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Digital Edition

Operating playbook has changed for Orlando's family entertainment centers

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO, Fla. — For the vast majority, it is inevitable that when Orlando, the “theme park capital of the world” or the “Central Florida tourist corridor” comes up in conversation, thoughts immediately turn to Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando Resort, SeaWorld Orlando, and even Busch Gardens Tampa Bay down the road. For those in “the industry,” IAAPA Expo and “post-season vacation” may also be on that list of items that come to mind. After all, they are a major part of the very definition of those titles and what moved “Orlando” into the international vernacular. However, if pressed for a full list of places visited after returning from a trip to Central Florida, such as Andretti Indoor Karting & Games, Dezerland Park Orlando and Icon Park are quite likely to be named.

These are just three family entertainment centers (FECs) of many, which are a much larger part of the “Orlando experience” than that for which they are given credit. Even if they are not the first names that come to mind when talking about the most visited tourist destination in the U.S., FECs deliver exceptional fun, especially in Orlando. This is because less-than-full-day attractions such as these are where many vacationers spend their time and money on their partial days — their day of arrival and their day of departure. And because of FECs late-night



Icon Park continued to move forward with expansion plans including the Icon Park Drop Tower, the world's tallest drop tower. AT/DAVID FAKE

hours of operation, they are also the go-to destination for those visitors who find themselves with additional energy (and cash) to burn off after the major theme parks close, but before retiring for the evening.

This bankable formula held true for 40-some years in central Florida. The recessions that occurred in the 1970s and the '80s did not

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A launch track and 55-degree reverse spike begin one of the layout configurations. COURTESY ZAMPERLA

Zamperla introduces its Family Launched Coaster

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

VICENZA, Italy — Poised to showcase its new product at the IAAPA Expo, Zamperla is particularly excited about its innovations within its coaster division.

Among its newest offerings is the Family Launched Coaster. Aligning with the mindset of many parks, Zamperla is aware that while big iconic thrill rides are still being sought, many parks are in the market for rides in that comfortable demographic between junior rides and white-knuckle thrillers.

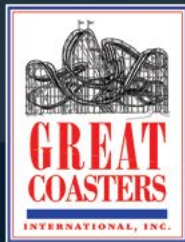
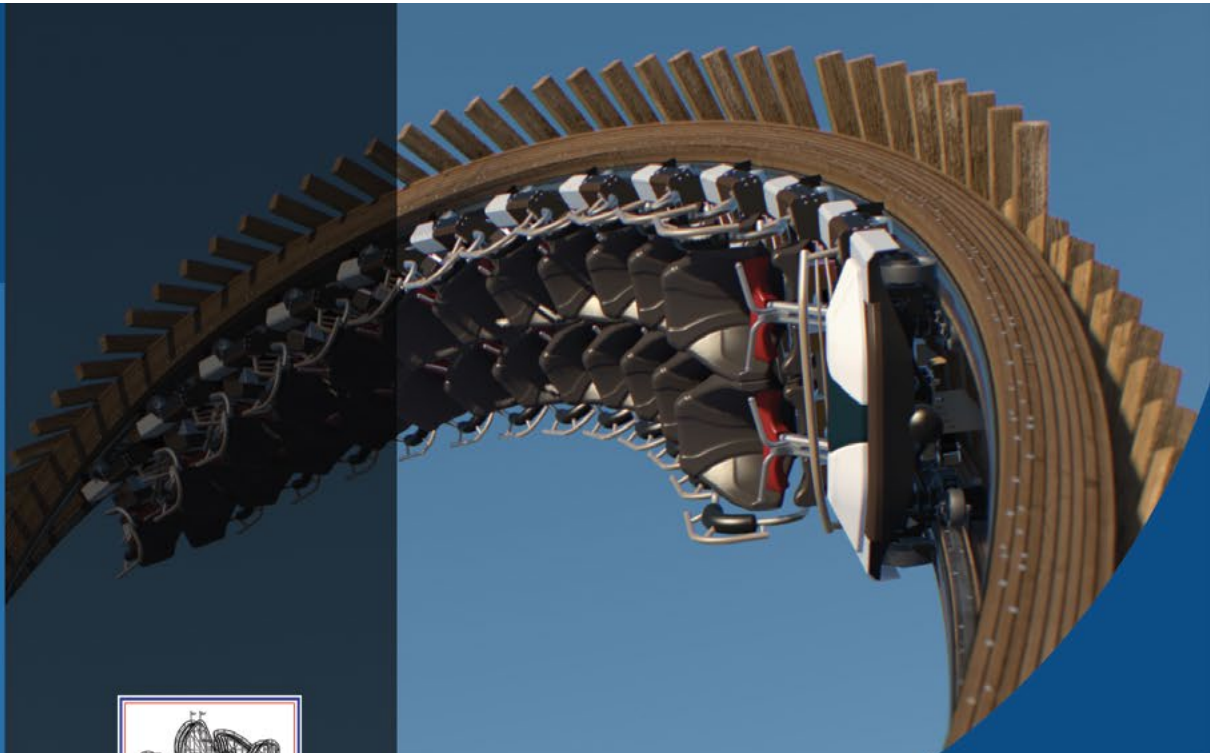
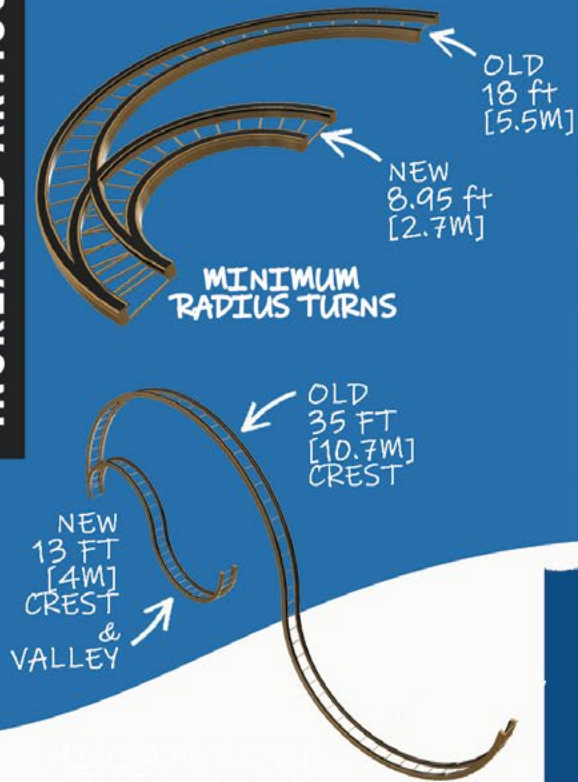
These past months, Zamperla has brought new designs for all three categories.

“Big picture, I think it shows where we want to go as a company,” said Adam Sandy, roller coaster sales and marketing director, Zamperla. “Earlier we introduced the Double Heart, which was a 48-inch (ride requirement) thrill seeker coaster. In August we showcased the Family Coaster Lift & Launch, which has a 36-inch requirement. This was a new take on our classic family gravity coaster. The upgraded system includes individual lap bars, magnetic brakes, tire-drive lift hills and a machine-milled chassis that has no welds, which significantly reduces nondestructive testing time and costs. The Family Launch Coaster is for families. It is 42 inches to ride unaccompanied. The goal is a combination of things. We haven't seen a lot of coasters geared toward families with kids 10 and under but are still marketable because they are unique. We're not seeing that. That's why we think the riding position will be great and the marketable features such as the launch — all those features come together into something they can put on social media and billboards. It will tell its own story and sell itself, but also the ride component is going to be very good. It's going to be different from what a lot of park goers

► See ZAMPERLA, page 7

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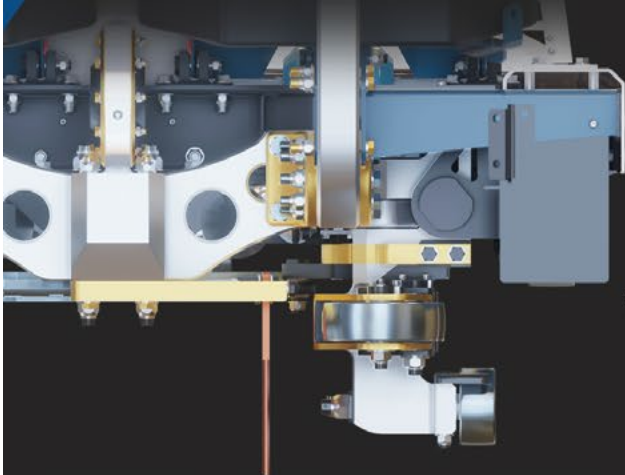
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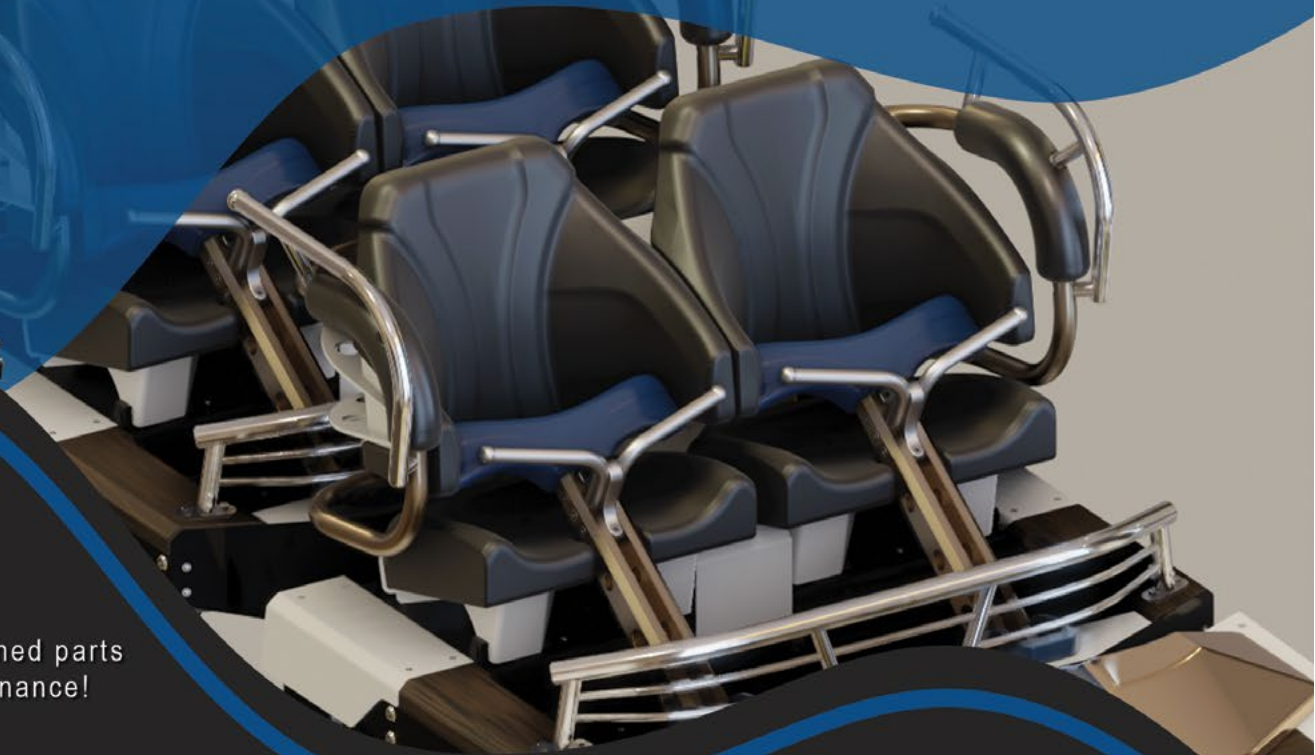
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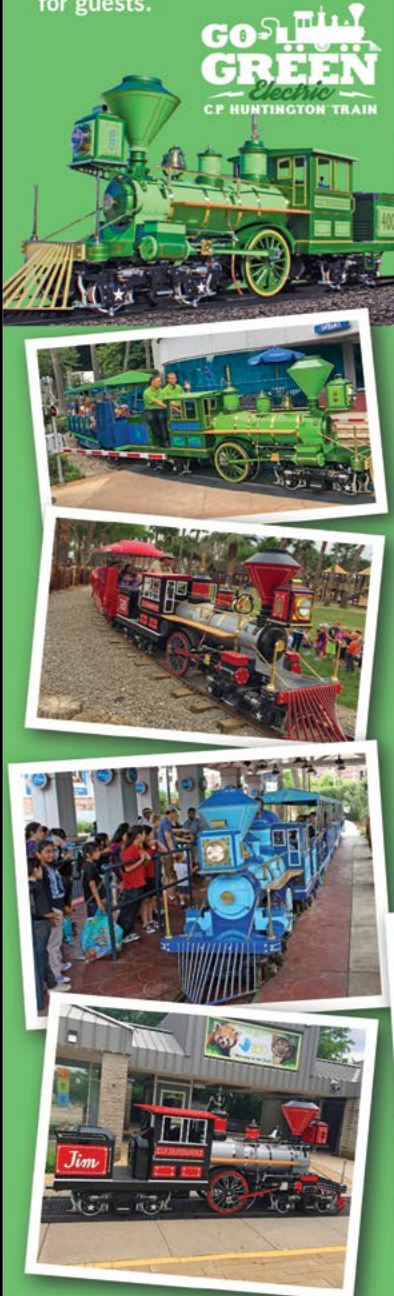
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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

The saga concludes...



Robinson

When the COVID-19 pandemic led to an industry — and worldwide — shutdown in 2020, two major plans changed for me right off the bat. A planned Walt Disney World vacation — with hopes to experience *Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance* — was only weeks away, and I feared that the shutdown might extend for more than a month or so and make that impossible.

The other was the reoccurring question from my industry associates: Is the IAAPA Expo in Orlando going to even happen this year?

We all know what happened. The shutdown stretched into months, so the Disney trip was cancelled. And, of course, IAAPA Expo 2020 was a no-go. For the first time in decades, I wouldn't be attending the annual industry convention.

While we're on the precipice of returning to the IAAPA Expo in 2021 — and all that the return means to our industry — I cannot hide my glee at one other poignant thing about to occur: I'll finally get to return to Walt Disney World.

One of the benefits of IAAPA Expo occurring in Orlando is getting to enjoy at least some time at the grand theme parks and attractions the area has to offer. Every year, there's a chance to at least ride a coaster or enjoy a unique new ride, if not experience an entire park. Part of the joy of working for this industry is being immersed in a world and industry that I love. It's not just about doing my job, it's about enjoying this industry even more the deeper that I become a part of it.

As an admitted *Star Wars* geek, I had been looking forward to the unveiling of *Galaxy's Edge* from the moment it was announced. Having visited early on, I was patiently waiting for the opening of *Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance*. While avoiding on-ride videos and detailed reviews was easy for the weeks between opening and my planned vacation, the added months because of the COVID-19 shutdown made it a difficult struggle.

Now, with IAAPA Expo Orlando within reach and some planned time to visit Disney's Hollywood Studios, one more hurdle from COVID is set to be cleared.

Yes, I'll be in Orlando at the Expo to work, network and learn. But, yes, I am giddy as a schoolboy knowing that — on the same trip — I will at long last be coming face-to-face with *Kylo Ren's* lightsaber, a platoon of Stormtroopers and will ... for one brief mission ... finally be joining the Resistance against the First Order.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Eric Fluet, *Get It Done Marketing*

Take a chance, say "yes"

It has been two long years since we have gathered in Orlando, but IAAPA Expo 2021 is finally here. I am looking forward to seeing industry friends and colleagues in-person once again.

Google co-founder Larry Page once said, "Have a healthy disregard for the impossible."

It is a quote that resonates with me because — as an industry with innovation at its core — we'd be stuck if we didn't think big or ask the question of "why not?"

Too often we hear "this is the way we've always done it" or "that's impossible." Is it really impossible or have we just not taken a step back and fully thought through the idea? Whether you are considering a new product, a crazy stunt, a new look, benefits of freelancers or a capital investment solution to an operational challenge, I encourage everyone to set their default answer to "yes." Yes, we can do that. Yes, we can figure it out.



Fluet

Don't let operational or policy challenges stop you from thinking big. Even the craziest ideas can be accomplished if you break them down into bitesize steps. IAAPA Expo is a fertile ground for innovation and new ideas. Networking, the sharing of best practices and tech solutions to everyday challenges can

be found around every corner. Why not take a chance on something new? You may find you cannot live without it.

As we pack our bags for Orlando and consider which educational sessions to attend and how long to spend on the show floor, remember to set your default to "yes."

"Yes, we can do that at our attraction."

"I had not thought about that but yes, this product could take us a step closer to solving our challenge."

Keep an open mind and you may find the answer you've been looking for at IAAPA Expo 2021.

And, yes, I'll see you in Orlando!

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

Roland Garcia, SeaWorld San Antonio



Roland Garcia is a man with personality. COURTESY SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO

A longtime **SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment** associate, **Roland Garcia** brings a wealth of enthusiasm and leadership to his role as vice president of entertainment at the San Antonio theme park. Roland's experience in production, live events, stage, theatre and casting all contribute to his accomplishments in the industry. He is a music lover, a fan of all things San Antonio and is known for his phrase, "set up for success."

Title: Vice President of Entertainment.

Number of years in the industry: 24 years.

Best thing about the industry:
The people ... always the people!

Favorite amusement ride:
Manta at SeaWorld Orlando.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ... Something in project management ... spreadsheets required!

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Audience attention span in the fast-paced, digital world.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ...
The reactions on the faces of the guests!

My favorite catchphrase is ...
The difference between a good product and a great product is all in the details.

Three things people visiting San Antonio must see are ... SeaWorld San Antonio, of course; The Majestic Theater and a Spurs game.

The ultimate dance song is ... Being a music lover, this is impossible to decipher!

The celebrity who annoys me the most is ... Any celebrity who is intentionally and consistently mean or rude; I do not do well with people like that.

I would spend an extra day off a week doing this ... Sifting through music at a Goodwill/Salvation Army Store ... I am a music lover!

November in San Antonio is ... Christmas time. Sorry, I work for a theme park, and we are always ahead of all the holidays!

All-time favorite sports team:
San Antonio Spurs!

People say I remind them of ...
People say I sound like Olaf from *Frozen* (Josh Gad) and look like the human version of Shrek from the movie *Shrek 2*.

My favorite things to wear are ...
Shorts, flip flops and a sports jersey when it's hot and a hoodie when it's cold!

The TV show I just can't get enough of is ...
The one that I laugh out loud the most at is "Life in Pieces," but I really enjoy watching "Lego Masters" with my family (the kids love it).

Best fall food: My family and I get together for a day to make homemade tamales. Like anything else, the food always tastes the best when paired with family and friends.

When I say vacation, you say ...
Snow skiing or a beach with crystal clear water.

Choose one: tickets to Broadway or the Super Bowl: Easy one ... Broadway. I would rather host a Super Bowl party with family and friends!

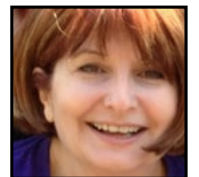
THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Santa Cruz Drive for Schools



SANTA CRUZ, Calif. — Sponsored by the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, Drive for Schools is the largest school fundraiser in Santa Cruz County. The program raised a record breaking \$744,645 for local schools in 2021 and has raised \$7,989,845 for Santa Cruz County schools since the program started in 2005. Drive for Schools runs for five weeks every fall. The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk covers the cost of the cash prizes and donates staff time to organize and run the fundraiser. Christian Garcia of Oakland was awarded the grand prize of \$25,000 for his ticket sales efforts. COURTESY SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK

Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

Randall Duell, showman

After years designing, constructing and managing amusement parks, my husband — **Bob Minick** — opened his design firm in 1983. His mentor, **Randall Duell**, was the first person to call and say, "Congratulations and I'll be sending some business your way."

Duell's office was in Los Angeles. **Rich Poling**, Bob and I were there frequently for meetings. Before an early morning meeting, **Rachel Duell**, Randall's wife, and I went downstairs to a movie filming location where she knew everyone. She introduced me to the chef who had specially prepared shrimp, grits and beignets. After eating, Rachel said, "You're late, we will take our beignets to go." We ate them on the way back. Of course, I had on a black dress. And, of course, I got powdered sugar all over me.

Rachel pushed me into the conference room and slammed the door. Her husband was bent over a large plan. Randall had not only designed **Disneyland** (as well as many other amusement parks) but was the Art Director for *Singing in the Rain* with Gene Kelley. I was a bit intimidated of him.

Randall gruffly said, "Nice of you to join us, Lottie." Then he looked up at me, my sugar powdered dress and sticky fingers. He winked at me and said, "I saved your chair here next to mine." He was a gentleman; a talented artist and our son is his namesake. We were privileged to know and love Mr. and Mrs. Randall Duell.

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.

►ORLANDO

Continued from page 1

have that much of an effect on the growing number of FECs and smaller attractions in the Orlando area. Even after 9/11, the area's attractions remained mostly resilient. Then came the 100-year pandemic that no one saw coming.

By mid-March 2021 the majority of the tourist corridor was closed indefinitely. Even those that hung on a bit longer were forced to close by April due to lack of tourist traffic. Then came the international travel bans, which was a big concern considering the large share of international tourism seen in Florida.

By the end of May and early June, attractions began to reopen. First the larger theme parks. Then, due to the larger parks' draw of local tourists desperate to get out of their homes, smaller attractions and FECs began to reopen, as well.

It appeared that there was hope after all for the ability to recover, especially since Florida was one of the southern states that required fewer restrictions on the operations of parks, attractions and FECs. Domestically, travel was back and many of those in more restrictive northern states were coming south to Florida. The tourism capital of the U.S. was back, alive and appearing to be headed in a positive direction.

In fact, the number of FECs on Orlando's International Drive actually grew during the pandemic. Dezerland Park Orlando, with its model car museum, indoor go-karts, bowling, arcades, rides and much more, had its official grand opening on December 14, 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S. The gigantic FEC is billed

as "Florida's largest indoor attraction" because of its 800,000 square feet of indoor "thrills and fun."

Just down International Drive from Dezerland, Icon Park continued to move forward with expansion plans that include the soon-to-open Icon Park Slingshot, the world's largest slingshot, and the Icon Park Drop Tower, the world's tallest drop tower. These two juggernauts are joining the Orlando Starflyer, the world's tallest swing ride, that has already been operating there since 2018. Not only does Icon park lay claim to this trifecta, it is also home of The Wheel at Icon Park, which at 400 feet is currently the ninth tallest observation wheel on the planet. On top of the thrilling rides, the park also houses a **Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum** and **Sea Life Aquarium**, and multiple restaurants and bars pack quite a wallop of entertainment and thrills on its, relatively, small 20-acre footprint. Throughout 2021 sizeable crowds could regularly be found enjoying the thrills, entertainment, food and fun at Icon Park.

However, just because there are new and expanding FECs in Orlando along with the fact the State of Florida took a less conservative approach to operational restrictions throughout the pandemic, it does not mean these operators have not also been met with their own new and unique challenges. It is quite the contrary, says **Sebastian Mochkovsky**, co-owner of Dezerland. Yes, there were forecasted slow times such as after the Thanksgiving/Christmas/New Year's rush in 2020, but also the anomaly of extended U.S. Federal Government assistance that



There was a bankable formula and business model that held true for 40-some years for FECs in Central Florida. The recessions that occurred in the 1970s and the '80s did not have that much of an effect on the growing number of FECs and smaller attractions in the Orlando area. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic that no one saw coming. AT/DAVID FAKE

saw local and domestic tourism in the U.S. begin to grow in February/March of 2021. That growth continued, then abruptly stopped at the end of the summer this year when children returned to school, and the extended Federal assistance came to an end.

Regardless, Mochkovsky remains positive. "We reached another high peak because of Halloween, and we believe November/December will go even higher again. But we don't have any parameters to compare, because [Dezerland] is so new that we don't even have a year of operation to compare apples to apples and to confirm that the money or that the boost in sales is a good comparison," he said. This combined with the fact that the business model and forecast created for Dezerland in 2018/2019 has been rendered useless due to the wrench that was thrown into the gears, otherwise known as COVID-19.

But that wasn't even the biggest challenge facing Mochkovsky and the other

FEC operators.

"Now, in addition our operation began with a model for an \$11/hour minimum wage that we set when the legal minimum wage was \$8.50/hour. So, our bar began high at \$11. Our bar is now at \$15. We had to increase to that level because we had no incentive for good manpower. Nobody wanted to work. So, the only way and an option was we had to increase the pay to move some of [people] back out on the street to work. For us, this definitely was the big challenge because nobody's business plan could have anticipated \$15/hour," said Mochkovsky.

This issue is a universal concern in the FEC world at the moment.

Over at **Andretti Indoor Karting & Games** just off International Drive, it is billed as a premier entertainment/event destination featuring high-speed electric Superkarts on multi-level tracks, State of the Art Arcade, Ropes Course with Zipline, Laser Tag,

Boutique Bowling, XD Dark Ride Motion Theater, Racing Simulators & multiplayer Virtual Reality experiences.' A representative for the company said, "Business is very good."

"Our business is better than ever thanks to two key decisions that we made early on. Complete transparency with our guests on our cleaning and sanitizing procedures and increasing our minimum pay rate for new and existing employees from \$10/ hour to \$15/ hour," said Andretti Indoor Karting & Games Managing Partner, **Eddie Hamann**. "We will continue to learn during this pandemic and will continue to ask our guests what they want and need for them to feel safe in our entertainment centers," he said.

This is just one more example of the positive business mindset required for a business to survive a pandemic.

The great news for the FEC industry is that Orlando is not the only market that is growing. Even as early as April of this year, **Market Data Forecast** published a prediction that the global FEC market size is expected to grow at an annual rate of 10.2% between 2021 and 2026 and reach 50 billion USD by the end of that period with the largest market being North America, but the fastest growing market being Asia Pacific. That is great news for everyone.

As the industry comes together for the 2021 IAAPA Expo Orlando, the U.S. has opened its borders once again to international tourists with proof of vaccination. This only adds more optimism to the equation for both FECs and the entire amusement and attractions industry.



Andretti Indoor Karting & Games (above left), Dezerland Park Orlando and Icon Park (above right) are three of Central Florida's most popular FECs. All three are located on or in close proximity to International Drive and the Orange County Convention Center. AT/DAVID FAKE

►ZAMPERLA**Continued from page 1**

have been on before.”

In its portfolio, Zamperla has two versions, one designed for a standard plot of land, the other illustrating the advantages of the ride in a customized terrain. The ready-to-go version features a 55-degree reverse spike, high speed turn, outward banking curve, dive turn, wave curve, high-banked helix and “fast snake curves.” This is a wide variety of ride maneuvers that offer an entertaining and varied ride experience.

“It could be a one-train ride, or it could switch out onto a live track and have two trains running,” said Sandy.

The standard models take passengers out of the station onto the launch track. From there, riders are launched in reverse up an inclined spike. After a moment of weightlessness, the train plunges forward again and receives an additional forward launch as it rushes through the system a second time. The target range of speed is around 50 mph.

“We want it to have some bite to it,” Sandy told *Amusement Today*.

The train itself lends itself to themes. Two examples in



Engineering work has already taken place for sites that don't have any special terrain. Trucks, motorcycles and sidecars are themes Zamperla is ready to create immediately (above right). COURTESY ZAMPERLA



illustrations are a motorbike with sidecar and a “jungle style” off-road truck theme.

“We’re coming to market with three main themes,” said Sandy. “In addition to the sidecar and the truck, we also like pairs of motorcycles. Those are our standard off-the-shelf seating arrangements, but if a client wants to integrate an IP or do some theming, we can accommodate all of those with some great custom vehicles.”

As Zamperla has continued to enhance its coaster lineup with engineered smoothness and

new thrills, preliminary work has been done on all concepts so that if the topography isn’t an issue, much of the work has been done. Some designs are already done. Customized layouts, however, are still not a problem.

“We can hit the ground running. If clients are looking for a 2023 or ‘24 project, those are well within reach,” Sandy said.

“Right now we’re seeing kids as soon as they turn 42 inches (tall), the majority of them are willing to go on things a generation or two ago they would not have ridden,” he added.

“We want to make sure we have something exciting for them. It seems as if there aren’t as many 42-inch rides as there used to be because times have changed. We’re giving something the majority of family members can ride and be excited about.”

The load/unload time, the width of vehicle and entrance in and from the vehicle are factored in to reach a goal of 1,000 people per hour. Even the station height relative to the train height is considered important in loading more efficiently. “Riders of all sizes can literally walk in and

walk out,” he noted.

In addition to the reverse spike at the launched beginning of the ride, Zamperla also has concepts where passengers experience a reverse of direction with the upward spike in the center of the ride.

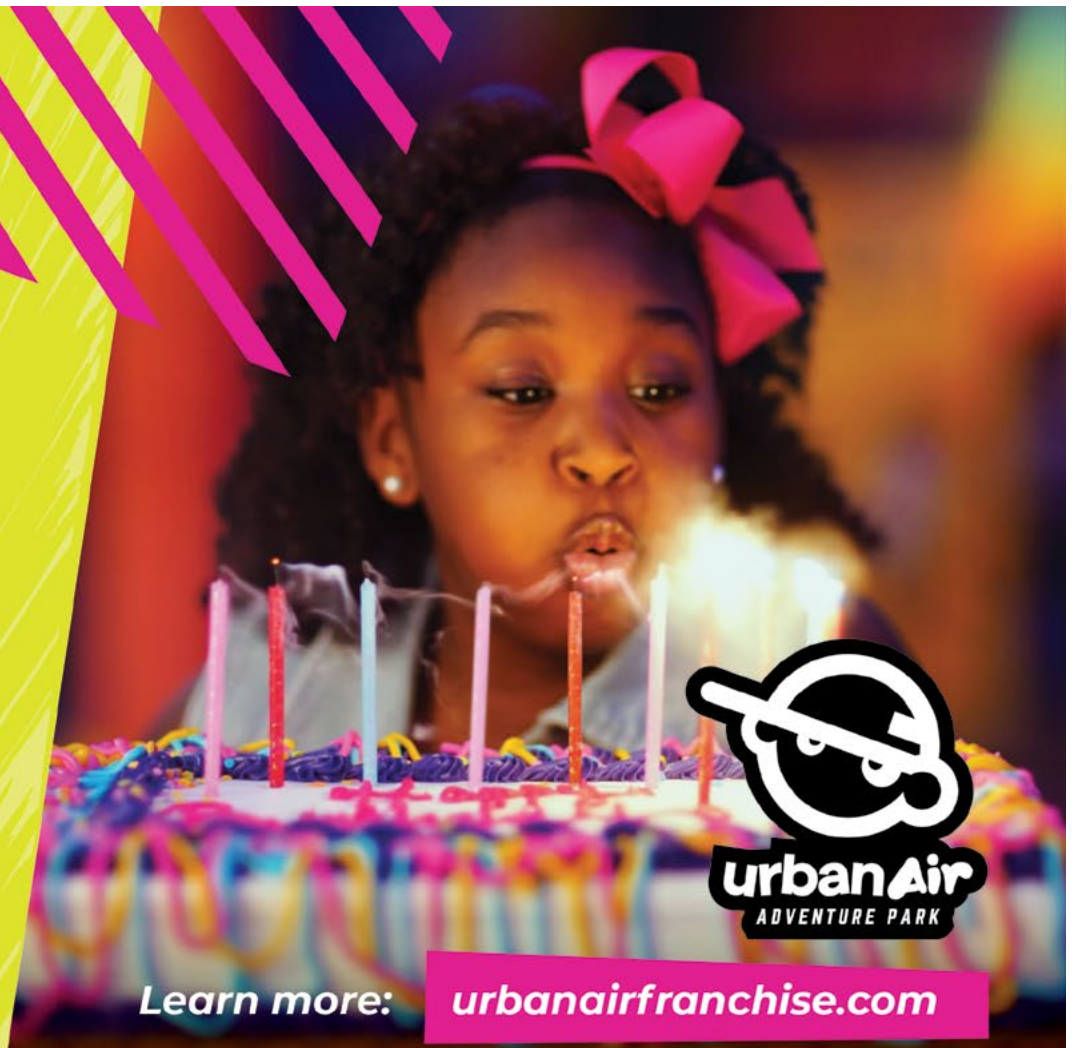
“We think that middle-of-the-road market has been underserved in the past decade. We didn’t want to come out with another chain lift take on that. We wanted to speak to a different generation of riders in terms of what they are looking for,” said Sandy.



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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Margaritaville Biloxi's new amusement park — page 14 / Nigloland adds new Mack Rides attraction — page 26

Legoland Florida celebrates 10 years, delivers new attractions

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. — Much attention has been paid to the 50th anniversary celebration of Florida's best-known destination, **Walt Disney World**; however, just about an hour down the road, **Legoland Florida Resort**, a park that celebrates an arguably equally well-known brand, **Lego**, is celebrating a milestone of its own.

On October 15, Legoland Florida Resort celebrated its 10th birthday by debuting a new attraction that immortalizes its brand's legacy, and also gave a sneak peek into the park's next chapter.

The new attraction, fittingly named **The Legoland Story**, provides guests with a behind-the-scenes look at the creation of the theme park and brand's ever-evolving experience. Aptly, the walk-through attraction also pays homage to the grounds on which Legoland was erected, **Cypress Gardens**.

Cypress Gardens is regarded as Florida's first tourist attraction, whose gates were open from 1936 to 2009, and as such, has a legacy of its own. In its later years the botanical gardens park, which became equally known for its waterski shows, added amusement rides and was rebranded as **Cypress Gardens Adventure Park**. An original ride vehicle from the park's family wooden roller coaster, **Triple Hurricane**, is on display in the **Legoland Story** attraction. The roller coaster, originally named for the three hurricanes that devastated the gardens and delayed the reopening of **Cypress Gardens** as **Cypress Gardens Adventure Park**, still operates at Legoland Florida under its current name, **Coastersaurus**.

In addition to Legoland Florida and **Cypress Gardens** history, the attraction details how the

entire Legoland chain of parks came into existence, as well as the unexpected origin story of "everyone's favorite brick," itself.

Legoland Florida's "brick-tastic" birthday celebration saw the reopening of **Miniland U.S.A.** with newly added shade structures that will help to protect both the displays and guests from the unformidable sweltering Florida sunshine. This is a welcomed and much-needed addition, even if the new structures do impede the once iconic panoramic view of the land as you enter it.

As part of the celebration, Legoland Florida Resort announced a new-for-2022 attraction, **Pirate River Quest**, as well as confirmed February 24, 2022, as the grand opening date of its other, already announced and well-under-construction addition, **Peppa Pig's Theme Park**.

"[Pirate River Quest] will see families set sail on this all-new river quest with a crew of **Lego pirates** to retrieve the lost treasure that was stolen by a troop of mischievous monkeys," said Legoland Florida president, **Rex Jackson**.

Jackson explained that the ride vehicle will be a **Lego-shaped boat**. And the attraction's accompanying media release further explained that when it opens, the **Pirate River Quest** will invite guests to "set sail with a rowdy crew of **Lego pirates** on Captain's orders to explore the murky waters and retrieve the lost treasure, stolen by a troop of mischievous monkeys. Journey through the uncharted waters of the legendary **Cypress Gardens** and discover the secrets protecting its canals, as this all-new story unfolds brick by brick into a family-friendly treasure hunt."

The nod to **Cypress Gardens** in the release is due to the waters on which this treasure hunt will



Legoland Florida celebrated its 10th birthday on October 15, 2021. In 2022, **Pirate River Quest**, will take place on the same waterways of the historic **Cypress Gardens boat tours** (right) which had operated until hurricanes devastated the **Gardens in 2004**.

COURTESY
LEGO LAND FLORIDA RESORT

take place. The waterways and canals were originally traversed by the gardens' beloved boat tours that operated from the park's opening until three hurricanes struck Central Florida in 2004 and devastated the lower gardens of the park through which the boat tours explored. **Cypress Gardens Adventure Park** was never able to fully recover from the physical and financial damage of those triple hurricanes, filed for bankruptcy and closed. This paved the way for the purchase of the land and attractions by **Merlin**, Legoland's parent company.

From its early days, Legoland Florida has painstakingly



honed the history of **Cypress Gardens**. Immediately after opening as **Legoland Florida**, the park spent three years restoring the **Oriental Gardens** and state-shaped **Florida Pool** in the park's lower section. Legoland even went as far as installing permanent heaters around the **Oriental Gardens' giant Banyan Tree**. The tree, a centerpiece of the **Oriental Gardens**, was planted in 1939. As a subtropical species, it was quite susceptible to the rare but occurring freezing temperatures of the region's coldest months. In **Cypress**

Gardens' early days, fires were lit near the tree to protect it on those especially cold nights.

While October 15 was the official birthday, Legoland had already been celebrating by debuting other new attractions earlier in 2021, including the addition of the 4D movie, **Lego Mythica — Journey to Mythica**, **Planet Legoland**, and **Brickbeard's Watersports Stunt Show**. And because everyone loves a good photo-op, Legoland will continue displaying its 20-foot **Lego birthday cake** through the end of the year.

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SeaWorld San Antonio to debut world's tallest S&S Screamin' Swing

AT: Tim Baldwin
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SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Following on the success of the states' newest and tallest wooden roller coaster, Texas Stingray, SeaWorld San Antonio is already constructing its next thriller, Tidal Surge. Manufactured by S&S Worldwide, the installation will be the world's tallest Screamin' Swing.

"When we decided to add a Screaming Swing to our portfolio of rides, we wanted it not only to be the biggest in the state or the country, but in the world!" said **Chuck Cureau**, director of public relations. "As they say, everything is bigger in Texas, and Tidal Surge will prove that to be true."

A Screamin' Swing rushes riders through the air on two arms. With a structure standing at 105 feet tall, it beats the previous record by only inches, but the swinging arc is 230 degrees of rotation, soaring up to 135 feet in the air.

"There are only a few of these super-tall pneumatical-

ly driven swings out there," said Engineering Director **Paul Lattin**, S&S. "Although this one takes the cake by only a few inches, the experience is something really special — this is not your typical swing."

Indeed. SeaWorld has ingeniously placed the new thriller at the edge of the park's central lake.

"Depending on which seat you have, you literally will be looking directly down over the water!" said Lattin. "We have loved working with SeaWorld San Antonio to optimize the thrill in a ride. SeaWorld has been wonderful to use our ride to best advantage in their park."

"With the park being over 200 acres, there is plenty of room for placement of new attractions," said Cureau. "The location of Tidal Surge will maximize the thrill of the ride as its pendulum-like arms will swing at 68 mph over the water of Bayside Lake."

This isn't the first Screamin'

► See SWING, page 12



Tidal Surge will swing riders out over the park's central lake. The world's tallest Screamin' Swing will carry 40 passengers at a time. COURTESY SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO





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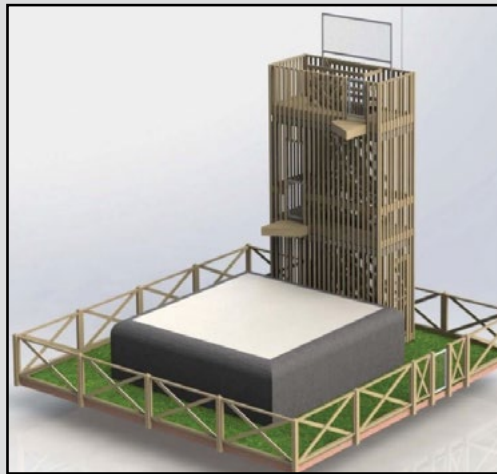
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Thorpe Park unveils plans for outdoor adventure park



CLEETHORPES, U.K. — Thorpe Park has applied to bring climbing walls, bungee trampolines and a jump tower to its outdoor adventure area in an upcoming re-development. The application stated: “The need to improve the facilities has gradually increased over time due to the increased desire for stay-at-home holidays, but the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the desire for these types of holidays which has meant improving the on-site facilities is now a necessity.” Parent company, Bourne Leisure — which owns operator Haven — has submitted the plans (above left) as more people turn to staycations rather than going abroad. Pictures submitted with the application show examples of similar attractions — such as the Jump Tower (above right) from Bourne's other parks. COURTESY BOURNE LEISURE

► SWING

Continued from page 10

Swing for SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment. Sister park Busch Gardens Williamsburg found its installation in 2019 to be popular. The San Antonio park's version is bigger, faster and seats more riders.

“Finnegan's Flyer has been a huge hit for our sister park in Williamsburg,” Cureau told *Amusement Today*. “We anticipate it will do just as well in Texas.”

Tidal Surge will seat 40 riders, 20 on each arm. Ride time is estimated to be one minute, 20 seconds.

“We love working with SeaWorld. They are a world-class organization, said Tim Timco, CEO, S&S. “The Busch Gardens Williamsburg swing is a great ride and has been a tremendous success. It really has opened the door for an additional swing to be added in continuing our partnership with SeaWorld.”

Once secured with a lap restraint, riders are swung

higher and higher. The pendulum arms eventually exceed the 90-degree horizontal plane, creating multiple moments of exhilarating airtime. Passengers momentarily levitate from their seats at heights of 135 feet. Adding to the thrill, the ride's position at the lake's edge will offer exciting views. Depending upon seating positions, riders will look down directly into the water or the faces of onlookers on the midway below. At 68 mph, it is the park's fastest ride.

“Anytime you work near water, there can be added challenges,” Lattin told *AT*. “But working with the park and the foundation engineers with our structural reactions at the edge of the water has been a pleasure. They made it easy on us and working at the water's edge wasn't an overly complicated challenge. We've enjoyed collaborating with the team of wonderful engineers to make this ride a reality.”

Riders must be 48 inches to participate.

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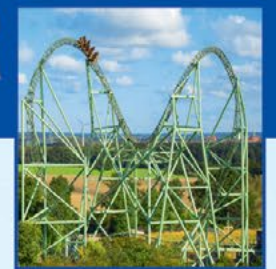
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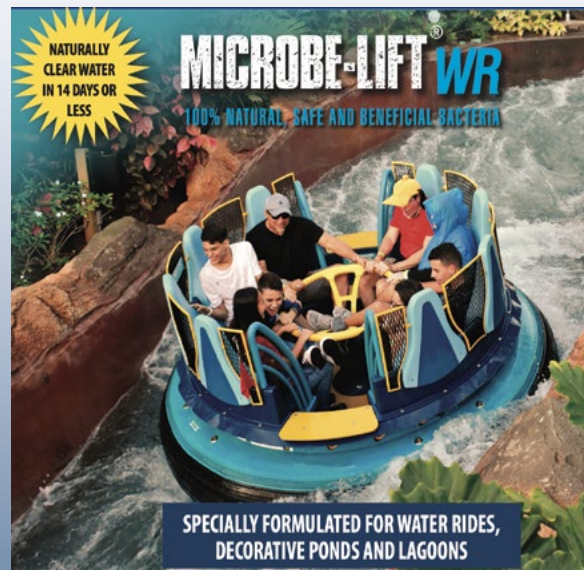
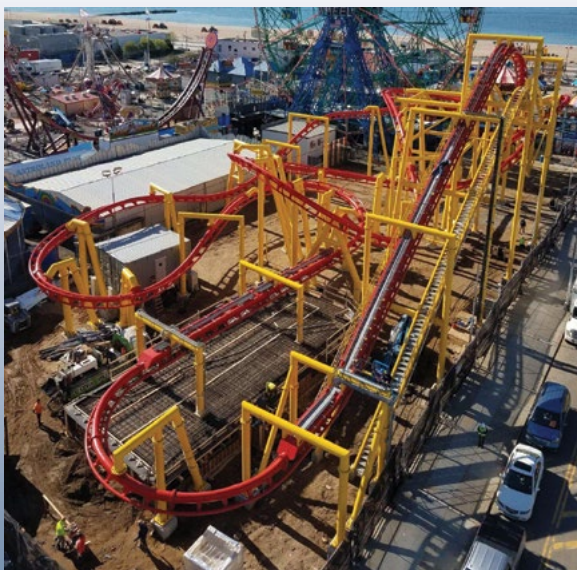


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Margaritaville Biloxi's new amusement park getting off the ground

AT: Pam Sherborne
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BILOXI, Miss. — The new amusement park that will be built at the **Margaritaville Resort** is getting off the ground and will, literally, be off the ground.

That is because the park is being built on a 25-acre platform over 25 feet in the air that creates a parking garage underneath.

"The platform is complete," said **Tessy Lambert**, public relations representative for the resort. "We haven't yet started to build the rides, though. We are anticipating a completion date of summer 2022."

At least that is the target for opening.

"With all that is going on with the supply chain, it is so hard to say, but that is when we are anticipating opening," Lambert said.

There will be access from the garage to the amusement park and to the resort's **Escape Arcade and Entertainment Center**. The 55,000-square-foot center opened at the same year that the hotel opened in 2016.

Lambert confirmed the resort's owners, **Biloxi Lodging**, are planning for a total of 22 amusement rides.

One of the highest-profile rides will be a 55-meter (slightly over 180 feet) wheel by **Technical Park**.

The other is the AeroBar, manufactured by European company **Aerophile** that has had success with tethered helium balloons. The AeroBar is a tethered balloon that rises inside a frame. It has a gondola with 16 seats circling a bar. Guests are strapped into their seats, then the AeroBar begins to slowly rotate as it rises about 120 feet into the air while providing 360-degree views of the area.

According to Aerophile's website, the gondola is guided by three rails. The ride takes



Above is a rendering of what the new amusement park may look like once completed. The big wheel, coming from Technical Park, will be more than 180 feet tall. The new amusement park coming to Margaritaville Resort Biloxi, Mississippi, will sit on a platform more than 25 feet in the air that creates a parking garage underneath (below left). The resort has plans for an **Aerophile AeroBar** similar to one shown below right. COURTESY MARGARITAVILLE RESORT



two minutes to go up, spends five minutes at the top, and then another two minutes to go back down.

Lambert said they also will be working with **Zamperla** for the other rides.

"When we open, we expect to be wide open," Lambert said. "We will have all of our rides in place."

An admission fee has been discussed, but no decision has been made at this time.

There will be a food court there as well.

"We will have lots of

yummy food and drinks," Lambert said.

With the rides installed on the platform, they will all seem to be further up into the air. The views, Lambert said, will be great looking over the ocean and Biloxi's barrier islands.

The Margaritaville Resort was inspired by the lyrics and lifestyle of singer/songwriter Jimmy Buffet.

The resort features a 371-room, 22-story family-friendly hotel with a number of amenities, including balconies, a

fitness center, meeting rooms, restaurants and a roof-top outdoor water park. The latter includes a 350-foot lazy river, waterslides, splash pad with play structure and kiddie pool.

The resort's Escape Entertainment Center offers a 48-foot-tall rock wall, Max-Flight: A Virtual Experience, a ropes course and the Omni Virtual Reality Arena. There also is an arcade and a boutique bowling experience.

There has been no announcement as to the name of



the amusement park. Lambert did say it won't be Margaritaville Amusement Park.

Other plans for the property includes another hotel tower.

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Unique Mega Blaster arcade machine takes second crack at industry



AT: Pam Sherborne
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HOUSTON, Texas — In March 2020, **Anthony McAnelly**, chief executive officer, **TXVend Inc.**, traveled to New Orleans to the **Amusement Expo International Tradeshaw**. He was taking the company's brand new product, the **Mega Blaster** arcade vending machine. The new game was created by **Alan Guridi**, who had had successes with other games he had created.

"We barely made the show," McAnelly said. "Our first unit wasn't quite ready."

But they made it. And not only made it, but also received second place in the category of **Best Machine of the Year** at the show.

The **Mega Blaster** creator and representative were excited and were ready to start rolling the **Mega Blaster** game out.

When they got home to Houston, Texas, the world had changed, being in the grips of a global pandemic. By late March, the U.S. had mostly shut down.

A March 2020 rollout was not going to happen. A 2020

rollout was not in the stars.

"We were forced to wait for more favorable market conditions," McAnelly said. "This past year and a half, however, has given us the opportunity to make improvements and incorporate valuable features to the machine such as the addition of a bill collector, a more visible and enticing prize compartment, among others."

Now, McAnelly said they believe that the **Mega Blaster** is better than ever.

"It is truly an efficient money maker like the industry has not seen before," he said. "It is designed to provide an experience that keeps the customer engaged."

McAnelly said they have done one test market and had great success, with the machine averaging about \$71 per day.

The game is designed to be a family game. Bouncy balls are shot from a launch plate by bungee cords in a slingshot method. The player tightens the cords from the outside. The bungee cords are rated for over 300,000 launches. The balls hit the prize dispenser at the top.

The **Mega Blaster** can operate by batteries alone, lasting for up to three months. If an electrical outlet is available, the battery turns on automatically in the event of a power failure.

It accepts \$1, \$2, \$5 and \$10 bills. For each dollar, one bouncy ball loads onto the launch plate. Customers can load up to 10 bouncy balls for all to be launched at one time by inserting \$10. The more bouncy balls launched at one time, the better chance of winning a prize.

The prize dispenser section has multiple settings that allow the vendor to set how difficult it is to win prizes.

McAnelly said they are currently in discussion with several potential manufacturers.

"Until we have a minimum 200-machine order, we will wait to select our final manufacturer," he said.

Guridi, the game's inventor, has seen success with some of his other creations including **Racket Power** and a shuffleboard-type game, both of which were sold through the **Billiard Factory** in Houston, Texas.

•txvend.com

TXVend Inc. is reintroducing a brand new game, **Mega Blaster** arcade vending machine. The company and creator **Alan Guridi** first introduced it in March 2020 at the **Amusement Expo** (above), but the pandemic shut down any momentum gained. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

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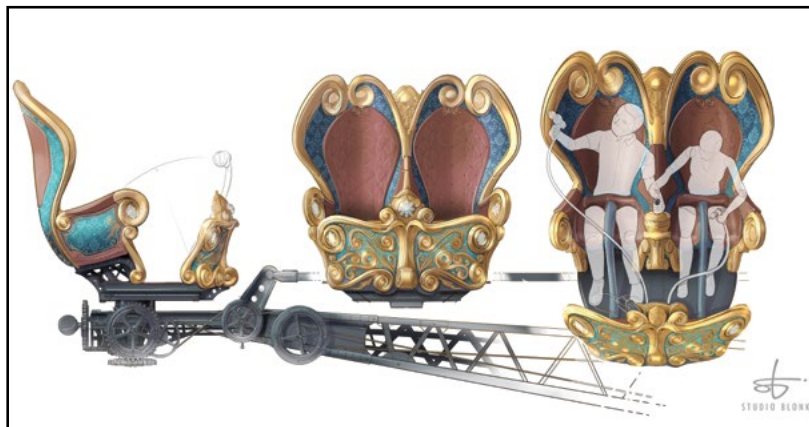
Lagotronics' Battle Arena: laser tag competition meets dark ride

AT: Tim Baldwin
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VENLO, The Netherlands — In searching for new attractions, many parks seek out installations that feature interactivity. Numerous rides incorporate competition in taking aim at specified targets. Laser tag arenas are known for teams of players challenging one another.

Lagotronics is introducing a new ride that incorporates all these attributes. The concept places 24 riders on 12 arms of a flat ride. Several movements will ensure that each ride is completely different. Arms raise up and down on three levels and ride gondolas rotate at the control of passengers. During the experience, riders use special guns installed in the vehicles to score points by hitting targets positioned around the ride. With a constantly changing battlefield with the various movements, the challenging aspects of Battle Arena will keep players returning hoping to improve their record.

"We are really pleased with how the Battle Arena turned out,



A gondola on each arm (above left) can rotate at the choosing of the rider to take aim at multiple targets, including other gondolas. Placed either indoors or outside, the ride can be interactive with other riders or awaiting guests. Spectators on the ground can become involved as well (above right). COURTESY LAGOTRONICS

and with the unique features it has, it's a true example of the diversity of our interactive products," said **Mark Beumers**, CEO, Lagotronics Projects. "It's great to get so many positive replies from the industry, so fast after the introduction, which confirms this is a very interesting attraction for many different types of operators, locations and themes."

Several options for the operator can make the new ride a signature piece for the park. It can

be installed indoors or outside and can be designed to where each player, each gondola or several vehicles forming a team can compete against others. A new, fun element is that riders can "steal" points from other riders by hitting the gondola targets. Furthermore, guests waiting in the queue can also participate and take aim at targets and the riders. This engagement while in the queue can double the enjoyment in the experience. Of

course, difficult "bonus" targets will add to the challenge.

"For the Battle Arena, we use our existing and proven interactive technology. This works with InfraRed LED beams from the guns or magic wands, which are recognized by the targets," Beumers said. "All parts of the equipment are waterproof and used already in many outdoor attractions worldwide."

When placed indoors, the thematic building can offer numer-

ous locations for targets, but being outside is not a drawback.

"The idea is to place the targets on the attraction's arms and gondolas, and also on the big decorative centerpiece," explained Beumers. "Walls, trees or other objects could be placed around the attraction that fit the theme and are able to contain targets as well."

The ride system has been developed by German manufacturer **ART Engineering**. Battle Arena can be installed on a footprint of approximately 350 square meters (3,767 square feet). Theming options can be as elaborate as the customer wishes.

"The idea for this attraction initially came from a mutual friend, **Henri Groels**, who is an independent Dutch designer of attractions," explained Beumers. "He contacted both Lagotronics and ART to discuss, and together we did the finetuning that brought us this fantastic result."

While other shooting rides are on the market, there are things that make Battle Arena unique.

"The gondolas go up and down in random order to three different levels of height," said Beumers. "On each level, different gondolas compete with each other, and other surrounding targets can be seen and hit. By operating the joystick to rotate a gondola, riders can choose in which direction they want to engage. People walking by or people in the queue line — or both! — can participate in the action to fight against the riders in the gondolas. By doing so, the queue becomes more fun, and people walking by are triggered to compete and also want to ride afterward!"

Other aspects of the attraction make it distinctive, such as the ability to steal points, theme adaptability and the arrangement of competition.

"It's a ride that has a proven motion that people love," said Beumers. "It doesn't require a lot of space, can be indoors or outside and can be a traveling attraction if needed."



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Premier Rides supplies world's tallest indoor coaster, EpiQ, in Qatar

AT: Tim Baldwin

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DOHA, Qatar — As Qatar continues to develop itself as a tourist destination, its capital city, Doha, has recently opened a new theme park. **Quest** is found inside the **Doha Oasis** mixed-development that includes residences, stores, five-star hotel, modern cinema and now Qatar's first indoor theme park. Although winter and its shoulder seasons can have glorious weather, summers are very hot. The indoor nature of **Quest** is an advantage.

Within the theme park, stories are driven around three concepts: City of Imagination, Oryxville and Gravity. Oryxville is a nod to the past with an Arabian flair. City of Imagination speaks toward the present. Gravity looks ahead to the future.

Appropriately placed, the park's biggest attraction is found in the futuristic section of Gravity. Built by **Premier Rides**, **EpiQ** snags the record for the world's tallest indoor coaster. The notable accolades don't stop there. The daring steel coaster also stakes claim to the world's fastest reverse launch.

As the ride experience goes, passengers stroll through a futuristic space station. Perhaps inspired a bit by the classic theme of



Walt Disney World's Space Mountain, the queue is brightly lit with other-worldly illumination and signage that sets the stage. Passengers step into one of two 12-passenger trains. **Quest** sports numerous hexagonal lighting fixtures into its ceiling, and on **EpiQ**, riders zig-zag through lighted hexagons on their way to the launch zone. A section of bright red track slides into place. From there, passengers are propelled backward up a

197-foot twisted reverse spike via linear synchronous motors. Surrounded by a tubular column of architectural theming, riders twist while traveling upward. A moment of weightlessness is experienced, and the 90-degree spike is traversed again, rushing forward this time. An additional burst of speed sends the train into the main layout at a heart-racing rate. Within the tangle of 1,837 feet of track, riders take highly banked curves, a zero-G roll, airtime hills and a corkscrew — all within a compact footprint.

Jim Seay, president of Premier Rides, commented, "We are extremely proud to have supplied this innovative and unique attraction to **Quest** theme park at Doha Oasis. We are honored to be a part of **Halul Real Estate Investment Company's** formula for success by delivering this one-of-a-kind, record-breaking coaster that is sure to be a must-see attraction. Guests will be impressed by the sophisticated state-of-the-art technologies applied to this augmented reality attraction."

Within the ride experience, visitors are immersed in a story involving one of the park's character mascots, **Spike**, a fun-loving and space-faring hedgehog. His passion is exploring far corners of the galaxy, and he invites guests to climb aboard a sleek interstellar spaceship while showing off his zero-G expertise

The compact nature of the launched coaster tangles into a snarl of curves and inversions. Riders enjoy the coaster in trains that feature lap bars only. COURTESY PREMIER RIDES



with his solar-powered jet-pack. As the most exhilarating ride within **Quest**, it is quite the "test drive."

"**EpiQ** was technically one of the most complex rides to design due to the architectural considerations such as the massive supports for the 27,000-square-meter (more than 290,000 square feet) overhead roof garden," said **Seay**. "Our technical team worked hard to ensure that the attraction was a perfect integration of dark ride and ultimate thrill ride."

Vehicles used on **EpiQ** are Premier Rides' **Skyrocket II** trains which are noted for their overall freedom with passengers safely secured with a lap bar restraint instead of harnesses over the shoul-

ders, giving a more comfortable experience.

Maryland-based Premier Rides has been building launched roller coasters for more than a quarter century, starting with **Outer Limits: Flight of Fear** attractions for **Paramount Parks** in 1996. Since then, the company has gone on to install more than 20 launched coasters around the world. In addition to its famous coasters, the company also has special-effect dark rides and custom-designed attractions. It also offers complete ride and train rehab.

EpiQ is one of more than 25 attractions within **Quest**. [Look for a further in-depth article on **Quest** theme park in a future issue of *Amusement Today*.]



The 90-degree, twisted reverse spike on **EpiQ** is a record-setter. COURTESY PREMIER RIDES

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LET'S CONNECT!



NBCUniversal/China-owned Universal Beijing builds cultural bridge

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

BEIJING, China — Universal Beijing Resort, with its highly anticipated Universal Studios Beijing theme park, Universal CityWalk Beijing, and two hotels, opened on September 20 as the world's fifth and largest Universal Studios-themed park. The official opening coincided with China's Mid-Autumn Festival holiday which occurred September 19 to 21.

The resort, operated by Universal Parks and Resorts, but owned by a partnership between NBCUniversal, a division of Comcast, and Chinese state companies represented by the Beijing Shouhuan Cultural Tourism Investment Company, has received an overwhelming positive embrace by the Chinese public. And even though the opening occurred amid a world-wide pandemic and U.S.-China tensions, China's and Universal's bets on each other are showing extremely favorable signs of paying off. However, this should not come as too big of a surprise considering they were dealt a good hand even before sitting down at the table for negotiations. After all, the Chinese people's love of both Hollywood and amusement parks is well known to rival that of the U.S. itself, and Universal Beijing Resort offers the perfect pairing of the two.

The resort has already been labeled a resounding success. In fact, when \$99 tickets to visit the resort on its opening day went up for sale a week prior to the opening on China's largest travel website, they reportedly sold out in less than 60 seconds. The hotels booked out almost equally as fast, and when a website run by Chinese-owned



Universal Beijing Resort is being embraced by Chinese citizens; so much so that when \$99 tickets to visit the resort on its opening day went up for sale a week prior to the opening on China's largest travel website, they reportedly sold out in less than 60 seconds.

COURTESY UNIVERSAL BEIJING RESORT

Alibaba began selling future tickets, they sold over 100,000 within just the first half-hour.

Even prior to tickets going on sale, there were signs that Universal Studios Beijing was on its way to a successful start and warm welcome by Chinese citizens. From the start of the by-invitation-only sneak peek that began on September 1, it was clear that the veritable who's-who of Beijing in attendance who also posted photos of their visit to the State-run social media platform Weibo, were the envy of many based on the large number of comments on the posts.

Still, it was not long ago that there were regular reports of Chinese nationalists boycotting U.S.-owned businesses and their products, and even the U.S.'s National Basketball Association (NBA). However, China's *Global Times*, a state-owned news outlet, played



down these reports in regard to the reception of Universal Beijing Resort by Chinese citizens and said the reception defied the "'pervading anti-U.S. nationalism' in China portrayed by Western Media."

Another theory for the resort's popularity is that it is majority China State-owned with U.S.-owned NBCUniversal having only a 30% stake in the

venture. This arrangement is similar to that of Shanghai Disneyland, which is also majority China State-owned.

Others credit NBCUniversal's forethought as a reason for the warm reception it has received. Citing that Universal Studios Beijing was designed in a way that it was not simply a carbon copy of another Universal Studios park, but that in addi-

tion to the favorite attractions and lands which are included in the park, Chinese culture is echoed in additions such as Kung Fu Panda Land of Awesomeness. This themed area took an already existing Universal IP and morphed it into a land that also celebrates China's cultural heritage. It does so by adding details not seen in the animated film. The touches are immediately identifiable to China-native guests but may go unseen by foreign tourists to the park.

Regardless of whether the reason for China's embrace of the resort is due to relaxing international tension or simply because the resort is new, there is no denying that Universal Beijing Resort is creating a bridge; one that even some Chinese officials in China have been hailing as proof that goodwill is alive and well between the two countries.

"I shared my roller coaster ride at Universal Studios Beijing with my [U.S.-China Business Council] friends, which reminded me of the shape of China-U.S. relations," began a tweet by Qin Gang, the newly appointed Chinese ambassador to Washington. "After all the tumbling and shakes, the roller coaster came to a soft landing in the end," Gang concluded.

It is Gang's underlying sentiment and positivity to which those in the amusement industry can relate. It is seen daily, time and again. Each time it occurs, it should be a reminder of our commonality and of our parallel pursuits of happiness, joy, laughter and, yes, sometimes even the thrill of a roller coaster ride. This commonality not only brings the amusement industry together but also builds bridges that make the divide between people, cultures and countries feel less wide.

► See BEIJING, page 23



Jurassic World Isla Nublar is one of seven themed lands throughout the expansive resort. COURTESY UNIVERSAL BEIJING RESORT

► BEIJING**Continued from page 22**

Universal Beijing Resort sits on land that covers four square km (just over 988 acres). By comparison **Universal Orlando Resort** with its **Universal Studios Florida** theme park, **Islands of Adventure** theme park, **Volcano Bay** waterpark, **Universal CityWalk Orlando**, and eight surrounding hotels currently occupy just over three and one-third square km (840 acres). However, the Florida resort will substantially increase in size with the additional three square km (750 acres) that will be occupied by the, currently under construction **Epic Universe** park and hotels when they open later this decade. **Universal Studios Hollywood** with its **CityWalk Hollywood** and entire surrounding film studios, measure in at one and two-thirds (415 acres). Finally, the entire **Universal Studios Japan** resort and **Universal Studios Singapore** resort measure just over .5 square km (133 acres) and just under .5 square km (120 acres), respectively.

There are 21 rides and attractions spread across seven themed lands within Universal Studios Beijing: **The Wizarding World of Harry Potter**, **Transformers Metrobase**,



The grand opening ceremonies for Universal Beijing Resort (above left) featured performers, characters and music. Above right, **Tom Mehrmann** (left), general manager of Beijing International Resort Co., Ltd. Theme Park and Resort Management Branch, and **Dorian Rommel**, managing director of Hotel Management Branch, unveiled the **Leed Gold Community Certification**. COURTESY UNIVERSAL BEIJING RESORT

Kung Fu Panda Land of Awesomeness, **Hollywood**, **Waterworld**, **Minion Land** and **Jurassic World Isla Nublar**.

The park operates four roller coasters. **Decepticoaster** is a **Transformers-themed Bolinger & Mabillard** sitting coaster model that is a clone of **Islands of Adventure's The Incredible Hulk** coaster at Universal Orlando Resort. **Flight of the Hippogriff** is a Mack Rides **YoungStar** Coaster model located in **The Wizarding World of Harry Potter**. **Loop-Dee** is a **Minions-themed**

family roller coaster manufactured by **Golden Horse**. And finally, **Jurassic Flyers** is a Mack Rides **Inverted Powered Coaster** model in the **Jurassic World Isla Nublar** land.

The resort's hotels, **The Universal Studios Grand Hotel**, with its **Golden Age of Hollywood** theme is situated across the Universal Studios Beijing's main entrance and the **NUO Resort Hotel**, with its modern Chinese imperial garden theme have rooms that fetch up to \$3,000 a night.



Phases two and three for Universal Beijing Resort are rumored to include a second theme park as well as a water park, with the next phase expected to have a completion date in 2025, but, as with phase one, the additional phases may see delays, especially since new construction has not yet commenced.

Universal Beijing Resort has been certified **LEED Gold** using the **LEED for Cities and Communities** rating system and is the world's first theme park resort to earn such designation.

The certification comes after years of dedicated planning and work to create a more environmentally friendly and community-driven resort destination. **LEED** or **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design** is the world's most widely used environmental sustainability rating system that sets global standards for measurable strategies that improve sustainability and quality of life. The program encourages and rates progress toward reducing carbon footprint and energy use.

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Vekoma supplies three launched coasters to China theme parks

Fanta Park Glorious Orient parks soar with Fighter Jet addition

AT: Tim Baldwin
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GANZHOU, NINGBO and NANJING, China — Two parks opened in China this year that offered twin launched coasters from Vekoma Rides. Dubbed Fighter Jet, the coasters stand as a signature attraction at each park. **Fanta Park Glorious Orient** is the name of both parks. One is located in Ganzhou, the other in Cixi, Ningbo. The Ganzhou park opened in late May, the Ningbo park opened a few weeks later in early July.

Vekoma refers to this style of coaster as the Top Gun Launch Coaster.

“The Top Gun Launch Coaster ‘Fighter Jet’ is a very special ride,” said Benjamin Bloemendaal, head of concept engineering, Vekoma Rides. “The concept was actually created by the **Fantawild** design team. They presented the idea of this aircraft carrier launch type experience and asked



Vekoma if we could design something that would simulate the flight of a fighter jet being launched from a carrier. That was the starting position for the concept design, and for the rest of the ride Vekoma tried to include as many directional changes and force changes that would simulate a ‘dog fight’ — two fighter jets battling in

► See VEKOMA, page 25

Vekoma’s Top Gun model called **Fighter Jet** is a signature attraction at Fanta Park Glorious Orient in Ganzhou (above).

Five inversions and below-ground trenches make for a breathtaking experience aboard **Dragon in the Jungle** (inset).

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► VEKOMA**Continued from page 24**

the sky." As the ride theme goes, guests tour a majestic aircraft carrier. A "code red" radio call straps eight pilots into two-car fighter jets. Once dispatched, a curve leads to the launch strip. Green flags go up, and riders are off on their aerial adventure.

"The coaster is the key thrill-attraction for these parks," said Bloemendaal. "Integration of the aircraft carrier and aerobatic flight maneuvers were key design aspects."

With no lift hill, the track length just shy of 3,000 feet is all action. After an initial launch, riders are sent flying at 60 mph in three seconds and sent through multiple curves, five airtime moments and four inversions. The tallest point of the ride is 105 feet (32 meters) following the launch. Vekoma dubs the element as the world's first roll-over camelback.

The seating offers a comfortable vest restraint instead of over-the-shoulder harnesses.

The interplay of the elements can create the sensa-

tions of a dog fight with other "fighter jets" if the launches are sequenced properly.

"When the attraction operates at its maximum capacity (using four trains), a train can be launched as soon as the previous train clears the mid-course safety brakes," said Bloemendaal. "In this case these two trains will interact until the first train reaches the final brakes."

To help aid in the look of an aerial dogfight, the trains on Fighter Jet are short, eight-seater trains. When *Amusement Today* asked for the reason the ride utilizes shorter trains, Bloemendaal explained: "It was based on the required capacity of the attraction and the self-dueling feature. In order to have two vehicles interact in the same track, we needed to have at least four trains in the track, combined with a high dispatch rate. The short vehicles help to expedite the load-unload process. Additionally the short vehicles allowed for a more convincing fighter jet theme."

Captivating as these two rides are, they are far from the only Vekoma installa-

Located at Fanta Park Glorious Orient in Ningbo, Dragon in the Jungle is a launched coaster that features a top height of 126 feet.
COURTESY VEKOMA

tions in China for this past season. Elsewhere in China (Nanjing), another launched coaster has opened. Called Dragon in the Jungle, the Shockwave model from Vekoma finds a home at Dragon Valley Theme Park. It features five dramatic inversions following its launch. Other elements include exhilarating dives and dips into below-ground trenches.

Dragon in the Jungle operates with two trains, each of which seats 16.

Top speed on the coaster exceeds 62 mph. The tallest element following the launch is a twisted top hat that rises 126 feet. Track length is 3,592 feet.

Vekoma Rides has been exceptionally busy in Asia this year. Four family boomerang coasters opened in 2021, and two junior coasters debuted. Several other projects are still under construction.

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Frances's Nigloland adds new Mack Rides attraction for fifth time



Krampus Expédition delivers a dramatic splash.
COURTESY MACK RIDES

AT: Tim Baldwin
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DOLANCOURT, France — Located in north central France and about two hours east of Paris, **Nigloland** offers families in the Champagne region a day of fun within its operating season, which runs from mid-June to mid-November. Built on a protected site in the Orient Forest, the park makes a commitment to preserve the natural environment. The 40 hectares (99 acres) are home to a protected natural river and century-old trees. So dedicated to the site, the park has created a team of 10 employees who work on the ecological management of green spaces.

Within these parameters, Nigloland provides a beautiful park filled with rides suitable for families. For the fifth time, the park has turned to **Mack Rides** for a coaster attraction.

Called **Krampus Expédition**, the new addition opened with the park in June. The new-for-2021 attraction is a blend of roller coaster and flume. Mack Rides markets



The ride's big plunge sends riders through scenic rockwork from **Universal Rocks**. COURTESY MACK RIDES

this genre of ride as a water coaster. For customers looking for a diverse attraction, it fulfills two needs.

"Especially in summer, people love to cool off and so we think the combination of a thrilling coaster ride and a splashing water ride is the perfect solution for any park," said **Maximilian Roser**, head of marketing, Mack Rides. "The log flume is limited in the movements and thrill factor. With the water coaster you get the best out of two worlds."

Park management agrees. According to feedback provided to *Amusement Today*, guest responses have praised the ride. Examples are "Incredible! I was surprised; it's very well done," "I really love the first fall" and "The real strength of Krampus is to include us in the storytelling and in something that had never been done before."

Theming by **Universal Rocks** transforms the attraction into an iconic piece for the park.

► See MACK, page 28

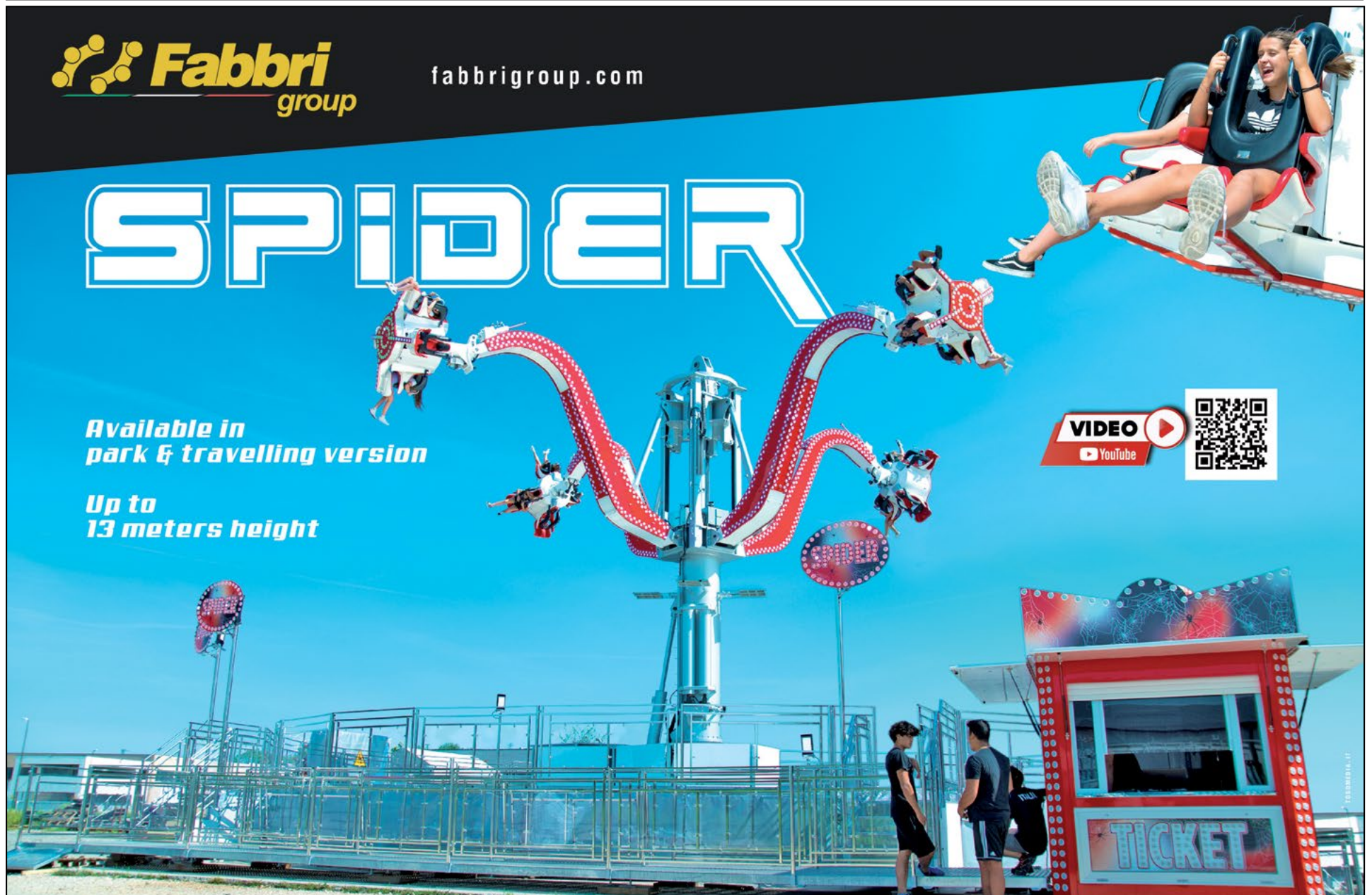


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Huss launches Break Dance 5



BREMEN, Germany — Huss Park Attractions GmbH has announced the launch of the Break Dance 5, an attraction which follows in the footsteps of the original and successful Break Dance ride. Officially launched at IAAPA Expo Europe 2021 in Barcelona, the new attraction incorporates Huss's Operator Center Stage as well as multimedia and special effects. These unique new elements within the attraction are the main visible differences between the original ride and the new model. The Operator Center Stage is a brand new location for the operator who becomes part of the ride and the "show." The Break Dance 5 offers two rides in one attraction, with operators able to run two different sets of show ride cycles, six in total, to provide an all-inclusive family experience or a white knuckle thrill ride. COURTESY HUSS



Eight passengers fit in each boat.
COURTESY MACK RIDES

► MACK Continued from page 26

During construction, Roser reports that the footers, columns and track are placed first before the theming is constructed around it. The ride was installed by RCS GmbH.

Lightly themed to the mythological monster, Krampus, the ride features six vehicles, each of which seats eight. Once dispatched from the station, boats float to the lift of the coaster portion. The lift height is 92 feet. Once over the top, riders scream through 60-degree

banked curves and an exhilarating drop. This sends the cars skimming over a speed bump and into a photogenic splash. The remainder of the ride is a leisurely flume ride that winds back to the station. In all, the three-and-a-half-minute ride travels just under 2,000 feet.

"We created the water coaster to create a stunning boat ride attraction with a twist," Roser told AT. "The coaster sections provide high speeds, steep drops and even airtime."

With all six boats in operation, capacity can exceed 880 passengers per hour.



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Wonder Woman Flight of Courage sets records for single-rail coasters

Six Flags Magic Mountain turns to RMC for park's 20th coaster

AT: Tim Baldwin
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VALENCIA, Calif. — Six Flags Magic Mountain is at it again. Already home to more roller coasters than any park on Earth, the thrill capital has announced something astonishing — the addition of its 20th coaster. From an amusement industry standpoint, it wasn't that long ago that having 10 coasters was considered remarkable. By the end of the last century, a handful of parks were claiming double digits, but a count of 20 is next-level impressive.

Stepping up, or in this case ... soaring in, is Wonder Woman Flight of Courage. Themed around the world-famous Amazonian princess, the coaster was cleverly announced on October 21, the 80th anniversary of the first appearance of the comic book heroine. She has appeared in DC Comics ever since.

"This is a monumental milestone for our park and obviously, years in the making. Thrill ride innovation has been part of our 50-year history, and with each new coaster addition, our goal has been to up our game by combining the newest in ride technology with all the record-breaking 'ests'...tallest, fastest, and longest," said Park President Don McCoy. "Even though we've held the world's most coasters record at 19 for several years, there's something really special about hitting the landmark 20th. Our partnership with Warner Bros. Themed Entertainment makes this accomplishment even more exciting, as we integrate the legacy of an iconic DC super-



The 20th roller coaster for the park will be a part of the DC Universe section. Wonder Woman Flight of Courage is the second roller coaster from Rocky Mountain Construction at Magic Mountain. The single-rail coaster features three inversions and numerous moments of airtime. COURTESY SIX FLAGS MAGIC MOUNTAIN

hero into the theming of the ride. Additionally, we are creating a more innovative guest experience by redesigning one of our most popular areas, DC Universe."

"Combining our record 20th coaster with Wonder Woman's 80th anniversary was the perfect way to showcase the legacy and power of two great brands...and deliver on the promise of great things to come," said Alexandria French, publicist, Six Flags Magic Mountain.

The single-rail coaster was introduced at sister park Six Flags Fiesta Texas in 2018. There, the version is called Wonder Woman Golden Lasso Coaster. It was an innovation of Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC). Since then, variations of the single-rail coaster have materialized around the nation, the most recent being Jersey Devil Coaster at Six Flags Great Adventure this past summer.

"As a single rail coaster, Wonder Woman Flight of Courage will be the only one like it at our park, so it adds a whole new ride dimension to our already vast variety of coaster experiences," said McCoy. "Being the world's tallest and longest aligns with



our years-long goal of adding record-breaking, one-of-a-kind rides to our park's tremendous coaster collection."

Much of the layout is extremely similar to the East Coast version, but there are some differences.

"The ride is a bit taller than the Jersey Devil, but the main difference is the alterations that were made to the layout around the station and transfer areas," said Jake Kilcup, COO, RMC. "At the requests of the park, we are adjusting the layout of the ride to utilize the bones of an existing station. So this also turns it into the world's longest single rail coaster."

Records are common to the park as they have set many in the past decades.

Nudging one foot higher than Jersey Devil, the record for tallest single-rail coaster will be claimed by Magic Mountain. Its top speed is 58 mph, and the track length is 3,300 feet. Riders on this genre of attraction sit



single file and straddle the track.

"This project was in the works prior to the pandemic, so we've been working on this for a while," Kilcup told *Amusement Today*. "Thankfully, things are moving forward. We're always excited to be working with Six Flags, and it's great to get back down to Magic Mountain. Tim Dofflow (director of maintenance), Jeff Hudgins (corporate engineer), and Bruce Thompson (construction manager) at Magic have always been great to work with. We worked with Don McCoy up at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom as well; we're happy to be involved in a project with him again too. Magic Mountain is an amazing thrill park with a great team."

The attraction will have a themed entrance portal and queue inspired by the mythical hidden island of Themyscira. Four 12-passenger trains in operation will give the line a consistent flow. A moving station will be implemented. During

the ride, passengers plunge an 87-degree first drop and fly thorough three inversions.

The new coaster will be located in the six-acre DC Universe area of the park, which will be expanded and entirely remodeled to include a new, innovative restaurant and bar experience, plus retail locations featuring exclusive DC branded merchandise. Wonder Woman will take up residence within the area.

The California park worked with RMC previously for the massive reimagining of Colossus into Twisted Colossus in 2015. It opened to rave reviews.

"As someone who enjoys pushing the envelope a bit, I've always really enjoyed Magic Mountain," noted Kilcup. "They've got such a great variety of thrill rides. It's always fun to be a part of projects that are a milestone, but we'd be happy to help them out with No. 21 as well..."



Wonder Woman Flight of Courage will feature an 87-degree first drop. COURTESY SIX FLAGS MAGIC MOUNTAIN

The Rig extreme theme park announced for the Arabian Gulf

SAUDI ARABIA —Saudi Arabia is creating a massive new theme park. The Arabic kingdom announced plans for its new development called **The Rig** to open in 2025.

A Middle Eastern developer plans to convert an oil rig into a massive 1.6 million-square-foot resort that will be located in the Arabian Gulf. The project is part of Saudi Arabia's 2030 strategy to launch as a major tourism destination.

The country is determined to reposition itself as a global hotspot that can compete with the likes of nearby Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Oman. It aims to attract 100 million tourists each year by the close of the decade.

Earlier this year, plans for a second national airline — the kingdom's current flag carrier is **Saudia**, formerly known as Saudi Arabian Airlines — and to invest \$147 billion into transport and logistics over nine years were confirmed by Saudi Arabia's **Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman**.

With funding from Saudi Arabia's **Public Investment Fund** (PIF) The Rig will be offering up three hotels with

THE RIG.

800 rooms, including one ultra-luxury option and 11 restaurants, all connected by platform bridges. There will be a roller coaster, rides, water slides, a submarine adventure and sports activities such as diving and bungee jumping. For luxury travelers, the park is planning arrival by helicopter and a superyacht marina with 50 berths.

Renderings of the upcoming attraction, which aims to "provide a multitude of hospitality offerings, adventures, and aquatic sporting experiences," along with a promotional video, were released in mid-October.

"This project is a unique tourism attraction, expected to



A rendering shows proposed **The Rig** theme park scheduled to debut in Saudi Arabia's Arabian Gulf in 2023. COURTESY PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND

attract tourists from around the world," read a statement from the PIF. It said it was expected to be particularly popular with visitors from the Arabian Gulf region.

When opened, the resort

promises 11 restaurants that will include sundeck tapas as well as undersea dining.

In a declaration of the environmental role of the oil rig-inspired theme park, PIF commented: "The Rig

seeks environmental protection in the project's area, in line with global best practices and in support of Saudi Arabia's efforts to preserve the environment."

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Blackpool Council of the Blackpool borough in England has approved an application by the **Pleasure Beach** amusement park to redevelop an adjacent area into a 31-space pay and display public car park.

Three buildings, which also had previously been used as holiday accommodation, are earmarked for demolition.

Planners, who granted permission using their delegated powers, branded the premises as "unsightly." The council has a focus on strengthening the resort's appeal to attract new audiences year-round and they all feel that a car park would be a great addition.

A large hike in public liability insurance premiums in the past 18 months has forced hundreds of small and family-owned businesses in the country of Australia to either cease trading or taking on huge debts as they attempt to safeguard themselves against potential accidents. From dealing with a shorter staff to enforcing COVID-19 safety protocols, the 2021 season has been a challenge for the amusement park.

But, that didn't stop visitors from attending.

According to a story that ran in the *Sydney Daily Herald* last month, operators in the amusement sector have been struggling to obtain affordable insurance. Some have experienced premium increases exceeding 200 per cent. Melbourne's **Luna Park** is now forced to pay \$1 million for public liability insurance of \$20 million. Two years ago it cost \$135,000 for \$100 million.

The story also stated that Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman **Bruce Billson** said there was a "clear and present danger" facing the sector because of an inability for the businesses to get insurance cover.

Public liability insurance coverage is a legal requirement for the operation of rides at showgrounds and fixed installations, both through contractual obligations and obligations imposed on councils and other landowners by state and territory governments.

"As businesses look to reopen after lockdowns, this issue is a shattering blow for those small and family businesses in the amusement, leisure and recreation sector which will be forced to stay shut because they can't get insurance," Billson was quoted as saying.

The **Monterey Bay Aquarium** celebrated its 37th birthday on Oct. 20. When the doors opened in 1984, aquarium officials had no idea what to expect as far as interest among potential guests. The business model suggested 500,000 in its first year, perhaps up to about a million.

But the first year brought in more than two million guests. Two million people still pour inside on an average year.

The grand opening of the aquarium debuted the Kelp Forest, making the aquarium the first to have an exhibit with a real living kelp forest. It also brought the sea otter exhibit, which went much farther than putting otters on display. The team there was the first to figure out that they could help to reintroduce baby sea otters into the wild after they had gone through a surrogacy raising program.

Since its debut, the aquarium has seen expanded growth even as late as 2019 with the introduction of the Bechtel Family Center for Ocean Education and Leadership.

The Wichita City Council approved last month a \$28 million long-term plan to turn **L.W. Clapp Golf Course** into a destination park in southeast Wichita, giving contractors the go-ahead to begin work on the first of four phases for the redevelopment project.

The overall plan for Clapp Park envisions a two-story restaurant and an indoor-outdoor farmer's market, both privately run. Other major features are a promenade surrounded by an athletic area.

The first \$5 million of the project has been earmarked to build an indoor-outdoor pavilion, restrooms, a "destination" playground and a "watertainment" splash pad.

A new attraction could bring half a million visitors to Tennessee each year.

Great Wolf Lodge officials have their eyes on Jackson, Tennessee, for their first location in Tennessee.

A story in a local Tennessee newspaper quoted **Kyle Spurgeon**, CEO of the Jackson Chamber of Commerce, saying that the city had been working with Great Wolf for three years. He also said: "It is going to happen. They're going to put a new 350-room family resort here in Jackson, that will bring a half million new visitors to Jackson a year."

Great Wolf Lodge released a statement, which reads: "We are always looking for opportunities to bring the Great Wolf Lodge indoor waterpark resort experience to more families. The Western Tennessee region is an area we remain very interested in and we continue to engage with state and local leadership as we further evaluate the potential for a resort in this region."

Orlando Free Fall, one of two new attractions coming to ICON Park, Orlando, Florida, has reached a milestone.

In the third week of October, construction workers topped off the attraction, which is scheduled to open in December.

At 430 feet, Orlando Free Fall is being touted as being the world's tallest free-standing drop tower. The attraction will offer views of International Drive as well as other thrills including a 30-degree tilt of the ride vehicle after it reaches the top. Then the vehicle will drop nearly 400 feet at speeds of up to 75 mph.

Science kits containing real uranium. Glass balls that make a fun noise when you slam them together. Heavy, sharp-pointed darts that can be hurled at metal hoops or annoying little brothers.

What could possibly go wrong?

The Napa Valley Museum in Yountville is inviting visitors to ponder that question with its new exhibit, "Dangerous Games: Treacherous Toys We Loved As Kids."

The exhibit opened in October and will continue through Feb. 13.

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Ahmad joins Embed, guides future of FEC customer experiences

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



Kash Ahmad

SINGAPORE — In August, **Embed** — a leader of the cashless business management systems and solutions for the amusement, entertainment and leisure industries — appointed **Kash Ahmad** as the company's chief management consultant, North & South America. In his new position, Ahmad hopes to help guide the FEC industry into the future and the next-level of customer experiences.

He has enjoyed a 25-year professional career in the family entertainment center industry, culminating in his most recent role as Executive Director at **Cineplex Entertainment LP**. Having spent most of his youth living in Canada and Southeast Asia, he was drawn to arcades around the world, and joins Embed with an international mindset that's fully immersed in FECs.

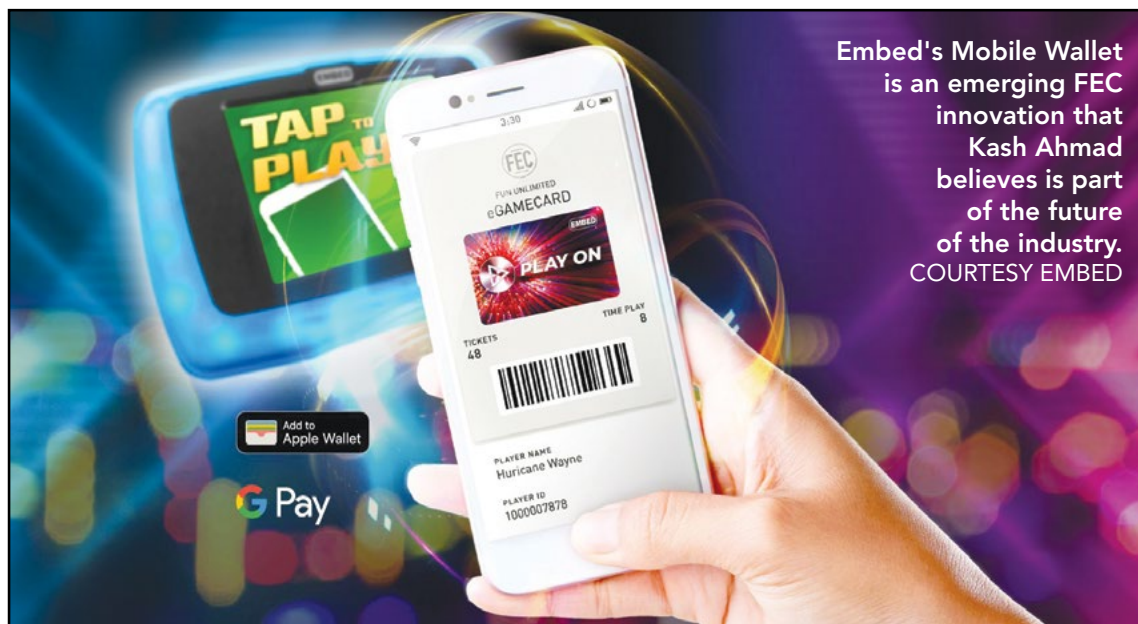
"The FEC industry is not one of those career paths that is discussed in university or around the dinner table when planning your career," shared Ahmad. "I always knew that I would pursue a career working with people, and although I fell in love with the arcade industry as a youth, I never imagined a career in it."

Family entertainment centers are the most rapidly expanding section of the amusement industry. In

his experience with FECs, Ahmad developed a passion for the service industry and the dream of going beyond the transaction, focusing on creating memorable customer experiences and fulfilling customer relationships — that drive return visits and future-proof a business — as the key to success.

"If I was blessed enough to be a part of something new and trend-setting in this industry, then I will commit to the evolution of the industry by always being in a position of innovation and leadership in this industry."

During his career, Kash was involved in developing popular Canadian FECs the **Playdium** and **The Rec Room** from inception to operation. He worked closely with Embed on the technology solution that powers these facilities to aid in enhancing the customer journey as well as operating efficiency to drive greater profit.



Embed's Mobile Wallet is an emerging FEC innovation that Kash Ahmad believes is part of the future of the industry. COURTESY EMBED

"As far as I can tell, the FEC industry has no boundaries," said Ahmad. "There have been so many challenges over the last 25 years, and the FEC industry has pushed through them. People will continue to pursue social activities, and it is up to us to enable the social activities. There are an incredible number of ideas and concepts in the market. Manufacturers are constantly innovating and launching new products."

"That is why being a part of Embed is so exciting to me. Embed will never be satisfied with status quo; [the company] will not settle for the best available so far."

While the amusement industry has undergone significant changes and advancements over the years, Ahmad believes these guiding prin-

ciples are fundamental to the development of this industry. He believes the last quarter century has been more of a journey than a career, and he is looking forward to continuing this journey with Embed.

"I've followed Embed and been a client for over 15 years. I've experienced their exceptional product and viewed them as a leader in the amusement industry. I'm incredibly excited to now work with them as they have continued to focus on innovation in an industry that requires constant advancement."

The recent pandemic is just the latest challenge for the amusement industry — and FECs specifically — to have to overcome. However, Ahmad sees this not as a hurdle, but as an opportunity to improve the

customer experience.

"First, people have learned to interact with technology more often. Although this consumer behaviour has been evident pre-COVID, we have now transitioned to the low-touch, contactless economy, so everybody's used to transacting this way. We have used technology even more to get involved with movies, food, shopping, and relationships," detailed Ahmad. "Second, we yearn for social interaction. This is driven by scarcity and public restrictions. With these shifts in mind, the FEC industry will see a surge in business and needs to be ready with advanced solutions. Since we don't have the advantage of unlimited space, adapting technology is the easiest way to navigate these needs."

In Ahmad's view, navigating the future of a changing industry is key to success and longevity for FECs and amusements as a whole.

"Hesitation or resisting change is a natural feeling. But most successful operators in our industry are the ones who took the leap forward," cautioned Ahmad. "Take **Dave & Buster's**, for instance. They did not stick with traditional tokens, tickets and game cards to pay and play. They tapped Embed to jointly develop a virtual game card solution that enables guests to reload or pay using their phones — better known as the award-winning Mobile Wallet that Embed offered to the industry for free. You don't have to be the first, but you definitely can't be the last if you want to thrive in the FEC industry. Technological hesitancy only slows your advancement."

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Pete Stearns
Senior Director, Midway Operations



www.embedcard.com



Walltopia's Fun Wall models (above) are now available for both indoor and outdoor attractions. Its popular Jump & Run (inset) offers guests an enticing ariel experience. COURTESY WALLTOPIA

Walltopia exhibits innovative products at European expo

BULGARIA — Founded in 1998, Walltopia is currently an industry leader in the climbing and adventure leisure products. The company showcased some of its most recent product developments at the 2021 edition of IAAPA Expo Europe

On display were the popular Rollglider (which combines free-falling with the feeling of flying for an enticing aerial experience) as well as the Jump & Run (which combines a dual-line racing Rollglider track with obstacles inspired by adventure courses). The ultimate goal of both attractions is for every participant to get a taste of what it's like to be a real-life video game hero.

The company offers a large portfolio of active entertainment products and has the ability to seamlessly combine them in multiple variations. The customized attractions can become the quintessential part of any entertainment location with the option to "gamify" the experience — turning the attraction into a competitive game for guests to enjoy, challenging themselves and one another — and engage audiences in different ways keeping them coming back to score higher.

Widening its customer base and owing to recent manufacturing innovations, Walltopia is now able to boast that its products — including its more than 100 Fun Wall models — can be produced with materials that allow outdoor usage. Easy to maintain and clean, the innovative materials used to construct these attractions do not become moist and are not affected by quick temperature changes. In addition, colors and prints will not fade when exposed to sunlight and will not be impacted by wind and weather.

The company introduced its new Digital Product Configurators for its Rollglider and ropes course, allowing buyers the ability to configure their project on the kiosk at the Walltopia's exhibits and receive an on-the-spot quote at industry expos.

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FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson
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New York City's **Edge** — located at Hudson Yards — announced its City Climb attraction will open November 9, 2021. Dubbed "the ultimate skyscraping adventure," City Climb is the highest external building climb in the world. Located above Edge, it challenges climbers to scale the outside of a building more than 1,200 feet tall, then lean out from the outdoor platform at the top of the skyscraper.

"City Climb quite literally shouts from the rooftops that tourism is back in New York City and there has never been a more exciting time to visit," said **Jeff T. Blau**, chief executive of **Related Companies**. "This is an adventure unlike anything the city has seen before, and we are thrilled to welcome the world to an experience of a lifetime."

Climbers are fitted with a safety harness and secured into the course via two cables attached to a trolley that seamlessly move with the climber throughout the entire journey. Once they reach the apex at 1,271 feet, climbers will have the opportunity to lean out and hang over the platform.

"The architectural details in New York City's buildings make our skyline one of the most instantly recognizable in the world, but until now the views from these iconic capstones have been reserved for cinematic superheroes," said **Michael Gilbane**, senior vice president of Related Companies. "We are exceedingly proud of the team who master-minded this entertainment marvel offering the world an unparalleled perspective of the City."

Showplace Cinemas locations throughout the Evansville, Indiana, area will look much different in the near future.

After a year where cinemas were virtually shut down due to the pandemic, movies are finally returning to the big screen, and Showplace Cinemas has decided to make some major improvements to offer much more than popcorn and movies for its guests. **Showplace Newburgh** made some huge upgrades a few years ago when it introduced the **Newburgh Family Entertainment Center** which featured an arcade, bowling lanes, laser tag and restaurant. Following its success, other Showplace Cinemas locations will now be making similar upgrades.

Showplace has already made several upgrades to a few of its locations including exterior paint and new state-of-the-art laser projectors. More upgrades will begin in the upcoming weeks with redemption centers, laser tag arenas, large arcades and upgraded food and beverage options announced for area locations.

Stern Pinball, Inc., announced the availability of the Insider Connected upgrade kit, giving players and operators the ability to connect all LCD commercial Stern pinball machines to the world of Insider Connected.

Insider Connected is a recent advancement to pinball which enhances and extends player engagement with games across both home and commercial environments. It also presents professional operators with a robust set of tools to drive location play, build player loyalty, analyze performance, make adjustments remotely and maintain the machines.

There are two basic upgrade kits — a Pro version and a Premium/LE version. Each contains a WiFi dongle, QR reader, micro SD card, plug in wiring, necessary hardware, stickers with QR code to register for Insider Connected, as well as easy installation and set up instructions.

Insider Connected upgrade kits will be available starting in November through authorized Stern Pinball distributors and dealers around the world.

Route 7 Adrenaline Warehouse held its official ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 22. Route 7 Adrenaline Warehouse is a family entertainment center located in a 60,000-square-foot facility in the former *Florida Today* newspaper press room in Rockledge, Florida.

"The vision for Route7 Adrenaline Warehouse is to be a venue where we can serve families, friends and our community by creating unforgettable experiences through world-class attractions and impeccable service," said owner **Lori Saltzman**.

The facility's attractions include go-karts, laser tag, rope and ninja courses, e-sports, mini bowling, game arcade and a virtual-reality, multi-sensory interactive XD Dark Ride theater.

The facility also includes a dining area and a sports bar where patrons can enjoy beer or wine.

Creative Works has unveiled Limitless VR which it boasts as "...a game-changing free roam virtual reality attraction for entertainment venues."

The high capacity attraction is installed in a laser tag arena to give operators two attractions in a single space: traditional laser tag arena and a virtual arena that transforms with the tap of a button.

Players use an untethered headset to freely walk through the entire laser tag arena. The props, barriers, and walls of the space are all mapped and represented in the virtual world. When players touch a wall in the virtual space, they feel the tactile wall in real life.

Two of the biggest draws of Limitless VR are the high capacity and high throughput, which means increased revenue potential for operators. Limitless is currently the highest-capacity free roam VR option on the market, allowing up to 16 players to compete simultaneously. In future product upgrades, Creative Works plans to increase capacity to 30 players.

WHEN THE TIME CAME TO REPLACE OUR WHEEL LIGHTS ONCE AGAIN, WE CERTAINLY DISCUSSED THE PROJECT WITH VARIOUS RIDE LIGHTING COMPANIES, BUT ALL ROADS LED BACK TO EWORKS PRO.

“ Since 1994, Knoebels has operated a Holland Ferris Wheel. When the time came to replace our wheel lights once again, we certainly discussed the project with various ride lighting companies, but all roads led back to EWorks Pro. We had previously worked with EWorks Pro to replace the LEDs on our ARM drop tower and were pleased with the outcome. Working with them for our Giant Wheel LEDs provided the same experience: communication was great, installation was timely, the product has been reliable, and the programming allows us to tailor the shows to our needs. The Giant Wheel is one of the most photographed locations in the park and is a key component of every season of our operation, from the 4th of July to Halloween and now our Christmas drive through light display. Since installing the wheel light package, we have worked with EWorks Pro on a third project and anticipate another positive outcome.”

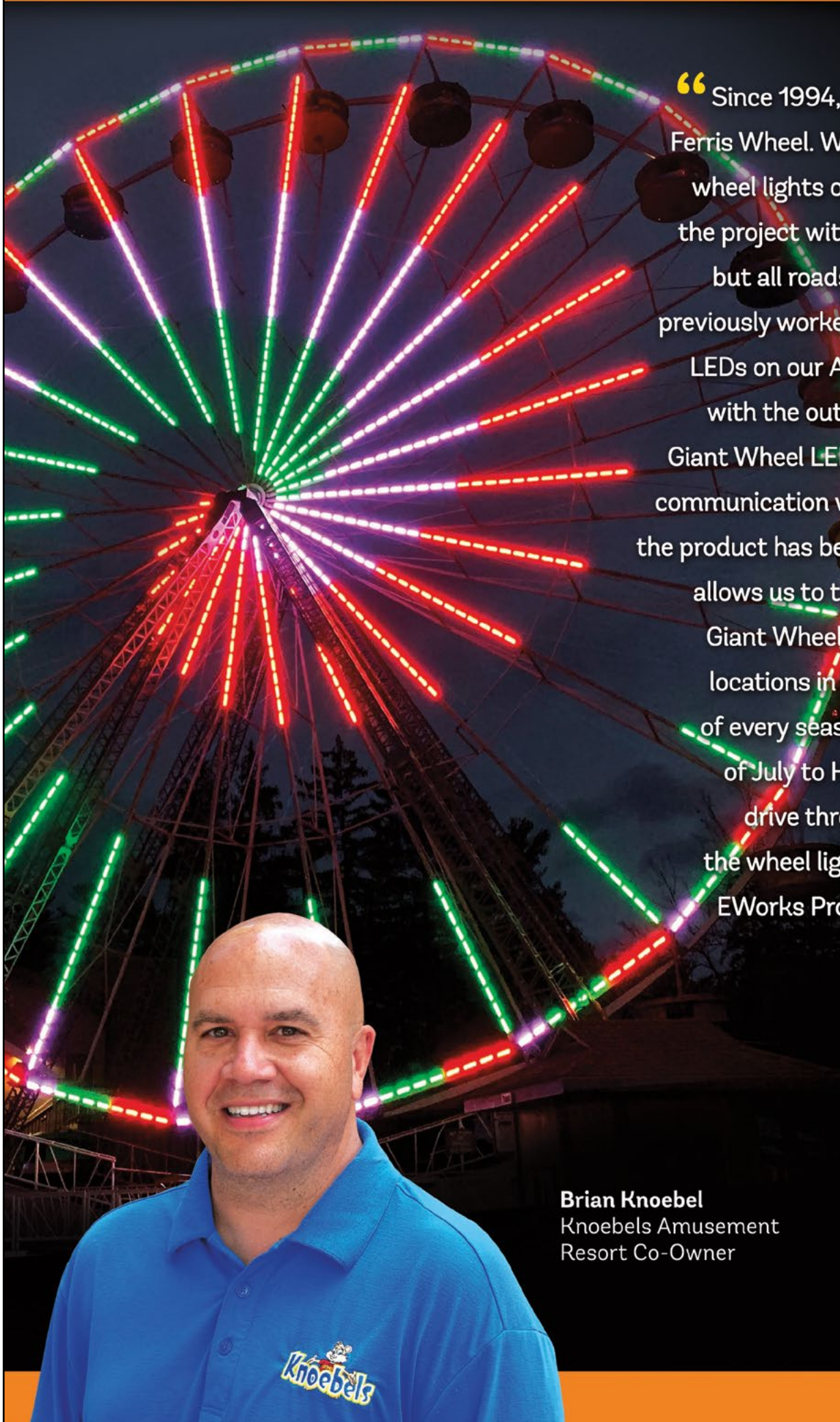
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MADE IN THE USA



Attendance down, however still strong for State Fair of Texas

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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DALLAS, Texas – During the 24-consecutive day **State Fair of Texas**, 2,202,689 people made their way to the fairgrounds, down from over 2.5 million at the last fair held in 2019. The 2021 theme was, “Howdy, Folks!”

“This year’s commemorative theme art encompassed the foundation of what the fair is all about — being together,” said **Mitchell Gieber**, fair president. “None of us could have predicted all that the COVID-19 pandemic would bring with it, but we felt so grateful to carry on the state fair’s 135-year history and welcome everyone back with a warm, ‘Howdy, Folks!’ this year. We were excited to make up for lost time and help families and friends from all walks of life reconnect again, while making new memories to last a lifetime.”

The weather cooperated during the two dozen days.

“Overall, the 2021 State Fair of Texas enjoyed beautiful weather, other than some above-average Texas heat to start off the fair and a few rainy days in the middle,” said **Karissa Condoianis**, senior vice president of public relations.

The fair operates an independent midway. There were 28 providers bringing anywhere from one to six rides for a total of 71, of which 23 were kiddie ones. This included **Alamo Amusements, Inc, Amusement Management International, Bishop Amusement Rides, B-Thrilled Attractions, Caprice Enterprise, D&K Amusements, Fair of Fun, Fair Ride Entertainment, Great American Entertainment, JOY RIDE, Laser Fair, Lauther Amusements, Lone Star Entertainment, M&C Attractions, McBubbles LLC, Mr. Ed’s Magical Midways, Pinnacle Fair Equipment Inc., Prime Pacific Entertainment, Rose’s Rides LLC, S.J Entertainment, Sky Spectacle,**



The Texas Star wheel (above left) is always a crowd pleaser. The ride has 44 gondolas and can seat 264 people. It remains on the grounds year-round, with occasional use on holidays, such as Independence Day weekend. A total of 28 carnival operators brought in a range of one to six rides, for a total of 71 on the 100% independent midway. COURTESY DAVID LIPNICKY

Inc, State Fair Spectacular, Talley Amusements, SkyWay Transportation, Tiki Amusement, Triple T Amusement, Wanderlust Amusement and Wood Entertainment Company.

There were a pair of new rides this year that included Moonraker (SDC Rides) **Bruce Perelman/Caprice Enterprise** and Toy Box (Fun Tech) **Tom McDonagh/McBubbles LLC.**

The three top grossing rides included Texas Skyway (Doppelmayr) State Fair of Texas, **Mike Demis**, operator; Texas Star (SDC Rides) **Mary and Tom Talley/Sky Spectacle**, operator; and Love Bug (Mack Rides,) State Fair of Texas, **Mory Hayworth**, operator. Midway revenue for rides and games was up by 25% over the 2019 midway revenue of \$24.3 million.

“We are very pleased to be back to normal,” said **Mary Talley**, owner of Sky Spectacle, State Fair Spectacular, Talley Amusements, and the iconic Texas Star Ferris wheel. “The comeback is always stronger than the setback, and our return to the State Fair of Texas is no exception.”

Daily admission to the fair ranged from \$5 to \$25, including special pricing on opening day. Special promotions offered included \$50 season passes (for

all 24 days), \$24 premium one day admissions, special-priced one-day admissions Monday-Thursday, online reduced admission pricing Tuesdays and Thursdays Thrilling Tuesdays (special ride pricing) and Thrifty Thursdays (food specials)/Senior Days. Also, every Wednesday, anyone bringing five canned goods got in for \$5. This promotion benefitted the **North Texas Food Bank**. Other events included Military and First Responders appreciation days, \$5 reduced general after 5 p.m. each night and discount coupons were available at **McDonald’s** locations.

Condoianis talked about COVID-19 mitigation challenges and practices the fair put in place: “Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state fair team worked tirelessly to ensure a safe environment for all. We were constantly in conversations, evaluating the latest guidance and protocols as they emerged from the national, state, and local levels. We encouraged folks to get vaccinated prior to the fair and worked with **Dallas County Health and Human Services** to offer vaccinations on-site. In addition, all fair employees were vaccinated prior to opening day. We asked that all fairgoers make an informed decision when choosing whether to attend the state fair this year or not. We also required masks to be worn indoors and in crowded areas outdoors. The beauty of Fair Park is that nearly 80% of the fairgrounds are outdoors, and there are 277-acres that allow fairgoers to spread out as they please during the state fair each year.”

Jennifer Schuder, senior vice president – marketing discussed their media and advertising strategy: “The media mix included direct mail, radio, broadcast, outdoor, and print. The fair launched a new pricing and promotions strategy for 2021 that was heavily supported by both paid and organic



social media as well as a robust email marketing program. In addition, the fair launched several new tools (specialized maps, downloadable materials, etc.) to assist fair attendees plan and extend their visit. The fair’s media budget for 2021 was down approximately 20% compared to 2019.”

There were 10 finalists in the Big Tex Choice Awards for food. They included **deep fried seafood gumbo balls, Gourmet Royale; Lucky Duck Dumplin’, Bert Concessions; Armadillo cookie butter ice cream sandwich, James Barrera; brisket brittle, Ruth Hauntz; and Fernie’s fried toffee coffee crunch cake, Winter Family Concessions.**

Home of the 1959 Original National Finals Rodeo, the fair brought a rodeo back to **Fair Park Coliseum**, free with fairgoer’s admission ticket. An all-new show, “Country Roundup,” debuted on the redesigned **Dr Pepper** midway stage. Specially created for the fair, “Country Roundup” featured animatronic and manual puppetry, and a vintage carousel-style stage to captivate its audience.

Joining the entertainment lineup was the **Produce Carver**. Think chainsaw carver meets giant pumpkin carver. Working his magic on fruits and vegetables, the Produce Carver travels the country, teaching the culinary art of fruit and vegetable carvings and leaving spectators and culinary professionals spellbound.

“Our State Fair: 135 years of the State Fair of Texas,” was a comprehensive exhibit celebrating the fair’s history. The exhibit included an extensive display of artifacts from the archives. In addition, the **Junior League of Dallas and Dallas Historical Society** partnered to produce an interactive exhibit to celebrate the Junior League of Dallas centennial. The exhibit focused on the history of the league and

its impact on Dallas. The third exhibit featured was the **Tom & Alicia Landry** family collection, which told the story of the man behind the legend, featuring more than 60 mementos from Landry’s life, some of which have never been seen by the public. These relics — from Landry’s childhood to **Dallas Cowboys** coach and after — will have a permanent home with the Dallas Historical Society.

As part of admission to the fair, free concerts were once again held on the **Chevrolet** main stage, with **Clay Walker, Black Pumas, La Energía Norteña, Grand Funk Railroad, Bill Engvall, and Charley Crockett** drawing the largest crowds.

“When we started this year, we still weren’t sure whether or not we’d be able to host a full fair,” said Condoianis. “We continued to plan cautiously, but optimistically, for all scenarios, including a full State Fair of Texas. Closing the gates on the 2021 State Fair of Texas embodies an even greater meaning than years past. After more than 700 days without the State Fair of Texas, the opportunity to come together safely again this year was the celebratory reunion we all longed for, and finally rejoiced in for 24 fun-filled fair days.”

Since 1886 the State Fair of Texas has celebrated all things Texan through quality entertainment in a family-friendly environment. The fair is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that passionately pursues opportunities to expand upon each pillar of its mission: agriculture, education, and community involvement. Since 1992, the fair’s scholarship program, one of its many community initiatives, has awarded college scholarships to more than 3,000 students in the Lone Star State for a total of \$15 million.

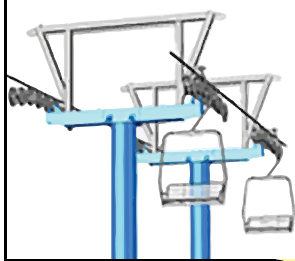
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Classic Coaster, a 1935 John Miller-designed ride, is always one of the top grossing rides at the fair that also occupies the grounds and uses some of the rides of Playland Park.
COURTESY WASHINGTON STATE FAIR



Washington State Fair organizers are good with event's lower attendance

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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PUYALLUP, Wash. — More than a million people attended the pre-pandemic Washington State Fair in 2019. This year, it was down 20%. However, organizers were okay with the decrease.

"We knew the impact of the pandemic would play a part in people choosing whether to come to the fair this year, but we knew how important it was for us to reopen. So, we welcomed guests who were ready to join our celebration and understood if some needed to wait until next year," said Stacy Van Horne, public relations manager.

The final tally of the 20-day fair came in just shy of 816,000.

Funtastic Traveling Shows was the carnival operator bringing in 63 rides (24 being kiddie ones), 58 games and four food joints. In 2019, Funtastic had 75 rides on property.

"It was great. All but two days had sunshine. The people who showed up spent quite a bit of money," said Ron Burback, show owner.

The new ride at the fair was the Pineapple Express, a Himalaya ride by Wisdom. It was brought in by Pat Davis, Davis Shows Northwest. The top adult rides were the Giant Slide (owned by the fair), 1935 Classic Coaster, a woodie built by John Miller and owned by Playland Park and Funtastic Shows and Extreme Scream (S&S Space Shot). In the kiddie ride realm, Speedy Gonzales coaster (Fajume), SillyVille train (Chance Rides) and Funny Farm walk through were the top rides.

Ride midway revenue was "Up tremendously," said Burback. It was their biggest year with less rides and games. The fair also confirmed revenue was at an all-time record. When



Nearly 816,000 attended the 20-day Washington State Fair in 2021.
COURTESY WASHINGTON STATE FAIR

asked about working with the fair, Burback said, "They are the greatest people in the world to work with. They understand the challenges we were faced."

Van Horne was pleased with the Portland, Oregon operator, stating: "Great as always, wonderful partners we've been working with for more than 40 years."

"We had one hell of a season," said Burback. "All 14 spots were outstanding with one exception. Spending was incredible." Help in the northwest was scarce as it was elsewhere around the country, forcing operational staffing rotation on rides and games, closing some briefly. Signs indicated if a particular ride or game was closed. "We would go back and reopen if we could, later on," said Burback. He was quick to point out and grateful that Guy and Charlene Leavitt (Ray Cammack Shows, RCS) temporarily sent 60 of their H2B workers to help Funtastic Shows with staffing needs.

"It has been the most challenging year we have ever had," said Burback. "All in all, we had one great year considering what's going on in the country."

The fair did not do many promotions this year, however they continued the opening day food drive where guests got in free for the first two hours if they donated food. The following Friday, the fair once again maintained their annual school supply drive done in the same

format. Every Monday was Military Appreciation Monday where active, retired, disabled military personnel and their dependents got in free. All those under age 18 also got in free opening weekend including Labor Day, courtesy of credit union BECU.

During the run of the fair, 369 guests received COVID-19 vaccines at an on-site booth, in partnership with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.

"The safety of our staff, vendors and guests were a top priority," said Van Horne. "We added nearly three dozen mobile hand washing stations and portable hand washing stations throughout the grounds. We had about 25% less vendors to allow for better spacing and 10% [less] rides. We provided masks to those who needed them, as it was mandated both indoors and outdoors."

When questioned what sets this fair apart from others, Van Horne said, "We're the largest fair in the smallest town in America. We're the largest single event in our entire state and the largest fair in the Northwest."

"We're proud we returned this year and kept everyone safe, without any COVID outbreaks, amongst the nearly 816,000 who attended," said Van Horne

The 2022 dates are set for September 2–25.

•thefair.com



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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Los Angeles County Fair, Pomona, is moving next year from its traditional late summer dates to a May timeframe. From its website: "After nearly 100 years of holding our annual Southern California tradition of ooey-goey delectables on-a-stick, farm animals and carnival thrills in September, the LA County Fair is permanently moving its dates to May beginning in 2022, when we celebrate the Centennial. Next year's Fair will run Thursdays-Sundays, plus Memorial Day Monday, May 5–30, 2022!"

RCS will continue to be the midway provider.

The Santa Barbara County Fair (California) was cancelled two years in a row. Santa Maria Fairpark hosted "Helm and Sons Amusements' Greatest Portable Theme Park" for two weekends, Thursday to Sunday, this year. Admission included all rides and entertainment. Food and carnival games were available for purchase. Pricing was \$25 in advance and \$30 on the grounds for kids 10 and under, \$40 for those 11 and up. In all, there were 28 carnival rides including the most popular, the Century Wheel, Zipper, Himalaya and Fun Slide. Masks were not required; however, capacity limits were established.

Upon conclusion of the six-day Eastern New Mexico State Fair, Roswell, Wright's Amusements made a substantial product donation to the Roswell Community Disaster Relief Services. Wright's was winding down its season, donating the remaining nacho chips, other assorted chips and many cases of lemons and apples, amounting to an entire trailer load.

During the early October fair, the Elbert, Colorado carnival operator organized a canned goods food night to benefit the food bank. Anyone who brought two non-perishable items received a reduced priced armband for all the rides from 4 p.m. to close that Thursday.

Also, the night before the 99th annual fair opened, the carnival provided two hours of free rides to all the youngsters who were showing their livestock throughout the upcoming week.

Wright's brought in 37 rides, of which 14 were kiddie rides. "They are the cleanest, most well-laid-out carnival we've had in a long while," said Leslie Robertson, fair office manager.

Wright's Amusements has been a family operation for 55 years. John Ring is current owner, previously owned by Ring's uncle, Floyd Wright.

Reithoffer Shows, orange unit, has some work that will be done to one of their rides in the off-season. "We are refurbishing our Freak Out (KMG Rides) and calling it the Inferno. It will be ready for our 2022 dates," said Suzi Reithoffer Blake.

Reithoffer Shows, blue unit, has a heavy workload in the upcoming off-season. "I now have enough work to keep me until we open [again] and two months after that!" said Rick Reithoffer, owner. Refurb projects include the Zipper (Chance Rides,) new scenery for the Grand Carousel (Chance,) Raiders kiddie soft play attraction (Wisdom Rides,) and Starship (Wisdom) Gravitron. The company also plans to rebuild Rick's sister, Jan's, office. "We want to keep the show in tip top shape," said Reithoffer.

The orange unit has some work that will be done to one of their rides. "We are refurbishing our Freak Out (KMG Rides) and calling it the Inferno. It will be ready for our 2022 dates," said Suzi Reithoffer Blake, office manager.

The show is expecting to take delivery in mid-December on a new Wave Swinger (Bertazzon).

Cape Fear Fair And Expo's Skip Watkins, fair manager, said the event's return after a one year hiatus has seen a significant increase in fairgoers. The Wilmington, North Carolina, fair opened on October 29.

"We've never had the huge attendance we've been having in the last few years, but last night in one day, we crossed over 10,000 people probably close to 11,000, and you know we'll end up with 40,000-50,000 people," said Watkins.

Powers Great American Midways operates the event's rides which it relocates after operating at the North Carolina State Fair.

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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ Wavegarden expands into Japan — page 50 / Dueling waterslide coming to Aquatica San Antonio — page 52

OCT opens Playa Maya in Xi'an, highlighted by ProSlide attractions

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

XI'AN, China — This past summer, **Overseas Chinese Town Enterprises (OCT)** a state-owned company which operates cultural tourism businesses in China, opened its latest water park within the OCT Xi'an multi-use development complex. Playa Maya water park features numerous attractions including 15 high-profile waterslides from Canada's **ProSlide Technologies**.

The water park is the ninth ProSlide/OCT collaboration in which ProSlide has supplied equipment over the course of an 11-year relationship. The decade-plus-long relationship has resulted in the installation of more than 100 waterslides in OCT parks. To help OCT fulfill its vision of making Playa Maya Xi'an its flagship park, ProSlide curated a cutting-edge mix comprised of some of its best attractions. The state-of-the-art water park is unlike anything else in the region and boasts some of the largest water ride offerings across the country including several firsts. As with other Playa Maya water parks, the 40-acre facility draws inspiration from Central America's Mayan civilization with detailed theming that transports guests into the lush jungles of Mesoamerica. The park features five themed zones: Maya Playa, Feathered



Guests enjoy the competition of the multi-lane Rally Racer. The overhead view (above) shows the two mid-course rally points including the three-lane crossovers halfway through the slide. COURTESY PROSLIDE

Snake Holy Land, Rainforest Secrets, Sun Tribe and Dawn Plaza. Stages and performance areas are scattered throughout the park allowing for interactive, thrilling and amazing entertainment experiences for guests throughout their visit. The park also plans to hold music festivals throughout the year.

Built at a cost of CNY2.43 billion (US\$377 million) the 183,333 square-meter (45-acre) Playa Maya water park is part of a 213-hectare (526-



acre) multi-use development in Peidong New Town of Xi'an's Xianxin District. Xi'an, the capital city of the Shaanxi Province, is one of the most important in the history of China, both as the capital of several ruling dynasties and as a market and trade center.

Over the past decade the city has seen explosive economic, physical, and population growth, becoming a huge metropolis in Northwest China. It is home to several of China's most prestigious universities. The city's many historical monuments, ancient

ruins and tombs, make it one of the most popular tourist destinations in China. This fact was not overlooked when OCT decided to build a world-class water park in the city.

"This park is truly OCT's crowning achievement", says **Fiona Luo**, ProSlide's vice-president, business development, China. "OCT Xi'an is a triumph of water park ride designs and concept designs, all brought together by OCT's breathtaking vision. We curated a cutting-edge ride mix of our absolute best water rides from around the world, many of which are appearing in China for the first time. This latest collaboration between OCT and ProSlide is the most ambitious to date and sets a new standard for water parks in the region. We're proud to be long-time partners with OCT and to have collaborated with them on their amazing transformation of the water



Colorful Mayan theming is carried through to the RideHouse 600 (above left). The mix of interactive water features and slides will keep children entertained for hours. The dazzling theming is evident in this view of the dueling RocketBlast water coaster and TornadoWave (above right). COURTESY PROSLIDE

▶ See XI'AN, page 46



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► **XI'AN**

Continued from page 43

park landscape in China.”

Among the attractions are several firsts for China including its first dueling RocketBlast water coaster, China’s largest wave pool and the longest river rapids in northwestern China. The most significant slide — and likely to become the park’s most popular — is a Dueling RocketBlast/FlyingSaucer 20/30 water coaster that includes multiple racing/rally points and a total of six saucer sections — three on each side. The ride also features ProSlide’s new ProSplash finish, a new run-out that replaces traditional landing pools and reduces water and energy requirements. A six-lane rally mat racer features two rally points, including a pair of crossover rally points in which three lanes cross over the other three lanes. A pair of Twister drop slides are also making a China debut, and a Dueling PipeLine is the first in all of Asia. Other notable attractions include a double Tornado 24, double FlyingSaucer



At night (above left) the park is illuminated with LED ring lights placed on all of the slides and ambient lighting throughout the park. This ride complex (above right) incorporates a lift system for the six-person rafts used by guests to experience the thrills of both the double TornadoWave and the massive Tornado 60. COURTESY PROSLIDE

45, CannonBowl, double TornadoWave + Tornado 60, FreeFall, and a TurboTwister + SuperLoop with SkyBox. All told, there are more than 20 signature ProSlide experiences combined into 15 water rides spread over eight custom complexes.

To complete the family guest experience, a high-capacity RideHouse 600 offers an innovative and immersive aquatic play structure. In keeping with the theme, the

interactive water play structure draws visual inspiration from the Maya civilization, displaying brilliant colors and designs. As part of ProSlide’s WaterKingdom suite of children’s and family attractions, the RideHouse is filled with an exciting mix of dynamic features, slides and interactive areas to explore.

To complement the waterslides, **Murphys Waves** installed the largest wave pool in China to date, as well as

a Torrent River. The Boogie Wave Pool covering 9,000 square meters (97,000 square feet) can deliver eight different wave patterns, and the system can generate waves up to five feet. The wave generator in the Torrent River can produce an even larger wave — greater than seven feet — every 60 seconds to propel guests down the river with screams of excitement. The river also incorporates a beach area with designated

entry and exit zones.

“With OCT’s latest park, ProSlide has brought some of the world’s best and most advanced water rides to the Xi’an region of China,” said ProSlide Chief Commercial Officer **Ray Smegal**. “The award-winning, state-of-the-art water ride innovations and technology at work will help cement OCT Xi’an as a premiere leisure spot, not just for China, but for the entire world.”

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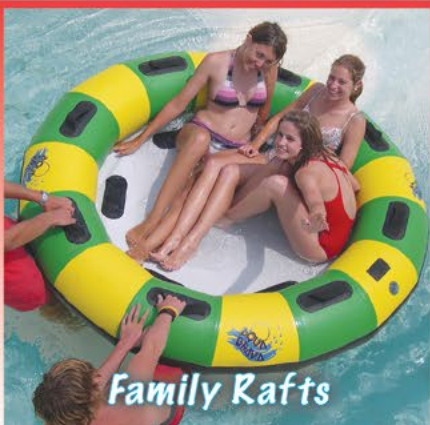
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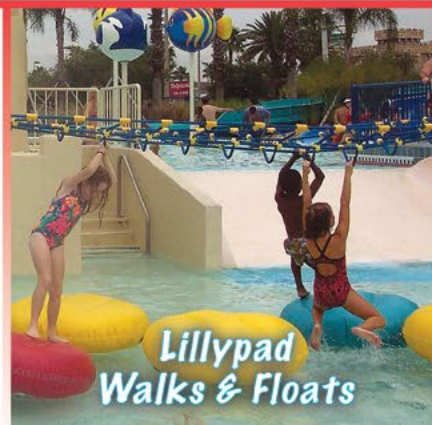
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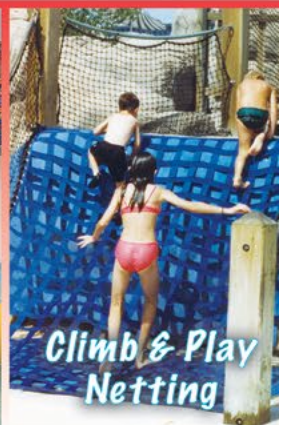
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Progress on redevelopment of New Orleans' Six Flags property

AT: Pam Sherborne
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NEW ORLEANS — The City of New Orleans last month selected **Bayou Phoenix LLC**, a group comprised of local businessman **Troy Henry**, local construction company **TKTMJ**, and **Hillwood Development Company**, based in Dallas, Texas, to redevelop the site of the former **Six Flags Corp.** park.

Ravaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the 227-acre site in New Orleans East once leased by Six Flags Corp. for the park has sat deteriorating. This is the first real progress toward a redevelopment project.

"Our first priority is, first and foremost, the people of East New Orleans," said **Troy Henry**, **Henry Consulting**. "And we are looking forward to moving forward with our partners, and the City of New Orleans, to ensure their needs are fully met."

"I'm hopeful and I believe that this project will be transformative and catalytic," Henry said.

The master development proposal originally submitted by Bayou Phoenix included a sports complex, an indoor/outdoor water park and hotel, a logistics center, a mega travel center and the redevelopment of the **Eastover Country Club, Golf Course** and residences.

In that original proposal, the team stated it will attempt to purchase an additional 172 acres of adjacent property to add to the 277 acres of the former park to expand the master plan to include retail opportunities and an amusement park.

However, the Bayou Phoenix team also stated, after the selection, that it would modify its plans according to the city's needs.



Above is a proposed map of the area and components of the Bayou Phoenix proposal for the site of the former Six Flags New Orleans in Louisiana. COURTESY BAYOU PHOENIX

As it has turned out, Bayou Group will acquire about 300 acres.

Bayou Phoenix had been chosen by the city along with the **Kiernan-West** group last May as a finalist. Kiernan-West is a group that included former NFL Saints quarterback **Drew Brees** and current Saints linebacker **Demario Davis**.

The Kiernan-West group proposed to turn the site into a logistics hub and urban farm. That proposal didn't receive as much community support as did Bayou Phoenix. So the Kiernan-West group withdrew.

During the same press conference that New Orleans Mayor **LaToya Cantrell** announced Bayou Phoenix was selected, Cantrell also added it would work with the Kiernan-West group to execute their plan for a logistics and transportation hub at a different location in New Orleans East.

A story that ran in the *Associated Press* about a week after the official announcement stated that the Kiernan-West group will acquire about 100 acres of the adjacent park property.

Because of that, according to Henry, the amusement park and retail development may not be possible.

However, the first phase of the Bayou Phoenix development has already been set. Phase one of the project is expected to include a logistics center and a STEM NOLA Center. The center has a preliminary plan to include about a million square feet and to create about 12,000 jobs.

Bayou Phoenix has estimated the cost of the first phase to be about \$1 million and take two years to complete.

STEM NOLA is a national leader in the design and delivery of STEM-based activities, programs and events to K-12

students, families and communities. STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

Phase two is expected to include a sports complex and indoor water park with a hotel. It's expected to be done 18 months after phase one is complete.

"In it, we will have the ball fields and the basketball courts, sports and volleyball and all that stuff but also an e-sports venue as well," Henry said.

Phase three was to be the amusement park and retail center. Whether that will happen is uncertain.

Residents living near the former Six Flags park in the New Orleans East, according to information on the Bayou Phoenix website as well in the newspaper, have said last month's announcement marks the most progress they have seen since Hurricane Katrina.

The amusement park opened in 2000 as **Jazzland Theme Park**, but after two seasons, it declared bankruptcy. Six Flags took over the lease, but then Hurricane Katrina struck and flooded the park and much of the city. The theme park never reopened, and eventually Six Flags went bankrupt. Control of the property went to the **Industrial Development Board of the City of New Orleans**.

The roller coaster and other rides have sometimes served as a backdrop for movies. But, nearby residents say the site has become home to wildlife such as alligators and people frequently break into the lot despite security outside.

Hopes are the redevelopment of this area will go a long way to change the course and future of New Orleans East.

There have been previous efforts but none have come to fruition.

Former Mayor Ray Nagin tried to bring about a deal with an amusement park developer and the Nickelodeon cable channel in 2009, but the relationship never materialized.

Three years later, a proposal to bring an outlet mall to that area gained momentum. But after the city approved a comparable project at the Riverwalk, the development team behind the Six Flags proposal pulled out.

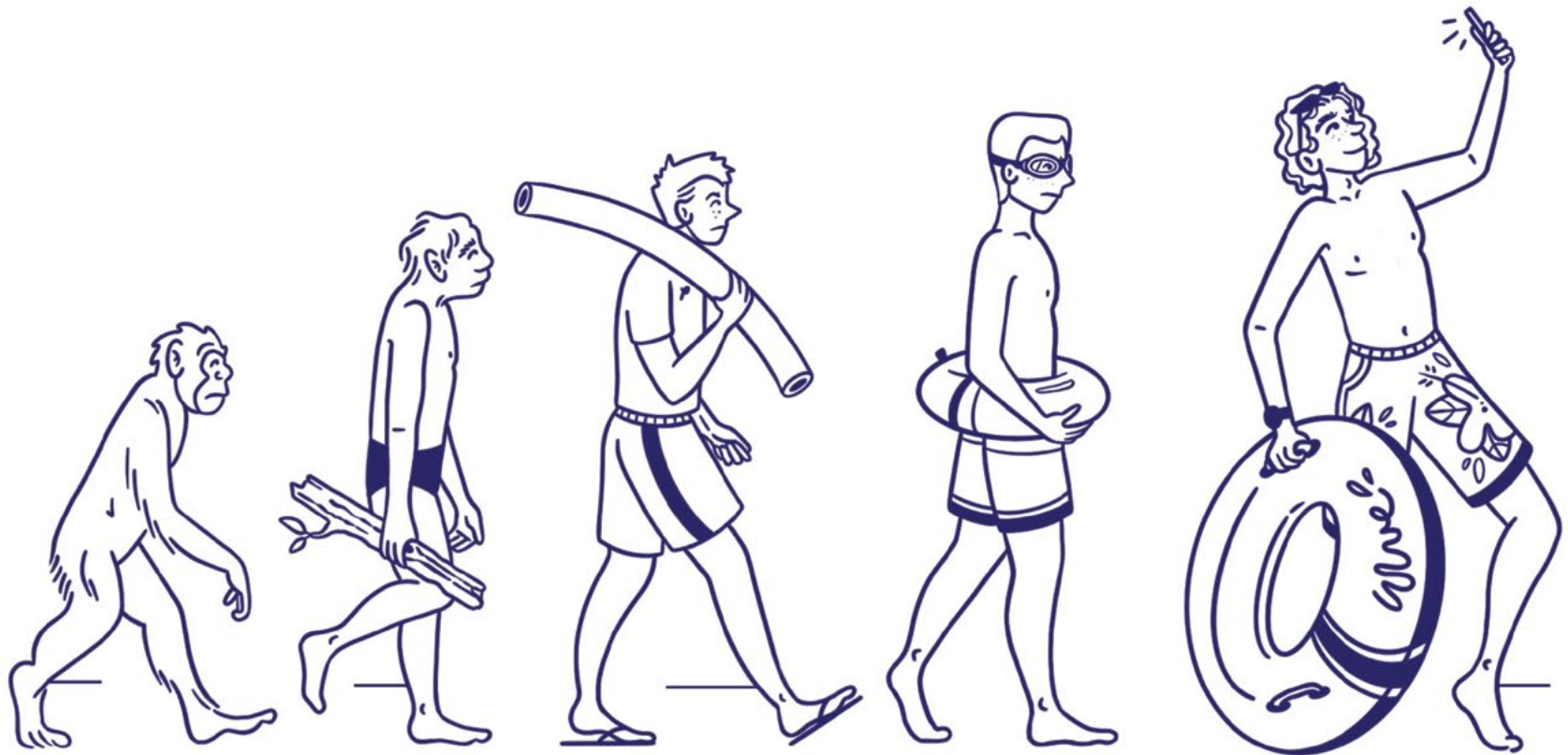
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The former Six Flags amusement park in New Orleans East was flooded by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The 277-park site has sat deteriorating since. COURTESY BAYOU PHOENIX



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A typical Wavegarden installation features a triangular pool with the wave generating sweep in the middle. This setup allows for different levels of waves on each side of the pool and can accommodate multiple surfers at a time. COURTESY WAVEGARDEN

Wavegarden signs deal, expanding into Japan

AT: Jeffrey Seifert

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DONOSTIA-SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain — Wavegarden SL, one of the largest manufacturers of wave generating systems for surf parks, has signed a deal with JPF Co., Ltd, a Japanese operator of cycling stadiums. JPF has established a division specializing in wave pools and will lead the Japanese market in the surf parks business for the future.

Established in 1957, JPF has been involved with large-scale projects and has installed international sports business destinations in various regions of Japan. The company has built and operates a motorcycle stadium and six cycling stadiums across Japan. Most recently JPF renovated a local cycling racecourse in the Chiba province creating the **Tipstar Dome Chiba**, an enclosed stadium capable of hosting international tournaments. The new facility hosted the PIST6 Championship — the first competition in Japan to pursue both speed and entertainment in cycling. This new type of sporting event combines a light show, art, food and fashion while pitting top athletes from Japan and abroad against each other in a high-level match to determine the world's fastest cyclists.

JPF and Wavegarden plan to meet the country's growing demand for surfing by developing up to seven projects in different regions of Japan in the next seven years. Interest in surfing in Japan has really taken off following the sport's Olympic debut in the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympic Games in which Japanese athletes took home the bronze and silver medals. A recent survey indicated that nearly 80% of respondents in the Tokyo area said they would surf if a wave pool was accessible.

Yoshihiro Kuba JPF managing director said, "We thought that there was something in common with our other business, so we started the wave pool business." He added, "Wavepools have various uses such as risk avoidance training for children at the beach, lifesaver training, surf experience for people with disabilities, as well as the popularization of surfing. We will do more than just provide waves to surfers. Instead, we can create a beach culture that is familiar to the natural environment."

The initial plan is to build a 40,000-square-meter (9.8-acre) facility with a 520-foot-long Wavegarden Cove. The facility would be similar to current **Urbsurf Cove** in Melbourne, Australia. The total cost of the project including surrounding amenities will be about 6 billion yen or US\$53 million.

Wavegarden has already established a market in Asia with the installation of Wave Park in Siheiung-Si, South Korea in 2020 — the world's largest surf park (see AT January 2021). That project was in alliance with **Daewon Plus Construction Group**, a global construction and real estate development company based in Busan, South Korea.

With the establishment of Wavegarden parks throughout Japan, the country, characterized by its traditional culture and its futuristic and technological vision, will soon be recognized for its innovative surf parks.



NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert

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Now that the only public pool in Mansfield, Ohio, is closed, the city is being forced to speed up plans for a new aquatic center. First proposed in 2020 as a part of a master parks plan, the city is looking to add an income tax issue to the 2022 primary ballot.

The **Liberty Park Pool**, built in 1934, has had numerous issues over the past several years. This summer, one of the motors of the primary pumps failed, forcing it to close before the end of the season. The pool had closed early the previous two years because of mechanical issues.

It was later discovered that a broken waterline under the deck washed out a wall in the pump house. Tracking down that line and digging up the concrete would be expensive and likely take most of next summer to repair.

At a city council finance committee budget meeting held in October, it was decided to stop spending money on the pool. At one time, the city had four outdoor public swimming pools, but the **Linden Pool** closed in 2016. The other two — **Ford-Hill Pool** and **Unity Pool** — closed in 2008 for budgetary reasons and were eventually demolished.

Current plans call for a 0.25% income tax levy to be used exclusively for the city's parks and recreation department. Expected to raise about \$3.7 million over a four-year period, part of that money is earmarked for a new aquatics center at **Liberty Park**.

The new center will cost about \$8 million, will include a zero-depth, ADA-compliant entry and have lap lanes and perhaps slides, according to **Mark Abrams**, the park and recreation department manager.

Abrams said the city will hold public meetings leading up to and after next year's primary election. If the levy passes in May, the next step is to start putting together a design plan. In the meantime, the city will be without a public swimming pool for the first time since the 1930s.

A waterplay structure at Lake Casitas in California will likely have to be removed. An aquatics design company that was hired to assess the play structure's viability deemed it unsafe and recommended it be removed. The structure, installed in 1998, has outlived the typical lifespan for this type of equipment. The weather, chlorine and more than two decades of use have taken their toll and the original manufacturer is no longer in business. The waterplay structure was found to have numerous cracks in the foundation supports and rusty areas with exposed sharp edges on some of the railings and steps. The water park has been closed since 2020 because of COVID-19 health concerns.

Fortunately, the water park has a lazy river and splash pad that are slightly newer and in better shape. The park agency is expected to replace the waterplay structure in the near future and reopen the entire water park next season.

Although the **Lake Casitas Recreation Area** has reopened to the public, the water park has remained closed. The water park provides an important recreation function for

the camping area and also provides revenue. Because Lake Casitas is a source for drinking water, body contact is prohibited. Boating and fishing are allowed but guests are not allowed to get in the water. Having the water park open helps provide an alternative to the lake, and helps rangers enforce the no-swimming-in-the-lake policy.

Beach Park in Aquiraz, Brazil, will open a new waterslide in December that features visual effects and music. Tobomusik, is a new musical waterslide that will include a custom sound track from **DJ Alok**, one of most prominent icons in Brazilian music. Alok was recently ranked as the fourth best in the world by *DJ Magazine* and is the highest ranking DJ in Brazil.

The Tobomusik slide complex starts at the top of a 13-meter (42-foot) tower and will feature three different slides ranging from 104 to 114 meters (341 to 374 feet). Each will have multicolored translucent rings and graphic cutouts. Alok will create 15 different song mixes that will play inside each slide during the rider's descent.

"It's very special to be able to work on this project, which goes beyond a musical production. Participating in all stages, being able to co-create alongside the team and having my music playing on the first musical waterslide in Latin America, has, without a doubt, been a unique and remarkable experience," said DJ Alok.

As work progresses on the massive **Qetaifan Island North** water park in Lusail, Qatar, developers are hoping to have two world records verified before the park is complete. The Qatari water park is working with **Guinness World Records (GWR)** to certify that it has the world's tallest waterslide, and the most waterslides. The Icon Tower, located just off the coast of Lusail with its 12 slides, will also have the world's tallest. It is designed to resemble a giant oil platform covered with colorful waterslides. The entire park will feature 66 waterslides on 21 towers and include 26 buildings, 15 pools, 45 cabanas, four food and beverage outlets, and a private beach. Included in the attraction mix will be the fourth installation of the SlideWheel rotating waterslide — the first in the Middle East.

The park is 60% complete, with the Icon Tower fully in place. Installation of the waterslides has begun. Once a good portion of the fiberglass is up, GWR will begin its assessment. The water park is expected to open in the third quarter of 2022, in time for the FIFA World Cup competition — the first to ever take place in an Arab country.

The project has been in the works since 2019 when **Qetaifan Projects** signed a contract with **WhiteWater West** for the manufacture, shipment and installation of the water park rides.

The island's construction engineer, **Mustafa Al Cherkawi**, said, "When we compare this to other water parks in the Middle East or even global water parks, this is a really big attraction and a big achievement for Qatar."



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Dueling waterslide to make its debut at Aquatica San Antonio

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Guests in the Lone Star State will be able to enjoy a new dueling waterslide next spring at SeaWorld San Antonio's Aquatica water park. Riptide Race, set to open next season, will be the park's first dueling pipeline waterslide.

Guests will climb to the top of the 51-foot tower and once there will have the opportunity to overlook Aquatica, SeaWorld and areas of still-undeveloped property that, under the park's original owners **Harcourt Brace Jovanovich**, were to become a second **Boardwalk and Baseball** theme park. After taking in the scenery, guests will grab a two-person raft and take their mark with their partner at the entrance to the slide. When both sets of racers are in place and a signal is given, riders will enter the first tunnel and begin their downward plunge through 565 feet of twisting slide toward a hopeful victory.

Riptide Race features dueling side-by-side flumes and low walls to ensure an exciting view of the competition. Guests can challenge



RIPTIDE RACE

each other while navigating tight loops, turns and exciting drops as they slide through enclosed and outdoor sections.

Riptide Race is a Dueling Pipeline slide from **ProSlide Technologies** of Canada. The ride

Riders negotiate tunneled sections, twists and turns then burst into daylight at multiple RallyPoints to see how well they are competing against their fellow riders in the adjacent lane (above). The similar Riptide Race slide at sister park Aquatica Orlando was a big hit with families this past summer (inset). COURTESY SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO, PROSLIDE

features multiple RallyPoints, a patented ride component that utilizes low divider walls and a U-shaped flume. Specially designed fiberglass keeps the two tube chutes as close together as possible and the RallyPoints allow riders to see and hear

their competition multiple times throughout the ride.

"The addition of Riptide Race will give thrill-seeking guests another exciting reason to visit Aquatica," said **Byron Surret**, park president of SeaWorld and Aquatica. "We're committed to

providing our guests with new experiences at our parks. Riptide Race is the third new high-speed water ride in as many years, and it gives guests one more heart-pounding ride to experience again and again."

With a height requirement of 42 inches, the fast-paced, high-speed slide is perfect for families with children. The exciting attraction pits teams of two against each other as they race toward the splashdown at the finish line.

A similar slide of the same name opened this past spring at the Aquatica park in Orlando where it has been thrilling guests throughout the summer. Riptide Race is expected to make its San Antonio debut in March 2022.

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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Skyline Attractions introduces P'Sghetti Bowl — page 56 / 3dx enjoys successful year — page 60

The Funplex Mount Laurel adding hotel accommodations in 2023

MOUNT LAUREL, N.J. — Site-work is under way on **The Funplex Mount Laurel's** newest addition, a much-anticipated hotel at its Mount Laurel, New Jersey, amusement and water park. The **La Quinta and Hawthorn Suites** dual-branded hotel is slated to open in the spring of 2023 with a combined 125 guest rooms.

Partnering with **Wyndham Hotels and Resorts**, the unique, dual-brand hotel offers versatile lodging options for both business travelers as well as guests visiting The Funplex Mount Laurel. Fifty-seven of the rooms will feature the recently updated Hawthorn room design that includes modern, well-equipped kitchens for extended-stay guests. The hotel will also feature the newly refreshed room design from La Quinta's Del Sol prototype in 68 rooms.

Introduced earlier this year, this new dual-brand hotel concept couples Wyndham's upper-midscale brand, La Quinta, with its benchmark, extended-stay Hawthorn Suites brand and is designed to offer guest flexibility and streamline operational costs. It includes a shared lobby, a modern great room, fitness center, bar and other amenities.

"Breaking ground on the new LaQuinta and Hawthorn Suites is the perfect start to our 25th anniversary season," said Funplex owner **Randy Lahn**. "We look forward to providing Funplex guests, local travelers and business guests the ability to stay at the park."

Since purchasing the property in 1997, Lahn has significantly invested over the



years, growing The Funplex from a mini-golf course and batting cage to a full amusement and water park.

Featuring indoor and outdoor rides, a water park, restaurant, arcade, bowling, laser tag, go karts and more, The Funplex Mount Laurel offers year-round fun. With the addition of a hotel and a 50% increase to the size of the waterpark in 2021, there appears to be no slowing to the Funplex's growth.

"Partnering with Wyndham Hotels and Resorts enables us to offer a new resort experience to our guests," said Funplex CEO **Brian Williams**. "With indoor and outdoor rides plus a water park, there is definitely two days of fun here at The

The La Quinta and Hawthorne Suites dual-branded hotel — scheduled to open in 2023 — has broken ground adjacent to The Funplex Mount Laurel (above). In July 2021, Funplex officially doubled the size of its water park, **The Splashplex**, with the opening of **Splash Island** (right). COURTESY THE FUNPLEX MOUNT LAUREL

Funplex Mount Laurel."

Along with the new hotel, The Funplex secured a liquor license which will enable it to serve alcohol at the park in addition to the hotel, enhancing its event and food and beverage offerings.

The hotel was designed by **Silvestri Architects PC** from Amherst, New York and will be contracted by **TWT Engineering**.

•thefunplex.com/mount-laurel



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Skyline Attractions introduces P'Sghetti Bowl family attraction

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO — When Skyline Attractions was established in 2014, they set up on the IAAPA Expo floor with a goal.

"When we first exhibited at the Expo in 2014, we won an IAAPA award for Strike-U-Up, the world's first strongman game that people could ride," said Jeff Pike, president. "We sold several, but we wanted to challenge ourselves to do something new each year. This year we are finally bringing another new revolutionary roller coaster — this time for the kids."

Enter P'Sghetti Bowl. The cleverly named coaster is strikingly different. The construction is made from a single rail, which Skyline Attractions feels brings multiple advantages.

"It is based on the same principles of the Titan Track developed for Great Coasters International, Inc.," said Pike. "There is no bending, there is no welding. There is no warpage or post-weld treatment. There is no nondestructive testing



Designed for both indoor (inset) and outdoor (above) use, the models' compact nature makes for a good fit indoors while adding to the thrilling nature of the ride.

COURTESY
SKYLINE ATTRACTIONS

required. No special welder's certification process is required. We have a super-efficient process that allows us to create a



really, really finely tuned, finely detailed track centerline."

"We developed the Titan Track for Great Coasters," added Chris Gray, vice president, Skyline Attractions.

"There is an advantage not only in durability but also in getting it to market. The turnaround time is going to be a lot quicker than anybody who has to weld roller coaster track together," Pike told *Amusement Today*.

In addition to the structural advantages, the track also lends itself to theming. Along with themed trains or environments, the track can feature a wooden motif, snakeskin or a cosmic outer space feel with dramatic lighting. "We can theme the ride in a way that no one has been able to do," offered Gray.

Elements include curving drops, tight helices, quick

back-and-forth transitions and airtime hills. The coaster is designed to be big on thrills even with its diminutive size.

"Since announcing it, P'Sghetti Bowl is the most requested [product] we've put out there in its first two weeks," said Gray. "The demand is huge."

"Another advantage of the P'Sghetti Bowl coaster — especially for those buyers who are just dipping their toes into the "hard-ride" market — is that the ride operates without the need for a complicated or expensive programmable logic controller (PLC)," Pike explained. "Instead, all of the ride's critical safety functions are managed by an on-board safety circuit built into the motor controllers. This circuit is rated for the performance requirements of ASTM and EN

standards and is incredibly intuitive for inexperienced technicians to quickly learn. New customers unfamiliar with the more complex ride logic systems will be able to operate and maintain the P'Sghetti Bowl coaster with confidence, knowing that they don't need a staff member with special training on PLC programming."

Six off-the-shelf models are readily available. They range from a footprint of 80 feet by 32 feet to larger models featuring dual racing tracks in a space of 162 by 79 feet. The coasters can operate indoors or outside. Skyline Attractions is also eager to do a custom design for any customer that has something special in mind. "We thrive on that," said Gray.

All models have a height below 25 feet making them an easy fit inside indoor family entertainment centers. Some models can be built in indoor spaces with a roof height of 20 feet.

"It's not even just FECs," Pike said. "There are other facilities looking at getting into amusements to augment their [offerings]. Zoos are a huge market for us. They are looking at offering fun and interesting rides."

"A racing coaster doubles the capacity still with a single operator in the middle," added Gray. "One operator has instant access to both trains. You'd get a pretty stunning-looking little coaster."

Economic elements include a single operator station, tire-driven lift that doesn't require a catwalk and the weld-free track design. Each model is available with an optional base frame, preventing the need to lay concrete or drill into existing infrastructure.

Trains are designed to accommodate an adult who wishes to ride alongside a child.

•skylineattractions.com

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With two intertwined tracks, the installation can double the capacity with a single ride operator. COURTESY SKYLINE ATTRACTIONS

P. Sghetti

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MODEL C
MODEL D
MODELS E&F



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Power 50 kW



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Height 18' [5.5m]
Length 235' [71.6m]
Power 50 kW



Size 100'x40' [30.5mx12.2m]
Height 22' [6.7m]
Length 420' [128.0m]
Power 50 kW



Size 152'x38' [46.3mx11.6m]
Height 22' [6.7m]
Length 410' [125.0m]
Power 50 kW



Size 162'x79' [49.5mx24.1m]
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Accesso expands its partnership with Illuminarium Experiences for Area15

ORLANDO — **Accesso Technology Group plc**, a technology solutions provider for attractions and venues worldwide, has signed a three-year agreement with **Illuminarium Experiences** to provide its Passport eCommerce ticketing suite and Ingresso ticketing distribution technology to support the operator's forthcoming Las Vegas location at **Area15**, which is set to open in early 2022.

This agreement marks an expansion of the partnership between **accesso** and **Illuminarium Experiences**, as the technology solutions provider has supported operations at **Illuminarium Atlanta** since July 2021.

"We are proud to continue our partnership with **Accesso** and deliver a seamless, convenient and personalized experience for guests of our forthcoming location in Las Vegas," said **Alan Greenberg**, CEO of **Illuminarium Experiences**.

"At **Illuminarium Experiences**, we are transporting visitors to the world's most amazing places, people and experiences through highly engaging, immersive digital spectacles. Through our partnership with **Accesso**, each of our guests can enjoy every minute of that experience, from beginning to end."

Illuminarium Experiences is a global experiential enter-



tainment company created by worldwide leaders in cinematic and interactive content, architectural and theatrical design and venue operations. Combining techniques used in traditional motion picture production and virtual reality, **Illuminarium Experiences** invites visitors to experience real-world, filmed content and authentic, re-created worlds in an immersive environment, without the need for wearable hardware. Earlier this year, the company opened its first-ever **Illuminarium** venue in Atlanta, Georgia. Following its opening in Las Vegas, **Illuminarium Experiences** will open unique venues in Miami and Chicago, with plans for 40 or more additional venues in major cities across the globe within the next five years.

"We're honored to serve as an essential part of the unmatched offering **Illuminarium Experiences** provides its guests," said **Steve Brown**, **Accesso** CEO. "As **Illuminarium Experiences** grows, so does our partnership, and we are truly excited for the opportunity to continue supporting this amazing team with our award-winning solutions."

The fully hosted Passport eCommerce ticketing suite from **Accesso** helps operators provide their guests with an intuitive and enjoyable eCommerce experience on any device, while driving revenue with up-sell and cross-sell prompts that help ensure guests can plan for their ideal visit. **Accesso's** ticketing distribution platform, **Ingresso**, connects operators like **Illuminarium Experiences** to a global network of third-party distributors to drive increased ticket sales — with potential reach of more than 1 billion new customers — while eliminating long voucher exchange lines at a venue's entrance by providing guests with real-time live ticket inventory.

•accesso.com



AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

Cedar Fair, Sandusky agree to \$100 million for city improvement

SANDUSKY, Ohio — In late October, the city of Sandusky, Ohio, secured a \$100-million, 20-year public investment in its future from **Cedar Fair**, which owns and operates **Cedar Point** in the city.

The agreement includes a new causeway, water taxi and other improvements that will be funded by an increase in taxes on park admission and parking. Just four months ago, Sandusky officials were growing increasingly concerned that the multibillion-dollar Cedar Fair was slowly and methodically relocating its corporate headquarters to North Carolina.

Cedar Fair has agreed to maintain a corporate presence in Sandusky, although it's unclear whether that presence includes company headquarters. Even with that uncertainty, it's a dramatic gesture from the company that got its start more than 150 years ago in the small Ohio city on Lake Erie's shore.

Starting in January, Sandusky will increase the city admissions tax from 4% to 8%, or about \$2 more per \$50 ticket at Cedar Point. An 8% parking tax will also go into effect.

The tax increases will raise \$4.5 million to \$5 million a year, or roughly \$100 million over 20 years.

The City Commission unanimously approved the deal, which also calls for \$1.5 million to support programming at the historic **Sandusky State Theater**, which is being rebuilt after major storm damage; \$14 million for a new city recreation center, and money for destination development, parks, streets and safety.

Sandusky City Manager **Eric Wobser** told local news sources that roughly half of the overall investment, including the causeway and water taxi, will benefit Cedar Point directly, while half will support the community more generally.

"When most people think of Sandusky, they think of Cedar Point," Wobser said. "This agreement will allow the park to continue to thrive as the best amusement park in the world and allow Sandusky to become a more vibrant community."

The new causeway, which connects Cedar Point to the remainder of Sandusky, will likely be rebuilt in phases over several years. It will include a fifth lane to relieve traffic congestion in and out of the park and also will include buried utilities, new water and sewer lines as well as an extension of the Sandusky Bay Pathway — a bike-and-hike trail that winds through the city. Currently, pedestrians and cyclists are prohibited on the causeway.

"Our community relies on tourism; with all of the improvements being set in motion, the agreement is a benefit for not only our visitors, but to all the residents and businesses that contribute to Sandusky's success," commented Cedar Point Director of Communications **Tony Clark** to local news outlets.

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3dx enjoys successful year making dreams into attraction reality

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

BLUE ASH, Ohio — With a goal to create relevant experiences, 3dx is a company that designs immersive and expressive environments. As its website states: “We’re engineers and riggers, carpenters and welders, seamstresses and storytellers.” While numerous live events are in the company’s portfolio, it is also finding great success in the amusement industry.

Located just on the outskirts of Cincinnati, 3dx has partnered with many theme parks in the past months.

“2020 was a challenging year for everyone, both on the manufacturer and supplier side as well as the operator side,” said Mark Rosenzweig, senior account executive, 3dx. “At 3dx Scenic, we are fortunate that we sell to a broader audience. In 2020 and 2021 — and well beyond that, I believe — we see a focus on seasonal festivals. This is not only to bring in day guests but also gives a reason for season pass holders and members to return multiple times to see the parks and attractions in a different light. It could be theming or music ... [something different] all through the year.”

Palace Entertainment reached out to 3dx for the rebranding of **Lake Compounce** in Bristol, Connecticut. It was the park’s 175th anniversary. The park is the oldest, continuously-operating park in North America and the Western Hemisphere.

“There we did an iconic fiberglass sculpture of a classic carousel horse,” said Rosenzweig. “It was meant to emulate one of the horses on the park’s historic carousel.



3dx was called upon to help Lake Compounce with key pieces installed during the park’s 175th anniversary. Mark Rosenzweig holds up a portion of the three-dimensional Boulder Dash sign (right).

COURTESY 3DX/MARK ROSENZWEIG; AT/TIM BALDWIN

It stands right in the planter as you walk into the park. By all accounts of what we have been told, it is the No. 1 most photographed icon of the park’s rebrand. There are a lot of photos taken and a lot of social media shares, which is exactly what photo ops are targeted for.”

Other elements in the Lake Compounce project included a new entrance marquee sign for the park’s award-winning Boulder Dash wooden roller coaster.

Valleyfair in Shakopee, Minnesota, had a festival stage located right in the middle of the park.

“Parks weren’t comfortable utilizing the indoor theater spaces because of social distancing. It was a gray area to be indoors for an extended peri-

od of time,” Rosenzweig told *Amusement Today*. “The festival stage is a great flex space. They can use these stages for multiple productions throughout the day. At Valleyfair, this was used during the [summer] season for a Peanuts Celebration show, the seasonal event Grand Carnivale and Neon Nights. We did the scenery for those productions — we custom printed panels and we fabricated performer pods that roll into place into strategic locations. That was cool to work with them. The way sets are set up, the crew could come in and within 15 minutes the set could be changed from Production A to Production B. It’s a very quick turnaround, so they could run continuous productions throughout the day.”



One of the largest projects for 3dx was impacted by COVID. Although Cedar Point’s official 150th anniversary was in 2020, the park opted to extend the celebration into 2021, when restrictions and world events weren’t quite so impactful. One of the major components of the summer season was the nightly Celebrate 150 Parade.

“We fabricated seven of the 12 parade floats in the parade,” said Rosenzweig. “We love every project that comes in here. We don’t really rubber stamp anything; everything is custom. But when it comes to something that our team is passionate about — and Cedar Point is one of those things because it is based in Ohio like 3dx — it was kind of like personal pride. To work on the Gemini floats, the Cedar Downs floats, the water swing float, the midway float ... everyone who has worked here has been to Cedar Point throughout their lifetime. To be able to bring back those memories was great.”

The Cedar Downs floats were sculpted and created with equipment at 3dx. Team members traveled to the park to take photos and measurements.

“To have those scanned

in and brought to life was an amazing feat,” Rosenzweig told *Amusement Today*. “We built them with internal structure so that riders could be on them during the parade.”

All the floats used Orlando-based **Lawless Industries** chassis. In doing so, cast members drive inside so they are not visible. 3dx found this more engaging than seeing floats pulled by trailers.

“It checked all the boxes. These seasonal events are meant to get repeat visits and increase length of stay. That’s the important thing; the longer the guest is on property, the more likely they are to open their wallet. For a family with younger kids, they might have been done for the day, but with the parade starting [in a few hours] they stick around and maybe have dinner,” noted Rosenzweig. “Not only does it increase revenue for the park, but it also creates a better guest experience as well. It completes your day. It’s that true ‘kiss goodnight.’”

The 3dx team is also heavily involved in Sesame Street IP for the SeaWorld parks. Parade



One of Cedar Point’s floats is seen in production (above left) and on the parade route (above right). COURTESY 3DX/MARK ROSENZWEIG

► See 3DX, page 61

▶3DX**Continued from page 60**

floats and scenery have been fabricated for various parks. Currently, the company is hard at work on the transformation of **Aquatica** in California into the new **Sesame Place San Diego** park.

"We are currently in phase one of installing our scenic elements," said Rosenzweig. "It's the single biggest project that 3dx has taken on. We are doing a full fleet of character sculpts — Elmo, Cookie Monster, Rosita — fiberglass sculptures that will be in some of the water elements and some that will be standalone photo ops. The centerpiece of what we are doing is the Sesame Street neighborhood. We took the immersive nature of it to the next level. It is literally like you are on Sesame Street. Every store, every element is exactly as it is on the show."

In addition to large set pieces such as Cookie Monster protruding from a waterslide funnel, a wave pool wall sce-

nic piece and various sculptures will help reimagine the existing water park that was already in place.

"To get something on this scale was really an honor," said Rosenzweig. "We've been considerably growing in themed entertainment. I think this project is really going to take it to the next level."

Ironclad NDAs restrict the company from talking about further theme park projects, but Rosenzweig is hoping to be able to release more information soon.

"We are very busy, which is very encouraging," he said.



3dx supplied seven of the 12 floats in Cedar Point's 150th anniversary parade.

COURTESY
3DX/MARK ROSENZWEIG

"We've seen a tremendous bounceback from both the scenic side and live entertainment side. People are wanting not only these immersive experiences but also wanting a turn-key solution because of staffing on the park level. They don't necessarily have the same number of people they did in 2018 and 2019 to even install elements. While our specialty is

in scenic fabrication, we can design something, fabricate something, we can deliver and we can install."

Prior to his move to 3dx, Rosenzweig's 20+-year career was on the ride supplier side.

"What has really excited me is the reaction of the industry to what we've done so far. I'm a realist, but I'm also an optimist. I think our industry

is going to come back with a force. It may take another year or two, but I think we're going to be above '19 levels. Everybody is going to be flying high. It's going to be the best time. We're still in a weird period of uncertainty, but I am most excited for the potential the industry has. I believe it is going to be a great time for everybody," he said.

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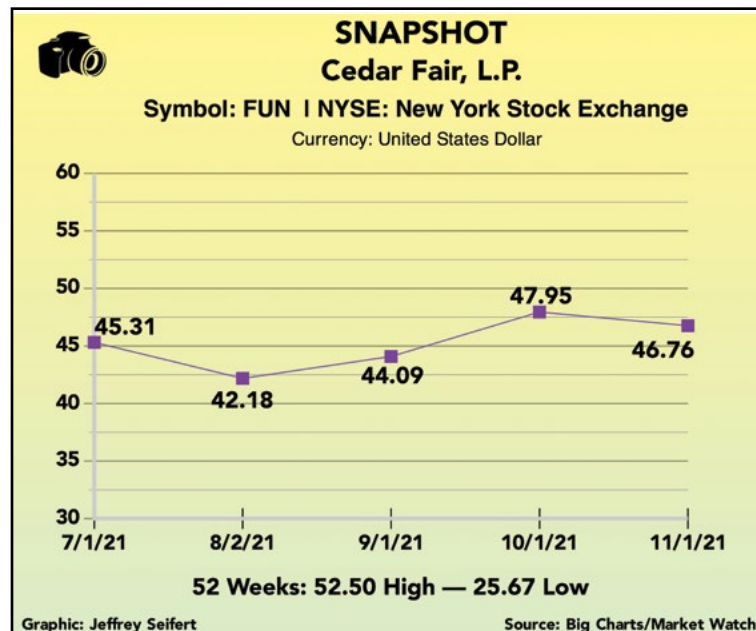
MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 11/1/21	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	137.57	143.02	51.02
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	47.02	52.50	25.67
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	52.26	61.80	40.96
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	170.19	203.02	119.81
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.08	0.13	0.07
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	51.42	56.07	22.75
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	4610.00	6500.00	4205.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	1.99	2.80	0.38
Lefoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	18.15	22.90	14.50
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	48.47	49.13	20.57
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	88.28	99.24	53.85
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	816.00	922.00	569.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	65.23	68.03	21.20
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	41.49	51.75	21.13
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	866.00	944.00	650.00

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



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S.)	As of 11/1/21	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.717	\$1.273
Midwest	\$3.639	\$1.393
Gulf Coast	\$3.486	\$1.355
Mountain	\$3.814	\$1.490
West Coast	\$3.932	\$1.391
California	\$4.651	\$1.420

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0.9151	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.3292	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.2381	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Six Flags announces third quarter results

ARLINGTON, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** reported attendance of 12 million guests and revenue of \$638 million for third quarter 2021. Results for third quarter 2021 are not directly comparable to the same prior-year period due to the company's COVID-19 related suspension of operations and operating restrictions that began in mid-March 2020. The company believes it is most relevant to compare its results in the third quarter of 2021 to the third quarter of 2019.

"We are encouraged by the strong demand we are seeing at all our parks and by our early progress transforming our business, as shown by accelerating attendance trends, higher per capita spending, and a growing active pass base," said **Mike Spanos**, president and CEO. "Through a difficult operating environment, we have remained focused on our ultimate goal: to delight our guests with thrilling experiences that only Six Flags can offer."

In the third quarter (July 5, 2021, through October 3, 2021), attendance at the company's parks was approximately 92% compared to the comparable fiscal period in 2019, which was July 8, 2019, through October 6, 2019. Attendance by pre-booked groups, inclusive of school groups who typically book in advance, has been significantly diminished due to the pandemic. Excluding pre-booked groups, attendance at the company's parks in third quarter 2021 was approximately 95% compared to the same period in 2019. As of October 18, all capacity constraints were lifted on the company's two Mexico properties. Of the company's 27 properties, only the company's theme park in Montreal continues to have capacity constraints.

Comcast reports third quarter

PHILADELPHIA — **Comcast Corporation** reported results for the quarter ended September 30, 2021. Revenue for the third quarter of 2021 increased 18.7% to \$30.3 billion. Net Income Attributable to Comcast increased 99.8% to \$4.0 billion. Adjusted Net Income increased 34.6% to \$4.0 billion. Adjusted EBITDA increased 18.1% to \$9.0 billion.

The parent company of **Universal Resorts**, the company's theme park revenue increased \$1.1 billion to \$1.4 billion in the third quarter of 2021, reflecting improved operating conditions compared to the prior year period, when each of our theme parks was either operating at limited capacity or closed as a result of COVID-19. Theme park adjusted EBITDA was \$434 million in the third quarter of 2021, which included pre-opening costs related to Universal Beijing Resort, compared to a \$174 million Adjusted EBITDA loss in the prior year period.

"I am pleased with our strong operating and financial results this quarter. Each of our businesses posted significant growth in adjusted EBITDA, contributing to a double-digit increase in our adjusted EPS. At cable, our customer and financial metrics remained strong, highlighted by 10% growth in adjusted EBITDA, the highest level of customer retention on record for a third quarter, and the most wireless net additions since the launch of **Xfinity Mobile** in 2017. Our results at **NBCUniversal** continue to be driven by the ongoing recovery at our domestic Theme Parks, as well as the success of our linear and streaming Media platforms," stated **Brian L. Roberts**, chairman and chief executive officer of Comcast Corporation.

Topgolf partners with Volta

SAN FRANCISCO — **Volta Inc.**, a leader in commerce-centric electric vehicle charging networks, announced a partnership with **Topgolf Entertainment Group** to add electric charging stations to additional venues across the country. Charging stations have already been installed at select venues in Arizona, California, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Oregon and Texas, with locations planned across Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, South Carolina, Texas and Washington.

In 2020, Topgolf and Volta kicked off a partnership bringing Volta charging stations to seven Topgolf locations across the country. Over the next 18 months, Topgolf plans to expand its relationship with Volta in new markets.

"Our partnership with Volta provides our guests with an easy, convenient way to charge their electric vehicles while also enhancing the overall experience of visiting Topgolf," said **Rodney Ferrell**, vice president, global partnerships, Topgolf Entertainment Group.

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Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Holiday World and Splashin' Safari was founded as **Santa Claus Land** in 1946 by **Louis J. Koch**.

Ownership has passed down through the Koch family and now rests with **Lori Koch**, who married **Will Koch** in 1985. He was the third generation of the family. He passed away in 2010.

Their daughters — **Lauren** and **Leah Koch** — are both working in management and will one day run Holiday World and Splashin' Safari.

Koch still loves to sing, dance

SANTA CLAUS, Ind. — Lori Koch came into the amusement park business singing and dancing, literally.

As a music education teacher major at the Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, and a performer, she auditioned for a part in the live entertainment shows at Holiday World.

She got the part and the rest could be said was history.

Holiday World originally opened in 1946 by the Koch family. In 1983, when she began working there, performing, her soon-to-be-husband's father was overseeing park operations.

By the end of her first summer there, she and Will Koch had met each other. They were engaged during Thanksgiving 1984 and married in May 1985.

The two took a year or so off from the park, but by Christmas 1986, they were back. And they went to work.

As her husband was honing his skills to one day take over as park president, she returned to her love of performing.

"I really wanted to stay with the live entertainment," Lori Koch said. "Will and I were talking about having a family, but I wanted to be able to perform at least one last time."

And so she did, also taking on the position of show manager. By the end of 1987, she was named the entertainment director.

It was a busy job, but one she took to heart for she had always felt the great importance of live entertainment.

"Of course, live shows are great for those who don't ride the rides," she said. "It gives those guests something fun and entertaining to do. The shows also give guests the opportunity to sit, relax, get a snack. When the show is over, they are ready for round two."

Koch said for the young people in the shows it gives them something else. It gives them confidence and gives them experience if they want

to go on performing.

Those things were important to Koch. She encouraged and supported them. She made sure they knew they could do whatever they wanted.

That also was the way she raised her three children.

Even with the birth of her children, she kept her position and continued to support the cast. In those early years, she was even an understudy for a while so she could step into a role if needed.

Her first child, Lauren, was born in 1988. Her second child, Leah, was born in 1990 and her third child, William, was born in 1994.

"There were some tough times then," she said. "I worked a lot, especially when Lauren was a baby."

As her children grew, she felt her time would be better spent with them. Of course, they spent many hours at the park and even began working there when each turned 14 years old.

But, by year 2000, she knew it was time to leave her full time job at Holiday World. That didn't mean, of course, she was really leaving the park, just full time responsibilities.

In fact, her family never lived more than five or 10 minutes from the park.

That made it easy for her to continue to sit in for auditions and continue to support the cast and entertainment department.

But she also had time to be in charge of the talent shows at her children's schools as well be the director of their musicals. She was and still is the youth choir director at her church and she also sings in the choir.

As her children grew, she wasn't sure which one(s) or whether any of them would want their careers focused on the park.

When her husband died in 2010, Lauren Koch had already moved away. But that brought her home where she has stayed.

Leah Koch was already there and

Lori Koch

Owner

Holiday World and Splashin' Safari
Santa Claus, Indiana



William was still quite young.

Koch watched as her girls began to want to be part of their dad's legacy and stay with the park. In fact, they say now, they knew they would always come back and be a part of it.

Koch also watched her son take a different path, at least for now. He now lives in New York City and is an audio engineer. At the first of this past November, he was in Chicago preparing for the opening of the Broadway play, "Beautiful - The Carole King Musical," as the primary engineer.

Koch wanted her children to do what they wanted as far as a career. It seems they have found their ways.

That is the same for her young performers. And she is now seeing some of them take their performance skills onward.

"There is one young man who toured with "Hamilton" and who is on *Sweet Magnolias* [a current Netflix series] and was in *Diana*, the newest movie on Diana, the Princess of Wales," she said. "I get tears in my eyes whenever I see him."

There are others as well. Koch said there was a young brother and

sister who commuted one hour each way, every day, during the season to perform at Holiday World.

"He went on to be a dancer in the *Mary Poppins Broadway* production," Koch said. "I am so proud of them. I am proud of all of them."

Koch has been aware throughout her years at Holiday World what she and her family were providing for guests and that was a way to make great memories. They now have started a program where families who are fostering children can come to the park for free once a year.

"I love the fact that we can provide those children with beautiful memories even though it might just be for one day," she said.

Since her husband's death, Koch and her daughters and son have become sole owners of Holiday World and Splashin Safari. However, she has taken a back seat, letting her daughters be the future.

She still sits on the board and that is great. But, these days, it seems her favorite seat is one where she is sitting close to her grandchildren.

—Pam Sherborne

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OBITUARIES

Showmen and ride builder, Bruce Edward Williams dies at 91

THONOTOSASSA, Fla. — Longtime member of the Showmen's League of America, Bruce Edward Williams passed away October 21, 2021, at the age of 91. He is survived by his wife of nearly 52 years, Patricia, as well as his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Williams was born in Greeley, Colorado, but was a Texan through and through. He served in the Army during the Korean War then went to college in Mexico City, Mexico, speaking Spanish with his Texas twang. He was a self-taught welder and built multiple rides and joints from scratch. The pinnacle of his many creations was his German Funhouse that stretched over three semi-trailers, a testament to his ingenuity. When the Funhouse was setup, polka music would blare over the speakers to add to the ambiance, much to the chagrin of whomever was taking tickets.

Conway was a hard worker and an excellent provider. He loved hearing about his children's latest projects or travels and took special joy in watching his grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow. He loved his family fiercely but no one was as dear to him as his darling wide Patricia.



Williams

At age 57, National Ticket Co.'s John Conway passes away

DANVILLE, Pa. — John Joseph Conway Jr., age 57, of Elysburg, Pennsylvania, passed away on Sept. 21, 2021, at the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, on March 24, 1964, a son of the late John J. Jr. and Jeanette (Santoro) Conway, he grew up in Bronxville, New York, and spent summers at the family summer cottage on the lake at Franklin, Massachusetts.

Following high school, Conway attended the University of Hartford and then attended Elizabeth Seton College, Yonkers, N.Y., before he enlisted in the U.S. Army on Dec. 15, 1987, and served as a medic until his honorable discharge on May 27, 1991. He was called to serve in Desert Storm, but the war was over before he flew out.

Conway then started working for the family business, National Ticket Co., as a salesman, working there until he enrolled at Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. After receiving his Information Technology degree, he returned to National Ticket Co. to run the IT Department. He wore many hats at NTC, Vice President of Sales, Secretary of the Board and Chairman of the Board. Conway loved his job and his employees.

Conway was a "gentle giant" who loved watching his children play in their sports, mainly soccer and snowboarding. He enjoyed trips to visit family in Montana, going to the lake and then on to the Oregon coast.

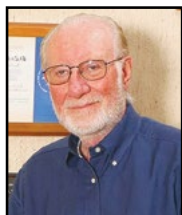


Conway

Claudio Sartori, founder of Sartori Rides, passes at the age of 88

MONTAGNANA, Italy — September 28, 2021, was a day of mourning for the Sartori family as they announced the passing of Claudio Sartori. He was the visionary founder of the Sartori family's business — Sartori Rides — which, begun from scratch in 1957, was built with great tenacity and strength of mind.

"What he has created in these 60 years will never be forgotten; it will be the responsibility of all of us to carry on his work with revolutionary ideas that will be able to honor his name," said Marco Savegnago of Sartori Rides. "We say thank you to a great entrepreneur, a man with great ideas and extraordinary dreams, who put a smile on the faces of thousands of kids and young people all around the world."



Sartori

ON THE MOVE

The **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** (IAAPA) has named **Kelly Repass** director, global research. In this role, Repass will develop a new strategy for the IAAPA research program and oversee its implementation and execution.



Repass

"Kelly comes to IAAPA with extensive travel and tourism experience leading consumer and industry research programs, understanding data, and presenting results in a comprehensive, and useful manner," said **Josh Powers**, executive vice president and chief financial officer, IAAPA. "She will lead IAAPA's efforts to conduct, analyze, and share market research to address the trends and opportunities that will shape the future of the attractions industry."

Repass comes to IAAPA with more than 20 years of research experience in the tourism industry. Most recently she served as consumer insights manager for **Disney Parks**, Experiences and Products. Prior to that she worked for **Celebrity Cruises** as manager of market research and consumer insights, as well as held research-focused positions with **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** and **Visit Orlando**.

With this year's opening of **Legoland New York Resort** and announcement of future resort enhancements across the California and Florida properties, **Merlin Entertainments** has solidified its commitment to the U.S. market. With these expansions, Merlin has appointed **Rex Jackson** as the North America regional managing director for Legoland Resorts.



Jackson

Jackson, an award-winning executive who helped lead Legoland Florida Resort from a single theme park into a multi-day vacation destination, will support the ongoing expansion of the Merlin Parks in North America, which include the three Legoland Parks as well as the second-gate attractions and hotels in those resort locations.

Jackson joined Legoland Florida Resort in 2014 as vice president of marketing and sales and ascended to his Resort President and General Manager role in August 2017. In addition to supporting the vision for all North American Legoland Parks, Jackson will maintain responsibility for the day-to-day operation and strategic direction of the family-favorite Florida destination, which celebrated its 10th birthday this October.

Advanced media serving, pixel management and show control technologies company **7thSense** has appointed **Erik Iversen** as senior product manager for pixel processing products.



Iversen

Iversen joins 7thSense from **Barco**, where he held multiple customer-facing roles since 2005, most recently as the product manager for image processing. Iversen has always been passionate about live events, developing a love of live shows early on. Prior to Barco, Iversen began his professional career in 1991 as a lighting

designer, freelanced as a video engineering and projectionist, and founded his own production company providing value-based corporate events. Throughout his career, he has been on high-profile corporate events and has toured around the world with several well-known musicians.

Speaking about his new role, Erik said, "7thSense has a company-wide focus on customer success. When customers bring their most challenging projects, the whole team jumps in to find the customer a great solution. There is a genuine passion for customer success and support. I really appreciate the team's ability to create innovative systems that can be customized to solve any challenge. The mix of 7thSense media servers, Medialon show control solutions, and Juggler pixel processors is a combination that is truly unique in the industry. I am really looking forward to creating some amazing systems with this great technology and inspired team!"

Stern Pinball, Inc. announced the appointment of **Tylor Carson** as the director of location entertainment.

Carson will report to the Director of North American Sales, **Erik Gilly**. Stern added Carson to strengthen and grow the global location-based entertainment market. He will help expand the location-based entertainment across the globe, with a focused approach on growing the Stern customer-base, and location play throughout arcade bars, breweries, and street operations. Now that Stern Insider Connected has been launched, Carson will help locations use the platform to better service their operations along with their patrons' overall pinball experience.



Carson

"With Stern's continued rapid growth, we are committed to investing in the expansion of our sales and marketing team. Tylor has over a decade of experience in the beverage distribution industry and will offer a fresh perspective for our location-based partners to capture and enhance their location's pinball experience," said **Gary Stern**, CEO of Stern Pinball.

John Murphy has recently joined **IdealOne** as a customer support representative.

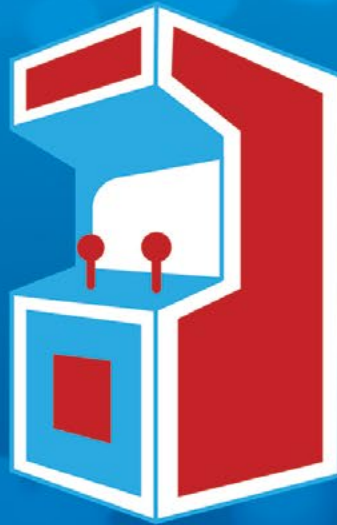
Located in Ireland, Murphy will provide front line product support for our customers in the EMEA region and will work alongside the support team in the United States.



Murphy

"In response to our rapid growth in the region, IdealOne has added support in Europe as we grow the number of clients in the region and we have recently boosted our support team in the [U.S.], too," said **John Vallis**, vice president international business development. "IdealOne places top priority on customer service and continually expands its capabilities in that area to keep pace with expanded use in additional countries as we continue to grow the business globally. We are pleased to welcome John to the team and he will work alongside the U.S. team to deliver our promise of true 24/7 support for our products."

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San Antonio to welcome industry for 2022 Golden Ticket Awards

Following the return of the Golden Ticket Awards voting in 2021, *Amusement Today* is already busy planning the Networking Event of the Year in San Antonio next September. The 2022 Golden Ticket Awards will welcome the industry in grand fashion, as the live ceremony and networking opportunities return. The host parks will be **Morgan's Wonderland** and **Six Flags Fiesta Texas**. These two unique properties are sure to be inspiring and informative — in addition to a lot of fun.

Morgan's Wonderland took national attention in 2010 by being the world's first ultra-accessible theme park opened to visitors of all abilities. The heart behind the park's mission is not to be only accessible for those with physical or cognitive disabilities but to inspire all

people to play together. In 2017, **Morgan's Inspiration Island** became a fully inclusive water park next door.

The opening reception on Friday evening, September 9, will let attendees see all that is special about the park.

Six Flags Fiesta Texas opened in 1992 in a particularly atypical setting. Using the cliff walls of a former rock quarry as a backdrop, the park has unique themes based on the cultures and music found in Texas. The park will be celebrating a 30th anniversary in 2022. Among all the year-long festivities will be the debut of Dr. Diabolical's Cliffhanger, a new **Bolliger & Mabillard** dive coaster.

In addition to many behind-the-scenes opportunities, attendees will also experience the park's award-winning entertainment and hospitality. The

Golden Ticket Awards ceremony will take place in the park's grand Zaragoza Theater, with an evening social to cap off the night.

Accommodations for the event will be the **JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa**. The resort boasts two championship golf courses, a water park, lounge pools and much more — with more expansion on the way.

The official dates of the Golden Ticket Awards networking event are September 9 and 10, 2022. *Amusement Today* will sponsor a golf tournament prior to the event. The possibilities to be entertained and to enjoy relaxing moments are endless in San Antonio. Make plans to be a part of this incredible networking event.

Amusement Today to offer limited print editions, subscriptions

ARLINGTON, Texas — *Amusement Today* Publisher Gary Slade has announced that beginning with the January 2022 issue, the trade publication will resume printed editions, but in limited quantity.

AT paid subscribers that were still owed mailed editions, after printing was suspended in April 2020 due to the COVID pandemic, will once again be mailed issues. One change to the printed copy will be the size, as the issue will now appear in a 9 by 12 inch format — slightly larger than a typical magazine size. All paid subscriptions will be credited for missing issues. Ending dates for subscriptions will be extended to end with either the June or December issues in the year the individual's subscription expires. Renewals will be sent in advance of the expiration date.

Readers who have received a complimentary printed copy in the past will now be asked to subscribe for the print issues due to the increase in paper, printing and postage.

Subscriptions will be made available to readers, but will only be available for signup at the various industry trade shows, safety seminars and other events. All print subscriptions will be sent via first class U.S. mail.

Free digital subscriptions to *Amusement Today* monthly editions will continue to be offered.

To subscribe to the electronic edition visit: amusementtoday.com/subscribe.

To view the current digital edition visit: amusementtoday.com/digital.

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SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Palace Entertainment has busy off-season — page 76 / PACE Seminar well-attended — page 80

The Riddler Mindbender reopens to a new generation of fans

Six Flags Over Georgia refurbishes the historic Mind Bender coaster

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

AUSTELL, Ga. — When it opened in 1978, Mind Bender at Six Flags Over Georgia, just outside of Atlanta, was national news. Manufactured by Anton Schwarzkopf, the beloved ride has thrilled park guests for more than four decades. As the ride has aged, the loyalty from its fans has not. But with all attractions that have existed for such length, the analysis of whether to retire a ride or refurbish it often comes into play. Thankfully for coaster fans, Six Flags Over Georgia invested the time, money and effort to keep this classic running.

At the ride's reopening, Park President Dale Kaetzel said, "While we have upgraded the ride with three new trains, brand new sections of track, new control systems, new lift and a beautiful, brand-new coat of paint, one thing that hasn't changed is the 42-inch height requirement, making The Riddler Mindbender still every young thrill seeker's coaster. We know people all around town for whom this was their first entry into high-level thrills."

Mind Bender closed at the end of the 2019 season, and after many enhancements in the nearly two years since closing, returned to operation on September 18. The reopening of the iconic ride came with a bit of a name change. Now more appropriately nestled into the Gotham City area of the park, it is called The Riddler Mindbender. The area currently boasts seven attractions and enhanced theming



The legendary Mind Bender began a second chapter at life after almost two years of refurbishment. The ride reopened as The Riddler Mindbender in September.

COURTESY SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA

elements to give it its own sense of space. Updated food and shopping locations have also modernized the area.

"The opening of The Riddler Mindbender marked the completion of a multi-year project to reimagine Gotham City," said Dedra Brown-Harvey, marketing and public relations manager. "The all-new Gotham City features seven thrilling attractions including Catwoman Whip (Zamperla Endeavor) and Poison Ivy Toxic Spin (Eli Bridge Scrambler), new immersive theming and revamped food and shopping locations such as Birds Of Prey Café."

Other flat rides in the themed area include a Larson International Giant Loop (Joker Chaos Coaster), Zierer Wave Swinger (DC Super-Villains Swings) and Sellner Tilt-A-Whirl (Harley Quinn Wild Whirl).

Three new trains now run on The Riddler Mindbender. Albeit shorter than the two trains previously in operation, park personnel are



confident they will see an increased capacity.

"Bolliger and Mabillard built the chassis and bogies. All other parts were built by companies across the country and assembled by our very own Six Flags maintenance and engineering team," Brown-Hall told *Amusement Today*.

"It was important to maintain the 42-inch height requirement for this classic ride," said Director of Operations Stephen Summers. "The Riddler Mindbender has been a generational rite of passage for younger guests at Six Flags Over Georgia for over 40 years,

and we hope to keep it that way for many years to come."

As with the former trains, the new versions safely operate with a lap bar as the primary restraint. Fans have cherished the ride experience without over-the-shoulder harnesses so commonly installed on coasters from the 1970s and '80s.

The park gives credit to Baynum Painting for the shiny, new coat of bright green paint.

"Our painters conveyed very inspiring stories," said Chris Baynum, president, Baynum Painting. "Guests typically walk straight to the

front gate, but the painters told us people would stop at the fence and watch the painters work before going into the park. Guests would cheer them on and applaud. They love that ride. To them, the refurbishment was something they truly appreciate."

The painting project took about 10 weeks, but it was split on each side of winter, with about five weeks before and after. Challenges the Baynum team faced were owed to a prime being done to the majority of the ride, which added some time to the project.

"It's a premium system we put on there," Baynum told AT. "At the end of the day, it's all about contrast. We didn't change the color, but it was faded, and the difference was remarkable. It just pops. It's going to serve them well for another 10 years."

In addition to the new paint, Riddler theming is spread throughout the queue line, train station and on the trains themselves.

When Mind Bender opened in 1978, it was a rare box-style type of track shared with its counterpart in Texas, Shock Wave at Six Flags Over Texas. While coaster "cousins," each Schwarzkopf coaster has its own unique layout. The Georgia legend takes advantage of multilevel terrain, helping to give the ride its individual character. In 2008, American Coaster Enthusiasts designated Mind Bender as an ACE Roller Coaster Landmark. The enthusiast communities have revered the ride for its historic significance. For more than four

► See RIDDLER, page 72

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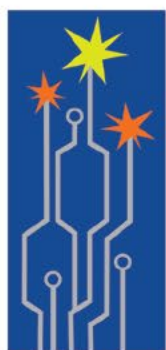


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The Riddler theming was carried throughout the attraction as part of the Gotham City area makeover.
COURTESY SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA

► RIDDLER Continued from page 70

decades, guests have awed at the coaster upon the approach to the park's entrance.

Six Flags Over Georgia opened in 1967. When Mind Bender debuted in 1978, it was the park's first looping roller coaster. Today, the theme park entertains guests with 11 coasters in its arsenal, seven of which go upside down.

When it debuted in 1978, it was part of the park's USA section; the track and supports were silver, and the trains sported a red, white and blue color scheme. In 1979 it became part of Jolly Roger's Island, an offshoot of the USA section. A year or two later, the coaster track was painted brown. With the 1997 addition of Batman the Ride (B&M), that section of the park was converted into Gotham City. The coaster was painted green, the trains were paint-



Three new 20-passenger trains now cycle through the ride.
COURTESY SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA

ed black, and green question marks appeared on both the train and the entrance sign — all hallmarks of Batman's arch enemy, The Riddler. Although a name change seemed imminent, it remained Mind Bender for another 22 years.

Mind Bender ranked in the Top 25 Steel Coasters 15 out of the first 16 years of the renowned international Golden Ticket Awards survey published annually by *Amusement Today*.

One of the more notable

attributes, in addition to its two vertical loops, is the diagonal helix that sends riders diving and curving into a ravine in an oblique-type maneuver that doesn't turn riders upside down. The positive G forces add to the thrill of this moment. Because of the topography, the lift is only 80 feet tall, but the change in elevation allows for multiple exciting elements.

"Six Flags Over Georgia continues to set the standard for new, innovative thrills," said Kaetzel.

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Disneyland continues its efforts to produce zero waste by 2030

AT: Pam Sherborne
 psherborne@amusementtoday.com

ANAHEIM, Calif. — New waste reduction programs introduced this year at Disneyland Resort, Anaheim, California, are evidence of the effort by management and employees to continue on the park's journey to zero waste, which is where it would like to be by 2030.

One new program initiated involves the guests, which are now being asked to help Disneyland with food waste reduction. It involves a third food waste bin being added beside the regular trash and recycling bins. The program has started as a pilot at Galactic Grill in Tomorrowland.

Park officials have admitted this new program has been a slow work in progress. But they also say that the 100 plus food outlets at the park produce a lot of food waste and they really need guests to help them reach their goal.

A news story that appeared in the Orange County Register stated that Disneyland has been recovering food scraps since 2014. This has been a behind-the-scenes effort by food prep.

The scraps are sent to a third party vendor and converted into



Disneyland Resort introduced two waste reduction initiatives this year. One is supplying an extra bin beside the regular trash and recycling bins for food scraps. Adding this third bin helps Disneyland achieve its zero waste goal targeted for 2030. COURTESY DISNEYLAND

feed nutrients for farm animals.

"We pride ourselves on a lot of the work that we do behind the scenes, but we also want our guests to take a moment and participate in that and help us get to that zero waste goal," **Jake Raykhelson**, Disneyland Resort's manager of environmental initiative, was quoted as saying.

Another program Disneyland

initiated was releasing reusable utensils that double as souvenirs. These were introduced this past April in honor of Earth Month.

Other Disneyland efforts over the years have resulted in Disneyland recycling enough aluminum each year to make a soda can about 1,000 times taller than its Matterhorn, more glass each year than the weight of eight

steam trains and enough paper each year to create a trail from Disneyland Resort to **Walt Disney World Resort** and back, twice.

Cans and bottles recycled by cast members in backstage areas benefit various nonprofit organizations like Canine Companions for Independence, which provides assistance dogs to people with disabilities. To

date, more than 35 assistance dogs have been assigned homes thanks to these funds.

The custodial guest services team helps to recycle 22 tons of material each day. Paper napkins and plastic merchandise bags used by guests are made from 100% recycled content.

More than 600,000 plastic cards, from hotel room keys to main entrance passes, have been collected for recycling this year.

Disneyland's efforts have not gone unnoticed. Disneyland has received 15 awards, the first as early as 2009. That year, the park was awarded with the GEELA, California's most prestigious environmental honor.

The next year, 2010, the resort received the Outstanding Stormwater Best Management Practices Implementation Program award.

The latest recognition was in 2019 when the park was selected as a winner of the 2019 SEAL Business Sustainability Awards for its environmental efforts and ongoing commitment to water conservation and the use of technology to drive efficiencies in water use.

In 2018, the resort's Circle D ranch achieved true Zero Waste Platinum Certification.

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Palace Entertainment has busy off-season with numerous projects

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

PITTSBURGH, Pa. — **Palace Entertainment**, the amusement company that owns and operates 25 entertainment, educational venues and lodging across ten states, is busy with off-season projects at over 50% of its amusement and water parks. Three of those water parks are getting **WhiteWater West** Aqua Loops initially planned to open in 2020, that are being named **Bombs Away** at each location.

Amusement parks

Riverside, California's **Castle Park** will focus on expanding its seasonal events lineup, providing additional reasons for annual passholders to visit regularly. The Inland Empire property will enhance their Springfest, Castle Dark, Dia de Los Muertos and Duke's Very Merry Village events, while also expanding upon Duke's Dance Party, a family event that occurs on Saturdays



Baynum Painting has been busy repainting four of Kennywood's roller coasters, including **Phantom's Revenge** and the three wooden roller coasters: **Jack Rabbit**, **Racer** and **Thunderbolt** (above). COURTESY KENNYWOOD PARK

throughout the summer.

General Manager **James Paulding** described 2022 plans for **Dutch Wonderland** in Lancaster, Pennsylvania: "[We] will build upon winning the Golden Ticket Award for Best

Family Park two years in a row by providing more of the fun families love. We will continue to expand opportunities to maximize the moment by pairing a Dutch Wonderland visit with stays at the **Cartoon**

Network Hotel or **Old Mill Stream Campground**, offering more benefits for those package visits. We also have plans to expand our popular holiday events, **Happy Hauntings** and **Dutch Winter Wonderland**, to

operate on more dates and provide more fun."

In western Pennsylvania, **Brandon Leonatti**, general manager of **Idlewild and SoakZone**, Ligonier, talked about next year: "After a great comeback season stretching from Memorial Day to Halloween, 2022 will be bigger and better than last year! To support the additional operating days and expanded events calendar coming to Idlewild next summer, America's third-oldest amusement park currently has an opening for a director of people and organization. This position would lead the park's hiring efforts and offers a fantastic opportunity for human resources professionals looking to take the next step in their career."

Nearby **Kennywood Park**, West Mifflin, has big plans for the new year, but is not ready to share them.

"What I can say right now is that we're eager to provide our guests more of what they love," said **Mark Pauls**, general manager. "That includes building off of this year's incredibly successful debut of the **Bites and Pints Food & Drink Festival** by adding even more value for Season Passholders with more reasons to visit. At the heart of our efforts is enhancing the unique, classic charm that makes Kennywood a 'bucket list' place for all amusement and theme park aficionados."

Baynum Painting has been busy at Kennywood, refreshing four of their roller coasters, including **Jack Rabbit**, **Phantom's Revenge**, **Racer** and **Thunderbolt**.

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▶ See **PALACE**, page 78



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► **PALACE**
Continued from page 76

Bristol, Connecticut's **Lake Compounce** is entering its 176th season with the brand-new look that started this year.

"Park teams are hard at work right now preparing for Holiday Lights this winter and doing retracking work on Boulder Dash," said General Manager **Larry Corneault, Jr.** "After a great first season for Venus Vortex water slide, we're looking to continue our growth with some enhancements to our dining lineup, growing business at the **Lake Compounce Campground**, and bolstering our special events lineup even further. Headlined by the return of the popular Bites and Pints Food & Drink Festival, Lake Compounce looks forward to providing more and more reasons to visit in 2022!"

"The **Story Land** (Glen, New Hampshire) team can't wait for the 2022 season, when we will be able to take even more steps back towards normal," said General Manager, **Eric Dziedzic.** "We're

excited to restore elements guests have missed through the pandemic, such as live entertainment and character meet-and-greet events, to continue the comeback to great fun."

Waterparks

Marketing Director **Kristin Turnquist** provided an update on **Noah's Ark Waterpark**, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin: "After a bounce-back summer in 2021, Noah's Ark Waterpark looks forward to making a splash with brand new special events, along with fan favorites such as the Father's Day Flop and special weeks for kids, local heroes and more. We also have plans for some enhancements to our food and beverage options to satisfy stomachs in between the swimming and sliding! Our first order of business this off-season, though, is hiring a new general manager to lead America's largest waterpark. This is a great opportunity to manage the crown jewel of the water park capital of the world, Wisconsin Dells. A great team is in place to guide to success."

Three Palace Entertainment water parks are adding Bombs Away, a WhiteWater West Aqua Loops. The attractions will be found at Raging Waters Los Angeles, Sandcastle and Wet'n Wild Emerald Pointe. COURTESY PALACE ENTERTAINMENT

"I'm so glad to be back in California and leading the state's largest water park," said **Roland Reyes**, general manager, **Raging Waters Los Angeles.** "Our guests have been patiently waiting for the debut of Bombs Away, the thrilling WhiteWater West Aqua Loop attraction with a drop that's over the top! Once guests take their first freefall through the two dueling 300-foot-long slides at speeds up to 26 feet per second, they will know Bombs Away has been worth the wait. We are excited to give everyone the chance to enjoy it next summer."

"**Raging Waters Sacramento** will expand and enhance its family-focused fun in 2022, highlighted by a month-long celebration of children in June," said General Manager **Angel Garcia.** "Kids Month will feature special activities, admission discounts and more. The park team is hard at work preparing for next summer, and can't wait to share more details soon."

Raging Waters San Jose,



billed as Northern California's largest water park, will have a larger season than ever before. The H2O splashes will continue through September, with the season slated to operate week-ends until Sunday, October 24.

"2022 will be the ultimate Steel City summer at **Sandcastle**," said **Kennywood/Sandcastle General Manager Mark Pauls.** "The action starts with Bombs Away, the extreme new drop slide opening next year. This big-thrill slide from Whitewater West will send guests into a freefall and 300 feet of screaming, soaking fun. Pittsburgh's Hometown Waterpark will run the longest schedule in park history, including an expanded special events lineup. We look forward to sharing more details soon."

"**Splish Splash** (Calverton, New York) had a major comeback summer and we look forward to a 2022 season that's better than ever," said General Manager **Mike Bengston.** "Our team will be renovating the Surf Shack retail store, reopening

Monsoon Lagoon, and expanding our events lineup to provide guests with even more reasons to become a season passholder and visit all summer long."

Water Country, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is hard at work preparing for 2022, with off-season maintenance and on-going upkeep activities. Billed as New England's largest water park, it intends to add new special events to spice up the fun.

"It was great to get back to fun in 2021, and the **Wet'n Wild Emerald Pointe** (Greensboro, North Carolina) team is eager to build off this year's success in 2022," said **Adam Good**, general manager. "The biggest new highlight will be the long-awaited debut of Bombs Away. Most of the slide is already in place, and we'll soon put the finishing touches on this thrilling new ride coming to us courtesy of WhiteWater West. Bombs Away turns up the thrills from the start, with riders freefalling right into the body slide and going as fast as 26 feet per second. As a double-barreled dueling slide, the drops will be over the top!"

Palace Entertainment, founded in 1998, is the U.S. subsidiary of Parques Reunidos, based in Madrid, Spain.

—additional contributions from Nick Paradise, Palace Entertainment

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Register now for the top amusement industry safety seminar worldwide

With more than 350 students expected, it is time to sign up for the 2022 **AIMS International Safety Seminar** and select from over 300 hours of course offerings that best fit individual needs. **Ellis & Associates (E&A)** will deliver the seminar's aquatics curriculum, ensuring a comprehensive and innovative program providing the most current industry information and global trends. New education partners include **International Ride Training (IRT)**, who designed and curated an all-new curriculum for the Operations Track and **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)**, who is actively involved in developing the educational content for the Carnival Track. This year's seminar will again include over 20-hours of inspection and maintenance education delivered entirely in Spanish.

The in-person seminar will take place January 9 to 14, 2022, in Galveston, Texas. Tuition is \$595 for a limited time only, and the CEU certificate is included in the price. Visit aimsintl.org for more information or to register for the seminar.

AIMS is proud to announce that **Gina**

Claassen, corporate safety director for **Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE)**, will be delivering the keynote address at this year's AIMS International Safety Seminar on Monday, January 10, 2022.

In her role as corporate safety director, Claassen leads the day-to-day safety program across the HFE portfolio. She works alongside HFE leadership to ensure consistent compliance across properties and departments. With a proactive approach, she has helped develop and implement long-term plans to enhance the company's safety program.

Claassen joined HFE in 1998 and began her career in the amusement industry working in the attractions division at **Silver Dollar City**. Since then, she has served in various roles at Herschend Family Entertainment, focusing on operations, safety and maintenance.

Soon after joining HFE, Claassen became involved with the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)** through its Ambassador program. She served as chair of IAAPA's Exhibitor Awards Committee

and currently serves on the IAAPA Global Education Committee, Program Planning Committee and as the chair of the Facility Operations Committee. She is a member of **ASTM F-24** and the **National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO)**. Claassen speaks regularly at industry conferences and was previously featured in IAAPA's Member Spotlight and *Amusement Today's* Women of Influence.

In addition to being an IAAPA Certified Attractions Executive, Claassen maintains industry certifications for maintenance, inspection, aquatics and operations from **Amusement Industry Manufacturers and Suppliers International** and NAARSO. She is a graduate of **Missouri State University**.

In response to a recognized need in the amusement industry for specific and in-depth safety education and certification, AIMS International has created the **Academy of Amusement Risk Management, Safety and Security (AARMSS)**. This structured certification program is designed to develop the safe-

ty, security and risk managers of today and tomorrow. Based on the foundational pillars of: safety, security, emergency management and risk management, the AARMSS curriculum is designed to educate and equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively manage an amusement industry safety, security, and risk management program.

Several scholarships to the AIMS International Safety Seminar are now available. To apply for a scholarship, please send an email to info@aimsintl.org with the scholarship you are applying for in the subject line, and — in 1,000 words or less — describe why you believe you are deserving. Scholarship applications are due by December 31, 2021.

AIMS International is a non-profit association and industry support of this important annual Safety Seminar is vital to the health and prosperity of the entire amusement industry. For sponsorship information, contact **Mary Jane Brewer** at 714.425.5747 or mj.brewer@aimsintl.org.

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PACE Seminar well attended after pandemic causes year absence

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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BLOOMSBURG, Pa. – COVID-19 put a stop to the annual ride safety event in 2020. The partnership between the Pennsylvania Amusement Parks and Attractions (PAPA) and the Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association (PSSA) to hold the Parks and Carnival Education (PACE) seminar this year took place in late October. There was a total of 98 in-person attendees, along with 40 opting to take the classes virtually. (This included 68 with parks, 28 showmen and two independent inspectors.) "This is the first time that we're actually trying the virtual portion," said Gary Chubb, seminar coordinator. "John Hartman, NAARSO (National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials) education chair, was directly responsible for setting up all the virtual equipment. He was the technician for the virtual training. John did a great job and I appreciate that he was willing to do that this year."

Classroom sessions were held in Kehr Union Building at Bloomsburg University, the first and third days. The second day, featuring "hands-on" instruction, took place at Knoebels Amusement Resort, Elysburg, Pennsylvania. A fourth day was available for those needing an additional eight hours



Dennis Paczkowski with Knoebels wooden coaster crew discussed both on and off-season maintenance of the structure and trains.
AT/B. DEREK SHAW



for NAARSO recertification.

This four-day ride safety education program is presented by NAARSO who supplied the 21 instructors and support staff. Face masks were required inside, while they were optional for outside sessions. Some of the industry representatives who presented included Mikayla Bower and Andy Vogel song, Ralph S. Alberts Company; Thom Cammarota, Uremet Corporation; Phil Castellano, Zamperla Rides and, Don Lind, Lind Enterprises (NDT session).

PACE offered either 24 or 32 hours of inspector training for Pennsylvania certified ride inspectors and/or NAARSO certified ride inspectors, along with recertification. In addition to Chubb, PACE seminar

coordination was also managed by Lisa Bartlebaugh, seminar administrative manager/registrar, assisted by her husband Jerry with Bartlebaugh Amusements.

"Lisa does a fantastic job. She keeps us all in line. I can't say enough about how Lisa keeps administrative functions moving well with the seminar," said Chubb.

Participants are divided into one of two tracks: park classes and traveling/inspector classes. A few of the attending amusement parks included Hersheypark, Kennywood and Knoebels. On the portable side, there were ride staff from Houghton Enterprises, Huey's Amusements, Rosedale Attractions & Shows and SwikaS Amusements, among others.

The three-day instruction for Class I and Class II ride inspectors featured two days

of classroom training. Some of the subjects covered included ride evacuation planning, hydraulic restraints, braking systems, wheels, incident documentation, why things fail, ASTM basics and an inspector roundtable.

One of the highlights of the annual seminar is always the hands-on portion. Attendees spent an entire day at the park looking at 11 different rides. The participants were broken down into eight separate groups so everyone could rotate through all the stations, visiting each ride, reviewing inspection check sheets, while going over various inspection points. Many of the rides had park maintenance personnel at them while some had NAARSO inspectors who pointed out the various inspection points and things to be aware of. While the climate was wet and cool,

it brought home the point that inspections are done in any weather conditions.

2021 PACE seminar sponsors included Frito Lay, Haas & Wilkerson Insurance, McGowen Allied Specialty Insurance, Pepsi Cola, Premier Rides, Inc., Rides 4-U Inc., S&S Worldwide, Inc. and Wisdom Rides of America. A special thanks goes to Dick Knoebel for sponsor procurement. The sponsors help offset a portion of the seminar costs.

When asked if he was pleased with the turnout, Chubb said, "This is one of those years where we really didn't know what to expect. This seminar was postponed last year. It was supposed to be here at Knoebels, [so] we came back this year. Overall, we're fairly pleased. People don't always realize what it takes to put on a seminar."

•paceseminar.com



Classroom instruction (above left) took place at Bloomsburg University. Some of the sessions included ride evacuation planning, hydraulic restraints, braking systems, wheels, incident documentation, why things fail, ASTM basics and an inspector roundtable. There were 11 different rides attendees rotated through during hands-on day at Knoebels Amusement Resort. Shown above right is Brady Petrovich (far left), who along with Matt Wynn, discussed the origins of the carousel operations at Knoebels and methods in which the park keeps the machine maintained.

COURTESY GARY CHUBB/PACE; AT/B. DEREK SHAW



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Aquamen Water Slide Restorations is putting down gel coat

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

HEDGESVILLE, W.Va. — **Aquamen Water Slide Restorations** is having its busiest year in its 18-year-history of restoring water slides from coast to coast.

Even though this year won't make up for lost revenues in 2020 due to the global pandemic, **Chad Donaldson**, company co-owner, said, "I am not complaining."

"This is the best year we have ever had as far as revenue," Donaldson said. "We are very busy."

When *Amusement Today* contacted Donaldson, the crew was at **Dollywood**, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, stripping, sanding, repairing and applying gel coat to Dollywood's **Splash Mountain** water slides. Aquamen already had completed work on six of the park's slides within the last year.

From there, they will move their working grounds to **Six Flags's Hurricane Harbor** Phoenix, Arizona. To follow is **Schlitterbahn Galveston Island**, Texas, and then another Six Flags property.

And on and on.

Donaldson described 2020 as a nightmare.

"We were completely booked up for that season," he said. "When the pandemic hit, the parks got their budgets pulled. We ended up having to close."

Fortunately for Donaldson, his partner **Chris James** and their crew of eight to 10 people, this year is very different.

Donaldson expected the Dollywood job to be completed by mid-November. By the time it is all said and done, the company will have used somewhere between



Before (inset) and after (above) photos of the Aquamen restoration job on the Zoomazon slide at Hurricane Harbor in Gurnee, Illinois. COURTESY AQUAMEN

400 and 450 gallons of gel coat, but only after sanding and repairing any cracks in the fiberglass.

The company uses hand sanders for all its sanding. The sander has a surface of about six inches so that part of the job can get lengthy and intense.

The gel coat comes in 55-gallon drums. Donaldson didn't disclose the name of the gel coat vendor, but did say it was in the U.S.

"This is our own formula," Donaldson said. "It took several years for us to perfect it. We like to keep where we get it a secret."

One aspect of the business which has been somewhat frustrating is the recent slow-down of the supply chain. It is causing a delay in getting the gel coat. It is now taking five weeks where it used to



take just two or three.

"It is starting to get better, though," Donaldson said.

Aquamen does offer warranties on its projects. Sometimes the lengths of the warranties differ depending the age and shape of the slides. There are multiple variables that can affect the life of a slide restoration. The age of the slide is one variable. The newer the slide, the less chance that the fiberglass is already compromised.

Repairing cracks in fiberglass is not rare, but the life of the repair varies according to the depth of the crack. Fiberglass is made to flex according to seasonal tem-

peratures. After the slide is stripped, a repair product is used, then sanded.

"That formula is very strong," Donaldson said.

Donaldson said some park operators are going away from the jointed fiberglass slides to one long piece of molded fiberglass. The longer the piece of fiberglass, the less flexibility it will have. Cracks in the longer pieces can be more significant.

The most significant environmental damage to a slide comes from the sun.

The height and angle of drop of a slide can be challenging for Aquamen's crew. Donaldson said many times

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Michigan Adventure
interior gel coating of Mammoth River Slide

Kings Island
interior gel coating of all water slides

Silver Dollar City
interior gel coating of 2 drop slides and 1 racer slide

Idlewild
gel coating of 3 serpentine slides

Six Flags Great Adventure
interior gel coating of log flume

Sesame Place
interior gel coating of Sky Splash Water Slide

Dollywood's Splash Country
gel coating of 6 slides

Cedar Point
interior gel coating of all water slides

Schlitterbahn Galveston Island
interior gel coating of 8 slides

Six Flags America
gel coating of all water slides

Hurricane Harbor Phoenix
interior gel coating of racer slide

they will need to use man lifts and/or a repel-type harness to get to those hard-to-reach places.

After 18 years of experi-

► See GEL, page 83



Above are before (left) and after (right) Aquamen restoration photos of slides at Oceans of Fun, Kansas City, Missouri. COURTESY AQUAMEN

►GEL
Continued from page 82

ence, however, they pretty much know what they will need; at least they mostly have gone beyond the trial-and-error phase.

Donaldson and James met years ago in West Virginia through a pool league. At the time, Donaldson was commuting everyday to Washington, D.C., where he worked for NASA and NOAA as a computer programmer. He took the train three hours over and three hours home.

James was commuting everyday to Winchester, Virginia, about a 25 to 30-minute ride each direction. He worked for a company that made materials for restoring floatables. Donaldson said James is a master when it comes to chemistry.

"In working with pool operators, James said they were always being asked if they were able to recoat slides," Donaldson said. "One day, he came over and we were sitting out on my back porch, talking.

"He told me that he felt there was an opportunity to make money in gel coating," he said.

Donaldson said there was quite a bit of trial and error at first. Plus, there were years of research.

"But after four or five years, things just exploded," he said. "I was able to quit my full-time job and dedicate myself to the business."

James was already full time. The company he worked for had closed sometime in those early years of Aquamen.

But, as the old adage says, the rest is history.

Today, Aquamen handles about one-half of the Six Flags water parks and nearly all of Cedar Fair parks.

"We also do quite a bit with Herschend Family Entertainment and Palace Entertainment and SeaWorld," he said. "We try to stick to the corporate parks, but we do, from time to time, pick up an independent water park or pool."

Donaldson said he feels very lucky to be in business with his best friend.

"We talk every day and we have never had any problems between each other," he said. "It has been great that I was able to go into business with my best friend and he is still my best friend."

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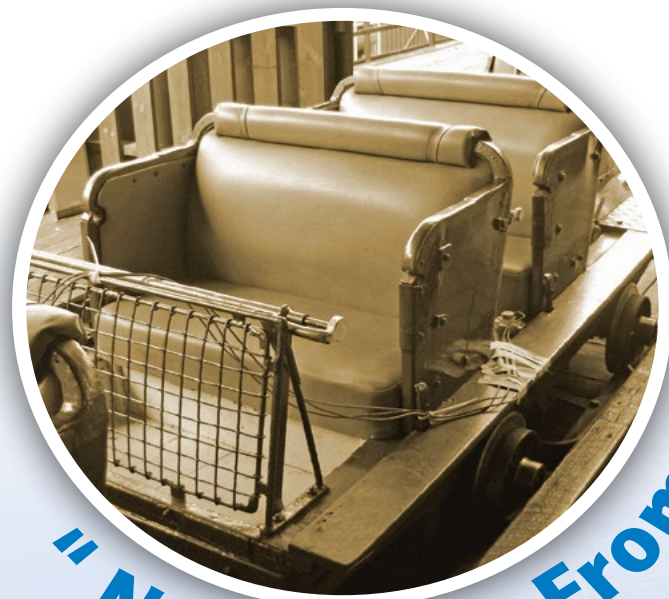
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January 23 – 25, 2022
Scottsdale, Arizona
iaapa.org

International Independent Showman's Association Super Extravaganza and Trade Show

February 15 – 18, 2022
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NJAA Annual Trade Show and NAARSO

March 9 – 10, 2022
Atlantic City, New Jersey
njamusements.com/expo.php

Amusement Expo International

March 15 – 17, 2022
Las Vegas, Nevada
amusementexpo.org

BPAA International Bowl Expo

June 26 – 30, 2022
Las Vegas, Nevada
bpaa.com/bowlexpo

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iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-asia

2022 Golden Ticket Awards

September 9 – 10, 2022
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Skyfair, Inc. is seeking a Ride Manager for Grafton Skytour. Located at the confluence at two of America's great rivers, the Mississippi and Illinois, in riverfront community of Grafton, Illinois, the skyride transports guests to and from Aeries Resort, home of the Best View in the Midwest.

As Ride Manager, you will be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Skyride, including:

- The safe and efficient transportation of guests.
- Building and leading a team of dedicated employees.
- Working in partnership with Aeries Resort on advertising, operating hours, and special events planning as needed.
- Inspections and Preventive Maintenance of the Skyride
- Ticket Sales

The right candidate will be a self-motivated person with great people skills. Prior experience with ski-lift operations or amusement rides is big plus. Training will be provided. This position reports to the President of Skyfair, Inc. and SkyTrans Mfg., LLC, located in Contoocook, New Hampshire.

All job applicants must pass a background check prior to hire. Skyfair, Inc., SkyTrans Mfg. LLC, and Grafton Skytour are an Equal Opportunity Employer.



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