

# Amusement TODAY

Your Amusement  
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NEWS Leader

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Print Edition

## Pipeline: The Surf Coaster makes splash at SeaWorld

Orlando receives a first-of-its-kind coaster from B&M

AT: David Fake  
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — Pipeline: The Surf Coaster, the first surf model coaster designed by Bolliger & Mabillard Consulting Engineers, Inc. (B&M), officially opened to guests at SeaWorld Orlando on May 27, after a several-week passholder and media preview.

At the grand opening event, Vice President of Operations for SeaWorld Orlando Rob McNicholas described Pipeline: The Surf Coaster in this way, "Only at SeaWorld Orlando can you surf at 60 miles per hour. You'll go 110 feet in the air

on our hammerhead wave. Your surfboard will go upside down in a maneuver meant to mimic an 'alley oop,' which is known in the surfing community. But what really sets this ride apart is its five airtime moments. But they're not normal airtime moments, they're prolonged airtime moments. And that's due to the unique first-of-its-kind seat design, which allows the seats to rise and fall two inches in each direction. The wave time, airtime and motion is ridiculous, and is the coolest experience I've ever had on a roller coaster. Truthfully. But you'll see it for yourself soon."

The new LSM launch coaster has received much praise, not only for its unique

► See PIPELINE, page 6



The arched entrance of Wild Mouse pays homage to its namesake at Cedar Point in the 1960s.  
AT/TIM BALDWIN



## Cedar Point reimagines beachfront into new Boardwalk area

Zamperla spinning coaster anchors updated section

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SANDUSKY — With more than 150 years of entertaining multiple generations of families and thrill seekers, Cedar Point has created a loyal audience that enjoys coming back again and again. Over the past decade, the park has successfully focused on specific sections of the park and has given them a crowd-pleasing makeover. In 2023, an area close to the front of the park has embraced Cedar Point's historic ties with the Lake Erie beach. It has been dubbed The Boardwalk.

"The place-making is what this area is about," said Tony Clark, public relations director, Cedar Point. "You could have just had Wild Mouse and Grand Pavilion and called it a day. But when we do improvements, we do the whole area. When the lakeside midway just had Wicked Twister and the Giant Wheel, it didn't really have

a theme; it didn't have a vibe. Now it does. It's now a more vibrant part of the park."

The newly envisioned Boardwalk has two large additions — a spinning Wild Mouse coaster from Zamperla and the Grand Pavilion restaurant. The park's Scrambler (Eli Bridge) and Matterhorn (Mack Rides) were relocated from the park's main midway to help complement the Boardwalk area. Both former rides and new rides have sharp signage to offer a cohesive stylized feel.

"The Boardwalk's retro vibe really comes out in the décor and signage," Clark told Amusement Today. "It's kind of '50s and yet older than that, so it has this weird but fun juxtaposition of possibly multiple eras, which is really the point. It is our vision of what guests may have experienced when they came to the boardwalk years and years ago. Obviously not the big rides and other attractions, but when they saw the Grand Pavilion for the first time and thought 'Oh wow!' and it was amazing, the same thing is happening now. That's what

► See BOARDWALK, page 7



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# AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

## You never forget your last



Robinson

As a kid growing up, my father was the vice president of LeSourdsville Lake/Americana Amusement Park. Naturally, I spent a ton of my childhood there. However, ironically enough, I was terrified of roller coasters my entire youth and never braved the park's legendary wooden coaster, The Screechin' Eagle. And the park shuttered before I overcame my fears.

Fortunately, for me, in my early 20s, the park reopened — under new ownership — and I was able to spend a summer evening riding and reriding the coaster. As luck would have it, the park was quiet that night so the operators just let us ride through the station — without additional ride tickets — more than a half dozen times back to back. It was wonderful.

However, in a sudden shock, the park closed permanently just a couple weeks after those rides. If I hadn't seized that free evening, I would've never gotten to ride the roller coaster that was the background for so many of my childhood memories and photos.

Every season, popular and legendary rides close at parks for good. Even treasured parks are shut down never to reopen in what feels like the blink of an eye. However, every park — every ride — is part of the memories and childhood of so many guests, forever living on in their dreams, their minds and their photo albums.

For our industry, the National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives works diligently to preserve its history. But the industry's true lineage is kept in the hearts of our guests who remember rides and moments so fondly. Be it their first coaster, their first ride with their own child or even just the sound of the nearby midway games as they stole a kiss from that secret crush ... every moment within our gates is treasured by someone, somewhere.

And, when a ride or park is lost to time, those treasured moments are where those rides and parks will live on for eternity.

**FLINT'S VIEW:** Bubba Flint



**INDUSTRY VOICE:** Adam Sandy, Zamperla

## Get out of the office and into the parks

We understand the struggle. As a park manager or ride salesperson, you're inundated with emails that never end and a phone that won't stop ringing. But if you're responsible for selling attractions or managing a property, you're needed in the park. The most successful leaders, like those who help first-year employees engage and grow with the park feel the pulse of their business by walking it every day. They notice when a queue line is full of carvings because the line isn't moving or when trash cans have been placed in the wrong spot, leading to garbage being strewn all over the place. Also, those new employees do need to see a leader above them, not just someone who wears a path from their car to their computer.

For those of us who sell attractions, it's tempting to stay home and pitch new concepts on Teams. But we miss out on so much when we do that. What are guests



Sandy

saying about my new ride? What are they saying about my competitor's? We've all been there when that phone call comes in because a new concept is experiencing more downtime than anticipated and we need to get on a plane. Our job is to understand the challenges our buyers face, not just call and say, "Hey man, how's it going?" when we have not stepped into a park in years.

While the definition of a normal park season is changing, Halloween stretched operating days out more than anyone imagined 30 years ago, for most properties there is a finite number of money making days. That means there is a limited amount of time for you to see what's happening. While it is a comfortable place to be, the office is the last place where you can learn about what is going on in your park or your customer's park.

So, get out from behind your desk this summer. We have memories to help create.

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



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



# 2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

## Sue Nichols, 5centride

Upon her recent retirement from *Amusement Today* and 41 years in the industry, **Sue Nichols** has left behind quite a legacy. In addition to *AT*, over the years, *Venues Today*, *Amusement Business* and **National Ticket Company** have benefited from her journalistic sales talent. Sue's gift of art, specifically painting watercolors, resulted in the creation of her own business, **5centride**, focusing on the subjects of amusement parks, carnivals, fairs and Americana. A member of several industry associations, Sue is a friend to many and a stranger to few. Her love of travel and life's simplicity can hopefully be enjoyed during retirement ... enjoy the ride, Sue!



Sue Nichols started off 2023 by retiring from the amusement industry she's serviced for more than 40 years. COURTESY SUE NICHOLS

**Title:** Retired from *Amusement Today*.

**Number of years in the industry:** 41

**Best thing about the industry:** The lifetime friendships made all over the U.S. and the world.

**Favorite amusement park ride:**

A carousel with a brass ring.

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

Probably an art teacher or a tour guide.

**Biggest challenge facing our industry:**

Attracting and retaining employees.

**The thing I like most about the amusement park season is ...**

The anticipation of parks and carnivals reopening and long days of sunshine.

**Favorite *Amusement Today* memory:**

Evenings out with just the *AT* staff at IAAPA Expo or the Golden Ticket Awards.

**When I say Gary Slade, you say ...**

A loyal and dedicated friend to the industry and to me.

**The first thing I did in retirement was ...**

Start to delete half the files on my laptop!

**At karaoke night, I would sing ...**

"Don't Fence Me In."

**Three things on my "bucket list" are ...**

1. Two more states to visit: North Dakota and Nebraska 2. Take the Canadian Pacific rail tour through the Canadian Rockies. 3. Drive Route 66 from Chicago to L.A. (theme here is travel).

**Best stress buster:** Screaming on a roller coaster! If that isn't an option, then walking my dog.

**It's summertime! My go-to summer snack is ...** A Slushee.

**Favorite summer activity:**

Visiting amusement parks and carnivals.

**The one person who always makes me laugh is...** Bill Owen of Indiana Ticket Co.

**If I could trade places with anyone for a day, it would be ...** Oprah Winfrey

— I'd like to give away lots of money to those groups and people I like.

**Least favorite household chore:**

Washing floors.

**On the Fourth of July, you will find me ...** In the daytime at a pool, after dark, huddled in the basement with my beagle, Emmy.

**On the Fourth of July, you will find me ...** In the daytime at a pool, after dark, huddled in the basement with my beagle, Emmy.

**What do you always have in the fridge?** Lots of ice for iced tea.

**Favorite food chain:** I generally seek out local restaurants, especially Italian ones. But I go to Sheetz for iced tea and breakfast sandwiches.

**For me, the perfect Sunday is....**

Doing whatever I want in a leisurely fashion (after you retire, it could be any day, but I do stay busy during the week).

**The best advice anyone ever gave me was ...** "It's not a sale until the money is in your hot little hands!" This was from my boss at my first job at the *Centre Daily Times*, right out of college.

**Favorite piece of clothing:**

Shoes!! I have many pairs but the most reliable are my 25-year-old hiking boots.

## THE INDUSTRY SEEN

### The ride of a lifetime



CINCINNATI, Ohio — With flight prices on the incline, *Amusement Today's* John Robinson decided to seize an opportunity for an alternate means of travel to Amusement Expo 2023 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Robinson chose to ride his 1994 Harley-Davidson Softail from his home in Cincinnati, Ohio, to the expo and then onward to Los Angeles California, to cover Universal Studios Hollywood's new Super Nintendo World expansion for *AT*. Robinson's travels included time along the legendary Route 66. *AT*/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

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## ► PIPELINE

Continued from page 1

and SeaWorld-apropos theme, but also for its smooth comfortable ride experience. A ride experience so fun and exciting that it also makes Pipeline: The Surf Coaster a re-rideable family thrill ride.

Historically, however, stand-up coasters have not been known for their comfort or re-rideability. What has changed? Why has B&M ventured back to its roots with a new stand-up coaster design after more than 20 years? To answer those questions, it is necessary to look back over the history of the stand-up coaster.

Stand-up coasters were a new, exciting concept that was well-received throughout the first half of coaster wars of the late 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. This was a period in which parks were more likely to spend large amounts on new, leading-edge, record-breaking and unique prototype coaster styles with the ROI being the promise of increased park attendance, awards, acclaim and bragging rights.

**TOGO** and **Intamin** were the forerunners in the stand-up coaster style in the '80s. However, many argue that it wasn't until **Walter Bolliger** and **Claude Mabillard** broke away from **Giovanola**, a manufacturing company who supplied rides to Intamin, and started their own design and manufacturing company, that the stand-up coaster reached its highest form of design.

That occurred in 1990 when Bolliger and Mabillard saw their company's first installation, **Iron Wolf**, a stand-up



coaster, open at **Six Flags Great America** in Gurnee, Illinois. The coaster opened to rave reviews.

B&M would design and install an additional eight stand-up coasters between 1990 and 1999, when Georgia Scorchers opened at **Six Flags Over Georgia**, B&M's last stand-up design prior to Pipeline: The Surf Coaster.

Since the late '90s, stand-up coasters have seen a waning trend in popularity. Some stand-up coaster installations have been retrofitted with sit down or floorless-style B&M trains in an effort to increase ridership. Others have been completely removed and scrapped.

Stand-up coasters, including B&M's, have become a polarizing coaster style — people either love them or hate them. For many in the latter camp, there are two main detractors of the original stand-up coasters.

The first is that the original stand-up coasters utilized rigid, over-the-shoulder restraints or large wings restraints through which riders put their arms, then pulled tight to their shoulders, chest and head. These restraints frequently resulted in headbanging and earring injuries due to exaggerated lateral forces caused by the higher center of gravity created by the standing position.

The second detractor



The coaster reaches speeds of up to 60 m.p.h. and a top height of 110 feet as the surfboard-themed, stand-up-style coaster train traverses a track length of 2,950 feet. It is the first new stand-up coaster to open since 1999. AT/DAVID FAKE

was the discomfort caused by the fixed bicycle-style seat, or "saddle," which once locked into place, has a comfort-level that ranges from awkward and uncomfortable to outright painful, due to its position, lack of give and the forces asserted on the rider throughout the course of the ride.

Then in 2020, recent patent filings surfaced for a new B&M stand-up coaster model, the Surf Coaster. It is in the illustrations that accompanied the patent filing where the question "why now" is answered.

The illustrations also clearly explained that B&M hadn't abandoned the stand-up coaster over the prior two decades, they were merely perfecting it and addressing the comfort issues of its early designs.

The difference between the old and the new is that B&M's surf model coaster utilizes a patented design that permits the harness and bicycle-style seat to have a



four-inch range of motion that is affected by positive or negative G-forces experienced throughout the ride.

When there are positive forces present, the restraint system lowers. When there are negative forces present, the restraint system rises. During moments of negative G-forces, riders' feet often leave the floor of the open-sided ride vehicle, which resembles a surfboard.

The rigid over-the-shoulder restraints were replaced with a rubber comfort vest that prevents the headbanging that often

occurred on the early stand up coasters.

"The layout for this ride was specifically developed to leverage the uniqueness of the new restraint system. It's unlike any other roller coaster that's out there. We really wanted to maximize those vertical motions — the zero-G feeling, as well as the amazing drop-ins," explained Jeff Hornick, vice president of attraction design and development for **SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment**. "Also on the back end of the roller coaster there are a series of left and right and up and down transitions that really make it as fun as possible to give you just the right amount of 'play' and really feel like you're surfing. You feel like you're doing a little back and forth motion like a real surfer. So even if you're not a surfer, you get to be one on Pipeline."

Pipeline: The Surf Coaster is the seventh at the park, affording SeaWorld Orlando bragging rights and a marketing campaign of "Coaster Capital of Orlando."

•seaworld.com/orlando



B&M's patent for the surf coaster model includes illustrations that demonstrate how the passenger restraint can move vertically to accommodate riders' height while also providing a four-inch range of motion up and down during the course of the ride, resulting in a more comfortable and unique ride experience. AT/DAVID FAKE



Signage for the relocated Scrambler conveys the vibe of the refreshed area (above left). A comical touch to Wild Mouse's lift is an image of the park's former Wildcat reaching down (above middle). The Grand Pavilion offers fantastic views of both The Boardwalk and Lake Erie, while serving as a two-story restaurant and bar with three balconies (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY CEDAR POINT

## ► BOARDWALK Continued from page 1

we were looking for — that awe, that wonder.”

The Wild Mouse pays homage to former such coasters that existed at Cedar Point decades ago, but with the updated spinning component. It is a modern take on an established classic.

“The Twister Freeform is an updated version of our classic Twister Coaster. When we spoke with Cedar Point, they asked us to provide an experience that gave a nod to the past but offered a modern ride experience,” said President and CEO **Antonio Zamperla**. “We believe it is a great example of the next generation of Zamperla coasters.”

“The addition of Wild Mouse perfectly balances the setting and attractions of The Boardwalk,” said **Carrie Boldman**, vice president and general manager, Cedar Point. “Being a part of family tradition is extremely important to all of us at Cedar Point. Wild Mouse allows young kids and adults to enjoy a ‘first’ roller coaster thrill together, and the spinning action of each car just makes it fun!”

There are seven cars, six are colorful mice with given names on the outside of the cars. The seventh car is a piece of cheese, which makes it a fun spin to be loaded in that particular car. At the top of the lift is another throwback to the park's Wildcat coaster, with its feline name-sake making a swipe at oncoming cars.

The installation of the coaster was done by **Baynum Solutions**, the expanded operations of the company formerly known as **Baynum**

**Painting**. Wild Mouse was the company's first coaster installation project in its construction division of its portfolio of services. Baynum was pleased the erection was a smooth process.

Baynum President **Chris Baynum** gives compliments to their partners: “Critical planning and preparedness by Cedar Point, Zamperla and the general contractor allowed us to begin and substantially complete installation prior to the tumultuous weather the Lake Erie peninsula can sometimes present in the winter months. The collaborative effort between all parties laid the groundwork for a smooth install and steady transition to the park for commissioning and operation.”

“We pride ourselves on being adaptive to meet the ever-growing needs the industry presents,” added **Melissa Bramford**, marketing director, Baynum Solutions. “So many of our accomplishments have been the result of embracing challenges and being passionate about delivering solutions. Diversifying our portfolio to include construction services has allowed us to become a turnkey service provider — it's a great feeling knowing our park partners can rely on us to facilitate successful

projects in many forms.”

“We're fortunate to have spent decades in amusement parks restoring and enhancing existing attractions,” Baynum told *AT*. “The legacy of our exposure to rides and attractions coupled with adding some of the industry's most experienced professionals to our team was a winning combination for this project — the confidence in our team is at an all-time high.”

Although Cedar Point has a reputation for building record-breaking, massive coasters, this one aimed at a broader audience helps diversify the company's offerings for families.

“Sometimes simple is actually best,” said Clark. “We nailed that. But we also did something different. It's a new model for Zamperla. It's a new coaster for us that pays homage to the one we had. This really is all about adding family attractions to the lineup. We also added the sass and fun with all the facial expressions on the cars.”

“Cedar Point challenged our design team in a lot of ways,” said **Adam Sandy**, roller coaster sales and marketing director, Zamperla. “We went back to the drawing board and created a custom layout just for the park. We are thrilled with not only the

layout, but the ride as a whole. It delivers in the way that Zamperla promised with the re-introduction of the Roller Coaster Business Unit in 2021. The ride is exciting, smooth and features the latest coaster technology. It is a huge step up from older Zamperla coasters and lays a new benchmark for our coaster quality.”

The ride features a moving station for continuous loading. The track length is 1,312 feet.

The cheese car is also specifically designed for ADA loading.

“Working to go beyond ADA compliance is extremely important to us,” said **Ramon Rosario**, sales director of the Americas, Zamperla. “The cheese car not only looks great, it also features a hinged door that opens allowing riders transferring from a wheelchair easier vehicle access.”

The Grand Pavilion makes a visual statement to the area. As proved by previous dining locations, but it features a high throughput of guests while offering elevated fare. New items such as slow-roasted turkey breast, dry-rub pork loin and gourmet sides provide more than the standard midway food. Guests get to select an entrée and their choice of side to create the dinner they want.

“When we evaluated the opportunity at Grand Pavilion, it was a chance to showcase menu items that were familiar, but elevated,” said **Bob Marks**, VP of food and beverage, Cedar Point. “We wanted choices that our guests couldn't find elsewhere in the park and the funnel cake fried shrimp is a great example. The funnel cake is a guest favorite, so our culinary team put together a fun twist on simple shrimp by incorporating the sweetness of that dessert. This is just a taste of what's to come as we explore and expand our in-park offerings.”

The Grand Pavilion has two floors. The upper floor has a large bar area with appetizers available, and three outdoor balconies, one of which extends over the beach promenade walkway.

When asked what he liked best about the Grand Pavilion, Clark immediately said, “Hands down for me is the outdoor spaces. We tell people all the time that the beach is part of our history. It's what made us famous, but when you have the chance to experience the visual of that without riding, it lets you see how special it is. And you have a bar that addresses the guests' requests to have a place to chill.”

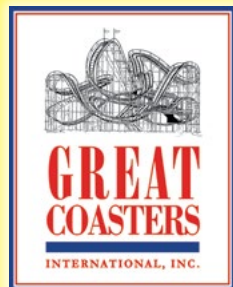
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## Registration is open for Networking Event of the Year Amusement Today, Dollywood share 2023 Golden Ticket Awards' schedule

**AT:** Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ARLINGTON, Texas — The return of The Networking Event of the Year brings about the opportunity for experienced professionals to spotlight the best of the industry. The Golden Ticket Awards will take place on September 8 and 9 at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. With the host hotel being the famous DreamMore Resort, industry professionals should prepare for a weekend of fantastic opportunities for social interaction, the sharing of best practices and the networking of creative ideas both the attendees and parks can offer. As a winner of numerous Golden Ticket Awards, Dollywood will delight and inspire those within the amusement industry.

This will be the third time for Dollywood to play host for the Golden Ticket Awards, and management is already at work preparing to welcome park operators, manufacturers, marketers and more from the amusement industry.

“Dollywood is excited to host the industry for the Golden Ticket Awards. It really is one of the most special events of the year, and we are proud to have everyone as our guests here in the Great Smoky Mountains,” said **Pete Owens**, executive vice president, marketing, **The Dollywood Company**. “And while we are thrilled to showcase our properties, we take the most pride in the hardworking Dollywood hosts who make everything come together in spectacular fashion. The Golden Tickets are just one part of what is a truly big year for us. With the addition of Big Bear Mountain, the opening of HeartSong Lodge & Resort this fall, a record-breaking Coaster Con, and, of course, the Golden Tickets, this is a year to remember at Dollywood. We look forward to seeing everyone in September!”

Registration for the event — still complimentary — is currently open and the full event schedule is available at



Dollywood's Wildwood Grove will host a welcome reception during the 2023 Golden Ticket Awards, featuring private ride time on the new Big Bear Mountain coaster from Vekoma. COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

GoldenTicketAwards.com. In addition, the site provides a direct link to make discounted room reservations for DreamMore Resort.

The 2023 Golden Ticket Awards event will feature the second annual National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives (NRCMA) Golf Tournament. Taking place on Friday, September 8, at the Sevierville Golf Club's River Course, the event is a chance for industry professionals to relax, take in 18 holes, network and raise money to preserve the industry's history.

The course is 7,120 long yards with wide fairways and larger greens. Much of the front nine runs alongside the Little Pigeon River and the entire course is picturesque. The course is flat with the exception of four holes on the back nine where elevation gets higher, which allows for beautiful panoramic views. Golfers may even see a bald eagle or two during their round.

•goldenticketawards.com



The popular NRCMA Golf Tournament will return during the 2023 Golden Ticket Awards. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON



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# PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

▶ Wildcat's Revenge unveiled at Hersheypark — page 14 / PortAventura World debuts Uncharted — page 18

## Family friendly DarKoaster storms into Busch Gardens Williamsburg

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — In mid-May, **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** jumped into roller coaster double digits with the addition of DarKoaster: Escape the Storm, its latest thrill-seeker attraction inside what was originally the Curse of DarKastle dark ride in the Oktoberfest section of the theme park. Billed as North America's first all-indoor straddle coaster, the family-friendly attraction fills a niche in the line-up of roller coasters appealing to all age groups.

"It's a ride that will have appeal across a wide audience, making it a great addition to an already world-class lineup of attractions," said **Kevin Lembke**, president, Busch Gardens Williamsburg.

The ride builds on the legacy of the Curse of DarKastle, as it tells the next chapter in the story. King Ludwig's abandoned fortress resurfaces as strange weather patterns have been recorded near the cursed castle grounds. A supernatural force is imminent as ghost-hunter explorers discover that they are evading more than just a raging storm. As the weather strikes, the straddle snowmobile-style seats allow for an immersive ride as guests lean into banks and turns across the 2,454 feet of track, encountering four accelerating launches while speeding through the elements in total darkness.

**Elizabeth Ringas**, president of **American Coaster Enthusiasts**, was quick to



Opening day for Busch Gardens' tenth and first all-indoor coaster featured a grand opening ceremony with elected officials and Busch Gardens fans. AT/B.DEREK SHAW

give praise: "This is the perfect addition to the park. It fills such a niche gap that they had between Grover's coaster for small children and then advancing as we grow our future enthusiasts. There's something everyone will enjoy on this coaster. It meets the needs of the whole family. It's just thrilling enough, and the effects are great. It's really fun to have different effects throughout the ride. I love that they added a dark ride back to the park. That was the one piece they were really missing. The fact that it's a family dark ride makes it even better, and the icing on the cake is that it is a coaster. I love a dark ride coaster. A perfect combination."

Riders straddle the seat like they would a snowmobile and are then secured with a lap bar. Lembke explained why this style was chosen: "Working with our partners at **Intamin**, we

knew we wanted to offer a new rider experience that complements the coasters already in the park. The straddle coaster was a great way to ensure DarKoaster would have a thrilling rider experience while delivering a new coaster style to our already diverse lineup."

**Suzy Cheely**, vice president, design and engineering for the park, explained the timetable. "We typically start planning a couple of years prior to opening. In the case of DarKoaster, we started survey work and construction documents in January of 2021," she said.

There were a few hurdles, namely working with an existing station and structure. The design was completely different due to building constraints.

"There are always challenges with every project. For this one, fitting the track inside an existing building

was the most challenging. I think we maximized the amount of track we could fit, and I think the results speak for themselves," said Cheely.

A switch track after one pass of the ride in the building doubles the length of the experience for riders before it returns to the station.

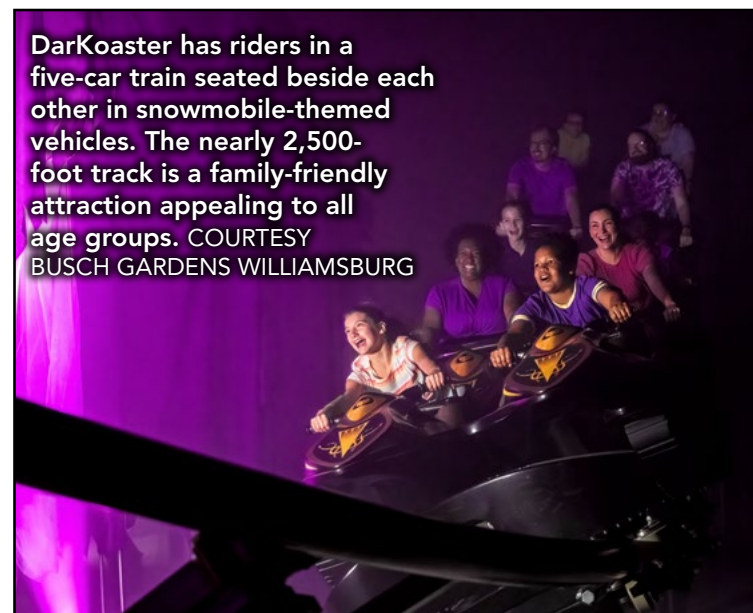
**Sandor Kernacs**,

president, **IntaRide LLC** (Intamin), was pleased with the end result. "We had been talking with the park on how to boost attendance and be successful," he said. "This is a really nice ride with excellent use of the space. I think it worked out very well."

There was a two-year delay due to the pandemic. Supply chain issues with getting electrical parts hampered the process, however, the ride was delivered on time and opened as scheduled. It is the park's tenth roller coaster.

"Partnering with Intamin on Pantheon and then on DarKoaster were both very positive and collaborative experiences," Cheely told *Amusement Today*.

In addition to the usual assortment of ride-branded souvenirs and clothing, visitors (21 and up) can also enjoy DarKoaster Black Lager, a limited-release beer brewed by **The Virginia Beer Company**, which is featured in commemorative cans.



DarKoaster has riders in a five-car train seated beside each other in snowmobile-themed vehicles. The nearly 2,500-foot track is a family-friendly attraction appealing to all age groups. COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS WILLIAMSBURG



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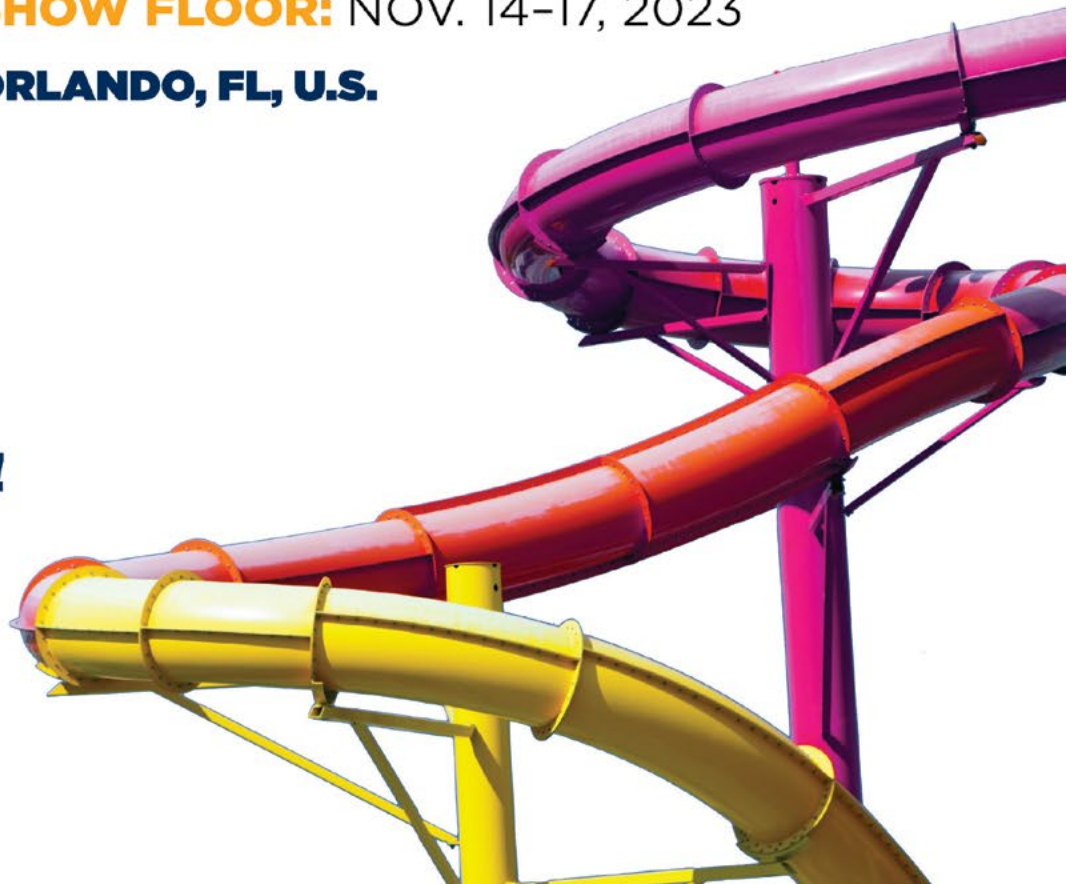
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B&M's Maximus – Flight of the Guardian anchors new area

# Merlin makes its largest investment in Legoland Deutschland

AT: Tim Baldwin  
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G U E N Z B U R G , Germany — More than €15.5 million was the single-largest investment made by Legoland Deutschland in its two-decade history. Parent company Merlin Entertainment followed its 2022 investment of more than €14 million on its Ninjago Quarter and resort room renovations bringing a combined total that is notably impressive for a park with its audience aimed at families with children ages 12 and under. The new 2023 expansion brings a new themed area.

"We are proud, and it is a huge display of trust of Merlin Entertainment to our location that we are able to invest almost €30 million in our resort in only two years," said General Manager **Manuela Stone**. "The whole team is excited about this positive signal toward our location."

The new land is called Mythica. Its anchor is a roller coaster from **Bolliger & Mabillard**, the first of its kind for a Legoland park, not to mention the first ride in the chain to go upside down. The ride is called Maximus – Der Flug des Wächters (translated means Maximus – Flight of the Guardian). It is termed a "wing coaster" in the B&M portfolio.

"We are excited to build the worldwide first

roller coaster of its kind in a Legoland Park here and fulfill the long-fostered desire of our guests for a park expansion with a high action and energy level," said **Dirk Schlecht**, technical director. "The coaster [is] accessible for children from primary-school age, a first thrill they can share together with their older siblings — an experience for the whole family."

B&M is renowned for its massive, world-class coasters, some of which rise to more than 300 feet in the sky. Maximus is the company's shortest installation, owing to Legoland's target demographic. However, it expands the audience with larger thrills, offering younger children a reason to return in years ahead. Despite a height of only 56 feet, families are flipped upside down twice. The two inversions are a corkscrew element and a heartline roll. The final roll soars right over the entrance into the Mythica area.

The two trains on the coaster are manufactured to look like they were made from Lego bricks.

Riders must be 120 centimeters (47.2 inches) to fly.

Installation of the ride was done by **RCS GmbH**. The ride has a track length of 1,500 feet. Maximus is the park's fourth roller coaster.

A pair of spinning drop tower rides called Fire and



Flight of the Guardian flips over the entrance portal into the Mythica land (above). Maximus is the first B&M coaster in a Legoland park. COURTESY LEGOLAND/ALEXANDER SCHEUBER

Ice Towers, supplied by **Zierer**, also create action in the new land. The height requirement to ride is one meter (39 inches). Each of the two towers seats 10 riders.

"The Double Family Freefall Tower is one of our most popular products as it is a ride for even the youngest visitors of amusement parks," said **Maximilian Biiller**, marketing and sales, Zierer. "With its moderate height of 12 meters — depending on the top decoration — it is the perfect opportunity for young children to experience their first drop tower adventure. Besides freefall movements, the towers also combine rotating and jumping/



bouncing motions, creating an amazing ride experience."

Zierer also supplied the drop towers to sister park Legoland Windsor.

"The ride itself is especially popular among amusement parks because it combines the aforementioned features with a high capacity and with a small footprint," Biiller told *Amusement Today*. "This makes it a perfect addition not only for bigger parks, but also for smaller ones. Additionally, the ride comes with some great theming possibilities."

Mythica also includes Lavaland Playground, which contains opportunities for younger ones to climb and slide.

The new land features animals that sport combined features. Maximus, the winged lion, for example, is beautifully rendered in

Legos on the ride station's façade. Other sculptures throughout the area feature mythical creatures, and as is always true with Legoland parks, the artwork is impressive with thousands and thousands of manhours used in creating the statues. And, of course, models from Lego's Mythical Creatures brand are featured in the queuing for the coaster, enticing youngsters to purchase one and take it home as a keepsake. Bobs, a flying unicorn that shoots rainbows from its horn, is another principal character.

The expansion did not include any types of buildings (shops, eateries or restroom facilities), but the range of activities does increase the length of park stay.

Legoland Deutschland opened in 2002. Mythica is the park's 11th themed section.



Double Family Freefall Towers from Zierer add to the excitement in Mythica. They are themed to Fire & Ice (above). Throughout the new area, multiple sculptures made out of Lego bricks are sure to impress (right).  
COURTESY LEGOLAND/ALEXANDER SCHEUBER



## Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne  
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There had been some speculation at the end of last season from fans as to whether or not **Six Flags Great Adventure's** Parachute Training Center: Edwards AFB Jump Tower ride in Jackson, New Jersey, was going to reopen.

It has been confirmed that the ride will not reopen.

"The ride is still standing, but there are no plans for it to reopen," said Six Flags' **Jeff Filicko**, marketing, communications.

The Parachute Training Center: Edwards AFB Jump Tower ride was built by **Intamin** and opened first at **Six Flags St. Louis**, Mo., in 1978. It was removed in 1982 and relocated to Six Flags Great Adventure in 1983.

When it first opened, it was called the Parachuter's Perch. A fact sheet of the ride called it a family thrill ride. It lifted riders 250 feet into the air before dropping them at 25 feet per second.

There were eight parachutes that held two to three riders each. The maximum weight of each car was 400 pounds. It used seatbelts, lap bars and safety clasps. The capacity was approximately 1,280 riders per hour.

In 1996, the ride was rethemed to the movie *The Right Stuff* and was renamed to the Parachute Training Center: Edwards AFB Jump Tower.

**Idlewild and SoakZone** in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, opened the 2023 season on May 20 with several park enhancements and a new character in Story Book Forest.

"This is set to be Idlewild's most exciting season yet with new concepts for events and multiple park upgrades that will enhance the guest experience," said General Manager **Tim Heger**.

Park enhancements include fresh paving and a completely upgraded bridge connecting Olde Idlewild and Raccoon Lagoon that includes accessibility ramps. New landscaping is in place, adding to the park's natural setting in the Laurel Highlands. A new guest services area offers a private nursing section to accommodate guests.

New photo locations also have been added throughout the park to snap a picture with the family.

Cinderella moved into Story Book Forest's Enchanted Castle and has been greeting guests as they finish their jour-

ney through the area.

In addition to all of this, several attractions have received upgrades. Park officials have brought back the second coach of the Loyalhanna Limited Railroad. The half-century old second coach has undergone an extensive transformation.

Also, Paul Bunyan's Loggin' Toboggan received a makeover. The upgraded log ride will once again splash down the chute.

SoakZone water park reopened May 27.

For more than 50 years, excitement and nostalgia have surrounded the **Land of Oz** theme park in Beech Mountain, North Carolina. Although it was closed for many years, the park now opens its gates to host special events several times a year.

This year, visitors can travel over the rainbow during the park's annual Autumn at Oz Festival, which is set for the weekends of Sept. 8-10, Sept. 15-17 and Sept. 22-24.

The event combines a festival atmosphere with an interactive theatrical experience featuring all the characters from "The Wizard of Oz."

In addition to live performances and other entertainment, food and craft vendors will be onsite.

Tickets went on sale June 16 and cost \$55, with children ages two and younger admitted free.

**Dixie Landin' Theme Park**, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the amusement park next to **Blue Bayou Waterpark**, will remain closed throughout summer 2023, and there is no timeline for when the park will reopen, a park official said Wednesday.

Dixie Landin' has been closed since 2019. It didn't reopen in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic and has remained closed since.

According to a local news agency, **Elizabeth Haynes Harrison**, director of marketing and media for Blue Bayou, said they are focusing on Blue Bayou because it is more popular than Dixie Landin'.

There is no timeline at this point for Dixie Landin's reopening.

Blue Bayou's season passes do not include Dixie Landin' and the prices are only based on Blue Bayou being open.

**Tinkertown**, Manitoba, Canada, is in danger of having to partially close some days of the week, saying it's seen a massive drop in job applications.

**Randy Saluk**, the owner of Tinkertown, told a local news agency that he's been struggling to hire enough staff since the COVID-19 pandemic. He said they typically get upwards of 250 applications per year. So far this season, he estimates he's only received between 50 to 60. To be open daily, he needs two shifts of 55 so 110 employees, but he just wasn't getting it.

If he is unable to staff up, he might have to reduce down operating hours.

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# Rocky Mountain brings Wildcat's Revenge coaster to Hersheypark

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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HERSHEY, Pa. — The long-anticipated opening of Wildcat's Revenge at Hersheypark took place in early June to the delight of roller coaster enthusiasts and park guests. The ride is a hybrid of the 1996-2022 Great Coasters International Inc. wooden Wildcat and Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC) structure and steel I-box track. The original footings and a third of the GCII structure were used in the reprofiled model. This is RMC's first project in Pennsylvania. The ride comes 100 years after the first Wildcat coaster opened (Philadelphia Toboggan Company, 1923-1945).

Even before the 140-foot lift hill, there are a few twists and turns right out of the station, giving riders a taste of what is to ensue. There are four unique inversions, spaced throughout Wildcat's Revenge, mostly following the original layout, with modifications. This smooth ride that never lets up, includes the world's largest 270-degree underflip, which the park describes as ascending upwards before the train twists counterclockwise into a roll before descending.

Each of the ride seats offers a pair of grab handles along with a loop to clutch in the center for those who opt not to put their hands in the air. A new free locker system allows guests to easily check any loose items before embarking on the ride.

Darren Torr, president of RMC talked about how the partnership with



The original footers and a third of the GCII structure were used in the reprofiled model (above). Wildcat's Revenge is the latest coaster at Hersheypark. This is the first time RMC has done any work in Pennsylvania. COURTESY HERSHEY PARK; AT/B. DEREK SHAW

Hersheypark began. "It started even before I joined the company in 2018 with exploratory conversations. At IAAPA [Expo] about a year and a half ago, Laura [Woodburn Krolczyk] and Vickie [Hultquist] reached out to us — super knowledgeable about coasters. They had a vision about what they wanted to accomplish with the ride," he said. "We really worked with them to dial in exactly the ride experience they were looking for, the guest demographic they were looking to serve. They liked what we came up with. It was a year and a half of sweat and tears to pull this thing off."

It also didn't hurt that Tony Rossi, managing director of maintenance, sent a package to RMC's headquarters in Hayden, Idaho, early on.

"To tell you the truth, I sent them a box of jumbo Twizzlers with a note saying, 'Make me a track,' and they did. We put this together



— the whole deal — in 14 months," Rossi said.

A mild winter helped with the construction process.

"Mother Nature was kind to us this year. It went smoothly, very smoothly. Everyone worked hard. This team was unbelievable to work with. We got what I think is an award-winning ride," said Rossi.

"There's nobody in our company that says, 'it's not my job.' We do whatever it takes. I'm really proud about how hard everybody worked to make this happen," said

Torr.

Jake Kilcup, director of design and engineering, commented on the changes the company made to the ride: "With these reprofiles, we try to tap into the history as much as we can, both for the park and for us. It's great inspiration to take something that existed for so long and a lot of people really enjoyed and breathe new life into it. The focus here was to create a ride for the whole family, something that's re-rideable. Our industry is to create memories. We do our best to

help that happen."

While the 1923-style station with low-pitched gables around the roof's perimeter remained, it was also made to serve as a workspace underneath.

Rossi explained, "Instead of having it remote in the service center, we decided to keep it right here at the ride, which we have done for the last few rides. Great Bear has it, Skyrush has it, Candymonium has it and now Wildcat's Revenge. It makes service[ing] of this ride much easier. Our season is getting longer and our overhaul time is a small port hole we're trying to drive a boat through. Right here we can start in our fringe season with one train, get that back up and continually have things running and easy to work on right there where it's at. It makes it so much easier."

How does Wildcat's Revenge fit into the Hersheypark lineup of roller coasters? Quinn Bryner, director of public relations explained, "We're really proud to add our hybrid to our collection. Now with this coaster, we've got 15 — all of varying thrills and types, and so with that we've got the most coasters in the northeast. We think we have one of the most eclectic collections in the northeast as well. Guests have been asking for a very long time for us to add a hybrid, and so with Wildcat's Revenge that's exactly what we did. We think it offers the best of what wood and steel can do for the rider experience. People think it's a great fit for our collection. We have all of their signature elements in one coaster experience. People have commented that it is really smooth, it's fast, it's intense, it doesn't let you know what's coming, it doesn't let you go from that first drop. That's exactly what the team worked really hard to design."

"I've been around a lot of coasters in my life. I've built a lot from the ground up. I am nothing but pleased with what we have and what we can offer our guests," said Rossi. "I'm glad it's here."

•hersheypark.com



Each seat has a pair of grab handles along with a loop to clutch in the center for those who opt not to put their hands in the air (above left). The mild winter aided in the construction process as it took 189 days to complete the track work. All told there were a total of 306 days from Wildcat's closing to Wildcat's Revenge opening. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

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Two new Zamperla attractions anchor refreshed area

# Kings Island opens Adventure Port with new rides, enhancements

AT: Tim Baldwin  
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MASON, Ohio — Kings Island boasts a very loyal local audience, and longtime visitors should enjoy what the theme park has done for 2023. What is new also touches on things from the past.

Adventure Port is a rethemed area of the park that management felt had become a bit neglected. Removed rides and aging theming have now been replaced with refreshed life and activity.

“We started saying, ‘What do we want to do here?’ The area wasn’t really Oktoberfest anymore; it wasn’t really Coney Mall,” said General Manager Mike Koontz. “We had an anchor here with [the restaurant], and we felt we should do something in this area to tie it all together and create a new experience. We felt there was an opportunity to take this area and reimagine it.”

Adventure Port comes



Cargo Loco pays homage to an original Kings Island attraction (above left). Sol Spin is one of two new additions from Zamperla (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY MARK ROSENZWEIG

with a backstory. The myths of an ancient civilization and its mighty city carved out of stone have lured travelers from around the globe to a bustling port community. Enrique, an unseen merchant, welcomes explorers searching for the lost city’s forbidden temple, fabled riches and mysterious wonders.

Adventure Port was created by a collective effort between JRA and Cedar

Fair’s Experience Design and Creative Studio led by Chuck Meyer.

“I was pleased that we chose JRA just for the history that Jack Rouse had with Kings Island,” Koontz told *Amusement Today*. “I always like it when we can find Cincinnati companies willing to invest in the park. They feel a little bit of pride and ownership.”

Two new rides from

Zamperla bring the action.

“Zamperla is thrilled to provide Sol Spin (Endeavor 24) and Cargo Loco (Tea Cup 12) to anchor the reimagining of Adventure Port,” said Michael Coleman, North American sales manager, Zamperla. “These two rides provide a broad appeal and give Adventure Port something for everyone to enjoy. The height restrictions on these rides allow for all

demographics to have a great experience.”

“We knew we were going to be partnering with Zamperla,” said Koontz. “When I was researching their inventory of rides, I saw the teacup ride which wasn’t exactly the same as the old Der Spinnen Keggers (1972 – 1989) but similar. Some of that nostalgia is really

▶ See ADVENTURE, page 17

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## ►ADVENTURE

Continued from page 16

important to our guests.”

Themed as shipping barrels, Cargo Loco has 12 vehicles in which riders have complete control of the spinning action. Humorously, when the ride arrived, all the barrels had some sort of alcohol printed on the side. The park decided to create a variety of options ranging from pecans to potatoes to pinto beans.

“Our ride associates are phenomenal,” laughed Koontz. “They’ve already incorporated in their interactions with [comments] like ‘Hey, Fish Oil is spinning faster than everybody else. Way to go, Fish Oil.’ They are making a fun experience for our guests.”

“Cargo Loco riders have the ability to control the amount of spin in each barrel, which allows guests to sit back and relax or have a truly dizzying experience,” added Coleman.

Sol Spin is a throwback to a previous Enterprise ride



Vibrant new colors bring a welcoming feel to Enrique's restaurant and Mercado bar (above left). Fanciful props and detailed signage create a new entrance portal for the Adventure Express roller coaster (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN



called Skylab that operated from 1986 to 1997.

The Adventure Express roller coaster (Arrow, 1991) has received some new embellishments, including a new entrance and sharp signage. Refurbished effects and new props will allow eagle-eyed riders to note the differences, many of which are in the station itself.

JRA did their first walk-through of the area in early summer of 2022.

“We completed designs by September,” added Kate Batt, project manager, JRA.

“Through November was a detailing phase.”

“It was understood that Adventure Express was to stay the theme that it was, and the interest was to build a theme around Adventure Express to embrace the area,” said Corie Flood, designer, JRA. “We took over the Oktoberfest beer garden as part of this zone.

The longstanding restaurant has been elevated to a more colorful experience. Although the facility has been known by many names, it is now Enrique's

to fit into Adventure Port's storyline. The menu features hand-crafted burritos. The backside, now called Mercado, is more of a bar area where tables with colorful umbrellas look over a small pond with Enrique's boat afloat.

“We wanted it to be fun and very vibrant and stand out,” said Flood. “It's very welcoming; it's very inviting.”

Through the rockwork, colors, entry portal and new signage, Adventure Port intrigues returning visitors with new ambiance.

“I grew up from around here and came to Kings Island,” Flood told AT. “It's very fun to see Kings Island embrace more theme park-esque zones and give the guests a more immersive experience rather than something that is more ‘amusement park.’”

“Investing in the theming and storytelling and details is exciting,” added Batt. “Enrique is part of our story. Everything he does is kind of homemade. We took a lot of scenic aging in painting to give it that type of character.”

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Intamin, Sally team-up to create one-of-a-kind attraction

## PortAventura World debuts Uncharted dark ride/coaster experience

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SALOU, Spain — The Far West themed land of PortAventura has a new look on its skyline. A rocky, cliff-like exterior disguising its newest attraction is breathtaking. The red-orange rock and sparse vegetation offer a realistic desert setting. A western-looking building in front of the façade helps further set the stage.

Uncharted: The Enigma of Penitence is an innovative and creative leap for indoor attractions. It is promoted as a dark ride, but to be more accurate, it is a combination of a roller coaster and a dark ride. Among the partnerships are Intamin Amusement Rides and Sally Dark Rides. The investment is a reported €25 million.

Based on the *Uncharted* film from Sony, which was based on a popular video game, the indoor attraction has numerous moments to wow guests.

"This attraction is the outcome of a pivotal agreement with an industry giant in entertainment, Sony Pictures," said David Garcia, managing director, PortAventura World. "The alliance permits us to extend our global footprint by means of a product that is truly state-of-the-art on an international scale and stands equal to the finest attractions globally."

"The PortAventura, Sony and Sally Dark Rides teams all got together to use the *Uncharted* movie as a reference point. We were able to develop a unique story that we can bring to PortAventura's guests that takes them on an incredible ride through an amazing adventure," said Rich Hill, chief creative officer, Sally Dark Rides. "It's a dark coaster experience that is also telling a story. There is so much packed into this attraction."

This attraction is the first collaboration between Sally and Intamin.

"The Multi Dimension Coaster is the first of its kind in many ways," said Sascha Czibulka, executive vice



Intamin, Sally Dark Rides and Sony Pictures collaborated on a themed, immersive attraction, Uncharted: The Enigma of Penitence. COURTESY PORTAVENTURA WORLD

president, Intamin. "It is not only the world's first indoor quintuple LSM launch coaster but also features the world's first side launch."

The length of the track is just shy of 2,300 feet. The tallest height of the track inside the building is 40 feet. Each of the three trains seats 12 riders.

"This unique dark ride coaster has Europe's first side drop, as well as the first dark ride offering drifting maneuvers with controlled spinning vehicles," Czibulka told *Amusement Today*. "It is the first Multi Dimension Coaster in Spain, and therefore has many first-off elements in the country such as Spain's first backward drop, first backward launch and Spain's first launched spike element. All of these unique coaster technologies give guests an incredibly thrilling, two-minute indoor coaster experience."

Luis Valencia, development director of PortAventura World, is confident the opening of Uncharted: The Enigma of Penitence reinforces the resort's role as being a disruptor in the entertainment industry: "The implementation of cutting-edge technology and the

characteristics of its multi-dimensional journey offers plenty of surprises with its many twists and turns, special effects and audiovisuals. The immersive storytelling is really exciting and promotes very positive values."

"We like to create stories based on amazing characters," said Hill. "Our goal is to bring the Uncharted story to PortAventura's guests in the form of this incredible roller coaster experience."

The entire adventure takes place in a 55,666-square-foot building. The queue is incredibly immersive and helps begin to spin the tale for explorers. Animatronics from Sally in the queue are effective at conveying what is about to transpire. Multiple thematic rooms keep the detail elaborate throughout. Repeat riders are bound to see fun details they hadn't on the previous journey. Many characters from the movie and video games via screen offer more of the storytelling. Sally had previously worked with PortAventura on its Sesame Street: Street Mission family dark ride.

"With Uncharted, we are taking it to a new level," said Hill. "The thrill, the motion of the vehicle, the dynamic ride



system — we think that guests who are coming to experience this attraction are going to experience something new and exciting."

"This Multi Dimension Coaster is not only highly innovative in terms of layout and ride experience but also in respect to the technology incorporated ensuring the highest safety and maximum comfort," said Czibulka.

RCS was responsible for the construction.

Guests with functional

disabilities are offered to "ride" through a virtual reality experience.

An immersive themed retail area complements the attraction.

"Our guests can anticipate an unmatched, innovative experience that enhances the diversity and quality of attraction offered," said Garcia. "All of this reinforces our position as one of the premier tourist destinations in both Europe and the world."



Quassy Amusement Park is celebrating its 115-year anniversary with a new Super Himalaya, manufactured by the Italian ride manufacturing company Bertazzon. Featuring more than 7,000 lights and a modern sound package, the new addition has been a crowd pleaser. COURTESY QUASSY AMUSEMENT PARK

## New Super Himalaya is a hit with Quassy's guests

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

MIDDLEBURY, Conn. — The new **Bertazzon** Super Himalaya, which opened at the beginning of **Quassy Amusement Park and Water Park's** 2023 season in Middlebury, Connecticut, has proven to be a real crowd pleaser.

"It is a beautiful ride and a great addition for us," said **Eric Anderson**, park owner. "It has over 7,000 lights and has great sound. It was just built great. Our guests love it."

Also known in parts of the world as the Musik Express, this fast-paced, circular thrill ride features 20, three-passenger cars connected in a circle. It travels at speeds of up to 12 revolutions per minute as it speeds through peaks and valleys. It rotates in both a forward and backward position.

Anderson said the ride's size is 60 feet by 60 feet. He feels the fact that three friends can sit together only adds to the fun experience.

The Super Himalaya replaces an older ride the park had had for many years, a **Chance Rides** Music Fest.

It joins the lineup of more than 20 rides at Quassy that range from kiddie to thrilling.

After major additions to Quassy over the past two years, Anderson said for the 2024 season, they plan to shift to cosmetics and maintenance improvements to the park.

In 2022, the park added a new **ProSlide** water slide. The slide uses ProSlide's RocketBlast water propulsion system, which implements water jets to push two-person rafts up rapid inclines and through several bowl segments for a total of three launches.

"So, for 2024, we don't have anything big planned," noted Anderson.

Quassy opened for the 2023 season at the end of April for weekend operations and went fulltime June 1.

The park is celebrating its 115-year birthday this year, having been founded as an amusement park in 1908. It was originally called Lake Quassapaug as it sits on the south shore of Lake Quassapaug. In its early years, it was more of a summer resort featuring swimming, a picnic grove, dancing and a carousel.

It was after World War II that Quassy established itself as a full-fledged amusement park with the addition of more rides, then eventually the water park.

•quassy.com

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# Reimagined Saw Mill Plunge, entrance highlight Castle Park's 2023

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — Visitors to **Castle Park** in Riverside, California, have been eagerly awaiting the reopening of the park's reimagined iconic Saw Mill Plunge flume ride. An exact date hasn't been set, but it will be very soon.

Parkgoers already have experienced some of Castle Park's other additions and improvements. The other large one, aside from the Saw Mill Plunge, is the new main gate, meeting guests at the opening of the 2023 season in May.

Park officials were pleased to be able to debut the new main gate that includes a new Castle Park sign, new ticket booths and a fully repainted entrance area.

"Guests also will see brand-new royal signage throughout the park adding to the all-new



Visitors to Castle Park, Riverside, California, were met with a brand new main gate when the park opened this season. The new main gate features a new Castle Park sign, new ticket booths and a fully repainted entrance area.

COURTESY CASTLE PARK

theming for park-goers," said **Ken Withers**, park general manager.

Yet, Withers knows parkgoers are eager to experience the reimagined Saw Mill Plunge as they watch the finishing touches

being put into place.

"Anticipation is building for the opening of the park's reimagined classic water ride, Saw Mill Plunge," Withers

▶ See **CASTLE**, page 21



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► **CASTLE**

Continued from page 20

said. "Our guests just can't wait to float through the retro saw mill experience, through twists, turns and rushing rapids as they splash their way down a towering plunge."

Withers said the **Palace Entertainment**-owned Castle Park teamed up with **Whitewater West**, a leading water park manufacturer headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia, to implement a new state-of-the-art operating system and five new four-person logs as part of the Saw Mill Plunge's upgrade.

The new ride also will sport a new retro look and new paint featuring shades of blue. In addition, it has received a new control system and new sensors throughout.

The Saw Mill Plunge originally opened at

**SAWMILL PLUNGE FAST FACTS**

**Height:**  
48 feet

•  
**Drops:** Two

•  
**Boats:**  
Five (four guests each)

•  
**Length of ride:**  
Four minutes

•  
**Capacity:**  
600 riders per hour

Castle Park in 1989. It was designed by Castle Park founder **Bud Hurlbut**. The reimagined ride has the classic flume ride's exterior while guests will float through a retro sawmill experience.

Withers said the park-wide transformation for 2023 focused on the main gate enhancements plus the reproduction of the Saw Mill Plunge.

"But we are always



It won't be long before visitors to Castle Park, Riverside, California, get to experience the all-new, reimagined Saw Mill Plunge ride. The ride sports a new retro look and new paint featuring shades of blue. It has received new control and operating systems and new sensors throughout. Castle Park officials partnered with Whitewater West to do the upgrades. COURTESY CASTLE PARK

looking ahead to make sure Castle Park continues being Riverside's best theme park," Withers said.

Castle Park features over 25 rides and attractions. There are four, 18-hole championship miniature golf courses, a water play area and a

vast selection of carnival midway and arcade games.

The park's water area, Buccaneer Cove, features a four-level water play area, five water slides, an aqua dome, spray cannons and more. Also offered are chair and cabanna rentals and a food and sundry area.

Castle Park's arcade offers a rotating line-up of the latest state-of-the-art video games mixed in with popular classics. There are more than 50 arcade games, air hockey, pop-a-shot and over 30 claw and ticket redemption games.

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



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# Paradox Museum New Jersey coming to American Dream in July

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Paradox Museum announced that its third U.S. location will officially open its doors this July at the American Dream mall.

With more than 70 “mind-twisting, eye-tricking” exhibits encompassing 11,000 square feet, Paradox Museum New Jersey will force guests to rethink what’s real and what’s not, with exhibits that will challenge the senses and make for the ultimate photo opp.

“We’re incredibly excited to finally be able to bring the unique, one-of-a-kind experience that only the Paradox Museum can offer to New Jersey,” said Marc Gregory Tipton, regional



With exhibits designed to challenge the senses and make for the ultimate photo opportunity, Paradox Museum New Jersey will force guests to rethink what’s real and what’s not. COURTESY PARADOX MUSEUM



sales and marketing manager, Paradox Museum. “We could not imagine a better home for the museum than American Dream and know that once guests

enter through our doors, they’ll be drawn to fully explore the intricacies of the paradoxes before them, challenged to think again and again about what’s real

and what’s not.”

Adding to a large list of unique American Dream attractions, Paradox Museum New Jersey will feature dozens of stand-out exhibits, including its popular Upside Down room where all objects — and people — will seem to defy gravity. Curated specifically for the New Jersey market, the Upside Down Room at Paradox Museum New Jersey will be set in a “Jersey Diner.” Guests can strike poses as though they’re sipping on a milkshake at the bar or sitting down ready to order dinner, all while through the lens of their camera, their world literally gets turned upside down.

Ideal for all ages and interests, a trip through Paradox Museum New Jersey will take visitors approxi-

mately 60 to 90 minutes. Team members will be available to guide guests as they explore elaborate exhibits and puzzling experiences, all while learning about vision, perception and the human brain. The museum will also include the Paradox Boutique where visitors can purchase souvenirs, games, clothing, accessories, and gadgets exuding paradox. The collection of fun, entertaining and educational products has been curated to challenge perspectives to exercise the brain.

Founded by the Paradox Group, the New Jersey destination joins three other Paradox Museum locations in the United States and five locations in Europe; more than two dozen additional locations are in development through 2024.

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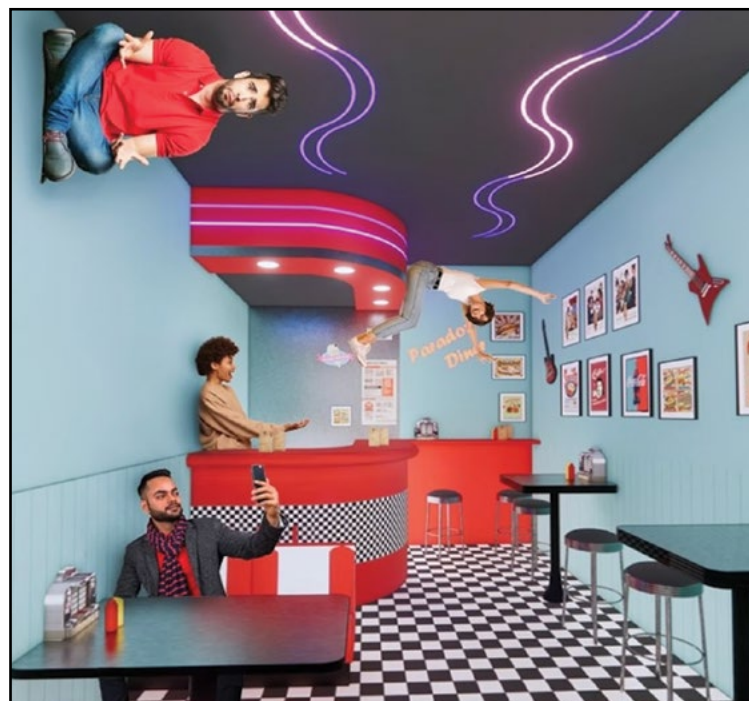
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Curated specifically for the New Jersey market, the Upside Down Room at Paradox Museum New Jersey will be set in a Jersey Diner. COURTESY PARADOX MUSEUM

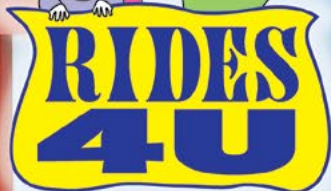


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## Romania's Miramagica now cashless with Intercard

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — Intercard has installed a cashless technology system at **Miramagica**, a family amusement park in Bucharest, the capital city of Romania. The venue is owned by **Britta Trading**, the leading operator of FECs in the country. Miramagica is located in the heart of celebrated Herastrau Park in Bucharest.

Intercard's **Austin Lacy** did the installation on-site in May 2023. Miramagica offers visitors more than 30 rides and attractions including bumper cars, bumper boats, a mini train, a carousel, a drop tower and a Ferris wheel. The new cashless system replaces an outdated token system.

"Miramagica Park draws large numbers of families with children and the new cashless system will make it easier for them to enjoy the rides and attractions," stated Lacy. "It's a classic amusement park with a great mix of old and new rides in a beautiful park setting."



Installer Austin Lacy set up the latest Intercard iTeller kiosks at Miramagica Park (above). Miramagica is a classic park with a unique mix of rides. COURTESY INTERCARD



## FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson  
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**Ripley's Believe It or Not!** is adding new experiences to its Ocean Boulevard location in Myrtle Beach. An area attraction since 1976, the location plans on continuing the fun well into the future.

Ripley's is offering three new attractions including miniature golf, an illusion lab and a haunted adventure. The location also announced additions to its already popular mirror maze.

The experiences were in a soft opening during the early summer, but held a grand opening on June 15, 2023.

Austin, Texas-based **High 5 Entertainment** broke ground in mid-June on its new location at **The Farm in Allen**, a 135-acre mixed use project in Allen, Texas. The new venue will include a heavily landscaped miniature golf course, a 24-lane bowling alley, a two-story laser tag arena, axe throwing, escape rooms and a scratch kitchen with a full bar.

High 5 will cover 3.09 acres of The Farm with a 41,784-square-foot building. The two-story layout will consist of a 30,252-square-foot ground floor and an 11,532-square-foot mezzanine floor. More than 25,000 square feet of landscaped minigolf will lie adjacent to the building.

High 5 at The Farm in Allen is slated to open in late spring 2024.

**Sure Shot Pickleball** will open in a former **Sky High Sports** trampoline park and sports venue in Naperville, Illinois. The new facility will feature 11 indoor courts, changing areas, a lounge where players can catch games on TV, a pro shop and space for private events.

"Our goal is to create a vibrant and inclusive community of pickleball enthusiasts while offering a top-notch facility that meets the needs of players at every level," said **Tim Kelly**, co-owner of Sure Shot Pickleball.

Created in 1965, pickleball has grown in popularity in recent years and has become the fastest-growing sport in the country. A 2023 Sports & Fitness Industry in Association report showed more than 8.9 million Americans play pickleball, up from the 4.8 million noted in the association's 2022 report.

"Pickleball is not a fad; it's here to stay," Kelly added.

**Tiger Woods' PopStroke**, an experimental family-friendly mini golf and dining concept is coming soon to Grandscape at The Colony, Texas.

According to a recent construction filing with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, the project will have 37 outdoor mini golf holes, food and drink

service and an outdoor playground area. The Grandscape location is one of 13 new PopStroke venues that are in development.

"We are seeing huge consumer demand to bring our immersive experience into new cities," said CEO and Founder **Greg Bartoli**. "PopStroke was created to bring people together across all ages and skill levels through the game of golf. We are thrilled to expand our reach and share the PopStroke experience with new guests."

Construction at Grandscape is beginning in June and is expected to be completed by the end of 2023.

**Dustin Curley**, the owner of **Yeti-Yard Next Level Adventures**, a go-kart and miniature golf attraction, has designed electric go-karts and its track as more of a strategic game than a race at the Wisconsin Dells facility. The go-karts charge in the pit area on the track.

The track features various markings with sensors underneath that either speed up or slow down a driver or opposing drivers, as well as earn and take away points for the driver.

"What's unique about it is it's got an interactive go-kart game," said Curley. "It's kind of like Mario Kart. You drive around and you get points throughout the game and can speed up your cart."

Yeti-Yard's go-karts were opened on May 31. The 18-hole miniature golf course being built under the tracks is slated to be ready by the middle of July. The joint attraction is built on the former site of **Old River Mini Golf**, which closed in 2017.

**Andretti Indoor Karting & Games** is set to open a location in Chandler and Glendale, Arizona.

"Inside the building, we house bowling, video games, laser tag, virtual reality attractions, and of course our go-karts for our three-level go-kart tracks," explained **Eddie Hamann**, managing member of Andretti Indoor Karting & Games. "We built within the structure about six to ten thousand square feet of meeting space for cooperate events, birthday parties, quinceñeras, wedding receptions, pretty much anything."

Both Arizona locations are set to have the business components of the company, but there will be some differences in the Valley locations.

"The tracks that you'll find in Glendale will be different from the tracks that you'll find in Chandler and some of the virtual reality attractions will be a little different," said Hamann. "But the other components like bowling, video games and obviously our menu and some of the other offerings will be pretty much the same."



# Two long weekends; six days for San Bernardino County Fair

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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VICTORVILLE, Calif. — This year, the Saturday to Memorial Day Monday in May and the first Friday to Sunday in June were the operating dates for the **San Bernardino County Fair**. Located in the high desert section of California, the 84-acre fair has been delighting guests for 76 years.

**Helm and Sons Amusements** from Colton, California, was the carnival provider, bringing in 40 rides with an equal split between major and kiddie. There were two areas for kiddie rides. They also operated 10 games and five food stands. Pre-fair ride wristbands were \$35 and \$55 on-site.

"We were blessed with perfect fair weather — high 70s and low 80s with a slight breeze," said **Davey Helm**, owner. "The economy [was not an issue] with the customers we saw. It was fantastic."

Making its debut on the Helm and Sons midway was a brand new 126-foot **KMG Speed** themed as **Medusa**. Also new to that spot was a newly refurbished **Grand Prix** roller coaster (**Zierer**). **Majestic** kiddie bumper cars were also new to the site. Brand-new **Denny's Electric Inc.** LED lighting packages were on both the **Giant Wheel** (**Chance Rides**) and **Century Wheel** (also **Chance**). The top three



rides were the **Giant Wheel**, **Medusa** and **Grand Prix** roller coaster. Ride revenue was just shy of \$600,000.

Helm had positive comments about the fair and fairgrounds: "It's a great venue that also doubles as one of three of our primary winter quarters. Also, there's a great management team in Victorville."

When asked about employment challenges and strategies, Helm said, "We opened later this year from 2 to 10 p.m. and look to go from 3 to 11 p.m. next year each day to ensure our teammates get proper rest away from working at the fair. These hours are ideal, and we feel are the model hours of operation in California for fairs and carnival-driven festivals. [It is] late enough in the day to beat the heat [and] early in the night to avoid the late-night issues that can arise."

The first weekend featured a monster truck event, demolition derby and a pro-open bull riding event brought to the fair by **Western Heritage Rodeo**.



Helm and Son brought 40 rides with an equal split between major and kiddie, including this **Watkins Stampede** (above). The San Bernardino County Fair typically operates two, three-day weekends each late May or early June. Hours were 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. each day. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ

The second weekend featured entertainment. Acts in the concert series included Mexican singer **Ana Bárbara** and country singer **Michael Ray**, and a free-with-admission **Night of Faith** concert with **Crowder**, a contemporary Christian artist.

"This is our time to provide entertainment and showcase the future farmers and talents of our community," SBC Fair CEO **Jennifer Morgan** said in a news release. "We've worked very hard to bring new and exciting things this year."

The theme was "A



Place Where Everyone Comes Together." General admission at the gate was \$10, with children 2 and younger free. Parking

onsite was \$5.

The 2024 fair takes place May 25-27 and May 31-June 2.

•sbcfair.com



In addition to the 40 rides the carnival brought, it also had 10 games and five food stands (above left). Total ride revenue was just under \$600,000. New to this spot was the newly refurbished **Zierer Grand Prix** roller coaster, beside the **Chance Giant Wheel** (above right). COURTESY STEFAN HINZ

# On the Midway: First Fruits Farm Memorial Balloon Festival

LOUISBURG, N.C. — The First Fruits Farm Memorial Balloon Festival was held June 3-4 at the 1,000-acre property in Louisburg, North Carolina. Walkways were lined with photos honoring fallen military personnel and guests were treated to afternoon entertainment which included the All-Veterans Parachute Team, DareDevil Dogs (presented by Purina), hot air balloon glow, amusement rides, bands, fireworks and more. Numerous veteran organizations were on hand with displays and related information. Admission was \$15 per person with parking also \$15. A VIP pass (\$95) included admission, preferred parking, private tented area with buffet dinner and beverages. A balloon mass ascension as well as tethered rides were available in the early evening prior to the glow. The event was originally scheduled for Memorial Day weekend but postponed due to inclement weather

—Ron Gustafson



The Midway food court was busy during the balloon festival. A variety of family rides were provided by Ragland Productions, Clayton, North Carolina. AT/RON GUSTAFSON



Balloon glow awed the crowd at the festival. AT/RON GUSTAFSON



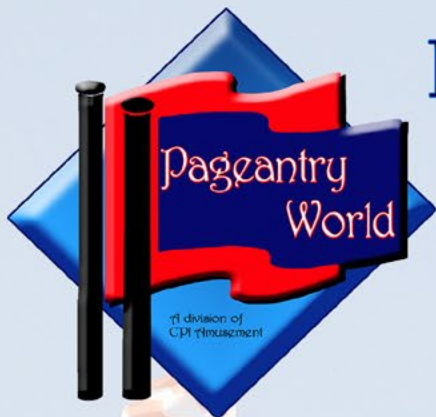
The ride midway had six mechanical rides, two inflatables. AT/RON GUSTAFSON



Guests were afforded the opportunity to walk inside a partially-inflated hot air balloon during the festival. AT/RON GUSTAFSON



North Carolina Vietnam Pilots Association had three aircraft on location which flew missions during the conflict. Pilots answered questions for festival guests. AT/RON GUSTAFSON



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## MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw  
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

**Jennifer Hesse** is the new manager of the **Kenosha County Fair**, Wilmot, Wisconsin. She took over that spot in early May. **Denise Zirbel**, who held the position for the last eight years, remains with the fair through the summer to help with the transition. Zirbel was the first fair manager of the Kenosha County Fair.

"We are grateful to Denise Zirbel for her dedication over the last eight years. Her leadership and vision have taken the Kenosha County Fair to new heights. Under her direction, the Kenosha County Fair expanded, developed new events at the fairgrounds and greatly enhanced the grounds and buildings of the 100-acre Fair," stated Board President **Randall Rossi**.

Hesse, the second full-time manager, holds a bachelor's degree from the **University of Wisconsin – Whitewater** in Social Work and a master's degree from the **University of Wisconsin – La Crosse** in Therapeutic Recreation. Her most recent position was the therapy program director for the **Southern Wisconsin Center**.

"She is no stranger to the fair and I'm excited to work with Jenny through this transition time," said Zirbel.

Hesse worked in the fair office for 14 years and is currently serving on the Executive Board of the Association. She volunteers by leading the Fairest of the Fair Committee and executing the Ag Olympics event during the fair. She was the 2012 Fairest of the Fair.

Hesse will be responsible for operations on the Fairgrounds including **Wilmot Raceway** and the Kenosha County Fair.

The fair will be held August 16 – 20 with a theme of "Barnyard Mardi Gras." **Alpine Amusement Company** is the carnival provider.

An inexpensive way to visit up to 51 member fairs in the Empire State is now available through the **New York State Association of Agricultural Fairs (NYSAAF)**. For a fee of \$125, the pass allows the pass holder and one companion gate admission plus parking, when available.

This pass is non-transferable, non-refundable and does not include carnival rides. Funds generated support the NYSAAF scholarship fund.

The 98th annual **Maui Fair** (Hawaii) has been postponed due to difficulty in securing operational commitments from service providers, volunteers and vendors. This large-scale community celebration has made its appearance elusive in recent years.

"We're very thankful for the support of our community and its leaders" **Sherri Grimes**, managing director of Maui Fair told **KHON TV-2**. "Despite their and our

best efforts, with venue construction challenges and no confirmation on rides and games, a different version of a fair could not be considered, even with a reduced-size Maui County Fair."

A key component of the fair is the Joy Zone which includes rides and games, owned and operated by **Fernandez Events**. The operator informed the fair alliance that it could not commit to providing a full Joy Zone because of high shipping costs and lingering staff shortages.

"Although we've tried to hold our 98th annual celebration for two years running, we are not able to have a fair where guests, participants and our community are treated to the style and magnitude of past annual fairs," said **Avery Chumbley**, alliance president.

A brawl at **Contra Costa County Fair**, Antioch, California, closed the fair two hours early. The violence led to the implementation of a new chaperone policy. The brawls involved teenagers screaming, throwing punches and pulling hair.

"As the deputies approached the scene, the juveniles fled to other areas of the fair and continued fighting," the sheriff's office statement said. "Deputies were unable to locate any victims as the juveniles ran away."

The next day, the fair announced a policy that requires chaperones to accompany minors starting at 5 p.m.

"We want to ensure that the Fair remains a safe and fun environment for all families and friends to gather and make memories. All youth must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Thank you so much for your cooperation and understanding," a statement from fair officials read.

Security guards were stationed by the entrance and inside the fairgrounds, with visitors walking through metal detectors.

**Renee Alexander** is the new CEO of the **Minnesota State Fair**. She is the first woman to run the fair and the first new CEO in nearly 30 years. Earlier this year, the fair announced Alexander would take over the role after previous CEO **Jerry Hammer** stepped down after 27 years at the helm.

"We look at ourselves as stewards," Alexander told **KMSP FOX 9**. "This fair belongs to the state of Minnesota. This belongs to the people. And we're here to carry it forward and hopefully make it better for the generations that come after us."

Alexander has a long history with the fair, starting as an intern in 1989, a position she held for five years. The Coon Rapids, Minnesota, native then spent 11 years in live event production outside the fair. In 2005, she returned to the Minnesota State Fair with a focus on live event production.

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# WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ Great Wolf Lodge Poconos nearing completion — page 32 / News Splash — page 32

## Transformed Sandcastle Waterpark welcomed guests in May

AT: Jeffrey Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

WEST HOMESTEAD, Pa. — Sandcastle Waterpark completed a massive two-year park improvement project just in time for its Memorial Day holiday weekend opening. Guests entering the park those first few days of the season noticed the changes immediately as the first thing they see when entering the park is a brand-new sign and steel archway with illuminated lettering.

Inside, all of the slides have been recoated and refreshed by **Safe Slide Restoration** of Fredericksburg, Missouri. Buildings were made brighter and better with new themes and fresh new colors with work undertaken by local contractors and painters. A few new attractions have been added as well. New foliage, flowers and ornamental grass have updated the landscape, making for a more pleasing environment. The lockers have been refurbished



The updated entrance now sports raised-letter signage (above left). The locker area has been refreshed with vibrant new hues and new signage promoting attractions within the park (above right). AT/GARY SLADE



and the locker area has been refreshed with vibrant new hues and new signage promoting attractions within the park. Guests will continue to find bright new colorful signage identifying food venues and attractions throughout the park.

"We are looking forward to welcoming guests to the brand-new Sandcastle this season, with eye-catching upgrades throughout the entire park," said Assistant General Manager **Zach Zapf**. "The team has been work-

ing hard to elevate the park experience in every way. Our guests are sure to be wowed by all the improvements."

Mon Tsunami wave pool and the family-friendly Mushroom Pool have a new brick façade, backdrops and a waterfall element. Dragon's Den, the park's tube chute/bowl slide that featured a dragon in the bowl, has been updated with a new dragon at the entrance and a new water-spraying dragon in the bowl. A misty spray has been added to help shroud

the abyss into which riders plunge as they exit the bowl.

The Sandcastle Bridge Bar and Grill now sports a new beachy atmosphere and a turf area outside adds Cornhole for visitors to play. Giant garage-style doors can be opened to expand the space and let in fresh air. An all-new menu embodies the seaside feel with offerings such as shrimp tacos, fish and chips, frozen margaritas, tropical cocktails and more. On the Boardwalk, the famous dipped cone from sister-park **Kennywood** will now be served at the water park.

Under the slides, kids and families can enjoy digging in the new Sandbox and creating sand sculptures. An oversized Adirondack chair provides a perfect opportunity for family photos.

Sandcastle will offer special events all summer long to give guests a reason to revisit. During Father's Day weekend the park held its annual Father's Day Flop belly flop contest. Jammin' July will feature live music

every Saturday and Sunday in July from some of the finest bands in the southwestern Pennsylvania region.

Sandcastle Waterpark opened in 1989 by **Kennywood Entertainment** on land that once housed a railroad switching yard for **U.S. Steel**. Located about five miles from Kennywood, the two have always been cross-promoted in the Pittsburgh market.

In 2007 Kennywood Entertainment sold its properties to **Parque Reunidos**, an international park operator based in Madrid, Spain. **Palace Entertainment**, which was established in 1998 and operated amusement parks, water parks and FECs throughout the United States and England, was acquired by Parque Reunidos in 2007 and became a subsidiary of the parent company. In 2020 Palace Entertainment established a corporate facility near Kennywood and is now primarily involved with the operation of parks and attractions in the United States on behalf of Parque Reunidos.

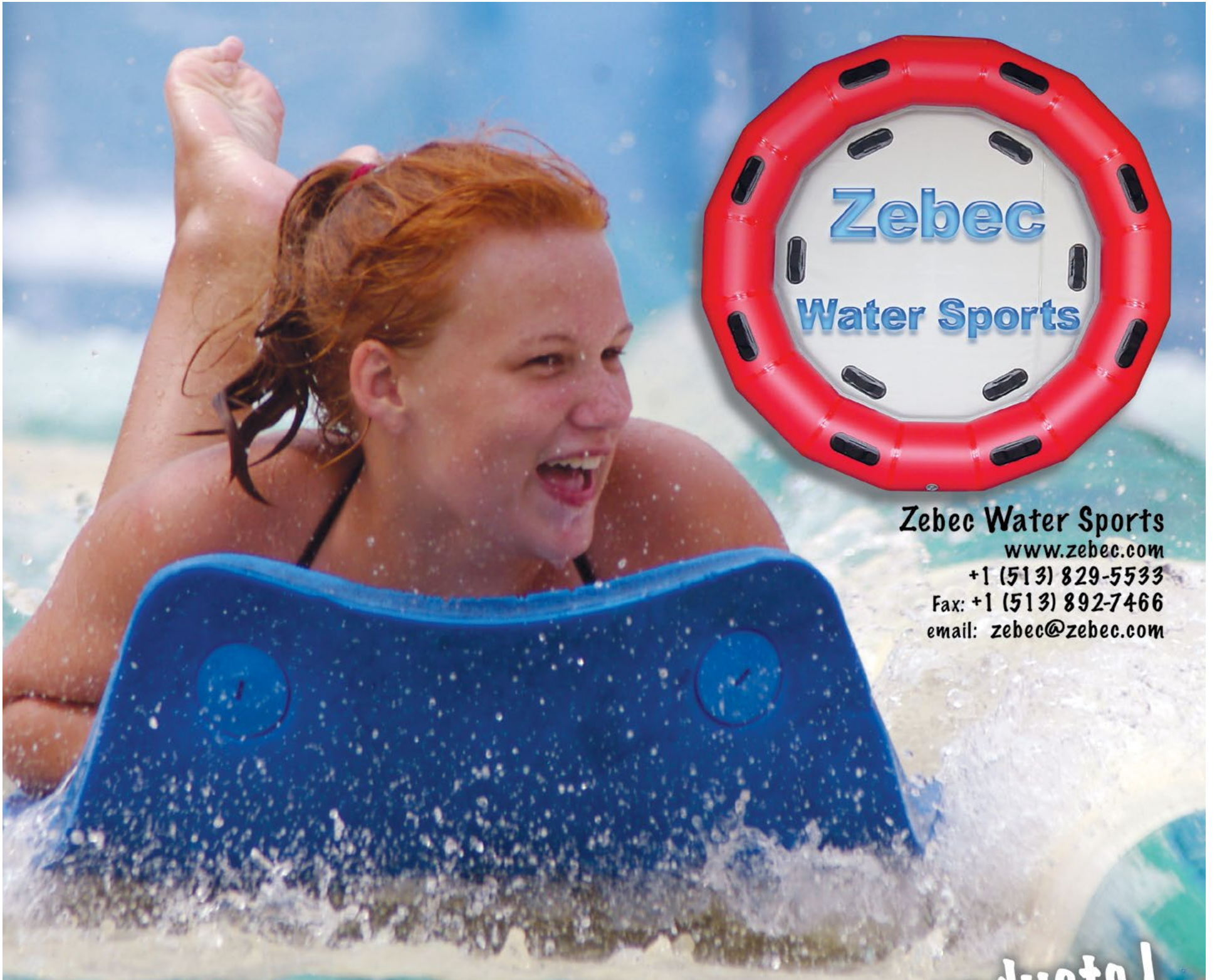


The slides have been recoated inside, and bright colors have been applied to the outside (above left). The new U.S.-based office for Palace Entertainment/Parques Reunidos is located just a few miles from Sandcastle and Kennywood (above right). AT/GARY SLADE

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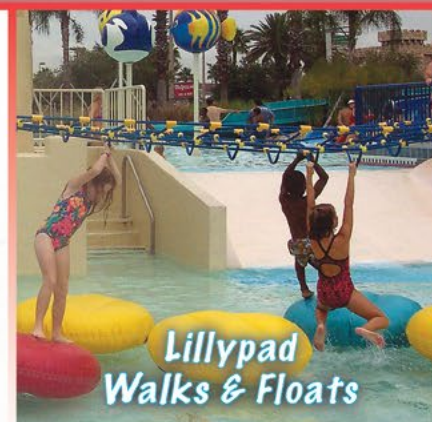
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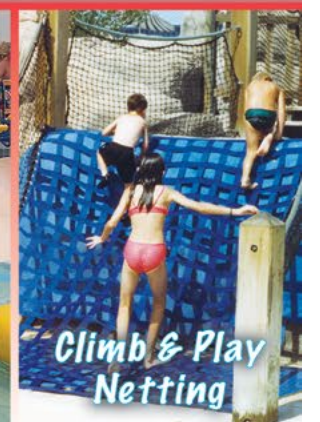
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# Great Wolf Lodge Poconos expansion nears completion

AT: Jeffrey Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

TANNERSVILLE, Pa. — **Great Wolf Lodge Pocono Mountains**, one of the earlier-built lodges, is nearing completion of a \$125 million expansion and update project. The massive multi-phase project has been in the works since 2019 — nearly 15 years after the lodge opened in 2005.

The expansion includes a new outdoor pool, ropes course, entertainment area, additional eateries and 30 three-bedroom woodland villas. The property's grand lobby has been updated with new carpeting, furniture and fixtures. In a press release at the time of the announcement, the general manager indicated that significant enhancements would be made to nearly every inch of the resort. A new tower adds 202 family-friendly suites bringing the total room count to 633, which makes it the second-largest resort in the Great Wolf portfolio.

The expansion project also includes the addition of 40,000 square feet to the indoor water park along with seven new slides. Among the new attractions is Mountain Edge Raceway, a four-lane mat racer with added twists. Otter Run is a body slide with multiple twists and turns. Wolf Tail is an enclosed side winder with a drop capsule launch. Slides similar to Wolf Tail at other Great Wolf lodges have proven to be extremely popular. Slidewinder is a tube slide that guests can enjoy with double or single tubes. The double tubes have the new seating arrangement that places one rider backward and the other forward. As thrill seekers encounter high-banked, open-air curves, they may find themselves switching direction. The finale is a mini-tornado and a 180-degree banked turn before plunging into the splashdown.

Once the expansion is complete, it will result in nearly 118,000 square feet of water attractions. The addition of seven new slides brings the total slide count to 20.

An outdoor pool, Racoon Lagoon, features an oversized resort-style pool with interactive fountains, poolside seating and a poolside bar.

A new restaurant, Fireside, is the first full-service restaurant at the Poconos location. True to its name, the restaurant specializes in bringing the outdoors indoors with fire-cooked dishes such as New York Strip steak, grilled salmon, burger and smoked chicken wings. Fireside seats about 200 people in the dining room and another 20 at the full-service bar. Along with the fire-cooked dishes are salads, soups, sandwiches and additional entrees. The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The resort's existing buffet restaurant was renovated to provide a more modern aesthetic and to create more seating options for families. It has been given a new name — Timbers Tables.

Opened in 2005, the Poconos property was built at a cost of \$150 million. In 2019 all 401 guest suites were updated and additional attractions for children were added. The first phase of the expansion was completed in 2022 and added a **Dunkin' Restaurant**, Woods End Creamery ice cream shop and Great Wolf Candy Company store.

There are currently 20 Great Wolf Lodges in North America, with the newest in Perryville, Maryland, having recently opened.



The Wolf Tail slide, which is popular at several of the lodges, starts with a drop-capsule launch into an enclosed sidewinder tube slide. COURTESY GREAT WOLF LODGE



## NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

A new **Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park** opened in May in the town of Binghamton, New York. The park features a man-made six-acre swimming lake with a sandy beach and the Splashtown Inflatable Waterpark — an **AquaGlide** floating obstacle course. Pedal boats and kayaks are available to cruise around the lake.

Attractions include jumping pillows, mini golf, pickle ball, gaga ball, a low ropes course, sand volleyball, tube slides and more.

**Wet-'N'-Wild Waterworld** in Anthony, Texas, has added Tarantula Tailspin, its third new attraction in six years. Riders on single or double tubes slide through enclosed sections highlighted with aqua-lucent visual effects, then rocket through two open saucer sections. The slides stand approximately 50 feet tall and the slide path runs nearly 350 feet.

The City Council of Bettendorf, Iowa, has selected a contractor to construct a state-of-the-art aquatic facility within the city. **General Constructors, Inc.** of Bettendorf, Iowa, has begun work on the \$18 million project and is expecting to have it open by May 2024.

The new facility is replacing the current **Splash Landing Aquatic Center** that closed in 2022. The city has partnered with **YMCA of Iowa Mississippi Valley**. The city will own the park and the YMCA will operate it.

The project will be complete in two phases, with the first being a large activity pool and four support buildings. The 12,500-square-foot pool includes a zero-depth entry with a spray feature, a ninjastyle ropes course and a diving well with two diving boards and two climbing walls.

The second phase will include a lazy river, splash pad and slide tower with the three waterslides.

In June, the community of Choctaw, Mississippi, opened a new attraction at its **Geyser Falls Water Theme Park**. An \$89,000 makeover to Lil' Squirts splash park features custom tribal-inspired designs including eight-point stars that represent the eight tribal communities of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

"We're taking steps of making progress to try to renew, renovate and invigorate all the properties that we have. Whether that's the water park here, the golf course, the casinos or hotels. Every aspect of it, we're trying to make all of our patrons have the ultimate experience when they come and visit us here at the

**Pearl River Resort**. I hope that many more kids, your children, our children, all the children that come and visit **Geyser Falls Water Theme Park** have many, many fun days ahead," said Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribal Chief **Cyrus Ben**.

The **Charles A. Foster Pool** in Lakewood, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, reopened for the season at the beginning of June, following a \$6 million rebuild.

"Before this year's overhaul, it had been nearly 40 years since the pool was last remodeled. It was showing its age, but with the project complete, this community gem is now shining brightly once again," said Lakewood Mayor **Meghan George**.

The original pool opened in 1953 and was last renovated in the mid-1980s. The original pool was demolished in September 2022 to make way for an expansion of the aquatic offerings at the site.

This latest incarnation adds an ADA-accessible zero-depth entry, waterslide, spray features, diving board, splash pad, shade structures, lily-pads, family changing room and a renovated pool house.

The pool maintains its 50-meter and 25-meter lap lanes and is still able to host swim meets, water polo and competitive diving, as it has done for years.

The city of Lakewood has a strong swimming tradition and some of the best swimmers in Ohio have come from the city's **St. Edward** and **Lakewood High Schools**. Many have gone on to compete at the national and international level.

New York's **Splish Splash Water Park**, in partnership with the **International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES)** has achieved recertification as a Certified Autism Center.

"Splish Splash is proud to be working with IBCCES to once again achieve recognition as a certified autism center," said Splish Splash General Manager **Mike Bengtson**. "In 2019, we became the first water park in New York State to receive this designation, and our implementation of the IBCCES Accessibility Card last year was a huge success. We always strive to make our park accessible to everyone, and working with organizations such as IBCCES is evidence of our strong commitment to this goal."

To achieve this goal, Splash Splash team members underwent extensive training to enhance their understanding of autism and sensory awareness. This ensures that autistic and sensory sensitive guests receive support during their visit.



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# BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Extreme Engineering introduces Hooli-Hoop — page 38 / Women of Influence: Julie Estrada — page 40

## Sesame Place refreshes water attractions with Sesame Street IP

AT: Tim Baldwin

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LANGHORNE, Pa. — In 1981, **Sesame Place** opened its gates, and families with young children have since been entertained with activities just their size. For more than four decades, the park has evolved and seen major growth.

The property offers a variety of amusement attractions, as well as shows. Rides come in the form of both water park offerings and dry rides. Since the Sesame Street IP has become part of **SeaWorld Entertainment**, Elmo, Big Bird, Abby Cadabby and the various characters have been seen more prominently.

At the Pennsylvania property, Sesame Street characters are giving an entirely fresh look to established areas in the park. A major transformation now themes an area as Big Bird's Beach.

"The slides and pools that are now a part of Big Bird's Beach were previously themed as Twiddlebug Land, giving guests the unique perspective of a twiddlebug," said **Meagan Passero**, communication manager, Sesame Place. "As a result, everything was made to look larger than life. While Twiddlebug Land will always hold a place in our hearts, Sesame Place strives to remain current and provide new, excit-



New signage for Little Bird's Bay is indicative of the inviting transformation (above left). 3dx Scenic sculpted this whimsical addition to the reimagined area (above right). COURTESY SESAME PLACE

ing experiences to guests. Our water rides and play areas are among our most popular attractions, and we know these new areas will be excellent additions to our already world-class offerings."

One of the partners on the project was **3dxScenic**, a fabrication division of **LIVE**, which creates immersive, three-dimensional design for events and experiences.

"Big Bird's Beach is the new land that resides on the former location of Twiddlebug Land," said **Brittany Frosio**, 3dx's project manager for Big Bird Beach. "The old land, while having well-served the park, was looking a bit dated, and management wanted to provide a larger

footprint from some of Sesame Street's better-known characters. Now Elmo, Rosita and Abby have their own attractions named for them."

"The new Sesame Place marquee sign atop Elmo's Surf and Slide sits where the iconic Rubber Ducky once resided and serves well as a roadside billboard both for guests inside and approaching the park, said **Mark Rosenzweig**, senior account executive, 3dxScenic. "For Rubber Ducky aficionados, fear not — the rubber ducky is now placed on ground level near the Sesame Street neighborhood and serves as a fantastic photo op. The mural wall behind the wave pool was the largest single element in this project."

"Our fans have always been passionate about the park, and while they were at first surprised to hear about the update, they have since celebrated the transformation and new attractions with us," Passero told *Amusement Today*.

3dx worked around some wrinkles to make the project a success.

"Installing the wave pool mural was particularly challenging as the pool had already been filled with water, so our teams had to rig the segments from the service road behind the pool," said Frosio.

3dx had worked at Sesame Place's sister park in San Diego when it was transformed from the former **Aquatica** in 2022.

"This was retheming of

a land of the park rather than the entire park but still makes up a considerable footprint in the water park area," Rosenzweig said. "The new land gives a more immersive beach-like feel with palm trees and sculpted sand — the latter used as bases for signage. The land also has over 25 surfboards serving as décor on Elmo's Surf and Slide tower."

"We always work closely to exchange ideas with our sister park, **Sesame Place San Diego**, and we're pleased to see that our fans on the West Coast enjoy the park as much as they do on the East Coast!" said Passero.

"The most reward-

► See **SESAME**, page 36



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► **SESAME**

Continued from page 35

ing aspect of transformative projects like Big Bird's Beach is watching the park guests enjoy and interact with the new land," said Rosenzweig. "Big Bird's Beach truly is a park within a park as it is home to the property's rebranded family raft slide, tube slides, wave pool and splashpad. This truly was a perfect collaboration between 3dx, Sea World Parks and Sesame Workshop that has added new layers of color and immersion to one of the most popular areas of the park."

Updated attractions in Big Bird's Beach include Elmo's Surf 'n' Slide, a six-person raft slide; Abby's Splash & Spray Garden, a water oasis with a giant water can sprinkler; Rosita's Seaside Slides (single or double tube); and Little Bird's Bay, a 10,000-square-foot family wave pool with a maxi-



The family wave pool now has an entire new backdrop, giving it a more colorful, summer feel (above). A new sign created by 3dx Scenic is placed atop a slide tower giving the park's brand greater visibility (right). COURTESY SESAME PLACE, 3DX SCENIC

mum depth of 18 inches.

At the all-new water play area, Bert & Ernie's Splashy Shores, kids can interact with tipping buckets, spraying jets, a water curtain, a water bobble and a spraying water tower.

"The Sea World and

Sesame Place teams were a joy to collaborate with," said Frosio. "They were amazing partners through the entire process of the project from concept to installation. 3dx is proud to have partnered with Sesame Place on yet another fantastic scenic install."



# Dimensionally expressive experiences

Congratulations to our partners at Sesame Place on the successful debut of Big Bird's Beach!



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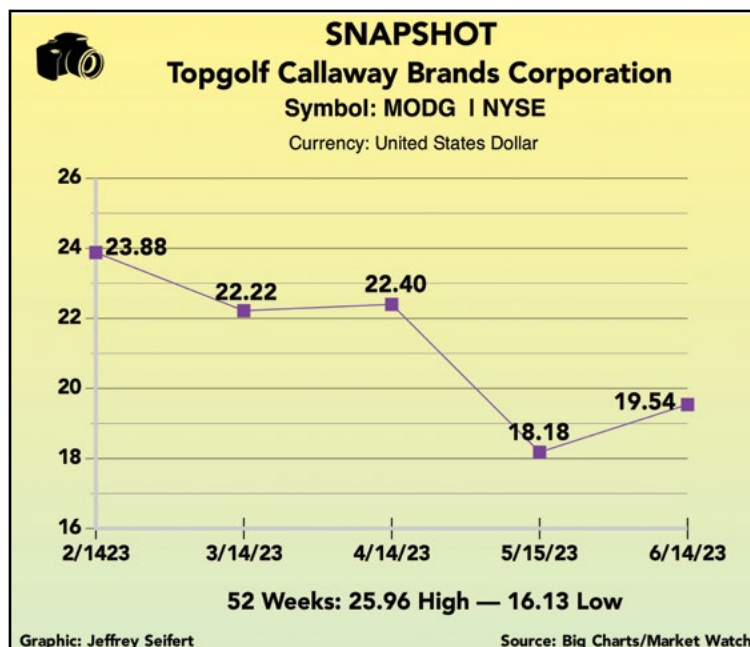
## MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 6/22/23	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
<b>PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS</b>					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	88.40	110.89	71.72
Bowlero Corp.	BOWL	NYSE	11.76	17.45	9.90
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	40.95	47.95	37.58
Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	40.58	43.71	28.39
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	42.31	47.29	29.59
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	44.09	55.90	33.92
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	5400.00	5670.00	3815.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	1.14	4.28	0.81
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	26.55	28.45	15.40
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	42.50	46.36	26.41
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.38	0.47	0.26
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	97.41	97.70	31.09
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	55.54	68.19	40.01
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	27.32	31.29	16.83
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	12.09	17.65	8.82
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	772.00	848.00	650.00
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	88.49	126.48	84.07
<b>SUPPLIERS/OTHERS</b>					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	124.50	148.50	99.6
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1343.00	1348.00	738.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	19.19	25.96	16.13

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—SOURCES: Bigcharts.com



## DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S.)	As of 6/19/23	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.866	(\$2.017)
Midwest	\$3.739	(\$2.041)
Gulf Coast	\$3.532	(\$1.921)
Mountain	\$4.032	(\$1.750)
West Coast	\$4.137	(\$2.014)
California	\$4.773	(\$2.142)

## CURRENCY

On 6/22/23 \$1 USD =	
0.9138	EURO
0.7842	GBP (British Pound)
141.83	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8962	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.4743	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3199	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

## BUSINESS WATCH

## Dave &amp; Buster's reports record first quarter

DALLAS, Texas — **Dave & Buster's Entertainment, Inc.**, an owner and operator of entertainment and dining venues, announced financial results for its first quarter ended April 30, 2023.

The company reported record revenue of \$597.3 million in the quarter increased 32.4% from the first quarter of 2022. Including the pro forma contribution of **Main Event** in the first quarter of 2022, the year-over-year growth was \$21.8 million, or 3.8%. Record Net income totaled \$70.1 million, or \$1.45 per diluted share, compared with net income of \$67.0 million, or \$1.35 per diluted share in the first quarter of 2022.

"We are pleased to report strong results for our first quarter of fiscal 2023. Our extremely talented team of operators and support center employees continue to execute on the breadth of strategic opportunities we've identified to unlock significant revenue growth and cost efficiency opportunities in our business which will continue to bring meaningful upside to all stakeholders and in all macro-economic environments," said **Chris Morris**, Dave & Buster's chief executive officer. "As a testament to the conviction we have in the long-term success of our business and the value we see in our shares, we have repurchased \$200 million of common stock thus far in fiscal 2023, reducing our shares outstanding by nearly 12%. We see tremendous upside as we continue to drive value creation for our stakeholders and we look forward to keeping you updated on our progress."

## Accesso acquires VGS

TWYFORD, U.K. — **Accesso Technology Group** announced the acquisition of **VGS** — a leading ticketing and visitor management system provider for leisure, entertainment and cultural businesses around the globe. VGS' award-winning SnApp platform will be rebranded as Accesso Horizon and operate as part of the acceso product set.

"I am beyond excited to announce the transformative acquisition of VGS. Its solution fits squarely into our technology roadmap and its top-tier customer base speaks volumes for the quality, scalability and functionality of the platform," said Accesso CEO **Steve Brown**. "This acquisition will allow us to provide our clients and future partners with technology that has the capacity to scale with their business long into the future and keep up with the growing demands of the modern consumer."

Founded by a team with decades of combined experience, VGS has supported visitor attractions in all aspects of the selling, distribution and redemption of tickets and entitlements since its establishment in 2011. Its client roster of more than 100 venues includes the world's largest theme park resort destination in Orlando, Florida, as well as leading theme park brands in Dubai, Singapore, Japan and China. Beyond theme parks, the ticketing and visitor management platform supports zoos, observation towers and other unique attractions in a total of 11 countries around the globe, including one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World — the Pyramid of Giza in Egypt.

## PEL acquiring Dynamic Attractions

ORLANDO — **Dynamic Attractions** is set to be sold for \$2 million to Hong Kong-based financial services firm **Promising Expert Limited** (PEL).

Founded in Vancouver in 1926, Dynamic Attractions initially specialized in building large-scale telescopes before changing tracks when several of its engineers switched to work in the theme park industry.

Although Dynamic Attractions had \$31.9 million of assets, this was dwarfed by its liabilities, which is why its sale price was so low. As PEL was Dynamic's senior secured creditor, it was the most logical bidder, and the filings reveal that its offer includes forgiveness and assumption of a significant portion of the secured debt.

# Extreme Engineering introduces the new towering Hooli-Hoop attraction

AT: Pam Sherborne  
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ATHENS, Texas — Officials of **Extreme Engineering**, a global supplier in engineering design and family-friendly attractions, has had a busy spring introducing its latest attraction, the Hooli-Hoop Tower ride.

Company officials debuted the ride at this year's **IAAPA Expo Asia** held at the **Marina Bay Sands** in Singapore, June 13-16.

The Hooli-Hoop is being touted as triple the fun since it includes three towers that interact with each other by launching, dropping and spinning riders down the twisted columns. Each Hooli-Hoop offers different ride paths and intensities all while operating in close proximity of each other.

"This ride breaks the mold from traditional tower attractions," said **Phil Wilson**, chief development officer of Extreme Engineering. "The Hooli-Hoop is perfect in modular spaces, indoors and can allow up to 18 riders at all times."

The Hooli-Hoop attraction offers unique features and a one-of-a-kind ride experience for families to share. It stands 27 feet high. There is an



Extreme Engineering debuted the Hooli-Hoop attraction during **IAAPA Expo Asia** held at the **Marina Bay Sands** in Singapore, June 13-16. Composed of three separate towers, the ride launches, spins and drops riders down twisted columns. The towers interact with each other giving riders a different type of ride experience. An optional rotating platform offers a more intense ride. COURTESY EXTREME ENGINEERING

optional rotating platform for extra thrills and spins.

"One of the best ride features is that the towers allow riders to come into close proximity with each other," Wilson said. "You feel as you can almost reach out and high-five the rider next to you."

The Hooli-Hoop was designed in the spirit of being inclusive to small children and adults to enjoy, allowing a rider height as short as 40 inches.

The Hooli-Hoop's accessibility for most indoor spaces is an advantage as the company begins its marketing. It only needs an entry door of eight feet wide by 10 feet tall. The three towers fit within a 40-foot footprint, safely operating in the closest ride envelope as possible.

The new ride offers over 540 riders per hour, the optional rotating platform, creative theming options and comes at a competitive price point.

Hooli-Hoop's name

was created by **Oliver Wilson**, age seven years. He is the grandson of **Jeff Wilson**, founder of Extreme Engineering. When the young Wilson first saw the ride, he immediately referred to it as Hooli-Hoop. The inspired name stuck.

The Hooli-Hoop is another addition to Extreme Engineer's arsenal of rides and attractions. For more than 28 years, the company has supplied the amusement and entertainment industry family coasters, engineering design and adventure rides.

The company is the creator of patented mobile rock-climbing walls and auto-belay systems. Some of the company's installations include the **Cloud Coaster** roller coaster, **High-Action Adventure** parks, ziplines, **Extreme Air** launchers, climbing walls and many other theme park attractions around the world.

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

## ON THE MOVE

**Palace Entertainment** announced the appointment of **Michael (Mike) Lusky** as general manager of **Adventureland Resort** in Altoona, Iowa, and **Donald Spiller** as general manager of **Raging Waters Los Angeles**.

Lusky will lead the Adventureland Resort team and will also support **Sea Life Park Hawaii** as group manager. Lusky has worked for various companies in the theme park, water park and hospitality spaces, including **Six Flags Entertainment**, **Great Wolf Resorts**, **Premier Parks** and **Funtime Inc.**

Spiller is a seasoned theme park veteran who brings more than 25 years of experience, most recently serving as General Manager for the past four years at **Six Flags Hurricane Harbor** of Phoenix, Arizona. Spiller served in operational positions of increased responsibility at **Six Flags Magic Mountain** and **Hurricane Harbor** in Los Angeles. He is well-respected in the industry and has several technical credentials as an **AIMS International** instructor and certified **Ellis and Associates** lifeguard instructor.

"We couldn't be more pleased to have Mike and Donald join the Palace team," said Chief Operating Officer, **Bonnie Weber**. "Their years of hands-on industry experience and breadth of knowledge will add great value to the organization."



Lusky



Spiller

**Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** has named **Brian Bacica** park president for **Six Flags Great Adventure** properties, which includes **Six Flags Great Adventure**, **Hurricane Harbor New Jersey** and **Six Flag's Wild Safari Drive-Thru Adventure**. In joining the Six Flags Great Adventure team, Bacica brings with him a diverse knowledge of the attractions industry and a strong history of leadership.

Six Flags VP of Operations, Public Safety, Maintenance, and Engineering **Jason Freeman** was at the park to share the announcement with the Six Flags Great Adventure team. Freeman offered: "Brian's years of experience in leadership roles and his diverse background in food and beverage, events, and theme parks, make him the perfect choice to lead these three extraordinary properties."

Bacica most recently served as a regional vice president at **TriMark USA** and has held executive positions with **Au Bon Pain** and **Peak Event Services**. He spent much of his career in theme parks including roles with the **Disneyland Resort** in Anaheim, California, and **Universal Parks & Resorts**.

"I am extremely excited about the opportunity to work for the world's largest regional theme park company at one of its most unique properties," said Bacica. "I look forward to working with the team to continue driving park initiatives while enhancing the guest experience for years to come."

Integrated cashless arcade payment system supplier **Embed** has named **Kathleen Goy** as its new marketing chief of staff. Goy, who is currently the global head of events at Embed, will take on the role to lead marketing teams such as creatives, events, PR and media.

As Chief of Staff, Goy will be CMO **Sara Paz's** right-hand woman in easing communications and operations in the department and across the Embed organization.

"I am honored to have this vote of confidence from the head honchos," shared Goy. "I'm excited to see how I can encourage teams to fuel fun with this new role."



Bacica



Goy

### FAST FACTS

**Height:**  
27 feet

**Ride design:**  
three towers which launch, drop and spin down

**Entry door size:**  
eight feet by 10 feet.

**Footprint:**  
40 feet

**Capacity:**  
540 riders per hour

## OBITUARIES

## Waldameer Park and Water World owner Paul Nelson passes

ERIE, Pa. — Ask anyone in northwestern Pennsylvania who is one of the major influencers in that region, Paul Nelson's name would always be on that list. Paul T. Nelson died May 19 at age 89. He was a long-time owner and visionary of Waldameer Park & Water World, right near the entrance to Presque Isle State Park.

Nelson was a larger-than-life person always seen on the grounds of his beloved park, whether it be on a golf cart or foot, carrying a two-way radio, ready to respond at a moment's notice. He was always smiling and always moving. He loved his park and it showed.

"I have a feeling and



Paul Nelson

it's deep within me that we owe this community an awful lot," Nelson told the *Erie Times-News* in 2015, when the park won a Commitment to Erie award. "This is my hobby, instead of golf. My community is my hobby. I like

Erie, I like my community, and I want to keep it that way." The previous year, Nelson himself won a Commitment to Erie Legacy Award.

That commitment goes a long way back — 78 years to be exact, when Nelson was just 11. He started to work for park owner, Alex Moeller, who adopted Paul and eventually willed the place to him. Nelson became general manager when Moeller died in 1965. The year prior, Nelson served as president of the Pennsylvania Amusement Parks Association.

By the late 1970s, the park was showing its age, and an infusion was needed to bring new life into the place. Nelson knew

what to do. He sold off the animals from the carousel (replacing them with fiberglass ones) using those proceeds to help fund the Water World expansion, which opened in 1986.

Every few years, new rides were added, continually refreshing the park and keeping it current. Its signature ride would be put in for the 2008 season, the Ravine Flyer II wooden roller coaster. Shortly before his passing, Nelson was actively involved in the installation of Rocket Blast, a \$9 million water coaster addition to Water World that opened this season.

"[During one visit] we had a long chat about family parks, as well as

some interesting stories about Bill Tracy, the man that created Waldameer's Whacky Shack, Pirate's Cove and who created some figures for the miniature railroad. A lot of history is gone with the passing of Paul," said Rick Davis DAFE founder.

Book author Jim Futrell shared a couple of Nelson memories, concluding with, "It showed how successful you can be in life if you truly love what you do, pay attention to the little things and don't lose sight of the big picture."

Although Nelson is no longer around, the park is in good hands as three family generations will keep it going and growing.

—B. Derek Shaw

## David Dean, former president of Lubbock's Joyland, dies at 67

LUBBOCK, Texas — James "David" Dean died peacefully in the loving care of his wife, Kristi, at their home in Lubbock, Texas, on May 29. He was 67.

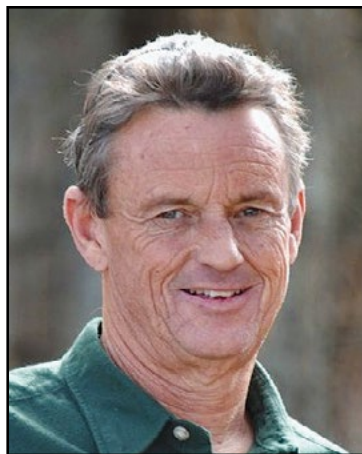
His parents, Jimmy and Katie Dean, acquired a small park in Lubbock (Mackenzie Park Playground) in 1973 and renamed it Joyland. The Dean family transformed it and grew Joyland over the years. The park offered classic rides and modern thrillers.

For 50 seasons, Joyland entertained families in Lubbock and surrounding towns. [See *Amusement Today*, June 2022.]

David often commented that the best memories he had of owning Joyland were seeing the smiles on people's faces.

David was quite skilled with machines, which made him a natural fit to work with amusement rides. Anyone who knew David knew full well that he was an extremely hard worker.

In addition to his mechanical expertise, his



David Dean

most valuable contribution to Joyland was his heart. He loved the park, and he enjoyed welcoming kids and families each season. David was the true embodiment of all the admirable qualities and characteristics of being an owner of a family-owned traditional park.

"David Dean and his wife Kristi were always extremely welcoming to the coaster fans from Texas and surrounding states. Every other year, a group of enthusiasts would make a pilgrimage to visit Joyland, along with the other traditional park in West Texas, Wonderland in Amarillo.

No matter how busy the day's tasks kept him, he always shared his smile and interacted with fans when he could. Enthusiasts enjoyed listening to his tales when the group assembled for dinner. He was a kind and humble man, but his friendliness and hospitality were completely sincere. ACE will miss him," said Jason Knutson, regional representative, American Coaster Enthusiasts.

A hobby of David's was his love of cars and drag racing, which dated back to his childhood. He loved racing for the sheer enjoyment. In younger days, he participated in racing competitions and his winnings allowed him to buy an engagement ring to propose to Kristi. He loved taking his family, including his pets, to the races.

"I had known David since 1963, as the Deans were neighborhood friends and business partners in the amusement industry," said Paul Borchardt, president, Wonderland Amusement Park. "One weekend when

David was about nine, I had read that Amarillo had a drag strip and races were that weekend. He expressed a real interest in cars, so I took him with me. Many years later when Paula and I moved back to Amarillo, I became friends with him and admired his interest in MOPAR, as I was a Corvette man."

The Deans made the decision to close Joyland last fall. Even though health concerns began to take their toll, he was still involved in finding homes for the many rides that delighted visitors

at Joyland.

David's impact on the city of Lubbock and its generations of families is unmistakable.

"I remember his positive and loyal attitude, always with a smile. He had a willing attitude," said Borchardt.

He is survived by his wife, Kristi; her parents, Stan and Betty Blevins; his three sons Jason (and wife Jen), James (and partner Heather) and Zach (and fiancé Breeann), as well as his sister, Mary Haiduk and husband Ray.

—Tim Baldwin



David Dean's love of cars included participating in drag racing competition. AT/FILE

# Women INFLUENCE

## A view from the top...

When asked to describe **Julie Estrada** with just one word, it is sharing. The former TV reporter used her gift to share news in San Diego and later brought her gift — and passion — to **Merlin Entertainments**. As the public relations representative for **Legoland California**, she developed and shared stories about the park, the **Lego** brand and the people who make the park unique. As director of public relations for Merlin's America destinations, she continues to share stories for more than 40 destinations.

## Estrada's celebrates colorful PR world of stories, relationships

CARLSBAD, Calif. — Work hard. Play hard. Lead with gratitude. Those sentences could be an inspirational bumper sticker but for Julie Estrada they serve as both the advice she gives to others and her personal mantra. This October, she will celebrate her 20th anniversary working for Merlin Entertainments. What began as her first role as a public relations representative at Legoland California grew with her, and, today, she serves as the director of public relations for the company's North America-based parks and attractions.

"I like to say that I always get what I want, but what I really mean is that through hard work and strong results, I make it impossible to say no to me," Estrada said. She points to her position as the perfect example. "For several years, at the end of my annual review, I would be asked, 'Where do you see yourself in the next few years?' I always answered that I wanted to be Merlin's national head of public relations for North America. For eight years I was told, 'The position does not exist.'"

That never deterred her, and with each attraction and new park opening, Estrada demonstrated how much the company would benefit from the broad role and why she was the only one who could do it. Today, those in the attractions industry know all stories relating to the Legoland brand lead back to "Jules."

As a Communications major with a focus on journalism at the University of California San Diego, Estrada originally believed her career would be in broadcast news. She worked for three TV stations in San Diego, including entertainment reporting and anchoring a newscast produced out of San Diego City

College. Producing news segments, and crafting stories inspired her most and her tenacity and talent led to her becoming the first female executive producer for KUSI's Morning News, where she remained for 10 years.

Throughout her time working in news, she recognized the importance of relationships. She would work with her reporters, writers, and anchors to provide copy, message points and stories that would work well for each broadcast, earning their respect and trust.

While pregnant with her second son, Estrada sought a career change that would embrace balancing motherhood with a thriving career and applied for a position with Legoland California. "John Jakobsen was the general manager," she remembered. "When we discussed why I was right for the role, I shared how I knew all of the key news media contacts in town. More importantly, I told him, 'I will not sell or promote anything I do not believe in. People trust me.'" She discussed her solid relationships and that her honest work and reputation set her apart from other candidates.

She got the job, and the rest is brightly colored brick history. Twenty years later, she acknowledges that while the media landscape has changed, the pathway to earning media coverage has not. "The fundamentals I knew then, apply today," Estrada shared. "Successful PR not only means speaking in solid soundbites — 12 seconds or less — but is based on strong relationships and the nurturing of those relationships. I cannot emphasize that enough. It requires understanding what format is best for the story and how to pitch it to the reporter utilizing their style and language. I'm always focused

**Julie Estrada**  
**Merlin Entertainments**  
**Carlsbad, California**



on our goals for our Merlin attractions and knowing what looks and sounds good. By making a reporter's job easier, I know they will not be able to resist telling our story."

For the past year, Estrada has been involved with helping Merlin communicate a special company-wide initiative that is opening new doors for its guests.

"Our Legoland Resorts in North America committed this year to all becoming Certified Autism Centers by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES)," she continued. "Led by our new CEO Scott O'Neil, this is important to our entire company. Our industry is about fun, and Merlin Entertainments is committed to providing accessible fun for all families. Through IBCCES we learned only 13% of families who have a neurologically diverse family member take vacations but 93% of those families would be more inclined to travel if locations were autism friendly. Uncertainty and worry prevent them from attempting a trip. This certification is for them. I'm proud to share that by the end of

2023, all three Legoland Resorts, Peppa Pig Theme Park and all of our Legoland Discovery Centers and Sea Life Aquariums in the U.S. will be certified for sensory awareness."

Estrada also understands that today's youngest guests are the next generation of industry professionals. That excites her. "We have special careers," she said. "We work in an industry that provides jobs that kids dream of. Kids who love to play with Lego can become Master Model Builders and work all around the world. Those who love math and engineering can go on to design roller coasters, and for the kids who were always told they talked too much in class, they can make a career out of sharing stories with anyone who will listen. Look at me!"

"Merlin is the second largest attractions operator in the world," Estrada finished. "In the U.S. alone, we have more than 40 destinations, and we are still growing. There is plenty of opportunity and our industry has something for everyone. I can't think of a better career or place to be."

—Susan Storey



# SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Fiesta Texas adds new coaster vehicles — page 44 / Europa-park gives family ride a makeover — page 46

## RMC adds its 208 ReTraK to Fun Spot America's Mine Blower

AT: David Fake  
Special to Amusement Today

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — 2023 has already been a “huge” year for Fun Spot America Theme Parks. Not only is it the park chain and FEC’s 25th anniversary year, but they also have made Fun Spot America Atlanta the year’s must-visit theme park for coaster enthusiasts by adding ArieForce One, a world-class coaster installation by Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC), that has been receiving rave reviews since it opened in March 2023.

Now, Fun Spot America Kissimmee has just reopened Mine Blower, its signature coaster, after a several-month closure for refurbishment and retracking. This process was conducted by RMC using their patented 208 ReTraK product as a replacement for traditional wood coaster track in key areas of the ride that had become noticeably rough since the thrilling Gravity Group-built coaster debuted in 2017.

Not only will the installation of the 500-plus feet of new RMC 208 ReTraK smooth out the rough spots, but it will also reduce maintenance in the long-term, due to its all-steel design.

“While we were working on another full-scale project with Fun Spot in Georgia, Mine Blower in Florida came up. [The park] was talking about doing



Fun Spot American President John Arie, Jr. called Rocky Mountain Construction's 208 ReTraK Solution a game changer for the park's Mine Blower coaster. COURTESY FUN SPOT AMERICA

some track repair and maintenance, and we said, ‘Hey, you know, this would probably be a good opportunity to being putting some of our 208 ReTraK system on Mine Blower,’” said RMC’s COO and Designer Jake Killkup.

“Our 208 ReTraK is based on our patented I-Box track system and is essentially a reimagined version of our Topper Track, which has been out there for quite some time,” Killkup added.

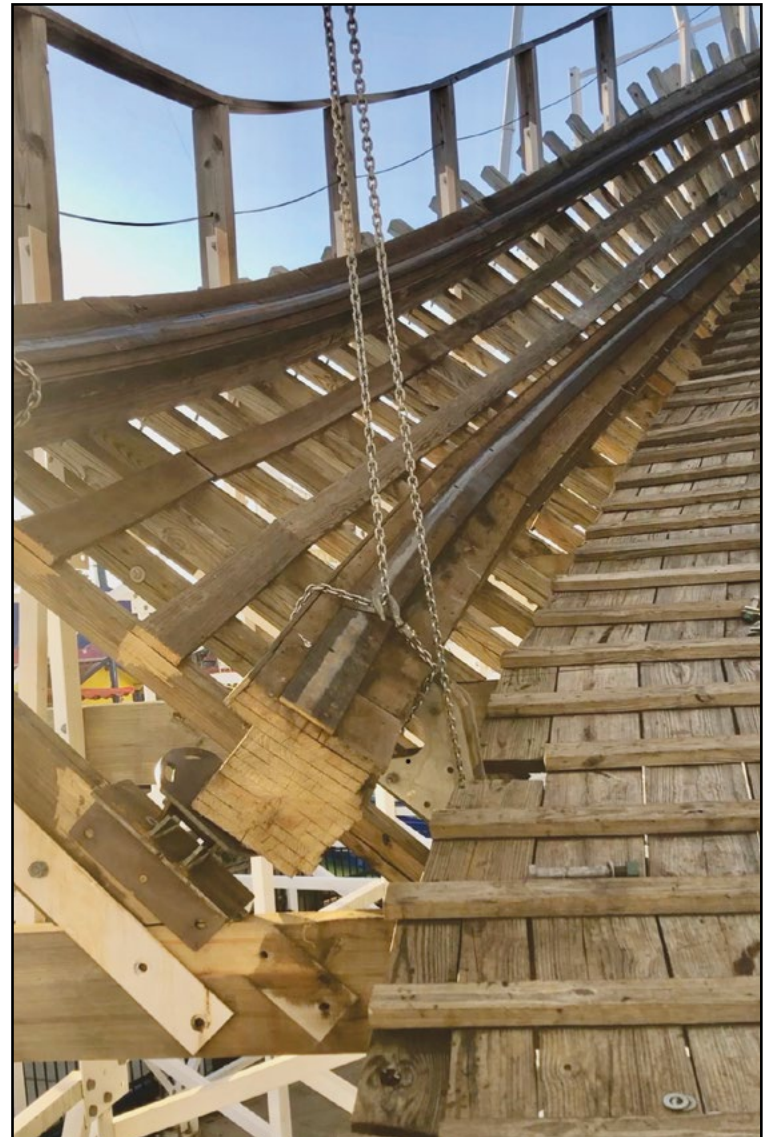
“In just about the same way that he came up with our Topper Track, our founder, Fred Grubb, saw that parks were replacing the same track every three to four years, and it was never a permanent solution. Parks don’t necessarily want to reimagine an entire ride; they just want to lower maintenance costs,” he continued. “The layout might be great, and there’s

no need to change it, and we’re just trying to smooth out the rough spots.”

The difference between RMC’s Topper Track and its 208 ReTraK is that the Topper Track still maintains a wood element. The 208 ReTraK is an all-steel track, but here RMC uses a premium grade weathered steel that doesn’t need to be coated.

“There is actually an element in the steel that causes a flash rust, and that rust is the coating that protects the material. So, the big idea was basically to be able to replace the wood track for the steel track but make it as affordable as possible and reduce maintenance and capex budgets,” said Killkup.

The custom 208 ReTraK is precision-manufactured utilizing RMC’s laser measurement system, CNC



plasma cutting abilities, and patented semi-automated welding technology. The premium grade weathered steel is manufactured to match the existing coaster profile and installs seamlessly to the coaster’s existing structure.

The key to cost savings is that the park does not need to retrack the full circuit all at once and, therefore, it does not become one huge payment for a park.

By completing the conversion in this manner, the park is able to use money they already have allocated to be used for the maintenance of the ride.

RMC has been slowly replacing track in this as-needed manner on Tremors and Timber Terror at Silverwood in Idaho.

“We’ve been working our way through the trou-

► See FUN SPOT, page 42

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LEGACY RIDE UPGRADE

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► **FUN SPOT**

Continued from page 41

bled sections, one at a time, over the past three years and trying to help the park clean it up as much as they can and lower their maintenance costs for the ride," Kilkup said.

According to RMC, the 208 ReTraK product lasts up to five times longer than traditional wood coaster track and eliminates the need for continuous inspection, repair and replacement of track sections. Additionally, 208 ReTraK is able to utilize a ride's existing trains, mechanical system and controls. Value added is that 208 ReTraK delivers a smoother ride, reduces downtime and improves wheel longevity.

208 ReTraK is designed and manufactured at RMC's facility in Hayden, Idaho. Both as-needed track replacements or complete circuit, off-season retrack projects can be installed turnkey by RMC's factory team or by the park with



The difference between RMC's Topper Track and their 208 ReTraK is that the Topper Track still maintains a wood element. COURTESY FUN SPOT AMERICA

RMC providing onsite technical support.

While he is not at liberty to speak specifics, Kilkup says that RMC has several other "irons in the fire right now" regarding additional 208 ReTraK projects at other parks. "There has been a lot of interest, and a lot of conversations are already pretty far down the road."

The Folks at Fun Spot America Theme Parks are also quite pleased with what RMC has brought to the table, both with ArieForce One at the Atlanta park and

Mine Blower in Kissimmee.

"Working with RMC on our ArieForce One roller coaster at Fun Spot Atlanta in Fayetteville, Georgia, has been nothing short of incredible. Now, to work with RMC and their 208 ReTraK Solution on Mine Blower is a game changer for our park," said **John Arie Jr.**, Fun Spot president, and CEO.

**John Chidester**, senior vice president of marketing for Fun Spot, said that what ArieForce One has done for Fun Spot Atlanta has been "like flipping a switch on"

when it comes to increased attendance and recognition on the national scale for the park. "We are very pleased. We still have a long way to go to where we want to be, but we're so proud of what our employees are doing to increase and maintain the visitation and repeat attendance so that people want to come back again and again. It's amazing what a ride like ArieForce One has done to help people recognize 'Oh, there is something different in Fayetteville and this is new and exciting.'"

As for Mine Blower, Chidester said, "The guys from **Gravity Group** gave us a great wood coaster, but we've learned that it's really expensive and difficult in Florida, probably more so than anywhere else, to maintain a wood coaster with the high heat, heavy rain, and humidity. It's just so tough. We know the same reasons were why Iron Gwazi went from wood to steel. So, when the guys at RMC presented this retrack

system and this became an option, we thought, 'Okay, it's definitely worth exploring.' We love what we have in Mine Blower, but if we're going to have a dynamic coaster, we need to make it more maintainable. This track replacement has only made it even more exceptional. Truly, it just does. We have already had enthusiasts out to ride it, and they're just loving it."

Fun Spot America debuted on December 24, 1997 as a small five-acre park with go-karts, rides and an arcade. Twenty-five years later, Fun Spot America Theme Parks now feature more than 100 acres of family fun across three diverse and unique locations. The flagship Orlando location includes the city's first wooden roller coaster in its 31-ride collection.

The Kissimmee park boasts the world's tallest SkyCoaster in addition to Mine Blower, Florida's only inverting wooden roaster.

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## NEWS & NOTES

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### Claassen's summer job leads to career dedicated to industry safety

My story is similar to many other industry veterans from my generation. We fell in love with and grew a passion for the attractions industry, not because we were exposed to it in our childhood years but because of the positive experiences and the relationships we built during our first years of employment.

As a child, a profession in the attractions industry was not on the list of things I was going to be when I grew up. I would occasionally visit a local park called **Dogpatch** (closed in the early '90s) near my hometown in north central Arkansas, and on a rare occasion I would venture north about an hour to visit **Silver Dollar City** and **White Water** in Branson, Missouri. However, most of my summers were spent at home on the farm, playing basketball in the driveway or playing summer softball in the local rec league.

My first real exposure to the industry came a few years later when a group of my college friends decided to get summer jobs at Silver Dollar City, and I thought it would be fun to join them. After all, the previous summer I worked in a hospital. While I enjoy helping people, most that come to a hospital have no desire to be there. Why not go to work at a place that is meant for having fun?

It was that summer that I quickly drank the "fun Kool-Aid" and began looking for opportunities to turn a seasonal summer job into a lasting career. I learned about a degree



Gina Claassen

program at what is now **Missouri State University** with a focus on Entertainment Management. Like many others, I was able to get an education that supported my growing passion at the same time as I gained valuable experience with seasonal work at the theme park. During that time, I fell into a niche by always being a part of the opening team for new rides and attractions. This gave me the opportunity to create lasting relationships with industry professionals whom I still admire to this day and am honored to call them friends and colleagues.

During my college years, I was blessed with an opportunity to be an **IAAPA** show ambassador. Attending the IAAPA Expo in this capacity provided me an inside look at the amusement industry's past, present and future. I learned just how colossal and broad the attractions industry is: exhibitors from around the globe providing goods and services for everything you could possibly think of and more; educational content that covered human resources, marketing, revenue, food and

beverage, games, government relations and operations; to the different industry constituencies... parks and attractions, family entertainment centers, zoos and aquariums, museum and science centers as well as water parks.

If IAAPA exposed me to how big the industry really is, it was involvement with other organizations that impressed me with how small and tight knit we are as well. I attended my first **AIMS International Safety Seminar** as a student in 2005. Having attended several IAAPA Expos by that time, I recall how different the AIMS safety seminar was compared to an IAAPA event. First, would obviously be the size and scope. AIMS creates an intimate learning setting where a wide variety of training techniques are used to teach classes. The teacher-to-student ratio allows for a relaxed yet interactive atmosphere. The opportunity to share and learn best practices from industry peers is a priceless pathway to developing long-lasting relationships. Manufacturers are able to provide instruction specific to their attractions to an audience who is primarily hands-on in maintenance and operations. While AIMS has shown record growth over the years, the focus on providing amusement safety education remains the mission and is vital to the sustainability of our industry.

The attractions industry may be global, but we are a small world. Small in the sense that one significant event has a

potential impact on the entire industry. Small in the sense that many of us operators share the same unique challenges no matter where we are located. And small in the sense that when any sector of the industry is challenged, the entire industry is impacted. While businesses in the industry are competitive, connections with industry colleagues make our industry strong. There are many Type A personalities who aspire to have the best or to be the best. However, when it comes to ensuring the amusement industry is safe, we are no longer competitors but work together on the same team. The AIMS Safety Seminar provides the platform for us to be teammates, to learn from one another, foster longstanding relationships, stay informed about industry activity and work together to educate, inspire and continue working towards building a safer industry.

Being a professional in the attractions industry may not have been on my list of occupations when I entered high school, but I could not have picked a more fulfilling career. Building life-long relationships with colleagues, being involved in industry organizations like IAAPA and AIMS, and actively influencing safety for our guests throughout the world are some of the most satisfying accomplishments, and I cannot imagine doing anything else.

—Gina Claassen  
Vice President of Safety  
Herschend Enterprises

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# Fiesta Texas adds new coaster vehicles, opens new gaming lounge

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO — Much is abuzz at Six Flags Fiesta Texas. The theme park has already introduced new festivals, debuted new shows and has given its water park a complete makeover (see AT JUNE 2023).

Its operations team has also taken a bold move. To help sustain full capacity, the majority of the roller coasters can now operate with maximum units. This spring, a third train for the park's iconic Iron Rattler was supplied by Gerstlauer.

"With the new train, it allows us to operate consistently with a two-train operation year-round," said Park President Jeffrey Siebert. "Before, when a train was in rehab or we were waiting for parts, it would go down to a one-train operation, which you can imagine with such a popular attraction, it was really not enjoyable for our guests. We don't want to disappoint our guests with longer-than-necessary waits when we go through the rehab process."

Typically, the refurbishment would take six to eight weeks,

but Siebert also notes that the attraction's trains are somewhat prototypical that have parts made just for Iron Rattler. The trains also feature thematic features on both the front car and the back car.

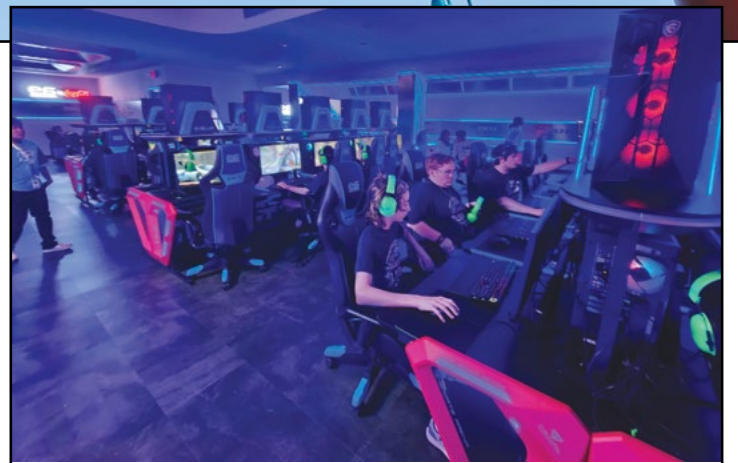
"As the story always goes, when we contacted Gerstlauer requesting a quote, they said, 'You won't believe it. We just cleaned out the warehouse a month ago and threw away the molds for the head and the tail.' We actually sent the head and the tail for them to replicate," Siebert told *Amusement Today*.

Interestingly, the park just purchased two new trains for the Vekoma Boomerang coaster. This seemed rather surprising owing to the fact that the shuttle coaster can only operate one train.

"The commitment has been to keep our rides running and make sure our guests are happy and offer a premium experience," Siebert said. "Part of that was to upgrade the ride — all new controls, all new braking system, structural improvements and with two trains, the ride never has to go down for a two-month or three-month window.



Six Flags Fiesta Texas invested in two new, next-generation Vekoma trains for its Boomerang coaster (above). The ESIX Lounge is attractive to gamers — in terms of both players and staffing (right).  
AT/TIM BALDWIN



This allows us to get three months of additional rides with the ride constantly in circulation."

The magnetic braking system has been noted for its quietness, and the new trains are the latest models that provide much

more comfort than the original train from 1999. The frictionless brakes also reduce wear and tear and needed maintenance.

Siebert likes to note that

the park's Boomerang is the most-ridden model in the Six Flags chain.

Wonder Woman Golden Lasso Coaster, the original prototype Raptor coaster from Rocky Mountain Construction will soon undergo a similar refurbishment. Following the July 4 holiday, the coaster will also receive new control equipment, new booster tires and new brakes. In addition, all three trains will receive upgrades to be more in line with the second-generation models from RMC. This will be a several-months-long process.

It's worth noting that when the Bolliger & Mabillard dive coaster, Dr. Diabolical's Cliffhanger, opened last summer, Fiesta Texas debuted it with an additional train for consistent full capacity.

"It definitely allows us to operate all our [coasters] with multiple units year-round and still successfully doing the necessary rehab," Siebert said.

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Six Flags Fiesta Texas received a brand-new train for Iron Rattler in the spring, which now allows the popular attraction to always run at full capacity (above left). The remodeled Coke VIP Lounge is an amenity on a daily basis for diamond pass holders and can work in conjunction with esports events (above right). COURTESY SIX FLAGS; AT/TIM BALDWIN

## ►FIESTA

Continued from page 44

Elsewhere in the park, Six Flags Fiesta Texas debuted the first-of-its-kind facility within any theme park. Called ESIX Gaming, the new lounge offers visitors the chance to take a break in a climate-controlled lounge with the latest top-of-the-line gaming equipment. The park has partnered with **IGN Entertainment**, the world's number-one entertainment platform in gaming. According to park officials, IGN has more than 286 million unique users.

"With the development of this new state-of-the-art ESIX Gaming arena, Six Flags not only raises the bar for the amusement industry but also shows the world its commitment to the gaming category," said IGN Strategic Partnerships and Innovation SVP **Karl Stewart**. "Their new arena offers guests unprecedented access to the latest games, technology and favorite teams in an intimate and highly competitive environment."

The ultra-modern 52-seat lounge features a bar, bathrooms, cell phone charging stations and a shop to test and purchase the latest gaming equipment. The Razer gaming stations also include a Razer Live streaming station in which guests have the opportunity to broadcast and host their own live content, including a webcam, key lights, dynamic microphone and gaming chair within a sound-enclosed booth.

"The concept of esports and egaming has been kicked around for quite a while as it has grown in popularity," said Siebert. "Colleges and universities are offering more scholarships. There are more national and local competitions, so the concept has been out there for a while. Early last year, the concept began solidifying with our partner **Coca-Cola**

for creating the world's first-of-its-kind space."

The space is sleek and has futuristic lighting that exudes a cool vibe. Patrons can purchase play time by the hour starting at \$10, and it becomes cheaper the longer a visitor plays. The streaming booth runs \$14 per hour.

"While Six Flags is known for its thrills and innovation — many of our guests love the rides, the

shows, fireworks and the water park — there is a huge audience out there that is just as thrilled by egames and sports, computer games ... you name it," said Siebert. "This is a space designed with the gamer in mind. Every piece of furniture is lit, and we can change the colors within a second if we need."

The park partnered with the **University of Texas San Antonio**, and its student-

based Roadrunner Gaming has helped run the facility. Staffing wasn't an issue as the park received a huge response in the first week of applications.

Upstairs from the gaming venue is a new Coke VIP Lounge. It can help facilitate tournaments, and during regular daily operations diamond pass holders have a relaxation space, including food options and a bar.



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# Josefina's Magical Imperial Journey — a makeover of family ride

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

RUST, Germany — Three years after Europa-Park opened, a towboat ride (Dschungel Floßfahrt) was added to the park's lake in 1978. At the time, it featured an African theme. While slightly an odd fit for a park based on European countries, the ride still offered a scenic, relaxing ride through numerous props within the water.

As with the majority of the rides at Europa-Park, it was manufactured by Mack Rides.

Keeping more with European ties, the park has completed a two-year makeover of the ride. Long gone is the African feel aboard wooden rafts. Josefina's Magical Imperial Journey now fits into the land of Austria.

"It had been in the park a long time. The biggest problem with a ride is the two or three months that we have to re-do it," said **Roland Mack**, co-founder, Europa-Park. "Because it is in the middle of the park, that makes it tough for the decision to 'go.' In those three months, winter could be a big, big problem. When you work on things in the corner of the park, you can work on it year-round and not be in this terrible time pressure."

The decision was to make it a two-year project. The groundwork and sewage were done just before the



Josefina's Magical Imperial Journey is a dramatic makeover of a 40-year-plus towboat ride. AT/TIM BALDWIN

2022 season. The boats and some improvements in decorations of the center of the lake came for the 2023 season.

"Europa-Park wanted to keep many aspects of the boat but still have a new look and feel of the ride," said **Maximilian Roeser**, marketing, Mack Rides. "The boats themselves were designed in-house with many details of the decoration and a surprise: the little table at the last two rows of the boat allowing guests to have a drink or snack while riding on the lake. But everything else needed to be exactly the same to fit the existing decoration, the tow boat ride system and the station."

The new boats are beautiful with fanciful adornments, flags and lampposts and take on a completely different feel. Nothing from the previous boats was retained.

"Everything is brand new. Only the connection to the tow cable is the same," said Roeser.

One of the unique features of the new boats are the addition of small tables on certain boats where guests can purchase suitable snacks beforehand and enjoy them aboard during their journey.

"We came up with the idea to take food on the boat," said Mack. "We will redo the restaurant side [of the food outlet] in the future, but we will keep

the food idea to see if it can work. We offer certain food items that people can bring. I promised my grandson we would take food and ride together one day. Ideas like this are very special for small kids."

Even after more than four decades, the original ride was still well-maintained and featured detailed scenes, playful fountains and numerous animatronics. The reimagining of the ride makes it even more elaborate. The tale along the way now includes the Yomis, which are mischievous and playful elf-like creatures. The Yomis are also featured in a film in the Enchanted Forest to further expand their adventures.

The ride's finale, once

a thematic cave, is now an elegant tunnel that showcases a royal wedding. An audio soundtrack also complements the journey on each boat.

Its high throughput is one of the ride's other strengths.

"Josefina's Kaiserliche Zauberreise (Magical Imperial Journey) is a ride that is appreciated by so many guests in the park," Roeser told AT. "You get a very long ride time while you can sit back and relax and just be a spectator of the theming and the park itself. As this is a ride with about 1,500 guests per hour, it hardly sees a long line, and therefore it is a great attraction to just walk by and hop on. Also, it delivers to so many guests from the grandparents to the smaller children that now also can see the Yomis, a newly introduced story of fairytale figures that live and play in this area."

Guests have embraced the ride, which lasts between nine and 10 minutes.

"It is getting a lot more riders in this format over its last incarnation!" said **Chip Cleary**, park consultant.

"I think it looks good now," Mack smiled.



Mack Rides created all new boats to accentuate the new theming of the ride. Lasting close to 10 minutes, the transformed ride is one that every park visitor can enjoy. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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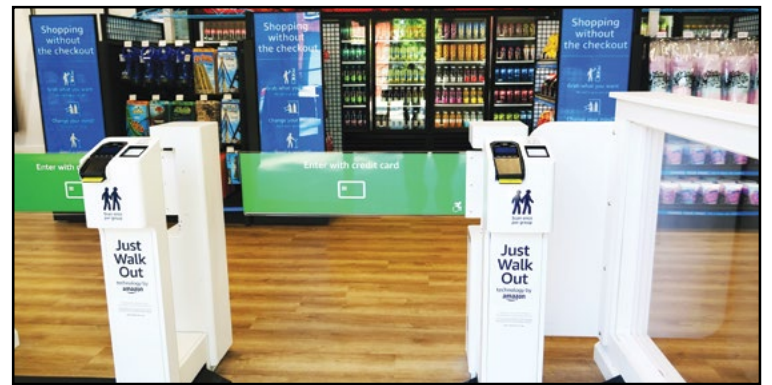
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## BREAKING NEWS



Quick Six at Six Flags Great Adventure and Six Flags Magic Mountain both utilize Amazon's Just Walk Out technology. COURTESY SIX FLAGS

## Six Flags launches the first theme park Micro Markets

JACKSON TWP, N.J. and VALENCIA, Calif. — The Coca-Cola Company and Six Flags have teamed up to bring the first ever frictionless micro market experiences to theme park visitors. Since June 1, guests at Six Flags Great Adventure were able to purchase park essentials using Amazon's Just Walk Out technology, without waiting in line at the register.

"Quick Six is an innovative collaboration between Amazon, Coca-Cola and Six Flags that pairs refreshing Coca-Cola beverages with summer fun," said Rachel Chahal, director of amusement and eentertainment partnerships at The Coca-Cola Company.

A seamless experience, the concept store, Quick Six, offers the first and only automated checkout-free shopping experience within a theme park. The store uses frictionless commerce technology to deliver a satisfying shopping experience for park guests, allowing them to save time and leave the store without having to wait in line to pay. Visitors can peruse the store, place items in their virtual cart and then simply leave when they're done, with their selections automatically charged to the payment method used to enter the store.

"We are thrilled to be able to offer this convenience to our park guests," explained Six Flags Vice President Stephanie Borges. "Checkout-free stores powered by Just Walk Out technology provide fast, seamless and contactless transactions, which we think will resonate really well in this setting."

The 400-square-foot stores showcase a curated selection of Coca-Cola products, as well as snacks, sunscreen, ponchos and other must-haves for an enjoyable day at Six Flags Great Adventure and, later this summer, at Six Flags Magic Mountain.

"We're excited to be partnering with Amazon and Coca-Cola on a new retail location, Quick 6, opening at the park this summer," according to a Six Flags Magic Mountain representative. "This is a joint venture with Amazon and Coca-Cola that will offer the innovative 'just walk out' technology allowing guests to shop and purchase items without having to wait in line for a cashier."

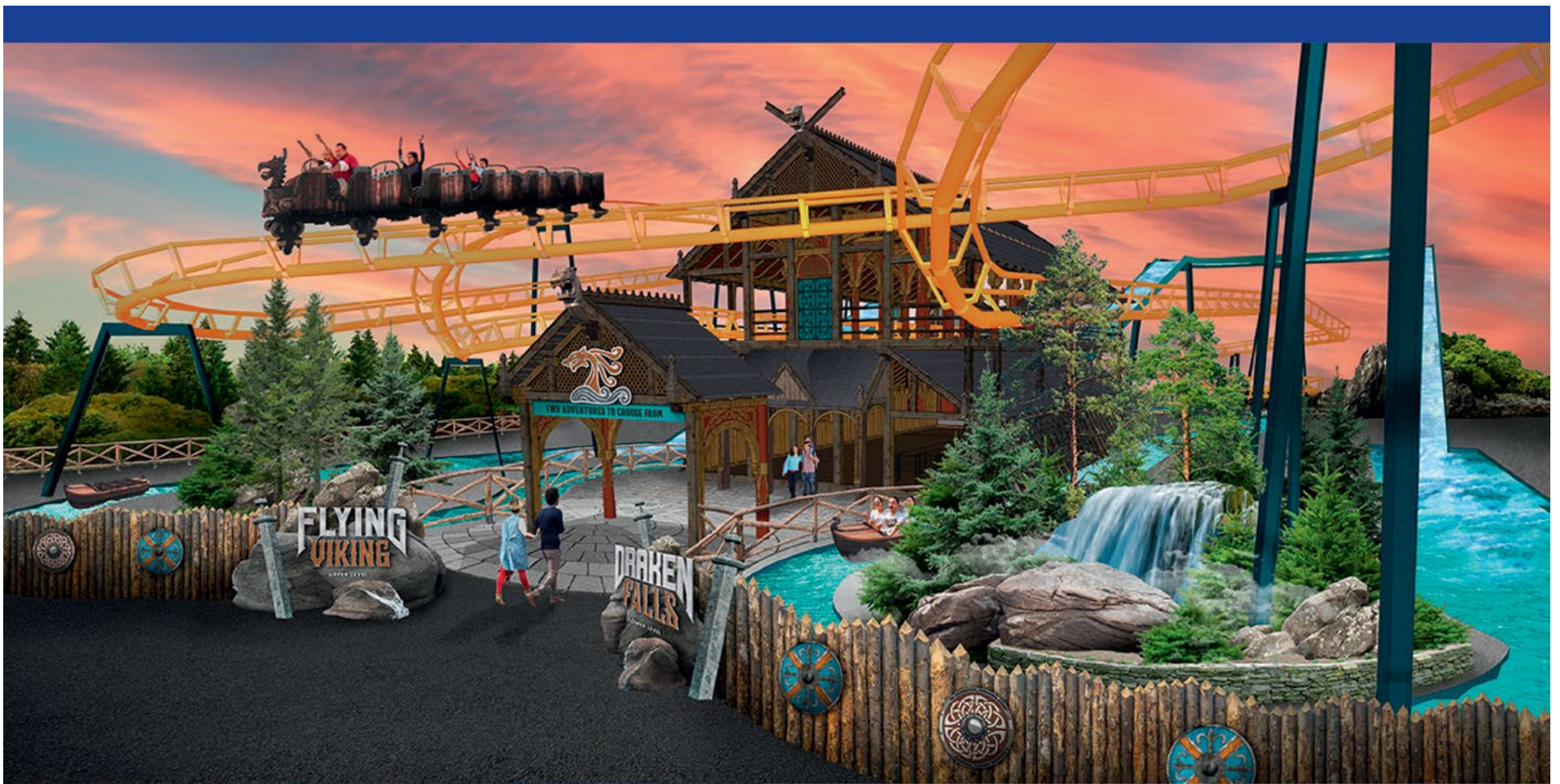
Designed for convenience, this unique store integrates Amazon's checkout-free technology to create an elevated guest experience that surprises and delights park guests, saves time, and generates revenue.

"We are excited to collaborate with Six Flags and Coca-Cola to deliver a better experience for guests and enable them to spend more time enjoying all these iconic parks have to offer," said Jon Jenkins, vice president of Amazon's Just Walk Out technology.

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