



Manufactured by Intamin Worldwide, SeaWorld San Diego opened Arctic Rescue on June 2, 2023. COURTESY SEAWORLD



Arctic Rescue coaster receives rave reviews at SeaWorld San Diego

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — A new cool coaster opened at **SeaWorld San Diego** this summer, and, even with this country's above-high temperatures, the Arctic Rescue is providing icy thrills to riders.

SeaWorld officials have been touting that this new ride, at 2,800 feet in length and with 40 mph maximum speed, is the fastest and longest straddle coaster on the West Coast. Riders experience three launches with speeds of 34 mph, 38 mph and 40 mph, respectively, while riding on the snowmobile-type seats of Arctic Rescue.

Manufactured by **Intamin Worldwide**, the new ride opened on June 2 to much anticipation.

"Arctic Rescue adds a new, family-friendly thrill to the park," said **Jim Lake**, park president. "With every innovation in the park, we push our mission forward of educating guests about marine mammals while providing them unique thrills and excitement they can't find anywhere else."

Each Arctic Rescue train holds 16 riders in eight, two-person rows. Riders race through the

► See ARCTIC, page 6

Haunted Hotel from Sally makes fun, family fit at Funtown Splashtown U.S.A.

AT: Tim Baldwin
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SACO, Maine — This summer, **Funtown Splashtown U.S.A.** debuted something the park had been wanting for some time. Before the turn of the millennium, a haunted walk-through attraction was adjacent to the park. After it closed in the 1990s, visitors felt a sense of loss. Park management felt this was the time to bring back something in that vein but in a new and updated manner.

"Coming out of a really good year post-COVID, we felt it was time for a new attraction, and a number of factors including the existing building and growing support for a 'haunted house' type of attraction from our guests led to the decision," said **Cory Cormier**, maintenance manager. "Having chatted with **Sally Dark Rides** in the past, we

knew we wanted them to bring the idea to life."

A dark ride gave the park the opportunity to repurpose a building it already owned.

"There was an existing 60- by 120-foot, metal-span building that was built around 1982 as a 500-person capacity theatre," said Cormier. "It housed 'The Galactic Laser Experience' for a few years before shutting down. After we tried a few different show options, it was permanently closed off and the front 20 feet turned into an arcade, with the back turning into storage for retail and games."

Sally took this existing building and in collaboration with park management created an original tale that comes off as scary but not extreme. Haunted Hotel was the name chosen for the attraction, and it spins a tale of a witch requested by townsfolk to leave a century ago having cursed the land her house was on. Of course, the

hotel exists there now, and strange happenings have been taking place.

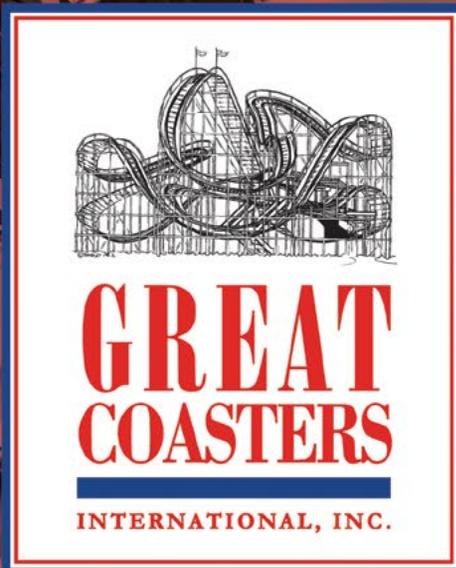
Amusement Today asked **Drew Hunter**, vice president of creative design for Sally, about the importance of a dark ride in the lineup at an amusement park.

"Aside from being attractions which are unique, creative and entertaining — and a refuge from the outdoor weather — there is a less-discussed reason from my personal vantage point regarding why a dark ride is always popular at a park," Hunter said. "Every time I sit in a vehicle just before dispatching — especially on a dark ride I've never been on — I wonder, 'What lies beyond the entrance door? What is going to happen once I ride through the portal? What new world will I encounter?'" Unlike most

► See HAUNTED, page 6



Haunted Hotel repurposed a building Funtown already had on property. COURTESY FUNTOWN SPLASHTOWN U.S.A.



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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint

May we never grow up



Robinson

Several months back, I wrote a column about the anticipation of Disney opening its TRON: Lightcycle Run coaster. At that time, I asked just how many of us had not — at one point or another — fantasized about riding a lightcycle on the grid and racing our friends when we were kids.

The ride was letting us live our childhood dream.

This past spring, I drove a wild Mario Kart down Rainbow Road at Universal Studios Hollywood's Mario Kart: Bowser's Challenge attraction and found myself walking through the Koopa Kingdom from the Nintendo games of my youth.

Let's face it, our attractions and our industry are the result of big kids finally getting to play with the big toys.

Recent announcements only further confirm this reality. Holiday World has announced the new Good Gravy coaster for 2024. It's a coaster that rockets through a can of cranberry sauce, literally letting Holiday World guests daydream of the days they played with their food. The unveiling of Cedar Point's Top Thrill 2 and its triple-launch race car trains are a giant visual of rubbing those toy rev cars on the carpet and watching them go faster and crazy with each increase in friction.

The forthcoming Mattel Adventure Park in Arizona is the living embodiment of this idea. A walkthrough Barbie's Dream House and a Hot Wheels roller coaster are just the beginning. Even as I approach the age of 50, I stepped back in awe at IAAPA Expo 2022 when I saw the giant Castle Greyskull, He-Man and Skeletor sculptures on display that were set to be part of the park's minigolf course.

We're engineering the rides of our childhood dreams and still playing all these years later. It's a spectacular feeling to realize that not only do we never have to stop being kids ... it can get even better with age!



INDUSTRY VOICE: Peter van der Schans, IAAPA

Accepting the responsibility of sustainability

Sustainability within the global attractions industry is of paramount importance in our rapidly changing world. As people's awareness of environmental and social issues grows, so does their expectation that businesses, including those in the attractions sector, should operate responsibly. Our industry exerts significant influence on the environment and local communities. That's why embracing sustainability is not just a choice but a necessity.

Earlier this year, the IAAPA Board of Directors approved commissioning a Materiality Assessment to get a better sense of the association's opportunities to operate in a more sustainable manner. This analysis involves engaging with stakeholders, gathering their input and organizing this into a framework which can contribute to strategic planning as well as satisfy corporate sustainability compliance objectives.

This assessment will also allow us to develop information and resources we can share with our



Schans

members to help them operate their businesses in a more sustainable way.

This effort aligns with survey results where 71% of all members indicated that sustainability is extremely/very important to their organization. Sustainability is not a throwaway topic, and we understand it takes commitment

and dedication to make a meaningful impact through the choices we, as an association and an industry, make.

That's why we have taken sizable steps to make IAAPA Expo Europe a more sustainable event and are following guidelines from the Austrian Ecolabel for *Green Meetings and Green Events* to make informed decisions.

While a lot of our work will not be noticeable to attendees, some things, like an increased use of digital signage (to reduce paper waste) and reusable dishes for catering orders, are part of the program. We know these efforts are just the first steps in our larger strategic approach, but they are an important step in the right direction.

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



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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Elizabeth Gotway, Six Flags St. Louis

Elizabeth Gotway wears many different hats when it comes to marketing at **Six Flags St. Louis**, where she has worked since 1989, and she wouldn't have it any other way. As the "Gateway to Thrills," Six Flags St. Louis is one of the company's three original theme parks, having opened in 1971. Known for her compassion, good nature and work ethic, Elizabeth also brings a long tenure to her job which comes with vast knowledge of the park's history and a good grip on the industry.

Title: Marketing, PR, Entertainment, Events and Execution Manager.

Number of years in the industry: 35 full-time, and six seasonal.

Best thing about the industry: It's ever-changing, there is always something new.

Favorite amusement park ride: Batman: The Ride.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ... Working at a hospital.

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Staffing! To provide the best experience for our guests, staffing is key. However, the number of applicants looking for a job is much less now than prior to 2020 and is impacting all types of businesses. I think the amusement industry is fortunate because it offers teens and young adults a fun job with great networking and leadership opportunities, so it may not be quite as bad as some other industries. But it still continues to be a challenge.

The thing I like most about amusement park season is ... Hearing the train whistle for the first time each season. The park just comes to life with the rides running and guests laughing and screaming.

Favorite kind of sandwich: Philly with provolone cheese, hold the onions and peppers.

My ideal day off is spent ... Sleeping in and then being able to spend time outside with our cows.

Least favorite holiday: Valentine's Day.

Are you a spontaneous soul or do you have to have everything mapped out? I really like to have a plan but can be very spontaneous with my boys.

Last time I went swimming was ... 2021



Elizabeth Gotway has enjoyed more than 30 years as part of the team at Six Flags St. Louis. COURTESY SIX FLAGS ST. LOUIS

If I was lost in the woods with nothing but an army knife, I could make a ...

Mark in the trees that I pass so that someone could find me, and I would know that I am not walking in circles!

Do you: eat out or cook at home most often? Eat out.

I feel most comfortable when ... I am busy with a project.

My father always told me ... You are only as good as your word.

Favorite morning drink: Diet Mt. Dew!

If I could watch only one TV show, it would be ... Friends or The Office.

Favorite family activity: Anything and everything with my boys.

What part of the day do you feel most creative? Nighttime.

My childhood ambition was to ... Be a teacher.

French fries or tater tots? French fries ... any kind of French fries.

If I could have any celebrity as a neighbor, it would be ... Definitely The Rock.

Favorite childhood movie: Gone with the Wind.

When it comes to college football, I cheer for ... No football for me!

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Keeping Strate history



SYRACUSE, N.Y. — On August 23, the Circus Model Builders of Central New York Hoxie Tucker Ring #73, debuted its tribute to the Strates Shows as part of its annual State Fair display. The organization's display features more than 3,000 square feet of model circuses, model carnivals and historic posters. The Strates Shows display includes vintage pictures and signage alongside a 50-car, scale model of the James E. Strates Shows train circa 1964. Above, James E. "Jimmy" Strates, third generation Strates Shows owner, visited the historical display on opening day of the New York State Fair. COURTESY JAMES E. STRATES SHOWS

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Guests are able to learn more about Alaska's wildlife while in queue for the ride as well as in the adjacent Wild Arctic Exhibit. COURTESY SEAWORLD

▶ARCTIC Continued from page 1

unpredictable arctic climate, able to lean into banks and turns and glide to heights of 30 feet. With its 48-inch height requirement, adventure seekers of all ages will enjoy the thrills and chills of Arctic Rescue.

SeaWorld San Diego partnered with nonprofit rescue and research facility **Alaska Sealife Center**, located in Seward, Alaska, for the opening of Arctic Rescue. As guests queue to board the new coaster, they are able to learn more about Alaska's wildlife and the need for conservation.

The center also is a partner in the Wild Arctic Exhibit, which is located alongside the coaster. Guests are encouraged to walk through the Wild Arctic exhibit and witness the wonders of the park's resident beluga whales, walruses and ringed seals whose wild populations are being threatened by a loss of Arctic sea ice.

Mitik, a resident walrus at Wild Arctic, was rescued in 2012 off the coast of

Alaska at just a couple of months old by a local fisherman. The whale was rehabilitated by the Alaska Sealife Center before being deemed non-releasable and finding a permanent home at SeaWorld San Diego.

SeaWorld Rescue San Diego also partners with the Alaska Sealife Center on the rescue and rehabilitation of Alaskan animals including seals, sea lions, beluga whales, otters and walruses, among others.

The Alaska Sealife Center is the only facility in Alaska that combines a public aquarium with marine research, education and wildlife response. While primarily dedicated to marine research and education, the nonprofit center is the only permanent marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation facility in Alaska.

Tara L. Riemer, president and CEO of the Alaska Sealife Center, said this new collaboration will enhance the center's mission to share Arctic rescue and conservation stories with the public.

•seaworld.com



Guests hop onto the snowmobile-type seats and ride to heights of 30 feet. COURTESY SEAWORLD

▶HAUNTED Continued from page 1

coasters or other openly visible rides at an amusement or theme park, a dark ride doesn't reveal its secrets until you ride it. Just before you enter a dark ride, there is a thrill of anticipation as to what will be found on the inside! I like that. A dark ride is an adventure in discovery."

Including the queue, 14 scenes immerse guests in the storyline. One of the principal characters is Miss Elanor, the manager of the Whispering Pines Hotel, who appears as three separate animatronics in the journey.

"There are so many hauntingly effective moments in Haunted Hotel!" grinned Hunter. "Perhaps my favorite overall scene is the hotel lobby which features a grand staircase, a huge fireplace and mantel, an oversized grandfather clock — and all manner of other-worldly manifestations brought on by the witch's curse. I particularly like the double arch window in the lobby which reveals a raging electrical storm outdoors with two dark, red-eyed ghouls howling and growling and scraping at the windowpanes."

In later scenes, guests experience a tilting hallway and a framed painting that grows tentacles and a huge eyeball.

Riders become involved by using "curse eradicators" to restore things as they should be.

When asked if Sally incorporated something new into this installation, Hunter told *Amusement Today*, "We have made great use of video effects, which are integral within the physical scenes, including ghosts in mirrors, the ghouls in the windows, a morphing stained-glass window, a fire with demonic eyes appearing in the fireplace and projections of the witch and other nightmarish beings. Most are CGI, but we also created some of the video effects in-house using a few of our Sally Dark Ride employees as ghostly inhabitants of the hotel. And there is one scene titled Dimension Dark-X which we have never done



Miss Elanor, an animatronic from Sally, welcomes guests to the Whispering Pines Hotel. COURTESY FUNTOWN SPLASHTOWN U.S.A.

anything like and was a real challenge to successfully create. It is a confusing and disorienting effect, but it is very simply achieved. Soon after that scene, guests witness the four missing hotel guests transform from psychedelic shapes back into their human form. This was something Sally had never attempted before but works beautifully in context."

The ride operates with eight vehicles supplied by **Bertazzon**.

Hopes were to have the ride open earlier in the season, but unfortunate delays moved the opening back.

"One of our first contractors that had to finish their work first was delayed over 5 five weeks from their projected start, so that created a cascading effect over the other contractors," Cormier told *AT*. "Thankfully a lot of our other contractors agreed to work weekends and some long nights, along with some of our crew, and we managed to pull it off. It was most definitely a team effort all around."

Buzz continued to build

even with the delay.

"Last year, we had closed the small arcade in the front of the building and hung a teaser banner across the front door," said Cormier. "People immediately reacted on our Facebook page guessing at what was coming. There is still a lot of love out there over the old haunted mansion we used to operate on-site, so I think our guests appreciate we have brought something like that back."

"The collaboration of Sally Dark Rides and Funtown Splashtown U.S.A. has been a delight in all aspects," said Hunter. "The Funtown team wanted a Haunted Hotel theme, so Sally presented them with several story options. Those were whittled down to one story, and then we all polished that into the ride we have today."

"I just personally love the fact that the whole family had a hand in both pitching ideas with Sally and really helping to create the characters and story involved with the ride," said Cormier.



Riders use "curse eradicators" to interact with each scene. COURTESY FUNTOWN SPLASHTOWN U.S.A.

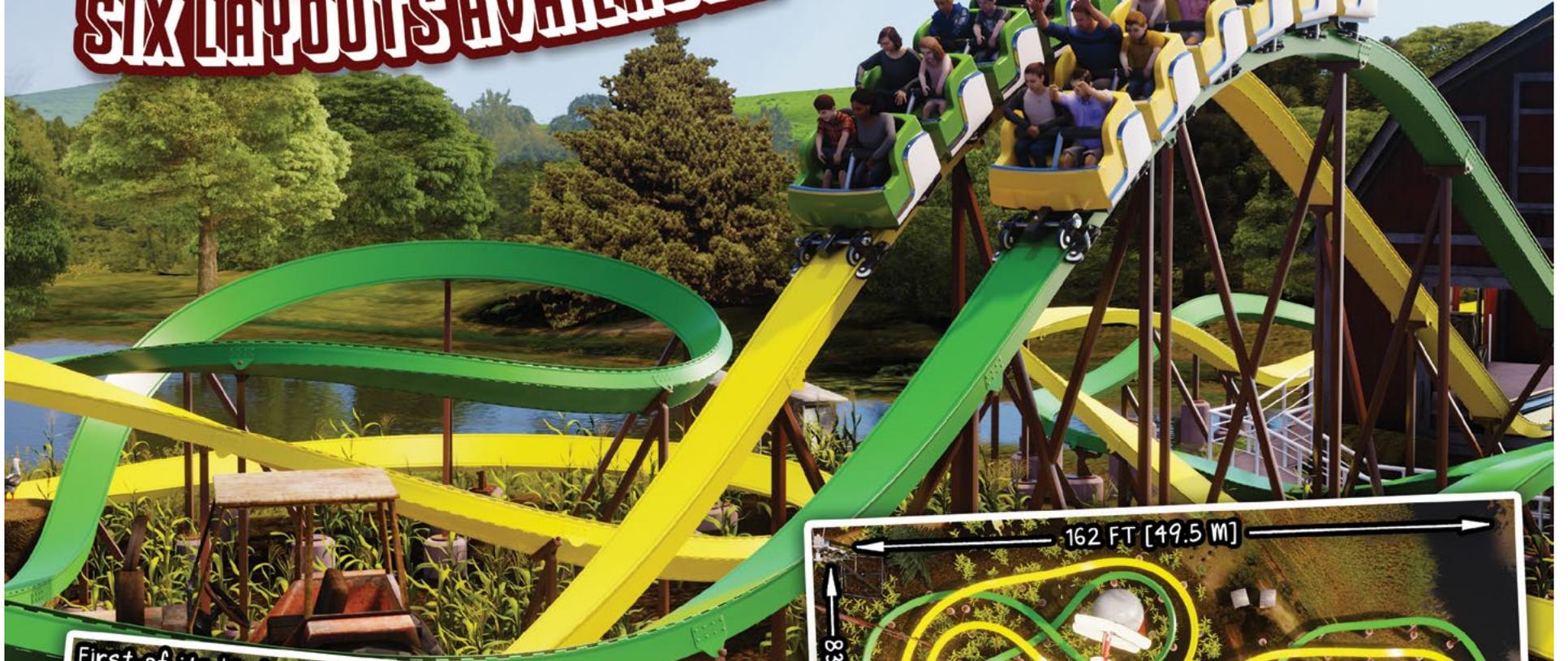
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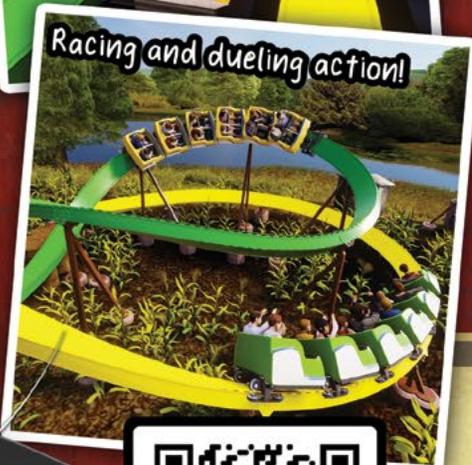


Details

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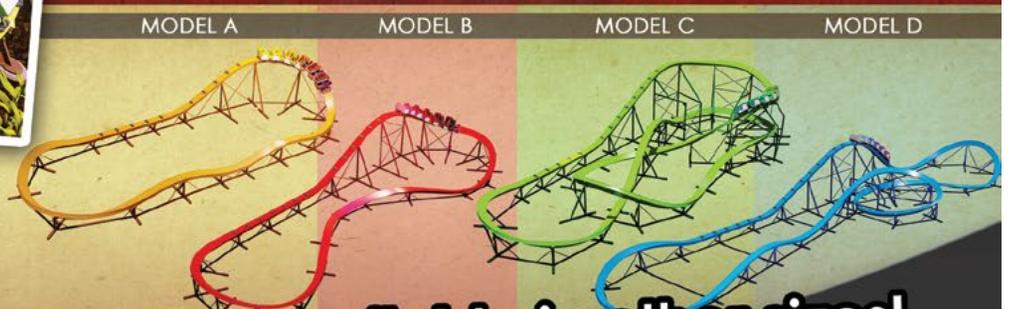
| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| Height | 24.5' [7.5 m] |
| Length | 566' [172.7 m] 592' [180.4 m] |
| Footprint | 162' x 83' [49.5 m x 25.3 m] |
| Capacity | 1,200 pph |
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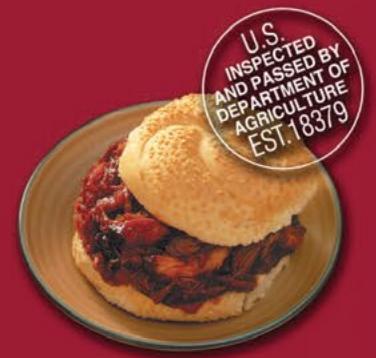


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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Holiday World announces Good Gravy coaster — page 14 / South Carolina opens Main Event FEC — page 26

Two new rides from Zamperla please guests of Adventureland

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ALTOONA, Iowa — In the past few years, Adventureland has seen growth that would make larger theme parks jealous. Following a major collection of flat rides the previous year, the park installed two new attractions in 2023.

General Manager Mike Lusky is new to the park, but he is well aware of the void left by the removal of the park's flume a few years back.

"When we opened the flume, [enthusiasm for such a ride] was one of the most common things we heard," he said. "People are excited. A lot of them have said it is better than the old flume. The two major drops on it are generating a splash literally with our guests."

Drakken Falls is the name of the new attraction and features boats that seat six.

But the flume wasn't all. Intertwined is a family coaster called Flying Viking.

"The combination of the coaster and flume ride is the ideal scenario for all age groups in one compact area," said Lusky. "One of the best shots I've seen is if you're lucky enough to get the coaster to fly by the front entrance of the ride and get the flume to splash right [beneath it] at the same time. I wish I could get my phone out in time."

"In well-established amusement parks, spatial allocation often comes at a premium," said Michael Coleman, North American sales manager, Zamperla.



Two new family rides at Adventureland intertwine with each other. AT/TIM BALDWIN

"Being able to utilize a single point of entry/exit for two loading/unloading stations while turning over approximately 1,000 people per hour in a relatively small footprint has a significant impact on the overall guest experience. The space, which was once home to a smattering of attractions, now holds two stunning attractions with more than double the capacity the area could once handle."

While both rides cater to families, older kids are embracing it too.

"One of the things with the coaster is it's literally one of the first things a child can ride. It's smooth; it's exciting," Lusky told *Amusement Today*. "It's not an over-the-top thrill, but it is thrilling enough for all age groups. But it's that one coaster that a youngster can get on for the very first time."

The height requirement is 36 inches to ride (with an adult). Flying Viking fills a void where a children's coaster was lacking.

"I love that the coaster has a low height requirement, but the train is accessible for a wide variety of riders," said Chris Kearsing, director of operations. "Someone tall like myself fits very comfortably. But someone only 36 inches tall can safely ride."

It's a very smooth coaster, and we've essentially had no mechanical downtime."

Because both attractions are self-contained, a Viking theme is a motif carried throughout.

"The theme is intriguing. It tells a story as you go through the queue. You'll see panels on the side that relay that same message that people can associate with," said Lusky.

"The log flume is also accessible to a wide variety of riders," said Kearsing. "It's an updated version of a fan favorite we had here for years. We're getting good throughput."

Accompanied children 42 inches tall can ride Drakken Falls. If they are unaccompanied, it is 48 inches.

"It's an excellent family attraction that pays homage to the old flume that was removed to make way for the Monster [coaster] a few years ago," Kearsing said. "It's an updated version of the older log flume-style attractions."

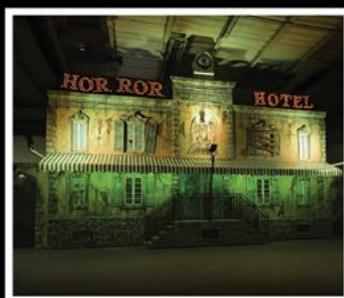
► See ZAMPERLA, page 10



A viking motif adorns both rides. The flume features boats that seat six passengers (above right). COURTESY ADVENTURELAND; AT/TIM BALDWIN



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► **ZAMPERLA**
Continued from page 9

It's highly engaging from both a rider standpoint and a spectator standpoint."

"Putting the rides together on the same plot of land makes everything about the experience better. It increases the kinetic energy of the area, it makes the rides more visually appealing and, from what we have seen at other Integrated Rides sites, it drives up guest per-cap spending," said Adam Sandy, roller coaster sales and marketing director, Zamperla. "Designing two attractions together is a huge benefit to parks for a myriad of reasons."

"The intertwining of the attractions is really cool from a spectator standpoint, even if someone doesn't want to ride or get wet. They can still enjoy the experience from the midway," said Kearsing.

The project was similar to an installation at Luna Park in New York's Coney Island. The concept proved to be a good fit for Adventureland.

"It came from discussing needs, like a lot of clients, they wanted capacity but were short on space. The park wanted a true 'first big coaster,' but they also knew there was a need to replace the log flume that was removed after the 2015 season," Sandy said. "The Integrated Rides package allowed the park to open two signature attractions in a relatively small footprint."

According to Coleman, Adventureland had more accessibility at this site than in New York, making for a quicker turnaround on the project.

No rides were retired to make room for the new installation.

Adventureland is part of Palace Entertainment.

"I think there is a high expectation for this park, just because of the great potential," Lusky told AT. "A 50-to-100-mile driving radius for visitors would be typical, but it seems to me in Iowa, all of Iowa and adjoining states will drive to Adventureland for their annual visit. We're excited to build on what we have."

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Minion chaos, villainous twist 'blasts' into Universal Studios Florida

AT: David Fake

Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — On August 11, Universal Studios Florida at Universal Orlando Resort unveiled Minion Land with its new Villain-Con Minion Blast attraction, inviting guests to step into the world of Illumination Entertainment's hit animated films like never before.

The new land and revolutionary gaming attraction are a testament to Universal Creative's commitment to creating unique immersive experiences that cater to a diverse range of tastes. From the whimsical and mischievous world of the Minions to the competitive gaming adventure of Villain-Con Minion Blast, Universal delivers excitement and fun that will captivate guests of all ages.

Step into a world where yellow mischief reigns supreme, and laughter knows no bounds. Minion Land is a vibrant addition to Universal Studios Florida that brings the iconic Minions from the *Despicable Me* franchise to life in spectacular fashion. Almost immediately after guests set foot inside the park, they encounter the new whimsical land, and are transported to Gru's secret lair and the energetic universe of Minions.

The one-of-a-kind land expands upon the wildly popular *Despicable Me* Minion Mayhem attraction and engages the entire family in a new collection of humorous adventures inspired by Illumination's beloved Minions franchise.

Universal didn't forget the Minions' favorite treat, bananas. Yes, there are *lots* of bananas!

Guests can fuel up for the mayhem with a unique dining experience, Illumination's Minion Cafe — a new eatery run by the Minions featuring inventive fare for every guest; Pop-A-Nana — a kiosk featuring banana-flavored popcorn; Freeze Ray Pops — a walk up window serving refreshingly colorful frozen treats; and Bake My Day — a retail location and bakery featuring Minion-themed



Minion Land is a vibrant addition to Universal Studios Florida that brings the iconic Minions from the *Despicable Me* franchise to life in spectacular fashion. In Illumination's Villain-Con Minion Blast guests blast their way to supervillain stardom in an experience which blends immersive sets, interactive game-based technology and an original storyline.

AT/DAVID FAKE; COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS FLORIDA



sweet treats. They can also pick up all the items necessary to complete their villainous transformation at the new Evil Stuff retail store. Guests can also stop by the outdoor Illumination Theater façade to meet, greet and interact with beloved characters like the Minions, Gru, Margo, Edith and Agnes from the *Despicable Me* franchise, and Rosita, Gunter and Johnny from the hit film *Sing*.

For those who are drawn to the allure of villains and antiheroes, Villain-Con Minion Blast offers a thrilling contrast to the original motion simulator attraction of Minion Land, Minion Mayhem, taking guests into the twisted world of Minion villains. The ride takes visitors on a journey through the minds of some of the most notorious villains from various film universes, offering an exhilarating and spine-tingling experience.

In Illumination's Villain-Con Minion Blast guests blast their way to supervillain stardom. Blending immersive sets, interactive game-based

technology, and an original storyline, this first-of-its-kind attraction puts guests' villainous skills to the test to see if they have what it takes to become a member of the Vicious 6 — a notorious group of supervillains from the Illumination hit film, *Minions: The Rise of Gru*.

As guests make their way through the "convention," they'll venture through the trade show floor, stocked with the latest gadgets vehicles, and fashion to pull off the most heinous of schemes, before picking up a blaster to compete against their friends, loved ones and fellow guests to prove how bad they really are.

Throughout the competition, guests use their E-Liminator X blaster — equipped with Freeze Rays, Banana Bombs, Explosive nun chucks and more — to cause as much mayhem and destruction as possible to earn points. As guests wind and glide through the experience aboard a moving pathway, they encounter each member of the Vicious 6, voiced by the

original cast from the film, in a setting inspired by their character, including: Belle Bottom, (Taraji P. Henson), Stronghold (Danny Trejo) Nun-Chuck (Lucy Lawless), Jean Clawed (Jean-Claude Van Damme), and Svengance (Dolph Lundgren).

Villain-Con Minion Blast is the first Universal Orlando attraction to feature a connected game play experience via The Official Universal Orlando Resort App. By syncing their blaster to the app with just a tap, guests, err, contenders, take their game to an entirely new level and track their scores, embark on special missions within the attraction, unlock evil perks and extra powerful blasts to help them gain more points and earn digital collectibles. The more guests play and the higher they score, the more perks and bragging rights they earn. Plus, this digital experience connects to the visitor's Universal Guest Account within the Universal Orlando app — unlocking a deeper connection that enhances their in-

park experience and sets the stage for even more digital-to-physical world benefits.

Villain-Con Minion Blast combines captivating storytelling with state-of-the-art technology to create an attraction that is freshly immersive and enthralling.

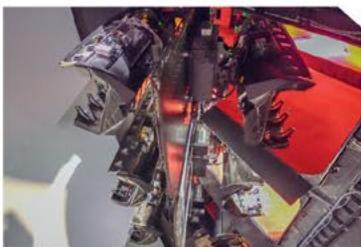
When asked what is most unique about Villain-Con Minion Blast, Victor Lugo, NBCUniversal's director of immersive experiences, said this, "First and foremost, we give you a completely untethered blaster to move about and use throughout the space, then we immerse you with things that you can blast in every direction. That along with the mixture of media and physical show sets are all interactable. We put you on a moving walkway and the intention there is really to give you freedom with how you go about what you blast. The general autonomy is part of the 'play.' We wanted to make sure guests can play the way they want to play. So, we're catering to people, and hopefully we'll create fans and more players by doing so."

According to his bio, Lugo has over a decade of design, software engineering and production experience. He has led character interaction and core gameplay efforts for over 15 AAA products in Ride, Show, Gaming and Connected Products. His titles range from interactive rides like Toy Story Mania, to EA Sports titles, to arcade fighting experiences, like "Killer Instinct" on Xbox One. He has a passion for creating innovative products, experiences that build lifelong fans.

Minion Land and Villain-Con Minion Blast is an experience that showcases the magic of immersive theme park entertainment. The attention to detail, the commitment to storytelling, and the dedication to delivering first-class experiences are evident in every facet of Minion Land. Universal Orlando Resort has once again demonstrated its ability to transport visitors into the worlds of their favorite movies and characters, allowing them to be active participants in the magic.

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Holiday World orders Vekoma's first family boomerang in the U.S.

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SANTA CLAUS, Ind. — It's not often that the name of a new ride is so outside-the-box, that it virtually becomes the major talking point. Some ride names are bold, others iconic and mysterious, and some are quite redundant and unimaginative. But in 2024, **Holiday World** will introduce something no one saw coming.

Good Gravy!

This is the name of a roller coaster? Indeed it is. Nestled in the park's Thanksgiving section, Good Gravy will be the first installation of a **Vekoma** family boomerang coaster in the U.S.

"While we were working on Thunderbird, we were already figuring out what would go in this particular spot," said **Leah Koch-Blumhardt**, director of communications. "For a while, the concept was going to be a water ride, and we had decided to call it Gravy Boat. It had started as a joke, but it cracked



us up so much, we fell in love with it. After several years, the concept changed to the Vekoma Family Boomerang, but we just couldn't let go of the gravy theme. We asked Vekoma to make the train look like a giant gravy boat with designs that would make everyone think of their grandmother's dinnerware, but with a Thanksgiving twist."

"I loved this out of the box," said **Carin Davits**, marketing, Vekoma. "The marketing and the theming fits perfectly in this section of the park. Holiday World did a great job on the teaser video."

"We had the concept, but we still needed a name," Koch-Blumhardt told *Amusement Today*. "Gravy

Good Gravy! will be the third roller coaster in the Thanksgiving section. The gravy boat-themed train travels through a can of cranberry sauce (inset). COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD

Boat sounded like a water ride to us, so we knew we had to find something different. Gravy Train felt a little inelegant for us — with free soft drinks, parking, and sunscreen, we're trying *not* to make our guests think about their wallets."

Standing at 77 feet tall, riders will be pulled up a tire lift backward before plunging back through Grandma's house (the station) and twisting and turning through

thematic props involved in fixing Thanksgiving dinner, including through a can of cranberry sauce. Rising up a reverse spike, the trains run the course backward, with a distance traversed of approximately 1,500 feet of track.

With top speeds of 37 mph, Good Gravy fills a gap between the park's children's coaster and its more breathtaking thrillers.

The train seats 20 guests. Riders only have to be 38

inches tall to ride.

"Good Gravy is a coaster for the entire family. With a low rider height restriction, it is accessible for kids, but it will always attract older riders due to its unique and fun experience," said **Ricardo Tonding Etges**, VP sales and marketing/Americas, Vekoma. "The shuttle aspect of the layout, combined with height and speed, creates a 'family-thrill' experience. This is not a 'children's coaster' at all!"

The family boomerang coaster has sold heavily across Europe, but Holiday will hold claim to the first one on the U.S.' domestic soil.

"We're proud to be building our first Vekoma roller coaster. The company has a stellar reputation, and it is well-deserved," adds Koch-Blumhardt. "As for the theme, this coaster might be a little corny, but that's exactly who we are. We've always been as cheesy as grandma's potatoes au gratin. We're stuffing this ride full of puns."

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Zamperla supplies new vision to Ohio park

Top Thrill 2 reinvents Cedar Point's iconic, towering coaster

AT: Tim Baldwin
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SANDUSKY, Ohio — All speculations have been put to rest. **Cedar Point** confirmed the details of its newest thrill machine on August 1.

Top Thrill 2 will reimagine the former icon, Top Thrill Dragster, which opened in 2003 as the tallest coaster in the world, and the first where riders surpassed the 400-foot mark. (Today, only two coasters carry riders that high.) The original attraction, supplied by **Intamin**, used a hydraulic cable launch to propel riders to 120 mph (a record when it opened). Sitting idle since late summer of 2021, eyes have kept a close watch on what may transpire. The park announced last year that Top Thrill Dragster “as you know it” was retired and a “new and reimagined ride experience” would come in the future.

Enter **Zamperla**.

With big shoes to fill, the Italian ride manufacturer is delivering the goods.

“As a company, we are not small,” said **Adam Sandy**, roller coaster sales and marketing director, Zamperla. In fact, I would say we are the largest manufacturer in the attractions industry. We ship more amusement rides than any other company annually and have a huge number of full-time staff spread across four facilities.”

Top Thrill 2 retains what fans loved about the original, but adds much, much more. Instead of just the launch that propelled riders up and over — which was admittedly breathtaking — the new incarnation will bring a popular trend of a multi-launch into the coaster experience. Using linear synchronous motors instead of the cable launch, each burst of speed will increase with each pass.



A 420-foot spike will join the equally tall tophat element (above). The vertical spike will thrill riders with a straight-down view (right).
COURTESY CEDAR POINT

The first forward launch will take riders partially up the retained top hat element at 74 mph. Rolling backward, the new addition will send riders up a brand-new 420-foot vertical spike at 101 mph. This will be the fastest backward launch in the world.

“I think the floating air-time while looking down 300 feet is going to be the sleeper element of the ride,” Sandy told *Amusement Today*. “Everyone focuses on the launches, but for the first time, guests will truly savor just how high they are as they look down on Power Tower.”

It’ll be an entirely new experience and sensation that hasn’t been felt before,” added **Tony Clark**, communication director, Cedar Point.

The final pass will send riders at 120 mph up and over, completing the excitement with the experience fans have loved for two decades.

“Top Thrill 2 will be the boldest and most advanced roller coaster



Cedar Point has ever introduced. It’s another one-of-a-kind that could only be built at Cedar Point,” said **Carrie Boldman**, vice president and general manager, Cedar Point.

“There are actually two things I’m most excited about, the first being the extended ride time,” said Clark. “We’re taking an experience that was roughly 17 seconds and increasing it to nearly two minutes. The second is the reverse launch. I was always a fan of Wicked Twister’s reverse launch, and with Top Thrill 2’s 101 mph launch, it’s going to be an amazing feeling and rush being thrust into that 420-foot-tall spike tower.”

The trains seat 20 riders compared to the orig-

inal’s 18. Zamperla is using its Lightning trains. According to Sandy, they have advantages. “For me it is the combination of a focus on both comfort and a cost of ownership. As a company we involved park operators from around the globe and got their feedback on the trains. We continued to hear that they wanted open, ergonomic vehicles that required less time and money to maintain. Customer feedback was the driving force as we designed our new thrill platform,” he said.

The Lightning chassis is one milled piece, so there are no welds. Zamperla feels this is a cost savings and time saver for customers as parks reduce their maintenance and NDT

time. The ride will operate with three trains.

To accommodate the multi-pass launches, a section of switch track will move each train in place.

“We are using a fast switch, which is a modified version of the switch we currently have in use on our Factory Coaster in China,” said Sandy. “It moves, locks and acknowledges the proximity switches extremely quickly. It will be a cornerstone of the ride’s success.”

In contrast to the past, the load and unload points will now be the same.

“Because of the new spike tower being extended beyond the unload section of the station, the former station/loading track centerline essentially becomes the ‘main line,’ so the loading platform will be reduced in size,” explained Clark. “In addition, the operator booth will be above the station, similar to GateKeeper’s booth design.”

“If you look at roller coaster history there is a high barrier to entry into this industry because it is so specialized,” Sandy told *AT*. “Therefore, historically companies level up and design experiences that they had the talent to create. But fans often had no way of knowing about those capabilities. Batman The Ride (1992), Superman: The Escape (1997) and the New Texas Giant (2011) were all innovative jumps that looked big to enthusiasts but were logical steps for people that knew the parties involved. I believe the team at Cedar Fair, like so many others we are speaking with, understood that after a multi-million-dollar investment in the Roller Coaster Business Unit, Zamperla had the team and technology to be a leader creating world-class coasters.”

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Rocky Mountain Construction builds track for updated attraction

Silver Dollar City invests \$30 million to recreate Fire in the Hole

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BRANSON, Mo. — When Silver Dollar City opened this spring, they informed fans that it was a farewell season for the park's beloved 1972 attraction, Fire in the Hole. Visitors had until December 30 to take a final ride. The attraction has seen longer lines this season than it has in decades.

On August 14, the park made a big reveal of a brand-new Fire in the Hole for 2024. As a \$30 million project, it is the single largest investment for an attraction in the park's history.

Already complete are the five-story building and the several layers of track manufactured by Rocky Mountain Construction. Consign will deliver the ride's control system.

If anyone were to ask why the park would want to invest such a large amount to recreate something that has existed for half a century, the park has an answer.

"There are several core principles that the Herschends have always led our businesses to operate under," said Brad Thomas, park president. "One of those principles is guest research. We've been doing research since the '70s. It allows us to know what we do that guests love and what we do that guests want to change. In that research, we polled our guests as to what was so integral to Silver Dollar City that we can't do away with that



The new five-story building (above) has elaborate theming compared to the original ride. New ride vehicles (inset) from RMC will be themed to fire-fighting equipment.
AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY SILVER DOLLAR CITY

drops and the splash landing — all of that's there because it's based on the original attraction. With \$30 million, you're going to do something special with it. When you think about fire, we're going to have some really special lighting effects that capture that glow and bring it to life in that way. My favorite special effect is a fiber-optic fuse that you'll see burning."

"I don't even know if *technology* was a word in 1971 and 1972," joked Thomas. "The effects are difficult to do in a facility that is half a century old. This [new] ride allows us to do onboard audio, to use lighting that wasn't even dreamed of 51 years ago, and we love that the flames will have a different version of life in the story."

The original ride was built in-house by the park.

"I am so proud of what the men and women of this company have put together in this ride," said Pete Herschend. "Fifty years ago, we couldn't even *dream* that there would be a 50th anniversary. We were just beginning; we were just learning how to create entertainment for families. Fire in the Hole was our first really big attempt at that. And you know what? It worked."

"I think it's incredible to work with one of the best theme parks in the world," said Darren Torr, president, Rocky

Mountain Construction. "It's been just over two years since the concept was put in front of us. Doing a family ride is an opportunity to reach a whole new demographic."

Mountain Construction. "It's been just over two years since the concept was put in front of us. Doing a family ride is an opportunity to reach a whole new demographic." The new attraction is being built in a different part of the park. Fireman's Landing will now be known as the Fire District. Guests will be queuing with the intention of seeing the new fire-fighting vehicle at the Silver Dollar City Pumper Factory. The event gets canceled once the town is on fire, and visitors are then enlisted as volunteers to take the new vehicles out to combat the flames.

er included has taken guests through this burning town.

"It has a little bit of thrill, but it's not so much that a child is frightened. It's a great first coaster. Great grandma can ride it with a grandchild. That is what has caused there to be so much of a connection," Thomas said. "That depth of connection is super, super important."

An entirely new façade has already been erected.

"It will feel fondly familiar," said Erica Rutledge, senior creative director for Herschend Family Entertainment. "There's the powered incline, the three

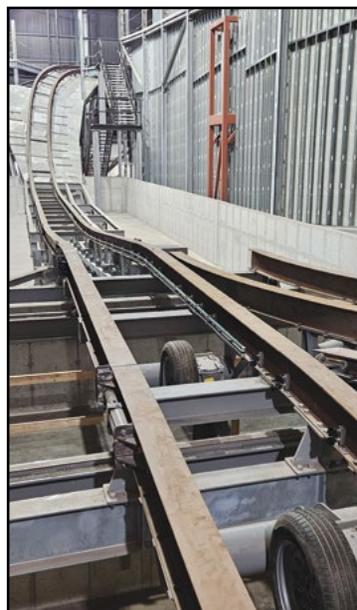
"We actually had Dailey & Vincent, a renowned Bluegrass duo, record the new version of the Fire in the Hole song and the guests will be able to hear that on the [onboard] audio," said Thomas.

"Herschend was looking to have an immersive experience, so onboard sound was a natural extension," added Torr. "This was a little bit challenging because we didn't start from scratch. We had the existing train design, but we wanted to modernize it with current ASTM standards."

"We have a couple of new show scenes," Rutledge told *Amusement Today*. "Guests aren't expecting them, and it is going to help finish telling the story. It will really connect some of those dots and make the story bigger."



Guests wanting a final ride on the original (above) have until Dec. 30. The attraction is seeing longer lines for its farewell season. Meanwhile, the updated attraction's track is all in place. At right is the final drop that will plunge into a splashdown — all in the dark. AT/TIM BALDWIN



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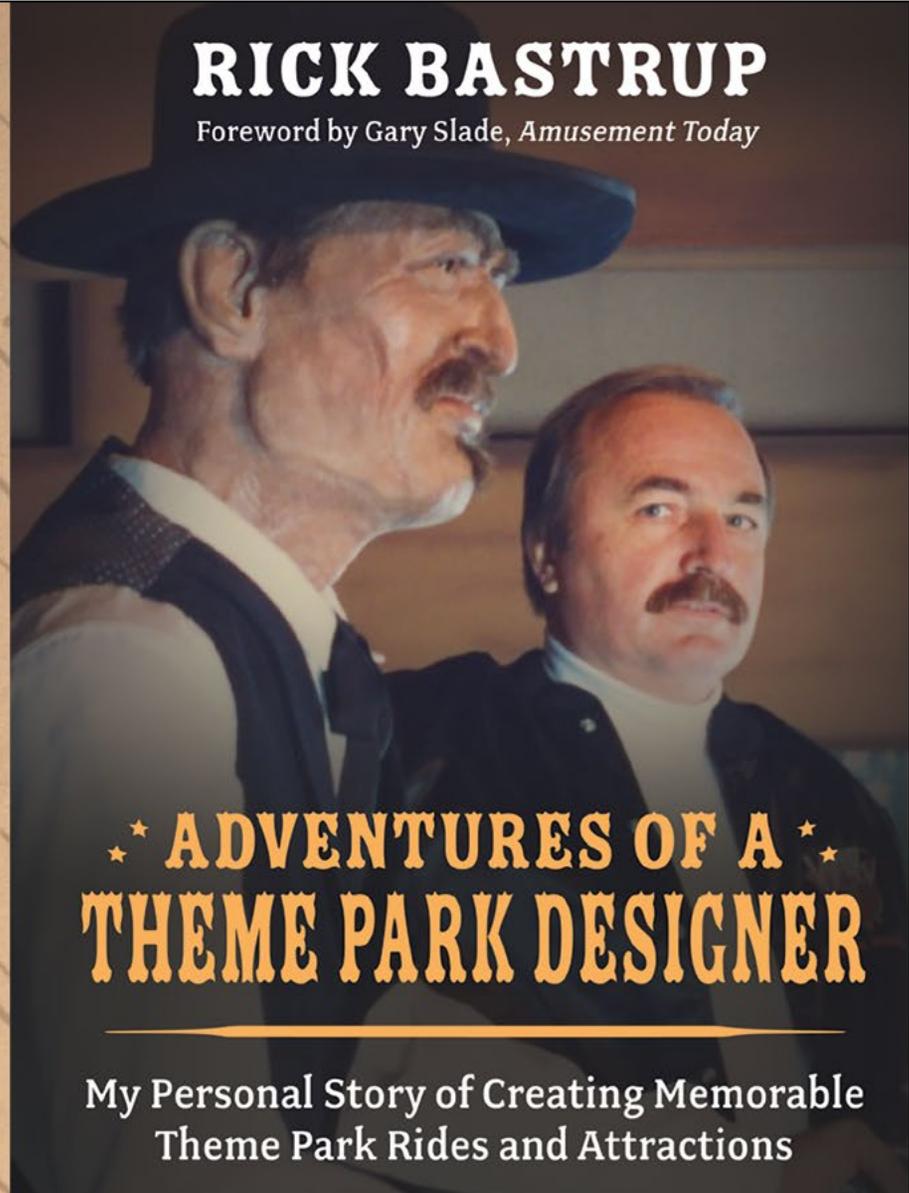


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Foreword by Gary Slade, *Amusement Today*



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Belmont Park begins celebrating two years ahead of its centennial

AT: Pam Sherborne
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SAN DIEGO, Calif. — Belmont Park officials already have begun to gear up for the park's 100th birthday even though it is still two years away. But because of what they want to celebrate, as well as give back to San Diego, it was never too early to plan.

"There are not a lot of 100-year-old things in San Diego, so this is special. We're not merely an amusement park," said Sarah Abelson, director of marketing at PE Management Group, the firm handling the park's marketing efforts. "We're crafting an identity as the gateway to San Diego.

"Belmont Park stands as a place where guests can hit the beach, experience multiple cuisines, go to the gym and ride the rides," Abelson said. "We want to continually push that messaging forward to position Belmont as your beachside destination since we are not your typical amusement park boardwalk."

The overarching goal is to allow Belmont to be a representation of the San Diego culture and community.

Park officials began the first phase of the celebratory 100th birthday, a marketing makeover, at the beginning of summer 2023. They plan to continue launching projects until they reach the 100th year.

The marketing makeover has been rebranding initiatives that have included a new logo, new uniforms, messaging, website and the launch of Belmont-branded merchandise, new food and beverage offerings and more.

Abelson said all of that has launched with the exception of the website.

"The website is expected to launch in quarter three and we cannot wait," she said. "It has been an extremely exciting time and busy summer for the park."



Signs of the re-branding of Belmont Park in San Diego, California, can be seen as guests arrive at the entrance of the park. As part of Belmont Park's re-branding initiatives new staff uniforms with crew neck shirts and logo merchandise came out this past summer (right). COURTESY BELMONT PARK

Some of the new food items for this past July, when the park turned 98, included birthday cake funnel cake and birthday cake-flavored Dole Whip.

New merchandise currently being offered includes sweatshirts, hoodies and T-shirts, for adults and children. As the centennial gets even closer, plans are to add some exclusive merchandise options.

The response to the rebranding in the park has been "nothing short of amazing," Abelson said.

"The new logo has captured hearts across the board, with its embodiment of the 'San Diego spirit' and an unrivaled sense of effortlessness," she said. "San Diegans are excited to see everything that ownership has been investing in the park. There's a shared enthusiasm about the promising trajectory of the next century and all the possibilities it holds for us."

While incorporating San Diego culture and community, park officials have employed the talents of local artists. All of the murals in the park were created by local artists.

The park has partnered with a local brewery, Second Chance Beer Company, on a roller coaster-themed Coaster Cruisin' IPA.

The park just launched a second blonde beer, Beach-Break Blonde, in partnership with them as well. That just became available in mid-August.

Park officials also are working on a first-ever community Belmont 5K. It will start and end in the heart of the park. Participants will be able to enjoy views of Mission Beach, the iconic Giant Dipper Roller Coaster and all that the community has to offer.

The 5K course is being made accessible for all who want to participate. Everyone will be encouraged to join, whether they are running or walking. Each registered participant will receive a complimentary wristband that grants access to all the rides and attractions at Belmont Park.

With the Belmont 5K scheduled on Sept. 17, the park will be decked out for its annual Fall Festival and increase its offerings with seasonal activities.



"We are always investing in the park and looking at ways we can continually enhance the park and move it forward," Abelson said. "Our dedication to innovation is unwavering as we constantly seek avenues to elevate the park's offerings whether that be the introduction of exhilarating new rides, new menu launches at our beachfront restaurants and more. We are always strategizing, planning and bringing fresh concepts to life."

Abelson said the park will launch a new attraction called Shipwreck Cove, where seated riders pull themselves up on a rope and let go as fast or as slow as they want. There also will be a nautical-themed play area below for kids.

A date has not been set for the new ride opening.

"We also will be repainting the Giant Dipper next year as we continue gearing up for our 100th birthday," Abelson said.

The Giant Dipper roller coaster was one of the first attractions built at the park under the plans of the original developer, John D. Spreckels. The 2,600-foot-long coaster was created by the noted Prior and Church design team and was built in less than two months by local suppliers and a crew of between 100 and 150 workers. The original cost to build the coaster, including its two 18-passenger trains, was \$150,000.

"We also have a few things that we cannot publicize just yet, but will be really major for the park as a whole," Abelson said.

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The Chicago area's newest interactive horror experience doesn't open until the fall, but horror fans are already able to snag their tickets.

The **Arboretum of South Barrington** will be partnering with **IWG Productions** starting Sept. 29 to bring **Terror Roulette** to life.

The experience goes beyond a traditional haunted house with such intensity that participants must be 16 years or older, sign a waiver and establish a safe word before entering the haunted house, according to organizers.

Ride Entertainment is excited to announce a new partnership with **Ziptrek Technologies**, adding the one-of-a-kind **Switchback** cable-to-rail system to Ride Entertainment's industry-leading portfolio.

"We could not be more excited to represent a product as innovative and unique as **Switchback**," said **Ed Hiller**, CEO and founder of Ride Entertainment. "Any facility, large or small, that is looking to upgrade their offerings with a unique tour or thrill experience now has that opportunity."

"When it came to deciding who to partner with in the amusement space, Ride Entertainment was the clear answer," said **Charles Steele**, president of Ziptrek Technologies, Inc. "We are thrilled to be working with them, and excited to see how their customers integrate **Switchback** into their locations."

The "Alpine Bobsled" ride at **Six Flags Great Escape** in Queensbury, New York, will be retired



to make way for future attractions. Guests are able to ride the **Alpine Bobsled** until Sept. 4. It was one of only two remaining **Intamin** bobsled rides in North America.

Zoo Atlanta in Atlanta, Georgia, is building a \$22 million new veterinary care center, which is expected to open next summer.

Ground was broken on the new **Rollins Animal Health Center** last month. It will allow the zoo to provide daily care for its more than 200 species of animals and to "fully inhabit its growing reputation for excellence in veterinary care," **Raymond King**, CEO and president, said in a press release.

The new center will improve existing veterinary facilities and expand the zoo's ability to perform research and work with universities around the region and the state.

It will contain a laboratory and radiology,

pharmacy, treatment and surgical centers, among many other amenities.

Oakwood Theme Park's famous **Megafobia** roller-coaster is back on track after its two-million-dollar re-vamp.

The iconic wooden ride, first opened in 1996 at the **Narberth**, United Kingdom, park, and will be benefitting from the latest in roller coaster technology that will make it not only as good as new but even better, according to its fans.

The retrack work has been carried out by American roller coaster design and construction company **The Gravity Group**.

Nostalgic celebrations came to **Tautphaus Park**, Idaho Falls, Idaho, with the grand opening of **Funland at the Zoo Saturday** that took place last month.

Funland has been a part of the Idaho Falls Park since opening in 1947. Rides like the **Eli Wheel**, **Octopus**, train, airplanes and carousel were part of **Funland**. The rides were professionally restored to like-new condition over a three-year project.

"**Funland** is an Idaho Falls gem, Idaho Falls Mayor **Rebecca Casper** said, about the park in a release. "We are delighted to bring back this place that holds memories across multiple generations,"

A community fund-raising effort assisted in the restoration of the historic rides.

As part of the ribbon-cutting celebration, a time capsule was placed at the park to be opened after the next 75 years of operation.

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Adventureland Resort begins Underground coaster upgrade

ALTOONA, Iowa — Work is underway at Adventureland Resort as the theme park prepares for its 50th birthday celebration in 2024. After adding 11 new rides to the park over the last two years, the park will kick off its 50th birthday season with the return of the Underground. The world's only indoor wooden roller coaster is set to reopen in 2024, complete with new upgrades that will elevate the ride experience for guests of all ages.

The Underground roller coaster was built by Custom Coasters International in 1996. The unique design is a mix of a wooden roller coaster with a dark ride, which has creat-



Indoor coaster Underground is receiving upgrades to its track and trains. The ride's journey takes guests through an abandoned mine in search of an outlaw gang (right). AT/GARY SLADE

ed the only fully enclosed wooden roller coaster in the world. The ride will make its return in 2024 after undergoing a refurbishment project including work to the coaster's track and train. The train has been sent to Philadelphia

Toboggan Coasters in Hatfield, Pennsylvania, where it is receiving a full rebuild.

"This enhancement of Underground represents a major milestone for Adventureland, as we honor our past while embracing the future," said Mike Lusky,

Adventureland general manager. "We can't wait for our guests to embark on this new adventure as we celebrate the park's 50th birthday in 2024."

In 2024, visitors can expect to be taken on a journey deep below Adven-

tureland Resort, in search of more than just Sheriff Sam's infamous lost gold. Guests will embark on a mission through the abandoned mine, in search of legendary outlaw Bad Bob and his gang after a daring gold heist. The gang take cover in the old mine with the stolen gold, along with some new treasures. Incorporating new technology and effects, guests will find themselves in a story-driven experience like never before. As they venture deeper into the abandoned mine, riders will face new challenges, unexpected twists and opportunities to uncover hidden secrets along the way.

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American Heartland announces theme park, resort in Oklahoma

VINITA, Okla. — Oklahoma state and local officials joined American Heartland leadership to announce **American Heartland Theme Park and Resort**, a more than \$2 billion entertainment destination development in northeast Oklahoma, just west of Grand Lake on Route 66. The development will be built in phases starting with a large-scale RV park with cabins scheduled to open phase one in spring 2025 and a world-class theme park and resort scheduled to open in 2026. The American Heartland Theme Park and Resort will offer a unique visitor experience rivaling the world's top resort destinations.

"We are thrilled to make Oklahoma the home of American Heartland Theme Park and Resort," American Heartland CEO **Larry Wilhite** stated. "At the crossroads of the heartland, Oklahoma is an attractive location for a family entertainment destination. The state's business-friendly approach and innovative



The \$2 billion American Heartland Theme Park and Resort will to be located just west of Grand Lake on Route 66. COURTESY AMERICAN HEARTLAND

partnership efforts have helped make this possible. We look forward to bringing unforgettable generational experiences to Oklahoma."

American Heartland will be a 1,000-acre development with a 125-acre theme park, which is comparable to the size of **Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom** and **Disneyland Park**. The park will feature an Americana-themed environment with a variety of entertaining rides, live shows, family attractions, waterways as well as

restaurant-quality food and beverage offerings.

"Oklahoma is excited to welcome American Heartland Theme Park and Resort," said Oklahoma State Rep. **Rusty Cornwell**. "Located on historic Route 66 just west of Grand Lake, the development will attract visitors from around the world to experience and celebrate the rich cultures and hometown values America has to offer."

The adjacent 320-acre **Three Ponies RV Park and Campground**, designed by

Oklahoma architects **ADG Blatt**, will be the largest campground in the central U.S. with 750 RV spaces and 300 cabins plus amenities.

"This \$2 billion investment in our state will create more than 4,000 jobs and introduce a new category of entertainment to the region, and its long-term economic impact will be transformative," said Oklahoma State Sen. **Micheal Bergstrom**. "Tourism is already one of Oklahoma's top industries and this project will elevate our state even further."

The developer is American Heartland whose leadership has deep Oklahoma roots. American Heartland is an affiliate of **Mansion Entertainment Group, LLC**, Branson's leading performing arts, animation and studio brand.

Led by Executive Producer **Steve Hedrick**, the design team is made up of a team of designers including more than 20 former **Disney Parks** builders and Walt Disney Imagineers. Design

firms include **THG, FOR-REC** and **Cunningham**, whose portfolios feature the world's foremost theme park brands including **Six Flags**, **Disney Parks** and **Universal Studios**.

American Heartland Theme Park and Resort is a family-friendly park promising timeless fun and boundless adventure. The theme park will feature a collection of six distinctly American lands to welcome guests on a journey through the American story. Families will find thrilling rides and heartwarming shows as they discover Great Plains, Bayou Bay, Big Timber Falls, Stony Point Harbor, Liberty Village and Electropolis.

"American Heartland will be a place families can come together to create lasting memories, experience joy, laughter, imagination and wonder," American Heartland Founder and Chief Creative Officer **Gene Bicknell** said.

The development will also include a top-tier 300-room hotel and modern indoor water park.



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South Carolina opens its first Main Event entertainment center

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

GREENVILLE, S.C. — Main Event Entertainment opened a new 50,000-square-foot indoor family entertainment center in Greenville, S.C., in mid-July making this its first in the state, but, most likely, not the last.

Main Event, headquartered in Lewisville, Texas, opened its first location in 1998 in Texas and now has over 50 in 17 states. Offering a wide array of fun, the response to the Main Event in Greenville has been great.

Janelle Allen, assistant general manager at the Greenville location, said popularity for the center continues to build and so does attendance. Special events such as corporate events also are increasing.

Some of the activities inside include Main Event's immersive and innovative bowling lanes. The lanes offer fun for beginners as well as professionals and everything in between. There is a separate bowling area that can be used by birthday party goers, corporate parties and other special events.



Main Event Entertainment opened its first South Carolina location in Greenville on July 14 and, by all accounts, the community is responding in a very positive way to having a new entertainment option. The new 50,000-square-foot location in Greenville, encompasses the amenities for which Main Event has become famous including over 100 games, arcade and classics VR. COURTESY MAIN EVENT



The lanes are enhanced with a state-of-the-art electronic scoring system, surround sound entertainment system and cosmic components.

Games are a huge part of the offering at Main Event. There are over 100 games of all kinds for all ages. Games being offered include the latest in racing as well as the old-school

video games such as Pac-Man, Space Invaders and NBA Jam.

There are classic arcade

games such as Donkey Kong, Jurassic Park, Star Wars and Battle Pod.

There are VR experiences for all ages and all accessibilities offered such as a seated VR game, Oculus Rift, as well as a full-room-scale game such as HTC Vive.

There are brand new VR games such as VR Rabbids: The Big Ride with motion box technology and simulated wind, and Beat Saber, a VR rhythm game.

Also included is a multiplayer, free-roam VR game option and V-Play puzzle games such as Zombie Survival and Singularity.



When guests are ready for a break, they may eat from the Main Event's menu in the restaurant area (above left) or join their friends with an adult beverage at the bar. There is an entire area just for redemption (above right). COURTESY MAIN EVENT

► See MAIN, page 28



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►MAIN

Continued from page 26

The Main Event in Greenville also offers regulation-sized pool tables and an indoor laser tag course where participants find themselves climbing over hurdles and dodging obstacles.

Main Event markets the laser tag experience to all ages and has reached out to corporations for team building.

There also is adult laser tag that happens later into the evenings.

Birthday parties and special events are available to book seven days a week and include tailored Party City Packs with made-to-order birthday balloon bouquets and party kit add-ons.

The Greenville location kicked off its opening on Friday, July 14, by offering the first 200 guests in line, one year of free laser tag. On the next day, Saturday, July 15, Main Event gave a \$10 donation to a local Greenville charity, **Pendleton Place**, for every strike bowled.

On Sunday, July 16, Main Event held a contest

MAIN EVENT FAST FACTS

Headquartered in Lewisville, Texas.

- Main Event Entertainment has over 50 locations in 17 U.S. states.

- Main Event locations have an array of entertainment including over 100 games of all types.

- First Main Event South Carolina location opened July 14 in Greenville, South Carolina.

called Big Super Fun Sundae Challenge. Any family who could finish an entire sundae in five minutes was awarded a free sundae.

With the opening of the Greenville location, 175 jobs were brought to the area with the hiring of front and back-of-house positions including servers, bartenders, dining hosts, line cooks, game and bowling attendants, and other positions.

• mainevent.com



Main Event features bowling lanes that boast state-of-the-art electronic scoring and surround sound.

COURTESY MAIN EVENT



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson

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A brand new entertainment center recently opened in New Jersey.

Cape Square Entertainment opened its doors in Rio Grande on July 15. The entertainment complex is located in the space of a former **Kmart**.

Cape Square Entertainment Center features 16-lane bowling alley Cape Square Bowl; a 3,000 square-foot arcade and a golf simulator. It also has Cape Square Theater, which includes eight theaters with luxury seats.

Town Square Entertainment — which owns Cape Square — also operates three other New Jersey theaters: **Harbor Square Theatre** in Stone Harbor, **Tilton Square Theatre** in Northfield and **Ventnor Square Theatre** in Ventnor.

- St. Louis, Missouri's **Aloha Mini Golf & Shave Ice**, a locally owned-and-operated family entertainment center, announced the grand opening of the first of its two new miniature golf courses, in time for the summer season. This brand-new attraction is the latest expansion to the company's offering, and marks the FEC's successful season in the industry.

Boasting 18 beautiful holes set in a tropical paradise, the new course promises an immersive Hawaiian experience for the St. Louis community. From palm trees, tiki gods, hibiscus plants and pineapples to lush greenery, the meticulously designed landscape transports players to the newest Hawaiian island in the chain. To top it off, the course features a spectacular water fountain display with a stream system fed by three fountains that cascades into eight stunning waterfall locations around the new island.

"At Aloha Mini Golf & Shave Ice, we're committed to creating fun, family-friendly environments," stated owner **Pete Kreamer**. "This new course represents our dedication to continually expand and innovate. We're excited to provide this unique Hawaiian-themed golfing experience to our customers."

- **Altitude Trampoline Park** is celebrating the tremendous growth the brand has experienced since the start of 2023. Altitude has solidified its position as an attractive franchise option, with an impressive total of 18 development agreements signed since the start of the year, which will bring more than 25 new locations to target markets across the country. Of the 25 new locations, Altitude will make an entrance into a number of new markets this year, including Lake Havasu City, Greater Atlanta area, Greater Pittsburgh area, Buenos Aires and Greater Tampa area.

As Altitude continues to expand its

presence nationwide, the achievement reflects the confidence entrepreneurs and investors have in the brand's potential for growth and profitability. The brand's dedication to delivering an exceptional guest experience has resulted in a remarkable systemwide sales increase of over 5% since the start of 2023. This upward trend showcases the brand's ability to not only attract new customers but also retain and satisfy its existing fan base.

"We are thrilled with the incredible growth Altitude Trampoline Park has experienced so far in 2023. Our focus on delivering thrilling, safe and unforgettable experiences for families has been the driving force behind our success," said **Mike Rotondo**, chief executive officer of Altitude Trampoline Park. "We are humbled by the support and enthusiasm we have received from our franchisees, team members and, most importantly, our guests."

- With more than 100 pinball machines, **Atomic Pinball Arcade** hosted its grand opening on Saturday, August 5, in Wood River, Illinois. Previously **CP Pinball** in South Roxana, Illinois, Atomic Pinball Arcade will have more games and a BYOB policy that appeals to league players and casual pinballers alike.

"It's a great place to play some pinball and have a couple of drinks. It's not a place to drink and play a couple of games of pinball," Owner **Chuck Sanderson**, said.

In addition to the pinball machines, Atomic Pinball Arcade will offer several other favorites like Skee-Ball, shuffleboard and some video games. It plans to sponsor a pinball league where players can compete against each other.

- **Chuck E. Cheese** and **Kidz Bop** music brand for kids have announced a continuation of Kidz Bop as the family entertainment center's official music partner with the brands offering wholesome family entertainment in fun centers and online. The partnership between these two family-friendly brands is now in its third year.

Chuck E. Cheese and Kidz Bop have teamed up to host nightly dance parties from 6 p.m. until close through the end of September. Families can rock out to original music and remix playlists from Chuck E. Cheese and Friends and music videos from the brand-new album, *Kidz Bop 2023 Vol. 2*.

"Chuck E. Cheese and Kidz Bop share a common mission — to provide unforgettable moments filled with fun, dance and laughter to children and families worldwide," said **Melissa McLeanas**, vice president of global media, licensing and Entertainment at Chuck E Cheese.

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Ohio State Fair breaks attendance records with over 1 million

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

COLUMBUS, Ohio — 1,006,228 people made their way to the Ohio State Fair this year, which is a 16.7% increase over the 2022 edition. This represents the highest 12-day attendance on record since the length was changed in 2004.

The single-day attendance record, set a decade ago, was also broken this year. Single-day attendance on Saturday, August 5, was 119,660. The prior single-day attendance record was 115,288, set on Sunday, July 28, 2013.

"Fairs are very weather dependent," said Virgil Strickler, general manager of the Ohio Expo Center & State Fair. "This year's Ohio State Fair started out very warm with temperatures reaching into the 90s with a heat index in excess of 100 degrees the first three days. However, we were extremely fortunate to have beautiful sunny skies and more moderate temperatures for most of the 12-days of the fair. I'm thankful so many fairgoers were willing



Fort Worth-based Talley Amusements was the Ohio State Fair's midway ride provider. A new ride at this year's fair was a kiddie train from Italian manufacturer Ital-Resina and owned by Talley Amusements. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ

to come out and experience this great state fair."

"The weather was perfect," said Mary Talley, co-owner of Talley Amusements, the midway ride provider. "There was no economic impact as people spent money like there was no inflation."

The Fort Worth, Texas based operation brought in 73 rides, with approximately 30 being kiddie ones. Half the rides were on the main midway with the other half in Kiddieland. Of that total,

booked in was Primetime Carnival with 10 rides, Jeremy Floyd, two rides and Big O Amusements two rides, JoyRides, Inc., two rides, Pride Amusements, two rides, Premium Shows of America, one ride and Wood Entertainment, one ride. Talley also offered 48 games and 28 food stands. New lighting added to the mix. "Everything looked amazing," said Talley.

The most popular rides included the Giant wheel (Lamberink), Fast Trax slide

(Fabbri Group) and Crazy Mouse (Reverchon).

New rides were the Crazy Surf (KMG) owned by Big O Amusements and a kiddie train imported from Italy, built by Ital-Resina and owned by Talley Amusements.

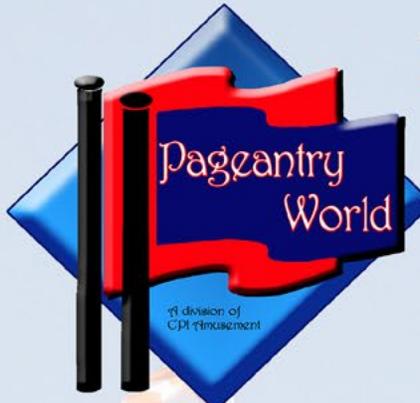
Midway ride revenue came in at just over \$3.2 million; an increase of 36.2% over 2022. This was the biggest gross in the history of the fair.

"Talley Amusements has been a great partner for several years," said Alicia Shoults,

assistant general manager and marketing and PR director. "We work with so many external partners to make the Ohio State Fair a success and we were glad to have Talley on board providing a safe, quality midway and Kiddieland experience for all fairgoers."

The carnival had an equally good experience. "It's a delight to work with Virgil Strickler and others as they appreciate our compa-

▶ See OHIO, page 31



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► **OHIO**

Continued from page 30

ny's safety record and cleanliness. All of our rides are pristine. That's how we roll," said Talley. She also felt the ride inspection process was "seamless" and "amazing."

Asked about any employment strategies, Talley said they had a decent group of H2B workers this season. They also utilized the services of 10 workers from **Kingdom Promotions**, Clay Center, Kansas. The company specializes in event staffing and non-profit fundraising. The operation provided one of its traveling teams for the duration of the 12-day fair.

Each year the Ohio State Fair employs more than 600 seasonal staff members for positions including but not limited to ticket sellers and takers, shuttle conductors and drivers, SkyGlider attendants, arts and gallery assistants and other positions.

"While we do recruit new employees every year, we are so fortunate to have many seasonal employees who return every year to work at the Ohio State Fair," said **Jo Ellen Albanese**, human resources administrator. "Some of those employees have worked here for decades because they love this fair and the fairgoers that come out every summer."

Fairs are often known for their wacky, deep-fried and exclusive items, and the Ohio State Fair certainly lived up to that stereotype. Some of the new offerings included build-your-own cookie sandwich, crawfish bowls, flaming hot **Cheeto** burgers, gelato tacos and nachos and nacho sundaes.

For the first time ever, the neighboring **Ohio History Center** and **Ohio Village** was open for free to fairgoers every day of the fair from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Ohio History members could get two free admissions to the fair with their membership card.

There were 11 paid shows and three free events, with entertainment that included classic rock, older and newer country, rap, pop, R&B and comedy. Concert revenue totaled \$2,340,959, which was the highest the Ohio State Fair has seen in

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►OHIO

Continued from page 31

the Celeste Center and an increase of 16.27% from 2022.

"The Ohio State Fair is truly a celebration of everything that Ohio has to offer from our roots in agriculture to the footprint we have on space exploration, new innovation, talented artists and entertainers, small and large business owners, outdoor opportunities and so much more," said Shoults. "If there's one thing

Ohioans love, it's their great state, and we work tirelessly throughout the year to ensure this celebration of Ohio honors as many great aspects of our state as possible."

"I will never forget this fair," said Strickler, who will be retiring in the coming months. "I'm already counting down the days to next year's opening day when I can return with my family."

The 2024 fair takes place July 24 – August 4.

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MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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The **Evergreen State Fair**, Monroe, Washington, recently welcomed **Mike Ohlsen** as the new fair manager. Ohlsen, a lifelong resident of Monroe, has worked in some capacity at the 193-acre fair park since 1984. Most recently he was co-interim fair manager.

"I bring unique skills and knowledge gained from 27 years of leadership and maintenance work at the Fair Park," Ohlsen told the *Lynwood Times*. "My goals as the new fair manager are to support our amazing fair park team and create strong relationships with our partners and surrounding community so they can be proud to be our neighbors. It excites me to be working with such a passionate team to produce the best fair possible to create memories for our community, including my family who is now in its fourth generation of fair workers," said Ohlsen.

"The Evergreen State Fair is a true gathering spot for the community. It brings people together and creates memories – whether that's participating in the fair as an exhibitor or attending with friends and family. That extends to events throughout the year. Mike is an excellent choice to continue to improve the fair for our community and future generations of fairgoers," said **Sharon Swan**, director of **Snohomish County Parks**.

The 2024 fair runs August 22-27 and August 29-September 2. The fair has been in operation 114 years. **Butler Amusements** has the ride contract.

The **Upper Peninsula State Fair**, Escanaba, Michigan, is under new leadership with **Matt Valiquette**, the new fair manager. He says it's quite a challenge, but the fact that they recently hosted big events like the **National Trappers Convention** and the **Northern Lights Music Festival** provided some lessons learned for the fair that took place in mid-August.

"It's a steep learning curve, no doubt," Valiquette told **RRN News**. "We had two weeks to turn these grounds back around. We had less than 48 hours to turn it around between the Music Festival and the Trappers Convention. Those were huge successes."

What did the fairgrounds do to prepare? "Traffic, making sure our utilities were up to par," Valiquette said. "There's a tremendous demand for Internet, electricity, water. And this is very old infrastructure, so you can imagine the maintenance demands to keep this thing running tip-top."

"The advisory committee worked hard to make sure that the animal exhibits were ready to roll," Valiquette said. "The junior livestock market, that's a big piece, too. It's super-exciting to be working with people who are so passionate about their

areas of expertise."

The U.P. State Fair returns August 14 – 20, 2024 with **Skerbeck Entertainment** handling the ride midway.

Magel Carnival Midway has exchanged hands within the family, now being called **Greater Midwest Shows**. The new owners are the Waknitz family based in Elk River, Minnesota. The family also owns **Midwest Rides** carnival.

The operation began in 1964 when **Bill Magel Sr.** bought Tilt-A-Whirl. Four years later he and his wife bought half interest in **Gold Eagle Amusements**, in time taking over the entire show shifting the name to Magel Carnival Midway.

Last September **John Magel Sr.** and **Bill Magel Jr.** retired, selling the show to **James** and **Rochelle Waknitz**. The Magels continue to help with the transition, bringing out games and drive equipment.

"When my cousins, the Magels, were looking to sell, it was a no-brainer for my wife and I to buy the show," Waknitz told the **Pine County News**. "My oldest son Tanner actually worked for the prior show and kept insisting we buy it when they were looking to sell. So that's what we did and expanded our company." All of the Waknitz children are involved in the operation.

"It's hard work but it pays off," said Waknitz. "I love seeing the kids laughing and smiling and having a great time. Families come to us to live their best summer days, older folks come to enjoy the ambience and everyone can have fun at the carnival no matter who you are. It's hard not to have fun."

Greater Midwest shows travels within Minnesota; while Midwest Rides spends its summers in Minnesota and the remainder of the year in the southern U.S.

Netherlands native, **Peter van Sluis** has been named the new fair manager of **The Rice County Fair**, Faribault, Minnesota. Van Sluis was chosen because of his past event experience and his many connections in the community. "He knows what it takes to make everything come together," board member **Joe Pesta** told the **Lansdale Area News-Review**. Sluis is a Faribault City Council member and a member of various community organizations.

From how to update the fair website to how to reassemble the sheep pens, there are a wide variety of responsibilities to the position.

"It's not a job that you just sit behind a desk and do the same thing," said van Sluis. "One day you do budgeting. The next day you might have to paint and then fix a drain. Then you do fundraising. Then you coordinate vendors."



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On the Midway: New York's Cattaraugus County Fair



Powers & Thomas Midway Entertainment provided the midway at the Cattaraugus County Fair in Little Valley, New York, July 30-Aug. 5. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON



A Bertazzon Swing Buggy was popular among fairgoers. COURTESY POWERS & THOMAS



A new KMG Freak Out was a featured attraction. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON

The Cattaraugus County Fair, Little Valley, New York, had a record run, fair officials reported. The July 30-Aug. 5 event saw an increase of 5% over its previous record in 2022 as 105,000 passed through the gate. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON



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On the Midway: Got To Be NC Festival

RALEIGH, N.C. — The annual Got To Be NC Festival, May 19-21, 2023, at the state fairgrounds, had a lot to offer patrons during its three-day run. The atmosphere seemed much more than a festival setting with large displays indoors and out, including hundreds of antique tractors and other farm implements along one portion of the midway. Big perks for attendees were free parking onsite as well as free admission to the grounds.

—Ron Gustafson



Brinkley Entertainment, Walnut Cove, N.C., presented its Paratrooper at the festival. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON



B&K Carnival, Gresham, S.C., had its office on the midway. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON



A rare yet well-maintained Watkins Tempest was featured on the midway. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON

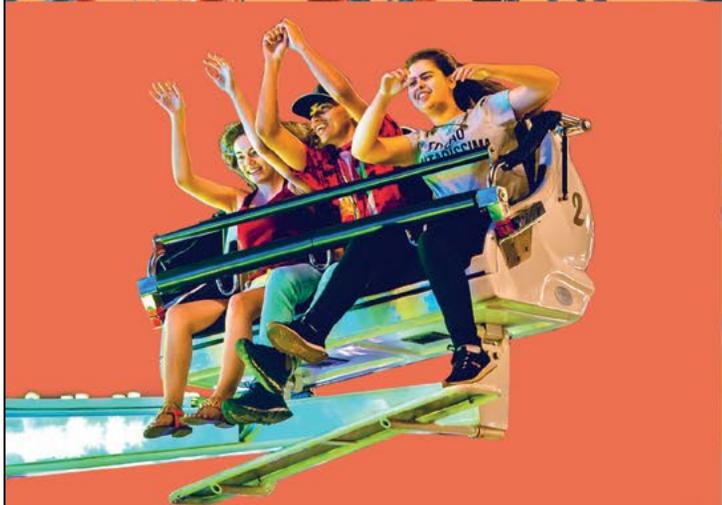


Brinkley Entertainment's Allan Herschell helicopter was a highlight. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON





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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ Nashville Shores adds new ProSlide mat racer — page 38 / News Splash — page 38

Studio City opens indoor water park designed by WhiteWater

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

MACAU, China — The long-awaited all-weather **Studio City Water Park** celebrated its grand opening in July, in the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

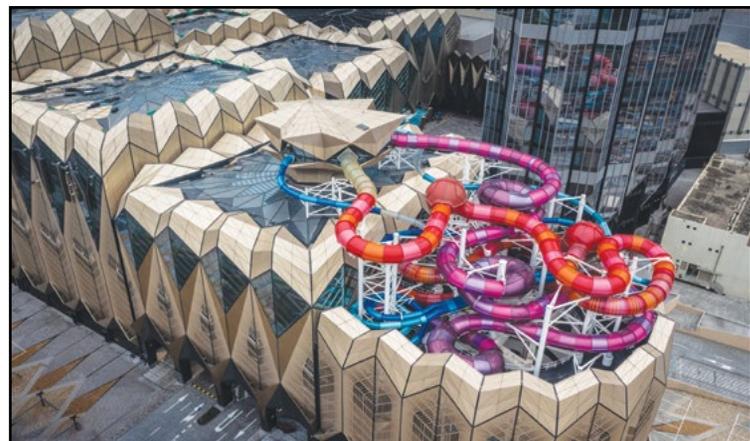
The new indoor water park was designed by **WhiteWater** of British Columbia, Canada, and is perfectly integrated with the phase-two hotel development. The indoor section of the water park is outer-space-themed and is the largest indoor water park in Macau with 16 attractions under one roof. Among the attractions are seven waterslides, two wave pools and a unique oblivion pool that extends both indoors and outdoors and features a glassy bottom providing incredible views and giving the illusion that swimmers are floating in the sky. The water park is set inside a futuristic-looking building with bold geometric origami-inspired shapes. A massive central dome and angled glass roofs, along with huge window walls, let in plenty of natural daylight.

The indoor portion complements the outdoor water park which opened in 2021. It has 62 various attractions including slides, rides, waterfalls, deep water jump-in pools and glass-walled elevated pools.

The premier attraction of the indoor section is **Lightspeed Shuttle**, a 300-meter (980-foot) uphill water coaster — the first of its kind in Macau. This latest Master



Lightspeed Shuttle includes multiple uphill blasts as it takes riders around the park (above left). The larger see-through windows along **Lightspeed Shuttle's** path allows for great spectator viewing (inset). The origami-inspired angular glass windows and skylights are evident in this view from above. A good portion of many of the slides are situated above the roof (above right). COURTESY STUDIO CITY MACAU, WHITEWATER



Blaster model uses technology originally developed back in the 1990s but incorporates several modern updates. Although the entrance is located above the floor level, **Lightspeed Shuttle** starts and ends on the same level, so guests do not have to carry tubes to the top of a ride tower. After having boarded their two-person raft, a conveyor takes thrill seekers to the top of the slide near the roof. Once over the top, gravity and water jets take over.

This next generation of Master Blaster has larger, see-through windows along the path, giving riders exhilarating views as they traverse around the park. It also allows friends and family as well as those in the queue to see guests laughing and screaming throughout the ride creating photo and video opportunities.

As with newer Master Blasters, this one is equipped with **Smart Blast**, WhiteWater's proprietary technology that ramps down the pump speed for uphill sections when not in use. This system is engineered to provide significant savings in power and water consumption, thereby reducing cost.

The ride comes to end in a channel of water right behind the loading point. Depending on crowds and the number of people in the queue, riders can, if the wish, stay in the raft and choose to ride again.

Rockwall Fall is a unique climbing wall standing 3.7 meters (12 feet) tall alongside a deep pool. Courageous climbers are encouraged to climb as high as they dare, and then leap — or fall — into the deep-water pool.

The two wave pools offer different experiences with **Luna Ripple** providing a peaceful setting among rocks with a gushing fountain and gently rolling waves. **Martian**

Waves is the more exciting of the two with a large waveball providing ocean-like swells.

Blackhole Slingshot and **Wormhole Whip** utilize round, multi-person round rafts. **Black Hole Slingshot** combines a WhiteWater **AquaSphere** and **Rattler** in a dark enclosed flume highlighted with colorful lights to provide every rider with a dazzling light show. **Wormhole Whip** is a **Constrictor** slide with multi-color translucent rings producing a dizzying effect.

Families with young children have plenty to keep them entertained with the **Command Center**, an indoor **AquaPlay 1050** with multiple levels, a large tipping bucket, several smaller tipping funnels, interactive water toys and pint-sized slides. The aquatic play area, and key areas of the park are covered with **Life Floor**, an award-winning, anti-slip, foam-rubber flooring system that provides safety and comfort.

In keeping with the modern, space-theme look, many of the waterslides were given custom metallic finishes to create a stunning visual.

The indoor water park is part of Studio City's \$1.3 billion phase two expansion, which included two hotels, a large technologically advanced multi-screen cinema, high-end restaurants, and state-of-the-art conference and exhibition facilities. The expansion was built by Hong Kong's **Melco International Development Ltd.**, with the design provided by **Zaha Hadid Architects** of the United Kingdom.

Studio City opened in 2015 as a "Golden Age of Hollywood," cinematic-themed resort. The original complex was designed by **Goddard Group** and featured two hotel towers — **Star** and **Celebrity** — connected by the world's first figure-eight Ferris wheel provided by **Intamin Amusement Rides**.

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As seen from above, the left pair and right pair of slides diverge onto different paths following the first rally point. COURTESY NASHVILLE SHORES

Nashville Shores adds new ProSlide mat racer

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

NASHVILLE, Tennessee — In celebration of its 25th anniversary, **Nashville Shores Lakeside Resort** has added a four-lane, mat-racer slide from **ProSlide Technology** of Ottawa, Ontario.

Riptide Racer stands more than 50 feet tall and features two mid-course rally points where the U-shaped flume and low separator walls allow sliders in adjacent channels to see and hear their competitors in the other lanes. Said to be the longest four-lane mat racer in the world, the layout is unique in that the pair of lanes on the right follow a different course than the pair of lanes on the left. To add to the excitement, each pair has a crossover point so that when sliders meet at the second rally point, the person they are sliding against is on the other side.

After a second crossover, all four slides converge for the final — and largest — drop as the thrill seekers within the channels race to the finish line to determine the winner.

“The Riptide Racer is a family-thrill slide featuring amazing speed, an interactive group experience, and a simple concept: first one to the bottom wins,” said **Joe Eckman**, general manager of Nashville Shores. “We are excited to add this multi-million-dollar, world-class attraction to our park and look forward to families and friends enjoying it together.”

Nashville Shores Resort is an RV park with a water park and adventure course, located in Hermitage — a residential neighborhood that maintains its own identity even though it is incorporated as part of Nashville. The resort sits on a peninsula on the shores of Percy Priest Lake. Lakefront amenities include a sandy beach with access to a floating obstacle course along with jet ski and pontoon boat rentals and a marina. For overnight accommodations, the resort offers RV hookups, and two cabin types — lakefront and hillside. The resort does not have tent camping.

The campground was first opened in 1971 as **Hermitage Landing**, shortly after the completion of the reservoir. It closed in 1997 and the property was acquired by **Mike Williams**, who opened Nashville Shores the following year, with two waterslides. With the closure of Opryland that same year, Williams had plans to build an amusement park on the site, but local residents opposed it, and he was unable to get approval from the Army Corps of Engineers, from which the land is leased.

In 2009 the park was acquired by **Gary Story** and **Kieran Burke** as one of the first properties to be owned by the then-newly formed **Premier Parks, LLC**. The new owners added a wave pool and lazy river for the 2010 season and added new capital to the park almost every year over the next decade. Premier Parks continues to own and operate the resort today.



NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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In July, **Gamuda Cove’s SplashMania Waterpark**, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, announced a plan to continually expand the water park over the next 10 years.

“Since the soft opening of SplashMania in February 2023, the water park has welcomed over 75,000 monthly visitors from both the domestic and regional tourism markets,” said Chairman **Tan Sri Ambrin Buang**. “Gamuda’s SplashMania Waterpark has put the South of Selangor on the map and breathed new life into the area.”

The park is attracting nearly 75,000 guests per month, mostly from the domestic and regional tourism markets. The park is hoping that with continued expansion it will become an international destination. The recent opening of Malaysia’s first virtual reality waterslide, **Atlantis VR**, will increase the park’s appeal.

The 250-meter virtual journey through the lost city of Atlantis was developed by **Polin Waterparks** and **Polin Game Technologies**. This first-of-its-kind attraction was still undergoing technical tuning when the park opened in February.

Jellystone Park in Tyler, Texas, opened a new water play structure in July. As is typical with these types of family-friendly additions, there are plenty of interactive elements to keep everyone entertained. Multiple levels, several slides, and water cannons will make sure that everyone gets watery relief from the hot Texas sun. Instead of the typical tipping bucket, a giant water tower was installed. It gradually fills then dumps its water on guests below every 10 to 15 minutes.

The park also has a swimming pool and a number of cabanas available for a private retreat.

Future plans include additional RV spots as well as cabins to accommodate more visitors.

Work has begun on a new 14-hectare (34-acre) water park in Desvío Arjón, in the Santa Fe Province in Argentina. Planned attractions in the first development phase include a 700-person-capacity wave pool and three state-of-the-art slides. Officials say they will invest US\$7 million.

The city hopes that in addition to providing recreation for the local population, the water park will help spark an interest regional tourism to the province.

Ground breaking for a new aquatic center in Spanish Fork, Utah, was sched-

uled to take place this month following years of planning and delays. The aquatic center was first proposed eight years ago, but after community opposition, a \$40 million bond issue to finance a city center, senior center, aquatic center, library and recreation center was defeated.

After the closure of the city’s last public pool in 2021, the issue was brought back to the forefront. The city council felt that citizens were not opposed to the new facilities, but rather the means by which they were to be funded.

The new facility will be paid for using sales tax revenue, a special recreation art and parks tax that was passed in 2018, property tax, and donations from local businesses.

New plans have the senior, recreation and aquatic centers combined into one 135,000-square-foot facility. The aquatic portion will include an indoor pool that connects to an outdoor lazy river and an outdoor leisure pool, waterslides and a children’s play area.

The **Willa D. Johnson Recreation Center** in Oklahoma City opened in July as the first center to be built within city limits in 40 years. The \$17.5 million facility is a multi-purpose, youth-oriented recreation center located on the north side of Douglass Park. It replaced an existing recreational facility that was more than 75 years old. It features a gymnasium, lounge, two multipurpose rooms, a teaching kitchen and an indoor natatorium.

The natatorium includes an interactive water play area, lap pool, water fitness area and a waterslide.

Willa D. Johnson was the first African-American woman to serve on the Oklahoma City city council, representing the seventh ward 7 for 14 years. She became a county commissioner for 11 years. Johnson died in 2022 at the age of 83.

“She championed our youth and championed the community, and to name this building after her talks to her legacy,” said Councilwoman **Nikki Nice**.

San Gabriel Valley representatives and organizations broke ground in July on a new aquatic center in La Puente, California.

Scheduled to be completed in 2025, the new facility will include an Olympic-sized swimming pool along with other smaller recreational pools, changing rooms, classrooms and offices. The aquatic center will provide public pool access, water safety programming, youth swimming lessons and lifeguard jobs.



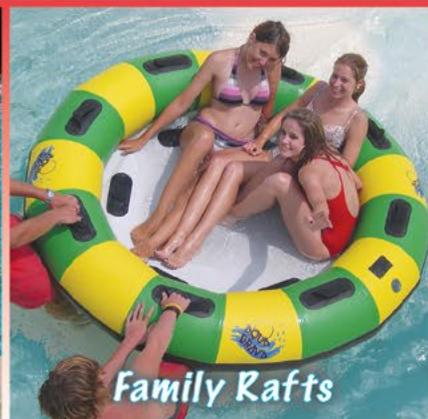
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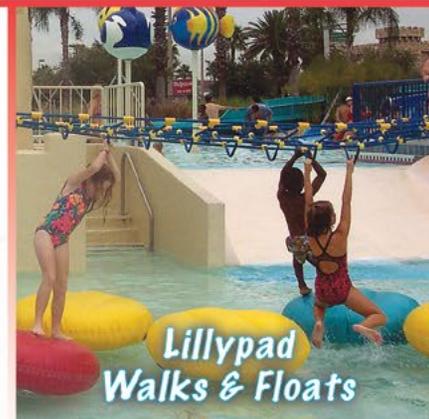
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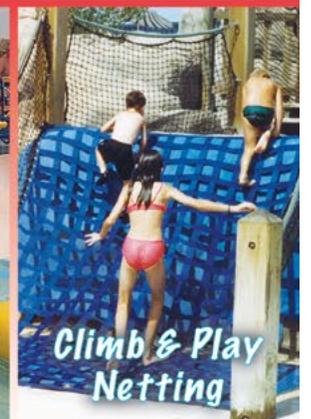
Family Rafts



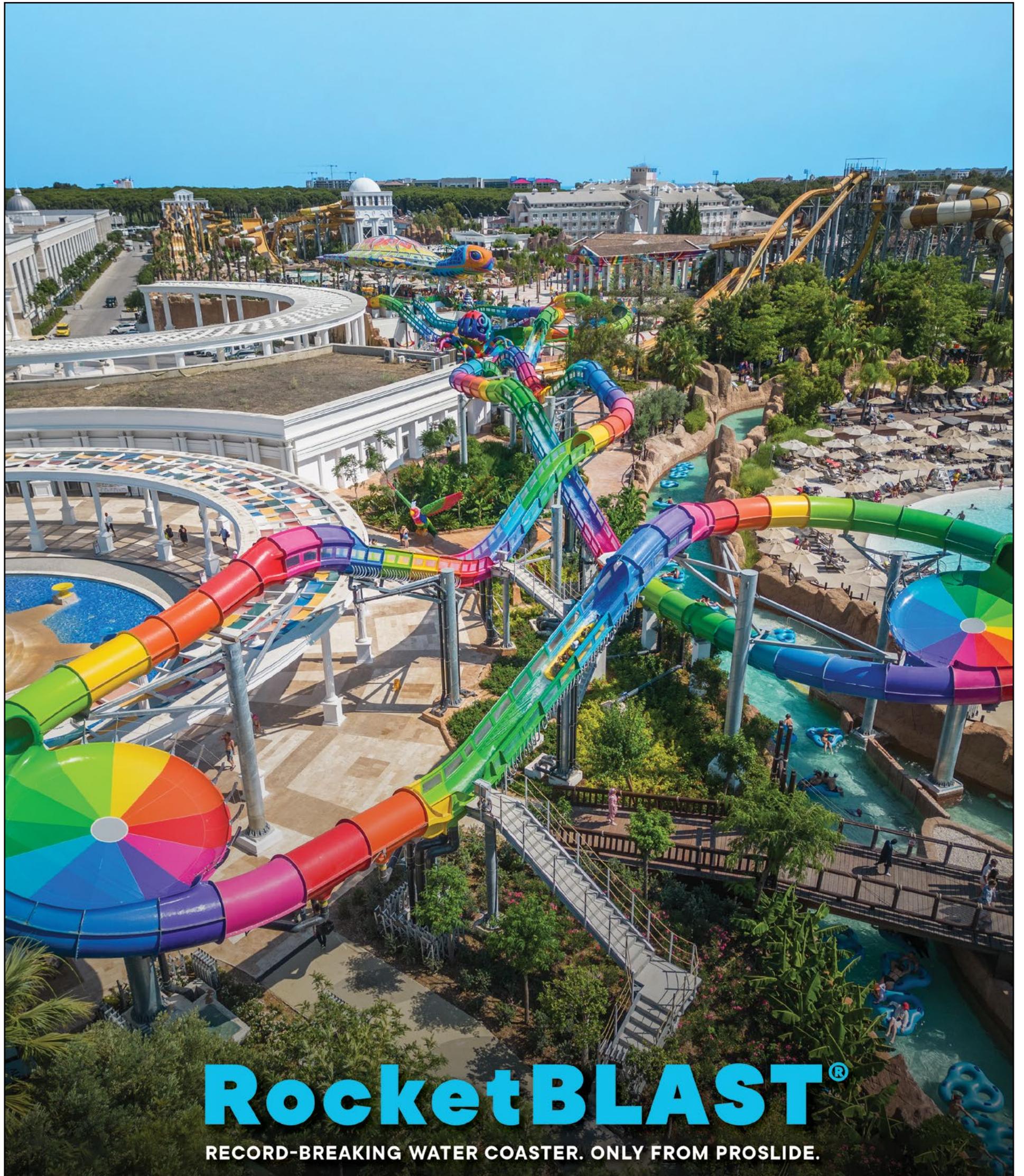
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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Vienna's Messe Wien hosting IAAPA Expo Europe — page 44 / Woman of Influence: Emily Popovich — page 48

Europa-Park's Hotel Krønasår expands with boutique offerings

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

RUST, Germany — Opened in 2019, Krønasår – The Museum Hotel was Europa-Park's sixth resort hotel. Closest to the train station just outside of Rust, Krønasår is the closest of the hotels to arriving tourists. More importantly, it is the first anchor hotel to the resort's second gate, Rulantica, the indoor/outdoor water park.

This second campus of attractions is about 3 km from Europa-Park, and guests can enjoy free shuttle service to both locations.

Krønasår opened with almost 300 rooms. Recently, an expansion was added to the existing Scandinavian-themed resort hotel. However, the expansion added only 11 new rooms.



Each Boutique Suite (above left) is themed to a Scandinavian locale. The Eatrenalin Suites offer a bed on a rotating platform supplied by Mack Rides (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

"It's like a little boutique hotel," said **Thomas Mack**, managing partner, Europa-Park.

That's putting it mildly. If the term boutique might imply "small," think again. One of the first words to come to mind with these new accommodations is *spacious*.

Of the 11 rooms, there are two specific divisions. Seven of them are themed to northern locations. With room names such as "Seeland," "Skanden," "Lappland," "Dalama," etc., each room has its own unique thematic locale and color palette. More notably, all are two-story rooms, with a curving



staircase between floors. Both the upper and lower floors have private balconies facing out to the lake on the backside of the hotel.

The amenities within are grand as well. Each room has its own sauna, beautifully modern shower fixtures, a simulated fireplace and vari-

ous places to relax.

The four remaining suites are termed Eatrenalin Suites as they are part of the same building that houses the resort's ultra-innovative **Eatrenalin** dining experience. Within that inde-

► See KRØNASÅR, page 43

Hologate raises nearly \$9 million for global expansion

MUNICH, Germany — Extended reality company **Hologate** has secured nearly \$9 million to significantly boost its international market expansion, namely in Europe and North America, plus new product development. The Series A is co-led by new investors **Bolero Holdings** and **Vester Partners**, with participation from existing investors, including European early-stage venture capital firm **Cherry Ventures**.

With a vision to make extended reality accessible for everyone, **Leif Petersen** founded Munich-based Hologate in 2013. The company pioneers turnkey extended reality (XR) solutions for entertainment and enterprise and has an impressive track record as the world's largest location-based VR network, spanning 42 countries and over 450 locations. Since the start, Hologate has captivated over 18 million players with an array of interactive — and immersive — en-



Hologate has captivated over 18 million players with an array of interactive and immersive entertainment products. COURTESY HOLOGATE

tertainment products and blockbuster IPs such as Ghostbusters and Angry Birds.

In 2020, Hologate introduced HGXR, a new division focused on enterprise training and simulation solutions. Hologate saw an

opportunity to leverage their unparalleled expertise in both the technical and design developments of XR and expand their product portfolio into the enterprise sector. Studies show the transformative potential of VR technology in training and simulation. VR learners exhibit greater focus, accelerated skill acquisition, and heightened confidence when applying newly acquired skills to real life scenarios post-training.

The company quickly gained trust from prominent organizations like the German Army, police forces and the **Fraunhofer Institute**. With the company's efficient and effective end-to-end XR solutions, HGXR recreates hyper-realistic scenarios — such as close quarter battle or police training — in safe virtual environments, enabling professionals to train

► See HOLOGATE, page 43



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►KRØNASÅR

Continued from page 42

scribable gastronomic journey [See *Amusement Today* May 2023], guests enjoy an eight-course meal in “floating chairs” by **Mack Rides** in which numerous rooms and various seating configurations continuously keep guests surprised.

“You wouldn’t notice it was the same building, but it is,” Mack said. “We wanted to have a connection to Eatrenalin.”

Mack Rides offers its own contribution to the Eatrenalin Suites as well. In those extremely spacious rooms — and the highest priced of the new expansion — the bed is placed on a rotating platform. With the touch of a remote, the bed can rotate to the television, the window view or any direction guests wish to face. Its sheer purpose is the “cool factor.”

“We used to only build rides [for parks] but now we have built ‘floating chairs’ for restaurants and turning platforms for beds in hotels. It could be a completely new market for the company,” Mack told *Amusement Today*.

The expansion took



The two-story rooms feature a balcony on each floor.
AT/TIM BALDWIN

a year to build and the lake behind the hotel was expanded to extend to the new suites as well.

Europa-Park has numerous convention facilities throughout the resort. Sometimes a convention will take up every room in all six hotels, and this is in the off-season.

When the theme park isn’t open, Krønásár serves the year-round business of Rulantica. In a press conference earlier this season, Mack said there wasn’t really an “off-season” anymore.

When *AT* asked if that was because of the year-round water park or the convention business, Mack said, “Conventions in the past have been very big, so I would say both. We do about 1,600 events a year. It’s convenient for companies

and businesses as they only have to talk to one person to get entertainment, to get food, and to get what they need. The off-season is very important to us, and with the water park, it’s more than the off-season. We have a second park all year round.”

Also within the complex of offerings is **Yullbe**, a stand-alone virtual reality attraction.

With six hotels, the resort can offer various types of accommodations. This new expansion specifically caters to the high-end. While rates can vary depending on the season, the new boutique suites carry a price tag of more than €1,000 a night. And the resort is getting it. For guests wanting to drape themselves in luxury while vacationing at Europa-Park, these are the rooms in which to do so.

•europapark.de/en

►HOLOGATE

Continued from page 42

any real-life situation including high-risk scenarios and undergo highly effective learning-by-doing experiences. Compact and mobile, HGXR’s turnkey solutions transform any room into a dynamic virtual training space, tailored to the specific needs of each customer.

Hologate’s recently secured \$9 million in funding will fuel growth across all divisions encompassing entertainment and enterprise solutions. Hologate aims to bring their cutting-edge HGXR training and simulation solutions to the global market, with a focus on Europe and North America. The funding will also support the development of new products and the realization of ambitious hiring plans, further strengthening the company’s capabilities and expertise. Finally,



Hologate is led by (l to r): Jan Ottens (Chief Technology Officer), Leif Petersen (Chief Executive Officer), Robert Fankhänel (Chief Operating Officer). COURTESY HOLOGATE

Hologate plans to further leverage AI to enable realistic and authentic interaction with virtual humans, unlocking new opportunities and driving innovation.

“Securing this financing is a testament to the strength of our vision and the incredible value our partners see in Hologate,” stated Leif Petersen founder and CEO of Hologate. “This investment will propel us towards ambitious goals in this era of spatial computing, play a vital role in our

plans for strategic hiring, explore new markets, innovate with new products and ultimately supercharge our growth.”

“With their ability to replicate everything from the visualizations to the interactions of real-life scenarios, Hologate is helping, to start, law enforcement professionals train in intense environments with fewer resources, less risk, and greater effect,” added **Filip Dames**, founding partner of **Cherry Ventures**.

OBITUARY

John Broome, founder of Alton Towers, dies at 80

STAFFORDSHIRE, U.K. — The man behind one of the U.K.’s most successful theme parks has died. John Broome, the founder of Alton Towers, has died at age 80.

Broome was born in 1943 and went on to have a far-reaching impact on the tourism industry.

A statement from Imperial Corporate Capital read: “It is with profound sadness that I must convey the news of the passing of our esteemed and beloved board member, Mr. John Broome. The entire team at Imperial Corporate Capital is feeling the weight of this significant loss.

“John was not just a colleague; he was a visionary and a pioneer whose far-reaching impact on the tourism industry is renowned. From transforming Alton Towers into a landmark theme park to his innovative vision for Camel Creek Resort [Cornwall], John’s creativity and determination were truly extraordinary.”

He began his career as a property developer in the

1970s but it was his development of the Alton Towers site that brought him national attention.

Broome first made inroads into the tourism industry in 1973 when he bought a concession to run a train ride through the grounds of the Alton Towers estate. After marrying manager’s Denis Bradshaw’s daughter Jane, John — who had made his millions in property — founded the Staffordshire theme park in 1980.

He bought out the controlling stake in Alton Towers in 1973 and over the next few years, he laid the foundation for the modern theme park by installing rides and developing areas of the grounds in progressive stages. His leadership saw the introduction of the Corkscrew rollercoaster, the Pirate Ship, and the Alpine Bobsled ride.

Broome sold the park to the Tussauds Group in 1990.



Broome

Former IAAPA President, Joseph Clark Robinson passes

BOUNTIFUL, Utah — Joseph Clark Robinson, 81, returned home on Thursday, July 27, 2023. His family, whom he dearly loves, were by his side. He was 81. Robinson was born to L a m o n d W i l l i a m Robinson and Jessie Jannetta Knowlton Robinson on March 7, 1942, in Farmington, Utah.



Robinson

Robinson graduated from Davis High School and the University of Utah where he earned his Master of Business Administration. After graduation he was employed as the comptroller and later as the general manager of Lagoon. He actually

began his career at the park starting at the age of eight.

He served on the board of directors of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions and then relocated to Washington, D.C. to serve as the president of the association.

Robinson and his beautiful wife, DeeAnn Carling, met while they were attending the University of Utah. They were married in the Salt Lake City temple on March 13, 1964. The two of them raised four children.

He was preceded in death by his parents, two of his brothers, Rick (Gwen Larkins), Stephen (Marion Adams), and his sister JoAnn (Robert Freed and Kumar Chavré).

Vienna's Messe Wien center hosting the 2023 IAAPA Expo Europe

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

VIENNA, Austria — IAAPA Expo Europe 2023 will be held from Sept. 25-28 at the state-of-the-art Messe Wien Exhibition and Congress Center in Vienna, the vibrant capital of Austria in the heart of Europe.

Industry professionals, key decision-makers and experts from all over the world will gather in Vienna to explore the diverse landscape of the European attractions market and shape the future of the entire industry.

The event will feature a comprehensive trade show floor of more than 600 exhibiting companies on approximately 17,000 net square meters (over 180,000 square feet) of exhibit space. There, attendees can explore a wide range of products, services and solutions offered by leading manufacturers and suppliers.

The event will offer an extensive educational program, including keynote presentations, panel discussions and in-depth seminars, providing valuable insights and knowledge-sharing from more than 100 international speakers.

"IAAPA Expo Europe is the must-attend event for professionals in the attractions industry and we are delighted to bring it to Vienna," said Peter van der Schans,

executive director and vice president for IAAPA Europe, Middle

East and Africa. "Vienna combines a deep appreciation for history and culture with a forward-thinking mindset, making it an ideal destination for this year's expo event. We look forward to showcasing the best of the attractions industry, fostering new connections and delivering exceptional educational opportunities in



Schans



Attractions industry professionals, key decision-makers and experts from all over the world will gather in Vienna, Austria, to explore the diverse landscape of the European attractions market at the 2023 IAAPA Expo Europe. It is being held at the Messe Wien Exhibition and Congress Center, Sept 25-28. COURTESY MESSE WIEN CENTER

this remarkable city."

IAAPA is bringing various new aspects to IAAPA Expo Europe this year. One is the new Hosted Buyer Program. IAAPA will host new buyers from around the world to meet exhibitors and association members through pre-arranged appointments. Through the exclusive Hosted Buyer Program, companies can optimize time and budgets, network and share experiences and be inspired by new trends and innovations and discover supplies across the globe.

Another new innovation this year will be found on the new Innovation Stage. To be located on the trade show floor, it will bring education to the floor and make it more dynamic, visible, and accessible than ever.

The stage will be located in Hall C and will host 20-minute EDUTalks that will cover business cases about implementing new trends among a vast variety of topics like operations, sustainability, safety and technology.

These short format presentations will give the

audience the flexibility to join for a quick session and continue their discovery of the show floor with little disturbance.

With Vienna as a backdrop, IAAPA officials couldn't resist forming another new feature for this year's show. The first-ever Host City Day will offer attendees to learn from Viennese experts about the city and some of its culture. Attendees will be given special insights into three focused areas: retail, culture and food and beverage. The day-long event will combine trends, tours of attractions and a networking reception.

It will be held on Monday, Sept. 25. Attendees wanting to participate will need to register separately for this event.

This year, IAAPA Expo Europe will deliver various events that focus on safety. Attendees may choose from the all-day event known as Safety Day, set for Monday, Sept. 25, or ask about the invite-only IAAPA Safety Exchange.

IAAPA members may

also ask questions, review the latest safety documents and meet the IAAPA EMEA Safety Subcommittee at the Safety Corner in the IAAPA Member Lounge.

Along with the Host Day tours and the Safety Day on Monday, Sept. 25, other day-long programming scheduled for this day include Water Park Day, Indoor Entertainment Day, Sustainability Day and EDUTour encompassing a trip to **Familypark**.

Familypark is an amusement park near Lake Neusiedl, Austria. It includes diverse themed zones, each offering unique adventures and immersive storytelling.

Water Park Day includes a visit to the local **Aqualand Moravia** park, and Indoor Entertainment Day features inspirational sessions at Messe Wien in the morning and tours of Vienna's leading indoor attractions in the afternoon.

Attendees to Sustainability Day will be offered a full day of educational sessions and workshops taking place at Messe Wien at the

Luftburg Restaurant.

All of the Monday day-long programs require a separate registration.

Trade show hours this year run 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 26, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 28.

This year's opening ceremony will take place in the morning on Tuesday, Sept. 26, with the Opening Reception closing out that day.

The Leadership Breakfast will take place on the morning of Wednesday, Sept. 27. **Nora Lamac**, managing partner of the **Wiener Riesenrad**, and **François Fassier**, vice president of **Leisure and Destination at Compagnie des Alpes**, will set the tone with their unique insights during keynotes.

IAAPA officials expect to be on par or increase the number of attendees from the 2022 Expo Europe. Registered attendance last year was 11,474, including 7,510 qualified buyers representing 4,408 buying companies and 530 exhibiting companies.

•iaapa.org

SeaWorld's Coral Rescue Center preserves Florida's coral reefs

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — In a pioneering effort to conserve and restore coral reefs, **SeaWorld Orlando** has unveiled its groundbreaking Coral Rescue Center in Orlando, Florida. The world-renowned marine theme park is leading the charge in coral reef rehabilitation and conservation by focusing on the restoration and protection of these vital ecosystems.

The largest part of the Coral Rescue Center is mostly situated in an off-site warehouse within the park's expansive marine research facility. The enormous 3,750-gallon facility houses 350 coral colonies and 15 species of at-risk coral, several of which are listed as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The center is a collaborative project between SeaWorld's team of marine biologists, environmental experts, and local conservation organizations. There is also a smaller working rehabilitation center within the SeaWorld Orlando park.

The park's Coral Rescue Center exhibit, supported by the **Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida**, is the largest public-facing facility dedicated to coral conservation in the country. This state-of-the-art facility enables guests to interact with coral biologists as they care for at-risk Florida corals, raising awareness about conservation and ocean health.

The center aims to restore coral colonies that have been damaged or depleted because of bleaching events, coastal development and other factors that have adversely affected the delicate marine habitats. SeaWorld Orlando's expertise in animal care, conservation, and marine research positions it as an ideal institution to spearhead this critical mission.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, **Dr. Sarah Miller**, the lead marine biologist at SeaWorld Orlando, emphasized the significance of their Coral Rehabilitation Center in the broader con-



SeaWorld's Coral Rescue Center aims to restore coral colonies that have been damaged or depleted due to bleaching events, coastal development and other factors that have adversely affected the delicate marine habitats. SeaWorld Orlando's expertise in animal care, conservation and marine research positions it as an ideal institution to spearhead this critical mission. AT/DAVID FAKE

we hope to ignite a passion for conservation in our visitors, empowering them to become ambassadors for the protection and preservation of Florida's corals."

text of global marine conservation efforts. "Coral reefs are among the most biodiverse ecosystems on the planet, providing a habitat for countless marine species," she stated. "They also act as natural barriers, protecting coastlines from storms and erosion. Our Coral Rehabilitation Center represents a commitment to preserving these invaluable natural resources for future generations."

"The new SeaWorld Coral Rescue Center represents another significant commitment to protect and conserve coral reefs, and the Center enables the public to get a close-up look at our work as we provide exceptional care in a safe haven for vulnerable corals as the conservation community works together to restore our vital coral reef system," said **Jim Kinsler**, zoological curator at SeaWorld Orlando and manager of the Florida Coral Rescue Center in Orlando. "By raising awareness about the importance of corals and their role in the environment,

SeaWorld has a long-standing relationship with the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida. The SeaWorld Coral Rescue Center is an extension of the partnership with the FCRC, providing funds for the coral housing units that allow SeaWorld to house and care for the rescued corals. "Corals are the rainforests of the ocean," said **Andrew Walker**, Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida president and CEO. "In addition to providing a home for a quarter of all marine life, corals buffer our coastline from damaging storms and fuel our state's economy. We're grateful to SeaWorld for providing a space for these rescued corals to thrive and for the public to learn more about our partnership to restore Florida's Coral Reef."

The Coral Research Center has even earned the often-elusive bipartisan support of US Congresspersons for the State of Florida. "The Florida coral reef is in trouble which poses both an ecological and economic threat

to the state of Florida and the country. It's the largest coral reef ecosystem in the continental United States and vital to maintaining healthy oceans. It also supports over 71,000 jobs and generates over \$6.3 billion in tourism revenue every year," said **Florida Congressman Darren Soto**. "I am proud to have worked across the aisle to pass the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act. Alongside our legislative efforts, partnering with world-class conservation and animal care organizations like SeaWorld will allow us to make a real difference in preserving our reefs for future generations."

This collaborative initiative comes at a crucial time for Florida's Coral Reef, and coral reefs worldwide face significant threats from climate change, pollution and human activities.

These efforts have never been more crucial, as in July of this year alone, the Atlantic Ocean's temperature off the coast of Florida hit repeated record-breaking highs in excess of 90 degrees. Sadly, this ocean-warming event has already led to the death of much of Florida's Coral Reef, also known as "bleaching," significantly setting

back several previous years-long rehabilitation efforts.

The center will focus on several key initiatives:

Coral Restoration — Utilizing state-of-the-art techniques, the team will cultivate and nurture coral fragments to create healthy colonies. These corals will then be transplanted onto damaged reef areas, helping to accelerate the recovery process.

Coral Disease Research — The center will conduct research to understand and combat coral diseases that have devastated reefs worldwide. This knowledge will be essential in developing strategies to mitigate the impacts of disease outbreaks.

Public Education and Awareness — SeaWorld Orlando recognizes the importance of public awareness in coral conservation. The park plans to create interactive exhibits and educational programs that inform visitors about the significance of coral reefs and what they can do to support their protection.

Collaboration with Conservation Partners — SeaWorld Orlando aims to collaborate with other marine institutions, universities and local conservation organizations to share knowledge and develop effective conservation strategies.

The Coral Rehabilitation Center has already received widespread support from environmentalists, marine scientists, and the local community. In addition to its conservation efforts, SeaWorld Orlando also seeks to inspire visitors to take an active role in preserving the oceans and the creatures that call them their home.

With the opening of the Coral Rehabilitation Center, SeaWorld Orlando reinforces its commitment to animal welfare and marine conservation. By combining its expertise in animal care and environmental stewardship, the theme park is poised to make a significant positive impact on the world's coral reefs and contribute to the overall health of marine ecosystems.

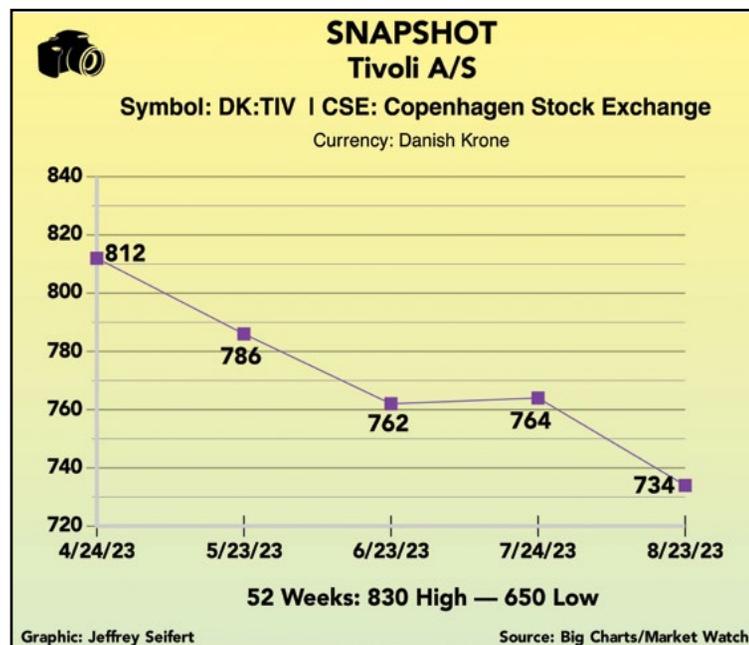
MARKET WATCH

| COMPANY | SYMBOL | MARKET | PRICE 8/24/23 | HIGH 52-Week | LOW 52-Week |
|--------------------------------------|----------|--------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS | | | | | |
| The Blackstone Group | BX | NYSE | 99.02 | 109.99 | 71.72 |
| Bowlero Corp. | BOWL | NYSE | 10.45 | 17.45 | 10.21 |
| Cedar Fair, L.P. | FUN | NYSE | 39.44 | 47.95 | 35.55 |
| Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media | CMCSA | NASDAQ | 45.24 | 47.45 | 28.39 |
| Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC | PLAY | NASDAQ | 38.82 | 47.29 | 30.36 |
| EPR Properties | EPR | NYSE | 43.91 | 47.70 | 33.92 |
| Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd. | JP:9010 | TYO | 5310.00 | 5820.00 | 3850.00 |
| Haichang Holdings Ltd. | HK:2255 | SEHK | 1.07 | 4.15 | 0.81 |
| Leofoo Development Co. | TW:2705 | TSEC | 16.95 | 28.45 | 15.40 |
| MGM Resorts International | MGM | NYSE | 42.40 | 51.35 | 29.20 |
| Parks America, Inc. | PRKA | OTC | 0.42 | 0.47 | 0.26 |
| Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd. | RCL | NYSE | 99.05 | 112.95 | 36.92 |
| SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc. | SEAS | NYSE | 48.49 | 68.19 | 44.38 |
| Six Flags Entertainment Co. | SIX | NYSE | 21.47 | 31.29 | 16.83 |
| Warner Bros Discovery Inc. | WBD | NASDAQ | 12.70 | 16.34 | 8.82 |
| Tivoli A/S | DK:TIV | CSE | 724.00 | 822.00 | 650.00 |
| The Walt Disney Company | DIS | NYSE | 82.47 | 118.37 | 82.46 |
| SUPPLIERS/OTHERS | | | | | |
| Brogent Technologies, Inc. | TW:5263 | TSEC | 114.00 | 148.50 | 99.6 |
| Sansei Technologies, Inc. | TYO:6357 | TYO | 1154.00 | 1515.00 | 738.00 |
| Topgolf Callaway Brands | MODG | NYSE | 16.21 | 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 8/21/23 | Change from 1 year ago |
|--------------|---------------|------------------------|
| East Coast | \$4.422 | (\$0.500) |
| Midwest | \$4.302 | (\$0.588) |
| Gulf Coast | \$4.095 | (\$0.524) |
| Mountain | \$4.500 | (\$0.385) |
| West Coast | \$4.794 | (\$0.336) |
| California | \$5.535 | (\$0.494) |

CURRENCY

On 8/25/23 \$1 USD =

| | |
|--------|-------------------------|
| 0.9223 | EURO |
| 0.7896 | GBP (British Pound) |
| 145.47 | JPY (Japanese Yen) |
| 0.8808 | CHF (Swiss Franc) |
| 1.5510 | AUD (Australian Dollar) |
| 1.3548 | CAD (Canadian Dollar) |

BUSINESS WATCH

Weather affects Cedar Fair quarterly report

SANDUSKY, Ohio — **Cedar Fair Entertainment Company** announced its financial results for the quarter ended June 25, 2023. In addition, the company announced the declaration of a cash distribution of \$0.30 per limited partner unit payable on September 20, 2023, to unitholders of record as of September 6, 2023, consistent with Cedar Fair's current annualized distribution rate of \$1.20 per LP unit.

"The investments we have made in our parks for the 2023 season, as well as those made over the past several years, have improved the guest experience, helped us achieve record guest satisfaction ratings, driven increased guest spending, and positioned Cedar Fair to continue delivering strong economic returns for investors," commented **Richard Zimmerman**, Cedar Fair's president and CEO. "Unfortunately, anomalous weather patterns — including unprecedented rainfall in California and wildfires in Canada — have significantly disrupted year-to-date attendance, as well as sales of 2023 season passes, creating a headwind on demand."

For the second quarter ended June 25, 2023, net revenues totaled \$501 million on attendance of 7.4 million guests, compared with net revenues of \$509 million on attendance of 7.8 million guests for the quarter ended June 26, 2022.

SeaWorld reports second quarter

ORLANDO — **SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.** reported its financial results for the second quarter and first six months of fiscal year 2023.

In the second quarter of 2023, the company hosted approximately 6.1 million guests, generated total revenues of \$496.0 million, net income of \$87.1 million and Adjusted EBITDA of \$224.2 million. Attendance decreased approximately 125,000 guests when compared to the second quarter of 2022. The decrease in attendance was primarily due to significantly adverse weather, including some combination of unusually hot and cold weather, rain and / or the fall-out from Canadian wildfires, across most of our markets, including during peak visitation periods.

"We are pleased to report another quarter of solid financial results despite the impact of significantly adverse weather, in-park venue closures and related disruptions due to construction delays and a shift in the timing of the opening of new rides during the quarter," said **Marc Swanson**, chief executive officer of SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc. "Our results during the second quarter further underscore the resiliency of our business, the effectiveness of our strategy and the tireless efforts of our outstanding team."

Six Flags discusses its second quarter results

ARLINGTON, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** reported second quarter revenue of \$444 million, Net Income of \$21 million, and Adjusted EBITDA of \$161 million.

"Following a year of transition, our strategy is taking hold. Despite a challenging weather backdrop in the first half of the year, we are seeing a return to a solid growth trajectory in attendance, revenue and earnings," said **Selim Bassoul**, president and CEO. "Looking ahead, we are optimistic about the remainder of the season, with major investments in our Oktoberfest Food Festival, Kids Boo Fest, Fright Fest, and Holiday in the Park events; and looking further ahead to 2024, we will be investing heavily in new marketable attractions to further elevate our position as a leader in thrills."

Total revenue for second quarter 2023 increased \$8 million, or 2%, compared to second quarter 2022, driven by higher attendance and higher sponsorship and international licensing revenue, partially offset by lower total guest spending per capita. The increase in attendance was driven primarily by increased pass sales in second quarter 2023 versus the prior period.

ON THE MOVE

Chance Rides announced that **Steve Gladow**, its current engineering manager, will now take on the new product development manager role. In this capacity, Gladow will lead the charge in advancing Chance Rides into the technological future. With his 10 years of experience leading the company's engineering efforts, Gladow brings a wealth of industry knowledge and expertise to generate exciting new offerings.

**Gladow**

The company also welcomed **Kyle Penner** as its new vice president of engineering to oversee its engineering team. Penner comes from **Kice Industries, Inc.**, where he served as engineering director. Over the course of 25 years, he has honed his expertise in new product development methodologies, cross-functional team collaboration, product design, process improvement, talent management and resource utilization. Penner's knowledge and qualifications are complemented by his MBA and degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Physics.

**Penner**

"We are thrilled that Kyle has joined our senior management team and that Steve oversees new product development," said **Aaron Landrum**, president and CEO of Chance Rides. "With this change, we see a new era of product development closely aligned to the industry needs while also enhancing our engineering capability."

Falcon's Beyond Global, LLC announced it has named **Toni Caracciolo** as executive vice president of marketing and branding, reporting to company President **Simon Philips**.

In this newly created position, Caracciolo will advance the strong momentum Falcon's has established over the past year as the company launched multiple proj-

ects, initiatives and experiences across its three core business units. Her deep travel experience is particularly relevant to the planned future growth of Falcon's Beyond Destinations.

**Caracciolo**

"Falcon's Beyond is a company on a rapid international growth trajectory. I

am both thrilled and honored to help bolster awareness for the brand and launch future projects across our multiple lines of business," said Caracciolo. "I'm excited to leverage my deep and diverse industry experience and relationship building to develop marketing programs that elevate the brand's story across travel, theme parks, consumer products, entertainment content and more."

Eastern States Exposition (ESE) announced that **Greg Sanocki** has joined the organization's marketing department as the communications and social media specialist.

**Sanocki**

"I've always loved going to The Big E, so I'm delighted

to be a part of such an important staple in our community and beyond," said Sanocki.

In his new role as communications and social media specialist, Sanocki will be responsible for overseeing ESE's digital and social media marketing initiatives, collaborating with departments to ensure seamless digital communication as well as creating and producing effective marketing communications.

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Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Emily Popovich is a positive professional whose career in the attractions industry has taken her around the globe. By fostering relationships and always learning from others, she has expanded her career and focused on making connections behind the scenes.

Popovich shares language of relationships, the power of no

BOLINGBROOK, Ill. — The word “no” is often the answer. At least, that’s the beginning of a guiding principle and piece of treasured advice Emily Popovich applies to her professional — and personal — life. “At the beginning of my career one of my earliest mentors said to me, ‘The answer is always no if you do not ask,’ Popovich shared. “It left a deep impression and has served me ever since. It’s a reminder to step out of our comfort zones and to ask the tough questions and to speak up.”

With 20 years of experience serving and supporting the global attractions industry, it’s hard to believe the word *no* is even part of Popovich’s makeup. Originally from Virginia, Popovich describes herself as an immense Disney fan from an early age who found her career by chance. “I have always loved Disney, from the first time I went as a little girl and felt that magic. I even met my stepfather for the first time while with my mom at Disneyland. It holds a special place in my heart. When my family got our first dog, I named it Diz — short for Disney, of course. I wanted a dog named Walt, but that didn’t work well for a female dog,” she laughed. “I’ve always loved amusement parks, but like so many, I had no idea there was an entire industry that creates and supports them.”

After graduating from the University of Virginia, Popovich was unsure of her next steps. “I earned degrees in both French Language and Literature, as well as English,” she said. “I chose these studies because I was good at them, but I had no idea what I was going to use them for.”

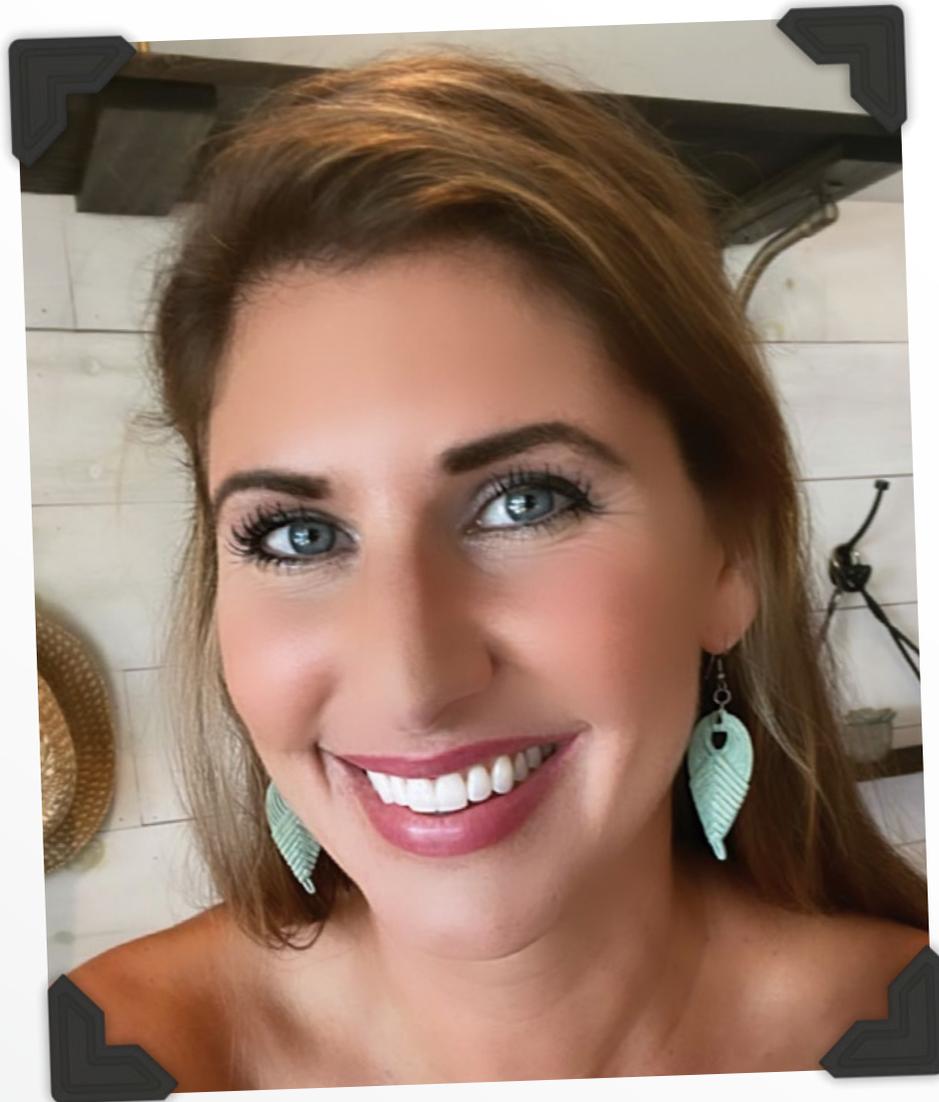
She landed her first role on

the eastern region sales team with the Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau; however, it was a spontaneous job listing at IAAPA she came across two years later that changed her life. “I knew in my core I was the right fit. IAAPA needed someone who was bilingual for a global position in an industry I’ve always loved. I was excited, eager to jump in and ready to learn more.”

Popovich’s natural gift for languages — and communication as a whole — served IAAPA and her career path well. Through her work in IAAPA’s exhibit sales department, she learned from members about their businesses as well as the importance of building and nurturing relationships. “This industry is filled with people who have extraordinary expertise in creating memorable experiences around the world,” Popovich shared. “I learned from so many, and through IAAPA partnered to help them achieve their goals. Success for me has always been so much more than just meeting a budget number. I focused on meaningful partnerships. Over time, many of these business relationships grew into genuine friendships. Like so many others in this industry, I say time and time again, this industry is an extended family.”

In 2016, Popovich’s personal life took her to Copenhagen when her husband’s job transferred her family. “In the spirit of being bold, I pitched to IAAPA a role change that would allow me to support the IAAPA EMEA team and help grow their revenue. I was now living in Europe, I spoke multiple languages, and I already knew many industry members. It was meant

Emily Popovich
L3DFX
Bolingbrook, Illinois



to be.” She continued with IAAPA and expanded the sponsorship program for IAAPA EMEA in new ways, and three years later when her family moved back to the U.S. she remained with IAAPA, transitioning to lead the global sponsorship and advertising program.

Popovich shifted her focus two years ago. Ready to learn more and grow in new ways, she found herself drawn to the design and fabrication firm L3DFX. Serving as the company’s first-ever chief of sales and business development has combined her passion with learning with sharing her talents to serve the team. “When I met Paul Ciesiun [L3DFX’s CEO], we discussed the importance of dedication, connections and his desire to stretch his team and grow the firm. Together we crafted this role for me, and I have proudly supported the team since.”

For Popovich, relationships and connections remain her core focuses. “I work with a different group of industry leaders now,” she explained. “While with IAAPA, I

primarily partnered with marketing and business development leaders. Today, I am learning another side of the industry as I work with procurement managers, project managers and park leadership teams.” She also now works alongside many industry businesses who were once clients. “The relationships I began to build so many years ago continue today. I’m proud to work alongside many of them and now have a part in the creative process that makes magic happen.”

Popovich understands how important it is to pay it forward by supporting industry newcomers. “I have mentors who still support me and serve as sounding boards,” she stated. “Serving others is immensely important, and I’m proud to support younger professionals. I often say, start with one. Make a connection with one person who inspires you. Ask for their advice and support. That one question can help chart an incredible career path. And besides if you don’t ask, well, you already know the answer.”

—Susan Storey

SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Sacoa Cashless continues world-wide growth — page 52 / New location for IRT Ride Camp — page 56

Ralph S. Alberts Company continues to go strong after 60 years

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

MONTOURSVILLE, Penn. — It all started in 1963 with **Ralph Alberts** in the basement of his family home running a tooling operation. Today that company has grown into a leader in the manufacturing of custom padding and other custom molding for the amusement industry and other recreational businesses, as well as non-amusement industries.

The following year Alberts first customer was with **Piper Aircraft**, manufacturing foam crash pads.

By 1978, the fledgling operation, now known as the **Ralph S. Alberts Company Inc.** (RSA) branched into ride safety padding for the amusement industry. The first application was designed for the Coal Cracker log flume at **Hersheypark**, Hershey, Pennsylvania. Prior to this, the industry had used padded upholstery on all new and used amusement ride vehicles. This product became a pivotal move for the company and industry. Today the standard is an integral skin foam system.

The six-decade old operation now offers all types of capabilities including custom molding, custom tooling, fiber reinforced plastic and machining and coatings. In July, the company announced the addition of a brand-new production expertise: Ethylene Vinyl



Above, staff gather in front of Ralph S. Alberts' facility. As Seth Alberts stated on the company website: "As a third-generation owner, I am proud to carry on our family's tradition and create avenues of future growth and success. More importantly, I am honored to embrace those same traditions with all of our employees who make that future possible." The Ralph S. Alberts Company currently has 75,000 square feet of space. The end of this month, the facility (below) is adding an additional 25,000 square feet to expand its fiberglass reinforced plastic operations. COURTESY RALPH S. ALBERTS COMPANY

Acetate (EVA). This light, durable, and mass production alternative for amusement ride safety padding allows for increased volumes, along with reduced costs and lead times with this injection manufacturing method.

In the last year, RSA has experienced a 100% growth in production of fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP) components that provide high quality and fire rated standards needed for the amusement industry.

Other industries the Ralph S. Alberts Co. serves today include the automotive, aviation, electronics, industrial, material handling, medical, military and sanitation segments.

Amusement Today spoke with **Seth Alberts**, 3rd generation president about the 60-year operation.

AT: Please provide some facts and figures about RSA.



Seth Alberts: We currently have a six-acre campus with three buildings totaling approximately 75,000 square feet. On September 29, we will be closing on an adjacent four acres, with an additional 25,000-square-foot building to expand our FRP Operations. As of today, we have 94 employees, 28 of which have been with us for more than 15 years, and four that have over 40 years.

AT: What are your early memories of the company?

SA: Being a family busi-

ness, my earliest memories associated with the company stem from conversations around the dinner table as a child and accompanying my father on business trips to some of the amusement parks. I worked in the factory while I was in high school during the summers to learn the technical side of the business.

AT: Explain your transition from family member to company president.

SA: I graduated from the University of Kentucky

in 2005, and immediately came back into the business. I started in sales and marketing, transitioned to vice president of operations in 2012, and became president and CEO once my father officially retired in 2018.

AT: What was your biggest challenge when you became president?

SA: I think the biggest challenge I personally faced as a third-generation owner

► See ALBERTS, page 50

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▶ALBERTS

Continued from page 49

was earning the respect of our longer-term employees. I did this through engagement, action, and my continued commitment in creating ways for further growth and expansion not only for the company, but for the employees themselves.

AT: What is a recent development of which you are proud?

SA: The creation of our sister company, **Alberts Spray Solutions, LLC**. [This is] a company that serves the oil and gas Industry with the installation of secondary containment solutions utilizing a spray polyurea liner system.

AT: Is there a memorable success that stands out?

SA: Most recently, the growth of our fiberglass division, bringing on new capabilities such as vacuum bagging, infusion, resin transfer molding (RTM), and carbon fiber. Also, the newest addition to our molding



Mikayla Arnold, business development executive of the company gives a tour highlighting some of the various products and services Ralph S. Alberts provides (above left). Above right, RSA is a family affair (l to r): Ed, Seth and Linda Alberts pose outside the front door of the operation. Seth Alberts is third generation president and CEO of the company, taking over from his father, Ed, when he retired in 2018. COURTESY SUE NICHOLS



arsenal in the form of EVA, an injection molding foam that will revolutionize the way we do things moving forward. Most importantly however, I believe we have built a team throughout our entire organization that is the strongest and most unified since I've entered back into the business.

AT: What is the most

important aspect of the company?

SA: This is an easy one for me — our employees. Without our hard-working and dedicated employees, working together as a team towards one common goal, we wouldn't exist. I'm most proud of them, and their accomplishments!

AT: Tell us about the

next chapter for RSA.

SA: As previously mentioned, our fiberglass expansion and the addition of EVA will create incredible opportunities for us across multiple industries. We have goals to someday have manufacturing capabilities in Florida, along with Europe through either organic growth or acquisitions.

AT: Any final thoughts?

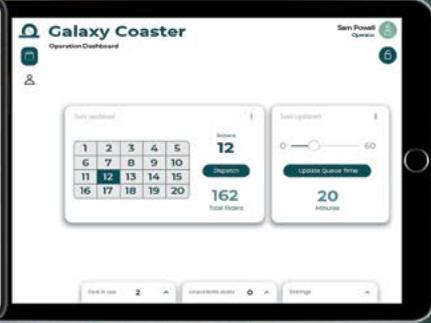
SA: For me, I'm just grateful that my father and grandfather built this stage to help support continued growth and success. My father has always been a best friend and mentor to me, and I'm proud to carry on the torch. Hopefully, one day, I will also be able to pass that on to one of my children.



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Ralph S. Alberts Company introducing lighter, more resistant EVA

MONTOURSVILLE, Penn. — The **Ralph S. Alberts Company Inc.** is bringing in a new material and production capability: EVA! For reference, Ethylene Vinyl Acetate (EVA) is the material used to manufacture **Crocs** — the footwear many are familiar with and love. The addition of this capability makes The Ralph S. Alberts Co., Inc. the only manufacturing facility in the U.S. that has this material manufacturing capability as a result of high demand from various customers across multiple industries.

EVA will make for safety and comfort components that are lighter and more resistant to the elements



EVA is the material used to manufacture Crocs footwear and — thanks to a machine in-house at Ralph S. Alberts Co., (above) — will soon be used to make lighter and more resistant amusement ride safety padding (inset). COURTESY RALPH S. ALBERTS

than our current open pour integral skin foam system, which is utilized for the majority of safety pad manufacturing. The process

will allow for increased volumes, along with significantly reduced costs and lead times due to it being a high capacity injection method.

While EVA is not a replacement process for integral skin foam, it is expected to be a game-changing addition to RSA's arsenal of capabilities.

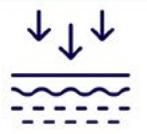
As of the beginning of July 2023, the machine is in-house at the Ralph S. Alberts Co., Inc. and is underway to be commissioned in the

coming weeks. Partners from Italy and Orlando will be onsite to assist in manufacturing the first EVA products. The Ralph S. Alberts Co., Inc. is expected to be in full service and fulfilling EVA orders for new and existing customers by early fall 2023.

•rsalberts.com






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BREAKING NEWS

RSA INTRODUCES EVA

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CONTACT SALES@RSALBERTS.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION

Sacoa Cashless continues its world-wide growth and influence

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO, Fla. — **Sacoa Cashless System**, a provider of cashless innovative solutions for the entertainment and amusement industry, continues its growth with its latest installation, the **Game Box Arcade**, going into **Gravity Max**, Liverpool, United Kingdom.

Sacoa had just announced in mid-July that in the prior 60 days, it had carried out 25 installations. These installations spanned various countries, including Spain, USA, Iraq, Egipto, Morocco, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Bulgaria, Netherlands and more.

This new installation was added in August. An important feature to note, said **Tamara Donzis**, Sacoa marketing, is that this state-of-the-art arcade is 100% unattended, allowing cost savings and



Sacoa Cashless System's newest installation is at the Game Box Arcade, in Gravity Max, Liverpool, United Kingdom. COURTESY SACOA CASHLESS SYSTEMS

revenue maximization.

Gravity Max Liverpool is the U.K.'s latest entertainment destination. Boasting an expansive 100,000-square-foot space, this \$10.9 million venue offers an array of experiences. It officially opened its doors on August 9, 2023, with a huge capacity of 2,500 people.

Among the cutting-edge products installed by Sacoa at the Game Box Arcade are eight self-service kiosks, 180 Sparks RFID card readers and other latest innovations showcasing Sacoa's commitment to enhancing customer experiences through seamless cashless transactions.

Pol Mochkovsky, CEO



of Sacoa International, said he was delighted to be part of this project.

"We are incredibly proud to contribute to the launch of Game Box at the Gravity Max Liverpool," he said. "This state-of-the-art arcade is 100% unattended as players buy

and recharge their playcards at any of the eight kiosks and then redeem their e-tickets at five self-dispensing redemption prize machines strategically located around the game room. Winners can

▶ See SACOA, page 53

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► **SACOA**
Continued from page 52

also redeem online through a revolutionary App. This brings huge savings on the operating costs.”

Gravity Max Liverpool offers live entertainment, combining numerous bars, a food hall, a multilevel e-karting track, AR bowling, e-sports arena, a pool hall, batting cages and an 18-hole tech street mini golf, all within one dynamic location.

Of the 25 installations Sacoa had installed in the 60 days prior to mid-July, 20 were already open to the public, while five, at the time, were awaiting their grand openings.

Among the products and solutions installed in these locations, Sacoa introduced its latest generation of Spark RFID readers, providing seamless and secure cashless transactions for amusement centers.

Spark reader features include wireless card readers with NFC and RFID technology (cards, wristbands, tokens and key fobs); optional single-head magnetic swipe technology; color-coding according to age restriction, promotions, tickets and more and full HD color 2.8-inch touch screen, auto orientation and e-tickets counting.

Other features include heightened e-ticket winning and counting with programmable flashing lights, universal card link compatibility and water and dust resistance.

The self-service Kiosk K4, designed to enhance guest convenience, was also featured among the installed solutions as well as the new August installation.

Sacoa touts more than 2,200 debit card systems installed worldwide. Sacoa is recognized as a leader in cashless management systems for the amusement entertainment and leisure industries.

The company also is a leading family entertainment center operator in Argentina and has been for over 65 years. That is the reason

Sacoa Cashless was founded in the early 1990s, to improve the technology systems in the company's own businesses. Sacoa will soon celebrate its 30th anniversary in cashless technology.

Company officials said that some of the benefits of the Sacoa Cashless System include an increase in revenue of up to 30 percent. It offers tools to implement marketing strategies to ensure customer satisfaction

and enhance customer loyalty. The cashless system eliminates the financial cost of float and reduces hidden operational costs. It offers computerized management, monitoring and control for operations of any size.

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At the Game Box Arcade, Sacoa Cashless installed eight self-service kiosks, as well as 180 Sparks RFID card readers. COURTESY SACOA CASHLESS SYSTEMS



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Frontier City returns Silver Bullet to operation following fire

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. — In February 2022, Frontier City was completing its off-season maintenance in its overhaul shop. A fire ignited and unfortunately almost all the components of the train that operates on Silver Bullet were completely destroyed. The fiberglass bodies had been stored outside the building, so fortunately they survived.

“It’s good that we were able to keep the iconic look of the ride,” said Zach Vobornick, director of maintenance and operations. “Virtually every other part of the ride that was done with or near done with — the parts were being cleaned; we were almost at the end of that cycle — we lost virtually everything. Schwarzkopf, obviously, no longer exists, so you can’t buy that stuff



Silver Bullet was the first major coaster at Frontier City. AT/TIM BALDWIN

from the manufacturer.”

The park did not give up. It went through a series of long processes. After inventorying what they needed.

“When everything in front of you that is labeled is destroyed, you really have to go back to square one,” said Vobornick. “We had to get engineers involved and lubrications experts and parts manufacturers involved. It was a process of either acquiring those

things or having them manufactured. To complicate that challenge, we were on the heels of COVID. In the previous years, everything was shut down, so everything was backed up.”

Being a part of the Six Flags chain made that challenge easier. And the park was determined to meet specifications and do the job right. It took close to a year for the teams to get things ready for testing. It

took a full season of the ride being down.

“Once we got it open, we were receiving comments that it was the smoothest it’s ever been,” Vobornick told *Amusement Today*.

Jim Kunau has been park president for this season. He was delighted to see the ride return.

“In terms of the ride’s value to the park, whether Silver Bullet was up and running was the first question

I got from a guest,” Kunau said. “I was hearing the question from fans before we even opened this season. It is a signature ride that is beloved. It is like seeing and visiting with an old friend.”

“People wanted that ride back. It’s part of the fabric of this park,” said Vobornick.

While the ride was out of operation, Frontier City took the time to upgrade the programmable logic system. It has found the ride has become much more reliable with the relocation of kick tires and sensors.

Silver Bullet returned to operation in the spring and has operated smoothly this season. The loop faces motorists on I-35, so the park has been pleased to have its presence prominently displayed once again. It was added to the park in 1986 and is one of five roller coasters at Frontier City.

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ADG's CEO engages in mentorship to share industry knowledge

COHOES, N.Y. — Aquatic Development Group (ADG) announced that CEO Ken Ellis, owner of H2OBX Waterpark, has engaged with Alex Ojeda, a renowned influencer and social media star in the water park industry.

Ojeda creates content on Instagram, Tik Tok and YouTube, where he travels around the world and shares photos and videos of parks. His content includes scenic views of water parks, testing out new rides, funny videos, and more.

Ojeda was 15 years old when he first started to gain an audience on TikTok. His early content included funny videos with family, lip-sync videos, dancing, and following trends. He then started to experiment with different content such as videos of water parks. He was already very passionate about water parks, theme parks and rides, so this content was a success. Ojeda currently has over eight million followers on his TikTok

account and continues to create fun, exciting content.

Ken Ellis has an abundance of knowledge to share with Ojeda from his vast experience in the waterpark industry. Ellis has more than 20 years of experience as CEO of ADG and more than a decade developing and operating one of the country's most innovative year-round resort destinations. His vision and expertise in the aquatic industry has contributed to the success of some of the most highly attended indoor and outdoor waterparks throughout the U.S., and the attractions and equipment that his company designs and manufactures can be found in more than 4000 facilities across the globe.

During his tenure at ADG, Ellis forged the path for his team to become one of the premiere design/

build companies in the industry and has led the charge to create some of the most innovative and industry-leading attractions in the market. From

game changing advances in wave generation technology and water ride design to the development and operation of year-round, nationally recognized resorts, Ellis

continues to lead his teams with the direction and vision that keeps both ADG and his parks at the forefront of product innovation, design and customer service.

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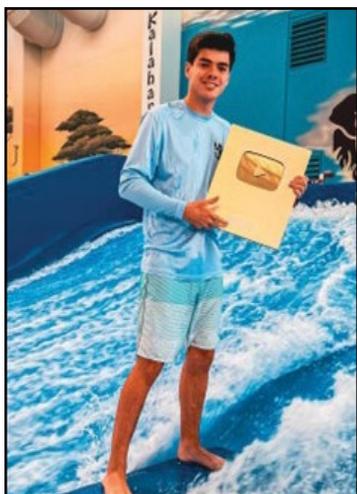
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ADG CEO Ken Ellis (above) has begun a mentorship program with social media influencer Alex Ojeda (below). COURTESY ADG



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Texas is the new location for 2024 IRT Ride Camp

AT: Pam Sherborne
 psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — International Ride Training (IRT) has announced that its 2024 Ride Camp will be hosted by the **Historic Pleasure Pier** in Galveston, Texas. This is the first time IRT has held its Ride Camp in this location.



GALVESTON ISLAND
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Attendees will stay at the **Hilton Galveston Island Resort** for an action-packed week February 5-9, 2024.

IRT will provide over 100 ride operational safety and service sessions to those that attend. Last year, IRT hosted over 160 attendees from over 65 parks world wide.

At Ride Camp attendees are offered subjects including ride operations leadership, motivating ride operators today, recruiting and retaining ride operators, teaching and advising staff on ADA requirements, leading leaders in ride ops, genuine training needs of trainers and those they train and many more.

IRT's goals are based on a true respect, love and passion for the industry. IRT's team is comprised of former ride operators, managers and directors. Each member understands the importance of giving tomorrow's operators the right tools and skills necessary to succeed in the amusement industry.

More information may be obtained by contracting Cindee Huddy at cindee@ridetraining.com or 615-545-8109.

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Save lives with safety education

AIMS International's annual Safety Seminar in Orlando, Florida, scheduled for January 7-12, 2024, offers operators and inspectors an opportunity to learn from industry experts in a week-long educational setting and earn certifications.

More than operators, inspectors, insurance reps, manufacturers, suppliers, and industry professionals from the front line to management attend the AIMS Safety Seminar to learn about the latest issues and practices in safety and security. By learning from the industry's top experts, everyone gains valuable information and feedback directly from those who maintain and operate their products and services every day.

Attendees have the option to choose either a targeted track of pre-populated courses OR to fully customize their experience by choosing courses from a variety of disciplines.

The seminar offers the most diverse, up-to-date, and relevant safety education courses available in the amusement industry and includes over 200 live instructor-led courses offered across many tracks, including: maintenance, inspection, operations, aquatics, safety/security, adventure attractions, portable, Spanish language and young professionals.



Lowenstein

Highlights include:

- Continued partnership with **International Ride Training (IRT)** to create the custom-curated Operations Track.
- Ellis and Associates** will return to offer the latest in aquatics safety education in the Aquatics Track.
- The Spanish-language Track, for Spanish-speaking safety professionals from Spain, Mexico and throughout

Latin America. Level I and Level II Spanish-language certification exams are available at the seminar for those interested in earning a prestigious AIMS International certification.

On-site certification testing is offered in Maintenance, Operations, Aquatics, and Ride Inspection; email info@aimsintl.org or call 714-425-574 for more information.

AIMS will once again host the Academy of Amusement Risk Management Safety & Security (AARMSS).

AARMSS is designed to offer advanced education opportunities specifically for those with experience working in safety and security management. AARMSS focuses on Safety and Security Management, Risk Management and Emergency Management. This prestigious two-year academy culminates with the new Amusement Safety & Security Certification (ASSC) exam that tests

knowledge gained through on-the-job experience as well as through the specialized AARMSS curriculum. Second-year students will have the chance to sit for the ASSC exam at the upcoming safety seminar. A limited number of candidates are accepted each year, so register soon! More information about this innovative new program is available on aimsintl.org/education.

Limited time early-bird registration for the 2024 AIMS International Safety Seminar at just \$695 opens September 11. Sponsorship opportunities are still available.

What sets AIMS apart?

The best way to ensure that your attraction operators are equipped to avoid and prevent accidents is by creating safety awareness through state-of-the-art amusement industry education. The best way for them to learn is for them to attend AIMS International Safety Seminar this January!

—Amy Lowenstein

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IAAPA Expo Europe

September 25-28, 2023
Vienna, Austria
iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-europe

World Waterpark Show

October 24 - 27, 2023
New Orleans, Louisiana
wwashow.org

Parks and Carnivals Educational (PACE) Amusement ride safety seminar

October 30 - November 2, 2023
Monroeville, Pennsylvania
paceseminar.com

Pennsylvania Amusement Ride Safety Seminar

November 7 - 9, 2023
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
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IAAPA Expo

November 13 - 17, 2023
Orlando, Florida
iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo

2024 IAFE Convention and Trade Show

November 26 - 29, 2023
Salt Lake City, Utah
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2024 AIMS International Safety Seminar

January 7 - 24, 2024
Orlando, Florida
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International Ride Training's 2024 Ride Camp

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