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Print Edition

2023 IISF Trade Show planners are encouraged by event exhibitor growth

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

GIBSONTOWN, Fla. — Members of the outdoor amusement industry have been gearing up for the multitude of industry events produced by a variety of associations and organizations in what has become known as "Florida Week," beginning the second week of February along the western coast of the Tampa area.

The larger of these activities is the 2023 **International Independent Showmen's Foundation's (IISF) Super Trade Show and Extravaganza**, set for February 14-17, on the grounds of the **International Independent Showmen's Association (IISA)** club grounds in Riverview, Florida. The IISF is the fundraising arm of the IISA.

This event may be the highlight, but the numerous other events make for a very busy week for industry members. For example, there is the **National Independent Concessions Association's (NICA) Business Expo** and the **Fare Foods Food Show** set

► See IISF, page 8



Tampa's Florida State Fair is just one of the many activities that take place during what has become known as "Florida Week." The Midway Sky Eye is just one of the thrilling rides along the midway operated by Wade Shows. COURTESY WADE SHOWS

Australia's Sea World unveils Leviathan; additional rides in New Atlantis Precinct



Leviathan is the first major wooden coaster to be constructed in Australia in more than 35 years. COURTESY SEA WORLD

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

QUEENSLAND, Australia — On December 2, **Sea World** debuted a wave of new fun for its visitors. The park, which opened on the Gold Coast in 1971, has created an exciting brand-new area called The New Atlantis Precinct.

"I am incredibly proud and excited to officially open The New Atlantis at Sea World. Our team have done an outstanding job in creating this truly unique precinct," said **Clark Kirby**, CEO, **Village Roadshow Theme Parks**, operator of Sea World.

The new section is across the lake on which the park offers water ski shows. Because the iconic attraction of the Atlantis area is a striking new wooden coaster, it

became necessary to fill in a portion of the lake to make the construction of the massive coaster possible.

"Our team worked strategically to reclaim unused land from our ski lake and repurpose back-of-house areas to create the space required to build this world-class precinct," said **Bikash Randhawa**, COO, **Village Roadshow Theme Parks**.

"The Leviathan is a spectacular experience with guests embarking on a journey from the moment they enter the precinct passing by enormous nine-meter warrior statues to enter the ride queue, which features incredible theming and state-of-the-art technology to fully immerse them in an underwater utopia before they brave the wooden coaster," Kirby said.

Australia has not seen a major, new wooden roller coaster in 37 years, making Leviathan quite noteworthy. It stands 105 feet tall and has a track length of 3,280 feet. Riders rush through the layout in a breathtaking 90 seconds at 50 mph.

Martin & Vlemminckx was contracted to build the new coaster.

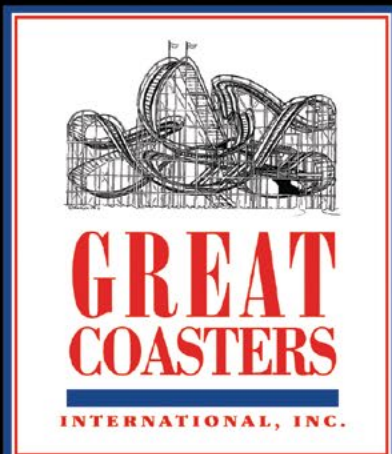
"The coach on the last seat is facing backward, which is rarely seen," said **Eve Melanson**, marketing M&V. "I think the theming is fantastic. People will be able to appreciate the coaster's design but also all the theming around it, which makes it so special. Wooden coasters are beautiful, but I think we're starting to see a trend of adding theming."

► See SEA WORLD, page 6

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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint

A quiet day at the fair



Robinson

In the summer of 2022, I visited the Ohio State Fair to get some photos for *Amusement Today*. I planned my day up there as part of my route to another event, and just picked the day that worked best with my schedule.

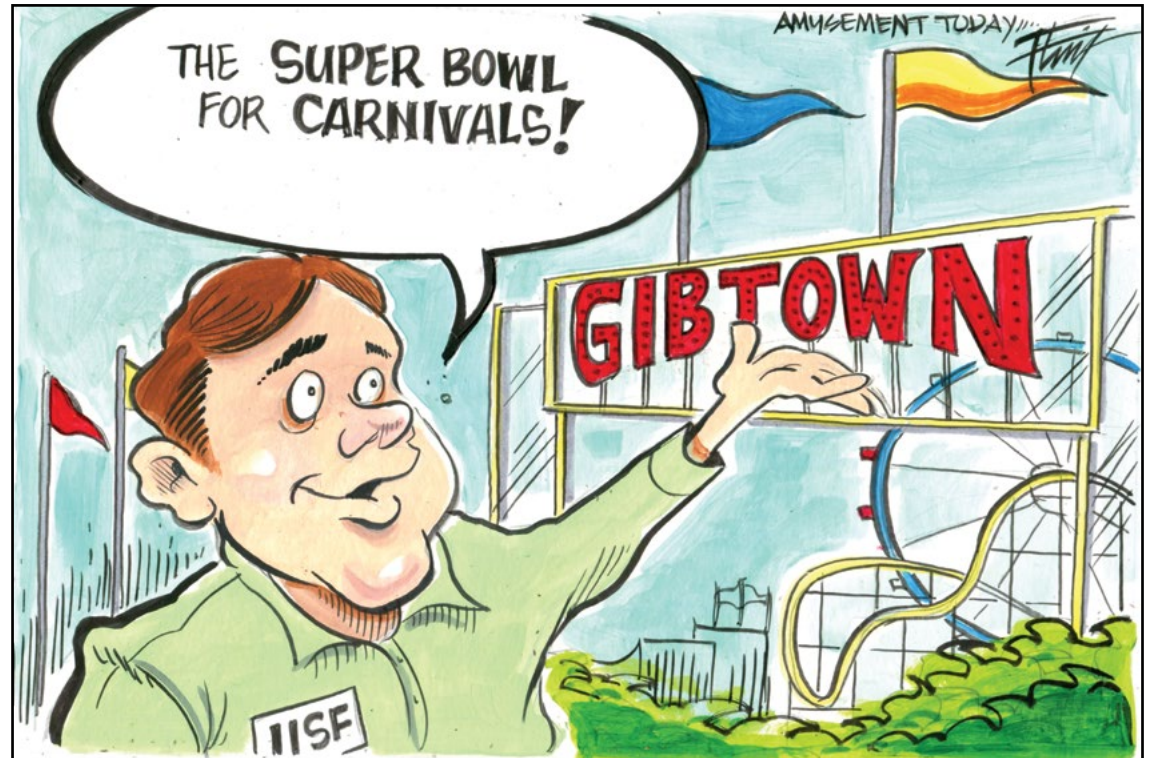
I got there early, but the fair was open and the midway was operating.

However, you would not be able to tell that unless you looked closely to see people on the active rides or heard their shouts of joy. Though operating, the midway was quiet with no music, no bells, no flashing lights and no barkers over the loudspeaker. For someone used to the over-the-top nature of an amusement midway, everything felt slightly off.

That's when I discovered that this morning was dubbed a "sensory friendly morning" for the Ohio State Fair. All of the sounds and captivating lights of the midway were shut down to allow guests with autism and other sensory needs to enjoy all the fair had to offer, without the added stress and difficulty that the normal eccentric midway can deliver to those guests.

In all honesty, despite trying to be someone who's considerate of other's realities — and someone who's spent their entire life along a midway of some sorts — the need for such days escaped me until just that very moment. Although the all-quiet and subtler midway seemed an abomination to me, it also put into perspective just how differently those with sensory needs take in what I would consider a normal midway. What was now "too quiet" for me is "too much" for them on any other day.

I'm grateful to be part of an industry that saw this need and found a way to ensure a day of fun for those who would have had to steer clear otherwise. I'm grateful that in an industry that prides itself on being over-the-top, we have found the value — and the heart — in reining it in once in a while. It's wonderful to find a new way to put a smile on someone's face.



INDUSTRY VOICE: Greg Chiecko, *Outdoor Amusement Business Association*

Is the carnival business in crisis? Not yet

We hear stories of some fairs no longer being able to obtain a carnival. We hear about labor shortages resulting in less rides arriving at fairgrounds. Let's discuss what is going on.

The Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA) estimates that at 2022's end, there are about 200 active carnival companies in the U.S. That is down from around 400 in 2017, a 50% reduction. The reasons for this dramatic drop are varied. Among them, rising operating costs, lack of labor and a non-generational transformation.

For every dollar taken in, the carnival expends the following: 10% on insurance, 20% on transportation and fuel, 25% on labor. That leaves 45% to pay the rent, cover overhead and administrative costs, new equipment investment and maintenance and, hopefully, a little profit. This formula is not sustainable. We need to have discussions with our fair partners on how we can adjust



Chiecko

the current model to create a mutually beneficial working relationship.

The inconsistent and random foreign guest worker labor force (H-2B) plagues our industry annually. The amount of Department of Labor certificates for labor exceeds 225,000. This is the number of jobs available that U.S. workers don't want. The visas allocated still fall short of the jobs by more than 100,000. The result is a lottery system to allocate workers. If a carnival receives no workers, it can't fulfill its contractual obligations. The carnival industry lives by the motto "the show must go on" and for the most part we have been able to. The day may come that a fair will get the phone call they won't have a carnival that year. We continue to advocate in Washington, D.C., to permanently fix this crisis, but we are not there yet.

We, fairs and carnivals, must strategize and implement change to ensure the future of both of our industries.

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

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Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader

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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Cynthia Wright, Sugar Shakers, Inc.

Cynthia Wright was born and raised in the concessionaire segment of the amusement industry. Today, as president of **Sugar Shakers, Inc.**, Cynthia and her team have created a popular food and beverage company servicing fairs, festivals and catering all types of events. Known for her customer service, marketing strategies, energy and kindness, she has made a name for herself as a 4th-generation concessionaire and catering professional.

Title: President.

Number of years in the industry:

Born and raised, 4th generation.

Best thing about the industry:

Traveling to the same places as well as new places every year, meeting people, and especially seeing repeat customers who are super excited and say, "I came here just for your food!"

Favorite amusement ride:

I still love the Tilt-A-Whirl.

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

Probably in the engineering field.

Biggest challenge facing our industry:

I would say the rising cost of supplies and trying not to pass it on to our customers.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ...

Never getting bored!

Favorite breakfast food:

Cereal. This month it's Shredded Wheat.

When I need advice, I turn to ...

My daughter. She has more common sense than I ever had or have even now.

Favorite thing to decompress:

Volunteering for Gary with *Amusement Today*. Not only is it fun and interesting to see the other side of the amusement industry, I have zero owner/president responsibilities, so it's a vacation for my brain.

When dipping tortilla chips, do you prefer salsa, queso or guacamole? Queso!

My all-time favorite dance song is ...

There are so many but the first that comes to mind is "Mony Mony" by Billy Idol.

It's Friday night at 7 p.m. Where can we typically find you? In season ... in my stand slinging dough! Off season ...

on my couch binge watching something.



Cynthia Wright, president of food and beverage company Sugar Shakers, Inc., is a fourth generation member of the carnival industry.

COURTESY CYNTHIA WRIGHT

My latest big bargain was ... Someone

dropped off a nearly new 12-ski capacity Thule roof rack box by the dumpster because the hinge was broken. \$40 on hinges and keys for an \$800+ box!

Choose one: Water skiing or snow skiing:

Snow skiing!

When I say vacation, you say ...

I want to go on a cruise. I've never been on one.

You are on an elevator. Do you look straight ahead or make small-talk?

Usually I look straight ahead.

The last time I went in the ocean was ...

Oh gosh, it must have been 20 years ago!

My favorite pizza topping is ...

I am a cheese girl.

Are you a little bit country or a little bit rock 'n' roll?

Definitely a little bit country.

One week ago today, I was ...

At Powder Mountain skiing.

The first thing I do when I get home from work is ... Kick off my shoes!

Coolest cartoon character: Tie between Elmer Fudd and the Tasmanian Devil.

My "can't miss" TV show is ...

The Andy Griffith Show.

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Wrestlemania meets Bengalmania



CINCINNATI, Ohio — When World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) visited Cincinnati, Ohio, in January for a live broadcast of *Monday Night Raw*, the talent was in town for much of the preceding weekend. During the show itself, popular WWE wrestler Angelo Dawkins — of the tag team The Street Profits — was repping the hometown Cincinnati Bengals with his ring entrance by wearing his Ja'mar Chase jersey (inset). He also celebrated the local NFL team with the city during the weekend, joining *Amusement Today's* John Robinson at the Bengal Bomb Squad tailgate Sunday night prior to the Ravens/Bengals playoff game.

AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

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Vortex by Huss flips riders upside down, making for another additional thrill ride in the New Atlantis Precinct (above left). Timberliner trains were provided for Leviathan by The Gravity Group (above middle). Trident by SBF is the park's tallest attraction (above right). COURTESY HUSS, CHERI ARMSTRONG, SEA WORLD

►SEA WORLD

Continued from page 1

Towering Atlantean statues serve as sentinels in the area, and two stand guard at Leviathan's entrance. Rocky walls grace the queue with artistic detailed serpents sculpted within them. The journey to the station leads riders through a mythic cave, with moody lighting setting the theme. Inside the station, video walls show the Leviathan swimming past sea portals before visitors.

M&V's 2021 project also saw theming incorporated into it at Jinan Sunac Land in China.

"This isn't your average amusement park ride. Leviathan is an intense and thrilling experience from start to finish!" said **Chuck Bingham**, senior vice president, M&V. "With its combination of speed, height and twists, we know it will appeal to riders young and old alike."

"We have experienced strong attendance figures since the opening of the precinct, and are receiving incredible feedback from our guests," said Randhawa. "The New Atlantis Precinct has done a wonderful job of complementing our existing attractions and experiences at the park, to provide an even greater experience for all who visit the park."

The trains for Leviathan were provided by **Gravitykraft**, a subsidiary of **The Gravity Group**, which did the engineering on the coaster.

"The trains feature a backward car as the last car, so that will really be awesome for those who want the extra thrill," said **Michael Graham**, principal, The Gravity Group, prior to the ride's opening. "What people don't realize is that it has a tail on it. It will be the only wood coaster that has a head and a huge tail on it. It's going

to be totally mind-blowing. We're really stoked."

The backward car is a revenue stream for the park as it requires an upcharge.

Enthusiasts have praised the ride for its many attributes, which include airtime, numerous banked curves, directional changes and maintained speed. The snarl of tangled trackage dives within and through itself leaving riders questioning what they have just experienced.

Bingham was moved that the Sea World management took it upon themselves to have the names of the important M&V management team pressed into six silver dollars permanently mounted on the coaster, including **Kevin Hehn**, past president of M&V, who passed last year because of COVID-related issues.

Two other thrill rides opened with the New Atlantis Precinct. The Trident, a swing ride supplied by **SBF**, is the tallest

landmark at the theme park. It stands at 137 feet tall.

"Standing at 42 meters high, the Trident boasts incredible views of the Gold Coast beaches, skyline and Broadwater to offer one of the most visually spectacular ride experiences in Australia," said Kirby.

The station, queue and signage are beautifully designed with gold arches. Another new addition is a thrill ride from **HUSS** called Vortex.

"It fills us with joy and pride that the HUSS Top Spin Suspended is part of the latest park expansion," said **Lars L. Hartmann**, international sales manager, HUSS. "We have found the collaboration on this project to be exceptionally pleasant and professional. Regardless of the pandemic, Sea World has created a true masterpiece with the New Atlantis area. We are convinced that this concept will successfully develop into an absolute visitor magnet."

The New Atlantis Precinct has a reported cost of AU\$50 million. The new area has been four years in the making. COVID-19 had its impact, as it has around the world. The area was originally planned to open in June of 2021.

"Similar to the entire construction industry in Australia, we experienced delays with the project," noted Randhawa. "Our team worked diligently with manufacturers, government agencies and relevant partners to combat these delays as efficiently as possible. However, due to the nature of the pandemic, several of the delays were outside of our control."

"At Village Roadshow Theme Parks, we are committed to providing world-class attractions such as The New Atlantis Precinct and the opening of this precinct is a major drawcard for the Gold Coast as we come into our peak season," Kirby said at the area's debut.



Atlantean statues guard over the new precinct (above left). Leviathan zips through its tangle of track with the last row facing backward (above right). COURTESY SEA WORLD



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Continued from page 1

for Feb. 12-13. The **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)** and the **Showmen's League of America (SLA)** also have activities scheduled.

And, then, of course, there is the **Florida State Fair**, Tampa, Florida, set to run Feb. 9-20.

Teresa Rimes, IISA, was excited about the 55th annual IISF Super Trade Show and Extravaganza where the number of exhibitors was tracking to increase over the 2022 event.

"Right now, we are on track and, really, a little bit ahead," said Teresa Rimes.

Rimes said in mid-January she was expecting about 120 exhibitors, compared to the about 100 in 2022. The trade show is a well-known buying opportunity for rides, games, trailers, plush, food suppliers, insurance carriers and many other related products and services.

Rimes said there are several new exhibitors this year and their foreign exhibitors, such as **Technical Park**, **Sartori** and **Bertazzon** will be back.

There are a variety of IISA activities surrounding the 2023 Super Trade Show and Extravaganza.

Events start on Saturday, Feb. 11, with the Sant' Yago Knight Parade, set to begin at 5 p.m., in Ybor City, Florida.

From 12 noon until 5 p.m., on Monday, Feb. 13, the Annual Big Hearted Jerry's Memorial Golf Tourna-



ment has been scheduled. It will be held at the **Summerfield Golf Course**.

The IISF Trade Show hours for the week are 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

There will be a Trade Show Kick Off Night set for the evening after the trade show's first day. This social event will include snacks, finger foods and live music. It will be held in the bar area at the IISA club.

The IISA Jamboree Museum Fundraiser has been scheduled from 5:30 - 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 18. Proceeds from this event, which includes a steak dinner, does to the **IISA Carnival Museum**.

The IISA Casino Night is set for the next evening, 7-10 p.m., Feb. 19. The Casino Night is a fundraiser for the Shriners' Club.

Events set for Friday, Feb. 17, include the Cemetery Association Memorial Service at 12 noon with a mass to follow.

Rimes said seminars and sessions also have been scheduled. They include the **ServSafe** program. This program features class materials, a study class and the certification exam, which is a required exam for all food service vendors in all states, including some local and city requirements.

The ServSafe program is scheduled for 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Feb. 14, 15 and 16. On



Planners of this year's International Independent Showmen's Foundation Super Trade Show and Extravaganza are looking forward to more exhibitors and more attendees. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

Feb. 17, it will run 11 a.m.-3 p.m. They will be held in the upstairs IISA board room and are limited to 25 people.

"And JKJ will be back talking about the H-2B Visa program," Rimes said.

James Judkins of **JKJ Workforce Agency**, along with **Cathy Mize**, a JKJ agency representative, will be on hand to discuss the updates and/or changes to the H-2B Visa program relating to foreign workers.

The agency will have a booth and will conduct a formal session 1:30-3:30 p.m., Feb. 15, in the IISA's Carousel Pavilion.

Sharon Hupalo, **MAH Consulting**, also will be back with the industrial trucking and forklift training class that includes a handbook, certificate and permit card for on-site equipment only.

Class size for this session is limited to 25 people. It is

scheduled to run 1:30-3:30 p.m., Feb. 17. The first hour will be held in the IISA upper board room with the second hour being hands-on.

NICA Business Expo and the **Fare Foods** food show welcomes all industry members. These events have been set for Feb. 13-15, at the Sheraton Tampa Brandon Hotel in Tampa, Florida.

This year's theme is "All In!" The **NICA Business Expo** will provide workshops and discussion groups covering the issues and the daily challenges of the concessions industry.

The **NICA Annual General Membership Meeting** is set for the afternoon of Wed., Feb. 15. During that meeting, speakers will review the year, install the 2023 Board of Directors, hold the **Coca-Cola** Membership Contest and hear from Benefit Partners. During the evening's Annual

Gala, a new Hall of Fame recipient will be honored.

The **Fare Foods Food Show** will run Feb. 12-Feb. 13. It will feature exhibitors showcasing the latest food trends and technology that will define and kickstart the 2023 fair season.

The **OABA** will hold its annual board meeting at the IISA Museum and will hold a reception honoring its Hall of Fame and Pioneer Award recipients. This organization also will hold its annual membership meeting and chair reception during the week at the Sheraton Tampa East Hotel.

The **Florida State Fair** is full of thrills, foods, competitions, exhibits and games. **Wade Shows** provides the midway and will bring such rides as the Midway Sky Eye, manufactured by **Lamberink**, **Bertazzon's** Wave Swinger and many more.

•gibtownshowmensclub.com



The 2023 IISF Trade Show is set to run February 14-17, on the club grounds of the International Independent Showmen's Association in Riverview, Florida. Above right is a look down the 2022 event's outdoor midway. AT/B. DEREK SHAW, GARY SLADE

IISF 55th annual Gibtown Extravaganza

February 14-17, 2023

Exhibitor Listing

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 50% Off Plush | 1003-1004 | IGPM Group | 424-426 |
| 5CentRide.com | 602 | Indiana Ticket Company | 722-723 |
| AC Radiocom LLC | 609-610 | JKJ Workforce Agency, Inc. | 830/930 |
| Aeria JKJ | 727-728 | Knight Equipment Company | Slab D |
| Amusement Devices & Mfg. LLC | Outside Space | Lamberink Ferris Wheel | Outside Space |
| Amusement Today | 601 | Lifetime Products Group Inc. | Outside Space |
| Amusement Wraps | 824-825 | LJM & Associates Inc. | Non-Exhibiting Supplier |
| Audio Innovators, Inc. | 725-726 | LKQ/ Keystone Automotive | 821-822 |
| Bj Toy Company, Inc. | 810-816 | Magic Money LLC | 519-520 |
| Battech Ent. LLC | Outside Space | Matt's Web Design | Breezeway Space |
| Berk Concession Supply | 410-412 | McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance | 403/503 |
| Bertazzon 3b S.R.L. | 406 | Midway Tents. | Outside Space |
| Best Toy Ltd. LLC. | 1018-1020 | Moore Industrial Hardware | Non-Exhibiting Supplier |
| Bob's Space Racers, Inc. | Outside Space | OA Finance, LLC | 718 |
| Burton & Company. P.A. | Non-Exhibiting Supplier | Peek-A-Boo Toys | 326-331 |
| Caravan Softoys / Big T | 318-325 | Powersource Transportation, Inc. | Non-Exhibiting Supplier |
| Carnivalwarehouse.Com | Breezeway Space | Price Chopper Inc. /Tap N Go | 512-513 |
| Carolina Atm Services LLC | 711 | R2M2 Energy Solutions | Non-Exhibiting Supplier |
| Cavallaro Concessions. | Outside Space | Rapsure Concession Trailers | Outside Space |
| Cca/Custom Change Aprons. | 524-526 | Recreation By Design | Outside Space |
| Chester Built Trailers Ltd. | Outside Space | Red Bone Products, Inc. | 419-420 |
| Chestnut Identity Apparel Inc. | 613-616 | Retro Refurbishing. | Slab 'C' |
| Circus And Traveling Shows Retirement | Non-Exhibiting Supplier | Rhode Island Novelty | 504-507/603-607 |
| Classic Toy Co., Inc. | 703-710 | Ride Parts Inc. | 715-716 |
| Cmd Enterprises LLC. | 627-628 | Rides-4-U, Inc. | Outside Space |
| ConcessionMall.com | 823 | Rocken Graphics | Outside Space |
| Dalton Kid Rides Rebuilders Inc. | Outside Space | Safe Strap Company | Non-Exhibiting Supplier |
| Designs In Motion | 414 | Sartori Rides SRL | 405 |
| Dills Enterprises LLC dba Uniglide Co. | Outside Space | Schantz Manufacturing | Outside Space |
| Eli Bridge Co. | 418/518 | Shelter Event Equipment. | Non-Exhibiting Supplier |
| Escapade | 509-510 | Showmen Supplies Inc. | Outside Space |
| Fabbri Group | 702 | Soda Parts Express Inc. | 827-828 |
| Fare Foods Corporation | 818 | Space Craft Mfg., Inc. | Outside Space |
| Fiesta | 914-916 | Specialty Insurance Ltd | 415-416 |
| Food Concession Signs | 918-921 | Sterling Jewelers | 1001-1002 |
| Forever Bunkhouses | Outside Space | Swanel Beverage | 819 |
| Frederiksen Industries, Inc. | Outside Space | Technical Park S.R.L. | 408 |
| Fun & Fun Toys, Inc. | 621-624 | Tent And Table.Com | Outside Space |
| Fun Tagg | 413 | Tig Artistics, LLC | Outside Space |
| Funlight Amusements SRO | Outside Space | Toy Factory, LLC | 924-928/1024-1030 |
| Gautier Fabrication Inc. | Outside Space | Triangle Poster & Printing Co. | 630/730 |
| Gloworks Imports, Inc. | 1014-1016 | Used Rides.Com LLC. | 712-713 |
| Goffa International Corp | 719-721 | Wadkins Expo Wheel. | Outside Space |
| Gold Medal Products Co. | 421-423/521-523 | Waterloo Tent & Tarp Co.. Inc. | N/A |
| Gosetto S.R.L. | 701 | Waymatic, Inc. | Outside Space |
| Gulf Coast Eco Trikes | Outside Space | Western Equipment Finance | Outside Space |
| Haas & Wilkerson Insurance | 618-620 | Whirleydrinkworks! | 515-516 |
| Hayes Specialties Corp. | 303-306 | Worldride Service & Supply Inc. | Outside Space |
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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Funtown-Splashtown, Sally announce Haunted Hotel — page 12 / Wisdom introduces Noble Rides — page 16

Hersheypark, RMC partner on new-for-2023 Wildcat's Revenge

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

HERSHEY, Pa. — The Wildcat has been on the prowl through Hersheypark's history for quite some time. Preceding the park's current oldest coaster, Comet, was a wooden coaster built by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company in 1923 called Wild Cat. That coaster operated for 23 seasons. In 1996, the park debuted a new Wildcat. This particular coaster has a historical footnote as the first project for Great Coasters International, Inc. That woodie served the park longer — 27 seasons. However, it closed mid-summer in 2022 to make way for yet a third Wildcat, this time Wildcat's Revenge.

Manufactured by Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC), Wildcat's Revenge adds an all-new steel track with unique elements to the former attraction's wooden framework. In coaster lingo, this wood/steel combination is often referred to as a hybrid coaster.

"Wildcat's Revenge will be the first hybrid coaster at Hersheypark — and in our state — with a nod to the unique history of this coaster in our park," said General Manager Vikki Hultquist. "The Wild Cat was the first coaster at Hersheypark in 1923. It was an original Milton Hershey purchase, and 100 years later, this new hybrid coaster reclaims the name and uses steel track to exact revenge on the wooden structure to take the rider experience to a new level."



A new lift truss system will increase the ride's height to 140 feet. COURTESY HERSHEY PARK

"I am excited about this ride," said Jake Kilcup, COO, RMC. "I love the underflip element. Taking the old lift hill and turning it into the underflip is so exciting. It's right on the edge of the park, so there will be great views. It's the first thing people are going to see."

This signature RMC inversion begins with an upward climb, followed by a counterclockwise 270-degree roll and a dive down towards the side.

Riders will sit in one of three custom trains, showcasing three-dimensional black, charcoal and silver wild cats with fierce expressions and protruding claws.

"The thematic elements are a design first for Hersheypark," said Hillquist.

RMC had a massive turnout for the attraction's lead car reveal at the IAAPA Expo in November.

For this new project, while much of the former structure

will be utilized, an entirely new lift truss will be built, taking the coaster stats from a height of 106 feet to 140 feet.

"Based on our guest feedback, we knew coaster fans would love a hybrid at Hersheypark," Hultquist told *Amusement Today*. "We're thrilled to work with RMC on a custom wood and steel coaster that feels unique to us in Hershey. Instead of just one of RMC's signature thrills, Wildcat's Revenge features the very best of all four — with the world's largest underflip, inverted stall, zero-G roll and reversing downhill roll."

With the new design, the layout will not follow the former structure exactly. Like the height, the length of the track will also be increased, from 3,183 to 3,510 feet. The speed will also increase from 50 mph to 62 mph.

"With the remodels, it really forces creativity," said Kilcup. "Foundations are in

place that we try to utilize as much as we can, but we're also trying to make this ride new and our own. We're taking a different path around that site and adding a few new foundations to bridge that gap."

Kilcup joked that a new layout on the structure makes it confusing for the bent numbering.

Joe Draves is credited with the ride's design.

The ride will offer three-train operation, but there is

no mid-course block brake. Kilcup explains that with a separate load/unload station and guests getting in and out on the same side of the vehicle, two trains can be in the station at the same time.

"As guests enter the Midway America region of Hersheypark, they will be welcomed by a fully renovated coaster station with a design that harkens back to the iconic 1923 Wild Cat station, with low-pitched gables around the perimeter of the roof," said Hillquist.

Hersheypark boasts the largest collection of coasters in the state. "We always want to offer our guests an experience they can't find anywhere else, and our coasters represent industry firsts and iconic rides for every thrill level," Hillquist said. "For Wildcat's Revenge, we worked closely with RMC on a design that combines the very best of RMC's signature thrills, including four inversions. Hybrid coasters allow parks like ours to take wooden coasters to a new level by enhancing the ride experience, length and number of thrills."



The reveal of the lead car garnered a lot of attention at IAAPA Expo 2022. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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Funtown-Splashtown, Sally partner for Haunted Hotel dark ride

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SACO, Maine— **Funtown Splashtown U.S.A.** started from humble beginnings as a drive-in food stand in 1960 as a family operation, owned by Ken and Violet Cormier. Over the years, an assortment of rides and attractions were added, and in 1967, the Cormier family decided to name the place Funtown. Today it is home to 50 rides, waterslides, pools and games.

Many years ago, a haunted house attraction was adjacent to the park, but following its closure in the 1990s, the land is now part of the current property. Guests in touch with the history of the park or those who had enjoyed the attraction in their younger years will be pleased to find a haunted attraction returning.

The Cormier family is partnering with **Sally Dark Rides** on Haunted Hotel.

“We’re actually thinking about the possibility of extend-



To help tell the storyline, a witch’s hut is being created to be placed outside of the haunted attraction. COURTESY SALLY

ing our season into October, and this would be a great core ride to offshoot with that,” said **Billy Cormier**, vice president, Funtown Splashtown. “The interest in a haunted ride is what we were interested in too.”

The attraction from the

past was a walk-through attraction. The Cormiers viewed that concept as labor intensive.

“It was very well done for the time, but we were looking for something different for the culture we’re in now, and Sally fits the bill for us,” Cormier

told *Amusement Today*.

“[The park] had an available building that had been used for several things, so they decided to gut that and put in a haunted dark ride,” said **Drew Hunter**, VP creative design, Sally. “We are repurposing that for Haunted

Hotel, an interactive dark ride. They didn’t want anything extreme, but they wanted it scary and creepy.”

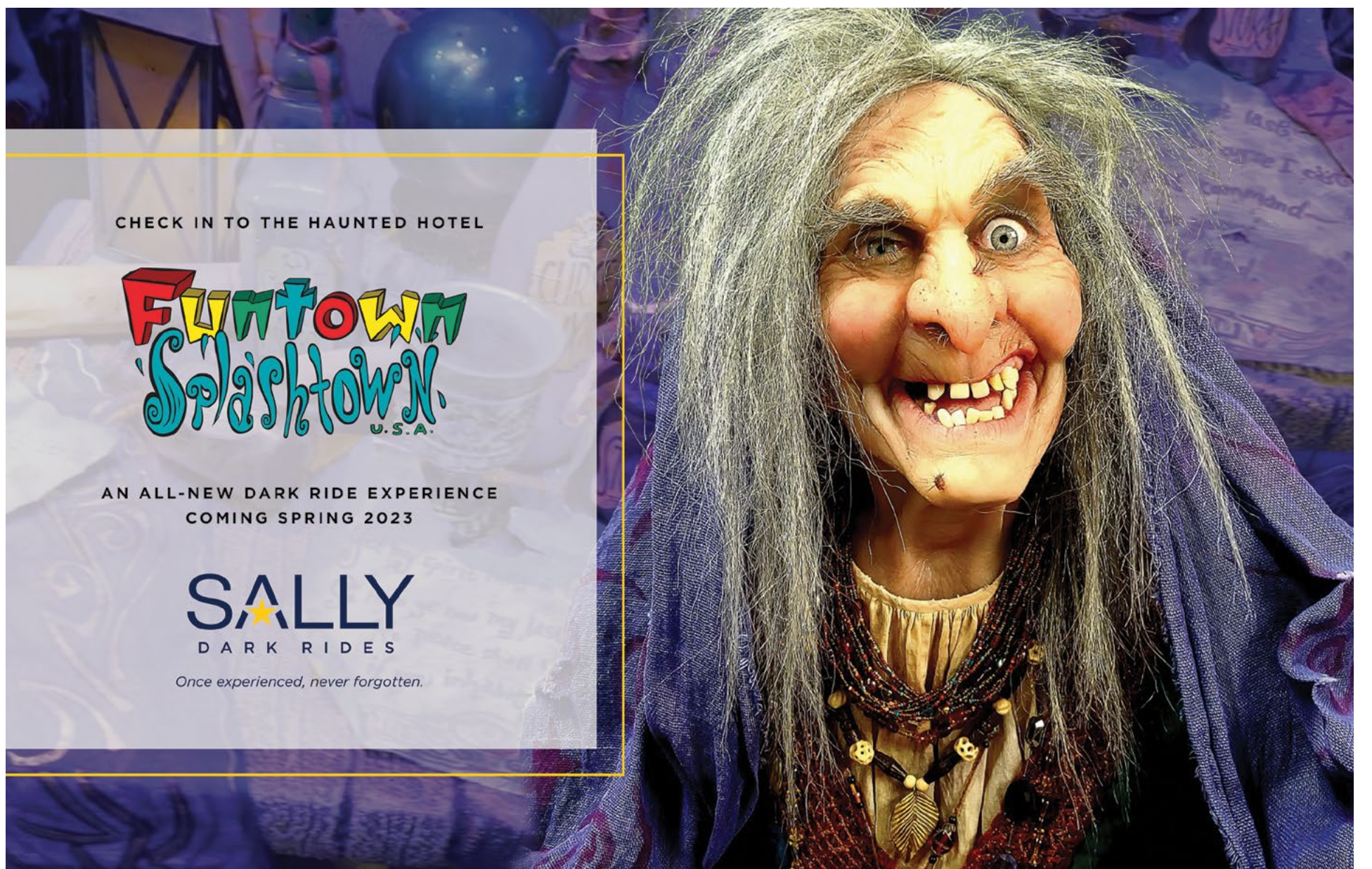
Hunter and his team developed a story for the park, and he is particularly taken with it because it incorporates the town.

“There was once an old conjure woman that lived right in that area over a hundred years ago,” he begins to spin. “No one really liked her, but she had a pet called Katbattikus. The townspeople told her they were scared of her and wanted her to leave, so she packed up and left. But they found a parchment, and on it was a curse. The curse said nothing will ever live in peace on this ground.”

The Whispering Pines Hotel will be the motif of the attraction, and, as the legend goes, will be on the “site” where the old woman lived.

“Miss Eleanor ran it, and things began happen-

▶ See HOTEL, page 13



►HOTEL

Continued from page 12

ing in the hotel," Hunter continued. "Recently a portal has opened up and has been sucking hotel guests into another dimension. So they have called on a special curse-eradication company to come in and get rid of the curse and rescue the guests."

With that wild tale, riders will board vehicles equipped with "curse eradicators," an ingeniously creative alternative to guns.

During the experience, all sorts of visuals happen, such as a stained glass window turning into the face of the witch. The attraction boasts 14 scenes, including the queue. Guests meet a young lady from the curse eradication company while in line, which helps further set the stage. She helps instruct riders on how to end the curse.

The ride features four animatronics of the cat, a winged frog, the witch, the representative from the company and three versions of Miss Elanor for an impressive amount of



The rendering (above left) shows curtains opening to reveal a storm raging outside as lightning bolts reveal dark figures trying to get inside the hotel. IAAPA Expo attendees enjoyed seeing the conjure woman come to life as they strolled the aisles last November. COURTESY SALLY; AT/TIM BALDWIN

animated interaction.

"I think this is going to be a home run for Funtown," said **Lauren Weaver**, VP marketing, Sally. "It's a ride completely unique to their park that's spooky, quirky and fun — touching on nostalgia of the old haunted attraction but with a completely new 'Sally' twist."

At the IAAPA Expo in November, the witch was on display at the Sally booth

and captivated passersby.

Sally's recent dark ride, **Volkanu: Quest for the Golden Idol** at **Lost Island Theme Park**, snagged a Golden Ticket Award in 2022 for Best New Family Attraction.

Bertazzon will be supplying the ride vehicles for Haunted Hotel.

The last major addition in the amusement park side of Funtown Splashtown was well more than a decade ago



(with heavy growth appearing in the water park), so management feels it is overdue for something new.

So far, the park has not made the commitment to extend into October. Management admits it is a large financial undertaking. "If you hit it with the weather, it can pay off," said Cormier. "For a short season like what we have, you have to tiptoe into things."

Funtown Splashtown opens Memorial Day weekend. The park procured many materials ahead of time to be proactive but realizes labor shortages and other variables can factor in that can potentially delay the project, but all parties involved are targeting opening day for the ride's debut.

"I think we can do it," said Cormier.

•sallydarkrides.com

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Palace Playland, Preston & Barbieri jumping into 2023 season

AT: Susan Storey
Special to Amusement Today

OLD ORCHARD BEACH, Maine — Previous plans came together last fall for Maine's **Palace Playland**. During IAAPA Expo 2022 in November, the park met with Italian ride manufacturer, **Preston & Barbieri** to finalize bringing its newest attraction for the 2023 season to life. Originally slated for the 2022 season, the installation of a new HyperJump was delayed, and given the park's short operating calendar, the two teams decided to wait until this year. And now, everyone is ready to reach new heights with this unique attraction.

The HyperJump, the latest from Preston & Barbieri, is a thrilling attraction which can seat 36 guests at a time and stands 30 feet high. It will be the park's second Preston & Barbieri ride, following the success-



Preston and Barbieri's HyperJump attractions can feature captivating lighting packages that illuminate the night as the ride's arms swiftly launch riders up and down. COURTESY PRESTON & BARBIERI

ful introduction of the Sea Viper roller coaster which debuted during the 2018 season.

A relatively new ride design for Preston & Barbieri, the company describes HyperJump as a ride which includes up and down motions, along with long and short-wave

boosts, and a bright, bold look. The ride's light package also brings an entirely different experience for guests as their park visit eases from day to night. While the Palace Playland version will have 12 sweeps, the company also manufactures a version which has 14.

"Reaching heights of 30 feet, we expect this thrill ride to be an exciting addition to our park and that it will appeal to a wide range of riders," shared **Paul Golder**, president, **Palace Playland Associates LLC**.

Operating for more than 120 years, Palace Playland is New

England's only beachfront amusement park. Ranked best in the state of Maine in 2022, the park features more than 25 rides and the largest indoor arcade in the state. The addition of the Sea Viper in 2018 brought the park's coaster

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Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
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A popular ride at **Alton Towers**, Staffordshire, England, is set for a revamp with a completely new story. **Duel: The Haunted House Strikes Back** has been closed since September with theme park fans speculating about what was coming next.

Duel first opened at the park as **The Haunted House** in 1992. By 2003, the ride had been redesigned with the introduction of **Duel** featuring laser guns, a new soundtrack and a zombie theme.

According to local reports, plans now are to take the attraction back to its haunted house roots. **Alton Towers'** owner Merlin Entertainment will use its creative team, known as **Merlin Magic Making**, to redo the ride.

The team has been on site, but no completion date has been disclosed.

A new rule starting at the end of last month has adults banned from riding the carousel animals at the **Children's Museum of Indianapolis**, Indianapolis, Indiana.

A social media post stated that adults are still welcome to sit on the benches or ride beside their children.

The carousel opened in 1917 at **White City Amusement Park** in Indianapolis. The animals were salvaged from the original carousel.

The Winter Music Series music event is back at **Dollywood's DreamMore Resort and Spa**, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. It began Jan. 13 and will run through March 4.

The Dollywood theme park won't open until March.

The **National Railroad Museum** in Green Bay, Wisconsin, has submitted plans for a \$15 million expansion project, including a new display building and a plaza along the Fox River. The 32,040-square-foot addition would be an expansion of the **Lenfesty Center**.

The project also includes a new 36-stall parking lot and other access improvements.

The timeline depends on funding, it may take several years to break ground. The first phase would be to update the overall site.

The Aventura attraction opened last month at **Parque Diversiones** in San Jose, Costa Rica.

The family-friendly roller coaster honors the nation's biodiversity and ecological wealth. The ride's unique elements include water features.

The **Trekking Group** has brought a new zip line adventure park to south Florida. Located on Watson Island, within Miami, Florida, **Treetop Trekking** opened last fall.

The six-acre park transports visitors outside of the city and into nature where zip lines, cable crossings, balance bridges and Tarzan-style swings await.

The adventure features are surrounded by a lush tropical jungle that's home to gibbons, lemurs, iguanas, ibises and capybaras.

There are three courses designed for both adults and kids. The **Explorer Trek** and **Thrill Seeker Trek** courses are made for those ages nine years old and over, while the **Discovery Course** is designed for those five years and older.

The **Trekking Group**, a company that builds and operates zip lines and adventure parks throughout North America, designed the course and is the operator.

Universal Orlando Resort is closing most of the designated smoking areas in its theme parks.

There will now be only one smoking location in each **Universal Orlando Resort** theme park. In **Universal Studios Florida**, Orlando, the smoking area is in **Gramercy Park**, in front of **Revenge of the Mummy**. In **Universal's Islands of Adventure**, the smoking area is in front of the lagoon in the **Port of Entry** land.

The **Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens**, Jacksonville, Florida, is embarking on a new rejuvenation campaign, which began this year with the completion of a new parking lot and is poised to continue early next year with a massive overhaul of the entryway to the zoo.

The first step of a multi-point plan to revive the zoo will include an expanded critical care center for manatees, which will be a roughly 310,000 gallon river and habitat. The expansion will allow the zoo to care for and rehabilitate between 15-18 manatees, nearly three times its current capabilities.

Alongside the manatee center will be an expanded and improved entrance for guests that places more emphasis on conservation efforts of Florida animals, plants and wildlife and includes a canopy entryway, sponsored by **Vystar**.

A planned \$300 million family resort and entertainment district set to be built at Missouri's **Lake of the Ozarks** could bring in half a million new visitors to Missouri as soon as 2024.

The major project, known as **Oasis at Lakeport**, is planned for the community of **Osage Beach**. A press release about the resort and entertainment district was released in early November.



The manufacturing process at **Preston & Barbieri** provides great view of the harness for a new **HyperJump**, similar to the one soon-to-be-installed at **Palace Playland**.

COURTESY PRESTON & BARBIERI

► PALACE Continued from page 14

count up to three.

At the time of **Sea Viper's** opening, **Golder** shared, "We feel that it is a perfect fit for the size of our park and have been very happy so far. We consider it a 'Family Plus' coaster since it is more thrilling than a typical family coaster."

His early season statement proved to be accurate, as the coaster quickly became a signature attraction for the park. **Sea Viper** is one of **Preston & Barbieri's** **Anaconda 2.0** models. Currently there are only two versions operating around the world. The first opened in Romania in 2017, and the **Sea Viper** debuted as the first in the United States. Both companies were – and remain – excited by this shared investment in new ride design.

The working relationship developed during the **Sea Viper** installation was a success as well. **Preston & Barbieri** worked to ensure its coaster would bring a new ride experience that also complemented the park's existing ride collection, while remaining on budget. Situating the ride on the oceanfront also gave riders incredible views of the park and the

Atlantic. The success of **Sea Viper** kept the door open for future rides and further business with the park.

Emerging from the pandemic with other parks in 2020 and 2021, **Palace Playland** continued communication with its Italian partners to determine what could be next. With the installation of **HyperJump**, **Preston & Barbieri** and **Palace Playland** are once again, together debuting a first for the manufacturer in the United States. **HyperJump** demonstrates how the company is continuing to expand its reach and client base in North America. Sure to be a showcase attraction for both park guests and other park operators looking for an updated take on an amusement park classic, **HyperJump** will soon have guests leaping into the queue.

And while the air is still cold in Maine, **Golder** and his team are busy preparing for warmer weather and reopening.

"Each year we add several new arcade games," he continued. "The arcade reopens in April to coincide with school vacation. Our rides will start running Memorial Day weekend, and we are looking forward to welcoming back families and guests of all ages."

Wisdom Rides introduces multi-national company: Noble Rides, LLC

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ORLANDO — Wisdom Rides of America, Merino, Colorado, officials announced during IAAPA Expo 2022 last November the formation of a new company called Noble Rides LLC (Sheridan, Wyoming), a multi-national partnership — with Noble Rides Switzerland — that will, said President Jared Davis, "redefine the way we do business."

And the response from IAAPA attendees was very strong.

"It has been an amazing show," Davis said, back in November. "The response for Noble Rides has been very positive."

Wisdom Rides of America has been specializing in developing amusement rides in a variety of applications including amusement parks, carnivals, family entertainment centers and more. Some of its hit products include the Dragon



The above rendering shows how the Noble Rides, LLC observation wheel will fit into the forthcoming Oasis in Lakeport, Osage Beach, Missouri. COURTESY OASIS

Wagon, Alien Abduction (Gravitron-Starship), Sizzler and Tornado.

The launch of Noble Rides, LLC is opening an international door in a much different way.

"Noble Rides gives us the opportunity to provide high end amusement park

rides at affordable prices," Davis said. "We will be able to partner with the best engineering firms in the world and utilize cost-effective manufacturing companies while maintaining a third party assistance."

Noble Rides will partner with a variety of firms across

the globe to bring what they hope will be the best of the best. Davis, who is the president of Wisdom Rides, also is president of Noble. He said Noble will be able to ensure customers' needs and standards are met.

With the connections Noble Rides has already made,

Davis said they can already offer 120 rides to parks.

Davis said Noble Rides already has five projects working in the U.S. He could disclose only one at this time and that is the observation wheel project for

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► NOBLE

Continued from page 16

the **Oasis at Lakeport**, a \$300 million family resort and entertainment district being built in Osage Beach, Missouri.

For this spoked-wheel, as well as any spoked-wheel project in the future, Noble Rides will partner with the Netherlands-based **KCI Engineering**.

"You just can't get any better than KCI for wheel engineering," Davis said.

KCI Engineering is known for its development and manufacturing of large observation wheels such as the U.K.'s 443-foot-tall London Eye, the 550-foot-tall High Roller in Las Vegas, Nevada, and UAE's 820-foot-tall Ain Dubai. KCI did the concept design for the proposed New York Wheel, and for Ain Dubai, KCI did the complete design.

The wheel at the Oasis will stand 200 feet tall. It will feature a custom LED lighting package that adds lighting on the cable system and rim of the wheel creating very high definition on the wheel.

It also will feature 25 lightweight and autonomous electric cabins (each housing a maximum of eight people), and includes energy-saving drive systems moving along a rail controlled by a high level of automation.

The deluxe cabins will have a variety of amenities, including air conditioning, an entertainment system, WIFI and even Bluetooth connectivity for the ultimate in guest enjoyment.

Passengers will be carried high above the park with spectacular views of the **Lake of the Ozarks** and the surrounding area.

Davis said he expects the new wheel to be the focal point of the resort being developed by **SkyView Partners** and **Tegethoff Development**. Being built along the Lakeport property, it will include 20 acres of amusement rides and attractions

along with hotels, restaurants, amphitheater, marina and boardwalk.

Plans are to break ground on the project in 2023 and open in the summer of 2024.

And this is just one of Noble Rides' projects.

Davis plans to remain president of Noble Rides, LLC while bringing on additional staff to work separately for Noble Rides, LLC.

Jared Davis, president of Noble Rides, LLC and Wisdom Rides of America, shows off a cabin that will be used on the 200-foot-tall observation wheel at the new Oasis at Lakeport, Osage Beach, Missouri. The wheel was sold through Noble Rides' partnership with KCI Engineering.
AT/PAM SHERBORNE



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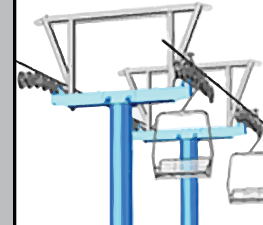
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Altitude Trampoline Park has disclosed a new franchise agreement that will bring the company's FEC concept to Lake Havasu, Arizona. COURTESY ALTITUDE PARK

Altitude Park is bouncing into new Arizona location

LAKE HAVASU, Ariz. — Altitude Park announced a new signed franchise agreement to leap into Lake Havasu, Arizona, as a location for active family fun and entertainment. Local entrepreneurs, **Bill and Liz Renfro** will introduce the energetic brand to Mojave County.

"We've been intrigued by Altitude ever since we started bringing my daughter to the brand's parks," said Bill Renfro. "After months of research, we're looking forward to building a family business with a concept that emphasizes celebrating life's most precious moments by promoting active family fun and free play in the Lake Havasu community."

After semi-retiring at 45, Bill Renfro began developing homes and looking for a franchise opportunity that would bring a much-needed indoor entertainment option to the Lake Havasu community.

"We're thrilled to bring aboard an individual who embraces fun, happiness and freedom like Bill and Liz," said **Mike Rotondo**, CEO of Altitude Park. "They are the ideal franchisees to bring Altitude Park's proven business model to Lake Havasu City and establish a home for gravity-defying joy, exhilaration, social growth and wellness in Mojave County."

Altitude Park is targeting markets throughout the country to further increase the brand's national footprint, with specific priority for new locations in Minnesota, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Oklahoma and Missouri. The company provides support to franchisees through aiding in real estate site selection, construction support, design models as well as financing options. The ideal buildout for a park is 25,000 square feet, but can range between 20,000-30,000 square feet.

Buzz Social debuts new 50-game arcade



Green Bay, Wisconsin, FEC Buzz Social features 48 lanes of bowling, a restaurant and sports bar and plenty of event space. In December 2022, the FEC celebrated its first anniversary by launching an arcade with 50 new games and a redemption center. The owners chose Intercard cashless technology. COURTESY INTERCARD



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

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On January 19, Austin, Texas-based **EVO Entertainment Group** announced a 53,000-square-foot entertainment destination in the Townwest Commons commercial development in Hutto, Texas. The venue will include eight theaters with recliner seating and full food service as well as 10 bowling lanes, games and a private event space.

"Coming out of COVID ... we wanted to stay close to home," EVO CEO **Mitch Roberts** said. "With high growth and just a great family community being 30 minutes from our home office, [Hutto is] kind of perfect."

Roberts said the Hutto location will be EVO's first ground-up build since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hutto City Council previously approved a set of economic development agreements for the project, including a \$4 million economic development grant and a \$1.5 million sales tax incentive. The entertainment center is projected to bring a \$25 million investment and roughly 40 full-time jobs to Hutto.

Pinstack is planning another bowling and entertainment center on San Antonio, Texas's northside, but this time the company will build a new location from the ground up.

The Dallas-based bowling center expects to start construction on the \$9.5 million facility in April and finish in February 2024. The Pinstack at the North Rim will be just as big as the 54,000-square-foot **Park North Shopping Center** location at 53,360 square-feet.

The first Pinstack opened at Park North in February 2022. It has 28 bowling lanes, rock climbing, laser tag and an arcade area with a VR attraction. Pinstack also has a restaurant with a full bar that has 24 beers on draft. Guests who reserve a bowling lane also get lane-side service for food and drinks.

The creators behind the world's first waterless indoor slide park are opening their first Texas location in Katy this fall.

Slick City Action Park — which has one location in Denver and another coming to St. Louis — will open inside the **Katy Mills Mall** and will feature indoor slides, air courts and other attractions for visitors of all ages.

Slick City is similar to a water park in the nature of its attractions, but there's no water. The slides end in padded flooring or landing pits.

Among the expansive list of slide options that will be featured at the park is the race slide, which is designed with four lanes that allow park-goers to speed their way to the bottom in a contest against other

sliders. Meanwhile, the park's switchback slide has twists and turns down a curved tunnel. Finally, the launch slide shoots participants toward an upward curve at an "exhilarating speed," sending them through the air and into a soft pit below.

"Slick City Action Park is the latest entertainment venue making their home in Katy," said **Chris Harris**, city of Katy councilmember and mayor pro tem. "The venue will add to the Katy Mills Malls and Boardwalk District as a destination for locals and visitors alike."

Plans for a proposed entertainment venue in Johnston, Iowa, have expanded to include a wider variety of activity options for guests, who will be able to bowl, throw axes, play pickleball, and drive or putt golf balls.

Plans for **Bombers** were announced in February 2022 and the entertainment venue was expected to have 60 climate-controlled bays from which golf balls could be hit onto a driving range. Other features in the proposed venue were to include a video arcade, a full-service restaurant, bars and a 100-room hotel.

However, **Topgolf** announced plans last June to open a venue in West Des Moines, Iowa. So, the development group revisited plans for Bombers and decided to refocus the venue from golf to family entertainment.

"We're still confident that people are going to come to [Bombers] even if Topgolf chooses to come to this market," said **Allen Stoye** speaking on behalf of the development group. "We're not going head-to-head on the golf. We're are going to be an entire entertainment district."

Georgia-based **Stars and Strikes** is preparing to open its new family entertainment center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. With fifteen existing locations throughout Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, the Stars and Strikes location in Myrtle Beach will appeal to guests of all ages that are looking for a smoke-free entertainment center that is kid-friendly.

"We are excited to open our doors in Myrtle Beach, and we are looking forward to hiring a fun Team!" said **Chris Albano**, managing partner and co-founder of Stars and Strikes.

The 52,500-square-foot entertainment facility will house 24 bowling lanes all of which will feature Spark Augmented Reality Bowling — an immersive, high-tech bowling experience that brings the lanes to life. Other attractions will include including an arcade with over 100 games and virtual reality, a multi-story laser tag arena, axe throwing and a large full-service bar.



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2022 State Fair of Louisiana attendance dips, learns lessons for 2023

AT: Pam Sherborne
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SHREVEPORT, La. — Unfortunately, 2022 was not a very good year, financially, for the **State Fair of Louisiana**, held Oct. 27-Nov. 13, at the fairgrounds in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Chris Giordano, president and general manager of the fair, cited several reasons and said he has learned some significant lessons along the way.

"The 2022 attendance was only 277,200 persons, which is the lowest attendance that we have had in recent history," Giordano said. "Our attendance in 2021 was 324,600, which wasn't our best run either, but we did make a considerable profit at the 2021 State Fair."

The fair has been on somewhat of a roller coaster over the past several years. Giordano said because the 2020 State Fair of Louisiana was canceled due to COVID shutdowns, the decision was made to hold a **Spring Fair** in 2021.

"It was a way for us to make up for having a state fair," he said.

That spring event turned out to be very successful. The success of that fair was attributed to it being the very first major event in the area's market after the COVID restrictions began being lifted.

"People were excited to be able to get out and do things in public settings again," he said.

There also was an influx of federal government support for individuals including stimulus payments and unemployment stipends.

Even though the 2021 State Fair wasn't as high as they had hoped, it was still okay. The entire year with both fairs made for a very good year.

The fair board made the decision to hold a Spring Fair again in 2022.



Crabtree Amusements provided the midway (above) for the 2022 edition of the State Fair of Louisiana. The fair hosts the LRCA Finals Rodeo in the Hirsch Memorial Coliseum (right). COURTESY STATE FAIR OF LOUISIANA

"That ended up losing around \$250,000," he said. The circumstances for the 2022 Spring Fair were much different. Most all events in that market were back open for 2022, so there was more competition than the prior year.

In addition, in 2022, fuel prices rose dramatically and inflation began, which limited the amount of disposable income for fair guests.

Both spring events were an abbreviated version of a typical State Fair of Louisiana held in the fall. There were about 35 to 40 carnival rides in the spring provided by **Crabtree Amusements**, live music, fair food, com-

mercial exhibitors, a few grounds attractions and a small cattle livestock show.

In 2021, the spring event had an attendance of 141,400 persons. In 2022, it had a much lower attendance of 51,500 persons over the run.

"We did have a couple of rainy weather days at the Spring Fair in 2022, but I attribute most of the decline in attendance due to the other factors of the economy and many other events being back open."

Needless to say, there won't be a spring event in 2023.

When the 2022 State Fair of Louisiana came around, the circumstances surrounding the Spring Fair



most certainly attributed to the decrease in participation and money being spent.

"What I noticed was that many people came to the fair during the week during the day before we charged an attendance,"

Giordano said. "The people here didn't spend very much money."

There also were several days of bad weather during the State Fair of

► See FAIR, page 22

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► FAIR

Continued from page 20

Louisiana. On Friday, October 28, there was light rain for much of the day. The next day, on Saturday, October 29, it rained for the vast majority of the day and night.

"We also had to shut down the fair early on Friday, Nov. 4, due to severe storms, and we shut down at 3:00 p.m. on Fri., Nov. 11, due to heavy rain."

But Giordano said there were some very positive aspects of the 2022 State Fair of Louisiana as well. The Junior Livestock Sale raised more money than ever bringing in over \$500,000. It usually averages between \$350,000 to \$450,000 each year. The livestock shows were very well attended.

Plus, there were not any type of security problems during the 2022 run.

Crabtree Amusements brought in about 50 rides. Giordano said Crabtree Amusements had some support from **Alamo Amusements** (Patrick Sheridan), **Todd Armstrong Shows** (Todd Armstrong) and **Wagner's Carnival** (Jason Wagner).

There also were some new activities for the 2022 State Fair of Louisiana.

"We had our first ever Treasure Hunt preceding the opening of the fair," Giordano said. "We partnered with our **Down-town Development Authority** and promoted a Treasure Hunt the two weeks before opening of the State Fair.

"We had a prize certificate that was worth \$1,000 in cash, a \$116 gift card, (2022 was the 116th edition) and a Family Fun Pack to the 2022 State Fair consisting of a complimentary parking ticket and four complimentary Pay-One-Price tickets.

Another new activity for 2022 was a State Fair Cornhole Tournament on Sun, Oct. 30, that took place on the arena floor of **Hirsch Memorial Coliseum**, located on the fairgrounds.

"We had a guaranteed payout of \$5,000 that was awarded to the top participating cornhole teams," he said. "The tournament did not bring in as many teams as we expected, so we did go in the hole a couple of thousand dollars on that event."

The fair holds the **LRCA Finals Rodeo** in the Hirsch Memorial Coliseum.

There also were some new grounds attractions, several new food vendors and a variety of new entertainers.

Some of the grounds attractions included **Circus Hollywood**, **State Fair Zoo**, **Hollywood Racing Pigs**, **Belmont World of Magic**, **Wild World of Exotic Animals Show** and a reptile show.

There were strolling attractions including **Dallas The Fire Guy**, **Nick The Escape Artist**, **Flo** (clown), **Rock-It Robot**, **World Stage Productions Break-dancers** and the **Magic of Doug Conn**.

"Our most successful live music was our Latino Day lineup on Sunday, Oct. 30," he said.

•statefairoflouisiana.com



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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In mid-December, the **Nebraska State Fair** named **Jaime Parr** the new executive director. Most recently she had been serving as deputy executive director, taking over from former director **Bill Ogg**.

"We are pleased and proud to have a native Nebraskan serving as executive director of the Nebraska State Fair," board Chairman **Bob Haag** told *KSNB-TV*. "Jaime's longevity with the fair, knowledge of the institution and love of all things Nebraska made her the ideal choice."

Parr outshined 21 other applicants for the job.

"I'm thrilled to be taking this position on a permanent basis," Parr said. "The fair has been such a big part of my life, as it has been for many Nebraskans. As a team, we'll work together to ensure that the Nebraska State Fair continues to offer something for everyone."

Working alongside former Executive Director Bill Ogg the past few months helped her prepare for the new role. Parr has learned the business from the ground up, starting in 1998, as a seasonal employee as an entry clerk for the Competitive Exhibits Department. The following year she became full-time, first as front desk receptionist, then space rental manager, facility director and deputy executive director. She also filled the top job on an interim basis in 2020. Parr was part of the team that brought the fair to Grand Island in 2010.

"One thing I've learned over the last 20 years, there's no such thing as staying too long at the fair," Parr told *The Fence Post*.

This year's fair takes place August 25 through September 4, with **Wade Shows** providing the midway rides.

The **Showman's League of America** announced those who received membership award pins. 25-year pins went to **James Przybycke, Briand Jones, Russell Nelson, Donald Simons** and **James Whiskin**. 50-year pins went to **Lawrence Wierbinski, Ron Heftman, Charles Johnson, Harold Netzler** and **Howard Shenk**.

2014 was the last year the **St. Clair County Fair**, Belleview, Illinois, was held. Now county officials are looking to restart the annual event this year. The timing coincides with the county's upcoming takeover of the **Belle-Clair Fairgrounds & Expo Center** in a joint purchase agreement with the city of Belleville. The intergovernmental agreement to purchase the 22.5-acre grounds was made possible in part with \$2.35 million of the county's federal COVID-related relief funds (American Rescue Plan Act, ARPA).

The fair operated at a loss for a couple of years before the 2015 cancellation. The early August fair events used to include stock car races, demolition derby, livestock judging, commercial exhibits, along with carnival rides and games. **Luehrs' Ideal Rides** had the spot at that time.

During the pandemic the county health department administered over 100,000 COVID-19 vaccinations on the site. "At that point, we found that it was the only facility that we have in our county that is able to handle a mass event," County Board Chairman **Mark Kern** told *KTVI-TV Fox 2*. "Whether it's COVID, or a tornado, or an earthquake — that was always the place we counted on should there be a major incident in the county." Moving forward, the fairgrounds will be used for emergency services, hospitality and tourism.

Existing events, such as monthly flea markets and other special event shows will continue. "There's a lot of life that comes from the fairgrounds," said Kern. "It's been an integral part of this community and county. We just hope to fill the fairgrounds with more use."

(As of press time, the sale transaction had not been completed.)

Pennsylvania is one of the few states that does not have a state fair, however the eight-day **Pennsylvania Fair Show** held in early January each year is considered to be an equivalent, minus the rides. The event is billed as the nation's largest indoor agricultural event, featuring 6,000 animals, 12,000 competitive exhibits, and 300 commercial exhibitors within one million square feet of space on 23 acres with 11 halls and 3 arenas. Estimated attendance is over a half million people each year. There are no amusement rides except for the two that are run by the **Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association (PSSA)** strictly for the purpose of raising scholarship funds for deserving students. Over 80 PSSA members volunteer each year to make this happen.

In one of the buildings is a 1946 **Allen Herschel** art-deco-styled, 36-foot carousel, complete with a pair of chickens that was provided by **SwikaS Amusements**. In another building within the complex, a **Hampton** tractor flat ride was provided for the event by **Penn Valley Shows**.

The \$3 donation collected from rides given to children, their parents, grandparents and others was split equally between the PSSA and **Pennsylvania Farm Show Foundation** scholarship programs. The showmen have been providing this service since 2005, generating well over a half million dollars.

Carnival owners and operators network during IAAPA Expo

ORLANDO — Many outdoor amusement business owners and operators attend IAAPA Expo 2022 to see what is available or to make a purchase of something they have had their eyes on.

Several took time to connect with their colleagues and catch up with them and their families.



Greg Chiecko, far right, president, Outdoor Amusement Business Association, visited with the Hitch-Hiker Manufacturing Co. family. From left are Jared Swartz, Holly Swartz, Jessica Swartz Coggins and Jeff Swartz. Hitch-Hiker, a concessions trailer manufacturing company established in 1969, is located in New Middletown, Ohio. AT/PAM SHERBORNE



A mini reunion of the McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance, St. Petersburg, Florida, took place during the Carnival Reception at the 2022 IAAPA Reception. From left are Annie Shugart, Drew Tewksbury, Lee Stacey, Lisa Cummings and, at front, Cheryl Tewksbury. AT/PAM SHERBORNE

Thomas and Deborah O'Connor, Skelly's Amusements Inc., Williamstown, New Jersey, checked out new equipment on the trade show floor at IAAPA Expo 2022. AT/PAM SHERBORNE



Sue Nichols (left) who announced her retirement from *Amusement Today* at IAAPA Expo 2022, spent some time with friends, Benjamin Pfeffer (center) and Madison Clayton (right), both with Tons of Fun, Douglassville, Pennsylvania. AT/PAM SHERBORNE

Western Fairs Association announces HOF, Barham recipients

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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RENO, Nev. — Three people were recently inducted into the **Western Fairs Association Hall of Fame** at an industry awards dinner held during the 100th anniversary convention and trade show in Reno, Nevada. They are **B. Troy Bowers, Bob Walker** and **Joseph Anderson**. Two individuals also received the 2023 Barham Award — **Davey Helm** and **Milo Franks**.

B. Troy Bowers, retired, has been involved as a service member, CEO, consultant, teacher, mentor and a board director. Bowers was recognized for his contributions as the first electronic data processor for county fairs and junior livestock auctions. He grew up in the fair industry, following in his father, Bates, footsteps. Bates was a fair CEO, 1965 WFA chair of the board and in 1980 was inducted into the WFA Hall of Fame. Troy Bowers took over the helm

of the **Amador County Fair**, Plymouth, California as CEO in 2007, shortly before funding for California fairs ceased.

Bowers made numerous personal sacrifices to ensure the ongoing viability of his fairgrounds. Bowers has served as a member of the board of directors of the **California Fairs Alliance** and WFA, serving as chair of the WFA board of directors in 2015. Bowers was recently appointed to the San Joaquin County board of directors and serves as the interim CEO of the **San Joaquin County Fair**.

Bob Walker, retired from the **Stanislaus County Fair**, Turlock, California, was recognized for his work in establishing the Satellite Wagering Facility Network in California, hosting the first Livestock Judging Conference, and his support in the development of the annual Managers Conference and Board of Directors training. Walker served as Stanislaus County



B. Troy Bowers

Fair CEO from 1972-1995.

He was a member of the board of directors of the WFA in the 1970s, serving as the board's chair in 1982. Walker is currently a consultant and vendor manager, working for several central California fairs. Most recently, he was the interim CEO of the **Merced County Spring Fair** in Los Banos, California.

Joseph Anderson, retired, is being recognized for his work at the **Napa Valley Exposition**, Napa, California, where he began as a volunteer in 1987. Anderson became an employee of the expo work-



Bob Walker



Joseph Anderson



Davey Helm



Milo Franks

ing in the position of entertainment director and exhibit supervisor. He served as CEO from 2000-2020 and has become mentor and educator.

He set the bar for fair coordination, staff management, and the myriad details and intricacies of running an event and facility. Anderson has been instrumental in providing leadership and guidance for the California Fairs Alliance, and the WFA. He has served as a member of the board of directors of WFA, serving as board chair in 2018. Anderson is currently chair of the showcase committee for the WFA.

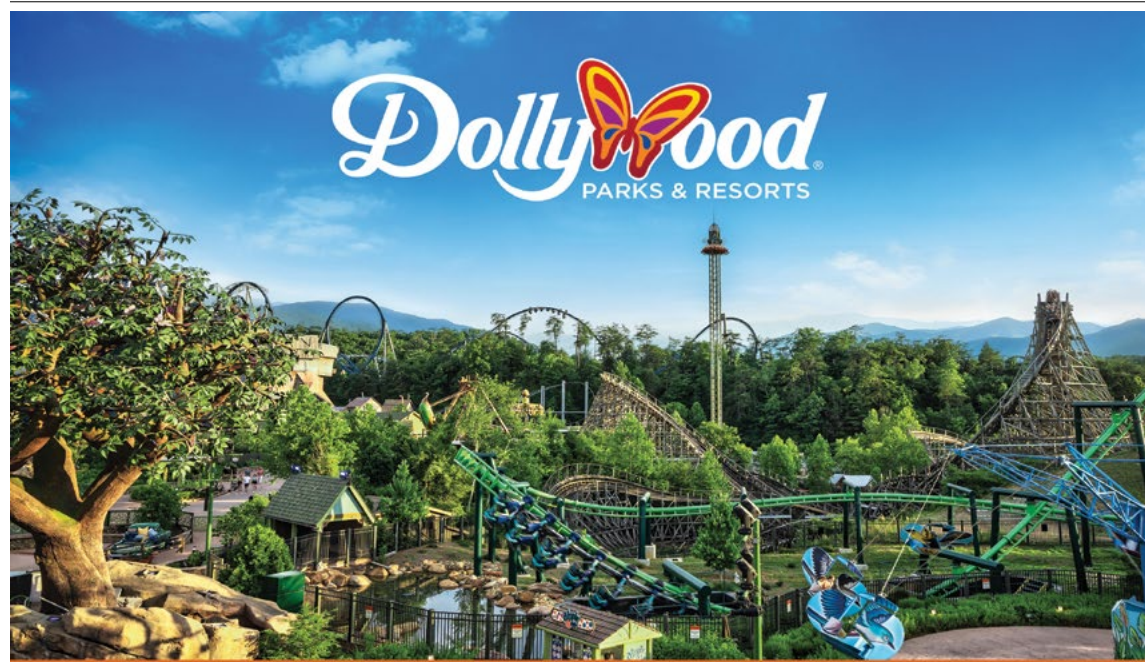
The Barham Award, presented in remembrance of Hot Dog on a Stick founder, **Dave Barham**, recognizes innovation, quality, and leadership in the field of service.

Davey Helm, owner, **Helm & Sons Amusements** was recognized for his innovations in operations and marketing of his mobile amusement business. Under Davey's leadership, Helm & Sons has added attractions in the form of circus entertainment, Bubba Bear and the Badland Band, the Land of Dinosaurs, and other attractions amidst all of the traditional midway rides, food and games, adding value to the guest experience.

Helm shattered the traditional midway mold with the addition of a DJ and live music on the midway, has a grasp on marketing to the next

generation, manages a highly engaged social media network and entertains thousands on and off fairgrounds each year. Helm, Jr. has been a leader in the fair industry in spearheading the production of several events on the west coast in an effort to generate revenue for fairgrounds, fellow food concessionaires, commercial vendors, and entertainment. Helm, Jr. is a longtime WFA member, convention trade show exhibitor, and sponsor.

Milo Franks, owner, **Milo and Son Enterprises**, has been in the fair industry as a food vendor for nearly 55 years. He started in the early 1970s selling "Freeze Kup" and has sold almost every food since. Franks ultimately settled on his niche of corn dogs and pizza through various innovations. He created Milo's Corndog Batter from collaboration and experimentation with a chemist. Franks was the first to build and use outside counters, initially implemented at the **California State Fair**; the first in creating visitor "flash" with 360-degree LED signage; and the first to design and build a double-decker pizza trailer that is the only one of its kind. Franks has served as a member of the WFA since 1995 and served as part of the WFA Convention team leading the transportation team, to transport the WFA headquarters from Sacramento to the annual convention satellite office.



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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ Polin becomes Ka'ana Wave distributor — page 28 / News Splash — page 28

Two iconic slides from ProSlide highlight Warner Beach expansion

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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MADRID, Spain — Last year, **Parque Warner Beach** debuted Europe's first TornadoWave 60 and Flying Saucer 45 complex. In keeping with the park's theming, the two rides feature **Warner Bros.** characters **Black Manta** and **Aquaman**.

The two slides from **ProSlide Technology** of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, highlight a newly expanded area. **Black Manta** is a tornado wave model that is 120 meters (390 feet) long. Guests aboard five-person cloverleaf rafts experience zero gravity due to the semi half-pipe style wave wall that is banked at nearly 90 degrees. The slide starts off with an enclosed tube with black and white translucent sections and a moderate grade, but then suddenly riders plummet into a steep drop that propels them up the wave wall where they sweep across the top. At the highest point in the arc, riders get to experience a moment of zero G-forces before they slide back down the wall into another enclosed section leading into the splash pool. **Black Manta** is an iconic, high-intensity slide that is geared to thrill seekers.

The **Aquaman** slide is more family friendly. A short, enclosed, twisty lead-in section allows the raft



The new expanded area has an Atlantis vibe to it as evidenced by this entrance to the area (above). Thrill seekers aboard five-person cloverleaf rafts experience near weightlessness as they ascend to the top of the wave wall (below). COURTESY PARQUE WARNER BEACH

full of guests to gradually build up speed before they encounter the first of the signature elements — the flying saucers. Riders burst into the daylight and climb the side of the chute as they are whisked counterclockwise around the first flying saucer element. Then it is back into another short, enclosed tube, followed by a second saucer section, this one with a clockwise rotation, giving riders that signature slalom-like course for which these rides are famous. The exit from the saucer leads into an enclosed tube for one final helix before dropping into the splash pool. The translucent sections of the enclosed



portions alternate between gold and green, matching the colors of **Aquaman's** armored suit.

Both slides share the same 14-meter (45-foot)-tall ride tower, splash pool and raft conveyor that brings the rafts to the top of the tower. Guests will appreciate not having to struggle to carry the five-person cloverleaf rafts. Employees at the top of the tower pull the tubes from the conveyor and place them into the dispatch pools where guests climb aboard. Lifeguards are located in the splash-down pool to assist guests exiting the raft and sending them into the conveyor.

The water park extension is next to the children's

area in a previously unused portion of the resort. The expansion carries a theme inspired by the city of **Atlantis** and features plenty of shade areas, lounge chairs and hammocks for guests to enjoy.

Parque Warner Beach opened in 2014 adjacent to **Parque Warner Madrid**. The theme park originally opened in 2002 as **Warner Bros. Movie World Madrid**. It was a joint venture between the **Community of Madrid** — the largest shareholder — and a number of other shareholders, including **Six Flags**, which at the time was under the leadership of **Gary Story** as the chief operating officer. **Six Flags**, with its five percent ownership, was original-

ly contracted to design and build the park. The attractions and theming are similar to what can be found in several of the company's properties. **Six Flags** exited the European market in 2004, selling most of its properties to **Star Parks**. However, its stake in the Madrid park was acquired by **Time Warner** allowing it to continue to use the **Warner Bros.** IP. After several other sales and acquisitions, **Parque Reunidos** was contracted to run the park, and eventually acquired 95 percent ownership, with **Time Warner** keeping its five percent stake.

A water park had always been part of the original plan, but as a result of the various ownership changes, it wasn't until 12 years after the theme park debuted that a water park was finally realized. The €8.5 million (US\$9.2 million) park covered 30,000 square meters (320,000 square feet) adjacent to the theme park and featured two wave pools, a lazy river, two water play areas, and multiple slides provided by **WhiteWater West** of **Richmond, British Columbia, Canada**. The water park makes extensive use of the **Warner Bros.** IP with slides themed to **The Joker**, **Harley Quinn**, **Batman**, **Superman**, **Wonder Woman**, and with this latest addition, **Black Manta** and **Aquaman**. In 2020 the park was awarded the **European Star Award** from **Kirmes** for having the best water slides in Europe.

Although this is the first **ProSlide** project at **Warner Beach**, **ProSlide** has been working with **Parque Reunidos** since 2015 when it installed a **Tornado/Behemoth Bowl** combination at the company's **Aquopolis Villanueva de la Cañada**, a water park near **Madrid**. Since that time **ProSlide** has supplied attractions to **Parque Reunidos** on a number of projects.



The double-slide complex is the highlight of the new expansion section and features two high-capacity slides, both accommodating five-person rafts. COURTESY PARQUE WARNER BEACH



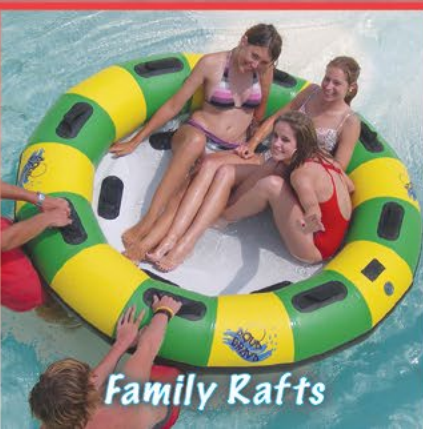
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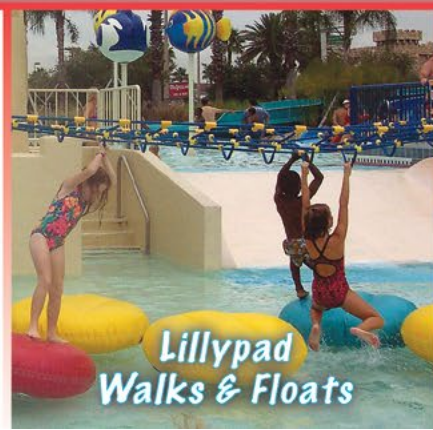
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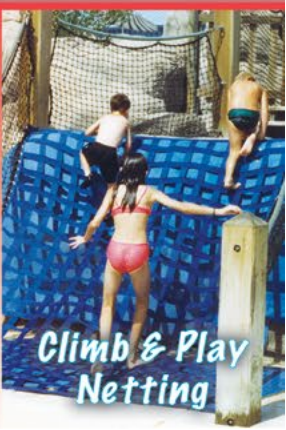
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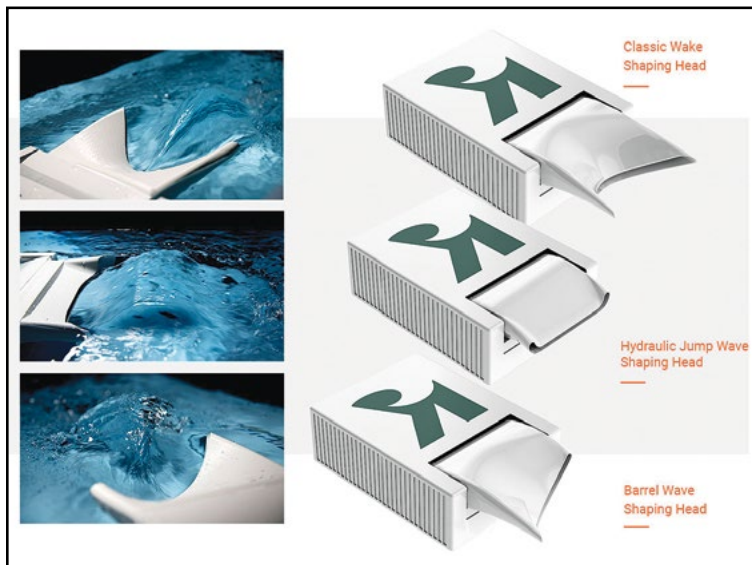
Sidewinder Tubes & Rafts



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COURTESY POLIN

Polin becomes distributor of Ka'ana Wave products

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

ISTANBUL, Turkey — **Polin Waterparks** has reached an agreement with **Ka'ana Wave Co.** of British Columbia to become the exclusive distributor of its surf attractions.

Signed during IAAPA Expo 2022, the agreement extends Ka'ana's reach into the Middle East and Asia where Polin already has a strong presence. Within these territories, Polin has exclusive rights to promote, advertise and distribute the company's ground-breaking surf attractions such as the latest CM7 series of surfable wave generation. Beyond these exclusive areas, Polin will actively promote Ka'ana as a worldwide partner.

Ka'ana Wave Company's CM7-Series wave machines represent a new class of artificial surf attraction, one that creates a variety of deep-water surf waves in new and existing pools and lagoons. The company said its aim is to break down barriers to entry and make surfing more accessible for everyone.

The CM7 is a dock that is installed in a pool and produces a variety of dynamic wave shapes. Under the dock is a drivetrain that powers a wave-shaping head. The shaping head protrudes from the dock and into the pool. The CM7 requires a 40-foot by 30-foot pool that is at least four feet deep. When surfers are ready, they walk out onto the head and drop into the wave. The shaper can be swapped out to produce right-break waves, left-break waves, boat-wake waves and a standard stationary wave. The pitch on the shaper is variable. Adjusting the pitch will change the wave size from a three-foot wave up to a 12-foot wave.

Ka'ana debuted the product last September at Britannia Beach, British Columbia. It was an opportunity for the company to reveal the product's first wave shapes, develop CM7 safety protocols and collect feedback about the surf experience from more than 250 people, including industry insiders, professional athletes, developers, city planners, architects, resort planners and aquatic designers, who had an opportunity to view the wave generation in action or to hop on a surfboard and test the waves themselves.

"Polin is an outstanding manufacturing partner with an amazing team. Expanding our relationship to include distribution in the Middle East and Southeast Asia is a logical step in the advancement of our goal of making surfing accessible to everyone around the world," said **Jamie Watson**, Ka'ana Wave Co. chief executive officer.

"At Polin, we have always aimed to strengthen our presence by developing game-changing products and technologies. For this reason, it is invaluable for us to start this partnership with Ka'ana Wave Co., who excited us with their game-changing Brass Ring Award-winning product. We believe the CM7-Series will be attractive to our clients and help us offer an even greater range of experiences to them," said **Bilge Pakis**, Polin Waterparks board member.



NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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The city council of Northport, Alabama, approved a master service agreement with **ProParks Management** to handle the initial phases of an aquatic center. The city council had been looking at a 150-acre site that was purchased in 2021, but decided that site, with its rugged terrain, would be better suited to an adventure sports park. In October a deal was made to purchase a large parcel of land along U.S. Highway 82 that will be developed into a large-scale aquatic facility. In December the council approved the agreement with ProParks Management to develop a concept plan and follow through its construction and opening. The council also approved a plan to develop a sports complex on a third piece of property around Kentuck Park.

"I am so glad to see the water park, adventure park and sports complex are all being done. I love seeing it being done simultaneously as well," said Councilman **Jeff Hogg** of district five. "These are different areas that will be beneficial to the growth of Northport and also to make this a destination city and one that people will come in and stay for days, not just one day."

Specific details of the water park have yet to be determined. The city is leaving it up to ProParks to decide the size of the facility and what attractions should be included.

The owner of a water park under construction in Hurricane, Utah, is trying to alleviate concerns from nearby residents that it will use too much water. The new water park is part of the existing **Jellystone Park RV** resort near Zion National Park. Although the park is being touted as the largest in Southern Utah, it is really just a water tower with four slides, all utilizing a run out instead of a splash pool. There is also a water play area with a water bucket, but the park will have no pools other than a few hot tubs.

Other efforts to reduce water usage include the use of artificial grass and the installation of a deep well that allows the park to draw water from underground resources instead of using surface water from rivers and reservoirs.

The Washington County Water Conservancy reported that the park is working with the local government to protect underground water rights. The conservancy indicated that it appreciates the efforts made to conserve water, and that the park had received all the necessary permits.

Scott Nielson, the owner of the park, said, "I feel like we've taken dras-

tic measures to reduce the water usage from my resort."

The citizens of Fargo, North Dakota, can look forward to a new aquatic center in 2024. The existing **Island Park Pool** will remain closed for the 2023 season for a multi-phase \$16.9 million renovation of Island Park. The new center will include a 50-meter competition pool with a deep end housing multiple diving platforms and a fly high slide. The 13-foot deep end will have two one-meter diving boards, two three-meter diving boards and a five-meter diving platform. The opposite end will be two meters deep and will be equipped with starting blocks. The middle of the pool will be shallower so it can be used for volleyball.

Separate from the competition pool will be a lazy river, circular relaxation pools, a zero-depth entry pool, splash pad and a waterslide. The waterslide can be used with or without tubes and the splash pool at the end connects to the lazy river.

The existing poolhouse structure will remain but will be remodeled to include updated locker rooms, a community room and a concession stand.

Island Park has had a pool for more than 80 years. The current 50-meter pool that is being reconstructed was built 45 years ago and has lasted well beyond its expected life.

Cornwall, Ontario, could become home to a Great Wolf Lodge indoor water park and resort. Several months ago **Great Wolf Resorts** signed a deal to acquire 40 acres in the Cornwall Business Park. The acquisition has yet to take place as Great Wolf is waiting on concessions and agreements from the city. The city needs to extend Nick Kaneb Drive and upgrade the water and sewer services. Those plans are in the city's 2023 capital budget and could take 18 months to complete. With that timeline, construction of the resort would not begin until mid-to-late 2024 and is likely to take nearly two years, meaning the earliest the resort could open would be 2026.

The CA\$350-million lodge would be constructed at the northern end of the future extension of Nick Kaneb Drive.

Specific details have not been released but Great Wolf has promised to build the most updated, state-of-the-art resort with at least five restaurants and expanded offerings above and beyond many of its current resorts, including the one currently operating in Ontario at Niagara Falls.

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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

▶ **Woman of Influence: Petrina Pope** — page 33 / **Amusement Today's Sue Nichols retires** — page 35

Farm tourism businesses adding entertainment, amusement rides

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO, Fla. — Many attendees of IAA-PA Expo 2022 spend time "kicking tires," looking around and making decisions on what to buy among the plethora of products and services.

Something with a little twist at the 2022 event was the interest of a small group of owners of farm tourism attractions looking to add amusement rides.

In fact, **Tim Noland, Eli Bridge Company**, reported selling a new Scrambler to **Vala's Pumpkin Patch and Apple Orchard** in Gretna, Nebraska. Noland said this was the first time Eli had a customer of this type.

Vala's Pumpkin Patch offers the traditional hay rides, farm animals with a petting coral, several different mazes, a haunted farm house, educational elements and more.

Two new attractions at Vala's were offered in 2022, a carousel and a train ride. A new Scrambler will be added for 2023.

"We also had another farm owner stop by inquiring about a Scrambler," Noland said.

That person, **Robert Gifford**, owner of **Liberty Ridge Farm** in Schaghticoke, New York, said he and his wife attended the 2022 IAAPA Expo looking at potentially purchasing



Liberty Ridge Farm of Schaghticoke, New York, (above left) is looking to add an amusement ride to its multiple farm activities. In 2022, Vala's Pumpkin Patch and Apple Orchard (above right) added a train ride and a carousel. The location is also adding a Scrambler from Eli Bridge, similar to the one pictured below, in 2023.

COURTESY LIBERTY RIDGE FARM, VALA'S PUMPKIN PATCH, ELI BRIDGE

a ride, but haven't made the decision as yet.

"We are looking at this type of attraction," Gifford said.

Liberty Ridge Farm holds a variety of special seasonal events for families.

Suzi Spahr, executive director of **NAFDMA International Agritourism Association**, said she is seeing some owners of farm tourism looking to add amusement rides.

"Some already have them and some are looking at doing that in the landscape of their farms and with farm theming," Spahr said. "Farms are always looking at ways to engage their audiences."

NAFDMA is an organization that works to

advance agritourism including on-farm retail, pick-your-own, consumer-supported agriculture and direct delivery. The organization works to facilitate events, resources, communications and peer-to-peer exchanges that bring together new relationships and opportunities.

Membership is made up of farmers, extension agents, industry suppliers, researchers, farmers' market participants and government officials.

NAFDMA is holding its annual expo Feb. 3-7 at the **Renaissance Austin Hotel**, Austin, Texas.

Len Soled, Rides 4 U, said his company is starting to look at this part of the industry as well. Soled



mentioned that Rides 4 U representatives plan to attend a couple events that market to the farm tourism industry over the next several months.

"We have seen some

of this, but we are still not sure it will be worth it for us," Soled said. "We are sort of testing it now."

• elibridge.com
• rides4u.com
• nafdma.com

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- Base frame option available for indoor or outdoor use
- Inclusive train design fits both children and adults
- Weld-free track design for reduced maintenance
- Theming opportunities for both the track and trains!

Ride Stats

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| Height | 24.5' [7.5 m] |
| Length | 566' [172.7 m] 592' [180.4 m] |
| Footprint | 162' x 83' [49.5 m x 25.3 m] |
| Capacity | 1,200 pph |
| Power | 100 kW |
| Height Req. | 36" [91 cm] |

MODEL A MODEL B MODEL C MODEL D



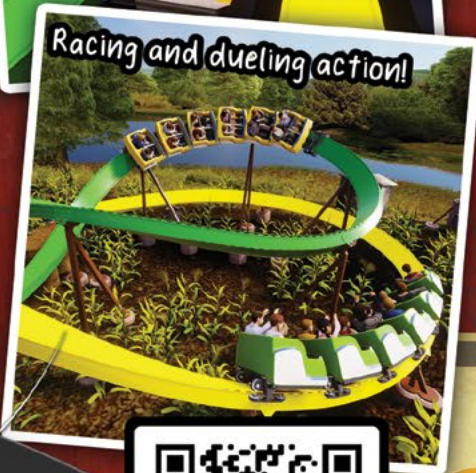
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MARKET WATCH

| COMPANY | SYMBOL | MARKET | PRICE 1/20/23 | HIGH 52-Week | LOW 52-Week |
|----------------------------------|---------|--------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| The Blackstone Group | BX | NYSE | 85.01 | 138.94 | 71.72 |
| Cedar Fair, L.P. | FUN | NYSE | 41.79 | 62.56 | 37.58 |
| Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media | CMCSA | NASDAQ | 39.37 | 51.20 | 28.39 |
| The Walt Disney Company | DIS | NYSE | 103.48 | 157.50 | 84.07 |
| EPR Properties | EPR | NYSE | 40.39 | 56.38 | 34.58 |
| Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd. | JP:9010 | TYO | 4545.00 | 5130.00 | 3650.00 |
| Haichang Holdings Ltd. | HK:2255 | SEHK | 1.93 | 4.29 | 0.81 |
| Lefoo Development Co. | TW:2705 | TSEC | 16.95 | 19.95 | 15.40 |
| MGM Resorts International | MGM | NYSE | 39.05 | 49.00 | 26.41 |
| Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd. | RCL | NYSE | 62.99 | 90.55 | 31.09 |
| Sansei Technologies, Inc. | JP:6357 | TYO | 802.00 | 926.00 | 704.00 |
| SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc. | SEAS | NYSE | 59.07 | 76.57 | 40.01 |
| Six Flags Entertainment Co. | SIX | NYSE | 26.52 | 47.24 | 16.83 |
| Tivoli A/S | DK:TIV | CSE | 766.00 | 900.00 | 650.00 |

STOCK PRICES ABOVE ARE GENERALLY QUOTED IN THE FOREIGN CURRENCY IN WHICH THE COMPANY IS LOCATED
 *Dubai Parks and Resorts halted trading on the Dubai Financial Market due to an acquisition by Meraas Leisure and Entertainment LLC earlier this year.

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

BUSINESS WATCH

Accesso adds to global client portfolio

TWYFORD, U.K. — **Accesso Technology Group** announced that it has signed strategic agreements with 18 new partners within the theme parks, attractions, ski, hospitality, cultural and zoo markets across the U.S. and the U.K. This selection of new clients will leverage a mix of the Accesso Passport eCommerce ticketing suite, the Siriusware point-of-sale ticketing solution, the ShoWare live event ticketing platform and Accesso's guest experience management platform to redefine the guest and patron experience at the various venues.

"2022 was incredible for our team at Accesso, and we're pleased to have closed out the year welcoming such a unique set of new partners to our worldwide client network," said **Steve Brown**, CEO of Accesso. "We look forward to deepening our global footprint even further in 2023, helping operators unlock new opportunities to drive revenue and deliver a better guest experience in the process."

The expanded portfolio includes the **San Francisco Zoo** (San Francisco, California), **Snowy Range Ski Area** (Centennial Wyoming), **Timberline Mountain** (Davis, West Virginia) and **Battersea Power Station** (London, U.K.) among others.

Disney requiring employees to be on-site

BURBANK, Calif — The **Walt Disney Company** will require hybrid employees to be on-site four days a week starting March 1. Disney CEO **Bob Iger** sent a message to cast members saying that "working together more in-person will benefit the company's creativity, culture and our employees' careers."

As of March 1, 2023, employees who are currently working in a "hybrid fashion" will now be required to be on-site four days a week — preferably Monday through Thursday. It appears the change in policy is a result of the upcoming centennial celebration of The Walt Disney Company, as well as other opportunities.

Red Sea Global joins Serandipians network

RIYADH — **Red Sea Global** (RSG), a developer behind regenerative tourism projects, has confirmed its flagship destination, **The Red Sea**, has joined the exclusive **Serandipians** network of luxury travel and hospitality organizations.

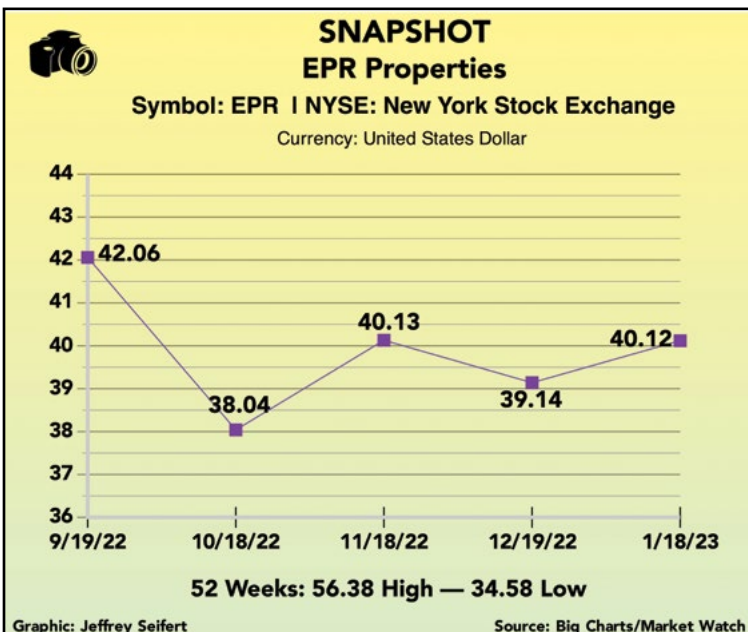
Set to welcome its first guests in 2023, The Red Sea is one of the first Saudi tourism destinations in the Kingdom to join Serandipians, and is one of just a small select number of luxury destinations to join the network before officially opening to guests. An industry-leading ecosystem drawing together the best boutique luxury travel agencies and hospitality brands from around the world, Serandipians has specifically selected The Red Sea to join its community on account of the destination's ambition to deliver outstanding services and best-in-class accommodation in a breathtaking location along Saudi Arabia's west coast.

"Combining the natural beauty of rolling sand dunes, untouched islands and abundant coral reefs with first-class luxury guest experiences, The Red Sea is poised to welcome travelers to Saudi Arabia as one of the world's few remaining unspoiled gems," stated **John Pagano**, CEO of RSG. "Our partnership with Serandipians will help us bring regenerative tourism to the world, and demonstrate a new kind of sustainable development that aims to enrich natural capital and benefit the environment in which we operate."

A portfolio of 13 international hotel brands have already announced they will have a presence at The Red Sea, including **Ritz Carlton Reserve** and **Miraval** hotels, the first to operate in the Middle East.



Disney announced the long-awaited TRON Lightcycle / Run coaster will open to the public on April 4, 2023 at the Magic Kingdom. COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD



DIESEL PRICES

| Region (U.S) | As of 1/16/23 | Change from 1 year ago |
|--------------|---------------|------------------------|
| East Coast | \$4.752 | \$0.799 |
| Midwest | \$4.374 | \$0.771 |
| Gulf Coast | \$4.224 | \$0.761 |
| Mountain | \$4.729 | \$1.051 |
| West Coast | \$4.688 | \$0.621 |
| California | \$5.430 | \$0.641 |

CURRENCY

On 1/23/23 \$1 USD =

| | |
|--------|-------------------------|
| 0.9210 | EURO |
| 0.8063 | GBP (British Pound) |
| 129.53 | JPY (Japanese Yen) |
| 0.9199 | CHF (Swiss Franc) |
| 1.4346 | AUD (Australian Dollar) |
| 1.3376 | CAD (Canadian Dollar) |

Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Petrina Coffman Pope is part of the family that owns Pope's Concessions, a veteran company in the outdoor amusement industry.

The company travels with other operators and provides both food concessions and rides.

Pope literally living her best life

GREENFIELD, Tenn. — Most people are familiar with the adage, "I'm living my best life," as the response to the question, "How are you?"

Adage or not, Petrina Coffman Pope feels, "I really sort of am living my best life."

It has been a good life, and she knows there is more to come. As a part of the family business, Pope's Concessions, family is certainly the main focal point.

"We are together all the time," she said. "We not only work together, but we also take trips together, are with each other at holidays, we eat meals together."

Sometimes traveling is hard. Sometimes it can get aggravating.

"It also gets in your blood and you don't want to do anything else," she said.

Pope grew up in Junction City, Kentucky. When she was about 12 or 13 years old, her father, Archie Coffman, began promoting mud sling demolition derbies and truck pulls. During the summer months, she would travel with her dad to the local fairs and festivals, sometimes several in one week.

"We always stayed pretty close to home," she said. "So, we went home every night. We might go to two or three events in a week."

Her mother, Patricia "Tootie" Coffman, never went to these events. "It really was not for her," Pope said.

She did this with her dad for many years. So, she was familiar with the outdoor amusement business industry, but in a different way from her future husband.

James Roy Pope was working in his family business, Pope Concessions. They started out with only food concessions and traveled primarily on Myers International Midways. Over the years, they began to add a few amusement rides here and there and booked those rides

onto the show as well.

Call it destiny or fate at work, stars aligned. It was years after Pope's father had begun promoting. She, in her early 20s, was still doing some traveling with him. They were at the Blue Grass Fair, one of Myers Midways dates.

"I saw James Roy Pope," she said. "I said, 'Who is that?'"

They met but didn't really start dating each other until a couple of years later when she was 26 years old.

That was in 1993 and that was the year she said she "ran away with the carnival." The young couple was serious about each other, but Pope wasn't sure the type of traveling and life she would have with Pope's Concessions was for her.

But Pope decided she would try it out.

"My parents weren't too happy because I was so far away from them," Pope said. "But I said I just needed to try this."

That was 30 years ago.

"I traveled that first season and it just worked for me," Pope said. "When we came off the road that fall, James Roy asked me to marry him. We got married the next May."

The couple had their first child in 1995, Joseph Pope. Their second, Sara Ann, was born in 1999.

And they continued to travel, staying with Myers International Midways for 25 years. There were very few times that they had to leave their children at home with family members, mostly when the children were very young.

Other than that, they have been together. And that is one thing that she has loved about her industry.

"I remember one time I was talking to a guidance counselor at one of their schools. She asked me what we will do with the children when we were out on the road.

"I was so surprised," she recalled. "I said, 'What do you mean

Petrina Pope Pope's Concessions Greenfield, Tennessee



what will we do with the children?' They will be with us."

The family traveled in a recreation vehicle, which seemed a lot easier than the day traveling she did with her father when she was young.

Both of her children work with the family's concessions company. Her son, who is now married, lives across the street from where he grew up and where Pope and her husband reside. Her daughter lives with them.

"My daughter went to college and got a B.A. degree in interdisciplinary studies with an emphasis on media design," she said. "She does marketing design for us."

The Popes are a very tight knit family. Her mother-in-law, Jane Pope still works on the road at 81 years old.

They collectively own 17 rides and about 25 concession trailers, although she said they never have them on the road at the same time.

Their season begins at the end of April with spots close to home. At the end of May, they begin traveling to spots in Kentucky as well as West and Middle Tennessee. October finds

them traveling to Mississippi and are home by Halloween.

"It is a good schedule," she said.

Another part of the industry that Pope loves is the people.

"All the people I have met and gotten so close with," she said.

The entire industry, she feels, works with each other.

"If there is an operator that needs a part for something and can't get it, we all try to help out. We aren't working against each other. We work for each other."

And many in the industry give back. Pope is the immediate past president of the Showmen's League St. Louis. She is still on the association's board and is in charge of its scholarships. She also is on the board of the Showmen's League of America.

And when her family goes to the International Independent Showmen's Foundation annual Super Trade Show and Extravaganza, they are in the kitchen cooking.

"We try to do what we can to help out in the industry," she said.

—Pam Sherborne

OBITUARY

IAAPA, WWA Hall of Fame member Fred Langford dies

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE, N.J. — Frederick R. "Fred" Langford, 94, of Cape May Court House, New Jersey, passed away peacefully on November 24, 2022.

A Wildwood native, Langford studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. He started his career designing and building single family homes and hotels in the Wildwoods with his lifelong friend, Will Morey, Sr.



Langford

Passionate about amusement design and manufacture, Langford later became a leader in the waterpark industry with his companies' Surf Coaster and Waterworld Products.

Several of his creations are in The Wildwoods, Ocean City and Long Beach Island. Traveling across the U.S., and the world, he designed and installed waterparks and waterslides in places as distant as Hong Kong, Tokyo and Taiwan.

In 2008, Langford was welcomed into the World Waterpark Association Hall of Fame. And, in 2019, he was inducted into IAAPA Hall of Fame for his pioneering gold standard in waterslide quality. His slides were state of the art with detailed moulds. Langford also pioneered self-supporting beams for his slide which allow waterslides to be longer and provided guests with an experience that feels more like a roller coaster ride.

In 2008, Fred realized his final dream of designing, building, and owning a par-3 golf course. Beginning with land acquisitions in 1982; he created what he called "beauty and challenge" with his beloved 195-acre Laguna Oaks Golf Course in Cape May Court House, New Jersey.

Worlds of Fun has named **Rick Fiedler** vice president and general manager of the 235-acre Kansas City theme park, water park and resort.

Worlds of Fun's new leader is a theme park industry veteran with more than 30 years of experience, including almost 27 years with the park's parent company, **Cedar Fair Entertainment Co.**

"I am thrilled to take on this new role and lead the talented team at Worlds of Fun," said Fiedler. "My passion for the industry will contribute to our mission of inspiring lasting connections and lifelong memories by delivering amazing experiences for all."

Fiedler's predecessor, **Tony Carovillano**, oversaw Worlds of Fun from November 2016 to December. As general manager, he ushered the park through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Franck Baril was recently announced as **Triotech's** director of special venues. In his new role, Baril will be dedicated to the edutainment projects for the museums, zoos, aquariums and tourist attractions in Europe.

"Triotech has already many references in this segment, and we are looking forward to having Franck focusing on these custom projects. With his experience in business development and his arts background, he will be instrumental to strengthen our position in Europe," stated **Yannick Gemme**, Triotech's vice-president of sales and marketing.

Baril joined Triotech's European Division CL Corporation in 2019 and has a strong track record in business development.

"Triotech has developed a sterling reputation for the high quality of its customized attractions and the ability to create exciting 'edutainment' experiences for museums, aquariums, and tourist attractions. I look forward to expanding this market," offered Baril.

The Walt Disney Company Board of Directors announced that it has elected independent director **Mark G. Parker** as Chairman of the Board. Parker, a seven-year member of the Disney Board and executive chairman of **Nike, Inc.**, will succeed **Susan E. Arnold**, who will not stand for re-election pursuant to the 15-year term limit under Disney's board tenure policy. As a result, the size of the Board will be reduced to 11 members.

"Mark Parker is an incredibly well-respected leader who over seven years as a Disney director has helped the company effectively navigate through a time of unprecedented change," said Arnold. "During his four decades at Nike, Mark has led one of the world's most recognized consumer brands through various market evolutions and a successful CEO transition, and he is uniquely positioned to chair the Disney Board during this period of transformation."

Parker will also chair a newly created Succession Planning Committee of the board, which will advise the board on CEO succession planning, including review of internal and external candidates. Parker served as Nike's chairman and CEO until 2020, when he became executive chairman.

"Mark Parker's vision, incredible depth of experience and wise counsel have been invaluable to Disney, and I look forward to continuing working with him in his new role, along with our other directors, as we chart the future course for this amazing company," said **Robert A. Iger**, CEO of the Walt Disney Company.

Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE) announced the promotion of two individuals who have consistently delivered results by focusing on the company's core value of constant improvement and have shown continuous dedication to safe and efficient operations across our properties.

ON THE MOVE

Gina Claassen has been promoted to vice president of safety. In this role, Claassen will serve as the leader for all safety, attractions and security teams to ensure a safe, secure and peaceful environment for all guests and hosts across HFE's properties. Additionally, as the PSC Safety Leader, she will oversee and provide direction for all safety, security, environmental and health procedures to ensure compliance with regulations and company requirements.



Claassen

Claassen recently celebrated 25 seasons with Herschend and was just selected to serve on the **IAAPA** Board of Directors. The company stated that her experience and industry knowledge will continue to serve her well in this new opportunity.

Nick VanGelder has been promoted to director of attractions & safety compliance officer. In this role, VanGelder will lead attractions operations for all Herschend properties with procedure development, standardization and operational optimization through consistent use of metrics and analysis.



VanGelder

As the PSC Safety Compliance Officer, VanGelder is also responsible for ensuring Herschend safety programs and procedures are in place at each property and that all team members are in compliance with the requirements.

LAI Games unveiled the addition of industry veteran **Mike Kane** to its leadership team. Kane has assumed the role of vice president of global sales for the company and is responsible for driving LAI's continued growth in global markets.



Kane

"Mike is one of the most respected and experienced leaders in our industry," said LAI Games CEO **Mark Easte**. "We look forward to seeing what great things he can do to continue growing LAI Games and furthering our commitment to customers and partners."

Kane brings a wealth of industry knowledge and experience to his role, having held top leadership positions with throughout the out-of-home entertainment industry, including **Cinemark**, **Hersheypark**, **Six Flags** and 17 years of heading up Game Strategy for **Dave & Buster's**.

"I'm excited to join the LAI Games team and look forward to contributing to the continued growth of this well-respected and innovative leader in the coin-op industry," added Kane.

Costumed mascot manufacturer **Rainbow Productions** has made two appointments to support growing demand for its services and to help the company pursue new business opportunities. **Magdalena Foulkes** has joined Rainbow Productions as licensing director and **James Barlow** has been promoted to sales and marketing director.



Foulkes

Foulkes will be responsible for the licensing side of the business, working to strengthen the company's relationships with licensors and build its portfolio with new brands.

In his new role, Barlow will be overseeing the company's sales and marketing teams and will be responsible for helping to grow the business in terms of events and mascot manufactures, both in the U.K. and internationally.



Barlow

"We are delighted to be announcing these two appointments of respected industry figures boasting proven expertise and achievement in our field," stated **Simon Foulkes**, managing director of Rainbow Productions. "We look forward to kicking off a very successful 2023 with the help of Magdalena and James."



Fiedler



Baril



Parker

Nichols retires after more than 40 years in entertainment industry

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — Sue Nichols officially retired from daily responsibilities in sales and advertising from *Amusement Today* on the last day of 2022.

That retirement might have ended the day-to-day business of a 40-plus-year career in the live entertainment industry, but it hasn't ended her love of the industry and the people she has met and befriended along the way.

She will continue visiting her friends at amusement parks, fairs and carnivals across the country. And, of course, that will mean taking a few spins on the rides, buying a few rounds of unsweetened iced tea and selling her artwork that she has transferred to mugs, tote bags, cheese plates, tissue boxes and more.

Since 1981 when Nichols began her first job in the industry with **National Ticket Company**, she has traveled to trade shows, fair conventions, baseball meetings, horse racing conferences, movie theater conventions and arena managers conventions. She has traveled to fairs, carnivals, water park shows and amusement and theme parks.

She has not missed one **IAAPA Expo** in all those 40 years. Her first year at the expo was in 1981, in Kansas City, Missouri.

She has traveled by plane, car and train.

Nichols was born and raised in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where she now resides after spending many years living in Dickson, Ten-



Above, *Amusement Today* Publisher Gary Slade presented Sue Nichols with an award recognizing her longtime industry service during IAAPA Expo 2022 as Nichols announced her retirement. Below is Nichols at her very first IAAPA Expo in 1981. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON; COURTESY SUE NICHOLS

nessee, a small community just to the west of Nashville, Tennessee.

She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Advertising at Penn State University, University Park, Pennsylvania. After graduation, Nichols worked for a couple of newspapers before answering an ad for a sales position at National Ticket.

She had no idea exactly where that would end up leading, but the promise of a lot of traveling and a company car had her right away.

She worked for National Ticket until 1988 and then went to *Amusement Business* until 2001. She began with *Venues Today* in 2002 and then joined *Amusement Today* in 2004.

During her time in Tennessee, she turned back to her art for relaxation. She found she had a talent for painting in high school, but had put that on the back burner.

Over the years she found she could combine her artistic talent with the industry



she loved. That was when she began transferring her paintings of amusement rides, go-carts, carousel horses, etc., on to ceramics.

Nichols also found that there was a market for selling them. She created her own business called **5centride**. She has expanded this business over the years and will continue selling them online, in person and at the **International Independent Showmen's Association (IISA)** trade show in Riverview, Florida, known simply as Gibtown.

When the announcement was made official at IAAPA Expo 2022, Sue Nichols friends and colleagues throughout the industry took a moment to help celebrate her career. There were kudos and congratulations all around as well as "thank-yous" for a job so well done.

"Congratulations Sue! You are a special person who shines every where you go!"

—Kris Butler Brajevich, **Butler Amusements**

"A lot of folks might be jealous of a woman who made a successful career out of her love of amusement parks. Roll on, Sue! Roll on!"

—Dean Phillips, **Philadelphia attorney and friend**

"Congratulations! Well deserved. More time now to ride roller coasters and paint! Enjoy!"

—Bridget McBride, **formerly of Amusement Today**

"Congratulations, Sue! Well deserved for your many years of service to this industry."

—Mark Bodenhorn, **Shippensburg University**

"I could always count on Sue to keep me updated with the latest water park industry contact to help answer questions and keep my stories accurate."

—Jeffrey Seifert, **Amusement Today**

"I'm always impressed by Sue's knowledge and grasp on the carnival industry. She knew her stuff, always aware of the the fine details of so many of the industry's carnival operators!"

—Tim Baldwin, **Amusement Today**

"Sue, I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award. Please keep sharing your art in your much-deserved retirement. All my best."

—Beth Wade, **Berry Center of Cypress, Texas**

Over the years, Nichols also has given back to the industry by donating some of her items to silent auctions held by industry associations. She also volunteered at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville, Tennessee, for 17 years.

She also has volunteered and given to local humane associations.

Nichols will continue do-

ing the things she loves. The difference now is that she will be calling her own shots.

And there is no way she will stay away from the highest and fastest rides. Take it from this writer, Nichols will ride anything once. Her child-like laughter doesn't totally drown out this writer's white-knuckled screams, but certainly gives a different perspective.

Nichols is a joy.



Above left, Sue Nichols is pictured with musical artist Johnny Cash at an early 1990s Western Fairs Association convention. Ever a fan of the amusement industry, Nichols had to seize an opportunity to hang out with Minnie Mouse (above middle). Above right, Nichols enjoys a ride the Phoenix roller coaster at Knoebels Amusement Resort, which is a pasttime she plans to do even more of in retirement. COURTESY SUE NICHOLS

SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► GCI, Arnolds Park rehab coaster — page 38 / Baynum Solutions works on coastal projects — page 40

Silver Dollar City investing in employee housing by Holtz Builders

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

BRANSON, Mo. — When acquiring and retaining staff at theme parks continues to be an industry concern, Silver Dollar City is being proactive. The park is partnering with the Wisconsin-based Holtz Builders to construct an on-grounds residence hall, adjacent to the park. The new three-story, dorm-like project will house temporary seasonal hosts. This forward-thinking approach to staffing helps Silver Dollar City go beyond Branson's borders.

"The last few years have been difficult, and there's no way to sugarcoat it," said John Zajac, director of human resources. "That said, I could not be more proud of Silver Dollar City and our parent company, Herschend Family Entertainment, for their dedication to our employees. We launched GROW U in 2022, which allows our employees to get their college degree at little to no expense to themselves based on their degree. As our CEO Andrew Wexler said: 'Whether it's to pursue a new dream or advance their career with us, we care about our employees' personal and professional growth, because we believe that their futures should be grown with love, not loans.' In a really difficult period, our company showed what was most important, our people."

"Affordable and easily accessible housing for our student programs is an ongoing



The new facility at Silver Dollar City (above) will house around 300 residents. Each room (below) will accommodate four individuals and include private bathrooms, a desk and small kitchen areas. COURTESY SILVER DOLLAR CITY

ing challenge," said Brad Thomas, president, Silver Dollar City. "The residence hall is needed today and is a critical part of our business strategy as we continue to grow and expand our operating calendar. Student programs are very important to our summer operations."

"In a major tourist town like Branson, it can definitely be difficult," Zajac added. "The population here and in our surrounding communities isn't that large, but what we lack in quantity, we certainly make up in quality. We have genuinely friendly people who strive to provide Ozark hospitality to the millions of people who come to visit annually. This is why a housing facility like the one we will open this year is so very important. It provides us the opportunity to attract wonderful people from outside our region with great jobs coupled with great accommodations at an affordable price."

The project will accommodate around 300 students. Standard rooms will house up to four students with four beds, individual lockers, a private bathroom, a large refrigerator, Wi-Fi, a study desk and self-contained heating and air. A change in design learned in Tennessee is separate bathrooms from showers in each room. Additionally, the hall will have two common kitchens with gathering spaces and laundry facilities. Indoor and outdoor recreational areas will provide open spaces for games and gatherings. The branch of Holtz Companies that owns and operates the employee housing is International Residence Hall.

Holtz Builders has established partnerships in resort communities to create safe, efficient and affordable housing for seasonal workers and is no stranger to Herschend Family Entertainment. The group previously developed a housing complex for sister Park Dollywood in Tennessee.



Amusement Today asked Dan Bullock, president of Holtz Companies, how the partnership with Herschend was initiated. "It started in Sevier County, Tennessee, with the Wilderness Resort. The folks at Dollywood heard about it and even toured the facility. That's how the conversation began," he answered.

"Dollywood has been an amazing organization to work with," said Bullock. "Great people, great philosophy ... we have such a great relationship because we have so many similarities between our organizations and the

values that we hold."

"For Dollywood, the international dorm has been a game changer," said Pete Owens, vice president, marketing, Dollywood. "As our market continues to grow, the demand for finding employees becomes harder. With IRH, we are able to control our own destiny with students we locate from outside this area to fill available positions. In 2022, thank to IRH, we were close to 100 percent staffed."

Of the three stories, two will be residential. The first

► See HOLTZ, page 37

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►HOLTZ
Continued from page 36

floor will have gathering places and commercial amenities.

"The joint kitchen/dining space will be an important gathering space where students can dine together and prepare their own meals," said Thomas. "In addition, residents will be able to enjoy special meals, activities and events that our employees have come to love and expect."

"The community area is very big," said Bullock. "One of the things we've found is that cooking is a social activity — it is a sharing of culture and sharing of food."

Silver Dollar City has provided the tract of land to Holtz for the project, with Holtz constructing and managing the new property. The site is adjacent to the park and has previously been used for festival storage, with a small piece of land for employee parking. Residents in the new lodging will be able to walk or bike to the theme park.

"This facility is more than just employee housing. Having had the opportunity to tour other facilities operated by IRH, you can feel the sense of community and togetherness," Zajac told AT. "I think this is really driven home when you walk through one of their community kitchens and gathering spaces. You see people of very diverse backgrounds genuinely learning and enjoying spending time with one another. Our facility will house students from our internship program (Silver Dollar UniverCity), which tend to be domestic students, but it will be shared with students from Bridge USA, the J1 summer work/study program among others as well."

"Much like the employee community on our park, it's just a really special thing to watch that happen. To see

people from very different backgrounds starting off as acquaintances, then becoming friends and, finally, family."

"Our Silver Dollar City, White Water and Showboat employees are known to care for each other," said Thomas. "That care extends not only to our longer-term employees and their relationships with each other but also their relationship to our student workers. In addition, we know that this housing will allow these students to develop strong friendships and relationships with each other."

"The J1 visa program is a cultural exchange program," said Bullock. "Students who come through that program work, but the basis of the program is cultural exchange, and we need to be very focused on making sure we are delivering a top-notch experience, to be creating ambassadors."

"We strive to be a great place to work for great people," said Thomas. "We are hopeful that these students will enjoy their jobs, enjoy the beauty — and the fun! — of the Ozark Mountains. We also look forward to some of these students falling in love with not only our park for one or more semesters but also seeing the career opportunities which exist with the continued growth of both The Silver Dollar City Company and the growth of Herschend Family Entertainment."

The facility has 24/7 staffing, with someone always at the front desk and full video monitoring. While there is a small group of full-time staffing, residents play a role in the well-being of the facility.

"One of the things we are very adamant about is clear expectations," said Bullock. "Be a good person, treat others the way you'd want your family to be treated, pick up after yourself, help others.

We set those basic ground rules. We don't have many issues. We feel: 'We want you back; we want you here year after year and to have a good experience.' We take that extra step. That's the culture we like to cultivate."

Bullock is inspired by Holtz Companies' founder, **Tom Holtz**. "Tom Holtz' purpose in life is to take care of people. That's who he is. Herschend shares that philosophy," he said.

"We most enjoy creat-

ing and operating housing developments that become 'communities' for student residents," said Holtz. "Our mission is to create lasting relationships, and we are in this project with Silver Dollar City for many years to come."

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Great Coasters completes wooden coaster rehab at Arnolds Park

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ARNOLDS PARK, Iowa — What's old is new again — literally! Arnolds Park, an amusement park in a city of the same name, has invested in a complete refurbishment of its classic wooden roller coaster, Legend.

"We want to preserve the history of not only The Legend coaster but all of our vintage rides," said Paul Plumb, marketing. "The parks that have these vintage rides are slowly becoming a thing of the past. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, we have been blessed with generous donors who have put us in a position where we can continue to operate and keep these rides operating safely."

"We started off with them multiple years ago," said Clair Hain, Jr., president, Great Coasters International Inc. "This year, the ride will have been completely restructured with new track."

Legend was built in 1930. Over its more-than-90 years of



Three years of refurbishment has now completed the entire coaster. The turnaround facing the entrance road has been completely rebuilt (above left). COURTESY GCII

service, it had operated under the names Giant Dips, Speed Hound and Big Coaster.

Standing at 63 feet tall, it may not seem "big" by today's standards, but the ride continues to enthrall families who come to the summertime setting alongside Lake Okoboji.

"There were some areas we didn't have a chance to do and get in and re-do the structure," Hain told *Amusement*

Today. "We are now. The new lift and basically the first curve are all being redone as well as a camelback."

New concrete was poured under the large turnaround to create a more stable foundation. Instead of just piers, it is more like a solid path under the structure.

The ride has also received a new drive system.

"Everything has been upgraded," said Hain. "The

brakes, they've done the train themselves ... the entire ride will be completely new except for the station."

"The Legend is the 'face' of the park as far as the rides go," Plumb told *Amusement Today*. "It is fun to watch a first-time rider who has been waiting for the day that they are tall enough to ride the coaster. Many times this is a 'family' event where not only mom

and dad are there to witness it,

but grandpa and grandma are all there to enjoy, all of whom remember riding the Legend when they were young."

Arnolds Park boasts an assortment of vintage and preserved rides offering a nostalgic experience. Its future was uncertain in the late 1980s, but the park was purchased in 1989 by a group of investors. In the late 1990s, the park was sold to a developer who had plans to raze the park and build condominiums. A "Save The Park" campaign created a groundswell of support, and today it operates in the black as a nonprofit. Investments continue to upgrade and enhance the park and area, maintaining the charm that has made it a beloved stop for so many Iowans.

Although GCII is not involved in the painting, the coaster's structure will still retain its classic white appearance.

The ride is expected to be ready to open by the time the 2023 season begins.

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Baynum Solutions working on multiple industry coastal projects

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

NEWPORT, Ky. — When **Chris Baynum** entered the field of painting amusement attractions in 1983, he had no idea how vast his portfolio would grow in the 30 years that followed. From that first wooden roller coaster, Kentucky-based **Baynum Painting**, now **Baynum Solutions**, currently oversees projects on some of the world's largest amusement attractions, waterslides and now the installation of rides.

From this significant growth in experience, knowledge of waterfront conditions has become engrained into tackling coastal projects.

Baynum admits the salt air has an obstacle that inland parks don't have to face.

"The challenge is the moisture," he said. "There's always a challenge with the fog and mist. Cleaning any oceanside project is vital. With saltwater, while you may not see it, the salt depos-



White track pops from a freshly painted Great Nor'easter at Morey's Piers (above left). The Baynum team, seen on the structure of Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk's Giant Dipper, makes sure the coaster looks its finest for its 100th anniversary (above right). COURTESY BAYNUM SOLUTIONS

its are on there. Everything has to be thoroughly cleaned before applying paint."

Baynum's company has returned to **Morey's Piers** to paint its largest coaster, The Great Nor'Easter.

"It gets beat up so much with the elements and salt year-round," he said. "This is our second time completely repainting that project."

Management at Morey's

Piers is very dedicated to making their seaside destination look top-notch. Often, this means work is staggered.

"It's phased. Last year we worked on the side closest to the coastline; this year's phase is the light blue structure sections and the track," said **Melissa Bamford**, marketing, Baynum Solutions. "In conjunction with that, which is kind of unique to

Morey's, is the annual maintenance program we do on their wheel. We do a number of spokes and one column annually in order for them to remain compliant with the [New Jersey] inspections each year."

"They've been a very loyal client, as well as consistent," said Baynum. "We know we will be there every year."

The timing of facilities'

similar off-seasons makes it a busy crunch period for restoration work.

"When we are painting either wood or steel, there's a challenge fighting the moisture and trying to — typically for us — accomplish it in off-season hours. Temperatures can also be a factor," he said. "Morey's also helps us tre-

► See BAYNUM, page 42

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The flume at Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier is receiving TLC, after the facility's coaster did in 2022. COURTESY BAYNUM SOLUTIONS

►BAYNUM Continued from page 40

mendously with weight load at that park, because you can't just bring lifts out on the pier; it could be a catastrophe. They help us in still getting the reach we need. It requires a little more thought than just sending in a crew and beginning painting."

Another repeat customer was **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**. After six weeks into the project, the work was halfway completed but halted because of the excessive rain.

"The rain was killing us," Baynum told *Amusement Today*, in regard to the atypical rainstorms that besieged California. "We're in a holding pattern right now, but when we get back to finish, we'll have it done in time for the 100-year anniversary."

The park's Giant Dipper roller coaster was built in 1924. This year will be its 100th season, while 2024 will be its 100th anniversary. The historic ride will look pristine for both milestones.

This is the third time the Boardwalk has partnered with Baynum to make the coaster look its sharpest.

"We did our first job there in 2000. It's one of my favorite spots," Baynum said. "There's just a laid-back coolness about the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk that gets me in the gut. I get it every time I visit. I can't describe it. There's something special about it."

In 2022, Baynum completely repainted the Iron Shark steel coaster at Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier. Currently, the

team is in the process of painting the flume at the Texas location, located on a pier jutting into the Gulf of Mexico.

"It's a big project," Baynum said. "You don't just have the elements, you have the water ride itself, and log flumes by nature are a challenge to keep up with corrosion. All these parks we're talking about do a phenomenal job keeping up with their maintenance. I can't say enough about that."

Baynum Solutions will also be heading to sister park, **Kemah Boardwalk**, not far from Galveston. In February, the park's observation tower will be repainted. This is the second time Kemah Boardwalk has partnered with Baynum on the attraction.

While Baynum Painting developed a reputation for large projects that needed a new look, the company is often called in to touch up brand-new attractions.

The **Zamperla** installation at **Luna Park** in Coney Island introduced a coaster/flume combo in 2022. Once construction was complete, Baynum Solutions was tasked to come in and touch up areas that needed addressing owing to the construction process.

"We have a lot of touch-up projects out there. Everything from the base bolts that come in unpainted to the rigging scrapes and strap scrapes — you're not repainting everything, but these are still very big projects," Baynum said. "You still have to get to all the points and access it."

While various seafront locations kept Baynum Solutions occupied, the company is busy with numerous other inland locations throughout the U.S. Work is underway to make sure those projects are completed by opening day.



Zamperla installed a coaster/flume combo at Luna Park. Baynum touched up the project following installation. COURTESY BAYNUM SOLUTIONS



Pacific National Exhibition to host SafeConnect event

VANCOUVER, B.C. — In partnership with AIMS International, the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) is hosting the second annual SafeConnect: Western Canada's Amusement Industry Safety Conference at the PNE.

Held on the Pacific National Exhibition Grounds (home to Playland), SafeConnect is a safety training event that embraces industry-leading certification in an expansive and inclusive face-to-face environment. Attendees will learn from world-class speakers, veteran trainers and the industry's top professionals sharing their expertise. Industry partners are welcomed to share safety initiatives and messaging for the Pacific Northwest audience.

Attendees will build their own schedule, choosing from content aligned with both ASTM Standards and industry best-practices. Conference take-aways and actionable safety information can be carried home to share with colleagues and co-workers. SafeConnect is managed and produced by the Pacific National Exhibition and invites delegates from across the industry to participate.

SafeConnect offers the AIMS certification program, connecting attendees from across North America through an onsite training seminar, culminating with the offering of AIMS certification exams for Maintenance Technician, Ride Inspector and Operations Technician.

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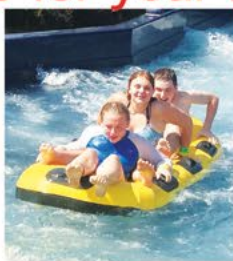
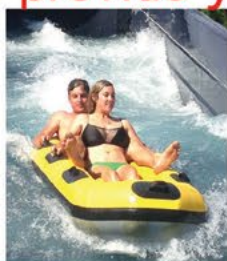


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BREAKING NEWS

Universal announces horror attraction for Las Vegas and family fun for Texas

FRISCO, Texas and LAS VEGAS, Nev. — **Universal Parks & Resorts** made two huge announcements on January 11, 2023. The first is a one-of-a-kind park designed to inspire fun for families set for Frisco, Texas. In addition, the creators of Halloween Horror Nights will develop a permanent horror experience in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The proposed Frisco park will be designed to be more intimate and engaging for younger audiences and will be sized for a regional audience. It will be filled with family-friendly attractions, interactive and playful shows, character meet and greets, unique merchandise and fun food and beverage venues. Although smaller in size, it will still carry the same

quality as Universal's other larger resort destinations.

Part of 97 acres of land recently purchased by the company, the proposed park also has plans for an adjacent themed hotel and room for expansion. The entire area is intended to have a completely different look, feel and scale than Universal's existing parks and will appeal to a new audience for the brand.

"Frisco is one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S. and has been recognized as a great place to plant professional roots and raise a family," said Frisco Mayor **Jeff Cheney**. "This new Universal concept will continue to enhance our tax base, expand employment opportunities and bring even more fun to Frisco."

The original concept

for Las Vegas will bring to life Universal's vast library of classic horror films and today's most terrifying tales. It will be the anchor tenant in a new 20-acre expansion of Las Vegas' immersive **Area15** entertainment district that initially opened to the public in September 2020 and has attracted more than four million visitors since that time. Occupying a 110,000 square-foot space, the new Universal experience is an innovative, creative complement to Area15's roots in experiential art and entertainment.

"We are enormously gratified to have an extraordinary company like Universal as our partner as we embark on the next phase of growth for Area15," said **Winston Fisher**, CEO of Area15.



Universal Parks & Resorts announced a one-of-a-kind theme park specifically designed to inspire fun for families with young children is forthcoming to Frisco, Texas (above). At the same time, the company announced a brand-new permanent horror-centric, immersive experience is coming to Las Vegas (below). COURTESY UNIVERSAL PARKS AND RESORTS



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Amusement industry law practice The Sheehan Firm's dedication to client support has led to opening an office in Orlando, Florida, The practice is in search of two additional attorneys for the new office.

Attorneys interested in joining The Sheehan Firm should submit their resume to Thomas Sheehan at tom@ridelaw.com



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