



Utah set to welcome 2023 IAFE Annual Convention, Trade Show

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah — Officials with the **International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE)** are excited about the upcoming annual IAFE Convention and Trade Show set for Nov. 26–29, at the **Salt Palace Convention Center**, Salt Lake City, Utah.

The annual event is the largest gathering of the fair industry. People from fairs of all sizes — from small county fairs to the largest events in the world — come together to learn, share ideas, network and visit the trade show. All throughout the week, there are many learning opportunities, entertainment and, of course, fun and games.

Marla Calico, IAFE president and CEO, said in mid-November that attendee registration was going very well and the floor plan at the convention is set for 310 booths. It will be sold out. The 310 booths represent about 200 exhibitors. The trade show will be open 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 27, and 11 a.m.-1 p.m. and reopen at

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Officials with the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) are excited about the upcoming annual IAFE Convention and Trade Show set for Nov. 26-29, at the Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City, Utah. COURTESY PALACE CONVENTION CENTER

Frank Zaitshik evolves Wade Shows into premiere carnival provider

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

RALEIGH, N.C. — **Wade Shows** owner **Frank Zaitshik** admits he has one of the largest carnivals in the nation, but his real aspiration has always been to be the best, not necessarily the biggest.

“There’s always room for improvement,” the veteran showman said during an extensive interview with *Amusement Today* during the **North Carolina State Fair**.

And who’s to argue with Zaitshik, now 77, who was born into the outdoor amusement industry?

“I’m a second-generation carnival guy,” he reflected. “Mom and Dad were concessionaires on the former **Olson Shows**, and I grew up picking up milk bottles in the One Ball game and spinning the wheel and retrieving the mouse in



Wade Shows' new **Chance Rides** double-deck carousel (above left) was featured on the Raleigh midway. A **Bertazzon Wave Swinger**, owned by Wade Shows, was on the PGAM midway at the North Carolina State Fair (above right). AT/RON GUSTAFSON



what we called the rat wheel. “My dad (**Irving**) created the 14-color crazy ball game after it became hard to find field mice for the wheel operation,” Zaitshik noted. “Crazy

Ball was a huge success and it was the beginning of financial security for my parents.”

Working his way up

In 1966, Olson Shows was

sold to **Rod Link (World Of Pleasure and Link Shows)** and the Zaitshiks stayed on with the new ownership.

“We worked under Link for a number of years, and

Rod taught me how to lay out lots,” Zaitshik said of that era. “Dad made me a partner in the family oper-

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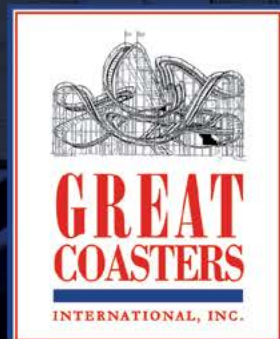
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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

Living up to it, not on it



Robinson

I've spent my entire life as a fan of the rock band Kiss. Their flamboyance and over-the-top spectacular shows have lured me in since childhood. But the band's overall popularity has gone up and down a few times over their 50-year career.

In the early 1990s, I remember an interview with co-founder Gene Simmons where he talked about the band refocusing its efforts and returning to prominence. He commented: "We've spent too many years living on our reputation, when we need to be living up to it."

Those words stuck with me then. More importantly, I find them truer than ever on a broader scale within our industry right now.

In recent times, I've heard story after story about attractions and suppliers touting themselves as "the top" of what there is, but not living up to that promise they once delivered on so brilliantly.

It does no good for a provider to be at the top of the game in technological innovation if the same company fails to properly maintain and service the tech they sold their clients just a year or two earlier. It reduces the numbers moving through our turnstiles when attractions offer new events that dramatically fail to live up to the standards they've set for themselves in previous years, simply counting on visitors to shell out extra dollars only to be disappointed once through the gates.

We're an industry built on fresh ideas, trendsetting, innovation and imagination. But our job doesn't stop with one idea or one success. We have to keep pushing every day, making sure the ideas of yesterday still delight tomorrow, making sure the world within our gates that customers have come to expect lives on.

Every single day, it's up to us as an industry to continue to live up to the bar we've set for ourselves ... and then exceed it.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Marla J. Calico, International Association of Fairs & Expositions (IAFE)

Fairs remain more than fairly relevant

When I have a chance for media interviews, it seems that at least a few times a year I am asked "What is the relevance of fairs today?" My answer is almost always the same: "Fairs are more relevant today than ever before."

Fairs play a vital role in their community — whether a small rural community, a large region or when that "community" is an entire state. The showcasing of agricultural is still part of the vital mission of the fair, but there's recognition of the obligation to connect guests — further and further removed from the farm life — with the food on their plates. The IAFE will be releasing results of a North American consumer research study in 2024 that will support this important mission for fairs today.

The competitions for youth, wheth-



Calico

er it be cookies or cattle, are key components of the projects of 4-H, FFA and other youth organizations providing leadership development. When a kid is learning how to take an animal into the showring, he or she is learning budgeting, time management, organizational skills, teamwork and mental preparedness. Isn't that what we want in every leader?

Finally, fairs are doing so much more in their communities, and we are seeing a greater emphasis on these "Metrics That Matter" as we see fairs share stories of hundreds of thousands of pounds of food raised for a local pantry; thousands of gallons of blood donated; and millions of dollars of scholarships are awarded — just to name a few metrics!

I will continue to emphasize that fairs are more relevant today than ever before.

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

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Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader

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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Melissa Bamford, Baynum Solutions

Melissa Bamford joined **Baynum Solutions** in 2018 after a decade in the industry with **Premier Rides, Inc.**, and **Ralph S. Alberts Co., Inc.**, where she was well-known for her sales skills and operational leadership. Today, as director of marketing for Baynum Solutions, Melissa is responsible for the company's amusement division. Her focus on client relationships has been key to her success, as she has a natural knack for connecting with people ... a rare "find" in today's workplace.

Title: Director of Marketing

Number of years in the industry:
15 years, professionally

Best thing about the industry: Heart-pounding passion! Creative manufacturers, dedicated operators, and the thrill-seeking guests — we're one big family.

Favorite amusement ride:
Kangaroo at Kennywood — my childhood, hometown park.

Biggest challenge facing our industry:
We're constantly hurtling toward greater heights, faster thrills and mind-blowing thematic creativity — all while ensuring inclusion for people of all abilities. Our industry's biggest opportunity? Adaptability... while exceeding the ever-growing expectations of our beloved thrill-seekers.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ... A longtime off-season warrior, I eagerly anticipate the unveiling of new attractions and the revitalization of properties. There's something infectious about the energy of guests experiencing these offerings for the first time.

Favorite holiday song: Traditionally, *O Holy Night*. Sentimentally, I love to sway and snap along with my dad to his favorite tune, *Driving Home for Christmas*.

Do you do most of your holiday shopping online or in store? Online... but how I miss the holiday hustle, decor and feel of traditional mall shopping.

The best holiday movie is ... "It's a beautiful life, Clark!" (*Christmas Vacation*)

Favorite holiday decoration:
A live Christmas tree

Favorite holiday dessert: My Mom-Mam's pumpkin custard pie.

My least favorite word is ... E-A-G-L-E-S



Melissa Bamford has enjoyed a more than 15-year career thus far in the amusement industry and has made a home with Baynum Solutions. COURTESY BAYNUM SOLUTIONS

This always gets me in the holiday spirit ... Christmas magic through the eyes of my son.

When I say snow, you say ...

Bird! Let's fly south, where it's warm, for the winter!

On New Year's Eve, you can usually find me ... Never miss a ball drop.

In one word, I hope the New Year will bring much ... "Caffeine" because let's face it, life's a roller coaster, and I'm going to need the energy to stay on this ride!

My first car was ... Volkswagen Jetta.

My perfect day is spent ... All things Mommy. Even if it's irrational arguments with a 3-year old, being a certified snack lackey and playing a human jungle gym (who didn't pass FEA).

I can't stand being around people who ... cheer for the Philadelphia Eagles.

The longest I have ever gone without sleep is ... I don't have an impressive answer, I'm not one to sacrifice sleep too often. Who doesn't love a good nap?!

My last road trip was ... Friendsgiving: Deep Creek, Maryland — where the kids now outnumber the adults... send help!

My favorite meal to cook is ... Pennsylvania Dutch, Chicken Pot Pie

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

A change of scenery



BLUE ASH, Ohio — Mark Rosenzweig and Matt Waldenmeyer prepare to embark on their own adventure by steering the ship of 3dxScenic. As the owners of the company, previously a subsidiary of LIVE Technologies, the two are excited about the fresh energy that the new structure and reinvigorated direction that this new chapter brings. Before coming aboard 3dxScenic, Rosenzweig developed industry experience with Zamperla and Ride Entertainment. Waldenmeyer, scenic fabricator and carpenter, served as director of operations for more than seven years with 3dx under its former structure. COURTESY 3DXSCENIC

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► IAFE

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3 to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

"What we are most pleased to see is an increase in registrations from the Western United States," Calico said. "For many, Salt Lake City is already their hub for flights, but especially with the travel ban lifted for fairs in California, we are seeing many folks from those fairs that we've not seen since 2017."

In mid-September of this year, California Governor **Gavin Newsom** signed a law that had been in place since 2016 that banned publicly funded travel to states with laws that discriminate against LGBTQ people.

The IAFE convention has been moving to different states, testing if those moves would make it easier for some of its members to attend. In 2022, the convention was held in Indianapolis, Indiana. The three years prior to that, it was in San Antonio, Texas.

"As we move to different cities each year, there will likely be subtle differences in attendance," Calico said. "Indianapolis in 2022 afforded many members the opportunity to bring more people to the convention than normal as they were within easy driving distance. Salt Lake City is entirely different as there are very few member fairs within a reasonable driving distance."

Still the numbers are looking very good.

In answering the question about what new activities attendees can expect to see in 2023, Calico said the educational content for workshops is always new.

"They are on timely topics of importance to our members," she said. "These ideas bubble up from our educational committees and are then pushed out to the entire membership for voting, as well as to add their own ideas."

One of the unique topics this year is a series on Life Happens — Even During the Fair. Each session will

IAFE keynote speaker, Damian Mason



Damian Mason speaks to corporations, associations, trade groups and agricultural organizations. He delivers business insights, information and inspiration in an entertaining package. He is the author of two books, *Do Business Better* and *Food Fear*, both published in 2019.
COURTESY IAFE

focus on a different situation in life that everyone has to deal with and tips on how to deal with it while working. One will be on working while raising active teens, young children or caring for an elderly parent.

The panelists in each will speak "from the trenches," Calico said and share their tips for balancing it all.

Another new and limited-attendance session comes under the IAFE as Educational Experiences. There are four different sessions in all.

The Learning with Legends, which is a 2.5-hour-long session, is one of the experiences featured. It will include a panel of industry legends, followed by time for the attendees to network with the legends in order to gain meaningful insights and forge new networks.

The remaining three are the **Utah State Fairgrounds** tour, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints facilities and operations tour, and the **University of Utah Football Stadium** facilities and operations tour.

Some of the workshop and educational topics this year include: A World Where Cash isn't King - Best Practices for Managing Products and Payments; Maintaining the Value of Your Commercial Exhibitor Profile; Artificial Intelligence for the Fair Industry; Does Your Future Include Construction — Things You Need to Know; Recruitment and Training of Fair-time Employees

and Volunteers; Group and Corporate Sale Packages; Connectivity Across Your Grounds and Difficult Discussions in Sponsorships.

Aside from the traditional scheduling of topic sessions, there will be three sessions of Institute of Fair Management on Sunday, Nov. 26, and one each on the three remaining days of the convention.

During registration, registrants were asked what was their primary job/role in their organization. This information was used to assign attendees to a network circle. Each "circle" will be made up of people with similar job duties. There will be ample scheduled opportunities for attendees to meet throughout the event. This time will not include any presentations, workshops or organized discussions.

Calico said it is never really easy to predict what any one highlight will be, but... "We'll have a great opening night kick off celebrating Utah's outdoor lifestyle with the S'More Fun event sponsored by the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association** (OABA) and a few of the carnival companies," she said. "We are expecting a good response to keynote speaker, **Damian Mason** and of course, networking remains the most beloved and valuable aspect of IAFE events of all kinds."

From visiting fairs and speaking with colleagues throughout the year, Calico said, in general, results were good, except where weather became a factor.

"Nothing new in that story," she said. "But, per-cap spending has been reported to be very strong, although it seemed to be a significant trend that concessionaires raised prices to try to keep up with their increasing costs."

Finding and keeping fair-time staff remains a challenge, not only for the fair itself, but its subcontractors as well for everything from garbage details to security.

"What seems to be an increase in unruly guests is of significant concern, and more fairs went to admission policies for minors as well as clear-bag policy

implementation," she said.

"On a positive note, we are seeing more and more fairs focus on the metrics that matter as they prepare their end-of-fair wrap-ups, switching the conversation from sheer attendance numbers to things like the impact upon the community."

For example, she said the **Erie County Fair**, Hamburg, New York, generated over 140,000 pounds of food on opening day for **FeedMore WNY**. That is a 46% increase over the previous year fair's donation.

The number of scholarships awarded to youth was successful. For example, **Tri-State Fair** in Amarillo, Texas, gave out \$100,000 in scholarships this year.

There have been increased efforts to reach and involve underserved audiences. For example, **Ohio State Fair**, Columbus, provided ASL interpretation at over 70 events.

"Countless fairs have added special times and spaces set aside for people with sensory impairments," Calico said. "More and more fairs are adding special livestock show programs similar to Bacon Buddies at the Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, pairing differently abled children with 4-H and FFA youngster to take an animal into the showing."

• fairsandexpos.com



The IAFE convention has been moving to different states in recent years, testing if those moves would make it easier for some of its members to attend. In 2022, the convention was held in Indianapolis, Indiana. COURTESY IAFE

International Association of Fairs and Expositions 2023 convention

		EXHIBITOR LISTING			
123iMP	837, 839			PAZ the Sports Guy	542
Jess Kellie Adams	836			Pee-Wee Stampede	225
Admit One Products	809			Pirate Man Dan	928
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Paul Bunyan Lumberjack Show	223	IG Presents	433	Southern Bleacher Company Inc.	819
CEW Enterprises/Sport Fence International	732	i6	110	Southwest Dairy Farmers	101, 103, 105
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Duck Enterprises, LLC	209	The Marvelous Mutts	324	Unique Images LLC	405
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►WADE

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ation, but Dad and Link didn't get along, so Dad went to **Thomas Shows**, but I remained with Rod."

In 1971, at age 25, Frank became the youngest concessions manager in the industry when Link promoted him to that position.

With years of experience under his belt, Zaitchik seized the opportunity in 1980 to purchase Michigan-based **W.G. Wade Shows**. The operation had 33 rides at the time and played exclusively in Michigan.

"Our first operating season was actually 1981," he said of the acquisition. "In '81 and '82 I had a partner, and it was supposed to be a marriage made in heaven. We each took out different units the second year of operation, but it became clear that it wasn't going to work out."

Zaitchik bought out the partner and started to rebuild the business by acquiring new equipment and trading in some of the duplicate rides.

Working with Wisdom

"The market was good in Mexico then and allowed me to trade in equipment to **Wisdom (Wisdom Rides of America, Merino, Colo.)** for new rides," he recalled.

Rides acquired through trade-ins with Wisdom were a Go Gater coaster, Raiders and Gravitron.

The first major piece purchased by Zaitchik was a new Pirate (SDC of Italy) in 1986 — a deal made possible by trading in an **Allan Herschell Sky Wheel**. The pact was brokered through **Ken Smith**, who worked the contract with the late **Mack Duce** of SDC. The ride still operates on Wade Shows today.

Under the leadership of Zaitchik, Wade Shows continued to add new attractions and today can play multiple locations at once with three units on the road and an arsenal of more than 120 rides.

Family affair

"I never intended to become this big," he admitted. "It's challenging, and how the heck I do it — I say not very good. Honestly, the key to our success is our people."



Frank Zaitchik is shown in the Wade Shows office during the 2023 edition of the North Carolina State Fair, a spot he has played with Powers Great American Midways for 18 years. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

What he calls the "Midwest" unit is managed by his son, **Gary**, and **Alex Danton**. **Jimmy Danton**, Alex's dad, was 16 when Frank purchased the show and has been with the carnival ever since, today serving as general manager of the East Coast unit.

Daughter **Shel-Lee** and son-in-law **Kevin Bosley** are in charge of another unit, while Zaitchik spends time on each of the three.

"I'm on what I call the East Coast unit here in North Carolina," Zaitchik said. "I spend six to 10 weeks with each unit but don't really call one home."

Daughter **Marina Zaitchik Small** and son-in-law **Johan Small** own **Iconic Midway Rides**, playing major fairs with Wade Shows, as well as operating as independents elsewhere.

"I'm proud of the job Johan has done in refurbishing rides — especially the **Larson Loop**, which we themed **Infinity**. They have a new **XXL** from **KMG (Netherlands)** being made now, and it will be the first portable ride of its type in North America."

The giant pendulum ride stands 80 feet tall with the swing action rising to a jaw-dropping 147 feet. The spectacular attraction is expected to make its debut on the Wade Shows midway at the **Florida State Fair** in February.

19th time in Raleigh

The 2023 edition of the

North Carolina State Fair marked the 19th time Wade Shows has been on the midway. For the past 18 seasons **Powers Great American Midways (PGAM)** has held the contract, with Wade providing around half of the rides.

Zaitchik admits the partnership with **Corky (Les) Powers**, PGAM owner, is rather unprecedented in the industry.

"Corky and I were kidding just the other day, that when we hit 20 years together in Raleigh, we might get it right," he quipped.

But by all indications, the show owners had the right stuff in the formula as "all 91 rides were ready and stickered for opening" on Oct. 12.

In addition, the massive midway incorporated 48 automated ticketing kiosks to bolster the guest experience.

"Corky and I are really ahead of the curve on digital ticketing within our industry," Zaitchik asserted. "While working together here (Raleigh) since 2006, there has never been a cross word between us."

The two showmen were both inducted into the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)** Hall of Fame in 2020.

Big route

Wade Shows touts one of the strongest fair routes in the country, playing the state fairs in Florida, Delaware, New York, Nebraska and

Oklahoma, as well as the **Alabama National Fair**, **Fiesta San Antonio (Texas)**, and the **San Antonio Livestock Exposition**.

Following Labor Day, the carnival trims down to two units.

"We don't have all of our rides in service at one time," Zaitchik said of the large inventory the carnival carries. "Over the past two years, we have sold some older equipment, and in some cases sold some rides which are no longer feasible to move, such as the **RC-48 (Pinfari)** coaster."

The massive ride requires eight trailer loads to move it over the road as well as a crane to erect it.

"It is very costly to operate, and the assembly bolts have to be changed out several times a year," he noted.

The show's **Fighter (Mondial)**, an exclusive spectacular with the carnival, was undergoing refurbishment when the pandemic struck in 2019. The ride is 75 percent completed and will be on the road again when finished.

Another coaster, **Comet II (Schwarzkopf)**, is also in the shop and was last used at the Florida State Fair in 2018.

"It's our largest coaster and needs \$150,000 worth of work," Zaitchik added. "We're not holding a fire sale by any means. It just comes down to **Gene Chaffee** (refurbishment and maintenance

director) having time to complete some of these projects.

"We have great-looking equipment coming out of there," he said of refurb operations coordinated in two Florida shops. "When they made him (Chaffee), they threw away the mold."

Another shop operates in Missouri under the direction of **Dave Brewer**, where most recently two **Owen** glass houses got facelifts.

Big wheels keep on turning

Raleigh featured five gondola Ferris wheels at the fair, the largest being the **SkyGazer**, a 155-foot observation ride located off the main midway.

Zaitchik partnered with **Michael Wood** of **Wood Entertainment**, San Antonio, Texas, to purchase the giant **Lamberink (Netherlands)** ride in 2017, and it has become a staple at numerous locations played by Wade Shows.

"His dad was an owner of Wade before I bought the carnival," Zaitchik said. "Michael is 100 percent in charge of the giant wheel operation. Reaching out to him to be my partner was one of the smartest things I've ever done."

The wheel is moved on 12 trailers with an additional three support vehicles.

Looking ahead

Fair officials were treated to a first look and exclusive ride on Wade's new double-deck carousel (**Chance Rides**) prior to the fair's opening. The menagerie carousel was reportedly a big hit with fairgoers during the 11-day event.

"I'm really anxious to see another project we're working on — a combination fun house/glass house with a 120-foot front," Zaitchik said. "It's being built by **Chuck Wheeler** of **Amusement Wraps** in Ohio and should be ready for our Florida spots."

Zaitchik admits his life in the carnival industry has been a marathon, but he just doesn't know how far the distance is.

"At my age, we still have an attitude and philosophy that if you are not going forward, you are going backward," the show owner emphasized. "We've made purchases as if we have 30 more years in the business — obviously I don't, but my family does."

PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

▶ Altitude Trampoline Park continues growth — page 20 / NC State Fair enjoys high attendance — page 28

Carousel Gardens grows; Christmas season bolsters attendance

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

NEW ORLEANS, La. — Jazz music and French/Cajun cuisine will always be associated with New Orleans. Unfortunately, part of the city's legacy will forever be tied to Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Carousel Gardens Amusement Park, part of New Orleans' City Park, took a terrible hit that year. Most of the rides and attractions were devastated. The park's namesake carousel, while taking damage, managed to fare better owing to its elevated environment. Still, the floodwaters were up to the horses' hooves.

Today, the park continues an ongoing resurgence. Eighteen rides call the park home, most of them new. Shrouded in the captivating canopy of moss-draped Live Oak trees, Carousel Gardens maintains its place in the city's history.

"Being born and raised



The restoration of the century-old carousel following the damage of Hurricane Katrina was a labor of love for this cherished classic. AT/TIM BALDWIN

in New Orleans, Carousel Gardens was my first carousel ride," said **Waymon Morris**, director of recreational services, City Park Conservancy (formerly New Orleans City Park). "I

remember it vividly. When Hurricane Katrina hit, I was working at **Six Flags New Orleans**. Carousel Gardens was such a devastating loss. We lost all the equipment."

Morris has now been with Carousel Gardens for more than 10 years. He learned that there was dedicated support to bring the amusement park back better than ever. It was beloved by the city and its residents.

"It's important to understand the city park is a 1,300-acre urban park," Morris told *Amusement Today*. "There are many, many things within the park — we have football stadiums, two golf courses, all these different things. The

pride and joy is Carousel Gardens Amusement Park. That is probably one of the most iconic parts of the park. When you think of City Park, you think of the carousel, the train and the Ladybug roller coaster."

The **Looff** carousel was built in 1906 and has always been a part of the park. Much restoration was involved in the reopening of the carousel, but fortunately, it was accomplished. Leadership continues a 10-year restoration where horses are routinely done.

Morris states the rides at the park are for the family demographic — from toddlers to 12-year-olds.

"We like to think of our

park where you get your 'firsts' — your first carousel, your first roller coaster ride, your first train ride," he said. "I like to think we train the public to indulge in our industry."

Zierer supplied a new roller coaster in 2015 to replace the original. The Ladybug is an ideal fit for the family audience.

"It is so smooth. Technology advanced so incredibly fast," said Morris. "When we installed it, it was a beacon of hope for us. It brought the park into the new age."

The park also boasts a 15-minute, two-mile

▶ See **GARDENS**, page 10



Holiday lights take on a truly New Orleans flair.
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The two-mile train ride is even more engaging during Christmas in the Oaks.
COURTESY CAROUSEL GARDENS

►GARDENS Continued from page 9

ride through the property aboard a **Chance** C.P. Huntington train.

The park opens the first weekend of March but has a long season. Beginning in November, the park puts on “Celebration in the Oaks,” a holiday festival, running from Thanksgiving to December 30. The park is decorated with lights and scenes.

“It is *the* New Orleans holiday tradition,” Morris told *AT*. “When you think about Christmastime in New Orleans, Celebration in the Oaks is No. 1.”

The celebration is more than 30 years old.

“When I was a little boy, Celebration started as the Christmas Tree Festival in the botanical garden adjacent to the amusement park,” he said. “Unlike other parks, City Park is 80 percent self-funded. Everything we do inside City Park is for the public, but every dollar comes right back into it. The amusement park plays a huge role in running a 1,300-acre park with no funding. What started as the Christmas Tree Festival became one of the most popular things in the city of New Orleans.”

Morris stated it is the



Adding to the distinctive atmosphere of the Live Oak trees, the holiday lights have made the Christmas event in the park a city favorite. COURTESY CAROUSEL GARDENS

busiest time of the year.

“It grew and grew and grew. It started in the botanical gardens and then into the amusement park. Then, it expanded into the two-mile train ride. We started placing [scenes]. It became the thing to do. You had to get on the train ride,” he said.

He jokes people have to get a cup of hot chocolate in the city’s “cold” 60-degree weather.

“I remember as a little boy that the train was the last thing we did,” Morris said. “Decades later it has become the quintessential part of New Orleans’ holiday time.”

Before Katrina, City Park had a driving tour. The hurricane damaged all

the sets, as it took months to erect everything for the automobile experience, and they were up in August. With the effects of COVID a few years ago, people couldn’t get out as they could in the past, and the driving tour was reimagined, along with the walking tour. The popularity of it has made it such a fixture that the driving tour isn’t expected to leave again.

The rides are also in operation during the Christmas festival.

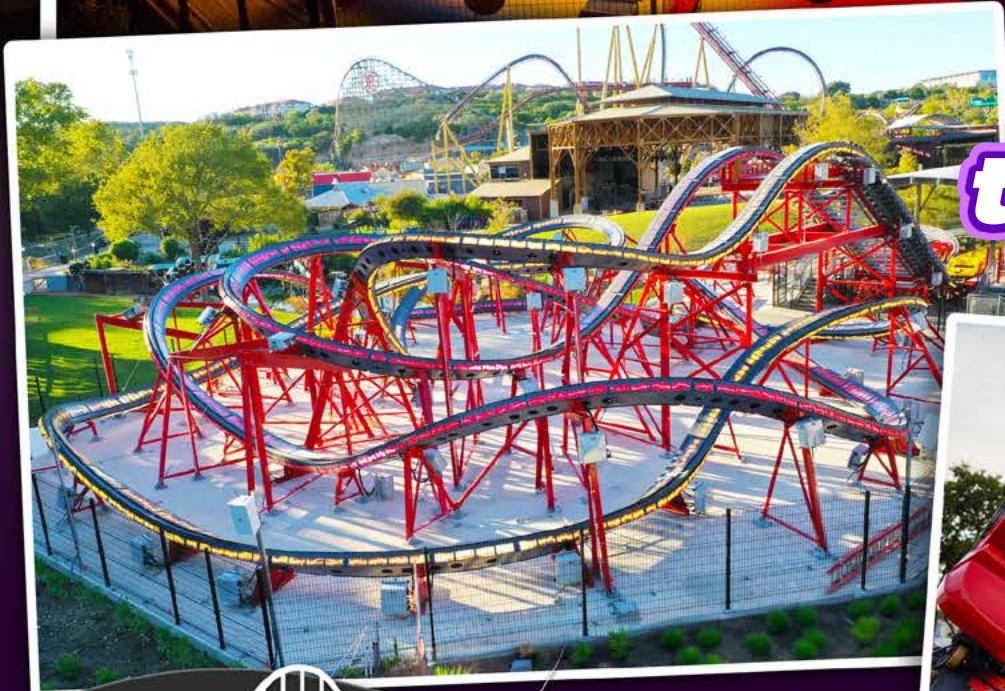
“We’re a different culture here. It’s the togetherness of New Orleans,” Morris said. “We cram everyone into a 20-acre event.”

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Jollywood Nights jazzes up Disney's Hollywood Studios

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — There has been much excitement and anticipation surrounding Disney Jollywood Nights, a new separately ticketed party at **Disney's Hollywood Studios**, since its announcement back in June of this year.

The four-hour party (8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.), scheduled to take place on 10 select evenings Nov. 11 – Dec. 20, 2023, has been marketed as more adult-oriented yet still kid-friendly. The experience is intended to be an alternative but not competing party to Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party at **Magic Kingdom**.

Walt Disney World is known for its entertaining separate-ticket events that provide guests with exclusive-to-the-event novelty food offerings, shows, parades and nighttime fireworks spectacles, with many of those selling out well in advance.

Jollywood Nights was no exception. The event features the "Disney Holidays in Hollywood" show which included an orchestra, dancers, live singers and appearances by Miss Piggy, Kermit the Frog, Disney Princesses, as well as Mickey and Minnie. The 30-minute show was well produced and well received, with guests queuing up before the show.

Another event offering was the Twilight Soirée at the Tip-Top Club, a "club" set up on the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror Terrace. No reservations were necessary to enter and enjoy



A popular item among Disney Jollywood Nights' food offering was a Christmas-themed Gertie sugar cookie with mint icing (above left). A gingerbread man named Ollie (above right) is a new character created exclusively for Disney Jollywood Nights. COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD; AT/DAVID FAKE

a live singer and band performing holiday songs.

The 20-minute "What's This? Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas Sing-along" show was a breakout hit and crowd pleaser. Its inventive scenic design, Jack Skellington puppet, projections and use of two non-speaking character actors was an overwhelming success. The IP's inclusion in the event can be attributed to **Tom Vazzana**, creative director with Disney Live Entertainment, who stated that not only is it his personal favorite aspect of the event, but it is also one that he has attempted to work into an event that just "didn't seem to fit" until Disney Jollywood Nights.

The culmination of the party was a showing of "Jingle Bell, Jingle BAM!," a short projection-

mapping, laser and fireworks show that takes place on and over the Chinese Theater. The show is not a new show, but a slightly enhanced version of the show that ran as the park's holiday fireworks offering from 2016 to 2020.

Holiday celebrations are all about delicious treats and a popular one among Disney Jollywood Nights' food offering was a Christmas-themed Gertie sugar cookie with mint icing. The Gertie Cookie is only available for purchase at the cost of \$4.29 per cookie at Dinosaur Gertie's Ice Cream of Extinction on the edge of Echo Lake.

Three of Disney Jollywood Nights' 10 parties sold out, sight unseen, before the first one took place on November 11.

Six Flags Fiesta Texas produces new *Christmas Carol* musical

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO — For more than 30 years, **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** has established a reputation for providing outstanding entertainment for its guests. Originally built by **USAA** and **Opryland**, the park's theaters are made for large audiences. Since the park sees substantial crowds during its fall and winter festivals, Fiesta Texas' award-winning shows have something special for its Christmas lineup of offerings in 2023.

Called "Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol: A New Spirited Musical," this new show has been long in the works.

"This is a concept we have been talking about for years," said Park President **Jeffrey Siebert**. "This year we said, 'This is the year.' With the event enhancements going on, and the quality we are trying to offer, it's time to introduce a new A-level signature show when shows matter most to our guests, which is during Holiday In The Park."

"The show has been a



passion project for Jeffrey for a couple of years now," added **Ben McTyre**, director of entertainment. "We wanted to create another signature holiday show for Six Flags Fiesta Texas that will be as grand in scale as our 'Majesty of Christmas' production and complement the rest of our Holiday In The Park show product. We're excited to bring it to life this year. We decided to make it a musical version with a cast of 25."

McTyre has a great deal of pride, owing to the fact that the show was produced in-house. The songs and score were written and arranged by **Darren Dalton** and **Wendell Vaughn**. The choreography was done by in-house choreographer **Carla Sankey**. The scenic and lighting design and scenic fabrication were pro-



Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* has been reimaged into an original musical at Six Flags Fiesta Texas. COURTESY SIX FLAGS

vided by **SRO Associates**, a local company that the park has collaborated with on past productions, including, most notably, "The Majesty of Christmas." Costuming design and direction are in-house as well, with additional costumes being provided by **Starline Costumes**, another local provider.

"When we decided we wanted to do it, the team, as you can imagine, embraced it. We wanted to do it correctly and create our own

original score, our own music and lyrics and new sets," Siebert told *Amusement Today*. "We wanted it to be another iconic show experience for the park. We've had 'Majesty of Christmas' for decades, and we wanted to deliver that quality experience. So, what's better than *A Christmas Carol*? It's an extremely well-known and loved tradition by our guests. We refer to it as an evergreen; regardless of generations or when you've

grown up, *A Christmas Carol* is truly a timeless classic."

The show takes place twice nightly in the park's Rockville Theater, which underwent a restoration during the fall. The debut of the new show was on November 25 and continues through December 23.

Instead of using two small casts, the park utilizes 25 performers that appear in both "Majesty of Christmas" and "A Christmas Carol: A New Spirited Musical," making the productions more impressive.

"It makes me very proud that we have created this production in-house," said McTyre. "The first time I heard the music, my eyes teared up. Even in their unfinished state, I was blown away by how great and heartfelt the songs truly are."

"This is the beginning of a brand-new tradition we hope guests will enjoy for generations to come," said Siebert.

In addition to lighting, animated and fountain shows, Six Flags Fiesta Texas offers six live-performance shows to bring seasonal cheer.

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Theme, amusement parks across country celebrate the holidays



Over 4 million dazzling lights are brightening the holiday season this year at Elitch Gardens' Luminova Holidays celebration. The park, located in Denver, Colorado, began its celebration on Nov. 24 and runs through Dec. 31. There will be a 65-foot-tall Christmas tree, a 25-foot-tall snowman that never melts and a 300-foot-tall candy cane tunnel and much more. COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS



When the sun goes down, the winter sky is shimmering with lights over Dollywood, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, during the park's Smoky Mountain Christmas. New this year are hundreds of festive drones dancing to festive tunes, lighting up the night with Christmas cheer in a new holiday spectacular. The event began Nov. 4 and is running through Jan. 6. COURTESY DOLLYWOOD



SeaWorld San Antonio, Texas, runs its Christmas Celebration for 43 days. It began on Nov. 9 and is featuring millions of lights, themed areas, "O Wondrous Night" stage show, a new jinglin' around the block activity hosted by lovable Sesame Street characters and a variety of festive food and beverages. COURTESY SEAWORLD



Holiday in the Park at Six Flags Fiesta Texas, San Antonio, kicked off Nov. 18 and will run through Jan. 7 on select dates. The festival is full of entertainment, dazzling lights, holiday-themed activities and areas, holiday sweet and treats and very merry merchandise. COURTESY SIX FLAGS



Christmas Town at Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, Virginia, kicked off on Nov. 10 and will run through Jan. 7. With its array of activities, seasonal food and beverage, award-winning shows and rides and attractions, the holiday season is the merriest time of all. COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS

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There are a lot of activities to do and lots of holiday decorations to see at Legoland Florida's holiday celebration. It kicked off Nov. 24 and is running on select dates through Dec. 31. COURTESY LEGOLAND



Hersheypark, Hershey, Pennsylvania, added some new attractions to its Candylane Christmas event, which began Nov. 10 and will last through Jan. 1, on select dates. New light shows, new seasonal activities and a variety of new seasonal treats are helping this park give glad tidings. COURTESY HERSHEY PARK

Visitors already have experienced the magic of the holiday season at Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party which returned to The Magic Kingdom, Orlando. It runs through Dec. 22 and includes a special holiday-themed "Mickey's Once Upon a Christmastime Parade." COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD



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HOLIDAYS



Lake Compounce, Bristol, Connecticut, kicked off its 11th annual Holiday Lights celebration on Nov. 24 with select dates scheduled through Dec. 31. It boasts Connecticut's tallest Christmas tree which gives off nightly light shows. There is something for everyone, including a Santa Claus visit, more than 500,000 lights and light displays, seasonal treats and, of course, rides and attractions. COURTESY LAKE COMPOUNCE



Strolling along in midtown at Silver Dollar City, Branson, Missouri, during An Old Time Christmas has been dazzling guests since the park started its celebration on Nov. 4. It runs through Dec. 30. Silver Dollar City is decorated with more than 6.5 million LED lights. The event features a variety of seasonal events, productions, food and beverage and 40 rides and attractions. COURTESY SILVER DOLLAR CITY



Each Christmas season, Knott's Merry Farm, the holiday event at Knott's Berry Farm, Buena Park, California, invites guests to make fun part of their holiday tradition with festive decor throughout the park, a spectacular ice show, crafts village and nightly snow in Ghost Town. The fun started Nov. 17 and runs through Jan. 7. COURTESY KNOTT'S BERRY FARM

Winterfest returned to Canada's Wonderland in Vaughan, Ontario, Canada on Nov. 17 for its fourth season of magical live shows, enchantment, themed areas, festive food and family entertainment. It also features cookie decorating, musical sing-alongs and rides and attractions. COURTESY CANADA'S WONDERLAND



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SeaWorld's new smalltooth sawfish pups are growing — and thriving — behind the scenes at the Aquarium Health Center. COURTESY SEAWORLD ORLANDO

SeaWorld welcomes new smalltooth sawfish pups

ORLANDO — The wonders of the world's oceans have inspired imaginations for generations. And in turn those imaginations have inspired the desire to better understand, protect and conserve the marine life that lives within the mysterious blue water. Since 1964, **SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment** has focused on sharing the wonders of the ocean with guests of all ages, while also serving the life under the sea through conservation and education.

On October 17, International Sawfish Day, **SeaWorld Orlando** announced it had experienced a wonder all its own with the incredible — and surprise — birth of three smalltooth sawfish shark pups. The live birth of two females and one male took place at 5:45 a.m. on Tuesday, July 11, 2023. Each pup measured in at close to two feet long in size. The proud parents, SeaWorld Orlando's only pair of smalltooth sawfish, have lived in the park's Shark Encounter for many years.

"SeaWorld Orlando is the only place in the United States with this species of sawfish," shared **Becki Orze**, one of the specialists for the 700,000-gallon habitat. "The pair that live in the Shark Encounter have been part of the SeaWorld family for quite some time, and while for many years we hoped they would successfully have pups, we began to believe they may have grown too old."

"That is why," Orze continued, "This birth is so

amazing. It is the first successful smalltooth sawfish birth in the United States. The proud sawfish mom is in her thirties and doing quite well since having the pups."

Orze went on to share the pregnancy was discovered during a routine health exam of the female. The first hint and suspicions was excitedly confirmed with additional scans, ultrasounds and checks. "If you are part of the sawfish nerd science community, you share in our awe."

Adam Brame, sawfish recovery coordinator with the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**, echoed Orze's excitement. While discussing the historic birth at SeaWorld Orlando's International Sawfish Day park passholder event, he stated, "This is an amazing milestone for this special species. The birth of smalltooth sawfish here at SeaWorld marks the first time smalltooth sawfish have successfully bred at an aquarium in the U.S."

In April 2012, **Atlantis, Paradise Island**, Bahamas, celebrated the birth of four endangered smalltooth sawfish. Atlantis has remained the first and only facility in the world to have reproductive success of the smalltooth sawfish, and now, SeaWorld Orlando can share both bragging rights, pup updates and joy.

With a smile and nod to Orze and the SeaWorld team, he added, "I hope SeaWorld's news helps inspire more people to join those of us in the

► See PUPS, page 19



Heading to **Coney Island**, Brooklyn, New York, isn't just a summertime activity anymore.

For the first time in its 120-year history, the iconic **Luna Park** opened for the winter. "Frost Fest" at the amusement park kicked off on Nov. 18 and will run right through the holiday season, ending on Jan. 7.

In addition to riding more than 20 rides, including the Cyclone roller coaster, parkgoers were able to skate on an all-new ice rink. According to Luna Park's website, guests could shop and partake in festive food options at the holiday market being offered.

Wild Adventures, Valdosta, Georgia, is bringing the exhibit Dinosaur Explore for the 2024 season. This entertaining and educational exhibit showcases more than 30 "larger-than-life" dinosaurs that move and roar just like they did when they roamed the earth. Families will come face-to-face with a giant Tyrannosaurus Rex, a 26-foot-tall Brachiosaurus, a Three-Horned Triceratops and many more.

The adventure area will be nestled in the Wanyama Botanical Garden where guests will discover the dinosaurs as they explore winding paths, uncover fossils and stumble across roaming raptors.

Among technological advancements revealed in September by **Universal Destinations and Experiences** CEO **Mark Woodbury** was facial recognition and photo validation, which he promised will create a "frictionless experience" at all the resort's properties. It is currently being tested at **Universal Islands of Adventure Theme Park**, Orlando, Florida.

According to the Universal Orlando website, the facial recognition technology verifies tickets and ticket holders, allowing guests to expedite the park entry process (similar to photo validation tested in 2017 for select Universal Express attractions in Islands of Adventure).

After repainting and many, many maintenance issues, a fan-favorite roller coaster, Xcelerator, from the Southern California theme park **Knott's Berry Farm**, Buena Park, reopened after being closed for more than two years.

Alton Towers Resort in Staffordshire, England, has released a video offering a sneak peek of its reimagined Nemesis roller coaster, which is set to be unveiled next year.

The transformation project includes replacing the ride's 2,500-foot-long track. The attraction takes riders on a heart-pounding journey with a G-force of 3.5 and a top speed of 50 mph.

► **PUPS**
Continued from page 18

sawfish nerd community." Although shark-like in appearance, sawfish are actually rays; their gills and mouths are found on the underside of their bodies.

"Sawfish are unique creatures. The smalltooth sawfish is one of five species of sawfish, and they are cool," Brame continued. "Their long nose, the rostrum, looks like a hedge trimmer. The middle of their body resembles a stingray, and their back end looks like a shark. By mixing all these parts together, you have a sawfish." He further shared the rostrum has unpaired teeth. Like all sharks, the teeth will fall out and grow back continually throughout the sawfish's lifespan, but will never pair up. Sawfish can have between 20

The Endangered Species Act, enacted in 1973, lists species around the world and sawfish are among some of most threatened species. The sawfish pups are expected to double in size by the time they turn one. COURTESY SEAWORLD ORLANDO



to 29 teeth at a time.

SeaWorld's only pair of smalltooth sawfish are located at the Orlando park, the fitting location for the species. Smalltooth sawfish are the only species of sawfish native to Florida. Atlantic Ocean dwellers, they once were found in almost all of Florida's surrounding waters, the Gulf of Mexico and along the East Coast as far north as North Carolina. Continued waterfront development, the destruction of Florida's mangroves and incidental catch

from the mass use of fishing nets and equipment including shrimp trawls, bottom long-lines and recreational hook-and-line gear have drastically decreased the population.

"The birth of these three pups is an important step in helping us to better learn about them so that we can better protect the remaining sawfish in the wild," Brame stated.

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Altitude Trampoline Park continues growth with new locations

AT: Pam Sherborne
 psherborne@amusementtoday.com

COLLEYVILLE, Texas — Altitude Trampoline Park, a leading family-friendly entertainment franchise headquartered in Colleyville, Texas, announced in late October the addition of 20 new park locations to its development pipeline across multiple target markets.

With more than 20 parks signed and eight leased and under construction, the developments are set to expand the brand's presence in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Georgia, California and Illinois.

Earlier in 2023, the



company announced its entrance into additional markets such as the Greater Atlanta area, Greater Pittsburgh, Buenos Aires and the Greater Tampa area.

Currently, there are close to 100 locations worldwide. There are franchises in nearly 30 U.S. states alone.

"At Altitude, we aim to expand our footprint with



Altitude Trampoline Park, based in Colleyville, Texas, announced in late October the addition of 20 new park locations to its development pipeline across multiple target markets. COURTESY TRAMPOLINE PARK

passionate partners and determine target markets to drive growth strategi-

cally," said Mike Roton-do, Altitude's chief executive officer. "As we continue to reach our goals, we utilize our knowledge and contacts in project management and real estate to ensure franchisees are set up for success. We feel that this trend of multi-unit expansion will continue into 2024, bringing family-friendly fun across the nation."

The announcement of Altitude Trampoline's new locations builds on the brand's goal to be con-

veniently located centers for family fun. These niche entertainment venues expanding across the country are state-of-the-art trampoline parks that focus on safety, offer next-level birthday parties and provide a variety of activities for both children and adults.

Meghan Bronner, Fish-Consulting, responsible for corporate public relations, said that not all of the Altitude Trampoline Parks franchises will

► See ALTITUDE, page 22

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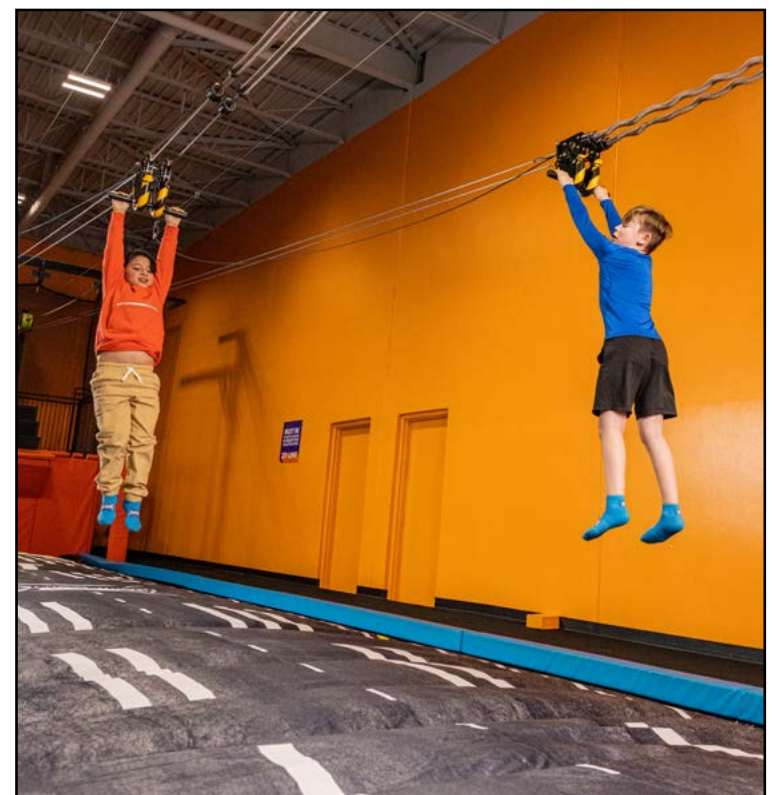
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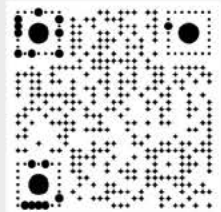


The attractions vary at each location and can include the \$10 Endless Jumps Membership program, playgrounds, basketball, dodgeball, interactive games and more. COURTESY TRAMPOLINE PARK



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Birthday parties at Altitude Trampoline Park locations have been very popular. In fact, party celebrations of any kind are a staple. COURTESY TRAMPOLINE PARK



▶ALTITUDE

Continued from page 20

look the same on the outside and they may also offer different attractions on the inside.

Some franchise owners have even paired the trampolines with virtual realities.

"As the brand expands, more efforts are being made to add tech and virtual reality experiences to locations across the nation," she said.

But guests will find a high standard of equipment and floor-to-floor trampolines at all of the Altitude Trampoline Parks.

Some of the activities promoted at the different locations include rock walls, monkey bars and an adventure course where guests may try out their Ninja force.

Guests can come together and form teams to play trampoline dodgeball and basketball.

Some franchises will include interactive games such as hunt-the-lights. There normally is a Kid's

Court for the youngest jumpers.

High-performance trampolines are offered to see just how high a guest really can jump.

Some locations offer a sweeper, which is a padded arm and spins over a trampoline area. Guests have to jump over the arm in order to not be knocked down.

Altitude Trampoline Park franchises have been very successful in promoting the brand's \$10 Endless Jumps Membership program.

The franchises' party packages have also been extremely popular with their wide selection of offerings. Small parties and large ones can be accommodated. Corporations may even rent out the entire park.

Some Altitude parks offer an array of programs. For example, there are the Junior Jumpers Jams for younger jumpers during the daytime hours and Friday Night Friendly events.

Altitude Trampoline Park was founded in 2012. altitudetrampolinepark.com



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

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

Chuck E. Cheese held a live press conference at which the titular character Chuck E. announced Munch's Make Believe Band Residency at Northridge, California, near Los Angeles.

Speaking alongside fellow members of the Make Believe Band — featuring Mr. Munch on keyboards, Jasper T. Jowls on guitar, Helen Henny on vocals, and Pasqually on drums — Chuck E. revealed that the band will be headlining an exclusive, permanent residency at the Northridge Chuck E. Cheese.

Northridge will become the nation's only Chuck E. Cheese fun center to feature an original animatronic band and the totally modern upgrade and experience for guests, making it a destination for fans of all ages — past and present.

While the fan-favorite band will perform daily at this location, a brand new experience will also delight current guests and future generations. The company has been busy renovating fun centers nationwide with updated features to offer multi-activity options for all ages. New enhancements include a new state-of-the-art interactive dance floor, a giant video wall and screens, the most popular kid-focused arcade games and new trampolines zones in select fun centers around the nation.

National children's entertainment center **Kids Empire** will be opening its second Ohio location in North Olmsted next spring at the **Great Northern Mall**.

"This speaks to the changing face of retail in a macro sense, because it's more about a destination than a single go-to department store," said North Olmsted Director of Economic and Community Development **Max Upton**.

The 14,800-square-foot center will feature mazes, slides, creative building games, play structures, drop-in ball pits and a dance room for youngsters of all ages, as well as a dedicated toddler area.

An investor in an East Peoria, Illinois, indoor-outdoor family entertainment center said he anticipates the facility will open by next spring. Funded by a group of local investors, construction on **The Putt Club** began this fall. **J.R. Runkel**, an agent and partner with **Fortner Insurance Agency, Inc.**, and an investor in the project, said construction should be completed in February.

"We're going to have 18 indoor and 18 outdoor professionally designed miniature golf holes where people can enjoy a putting experience," Runkel stated.

We're also going to have a full restaurant and bar that's going to be top notch. It should be a great place for corporate events and family outings."

In addition to miniature golf and a restaurant, the Putt Club will offer games for all ages, as well as two indoor and two outdoor cabanas for private events. The cabanas will each be equipped with televisions and seating for 10 to 12 people.

Crayola Experience is set to open its first international venue in China.

A 40,000-square-foot attraction, complete with animation theaters and color labs, is scheduled to open sometime in 2026 in Beijing. Crayola and **Max-Matching Entertainments** representatives announced plans for the project in a news release.

The new venue is expected to be constructed as part of a new international family entertainment center complex, called **Top Park**. The complex is located north of the **Universal Beijing Resort** within the Beijing Municipal Administrative Center.

It's set to include five major family entertainment centers, a themed hotel, commercial street and business center. The complex is designed to drive increased culture and tourism to the region from China and throughout the world, representatives said.

Launch Entertainment is making its way to Northern Denver.

The family entertainment park — known for its variety of attractions — recently signed an agreement with local entrepreneur **Kathleen Malocsay** to establish a new park in Denver. This location will cater to guests throughout the northern part of the city, marking Launch's inaugural presence in Colorado and establishing the brand's aggressive nationwide growth. Launch Entertainment of Denver will feature indoor trampolines, bowling, arcades and more, with the goal of opening in the latter half of 2024.

"As Launch Entertainment continues nationwide expansion, we are thrilled to partner with local owners like Kathleen," said **Jeff Todd**, SVP of business development at Launch Entertainment. "We actively seek experienced franchise prospects, like Kathleen, to drive our development in multiple states across the country, and we have full confidence that she will provide an exceptional family-friendly experience to Denver."

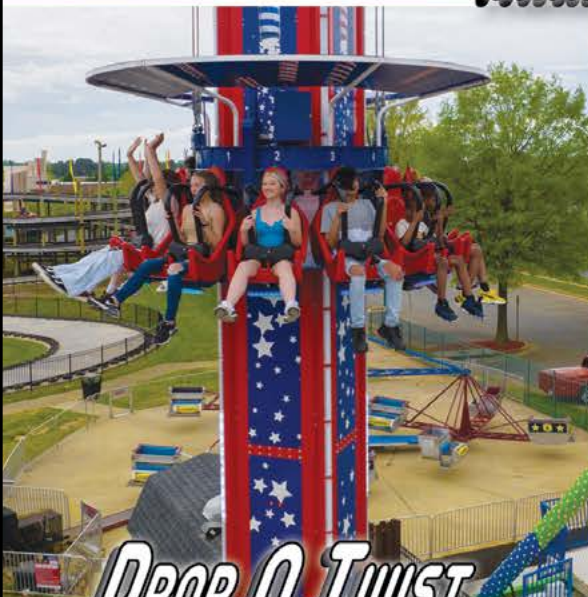
Spinning family fun onto the midway!



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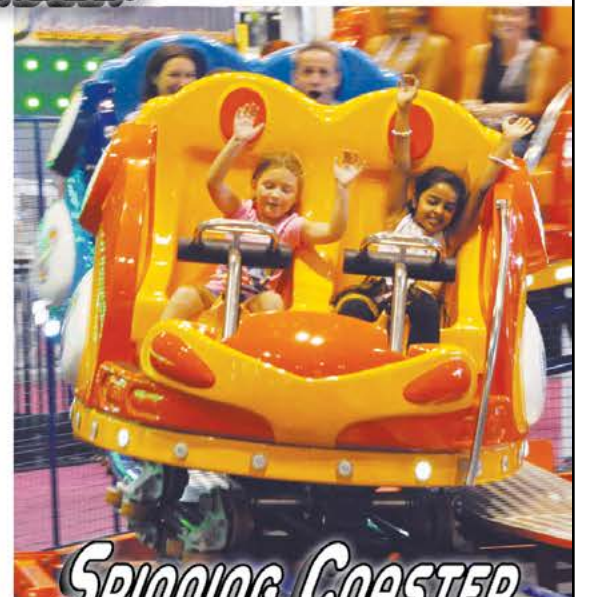
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State Fair of Texas attendance and midway revenue both down

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

DALLAS, Texas — Throughout the 24-day State Fair of Texas, 2,341,449 people attended, down approximately 8% from 2022 when 2.5 million fairgoers went through the turnstiles. This is due in part to the first week being one of the hottest on record for Texas, with an average high of 94 degrees. The highest was on day nine, Saturday, October 7 when 208,731 folks decided to “Explore the Midway,” which was the 2023 theme.

The State Fair of Texas operates with an independent midway, which had 74 total rides; 29 were kiddie rides. There were 26 carnival providers bringing anywhere from one to seven rides. Operators included Alamo Amusements, Inc., Amusement Management International, Bishop Amusement Rides, B-Thrilled Attractions, Caprice Enterprise, D&K Amusements, Fair of Fun, Fair Ride Entertainment, Great American Entertainment, Iconic Midway Rides, JOY RIDE, Laser Fair, Lauther Amusements, Lone Star Entertainment, M&C



The independent Midway had 74 rides with 29 just for the younger set. 26 different operators brought in anywhere from one to seven rides. COURTESY STATE FAIR OF TEXAS

Attractions, McBubbles LLC, Mr. Ed's Magical Midways, Pinnacle Fair Equipment Inc., Prime Pacific Entertainment, Sky Spectacle, Inc, State Fair Spectacular, Talley Amusements, Texas Skyway, Inc., Triple T Amusement, Wanderlust Amusement and Wood Entertainment Company. Making her first appearance at the fair was Marina Zaitshik, owner of Iconic Midway Rides, bringing one ride.

There were three new rides at this year's fair. They included Infinity (larger Ring of Fire), Larson

International) Iconic Midway Rides; Toy Cars (IROSA) Tom McDonagh's McBubbles, LLC and Kiddie Bumper Boats (Christiani Rides, Inc.) Joey Weaver's Fair Ride Entertainment. The three top-grossing rides were Texas Star wheel (SDC) run by Tom and Mary Talley, Texas Skyway (Doppelmayr) run by Mike Demas and Love Bug (Mack Rides) run by Maurice Haworth. Revenue for rides and games was down by 12% from 2022.

“Our top priority every year is safety for not only our fairgoers but our vendors and

employees. This is exactly why we handpick every single ride that enters the State Fair of Texas midway, to ensure that it meets every one of our extensive safety requirements,” said Rusty Fitzgerald, senior vice president of operations. “The ride and games owners here bring the highest level of service and ‘Texantude’ to our Fair for our fairgoers, and this year was no different.”

Special promotions provided the opportunity for increased savings and value to attendees. These included season passes for all 24-days, a premium one-day admis-

sion, special pricing Monday-Thursday with discounted admission tickets of \$15, \$10 for seniors and children, \$5 senior day every Thursday, reduced general admission after 5pm every evening and discounted tickets from participating McDonalds with \$5 off weekdays and \$7 off on weekends.

Other companies and organizations had special promotions too. By bringing two jars of peanut butter on opening day, attendees got in for \$10 benefiting the North Texas Food Bank. That same organization also benefited when fairgoers brought five canned goods on Wednesdays, they got in for \$5. Tuesdays and Thursdays were Dr Pepper value days if fairgoers purchased online, reducing admission to \$10.

Tuesdays allowed riders to enjoy most midway rides for four coupons, with kiddie rides discounted to three coupons. Thrifty Thursday's discounted food program, presented by T-Mobile, gave guests savings while snacking, as participating food vendors offered one of their signature menu items at a reduced price, ranging from mini versions to regular-size items.

The advertising budget was approximately \$1 million. The marketing mix focused on growth and sales conversion within internal communications channels (website, email, text messaging, and organic social media). The media mix included integrated print — 22%, broadcast — 20%, radio — 18%, internal communication channels — 10%, paid social media — 10%, direct mail and direct-to-home — 10% and outdoor — 10%.

Food finalists in the savory category included deep fried cheesy crab tater bites, deep fried pho, loaded fries pizza, OX'cellent soul roll and turkey ribs. In the sweet category the finalists were Biscoff delight cheesecake, bourbon banana caramel sopapillas, Fernie's fried cherry pie in the sky, sweet Encanto waffle and trail-ade, lemonade with fruit, cucumber and mint.

New food vendors includ-

► See TEXAS, page 26

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EXIT EXIT EXIT

▶TEXAS

Continued from page 24

ed EATALY, Pound Cake Experts, Sandoitchi sandwich and Stay Cheesy. New fair food included butchers block — the ultimate carnivore bowl, churreos (cookies and churros), cornbread sausage bombs, cotton candyrita (cotton candy and margarita), and creole etouffee beignets. In the deep-fried department were candy pecan bacon bread pudding, honey butter brisket swirls, surf & turf empanada, sushi bombs, Texas oatmeal pie and Vietnamese coffee.

The wonders of the prehistoric area made their way to Fair Park for the new Dinosaurs at the Lagoon exhibit that featured 10 life-sized dinosaurs found in Texas, a kids' play area, along with seating and dining. Visitors were able to get their picture with a 57-foot-tall Alamosaurus.

The Hall of State had two brand-new exhibits: the Texas Ranger bicentennial exhibit and the Texas Tech centennial exhibit focused on Texas Tech's first 100 years.

"With safety as a top pri-

ority here at the Most Texan Place on Earth, we have maintained several COVID-related safety measures put in place for 2021 to mitigate any further spread of COVID-19 at the 2022 and 2023 event," said Senior Vice President of Public Relations **Karissa Condoianis**.

Safety measures the fair kept in place from previous years included 500+ hand sanitizing stations, a cleaning team frequently cleaned and disinfected tables and high-touch surfaces and Active Pure technology was in the vast majority of the buildings at Fair Park to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 indoors.

Over 30 free concerts were offered on the Chevrolet main stage, including **Lonestar**, **CeeLo Green**, **Bowling for Soup**, **X Ambassadors**, **Red Jumpsuit Apparatus**, and **We the Kings**. **Lil Jon** and **Yahritza y Su Esencia** drew the largest crowds at their concerts. All concerts and live music were included with admission.

The fair was asked about employment challenges. "We saw fewer challenges with hiring and onboarding seasonal



A portion of Kiddieland boasted 29 rides, including two new to the spot: Toy Cars brought in by Tom McDonagh's **McBubbles** operation and Kiddie Bumper Boats, **Joey Weaver's Fair Ride Entertainment**. AT/SAMMY PICCOLA

employees for the 2023 fair than the 2022 fair. This can be attributed to the all-new Tex Team Resources Center — Employee Service Center, which was a new program dedicated to streamlining everyone's hiring journey," said Condoianis. "Each year, we promote thousands of job opportunities with the state fair, working to reach folks across the DFW metroplex, with a special focus on our neighbors in South Dallas. With the integration of our new

resource center, we were able to assist even more employees with completing their applications and necessary paperwork in person. We're very fortunate to have folks who return every year, and for those who have worked three or more fairs, we offer a scholarship opportunity for our employees or their dependents to pursue higher education."

She added, "We are incredibly thankful to all the fairgoers who joined us to celebrate

all things Texan. Greeting over 2.3 million people has been a privilege, and by simply coming out to have some fair fun, you have helped us to support our vendors and small businesses as well as helped us to support some of the fair's signature programs. We look forward to welcoming you all back next year at the 2024 State Fair of Texas."

"Thank you to all who came out to join us at the Most Texan Place on Earth this fair season," said **Mitchell Glieber**, state fair president. "Through your continued support during our largest fundraiser of the year, the State Fair of Texas, you have aided in making a difference in our community. The funds raised will help us further our nonprofit mission initiatives, which give us more opportunities to award scholarships, feed those in our South Dallas community, and give back to other nonprofits like ours in the Dallas area that are making an impact in our community."

The 2024 edition takes place September 27 through October 20.

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“ Incorporating the **Circle of Excellence** designation as part of the fair's selecting and contracting of carnival operators should be a priority. ”

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More than 900,000 attend the 11-day North Carolina State Fair

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

RALEIGH, N.C. — Sunny skies welcomed patrons on the final weekend of the **North Carolina State Fair**, helping propel attendance of the 11-day exposition (Oct. 12-22) to 926,425, officials said.

"I am grateful to our fairgoers, vendors and businesses that support the fair," said Agriculture Commissioner **Steve Troxler**. "It is a celebration of the best of North Carolina and feels like an annual reunion that brings everything together that makes North Carolina a great place to live."

Rain hampered attendance on the first Saturday (Oct. 14) of the fair with 62,501 passing through the gates. In comparison, the same day in 2022 saw more than 115,000 attend under sunny skies. The record for the first Saturday is 131,699, set in 2010.

Scattered showers also swept through the area on Friday, Oct. 19, with attendance recorded at 71,540, down 20,000 from the previous year.

Though no single-day records were set, the final weekend saw strong attendance with 135,545 on Saturday and 114,607 on Sunday.

Total attendance at the fair has eclipsed the one million mark during five runs, the most recent in 2017. Last year, 960,172 passed through the turnstiles, which was four percent higher than this year.

"The 2023 fair was a success by all measures," noted Fair Manager **G. Kent Yelverton**.

As for the weather, Yelverton said: "We had



Powers Great American Midways fielded more than 90 rides at the North Carolina State Fair. The company's new Techo Jump from Sartori (right) was popular at the Raleigh event.
AT/RON GUSTAFSON

steady rain until late afternoon on the 14th, and on Oct. 20 we had three periods of rain and storms. The later storm caused a severe thunderstorm warning and closed outdoor activities and entrance gates for 45 minutes in the early evening."

The fair official also pointed out that there were impacts from three major concerts at the adjacent PNC Arena, a venue that shares parking with the fair. One concert was canceled only hours before showtime.

For the 18th consecutive year, **Powers Great American Midways** (PGAM) was contracted to provide the enormous midway. Show owner **Corky (Les) Powers** has worked with **Frank**



Zaitshik of Wade Shows at all 18 fairs to field rides, games and food concessions on the carnival midway.

"The season started off wet, but thankfully we got good weather for most of our fairs," Powers said at Raleigh, the last spot of 2023 for PGAM. "When we had the weather, we were ahead of last year. Rain the first Saturday here certainly hurt."

The Raleigh midway featured 91 rides, all of which were inspected and stickered prior to opening on Oct. 12.

Four gondola Ferris wheels were placed at

key vantage points on the T-shaped layout, the largest being Powers' 33-meter (**Lamberink**) adjacent to kiddieland. Wade provided its **Chance Rides Giant Wheel** on the main section of the midway with Powers' Itsy Bitsy spider wheel (**AMC**) anchoring one end of the "T," while Wade's Friendly Wheel (**Technical Park**) was at the other end.

Wade and **Wood Entertainment** (San Antonio, Texas) again presented their 155-foot State Fair SkyGazer wheel (**Lamberink**) on the 344-acre fairgrounds near

the Graham Building and Gate 3. The massive wheel offered birds-eye views of the fair and surrounding area. Tickets were sold separately for the ride at \$7 per person, \$6 pre-sale.

Fairgoers were treated to new rides from Powers, including **Tesla AC**, a **Tivoli**-themed **Orbiter**; a mini Reverse Time themed as **Wipe Out** (**SBF/Visa**) and **Techno Jump** (**Sartori**). Wade stole the limelight in kiddieland with its new double-deck carousel (**Chance**).

There was no shortage of spectaculars as Powers fielded **F5**, **Khaos**, and **Air Raid** (**KMG**); **Air Maxx** (**SBF/Visa**), **Wave Swinger** (**Zierer**), **Flying Bobs** (**Chance**), **Inferno loop** (**Larson International**); and **Rock Star**, **Vertigo** and **Sky Hawk** (**A.R.M. USA**).

Two coasters, **Mighty Mouse** (**Zamperla**) and **Super Cyclone** (**Interpark**), were among the spectaculars presented by Wade. Also, **Super Himalaya** (**Reverchon**), **Street Fighter** (**Technical Park**), **Mega Drop** (**Fabbri**), **Alpine Bobs** (**Chance**), **Quasar** themed as **Music Express** (**A.R.M. USA/A.R.M. UK**) and **Wave Swinger** (**Bertazzon**).

Family and other thrill

► See **CAROLINA**, page 30



PGAM was again supplemented by Wade Shows during the North Carolina State Fair in Raleigh. Among the spectaculars Wade provided: **Wave Swinger** (**Bertazzon**), **Super Himalaya** (**Reverchon**) and **Crazy Mouse** (**Zamperla**).
AT/RON GUSTAFSON









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Robeson Regional Agricultural Fair enjoys a solid run

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

LUMBERTON, N.C. — While attendance remained on par with 2022, officials with the **Robeson Regional Agricultural Fair** expect revenue to be up when the books are finally closed on this year's exposition.

"Attendance appears to be in line with last year," Fair President **Timothy Taylor** told *Amusement Today*. "Our treasurer is still totaling numbers, but revenue appears slightly higher than last year."

Good weather also played heavily into the success of the nine-day fair (Sept. 29 – Oct. 7).

"This was probably the best weather the fair had in almost a decade," Taylor noted. "It certainly didn't hurt that folk felt comfortable on the grounds with temperatures in the upper 70s, a slight breeze and sunny skies."

New acts were added to the fair's free lineup, including **Doc Magic** children's variety show and **Ember Fire Art. Johnny Rockette's** high-flying cycle show was also presented along



Air Flyer (above left) and Ladybugs ride (above right) were on the Big Rock Amusements Midway at the Robeson Regional Agricultural Fair in Lumberton, N.C. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

with local acts and livestock shows.

"Ember Fire and local entertainer **Zach Oxendine** were the most highly praised by guests," the fair official said.

Big Rock Amusements, Chesaning, Mich., again provided the midway with 35 rides, including eight spectaculars, 12 majors and 15 in kiddieland. Spectaculars included: Air Flyer (**AK Rides**), Himalaya (**Wisdom Rides of America**), Ring of Fire (**Larson International**), Rip Tide (**A.R.M. USA**), The Beast (**KMG**), and a **Technical Park** Street Fighter booked in through Wade Shows.



Other featured attractions included Yo-Yo and Zipper (**Chance Rides**), Gondola Wheel and Sea Ray (**Mulligan**), Sizzler (**Wisdom**) and Tilt-A-Whirl (Larson).

All-day ride wristbands were \$25 Monday – Thursday and \$30 Friday and Saturday. Sunday of the fair was sponsored by **Univision** with \$25 wristbands from 2 to 8 p.m. Big Rock offered free rides from 1 to 2 p.m. for early fairgoers with the \$10 admission waived for military and first responders. Individual ride tickets were \$1.25 each or 20 for \$20 during the

event's run. Kids 4 and under were admitted to the fair for free.

Oct. 5 also featured a canned food night with free admission to the grounds for each person donating 10 canned items.

The fair also offered pre-sale combo admission and ride packages for \$25.

A number of improvements were made at the fairgrounds for 2023, including new entry software to streamline exhibits and entries.

"Our new mega pass express booth also cut down on lines, so there was virtually no waiting to get into the fair," Taylor added. "We were also set up to take credit cards for gate admission and ride wristbands, which increased our online sales thanks to the specials we offered."

Parking was free with admission, including all the entertainment, livestock shows and competitions.

Taylor said the fair board has already hit the ground running, holding a meeting the Sunday after the fair closed. The 2024 edition of the event is slated Sept. 27 – Oct. 5.

►CAROLINA

Continued from page 28

rides were in the mix along the midway with kiddieland having more than a dozen attractions such as Crazy Cabs (SBF/Visa), Dragon Coaster (**Jung-Max**), Fun Slide (**Frederiksen**), Jumbo Circus (**Klomag**), Grand Carousel (Chance), Wacky Worm (**Fajume**) and more.

The carnival provided dozens of automated kiosks which allowed guests to purchase all-day wristbands or ride ticket cards.

It was the first time Raleigh's **FunTagg** digital ticketing was used for all of the rides, Yelverton said. "Powers Great American Midway was a great partner, again, for 2023."

Unlimited rides were \$40 per person (\$30 pre-sale), with credits on ride ticket cards \$1 each (\$10 for 18 credits pre-sale). Rides required 5-6 credits each. The SkyGazer wheel (\$7, \$6 pre-sale) and State Fair Flyer chair lift (\$7 and roundtrip \$10; \$6 and \$9 pre-sale respectively) were not included in the midway offers.

The fair also offered discounted pre-sale admission and ride packages as follows:

- Dizzy pass: \$38 for one



Powers Great American Midways presented its AirMaxx (above right) spectacular — the only one of its kind in North America — from SBF/Visa as well as its new Wipe Out (above right), an SBF/Visa mini Reverse Time, at the North Carolina State Fair in Raleigh. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

gate admission and one all-day ride wristband

- Flyer package: \$34 for two gate admissions and two roundtrips on State Fair Flyer

- SkyGazer: \$14 for one gate admission and one SkyGazer ticket

A **Tools For Schools** deal also bounced back money to participating schools when fair admissions were purchased online in advance using designated school codes. The fair donated \$2 per adult and \$1 per child ticket. Pre-sale ticket prices were \$10 for adults, and \$5 for kids 6-12. Five and under were

free with seniors (65+) \$5.

At the gate, admission was \$13 for adults and \$7 for kids. Active military and their dependants were offered \$8 admission.

Hunger Relief Day, presented by **Smithfield Foods**, was held Oct. 19 which afforded fairgoers who donated six cans of food free admission to the fair. Officials said 253,000 pounds of canned goods came in this year, compared to 214,000 in 2022.

There were 4,000 classes of competitions as well as a grandstand and other entertainment throughout the 11-day event.



More than 21,600 general competition entries were received and 2,819 entries in livestock competitions.

Most notable was a watermelon weighing in at 308 pounds, said to be a world record thus far this year.

Rand Grandstand highlights included tractor pulls Oct. 13-15; Motorsports **Mayhem** Monster Trucks and Quad Racing, Oct. 20; Monster Trucks, Quad Racing, Demolition Derby, Oct. 21; and Monster Trucks, Quad Racing, Mini Van Derby, Oct. 22. Admission was \$10 for all events.

The **Hunt Horse**

Complex staged draft horse and mini horse pulls with admission also \$10.

Free fair entertainment at the fair included **Dale Jones**, one-handed juggler; **Rock-It Robot** roaming in kiddieland; **Melody Farm Follies** animatronics theater; and **The Birdman: World Class Bird Shows**.

Also, the **Homegrown Music Fest** with entertainers from throughout the state was featured at the Waterfall Stage.

The 2024 edition of the North Carolina State Fair is slated for Oct. 17-27.

•ncstatefair.org



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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The **East Texas State Fair**, Tyler, may have held its last fair next to **Christus Trinity Mother Frances Rose Stadium**. The 10-day fair ended on October 1.

The fair has been held next to Rose Stadium since 1912; however, there are tentative plans for a new location as the current contract comes to an end, according to East Texas State Fair president and CEO, **John Sykes**.

"We're going to build a new fairground. We've been trying to do that for many, many years. It's expensive to do, especially infrastructure," Sykes told *KETK-TV*. "If we had the infrastructure already established, it would be relatively easy to get the rest of it done. But don't give up. I mean, we have some plans in our bucket right now that we're going to really hopefully surprise some people of Tyler."

The fair is still working on plans and hope to make an announcement soon.

The 2024 fair will take place either beside Rose Stadium or the new site. **North America Midway Entertainment** has the ride contract.

A new world record for the largest butternut squash was set at the Giant Veggie Weigh-Off event at the **State Fair of Virginia**, Doswell.

The record-setting gargantuan butternut squash weighed in at 131.4 pounds. It was entered by **Jason Loris**, Amisville, Virginia. There were two other big-boy vegetables that set state fair records. A long gourd — entered by **Hank Houston**, of Spotsylvania — measured 126.5 inches long. Additionally, another giant vegetable, a squash, grown by **Paul Jarosh**, of Culpeper, weighed in at 911.6 pounds.

The 2024 fair runs September 20-29 with **Deggeller Attractions** providing all the thrills.

On August 1, *PBS Iowa* premiered a two-hour-long documentary on the **Iowa State Fair** (Des Moines). Called *Our Great State Fair*, it tells the story of the 11-day Iowa State Fair for the first time in a video presentation. The **Iowa State Fair Blue-Ribbon Foundation** says that the program dives into "the stories that set it apart from any other fair and shows how the event brings people together for 11

unforgettable days each year."

"Iowa PBS has covered the Iowa State Fair for more than 50 years, but we wanted to look at the entire history of the fair," said *Iowa PBS* Producer and Director **Theresa Knight**. "We were able to take a step back and look at what it's meant to people over the years and why it's an important part of Iowa's history." The documentary can also be accessed on YouTube.

The first fair took place in 1854 in Fairfield, Iowa, as an experimental agricultural exposition with a budget of \$323 (\$11,694 in today's money). The fair jumped around from town to town until it permanently moved to Des Moines in 1878. It has been at its present location since 1886. The fair is famous for its food, entertainment, competitions, political platforms and the butter cow.

The 170th edition returns August 8 – 18 with an independent midway.

The **International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE)** is looking for more young people to join their 2024 Ambassador program. The high-energy group works to promote the IAFE through social media and at IAFE events. Ambassadors serve a two-year term and are limited to three terms. Interested people can find more information at fairsandexpos.com/ambassador-program.

Applications are due by the end of January 2024.

The **Showmen's League of America (SLA)** recently honored some of its members at the annual meeting during the IAFE convention in Salt Lake City. Special member pin awards went to these 50-year members: **Ron Burback, Funtastic Traveling Shows; Jimmy Hall, Butler Amusements; Sam Johnston, retired owner of Funderland Amusement Park and John Kozlik.**

25-year members include **Mick Brajevich, Butler Amusements; Vince Caldiero; Barton Finlayson, Mighty Thomas Carnival; Duane Hickman, Quality Concessions; Chris Huston, Huston Family Foods; Freddy Miller, Miller Spectacular Shows; Lance Moyer, Butler Amusements; Carl Snoddy, NAME; Jeff Swartz, Hitch-Hiker Manufacturing and Michael Wood, Wood Entertainment Company.**

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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► News Splash — page 35 / Kalahari breaks ground on its fifth resort — page 35

Island H2O Water Park extends operations with Holiday Nights

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Water parks are typically known for having summer seasons. Warmer climates can stretch operations from an earlier spring opening to dates into early fall. Only a handful can operate year-round in the United States. Even Central Florida's water parks can be limited from opening 12 months out of the year. While **Island H2O Water Park** has a long season, it has stretched operations into December with a new event, **Holiday Nights**.

In support of **Give Kids The World Village**, Island H2O agreed to host **Night of a Million Lights** in 2022. That event had taken place at the Village when it was closed to families due to the global pandemic. As a fundraiser, it was a popular solution to



Holiday Nights offers numerous props for photo ops for families (above). The tree made of surfboards is a clever blend of the holidays and the park's theme (right). COURTESY ISLAND H2O

help keep Give Kids The World healthy.

"When we hosted **Night of a Million Lights** last year for Give Kids The World Village, we saw the amazing work that they are doing; it moved us all," said **Ron Sutula**, general

manager. "They started this event during COVID at their Village when there were no kids there and with the village being full with families again, they have changed their focus back on making those kids' experiences amazing. We



saw the value in what they are doing and decided to take on the event this year with the donation back to them to be able to support the real work the Village is doing to change these families' lives."

While Give Kids The World is bringing fundraising holiday events back to the Village, Island H2O is introducing its own all-new event. Even though the festival in 2023 has been brought in-house by the Kissimmee water park, Island H2O is still making a donation to the nonprofit Give Kids The World Village.

"This is a brand-new event!" Sutula told *Amusement Today*. "Everything is different from last year except how many lights will be used. Though we are not using the water slides for this event, we wanted to play into the Island Holiday that you can experience here at the water park. We do have a couple of holiday-themed inflatable slides and a trackless train for the children to enjoy. We are excited to offer a tropical island vibe during our **Holiday Nights** event."

► See H2O, page 34



During November, the water park was open over the weekends during the daytime but took on the Christmas spirit at night. COURTESY ISLAND H2O

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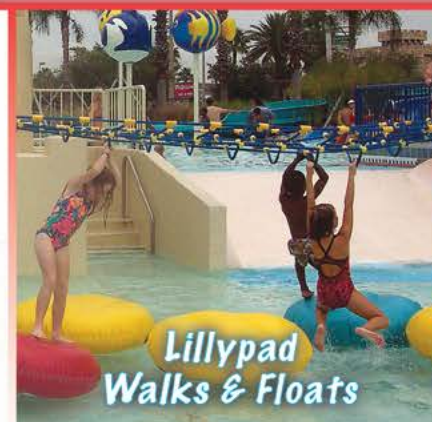
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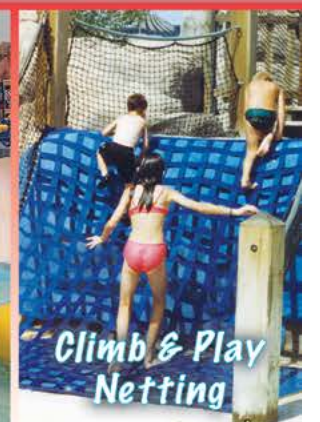
Family Rafts



Sidewinder Tubes & Rafts



Lily Pad Walks & Floats



Climb & Play Netting

►H2O

Continued from page 32

Holiday Nights began on November 8 and will continue through the end of the year, operating daily from December 13 on. In its initial weeks, it was open Wednesday through Sunday.

"One of the focal points of the event this year is the Tropical Trail walk-through experience that we have under and around one of our slide towers," said Sutula. "From the moment you walk in, you are hit with bright fun colors of hibiscus flowers and pineapples. Every turn you take there is another element that will wow you. Holiday Nights is a very unique holiday event and many of our decorations are special. Our surfboard Christmas tree is something that really brings the island and holiday experience to life and is an iconic piece."

On select dates in

November, the water park was open until 5:00, and then new audiences were allowed in starting at 6:00 for the holiday transformation.

"Fortunately, the water park was only open weekends, so we were only challenged two days a week to transition to our nighttime holiday event," Sutula said. "The park hosts our traditional foods during the day but then brings our Holiday Market and specialty eateries to life at night. We have everything from candied apples and roasted candied nuts to hot chocolate and s'mores and more!"

The Holiday Market has vendors in cabanas around the wave pool.

Other offerings include a train ride through the water park, inflatable dry slides, a letters-to-Santa station, s'mores and local choirs singing holiday carols on weeknights. A DJ keeps the fun hopping on Friday nights. On Saturdays and Sundays,



On the weekends, the event features a luau to bring the tropical vibe into the holidays. COURTESY ISLAND H2O

a Hawaiian Luau Show takes place.

"When planning this event out, we really wanted to focus on the community and interactive experience," Sutula told AT. "On weeknights,

we host local choirs and bands from throughout Central Florida. On Friday nights, we have a DJ that will focus on interactive games with the crowd like Reindeer Relays and Christmas Trivia. Then on

Saturdays and Sundays we will have a full Holiday Hawaiian Luau with a traditional hula dance and a fire breather. Once again, bringing together the magic of the holidays with an island vibe."

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NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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Two new waterslides opened recently at the **Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools and Spa** in the Canterbury region of New Zealand. Named Violet Vortex and Waiiau Winder, the two slides feature special lighting and visual projection technology never before seen in New Zealand.

The projections can be changed to give different experiences on different days or seasons, such as mountain snowscapes or an underwater experience.

"We're projecting images onto the side of the slide as you're riding down it. The one we've got there at the moment, it looks as though you're right next to a tropical fish tank," said **Abbot Graeme**, general manager.

The NZ\$3.2 (\$1.91) million slides replaced two 25-year-old slides that were beyond their lifespan.

Opening the slides is "a significant celebration, following months of relentless effort and commitment from the entire project team," said Abbot.

Hamner Springs features 22 pools each with its own unique offering, from tranquil adult-only pools to child-friendly freshwater pools and play areas in a scenic natural setting. The geothermally heated pools range from a comfortable 32°C (89.6°F), right up to a rejuvenating 42.6°C (108.6°F).

The design phase has been completed for the **Northwest Oklahoma Natatorium** in Woodward, Oklahoma. The official design, submitted by **Barker Rinker Seacat Architects** from Denver, Colorado, comes following three years of meetings, fundraising and surveys.

The center will have two separate pools, a waterslide, current pool, spa, locker rooms, family changing rooms, multi-purpose rooms and meeting rooms.

"One pool is cool water and designed for competitive swim sports. It would also have a deep end for diving, Red Cross training, scuba classes as well as enough surface area for obstacle course races or even kayak and canoe practice," said **Dr. Trent Yadon**, chairman of the board for the natatorium committee. "The other pool is warm water that allows for comfortable leisure swimming for infants and adults. This warm pool will be used for water aerobics, beginner swim classes, resistance walking, and physical therapy."

Work is continuing on a water park in the **Hall of Fame Village**, in Canton, Ohio. Officials hope to have the 120,000-square-foot indoor water park and adjacent hotel finished by October 2024.

The football-themed water park is to include a lazy river, wave pool, zero-entry fun zone, swim-up bar, outdoor entertainment area and a slide tower that can accommodate at least eight waterslides. Current plans show one large high-profile family raft ride, with the ability to add a second raft ride in the future.

Michael Crawford, president and CEO of the **Hall of Fame Resort and Entertainment Co.** updated Hall of Fame Village shareholders on the project and other happenings at the entertainment campus and development.

"Our 120,000-square-foot indoor water park is coming to life with core and shell being erected, and the building's exterior is set to be completed prior to winter of this year," said Crawford.

"It's an incredible new, one-of-a-kind asset that will impact not only the company's revenue growth but will also be an anchor guest experience to extend our 'stay and play' concept for the Village," he added.

Hall of Fame Village is a 100-acre sports and entertainment destination centered around the Pro Football Hall of Fame. The first phase estimated to cost \$900 million was completed in 2022. The hotel and indoor water park are part of phase II.

Splashdown Quaywest on Goodrington Sands Beach in Paignton, England, has been given permission by the local government to proceed with a £3 (\$3.7) million upgrade.

New waterslides will be installed along with an indoor play area and a climbing structure. In addition, there will be a new arcade, cafe and kiosk building, along with upgraded landscaping.

Splashdown Quaywest is one of South Devon's most important tourist businesses, and operators **Lemur Attractions** say the improvements will mean better facilities for young families.

Managing Director **Alan Richmond** said the investment would secure the future of the water park and leisure facilities for many years to come.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the development of Goodrington Sands and Splashdown Quaywest water park, which we firmly believe will have many positive impacts on the wider economy of the English Riviera, and help ensure that it remains a leading destination in the U.K. It is very exciting, and we can't wait to get going," said Richmond.

Originally built in the late 1980s, Splashdown Quaywest is the largest outdoor water park in the U.K.



The Nelson family, owners of Kalahari Resorts & Conventions, recently broke ground on their fifth resort, scheduled to open in Virginia in 2026. COURTESY KALAHARI RESORTS & CONVENTIONS



Kalahari breaks ground on its fifth resort, opening in 2026

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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THORNBURG, Virginia — **Kalahari Resorts & Conventions** broke ground on its fifth resort in the unincorporated community of Thornburg in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. The ceremony, which took place on October 20, 2023, marked the beginning of the construction of the 1.38 million-square-foot resort, estimated to open its doors to the public in 2026. This resort will be conveniently situated right off I-95, making it the perfect adventure destination for families in the D.C.-Maryland-Virginia metro area, and neighboring cities such as Richmond and Baltimore.

"Kalahari Resorts & Conventions is a welcome addition to Virginia's ever-growing travel and tourism industry," said Secretary of Commerce and Trade **Caren Merrick**. "Tourism development is essential to building our economy and positioning the Commonwealth as a premier travel destination. The opening of Kalahari Resorts & Conventions will attract more visitors and businesses to Virginia, which will generate hospitality jobs and create a significant economic impact for the region."

The Spotsylvania County Kalahari Resort will offer 907 guest rooms and suites, a 175,000-square-foot indoor water park featuring thrilling waterslides, dedicated children's areas, a massive wave pool, surfing simulator and 10 acres of seasonal outdoor pools. Adjacent to the water park will be a 90,000-square-foot Tom Foolerys Adventure Park, featuring thrill rides, a ropes course, climbing walls, arcade games and more. The site will also include 12 on-site food and beverage outlets, including buffet and quick-bite options and four signature dining experiences.

The new location's convention center will feature two large ballrooms, 16 breakout meeting rooms and 50,000 square feet of outdoor event space. As with previous Kalahari resorts, the Spotsylvania location will be African-themed with spectacular custom art and textiles created by genuine African craftsmen. To date, the Nelson family has invested more than the \$5.5 million to support African artists and designers.

The owners of Kalahari Resorts & Conventions, **Todd Nelson** and **Shari Nelson**, have been the driving force behind the development, creation and expansion of the Kalahari brand since its inception in 2000. "We have always loved Virginia," said Todd Nelson. "We can't wait to share the Kalahari experience with the people here."

BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

▶ Annual Holiday Cooking Guide — page 39 / Women of Influence: Alicia Shoultz — page 44

New Orleans welcomes World Waterpark Association Trade Show

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana — The 43rd Annual World Waterpark Association Trade Show and Symposium took place at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. The last time the show was held in The Big Easy was 2016. Close to 1,700 attendees enjoyed quality time in educational classes, networking opportunities or checking out the latest products or innovations on the trade show floor. The four-day symposium took place October 24 through 27, 2023, two of the days included the trade show exhibition hall.

Education, of course, is key to the symposium. More than 120 speakers shared best practices on topics that meant the most to attendees. These included operational safety, new revenue streams and maintenance.

Although the WWA convention officially ran from October 24 through October 27, events and certification courses started on Sunday, October 22, with the first of two- or three-day certification courses. On October 22, the first day of a two-day Aquatic Factory Operator Certification Course took place. Another two-day course, the Certified Pool Operator Certification Course, likewise began on October 22. The first of three courses of the Ellis & Associates Lifeguard Instructor Licensing Program also began October 22.

Several WWA University offerings took place on October 24, including courses in water



Attendees had the opportunity to spend time on the exhibit floor talking to vendors who were eager to introduce their products and answer questions. AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT

park design, water quality certification and water park maintenance. StarGuard Elite offered its lifeguard supervisor course. October 24 was also the day of the WWA Annual Golf Tournament at the Lakewood Club in New Orleans.

When asked about the education sessions, Matt Massey, general manager, Cowabunga Canyon told AT: "I've been to three classes. The education program is critical, especially for the new people who come each year. It's so important that they go to these classes and learn from people who have been in the industry for so long. I always take something away. This is my tenth show, and I still get something from every show I go to."

"It is always an honor to be asked to speak alongside colleagues or mentors in the industry that you look up to. It is that feeling of validation that not only have you been succeeding, but you've been

noticed by your peers to have something worth sharing," said Jessi O'Daniel, general manager, Typhoon Texas, Austin.

"I will never forget the inspiration I felt during my first WWA and IAAPA shows. I use presenting at these shows as a way to help pass that inspiration along to fellow colleagues and young leaders coming up in the industry," added O'Daniel.

Wednesday began bright and early for a few attendees with some committee meetings starting as early as 7:30 a.m. The rest of the morning was full of activity with more workshops, roundtable discussions and meetings. Finally, as the afternoon drew near, everyone clamored to find a seat for the opening general session at 11:30 a.m.

Beginning with a welcome from WWA President Rick Root, the multi-media session included an address

from several WWA board members, WWA news and announcements, and a plethora of recognition and awards leading up to the 2023 Hall of Fame inductees, including Gary Slade, founder and publisher of Amusement Today (see sidebar). After the opening general session, everyone headed to lunch on the show floor, and the main part of the WWA Show 2023 was underway.

On Wednesday and Thursday, attendees had the opportunity to spend time on the exhibit floor talking with knowledgeable people eager to introduce their products and answer questions. The trade show floor also served as the location for lunch on both days, allowing for more interaction between attendees and exhibitors. The usual players were there with WhiteWater and ProSlide Technology grabbing the spotlight with large

booths, huge TV monitors and colorful display models showing off each of the company's catalog of attractions, SplashTacular, Fibrart and Polin Waterparks — which had been absent last year — also had booths on the trade show floor. Many designers such as Aquatic Development Group, Martin Aquatics, Counsilman-Hunsaker and Wet Engineering, to name a few, had a steady stream of visitors throughout the show.

Suppliers CPI, Rave Sports, Tube Pro, Zebec, and Zpro, were touting their particular brands of inflatables, tubes, rafts, mats, lifejackets and other water park essentials.

Those familiar with the industry know a water park is a lot more than just pools, slides and lazy rivers. Water has to be pumped and filtered and treated and sometimes heated. Several companies were showing off products that pump, filter and clean. Both water chemical and chemical alternative treatments were displayed to make certain that water quality never becomes an issue.

Vendors for just about anything needed to successfully run an aquatic facility could be found at the WWA show. Two days provided ample opportunity for facility owners and managers to discuss concerns, look for new items or have the opportunity to meet with current suppliers face-to-face.

A highlight of the week was the Annual Reunion

▶ See WWA, page 38

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The 2023 WWA Hall of Fame inductees — (l to r) Gaylee W. Gilliam, John Child, Rob Lawson and Gary Slade — pose with WWA president Rick Root. COURTESY WWA

WWA Hall of Fame 2023 inductees

The WWA Hall of Fame exists to recognize individuals who have made noteworthy achievements in the development and advancement of the water attractions industry. Four outstanding individuals were inducted in 2023.

John Child, Blackpool, England

Child grew up in Blackpool, England, and started as a lifeguard in 1986 at the newly opened **Sandcastle Waterpark** in Blackpool. He won the Preston and Ribbie Lifesaving Championships and applied as a supervisor at the new facility. He worked his way up to water park manager, then operations manager, general manager and eventually became the managing director.

In 2003, as the facility began to age, he took on a 10-year, three-phase, \$20 million investment that eventually transformed Sandcastle into the largest water park in the United Kingdom achieving global recognition.

Child's work in tourism, advocacy for the disabled and community service was recognized by King Charles in the King's birthday honors where he was awarded an MBE in 2023.

Gaylee W. Gilliam, Attorney at Law

Raised in Louisville, Kentucky Gilliam, along with her husband **Ed Hart**, rescued **Kentucky Kingdom** when it filed for bankruptcy after its first season. An integral part of their plan was to incorporate the water park into the amusement park, a practice that was practically unheard of at the time.

Gilliam joined the **International Amusement and Leisure Defense Association** in 1994 and served as an officer for more than 25 years.

In 2021 she worked with several waterparks in Kentucky along with **Ellis & Associates** and **StarGuard Elite** to help revise the Kentucky Department for Public Health lifeguarding guidelines.

Gilliam has served two terms on WWA's Board of Directors. She received the WWA Executive Board Award in 2017 and continues to serve on the WWA Government Relations Committee.

Rob Lawson, Daldorado

Lawson has made significant contributions to the aquatic industry with his groundbreaking product designs.

He began his journey in the 1990s when he introduced a new type of PVC perpendicular grating that was a significant improvement over other grating designs that were on the market at the time. Lawson's tireless commitment to innovation with an emphasis on safety has not only advanced and changed the industry for the better but has also earned him the respect of his peers and customers.

In addition to his product designs, Lawson has been an active advocate for water safety. Lawson's tireless commitment to innovation with an emphasis on safety, has made him a leader in his field.

Gary Slade, Amusement Today

Slade grew up in a small West Texas oil boom town where he took advantage of his photography and darkroom skills to provide photographs to the local newspaper.

While attending college in Arlington he started working as a ride operator at **Six Flags Over Texas** and helped with the employee newsletter as well as college publications. He joined the newly formed **American Coaster Enthusiasts** fan club and started traveling all over the country visiting amusement parks and water parks. During his travels, he photographed the parks and eventually started to provide photo documentation for ride manufacturers. Through his travels and association with theme park operators, he became friends with several major players in the industry.

He was encouraged to use his newspaper background skills as well as his knowledge of the amusement industry to start a trade publication. In April 1997 he published the first issue of *Amusement Today*.

The following year he introduced the Golden Ticket Awards to honor the best of the best in the amusement and water park industry. Since its founding 27 years ago, *Amusement Today* has published 356 issues, featuring 16,349 total pages and presented 598 Golden Ticket Awards.

▶ WWA

Continued from page 36

Party. The event venue **Generations Hall** was the location for the party. Although walkable, bus transportation was provided from the **Hilton Riverside** for those who had done enough walking around the trade show floor. With food and drink provided by host ProSlide Technology, attendees had plenty of time for social interaction to network and simply have fun. Generations Hall was originally built in the early 1820s as a sugar refinery. The space had been completely redesigned to capture the essence of old New Orleans.

Keynote sessions took place on Thursday and Friday. Thursday's Keynote speaker **Chad Porter**, captivated attendees with a humorous, although somewhat disturbing recount of his personal journey to overcome a heartbreaking tragedy at a young age. Porter, who was an Eagle Scout, class president and MVP recipient, had hopes of becoming a professional athlete but lost his leg in a horrible waterskiing accident at the age of 15. His amazing story of reconstructing purpose and not letting obstacles stand in his way was truly inspirational.

On Friday, **John Drebing Jr.**, presented "Safety for Effective Leaders — Empowering People To Work Safely." Drebing discussed how to provide the tools, energy and passion to get people to work more safely and comfortably. By putting these skills into practice at facilities, attendees can be assured their teams never feel the regret of knowing they could have pre-

vented an injury.

By the end of the show, most attendees had met their goals and left knowing they had a positive experience.

Cade Varen, regional general manager, **Cowabunga Vegas Waterparks** told *Amusement Today*: "The take-away from the show this year is our community of industry professionals and industry leaders are stronger than it has ever been before. We've never seen collaboration and inspiration and true innovation in the industry like we have today. This show is the water park event of the year that is truly not to be missed."

Stephen Sims, general manager, **Somersplash Waterpark** offered this feedback: "I've been coming since 2007. There's always something you can pick up and take back home. The show is always the highlight of the waterpark industry itself. You can come to this conference and take at least one — if not more — thing from some of the information that you receive here and incorporate it into the upcoming season. It's well worth coming to it."

Sims added, "All the education sessions have value to them. To see how the large water parks and small water parks have the same issues. It's nice to see where we can all come together as an industry. We see a lot of similarities, but we go about things a little differently. It's always interesting to see how they do it."

The World Waterpark Association will host its 44th Annual Symposium & Trade Show at the **Paris Las Vegas Hotel & Casino** on October 8 through 11, 2024.

•wwashow.org

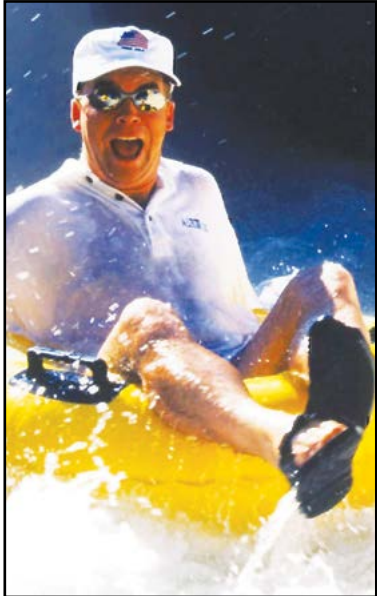


The show offers plenty of in-depth training and learning opportunities from quality speakers holding multiple sessions spread over five days. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Amusement TODAY

ANNUAL HOLIDAY COOKING GUIDE

While walking the aisles of the World Waterpark Association Show, *Amusement Today* approached a handful of exhibitors there to share some of their favorite dishes for our 19th annual holiday recipe feature.



Andrew Mowatt

WhiteWater West

This is a family favorite that we acquired from our friend Sharon Ritchie from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Sharon's Special Christmas Veggie Dish

Ingredients:

- 1 small bag of baby carrots
- 2 cups chicken stock
- Fresh broccoli and cauliflower
- One package frozen baby peas
 - 1/3 cup butter
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs
 - 1/2 cup parmesan cheese
 - 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
 - 1/2 tsp. paprika

Steps:

- Partially boil bag of baby carrots in chicken stock. Drain and reserve the stock.
- Cut broccoli and cauliflower into bite size pieces and steam separately until still crisp; Drain.
- Option: Any other veggies can be added as long as they are partially cooked and still firm.
- Place all vegetables into a greased 9x13 pan.
- Melt butter and add panko bread crumbs, parmesan cheese, garlic powder and paprika. Mix together; set aside. All this can be done ahead of time and sit at room temperature
- One hour prior to dinner, put reserved chicken stock into a small pot and whisk in 4 Tbsp. of flour. Heat slowly and whisk until stock thickens.
- Pour over vegetables and mix until all are coated with sauce.
- Heat oven to 325 degrees. Top with seasoned bread crumbs.
- Cook for 30 minutes or until it bubbles and is brown on top.

Serves 12 people

Teresa Polley

CPI



Praline Pineapple Coconut Cake

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 2 cups flour
- 1 3/4 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/2 cups crushed pineapple and juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup coconut
- 1 cup brown sugar

Frosting:

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup evaporated milk
- 1 cup chopped pecans

Steps:

- Beat eggs.
- In order listed, combine all other ingredients except coconut and brown sugar. Stir ingredients until smooth.
- Pour batter into greased 9 x 13-inch pan.
- Mix coconut and brown sugar, sprinkle across top of cake. Bake 30 to 40 minutes at 350 degrees. Cool in pan.

Frosting: Melt butter, add sugar and milk. Boil 2 minutes. Add pecans, spread onto cake.

Serves 20 to 25

Joel Riker

StarGuard Elite



My mom's Macaroni and cheese holds a special place in my heart, especially during Thanksgiving. There's something incredibly comforting about it and it brings back fond memories of family gatherings.

Baked Macaroni and Cheese

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. elbow macaroni
- salt and pepper
- 2+ cups milk
- 10 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- butter or margarine (1 stick)
- 2 eggs, well-beaten

Steps:

- Boil macaroni in water until cooked and drain. Cover the bottom of a 4-quart casserole with a layer of macaroni, top with cheese, salt, pepper, and butter (dot on top).
- Add another layer of macaroni and repeat layers.
- Top with cheese, butter, salt and pepper.
- Combine milk and eggs and pour over macaroni layers until you can see milk come to the top.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 45 - 60 minutes (cheese on top turns a golden brown)

OBITUARY

Industry legend, ride developer Jon Eyerly passes at the age of 82

SALEM, Ore. — Jon Eyerly, 82, the third generation of the family to run the former Eyerly Aircraft Co., passed away Nov. 6 after a long battle with Parkinson's Disease and related complications.

He was born in Salem on March 17, 1941, to Jack V. and June Eyerly and spent his early years at Cascade and South Salem High Schools.

After high school he joined the family business, which was founded in 1930 by his grandfather, Lee. Jon's first task was sweeping floors before being promoted into the manufacturing process to assemble light strings for the rides.

At age 21, Jon operated the family's new spectacular Monster ride at the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. He then drove trucks to deliver equipment to customers before being named manager of the Eyerly shop.

Though Lee Eyerly first made a name for himself as an aviation expert, it was the development of amusement rides that propelled the business into the spotlight.

By the late 1930s, the company changed its focus from flight simulators to the production of thrill rides such as the Loop-O-Plane and Roll-O-Plane. Despite transitioning into the ride business, Eyerly didn't change the company name or logo.

Other popular attractions patented by Eyerly included the Octopus, Spider, Rock-O-Plane and Monster. Many Eyerly rides still operate at amusement parks and with traveling shows today. It is said that the company produced around 1,800 rides during its years in business.

Jack Eyerly took the helm of the company when Lee retired in the 1950s and Jon operated Eyerly Aircraft during its final years leading up to 1990.

Jon Eyerly carried on the family legacy and held several patents of his own — most notably the Crazy Kars. He finished a long, distinguished career in the industry with Funtastic Traveling Shows of Portland, Ore.

He is survived by his wife of 35 years, Susan; his two daughters, Tara Isaac and Mandy Harrell, both of Salem; and his stepchildren Adam Albrich, Annandale, Va., and Amy Albrich, Salem. He has 12 grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Showman Graham Robert Putnam of Michigan passes away at 76

DEXTER, Mich. — Graham Robert Putnam, born in Lansing, Michigan, passed away under hospice care in his home in Dexter, Michigan, on October 31, 2023. He was 76.

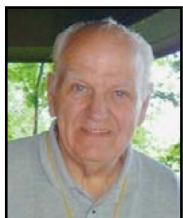
After earning an MBA at the University of Michigan and service in the Army National Guard, his long standing interest in magic led to his career as owner of Chicago-based FUN Inc, manufacturing magic tricks and novelties.

For many years, Putnam enthusiastically coached youth baseball in Oak Park, Ill., where he raised his family. He was active in the Showmen's League of America and received its Hall of Honor Award. He annually attended Abbott's Magic Get Together and Michigania Alumni Family Camp where he enjoyed sharing memories with friends. He valued his relationships dearly. He was honored that his friends and family went out of their way to spend time with him.

In retirement, Graham became an avid duplicate bridge player and took opportunities to travel. He was a supporter of the performing arts and had a lifelong interest in theater. He honored the careers of his mother and sister through contributions to scholarships for educators.



Eyerly



Putnam

ON THE MOVE

CEC Entertainment, LLC., announced the appointment of marketing veteran **Mark Kupferman** to the position of chief insights and marketing officer for the company's flagship brand, **Chuck E. Cheese**, and its virtual kitchen brands, including **Pasqually's Pizza & Wings** along with overall enterprise responsibility for all insights and research. Kupferman is a marketing leader with expertise in brand development, digital media, menu innovation, and in leading high-performing teams to deliver transformational growth throughout his career.



Kupferman

"I am thrilled to have Mark join CEC Entertainment to lead the marketing strategy for the world's largest family entertainment center brand, Chuck E. Cheese," said **David McKillips**, president and CEO of CEC Entertainment. "His proven expertise and success across the restaurant and family entertainment business is a perfect complement with the most aggressive brand transformation in the company's history."

Kupferman will lead all marketing functions, menu innovation, communications, as well as the brand's digital marketing and consumer journey initiatives. He will be responsible for developing and executing strategies that position Chuck E. Cheese for long-term growth, both domestically and internationally. Additionally, he will oversee the entire company's insights and research responsibilities.

"Chuck E. Cheese is an iconic brand and I am truly honored for the opportunity to join the amazing team and lead the brand for the next generation of fans," said Mark Kupferman. "The Chuck E. Cheese brand potential is unlimited. I look forward to working with the entire CEC Entertainment Team and franchise community to build and accelerate the brand's momentum in the years to come."

The **Themed Entertainment Association** (TEA) announced the appointment of **Chloe Hausfeld** as global director of strategic partnerships. The newly established position is responsible for the generation and growth of non-dues revenue stream and plays a critical role in helping TEA reach its strategic, operational and financial goals.



Hausfeld

As a member of the executive leadership team reporting to TEA's Executive Director, Hausfeld will lead the effort to identify and prioritize key partnerships and industry alignments.

"We are thrilled Chloe, a legacy TEA member, has accepted this position where she will build upon existing partnerships

and identify new strategic relationships for TEA and its members. She understands TEA's unique value proposition and will be the best person to tell our story to the rest of the world as a global representative for our organization," said **Lindsey Nelson**, Executive Director of TEA. "The formation of our new Industry Relations Division, of which Chloe will lead, represents the first in a series of actions TEA plans to take in the coming months to better prepare the organization to capitalize on opportunities for the future."

Hausfeld brings extensive experience to her new role. With a long tenure in the entertainment and attractions industry, many remember her serving **JRA** as vice president, where she traveled around the world connecting with current and future clients. She greatly enjoyed her most recent position with **Baynum**, where she cultivated key client and vendor relationships for amusement solutions. Hausfeld is credited with helping direct growth efforts as one of the industry's top service providers.

Har Kupers, who has been working at **Vekoma Rides BV** (and its legal predecessor) for more than 30 years and is currently CEO of the global market leader in roller coasters, has been appointed as corporate executive officer of **Sansei Technologies Inc.** as of January 1, 2024. In this new role, he will also become chairman of Vekoma and its American sister company **S&S Worldwide Inc.**



Kupers

Kupers' base of operations remains in Vlodrop, Limburg, from where he will divide his time between Vekoma Rides BV, S&S Worldwide Inc. and the Japanese parent company Sansei Technologies Inc.

The position of CEO at Vekoma Rides BV will be taken over by the current CFO, **Anne-Mart Agerbeek**. Agerbeek, who has extensive experience in the manufacturing industry and has a broad background in finance, IT and sales, has been CFO and statutory director at Vekoma since 2018. She got to know Vekoma well because, in addition to her financial, IT and legal role, she was also jointly responsible for Commerce within Vekoma together with Kupers.

"Vekoma is first and foremost a team. This also applies to the current management team," stated Kupers. "We operate as a team, each with their own tasks and responsibilities. I am very pleased that we have found the ideal candidate for the CEO position within our current team in the person of Anne-Mart. The composition of the rest of the management team remains unchanged."



Agerbeek

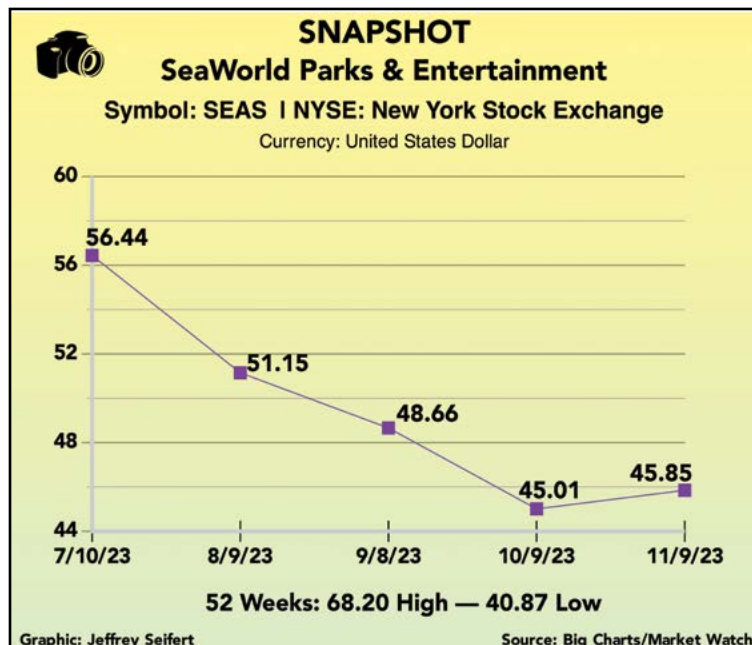
MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 11/10/23	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	98.64	116.78	71.72
Bowlero Corp.	BOWL	NYSE	10.22	17.45	8.85
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	37.67	47.95	34.04
Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	41.91	47.45	33.21
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	35.37	47.29	31.65
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	45.09	47.70	33.92
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	11.43	44.00	7.17
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	4305.00	5820.00	3985.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	1.02	3.99	0.81
Lefoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	17.35	28.45	16.15
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	38.74	51.35	32.43
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.32	0.47	0.26
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	94.91	112.95	47.91
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	46.84	68.19	40.86
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	23.20	31.29	18.29
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	10.13	16.34	8.82
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	714.00	822.00	684.00
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	88.27	118.18	78.73
SUPPLIERS/OTHERS					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	117.50	148.50	106
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1168.00	1515.00	764.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	10.05	25.96	9.84

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 11/6/23	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$4.294	(\$1.179)
Midwest	\$4.334	(\$1.017)
Gulf Coast	\$4.032	(\$0.905)
Mountain	\$4.489	(\$0.849)
West Coast	\$4.769	(\$0.624)
California	\$5.816	(\$0.375)

CURRENCY

On 11/13/23 \$1 USD =

0.9358	EURO
0.8177	GBP (British Pound)
151.51	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9022	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.5720	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3797	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

SeaWorld reports its third quarter financials

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

"We are pleased to report another quarter of solid financial results despite the impact of unusual and significantly adverse weather in our peak operating season across most of our markets," said **Marc Swanson**, chief executive officer of SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc. "Our results during the third quarter continue to demonstrate the resilience of our business, the effectiveness of our strategy and the tireless efforts of our outstanding team. We are particularly pleased to continue to see strong results from our focus, efforts and investment in our in-park offerings as we grew in-park per capita spending for the 14th consecutive quarter to a record level during the quarter. We are excited to see the continued results of our ongoing work in this area in the coming quarters into 2024. I want to thank our ambassadors across our parks for their dedicated efforts to welcome and serve our guests during the busy summer season."

Attendance was 7.1 million guests, a decrease of approximately 0.2 million guests or 2.8% from the third quarter of 2022. Total revenue was \$548.2 million, a decrease of \$17.0 million or 3.0% from the third quarter of 2022. Net income was \$123.6 million, a decrease of \$11.0 million or 8.2% from the third quarter of 2022.

Merlin, Purpose Coalition partner for report

POOLE, U.K.. — **Merlin Entertainments** announced its strategic collaboration with the **Purpose Coalition** to publish a comprehensive impact report on Merlin's social impact in the U.K. The partnership launch took place in the iconic **Blackpool Tower Ballroom**, nestled in the heart of Merlin's Blackpool Cluster featuring eight of its attractions.

Merlin's Impact Report, which will be published in Q1 of 2024, will be crafted in partnership with esteemed figures in politics and social advocacy, including former Education Secretary and Chair of the Purpose Coalition, **Rt Hon Justine Greening**, and crossbench peer and former Labour MP, **Lord Walney**. The report will explore Merlin's people and community focused initiatives through the prism of 14 Purpose Goals, addressing critical life stages and barriers to opportunity including successful early years, school years and good health and wellbeing. The report will help to identify the gaps where access to opportunity is limited and where Merlin as a major U.K. employer will be able to aid social mobility further.

"The role of the leisure and hospitality sector is hugely important in the U.K., delivering jobs and opportunities across the country, and contributing significantly to local and national economies," stated Greening. "The pandemic hit the sector hard, and it continues to be affected by cost-of-living pressures, in terms of its operations and the spending power of its customers. Despite that, however, there is no doubt that it remains a hugely popular part of people's lives, and attractions and theme parks offer an ever more sophisticated experience. By sharing its purpose-led best practice on attracting, developing, and retaining its staff and on its community engagement, Merlin can play a leading part in shaping the sector and levelling up the communities where it operates."

The strategic partnership between Merlin Entertainments and the Purpose Business Coalition will leverage Merlin's influence as a global entertainment giant to become a catalyst for positive social and economic change. As the impact report takes shape, Merlin is set to redefine its broader impact on society.

Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Alicia Shoults is the assistant general manager at the **Ohio Expo Center and State Fair**. While studying political science at **The Ohio State University** she believed her studies and career path would include law school. Instead, life, a paper flier and even some bunnies helped lead her to join the 173-year-old state fair.

Rabbits, passion, and a dash of Taylor Swift equal a fair-y career

COLUMBUS, Ohio — While listening to Alicia Shoults discuss her role with the Ohio State Fair, it only takes a few moments to understand she is passionate about all of it. And while it seems her job shines only 12 days a year, it is one that is focused on creating lasting memories. “I always say I am a jack of all trades,” she shared. “We all wear so many hats to operate the Ohio State Fair throughout the entire year. I have a hand in determining the best acts and concerts we’ll book, seeking smaller performers to add to our line-up, discovering new attractions and even working to turn the livestock barns more quickly, so guests who have little exposure to animals and agriculture can see as much as possible during the 12 full days of the fair.”

For Shoults, serving as assistant general manager for the annual event also includes unique, temporary housing. “I stay in an RV on-site throughout the duration of the fair. The days — and nights — are really long during that time. My family understands the schedule and looks forward to the way we have made my long hours special and tolerable. They will camp with me for a few nights. This way we get some family time while the fair is running, and as an added bonus, they also get to experience special moments that others can’t. They’ll see the bright lights turn off each night, and they’ll wake up to the sounds from the roosters in the poultry barn.”

When asked how she found her way to the midway, Shoults’

start probably sounds foreign to college students today. However, it also shows how the right opportunity may appear when least expected.

“I am from Ohio and was involved with the Ross County 4H Junior Fair Board while in high school. I even showed rabbits a few times,” she explained. “While attending a meeting with my college academic advisor, a flyer advertising a communications internship for the Ohio State Fair caught my eye. It felt like a natural fit, so I applied and soon was working with several other summer interns.”

Shoults believed once her internship ended, she would remain on her path toward law school.

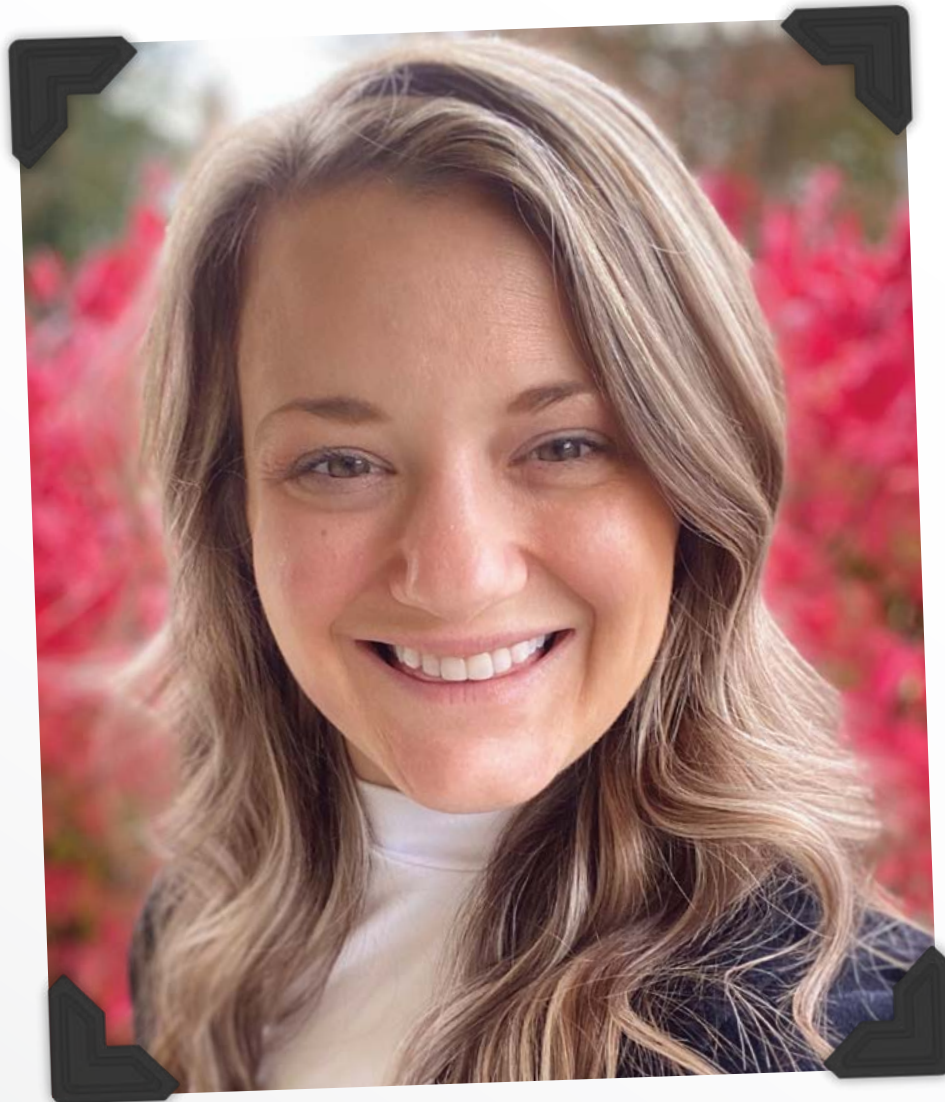
“I remained in contact with my manager,” she continued. “She kept me on in a freelance capacity, and I supported her by writing press releases to help share what was new. Years later, when she moved on, I realized I wanted to work for the fair. I haven’t looked back since.”

Her role began in 2011, but Shoults credits that early internship flier with starting it all. “Internships are so important,” she said. “They give you the opportunity to try something without having to commit. Internships help students discover what they love — even what they don’t — during a time in their lives when it’s still easy to pivot. My internship with the Ohio State Fair opened my eyes to an industry I came to love. If bulletin boards still exist on campus, I hope students take a peek.”

Like so many others in the

Alicia Shoults

Ohio Expo Center and State Fair
Columbus, Ohio



fair and exposition industry, Shoults says its people make the difference. “The support everyone offers to each other, the knowledge-sharing and camaraderie is something no other industry has.”

“Right this moment,” she continued, “my office looks like it’s been taken over by ‘Swifties.’ We are preparing for the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) convention, by making friendship bracelets to share with other attendees. As we work together with our bead kits, we have even discovered a new staff bonding opportunity. This is just another example of how our industry doesn’t take itself too seriously.”

As a woman leader in the industry, Shoults knows it’s important to keep perspective.

“The best advice I was ever given is to be aware of work-life balance. It’s rarely perfect, but it is important to strive, as well as encourage colleagues and

employees to strive for it. We love our jobs, but family comes first. Even during busy Fair Week, we want everyone to make time so they can also experience it together with their family and friends. What is the point of such hard work if you can’t enjoy it, too?” she said.

She also reminds others to “leave it at the office. Even on days when we have been emotionally impacted by something at work, we need to remember those feelings don’t have to come home with us. It is okay to set them aside until the next time we return to work.”

“We give a lot to our guests, exhibitors and facilities teams,” she concluded. “With every event we host — and this year we had 293 days related to an event — we are united by passion and dedication. I love being able to intermingle with so many people to help make the Ohio State Fair one which is an annual family tradition for our visitors.”

—Susan Storey



SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

▶ PACE Seminar a success — page 46 / Auction items sought for AIMS Safety Seminar — page 50

Perspectives on safety displayed along the WWA tradeshow floor

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

NEW ORLEANS, La. — Attendees at the recent WWA Show in The Big Easy could find various services and products to improve a park operator's commitment to safety.

Safe Slide Restoration has been in the water park industry for 15 years. With more than 400 projects per year, Safe Slide Restoration inspects, restores and maintains fiberglass.

"We start with an onsite inspection. Then we work on surface preparation. On the interior ride path, [the process] involves sanding, cleaning and applying gel-coat 24 mils thick," said **Tony Perry**, vice president of customer relations. "For the most of the large water parks, the majority of the waterslides are made out of fiberglass. Safe Slide comes in to help inspect, restore and get into a maintenance process with these large slides and steel structures."

When asked by AT if restoration leans more toward a safety issue or aesthetic issue, Perry said, "These two lines intersect. Aesthetics and safety come in line in the ride path area. On the exterior, we're protecting the investment and the aesthetics. With the ride path, you're getting better safety because you are offering protection from the bare fiberglass."

An upcoming project will take place at



Safe Slide Restoration also provides inspections (above). Slide Guys Restoration (right) restores and refurbishes waterslides. COURTESY SAFE SLIDE RESTORATION, SLIDE GUYS RESTORATION

Universal's **Volcano Bay**. While a relatively young park, Perry observed: "The normal season can be about 100 days. But someone at the Universal [level] or **Great Wolf Lodge** are running more like 360 days; they are accelerating the life expectancy of fiberglass."

Other projects on the horizon for the company include **Wet 'n' Wild Hawaii**, **Aquatica San Antonio** and **Holiday World & Splashin' Safari**.

Perry pointed out the company was finding more attention at the show in areas in which Safe Slide was branching out such as inspections and non-destructive testing, both visual and ultrasonic.

"That really helps [the operator] get ready for the season and have a fresh set of eyes," he said.

Installations is another branch that Safe Slide offers, be it waterslides or

steel towers.

Ramuc has been around for almost 90 years providing specialty aquatic coatings. **Tuff Coat** is a newer product, just a few years old. Tuff Coat is a rubberized non-skid surface.

"It's a water-based urethane that has recycled rubber. It can be applied with a roller or sprayer," said **Gary Furgeson**, vice president of sales.

When asked about the effects on surface temperature, Furgeson told *Amusement Today*: "We've done internal testing for [temperature]. Tuff Coat reduces surface temperature by 10 percent."

Aquatic blues and sandy colors are the most popular, but numerous colors were available. With 50 gallons or more, Tuff Coat will match the color to a park's "brand."

Furgeson and his team, while there for the WWA



show, noted the importance of the product outside the water park industry.

"Trips and slips aren't just inside water parks. There are all kinds of applications — property management and assisted living communities," he said.

Slide Guys Restoration has been in the business for 11 years. **Jordan Bakeman**, co-owner, enjoyed a great show.

"We restore and refurbish waterslides, from exteriors to interiors and any of the hardware to the slide towers themselves," Bakeman said.

"We train our guys five years before they can be certified technicians, which is way above industry standards. We're trying to be the best — the No. 1 restoration company out there — and I

think we are achieving that. We don't just send someone into the field. And the ownership is out there," Bakeman noted of involvement from the top down. "Our project managers have been with us for 10-plus years."

Bakeman also acknowledged the need for the beautification that comes with restoration.

"We push safety at tradeshow and when we visit parks. But you also want a nice, clean-looking park, an attractive park for customers to want to go there," he said.

Projects on the docket for Slide Guys Restoration include the city of Dublin, California, and **Jellystone Park** in North Texas, which

▶ See FLOOR, page 44

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Keep our amusement park industry strong!
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While the durable transparency resembles glass, a demonstration (above right) on the WWA show floor demonstrates the flexibility of the Wonky Ware product. AT/TIM BALDWIN

FLOOR
Continued from page 43

began in early November. Bakeman feels training makes Slide Guys Restoration distinct.

“We focus heavily on training and on leadership. We focus heavily on the products we use — what we use and why we use them. We use superior products, from our vinyl-ester resins to the brand of our gelcoat and additives,” he said.

For attendees that stopped by **Wonky Ware**, they were impressed with what the company had to offer. At first look, it seemed like typical glassware or hard plastic, both of which can break and create foot hazards. Wonky Ware can provide a company’s branding on the drinkware, but the material is shatter-resistant and durable while offering excellent transparency.

Bill Johnson, president, was quick to demonstrate the flexibility of the sturdy drinkware by attempting to crush it in his hands.

Daldorado is known for its swimming pool products, most notably the advancements made in grating and drains. **Robert Lawson**, CEO, was inducted into the WWA Hall of



Ramuc and Tuff Coat provide a rubberized non-slip surface in numerous colors. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Fame at the 2023 tradeshow. In addition to what one would expect to see along those lines of safety, he had an atypical item to spotlight at the Daldorado booth.

Sporting many colors, the product he was sharing was an edged food tray with an edged spot for a drink cup (included).

“In this particular version, it has a drink holder, or a glass of wine with a stem can be carried,” he said.

Because of the ingenious slot placed in the tray, either a stemmed piece of glassware or the included plastic cup could make for easy carrying.

Although the product can apply to all sorts of businesses, the allure to the water park industry is the

“non-breakable” aspect, as well as the branding opportunities on the tray itself.

“They are usually sold in packs of four for retail, but in an amusement park or water park, you can offer them in the food areas instead of cardboard, which they take home as a souvenir.”

Brands can be placed on the tray itself as a marketing ID, as well as making the product a fun collectible.

“Instead of throwaway paper cups and things, this can be reused around pools. It reduces waste and reduces trash. It’s very much brand enforcement.”

When asked how he became associated with the product, Lawson told AT that a connection between the inventors of the product (friends of his) and Lawson’s familiarity with the water park industry made for a suitable fit for the WWA Show.



Branded food and beverage merchandise (shown at the Daldorado booth) are perfect for being around the pool. AT/TIM BALDWIN



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 L I G H T I N G

PACE Seminar trained more than 50 at Kennywood, in classrooms

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

MONROEVILLE and WEST MIFFLIN, Pa. — The annual ride safety education seminar offered by the **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks and Attractions (PAPA)** and the **Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association (PSSA)** took place in late October/early November. The educational portion of the program was presented by members of the **National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO)**. Known as the **Parks and Carnival Education (PACE)** seminar, there were 55 attendees,

Seminar classes were held at the **DoubleTree by Hilton** in Monroeville, Pennsylvania. One full day of instruction was conducted at **Kennywood Park**, West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, where attendees were able to take



There were 25 different topics presented during the four-day seminar. Three of the days were classroom training (above left). Above right are the volunteers who put on the 2023 PACE seminar (l to r): NAARSO Education Chairman John Hartman, Assistant Seminar Coordinator Mike Funyak, Seminar Administration Manager Lisa Bartlebaugh and PACE Seminar Coordinator Gary Chubb. COURTESY PACE/GARY CHUBB

an "up close look" at a dozen rides during the training.

PACE Seminar Coordinator **Gary Chubb** was assisted by Seminar Administration Manager **Lisa Bartlebaugh (Bartlebaugh Amusements)**, Assistant Seminar Coordinator **Mike Funyak (DelGrosso's Park & Laguna Splash)**, and NAARSO Education

Chairman **John Hartman**. In addition, **Matt Palko** from Kennywood coordinated the "Hands On" day at the park, and **Yvonne Brown** from the **Pennsylvania Bureau of Rides** assisted with Pennsylvania state paperwork and testing. **Dick Knoebel** again assisted in securing sponsors for the four-day session.

Instructors included **John Hartman** of **Wagner Consulting**, **Ed LaSalle** — independent inspector/consultant, **Tom Jones McGowen** **Allied Specialty Insurance**, **John Riggleman** — retired from **Universal Parks**, ASTM F24 Committee, **Joe Filoromo** Pennsylvania Bureau of Rides inspector supervisor, and Gary

Chubb of GC Amusement Consulting, LLC.

Attendees represented a variety of amusement parks, traveling shows, and inspectors. Traveling shows represented included **Bartlebaugh Amusements**, **Lynam's Amusements**, **LAM Enterprises**, **Gambill**

► See PACE, page 48

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2. Variety and diversity. No other seminar offers such a diverse range of classes.

3. Great opportunities to learn from industry experts and network with your peers!

4. The highly acclaimed **Academy of Amusement Risk Management, Safety and Security (AARMSS)** is back with a new curriculum. Apply now! Go to aimsintl.org for more information.

5. Highly qualified education partners. **Ellis & Associates**, the worldwide leader in aquatics, will be delivering new and updated courses in the Aquatics Track. The Operations Track, with courses curated and delivered by the ride operations experts

at International Ride Training, boasts fresh new content and hands-on experience at a local amusement park.

6. Networking opportunities. Attracting more than 500 students from across the industry — theme and amusement parks, water parks, carnivals, zoos, FECs and more — you will learn from peers and make connections you can use for years to come.

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Apply for a Scholarship! **The IAAPA Foundation** provides five scholarships to the AIMS Safety Seminar in memory of **Alan Ramsay**. Application forms can be found at aimsintl.org/aims-international-safety-seminar/scholarships. **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)** offers four scholarships to OABA members who are first-time AIMS International Safety Seminar attendees. Contact oaba.org/images for more information.

10. Great opportunities to learn from industry experts and network with your peers!

11. Certification opportunities to sit for any of the prestigious AIMS International certification exams will

be available in person during the seminar, with review sessions available for those who feel the need for a little extra preparation. Exams are available in Spanish at the seminar and Virtual Spanish Track attendees will be able to take certification exams online the week after the seminar.

Did you notice numbers 3 and 11 are the same? That's because this seminar is the best opportunity to meet directly with and learn from some of the top minds in the industry.

At the AIMS International Safety Seminar, you can choose classes that fit your needs, or if you prefer, there are a variety of specialized tracks to choose from: Maintenance 1 & 2, Inspection 1 & 2, Operations, Adventure Attractions, Aquatics, Safety, Spanish Language track and, new this year, an AHJ (Authorities Having Jurisdiction) Track. Talk with and hear directly from state regulators.

—Amy Lowenstein

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Exterminator, the Reverchon indoor spinning Wild Mouse roller coaster was visited by six different groups that rotated through the various rides on the schedule.
 COURTESY PACE/GARY CHUBB

► **PACE**

Continued from page 46

Amusements, Houghton Enterprises, Huey's Amusements, C&L Shows, and Majestic Midways. Amusement park attendees included Kennywood Park, Hersheypark, DelGrosso's Park, Bushkill Park and Funland (Rehoboth Beach, DE). Inspectors included representatives from The Connecticut State Police, West Virginia Department of Labor, Pennsylvania Bureau of Rides, and Allegiant Safety Consulting along with several independent inspectors.

Class instruction topics included: Pennsylvania update, Eli Bridge rides, Basic PLC and ladder logic, ASTM F770, investigating issues, evacuation/weather, limited specialties, basic NDT/ASNT, comprehensive evaluation, signage, wire rope, basic OSHA, culture of safety, inspection tools, ride training, life safety code 101, preventative maintenance, waterslides and play structures, midway inspections, fences — steps — rails, accessibility, risk reduction in Go Karts, personal protective equipment, documentation & SOPs and an inspector round table.

"This year was the first time we presented a class at the PACE Seminar on 'Basic PLC and Ladder Logic.' John Hartman gave the

class using a computerized simulator. To the surprise of many attendees, this ended up being one of their favorite classes," said Chubb. "For our 'Hands On' day at Kennywood, we had a wonderful time. The Kennywood folks exceeded our expectations."

Seminar sponsors included Kennywood Park, Amusement Today, A.R.M. USA, Chance Rides, Great Coasters International, Haas & Wilkerson Insurance, International Rides Management, Larson International, Majestic Rides, McGowen Allied Specialty Insurance, Naughton Insurance, Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Premier Rides, Ralph S Alberts Company, Inc., Rides 4 U and Sally Dark Rides.

The 2024 PACE Ride Seminar will be held in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania (for the classroom portion) and Knoebels Amusement Resort will serve as the location for the hands-on portion. The tentative dates are October 28-31.

NOTE: From 1985 through 2006 this seminar was known as the Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar. In 2007 it became known as the PACE Ride Safety Seminar. On or about 2007, Phil Slaggert, a private ride safety consultant, picked up the name of Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar and has been running two additional seminars in the Commonwealth per year since that time.



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Auction items sought for AIMS International Safety Seminar

DALLAS, Texas — AIMS International, the world leader in amusement safety education, is seeking items to auction at its annual safety seminar scheduled for January 7–12, 2024 in Orlando, Florida.

Typically offering more than 60 items, seminar attendees, instructors, and volunteers bid on items donated from across the



globe to support AIMS International, a non-profit 501(c)(6) association. From corporate swag to limited edition prints and exclusive

ride engineering drawings, no donation is too big or too small.

Funds raised through the auction will be used to

support the AIMS mission. That mission includes promoting safety in the amusement industry through the annual AIMS International Safety Seminar; speaking at industry functions; participating in the development of safety standards for the amusement industry; establishing working relations with local, state, and federal government entities; and

establishing cooperative and working relations with other amusement industry trade associations, amusement park owners and operators, concessionaires, equipment manufacturers and suppliers, carnivals, fairs, water parks, family fun centers, adventure parks, and other segments of the amusement, entertainment, leisure, and recreation industry.

Auction items can be shipped to:

SeaWorld Orlando
ATTN: AIMS Safety Seminar
7007 SeaWorld Drive
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Items must be received by January 5, 2024. For further information or questions please contact info@aimsintl.org.

This year, the AIMS International Safety Seminar is introducing a week-long Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) Track. This new track focuses on the safety of guests and staff members through regulatory efforts. The curriculum is designed for both new and experienced amusement industry professionals and state regulators. Students will learn to understand regulations, learn their objectives and explore methods to improve the inspection process for all of those involved.

Back by popular demand, Ellis & Associates (E&A) will deliver the seminar's aquatics curriculum. E&A will ensure a comprehensive and innovative program providing the most current industry information and sharing global trends. Also returning in 2023 is the **International Ride Training (IRT)** certification with a new curriculum, instructors and an expanded Operations Track. Additionally, this year's seminar will again include over 20 hours of operations, inspection and maintenance education delivered entirely in Spanish.

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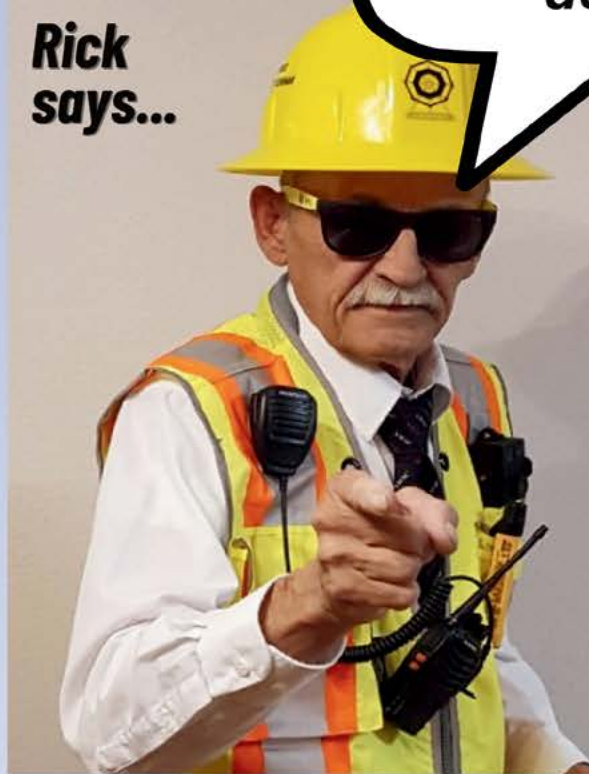


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California's largest solar project begins at Six Flags Magic Mountain

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — Six Flags Magic Mountain, in partnership with Solar Optimum and DSD Renewables (DSD), announced the official ground breaking of a new 12.37-megawatt solar carport and energy storage system. The Six Flags Magic Mountain project is the largest single-site commercial renewable energy project in California and largest solar project allocated toward a for-profit organization in the U.S.

"We're thrilled to be breaking ground on this monumental project and taking the next step towards a cleaner, greener future," said Six Flags Magic Mountain Interim Park President Jeff Harris. "We're continuing to make advancements towards improving and protecting the environment and are honored to be industry leaders, paving the way for other theme park companies around the world. Our partners and established solar and renewable energy industry experts at Solar Optimum and DSD

Renewables, as well as our partners with Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger's Office, have been instrumental in bringing this project to fruition, allowing us to break ground at an increased timeline. Getting a glance at what this massive structure will bring to our parks and community is simply remarkable."

The Six Flags Magic Mountain project is the third solar installation for Six Flags. Properties in Northern California at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom and New Jersey at Six Flags Great Adventure have also developed on-site solar capabilities with more than 30 megawatts of fully operational solar power systems installed. These three sites will rank as the largest volume of onsite Solar PV systems for any U.S. organization with a combined total of 42.37 megawatts.

"We are excited to break ground on this solar-plus-storage project at Six Flags



Six Flags Magic Mountain has broken ground on a 637,000-square-foot, 12.37-megawatt solar carport over the main guest parking lot and team member parking lot. With it, the park will be able to offset 100% of its energy usage with solar power. COURTESY SIX FLAGS

Magic Mountain and watch the Solar Optimum team work their installation magic. Solar canopies have always been an excellent use of otherwise underutilized space and this site, with its wide open parking lots, provides the perfect canvas to build

on," said Danielle Fidel, senior director, Developer Network at DSD. "Partnering with Solar Optimum through DSD's Developer Network has allowed us to make this project a reality for Six Flags and we're looking forward to it coming to life!"

"The Six Flags Magic Mountain solar project stands as the largest of its kind in the nation, boasting an impressive area exceeding 637,000 square feet of shade structures," said Arno Aghamalian, CEO and founder of Solar Optimum. "The magnitude of this undertaking is a marvel in itself, and as we initiate the construction phase, we are excited to offer a glimpse into what this project will evolve into by the year's end."

"Not only does this project rank as a remarkable national achievement, showcasing the integration of solar technology, carports, energy storage, and electric vehicle charging, but it is also a testament to the dedication and collaborative spirit of all those involved," continued Aghamalian. "From the offices of the Governor and LA County Supervisor to SCE, our development partners, and a dedicated team of individuals, we are rapidly ushering this project to completion."

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