

Zambezi Zinger leads Worlds of Fun's 50 year celebration



Zambezi Zinger's low-to-the-ground maneuvers are signature moments.
AT/GARY SLADE

New concept woodie from GCII

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Themed around the literary classic, *Around the World in 80 Days*, **Worlds of Fun** opened its gates on May 26, 1973. In the thick of the theme park boom that populated various states around the country in the 1970s, Worlds of Fun was a project of **Lamar Hunt**, then the owner of the **Kansas City Chiefs**. His company, **Mid-America Enterprises**, heavily helped drive tourism to Kansas City.

Today, the 235-acre complex includes **Oceans of Fun** and **Worlds of Fun Village** and is under the **Cedar Fair** umbrella.

Commemorating 50 years, the theme park has undergone a colorful makeover for the 2023 season, with an abundance of buildings repainted and many attractions and reflections to remind visitors of the park's rich history.

The biggest addition is the opening of Zambezi Zinger, a brand-new thriller from **Great Coasters International**,

► See ZINGER, page 6

Zamperla is the principal supplier with new ride package

Aeronautica Landing brings impressive new land to Carowinds

AT: Tim Baldwin
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CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Often tied with license plates touting "First in Flight," North Carolina has a history with roots in aviation. **Carowinds**, which straddles the state borders of both North Carolina and South Carolina, is embracing that heritage with a brand-new area called **Aeronautica Landing**. It's a big addition for the park in honor of its 50th anniversary.

The new land is a stylized area featuring whirling rides, artistic sculptures and a retro-cool look. Within is an aura of both

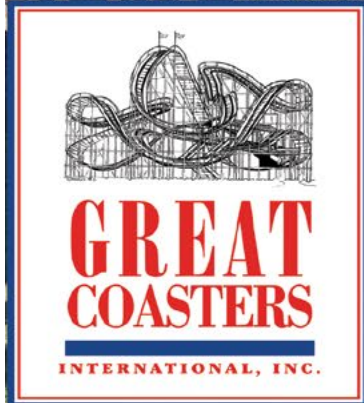
the past and future.

"What birthday celebration would be complete without a big gift?" said **Manny Gonzalez**, vice president and general manager, Carowinds. "Countless team members — explorers and dreamers in their own right — worked more than five years to make **Aeronautica Landing** a reality. Immersive theming and storytelling combine with kinetic energy and steel to bring guests an enhanced, family-friendly theme park experience that showcases the rich historic heritage of

► See CAROWINDS, page 7



The creative sign designed by Cedar Fair's XDS creative team welcomes guests to the new Aeronautica Landing area. AT/TIM BALDWIN



IT HAS ZUNG!

ZAMBEZI ZINGER IS NOW OPEN AND READY TO RIDE AT WORLDS OF FUN! IT IS THE FIRST EVER HYBRID COASTER (WOOD AND STEEL) WITH A STEEL SPIRAL LIFT. ZAMBEZI WAS CUSTOM DESIGNED FOR LOW-TO-THE-GROUND TWISTS AND TURNS ON A UNIQUE TOPOGRAPHY.

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- DROP HILL HEIGHT: 74' [22.5M]
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- TUNNEL LENGTH: 110' [33.5M]
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- RIDE MANUFACTURER: GREAT COASTERS INTERNATIONAL INC.
- ENGINEER DESIGN: SKYLINE





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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

It's the end of the summer



Robinson

Didn't all of the parks just open up for daily operation? Didn't our roller coasters just start climbing the hills for 2023? Didn't the water just get turned on aboard all of the water slides?

It feels like just yesterday, schools were ending their calendar year and our industry was coming alive to entertain the masses for vacations and day trips. And, now, it's suddenly August. Labor Day is just around the corner, parks are going back to weekend operation and weeknights are about to become "school nights" once again. Where did it go?

The good news is, in recent years, many attractions have found ways to extend their season well into the fall and even the winter. Halloween spooktaculars, festive holiday lights and indoor attractions keep the turnstiles turning even during the polar temps of winter.

However, it's still a moment that brings a sad look to my eye knowing that the summer is ending and picking up to just go visit a park won't be as easy as a 15-minute drive down the street.

Time flies when you're having fun. That's a reality we lose touch with and forget about too quickly. We start the summer with hopes to ride every new ride, laugh with our kids daily and embrace the fun of the season. And then, in what seems like overnight, the time is running out and the days are getting to be in short supply.

We're in the business of fun. We've got a few weeks of summer left. So, get out there and have some fun! We'll meet and make deals at the WWA Show, the IAAPA Expo and the Golden Ticket Awards. Bask in the sunshine moments we have left and create some smiles with our families, friends and even our business associates.

The deals we make tomorrow will set up tomorrow's fun. But, don't miss out on today's! Summer's not over yet ... let's ride!

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Tim Baldwin, Amusement Today

When the impossible happens

Unquestionably, the very existence of the amusement industry is dependent upon safety.

Because of the rarity of negative incidents, they tend to be easy for the media to gravitate toward. When a fatality is involved, it is painful on so many accounts. In June, Gröna Lund suffered a serious accident. Being honest and straightforward with the public and guests, the park made an immediate statement:

"Today, the impossible happened. An accident on the Jetline roller coaster led to the death of one person and several injuries. It is a day of mourning at Gröna Lund, and our thoughts go out to those affected and their relatives."

The incident wasn't the first in our industry, nor will it most likely be the last, but each time it strikes hard.

After clearly and honestly explaining the details, the park noted: "An accident like this shouldn't happen, and we will do everything to find out how it could happen anyway."



Baldwin

An official at the park confided that the facility had always invested in high-quality attractions and was very adamant about intricate inspections. This makes it particularly hard.

The park closed for a week to allow employees to process the tragedy. Before reopening the rides, the park opened its gates to allow guests to come in and find a sense of calm and to understand the impact on both the affected families and that on the park.

The statement continued: "We know that many of you share this great sadness; our thoughts go primarily to those affected, their relatives and to all our guests and employees. The grief is heavy."

The park is not alone. As Gröna Lund handled the horrible situation truthfully and professionally, its colleagues in the industry stand with them. As much as we think it impossible, it could honestly happen anywhere. And we grieve together.

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

AmusementTODAY
Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader

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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Sam Bryant, Cedar Point

A fan of amusement parks, **Sam Bryant** finds himself working at the perfect place — **Cedar Point** in Sandusky, Ohio. He has held various positions in different departments during his 33-year tenure and currently serves as area manager of recruiting, where he is responsible for staffing the amusement park/resort's nearly 7,000 seasonal employees. Sam is well known for his quick wit, no-nonsense style, positivity and get-it-done attitude.

Title: Area Manager of Recruiting.

Number of years in the industry: 33.

Best thing about the industry:

Over the years, to meet people from all over the world and to make people happy, provide an enjoyable experience when visiting Cedar Point.

Favorite amusement ride:

Steel Vengeance.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ... A bus driver!

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Finding associates to staff the park.

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

The weather ... and the ability to hang out with friends and family.

My first car was ... 1991 Geo Storm.

A life-changing moment for me was ... Losing my mother in 2015.

Favorite midnight snack:

Peanut butter sandwich.

My perfect day is spent ...

With my dogs Raydar and Max and listening to Earth, Wind & Fire.

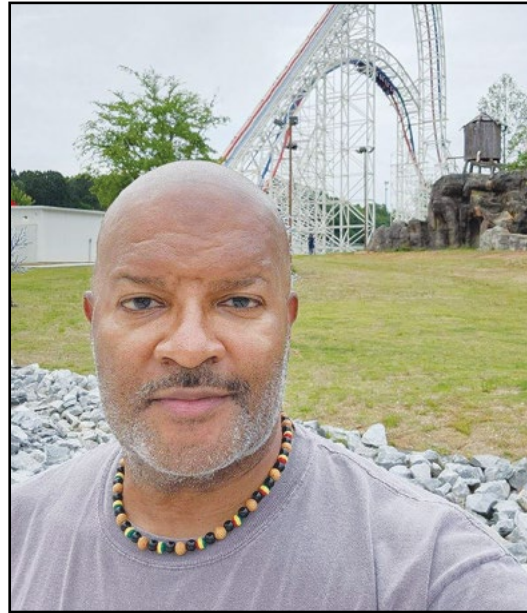
Three items on my bedside table are ...

A lamp, alarm clock/cell phone and bottled water.

The worst movie I have ever sat through would have to be ...

"Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind."

Ten years ago, I was ... A manager in the Merchandise/Games Department.



Sam Bryant is currently enjoying his more than 30-year tenure at Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio. COURTESY SAM BRYANT

I can't stand being around people who ... Have a negative attitude/personality.

On a hot summer day, I cool down by doing this ... The pool or beach and listening to Earth, Wind & Fire (yes, I love this musical group!).

If I could live in any home on a television series, it would be ... Any home on "Modern Family."

The longest I have ever gone without sleep is ... 24 hours.

It's almost football season! My favorite teams are ... Cleveland Browns and The Ohio State Buckeyes.

The last time I traveled more than 100 miles away was to ... The ACE Convention at Dollywood and Carowinds.

My least favorite word is ... ASAP.

I am afraid of ... Drop tower rides, enclosed waterslides and spiders.

The all-time best ad slogan hands-down is ... "Where's the BEEF?"

The coolest game show host is ... Bob Barker.

On my last birthday, I ... Spent time at Universal Studios Orlando.

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The ride of a lifetime



NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS, Texas — Natural Bridge Caverns recently unveiled its revamped tours and guest experiences (see story, page 12). The new tour has been dubbed Hidden Wonders, and the area now includes an underground event space as well as a magic carpet exit from the attraction. While attending the opening reception, General Manager Terri Adams (left) caught up with *Amusement Today* Publisher Gary Slade for some laughs and a photo. AT/GARY SLADE

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►ZINGER

Continued from page 1

Inc. (GCII). The roller coaster pays homage to an original attraction at the park, which had the same name. In 1973, it was a steel speed racer from **Schwarzkopf** that opened with the park. This new incarnation is a hybrid of wood and steel, although the majority of the track is wood.

Like its predecessor, the new coaster features a spiral lift, a fitting tribute to the original and a fun remembrance for the generations who loved it. The original Zambezi Zinger operated at Worlds of Fun through 1997 (although it still operates at its relocation in Colombia to this day).

The new ride sports some other noteworthy attributes. It is the first use of GCII's Infinity Flyer trains. This new rolling stock allows for tighter turns, quicker crests and inversions. However, there are no inversions designed into Zambezi Zinger.

"It's very exciting to see our new trains be put to use and the result of using them is beyond excellent," said **Olivia Hain**, marketing, GCII. "Because of their success at Worlds of Fun, we expect more parks to invest in our Infinity Flyer trains."

Another GCII innovation incorporated into the ride is its Titan Track. Most of the track is wood, but the spiral lift and an adjacent turn are made from the GCII steel track.

"We see this becoming more common," said Hain. "More parks are realizing it helps with long-term maintenance. It also can be designed for inversion/looping elements, if desired by the park."

The spiral lift is tire driv-



The combination of Titan Track and steel supports in the layout made the spiral lift possible. AT/GARY SLDE

en. The two Zambezi Zinger trains feature eight rows for a total of 16 passengers per train. The layout was formulated by **Skyline Design, LLC**.

Once off the lift, the layout has an original path compared to the 1970s version, although a tunnel is still included. It begins as a typical wooden roller coaster would, but a second act that sizzles close to the ground offers a sense of accentuated speed. It is the low-to-the-ground maneuvers that have already given the ride a reputation of being a signature attraction. The new trains allow for exhilarating transitions. Many riders are caught by surprise. But not GCII.

"No, this did not surprise us," Hain told *Amusement Today*. "We knew about the snappy turns and quick transitions being so low to the ground. The low-to-the-ground, quick transitions are one of our favorite design elements in the coaster."

The breathtaking final run includes some zigzag moments giving riders a real

bang for their buck.

When asked by *Amusement Today* to pick his favorite part, "I call it the fighter jet turn," said **Brian McGannon**, communications manager, Worlds of Fun. "When you come down in the back half and right before you enter the tunnel, it kind of flips you over back into the tunnel, the ride really starts to pick up there. I really like that part of the ride. And then in the front half when you have that almost zero-G turn right before you go into the wingback turn around the spiral lift. And the spiral lift is iconic."

Track length is 2,428 feet, and the height is 75 feet, but like the original, the coaster makes use of the ravine topography. The top speed is 45 mph.

"It's paying tribute; it's a reimagination," said McGannon. "It's a new ride; it's a whole new animal for a new generation."

The coaster is far from the only thing included in the celebration. A new historical

exhibit highlighting 50 years has been very well received. It is housed in the lobby of the park's Tivoli Theater.

"It has been a tremendous exhibit," said McGannon. "A lot of people pouring out their memories. I think that has been the most exciting part of this. Once we heard the outpouring of memories, we knew we needed to capture them somewhere."

"Guests were very excited to see what we had going on here," said **Darren Keith**, manager of entertainment, Worlds of Fun. "It's a showcase of our history. As I walk through this space and get to see guests reminisce — 'I rode the original Zinger,' 'You need to bring back Orient Express' — I have those same memories from my childhood as well. Getting to interact with those guests has been one of the most rewarding parts of this exhibit."

Inside, many artifacts — photographs, video, costumes and memorabilia — take guests back through the many years, including a car

from the historical Orient Express, on loan from the **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives**.

Within the live show entertainment, the Moulin Rouge venue has assembled some "greatest hits" moments from years past. Show fans will delight in seeing the costumes and songs from "Stax of Wax" and "British Invasion," popular shows from decades past.

Creatively, the park has invested in new thematic details, a rich color palette and a focus on the park's original themes, even down to the music.

"The themes were so rich and so pure, we wanted to update that. When you walk around the park, you can see all the immersive touches and all the theming," McGannon told *AT*. "Whether it is the Front Street Emporium with the bell tower chiming in Americana or those little touches in Africa, where you feel like you are in a Moroccan market, you are transported to somewhere else, and that's what we really wanted to do."

Historical signage has also engaged guests with trivia questions and fun reflections.

Capping off each night is "50 Nights of Fire," a skyward scrapbook that includes pyrotechnics, a specially created narration and soundtrack and more than 100 drones. The show runs through August 12.

"The drone technology adds a totally unique and new element to the traditional theme park fireworks show. The investment from Cedar Fair has been super. We get to tell the story of the park. It's just another element of depth to the 50th anniversary."



A historical exhibit brings in photos, artifacts and stories from the past (above left). The new Zambezi Zinger (above middle) pays tribute to the original, which opened with the park in 1973. Drone technology works along with the fireworks to allow "50 Nights of Fire" to tell the story of Worlds of Fun (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN



Zamperla's Rocking Tug ride is decked out with thematic props to accentuate the theme (above left). The entrance into Aeronautica Landing engages guests with creative artistry (above right). New bumper cars from Majestic offer LED flash to transform the classic attraction (below). AT/TIM BALDWIN

► CAROWINDS Continued from page 1

the Carolinas.”

Of the six rides there, four were supplied by Zamperla.

“The essence of Aeronautica Landing is an immersive area within the park that feels different from any other space you’ve ever been in,” said **Ramon Rosario**, sales director, Zamperla. “In collaboration with Cedar Fair’s design team, our rides are designed to seamlessly integrate into the space and provide kinetic energy. They become a component, rather than the star, to enhance the space. During our collaboration, when we’re provided with the styling book or storyboard, it is our job to complement the vision set forth. Aeronautica Landing is more than an expansion of ride installations — it is a space that celebrates flight through flawless inte-

gration of attractions, merchandising, food/beverage offerings and so much more for guests to enjoy.”

“Aeronautica Landing was a big collaborative effort to take an area of the park and strip it down to nothing and take out some aging rides that were problematic and open the view of Afterburn. We had this amazing **B&M** inverted coaster, and you couldn’t see it,” said **Clayton Lawrence**, corporate creative producer, Experience Design & Creative Studio, Cedar Fair. “If we leaned in and opened that up, it had a flight theme to it, and we felt we should continue the flight theme. We wanted to get a collection of flats that told the story of the Carolinas.”

Terminal A is a new food location that features craft beers. An outdoor patio complements the indoor space. An aviation-themed games area creates a fun zone and revenue stream in the new area.

“We’re also looking at our restaurants with a story-based approach so that it is a unique and fun dining space,” said Lawrence.

Much of the magic comes from the theming and detailed props on both the rides and within the surroundings. The artistic look of each attraction elevates them above the off-the-shelf appearance of similar rides.

“We teamed up with Zamperla because they are doing great things with ride molds and the theming overlays on top of their attractions,” said Lawrence. “They’ve been a great partner in bringing our story together. Sometimes their rides are really ‘blinky,’ and they look like a country fair. Sometimes we don’t want the blinkiness of it; we want the theming. They’ve been great partners.”

“I love all my children equally!” laughed Rosario. “Cedar Fair’s objective was to create a broad-appeal area for their guests. Having



these four fan-favorites (WindstarZ, NebulaZ, Skater, and Air Race) incorporated into Aeronautica Landing will bring plenty of smiles to children — and adults — of all ages at this special space in Carowinds.”

A delivery of all-new bumper cars from **Majestic Manufacturing** brings the upgraded attraction into a modern aesthetic. LED

lighting on the vehicles gives a futuristic and sleek vibe to what is now called Hover and Dodge. Just outside is a flight control tower giving further presence to Aeronautica Landing.

Elsewhere in the area is a rethemed Trabant, a classic ride from **Chance**.

The offerings of the six

► See CAROWINDS, page 8



The games area is completely immersed into the theme, offering a uniformity to the zone (above left). Zamperla's popular Nebulaz ride fits into the mechanical flair of Aeronautica Landing (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

►CAROWINDS

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rides range from thrill to family, so there is something for everyone.

“A project of this magnitude often starts simply enough with a walk-through of the site by myself, the park president and members of the design team at Cedar Fair,” Rosario told *Amusement Today*. “From there, we have meetings with our design team and begin the collaboration. Organizationally, we have continued to evolve from a reliable ride manufacturer to a leading choice for IP applications to a team capable of creating custom attractions based on any vision. We have such a deep roster of talent in our art department and production departments, which has been cultivated over the years. Cedar Fair has recognized this ability, and we are proud of the process, our capabilities,



and bringing their wonderful vision to life.”

Throughout the area are props and sculptures accenting the spirit of flight. In the center of Aeronautica Landings is a large sculpture in honor of the pioneers of early aviation. A plaque on the sculpture reads: “Dedicated to all those who made the dream of reaching the skies a reality.”

“We decided to look at

every attraction as a piece of history and equipment that celebrates flight,” said Lawrence. “We have the Air Walker, which is a nod to Kitty Hawk and the wing aerialists; Windstar is a nod to hang gliding; and we looked at each [ride] as its own individual piece of the story.”

“Aeronautica Landing is a tribute to the Carolinas spirit of invention, exploration and aviation, where



Air Race offers wild thrills (above left), while Windstar (above right) makes sure all ages find attractions right for them. A sculpture dedicated to the pioneers of aviation and the spirit of innovation provides a reflective moment to bring the area's focus to light (right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

guests immerse themselves in flight,” said Gonzalez. “It represents a new age for Carowinds. We honor what was and what is while we inspire what could be.”



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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Parque Warner Madrid debuts Intamin coaster — page 16 / Meow Wolf brings its unique style to Texas — page 22

SeaWorld opens first 'orca-free' location, indoors in Abu Dhabi

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — On May 23, **SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi** officially welcomed guests to its latest and most technologically advanced park. The park, located in the UAE's capital city, is a \$1.2 billion investment and was developed by **Miral Asset Management** in partnership with Florida-based **SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment**.

SeaWorld Abu Dhabi is the first venture for the company outside of the U.S. And while the park is home to the world's largest aquarium (25 million liters/6.6 million gallons) as well as more than 68,000 marine animals, including sharks, dolphins and seals, guests will not find any orcas within the 45-acre indoor park.

What guests will discover are the eight realms (themed areas) of SeaWorld Abu Dhabi that take them on an adventurous journey of discovery leaving them with a greater appreciation of the ocean's beauty and importance.

The adventure begins in Abu Dhabi Ocean, where guests can engage with invertebrates, sharks and rays in touch pools, learn about the local marine life, and explore the nation's founding father's respect for the natural world.

In the One Ocean realm, guests will get the chance to witness the park's signature multi-media spectacular, "One Epic Ocean," which takes guests through the earth's most fascinating ocean environments, while also celebrating the connection between



Visitors can explore the MENA region's first Marine Life Theme Park and discover eight immersive realms, taking them on a journey from the tropics (above) to the poles (below right). Aboard the heavily-themed Manta coaster from Intamin (below left), riders experience the only outdoor section of the park for a large portion of the coaster's track. COURTESY SEAWORLD YAS ISLAND



life on earth and the ocean. This realm also features the Animal Care Center, an on-site clinic allowing guests to observe and interact with expert veterinarians and animal care specialists who provide animals with around-the-clock care, routine check-ups and treatment when needed.

The Rocky Point realm will usher guests into a beautiful hidden cove in the U.S.'s Pacific Northwest, where park-goers will find seals and sea lions resting on rocks and swimming around their stunning surroundings.

The sun-soaked Tropical

Ocean reveals a shimmering blue lagoon, a lush rainforest and various animals such as dolphins, flamingos and tropical fish living in state-of-the-art dynamic habitats. This realm is home to the record-breaking Manta roller coaster, a thrilling, heavily themed **Intamin Amusement Rides** coaster with the region's most airtime moments, in addition to the world's first zero gravity flip-out and the world's first twisting double-down dive among its four inversions. Riders experience the only outdoor section of the park on a large portion of

the coaster's track.

In MicroOcean, a special realm designed with young explorers in mind, children can discover the vital role of some of the ocean's smallest inhabitants, plankton, through interactive exhibits, rides, entertainment and play structures. Among the several **Zamperla** rides in this realm, children especially enjoy the Eel Racer roller coaster, a Zamperla Junior Coaster.

Endless Ocean is home to the world's largest multi-species marine life aquarium containing 25 million liters of water and featuring more

than 68,000 marine animals.

The two realms of Polar Ocean, *Arctic* and *Antarctica*, showcase the habitats of walrus, penguins and other amazing polar species, giving guests ample opportunities to learn about the uniqueness of these diverse regions. The Arctic realm also features **Hypersphere 360°**, a fully immersive 360-degree multimedia sphere that offers guests an opportunity to delve into the ocean's depths through an around-the-world journey brimming

► See SEAWORLD, page 10



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SEAWORLD Continued from page 9

with awe and exploration beneath the waves.

Because SeaWorld is more than just a theme park, the company also established Yas SeaWorld Research & Rescue, the first and only integrated research, rescue, rehabilitation, return and education center in the Middle East, North Africa (MENA) region. The conservation organization is committed to conserving the Arabian Gulf's marine wildlife, habitats and ecosystems while educating and inspiring a new generation of marine enthusiasts. Backed by SeaWorld's nearly 60 years of experience in sea life research, rescue, rehabilitation, return and education, the organization will add to SeaWorld's 40,000+ rescues that have

already occurred globally — the true heart of SeaWorld.

Just a week before the park's official opening, **Global Humane**, the international brand of **American Humane**, joined representatives of SeaWorld stateside in Washington, D.C. to celebrate a milestone for protecting animals. It was at this meeting that Global Humane announced that both SeaWorld Abu Dhabi and Yas SeaWorld Research & Rescue have earned the Global Humane Certification.

To receive Global Humane Certification, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi passed rigorous third-party assessments that reviewed the well-being of animals in the park's care. The independent process is guided by the latest science and is informed by experts that have decades of experience in protecting animals.

"Not only is this announcement a big milestone for SeaWorld and Global Humane, but it is a big win for all the magnificent creatures that call our planet home. With the Global Humane Certification, visitors to SeaWorld Abu Dhabi can be confident the park is treating its animals humanely," said **Dr. Robin Ganzert**, president and CEO of American Humane.

"Zoos, aquariums, and conservation parks play an important role in inspiring the next generation of animal advocates, as well as facilitating critical conservation work," Ganzert added. "We are thrilled to welcome the creatures at SeaWorld Abu Dhabi to the Global Humane family, which helps to verify the humane treatment of more than one billion animals across the globe each year."

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Severn Lamb completes new railroad project in Dayton, Ohio

DAYTON, Ohio — **Severn Lamb** announced the successful completion of the Dayton, Ohio's new railroad project at **Carillon Historical Park**. The company's Managing Director **Patrick Lamb** expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to work on this remarkable venture and commended **Brady Kress**, president and CEO of Carillon Historical Park, for his visionary leadership.

Severn Lamb is a third-generation family business with more than 70 years of experience. It specializes in turning conceptual projects into reality. Lamb, who has been personally involved in the industry for nearly 20 years, acknowledged that Dayton's new railroad holds a special place in the company's portfolio of accomplishments.

The journey began in 2013 when Kress and Severn Lamb were first introduced. Kress shared his vision for the railroad, and together they embarked on finding the best approach to bring it to life.



The classic looking locomotive Jane Ellen, provided by Severn Lamb, is the focal point of Dayton, Ohio's new railroad. COURTESY SEVERN LAMB

In 2016, Lamb visited Dayton for the first time, gaining a first-hand understanding of the city's essence and immersing himself in Kress's visionary concept. It was during this visit that he first laid eyes on the model of the Cincinnati locomotive, which became the foundational design inspiration for Dayton's new railroad.

In 2020, after years of discussions, the decision was made to adopt a three-foot gauge for the railroad to align

with the overall vision and aesthetic of the site. Severn Lamb's designers and engineers collaborated closely with Kress to customize the Jupiter locomotive, transforming it into a faithful representation of the original Cincinnati locomotive from 1851. The customization included modifications to the pilot, front trucks, drive wheels, imitation valve gear, smokestack, sand and steam domes, whistle, safety valve, bell and various other elements.

While focusing on the locomotive's appearance, Severn Lamb also integrated the latest electric drive train technology into the design. The train's powertrain system features four large 30kW motors, a 220kW battery pack and advanced control gear. This electric powertrain was engineered to effortlessly haul 150,000 pounds of train at 6 mph along the 1.8-mile loop, which includes gradients of up to 3%, ensuring seamless operation throughout the day.

From 2021 to 2022, Severn Lamb dedicated over 10,000 hours to detailed design and manufacturing, bringing the locomotive, dubbed "Jane Ellen," to life. The process involved extensive production, such as creating new patterns for the drive wheels, casting and machining the wheels, and fitting them with appropriate tires, reminiscent of the original manufacturing process.

In 2022, Jane Ellen underwent thorough Factory

Acceptance Testing to ensure its performance.

In addition to the rolling stock, Severn Lamb's team, — led by **Chris Freed** — also undertook the design, supply, and installation of the one-mile track for the Dayton Historical Park journey. Notably, the company employed the world's only three-foot gauge rail tamper during this process, guaranteeing the track's impeccable quality and stability.

Lamb acknowledged that while Severn Lamb has been involved in numerous prestigious projects worldwide, including Disney's modern-day railroads and custom electric trains themed as a 1950s oil trucks for Qatar, Dayton's New Railroad holds a special place among them. The seamless integration of the train, track, civil infrastructure and surrounding buildings within Carillon Historical Park has created an awe-inspiring experience that exceeds expectations.

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Construction on the new Peppa Pig Theme Park in North Richland Hills, Texas, officially began with a groundbreaking ceremony on June 28. COURTESY MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

Construction on second Peppa Pig Theme Park has begun in Texas

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS, Texas — Starting in 2024, families will be able to enter the playful world of Peppa Pig for an unforgettable day of adventure at North America's second **Peppa Pig Theme Park** set to open in North Richland Hills, Texas.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on June 28, kicking off construction of the park.

Designed to be the ultimate theme park experience and targeted for the preschool market, this new stand-alone theme park will feature multiple rides, interactive attractions, themed playscapes and shows, all based on instantly recognizable locations from the globally popular brand.

This new immersive experience of Peppa Pig Theme Park builds on the success of the Peppa Pig Theme Park in Winter Haven, Florida, and Peppa Pig World of Play locations spanning across the globe from Texas to Shanghai.

The Florida park, which was the first stand-alone Peppa Pig Theme Park in the world, opened in February 2020.

Merlin Entertainments, a global leader in location-based entertainment with brands including **Legoland**, **Madame Tussauds** and **Sea Life Aquariums**, has a licensing agreement with global branded entertainment leader **Hasbro**, owner of the Peppa Pig brand, to build and operate Peppa Pig attractions.

Next year will be the 20th anniversary of the Peppa Pig brand.

Merlin has announced that it will build a third Peppa Pig Theme Park, this time bringing the concept to the European Union. The EU's first Peppa Pig Theme Park will open next year in Günzburg, Bavaria, Germany, in the Legoland Deutschland Resort.

"We look forward to continuing to celebrate our dynamic partnership with Hasbro by creating more opportunities and bringing phenomenal brands like Peppa Pig to life through our attractions," said **Scott O'Neil**, chief executive officer of Merlin Entertainments.

O'Neil said the location of the North Richland Hills community was a natural selection owing to the success of **Legoland Discovery Center** and **Sea Life Aquarium** in Grapevine, Texas. North Richland Hills is located less than 20 miles southwest of Grapevine.

The Texas Peppa Pig Theme Park will be located adjacent to **NRH2O Water Park**, adding to the area's entertainment offerings.

Merlin Entertainments, headquartered in the U.K., operates more than 140 attractions, 23 hotels and six holiday villages in 25 countries spanning four continents.

•merlinentertainments.biz

Natural Bridge Caverns, Sunkid/Star Lifts deliver a creative "ride" from cave tour

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS, Texas — When **Natural Bridge Caverns** was established as a destination in 1964, the cave was the sole draw. In its 60 seasons, the facility has grown dramatically, particularly in recent years with many other fun attractions above ground to lengthen the stay.

In 2023, a return to the depths of the cavern offers something both innovative and entertaining.

"We completely rewrote the tour," said **Terri Adams**, general manager. "We renamed it from Hidden Passages to Hidden Wonders. The Discovery Tour talks about the Wuest family discovering the caverns in the 1960s. This new tour really talks about rock, water and time — how is the cavern formed? It's like magic in there, but it's really science. That's how we wrote the script for the light and sound show at the end."

The music was done by a composer, **Chris Thomas**, specifically for the new cavern expansion.

In addition to the show, the expansion includes an underground "ballroom" event space that can accommodate up to 300 people.

It is getting out of the cave that really makes the new tour a stellar attraction.

"Natural Bridge Caverns (NBC) first contacted **Sunkid/Star Lifts USA** in early 2017 regarding the possibility of a moving carpet to be used in conjunction with a tunnel that would exit the newly developed Hidden Wonders portion of the caverns," said



The expanded cavern now features a light and sound show to convey the beauty of the science that formed the underground wonderland. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Conor Rowan, president, Star Lifts USA. "Star Lifts USA had assisted **Snowbird Ski Resort** in Utah on the installation of a 600-foot-long moving carpet in 2006. Like the NBC project, the moving carpet is inside a tunnel that provides access to the Mineral Basin area. The moving carpet is used both in winter and summer to transport skiers, snowboarders and hikers."

The NBC team, including **Brad Wuest**, **Travis Wuest**, **Matt Carr** and **Justin Royce** visited the installation at Snowbird with **Joe Gmuender** and **Marc Wood** of Star Lifts USA in June 2018. They rode the moving carpet and discussed the possibilities of a similar installation at NBC for the cavern exit tunnel.

"While the moving carpet at Snowbird and NBC are similar in many ways, the construction challenges were unique," said Rowan. "At Snowbird, snow and cold temperatures were the norm during the completion of the moving carpet. However, the tunnel could be accessed from both ends! The NBC moving carpet only had construction

access from the upper end of the tunnel. Therefore, all equipment along the length of the installation had to come from the top down, including the rather large bottom return and tensioning terminal. Meanwhile, all the other development work of the Hidden Wonders area had the same one-way-in-one-way-out access. But the construction team did not have to deal with snow and ice!"

The conveyance system is more than 700 feet long. It is the longest ever built by Sunkid/Star Lifts.

"It's a very unique ride," noted Adams. "It is the first to exit a cave. Instead of walking out, you get to ride out."

The tunnel itself took five years, but the installation of the conveyor took less than a year. NBC refers to it as The BAT: belt-assisted transport.

"Brad and Travis are always thinking ahead and thinking of ways we can improve the cavern experience," said Adams. "Our goal is to always keep the cavern the central attraction and our premier attraction."

Adams has said the response to the new tour is "fabulous" and that guests appreciate the differences between the two tours. She said some guests have some hesitation in accessing The BAT. "Once they conquer it, they're super excited," she told AT. "They love riding out instead of walking out."

The journey out of the cave is now a seven-minute ride up a moving conveyor supplied by Sunkid/Star Lifts USA.

AT/TIM BALDWIN



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Kissel Entertainment Sky Wheel at Columbus Zoo

COLUMBUS, Ohio — In May 2023, Kissel Entertainment and Columbus Zoo and Aquarium announced the inaugural installation of a Lamberink 33 meter (more than 109 feet) Ferris wheel, branded as the “Adventure Sky Wheel” which began operation on Memorial Day Weekend and will continue through October 2023. “Our company is thrilled to book this spectacular ride at the Columbus Zoo,” said R.A. Kissel, president of Kissel Entertainment. Rising more than 11 stories in the air, Adventure Sky Wheel is one of only three giant Ferris wheels in Ohio. COURTESY KISSEL ENTERTAINMENT

Flood in 2022 damages Speelunkers Cave, repaired ride reopens to Six Flags' guests

ARLINGTON, Texas — Following a damaging flood late last August, Six Flags Over Texas' new-for-2022 attraction, Pirates of Speelunkers Cave, was forced to close. This June, the park reopened the ride, making sure repairs were done and the details were in place.

The beloved family attraction opened as The Cave in 1964. It ran through the 1991 season. Following that, the float-through dark ride was reintroduced as Yosemite Sam and the Gold River Adventure.

It operated through 2018, but following yet another flood, it closed and remained dormant for several years until Six Flags reinvested and brought back the original concept of the whimsical spelunkers in a new storyline involv-



Six Flags Over Texas' popular family attraction Pirates of Speelunkers Cave reopened in June 2023 after flood waters damaged the ride in August 2022. AT/TIM BALDWIN



ing pirates trying to steal their treasure. The ride has a high throughput and appeals to every visitor who comes to the park, regardless of age.

—Tim Baldwin



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Intamin, Parque Warner Madrid debut Batman Gotham City Escape

AT: Tim Baldwin

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MADRID, Spain — When Parque Warner Madrid opened in 2002, one of the areas of the park was themed to superheroes. Since that time, additions in that area have been rather quiet. That changed this season, when Batman Gotham City Escape was the first new coaster in the superhero area in more than two decades.

And what a coaster it is.

Supplied by Intamin, the triple-launch coaster is unlike any other design the company has done, being fully customized to the area.

“Batman Gotham City Escape is a true custom layout. And as always when clients approach us with a challenging site, we were quite excited to have had the chance to develop and come up with a unique and winning layout,” said Sascha Czibulka, executive vice president, Intamin. “The coaster features an inversion with breath-taking hangtime for a couple of seconds. The coaster crosses paths and can be nicely seen by spectators — iconic views and postcard moments are guaranteed.”

Guests enter into an immersive queue, in which a visit to Wayne Manor suddenly puts them under attack. The Joker’s nefarious laughing gas emanates from a fireplace. Easing the panic, escape hatches open and visitors are able to evade the criminal assault through themed corridors to a pre-planned escape plan with-



Batman Gotham City Escape is the first roller coaster from Intamin for Parque Warner Madrid. The steeper-than-vertical tophat (above, inset) delivers great spectator appeal, as well as thrills. COURTESY SAMUEL DI BARTOLOMEO

in the Batcave. Once in the coaster (“escape”) vehicles, passengers are strapped in for an exhilarating adventure.

“Batman Gotham City Escape is a unique multi-launch coaster in Spain, and the attraction is very different from the other coasters at Parque Warner Madrid,” said Arantxa Orusco, public relations, Parque de Atracciones de Madrid. Visitors will be able

[to experience] electromagnetic propulsion systems and make a journey of more than 1,010 meters in 111 unforgettable seconds with sound and effects onboard. The harnesses leave the shoulders free to give a greater ride. The second launch brings them face-to-face with Poison Ivy through the gardens of Robinson Park. The ride continues with twists,



turns, descents and climbs in spaces specially designed for the attraction.”

While some moments are concealed indoors or below ground, the outside portions have incredible spectator appeal. A first launch sends riders into a corkscrew element and then onto a second launch track that catapults trains up to the 147-foot-tall top hat at the ride’s greatest speed of 65 mph. It is there that guests have only a short moment to breathe. Pausing at the precipice, brakes intended to slow the descent build anticipation until the train plunges into a steeper-than-vertical drop.

“The top hat is one of the attraction’s most unique elements, as it first provides spectacular views of the park while the train comes almost to a stop before racing down a 98-degree drop,” Czibulka told *Amusement Today*. “The top hat is also seen when entering the park as it is towering proudly on the vibrant and colorful main avenue of the park.”

The adventure encom-



“I think that my favorite moment of the ride is the [front-seat] point of view from where you can see the entire Warner Park and plunge into the void with a 98-degree inclination,” said Orusco.

The trains are highly themed with red lights and stylized Batman-esque detailing. Each train seats 12 passengers, and the ride operates with three trains. Riders also hear onboard sound.

The track length is 3,314 feet. The thrilling escape takes almost two minutes to complete.

“The reaction of the people has been amazing. They all comment that they never imagined the experience would be so incredible and exciting,” said Orusco. “Our visitors agree that Batman Gotham City Escape is one of the best roller coasters they have ever ridden. Batman Gotham City Escape is more than a spectacular multi-launch coaster. It is a unique experience that will immerse you in a thrilling narrative story as you tour Bruce Wayne’s iconic mansion, battle the evil Joker and his henchmen, and discover the secrets of the Batcave never seen in the park.”

“Batman Gotham City Escape is without doubt one of the best coasters which opened this year,” said Czibulka. “I have to admit not having had the chance to ride all of the new ones, but this one put much more than just smiles on my face. The pace, the flow of elements, the smoothness and also the themed environment made it an unforgettable experience for me, and it is definitely one of my favorites.”



Batman Gotham City Escape receives speed from three launches. Twelve-seat trains rocket through the twisting layout. COURTESY SAMUEL DI BARTOLOMEO



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Legoland Florida, Winter Haven, Florida, has revealed details about this year's Brick-or-Treat event, which will include the return of the Monster Party theme.

The Halloween event will take place on select weekends from Sept. 16 through Oct. 29, and it's included with park admission.

The park will be decked out in Halloween decor and offer various activities with the Lego monsters, including live shows, a 4D movie called "The Great Monster Chase" and character meet-and-greets.

After more than a decade on display at the **California Science Center**, Los Angeles, the space shuttle Endeavour will begin the final trek to its permanent home at a new Los Angeles building in the coming months.

To get ready for the grand move, the state-run museum announced last month that crews will begin the installation of the base of the shuttle's full stack on July 20.

Workers will use a 300-ton crane to lower the bottom sections of the twin solid rocket boosters, which are 10,000 pounds each and roughly nine feet tall, to the freshly built lowest section of the partly constructed \$400 million **Samuel Oschin Air and Space Center**.

The **Strong National Museum of Play**, one of the country's largest museums devoted to the history and exploration of play, is expanding and enticing families to visit the Rochester, New York, facility.

The museum's 90,000-square-foot expansion, developed in collaboration between The Strong, **Konar Properties** and **Indus Hospitality Group**, features more than 24,000 square feet of exhibit space dedicated to the celebration of electronic games and an additional 17,000 square feet of outdoor, life-size board games, fit for guests of all ages.

Barbie will soon make her theme park debut, welcoming guests into an interactive, immersive experience, complete with pink drinks and more.

Earlier this year, Mattel announced the development of an all-new theme park inspired by some of the most popular franchises in its brand portfolio, including Hot Wheels, Masters of the Universe, Thomas & Friends and Barbie.

Mattel Adventure Park, Glendale, Arizona, had a reception among fans eager to experience the double-looping launch coaster inspired by Hot Wheels, the life-size recreation of Castle Grayskull from Masters of the Universe that will house a state-of-the-art laser tag experience, and the immersive Barbie Beach House, which will allow guests to enjoy a signature pink beverage on the third story rooftop.

Knott's Berry Farm, Buena Park, California, has announced a new parking option for guests visiting the amusement park. The new preferred option gives guests the opportunity to park in the closest parking lot to the main gate of Knott's Berry Farm. The new parking option is \$50 for normal-day guests.



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Lightning strikes Furuvik for all-new family fun from Vekoma

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

GÄVLE, Sweden — Six years ago, **Furuvik** turned to **Vekoma** to build what was its largest coaster at the time. The 2017 installation was one of Vekoma's popular Family Boomerang shuttle coasters. For the 2023 season, the park has gone even grander.

Lightning is a new Family Launch Coaster. At a height of 56 feet, it still offers thrills without being intimidating for the park's younger guests.

"Lightning is one of the best family coasters — kids from the age of four years and up can ride," said **Stefan Holtman**, sales manager, Vekoma. "The high speed of 75 km/h (47 mph), from 0-75km/h in three seconds, many changes in ride direction, several moments of air-time, and G-Forces up to 3G will make this an unforgettable experience for the young daredevils which they can't experience anywhere else."

"We are thrilled to finally have this ride in place and ready for our guests, who have been eagerly anticipating it. It's incredibly exciting, and I'm confident it will be loved by both young and old. I'm personally super excited to experience it myself," said **Sandra Wilke**, CEO, Furuvik, at the ride's opening.

The track is 1,411 feet, but riders experience the length twice because when it comes through the station, it is launched again.

"We decided to design our new Family Launch Coaster with the option to have a sec-



Lightning is the biggest investment in Furuvik's history. The top speed on the coaster is 47 mph. COURTESY VEKOMA

ond round on the ride with an on-the-fly launch," Holtman told *Amusement Today*. "The operator can decide by a key switch on the control panel to run the ride with a single or double lap. The benefit of this double lap cycle is that we can offer the riders two completely different launches, one from a standstill and one on-the-fly. Further with the high pacing of the ride, the double lap cycle would only sacrifice 190 passengers per hour, going from 750 pph to 560 pph. This combined with the fact that the ride experience with a double lap is 860 meters (2,822 feet) long, the client at Furuvik decided that he would run the ride standard in a double lap mode."

"Lightning is a massive investment and without doubt the biggest attraction in Furuvik's history. It's really cool that Furuvik now has its own launch coaster; a gigantic roller coaster



that takes off at the speed of lightning right from the start," said **Peter Osbeck**, senior ride manager at **Parks and Resorts Scandinavia**.

"The 430 meters of track offers many different ride elements, and this combined with the extreme smoothness of the ride is making Lightning a super fun roller coaster and will definitely create a big smile on all guests, young and old," added Holtman.

It surpassed Osbeck's expectations, who was involved with the project from the first sketch to the completed installation. "It's one of the absolute best family coasters you can get," he said. "You're allowed to ride even if you are only one meter [in height]. It's fun even for me who has been riding so many roller coasters. It's a fantastic feeling."

With two trips around the circuit, the ride offers an experience of about 75 seconds — and it's all fun action.

Lightning runs with one 20-passenger train. The front has a retro-stylized look, giving the train notable character.

Osbeck said the style of the train was the result of many discussions and the production of a "mood board" with different styles. "Both the station and the name are very old," he said. "The station design reminds me of the Giant Dipper in San Diego and [Giant Dipper] at **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** with the red-and-white striped roof. **Nick Farmer** came back with designs [reminiscent of] the aluminum speed racers of the 1930s. We presented it to Vekoma, and we are very satisfied."

Headlights are on the front of the train. Osbeck is looking forward to later

months in the season when it gets darker earlier. "The track is black. I think it will look fantastic," he said.

Lightning returns excitement to an area following the retirement of a previous coaster.

"The park was looking for a ride at a location in the back and of the area where the Rocket coaster, an old **Schwarzkopf** Jet Star, had been standing," said Holtman. "We had just created a small design of our newly developed Family Launch Coaster, which perfectly fit their target group and the available space. After presenting this layout, they simply said: 'What can we get if we raise the budget?' and that is how Lightning was born. We are very pleased that the client gave us this opportunity to make the ride so much more than its original design. Furuvik was highly involved in the various steps of the project and the cooperation throughout the project has been excellent. And most rewarding, the audience simply loves it!"

"Lightning is so completely different," said Osbeck. "The Jet Star was old school. It was very noisy. Lightning is super smooth and very quiet. It has better capacity too."

The roller coaster debuted on June 3.

"Everybody loves it," said Osbeck. "The guests as well as the employees."



With two laps around the layout, the park offers riders a substantial ride. The look of both the station and front of the train have a retro roller coaster feel (above left). COURTESY VEKOMA

Silver Dollar City's new Summer Festival enhances guest experience

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

BRANSON, Mo. — From night rides to special entertainment to new decor to special foods, park officials at **Silver Dollar City**, Branson, Missouri, went all out to focus on the total family experience during the all-new Summer Nights festival, which ran from July 15-30.

In the past, the Summer Festival, which had been called Moonlight Madness, focused on the rides and the nighttime experience of those rides.

"But we really wanted to take a step back for 2023 and look at what the family is experiencing," said **Dalton Fischer**, communications manager. "We renewed the focus on all of our entertainment."

Indications are that the Summer Festival was a hit.

There were small enhancements and large ones. On the simpler side, for example, the park had just concluded its Ozarks Festival that offered giant cornhole games and giant tricky triangle games.

"We kept those up for the Summer Festival," Fischer said. "We also had picnic tables with regular-sized games that people could play."

There was plenty of live entertainment.

"We had anything and everything here," he said.

There was Pittsburgh's high-energy saxophone and drum trio Big Blitz, master illusionist **Peter Gossamer** and, at the 6,000-seat Echo Hollow Amphitheater, an ABBA Tribute: Dancing Dream. Plus, there was a special performance from '80s cover band Members Only.

There were performances by the Rain Maker, a character from the late 1970s and '80s. This wasn't a sit-down show but more of a stop-by-and-see.

"During those shows, we actually made it rain in that area of the park," Fischer said.

Five new roaming characters were added to the force for the 2023 season, and they were on hand for the Summer Festival.

Of course, the park's rides were and are always a hit whether day or night. The nighttime experience does give a different dimension.



The new upgraded Pathfinder park maps located throughout Silver Dollar City are offered from custom-made wooden boxes (above left). During the park's Summer Festival, new decorations donned Town Square including a canopy of cloth, handsewn pendants (above right). COURTESY SILVER DOLLAR CITY

Guests experienced the pitch-black Ozark Mountains on the Time Traveler spinning coaster and sped through the triple-inverting Outlaw Run wooden coaster. They were able to make nighttime splashes on Mystic River Falls water raft ride.

The park decorated Town Square with a canopy of thousands of wide cloth, handsewn pendants. Fischer said the skeleton for the pendants will stay up all year long and will be used for the park's other festivals.

"We spent over \$1 million dollars on the skeleton to hang these," he said.

Park officials also pushed hard to add more color by planting additional flora with all the summer colors. Fischer said there was a palette of yellow and a new blue as well as reds and greens.

The park offered exclusive specials and discounts at various iconic restaurants, eateries and storefronts.

Each night's grand finale during the Summer Festival featured a fireworks show

over Echo Hollow.

In total, there was more than 12 hours each day of entertainment in the park during the Summer Festival.

A project the park worked on for the 2023 season was upgrading the look of the park's map called the Pathfinder.

"We made the map look even older than it did to reflect the 1880s," Fischer said. "They really look old, in a good way."

"We had them in wire racks up until this year. We now have them in custom-made wooden boxes located

throughout the park. They look very similar to those neighborhood library boxes, but there isn't a door to them."

An on-going project at the park that is enhancing the guest experience as well is the expansion of the parking lot. So far, the park has added 1,000-plus, new spaces. By the time of completion, there will be a total of about 1,800 new parking spaces.

Silver Dollar City still offers free parking, something officials there have done since the park opened in 1960.

"There is a preferred parking area that requires an upcharge, but the rest is free," Fischer said. "It hasn't been easy adding the additional parking spaces since we are in the mountains. We now have a pedestrian tunnel and a tram tunnel."

Tram services are offered throughout the entire parking area.

Silver Dollar City offers an array of special events and festivals throughout the year. Coming up are: Season Pass Appreciation, Aug. 7-13; Southern Gospel Picnic, Aug. 24-Sept. 4; Country Music Days, Sept. 8-10; Harvest Festival, Sept. 15-Oct. 28 and An Old Time Christmas, Nov. 4-Dec. 30.

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Meow Wolf brings unique style into Texas with The Real Unreal

AT: Tim Baldwin
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GRAPEVINE, Texas — Founded in 2008 as an art collective in Santa Fe, **Meow Wolf** has continued to gain notoriety for its outlandish, immersive and creative concepts. In 2016, Meow Wolf opened its first artistic entertainment experience in Santa Fe: **The House of Eternal Return**. Since then, installations have been created in Denver and Las Vegas, as well as a dark ride at **Elitch Gardens**. As the brand slowly becomes more well known, the fourth installation has opened in Texas.

The Real Unreal has opened as part of an entertainment option within **Grapevine Mills Mall**.

"This was four years in the making," said CEO **Jose Tolosa**. "Forty Dallas-Ft. Worth artists are represented here along with our 150 Meow Wolf artists. Fifteen years ago, a scrappy group of artists got together and produced art. Slowly in time, they realized that with the right resources, they could build a successful company. And they have taken their art to so many large audiences, now in their fourth city."

Meow Wolf has a commitment to sustainability. The collective's original exhibition was built inside an abandoned bowling alley. In Grapevine, a massive, closed **Bed, Bath and Beyond** is now an artistic powerhouse of imagination and entertainment.

Guests begin their experience in the front yard of an actual house, all under the cloak of nighttime darkness and stars. Visitors peer into the windows and get a sense



One of the rooms inside, **The Neon Kingdom**, can serve as an event space. AT/TIM BALDWIN

of calming normalcy. Until they step inside.

Meow Wolf worked with a storyline to develop the experience, but the company isn't keen on detailing the story for its customers. They'd rather the visitors explore for themselves and get their own interpretation. The Delaney house seems like an average house, but as families begin exploring they realize something is different. Clues are spread about the home that the son, Jared, has discovered portals to other worlds. Enter a closet and see another dimension starting to form. Open the refrigerator and be drawn into another world — of refrigerator doors!! Slide down through the washer and dryer.

It's mindbending. "The nature of each of our installations is that there is no linear way to learn the story," said **Connor Gray**, public relations. "We encourage

every visitor to explore the space and discover what they want to discover at their own time and pace. We want people to get lost — get lost in the interactive spaces and the creativity. In some rooms, what may be completely familiar to some may lead you to a whole different dimension."

Because of its "trippy" nature, both **The Real Unreal** and **Meow Wolf** itself are challenging to explain.

"When I started in October, so many people asked me, 'What is Meow Wolf?'" said **Kelly Schwartz**, general manager. "It is difficult to describe, but in its simplest form, it is an interactive, immersive art experience, but it is so much more than that. The word that comes to me is *discovery*. It's discovering one of the art pieces you're drawn to or whether you're opening one of the portals and discovering a new world, or leaving with a sense of discovery, that

word resonates with me."

Not only is the path within undetermined, but it is challenging to put into words how the moods, colors, textures and music will affect each individual. Nor should it be overly described in print, so that each customer can enter and have that sense of exploration. **The Real Unreal** is very tangible, and people are encouraged to open doors and look in drawers.

Stavo Craft, director of internal engagement and programming, told *Amusement Today*: "One of the things that separates Meow Wolf from other art experiences — especially those in a big city — is the release of ego play and the signing of names to every aspect that has been done and building a career with the idea

of 'name.' With Meow Wolf, there is a relinquishing of that ego to allow it to be more than the sum of the parts. That's kind of revolutionary; that's so against the contemporary brain of the artist mindset to not be the star."

The Real Unreal is fully ADA-accessible. The experience comes with two elevators to get to the different levels.

"We've made sure each of our rooms and all the ways to explore are accessible to everyone," said Gray. "People may not be able to use the exact same path to that room, but they are able to see all the different spaces."

While some rooms may be sensory overload, there are other spaces that allow people to sit and calmly reflect.

"It's a perfect environment for kids to run around and be imaginative, but even more so for parents who get to experience that world of imagination they have inside themselves that has often been locked away; they are set free by these experiences," said Craft. "To be imaginative, and, more importantly, feel that anything can be anything."

The attraction comes with full retail and a café. One of the realms inside, **The Neon Kingdom**, can also serve as an event space.

Tickets to Meow Wolf: **The Real Unreal** are timed and are priced at \$50 per adult and \$45 per child.

"You're going to get lost, but hopefully, you get lost in a good way," said Tolosa.



Meow Wolf: **The Real Unreal** opened on July 14. CEO Jose Tolosa welcomed the media to previews (above middle). Other universes inside **The Real Unreal** engage all the senses (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN, SAMMY PICCOLA



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Limitless by Creative Works is the only free-roam attraction that is mapped with physical props in the arena.
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Limitless free-roam VR attraction debuts 6-player version by Creative Works

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — Recently, Creative Works announced a new six-player size for the company's Limitless free-roam VR attraction.

Limitless is the only free-roam attraction that is mapped with physical props in the arena. When players see and touch a wall in the virtual space, they feel the wall in the real world. This merging of virtual and authentic worlds has been a game-changer for VR attractions.

The new six-player size only requires a 20-by-30-foot footprint, making it accessible for just about any operator. This format joins the existing eight-player and 16-player Limitless layouts that are already available from the company.

The six-player size has all the same features and benefits of the larger formats, including an open air design, free-roam game mechanics, and smartphone assisted onboarding.

"Limitless provides an amazing player experience that's easy to learn and difficult to master," stated Armando Lanuti, president of Creative Works. "This new size format makes the attraction fit more easily into a venue, especially for operators who are looking to upgrade from an existing VR experience."

At the same time, the company also launched the fully integrated Striker Mavrik-Pro haptic guns for all Limitless attractions. These guns have virtual recoil, haptic engines and active touch inputs, making the gaming experience even more intuitive and immersive for players.

In order to help keep guests coming back, Creative Works has also begun to offer persistent player accounts. Players can create a free account from their mobile device, choose their avatar and choose their gun skin. Just like the most popular at-home video games, players will be able to unlock new skins and avatars in the future. This account technology is the foundation for future developments, including multi-venue tournament play, stat tracking and leaderboards.

•thewoweffect.com



Limitless players can now use fully integrated Striker Mavrik-Pro haptic guns.
COURTESY CREATIVE WORKS



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson

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Immersive entertainment in Southern California is about to be transformed when award-winning **60out Immersive Entertainment Center** opens a state-of-the-art flagship location at **HHLA** (the former **Promenade at Howard Hughes Center**). Opening this summer, the highly anticipated 60out will be the largest and highly innovative immersive entertainment center on the west coast, blending technology, pop culture and spectacle.

60out at HHLA will feature six cutting-edge experiences — including official escape rooms for *The Smurfs* and *Legendary's Godzilla vs. Kong*. This 60out location will be the only escape room in the country to have two licensed games with major motion picture studios. Other attractions will include *Titanic*, *Hotel on Road 66*, *Casino Heist* and a VR experience with more than 30 live-action journeys.

"Consumers are seeking fun excursions more than ever to enjoy with friends, family and coworkers," said Ilya Vradiy, CEO of 60out. "We have elevated escape rooms and gaming into fully interactive and lifelike adventures through the latest technology, elaborate special effects and immersive themes. We have invested heavily to create the most realistic and unrivaled games that will turn LA upside down with exciting new experiences."

The creators of Tennessee's **The Escape Game** announced the grand opening of its first location of a new entertainment concept at **Opry Mills** called "**Great Big Game Show**."

Opened in July, Great Big Game Show is a live-action game show where guests are the contestant. It works like this: two teams face-off in a variety of game show rounds, each with a different style of gameplay — from minute-to-win-it style challenges, to puzzle-solving, trivia, games of chance and more. Great Big Game Show is completely replayable and a new experience every time.

Great Big Game Show is located in the entertainment wing of the mall next to **Madame Tussauds** and **Aquarium Restaurant**. The Opry Mills location will open with two "studios," each of which can host up to 12 participants at a time.

Illuminarium is a new sensory experience that will have guests feeling like they've stepped inside a film. The tech-driven entertainment attraction will make its Canadian debut in Toronto's **Distillery District** on August 25, 2023. It will completely transform the 13,500-square-foot former **Fermenting Cellar** into a surreal realm of immersive spectacles.

The attraction, in collaboration with Toronto-based **Secret Location**, uses cut-

ting-edge technologies to appeal to all guests' senses, allowing them to see, hear, feel, and even smell the immersive world around them.

"We're so excited to join together to bring Illuminarium to Toronto," said **Ryan Andal**, president and founder of Secret Location. "Illuminarium's platform gives us the ability to uniquely combine techniques used in traditional motion picture production and virtual reality to make you feel like you are actually there."

Bounce Milwaukee will close its doors permanently on August 31, 2023. The owners say they are being forced out by their landlord.

The family entertainment center was created by **Becky Cooper** and her husband, Milwaukee County Supervisor and State Rep. **Ryan Clancy**. The space is equipped with inflatables, rock climbing, laser tag, a restaurant and axe throwing.

Cooper told local news sources that this has been a months-long negotiation where the landlord, **Central Asset Management**, negotiated a new lease in bad faith. She believes the landlord wants Bounce gone and used the lease negotiation to force the Bounce owners' hand, by increasing rent to extreme levels.

Sacoa announced the successful installation of its products at **Hasbro City**, the largest theme park with interactive experiences in Latin America. It is located in Huixquilucan, Mexico, covering an impressive area of 9,000 square meters.

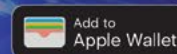
To enhance the visitor experience and streamline operations, Sacoa has implemented a range of its cutting-edge products including the Sacoa Self-Service Kiosk, CRM and Online Sales modules and the Redemption module. The games operates under Spark RFID card readers with wristbands and cards. Additionally, Sacoa's POS systems have been installed at the ticket counters and in the park's restaurants.

"We are very proud to be part of this project that became a reality after hard work of integrations and adaptations in order to provide the best experience for visitors," said **Pol Mochkovsky**, CEO of Sacoa International.

Semnox Solutions is working with **Mike Abecassis** to modernize and optimize the operational systems of the newly acquired **Dezerland Action Park** in Miami, Florida. Abecassis has acquired Dezerland Action Park and plans to modernize and optimize the operational systems, promising a seamless and advanced guest experience, by replacing existing technology with Semnox.



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The 2023 San Diego County Fair enjoys a jump in attendance

AT: Pam Sherborne
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DEL MAR, Calif. — The 2023 version of the San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, California, which ran June 7 - July 4, is in the history books. Fair officials were pleased to report there were a total of 997,720 visitors this year, up from 973,508 last year. It may not be the pre-pandemic level of 1.2 million, but officials feel they are coming back.

Carlene Moore, fair CEO, was extremely pleased with the 2023 numbers, although she stressed that the fair is not all about the numbers. It is about education, tradition, economic opportunity, innovation, partnerships and, of course, family-friendly fun.

Officials also were pleased at how the improvements and changes made to the fairgrounds helped with the midway flow easing crowded areas.

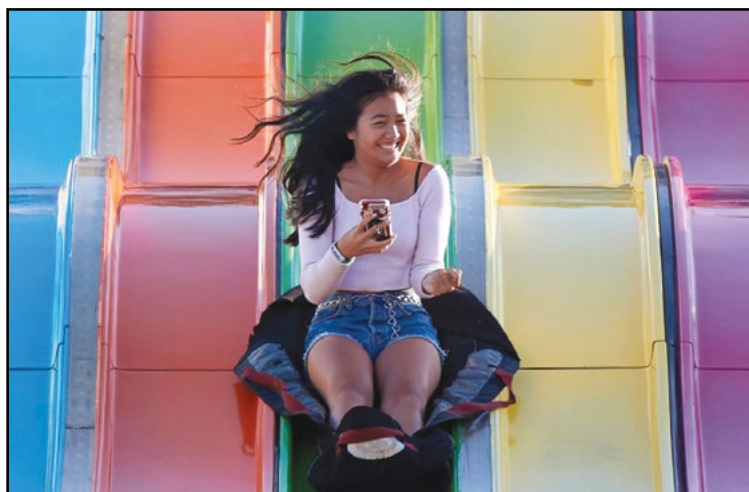
"Multiple ride and game locations were changed," said Luis Valdivia, fair marketing specialist. In addition to ride and game changes, there also were fewer rides and games booked for the 2023 fair to create a more open and free-flowing Fun Zone and Kid Zone."

The theme for the 2023 fair was "Get Out There," with a variety of pre-fair promotions.

The 2023 event offered an array of entertainment, competitions, exhibits and the popular independent ride areas of Fun Zone and Kid Zone. There were 70 rides on the midway representing 14 ride operators/owners. There were two



The 2023 San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, California, ran June 7-July 4. Attendance beat 2022's, drawing a total of 997,720 visitors. The Fast Trax Slide, provided by Talley Amusements, came in the top five most popular rides (below left). The thrilling Medusa, manufactured by KMG, was provided by Helm and Sons (below right). COURTESY SAN DIEGO COUNTY FAIR



new rides to the fair, Medusa and Joker 360, both brought in by **Helm and Sons**. The Joker 360, manufactured by **Technical Park**, was the more popular of the two with a total of 38,539 riders. Medusa was manufactured by **KMG**.

The overall most popular rides on the midway were: the Skyride, provided

by **Ray Cammack Shows**, manufactured by **Doppelmayr**; the Giant Wheel (33 meters) provided by **Talley Amusements**, manufactured by **Lamberink**; Crazy Mouse, **Wood Entertainment, Reverchon**; Fast Trax Slide, **Talley Amusements, Fabbri**; and Rave Wave, **Ray Cammack Shows**.

There were 94,420 rid-

ers on the Sky Ride.

Of the were 43 games provided this year, the most popular was Bottle Up, with 33,497 players.

As always, livestock played a large role at the fair. More than 350 San Diego County youth ages nine to 18 years participated in the Junior Livestock Auction. There were almost 500

animals entered into the market competition.

The livestock auction brought in \$482,739 on the sale of 228 animals to 90 buyers. That 2023 amount was an increase of 2022's by \$59,000.

Nearly \$28,000 was paid for the Beef Grand Champion steer from exhibitor **Clayton Critz**, whose twin brother **Landon Critz** saw his steer win the reserve grand champion title.

Among the 100-plus vendors offering delicious concessions, **Apollo's Greek** sold over 10,000 chicken gyro pitas and **Biggy's** sold over 1,100 of their Hot Cheeto Chicken Sandwich, the food item



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► **SAN DIEGO**

Continued from page 26

named Best of Show title in the Fairtastic Foods Competition.

Chicken Charlie's sold approximately 40,000 Flamin' Hot Cheetos potstickers and **Mom's Bake-shoppe** sold 160,282 chocolate chip cookies as of 8:30 p.m., July 4.

The **Coconut Guy** sold about 4,600 coconuts.

The Grandstand Concert Series drew 58,000 attendees between 13 different shows. The show by **Los Tigres del Norte** drew the largest crowd, with over 7,500 people, followed by performances of hip-hop artist **Nelly** and famed comedian and actor **Kevin Hart**.

There was a total of 246 entertainers and acts this year. About 98 of those were new and 212 were local.

There were 17 San Diego County communities participating in the 2023 Community Banner Program that highlights county residents.

There were 9,187 competitive exhibit ribbons awarded during the fair.

The fair hired 1,000 plus seasonal employees this year.

The San Diego County Fair began in 1880. Since its beginnings, the fair was suspended on only two occasions, during World War II and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fair has been known by four names during its history. They are the San Diego County Fair from 1880 to 1953 and from 2002 to present; the Southern California Exposition and San Diego County Fair from 1954 to 1969; the Southern California Exposition from 1970 to 1982 and the Del Mar Fair from 1983 through 2001.

The Del Mar Fairgrounds and the San Diego County Fair are owned and operated by the **22nd District Agricultural Association**, a State of California agency operating under the **California Department of Food and Agriculture** (CDFA).

New this year was **Joker 360**, manufactured by **Technical Park** (right). The ride thrilled 38,539 guests throughout fair. The **Crazy Mouse** (far right) ride was rated in the top five most popular rides at the fair. The coaster was provided by **Wood Entertainment** and manufactured by **Reverchon**.
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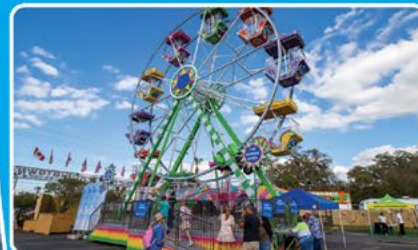
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MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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Zeke Fraser, a longtime Santa Cruz resident, was recently named the **Santa Cruz County Fair** manager. He replaces **Ken Alstott**, who was hired in April on an interim basis. Fraser has a background in finance, property management and operations. Most recently he worked for digital publishing company **FileOpen Systems**.

Fraser's family has experience in the entertainment arena. His father traveled the California county fair circuit as part of a musical band. When a teenager, Fraser toured with him and participated in several Renaissance fairs.

"I think the fair has been calling to me for a long time, and I'm excited to finally answer that call," Fraser said in a release. "Being local gives me the perspective and the contacts to ensure that the fair continues to be well sponsored and that the people of Santa Cruz and surrounding counties will get a fun, enjoyable county fair that feels like it belongs to them."

He is the fourth person in the top spot of the fair since October, when **Dave Kegebein**, CEO of the fair for 11 years, was fired by the board, under pressure from the **California Department of Food & Agriculture**. A state audit accused him of mismanagement.

Kelley Ferreira stepped in as interim fair director, replacing Kegebein, but resigned in April amid rancorous and confrontational board meetings and community anger. The fair board then appointed Alstott, a veteran of state fair management who commuted from Tennessee, as interim director.

The 2023 Santa Cruz County Fair is scheduled for September 13-17. **Brass Ring Amusements Midway of Fun** is the carnival provider.

Bonner County Fair, Sandpoint, Idaho, has a new person at the helm, **Amy Robbins**. She started in May, filling the vacant fair manager position.

The Montana native has quite a bit of experience in the industry, first as a youngster in 4-H and participating in numerous rodeos. Then later as an adult, Robbins volunteered in numerous positions until they evolved into paying ones.

"I was lucky enough to get a job as the events coordinator for the **Montana State Fair** in Great Falls," she told the *Bonner County Daily Bee*. "That's a very large fair in Montana, and that was a great experience."

After that, Robbins began working at the **Last Chance Stampede and Fair**, Helena, Montana, serving as events planner.

The new fair manager said her number one goal after preparing for this year's fair — which will be held later this month, is planning for fair facility improvements, including the rodeo arena.

"I feel like my goal is always to make it better than I found it," she said. "To grow the events, to add more events; you know, think outside the box. New events can come in that maybe someone hasn't thought of. The fairgrounds are a great community place to gather, and I just want to make things bigger and better."

In mid-June, the **Yolo County Fair** (Woodland, California) board ended its contract with **Bart Vannucci** who served as CEO. The board appointed Chair **Elaine Yamaguchi** to serve as interim CEO until a new one is selected.

"We thank him (Vannucci) for his many years of dedicated service to our community," a Yolo County Fair Board press release read. "We will have no additional comment on this personnel matter."

"We plan for the fair to provide all the fun we have enjoyed in the past," the release read. "Our fair continues to be the largest and oldest free gate fair in California."

The first Yolo County Fair was held in the late summer of 1893 with horse racing being the main event. The Yolo County Fair was incorporated in 1935 and now comprises 55 acres.

The 2023 fair takes place August 16 – 20 with no annual opening night gala this year according to the release. **Brass Ring Amusement's Midway of Fun** is providing the carnival midway.

The **Palouse Empire Fairgrounds**, Colfax, Washington, recently welcomed **Ashley Reisenauer** as the new fair manager. She is responsible for coordinating and planning various events and activities on the grounds.

"I think I learn something new every day," Reisenauer told the **Whitman County Gazette**. "I started in mid-March, and honestly, life presents you with opportunities, and life presented me with this opportunity, and I am excited to see where it takes me."

The Colton, Washington, native received two bachelor's degrees in Equine Science and Agriculture Business. Following her undergrad work, Reisenauer elected to complete her master's degree in animal science. She previously attended **Colorado State University** in Fort Collins, Colorado.

"I was ready for a change in my career and thought it would be a neat opportunity to see what it could be," she noted. "I have been out of school for about four years, and this community has always meant so much to me and has helped feed my passion since day one. It's natural to come back and want to make a difference."

The **Palouse Empire Fair** returns September 7-10 with **Midway West Amusements** providing the rides.



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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► Texas community opens water park — page 32 / World's Largest Swimming Lesson continues success — page 33

ProSlide Technology's Riptide Race debuts at Water Country USA

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment has found success with the addition of racing waterslides at its water parks. Riptide Race, a dueling slide from ProSlide Technology of Ottawa, Ontario, made its debut in Water Country USA in June.

Although similar in name and configuration to slides at its sister parks, each of the slides has unique features. Riptide Race first appeared at Aquatica Orlando in 2021. At 68 feet in height, it is the tallest of the four. That was followed by a similar slide the following year at Aquatica San Antonio. Rapids Racer also debuted in 2022 at Adventure Island adjacent to Busch Gardens Tampa Bay in Florida. That slide added the world's first dueling saucer sections. Taking advantage of a natural hillside, Rapids Racer may not stand as tall as the others, but at 600 feet in length, it is the longest of the group.

The dominion-state version of Riptide Race starts from a 54-foot tower and has thrill seekers racing side-by-side through 520 feet of action-packed slide. All four slides feature multiple RallyPoints, a patented ride component that utilizes low divider walls and a U-shaped flume. Specially designed fiberglass keeps the two tube chutes as close together as possible and the RallyPoints allow riders to see and hear their competition multiple times throughout the ride.



Riptide Race replaces the park's former Rampage water toboggan slides. Riders emerge from the enclosed tubes and burst into daylight to slide side-by-side at one of the RallyPoints (below). COURTESY WATER COUNTRY USA

To add to the excitement, each of the three Riptide Race slides separate at points along the way and cross over or under each other so that at the second rally point, the competitor's tube is on the opposite side. That is followed by another crisscross so by the third rally point, the tubers are on the same side on which they started, where they will remain until the final splashdown where the winner is determined.

The side-by-side racing element is new for the park and a first for the state of Virginia. Participants only have to meet the 42-inch height requirement. Single or double riders can compete. Double riders must have a combined weight of less than 450 pounds. The slide is mostly enclosed with multi-color translucent sections allowing varying



color changes. The first two RallyPoints are open to the sky, but the last goes through a specially designed tube that encloses both slides.

Riptide Race replaced the Rampage attraction that had been at the park since it opened. Once popular at water parks throughout the country, these water toboggan slides featured a plastic toboggan that slid down a 60-degree inclined chute building up enough speed to

skip or glide across a 120-foot-long shallow pool. As with this installation, most utilized a pair of slides to increase capacity that shared the same tower, runoff pool and lift mechanism to transport the toboggans to the top of the slide tower. It was demolished in December 2022 leaving very few of these toboggans in operation.

The addition of Riptide Race follows a series of new additions and enhancements

that began in 2018 with the closure of one of the older slides, Meltdown, to make way for the ProSlide water coaster, Cutback, which opened the following year. The 2020 pandemic slowed things down a bit, but enhancements to the park continued in 2021. Last year an older ProSlide enclosed dark mammoth river was updated with LED lighting, sound effects and music to enhance the ride experience. Rebranded as Aquazoid Amped it brought new life to an iconic slide that had been sitting idle.

Although not physically connected to Busch Gardens Williamsburg, the two parks share clientele and are marketed together. Multi-day tickets are available so guests can visit both the ride park and the water park. The water park was built by the Busch Entertainment Corporation and opened in 1984, nearly a decade after the opening of Busch Gardens Williamsburg. It featured a 1960s surf theme, much of which has been maintained over the years. Following the acquisition of Anheuser-Busch in 2008 by In-Bev, the theme park division was sold to the Blackstone Group. The company was renamed SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment. Anheuser-Busch Inc. granted SeaWorld a perpetual, exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free license agreement to use the Busch Gardens trademark, Water Country USA, Adventure Island and other names related to the operation of its theme and water parks.

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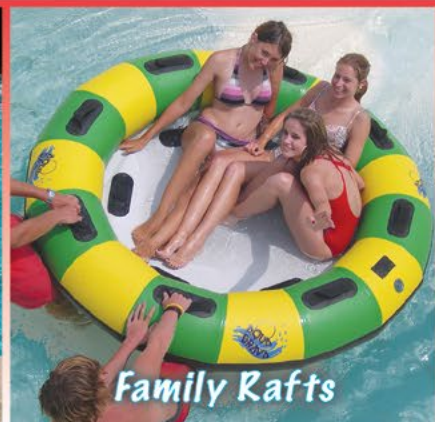
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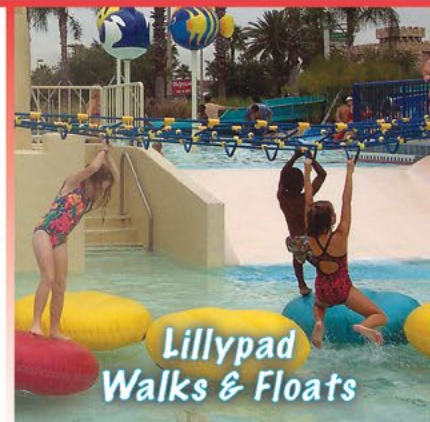
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Climb & Play Netting



The wave pool, tidal river and activity pool at Meridiana, are for the exclusive use of residents of the master-planned community. COURTESY ADG

Texas planned community opens private water park

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

IOWA COLONY, Texas — **Meridiana**, a planned community south of Houston, has opened a first-of-its-kind aquatics experience in a master-planned community. Designed by **Aquatics Development Group (ADG)** of Cohoes, New York, **Adventure Cove** brings a private water park right into the community neighborhood.

The two-acre water park features a wave pool, winding tidal river and resort-style recreation pool with cascading waterfalls in an amenity village setting. Adventure Cove includes a large pavilion, fitness center, outdoor space for group classes, spacious open lawn, food truck parking for up to three operators, and picnic-style seating. The park also provides ample lounge seating with umbrellas, cabanas, chaise and deck chairs available throughout the setting.

"It's like having a family water park right in the neighborhood," explained **Matt Lawson** of Meridiana developer **Rise Communities**. "Amenities make a community, and they're a big reason why we continue to have such success."

Adventure Cove's aquatics features were open to residents on the weekends until Memorial Day. It operates daily through Labor Day weekend. The other fitness and recreation elements are open year-round.

ADG was the design/builder on the project and supplied all specialty wave equipment for the property. The 9,300-square-foot wave pool features a gradual beach entry and family-friendly waves. A 2,600-square-foot-adventure pool can be used for lap swimming or water basketball with hoops located in the corner of the pool. The adventure pool also includes in-water sun shelves, allowing bathers to enjoy comfortable lounge seating while in the water. Cascading, hand-carved waterfalls pour into the island pools to offer a tropical atmosphere and provide relaxing sounds.

"We know that people in Houston love water, so we definitely wanted to have a water component but create something different," said Lawson. "That's why we worked with ADG to deliver a wave pool, tidal river and an island pool, along with a number of other things."

The Meridiana master-planned community opened in March 2017. The community is scheduled to have 5,500 houses on 2,700 acres of property. It is located at the intersections of Texas State Highways 288 and 6, just 24 miles from downtown Houston. It has received several accolades, including Best Community and Best Developer of the Year from the **Texas Association of Builders**. Meridiana has also garnered PRISM awards from the **Greater Houston Builders Association** for Community Recreation Center of the Year, Best Landscape Design and Community Entrance of the Year.



NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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A new kids area has opened at **Pool WAI**, the water park at **Yomiuriland** in Tokyo, Japan. Wai Wai Jungle is a water-play structure with multiple interactive elements, including water cannons and fountains, a tipping bucket and five waterslides. The slides vary in length from 45 to 170 feet. The tipping bucket takes about four and half minutes to fill before unleashing more than 600 gallons of water onto the guests standing below.

Waverly, Nebraska, is now home to a \$6 million aquatic center. The **Waverly Aquatic Center** opened its doors on July 4. The center includes a lap pool, activity pool, two waterslides, current channel and a splash pad.

Sadly, the timing was not great as the city is in a severe drought with wells and other water sources at an all-time low. The mayor indicated the new center is far more efficient than the old pool it replaced and uses a lot less water.

Funding for the project started in 2020 when voters approved a \$3.5 million bond issue and a half cent sales tax increase. Additional funding was provided by the American Rescue Plan Act, the local county, donations, community sponsors and fund raising efforts.

The **North Sydney Olympic Pool** in Australia is on track to reopen next April following an AU\$89 (US\$61) million redevelopment.

Opened in 1936, the pool hosted the 1938 British Empire Games, and although 86 world records have been set at various world competitions and qualifying meets, it has never officially been a part of any Olympic games. The pool closed in 2021 for refurbishment.

Once complete, the pool will be part of a state-of-the-art fitness and leisure center with upgraded timing systems, a 970-seat grandstand, an expanded gym and accessible changing rooms. The facility will also include a family friendly kids waterplay area with a splash pad and water sprayground.

The pool is famous for its classic art-deco architecture and spectacular location alongside Sydney Harbour between the Sydney Harbour Bridge and **Luna Park**.

The **JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge Resort & Spa** recently completed an \$18 million expansion and upgrade of its private water park, **AquaRidge**.

The \$18 million water park refresh was part of an \$80 million renovation to commemorate the resort's 20th an-

niversary. The 140,000-square-foot facility now features a waterfall, splash pad area, updated lazy river and two pools. Three new slides were added to the park to appeal to adventure seekers.

Other hotel aquatic areas were reinvented as well:

Sedona Springs, described as a VIP family-friendly sanctuary, has a large infinity-edge hot tub, three cabanas, five shaded daybeds, lounge and fire pit seating, a waterfall and a stargazing area.

Sky Island, the resort's first adults-only area features an infinity pool, hot tub, four cabanas, lounge seating and stone fire pits. A VIP attendant will welcome guests.

Sedona Cove replaced the former Griffin Bay pool and has become a luxury poolside retreat with upgraded lounge chairs, couches, misting fans, cabanas, daybeds and, of course, a pool concierge to provide assistance.

The Wildfire Grove area has been refreshed with a poolside bar and a waterfall.

An **Aquaglide** inflatable waterpark/obstacle course made its debut on July 15 in Winslow, Indiana. **Old Ben Aqua Park** was a redevelopment of the **Old Ben Boy Scout Reservation** that was sold last year to **Clint Swisher** who had previously owned a Jellystone Park in Bloomington, Indiana. Swisher wants to continue to expand the property by incorporating some of the facilities that were already there such as the archery and rifle ranges. He also wants to add zip lines, an event center, wedding venue and other amenities. He is hoping to have a fully operational camping property by 2025.

Although no longer owned by the **Buffalo Trace Scout Council**, local troops are still permitted to camp on the property.

King's Pointe Waterpark & Resort in Storm Lake, Iowa, is looking to expand by investing more than \$6 million in renovations over the next few years. The 16-year-old-resort will first turn its attention to the indoor water park which is expected to take about two months. Once that is complete, the park will focus on the outdoor water park and the resort property.

King's Pointe Resort is owned by the city of Storm Lake. The city has finalized the issuance of a \$5.8 million tax-increment bond to finance the remodeling. In addition to renovating the water parks, the funds are expected to be used to upgrade hotel room items such as mattresses and televisions.

World's Largest Swimming Lesson welcomes 40,000 participants

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — **Team WLSL**, a global team of aquatic facilities and water safety organizations, coordinated by the **World Waterpark Association (WWA)**, kicked off the first official week-end of summer with tens of thousands of kids on six continents all participating in the same global swimming lesson on June 22, 2023. In addition to sharing critical water safety skills, the lesson helps build awareness about the vital importance of teaching kids to swim to help prevent drowning.



U.S. Olympic Gold Medalist, Cullen Jones, helped students learn water safety skills at the Valley of The Sun YMCA/Leslie's World's Largest Swimming Lesson event in Phoenix, Arizona. COURTESY WLSL

In the U.S., more drowning and near-drowning accidents take place in June and July than any other time period according to the CDC. The 4th of July holiday also sees an increase in drowning accidents compared to other weeks during the summer.

"Reaching as many parents and caregivers as possible with this information

is crucially important as we head into the peak season for aquatic recreation," said **Rick Root**, president of the WWA. "Whether families are spending time at a waterpark, the community pool, the beach or the lake, we want them to be prepared by enrolling kids in swimming lessons and always providing

active adult supervision."

Research released by the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** in 2021 shows drowning is the single leading cause of death for kids ages 1-4 and remains the second leading cause of unintended, injury related death for kids ages 5-14. While research from the **AAP/National**

Library of Medicine shows that participation in formal swimming lessons can reduce the risk of drowning by 88% among children aged 1-4.

"At the age of five, I almost drowned," shared U.S. Olympic Gold Medalist, **Cullen Jones** speaking at the World's Largest Swimming Lesson at the **Valley Of The Sun YMCA/Leslie's** location in Phoenix, Arizona. "I was fully supervised, there were lifeguards there, my parents were there... but as soon as I hit the water, I flipped upside down and because I hadn't had swim lessons, I didn't know what to do," said Jones. "We want to make sure people are safer around the water and the best way to do that is swimming lessons."

U.S. Olympic Silver Medalist, **Maritza McClendon**, the first African American female

to swim for Team USA and win an Olympic Medal, led the WLSL event at **Disney's Typhoon Lagoon Water Park** in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. The Disney World resorts hosted more than 600 kids from area non-profits including **Boys and Girls Clubs, Elevate Orlando, Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida** and **Big Brothers Big Sisters**, making it the largest event in the state of Florida.

In total, more than 600 waterparks, aquatic centers and **Goldfish Swim School** locations, hosted the same lesson. From Hong Kong to Qatar, to the United Arab Emirates and Okinawa, Japan where the U.S. Marine Corps Installations Pacific taught both Marines and Marine Corps families, every facility worked to share the same important message that swimming lessons save lives.

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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Dutch Wonderland hosts PAPA Summer Meeting — page 36 / Chance Rides plans for future — page 40

Gateway Ticketing Systems celebrating 35 years, humble roots

AT: Tim Baldwin

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GILBERTSVILLE, Pa. — It started with a chicken coop. Sort of.

When Peter Grumblatt wrote one of the first PC-based ticketing systems, he could never have imagined that a project created for New Jersey Transit would not only gain traction in the busing and transportation industry in the first two years but eventually transform into a pioneer in the amusement industry. When Grumblatt and a business partner formed Merion Software Associates, the successful endeavor was essentially housed in an outbuilding at his home, which was used as a chicken coop by the previous homeowner.

Gateway Ticketing Systems was founded in 1988 when Grumblatt and two college students already working with him were busy working on developing ticketing installations and software consulting projects. Michael Andre was one of the young men; Darryl Moser was the other.

Having made a name for itself in bus ticketing, the company was invited to exhibit at a Comdex tech expo.

"It was a big trade show in Las Vegas each year," said Michael Andre, president and CEO of Gateway Ticketing Systems. "AT&T invited us to exhibit with them, but nothing really became of that. But right next to us was another ticketing company. It turns out that company concentrated on performing arts and



reserved seats. We learned from them that a company in California had issued an RFP for a ticketing system."

That company was Disneyland. It was a big stepping stone in a new direction.

With innovation at the forefront and a dedication to customer service, Gateway Ticketing Systems evolved into an industry leader. Today, it services close to 500 customers around the globe, and Gateway Software is running in more than 30 countries. It has offices in Calgary, Canada, and London, England, in addition to its main headquarters in Pennsylvania.

In 2014, it finished construction on a 42,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility.

In late June, for the first time, Gateway brought in the entire team of employees for a week-long company-wide summit. Almost the entire company was on-site; 170 attended.

"It was a great success in the camaraderie of bringing our people together," Andre told *Amusement Today*. "The whole idea was coming out of COVID, and I thought at the time, 'Wouldn't it be great if we could literally bring all of Gateway from all



This former chicken coop housed the working end of the business when Peter Grumblatt started writing operating systems (inset). The Gateway Ticketing team posed for a group shot in front of its state-of-the-art facility at a recent summit (above). COURTESY GATEWAY TICKETING

over the world?' One of the goals was to get those team members who normally wouldn't go to a trade show or a learning summit and talk about the state of the company and where we've been and what plans look like for the future."

The event had keynote addresses, workshops and alignment with core values, as well as fun networking and social opportunities.

Amusement Today sat down with CEO Michael Andre to talk about the 35 years:

AT: How does the modern headquarters facility service both your team members and customers?

Michael Andre: We started in 2012 to build our own building and decided we wanted a facility that would represent what Gateway would be in the next decade or two. We wanted to embody what we thought the future of Gateway was. We wanted a great environment for our

people to work in as well as something attractive for our customers to visit. We retrofitted some of our meeting rooms to bring in the technology to share [remotely] with the people here in person. Coming back, we felt it would be more hybrid. Post-COVID we did a round of investment in internal technology.

AT: Decades ago, how did you get connected with Merion Software Associates?

MA: I grew up in a small business in an entrepreneurial family. It was a farmer's market stand in the local area. My dad is a meat cutter by trade, and he wanted his own store, and it had a diner. I studied computer science in college, and I talked my parents into buying a computer for the business. My parents had been doing all the bookkeeping by hand. I wrote some programs for

them to calculate payroll. I wrote a program to print the daily specials; we used it like a printer. One of our customers noticed that — in a small 1980s Pennsylvania diner — and it caught the attention of Peter Grumblatt. And the family started talking to him, and he expressed interest in what I had done. He invited me over to talk business. It was serendipity; he offered me a project. And I really didn't want a career in diner cooking.

AT: How does one transition from bus lines to theme parks?

MA: When Disneyland, who had been looking for a system for months, called looking for a specific ticketing system, we ran off PCs. AT&T could provide the hardware but not the software. Fast forward, we did a two-way joint proposal with AT&T. They invited us to come out and demo the system, and it was successful.



Andre

► See GATEWAY, page 36



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Dutch Wonderland hosts 2023 PAPA Summer Meeting

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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LANCASTER, Pa. — The annual **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks & Attractions (PAPA)** summer fun meeting took place July 17 and 18 at **Dutch Wonderland**. In attendance were 103 members and guests who enjoyed food, fun, networking and fellowship during the two-day event. The host park is celebrating its 60th anniversary this season.

Overlook Golf Course was the site of the always popular scramble golf tournament that kicked off the first day. **Pete Barto, PB Amusement**, who coordinated the outing, provided details. "It was a beautiful day with great participation from the members of PAPA. We ended up with 28 golfers, which is, as far back as I can remember, a record. [The event is] really gaining some momentum." Scoring was close; however, the winning team was from **Hershey Entertainment & Resorts (HE&R)**. Members included **Jeremy Underkoffler, Matt Bennett, Jason Roth** and **Brad Kirkham**.

This outing marked the first time a concerted effort was made to attract sponsors. "The great thing was the amount of sponsorship support we had this year. We had seven sponsors of the tournament, which is amazing. We're hoping that we will be able to continue that for years to come and continue to contribute more to the scholarship fund," said Barto. When all was said and done, \$2,217 was raised for the **Barbara J. Knoebel** scholarship fund, double the previous year. The fund annually assists student employees of PAPA member organizations in the form of scholarships for educational purposes.

That evening, attendees enjoyed a cocktail reception, in and outside Penley's Pub in the middle of the park, followed by a chicken and steak strips buffet dinner at Mill Stream Catering, also on property.

The second day started with a very extensive breakfast buffet at Merlin's restaurant at the front of the park. While some attendees took park tours, others par-



Having a little fun on the golf course is (l to r): **Peter Wolf, Gateway Ticketing Systems; Brian Knoebel, Knoebels Amusement Resort; Pete Barto, PB Amusement; Carl Crider, DelGrosso's Park & Laguna Splash** and **Chad Wallace, Gateway Ticketing Systems**. COURTESY NANCEE CRIDER



Attendees came from all over including (l to r) **Chris Gray, Skyline Attractions; Gina Guglielmi, Intermark Ride Group** and **Bob Dean, Leisure Labs**. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

icipated in a mid-morning board meeting. Treasurer **Dick Knoebel** amended his usual response saying, "We are very solvent." A presentation was made by representatives from the **Pennsylvania Restaurant and Lodging Association (PRLA)**. Some items covered were minimum wage, state budget, tourism, amusement park liquor bill, and school start. Committee reports covered human resources, scholarship fund, marketing and the PAPA website.

Scott Silar, PAPA president, provided an overview: "For the summer meeting we try to do it at one of our member facilities. Representatives from manufacturers, suppliers and vendors [as well as parks] get together and talk about how their year is going. We succeed together and we all face very similar challenges, so we get together to celebrate together and also learn from each other. We all strive to provide the best possible experience for our guests in a safe and memorable environment. We all kind of lean on each other to learn from each other to be able to provide that product for our guests."

Gary Chubb presented info on the 2023 PACE (Parks and Carnivals Education) ride safety seminar that takes place October 30 – November 2 in Monroeville, Pennsylvania. "Hands-on" training (rain or shine) is at **Kennywood Park**, West Mifflin, Pennsylvania. This annual seminar is held in conjunction with the **Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association (PSSA)** and offers both 24- and 32-hour certification training sessions. The educational portion of the seminar is led by instructors from **NAARSO (National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials)**. Inspector testing is also offered for Pennsylvania certified inspectors and/or NAARSO levels.

PAPA formed in 1935, promotes the industry, allows for the exchange of knowledge among members, upholds a good public image and monitors legislation and regulatory concerns. The 2024 spring meeting will be held at the **Hershey Lodge**, February 26 and 27, while the summer fun meeting will take place at **Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom**.

► GATEWAY

Continued from page 35

Integrated credit card processing was very unusual at that time. We were put in for a six-month pilot. Disneyland had 32 ticket booth windows, and they put our system in the middle two. The turning point was when the tellers lobbied to work our computerized booth; they enjoyed it that much more than just doing it manually. Pre-printed tickets had the whole inventory issue. We addressed that and speeded up their processing.

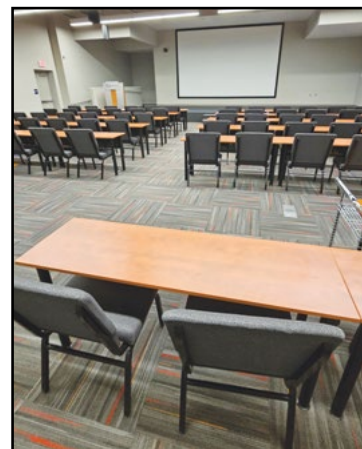
From that, we started pursuing other parks. We were honestly naïve. With our [second park], we realized their operations were very different than Disney's. They had discounts. They wanted discount tracking. They had annual passes and group sales. From then on, we learned about IAAPA, and we exhibited at the expo and started organically growing our company in the attractions business.

AT: Was there a hesitation to switch from busing to theme parks?

MA: They were both progressing at the same time. I think Peter's wisdom in looking at what would be best for us as a small company is to have two different types of marketplaces. Diversifying. We realized the way we had built our ticketing system, it was generalized enough to where it could sell a bus ticket and a theme park ticket. We had to write more applications. The core technology of selling and printing a ticket, and recording and generalizing transactions was common point-of-sale technology.

AT: When was the "Aha!" moment that theme parks were really taking off?

MA: We started expand-



ing into zoos. We got traction with zoo customers, and they are a tight-knit community. We had momentum there. For me, it really clicked in 1996. That was the year our activity in the attractions space really started to move faster than the bus industry did. That was the turning point.

AT: You have an office in the U.K. That has clearly taken off.

MA: In 2012 we did a joint venture with a company called Metafour, which was in travel services, and they had a similar philosophy to ours in software. Again, it grew organically.

AT: After 35 years, what brings you the most pride personally?

MA: What we've been able to build through hard work and a focus on taking care of our customers and doing interesting projects. There wasn't a grand plan. When I started working with Peter, it was about him moving with a project. It had peaks and valleys. Technologically interesting projects and being geographically diverse over the years — I couldn't have imagined it. It's humbling.

AT: Particularly with COVID, there has been a surge in online ticketing. How has that changed the business?

MA: There was already a trend in e-commerce. COVID accelerated that with capacity restrictions. There was a natural fit to expand online ticketing. It has evolved. We have had online ticketing capability since 2004. We've been carrying that forward with more features. COVID drove more functionality that we built around self-service. Parks have had labor challenges, so it has helped them.

AT: What's next for Gateway?

MA: There's technology generation. We went from microcomputers and MS-DOS to Windows to these days its Cloud. We're working on the next generation of Cloud products. We'll continue to grow, take care of our team and work with our customers.

The modern facility serves both team members and customers with high-tech classrooms, meeting rooms and collaborative areas.

AT/TIM BALDWIN

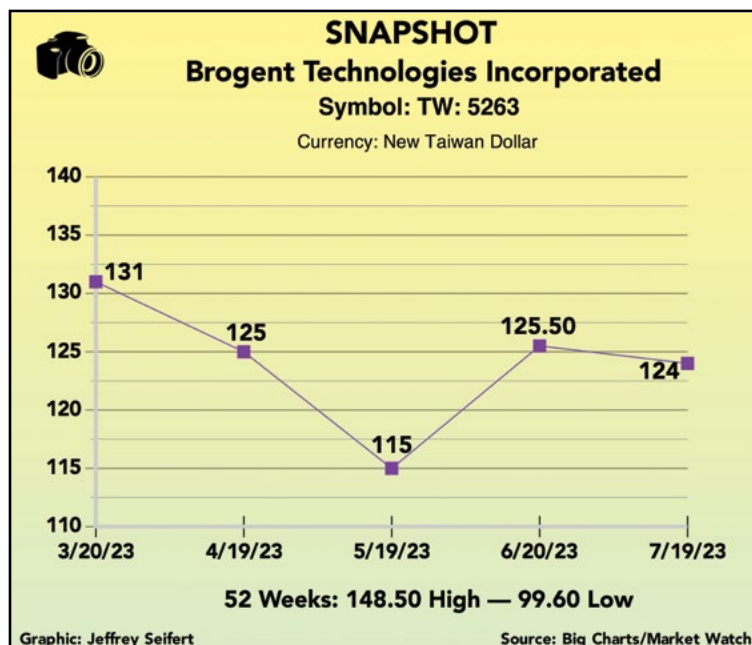
MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 7/20/23	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	107.51	110.89	71.72
Bowlero Corp.	BOWL	NYSE	11.32	17.45	10.34
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	36.67	47.95	36.19
Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	43.21	43.71	28.39
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	46.40	47.29	30.36
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	45.76	55.90	33.92
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	5350.00	5670.00	3850.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	1.11	4.28	0.81
Lefoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	21.50	28.45	15.40
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	49.75	50.11	29.20
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.30	0.47	0.26
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	101.11	105.21	33.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	52.17	68.19	43.83
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	23.58	31.29	16.83
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	13.11	17.65	8.82
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	764.00	838.00	650.00
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	86.21	126.48	84.07
SUPPLIERS/OTHERS					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	129.00	148.50	99.6
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1316.00	1515.00	738.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	19.56	25.96	16.13

Details and information available at amusementtoday.com/stocks

Worldwide Markets — CSE/DK: Copenhagen Stock Exchange; HK: The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong; JP: The Tokyo Stock Exchange; NASDAQ: National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; NYSE: New York Stock Exchange; OCT: Over-the-counter stocks; TAIEX: The Taiwan Capitalization Weighted Stock Index; TYO: The Tokyo Stock Exchange; TW: The Taiwan Stock Exchange.

—SOURCES: Bigcharts.com

**DIESEL PRICES**

Region (U.S)	As of 7/17/23	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.879	(\$1.588)
Midwest	\$3.726	(\$1.683)
Gulf Coast	\$3.506	(\$1.577)
Mountain	\$3.927	(\$1.619)
West Coast	\$4.131	(\$1.637)
California	\$4.848	(\$1.668)

CURRENCY

On 7/20/23 \$1 USD =	
0.8917	EURO
0.7721	GBP (British Pound)
139.53	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8584	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.4753	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3169	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH**Merlin, Coca-Cola partner for the planet**

LONDON, U.K. — **Merlin Entertainments** has announced a partnership with **Coca-Cola** in a bid to help protect the planet and reduce plastic waste. This summer, guests will have a chance to win VIP experiences at some of the U.K.'s best-known family attractions in exchange for simply bringing along an empty 500ml plastic bottle and recycling it at one of the specifically designed reverse vending machines across U.K. attractions.

Since the launch of the initiative in 2019, Merlin has collected and recycled over 100,000 plastic bottles through specifically designed Coca-Cola reverse vending machines and is now offering guests the chance to be part of the action and enter between July 1 and September 30, 2023. This year the campaign has reached new heights and now includes 28 reverse vending machines, which will be on-site at 11 participating Merlin Entertainments attractions, including **Alton Towers Resort; Legoland Windsor Resort; Thorpe Park Resort; Chessington World of Adventures Resort, Warwick Castle; Sea Life** aquariums in Blackpool, Birmingham, Brighton and London; **The Blackpool Tower and Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham**.

"This summer, reverse vending machines will be located across Merlin attractions which will enable guests to recycle their plastic bottles to ensure they can be used again as well as giving people the chance to win some amazing VIP experiences," offered **Elodie Peribere**, marketing director for Coca-Cola Great Britain. "We share Merlin's passion for entertainment and goals for sustainability: all of our bottles are 100% recyclable, and this year we added attached caps across our portfolio to make it easier for people to recycle the whole package and help reduce littering."

Scruffy Dog realizes Emerald Park's new area

LONDON, U.K. — **Emerald Park** just outside of Dublin, Ireland, has commissioned **M.A.D Models**, part of the **Scruffy Dog Creative Group** (SDGC) to create a scale model of the park's upcoming 6.5-acre expansion, Tír na nÓg and bring its stunning creative vision to life.

The model was made to provide a captivating preview of the planned attractions, including two intertwining steel roller-coasters, concessions outlets and an array of other attractions. While most elements were rendered digitally, the roller coaster tracks required manual craftsmanship. The team at M.A.D Models created the tracks using wire, replicating the design of the intertwining steel roller coasters with great accuracy.

"This has been such a great project for our team. It was exciting for us to use such a range of techniques — especially doing so much by hand — but we're really happy with the final product and makes for a really evocative display piece," stated **Friedemann Wocke**, head of SDCG's M.A.D Models division.

The finished scale model of Tír na nÓg has been successfully transported and delivered to its new home at Emerald Park in Ashbourne, Co. Meath.

FEG expands attractions portfolio in Texas

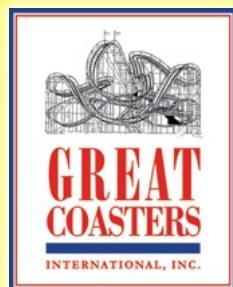
ITASCA, Ill. — **Family Entertainment Group** (FEG) has announced the addition of three new locations to the company's attractions portfolio. In collaboration with **Landry's Inc.**, FEG will be assuming operations at the **Kemah Boardwalk, Galveston Pier** and the **Houston Aquarium** in Texas.

As part of the agreement, FEG will be providing a significant upgrade in equipment for all locations.

"We are thrilled to partner with Landry's Inc. to take over operations at these great locations in Texas," said **Ray Smith**, vice president of business development at Family Entertainment Group. "Our focus has always been to create memorable experiences for families, and we are excited to bring our expertise in entertainment to enhance the offerings at the Kemah Boardwalk, Galveston Pier and the Houston Aquarium."



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Excitement is growing for the 2023 Golden Ticket Awards at Dollywood

Deadline to reserve room at DreamMore Resort for the upcoming event is August 22

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.

“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!”

The Golden Ticket Awards industry event will also host the 2023 **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives (NRCMA) Golf Tournament!** The dazzling charity event is aimed at preserving the historical heritage of roller coasters for present and future generations. On Friday, September 8, industry professionals can join one another for a day of golf and excitement as they tee



The NRCMA Golf Tournament — held during the 2023 Golden Ticket Awards — is a great way to relax and have fun with other industry professionals during the "Networking Event of the Year." AT/GARY SLADE

off for this incredible cause. The NRCMA Golf Tournament is not just an ordinary event; it's a chance to become part of something extraordinary. Participation directly supports the NRCMA's mission, empowering the industry to continue preserving the legacy of roller coasters.

There's no need to be a golf pro; all are welcome! Whether you're a seasoned golfer or trying it for the first time, enthusiasm and passion are what truly matter. Together, all can make a difference and ensure the joy of roller coasters lives on for future generations.

The NRCMA Golf Tournament offers more than just giving back; it's an opportunity to create cherished memories, shared camaraderie, and unforgettable moments. So, step up and be a roller coaster history hero. It is a day filled with excitement, making a positive impact on roller coaster preservation.

2023 Golden Ticket Awards attendees who want to participate in the NRCMA Golf Tournament can signup by emailing Chloe Hausfeld (hausfeld@baynum.com) or Walt Bowser (walt@baynum.com).

•goldenticketawards.com



2023 Golden Ticket Awards attendees can receive discounted accommodations at Dollywood's DreamMore Resort. The deadline for hotel registration is August 22, 2023. COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

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Chance Rides plans for future, partners with Permanent Equity

WICHITA, Kan. — **Chance Rides Manufacturing, Inc.**, has formed a financial partnership with **Permanent Equity**, a Missouri-based private equity firm. Located in Wichita, Chance Rides is known as the largest manufacturer of amusement rides, roller coasters, observation wheels and people movers in the United States and has been delivering fun for more than 60 years.

"This company has meant everything to me, it's been my life and my family for so many years," said Owner and CEO **Dick Chance**. "It was my main goal to continue the legacy of Chance Rides long after I'm gone and for the company to be successful in the future. I've had the honor of leading the company for close to 40 years and I know Permanent Equity will help the Chance legacy continue far beyond the next 40 years."

Chance Rides operates at the same 250,000-square-foot facility **Harold Chance** started in. It currently employs 130 skilled workers, from welders to artists, many serving Chance Rides for more than 35 years.

"The financial partnership allows us to continue to provide parts and services for existing Chance products," said Chance.

Chance Rides' capabilities include engineering, prototype shop, fabrication, molding, painting, carousel art, final assembly and customer support throughout the customer's journey.

"With Permanent Equity's financial partnership, the future of Chance Rides shines brightly and with immense optimism," said **Aaron**



Chance Rides's Dick Chance poses with the **Lightning Run GTX Coaster**, at **Kentucky Kingdom**, a family-led project which both of his sons worked on. AT/FILE

Landrum, president and COO. "Our organization thrives on the exceptional skills, capability, and dedication of our outstanding team, coupled with our longstanding commitment to delivering world-class products and services."

"[Chance Rides] unwavering commitment to craftsmanship and quality are admirable, resulting in deep bonds built among customers over six decades," said **Tim Hanson**, chief investment officer at Permanent Equity. "We're excited to invest in the continued success of this management team, and to roll up our sleeves alongside them to do more of what they do best — make the world more fun."

"The core values of Permanent Equity har-

monize remarkably well with our own, and we envision this long-term relationship as mutually advantageous for our stakeholders," added Landrum. "Our diverse customer base can expect uninterrupted service and timely deliveries during this transition."

"One of the key factors in partnering with Permanent Equity is its proven track record of preserving company legacies and enhancing what's already working," said **John Chance** Chance Rides VP business development. "They're not trying to come in and change everything, they care about our company, employees and customers."

"It's been a fun ride, and I'm ready for the next chapter, enjoying some of my hobbies and traveling," commented Dick Chance. "My favorite ride was truly a family-led project. It is the **Lightning Run GTX Coaster** at **Kentucky Kingdom** in Louisville, Kentucky. It was the last project my late son, **Michael**, and John worked on together."

Over the years, all three of Dick's children — **Michael**, **John** and **Amie** — have been involved with the company.

Permanent Equity will retain the Chance Rides name, in the form of Chance Rides, LLC, and will remain in Wichita. Chance Rides will maintain its skilled workforce and the current management team. Dick Chance will transition from owner and CEO to holding a minority interest. **Aaron Landrum** will lead the company as president and CEO.

• chancerides.com

OBITUARY

Shelley Sax-Eldridge of Stern Pinball passes away

HUNTLEY, Ill. — Shelley Sax-Eldridge 70, of Huntley, Illinois, passed away peacefully July 10, 2023, at JourneyCare Hospice in Barrington, Illinois. She was born October 8, 1952, to Bernard and Gloria (nee Lerner) Sax.



Sax-Eldridge

She grew up in Rock Island, Illinois, and she lived in the Chicagoland area and Santa Clara, California.

In 1979 a friend told her about an opening for an executive assistant at a Stern pinball company. She always wondered where those things came from. She went on the interview, accepted the job on the spot and the rest is history. She wore many hats, serving as a receptionist, purchasing clerk, bookkeeper, traffic manager, personnel manager, office manager and administrative assistant.

The title on her business card was lovingly changed to JOAT (Jack Of All Trades) and never changed during her time at Stern pinball.

"Without Shelley, there would be no Stern Pinball," said Gary Stern, chairman and founder. "Shelley embodied our company's entrepreneurial, get-it-done spirit. More importantly, she was one of my closest and dearest friends, and I will miss her."

"Despite her occasionally profane protestations to the contrary, Shelley absolutely loved what she did and being part of the Stern Pinball family," added Stern. "We will never forget Shelley. Her immense contributions to our company and the pinball industry will live on forever. Rest in Peace, Shelley."

She is survived by her husband **Larry Eldridge**, brother and sister-in-law **Steve** and **Dianne Sax**, and niece **Misty Sax**.

ON THE MOVE

Launch Entertainment announced that it has added **Craig Erlich** as its CEO. Erlich was most recently the president and CEO of **Friendly's Restaurants**, with prior experience as CEO of **Brix Holdings**. Erlich is excited to bring to Launch his proven track record of leading companies, establishing and executing strategic vision, and scaling and managing a robust executive team.



Erlich

"We are very excited to have Craig leading the Launch team given his impressive track record of growth and relentless focus on franchisee success," said **Rob Arnold**, co-founder of Launch. "With dozens of locations under development and a pipeline full of sophisticated franchisees, Launch is poised for tremendous growth."

Merlin Entertainments announced the appointment of **Spencer Holt** as the company's new chief experience and people officer.

Through this newly created role, Holt will be responsible for both the employee journey of Merlin's 30,000-strong workforce and the guest experience delivered to over 50 million visitors who visit Merlin's attractions across the globe each year.

Holt is an award-winning educator, speaker, podcast host and executive coach, and



Holt

comes to Merlin with over 20 years of experience working in global businesses across the pharmaceutical, finance, franchising and sales industries. He will join the company's executive team at the beginning of August.

"There is no bigger opportunity, nor anything more important than creating the greatest place to work in the world for those closest to our guests and realizing the direct impact it will have on our guest experience," said **Scott O'Neill**, CEO of Merlin Entertainments. "Spencer Holt is the right person to lead us there and I am thrilled he has agreed to join the Merlin family."

Intercard has named arcade expert **Jeff Tash** as its route operator specialist. Tash, who joined Intercard in early 2023 as a sales rep, will represent Intercard to route operators across the U.S. and Canada. Operator customers include such industry leaders as **CTM**



Tash

Group, Pioneer Vending and **Patriot Vending**. Tash has experience in sales and business development for such leading companies as **Elaut Group, Moss Distributing, Raw Thrills** and **TouchTunes Music**.

"Jeff's extensive experience in route operations makes him a strong addition to the Intercard team as we are steadily growing our customer base in this important category," said **Bill Allen**, North America sales manager for Intercard.

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Focus *on the* HORIZON

Connections, coasters inspire Mullins

ORLANDO, Fla. — Most people will point to meeting a favorite character or superhero as a special moment from childhood. For Tyler Mullins, Spider-Man left a profound impression during a family vacation to Orlando. “The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man at Universal’s Islands of Adventure is the peak amusement and theme park experience,” he shared. “I’m not even sure I knew who Spider-Man was before I rode the attraction, but I was in awe. More than 20 years later, it’s still as impressive and amazing as it was on day one!” Today, as a design engineer for Skyline Attractions, Mullins blends the engineering process with creativity and passion for the attractions industry, often thinking of the feelings of awe he felt on the web-slinger’s famous ride.

Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, he once thought he had a “lofty goal” of a career with rides and theme parks. “I loved visiting parks,” Mullins continued. “My family was always incredibly supportive of my passion and encouraged it. When my dad would take business trips, he would pick up theme park maps and brochures from the hotels for me. I would pour over them.” He joked those park maps and rides would often make their way into school projects, too. “Since elementary school, I have been drafting ride concepts, even while in class. I always found a way to skew assignments and presentations to be about theme parks and roller coasters.”

Those early renderings and presentations helped lead him to The Ohio State University. “I have always been drawn to the technical side of how things are built and how they work,” Mullins explained. “When I thought how I could combine my lifelong love of roller coasters and theme parks, I focused on civil engineering because of its wide scope.”

Mullins recognized classwork alone would not guarantee a

dream position and pushed himself — often out of his own comfort zone — to make personal and professional connections. “When I look back now,” he said, “It was those moments of confidence when I put myself out there that helped me the most. I tell people now that even the smallest moments can be game-changing when you can push yourself to take even one step further.” He cites examples such as taking part in events geared toward emerging industry professionals and college students, including FREDex, ASTM, SKYnext and IAAPA Expo that helped him the most.

He also looked inward and focused on what set him apart from others. Mullins does not hesitate when describing himself. “I’m organized; that makes everything easier from the beginning. I’m ambitious; I set goals for myself, sometimes really lofty ones. I’m passionate; that drives me every day: passion for this industry and what I do.”

There’s a fourth word Mullins uses a great deal as well. “I am so grateful for all of the opportunities I have had so far. I’m grateful to so many in the industry who took the time to give back and to host events for students like me to expose us to career paths and opportunities. I’m grateful to everyone who continues to share their experiences and knowledge, and who open doors not just for me but for the next generation of future professionals. I remain grateful every day for all that I have done and all I continue to be a part of.”

A summer internship at Great Coasters International helped open the big door to life after college, and in 2018, Mullins joined Skyline Attractions. He has been there ever since. Mullins says his Skyline career allows him to “wear a lot of different hats. I’ve had a lot of experience with project management for some of our larger ride projects, including the Zambezi

Tyler Mullins Skyline Attractions Orlando, Florida



Zinger and a few other large-scale GCII coasters. I’ve also taken on the managerial role for events such as SKYnext and IAAPA Expo. And of course, my engineering and design work creating layout concepts and proposals alongside our team inspires me every day.”

A side “bonus” part of his role has also been with Skyline’s marketing. “I had the opportunity to overhaul our website so we could better present what we offer and showcase our portfolio, as well as takeover our monthly newsletter and social media strategy,” he continued, “I actually considered majoring in journalism because I enjoyed writing while in high school. Now I get to tap back into that “smaller passion” without forfeiting or giving anything up. It’s really amazing.”

“Most especially though, I love seeing the evolution and progress of our projects. It’s truly wild to go from the conceptual renderings of a ride to the foundations, structure and, eventually, the finished ride. To play a role all the

way through on our rides — wow, my kid dreams are now reality. I am doing it. I’m so grateful and excited for each opportunity.”

While recognizing he is still early in his career, Mullins shared giving back is important to him. Through taking part in events with TEA, ASTM International and IAAPA, he has made strong business and personal connections, and understands how tightknit the overall attractions industry really is. “Everyone works hard in this industry, and we often make sacrifices to do so,” he said. “However, a large part of that work is supporting each other, even across company lines. I’m lucky I can give back to students and others who want to learn more about being a part of the coolest industry in the world. Yes, I’m lucky, and also very grateful.”

—Susan Storey

[Editor’s Note: Amusement Today is a proud sponsor of SKYnext 2023 which is taking place in Orlando this September.]

SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

▶ Blackpool's Big Dipper gets facelift — page 45 / National Ride Operator Appreciation Day — page 46

Massive rehab projects revitalizing popular Kennywood attractions

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

WEST MIFFLIN, Pa. — To celebrate the park's 125th birthday, officials at Kennywood Park began a two-year park-wide transformation project prior to the park's opening day in 2022.

The massive two-year park improvement project included additions and upgrades from the parking lot to the main gate and throughout the walkways within the entire park.

A number of the park's rides and attractions were renovated, updated and/or repainted. A new ride was installed inside a new park area.

Upgrades and additions to food and beverage locations were made.

And the list goes on.

The refurbishments all had a precise plan, according to **Lynsey Winters**, communications director, **Palace Entertainment**, the company that owns and operates, Kennywood.

The two entities worked with **Hampton Creative** to help leverage the iconic Kennywood brand. This has created cohesion across in-park signage, website assets, social media and beyond.

"All the refurbishment projects were designed by Hampton Creative to include buildings, pathways and landscapes," Winters said. "Once the park had the renderings, workloads were divided. Some projects were done in-house by the park's talented carpenters and painters and, in some cases, third-



Kennywood's Raging Rapids, originally manufactured by Intamin, was upgraded for 2023, with refurbished rafts done in-house and a new control system was completed by Irvin Ondrey Engineering (above left). The Whip, Kennywood's oldest flat ride, also went through a complete refurbishment this year (above right). COURTESY KENNYWOOD



party vendors were brought in to complete larger scale, more-complex projects."

Beginning with the rides and attractions and starting it off in 2022, a completely restored Kangaroo ride was brought back to the park. The ride originally opened in 1962 and was manufactured by **Aero-Affiliates**.

After the 2020 season, park officials removed the Kangaroo. Careful consideration was given to the ride and park officials, along with consultation from **Premier Rides**, decided to completely redo it and bring it back with new technology.

"The park worked with Premier Rides to modernize and restore the attraction, enhancing it with new theming, lighting and a dedicated logo," Winters said. "The renewed Kangaroo was enhanced both to celebrate its special place in the park and to ensure it can be enjoyed for generations to come."

At the start of the 2023 season, the park introduced

the all-new ride in the newly designed Area 412. Spinvasion, manufactured by **Zamperla**, is the first multi-action spin ride of its kind in the United States, said Winters.

Single riders board this craft and take off, racing parallel to the ground before crisscrossing other riders.

Within this new area, the pre-existing ride, Cosmic Chaos, also underwent a transformation. Also a Zamperla ride, it was renovated with an all-new, eye-catching neon green coat of paint and refreshed celestially chartrreuse aliens.

Kennywood's Raging Rapids, manufactured by **Intamin**, was upgraded in 2023. The attraction's rafts were refurbished. The boats were done in-house, working with **Intamin's** direction. A new control system was installed by **Irvine Ondrey Engineering**.

This ride was opened in 1985 and simulates a white-water rafting trip through canyons and beneath waterfalls. Three pumps are

constantly filling the cement trough with 93,000 gallons of water each minute.

The Whip, Kennywood's oldest flat ride dating back to 1919, also went through a complete refurbishment this year. Originally manufactured by **W. F. Mangel's**, all 16 cars of the ride were completely restored with new wood and mechanical components and finished with fresh vinyl upholstery and paint.

Large-scale repainting of four of the eight Kennywood coasters was done by **Baynum Painting**. Those coasters were: Phantom's Revenge, rebuilt by **D.H. Morgan Manufacturing** and opened in 2001; Thunderbolt, the 1968 **Andrew Vettel** coaster that originally opened in 1924 as the **John Miller Pippin**; Jack Rabbit, John Miller, which originally opened in 1920 and the 1927 Racer, another John Miller coaster.

The Jack Rabbit also received a new entrance portal.

Kennywood's SwingShot received a makeover with col-

orful ribbons swirling up the sides of the massive swinging ride that catapults riders more than 90 feet into the air.

Moving on to the grounds improvements starts with guests at the park's main gate. The main gate, tunnel and entry midway were the main focus for the park's 2022 year of the refurbishment project.

"The main entrance was fully repainted in iconic Kennywood yellow and a large carousel horse was added in the center creating an inviting and eye-catching entry for visitors," Winters said.

"Murals featuring beloved Kennywood sayings, attractions and history were painted in the entry tunnel to delight guests as they make their way from the entrance into the park," she said

A more inviting and exciting atmosphere was created throughout the park complete with vibrant, signature Kennywood colors and stylish landscaping that

▶ See KENNYWOOD, page 44

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►KENNYWOOD

Continued from page 43

appeals to new guests and Kennywood traditionalists.

The park has worked with a local landscape company for the past two years to help complete the park's transformation.

The park's refreshed branding also was added throughout Kennywood through all-new, in-park signage, pole planners, way-finding and more.

Numerous food and beverage, retail and game locations also received redesigns, establishing brand consistency throughout.

Some of those additional updates created to help guests celebrate Kennywood's 125th anniversary include:

- Pizza Warehouse, the popular park pizza parlor, that underwent a complete transformation, featuring a flashy brick façade, a refreshed interior and a unique photo location, as well as an all-new menu and revamped ordering process to increase efficiency.

- Golden Nugget, one



Kennywood's main entrance was the park focus in 2022. It was fully repainted in iconic park yellow and a large carousel horse was added in the center (above left). The new area for Spinvasion is called Area 412 (above right). A component of the area is the inclusion of the pre-existing ride, Cosmic Chaos, which underwent a transformation for 2023. COURTESY KENNYWOOD



of the park's most recognizable stands, was revitalized with brilliant turquoise and Kennywood yellow exterior, blending classic and modern details. The iconic ice cream cone has been a Kennywood staple for generations.

- Pagoda, one of Kennywood's most striking restaurants, was renovated with whimsical façades that showcase the restaurant's savory side, with a fire-breathing sausage and its sweet side with a larger-than-life frozen treat, adding to its imaginative design.

- 1898 Coffee Co. is Kennywood's own in-park coffee shop that features an array of coffee flavors to jump-start the fun along the main midway. The building 1898 Coffee Co. is in was completely renovated to give off a neighborhood coffee shop vibe with signage that includes a larger-than-life coffee cup with special effects creating steam coming off the top.

- The retail shop in the new Area 412 section, the Gift Ship, was updated and rebranded to connect to the alien theme, offering out-of-this-world souvenirs and an extraterrestrial vibe.

- The first theme-park-

- based Primanti Bros. restaurant is the newest addition to the park, located in Lost Kennywood. This partnership creates the perfect marriage of two iconic Pittsburgh brands. The beloved staple serves its "almost famous" sandwiches daily.

With safety and security the top priority at Kennywood, officials introduced new security measures in 2022.

"These new security measures are proprietary and in the interest of the safety of our guests and employees," Winters said.

Kennywood also employs the use of Evolve, a

state-of-the-art weapons detection system, as well as canines. New cameras with AI technology have been added along the entire fence line of the park.

New for 2023, the park added a bag policy limiting the size of bags guests are allowed to bring into Kennywood.

The chaperone policy has also stayed in effect. The policy, instituted in the fall of 2022, requires anyone under 17 years of age to be accompanied by an adult 21 or older at all times. Masks are banned after 6 p.m., except for medical masks.

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Blackpool's Big Dipper celebrates 100th birthday with facelift

AT: Pam Sherborne
 psherborne@amusementtoday.com

BLACKPOOL, U.K. — On August 23, **Blackpool Pleasure Beach** is throwing a different type of special event. It is a birthday party, but not for the park as it dates back to 1896, already surpassing 100 years. It is not for any staff, employee or guest. It is a 100th birthday party of the park's iconic Big Dipper wooden roller coaster.

The classic roller coaster was first installed in 1923, with a track extension renovation in 1934.

"A coaster as monumental as our Big Dipper deserves nothing less than the glamorous party we intend on throwing," said CEO of Blackpool Pleasure Beach, **Amanda Thompson OBE**. "We want everyone else to celebrate with us. It is set to be an evening filled with fun."

Upon arrival, guests will receive a commemorative birthday party ticket, discount on centenary merchandise, a certificate and a voucher for a complimentary glass of prosecco and a cupcake.

And, of course, they will have the opportunity to ride the coaster.

In addition, there will be plenty of entertainment and laughs, said park officials.

Blackpool Pleasure Beach's Big Dipper has been described as the ultimate wooden coaster with five drops and a series of twisting and banked turns. It is oriented north-to-south, rises to 65 feet and spans 3,300 feet in length, with one cycle of the ride taking approximately two and a half minutes.

The coaster operates with two trains, each containing three four-bench cars, seating two people per bench. The ride roughly transports 672 riders an hour and reaches a maximum speed of about 55 mph.

Aside from the roller coaster's iconic onion cupola at its peak, the coaster is unique as it operates on two lift hills and one simultaneous chain.

Officials at Blackpool Pleasure Beach decided to give the Big Dipper a facelift for its 100th birthday. The nine-month project, which culminated in reopening on July 7 of this year, included

a total paint job on the coaster and maintenance on the track and structure.

The onion at its peak went from blue and white to silver, white and gold. The pristine white rails have impressed many guests so far.

All the work on the Big Dipper was done in-house.

"We have an in-house

▶ See **DIPPER**, page 47



The Big Dipper stands tall in 1923 from the sea wall (above). Some of the Thompson family members riding the Big Dipper in 1953 (right). COURTESY BLACKPOOL PLEASURE BEACH



SAFETY MARKET PLACE

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First annual National Ride Operator Appreciation Day a success

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The first National Ride Operator Appreciation Day was held June 30 of this year with parks across the country creating celebratory events to let their ride operators know how much they are valued.

"This day was created to celebrate and appreciate ride operators in the amusement industry who operate rides such as roller coasters, carousels, Ferris wheels, log rides and all the amazing rides at theme parks, amusement parks, carnivals and fun centers," said Cindee Huddy, owner/managing partner, International Ride Training (IRT), which provides ride operations training, auditing, advisory services, coaching and much more.

"Many in our industry participated and we hope the whole industry will participate in 2024 as the word grows," Huddy said.

Some of the ways parks

celebrated included **Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom**, Allentown, Pennsylvania, celebrating their team with a pancake breakfast bar and ice cream sundae bar throughout the day. Each associate was given a thank-you card and a button to show how much they are appreciated.

Daytona Sling Shot Park, Daytona Beach, Florida, held a Christmas-type celebration on June 30 to celebrate the ride operators there. The operators were offered a full Christmas dinner including a turkey dinner with all the trimmings.

Kings Dominion, Doswell, Virginia, hosted an all-day appreciation event as well. Park officials created a video of their operators sharing what they love about their jobs.

Wild Waves in Federal Way, Washington, also celebrated big with their ride operations team.

Of the parks that did



Park officials at Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom, Allentown, Pennsylvania, celebrated their ride operations team on June 30 with a pancake breakfast bar and ice cream sundae bar throughout the day. COURTESY IRT

participate, Huddy said they shared how much their ride operators appreciated being appreciated.

"We hope next year to have more fun by having more parks join in and have carnivals and fun centers participate as well," she said.

Huddy said the National Ride Operator Day celebration was the creation of **Connie Crowl**, operations manager, at Kings Dominion.

"She started this at her park last year," Huddy said. "She reached out to us to help secure the date and promote this important day industry wide."

"All of us at IRT were immediately on board and registered the day in the National Day Archives and kicked it off for 2023," she said. "We are looking forward to making it a bigger celebration next year and for years to come."

Ride operators are passionate individuals that are very committed to what they do, Huddy said.

"Ensuring the safety of the riders while being friendly and efficient to ensure the rider experience is thrilling and fun," she said. "What would a world without ride operators be? No fun."

Along with the training programs, education and coaching, IRT also provides ride operators leadership development, Standard Operating procedures development and general ride safety consulting to theme parks worldwide. The company hosts an annual Ride Camp training program.

IRT offers International Ride Operator Certification (iROC), a third-party certification of ride operators' safety, efficiency and professionalism. It is based on standards of performance developed by IRT in consultation with leading industry owners and operators around the globe.



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►DIPPER

Continued from page 45

body shop, which is home to a talented team of individuals that keep on top of all of our refresh and paint maintenance on the park," said **Olivia Houghton**, public relations executive at the park.

The Big Dipper was originally designed by **John Miller** and built by **William H. Strickler** and **Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters** at a cost of just over £25,000.

The coaster operated for 10 years before the track was extended by **Charles Paige**, an American engineer.

The Big Dipper holds the title as one of Britain's oldest-in-use roller coasters and is one of the oldest rides at Blackpool Pleasure Beach.

"Although this coaster may be a veteran amongst the park, it's a truly enjoyable ride and we hope that its recent 'glow-up' will reinstate its position as a grand wooden coaster that is rich with history and a century full of memories and laughs," Thompson said.

Its iconic status has seen millions of people step aboard the famous trains, which take guests on a white-knuckle ride to the top of its summit, an adrenalin-filled journey not short of big drops and exhilarating turns before returning to the station.

Some of the famous thrill-seekers include the likes of Hollywood's **Diana Dors**, **Wayne Rooney** and **Robbie Williams** just to name a few.

Aside from the party, Blackpool Pleasure Beach is offering a way for guests to be transported back in time in honor of the coaster's 100-year history. People may upload any image of themselves at Blackpool Pleasure Beach and it will be sent on a journey back to 1923. The participating person will receive a centenary image via email.

Big Dipper will be open during normal park operating hours on August 23 for those who wish to ride during their visit.

The party will take place after the park's normal business hours. Blackpool Pleasure Beach has been family owned and operated since it first opened in 1896.



The Big Dipper's iconic onion went from a blue and white to its now silver, white and gold (above left). The ride is sporting a pristine white track after receiving a face lift from the park's body shop (above left). COURTESY BLACKPOOL PLEASURE BEACH

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In the heat of summer

As any experienced amusement industry operator can tell you, as the summer heats up, it becomes even more difficult and important to keep staff members motivated and engaged in their essential work tasks, including safety vigilance.

As excessive heat has affected much of the globe this summer, it is critical for park leadership to re-double their efforts to monitor guest and employee heat-related safety.

Below are some tips and reminders to keep heat safety top of mind as we hydrate our way through August:

- Monitoring guests for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke: Educate your staff on the signs of heat exhaustion. Some signs of heat exhaustion include: dizziness, head-

ache, feeling sick or being sick, skin becoming pale and clammy or getting a heat rash, cramps in arms, legs and stomach. If a guest shows signs of head exhaustion or heat stroke, staff should take immediate action to cool them down and call for assistance.



Lowenstein

- Stay hydrated: Ensure employees are drinking plenty of water throughout the day, even if they are not thirsty. Talk to them about avoiding sugary drinks, as they can dehydrate you even more. Offer more water stations. Ensure misters are working in queue lines if present. Talk to employees about encouraging guests to stay hydrated.

- Sunscreen: Apply sunscreen

and reapply every two hours. Remind employees to get sunscreen on all exposed skin, including ears, lips and tops of their feet for lifeguards.

- Take breaks in the shade: Provide shaded areas for your employees to take their breaks. Have water available in break areas. Offer shade in queue lines and dining areas where feasible

- Monitor the weather forecast: if high heat is expected, take steps to prepare the park. Check all umbrellas are up and functioning, shade structures are intact and ample water stations for employees and guests.

If you're looking for more ideas on how to educate, train and keep your workforce safe all year long, **AIMS International** has you covered. The 2023 AIMS

International Safety Seminar is right around the corner and is chock-full of training tips and creative ways to educate and motivate your team, even during the dog-days of summer.

Remember, a certificate holder of either an AIMS or **NAARSO** certification can renew that certification by earning continuing education units (CEUs) at either the AIMS or NAARSO safety seminars, or by taking on-line continuing education courses and earning CEUs through AIMSconnected. AIMS International and NAARSO stand united in offering world-class safety education programs to the amusement industry.

For more information, please visit aimsintl.org or email info@aimsintl.org.

—Amy Lowenstein

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