paddlewheel Excursions that will bring a smile.

"One of the things we talked about with the 150th anni-

► See POINT, page 8



Floats captured numerous aspects of the park's history. COURTESY MARK ROSENZWEIG/3DX SCENIC

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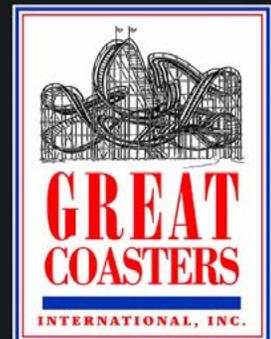
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# AMUSEMENT VIEWS

**AT NOTEBOOK:** Gary Slade, [gslade@amusementtoday.com](mailto:gslade@amusementtoday.com)

## Remembering Paul Ruben



Slade

Amusement Today has published countless obituaries since our beginning in 1997, both as a service to the family and our industry but also as a matter of public record for future generations, who we hope continue the tradition of amusement industry research, just as we do today.

All published obituaries are difficult, even more so when they are of someone our AT staff knows. The most difficult ones are when they are one of our own. Paul Lewis Ruben, 84, never wrote for AT, but his editorial contributions included *Amusement Park Journal*, *RollerCoaster!* (ACE) and *Park World*.

I had the pleasure of knowing Paul through all those media journeys and I always enjoyed his stories and his friendship. We shared many rides together at various park media events and always found time to catch up at the various trade shows. Two media events come to mind:

- On April 4, 1998, Six Flags Magic Mountain opened Riddler's Revenge, a B&M stand-up coaster. This was Bonnie Weber's media event and she convinced Paul to let her spray paint his hair green for a TV shoot, which he gladly accepted. I think this was a good example of Paul's humorous side, for those of us who got to see it.



- On June 15, 2012, Disneyland's California Adventure Park opened its new \$1.1 billion Cars Land and, as fate would have it, Paul and I took one of the early media rides together aboard Cars. The event was spread out over the entire day giving media free downtime to enjoy the park or just enjoy the new section, where I ran into Paul again. He was a little flustered as he could not find a Kodak Picture Spot to get a close up of the Cars vehicle on the track due to all the media trucks and support equipment blocking key vantage points of the ride. I told Paul I had found his angle. We ventured over to the elevated TV stage for KTLA where I had a contact. Since they were in between live shoots, we were allowed on set where we had a beautiful view of the ride from 25 feet in the air. Paul was always appreciative of that "Kodak" moment.

Just as this industry will, I will miss my friend Paul Ruben, but what I will miss the most are our talks about roller coasters, the industry and even the trials and troubles of early day film cameras when the mechanics didn't always work to our liking.

**FLINT'S VIEW:** Bubba Flint



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

## Hope for tomorrow is stronger than ever

I remember all too vividly the feeling in the air one year ago. This industry was nervous, many of its members genuinely fearing for what each day, each round of the news cycle would bring. Unemployment? More shutdowns? We all waited with bated breath as parks and attractions started to open (to limited capacity, in parts of the country that would allow them to open) just trying to salvage what could be of the 2020 season.

Even as 2021 started, we were excited to hear when Cedar Fair and Six Flags announced opening dates for all of their company-owned parks. But we were also tapering that news with caution, having seen things change entirely on a moment's notice.

Thanks to vaccination efforts, we are finally starting to feel the nerves relax a little. Rides that were supposed to open in 2020 are now debuting in 2021, and guests are queuing up to experience them in impressive numbers. Even better, parks across the



Robinson

globe are announcing new attractions for 2022 and 2023, showcasing high-dollar investments and their commitment to continue and deliver the fun.

In recent weeks, owners are breaking ground on new FECs, theme parks, water parks and other attractions. The footprint of the industry is expanding once again, promising to keep wowing guests with thrills and putting smiles on the faces of families worldwide.

There's still a lot to be done. The hiring crisis is very real. The struggle to return the H1 Visa program to its normal levels and ensure proper staffing is ongoing. Suppliers and manufacturers are still waiting on payment for orders made in 2019 or 2020, and eagerly awaiting more orders for 2022 and beyond to get their books back into the black.

Even with so much more to do, it's undeniable that a real sense of hope has returned both to the amusement industry — and the world as a whole. Let's keep that hope going and growing!

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



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# 2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

## Keith Herrman, Kemah Boardwalk

**Keith Herrmann** started his career in the amusement industry at the former **Six Flags AstroWorld** where he worked while in high school and college. Today, he serves as senior sales manager for **Landry's Restaurants** at the charming **Kemah Boardwalk** near Houston. His job keeps him hopping as he is responsible for maximizing revenue across the group of full-service restaurants at the entertainment complex. Keith is known for putting his team first, being open to new ideas and mentoring several employees in the industry.

**Title:**  
Senior Sales Manager.

**Number of years in the industry:**  
35.

**Best thing about the industry:**  
The fun and excitement and letting me pretend I am still young.

**Favorite amusement ride:** So many, but really love Superman at Fiesta Texas.

**If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ...**  
Performing on Broadway!

**Biggest challenge facing our industry:**  
Rebounding from the past year.

**The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ...**  
Walking the park when it is full of people and observing.

**To me, the most influential person in history is ...** That is a hard one. Let's go with Walt Disney.

**Favorite dessert:**  
Cheesecake.

**When I say exercise, you say ...**  
Walking from one end of the park to the other, multiple times.

**The best pizza I have ever eaten was at ...**  
I can't remember the name, but it was a little "ma and pa" place in Chicago.

**Right now, the ring tone on my cell phone is ...** A boring standard apple ring tone.

**The last book I read was ...**  
Dear Evan Hansen.

**Growing up, my nickname was ...**  
I didn't really have one.

**When on an airplane, I typically ...**  
Watch a movie or sleep

**The food I crave most often is ...**  
Anything Mexican!

**The concert I would really want front-row seats to is ...** Dolly Parton or Fleetwood Mac.



Keith Herrmann has enjoyed a career in the amusement industry spanning across nearly four decades. He often puts his experiences to work by mentoring several of his employees about the industry. COURTESY KEMAH BOARDWALK

**In 10 years, I hope to be ...**  
A lottery winner.

**People say I remind them of ...**  
Brad Pitt (I wish)!

**If I could be part of any TV family it would be ...** The Griffins (*Family Guy*).

**The newspaper I read every day is...**  
None, I rely on the web.

**The local paper:**  
*Houston Chronicle*

**All-time best comedian:**  
Gallagher or Eddie Murphy.

**The most useful invention in the last 10 years has to be ...**  
Computer technology.

**In one word, my home can be described as ...** Messy, I am never home enough to really clean!

**If I had an extra day off, I would spend it ...** Sleeping.

**My favorite day of the week is...**  
Sunday.

## THE INDUSTRY SEEN

### Hiring Trailblazer



ELYSBURG, Pa. — Amusement operators all over North America are facing staffing challenges. To help combat this, the ownership at Knoebels Amusement Resort created a promotion called, "Work Here. Win Here." The park is giving away a new 2021 Chevy Trailblazer. The giveaway is the result of a partnership between Knoebels and Blaise Alexander Family Dealerships. Employees, 16 and older, working 250 hours get a chance in the vehicle drawing. Bonus entries are offered for every additional 25 hours worked. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

## Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

### The Magic Sock

In the mid-1970s, **Bob Minick** was part of the **Six Flags Over Texas** team. He scheduled a meeting for **Paul Osborne Associates** to meet management in the boardroom and present the company's idea for a Himalaya encased in a blacked-out building that would showcase the magic of the costumed character creation, **Cyrus Cosmo**. **Paul Osborne** presented the idea.

The showmen — **Jim Ashworth**, **Vic Donovan**, **Tom Major** as well as Minick — were sold immediately. However, silence from the corporate executives was, as always, non committal. **Hardy Haberman**, Osborne's partner, assessed the situation. Unlike, Osborne who was dressed in a sports coat and slacks, Haberman attended the meeting in an old green coat, sailor captain's hat with long curly hair underneath and heavy boots.

As the silence progressed, Haberman crossed his left leg over his right and untied his boot. He set the boot down carefully and just as carefully took off his sock, put it on his right hand and arranged it carefully. The hole in the sock's toe was still clearly visible. Then, the sock began to talk.

It was never exactly made clear what "Boot Sock" had said in the meeting, but it's no surprise to know that Ashworth, Donovan, Major and Minick had nearly fallen out of their chairs laughing. **Cyrus Cosmo** and **The Rotoriculous** were a stunning success at **Six Flags Over Texas**. The sock has made its way to **The Magic Sock of Fame**.

*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 it to Lottie Minick at minickassociates@gmail.com.*

## ►PHOENIX

Continued from page 1

this came out. It far exceeds our expectations," said Vourderis.

Vekoma Global Business Development Manager **Ricardo Tonding Etges** talked about the partnering process: "This is another example of the great collaboration of Vekoma and Deno's, with both parties actively discussing the track design and ride elements. After a few iterations, we got to a point where the track layout was making the best use of the real estate while offering a very unique family-thrill ride experience."

"The compactness of the site resulted in fruitful discussions on how to make the most of it. Luckily, Deno's wanted a family ride that still has a good sense of thrill. This was a perfect fit because the site constraints would lead to tight curves and quick transitions," said Vekoma Concept **Engineer Tonny Schonewille**.

Project Manager **Daniël Kerkhofs** talked about the construction that was carried out by **Ride Entertainment Systems**, ride maintenance and installations division. "The entire sequence of construc-



tion was well planned before the start, the construction went well above average, the entire structure of tracks, columns and equipment fitted together perfectly," he said. "One of the biggest challenges during construction of the Phoenix was basically the lack of storage around the construction site. Thanks to the enthusiasm and personal contribution of D.J. Vourderis, and the collaboration with the Vekoma logistics department, a solution was found on a daily basis."

Vourderis was quite pleased with the erection process. "The on-site crew from Vekoma were fantastic. They were more than just supervisors. We all worked together to get the job done. Ride Entertainment and their crew was amazing — they are real pros. I am extremely par-



Part of the footprint of Phoenix allows park goers to walk underneath and observe the ride while it is in operation. COURTESY DENO'S WONDER WHEEL PARK

ticular about how things should be put together, and they did not disappoint. They were just as meticulous as we are. They did not leave until everything was perfect. The training Vekoma provided was also excellent. I had about a million questions, and different scenarios I asked them to play out for us. They sat with our team and made

sure we knew how everything worked before they left. We had several days of "school" with the supervisors. They would make us run the ride, and purposely simulate errors to show us how the system responded and how to troubleshoot," said Vourderis.

"Despite the challenges of working in a major municipality, during a once-in-a-lifetime

pandemic, our installation team at Ride Entertainment was honored to add our names to the already rich history of Deno's Wonder Wheel with our contribution to the construction of Phoenix," stated **Amanda Mercado** of Ride Entertainment's installation division. "[Deno's

► See PHOENIX, page 7

CONGRATULATIONS TO DENO'S  
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**► PHOENIX**  
Continued from page 6

ownership is] a genuine, hard-working group dedicated to bringing back smiles.”

The Vekoma team had an equally rewarding experience with the Vourderis family. “The people from Deno’s Wonder Wheel are a close team, working together tirelessly to take care of and operate their park. One thing that was immediately clear was that they are fully aware of the history of their family’s park and Coney Island in general, and they feel responsible for its future. It was truly a pleasure to join in that,” said Schonewille.

“The Phoenix is a perfect example of our family, the city of New York, Vekoma, Ride Entertainment and our beloved Coney Island community working together to get the job done,” said Vourderis.

The proof is always in the pudding and rider reaction has been strong.

“The Coney Island Phoenix is definitely more thrilling than it looks. People can’t believe how intense the ride is. Not one person has come off disappointed, and many get back in

line to ride again. I believe its ability to allow children as small as 39 inches to ride will create a great many future roller coaster enthusiasts! People often comment on what a great addition this coaster is. The layout and ability to walk under the Phoenix has greatly improved the look and feel of this part of Coney Island,” added Vourderis

**Dennis Vourderis**, co-owner has been elated as well. “Business has been great! People are out and spending money. The Phoenix is exceeding our expectations!”

The younger Vourderis finishing his remarks on the first day in July said, “The eyes of generations to come will be watching what happens now. Let’s show them who we are. And as long as we remember who we are, Coney Island will always be a place for all people to come and play. It is a place where the troubles of our time can be forgotten. When the politics of the world divide us, places like Coney Island are essential in bringing us back together. We look forward to welcoming you all in 2021, the first year of The Phoenix roller coaster, and over 100 years of Deno’s Wonder Wheel.”



**Phoenix was erected on-site at Deno's Wonder Wheel park by the installation team from Ride Entertainment. The team was tasked with the challenges of working within a major municipality on top of the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

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Snake River Expedition is a beloved attraction from the past reimaged for the anniversary. Live actors bring the storyline to life throughout the entire ride experience (above middle). Animated sets provided by The Weber Group add humor to the journey (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY CEDAR POINT, THE WEBER GROUP

## ►POINT Continued from page 1

versary milestone was what we should bring back that had nostalgia, what people loved, and the boat ride kept coming up," Boldman told *Amusement Today*. "It's a family ride, but it is an immersive experience. It's full entertainment. Our entertainment team is doing a great job performing and acting."

Snake River Expedition is a blend of ride operations and entertainment departments. Numerous live actors spin a yarn about transporting gold — and dynamite! — along the river. Outlaws, allies and boat captains keep the bad jokes from the past continuously coming but keep the story moving. Animatronics and scenes along the voyage tell more of the story, and boats actually dock halfway through the ride for an exchange of goods and an eventual shootout. On each journey, a young guest is chosen to be in charge of transporting the gold, which helps further bring park visitors into the whimsical and tongue-in-cheek storyline.

"It's really become a great opportunity to entertain guests of all ages. The great thing about that ride is that you can carry a handheld infant on it," added Boldman. "It's a family ride, a family tradition. It has been for many years, and now we've brought it back and tied it into Forbidden Frontier. We've created a bigger story around the whole thing. It's really exciting."

The attraction operates with four boats. Prior to boarding, the stage is set in a pre-show "barn," where passengers receive instructions for their secret mission. It is the first interaction with the live performers.

In addition to the live actors, numerous sets and animatronics were created by **The Weber Group**. Cedar Point had

partnered with the company in 2019 for Forbidden Frontier.

"Really getting to work on the blue sky portion of things and taking this loose storyline that Cedar Fair came to us with and developing these scenes and visual cues was really enjoyable," said **Brad Stivers**, creative director, The Weber Group. "Obviously, we had the extra year with COVID, and that gave Cedar Fair extra time to reevaluate how they wanted to tell the storyline."

Stivers remembered the days of Paddlewheel Excursions and noted that one of those original props — an elk — was still in place. "All the other animals are based off that elk," he said. "I'm partial to the raccoons. They're good at getting into trouble."

Because live actors are heavily involved throughout the journey, The Weber Group kept safety at the forefront.

"There's a portion at the end of the ride where an outhouse blows up, and we had actors interacting with that piece," said Stivers. "There was a lot to do with safety concerns to make sure that actor was safe when they went through that building. There is always [collaboration] with [the entertainment department] as they developed their story and making sure the stuff we're making with the tech involved and audio cues that it all works together to make a seamless experience."

One of the long-awaited components of the anniversary was the Celebrate 150 Spectacular. The parade is scheduled to run nightly, which began June 26 and will continue through August 15. "It will really knock your socks off," said Boldman. "two story floats — it's a larger-than-life parade and stops for a night show. It's a big deal! We do a Halloween parade, but this is something we've never done before. We've tapped into our history, so you see a little bit of a story and the history of Cedar Point through the floats."

Twelve floats are exclusively themed to Cedar Point, including homages to the past such as an

1800s circle swing that once rotated in the waters of Lake Erie, the bath house which was the park's first attraction, midway games including Fascination, an homage to the steamships that used to transport guests to the resort, and the classic entrance sign letters. Famous signature rides like Gemini and Cedar Downs have twin floats in the parade. The Hotel Breakers float has acrobatic performers in bellhop uniforms on trampolines, while a tangle of coaster track has skilled roller skaters on that float.

Cincinnati-based **3Dx Scenic** was called upon to create many floats. The company's work had been on view on floats for the Grand Carnivale events that toured Cedar Fair parks in 2019.

**Nate Thieme**, vice president of scenic experiences, 3Dx, told *AT*, "We had worked with them in the past, and they came to us with blue sky thinking with what the anniversary floats were going to be. They

array up to Cedar Point with our tech to get a 3D scan of that horse to create that exact replica."

Thieme said the company remained cognizant of the load distribution being accurate for maneuvering and powering the weight.

"The midway float is amazing," said Thieme. "There are so many interactive pieces with the lights and the moving sign. It just captured some old nostalgic games that were on the midway."

"The intricacy of the Fascination signage is wonderful," said Rosenzweig. "That sign was so iconic."

Interspersed within the floats are costumed dancers, cyclists and performers — more than 100 in all. A soundtrack especially written for the parade keeps the energy lively. In all, it is a 45-minute parade route. The floats end in what is termed Celebration Plaza for a final stage show.

"I was in tears as it came down the midway the first

time," said **Tony Clark**, director of communication, Cedar Point. "All of our planning that went into that anniversary that was paused and set aside came to life in that one moment. We knew it was time to share that special time in our history with our guests — and our team."

With the parade originally planned for 2020, the work on the floats was shared with Dayton-based **Scenic Solutions**. Working around other projects, 3Dx Scenic did seven of the 12, with the others going to Scenic Solutions.

"It was a large amount of work in a short amount of time," said Rosenzweig. "If we knew we had until 2021, we would have loved to have done it all."

3Dx Scenic delivered the floats to Cedar Point in 2020 and the park has a staging site to store them.

Boldman finds the floats to be a marvelous asset. If there is a way to continue to utilize these anniversary pieces, she is open to options.



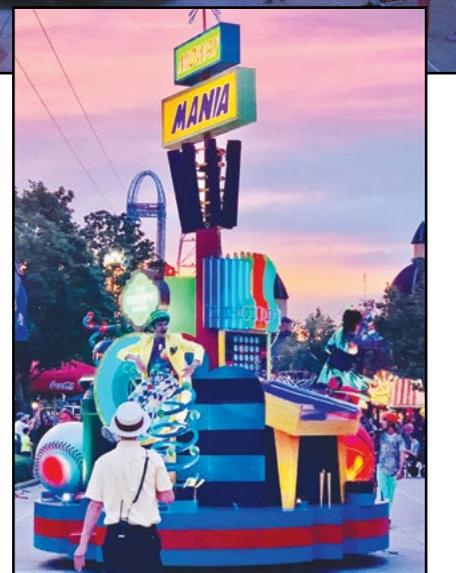
had a designer on staff, and we built from his designs."

"It was so fun for us to work on this," said **Mark Rosenzweig**, senior account executive, 3Dx. "We're all such big fans of the park. Just how it pays homage to the park history, it was so cool to fabricate Cedar Downs horses for jockeys to ride down the midway."

"The Cedar Downs horses are actual replicas of the horses on the carousel itself," noted Thieme. "We sent our camera

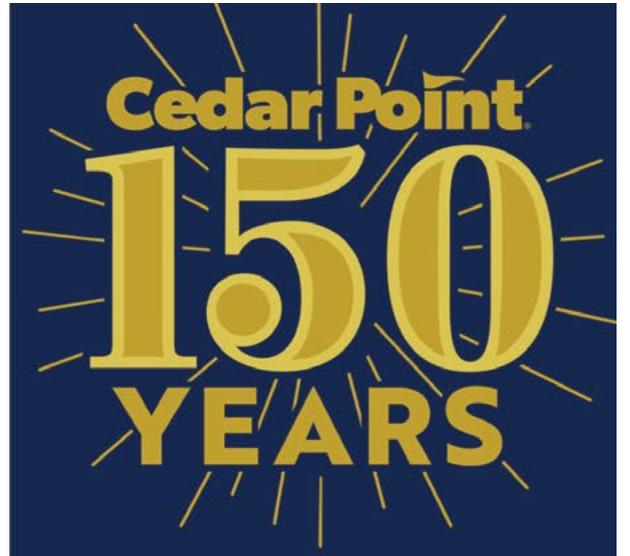
**3dx Scenic produced multiple one-of-a-kind floats for the anniversary parade. Midway games are spotlighted for Cedar Point fans (right). Riders inside Gemini coaster vehicles interact with parade spectators (above).**

COURTESY  
MARK ROSENZWEIG/  
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► See Amusement Today's in-depth coverage of Cedar Point's 150th anniversary! Pages 38-39

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# PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Kings Island opens Camp Cedar — page 16 / Fireworks spectaculars return to Florida parks — page 22

Jersey Devil Coaster — an urban legend comes to life

## RMC and Six Flags Great Adventure unleash record-setting coaster

AT: Tim Baldwin

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JACKSON, N.J. — Six Flags Great Adventure has one of the most impressive roller coaster collections in the world. Among the arsenal are record-setters and award winners. It is only fitting that its newest installation, Jersey Devil Coaster, is its 13th.

With an official opening on June 13, Jersey Devil Coaster is a product of Idaho-based Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC). Jersey Devil Coaster is the fourth installation of the company's Raptor track, a single-rail style that places riders in a single-file configuration on the train. The first three installations featured a similar layout design that was very compact, but New Jersey's model is a custom model that sets records for the genre.

"The out and back style of the ride and added height allowed us to do things a bit differently," said Jake Kilcup, COO, RMC. "Elements are a little more sustained throughout. Both are super fun, just different styles of ride — out and back vs. twister."

"It's a quality ride. It has features that none of our other rides have, which is a reason why we selected it," said John Winkler, park president. "I had previous experience [with RMC] while at Six Flags New England. Some of those features weren't here, so we started talking about what are we missing. It's unique. It checks off a ton of boxes."

Winkler loves the 48-inch height requirement, which broadens the audience.

"The guests have been



Jersey Devil Coaster is the first coaster from Rocky Mountain Construction at Six Flags Great Adventure. The coaster features three unique inversions that are not found on any of the park's other coasters. AT/TIM BALDWIN

loving it," said Kristin Fitzgerald, communications manager. "The fact that it is an attraction that nearly everyone in the family can ride together is something really special. It was something sorely missed in our park in terms of a thrill attraction. It's very thrilling but not so extreme that it excludes kids. I keep hearing that the most."

"We've been wanting to put a ride over by the lake for a long time, and with three signature pieces down that roadway, it helps our circulation from a traffic point of view," Winkler added.

A few children's attractions had to be removed to make space.

Before the pandemic of

2020 became widespread, the ride was 60 percent completed in terms of construction. Parts were on property when global events took hold of statewide restrictions. For this season, it was a matter of finishing the erection and testing.

"We went water park the year before, so it had been two years since a theme park focus," said Winkler. "The Jersey Devil was needed."

Standing at 130 feet tall, it takes the record for this style of ride. In contrast to previous installations, Jersey Devil Coaster features four trains in operation and a much longer length of 3,000 feet. The trains are also longer at 12 passengers.



► See DEVIL, page 12

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Of the four single-rail coasters from RMC, Jersey Devil is both the longest and tallest. Four trains can run simultaneously on Jersey Devil's winding track. AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT, TIM BALDWIN

► **DEVIL**  
Continued from page 11

"With the longer train, we needed to be cognizant of how that last coach does over humps and other elements," noted Kilcup. "I really like the way it turned out. There's a good variety of ride experiences from the front, middle to the back of the train. A little something for everyone if you will."

Jersey Devil features three inversions in addition to numerous airtime-filled drops. A dive loop, zero-G stall and zero-G roll make for exhilarating maneuvers. Top speed is 58 mph following an 87-degree first drop.

The name of the coaster comes from an urban legend

from the New Jersey area.

"I think people are enjoying that as well, in addition to learning the history of the Jersey Devil," said Fitzgerald. "For New Jerseyans, it's such an inherent part of our youth, growing up. There were Jersey Devil sightings and Jersey Devil stories, but anyone from outside the area has no idea what the Jersey Devil even is. As the legend goes, the Jersey Devil is the unwanted 13th child of Mother Leeds of southern New Jersey in the Pine Barrens. It supposedly turned into a monster and flew out the chimney and started terrorizing people. All these years there have been alleged sightings of this creature that is said to be part ani-

mal and part human."

While waiting in the queue, signage and images allow some of this folklore to unfold.

"We actually have our own tale to tell," added Fitzgerald. "There is a piece of history that ties back to our great lake, and the story goes that the Jersey Devil wanted to take a wife. He met this beautiful woman named Guinevere, he was morphed into human, and they were set to be married under a full moon by the lake. Under the full moon he transformed into a beast, and she was terrified. She fled into the lake never to be seen again. We've had a terror trail at Fright Fest called 'Lady of the Lake' since 2017. That was our tie to the story."

The four-train operation

is in continuous flow with a "moving" station in which trains do not stop. They gradually roll in where one passenger steps out and the next rider steps in until the train is completely loaded.

"We had great partners to work with. Six Flags knows what they're doing; they own and operate hundreds of rides," Kilcup told *Amusement Today*. "The flow of the four-train system was a collaboration between our teams. We're really happy with how it turned out!"

"It's all about throughput," said Winkler. "And one of the cool features is that it doubles back on itself multiple times, and if you have two trains on the track, you get that whole bypass. None of our other coasters here do that. It's a completely different experience."

"My favorite moment is coming out of the airtime hill and going right into the 180-degree stall," said **Gabriel Darretta**, public relations supervisor, Six Flags Great Adventure. "You get this feeling of weightlessness that I don't think I've ever experienced on any other coaster. That, tied in with the smoothness, is a really good element."

"At night, I think the ride offers a completely different spectrum than it does in the day," said Winkler. "During the day, you have the scenic lake views. We're very rural, so you have a good visual of the property at the top of the hill. But at night, the sunset or moonlight creates shadows. When you are going through these stalls and corkscrews, it's a very different experience. It kind of disorients you."

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Riders on a Raptor track model sit single file. AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT



Photos Courtesy of Upstop Media

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# Mack spinning coaster gets magical, cosmic at Plopsaland De Panne

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ADINKERKE-DE PANNE, West Flanders, Belgium — “Magical people of tomorrow, the wisdom of nature has brought you here. And you may rest assured, it will not desert you on your ride to happiness. After this point, your minds will never be the same.” So says a cosmic being projected on a screen above the roller coaster trains on The Ride to Happiness by Tomorrowland at Plopsaland De Panne.

This new Xtreme Spinning Coaster from Mack Rides — only the second in the world — has delivered rave reviews since its July 1 opening. Journalists at previews were giving it high praise such as “a party adrenaline rush” and “the best roller coaster in Belgium.”

At €17 million, it is good that the ride has performed as the park had hoped.

The first type of this ride (Time Traveler) opened in 2018 in Branson, Missouri’s Silver Dollar City. That first instal-



Riders are not only spun but turned upside down five times. A slow inversion right out of the station starts the fun immediately (above left). Vehicles spin dependent on the riders’ weight (below). COURTESY PLOPSALAND



lation garnered an enthusiastic reaction as well. In the time since, both Mack and Plopsaland have kicked it up a notch.

“The Ride to Happiness is awesome. Time Traveler is great, but this layout is really one big step further,” said Maximilian Roeser, head of marketing, Mack Rides. “[This has] a stronger launch than Silver Dollar City, and the elements are just in a constant flow. Therefore the cars spin a lot more than in Branson, but that’s also what the client want-

ed — an extreme roller coaster for teens and adults. The first reactions were thrilling.”

The ride consists of numerous elements, beginning with a slow heartline roll out of the station. From there, a launch to 56 mph sends riders soaring, spinning and flipping. Five inversions — some of which are challenging to describe — upend smiling passengers. A mid-ride launch keeps the speed going until

► See MACK, page 15



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► **MACK**

Continued from page 14

the trains have traversed the 3,018 feet of track.

"The most impressive element is the one after the second launch where you go up to full speed and then head into a one-and-a-half heartline roll just to be sent down again. This would be a great element on any launch coaster – but with the spinning gondolas we go next level."

Because there is not a traditional lift hill, the modest size of 108 feet is taken at good speed thanks to the linear synchronous motor launches, and all the ride's elements stay fast and fluid. In addition to the inversions, pops of airtime make the ride a complete package.

For most parks, the coaster hardware would be enough, but the setting Plopsaland has staged elevates the ride to world-class. Park management partnered with **Tomorrowland**, an electronic music festival that has reached worldwide renown in past years. This other-worldly cosmic overlay brings a sense of "cool" in a whole new way. Even the trains play an original, orchestrated soundtrack.

"The new The Ride to Happiness coaster can be seen from afar on the motorway and changes the entire skyline of the park, which provides a whole new dimension," said **Chelsea Vanhullebusch**, marketing, Plopsaland. "The fact that we were able to realize this together with Tomorrowland is like a dream come true. Through this collaboration, we can both entertain an even bigger audience, which only makes us stronger."

"Tomorrowland is a wonderful addition to the ride experience," said Roeser. "If you haven't seen it, look at the stages and theming of their annual electronic music festival. It's amazing! And to have this great exterior and interior design combined with an awesome onboard soundtrack and really powerful speakers is just a blast."

Four cars of four passengers arranged in back-to-back seating send riders on their journey 16 at a time. The Ride to Happiness operates with two trains.

Another rider at previews summarized his 14 rides like this: "Every ride is different. There are inversions you go through obliquely or backward — that's just bizarre."

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# Kings Island Camp Cedar offers new lodging for theme park visitors

AT: Tim Baldwin

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MASON, Ohio — Longtime fans of Kings Island might remember an old campground where visitors to the park could stay. Kings Island was built in the 1970s, and much has changed. A **Great Wolf Lodge** now resides on that former site today. But camping is back.

Delayed from a late-June opening, **Kings Island's Camp Cedar** opened on July 15.

Boasting 52 acres, the site is just off Highway I-71 at the same exit as Kings Island. Originally purchased to be developed for other business, the space became available for new options after previous plans had been discarded.

"This location has a real wooded area around it," said **Terrie Zajo**, general manager. "I think [the acreage] gives us a little more room, and the ability to expand in future development as well. I think being set back a little off from Kings Island helps offer two experiences. We can shuttle our guests back and forth to the park for a day or two, and then they can enjoy staying with us a day or two."

The ownership of the campground is not the theme park. The property has two owners, **Small Brothers LLC** and Cincinnati-based **Terra Firma**. Kings Island has been hired to manage the property. The management includes a licensing agreement.

Although there is a slight nod to **Cedar Fair** with the camp's name, the real driving force is the emphasis on trees. All the streets within the facility are named after trees, as are the style of cottages. There are 73 cottages of various types. The Aspen and Hickory models sleep eight; Sycamore, Mulberry and Birch sleep four. The Mulberry comes with two separate bedrooms and bathrooms which are ideal for couples sharing a vacation.

Each cottage comes with a



Camp Cedar offers 74 cottages of different types, along with 184 RV sites. Families can rent cottages alongside each other to keep reunions together. Cottages have full kitchens and bathrooms; some models sleep up to eight (below left). The "living room" within the Hornbeam Lodge provides a cozy feel (below right). COURTESY KINGS ISLAND



full kitchen and an outdoor fire pit and grill. All come with a front porch or deck.

"I used to stay at the old Kings Island Campground growing up. Some of my best memories of visiting Kings Island were waking up and having our breakfast at the campsite and then heading over to the park and spending the day," said **Chad Showalter**, director of communications, Kings Island. "When I heard Camp Cedar was coming back to Kings Island and that camping experience — of course, nothing like what I had growing up with this being more of a luxury outdoor experience — just the idea of walking trails and fire pits and an incredible swimming pool and spending time with family

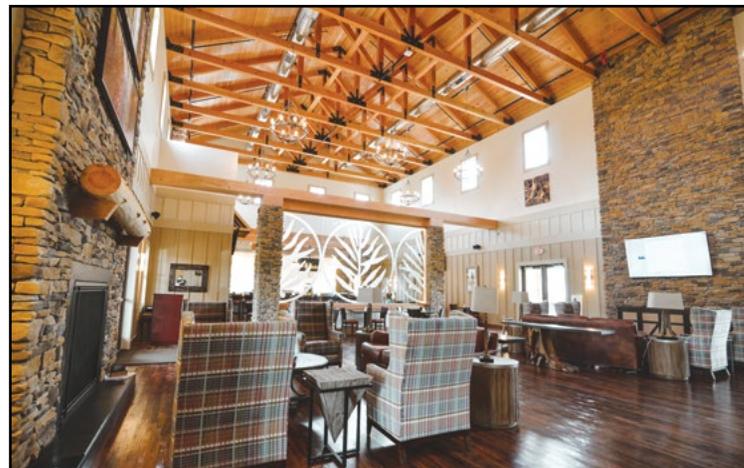
... not having to drive home at the end of the day, that's what's going to make it really special."

Camp Cedar also offers 184 RV sites in the complex.

"RV growth is at an all-time high," Showalter told *Amusement Today*. "I think Camp Cedar is opening at the right time to provide that experience. There aren't as many campgrounds as there used to be."

Upon arrival, guests find Hornbeam Lodge. Inside there are four parts, beginning with a Welcome Center. Coyote Camp Store will let visitors find both needed items as well as an assortment of souvenirs. The third space is an open area Zajo calls the "living room."

"It's kind of the heart of everything," she said.



Ironwood Grill and Tap is the far end of the lodge. Serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, the full-service restaurant has both indoor and outdoor seating. Zajo noted they are developing pizzas to be delivered to cottages as well.

Dining doesn't stop there. Near the pool is Belize Street. "It's like food truck-inspired dining," said Showalter. Here, guests find Urban Cow (ice cream), Route 66 (American fare), Fresh Tortilla (Tex-Mex offerings) and Beach Box (a three-sided full-service bar).

Being able to cook in one's cottage is an advantage, but if the campers wish to relax and be pampered, there are various options to dine and take it easy.

Deerfield Springs is one of two swimming pools. With a towering waterfall backdrop, the 5,000-square-foot, heated pool has interactive elements and a zero-depth entrance. Kingfisher Landing is an adults-only pool located near Ironwood Grill and Tap. Rental cabanas are located at both and include full service.

Three bath houses cater to those not only at the pool but to the campsites as well. Washers and dryers are available too.

"If you have eight people in a cottage, someone may want a longer shower, so you send the kids over to the bath house, and then everyone can get going," said Zajo. "We wanted to make it convenient for guests to be

able to maximize their time."

The campground has 14-passenger shuttles to take guests to Kings Island, but those wanting to take their own cars have parking privileges.

"When you stay here, you get early ride time," said Zajo. "Shuttles run back and forth all day. Some kids need a nap in the middle of the day."

About 250 staff members are on hand to make the vacation easier.

As general manager, she's excited to see the property open. COVID affected shipping and logistics, delaying Camp Cedar in getting open. "Being outdoors is great, unless you are building outdoors," joked Zajo, referring also to weather delays.

"You can go online and actually pick the site you want to stay in," Zajo told AT. "If you want to be close to the lodge, you can pick that; if you want to be back in the woods, you select something there."

Families booking together can pick their own cottages and know that members are close together.

"We've seen people who want to rent, eight, nine, ten cottages for a big family reunion," said Zajo. "They can sit out back and do the s'mores at the fire pits. Really enjoy family time. I think that really excites me the most."

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



The 5,000-square-foot pool includes interactive and participatory elements. COURTESY KINGS ISLAND

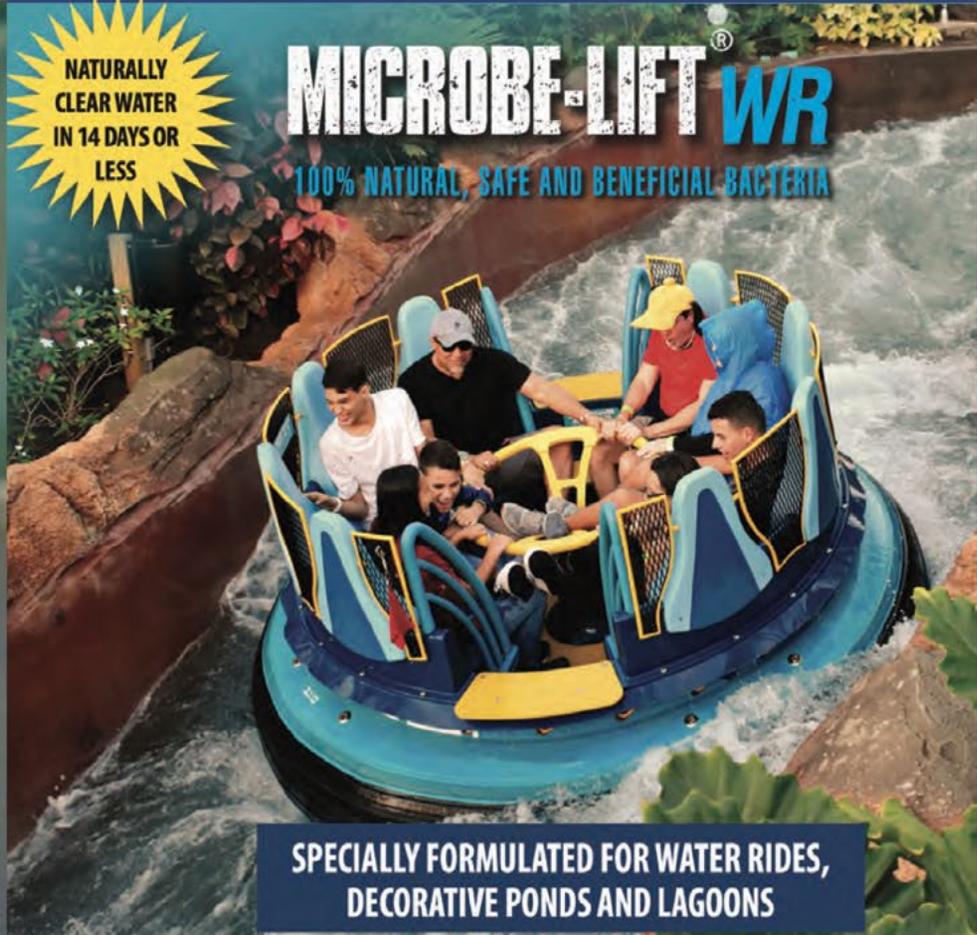


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# Massive crowds enter Marvel stories at Disney's Avengers Campus

AT: Pam Sherborne  
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ANAHEIM, Calif. — **Marvel Entertainment** superheroes fans are living the dream at **Disney California Adventure Park** now that the new Avengers Campus has opened.

And that is exactly where Disney officials wanted them to be when finalizing construction and storylines for the new land that opened June 4.

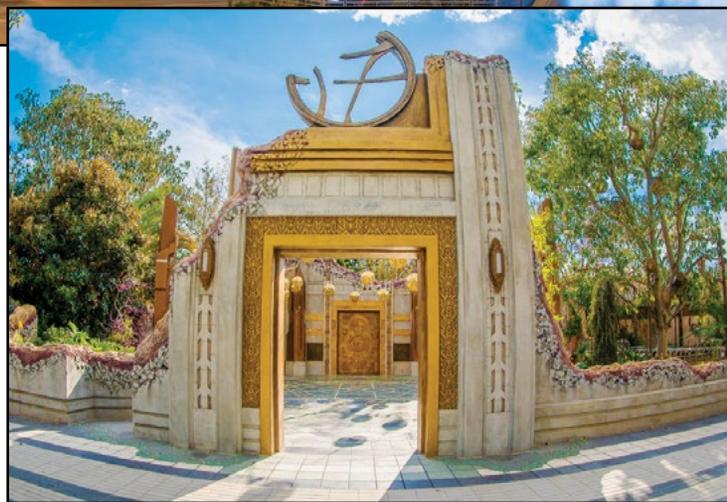
As **Josh D'Amato**, chairman of **Disney Parks**, was quoted as saying: "We've got the ultimate playground for Marvel."

The six-acre Avengers Campus, based on years of Marvel Entertainment stories and movies, was supposed to open in 2020, but, needless to say, that didn't happen.

So, anticipation was high when Disney officials announced the opening for June 4, 2021. In fact, in the wee hours of that Friday, before dawn, visitors began lining up for the opening. Reports have it that by 7 a.m., when the first lottery recipients were sent out, the line had grown to one-half mile and had circled back on itself 17 times.

With crowds continuing to amass, Disney officials decided to take those lucky first attendees inside Avengers Campus at 8 a.m. instead of the scheduled 9 a.m.

This is the first phase of the Avengers Campus opening. With this, visitors are being treated to the new **WEB Slingers: A Spider-Man Adventure**, **Guardians of the Galaxy Mission: Breakout!** attraction, the **Ancient Sanctum**, **Pym Test Kitchen**, **Pym Tasting Lab**, **Shawarma Palace**, **Terra** and the **Avengers Headquarters** with a to-scale **Quinjet** sitting on the rooftop launch-



Visitors may find some of the mightiest of the Marvel superheroes at the Avengers Headquarters. The headquarters has a Quinjet rooftop launching pad and is overlooked by the existing **Guardians of the Galaxy: Mission Breakout** tower (above). Guests may also visit the **Ancient Sanctum** and learn the site's secrets from **Doctor Strange** (inset).  
COURTESY DISNEYLAND RESORT

pad. The Quinjet is parked atop the Avengers Headquarters where, from time to time, guests will find some of their superheroes battling villains. The Quinjet lights up and revs its engines for guests.

The Quinjet, which first appeared cinematically in 2012's *The Avengers*, is the focus for the still-to-come attraction.

It is all in a story, but guests in the new land don't really need to have read all the Marvel stories or seen all the Marvel movies to enjoy. They are able to get caught up in the land of superheroes and villains. They are able to see the superheroes in different parts of the campus. At any time,

these superheroes may have to jump into action.

They are able to meet many during the meet and greets. Some of these characters include **Captain America**, **Captain Marvel**, **Iron Man**, **Black Panther**, **Thor** and **Black Widow**.

Visitors also are able to watch as **Spider-Man** swings in the air over the Avengers Headquarters. The **Spider-Man** doing stunts up to 60 feet is actually a robotic figure, but the character does land from time to time.

The new **Worldwide Engineering Brigade (WEB)** attraction, **WEB Slingers: A Spider-Man Adventure** allows

visitors to test their own web-slinging powers. Designed by Disney Imagineers, riders are tasked with helping **Spider-Man** nab the **Spider Bots** that were replicated in an experiment gone wrong.

All the riders need is to wear 3D glasses. They board vehicles with onboard interface that is able to track hand gestures. If they want to fling a web, they fling their arm forward. The gestures are picked up and out comes virtual webs.

To keep guests coming back for more, they may purchase **WEB Tech** accessories in the retail outlets on the campus. The **WEB Power**

Band unlocks multi-fire webs aboard **WEB Slingers**, creating a different ride experience.

The pre-existing **Guardians of the Galaxy — Mission: Breakout!** ride has been incorporated into the Avengers Campus. The thrilling drop tower has a tale of its own.

Guests may explore the ruins of a mysterious **Ancient Sanctum** and learn the site's secrets from **Doctor Strange**, who is looking for people with magical abilities to join his team.

The food and beverage locations haven't been left out of the Marvel stories. The main dining area within the Avengers Campus is called **Pym's Test Kitchen**. Here, scientists working with **Ant-Man** and the **Wasp** are using their growing and shrinking technology to create innovative foods.

There also is **Pym's Tasting Lab**, a place for adults to enjoy craft beers and signature cocktails.

There are two food carts. The first is **Shawarma Palace** and the other is called **Terran Treats**. The **Terran Treats** booth is located near the **Guardians of the Galaxy** ride and features items that play on some traditional foods such as circular rainbow churros and bright purple cream puffs.

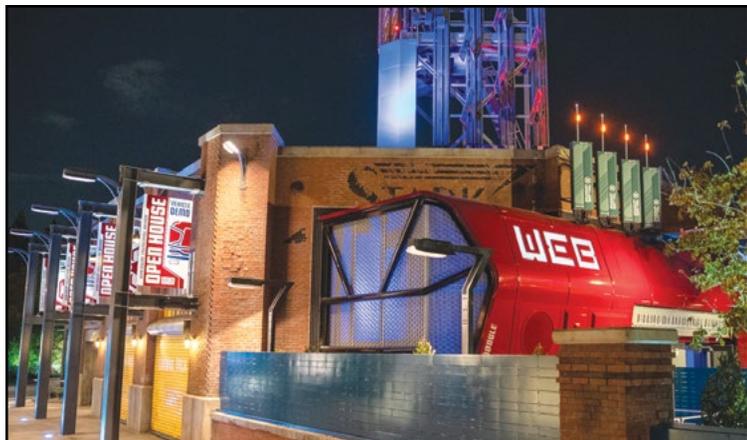
Walt Disney Imagineer **Brent Strong**, executive creative director for development of Avengers Campus, told *USA Today Network* the day before the opening: "We designed this with everybody in mind.

"So if this is your first time encountering these characters, this is a great introduction and hopefully it inspires you to want to learn more about them.

"There's really something for everybody," Strong said.

Disney purchased **Marvel Entertainment** in 2009.

• [disneyland.disney.go.com](http://disneyland.disney.go.com)



For one of Avengers Campus' feature attractions — **WEB Slingers: A Spider-Man Adventure** — Walt Disney Imagineers created technology for the interactive dark ride that recognizes riders' gestures (above right) so they are able to participate by slinging webs like the spectacular **Spider-Man**.  
COURTESY DISNEYLAND RESORT

# Rock 'n Drive-in Laser Show is coming to Quassy Amusement Park

**AT: Pam Sherborne**  
 psherborne@amusementtoday.com

MIDDLEBURY, Connecticut — **Quassy Amusement Park and Waterpark** will present a brand new event next month called **Totally Rock'n Drive-in Laser Light Show**.

Being produced by **Laser Encore**, the show has been set to run two consecutive weekends, September 10, 11, and 12 and September 17, 18 and 19. Park officials have set a tentative start time for the shows at 8 p.m., early enough for children.

**Robert Teorey**, Laser Encore, has been producing laser shows since 1985 when he started with planetarium laser shows. Since, he has been holding a variety of shows in a variety of venues and for a variety of operators.

"Back about a year ago, when the pandemic hit, we started doing the drive-in shows," Teorey said. "I saw where people were holding drive-in concerts and I thought, 'why not a drive-in laser show?'"

"Since, we have been selling out every weekend," he said. "I have two crews on it."

Teorey said some venues had started offering tailgating and it had become extremely popular.

"Everyone seems to love the tailgating," he said. "It allows families to get out. It is really family-friendly. Some places will open an hour early for tailgating, some two hours early."

Quassy park officials are considering offering park food for sale, as well as tailgating before the shows. Food sales would be online when guests arrive. A QR code would bring up the menu and guests would order and pay with their phones.

**Ron Gustafson**, director of marketing and public relations at Quassy, expects guests also will have the opportunities to purchase light-up novelties during the shows.

All tickets will be sold online so that the park will be able to manage capacity. Park

▶ See **LASER**, page 20



Quassy Amusement Park and Waterpark, Middlebury, Connecticut, will present **Rock 'n Drive-in Laser Light Show** for two consecutive weekends starting **September 10**. The shows, which are expected to begin at 8 p.m. with time for tailgating prior, are being presented by **Laser Encore**.

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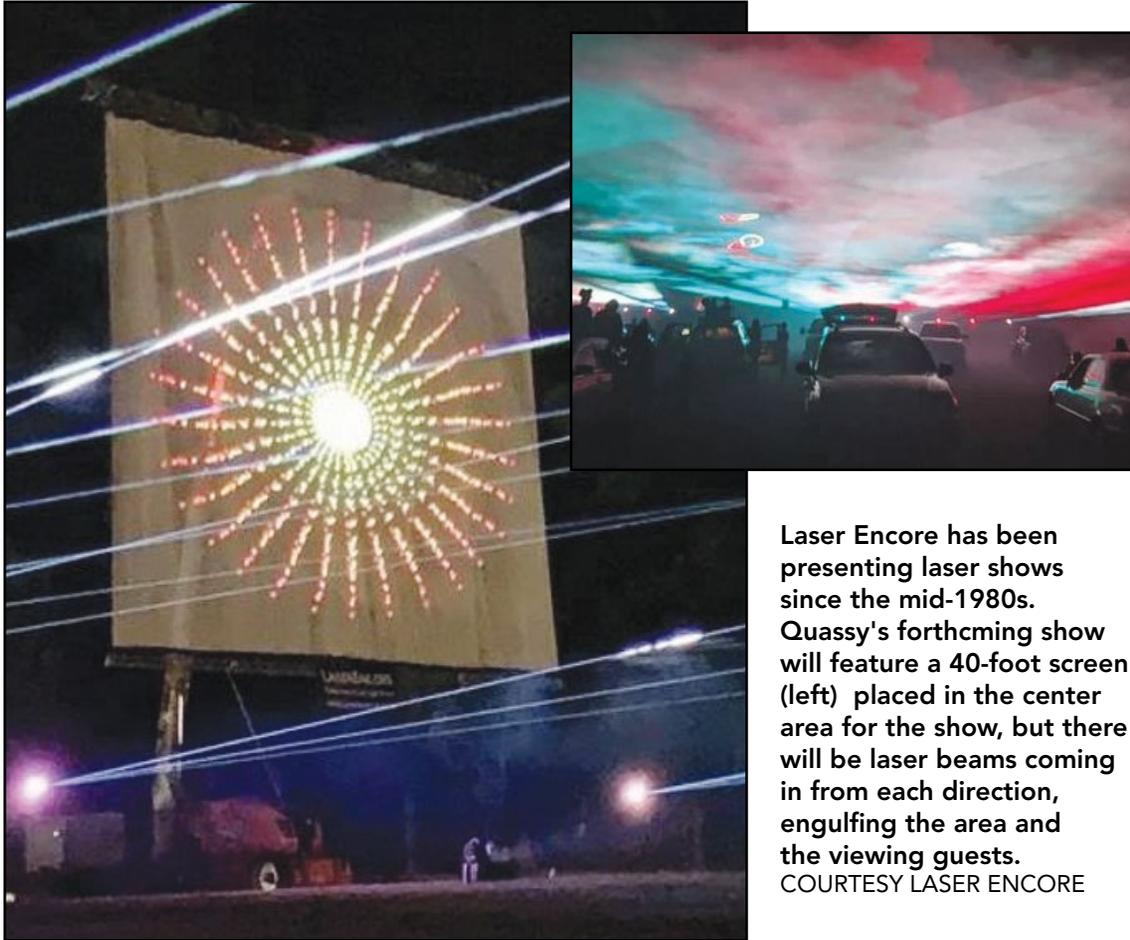
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Laser Encore has been presenting laser shows since the mid-1980s. Quassy's forthcoming show will feature a 40-foot screen (left) placed in the center area for the show, but there will be laser beams coming in from each direction, engulfing the area and the viewing guests. COURTESY LASER ENCORE

► **LASER**  
Continued from page 19

officials anticipate a capacity of about 200 cars per night. Officials want to be careful not to oversell the events.

Show sponsors will have their logos shown during the opening.

"There will be a 40-foot-tall screen in the center of the area with laser graphics projected on it," Gustafson said. "There also will be four aerial laser units on each side of the screen, which will engulf the audience with lasers. This will all be choreographed to family-friendly music (snippets only), so it will be fast paced."

Gustafson said, over the years, Quassy has had laser shows. The last one was 10 years ago.

"But nothing like this," he said. "Aerial beams are now full color. Years ago we had only bright green."

Teorey said the drive-in

laser shows have become a permanent part of his business offerings now.

"Our regular shows are starting to pick back up, but these will continue to be a big part of our business," he said. "They will just be mixed in with our regular shows."

Teorey expects the shows at Quassy to last an hour.

Teorey also expects to be at the 2021 **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAA-PA) Expo** in Orlando, Florida, in November. Teorey exhibited there in 2019 and had planned to be there again last year.

"We also do seasonal rentals for amusement parks, which is why we go to IAA-PA," he said.

The event at Quassy will be a stand-alone event. During that time of year, the park closes at 5 p.m. No rides will be open.

- [quassy.com](http://quassy.com)
- [laserencore.com](http://laserencore.com)



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# Climactic fireworks displays return to Florida's amusement corridor



On October 1, 2021 Walt Disney World Resort will debut two highly anticipated nighttime spectacles in celebration of the resort's 50th Anniversary: HarmonioUS at EPCOT (above left) and Disney Enchantment at Magic Kingdom (above right). COURTESY DISNEY

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

ORLANDO, Fla. — Guests around the world are finally finding their way back to the amusement industry's parks in large numbers after a long, exhausting year without fireworks displays and shows. This past July Fourth holiday saw the return of fireworks shows to parks across the U.S., some for the first time since July 2019. However, in Florida these displays were even more noticeably absent long before the 2021 U.S. Independence Day holiday.

Central Florida is known for its world-class parks and attractions, along with their nighttime skyward spectacles. There, over-the-top, music-synced pyrotechnic displays are a nightly expectation. These shows, like so many other things, were ended abruptly with the park closures in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. And even though the Central Florida amusement corridor was among the first in the industry to see its parks reopen in limited capacity with new health and safety standards, the night sky mostly remained both dark and silent.

SeaWorld Orlando was an outlier and the first to quickly bring back fireworks briefly in July 2020, shortly after reopening from their pandemic closure. It again lit up the sky in 2020 with Holiday Reflections through-

out December and ended with an added bang with its 2021 New Year's Eve midnight countdown celebration.

For the return of pyrotechnic shows in 2020, SeaWorld Orlando re-engineered its pyrotechnic shows to make them visible from all around the park to allow guests to remain physically distanced in a time when it was a requirement, along with face masks, and still enjoy the shows in their entirety.

This year SeaWorld Orlando was again the first to bring back nighttime displays in late May along with the award-winning summer event, Electric Ocean, a colorful family dance party celebration that sparks as the sun sets and occurs on land, sea, and sky. This event includes the return of Ignite. According to the park's show description, guests can "Surf the wave to a whole new level with Ignite, a fireworks and fountains spectacular that brings the brilliant colors of the sea to the skies above the park."

A SeaWorld Orlando representative explained that they found the re-imagined show format to work very well last year that they continued it for New Year's Eve, and now again with this year's Ignite, despite the relaxing of physical distancing, masks and other policies.

Simultaneously with the return of Ignite in May of this

▶ See FIREWORKS, page 23

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SeaWorld Orlando re-engineered its pyrotechnic shows in 2020 to make them visible from all around the park to allow guests to remain physically distanced in a time when it was a requirement along with face masks and still enjoy the shows in their entirety. This re-imagined show format worked so well last year the practice remained with this year's Ignite, despite the relaxing of physical distancing, masks and other policies. COURTESY SEAWORLD ORLANDO

## Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

**Galaxyland**, the amusement park at the **West Edmonton Mall**, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, announced last month a partnership with the toy company **Hasbro**. This partnership will bring 25 newly-themed rides to the park, several of which already have been unveiled. Those rides included a My Little Pony themed Ferris wheel.

The transformation with Hasbro will take over the entire park, which has been space-themed for more than 20 years. West Edmonton Mall's amusement park also will be home to new Hasbro-themed retail and food venues.

Park officials plan to unveil the additional rides over the next few months and into 2022.

Loading riders onto the Giant Dipper, a star attraction of the **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**, Santa Cruz, California, is not how **Karl Rice** thought he'd be spending his summer.

But Rice, whose family runs the Northern California amusement park, like so many other amusement and theme parks this year, got a later-than-usual start in hiring workers after reopening in April. Reuters news agency reported at the end of June that Rice had only been able to hire about one-half of the 1,900 employees he traditionally needs for the summer season.

Rice, the park's president, said all park executives are working attractions or food stands at least once a week this summer. Rice is taking on two eight-hour shifts a week, usually helping guests in and out of the historic Giant Dipper, roller coaster.

To get more applicants, the Boardwalk offered a \$300 bonus every two weeks for those clocking at least 30 hours a week. The number of applications surged afterwards. Finding time to train the new employees has added another dimension of challenges.

Fourth of July preparations by park officials at **Waldameer Park and Water World**, Erie, Pennsylvania, were made a little more challenging this year due to some policy changes. Although not permanent, the most significant change was charging guests to get into the park on Saturday, July 3, and Sunday, July 4.

Waldameer always has been a free admission park. But park owner, **Paul Nelson**, and **Steve Gorman**, park president, decided on the change to try to curtail some of the disruptive behavior they have been seeing in the last month or so. Nelson told a local news agency that charging the admission wasn't something he wanted to do, but he and Gorman felt it would help.

All admission tickets had to be purchased online, with the online sales shutting down at 5 p.m. for that day. Everyone age one year and older had to pay. This would require planning.

They also decided to go with a no-alcohol policy for the 4th weekend and operating hours were decreased. Instead of staying open

until 9 p.m., the park closed at 7 p.m.

Nelson told an *Erie Times-News* reporter on July 2 that he felt these changes for the holiday weekend was the only way to keep guests and park employees safe.

"I will tell you that the last three days are the worst three days that Waldameer has had," Nelson was reported saying after a recent operating weekend.

The behavior problems are primarily among young people, Nelson reported, and he said he was worried about the tone.

"They are rude to each other," Nelson said. "They are rude to the other customers and they are rude to the help."

And it seems that the rude behavior has occasionally escalated. Several fights broke out at the park on Memorial Day, leading Millcreek Township police to charge two juveniles, a girl and a boy, with disorderly conduct. There were several fights reported at the park over a couple of hours.

Nelson said he has seen people dumping garbage on the ground and arguing when they were asked to stop smoking or vaping.

"This is not how things are at Waldameer," Nelson said.

Nelson and Gorman plan to set these same policies for Labor Day weekend and there could be other weekends throughout the summer.

Hangloose Skywire, the first attraction to open at **Hangloose Adventure** park, Bluewater, England, is giving guests a sky view of lakes and glimpses of the 50 acres of park land at Bluewater in which the new adventure park will be situated.

The Hangloose Skywire is being touted as England's fastest and longest zipline. It is nearly 2,380 feet long. It opened at the end of June. The original opening date had been set for May, but a series of delays pushed that back by a couple of months.

The zipline will not be the only attraction at Hangloose park. Over the next 36 months, park owners plan to add an outdoor skydive machine, a swing and an outdoor climbing wall. The climbing wall will make use of the cliffs surrounding Bluewater to create a range of fun-filled activities for all fitness levels.

After a bankruptcy filing by its parent company in 2019, the **Adventure Landing** theme park located in Jacksonville, Florida, on the city's west side, closed on June 27. Its Jacksonville Beach park could close by October, but the owner of the Adventure Landing brand, **Hank Woodburn**, is looking at options to move that park to another location.

While Hank Woodburn owns and operates Adventure Landing parks, all the parks sit on leased lands.

The operator of the Adventure Landing parks, **NRP Lease Holdings LLC**, filed for Chapter 11 reorganization in December 2019. Woodburn and his wife, Susan, own NRP, according to bankruptcy court filings.

NRP operates 13 parks in Florida, North Carolina, New York, Kansas, Ohio, Texas and Missouri. All of them are open and other than the Westside park, Woodburn said he expects to continue operating all of them.

**Merlin Entertainments** is planning to open a **Madame Tussauds** wax museum in Dubai, UAE, later this year.

The museum will consist of seven themed rooms and wax figures of 60 global stars.

Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings this summer, Busch Gardens Tampa lights up the sky with Spark! A Nighttime Spectacular. COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS TAMPA



## ► FIREWORKS

Continued from page 22

year, SeaWorld Orlando's sister park, **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay**, also rolled out Spark! A Nighttime Spectacular every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evening this Summer. The show, which the park is billing as its biggest and brightest show ever, features an "explosive array of fireworks and exciting effects from dazzling lasers to graceful water elements and dramatic pyrotechnics."

**Legoland Florida Resort** brought back Red, White & BOOM for two nights in July as a celebration of America's independence. This annual fireworks show, with the help of special LEGO 3D glasses, "transforms into bursting LEGO bricks before your eyes."

**Fun Spot America** also got back in the pyrotechnics game for one night on July 4 with their "HUGE" fireworks display shows at their Orlando and Kissimmee parks.

After **Walt Disney World Resort** reopened following its pandemic closure, guests had to wait another year before fireworks returned to the night sky over the parks. Arguably the most well-renowned pyrotechnic spectacular producer within the amusement industry, Walt Disney World Resort finally brought back their nightly fireworks shows, Happily Ever After at **Magic Kingdom** and EPCOT Forever at **EPCOT**, just before the Independence Day holiday.

Happily Ever After magically transforms Cinderella Castle through the use of amazing state-of-the-art projection technology, fireworks, lights, lasers and special effects, accompanied by a soaring score featur-

ing contemporary versions of beloved Disney songs. The nightly show "inspires all dreamers to find their own happily ever after."

EPCOT Forever, which takes place on the World Showcase Lagoon, invites guests to "witness the wonder of the story of Epcot and behold the single 'spark of imagination' that started it all. The show replaced the long-standing favorite, IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth show, in October 2019, and will be replaced on October 1 with a highly anticipated, new show, HarmonioUS, for the 50th-anniversary celebration of Walt Disney World

Magic Kingdom will also receive a new fireworks show for the 50th anniversary on October 1. Disney Enchantment will be the first Magic Kingdom fireworks show that will feature projection mapping not only on Cinderella Castle, but also on all buildings of Main Street, U.S.A.

Disney has not commented on when fireworks or the guest favorite, Fantasmic!, will return to **Hollywood Studios** park.

The resorts fourth park, **Animal Kingdom**, does not permit fireworks shows owing to the large population of animals at the zoological park.

While not classified as a fireworks show, **Universal Orlando Resort** has brought back its nighttime spectacular, Universal Orlando's Cinematic Celebration, on multiple occasions since October 2020. The movie-themed projection, light and fountain show occurs on the park's central lagoon on evenings where extended hours are observed.

## Pizza Ranch opens three new locations

ORANGE CITY, Iowa — Family restaurant and arcade chain **Pizza Ranch** announced the opening of three new locations across the Midwest: Champlin, Minnesota; Brookings, South Dakota and Duluth, Minnesota.

Pizza Ranch combines two extremely popular things for families — food and arcade games. Pizza Ranch restaurants offer an all-day buffet, including pizza, a salad bar, chicken as well as dessert buffet. Select locations also offer a **FunZone Arcade**, featuring games and a full-service redemption center.

"Pizza Ranch is poised to add 10 to 15 new FunZone locations this year, and 20 to 25 over the next 24 months," said **Mark Souba**, chief development officer, Pizza Ranch. "We're always looking at trends to find the right new games and prize products to include in our game rooms, like virtual reality and golf simulators. Growth is definitely on the horizon, and we're fighting our way back from the effects of the pandemic."

The chain partnered with **Embed** on the recently opened locations. Embed's involvement included the installing its integrated business solution consist-



**Pizza Ranch recently opened multiple new locations that feature a FunZone Arcade (insert) which utilize Embed's SmartTOUCH system.**  
COURTESY PIZZA RANCH



ing of SmartTOUCH readers and self-service kiosks that include easy upsell features, package deals and game card reloading.

Pizza Ranch has an aggressive growth schedule, anticipating double-digit growth of its arcade business in 2021. As their business grows, Pizza Ranch has real-time visibility and control across their entire operation by installing Embed's software platform that enables entertainment business owners to achieve increased operational efficiency while reducing costs

and increasing profitability.

"We are completely focused on providing tailored solutions to help our customers drive more profit for their business by increasing their revenue, reducing their costs, and achieving their business goals," said **Renee Welsh**, CEO of Embed. "One of the benefits of our platform is that it's modular, so if you are a business with multi-locations, you can still have real-time visibility and control across the entire operation, with us to support you anytime, anywhere."

## iFly World opens first Michigan location



DETROIT — Indoor skydiving arrived in Detroit, Michigan, with the opening of **iFLY World**. The company's first Michigan location opened its doors on July 24. iFLY's indoor skydiving utilizes a vertical wind tunnel that allows for guests to comfortably lean into a cushion of air and take off for the thrill of flight. iFLY joins Texas Roadhouse, Planet Fitness and Carvana on the Adell Center site formerly occupied by the Novi Expo Center. The property has been under construction since 2019 and iFLY is part of a planned entertainment district slated to include two hotels and additional restaurants. iFLY was launched in 1998 and has grown to 80 tunnels worldwide including over 30 U.S. cities, France, New Zealand, Brazil, Australia, Singapore, and Great Britain. COURTESY IFLY WORLD

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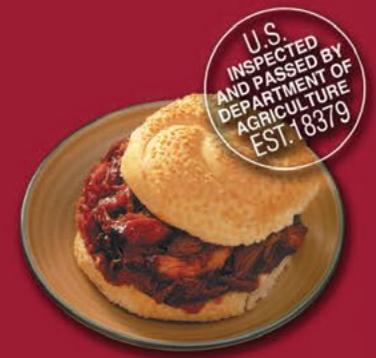


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## Urban Air Adventure Parks introduces new mascot



Urban Air Adventure Park, the world's preeminent indoor adventure park, introduces Urbie, the company's newly-minted mascot. As a true representation of fun and inclusivity for all, Urbie has been reimagined to fully emulate the any and every kid.

COURTESY URBAN AIR ADVENTURE PARKS



Fun Planet's Jason Wallace (left) chose the Intercard cashless system for his renovated FEC partially because of his existing relationship with Jerry Heinz (right), Intercard's Asia-Pacific sales manager. COURTESY INTERCARD

## Australia's Fun Planet FEC renovates, adds Intercard

AUSTRALIA — Intercard has installed its latest system at Fun Planet, a renovated FEC in Shepparton, Victoria, Australia.

Fun Planet is a 54,000-square-foot facility that features a three-level laser tag arena, an indoor go-kart track with Sodi electric-powered karts, more than 130 arcade games, a prize redemption counter, mini-golf, climbing wall, four birthday party rooms, a go-kart function room and a small theater. The existing center was completely revamped before reopening to the public as Fun Planet on May 14.

Jason Wallace, director of Fun Planet, is partnered in the FEC with IT consultant Chris Motton and Zak Athanasiadis of Zax Amusements (Intercard's Australian distributor). Zax is Australia's largest supplier of amusement games.

A three-decade veteran of the Australian amusement industry, Wallace first experienced Intercard's technology while working at Fun Lab Pty, the operator of multiple amusement brands. It was there that he met Jerry Heinz, Intercard's Asia-Pacific sales manager. One reason Wallace chose Intercard was his existing relationships there.

"I like relationships. So having a good relationship with not only Jerry but also global marketing director Lynda Brotherton and CEO Scott Sherrod made it easier to communicate with the company, it made it feel friendly and family," said Wallace. "Obviously, the product needs to work as well and their product works. It's very stable. We've never had issues with it."

Wallace noted that none of his new employees at Fun Planet had worked in an arcade before, making ease of training crucial. "It was a very simple pickup for 15-year-olds through to returned-to-work mums. We've all picked up the system very, very quickly and easily," he explained.

"Jason Wallace is one of the most experienced amusement operators in Australia and I have enjoyed working with him from his days with Fun Lab through to his own growing group of FECs today," said Heinz.

In late June, Wallace, in different partnerships, assumed management of Wyncity FECs in Point Cook and Morwell. These centers also run on Intercard cashless technology.

•intercardinc.com



## FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson

jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

WarnerMedia announced the opening date for two all-new interactive Harry Potter virtual reality experiences — Chaos at Hogwarts and Wizards Take Flight. The ground-breaking experiences will debut exclusively at the newly opened **Harry Potter New York** flagship store on July 15, 2021 and will give fans of the Wizarding World and thrill seekers the chance to explore the magical world as never before.

Created by WarnerMedia in partnership with the creative teams at **Wevr** and **Keylight** and virtual reality company **Dreamscape Immersive**, the two adventures create totally new and unique experiences for fans. Both experiences combine action with the popular characters and landmarks into an immersive virtual world for the first time, allowing guests to step into the action in a new real-time interactive exploration of the magical world of Harry Potter.

Using state-of-the-art wearable VR technology, including headsets, backpacks, hand and foot trackers as well as peripheral wands that allow interaction with the virtual experiences, visitors will be able to roam freely through Hogwarts Castle, and fly through the skies of London, complete with wind in their face. The sensory effects and immersive virtual environment promise to deliver a level of realism and adventure unlike anything fans of the franchise will have experienced before.

**Spare Time Entertainment** is planning to open a bowling-led FEC in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, this coming November.

The venue will be Spare Time Entertainment's 18th location in North America and its second in Iowa. It will have 80 arcade games, 18 bowling lanes, as well as food and beverage options in a 60,000-square-foot facility, plus three escape rooms and a video wall.

**The Funplex Mount Laurel** officially opened its newest area to guests in early July, just in time for hot summer days. Named Splash Island, this unique area doubled the size of the Funplex's existing water park adding five new slides, a pool, 10 premium cabanas, and twice the deck space for guests.

Rising into the sky is Whipsplash, the high-flying, gravity-defying centerpiece of Splash Island. Designed to build rider anticipation, Whipsplash delivers excitement with big drops, near-vertical ascents, and a zero-gravity wall summit. A two-person tube slide, Whipsplash delivers extreme G's, a weightless experience, photo opportunities and unique twists.

"The addition of Whipsplash changes the skyline of our park," said Funplex owner **Randy Lahn**. "The unique design of this impressive slide will offer our guests a thrilling sensation of weightlessness before they splash down to the bottom."

The addition of 10 new, premium

cabanas, The Villas offer a high-end experience with hostess service and convenient access to all the new Splash Island attractions including the Relaxation Pool where the entire family can kick back and unwind.

"With five new slides, a new pool, and upgraded cabanas, we've created a space that offers thrills and relaxation for the entire family," said Funplex CEO **Brian Williams**. "In addition to new slides, the expanded water park footprint gave us room to offer additional deck space for our guests to spread out."

To capitalize on the crypto craze and help Esports operators earn some extra money, **ggCircuit** has introduced a feature on its software that allows its computers to mine for crypto while not being used. The feature was introduced by ggCircuit last month, and any **Creative Works** clients with the company's Game Up Esports attraction will be able to participate in the program to start generating additional revenue.

In order to start mining crypto and receiving monetary rewards, Esports centers that use ggCircuit's software (called ggLeap) must opt-in to ggCrypto. Once opted-in, clients will be instructed to download the ggCrypto module.

With the hardware installed, computers that are not being used by gamers will begin mining for crypto automatically. The mining process will stop if a player logs into a computer that is currently mining. This allows the computers, when not being used, to generate additional revenue for Esports operators and facilities.

The crypto mining feature has been operational in ggLeap computers for over a month now. In the first 18 days of the program, from May 13 to May 31, there was over \$83,000 generated by Esports venue owners through the crypto mining program.

Among the awards at the Amusement Expo International 2021 trade show in Las Vegas, **LAI Games** took home a prize for its Angry Birds Coin Crash.

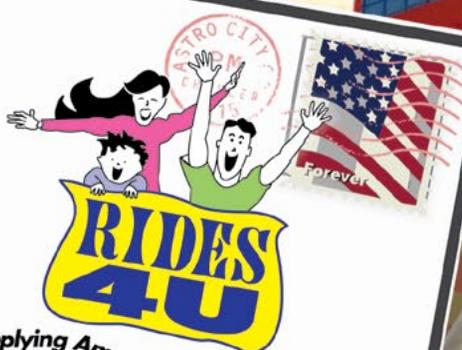
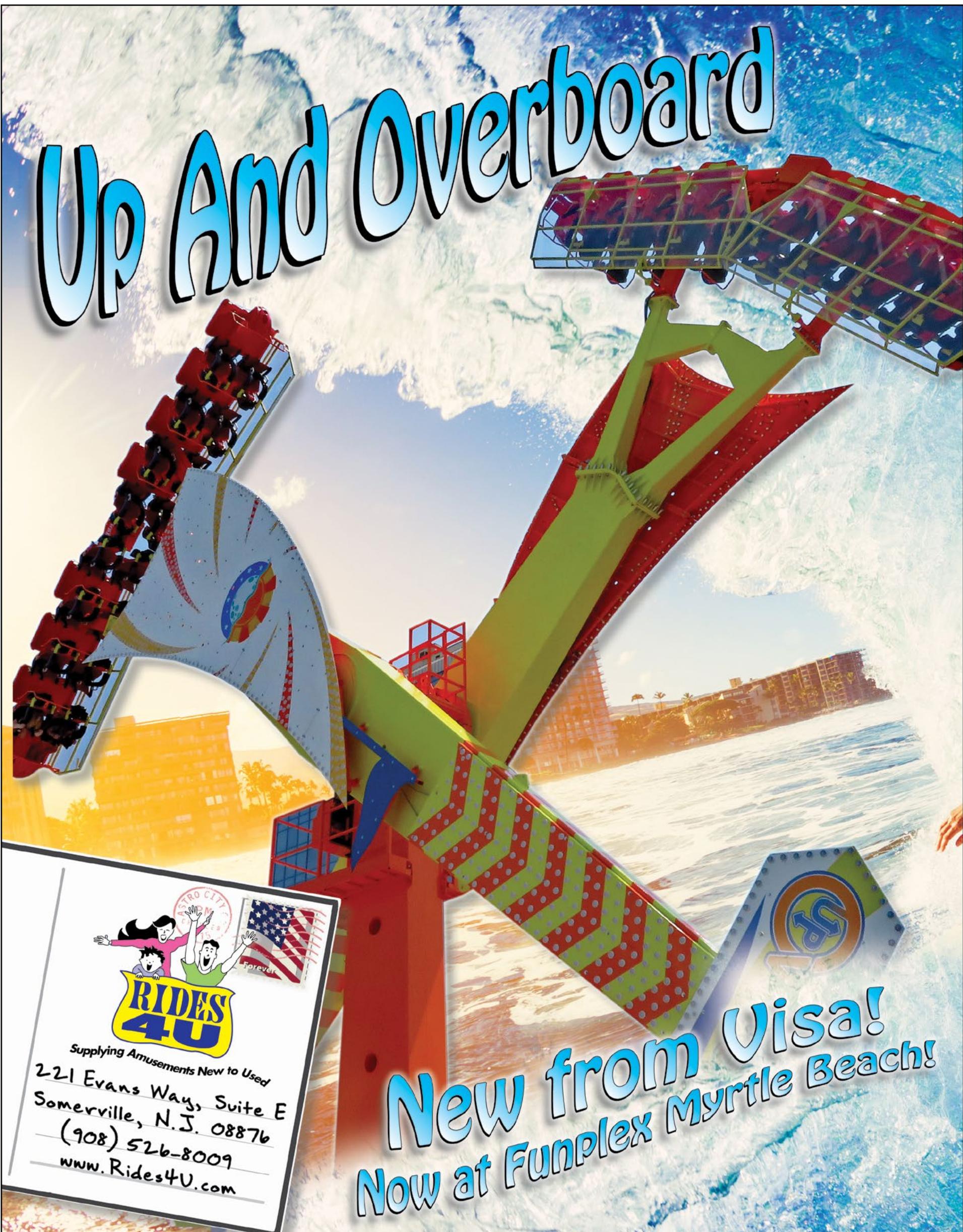
The new coin pusher from the developer won the AMOA Innovator Award, and it shared the title with Amusement Connect for its Slider Mech.

Laser tag specialist **Lasertron** is banking on the long-term success of axe throwing at FECs and entertainment venues. The supplier has added the new game to its portfolio.

The U.S.-based company has installed eight axe-throwing lanes at its New York location at Rochester after a six-month research and development project to refine its own version.

The Lasertron version of what is now a long-established and traditional game, has target displays and software for scoring, all with differing degrees of difficulty. In the game, the players compete against one-another in a game similar to traditional barroom darts.

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# 68th annual Watermelon Thump Festival has a good run for 2021

AT: B. Derek Shaw  
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

LULING, Texas — How far can you spit a watermelon seed? In Luling, Texas, it is an organized contest, part of the **Watermelon Thump Festival**, held for 68 years on the last Thursday through Sunday in June. “Because of COVID-19, we did not do our normal seed spitting or watermelon eating contests. However, we did a corn hole competition instead, and it turned out fantastic. In 2022, we will return to doing [both] contests, as [well as adding the] corn hole contest to our list of activities,” said **Yolonda Hiner**, Secretary/Treasurer of the non-profit **Luling Watermelon Thump Association**.

Attendance is not recorded for the festival, however, “the grounds were full of people and everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves,” said Hiner. Organizers estimate 30,000 visitors attend the event held in a town with a population of only 5,954. A Thump Queen is crowned each year, and she presides over the giant Watermelon Thump Parade, which starts promptly at 10 a.m. on Thump Saturday.

**Alamo Attractions, Inc.** brought in 23 rides, of which 12 were kiddie ones. There were 10 games and four food joints. New for the festival this year was Ballistic



Always held the last Thursday through Sunday in June, an estimated 30,000 people attend the four-day festival in Luling, Texas, population 5,954. San Antonio’s **Alamo Attractions, Inc.** had 23 rides on the midway of which 12 were kiddie ones. COURTESY WATERMELON THUMP FESTIVAL

(**Amusement Devices & Manufacturing, LLC**). The top three rides were **Sizzler (Wisdom Manufacturing)**; **Sidewinder (Eyerly)** and the **Ballistic** swing ride. COVID-19 practices included sanitizing the rides, as well as periodically wiping them down.

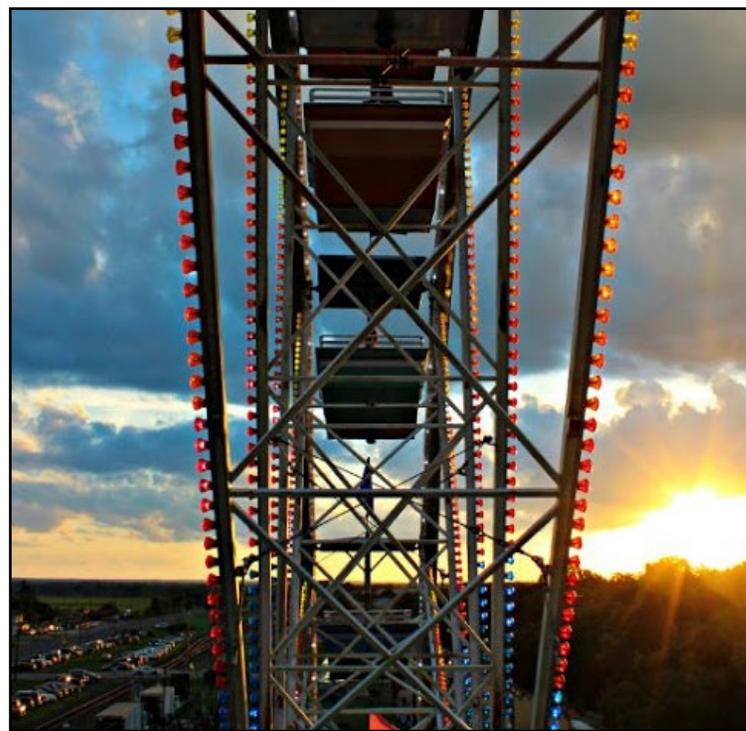
When asked about the carnival provider, Hiner said, “We enjoy working with **Alamo Attractions, Inc.**, and have not had any issues with them. We have been working with them for many years and hope to continue working with them for many more.”

**Mark Cox**, a manager with **Alamo**, was asked about working with the Thump organization and the event. “Excellent.

Never had an incident. There were no complaints, except for the long lines at the ticket boxes. It was a record year there for our company. You couldn’t have asked for a better outcome,” he said. “Sometimes people [event goers] in the heat get a little rude, however everybody was so happy to get out and have a little fun. It was nice to see.”

The pandemic eliminated traditional advertising. “This year because of COVID-19 we did not have a budget and did not advertise, except in our social media,” said Hiner.

Entertainment also took a hit. “Again, because of COVID-19, we did not have much of a budget, so our entertainment



was not what it has been in the past. However next year (2022) we will be back to having the best entertainment around!”

The food booths are owned and operated by local non-profit organizations. Money raised goes to scholarships and helping the Luling community. The association has a non-compete clause for food vendors. There cannot be more than one of any type of food, so each organization can make the most of their time and money.

In 1954, **Hermon Allen**, principal of the **Luling Elementary School**, proposed the idea of a celebration to

honor the growers and promote the Luling watermelon market. A contest was held to name the event and the winner was a young man from **Luling High School**, **Mr. Carol Ferguson**.

In 2019, the biggest Black Diamond champion melon in the festival’s history weighed in at 141 pounds. Thump headquarters receive inquiries from all over the world each year. While Thump organizers are somewhat puzzled by all the national attention at times, they have decided it must be the name, “Thump” — it just sounds like fun.

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

## On the Midway: Penn Valley Shows



Taking a quick break in the middle of the crowd, (from left): **Kevin Swavelly**, Treasurer of the Greater Governor Mifflin League; **Kerry and Christina Benner**, owners of Penn Valley Shows. Swavelly has been with the organization since 1988. Penn Valley was the first carnival to open in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania this year on March 31 at **Clipper Magazine Stadium** in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Penn Valley have 28 spots this season, finishing October 2 with just food and games at the **Bloomsburg Fair**. **Shillington** is one of the bigger spots in both size and gross revenue. AT/B. DEREK SHAW



**Penn Valley Shows**, based in **Middleburg, Pennsylvania**, brought in 17 rides to the 45th annual **Greater Governor Mifflin League Community Days** in **Shillington, Pennsylvania**. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

New to the show and making its debut in **Shillington**, is a **Mulligan Sea Ray**, recently purchased from **Penn Wood Shows**. Also new in the ride lineup are a **Datron Tractor** ride and a **Wisdom Sizzler**. Each employee follows a strict no-cell phone policy. On site there is always a **Pennsylvania certified ride inspector** as well as a **ServSafe certified employee**. AT/B. DEREK SHAW



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## On the Midway: Russ Amusements



Russ Amusements, Inc. principals include (l to r): Jim Boyer and son, Steve. Not pictured is the other fourth-generation son, Kristian. The company plays nearly two dozen dates each season, between May and October, in south central Pennsylvania and northern Maryland. AT/B. DEREK SHAW



The Wellsville, York County, Pennsylvania-based midway provider brought 13 of its 19 rides to the Shrewsbury Volunteer Fireman's Carnival. More would have been set up if additional help was available. The first spot the company played this year had seven rides with seven workers. AT/B. DEREK SHAW



Some of the rides include a rarely-seen-these-days, Grover Watkins Tempest (called Cyclone at this show) and an Eli Bridge Company HY-5 II rim drive wheel. AT/B. DEREK SHAW



Attendance was strong at the six-night annual fire company fundraiser. "Great crowds, extreme spending. I don't know when [the end of this streak] is going to happen," said Jim Boyer, reflecting on the spots he's played so far. AT/B. DEREK SHAW



## MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

This September, the **Calgary Stampede** will have a new CEO. **Joel Cowley**, the former president and CEO of the **Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo**, takes over the reins from interim CEO, **Dana Peers**. "The Stampede is fortunate to have found a leader in Joel Cowley who has seasoned experience with a similar organization and a strong familiarity with the Stampede's complex year-round operations," said **Steve McDonough**, president and chairman of the Calgary Stampede board of directors.

Cowley holds an MBA from **Michigan State University** and an MSc. in animal science from **Texas A&M University**. "I am incredibly excited for this opportunity," Cowley said in a statement, adding that he has had numerous interactions with the late **Warren Connell**, interim CEO Dana Peers and several other Stampede volunteers and staff over the years.

"Warren and Dana have been incredibly strong leaders for this organization, and I'm proud to step up to lead the Stampede beyond the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future," Cowley said.

This year's Stampede ran July 9-18. **North American Midway Entertainment (NAME)** provided the midway.

**Matt Durian** is the new manager of the **Linn County Fair**, Central City, Iowa. "We are excited to have Matt as part of the fair family," **Jennifer Dunn**, Linn County Fair Board member, said, in a statement. "The events of 2020 left us unable to fill this vacancy until now and Matt is a great person for the role and a perfect fit for The Linn County Fair. We look forward to putting his skills to use to further grow and develop our rental and partnership offerings."

The Paso Robles, California, man majored in agricultural communications at **California Polytechnic State University** and planned or interned at various livestock-related events in the Golden State.

"I am extremely excited about this opportunity to give back to youth organizations and support an important section of the agriculture industry," said Durian in a statement. He started June 1.

The five-day fair is held in late June. **Next Generation Shows, Inc.** has the ride midway.

**The Lake County Fairgrounds & Events Center** in Grayslake, Illinois, recently named **Shannon Dunn** the new general manager. Dunn who joined the center three years ago as marketing and events manager, succeeds **Jon Brodzik Jr.**, who served five years on the fair association board before being named general manager nearly five years ago.

"Her dedication during the pandemic proved that she has a strong grasp on what it takes to be a leader," association President **Kelli Kepler-Yarc**, told the *Daily Herald*, Chicago.

Before joining the fairgrounds, Dunn spent 10 years as a contractor with the **Illinois National Guard**, teaching troops and their families what to expect during deployment.

"She has a very good rapport with all the vendors," Kepler-Yarc said. "We're looking forward to having people come through the doors."

The **North Central Washington Fairgrounds** in Waterville, Washington, is now the **Douglas County Fairgrounds**, home to the **North Central Washington Fair**.

**Carolyn Morley**, fair manager, said since the fair is put on by Douglas County, she wanted the entire county to feel connected to the fair, which is how the name change started.

"We actually, pre-COVID, started getting some signage revamped on our corner area. We thought it was the perfect time. If we are going to get new signage, we'll make the name change now. Then COVID happened, which made it take longer," Morley said.

The 2021 fair takes place August 26 - 29, with **Paradise Amusements** the carnival provider.

**The California Carnival Company** has decided to cease operations. **Kevin Tate** founded the business in 2006, carving out a Northern California route with still-dates, festivals and over two dozen county and local fairs. At one time, they operated with an 80-person staff and 35 rides. Tate endured personal health issues earlier this year, which contributed to the decision to sell off the route and assets. COVID-19 contributed greatly in the decision as it caused disruptions in the route and workforce, making a 2021 restart too difficult to accomplish, especially with California's restrictive measures, only allowing virtual or drive-thru events.

**Classic Amusements** picked up some of the spots.

**Toby's Carnival, Inc.** Marceline, Missouri, has decided to call it quits. Owner **Daniel Yarnell** has a half dozen reasons listed on its Facebook page. "Yes, COVID helped to close our business. Due to our closing, 28 celebrations that we provided a midway to were faced with having to find a new carnival for their events. You may not see as many rides and games as you have in the past. Since COVID and all the free money for people to stay home, it has been extremely hard finding employees," Yarnell said. "If you notice an increase in any prices, look around. Diesel is almost \$4 a gallon, freight on all carnival food, and prizes, etc. is up, employees' wages are way up, and countless other things the general public are not aware of when it comes to basic operations of a carnival. One of the reasons I decided to close was the unknown. Every year we faced the weather closing us down. But the new unknowns are very scary to the amusement industry. At any point, the local or federal government can close you for fear of a new outbreak of COVID. I am sure that every carnival that decided to try to continue this year, with all of its uncertainties, is on the fence if they want to continue."

The carnival, founded in 1963 by **Norman "Toby" Nemmers**, operated in Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa.

# WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ WhiteWater announces sustainability commitment — page 32 / News Splash — page 32

## ADG launches new type of compact, stationary surf wave pool

AT: Jeffrey Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

COHOES, New York — When **Big Surf** in Tempe, Arizona, opened in 1969, it was the first time that surfers could ride manmade waves hundreds of miles from the nearest ocean. Since that time, surfing has increased in popularity — to the point that currently more than 24 million people identify themselves as surfers.

The sport has become so popular that the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** voted to include surfing competition in the upcoming Games of the XXXII Olympiad.

Multiple companies now offer various versions of inland surfing pools, and last month **Aquatic Development Group (ADG)** launched EpicSurf stationary surf wave. ADG's latest offering was introduced during a virtual tradeshow summit that took place on June 24, 2021, and was hosted by **Surf Park Central**. The event brought together leaders from around the world within the surf industry to discuss the latest developments in the market and introduce new and advancing technologies on all things surf. ADG had been fine-tuning the product over the last few months, with surfers in wet-suits testing the waves as early as January, in the freezing cold, with snow still on the ground.

Made-to-order waves offer surfers the chance to play or train in a structure that mimics ocean conditions, but with perfect waves and swell periods. This new product is engineered and manufactured at ADG's headquarters in upstate New York. ADG is no stranger to manmade waves as the company has been moving water for more than 50 years.

EpicSurf represents the latest evolution of stationary wave pools. Differentiating it from other stationary waves on the market, EpicSurf produces a real wave of water with a depth that can be adjusted from three to six feet for a more authentic surfing experience. The deep-water wave allows the rider to use an assortment of boards while surfing, including a full-size surfboard with skegs (or fins) instead of a modified flow-board. Current stationary surf simulators produce only a thin



EpicSurf's compact footprint, starting at just 30 feet in width, allows for easy placement without taking up a lot of space. An optional training bar can help novices maintain their balance as they improve their boarding skills (below left). With a wave depth of three to six feet, EpicSurf allows surfers to use full-size boards with skegs (below right). COURTESY ADG

sheet of water that is pushed over a formed surface.

"There are other manufacturers out there who are approaching stationary surf waves with thinner films of water, but at ADG we wanted to go all in and create a wave that gives riders a truer surf experience," says **Jim Dunn**, president of ADG. "EpicSurf is an opportunity for experienced surfers to get on and use real ocean boards and have lots of room to carve and perfect their skills, but at the same time, it also offers a platform for beginners, giving them the chance to learn and advance, growing the sport for everyone."

"This is the perfect wave for surf lessons," said **Phil Jackson**, executive director of **Surf Dreams Foundation**. "The EpicSurf wave is a real game changer for the surf industry. The kids couldn't get enough of it." Starting out with a gentle wave and a training bar, novices can quickly learn how to surf in just a matter of a few hours. Couple that with an after-school program and young surfers can become experts in a matter of weeks.

ADG's EpicSurf offers a unique Rapid Wave Adjustability system by means of a remote access control system that allows the operator to quickly and easily tune the wave, changing the height from



three to six feet in just seconds. Each and every rider, whether expert or beginner, can get an instantly customizable ride experience matched perfectly to their skill level. A retractable training bar is also available for beginners to help ease them onto the wave and make learning to surf easy for everyone.

The EpicSurf attraction boasts a compact footprint that would work well in a city setting or other location where space could be an issue. Competitor's surfing pools with moving waves often require large areas of land and massive pools of water. Having locations near city centers means the venue can open early in the morning for those looking for an alternative to the morning jog. In the afternoon it can appeal to a lunch crowd who just want to shred waves for an hour or two. Then in the



evening, the venue can take on a whole new vibe, with more of a nightclub atmosphere.

The EpicSurf wave surface can be designed and built starting from a width of 30 feet and can expand up from there in increments of eight feet depending on the client's specific site plan or business model needs. ADG offers a complete turnkey solution that includes pumps, filtration, engineering and design documents. With the company based in New York, ADG service technicians are readily available for on-site service and replacement parts and accessories are readily available through ADG's New York-based warehouse.

An RFID technology package can be added to allow guests to access session times, number of rides, and rider stats all via a wearable wristband. The RFID

system can be expanded for use on food and beverage, photo and merchandise purchases.

EpicSurf marks the latest development in wave design and engineering from ADG, a company long known for its innovation, creativity and superior wave system products. The company has a long history with more than 100 design-build projects to its credit. ADG is also the leading manufacturer when it comes to wave systems having been one of the first companies to produce successful hydraulic and pneumatic surfing waves back in the 1970s and 1980s. **WaveTek** branded waves have been installed in more than 500 projects around the world including wave pools in resorts and water parks, as well as in aquariums, water rescue training facilities, fountains and even motion picture studios.

## WhiteWater announces sustainability commitment

VANCOUVER, B.C. – **WhiteWater**, celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, has announced that **Paul Chutter**, son of CEO **Geoff Chutter**, assumed the role of president. With this generational change comes a more urgent focus on the impact the attractions industry has on the environment.

In keeping with this focus, the company has also announced a corporate-wide commitment to implement more sustainable environmental practices for all its operations and products as well as those of its suppliers, with ambitious waste and carbon footprint reduction goals in the next 20 years. It aims to be a driver of sustainable change in the industry, both up the supply chain as well as downstream to address the global climate crisis.

While WhiteWater has been working in the background for many years on improving the environmental sustainability of its products, it is now bringing it to the foreground. Many of the company's products and designs already improve water and energy savings, from risers built according to proprietary computer simulations to guard against splash, to run-out lanes with wave catchers. Smart blast technology that uses variable frequency drives (VFDs) to dynamically adjust pump speeds during ride operation, thereby drastically reducing water and energy usage garnered an **IAAPA Brass Ring Award** in 2016.

As WhiteWater looks to its next 40 years, it is clear that in order to continue doing business in the water attractions industry, all players need to confront the sustainability issue head on. To further real end-to-end change in WhiteWater's entire operation, all areas of the company are involved, from design to procurement, from manufacturing to marketing. Every employee is encouraged to contribute their ideas, which are collected and considered by the company's sustainability committee. Approaching the issue holistically, the company is implementing a sustainability scorecard, with focus on four areas: corporate, manufacturing and supply chain, parks and products, and social responsibility.

Each of these areas is headed by a staff sub-committee consisting of employees who have the passion and expertise in the topic. They collaborate to establish baseline metrics and achieve interim milestones that keep the momentum going to realize long-term objectives. The sustainability scorecard will hold WhiteWater accountable for making progress toward truly sustainable practices, with each area setting ambitious goals for the coming years.

The Corporate aspect of the sustainability scorecard covers WhiteWater's day-to-day operations, with the goal of achieving ISO 14001 standards for waste reduction and environmental management by 2025. This certification will not only serve as an internationally recognized external validation, but it will also embed environmental thinking in the business strategy.

For the manufacturing and supply chain part of the scorecard, WhiteWater is committed to halving its waste by 2030 and becoming net zero by 2040. In addition to examining its own product development and manufacturing processes, the company will work closely with its suppliers and partners with regard to raw materials, energy consumption, and end-of-life solutions.

Because the oceans are as important as the forests in removing carbon from the atmosphere, WhiteWater will be donating 1% of its corporate profits to water-focused non-government organizations.

In addition to making monetary donations, WhiteWater is also supporting employees to engage in social responsibility and live a more sustainable lifestyle. Starting with preserving the local environment, company-sponsored team activities include river trail maintenance, beach clean-ups, and recycling drives, with more in the planning.

With this announcement, WhiteWater aims to encourage the industry to take action on sustainability and invites all players — manufacturers, designers, suppliers, operators — to join its efforts.

• [whitewaterwest.com/sustainability](http://whitewaterwest.com/sustainability)



## NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert

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

Munich, Germany, will be home to a new surf park provided by **WhiteWater's** Endless Surf. Located in the municipality of Hallbergmoos, just north of Munich, **Surftown MUC** has been given approval to proceed with the development of an artificial surf park.

The president of WhiteWater's European headquarters, **Rainer Maelzer**, has been able to support the Surftown team closely through the design phases of the development. "The design will result in a venue that has broad and year-round appeal and a welcome addition to active leisure options in the region. I have to admit a little local pride to see these Endless Surf waves open here before Paris. We have the team ready to bring it to life!" said Maelzer.

Located near Munich International Airport, the venue will easily attract guests from all around the country and the globe.

The 20,000-square-meter (215,000-square-foot) wave pool, is capable of handling 700 surfers per day in 18 sessions. The facility will also include additional lifestyle amenities like fitness areas, food and beverage, merchandise retail, and lounge areas by the beach.

**Soaky Mountain Water Park** in Sevierville, Tennessee, is opening its second season with several new additions. Although the park was able to open last year with restrictions, it is looking forward to celebrating a true grand opening to kick off a full season.

New this year are two new bars — the Overlook Bar and the Wipeout Bar — offering frozen margaritas, daiquiris, piña colodas and other adult beverages. Along with the bars are 11 new clamshell cabanas which fit two people under a colorful shade and include two lounge chairs and a safe. Occupants of the cabanas also get beverage service from the new bars including the frozen speciality drinks.

The water park has also expanded its food offerings by adding the Candy Cabin building where guests build a desert, choosing from a variety of Yukon Frozen Yogurt or sorbet flavors, along with a selection of toppings and then paying by the weight of their creations.

Summit Snacks food carts also are available in the main plaza area. These carts serve food for guests to eat on the go, including: nachos, pretzels, popcorn, hot dogs, novelty ice cream, cookies, fresh-squeezed lemonade, beer, bottled water, Ices and fountain drinks.

Northern Ireland is now home to an inflatable water park. **Splash Outdoor Waterpark** in Moneymore, Ireland, opened this summer on a 17-acre site that includes a 12-acre freshwater lake in an abandoned quarry. While attempting to leave the area steeped in its own natural beauty, the owners of the park created access to the water, a parking lot and a building with changing rooms and toilet facilities. The mammoth inflatable waterpark is equipped with a number of obstacles provided by **Wibit Sports** of Germany. Additional activities at the park include open

water swimming, standup paddleboarding, pedal boats and sailboats.

**Plopsaqua Hannut-Landen** water park made its debut in Belgium on June 9, 2021. The park had been partially open since December 11 with a 25-meter swimming pool accessible to residents of Hannut and Landen. The park will continue to open in phases. In June, three slides, the wave pool an outdoor area and water play structure opened. Additional raft slides, body slides, racing slides, a wild river, Jacuzzis and saunas will open in July and August with a second inauguration taking place when the park is fully operational.

Plopsaqua Hannut-Landen is the second water park developed by the **Plopsa Group** following the success of **Plopsaqua De Panne**. Since the new park is in the heart of Hannut and Landen, it was designed to cater to school groups and features an eight-lane lap pool and a four-lane instruction pool in addition to a waterslide recreation area.

Jordan's **Saraya Aqaba Waterpark** located on the Red Sea coast, opened to the public on July 3. The world-class attraction, located in the heart of Jordan's only coastal city, promises guests an aquatic adventure with more than 25 rides, slides and experiences in addition to family-friendly eateries. The water park is expected to welcome guests from across the kingdom, as well as tourists from around the world. Several of the attractions were inspired by Jordan's most iconic landmarks, including the Wadi Rum mountains and Mount Nebo, the Dead Sea, and the historic ruins of Jerash and Pella.

**Chris Van Der Merwe**, general manager of Saraya Aqaba Waterpark, said: "Following months of earnest preparation, it fills me with an immense amount of pride to see the doors of Saraya Aqaba Waterpark finally open to the public. Whether hopping on exhilarating rides and slides, taking on thrilling watersports, relaxing poolside or enjoying delectable dining and live entertainment — we have carefully curated a wide range of experiences to cater to the entire family."

Saraya Aqaba Waterpark was developed by **Eagle Hills**, the largest developer in the Kingdom of Jordan and is currently managed and operated by **Farah Experiences**, the company behind **Yas Waterworld** and **Ferrari World Abu Dhabi** in the United Arab Emirates.

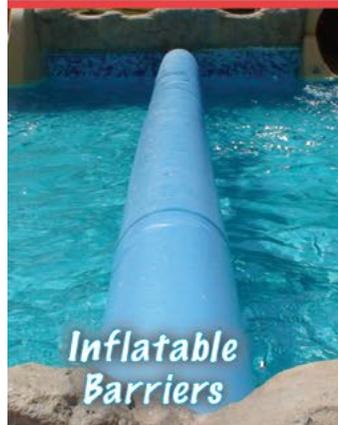
A fire at the **Mountain Creek Waterpark** in Vernon, New Jersey, damaged portions of a ProSlide Tornado. The fire broke out on June 15 on the High Anxiety waterslide. The park had not yet opened for the season and firefighters responded quickly and were able to douse the flames before it destroyed the entire slide. Photos shows flames erupting from the loading platform at the top of the tower. The park opened a few days later but the Tornado slide and a few surrounding attractions remained closed. The cause of the fire has yet to be determined.



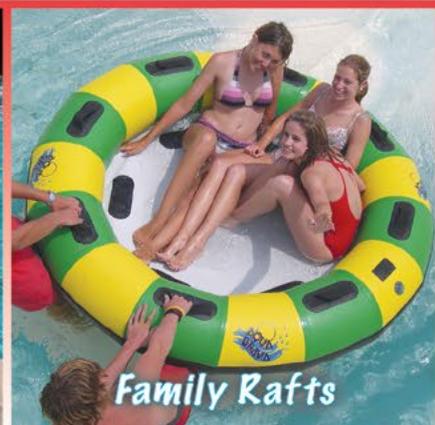
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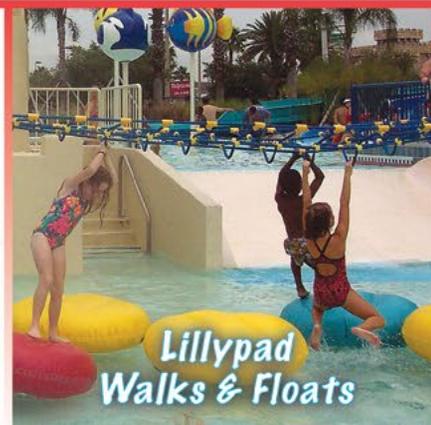
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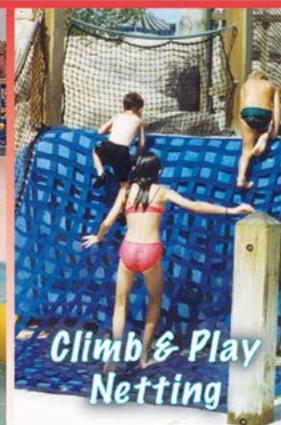
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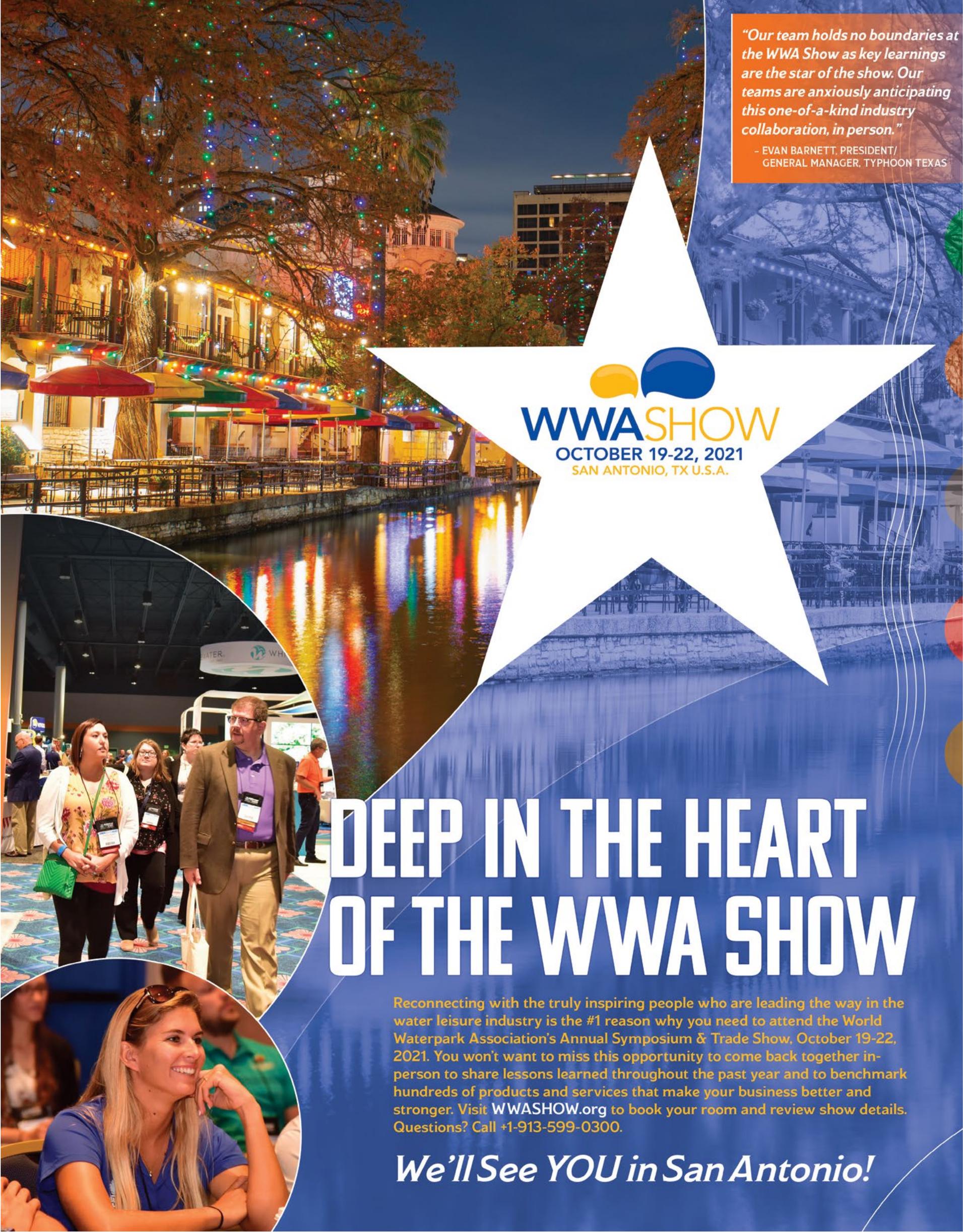
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# BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Cedar Point celebrates 150th anniversary — page 38 / Charlie Dinn, Paul Ruben pass — page 41

## Larson International uses COVID-19 pandemic to build inventory

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

PLAINVIEW, Texas — **Larson International Inc.** did something during the pandemic last year that it had not done in many, many years. The company built up its inventory, building several rides on spec.

"We had some projects going on last year when things shut down," said **Hunter Novotny**, vice president of sales and marketing, Larson International. "They were just completely frozen. They are still here."

To avoid having to lay off any workers, Novotny and his father, **Jeff Novotny**, company owner, put their heads together and came up with a plan.

"We were in a stable financial situation when the pandemic shutdowns began" Novotny said. "We worked it out with our bank and started building rides."

The Larson International factory ended up building two Flying Scooters, a portable Fireball, a 22-meter Giant Loop, a Jumping Jumbos and two Tilt-A-Whirls.

"**Walter Larson** would carry an inventory of loops," Novotny said. "But this is the first time we have been able to do this."

Walter Larson founded Larson International in 1968. The Novotny family purchased the company in 2006.

"We always have been busy enough that we never had time to build up our inventory like this," Novotny said. "In between busy times, parts sales would keep us going."

"But it became a different world," he said, referring to the global pandemic and the



Larson International company heads wanted to keep their workers employed during the pandemic, so the company prebuilt its most popular rides. The company now has a ride inventory as never before. COURTESY LARSON INTERNATIONAL



lockdowns that pandemic created.

Novotny said they wanted and needed to keep their skilled employees. This was a way to do it.

"No one knew how long it would take before we could get back to business," Novotny said. "We wanted to maintain the stability of our company."

The typical number of employees at Larson International is 40 to 45. Novotny said it is down to about 35 now, but

that is due to some employees who left by choice.

"There was quite a bit of fear when this hit," he said. "Some of our employees made some lifestyle decisions and decided to leave."

There were losses due to health issues.

"We did our best to keep everyone here," Novotny said.

Now that businesses have begun to open, Novotny said

► See **LARSON**, page 36



Larson sold one 22-meter Giant Loop and a replacement is currently being built to have in stock and ready for delivery. COURTESY LARSON INTERNATIONAL



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## Lagotronics' GameChanger receives European patent



**THE NETHERLANDS** — Lagotronics has announced that its unique GameChanger dark ride has officially received a European patent. Now the attraction has patents in the USA, Asia and Europe. The GameChanger is an interactive media-based dark ride that offers a large capacity in a relatively small area. The attraction has already received several awards such as the European Star Award (for best new ride) and two Golden Crown Awards (for outstanding medium/small ride & outstanding dark ride supplier).  
COURTESY LAGOTRONICS



## ► LARSON Continued from page 35

they are beginning to see some purchasing interest among amusement industry professionals. The company sold a 22-meter Giant Loop in April and is currently building one to replace it.

"The Giant Loop we sold is going overseas," he said. "We have potential sales on some of the other rides, but none have come to fruition. We feel we are on the cusp of a busy fall."

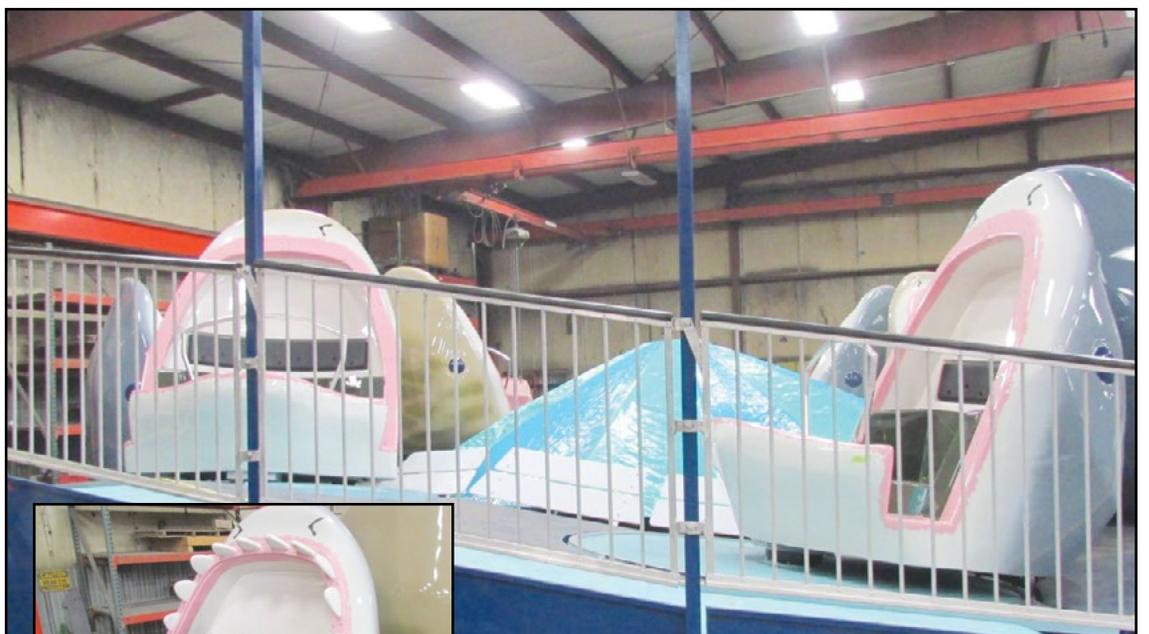
Novotny hopes it will play to their advantage to have inventory ready to go.

"So, we are not slowing down," he said. "If we sell one, like the Giant Loop, our plans are to build another. Our equipment is ready to ship or ready to be customized."

Larson International has the capability of warehousing all the rides it has manufactured. The company has two warehouses across the street from its plant. Some space in those warehouses was being used to store artifacts, ride parts, etc., that have been donated to the **National Roller Coaster Museum**. A recent expansion to that museum allowed Larson employees to free up more space in the warehouses so that all finished rides could be kept indoors, out of the weather.

"Another thing we were able to do last year was have some of our employees work on the museum," said Novotny. "That didn't really give us any income, but it was something for the employees and they made a lot of progress."

•larsonintl.com



With two Tilt-A-Whirls prebuilt by Larson, the company opted to make one of them a popular themed version of the ride, with the rider carriages designed as shark heads. Riders would be seated inside the sharks' jaws.

COURTESY LARSON INTERNATIONAL



Quassy Amusement Park owner George Frantzis II (center) helped kickstart legislation in his home state of Connecticut to allow for the rider operator age to be reduced to 16.

AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

## Connecticut passes bill, allows ride operators aged 16 and up

**HARTFORD, Conn.** — Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont signed Senate Bill 186: An Act Allowing Persons 16 Years Of Age Or Older To Operate Rides At Amusement Parks. The new law went into effect July 1.

The bill was sponsored by Sen. Eric Berthel, who represents the district in which Middlebury's Quassy Amusement & Waterpark is located.

Berthel's children were employed at the park in 2020, and he started working on the legislation after a conversation with Quassy's George Frantzis II, a park owner. Up until now, Connecticut law mandated that ride operators needed to be at least 18 years old. Frantzis emphasized that 16-year-olds were capable of and could safely operate rides, which is allowed in numerous other states.

Berthel drafted the bill, which was co-sponsored by Sen. Kevin Witkos, Rep. Anthony D'Amelio, Rep. Cara Pavalock-D'Amato, Rep. David Rutigliano and the House General Law Committee.

Upon hearing about this bill, the **New England Association of Amusement Park and Attractions (NEAAPA)** and members in Connecticut, along with the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)**, immediately got to work providing testimony and information to the state's Joint Committee on General Law, which heard the bill in February.

NEAAPA members Quassy Amusement and Waterpark, Lake Compounce Theme Park, Sonny's Place, Ocean Beach Park and International Ride Training all worked to get the measure passed.

# THESE SMILES ARE READY TO DELIVER!

RIDES ARE IN STOCK AND READY TO GO!

FIRE BALL • TILT-A-WHIRL • FLYING SCOOTER • JUMPING JUMBOS



*Pandemic merely delayed milestone fun*

## Cedar Point celebrates 150th anniversary full scale — a year late

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SANDUSKY, Ohio — It was 150 years in the making. A milestone anniversary of a century and a half is no small feat, and such an occasion deserves a huge celebration. Unfortunately, a global health crisis pays no attention to such things. As the amusement industry scrambled to just open the gates in 2020, parks were stepping back and putting projects on pause. In the case of **Cedar Point**, and its 150th celebration, postponing it a year to where it could be done right was the correct move.

“Obviously, like everyone, our plans were interrupted,” said Vice President and General Manager **Carrie Boldman**. “We were happy to do a few things last year but held onto a few things for a full-blown celebration.”

Some celebratory merchandise found its way into the hands of fans last season, but 2021 brings what management had envisioned in the years of planning. It begins as guests enter the front entry plaza and see the number “150” larger than life.

“Everybody is getting their picture taken there,” said Boldman. “It’s such a great welcome to see that big 150 in lights. We know people are just happy to be back, but true Cedar Point fans are happy to come back and celebrate the 150th.”

Throughout the park, there is much to see during a visit. The park was pleased to open Snake River Expedition, a re-imagined throwback to Cedar Point’s previous Western Cruise/Paddlewheel Excursion boat rides that ran for more than 50 years (*see cover story*).

This season, there is much more 150th merchandise for loyal aficionados. In addition to apparel, a fun favorite has been the introduction of collectable buttons.

“The buttons have been popular. We wanted to do something uniquely ours,” noted Boldman.

The variety of buttons is so vast (more than 150) that both young and old — multigenerational fans and first-time newcomers — can find



The Celebrate 150 Spectacular concludes with a grand show production making for a nightly epic finale (above). A big photo op prop (below) welcomes guests as soon as they enter the park. COURTESY CEDAR POINT; AT/ TIM BALDWIN

something that brings a smile. Retired attractions, the roller coaster lineup, hotel properties, Peanuts characters and many more find themselves on a circular keepsake. Priced at only \$1.50 or five for \$5, the collectible is an affordable remembrance. Because of the enormous selection, the park has even provided cards displaying the entire collection so fans can either check off or make sure they have all their favorites.

Sprinkled along the midway are staffed kiosks called Courtesy Corps. A reflection of such stands from the 1960s and '70s, the booths are adorned with enlarged historic views of the park draped along the sides. Team members help visitors with directions, information about the park or the anniversary event.

The summer nights bring the celebration to a grand finale. With the fanciful and energetic parade kicking off the entertainment (*see cover story*), the floats park in Celebration Plaza where musical performers and pyrotechnics keep the street party at peak level. The multi-sensory Celebrate 150 Spectacular is an epic finale for visitors who have spent the day at the park.

“I have never had so many people come up to me — including team members



The Celebrate 150 Spectacular begins each evening with a larger-than-life parade featuring floats from Scenic Solutions and 3Dx Scenic. COURTESY CEDAR POINT

► See **CELEBRATE**, page 39

## ►CELEBRATE

Continued from page 38

— and say that the parade was the best way to summarize and caption the experience at Cedar Point and what it means to our family,” said **Tony Clark**, director of communications. “A traditional part of a visit here is important to us, and the parade really encompasses our history, but there’s something about it that is intangible that touches people’s hearts as well. We knew the scale was big, and we knew we had all the pieces to make great entertainment, but for us to see the extra layer of that has been something really special to behold.”

Introduced last year, the Ticket of a Lifetime promotion continues daily through the grand celebration that started June 26 and continues through August 15. This promotion allows a lucky winner each day to win a lifetime season pass (along with three other family members or friends to receive one).

Each day during the celebration, guests inside the park who register will have five chances to win by scanning their mobile device at each Courtesy Corps information kiosk. Winners will be randomly selected, then announced nightly through a limited-time CP150 app that allows guests to win prizes for playing park trivia and to be a part of the finale of the Celebrate 150 Spectacular show.

“We draw a winner each night just before the parade steps off,” said Clark.

While entering the Ticket of a Lifetime sweepstakes, guests will also have the chance to be one of 150 winners to be instantly upgraded to a CP150 VIP Experience for the day. The winner, plus three friends, will receive one-



Fans of the park can purchase inscribed red bricks in the Legacy Plaza through Labor Day (above left). Courtesy Corps stations are staffed with team members to answer questions and help with anniversary activities (above right, inset). AT/ TIM BALDWIN

time Fast Lane passes and access to three exclusive VIP lounges where they can relax in style, charge their phones, catch a game on giant TVs and enjoy complimentary water and snacks plus a private cash bar. VIP winners will also have access to the VIP party deck offering great views of the high-energy nighttime parade.

“When they told me there would be in-line roller bladders on the roller coaster float, I couldn’t believe it,” said Clark. “I thought that was over the top. The concept was to celebrate our roller coasters. I thought there was no way we would pull that off, but there they are jumping off the float and then jumping back on. It’s just insane. Through anniversary magic, there they are. People think it is really cool.”

Among food offerings, Cedar Point has some fan favorites. For this season, guests can purchase a Taste of The Point tasting card and indulge

in some of the park’s most famous fare, including several that are sure to become new favorites. Famous fresh-cut fries become cilantro, lime and queso fresh-cut fries; hand-battered cheese on a stick becomes fried pepper jack cheese on a stick with raspberry jam; and funnel cakes transform into funnel cake hot chicken sandwiches. In total, 15 specialty food items are available on the tour. Guests can save on the Taste of The Point tour when they purchase tasting cards in advance online.

“The food and beverage team did a bang-up job of elevating these items,” said Clark. “They’ve added layers to them. You take the concept of what we have been serving for many, many years and what is famous to the culinary tastes of today.”

The sampling cards come in various denominations.

“It’s kind of silly, but one of the big surprises was the juice bottles we brought back,” said Clark. “We surveyed



our guests on social media and asked, ‘What food items would you like to see return?’ Resoundingly were the souvenir juice bottles on midway carts. We were able to track those down and find a manufacturer to make them for us. They now have their own location on the midway and it’s super popular. We knew people asked for it, but you just never know what the real execution is going to look like. People love them and are lining up for them and want to collect all four.”

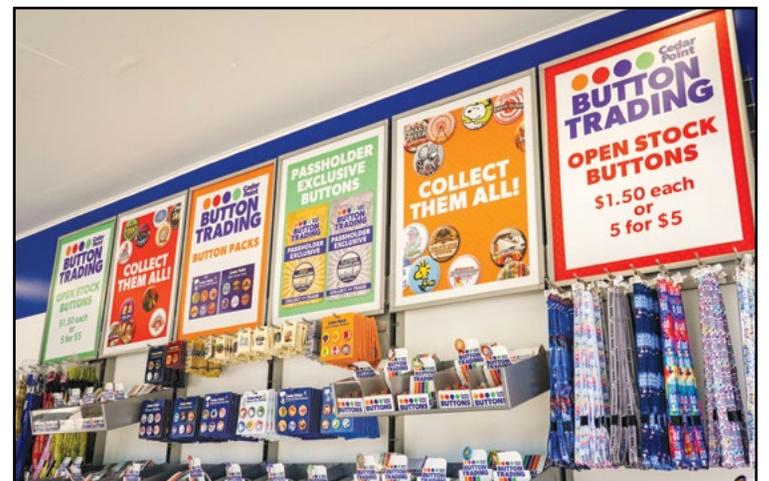
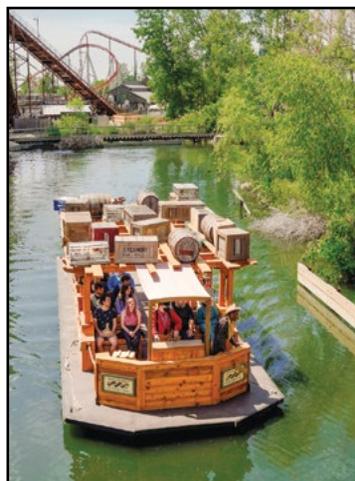
One small casualty of the pandemic setback was the updated renovation to the Town Hall Museum. It was paused for this season, and the park continues to evaluate its development for the future.

Hardcore fans who really want to make their love known can purchase a brick on the Legacy Walk. A message, family names, hometown or simple graphics can be inscribed into bricks and placed in the center of the main midway. Enthusiasts of

the park may do so through Labor Day of this year. It can be done online at [cedarpoint.com/150](http://cedarpoint.com/150), starting at \$75.

Of note, floral arrangements also denote the anniversary with the 150th logo in flowers.

“Not many businesses get to celebrate this kind of milestone, and certainly not many businesses get to say their only job is to make people happy,” said Clark. “The fact that all of us working today at this park that have been doing the same thing since 1870 is the heart of this celebration and what we do on a day-to-day basis. Things will still continue next year like they have since 1870. We’re going to open, the team is going to be here, and we’re still going to be the place people are going to come to for summer fun.”



Cedar Point has marked the occasion in a floral arrangement (above left). Snake River Expedition is a return of a family favorite (above middle). More than 150 buttons make for easy anniversary collectibles (above right). COURTESY CEDAR POINT; AT/ TIM BALDWIN

## MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 07/14/21	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	98.65	102.89	49.26
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	43.65	52.50	22.81
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	57.77	59.11	40.96
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	183.42	203.02	113.37
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.08	0.15	0.07
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	55.33	56.07	20.62
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	5190.00	6500.00	2611.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.66	0.375	0.89
Lefoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	19.20	23.05	14.50
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	39.97	45.34	14.65
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	76.20	99.24	45.71
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	815.00	875.00	538.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	46.69	58.26	13.91
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	40.31	51.75	16.06
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	878.00	944.00	620.00

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

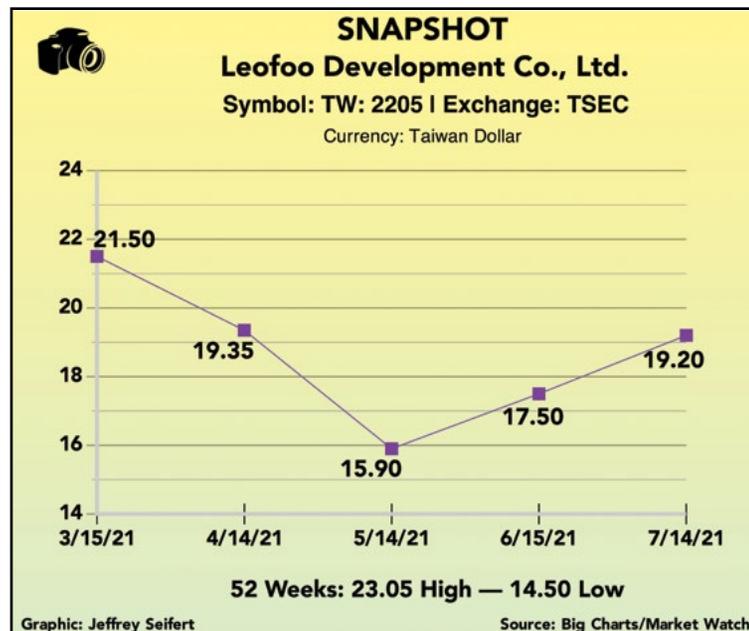
**Worldwide Markets:** ASX, Australian Securities Exchange; CSE, Copenhagen Stock Exchange; LSE, London Stock Exchange; NYSE, New York Stock Exchange; NASDAQ, National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; SEHK, Hong Kong Stock Exchange; SZSE, Shenzhen Stock Exchange; TSEC, Taiwan Stock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

—SOURCES: Bloomberg.com; Wall Street Journal



Multiple Cedar Fair parks announced the return of the popular Grand Carnivale to the parks festival in July and August. The event features shows, a parade and unique food treats.

COURTESY MICHELLE MOMANY



## DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 7/12/21	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.312	\$0.781
Midwest	\$3.261	\$0.948
Gulf Coast	\$3.830	\$0.885
Mountain	\$3.594	\$1.249
West Coast	\$3.568	\$0.974
California	\$4.187	\$0.936

## CURRENCY

On 7/15/21 \$1 USD =

0.8468	EURO
0.722	GBP (British Pound)
110.26	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9168	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.3392	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.2502	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

## BUSINESS WATCH

## Dollywood announces childcare benefit

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — **Dollywood Parks & Resorts** officials announced a new benefit for hosts working at the Smoky Mountains theme park. Through a new partnership with **WeeCare**, the largest childcare network in the United States, hosts at all Dollywood properties can find licensed childcare providers who offer flexible schedules for newborns through school-aged children. Additionally, **The Dollywood Company** will pay a portion of childcare costs for those who enroll in the program.

This new benefit comes at an opportune time, as many parents are unable to return to their jobs following the pandemic due to a shortage of childcare workers. WeeCare concierge care managers are available to help enrolled hosts find and tour licensed, safety-certified family childcare homes. Once a family childcare home is selected, WeeCare assists in enrolling the hosts' children and provides around-the-clock care support. The network of WeeCare facilities includes full-time, part-time, backup, drop-in, school-aged, after-school and overnight care options in the area.

"Obviously, this is a tremendous benefit for our hosts," said **Tim Berry**, Dollywood vice president of human resources. "Simply put, childcare arrangements can be overwhelming to most families. It is our hope that this new partnership takes some of that stress away from our current and future hosts. The Dollywood Company has always been devoted to taking care of its employees and this is the next commitment to that. WeeCare can help hosts find childcare with hours that mirror Dollywood's operating calendar, allowing our hosts more flexibility in scheduling. As any parent can attest, you can breathe a little easier when you know your kids are taken care of; there is an instant sense of relief. We want this to be the case for our hosts. Additionally, we will pay a portion of the costs for children at enrolled facilities, and all hosts are eligible. This benefit is not dependent on income."

## Disney relocating 2,000 jobs to Florida

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — **The Walt Disney Company** will be relocating approximately 2,000 jobs from California to a Lake Nona campus not far from Orlando. The move is to take place over the next 18 months.

The Lake Nona campus will house Walt Disney Imagineers and more professionals in the Disney Parks, Experiences and Products division who are not fully dedicated to **Disneyland**. The 2,000 positions represent less than 5% of Disney's total jobs in California. The size and specific site of the campus have not been confirmed.

"This new project will create a dynamic environment to support our expanding business — a brand-new regional campus which will be built in the vibrant Lake Nona community of Orlando," **Josh D'Amato**, chairman of Disney Parks, Experiences and Products, said. "This new regional campus gives us the opportunity to consolidate our teams and be more collaborative and impactful both from a creative and operational standpoint."

## Six Flags offers second round of bonuses

ARLINGTON, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** is ramping up efforts to reward its team members by offering another cash bonus package. Seasonal team members who work through October 31, 2021, can earn up to an additional \$500 to \$1,000 or more with a 10% bonus for wages earned from July through September and a 15% bonus for wages earned in October.

"This program is part of our ongoing commitment to reward our employees for their continuous support," said Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer **Laura Doerre**.

Previously in late June, Six Flags announced that seasonal team members employed as of July 1, and who work through September 6, can earn up to an additional \$500-\$1,000 or more.

## OBITUARIES

## Charlie Dinn, famed wooden roller coaster builder, passes away at 88

CLERMONT, Fla. — Charles “Charlie” Dinn, a wooden roller coaster builder and credited by many as the dynamo behind a resurgence of wooden roller coaster construction, passed July 6. He was 88.

Dinn was the director of construction, maintenance, and engineering at Kings Island, Mason, Ohio. He oversaw design and construction of The Beast, which opened in 1979. In November 1983, Dinn left Kings Island and opened the Dinn Corporation in West Chester, Ohio.

The company relocated two wooden roller coasters from parks that closed. They were the Rocket at Playland Park, San Antonio, to Knoebels Amusement Resort, Elysburg, Pa., being renamed the Phoenix and the Giant Coaster at Paragon Park, Nantasket Beach, Massachusetts to Wild World (now Six Flags America,) Largo, Maryland, being renamed Wild One. Dinn contracted with Curtis D. Summers, Inc., engineering firm in Loveland, Ohio, to provide the design for the restoration of the helix of the Giant Coaster. Dinn also did a complete rebuild of the Wildcat at Lake Compounce, Bristol, Connecticut.

Dick Knoebel floated the idea about moving a roller coaster to Dinn at the 1984 IAAPA show. “I need you to help me,” to which Dinn quickly responded, “I’m on board!” Knoebel continued,



Charlie Dinn (right) alongside his wife, Martha June. AT/FILE

“We had three bents up before Charlie arrived. He took over from there. After our first ride, we were thrilled. Charlie did a good job for us. He worked hard, and he partied hard.”

In 1987, Dinn and Summers started building new coasters, ten in the United States and one in the Netherlands, their last in 1991. The two catered to what the industry was demanding at that time: bigger, higher and faster.

Another who knew him from early on is Larry Bill, engineer, The Gravity Group, LLC. “Charlie Dinn was a legend and an icon of the industry. There are a lot of us in the industry today that got our start with him. Rest in peace Charlie.”

The first time Tom Rebbie (owner Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters Inc) met Dinn was in 1979 when he was working on the Beast trains after they arrived at Kings Island. “He

seemed like a very happy guy. Over the years when working with him at both PTC and PTCI, it was always a pleasure. Sometimes I didn’t understand what he said with that Midwestern accent. He would just smile and chuckle. I thought the world of the guy. I always enjoyed his company.”

Clair Hain, Jr., president of Great Coasters International Inc. shared what it was like working with Dinn. “In the beginning, it was like working for my father. Toward the end, it felt like a father and best friend. Eating breakfast and lunch every day together was fun and amusing. I am very sad and I feel like I lost a best friend.”

Dinn is survived by his wife of nearly 67 years, Martha June; daughter Denise Dinn Biddle of Ormond-by-the-Sea, Florida; and son Jeff Dinn, Wilmington, Ohio.

—B. Derek Shaw



Charlie Dinn oversaw construction of Kings Island’s famed The Beast roller coaster. Above, he’s pictured with the ride shortly before its 1979 debut. COURTESY RICHARD MUNCH

## Amusement industry writer Paul Lewis Ruben passes at 84

PENFIELD, N.Y. — Paul Lewis Ruben passed on July 12 at age 84.

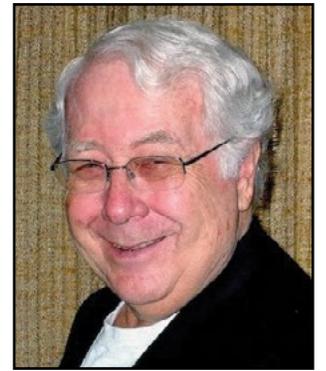
Ruben launched a career as a writer/editor about the amusement industry. Since he began visiting parks at age five, he had visited nearly 400 parks worldwide and traveled an estimated 10,000 miles on more than 910 different roller coasters. He was a frequent speaker to civic groups and a guest on TV programs discussing roller coasters. He served as associate editor of *Amusement Park Journal* for nine years, editor of *RollerCoaster!* for four years, and since 1989 was North American editor of *Park World*. He was a member of the American Coaster Enthusiasts.

Ruben was a BS and MS graduate of the University of Rochester’s Institute of Optics. He was an optical engineer and lens designer at Bausch & Lomb, 3M Wollensak, and Eastman Kodak before becoming an independent consultant in lens design. His work resulted in 41 patents in the fields of zoom lens systems, photographic objectives, projection lenses, visual systems, and microscope objectives, and six published papers. During his 29 years at Kodak, he designed the lens systems found in several generations of Pocket Instamatic cameras, available light movie cameras, zoom lenses for movie cameras, and the optical systems in Kodak Instant Cameras. As an independent, he developed an ultra micro miniaturization lens that led to the development of tiny computer chips. He was an emeritus member of the Optical Society of America.

As a young man growing up in Niagara Falls, New York, Ruben spent summers selling ice cream, then as a tour guide around the Falls. He was a skilled water skier, usually on the upper Niagara River. Paul was also an accomplished bassoonist, playing with both the University of Rochester and the Niagara Falls Symphony Orchestras. An avid tennis player, he played winters at the Rochester Tennis Club and summers in the Penfield Sunday morning tennis league. He was also a founding member and past president of the Penfield Rangers Soccer Club.

“We are all very sad to hear the news that Paul Ruben has passed away and our thoughts are with his family and friends,” offered Becci Knowles, editor of *Park World*. “I had the pleasure of working with Paul for over 10 years and will very much miss his second-to-none sense of humor and storytelling. His enthusiasm for the theme park industry and, in particular, roller coasters seem to meet no boundaries. This fantastic industry that we work in has truly lost one of its greats.”

Ruben was predeceased by his parents, Harry and Rose Ruben. He is survived by his daughter, Dr. Cherie Ruben (David Green) of Derby, N.Y.; son, Joel (Abbey) Ruben of Fairport, N.Y.; grandchildren, Maisa and Zoë Ruben, and brother, Arnold Ruben (Sandra) of Pittsburgh, Pa.; a niece, Naomi Pittle, her husband, Dr. Howard Pittle, and two great nephews, Harrison and Merritt, all of Pittsburgh, Pa.



Paul Lewis Ruben

Paul Ruben discusses Superman: Ride of Steel at Six Flags New England with the local press during the Intamin coaster’s opening day.  
COURTESY RICHARD MUNCH



▶ See related story page 4

# Women INFLUENCE

## A view from the top...

**Wapello Fabrications**, Wapello, Iowa, was founded in the 1970s. **Nikki Hardin's** grandmother, **June Hardin**, was a founding partner.

Nikki Hardin began working there with her grandmother and uncle, **Don Hardin**, when she turned 20 years old.

In 2013 June Hardin passed away and Don Hardin took over running the business.

Nikki Hardin stayed with the company for 17 years, but left Wapello Fabrications — as well as Wapello, Iowa — this past winter for the sunny shores of Long Beach, Mississippi.

## One leap of faith becomes a giant opportunity for Hardin

LONG BEACH, Miss. — Sometimes change is hard. Sometimes it is scary. Sometimes it is sad.

But at the end of the day, change can also be exciting.

Nikki Hardin, who has left Wapello Fabrications, Wapello, Iowa, after spending 17 years in the company and even more years in the amusement industry, has experienced most of the difficult parts.

She is now honing into the excitement, yet still missing the industry that she has known all of her life.

"I always knew that I wanted to relocate out of the cold weather in Iowa," said Hardin, sitting in her new residence across the street from the Gulf of Mexico in Long Beach, Mississippi. "I guess it was the pandemic that made me finally make a move."

Of course, having thoughts of relocating is quite different from leaving the industry entirely.

But, again, the catalyst was the COVID-19 pandemic. It froze their business, as it did to many. The hustle and bustle of the company's manufacturing was gone. The telephones weren't ringing.

"We weren't working at all," Hardin said. "In fact, I haven't spoken to anyone in the industry in over a year."

She visited with friends in New Orleans this past winter.

"I told them I wanted to drive over to Biloxi, Mississippi," she said. "I had never been there and I wanted to look at the area. But along the way, I saw all these little coastal towns. I said 'I think I'll move there.'"

When she returned home, she told her uncle, Don Hardin, who took over the business in 2013, that she planned to leave Wapello Fabrications and move the Mississippi.

"It was sad," she said. "He wasn't expecting it."

But she felt her salary was a drain

on a company struggling to come back after a complete shutdown.

"I figured business would eventually come back," Hardin said. "Uncle Don is already getting orders. I do feel like he can stay afloat."

But it will be tough, she knew. Perhaps it was just time to go.

"I sold just about everything I owned," she said. "I put my house on the market and made the move. It was scary."

At 37 years of age, Hardin did what so many have done in the past, made that leap of faith. She used the support and confidence she had gained from her family and the family business. She took with her a large coffer of skills and talents. Probably even larger than she realized at first.

"When I first came down here and started building my resume, I realized all the different aspects of manufacturing I had done," she said. "Even shipping logistics was a huge part of what I did. Those critical thinking skills were so important."

Getting products out to customers in a one-day turn-around was not an easy task.

She is not rushing into another career right now.

"I am just trying to get my feet under me," she said.

She is not sitting still, either. She has taken a job working in the hospitality industry, waiting tables and bartending. She has found she is good at multitasking, people communications and money handling. She is making connections. In mid-July, she had been working at a restaurant for three weeks and had already been noticed and pinpointed for a managerial position.

It would be a big mistake to think Hardin doesn't miss the amusement industry and Wapello Fabrications.

"I miss having a product at the end of the day," she said. "If Wapello

## Nikki Hardin

Assistant Manager (former)  
Wapello Fabrications  
Wapello, Iowa



relocated down here, there is no doubt I would be right there."

Would she go back into the industry in another role?

"I wouldn't hesitate, but it would have to be the right opportunity."

Hardin, who was born and raised in Wapello, started in the amusement industry when she was 14 years old on her grandfather's, Don Hardin, midway.

"My grandpa had a small carnival that he would take out on weekends," Hardin said. "It was very small. We played local events and were always back home at night."

It was fun, she said. Her uncles and cousins all took part. Her father, Gordon Hardin, helped out in the summers.

"He helped build a few trailers," she said. "He also had his own small painting business."

Her mother, Lisa Hardin, gave her support. Her grandmother, June Hardin, focused primarily on Wapello Fabrications.

After high school, Hardin attended a small community college and then transferred to a larger university in the same year.

"I came home from college that first summer and my grandma said, 'Well,

you can always come here and work full time.' I did and I never looked back."

For the next 17 years, she learned to make inflatables and she learned how to sell them. She learned the business. She went to trade shows with her grandmother.

The company diversified during slow times, expanding to make things like air bags for stunt skiers and linings for air bags for pole vaults. They offered repair services.

"We were very busy when I started. We had gotten a contract from Six Flags to manufacture our ladder climb game for all of the Six Flags parks," she said.

But over the years, Wapello's business decreased. The year 2008 wasn't great. Competition from Chinese companies selling similar products took its toll.

"We found a way to persevere," she said.

Until the pandemic.

She has begun to look at her move as an opportunity. A time she can spread her wings from her leap. She knows what she has to offer.

Her world has just gotten bigger.

—Pam Sherborne

## ON THE MOVE

**SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.** announced the appointment of **Tom Iven** to the position of chief operating officer (COO) effective June 28, 2021. SeaWorld's Board of Directors unanimously approved the appointment.

"We are excited to have Tom join the SeaWorld team as we continue to drive the business forward and emerge an even stronger company post COVID-19," said **Marc Swanson**, chief executive officer of SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc. "Tom brings significant theme park operating experience and a long, successful operating track record. I am confident he will make immediate contributions as we continue to execute on our strategic plans to realize the full, long-term potential of the company," continued Swanson.



Iven

Prior to joining the company, Iven served as senior vice president of park operations for **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.** He was responsible for the operations management of all of Six Flags' parks and properties. Iven began his career at Six Flags as a seasonal employee and had a career spanning several decades. Iven served in key operating and leadership roles both at the park and corporate level. In addition, Iven led the development and acquisition of numerous parks and other special projects that contributed to multiple years of strong results for Six Flags. Iven holds a B.S. degree from **Missouri State University**.

The **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)** formally announced in late-May that **Keith Stephenson** has joined the organization as director, public affairs, IAAPA North America. Stephenson will lead IAAPA's government relations and advocacy initiatives on key issues impacting the attractions industry in the U.S. and Canada.



Stephenson

Stephenson has 25 years of public affairs and trade association experience representing the hotel and lodging, food and beverage, and retail segments of the hospitality and travel and tourism industry at local, multi-state, federal, and international government levels.

"Keith is a great addition to our public affairs team," said **John Hallenbeck**, vice president and executive director, IAAPA North America. "As we continue to educate lawmakers and regulators to gain their support on issues critical to our industry, Keith will lead the team and guide our strategic efforts. His association background and vast public affairs experience at all levels of government, coupled with his collaborative approach will be key assets as he serves our members in North America."

Stephenson has served as a lobbyist for the **Ohio Council of Retail Merchants**, executive vice president for the **Ohio Hotel and Lodging Association** and director of state government affairs for the **American Resort Development Association**. In his most recent role, Stephenson has served as the director of state and local government affairs for the **National Restaurant Association**, where he managed a complex portfolio of policy issues in many of the largest consumer markets in the U.S.

Stephenson holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Economics from the **Ohio State University**. Reporting directly to Hallenbeck, Stephenson will be traveling the US and Canada to address federal and state/province affairs with his home base at the IAAPA's headquarters in Orlando, Florida.

**Storyland Studios** welcomed veteran **Walt Disney Company** Imagineer **Jim Clark** as the company's newest executive director.

Clark's 27-year tenure with the Walt Disney Company included work at **Walt Disney World, Disneyland** and **Tokyo Disneyland**, with two decades at Walt Disney Imagineering. Most recently, he served as senior creative producer for the Tokyo Disneyland expansion, where he helped develop the concept.

"I'm excited about the depth and diversity of projects at Storyland. There are going to be a lot of great opportunities here," he said.

"We're thrilled to have Jim as the newest member of our executive team," said **Ben Thompson**, chief strategy officer and head of global clients at Storyland Studios. "To have yet another talented veteran Imagineer on our team — who learned firsthand from a legend like **Marty Sklar** — is an honor, and we're so excited to begin working with him."



Clark

**Christie** announced the appointments of **Francois Godfrey** and **Maz Zaeefjou** to the Professional Services team as directors of sales and business development. Christie Professional Services helps partners across the globe to prolong the life of their AV systems and get the most from their investment by proactively maintaining, troubleshooting and resolving critical system issues.

Francois and Maz will be responsible for new business development opportunities and partnerships across the Professional Services portfolio, which will be expanding to encompass a broader range of vertical markets, including largescale attractions, government and more.

"We're excited to have both Francois and Maz join our Professional Services team," said **Josh Kolbeck**, senior director, NOC and business operations, Professional Services, Christie. "Both are seasoned sales and business professionals with years of experience, and they will be a great asset to the growing Professional Services team. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution for maintaining an organization's AV system, and their varied expertise gained in prior roles will prove invaluable as we seek to tailor our services to each customer's unique needs and budget — whether our partner has a new Christie display solution or one that's been serving them for years."

Godfrey is new to Christie, with previous experience as director of projection and technical services at a cinema exhibitor, as well as in a variety of sales and marketing roles with AV manufacturers. Zaeefjou has been with Christie for five years — having served as a senior manager in its Enterprise division — and possesses 25 years of experience managing sales and engineering projects across multiple industries.

**Redemption Plus** welcomed two additions to its Customer Success Team.

**Kristyn Bruce** has returned to Redemption Plus as a customer support specialist, handling customer requests and overseeing merchandising and design projects.

"We are looking for 'Swiss Army Knife' employees. We all juggle multiple tasks at Redemption

Plus, and Kristyn exemplifies exactly what our team is built on: collaboration, creativity, and process. I'm so excited that she came back to our team and excited to see her interacting with customers again," said **Mike Tipton**, chief operations growth officer.

Another addition to the Redemption Plus Customer Success Team is **Greg Robison** as senior account executive for Texas. Robison joins the team with over 10 years of experience in the toy and giftware industry. He will be visiting Texas customers and prospects on behalf of the company.

"In order to really impact our customer locations with quality redemption management, we felt that a boots-on-the-ground approach in Texas would be best. Greg is passionate about serving customers and has the type of curiosity you look for in a customer success rep.," said **Michael Nowak**, president of Redemption Plus.

The **Kansas State Fair** board named **Bryan Schulz** as the fair's next general manager.

Prior to this, Schulz served as the executive vice president and general manager of the **Red River Valley Fair Association** in West Fargo, North Dakota. He served in this capacity from January 2008 to December 2019. He is a 1991 graduate of **North Dakota State University** with a bachelor's degree in Mass Communications, Speech and Animal Science.

In addition to his work with the Red River Valley Fair Association, Bryan was also active within the **International Association of Fairs and Expos (IAFE)** where he graduated from the Institute of Fair Management in 2012 and received his Certified Fair Executive (CFE) designation in 2013. He was a member of the **North Dakota Association of Fairs** Board of Directors from 2011 to 2019 and served as President in 2016.

**Sally Reynolds** is now chief operating officer at attractions company **Spider Entertainment**.

The U.K.-based company develops, designs, delivers and operates home entertainment ventures. It declared Reynolds as the company's first major recruit since it began operations. Her role will cover both the attractions industry and the strategy services division.

Reynolds has previously been CEO at **Silverstone Heritage**, the charity which runs the **Silverstone Interactive Museum** for the motor racing sector, since 2017. Reynolds has also been a non-executive director at **Willows Activity Farm**, the largest farm attraction in the U.K. She will retain both of these roles in addition to her responsibilities at Spider.

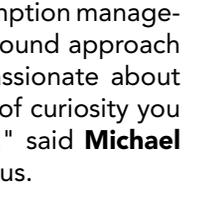
**ITEC Entertainment Corporation** announced **Bryce Hershner** is joining the company as vice president of engineering, North America. In his role, Bryce will oversee the control system, audio/video, and special effects lines of business across leisure, hospitality, retail and entertainment markets, while also driving the expansion into new verticals.



Bruce



Robison



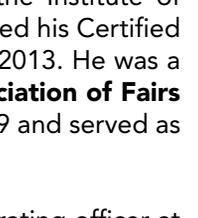
Schulz



Godfrey



Zaeefjou



Reynolds



Hershner

# SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► PPG, Six Flags enter into agreement — page 46 / Water parks increase recruiting efforts — page 48

## Castle Park, Western Train Company restore historic carousel

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — Castle Park opened its gates in 1976. Today, the 27-ride amusement park has rides for all ages, but the four championship miniature golf courses have claimed their own share of fame among aficionados. An arcade, water playground and more provide additional offerings for a day of fun.

In addition, Castle Park has a lot of history behind it. **Bud Hurlbut**, in terms of California theme parks, became somewhat of an amusement industry legend. He first found success building miniature trains. Making his mark at **Knott's Berry Farm**, Hurlbut was the visionary behind that park's notable Calico Mine Ride and the iconic Timber Mountain Log Ride. Always a dreamer, Hurlbut wanted a park of his own, which led to the creation of Castle Park.

Like most every facility, Castle Park has grown and changed, but the charm and



family-friendly ambiance still remain. One piece of history is receiving some love. Currently, the park's carousel, simply known as Merry-Go-Round, is undergoing refurbishment.

"Our Merry-Go-Round is an iconic part of Castle Park's history and preserving it has been and always will be a priority," said General Manager **Ken Withers**.

"It was really during the pandemic when this all started. We shut down in California, obviously. We really looked for areas of opportunity to show we are continuing to make improve-



Castle Park's Merry-Go-Round has been a part of the park's lineup since the 1980s. Guests can see all the parts involved in restoring the carousel (inset). COURTESY CASTLE PARK

ments in the park," said **Ryan LoRusso**, marketing, Castle Park. "That was an area we thought would be a great addition. There is a lot of history to the park, and that carousel is an iconic piece of our park's history."

**Western Train Company** was called upon to do the restoration. The company purchased Hurlbut's train business in 2011 and continues to service his trains, as well as offer miniature replicas.

"They had historically worked on our trains," said LoRusso. "This is the first time we have had them additionally work on the carousel."

"This was the first carousel [Hurlbut] saw at Knott's Lagoon. It was moved to Castle Park by Bud and his team in the '80s," said **Anthony Marquez**, marketing, Western Train Company.

"Even part of the building in Castle Park is part of the same building that was at Knott's Lagoon."

The restoration process began this spring.

"There were important parts inside the carousel — mainly the bearings — it looked like it was about 10 years of wear. The carousel was 'rocking' back and forth," said Marquez. "The biggest part of the project is taking the carousel apart and putting it back together. It takes a lot of manpower. Especially with a historic carousel like this, we're trying to keep everything intact. We're trying to be as careful as we can with it."

Merry-Go-Round is reported to have originated in the early 1900s, however, Hurlbut made modifications. In 1927, new parts were added to bring it into

the Coney Island style. Facial boards and brighter lighting gave it an enhanced sense of wonder. Over time, **Philadelphia Toboggan Co.** horses were added.

"It's not a true Dentzel carousel; it has a lot of hands in it from a lot of different manufacturers," said Marquez. "But Bud Hurlbut somewhere between the 1980s and '90s retrofitted it into what it is today."

Three rows of animals feature a menagerie of rabbits, bears, ostriches, pigs, deer, cats, a lion, a tiger and a goat. Of the 30 horses, 18 are jumpers. There are also two chariots.

Prior to operating at Knott's Berry Farm, the carousel had an earlier home at **Hersheypark**.

"Some of the components



A wooden framework structure stabilizes the carousel during renovation procedures. COURTESY CASTLE PARK

► See **CAROUSEL**, page 45

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## ► CAROUSEL

Continued from page 44

have been moved for safety. We don't want to [damage] any animals; some of them we cannot remake. We have moved them to a safe spot outside the park," said Marquez. "But everything is being done inside the park. The carousel is still up in the building. [Work] has been really good."

With loving care comes the unfortunate necessity of a beloved attraction being closed temporarily.

"When we reopened in April, we had signage in front of the Merry-Go-Round saying it was undergoing refurbishment, but we still provided a photo op. That was a way for us to get the guests engaged and see where we were and where we end up," said LoRusso.

Owing to wanting to do it right, there is not a definitive date yet to the reopening of Merry-Go-Round. Both Castle Park and Western Train Co. are hopeful that the completion will be sooner rather than later. Early fall is a comfortable assumption,



**Bud Hurlbut is seen with the carousel that he operated at both Knott's Berry Farm and Castle Park (above). Visitors will note the removal of several horses for the restoration to take place (below). COURTESY CASTLE PARK**

but sometime this summer is a target both entities feel is achievable.

Castle Park is owned by **Palace Entertainment**.

"Castle Park was built by Bud Hurlbut, so it was his park from the ground up," noted Marquez. "Every ride ... the log flume, the airplane ride ... was built by Bud."

As more rides have come along, the dedication to history is still keeping the past fresh and relevant to be enjoyed.



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# PPG, Six Flags Entertainment enter into a five-year preferred supplier agreement

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

PITTSBURGH, Pa. — PPG, a Fortune 500 global manufacturer of paints and specialty materials, announced at the end of June a five-year preferred paint supplier agreement with Six Flags Entertainment Corporation.

According to PPG officials, the paint products offered through this agreement will help create brand consistency and protect Six Flags' most famous skyline attractions, coasters, offices and more. These include Georgia Scorcher and Monster Mansion at Six Flags Over Georgia, Austell, Georgia; Poltergeist at Six Flags Fiesta Texas, San Antonio, Texas; and the iconic Oil Derrick at Six Flags Over Texas, Arlington.

In announcing this new agreement, PPG said they were excited that Six Flags has entrusted PPG to protect and beautify countless surfaces.

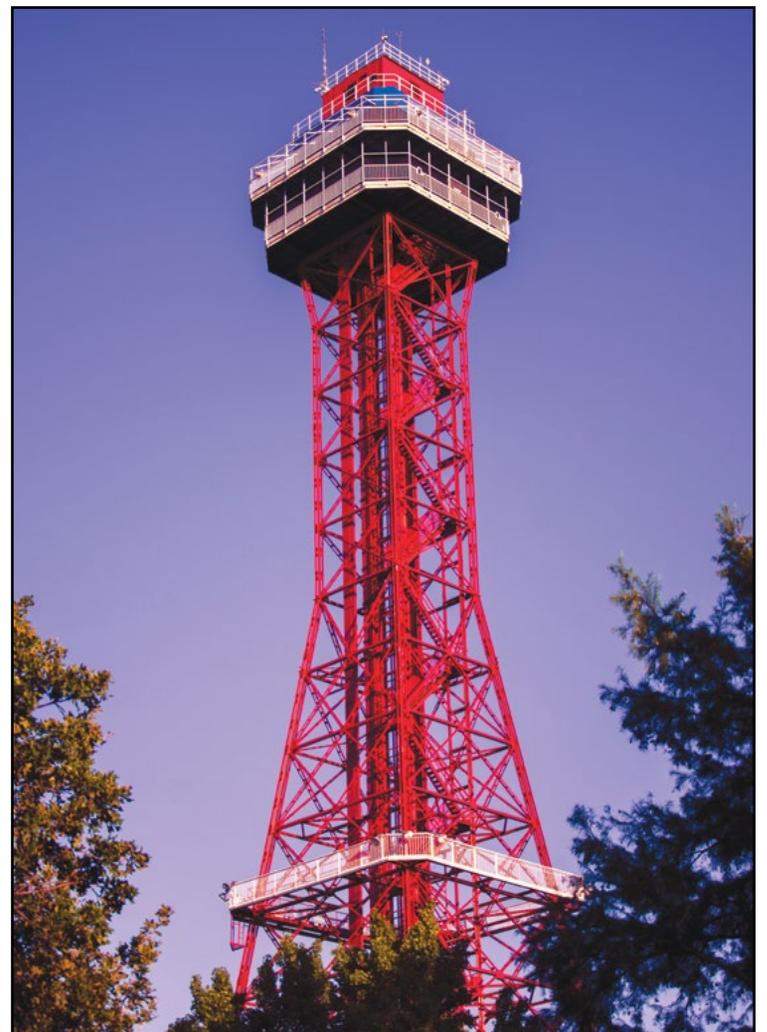
"This agreement demonstrates that PPG can provide to Six Flags as a trusted paint and coatings manufacturer," said Buddy Allen, PPG corporate accounts manager, architectural coatings. "We are elated to have earned Six Flags' business and provide coatings that will enhance the visitor experience."

Allen said the company is excited to share its 135-year history of reliable coatings and products expertise with the visions Six Flags officials have undertaken.

Stephanie Borges, Six Flags vice president of strategic marketing and partnerships, said during the announcement, "We are excited to welcome PPG as Six Flags' preferred paint partner and we look forward to enhancing our parks with their superior PPG paint."

Allen said PPG will use a variety of its products depending on the structures to be painted.

"For example, a ride that involves water will require specialty coatings that can help repel moisture, while still providing vibrant color and long-term durability," he said. "A popular attraction like Six Flags Over Texas' Oil Derrick, a 300-foot-tall steel structure that looks like a real oil well, will require coatings that can



Through a new five-year preferred paint agreement with Six Flags Entertainment Corp., PPG will supply paint products and coatings to some of Six Flags' most famous attractions such as the steel Oil Derrick at Six Flags Over Texas. COURTESY PPG



stand up to the park's millions of annual visitors, constant sun exposure to minimize color fading and paint chipping."

One of the paint products to be used as part of the agreement is PPG PERMANIZER paint. The product's 100% acrylic formula provides a premium, long-lasting finish with a durable film, and super adhesion and protection from ultraviolet light (UV), dirt and moisture.

Other products expected to be used include: PPG AMERLOCK2 coatings with low volatile organic compounds (VOC); PPG PSX 700 products; PPG PSX 800 coatings; PPG FASTDRY 35

products; PPG TRUEFINISH products and various PPG DELFLEET products.

"Colorants added to these base paints may increase the VOC level significantly depending on color choice," Allen said.

Allen said PPG's current number of staff is ready and prepared to work with Six Flags.

"Six Flags strives to provide the best overall experience for its visitors, and that means using products that are vibrant, durable and capable of withstanding diverse weather conditions and general wear and tear from the parks' millions of annual visitors," Allen said.

• pppaints.com



## NEWS & NOTES

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### Safety as a core value

As the amusement industry continues to recover from a year like no other, and even though COVID-19 continues to hamper the operations of many amusement industry businesses across the globe, safety remains not only our number one priority, but a core value of our industry. What, you may ask, is the difference?

Priorities shift. Depending on the current environment, challenges and even trends businesses are facing, they can — and will — change their priorities to fit the most pressing issues of the moment. Priorities are meant to address the short-term needs of the organization. Core values, on the other hand, do not change. They stay constant no matter the current climate of the business. Core values can be seen as the very fabric of the organization — they are what form the foundation on which the company's work is performed.

For this reason, it is extremely important that safety should be seen as a core value, as well as a top prior-

ity, for your organization and for our industry, as a whole.

In our ever-changing world, where technological innovations are continuously being made that push the boundaries beyond what has been done in the past to make amusement attractions more and more exciting, the amusement industry has taken on the responsibility of holding itself accountable for the safety of its guests and employees; for keeping safety as a core value.

For decades we have banded together as an industry and put aside differences with our business competitors to make it possible for our best and brightest minds, no matter by whom they are employed, to work together to develop standards and to create best practices that demand that safety remain a core value of our industry.

The future is bright for the amusement industry. As we make our way through this dark period and are finally seeing the excited, shining and

unmasked faces of the guests who have so missed the rides and attractions that have brought their families together for decades to make lasting memories, we must keep our eyes on what's most important: the safety of our guests and employees. Rides that sat dormant for a year or more must be inspected and possibly even re-commissioned. Annual maintenance that was deferred must be performed to the manufacturer's specifications. SOPs must be updated to include new safety and sanitation procedures mandated by health organizations. Operators must be re-trained to ensure new protocols are learned and existing ones are reviewed. Midways, queues, signage, parking lots, walkways, fences, ride perimeters and all other areas which are accessed regularly by guests and employees must be properly inspected and maintained to ensure their safety.

**AIMS International** stands ready to assist and to provide education and certification opportunities to everyone working in this great industry who

holds safety as a core value in their business. We are continually reviewing, revising and adding to our curriculum to keep up with and support the core values of our stake holders.

To that end, we are proud to announce that the **AIMS International Safety Seminar** will be hosted in-person in Galveston, Texas, on January 10-14, 2021. During the seminar we will be offering a new certification program specifically designed for safety and security professionals working in the amusement industry.

The new Certified Amusement Safety & Security Associate (CASSA) and the Certified Amusement Safety & Security Professional (CASSP) certifications will be supported by the new **Academy of Amusement Risk Management, Safety & Security (AARMSS)** which will be hosted at the next AIMS International Safety Seminar. More information will be available on the AIMS website soon, so please stay tuned. To learn more about what AIMS has to offer, please visit [aimsintl.org](http://aimsintl.org).

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



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# Water park officials ramp up recruiting, training efforts for season

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

UNITED STATES — Many water park officials across the country apparently have learned the art of the pivot this year. Opening their facilities while COVID-19 pandemic protocols were still in place and, then, later, as they were being eased, required they stay flexible and fluid.

And, then, along with businesses across the board and across the U.S. began opening all at the same time, the crunch of the labor shortage hit. That shortage, of course, included certified lifeguards.

After speaking with several water park officials across the country, however, it seems many were able to task their teams to get hiring up and training going early. As the community pools continued struggling to find more lifeguards, many water park officials who had initially been worried found they could get or at least almost get fully staffed.

The *Courier Journal* news agency in St. Louis, Missouri, reported earlier in the summer about the closure of community pools but found the area's water parks were able to get fully staffed. One of the main reasons for this difference was that water parks in the area were able to offer in-house lifeguard certifications.

A spokesman for the Aquatics for Collinsville Parks and Recreation Department reported to the local news agency they were able to give the classes. The biggest challenge there was finding space for training.

A spokesperson for **Raging Rivers**, Grafton, Missouri, was quoted as saying, "We were worried, but we have staff and we're operating great."

Other water parks also found themselves with enough staff, including lifeguards, to keep afloat.

"In early spring, when we were seeing signs of a constricting workforce due to the pandemic and extended unemployment benefits, our management team was working closely with all the local schools to promote our job openings," said **Andrew Chafatelli**, COO, **Splashdown Beach Waterpark**, Fishkill, New York.

In addition to staying out



The management team at Splashdown Beach Waterpark (above left) began early working closely with local schools to promote job openings there which definitely helped the park to get fully staffed for the 2021 season. COURTESY SPLASHDOWN BEACH WATERPARK

in front of a possible impending challenge, Chafatelli said they also increased advertising and boosted starting wages to help attract applicants.

As a result, Chafatelli reported mid-July they had secured 132 lifeguards. In a typical season, they may employ up to 135.

"In our experiences and discussions with other parks, one of the hardest positions we are having difficulty securing are maintenance technicians," he said. "The lack of technical training and maintenance experience is a problem. I am not sure if this is correlated to the pandemic or is a result of less people going into trade schools and more people going for a four-year degree. Hopefully, the worst of the staffing shortage is behind us with continued vaccinations and unemployment benefits scheduled to end in September."

**Ryan Forson**, managing director, **Hawaiian Falls Waterparks**, said his staff is already working on retention events to host during the off season in hopes of bringing much of the current staff back in 2022.

Like Chafatelli, the Hawaiian Falls team worked hard and early.

"We have not been affected thus far by the lifeguard shortage," Forson said. "Our team worked hard to get return staff plugged in. We also implemented slide attendant

positions last year, which has helped us reduce the number of lifeguards needed."

Forson also said they raised lifeguard pay a couple of years ago to help combat other employers in the area. They also created events solely for their employees to keep them employed.

"We have seen some challenge due to more seasonal businesses coming back to life, but no major challenges," he said. "We have noticed the younger generation is less inclined to work a lot of hours per week so working to get extra days off for people has been

a continual task."

When **Island H2O Live**, Kissimmee, Florida, opened for 2021, officials there found they were unexpectedly busy, which increased demand so that they were open seven days a week rather than the three to four they had anticipated. With school still in session, it was a challenge on weekdays to have all the staff positions filled.

"A few solutions we developed were opening sections of the park later in the day, rotating staff, and closing less used areas," said **Jim Kunau**, general manager. "Once the local

school systems were out, our staffing increased alleviating our issues."

Kunau said they typically train 200-plus lifeguards for the park for the season.

"It took us two additional weeks to get to this volume versus the previous two years," Kunau said.

As they begin to plan for the 2022 season, Kunau said they are considering several factors such as a minimum wage increase and more development in the areas of recruiting and retention.

"We continue to focus on creating a culture at the park where employees want to be," he said. "We offer employees free tickets and season passes based upon working a certain number of hours. We host holiday cookouts and create events like Sundae Sunday, where employees can create their own ice cream creations."

**Lee Hovis**, operations manager, **Tolomato Community Development District**, Ponte Vedra, Florida, has had a little bit of a different experience this season.

"We have been affected by staff shortages for lifeguards, as well as other positions such as food service and event staff," Hovis said. "We have reduced food and beverage hours, but we have not had to limit any operating hours for the pools and water parks. To help compensate for shortages we provided more lifeguard

► See STAFF, page 49



Officials at Island H2O Live were able to ramp up the number of staff at the facility for 2021. There were challenges at the beginning of the season because it was busier than anticipated. COURTESY H2O LIVE

## LJM team inspects Pennsylvania amusement rides at several facilities



LJM and Associates, Inc. provided its inspection services to Hersheypark. Pictured are LJM team members (l to r): Amanda Mercado, Lewis Merz, Rob Gavel and Troy Blackwell. COURTESY LJM & ASSOCIATES INC.



Whitney Westphal & Troy Blackwell of LJM look over the interior of a Kennywood attraction. COURTESY LJM & ASSOCIATES INC.



LJM's John Ott inspects a water slide at Ligonier, Pennsylvania's Soak Zone. COURTESY LJM & ASSOCIATES INC.

Amanda Mercado of LJM ascends for a better look at an Idlewild attraction in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. COURTESY LJM & ASSOCIATES INC.



### STAFF Continued from page 48

training classes to help supply more lifeguards."

Beyond the shortage, Hovis also has found the lack of availability of the hired staff. Like Forson, he said it looks like one of the trends for 2021 is that staff members do not want to work as many hours as previous years, thus creating more schedule holes.

In previous years, Hovis said they typically employ between 80 to 100 lifeguards. But after an expansion to the water parks this year, they had anticipated needing 120 to 130 lifeguards.

"We currently have 100," Hovis said.

Hovis sees several things happening contributing to the lifeguard shortage.

"I think the pandemic has impacted the shortage, but I believe it goes further," he said. "There seems to be less lifeguard classes being offered regionally, less applicants desiring to become lifeguards and a tremendous amount of com-



Hawaiian Falls Waterparks Managing Director Ryan Forson said its parks were not affected this year by the labor shortage. They were fortunately able to end up with a high retention of former employees. COURTESY HAWAIIAN FALLS

petition for jobs. Everywhere I go, businesses are hiring."

Hovis said his staff will be holding monthly lifeguard classes in the fall.

"We also are developing an employee incentive for referring staff members," he said.

Some of the nation's water parks did report a later opening this year than had been anticipated. For example Carowinds' Carolina Harbor, Charlotte, North Carolina, had set an initial opening date as May 29 along with the rest of the facili-

ty. Because of a lack of workers, the water park opened June 12 instead. The type of labor needed was not specified.

Kings Dominion, Doswell, Virginia, opened as planned on May 22, but officials there delayed the opening of the Soak City Water Park until June 19. Officials there had stepped up their recruiting and were offering a starting wage of \$15 an hour for lifeguards.

And there were certainly others.

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## BREAKING NEWS

## Baynum Painting joins Life Floor's Registered Aquatic Partnership program

NEWPORT, Ky. — **Baynum Painting** announced it is joining **Life Floor's** Registered Aquatic Partnership program. Life Floor provides a unique safety surfacing solution and is the first and only product certified to NSF/ANSI/CAN 50 for use in aquatics recreation. In addition to being recognized as Certified Installers, Baynum will continue to work with Life Floor in delivering service and value to its customers across the aquatics community.

"Expanding Baynum's offerings to include the highest quality safety flooring in the market aligns perfectly with our services," said Walt Bowser, vice president of Baynum Painting. "Our team of specialists are already doing ground-up water park slide and aquatic feature installations, total renovations of existing fiberglass slides, steel corrosion remediation and prevention, and now we're installing Life Floor on and around these same structures to help them look fantastic while improving site safety measures."



COURTESY  
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## Roller Coaster Museum unveils new additions to ACE, Thrill Seekers United

PLAINVIEW, Texas — Dozens of ride and theme park enthusiasts descended on the **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives** (NRCMA) for the Fourth of July holiday to explore the museum collection and, for the first time, see the 10,000-square-foot Mark Moore wing.

In addition, the group was also honored to see the unveiling of two new, historically significant ride vehicles that influenced the theme park experience. The first was a Loch Ness Monster **Arrow** ride vehicle donated by **Busch Gardens Williamsburg**. The Loch Ness Monster was the first roller coaster with interlocking loops and was the impetus of the first ever **American Coaster Enthusiast's** (ACE) Coaster Con 43 years ago.

The second was the first coaster car designed by **Dana Morgan** and **Steve Okamoto** for the West Coaster at **Pacific Park** on the pier in Santa Monica, California. The car was donated by Pacific Park.

The group also saw museum exhibits fabricated with the help of several manufacturing partners. The most recent addition was a track and train display of the 1938 Rollo Coaster from **Idlewild and Soak Zone** designed by **Skyline Attractions** and constructed by **Great Coasters International** (GCII). The impressive 12-foot-tall and 30-foot-long display joins a track and train display of the **Cobb and Rosser**-designed Texas Cyclone as well as a display of the 1977 **Schwartzkopf** Super Dooper Looper from **Hersheypark**. Photos of the installations

and a time lapse of the construction are available at [rollercoastermuseum.com](http://rollercoastermuseum.com).

The museum continues to acquire priceless pieces of history. It recently took possession of a car from the former **Rocky Springs** Jack Rabbit coaster in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where it was in operation from 1918-1927. In addition to the Jack Rabbit car, the museum recently received a collection of antique wooden coaster brake handles and a model of the Phoenix wooden coaster, which recently underwent a three-year restoration by model builder **Dave Rouse** of Arlington, Texas. The model was originally built by ACE member **John Hunt** and was donated to the NRCMA by Dayton, Ohio, resident **Beth Remhoff**.

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



An Arrow vehicle from Loch Ness Monster formerly of Busch Gardens Williamsburg and a Morgan lead car from Pacific Park were unveiled recently as the latest additions to the National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives. COURTESY NRCMA

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