

► Expanded Safety, Maintenance and Operations coverage section — pages 33-61

Amusement TODAY

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Digital Edition

AIMS International Safety Seminar on track to set more records

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO — AIMS International, a world leader in amusement safety education, is finalizing preparations for the 2024 AIMS International Safety Seminar to be held at its new location, the DoubleTree by Hilton at SeaWorld Orlando, Florida, Jan. 7-12, 2024.

Seminar planners are excited as they are on pace to have a third consecutive record turnout. In 2023, there were 687 attendees, 151 hours of instruction and 50 sponsors, with 37 on site, all record-setting numbers.

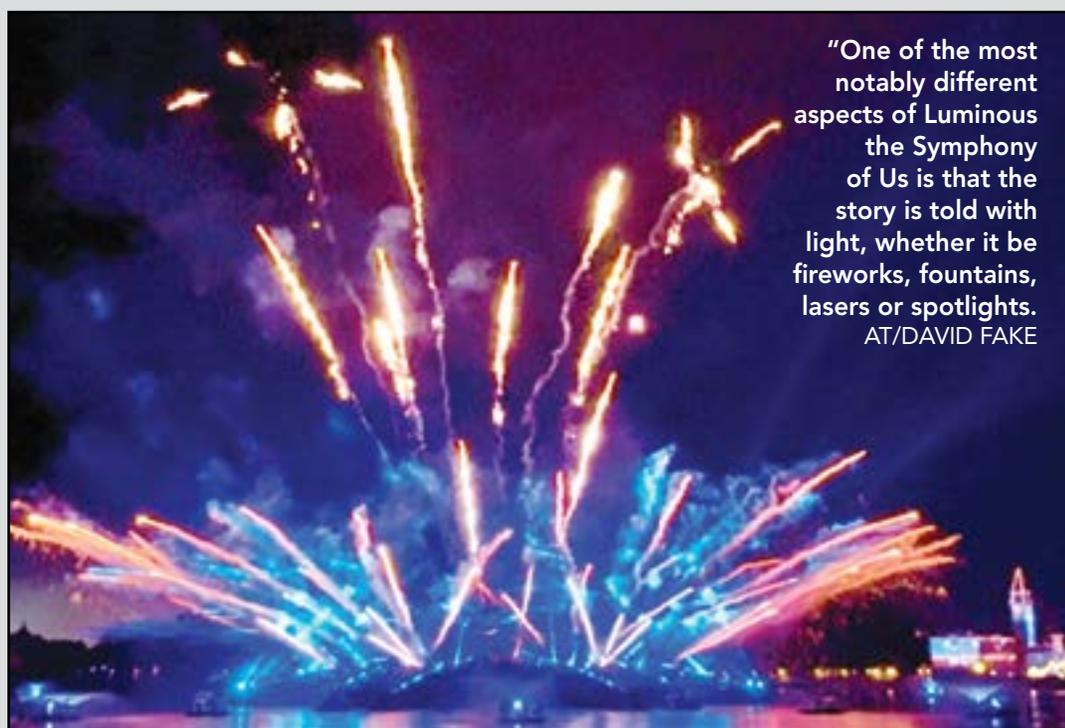
Attendees to this year's seminar will learn from world-class speakers, vet-



The 2024 AIMS International Safety Seminar is on pace to set a third record attendance. The 2024 event will take place Jan. 7-12, at the DoubleTree by Hilton at SeaWorld Orlando, Florida. This is a scene from the 2023 seminar with a record number of attendees of 687. The crowded room shown was the opening session with keynote speaker Erik Beard of International Ride Training. COURTESY HFE

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EPCOT's "Luminous — The Symphony of Us" lights night sky



"One of the most notably different aspects of Luminous the Symphony of Us is that the story is told with light, whether it be fireworks, fountains, lasers or spotlights."
AT/DAVID FAKE

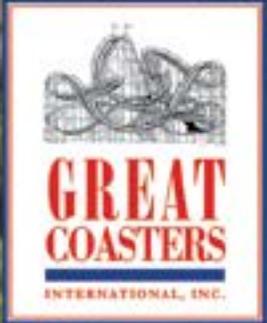
AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Florida — EPCOT's newest nighttime spectacular, "Luminous — The Symphony of Us," debuted to EPCOT guests on December 5. The overwhelming positive reception about the new show was certainly a welcome relief for the **Disney Live Entertainment** team behind the show. "Luminous" had much to prove and faced considerable skepticism from Disney fans and critics from the moment it was announced at D23 in September 2022.

After all, "Luminous — The Symphony of Us" is slated to be the long-term replacement for "Harmonious," which itself was to be the long-term replacement for "IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth," the much-loved, long-running fireworks show when it debuted in October 2021. "IllumiNations" ran 20 years. "Harmonious" ran for just 17 months.

One can only imagine the tremendous pressure the team behind "Luminous — The Symphony of Us" was under to deliver a universally satiating show — one that resonated with both the EPCOT purists and fans of Disney movie IP.

► See EPCOT, page 7



AIMS INTERNATIONAL SAFETY SEMINAR

ORLANDO, FLORIDA | JAN. 7-12, 2024

Great Coasters International, Inc. will be attending the 2024 AIMS International Safety Seminar in Orlando, Florida. As the world leader in amusement safety education, AIMS International gathers the tools, resources, and networking opportunities to provide safe entertainment experiences. Come visit the GCI booth and talk to our representatives to learn about roller coaster maintenance!

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

Communication is key



Robinson

We've all — at one time or another — remarked on the irony of living in the "Information Age" and having access to the world digital sharing literally at our fingertips. Yet we struggle to remember what we have to do each day, to find the answers to annoying trivia, to understand the world around us or even to say hello to our friends and family.

To put it simply, that must stop. We've all had that text that came in that we replied to "in our head" and yet never actually communicated the message to the sender.

January and February are loaded with industry safety seminars. However, the cornerstone of industry safety is communication. Communication between ride ops and maintenance ... communication between maintenance and the head office ... communication between managers/owners and suppliers/manufacturers ... it's a chain that keeps things running smoothly and our patrons safe inside our gates.

Safety operations programs and apps have emerged in the industry to help this very thing, and they have proven wonderful. However, in the end, it falls to the users and operators to ensure all communication is not only sent, but read and reacted to. Yes, we all get 1,000 emails per day and, yes, odds are that random squeak is nothing a little WD-40 won't fix. But we have to read, acknowledge and respect that communication chain if we want to keep it connected and active.

There's a wealth of information and answers waiting for us, but it falls to us to both read and share it ... and, then, not fail in communicating the next steps to the needed parties. Even if that next step is just showing appreciation for keeping everyone informed. "Thanks for sending this! Appreciate you staying on top of things," is a simple message that helps ensure further messages will be conveyed.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Amy Lowenstein, AIMS International

Time of reflection and excitement

This is the time many of us take to review the year, accomplishments, what worked, what tweaks need to be made and goals for the next season.

At AIMS International, we are in the final stages of preparation for the 2024 Safety Seminar. After months of careful planning, we are ready for the big move to Orlando, Florida. We've reviewed documentation and trained new Ambassadors, the first to greet our attendees, instructors, and sponsors — much of the same planning phases you go through as you prepare for the 2024 season. It's a great refresh.

Lessons I have learned in my time working at theme parks and FECs is that this is the critical time to not only take a breath but to also review inspection checklists, employee training materials and documentation. Is it all in order? When that audit comes, will you feel confident your employees are properly trained, all their training paperwork is signed, and you



Lowenstein

know exactly where it is located? Are all inspection checklists in order and in place and you know exactly where they are in that binder on the shelf or in tidy electronic software?

Operating safely daily is the top priority. Right behind that is ensuring all your documents are in order, legible and that pertinent staff know where they are located. If you do shut down after the season, employees need a refresher training when they return and need to be reminded how important documentation is as well.

If you or your staff need training on updating SOP's, staying current on ASTM updates, operations, maintenance, and inspection visit aimsintl.org to register for the 2024 AIMS Safety Seminar January 7-12 or view the hundreds of available training courses in AIMS ConnectED. It's a great resource for this type of content.

Wishing everyone a safe 2024!

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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Preston Perkes, S&S Worldwide, Inc.

As executive director of administration for **S&S Worldwide, Inc.**, **Preston Perkes** is responsible for project management, supply chain and costing, customer service, installation, tech services and IT for the Utah-based company. A natural leader, Preston is dedicated, organized and does his job with undeniable passion. He has been a volunteer for the **Boy Scouts of America**, loves family time and enjoying the great outdoors.

Title: Executive Director of Administration.

Number of years in the industry: 17

Best thing about the industry:

I think we all agree on a similar narrative and that's being part of creating unique and exciting experiences for all to enjoy.

Favorite amusement ride:

Record height Screamin' Swings "Serengeti Flyer" (Busch Tampa) and "Tidal Surge" (SeaWorld San Antonio).

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

Working in the outdoor recreation industry. Utah is home to various companies and has the best environment for outdoor recreation.

Biggest challenge facing our industry:

Loss of key personnel with the knowledge and expertise to maintain/run parks and rides.

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

Spending time with friends and family, enjoying all things fun and entertainment.

2024 is going to be ...

The year that the world's first Axis coaster is installed.

Favorite winter activity:

Downhill skiing. I live in Utah!

The band that I would really like to see reunite is ...

90's one-hit wonders... you probably don't know the band but you know the song... Spacehog, Toadies, Harvey Danger, New Radicals, The La's.

The first thing I do when I get to work is ...

Open email and then whatever has been on my mind that morning.

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

Heliskiing in Alaska, throwing out the first pitch at an MLB game, exploring the world with my wife.

In one word, I would describe my car as ...

Utah approved.



Preston Perkes has spent nearly 20 years in the amusement industry, and all of them with S&S Worldwide, Inc. COURTESY S&S WORLDWIDE

The last time I danced was ... Last year on a cruise with my family. I'm not a dancer, but I've found out my kids are.

My all-time favorite meal would have to be ... Thanksgiving dinner.

Favorite midnight snack:

Ice cream or any baked good.

My next vacation will be to ...

Disneyland road trip with the family.

My TV is usually set to ... Football, Survivor and, right now,... Yellowstone.

Take your pick: wine and cheese or beer and pretzels? Can I pick cheese and pretzels? Maybe add a Diet Mt. Dew.

The clothes I feel most comfortable in are ... Pretty much anything. I don't mind dressing up or down, but I usually end up in casual shorts and a T-shirt when at home.

The neatest view I have ever seen is ...

They are all centered around the outdoors: High backcountry of the Wind River Mountains, sandstone canyons of Lake Powell and the Teton Mountains.

The three things I always have in my laundry room are ... Nothing special... Clothes, detergent, dryer lint.

My life motto is ... Don't let the behavior of others steal your joy.

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

A gift from the Knoebels family



ELYSBURG, Pa. — Knoebels Amusement Resort welcomed Pamela Landwirth, president and CEO of Give Kids The World Village, to the park in December to present her with a check for \$22,000. The funds were raised during the 2023 season through several park events including Coasting for Kids and coins from the park's fountain. Knoebels has been supporting Give Kids The World since 1994 and this year's donation brought the lifetime donation total to \$109,000. "We are honored to support Give Kids The World," said Brian Knoebel, fourth-generation family member and owner. COURTESY KNOEBELS

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▶AIMS

Continued from page 1

eran instructors and the industry's top professionals sharing their expertise. The 2024 seminar will deliver more than 400 hours of educational content, including 16 classrooms, 150 instructors, 14 tracks and two Academy of Amusement Risk Management, Safety and Security (AARMSS) tracks.

"Delivering upon our commitment to provide industry-leading safety education, we are excited to expand our offerings for the fourth consecutive year," said **Amy Lowenstein**, AIMS executive director. "With three new tracks, three new classrooms and the new welder certification, AIMS International is well positioned to remain the world leader in amusement safety education for years to come."

The 2024 seminar will be Lowenstein's first as executive director.

"It takes an army of the industry's top professionals to put this seminar together

each year," she said. "For the past eight months, a dedicated and talented group has met dozens of deadlines to make our complex seminar a success. From the board of directors to our young professionals, AIMS is laser-focused on expanding educational content, and I am grateful for the opportunity to lead AIMS International into the future. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in Orlando."

Continuing an AIMS tradition of delivering innovative educational content, AIMS has added new content such as Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), a custom track designed for state regulators.

Also new this year is the Advanced Weld Inspection and Welder Certification training class. This class will teach advanced methods of weld inspections per **American Welding Society (AWS)** requirements.

In addition, attendees may take a welder qualification test per AWS D1.3-18 Structural Sheet Steel requirements. If successful testing is achieved, attend-

ees will be issued an AWS Welder Qualification Record (WQR) for future use.

Topics of the new welding track include AWS Documentation, AWS Visual Weld Inspection, Welding Processes, Welding Techniques and AWS D1.3-18 WQR. Attendees will be able to perform an actual AWS D1.3-18 flat (2F) horizontal weld test.

Developed in partnership with industry-leading organizations, all available tracks this year are:

- Aquatics in partnership with E&A;
- Operations in partnership with International Ride Training (IRT);
- Adventure Attractions in partnership with Urban Air;
- Safety;
- Inspection I;
- Inspection II;
- Maintenance I;
- Maintenance II;
- Portable Amusements;
- Spanish Language; and
- Young Professionals.

Icon President and CEO **Chris Jaskiewicz** will deliver the keynote address at this year's seminar. Representing

the **Visit Orlando** board of directors, Jaskiewicz will welcome the AIMS International Safety Seminar back to Orlando for a multi-year run.

Topics at the AIMS seminars run the gamut and touch on all the tracks offered. Students may select a track to create a schedule, or they may custom-design their own based on their company's needs.

Some topics that can be found during an AIMS seminar include developing a culture of safety; traveling show security; special event security; emergency response planning; guest mindset; how to protect your organization from lawsuits; visual inspection; corrosion inspecting; inspecting fasteners, safety restraints and bearings; inspections beyond metal and advanced water quality.

Others include fluid power, maintenance checklist, electrical basics, electrical troubleshooting, water slide inspections and aquatic facilities safety.

The opening reception for the 2024 AIMS seminar

will take place Sunday, Jan. 7, at 6 p.m. Registration also opens that afternoon.

The keynote address will take place Monday, Jan. 8, at 8 a.m. Classes begin at 9 a.m. and run through 5 p.m., except during lunch. A happy hour is at 5 p.m., with a member meeting at 6 p.m.

Classes begin at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 9, and will run until 5 p.m., again with the exception of a lunch break. There will be a 5 p.m. happy hour and a sponsor reception at IAAPA headquarters from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Classes begin again at 8 a.m., on Wednesday, Jan. 10. They will run until 5 p.m., with a lunch break.

A **SeaWorld** event will take place that evening at 7 p.m.

On Thursday, Jan. 11, classes run the same as Wednesday. The AIMS Auction runs this day as well from 1-5 p.m. A happy hour follows.

Friday, Jan. 12, kicks off with classes from 8 a.m.-12 noon. Lunch runs until 1 p.m. and testing runs from 1-5 p.m.

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Much like a beautiful piece of music, "Luminous — The Symphony of Us" is comprised of a series of movements representing the life experiences we all share. This universal commonality includes experiences such as familial bonds, friendship, romance and even the challenges we face. COURTESY EPCOT; AT/DAVID FAKE

► EPCOT Continued from page 1

One faction was looking for new, exciting, original, adult-leaning fare, the other wanted recognizable Disney characters and music. "Harmonious," while arguably a technical juggernaut and visually stunning at night, leaned too far into its video screens and water screen projections of Disney characters accompanied by renditions of Disney songs sung in English and the native tongue of the countries in which their respective movies were set.

Characters and music alone were not the demise of "Harmonious." Its greater transgression was that it planted its oversized barges and video screens in World Showcase Lagoon both day and night, ruining the beautiful sightlines and overall aesthetics for which the World Showcase area of EPCOT

was known.

Disney describes "Luminous" as "a dazzling fireworks, fountains, lights and music to connect us all through commonalities of the heart. This all-new show shines a light on how each of our unique melodies comes together to form a great symphony — the symphony of us."

One of the most notably different aspects of "Luminous—The Symphony of Us" is that the story is told with light, whether it be fireworks, fountains, lasers or spotlights. Gone are the large video screens and water-screen projections.

Merriam-Webster defines the word luminous as "emitting or reflecting usually steady, suffused or glowing light." The dictionary also adds "clear, enlightening; shining, illustrious" in its definition.

While EPCOT's new nighttime spectacular easily falls



into the first part of the definition, it is in how Luminous also encapsulates the latter part of the definition that sets the show apart from its short-lived predecessor, "Harmonious."

Much like a beautiful piece of music, "Luminous — The Symphony of Us" is comprised of a series of movements representing the life experiences we all share. This universal commonality includes experiences such as familial bonds, friendship, romance, and even the challenges we face, including loneliness, uncertainty, loss and hope.

The overarching theme is that even in our darkest moments, hope still springs eternal when we realize we are truly never alone and we listen to the beating of our hearts.

These themes, along with the underlying message of "Luminous — The Symphony of Us" is that we are all far more alike than we are different. Guests can expect to hear new arrangements of iconic Disney hits that enliven the

story, including:

- Symphonic opening and welcome through the original song "Heartbeat Symphony."

- Familial bonds are represented by stirring, multilingual arrangements of "You'll Be in My Heart" and "Proud Corazón."

- Friendship is highlighted in classic songs like "You've Got a Friend in Me" and "Friend Like Me."

- Romance blossoms in a sweeping arrangement of "So Close," from Disney's *Enchanted*.

- Challenges are expressed with heartfelt renditions of "When She Loved Me," "Remember Me" and "Into the Unknown."

- Hope crescendos with music featuring "I See the Light" from *Tangled*, which launches into the finale.

- The finale uses the original song "Beating of our Hearts" to express that we should never give up, because we are never alone.

Stef Fink, music producer at Disney Live Entertainment, said the team sought to use new music and arrangements as a natural expression for

developing the show's music-driven story. She described the new, original music as "very EPCOT-ian."

"We really felt like we needed to tell the story more," Fink explained, "and we didn't want to turn back just to the Disney IP to do that. We wanted to bring something to EPCOT that was wholly EPCOT and our own."

"We wanted it to feel like EPCOT and live in its own world," she said.

In addition to "Luminous — The Symphony of Us," EPCOT also debuted Dreamers Point on December 5 as part of the company-wide Disney100 celebration. Here guests can draw inspiration from the new "Walt the Dreamer" statue, which shows Walt later in his life, when he was dreaming up the initial concepts for the park and the overall Florida Project. Disney says the Walt's relaxed and reflective demeanor was important to the design of this statue, a nod to the pure optimism he felt for the future and the magic of possibility that was the basis for the dream he never saw come to life.

EPCOT also debuted Dreamers Point courtyard and the Walt the Dreamer statue. AT/DAVID FAKE

PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► S&S Worldwide introduces RailRyder – page 14 / IAFE Convention and Trade Show a success — page 21

Storyland Studios's forthcoming Libertyland USA to have it all

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

RAPID CITY, S.D. — Storyland Studios, an experienced design firm with an extensive background in theme park design, unveiled plans early in December for a new theme park that will anchor a sprawling resort in South Dakota.

The proposed theme park, **Libertyland USA**, will anchor a retail and dining center and special event facility, a resort hotel, RV campground, as well as a residential village.

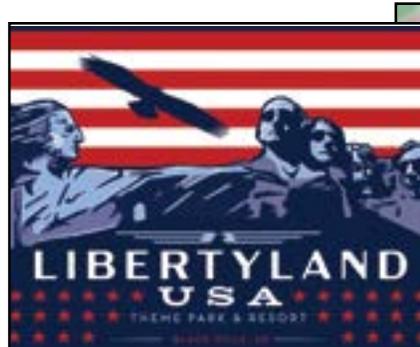
The entire development is slated to open in 2026. The theme park and surrounding attractions would be built in the Black Hills of South Dakota, not far from Rapid City.

Local officials have accepted the proposal unanimously, and it has been made possible by the formation of the **Rapid City Destination District**, a 302.1-acre planned development zone situated in a strategic location along I-90. The project's scope and size will be expanded in the future with the addition of property offering views of the **Mount Rushmore National Memorial**.

Storyland Studios described the area as rich in heritage, story and natural resources. Resort developers feel the area's natural beauty paired with man-made wonder will make this region a must-see for American and



Storyland Studios announced in early December plans for a new theme park that will anchor Libertyland USA resort near Rapid City, South Dakota. Artist renderings show the complex will include the Libertyland theme park, a retail and dining center, special events center, a 300-room resort hotel with indoor water park and an RV resort and campground. COURTESY STORYLAND STUDIOS



international visitors to experience alike. The theme park will be an interactive living history attraction.

The Libertyland USA theme park is to be the centerpiece of the destination. To the north is planned the Black Hills Village residential district. To the southeast of the park will be the retail/

► See STUDIOS, page 10



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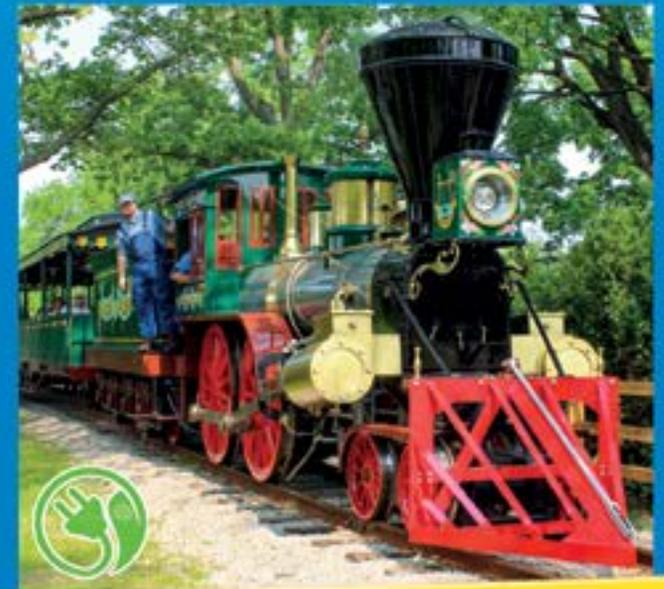


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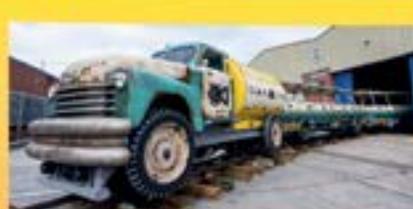
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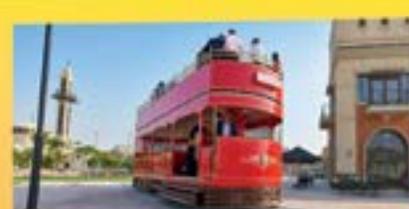
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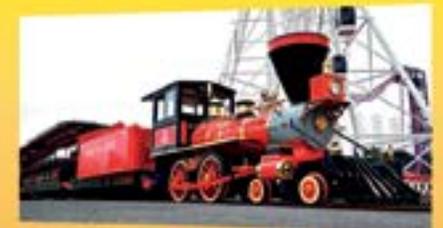
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STUDIOS Continued from page 8

dining lifestyle center.

The RV resort and campgrounds would be situated farther to the east.

The lifestyle center is to include retail, dining and entertainment offerings. The nearby special events center will feature an arena dinner show and chuck wagon dinner offering coupled with an expandable outdoor theater.

The 300-room western-themed resort is to feature an indoor water park and conference center.

Plans for the RV resort and campground will feature 200 spaces for RVs, along with a traditional campground. That area also will contain a general store, restaurant and recreation center in addition to an offering of outdoor activities.

Finally, the Black Hills Village residential district will offer a variety of residences.

Storyland Studios is known for creating stories to create environments and immersive experiences. Team members and executive leadership include alumni from Walt Disney Imagineering, Universal Studios and Legoland.

• storylandstudios.com

Libertyland: What to expect

- Theme Park, Interactive Living History Attraction
- Lifestyle Center: Retail, dining and entertainment
- Special Events Center: Arena dinner show and chuck wagon dinner offering, with expandable outdoor amphitheater
- Western Themed Resort Hotel: 300 rooms, with conference center and indoor water park
- RV Resort and campground: 200-RV slip campground and outdoor activities, with general store, restaurant and recreation center
- Black Hills Village: New residential district featuring single-family and multi-family residences



The plans for the forthcoming complex include an RV resort and campground, which will feature 200 spaces for RVs along with a traditional campground. In addition, the Black Hills Village residential district will offer a variety of single-family and multifamily residences.
COURTESY STORYLAND STUDIOS

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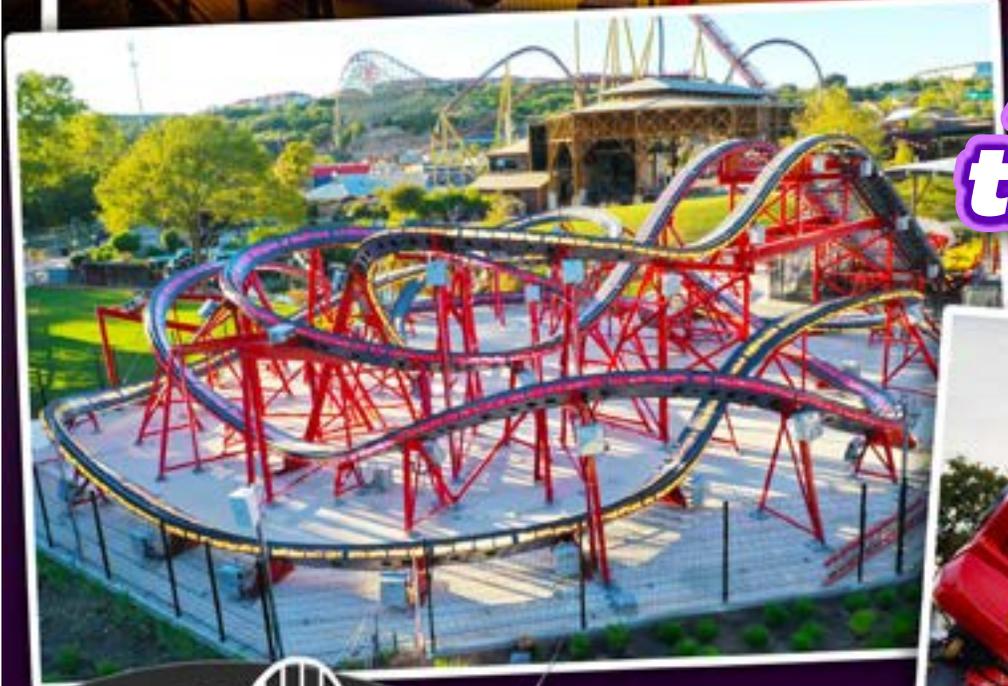
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Dorney Park's Thunderhawk coaster becomes a centurion in 2024

AT: Pam Sherborne
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ALLENTOWN, Pa. — When it first opened at Dorney Park in 1924, it was simply called Coaster. After it was painted yellow in 1954, fans began calling it the yellow ride. Those names remained interchangeable until 1989 when Coaster permanently became Thunderhawk.

That ride, all 2,767 feet of it, will celebrate its 100th birthday on March 30, 2024. Although the park won't be open that day, as the 2024 season won't be underway at that time, fans may look forward to a 100th celebration mid-season next year, according to **Ryan Eldredge**, manager, publications and communications.

"We plan to have some events as well as merchandise to celebrate the ride's 100th," Eldredge said.

"It's such an honor to celebrate 100 years of fun with Thunderhawk," Eldredge continued. "It's not often that rides of this magnitude can thrive over the course of a century. During our 2024 season, we look forward to unveiling a line of merchandise and celebrating this historic milestone in a way that is fit for a ride that has



The Thunderhawk roller coaster — shown above in its inagural year — at Dorney Park, Allentown, Pennsylvania, will turn 100 on March 30, 2024. The park plans celebrations that will take place sometime mid-summer, along with special 100th season merchandise. COURTESY DORNEY PARK

provided thrills for several generations of Lehigh Valley guests."

Eldredge said park officials are waiting to unveil celebration plans and decided to hold them mid-season so that Thunderhawk will get its turn for undivided attention. Dorney Park plans to open the new Iron Menace coaster, which is 160 feet tall and will feature a 95-degree drop, at the beginning of 2024.

The classic wooden Thunderhawk is the second oldest ride still operating in Dorney Park. The oldest is the Whip, which was installed in 1920 by **W.F. Mangels**.

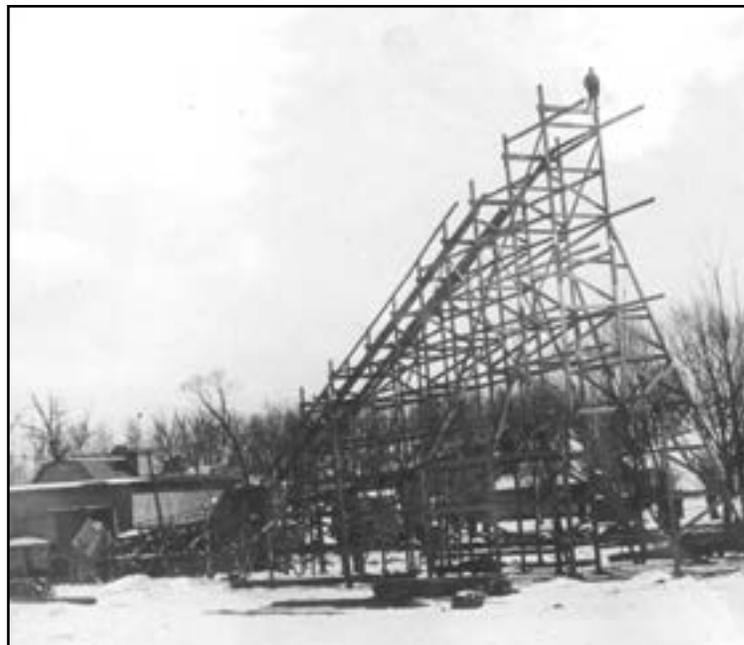
Thunderhawk is Dorney's oldest

coaster and, according to **American Coaster Enthusiasts** (ACE) information, the oldest coaster in the northeast.

It was one of the first additions made by **Robert Plarr** after purchasing the park from **Allentown Kutztown Traction Company** in 1923.

Plarr replaced the park's gentler Scenic Railway coaster with the newer, more thrilling roller coaster from **Philadelphia Toboggan Company** (PTC). Designed by **Herbert P. Schmeck**, the out-and-back coaster was built along an existing trolley line and opened on March 30, 1924.

In 1930, Plarr rehired PTC and Schmeck to



Thunderhawk was originally dubbed "The Coaster." Shown above under construction in 1923, the ride was manufactured by Philadelphia Toboggan Company and designed by Herbert P. Schmeck. COURTESY DORNEY PARK

redesign and reroute the original layout of the coaster. It featured diving drops and twists that redirected the course over the neighboring trolley tracks and into the nearby picnic groves before heading back to the station.

During the "yellow ride" era that began in the mid-1950s, the park's Skooter bumper cars and the coaster shared the same building as the loading station.

The 80-foot climb up the chain-lift hill offers riders a historic view of what was once the ride's traditional out-and-back layout.

In 1992, Dorney Park

was sold to **Cedar Fair, L.P.** of Sandusky, Ohio. In 1995, Thunderhawk received a more modern loading platform.

Thunderhawk's trains get sent to PTC yearly to be refurbished.

"They are there now," Eldredge said. "We also retrack portions every off-season to ensure a smoother rider and pain-free experience."

All the trains were replaced in 2016.

On June 23, 2021, ACE recognized Thunderhawk as an ACE Roller Coaster Landmark, a designation reserved for rides of historic significance.



In 1930, Dorney Park owner rehired Philadelphia Toboggan and Herbert P. Schmeck to redesign and reroute the original layout of the coaster. It featured diving drops and twists that redirected the course over the neighboring trolley tracks. COURTESY DORNEY PARK





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S&S Worldwide introduces new genre to its portfolio: RailRyder

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

LOGAN, Utah — Spoken about in business conversations at the recent IAAPA Expo, a new concept from **S&S Worldwide** is designed to help customers build something fresh and innovative while keeping a modest budget.

The company is calling its new single-rail coaster RailRyder.

“Five or six years ago, we played with bringing back a legacy item from **Arrow**, the Steeplechase,” CEO **Jason Mons** told *Amusement Today*. “S&S owns the Arrow assets and drawings. In doing Steeplechase with current codes, current manufacturing and current costs, we realized it had become price-prohibitive to re-do the Steeplechase the way it was. But it was such an amazing ride, we knew we wanted to do something with it.”

“This is more of an evolution and less of a prototype,” said **Trevor Dyer**, global director of marketing. “Some parks are reluctant to go with a prototype, and we feel this is simply the next step in an evolution.”

Currently, an Arrow Steeplechase (1977) operates at **Blackpool Pleasure Beach**, and even though it isn’t one of the tallest rides at the park, it is one of the most popular and beloved.

“After reexamining what we had with the single-rail track and the vehicles that sat on top, we came up with a train system,” said Mons. “The vehicle for the Steeplechase sits about 18 inches off the track. We’ve lowered this to four inches off the track. That’s going to give it an amazing

sensation of speed riding right on top of the rail — hence the name RailRyder.”

S&S offers two styles of seating. A toboggan style allows riders to lean back. The other has a jet-ski style that accentuates the straddling of the track. Riders sit in tandem with two riders in each vehicle and 12 riders per train.

S&S looked at capacity with this new iteration. While custom designs are always possible, three layouts have been designed. Depending on the size of the installation, capacity is expected to be between 400 to 1,000 riders per hour. The largest model has two lift hills, one at 60 feet and the other at 45 feet tall.

Mons reported to *AT* during the IAAPA Expo that the largest model, with four trains, comes in at a price tag of around \$5 million.

“We had the right experience with Steeplechase,” said **Preston Perkes**, executive director of administration. “It is an open vehicle with nothing on either side of you. It almost [felt] unrestrained. That was the challenge, we have the experience, but we had to get the capacity at the right price. It’s the same experience as Steeplechase; it’s just packaged differently.”

Perkes feels that the smaller models can be at the right price point for FECs, zoos and smaller parks.

“It has shocked a lot of people in what we’ve been able to do with that and generated a lot of interest,” added Perkes. “It has been great. We’re known for unique, high thrills. We had a gap in our portfolio offering; so, we attempted that with Steeplechase. Now, with RailRyder, it has a



Parks have the option to have riders seat more toboggan-style leaning back (above) or in a more jet-ski configuration (below). COURTESY S&S WORLDWIDE



39-inch height requirement. Members of the family can all ride the same ride.”

The smallest version has a length of about 900 feet. Accommodating 400 people an hour, the ride is estimated to come in at about \$2.5 million.

“We’re really trying to help parks bring more families into their park,” said Mons. “Our family inverted coaster is what I call a gateway coaster; that first coaster a kid is willing to get on. Kids can ride with their parents. This is another gateway coaster. At that price range, we feel it will allow parks who couldn’t really afford to

put in a coaster for many years to pick up a new coaster and reinvigorate their parks — and S&S wants to be a partner in that and a collaborator in growing their ridership and offerings.”

The intertwining of the track allows interaction with other trains, and the low-to-the-ground layouts open up the possibilities for theming. Because of its low height in comparison to high-profile rides, S&S is confident that the RailRyder is simpler and faster to manufacture. Installation is also more cost-effective.

“We’re hearing from parks that installation costs

are soaring,” noted Mons. “To be able to use smaller crews and smaller equipment, we will be able to save parks a lot of money on installation.”

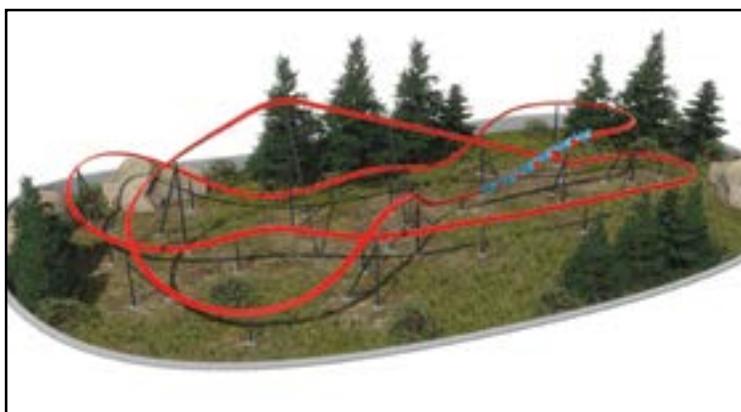
“Being four inches off the rail and a gravity-driven experience is where we feel we differentiate ourselves from others,” said Perkes.

A rolling station helps keep capacity at its maximum.

Customers can work with S&S on the type of restraint they would prefer when designing projects.

S&S Worldwide has manufactured many innovations in coaster design over the past decade. Long known for its air-launched coasters, the company introduced the 4D FreeSpin in 2015, is currently installing the first model of the rotating Axis coaster and is now making RailRyder available.

“This isn’t meant to be any of those [from our competitors],” Mons emphasized. “This is meant to be a unique ride by S&S; it gets you right down to the rail. We’re not looking at this to be high-thrill. We’re looking at a fun, family-friendly thrill.”



With four trains and two lifts, the large model of RailRyder (above left) can accommodate 1,000 riders an hour. With approximately 900 feet of track, the smallest model (above right) moves 400 passengers an hour at a price tag of approximately \$2.5 million. COURTESY S&S WORLDWIDE

The sky is the stage and only limit for Sky Elements Drone Shows

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS, Texas — On Wednesday night, Nov. 15, outside of the **Orange County Convention Center**, Orlando, Florida, where the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo 2023** was taking place, the sky lit up with a dazzling display of lights from 1,600 drones in the sky.

Orchestrated by **Sky Elements Drone Shows**, based in North Richland Hills, Texas, the display gave Expo attendees, as well as those visiting and/or living in Orlando, a look at what the company can do.

The synchronized swarm of drones created formations, including Earth, a cowboy, a dragon fighting a knight and an astronaut outside the International Space Station.

In addition, during



the trade show, the team broke two Guinness World Records. The company earned the record after creating the world's biggest American flag and aerial logo made out of drones.

Kyle Pivnick, vice president of business development for Sky Elements, said his company was glad they had attended the show.

"It was very much of a success for us," Pivnick said.

The success of the IAAPA Expo show will only add to the success

the company is already experiencing. But that is not a bad thing.

Pivnick said Sky Elements already does 60%-70% of all drone shows in the U.S.

Pivnick has described Sky Elements as aerial entertainment, so the drone show may be anything a customer wants.

Pivnick said the number of drones in a show can range from 100 for a smaller celebration up to the thousands. The sky is the limit.

The Sky Elements team has put on displays all over the U.S. and the world, including for clients such as **Major League Baseball**, **Federation of International Football Association** and **NASCAR**, to name a few.

The company has done shows for Independence Day celebrations, live concerts, parades, parks, recreational events and the 65th Grammy Awards.

The company has created drone shows in Las Vegas, such as recently for **Formula 1** racing. The finish line was met with a surprise of 1,000 drones in the form of a race car over **Resorts World Las Vegas**.

The team put an image of the Statue of Liberty in the sky over New York City. The company has flown a reindeer over that city's night skies as well.

At its core, Sky Elements calls itself a storytelling company that marries the

worlds of creativity and technology.

It is a turnkey solution for assisting clients through permitting, licensing and FAA waivers.

In addition, Sky Elements can produce indoor drone shows. Indoor drone light shows rely on different technology and do not require an FAA waiver.

The company works closely with clients to obtain any necessary permits for indoor performances, guaranteeing safety and compliance. The beauty of indoor drone light shows is that it's typically quicker to get up and going with a smaller crew. This ensures a smaller footprint on site and less red tape to cut through.

Pivnick said Sky Elements has been creating drone shows for the past three years but has been in business for six years, starting with pyrotechnics.

• skyelementsdrones.com



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Sansei Technologies announced a partnership with Forrec, whose work immerses guests in magical, branded lands similar to *John Wick: Open Contract* at Motiongate Dubai. COURTESY FORREC

Forrec, Sansei Technologies form strategic partnership

TORONTO — Experience design company Forrec and Japan-based Sansei Technologies have formed a partnership to better meet the evolving needs of clients in the experience design and attractions industry.

Sansei has taken a majority share of Forrec and now becomes a strategic partner that can invest in Forrec's growth to expand its client base, access new markets, extend its capabilities, elevate its talent and build new industry relationships.

"Sansei and Forrec's shared focus on our employees, relationships, and industry partners has been key to our success," said **Cale Heit**, Forrec CEO. "As partners, our shared priorities are a commitment to collaborate and create new opportunities and experiences for our clients, their guests, and our talent. Forrec has earned the trust of our clients, and now they are looking to us to do more. This presents an amazing opportunity to grow and create some of the world's most successful leisure and experience destinations."

This partnership is a forward-looking and strategic response to emerging new technologies and increasing guest expectations that have led to greater demands from clients — who are creating more dynamic, more complex, and more integrated projects than ever before.

Forrec and Sansei are highly complementary, with both companies in a position to benefit from the other in areas such as market insights, new business opportunities, expanded client solutions and service offerings, exchanging design and technical expertise, and an extended global network.

Sansei's experience in rides, attractions, immersive experiences, and performance installations means Forrec can integrate these new technologies into its strategy, design, and planning work — offering clients a new level of expertise and capabilities.

"Forrec's people and their outstanding storytelling and design capability and our expertise in amusement rides complement each other," stated **Noboru Rachi**, CEO of Sansei Technologies Group.

Forrec will continue to operate as a separate company, with daily operations remaining with Forrec management. A new Board will combine the expertise of the Sansei Technologies group of companies and Forrec team members.

Forrec is committed to continuing to work with its clients in the same way, with the same values and integrity that has earned the trust of clients around the world. Every project is unique; accordingly, Forrec will continue to work with world class suppliers to create industry-leading storytelling and guest experiences.



Last month Merlin Entertainments and Hasbro revealed details of the five rides and seven themed playscapes of the park geared for preschoolers. The Peppa Pig fun is set to come to North Richland Hills, Texas, in 2024.

At the **Peppa Pig Theme Park**, kids will notice a lot of their favorite characters and settings from the show on rides such as Daddy Pig's Roller Coaster. On that coaster, families will board Daddy Pig's red car and get taken on a detour once they face Mr. Bull, who is digging up the road.

The park, which will be just a few miles from the indoor play attraction **Peppa Pig World of Play** in Grapevine, will also have an aerial carousel experience with Peppa Pig's Balloon Ride. Families can even set sail on Grandad Dog's Pirate Boat Ride and explore Grampy Rabbit's Dinosaur Park.

Six Flags Magic Mountain, Valencia, California, has filed a permit to tear down its Golden Bear Theater.

The demolish permit was filed with Los Angeles County on Dec. 5. The theater is located across from Bugs Bunny World and near the Full Throttle Plaza.

Officials at Six Flags have not made a statement on what will replace the theater.

Officials at **Sesame Place Philadelphia** have announced the introduction of the 123 Playground, an all-new, 3,000-square-foot play area in 2024.

The new playground will provide a place where adults can relax and recharge while children can run around, explore, burn off energy and play in the imaginative and colorful play area.

"We are thrilled to share our plans for 2024," said **Cathy Valeriano**, park president of Sesame Place Philadelphia, in a news release. "After speaking with many of our guests and season pass members, the most requested attraction for our park has been a playground where children of all ages can climb, hop, and play and we're so excited to bring this request to life."

What's old is new again as **Disneyland** rolls out Pixar Fest for next spring with a returning fireworks show and a "new" parade that sounds very similar to an old favorite that helped launch the rethemed

Pixar Pier back in 2018.

Pixar Fest returns to **Disney California Adventure** and Disneyland on April 26 through Aug. 4, with the new Better Together parade and the returning "Together Forever" fireworks show.

While the long-awaited return of polar bears will be the obvious draw, **Wilderness Institute/Calgary Zoo**, Alberta, has launched the newly improved Wild Canada zone last month.

Formerly known as Canadian Wilds, the all-Canadian exhibit at Calgary's zoo has reopened to the public after a two-year, \$42 million overhaul. Wild Canada houses 15 Canadian species, including renovated habitats for the zoo's river otters, muskoxen, bighorn sheep, woodland caribou and whooping cranes.

The revamped section also includes a renovated aviary for a selection of Canadian owls and hawks.

Of course, that is with the high-profile addition of two polar bears, Baffin and Siku, the focal point of the 21-acre exhibit.

Sydney's **Powerhouse Museum**, Ultimo, New South Wales, Australia, will be closed for up to three years while \$250 million building and conservation work is completed.

Arts Minister **John Graham** made the announcement and revealed updated concept designs for the redevelopment of the science, technology, arts and design space in December.

The Powerhouse Museum, a museum of applied arts and science, will close its doors in early February. The Powerhouse plans include an outdoor public square and a reoriented entrance facing the Goods Line walkway from Central Station.

The state government said the revitalization will help host exclusive international exhibitions in addition to the Powerhouse's existing collection.

Land that was once occupied by an amusement park in Ocean County's Berkeley Township, New Jersey, will be preserved as open space.

Ocean County, with the blessing of township officials, recently approved the \$5.9 million purchase of 27 acres of land that was once home to **Blackbeard's Cave**. The county plans to maintain the land as open space, according to a news release.

Rather than bidding \$28 million to embark on a journey to space, guests can now head over to the **Kennedy Space Center**, Merritt Island, Florida and feel the sights and sounds of outer-world travel.

The center debuted its newest exhibit last month, a replica of Blue Origin's New Shepard crew capsule.

The interactive VR experience brings guests onboard the capsule and uses data and imagery to mimic the rocket's journey into space.

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Legoland Florida kicks into 2024 with Lego Ninjago Weekends

AT: Susan Storey
Special to Amusement Today

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. — For **Legoland Florida Resort**, 2024 is literally “kicking off” with the return of one of its most popular in-park events, Lego Ninjago Weekends. The action-packed themed weekends, inspired by the popular *Lego Ninjago* movie and animated series set the tone for a year filled with added-value and kid-focused events.

“Lego Ninjago weekends was a huge hit with our guests, especially our annual pass holders, and we’re so excited to be bringing it back to kick off an awesome new year,” said **Julie Estrada**, director of public relations for North America, **Merlin Entertainments**. “Both kids and adults love discovering their inner ninja and we love giving them new ways to do it! This is just the start of a full year of events we know will excite first-time visitors as well as our most loyal fans.”

While Ninjago weekends are best known for interactive and energetic activities for kids, one area guests will really bite into this year is the exclusive all-new menu of culinary treats created just for the event.

“Unique items and specialty food have become a core part of our park events, and this year, our food and beverage team created an entirely new menu just for Lego Ninjago Weekends,” Estrada continued.

Six new items weave a savory trek around the park with new experiences, as well as an update to one of the park’s beloved classics. Highlights include the HI-YA Biscus Kombucha Lemonade, Bonsai Birria Ramen, Wings of Wisdom twice-cooked wings tossed in a sweet Thai chili glaze, Currate Chop Fries, shoe-string fries tossed in a curry spice blend and Master Wu’s Dojo-Que Sandwich.



Legoland Florida's Ninjago weekends are best known for interactive and energetic activities for kids. COURTESY LEGOLAND



Park favorite Granny’s Apple Fries will have a ninja spin too with the addition of the **Foe Kickin’ Apple Fries**. The unique dessert is complete with apple fries, soft-serve banana ice cream, strawberry boba and ninja sprinkles.

Whether snacking their way through the park or pausing to try it all, guests can burn through their specialty food calories as they take part in the many high-energy activities and shows, including interactive ninja training with favorite characters. An all-new six-step ninja training activity will send guests around the park. Upon completion, guests will also earn an exclusive, limited-edition ninja headband.

Ninjago Weekends, which first launched in 2018, did not take place at the park last year. The return of the event is exciting for the Winter Haven-based park and the launch of a full calendar of reasons to visit. In November 2023,

Legoland’s kid reporter team announced the new year would be filled with new and enhanced events starting with Lego Ninjago weekends. Driving right up on its bumper, the **Lego Ferrari Build & Race Experience** attraction will open in March and a third gate, an all-new aquarium, **Sea Life Florida** will debut this fall.

Ninjago Weekends is a complete park experience for Legoland and the time when one of the park’s themed areas, **Lego Ninjago World** truly shines. The area’s hero attraction, **Lego Ninjago The Ride**, an interactive dark ride, blends 3D computer animation, 4D special effects such as heat, fog and strobe lighting, and interactive gameplay which has guests blasting animated fireballs and lightning at villains. Located a few ninja spins and leaps from the attraction, the popular **Ninja Kitchen Food Truck** features a year-round variety of snacks including

traditional egg rolls, super fancy spring rolls, bao buns, and more! During Ninjago Weekends, guests will find the special **Curr-ate Chop Fries** at the themed truck.

Through the Ninjago weekends, Legoland will continue to build on its efforts to create one-on-one engagement moments with guests. The event will mark the debut and distribution of a new collector series featuring Ninjago characters on pop badges for annual pass holders. This includes keeping the “Where’s Mr. Gold?” pop badge program

alive. Each day, 10 exclusive Pop Badges are given to park employees. The distribution itself is secret and invites guests to seek and approach employees in search of the elusive, prize-wielding badge. The Ninjago-themed pop badges are expected to become treasured trading souvenirs. In addition, to further celebrate and reward Legoland annual pass holders, the park is also bringing back its exclusive complimentary park magnet, and distribution will coincide with Ninjago weekends. This year’s design celebrates the event, too.

With three hotels and two parks, Legoland Florida Resort continues to communicate it has grown into a full destination. The **Legoland Hotel** provides a seamless complement to the Ninjago Weekends experience. Guests can get the full ninja treatment, surrounded by heroes Kai, Nya and Master Wu, by staying in one of 12 Lego Ninjago-themed rooms. First launched in 2022, the colorful suites extend the Ninjago universe so young ninjas and their parents can recharge their elemental powers and sleep like a samurai. From snacks to training steps to rides and shows, the return of Lego Ninjago Weekends is the perfect karate-chop start to a year filled with guest-focused fun at Legoland Florida Resort. The hotel will also host its first-ever ninja dance party in the resort’s lobby each night.



Ninjago Weekends is a complete park experience for Legoland. COURTESY LEGOLAND

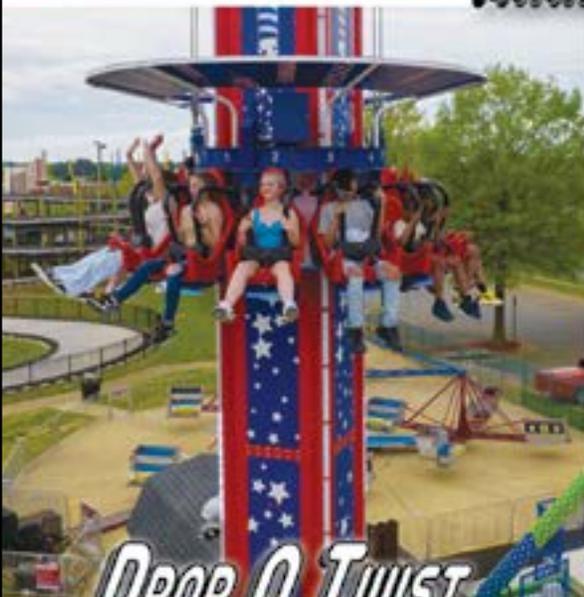
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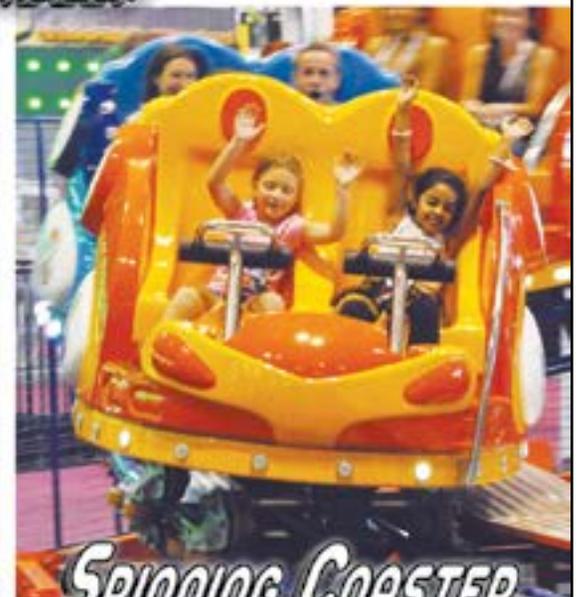
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COURTESY THE FUNPLEX

Dual-branded hotel at N.J.'s Funplex holds ribbon cutting

MOUNT LAUREL, N.J. — December 5, 2023, marked a historic moment as **The Lahn Hospitality & Amusement Group**, in collaboration with the **Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce**, hosted the official ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the grand opening of the new dual-branded hotel — **Wyndham Mount Laurel/Moorestown**. Positioned on the property at **The Funplex** in Mount Laurel, N.J., this joint endeavor symbolizes a milestone for both The Funplex and the Lahn Hospitality & Amusement Group, reaffirming their commitment to community growth and enhanced entertainment offerings.

The festivities commenced with a ribbon cutting ceremony, highlighted by speeches from multiple distinguished keynote speakers. The inspiring words of **Kristy Howell**, president and CEO of the Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce; **Stephen Steglik**, Mount Laurel, N.J. Mayor; **Carol A. Murphy**, assemblywoman; and CEO of Lahn Hospitality & Amusement Group **Brian Williams** set the tone for a momentous occasion, emphasizing the collaborative spirit and significance of this dual-branded venture.

"As everyone knows here in this room, Mount Laurel is growing," said Steglik. "I want to thank you for investing in our community. Thank you for being a part of Mount Laurel and its continued growth and success."

Guests had the opportunity to explore the hotel's showroom and partake in tours of the rooms, providing an exclusive glimpse into the **LaQuinta** and **Hawthorn Suites** and state-of-the-art facilities. In collaboration with **Wyndham Hotels and Resorts**, the recently unveiled dual-brand hotel seamlessly integrates Wyndham's upper-midscale La Quinta with the distinguished extended-stay Hawthorn Suites brand. This strategic partnership is crafted to elevate guest experiences through enhanced flexibility and operational efficiency. The hotel boasts a unified lobby, a great contemporary room, a state-of-the-art fitness center and other premium amenities.

Among the offerings, 57 rooms showcase the newly updated Hawthorn room design, featuring well-appointed kitchens tailored for extended-stay guests seeking heightened comfort. Additionally, 68 rooms showcase the contemporary room design inspired by La Quinta's popular Del Sol prototype, adding a touch of fresh sophistication to our accommodations.

"We wouldn't be here today without the support of the Wyndham team. The La Quinta and Hawthorn brand bring a beautiful facility to our portfolio," shared Williams. "The Funplex has been a part of this community for 26 years, and we're enthusiastic about deepening our engagement with our guests in meaningful ways."

The ceremony concluded with an air of anticipation for the increased engagement between The Funplex and its guests, promising an enhanced experience for the community. The unveiling of the dual-branded hotel was more than just a ceremony; it was a celebration of unity, progress, and a promising future for Mount Laurel.



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson
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Sky Park Adventure LLC plans to open a 38,000-square-foot indoor amusement center in East Dallas, Texas. An application for a Specific Use Permit has been filed with the city. Sky Park will lease the building from owner **Dominus Commercial**.

The amusement center will be in the vacant building adjacent to the existing **Extra Space Storage** location. The application states the facility will include trampolines, soft play jungle gym, bumper cars, laser tag, pickleball courts, video game machines and a small kitchen to serve drinks, pizzas and snacks.

The Sky Park venture is led by **Kyle Bickham**, owner of **The Modern Tot**, a daycare operating across from the proposed amusement center.

"We have been taking my 5-year-old and my 9-year-old sons to **Kid's Empire** in Mesquite [Texas] and **Altitude** in Richardson [Texas]," Bickham said. "At the same time, I have been staring at the vacant space across the street from Modern Tot."

A new entertainment venue — with arcade, laser tag, bowling and more — will soon open up in Killeen, Texas.

Killeen Economic Development Corporation officials announced, via news release, the upcoming opening of a new family entertainment center, which plans to offer local jobs to Killeen-area residents.

Area 254 will be opening soon. Inside, the center will feature bowling, two-story laser tag, roller skating, arcade games, karaoke, and a 30-tap self-pour beer and wine station.

The FEC was scheduled to open prior to December 25, 2023.

Betson Enterprises announced the completion of an 80-piece gameroom installation at **Spare Time Entertainment** in Omaha, Nebraska. This collaboration marks another successful venture between Betson Enterprises and Spare Time Entertainment. The new location opened its doors on Thursday, November 30th, 2023.

Britannie Betti, northeast regional sales director at Betson Enterprises played a pivotal role in the project. Betti provided recommendations to Spare Time Entertainment on game selection and layout to ensure optimal use of the available space to enhance the customer experience and maximize revenue.

Spare Time Entertainment's Amusements Operations Manager **Lyle Stewart** commented: "Britannie, our sales rep, is very friendly and helpful, and the install crew communicates well and follows

up to ensure everything is working well."

The diverse mix of game selections includes popular redemption pieces like Nerf Arcade, Dodgeball Ultimate Arena Deluxe, HYPERpitch, Rick and Morty Blips and Chitz and more.

Intercard and its business partner **Power House Entertainment Group** recently installed cashless technology at the 160-game arcade at **Sector Sixty6** FEC in Canovanas, Puerto Rico.

The largest indoor FEC in the Caribbean, Sector Sixty6 is located in the Outlook 66 mall. In addition to its Arcade Mania sector, the FEC offers electric go-karts, bowling and a ropes course. Power House consulted on design and development of the FEC and oversees the management of Sector Sixty6 and its 100 staff members.

Intercard's **Austin Lacy** did the installation on-site in October 2023. This is Intercard's third arcade project with Power House Entertainment Group.

Urban Air Adventure Park held the grand opening of its new Hazlet, New Jersey, location in the **Hazlet Town Center**.

"We're excited to celebrate our long-awaited grand opening of Urban Air with the Hazlet community and surrounding areas," said **Sweta Shah**, owner. "We have worked hard to bring a safe, fun and super exciting family entertainment center with incredible attractions for the entire family."

Urban Air officials said they were very grateful for the patience of the Hazlet community as they worked to get the Adventure Park open.

Flight, the multi-experience family entertainment venue with 13 locations across the U.S. and Canada, has officially announced the relaunch of its 26,000-square-foot park located in Ronkonkoma, New York, complete with newly renovated attractions that encompass themes of aviation and space. The relaunch of the Ronkonkoma park marks the second Flight location to receive a complete overhaul and retrofitted design, following the successful reopening of the Springfield venue last August.

The Ronkonkoma location completed an extensive transformation, which includes the construction of revamped attractions inspired by human flight across air and space.

Flight Adventure Park has become an integral part of the Ronkonkoma community, providing family-friendly adventure and fun year-round.

Successful 2023 IAFE Convention and Trade Show in the books

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SALT LAKE CITY, Utah — The 2023 theme for the **International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE)** Convention and Trade Show, held at the **Salt Palace Convention Center**, Salt Lake City, Utah, Nov. 26-29, was “Fairs Reunite, Inspire, Support an Education” or “Fairs RISE.”

That theme seemed to be extremely fitting because that is exactly what happened during the four-day convention.

It was definitely “deemed a success,” said **Brittany Harper**, IAFE director of marketing and communications.

There were 58 educational sessions presented this year. **Marla Calico**, IAFE president and CEO, said staff and members work all year long to make sure the educational portion focuses on topics that matter to the industry.

“They are on timely topics of importance to our members,” Calico said, before the convention. “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.”

The sessions were organized in various formats, including panel discussions and presentation style.

One of the unique topics this year was a series on **Life Happens — Even During the Fair**. Each session focused on a different situation in life that everyone has to deal with and tips on how to deal with it all while working. There was one on working while raising active teens, young children or caring for an elderly parent.

In addition to the workshops, the convention included 37 networking circles, 27 Champion Circles, Fairs RISE sessions, one opening ceremony and two general sessions.

Along with the success-



The trade show portions of the 2023 IAFE Convention and Trade Show (above left) saw a steady stream of attendees. Exhibiting their stadium/theater bleachers to the fair representatives were Linc Darrow and Sarah Lundgren of Southern Bleacher Company, based in Graham, Texas (above right). AT/GARY SLADE



ful educational portion, the 2023 IAFE Trade Show aisles were packed. Many reports from exhibitors indicated that they got bookings and deals done on the floor.

“I thought this show was one of the best ever,” said **Robert Holmes**, IFMG, **Spectrum Weather and Specialty Insurance**.

His company was the recipient of the 2023 IAFE Associate of the Year Award.

The 2023 IAFE Trade Show was comprised of 295 booths and welcomed 21 showcasing acts within the two-day show.

According to initial survey responses, one of the most enjoyed portions of the 2023 IAFE Convention and Trade Show was the S’more Fair Fun event held Sunday evening, Nov. 26, at the **Utah State Fairgrounds**. Complimentary food, beverages, carnival games, strolling entertainment, fire pits with s’more supplies, and picture stations were avail-

able to attendees.

The convention was kicked off by speakers **Jennifer Giesike**, IFMG, CFE, **Washington Town and Country Fair**, Missouri, and **Kelly Collins**, IFMG, CFE, **State Fair of West Virginia**, Lewisburg. Giesike served as the 2023 IAFE board chair and Collins served as the 2023 convention program chair.

Throughout the year, Giesike and Collins led the convention programming committee and really focused on the inspiring part of this year's theme. In doing so, IAFE members were asked a simple question, “What Inspires You?”

Responses varied greatly, but all included a heartfelt answer to what keeps our fair staff, volunteers, board members, sponsors, exhibitors and guests motivated to continue moving forward. Answers included mention of mentorship, colleagues, the ability to create family fun experiences, community engagement,

tradition and more.

The IAFE also strives to inspire members within the industry throughout the year. Thus, the Fair Games challenge was born this year.

Throughout 2023, points were given within each respective geographi-

cal zone for participation in IAFE activities, including cyber seminars, contests, committees, zone meetings and convention attendance, among others.

At the closing IAFE general session, the results were

► See IAFE, page 22

New IAFE board members elected at 2023 convention

Jo Reynolds, CFE, IFMG, general manager of the **Warren County Agricultural Association**, Indianola, Iowa, was elected the new IAFE chair.

Ray Allison, CFE, **Indiana State Fair**, Indianapolis, was elected second vice chair.

Bryan Schulz, CFE, **Kansas State Fair**, was elected Zone 5 director.

Kady Porterfield, CFE, IFMG, **Kittitas County Fair**, Ellensburg, Washington, was elected Zone 8 director.

Andy Deggeler, **Deggeler Attractions**, was elected Director At Large representing associate members.

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Sam Ryan, left, and Rick D'Aprile, of Amusement Entertainment Risk Insurance Agency (AERIA) attended the 2023 IAFE Convention and Trade Show. AT/GARY SLADE

IAFE
Continued from page 21

announced. The zones winning 1st, 2nd and 3rd received \$4,000, \$2,000 and \$1,000, respectively. These cash prizes will support future zone meetings and activities.

The IAFE Education Foundation's Raisin' for a Reason Wagons and Whiskey fundraising event at

the convention netted over \$40,000. This money supports the Institute of Fair Management.

Other popular activities this year included the Institute of Fair Management courses and graduation. Of all convention attendees, 23% were either enrolled or graduates of the Institute of Fair Management program. The program continues to

grow and develop, which was evident during the general session. The IAFE recognized 26 Institute of Fair Management graduates and 12 individuals receiving their Facilities Management Grad Track certification.

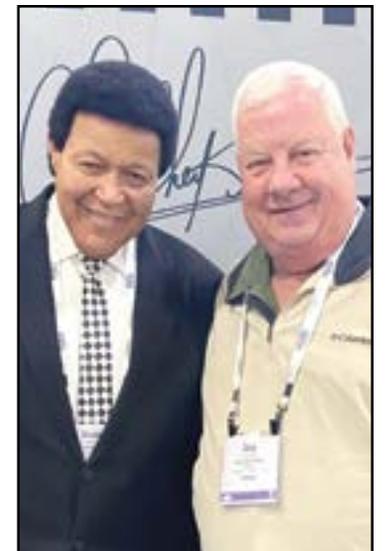
The Young Professionals (YP) activities proved successful with a full house and positive reviews. Events included Ment-A-Minute, Connect and Cocktail, a workshop, and a social outing. The YP Steering Committee also supports the Rising Star Award.

IAFE Ambassadors were present throughout the convention, from social media to hosting an IAFE benefits overview session, First Friends Reception, overseeing the first Jenga competition and serving as mentors to many IAFE members in attendance.

Four educational experiences were offered to convention attendees, including The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Facilities and Operations Tour, Utah State Fairgrounds Tour, the University of Utah Football Stadium Facilities and Operations Tour and Learning With Legends Gaining Wisdom from Industry Titans.

These experiences were limited to a smaller quantity of participants to ensure a positive experience for all.

• fairsandexpos.com



Amusement Today Publisher Gary Slade, right, caught up with music industry legend Chubby Checker during the 2023 IAFE Convention and Trade Show in November. AT/GARY SLADE

"This new program provides OABA standards that help improve our entire industry. That is something we can all be proud to support."

.....

Industry veteran and OABA Chair
Andy Deggeller
President of
Deggeller Attractions

"Any operator that meets the OABA requirements for Circle of Excellence designation poses less of a risk for loss and gives us more confidence in providing coverage at a reduced rate."

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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."

.....

Marla Calico
IAFE

"We have long discounted our legal fees for Circle of Excellence members, and we look forward to validating this improved program."

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U.S. Postal Service releases special "Carnival Nights" stamps series



The United States Postal Service (USPS) has released a panel of forever stamps titled Carnival Nights. The 10-stamp images — sold in a 20-stamps pane — were designed by Greg Breeding, an art director for USPS, using existing photographs. Some of the featured photos are from California's Butler Amusements. COURTESY USPS

Washington County's **Agriculture and Industrial Society**, West Bend, Wisconsin, operator of the **Washington County Fair Park and Conference Center**, appointed **Stacy Holland** as CEO, effective January 14.

"Our Board agreed that Stacy has the skills and abilities to execute our vision for the county's facilities: elevating the county fair, expanding agriculture and industry and connecting the community," AIS President **Phil Dahlberg** told the *Washington County Insider*. "Her extensive communication and leadership skills will be a welcome addition to our team at Washington County Fair Park."

Holland has a robust background in strategic growth initiatives, acquisitions, cost management and continuous improvement, with an emphasis on sales expansion and operational efficiency. She has held leadership positions with **Deloitte**, **Rockwell Automation**, and **Waukesha Bearings**, and most recently served in CFO positions for several emerging pharmaceutical research companies through her own business.

"I enthusiastically look forward to advancing AIS's strategic vision by increasing the use of the Fair Park in ways that serve Washington County residents, agricultural interests and businesses," said Holland.

The fair comes around July 23 – 28, with **Rainbow Valley Rides, Inc.** as the midway provider.

The **Jackson County Fair** Board, Medford, Oregon, has hired **Pamela J. Fyock** as the new manager of the **Jackson County Fairgrounds & Exposition Park**.

She has experience in the industry, including



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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the **California State Fair**, **Sacramento County Fair** and more, along with expertise in event promoting, as well as fundraising.

Fyock told *KOBI-TV, NBC 5* that she's excited to be coming to the Rogue Valley. "This is a great opportunity, and this could be the biggest venue in southern Oregon. I'm just excited to get up there, roll my sleeves up, and build on a great foundation and head into the future."

Her first big project this spring will be the Central Point Wild Rogue Pro Rodeo, May 16–18.

The fair returns July 16-21, with **Paul Maurer Shows** handling the ride midway.

Gregg "Scooter" Korek, vice president of client relations at **North American Midway Entertainment** (NAME), recently received a Roll of Honor award from the **Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions**. Established in 1979, this accolade celebrates outstanding service and contributions to the Canadian fair and exhibition industry.

"Scooter's contributions to the fair world are recognized around the world, and we are fortunate that he's been part of the **Calgary Stampede** midway for more than five decades," **Kyle Russell**, director of Stampede programming told *Livewire Calgary*.

"He is a respected leader amongst his peers, staff and fairs across North America. Scooter never forgets someone that he's met, and his caring nature and charming personality

have helped create a magical experience for guests of the Calgary Stampede."

Korek, a native of Calgary, began his career in midway entertainment as a teenager after getting a job with **Conklin Shows**, which was then the supplier of midway services to the Stampede. He had originally intended to get a job directly with the Calgary Stampede, however, ended up transforming that summer midway job into a decades-long career.

NAME, which was formed from a merger of several midway companies including Conklin, serves 15 million people each year at more than 120 events across Canada and the U.S.

"Scooter's impact extends beyond operational excellence. He has been a trailblazer in modernizing the fair industry, introducing concepts such as the cashless midway and admission systems," said NAME.

"Many of the e-ticketing systems used by fairs today are based on programs pioneered by Scooter at the turn of the last century."

During the November 16 awards presentation at the **River Cree Resort** in Edmonton, Alberta, **Jim Laurendeau**, VP, park development and operations at the Calgary Stampede, said, "Scooter has a way of breaking down walls between people and building understanding ... he builds understanding and he builds bridges between the front lines and management, between service members and fairs, between this fair and that fair — always leading, always connecting, and always humble."

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Korek is a walking encyclopedia of carnival business history. His deep knowledge, coupled with a passion for the industry, has made him an invaluable resource and advocate.

WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ Crystal Lagoons develops Public Access Lagoons — page 26 / News Splash — page 26

New Jersey's reimagined Showboat Hotel opens Island Waterpark

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Last year the **Island Waterpark** at the reimagined **Showboat Hotel** opened to the public. Touted as the largest beachfront indoor water park in the world, it is also the largest indoor water park in North America under a single retractable roof.

The \$100 million Island Waterpark is the latest attraction to open at the Showboat Hotel Atlantic City following its transformation from a casino to a non-gaming hotel and family-friendly resort destination. This multi-phase process has been ongoing since Atlantic City began rebranding itself in 2015 by going back to its roots and offering tourist attractions outside of the gambling industry. The previous big addition to the Showboat, the **Lucky Snake Arcade**, opened in 2021 with more than 300 games and attractions including pinball, video games, virtual reality, redemption games, bowling, roller skating and indoor go-karts. Taking over most of the former casino floor, the 60,000-square-foot arcade helped establish the hotel resort as a destination for families. This past summer a movie-themed mini-golf



As is typical with indoor water parks, the three largest waterslides begin and end inside, but the bulk of the slides are outside of the building (above left). The roof (above right) was designed to support waterslides both above and below the structure. COURTESY WHITEWATER, OPENAIRE

course and a 40-foot climbing wall were added.

Martin Aquatic of Orlando, Florida, led the conceptual efforts of the Island Waterpark. The glass enclosure was built by **OpenAire** of Oakville, Ontario, which has made a name for itself building large glass-enclosed structures with retractable roofs. Similar water park spaces from OpenAire include **The Pump House** at Jay Peak, Vermont; **Epic Waters** in Grand Prairie, Texas; **The Cove at the Lakefront** in Little Elm, Texas; and **Tropic Falls Waterpark at OWA** in Foley, Alabama.

Each project seems to be a little larger than the previ-

ous one and, this particular structure is the largest that OpenAire has built to date, covering more than 100,000 square feet with a 550-foot-long building. It features two cupulas, the signature retractable roof and large sliding glass walls that open to a greenspace adjacent to the boardwalk. In addition to the main retractable roof, both cupolas have their own retractable sections. Other significant architectural features include a pair of waterslides that extends from one of the cupolas being supported by the arched glass-covered roof. The roof was also built with the ability to support waterslides above the roof or suspended from the ceiling to eliminate support poles running to the ground. Although the suspended feature was not taken advantage of, the capability is there, and a waterslide hanging from the ceiling may be added in the future.

The indoor water park includes 11 slides from **WhiteWater West** of British Columbia, Canada; two aquatic play structures; a double **FlowRider**; lazy river; and sports activity pool. The central play attraction is one of the largest-to-date indoor **AquaForms** modular interactive multi-level structures with 12 platforms, five slides, 55 play features, 280

feet of paths to explore and a 317-gallon tipping bucket. Major slides at the park include headfirst mat racers, body slides and tube slides. The three tube slides at the south end of the facility offer the most excitement, with all three starting from the tallest slide tower inside the large 77-foot-tall cupola that extends above the main roof. **Electric Eel**, with its two **AquaSpheres**, has guests oscillate back and forth inside translucent-domed orbs and then finish with a hypnotic **AquaLucent** dot-patterned slide section. **Sonic Serpent** delivers a speeding fun time through loops and hairpin turns. **Barracuda Blaster** is a **Constrictor** slide that sends riders through a path punctuated by mesmerizing **AquaLucent** dots and then down three tight coils for high-banking turns.

Adults will find relaxation in an exclusive area called **Paradise Adult Island** that includes private cabanas, lounge chairs, and **Bliss Pool** — a separate adults-only infinity-edge pool with a swim-up bar. There are even **Pelotons** for those who didn't get enough exercise climbing stair towers. This is adjacent to the sliding glass walls that open up to a private greenspace with ocean views that can be used to

host events or soirees. An upper mezzanine can also be used for private parties.

The Showboat originally opened in 1987 as a hotel, casino and 60-lane bowling alley. The property was acquired by **Harrah's Entertainment** (now part of **Caesars Entertainment**) in 1998 and a second hotel tower was added in 2003. Although profitable, Caesars closed the Showboat in 2014 to stabilize its other Atlantic City properties. The Showboat was acquired in 2016 by Philadelphia developer **Bart Blatstein** and reopened in July that year as a non-gaming hotel. Since that time, it has undergone extensive renovation.

"Atlantic City has long been one of the most iconic destinations for entertainment geared for adults, but now the Island Waterpark at The Showboat Resort will open up a whole new world of family entertainment on the boardwalk," said Bart Blatstein, **Tower Investments** CEO and Showboat owner. "When people see this, they will be blown away; it is truly like entering a tropical paradise and the best part is that people — both kids and adults — will be able to enjoy it all year round."



The **AquaForms** play structure in the middle of the park has more than 280 feet of paths to explore connecting 12 platforms. COURTESY WHITEWATER



The general public can now enjoy the azure water and sparkling white sand of a Crystal Lagoon. COURTESY CRYSTAL LAGOONS

Crystal Lagoons developing new Public Access Lagoons

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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MIAMI, Florida — **Crystal Lagoons**, the company that has created idyllic artificial lakes and lagoons for private communities and resorts has expanded to public access water amenities. Known for its crystal-clear water, these lagoons have been built all over the world for resorts and private communities. With a Crystal Lagoon as the centerpiece, developers have been able to create idyllic beach life just steps away from people's homes, even within landlocked areas.

Access to these spectacular water playgrounds with their turquoise water, white sand beaches and recreational facilities has been limited to resort guests or those living within the private community that surrounds the lagoon.

This past summer, that has changed. Crystal Lagoons opened its first Public Access Lagoon (PAL) at **Lago Mar**, a master-planned community in Texas City, Texas, near Houston. Unlike previous facilities, the Lago Mar development is open to the general public. Season passes and day passes are available via the facility's website, making Houston the first city in the world to demonstrate the incredible appeal and versatility of a Crystal Lagoons amenity.

The lagoon at Lago Mar was a joint project with Houston-based developer **Land Tejas**. The 12-acre Lago Mar Lagoon spans more than a quarter mile from end to end. It has more than a mile of shoreline, making it the largest Crystal Lagoons amenity in the U.S. in terms of length and water shoreline. The public-access facility offers year-round entertainment including water sports, concerts, weddings, events, trade shows, day clubs, restaurants, retail and more. The lagoon itself first opened in 2021, and the public was invited to enjoy the facilities during a limited-time event known as Lagoonfest Texas. Since then, work on future phases continued with the addition of hotels, retail, dining and more to make it the first permanent PAL.

The first Crystal Lagoon in the U.S., the **Epperson Lagoon** in Wesley Chapel, Florida, about 20 miles northeast of Tampa, opened in 2018 and has seen continuous success since its first day. Due to increased demand from the general public in the area, the development is being switched from a resident-only lagoon to a PAL to accommodate local demand for beach life and water sports.

Crystal Lagoons is the brainchild of **Fernando Fischmann**, a native of Chile, who now lives in the U.S. After earning a degree in biochemistry, he developed **San Alfonso del Mar**, a holiday resort on the coast of central Chile, and began to look at methods to maintain the purity and clarity of large volumes of water at low cost. He built his first crystal lagoon in 2006 at the resort. Following that success, Fischmann decided to repeat the business model all over the world by founding Crystal Lagoons. Fischmann was presented with two Stevie Awards in 2016 for Innovator of the Year and Innovation of the Year. His company, Crystal Lagoons, is valued at more than \$4.1 billion and has been awarded more than 2,200 patents in 180 countries. Currently, Crystal Lagoon has a portfolio of more than 1,100 projects in different stages of development in more than 60 countries.

• crystal-lagoons.com



NEWSPLASH

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A new **Calypso Cove** luxury resort is under construction in The Bahamas. The \$250 million development on South Long Island includes the new resort, cruise port terminal, marina facilities, 18-hole golf course, casino and a water park.

Although part of the same country, South Long Island is about 300 kilometers (186 miles) from the capital city of Nassau where cruise ships currently dock when visiting The Bahamas. The development will offer an alternative cruise port, as well as cater to luxury yachts with its full-service marina.

The island is known for its beautiful white-sand beaches, but with little else to do, many of the inhabitants have moved away. The project has the potential to provide a much-needed boost to the island's economy and encourage long islanders who have left to return back home. Once completed in 2026, the resort will require a significant workforce.

Specific details of the water park have yet to be released, but it promises to be a world-class water park with several significant attractions.

Plans are proceeding for a new water park in Osceola, Arkansas. In November, Osceola voters approved a one-cent sales tax to build a new water park that will include a lazy river, waterslide tower with three different slides, shaded seating areas, outdoor recreation pool and indoor lap pool that can be used year-round.

"We have attracted workers into this town, but it is important that we attract the entire family," said Mayor **Joe Harris Jr.** "We want the mother and the kids to say they want to move to Osceola because we will have something to do here."

Along with the water park, upgrades will be made to other parks around town. Work on the water park was expected to begin immediately, however, a target completion date was not announced.

Icon of the Seas, the newest ship from **Royal Caribbean**, made its first journey from the **Meyer Werft Shipyards** in Turku, Finland, to Cadiz, Spain, where it will receive its finishing touches before making a transatlantic crossing to Miami. The inaugural sailing is scheduled for January 27 out of Miami. Icon of the Seas is the largest cruise ship ever built, and with that comes a new record-breaking water park. Category 6 will span three decks and include six high-profile slides, including the first four-passenger family raft ride at sea.

• **Yas WaterWorld** in Abu Dhabi, UAE,

is undergoing a 16,900-square-meter (4.17-acre) expansion. The new area will add 3.3 kilometers or a little more than two miles of new slides. The addition of 18 new slides and attractions will increase capacity by 20% and bring the park total to more than 60 rides and experiences.

Highlights of the area include a swim-up bar, high-thrill boat ride, family raft rides, a log/flume boat ride and dueling Master Blaster. The new area will also increase the kids attractions by adding mini versions of the park's iconic rides such as a mini-blaster and mini-boomerango.

Once completed in 2025, Yas WaterWorld will have the tallest slide in the UAE, as well as the first amusement park ride within a water park.

Plans for a new aquatic center in Ames, Iowa, were revealed in November and the city has started asking for construction bids.

The **Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center** will include three different pools, a waterslide and a lazy river. The \$32.1 million needed to build the 38,900-square-foot facility was raised through donations, general obligation (GO) bonds and funds provided by the American Rescue Plan Act. The project is also being considered for a Community Attraction and Tourism Grant of \$500,000. If the grant is awarded, the city will be able to reduce the GO Bonds even further.

Construction for the aquatic center is planned to start in late March or early April of this year, with the official opening expected in 2025.

Work is progressing on the new aquatic center in Kaukauna, Wisconsin, keeping the project on target for a May 2024 dedication followed by a June opening.

The city has been working to raise \$1 million of the estimated \$6 million for the project from public donations through its "Something for Everyone campaign." Aside from the \$1 million from the capital campaign, other sources include \$1.5 million in tax increment financing, \$3 million from city borrowing and \$500,000 from the parks and pools capital funds.

The new aquatic center is an upgrade to an existing facility that was built in 1991. The pool shell and concrete deck were in good shape, but everything else needed to be upgraded or replaced. The new facility will include a refurbished and modernized pool along with a waterslide, splash pad with a modular play structure, climbing wall and updated restrooms.



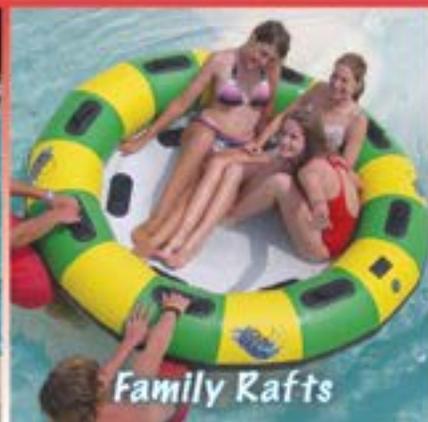
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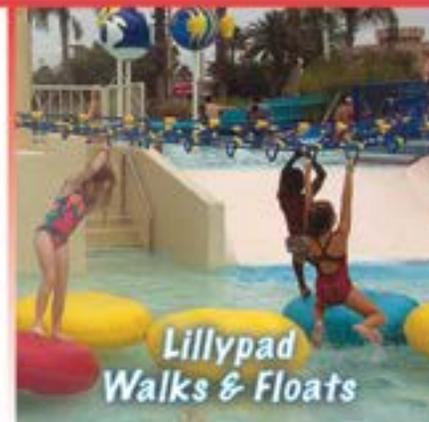
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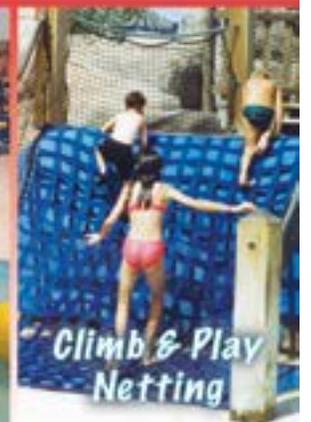
Family Rafts



Sidewinder Tubes & Rafts



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Climb & Play Netting



BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Disney legend Dick Nunis passes — page 30 / Woman of Influence: ASTM's Katerina Koperna — page 32

Dollywood opens HeartSong Lodge, the resort's second hotel

AT: Tim Baldwin
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PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — When theme parks have their own hotels, these destinations enter an upper echelon in the amusement industry by becoming resorts. In 2015, Dollywood did just that when it opened **The DreamMore**. The success of those first accommodations has continued to let the national (if not global) destination thrive. With a Grand Opening on November 3, the park's second hotel, **HeartSong Lodge & Resort** welcomed guests for "sneak peak" soft previews in October.

"When we opened Dollywood's DreamMore Resort and Spa in 2015, we began offering our guests perks they could not receive anywhere else, including complimentary transportation to and from both parks, complimentary Dollywood TimeSavers, package pick-up and the outstanding guest service that only a Dollywood resort can provide," said **Pete Owens**, vice president, marketing, **The Dollywood Company**. "With HeartSong Lodge & Resort, we are able to provide our guests 302 more rooms, which is 302 more families who can make memories worth repeating at our properties. We want to provide our guests with everything they need for a memorable Smoky Mountain vacation, which



HeartSong Lodge & Resort embraces its setting in the Smoky Mountains. A giant fireplace (below left) offers a warm welcome in the 4,000-square-foot lobby. The ambiance of the Smoky Mountains is brought into the rooms (below right). COURTESY DOLLYWOOD; AT/TIM BALDWIN



includes guest rooms, restaurants, shopping, amenities and transportation to our parks, as well as the parks themselves."

Although located near The DreamMore, HeartSong Lodge seems tucked out of sight, nestled in the hills of the Smokies themselves.

"We want our guests to have ample opportunities to explore the beautiful mountains right outside of the lodge," said HeartSong

General Manager **Kevin Osborn**. "Each evening, our Camp DW hosts offer marshmallow roasting, as well as a fun campfire sing-along. We are building a playground area into the side of the hill located in our Cove area that is inspired by the natural playground of the Smoky Mountains. The Cove outdoor swimming pool features an incredible cascading water feature, zero depth entry and splash pad. Our indoor pool has

a very intentional architectural design that includes the ceiling mimicking the pool shape below."

Once at the porte-cochère, guests step from their cars into a 4,000-square-foot atrium lobby that has the materials and textures that embrace the feel of the outdoors in the Smokies. The towering stone fireplace and beautiful lantern-inspired windows are both cozy and welcoming.

"The family gathering places both inside and outside of the lodge really illustrate what Dollywood Parks and Resorts is all about: creating memories worth repeating for our guests," said Osborn. "From the incredible fire feature to the back porch area where our Camp DW staff host family activities each day, these areas showcase the beauty of not only the Smoky Mountains but also the beauty in making connections with the ones you love."

The DreamMore, while sharing a similar setting, celebrates the personality and mystique of the resort's namesake, **Dolly Parton**. HeartSong is more heavily influenced by the Smoky Mountains themselves.

"We wanted to make sure HeartSong Lodge provided the same incredible experience that guests have come to expect from DreamMore Resort. However, we didn't want the experiences to be identical," Owens told *Amusement Today*. "Guests of both resorts enjoy the same park privileges and guest service. What is different is the way the resorts are designed and experienced. DreamMore Resort is inspired by Dolly herself. HeartSong Lodge & Resort is inspired by Dolly's love for the Smoky Mountains. These differ-

► See HEARTSONG, page 29



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► **HEARTSONG**
Continued from page 28

ences in inspiration lead to obvious distinctions in design and color palettes, as well as variation in menu selections in our dining areas, Camp DW activities and more.”

“Dolly’s influence is at the core of everything we do,” added Osborn. “Her heart and creativity guide every decision we make, and the lodge is no exception. We took her love for the Smokies and created a beautiful home away from home for our guests that seamlessly blurs the lines between outdoors and in. We also wanted to make sure we included a few pieces of

Dolly’s life as a global entertainment icon, which guests are able to discover in our Acoustic Lobby. These details include a beautiful acoustic guitar-inspired chandelier, as well as wardrobe pieces and instruments from her incredible career.”

In bringing the feel of the outdoors into each room, sound boxes are placed within the accommodations. These sound boxes allow guests to enjoy the sounds of nature, including crickets, babbling brooks and crackling campfires inside their guest rooms.

As this is the second resort property, The Dollywood Company learned a couple of things



Children’s sleeping areas are set in their own space with phone chargers at the bedside. AT/TIM BALDWIN

in designing its newest.

“We wanted to make sure we took the best parts of DreamMore Resort and built upon them here at HeartSong Lodge, Osborn told AT. “With the

Smoky Mountains being such a heavy influence on HeartSong Lodge, it was important for us to provide our guests with rooms with balconies so that they could enjoy the

beauty of the Smokies from their guest rooms. We also added a trolley lobby so that our guests enjoying our award-winning parks have their own area to board our complimentary transportation to and from both parks. We also wanted to make sure that our guests were able to enjoy our amenities as conveniently as possible, which is why at HeartSong Lodge guests will find that the outdoor hot tub is located adjacent to the indoor pool.”

Both resorts are open year-round. Dollywood recently announced the theme park’s operating schedule will expand to 280 operating days in 2024.

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OBITUARY

Walt Disney World legend Dick Nunis has passed away at the age of 91

ORLANDO — Dick Nunis, former chairman of Walt Disney Attractions and a 44-year cast member, died December 13, 2023, in Orlando, his family confirmed. He was 91.

His Disney career began as an orientation and training instructor in 1955 before the opening of Disneyland in Anaheim, California. He later said he was earning \$1.80 an hour. Nunis went on to be instrumental in the development of Walt Disney World, Tokyo Disneyland and Disneyland Paris.

"We mourn the passing of Dick Nunis, a true Disney Legend whose contributions to The Walt Disney Company have touched the lives of millions of people all over the world," said Bob Iger, CEO of The Walt Disney Company. "What started as a summer job training future Disneyland employees would ultimately become a storied 44-year career at Disney."

Nunis learned about Disneyland through his classmate, Ron Miller, who was Walt's son-in-law. On a lark, he decided to apply for a summer job at the new theme park and was hired by Van France — founder of The Disney University and author of the park's orientation and training program — in May 1955 as an orientation training instructor. Just prior to the park's July 17, 1955, debut, the duo began training Disneyland employees. Among members of their first class were Walt and his executives. During those early years, Nunis learned Walt Disney's theme park philosophy firsthand. And, as he guided the growth of Disney's outdoor attractions from a single park into a worldwide resort, the premier theme park executive always kept his focus on the people.

Nunis was instrumental in guiding the growth of Walt Disney's outdoor entertainment enterprise from a single park in Anaheim into what today has grown to become a world-class global theme park and resort business. His legacy includes significant milestones in Disney theme park history including the development of "Project X," which eventually became the Walt Disney World Resort.

"Dick took the values and philosophies he learned directly from Walt and incorporated them into everything he did at Disney. We are grateful for his many achievements and we extend our deepest sympathies to his family and loved ones," Bob Iger, CEO of Walt Disney Co., said in a statement Wednesday.

On May 26, 1999, exactly 44 years to the day after he joined the company, Nunis retired as chairman of Walt Disney Attractions. That same year, he was honored with a window on Main Street, U.S.A., at Disneyland and was named a Disney Legend. Nunis' window, located above Disney Showcase, reads: "Coast to Coast Peoplemoving, World Leader in Leisure Management, Dick Nunis, Proprietor, Founded 1955, Offices Anaheim, Orlando, Tokyo, Wave Machines a Specialty." The "Coast to Coast Peoplemoving" refers to Nunis' role in convincing hundreds of Disneyland cast members to move from California to Florida to help open and operate the Walt Disney World in 1971.

In 2022, Nunis released the memoir *Walt's Apprentice: Keeping the Disney Dream Alive*, which follows Disney's highlights, including the development and opening of Disneyland, Walt Disney World, EPCOT, Tokyo Disneyland, and Disneyland Paris, in addition to the pageantry for the 1960 Winter Olympics and the Disney attractions at the 1964–1965 New York World's Fair. He also shared anecdotes about learning directly from Walt and championing his vision as Disney expanded worldwide.

Nunis is survived by his wife Mary; his children, Rich, Lisa and Corey; and his grandchildren, Richie, Dean, Madison, Landon, Annabelle and Greyton.



Nunis

ON THE MOVE

Cedar Fair Entertainment Company announced a strategic reorganization to its corporate leadership structure.

Robert (Bob) White, who since 2021 has served as senior vice president of business intelligence, has been promoted to chief commercial officer, a new executive-level position created to better meet the challenges of today's dynamic consumer landscape and enhance the company's focus on driving guest demand. Additionally, **Christian Dieckmann** will step into an elevated role as chief strategy officer, focused on identifying growth opportunities and driving strategic initiatives at the company. Both promotions are effective immediately.



White



Dieckmann

As part of this strategic reorganization, **Kelley S. Ford** will transition out of the executive vice president and chief marketing officer position after serving 11 years in the post. To support the organizational change, she will remain employed in a non-executive role until March 29, 2024.



Ford

"I want to thank Kelley for her leadership and guidance over the years," said **Richard A. Zimmerman**, Cedar Fair's president and chief executive officer.

Zimmerman continued, "I am pleased to announce the promotions of Bob and Christian to new leadership roles within the company. Bob is a proven executive who has held key leadership roles across sales, marketing, and operations over his distinguished career in our industry. His wide range of experience perfectly complements the Cedar Fair leadership team, and I am confident he will make a significant impact on improving consumer demand and on driving growth in our business."

"Christian has a track record of building key relationships and successfully executing organizational growth strategies," added Zimmerman. "Since rejoining Cedar Fair over four years ago, he has played an instrumental role in shaping our company's evolution and strategic direction. I am immensely grateful for Christian's partnership and look forward to strengthening that collaboration as he embarks on his new and expanded role."

White, who has more than 40 years of experience in the amusement park industry, will be responsible for developing and directing the company's commercial strategies for guest acquisition. He will report directly to **Tim Fisher**, Cedar Fair's chief

operating officer. Dieckmann, who has a decade of experience in the location-based entertainment space, including eight years with Cedar Fair, will focus on developing and executing growth opportunities across the company's portfolio of properties. He will report directly to Zimmerman.

After a memorable tenure marked by innovation and dedication, **Marla Calico**, CFE, has announced her retirement as the president and CEO of the **International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE)**, effective December 31, 2024. With her leadership, the IAFE has seen unprecedented growth and advancement in the fair and exposition industry.

"As we think of strong foundations and exceptional mentors, one person that comes to mind that has had an impact on all our lives is Marla Calico," **Jo Reynolds**, IFMG, CFE, IAFE Board Chair, said. "She has helped build a strong foundation for the association, many fairs, and countless individuals."



Calico

"Leading the IAFE has been an incredible privilege and the highlight of my professional career," remarked Calico. "I am immensely proud of the progress we've achieved together, and I am confident that the association is well-positioned for continued success in the future."

The timeline and procedures for the selection process will be thoroughly outlined in the upcoming weeks. After the start of the new year, a search firm will be engaged to conduct a comprehensive search, ensuring the selection of a qualified candidate who will continue to uphold the IAFE's mission and values.

Baynum Amusement Solutions welcomes **Andy Maurek** as the director of their amusement division, marking a pivotal addition to the company's leadership team. Maurek assumes responsibility for developing new business, managing projects, cultivating pivotal client and vendor relationships, and spearheading growth efforts. Maurek began at Baynum Amusement Solutions on December 4.



Maurek

Maurek's journey commenced over 40 years ago at **Hyland Hills Water World**, where his hands-on approach and insightful strategies significantly contributed to the park's iconic reputation. During his seven-year tenure as vice president of business development at **ProSlide Technologies**, Maurek played a pivotal role in driving strategic initiatives that elevated the company to global prominence.

MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 12/18/23	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	125.96	130.41	71.72
Bowlero Corp.	BOWL	NYSE	11.32	17.45	8.85
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	38.13	47.95	34.04
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	44.70	47.45	33.78
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	49.39	51.54	31.65
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	48.03	49.10	33.92
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	11.99	44.00	7.17
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	4125.00	5820.00	3985.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.96	2.27	0.90
Lefoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	17.60	28.45	16.15
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	43.54	51.35	32.43
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.31	0.47	0.23
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	121.10	123.72	47.91
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	51.02	68.19	40.86
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	24.20	31.29	18.29
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	702.00	822.00	684.00
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	92.86	118.18	78.73
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	11.97	16.34	8.82
SUPPLIERS/OTHERS					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	119.00	148.50	108
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1114.00	1515.00	777.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	13.94	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 12/11/23	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$4.050	(\$0.957)
Midwest	\$3.900	(\$0.751)
Gulf Coast	\$3.640	(\$0.704)
Mountain	\$4.049	(\$0.978)
West Coast	\$4.310	(\$0.738)
California	\$5.367	(\$0.195)

CURRENCY

On 12/18/23 \$1 USD =

0.9177	EURO
0.7885	GBP (British Pound)
142.11	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8700	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.4910	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3372	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Accesso, California Mountain Resorts partner

ORLANDO — **Accesso Technology Group** announced a groundbreaking partnership with **California Mountain Resorts Company** (CMRC). This collaboration introduces an unparalleled skiing experience through the development and integration of five distinct mobile apps: the all-new Cali Pass, plus local mountain apps for four unique resort locations in California: Bear Valley, Dodge Ridge, China Peak and Mountain High. Through innovative marketing strategies and 3D GIS platforms, this partnership and app network offering is set to revolutionize the way users explore, engage, and enjoy skiing — both across California and around the world.

"We're thrilled to be working with California Mountain Resorts Company to introduce new industry-leading applications that deliver exceptional, personalized experiences to its guests," said **Ben Mathews**, Accesso senior vice president of enterprise solutions. "This partnership marks a significant milestone for our team as we continue to revolutionize the guest experience for our ski partners and create unforgettable moments on the slopes."

Through this partnership Accesso's guest experience management technology will power localized apps for four of CMRC's unique mountain resorts and the all-new Cali Pass — which unites the user experience across the four resorts, as well as 19 global "Powder Alliance" destinations within the global CMRC portfolio. The Cali Pass offers unlimited access to the four local mountains, as well as three-time-per-year access to the 19 global resorts.

Roller raises \$50 million in capital

MELBOURNE, Australia — **Roller**, an all-in-one, cloud-based venue management software solution built for attraction businesses, announced its latest funding round of \$50 million led by global software investor, **Insight Partners**. This latest funding round will provide additional resources and capacity to invest into Roller's platform and services, ultimately helping the company's customers to grow through delivering exceptional guest experiences.

Roller is a complete software platform for modern attractions and leisure venues. From humble origins, Roller is now a global business with over 1,500 leisure and attractions venues using its platform across 30 countries. The company's innovative products include: ticketing, point-of-sale, integrated payments, CRM, memberships, gift cards, waivers, self-serve kiosks, cashless wallets, the guest experience score and more. The business has also achieved more than five times revenue growth over the last three years and has done so in a capital efficient manner.

"We are thrilled to partner with the team at Insight Partners and welcome **Rachel Geller** to Roller's Board. This is an incredible moment for the business, our phenomenal team and our amazing customers around the world," stated **Luke Finn**, Roller's co-founder and CEO. "Whilst we have come so far, over more than a decade since starting the business, this is only the beginning. We are more excited than ever to accelerate our investment in helping our customers to grow and deliver amazing experiences for their guests."

The close of the round is subject to approval by Australia's Foreign Investment Review Board.

Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Safety is paramount in the attractions industry. For the last 10 years, **Katerina Koperna** has supported the work of **ASTM International F24** Committee members with dedication, poise, focus and even some fancy footwork.

Bringing industry professionals together for a positive impact

WEST CONSHOHOCKEN, Penn. — ASTM International's F24 Technical Committee on Amusement Rides and Devices (F24) is known for setting safety standards for the attractions industry. As manager, technical committee operations for F24 on Amusement Rides and Devices for ASTM International, Katerina Koperna focuses on bringing industry professionals together so that they can continue to enhance and develop critical safety standards. "No day is ever the same," Koperna said. "I work with volunteer members from four different technical committees, who are experts in their fields, on the development of content that gets balloted through our rigorous consensus process. The hope is it will then eventually meet the requirements to become a published standard. My days include assisting with the movement of standards through the consensus process, helping members communicate with one another, explaining the process, seeking opportunities to educate stakeholder groups on the value of ASTM International and much more."

While Koperna's days may sound overwhelming, she is energized by them. "I truly believe that ASTM helps our world work better and positively impacts society. The work provides protection to consumers who are often unaware that the products they purchase are tested to our standards."

Koperna's career began with roles that included planning and executing events for Indiana University of Pennsylvania, the National Constitution Center and the American Red Cross Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter. A summer position at Hersheypark with Jay Vending also showed her what it is like to work in a theme park.

"Growing up in Pennsylvania my family did not take big vacations.

However, we did visit Dorney Park, Knoebels and Hersheypark. They were special times. The joy and memories that come from visiting parks stay with families forever. As part of F24, I think about that doing this work. I am proud to have a small part in helping ensure such visits are safe.

"There is so much passion and the people on the F24 Committee genuinely love their work," she shared. "They are incredibly intelligent and have devoted countless hours to developing standards, ensuring every word is used intentionally. Their passion is contagious, and many are now my trusted colleagues and friends."

Along with F24, Koperna oversees three additional technical committees. "I manage F47 on Commercial Spaceflight, D18 on Soil and Rock, and D21 on Polishes," she said. "I'm a people person and each committee allows me to connect with others, learn from them and support their work."

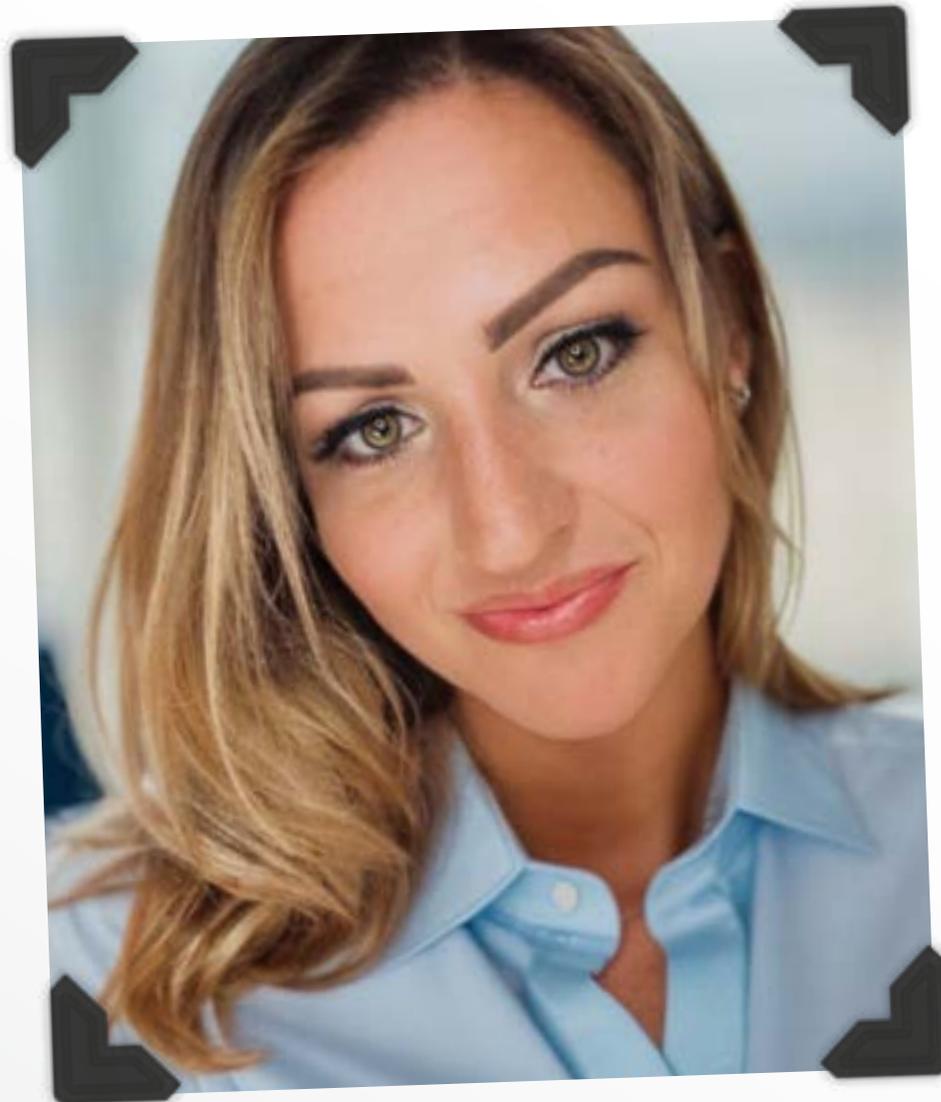
Supporting committee work has taken Koperna all over the world, and even allowed her to plan a meeting high in the sky.

"In April 2022, I had the privilege of co-hosting the first-ever standards meeting from space," she explained. "Our F47 Committee Chair Michael Lopez-Alegria was commander of the AX-1 mission to the International Space Station and he graciously conducted the meeting live from the ISS. It was unique and memorable."

Serving up-and-coming industry professionals is a part of Koperna's role that she knows is positively impacting the future.

"I also run ASTM's Emerging Professionals Program for all 148 committees. Now in its ninth year, through the support of a task group, we have graduated more than 300 members. Today many

Katerina Koperna ASTM International West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania



of our graduates are in leadership positions within their committees."

Koperna also points to F24 as a leader in broadening committee participation.

"Committee F24 has led the way to encourage companies to invite women from their teams to get involved and take part. Its Women's Networking Event is now in its 10th year and engages more than 40 women at each meeting. I'm so proud other committees have been inspired to now host their own women's events," she continued. "I encourage women who want to get involved with standards to seek support from their company and come to the table. Whether it's for F24 or another technical committee, everyone's input has value. This is advice I share with anyone who wants to grow in any aspect of their career: come to the table."

From early fundraising events to conversations from the stars, Koperna has always been a self-starter.

"I grew up in Pennsylvania's coal region and learned the importance of working hard for what you want. I always set new goals for myself to work toward. I am motivated through

my interactions with members and the work we do. And, of course, having two boys keeps me focused on providing a strong example."

While communication through technology is a key part of her role, Koperna says personal connection is where she shines.

"I feel the most fulfilled when I get to be with my members at in-person meetings and events. Getting to meet new people, building relationships, and taking part in the post-formal events all drive me. We travel, enjoy meals, engage with one another, maybe even dance a little — that's when it all really comes together.

"Safety and standards are serious, and the work is so important," Koperna continued. "I take my job very seriously and I work hard. At the end of my workday though, it's important to me to be able to leave it behind. Everyone knows the saying 'Work hard, play hard.' My motto is, 'Work hard, sing loud and dance the night away!'"

"The future of the attractions industry is exciting," she concluded. "I'm honored to be a part of it."

—Susan Storey

SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

▶ Embed's Success Squad, GoTrain — page 44 / Palace Entertainment launches safety medallion — page 46

Safety suppliers showcase innovation, dedication at IAAPA Expo

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — The IAAPA Expo 2023 floor was chockful of the amusement industry's usual suspects. And while it is no surprise the ride designers and manufacturers receive the majority of the spotlight during the expo while hawking their latest and greatest wares, so were the oft under-appreciated safety-focused innovators — the silent heroes of the industry.

These true heroes provide the necessary services and equipment that permit operators, parks and FECs to confidently purchase, offer and maintain those newest of new, record-breaking attractions.

At this year's expo, safety equipment suppliers, manufacturers, maintenance service providers, insurance brokers and all-around innovators were represented in force ready to provide an array of services that cater to every operator's needs.

Amusement Today shines the spotlight on several of those unsung heroes of the industry with a safety-focused mission who appeared at the IAAPA Expo in November 2023.

At the top of the list are the service organizations that bring all the companies and parks together into a society of like-minded and focused individuals. Organizations such as NEAAPA and AIMS International have been instrumental in proactively keeping the industry connected, informed and educated.

NEAAPA, "The



Audio Innovators Inc. help keep industry communication flowing throughout multiple facilities (above left). NAARSO delivers unparalleled safety training courses (above right). Insurance agencies such as McGowan Allied (below left) help indemnify operators against the unimaginable. Companies like Safe Slide Restoration (below right) are reinventing the industry's approach to restoration. AT/DAVID FAKE



Northeast's Entertainment Association," is dedicated to serving its membership by promoting safe operations, regional development, professional growth and commercial success of the amusement industry in the region. As the nation's premier regional attractions trade association, NEAAPA strives to serve its membership with the best educational opportunities, safety and advocacy awareness, and networking opportunities.

AIMS International is a non-profit association dedicated to improving amusement industry safety through

leadership in education. AIMS provides safety education and certification programs for Ride Operations, Maintenance, Inspection, and Aquatics. AIMS will also offer New Adventure Attractions and Risk Management, Safety & Security programs during the annual Safety Seminar on January 7-12, 2024, in Orlando. Online education is offered through AIMS Connected all year long.

Companies like Mobarro and TÜV NORD provide maintenance and operational support to anticipate and identify the weak links



in a park's operations and ensure they have the tools to strengthen those links to keep the organization uniformly fit and in compliance.

At the expo, Mobarro provided tours of the basic and advanced features of their platform and demonstrated the how and why they may be the best fit for operators' maintenance, safety and operations needs — regardless of the size of their site. Mobarro facilitates services for most areas of ride safety, maintenance and operations, including water quality, food services and even zoological regulatory checks. Morey's Piers and Beachfront

Operations Manager Will Morey says, "Mobarro streamlines checklists and reporting leading to enhancements to both. Their capability is robust, and their support is knowledgeable and swift."

TÜV NORD of Netherlands explained that it is their intention "to make sure that fun and thrills are absolutely safe. Machines driving rides must work extremely. Everyone benefits from it; the risk of accidents is minimized, and operating costs are reduced."

TÜV NORD inspects

▶ See SUPPLIERS, page 34

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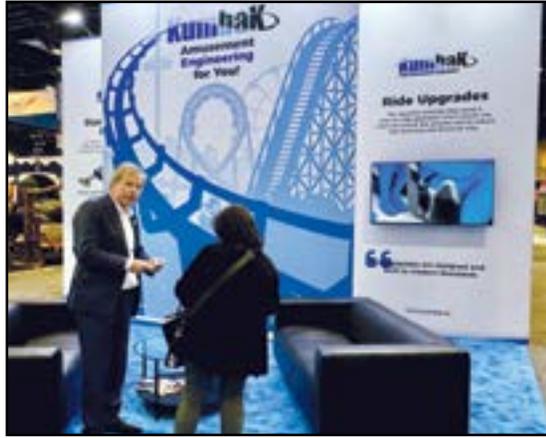
► **SUPPLIERS**

Continued from page 33

rides according to EN13782/13814/ASTM and is pleased to advise and support operators anywhere in the world with inspections that enhance customer trust and confidence, provide greater cost-effectiveness through safety and functionality, minimize accident risk and increase certainty of legal compliance and reliability of operators' equipment.

Wheel suppliers and safety innovators like **Maclan Corporation** and **Uremet Corporation** are instrumental not only in manufacturing reliable wheels for attractions but also in retrofitting or reengineering equipment of defunct manufacturers.

Maclan Corporation is approaching 50 years of serving the amusement industry as a manufacturer of polyurethane and rubber products and creates dynamic roller coaster wheels and parts for amusement industry customers across the U.S. and around the globe. Manufacturing new wheels to O.E.M. specifica-



Kumbak (above left) offers a wide range of technical services, products and assistance. Ralph S. Alberts Company is a full-service, multifaceted custom molder (above right). AT/DAVID FAKE



tions and refurbishing used, worn-out wheels many times over, Maclan's goal is to provide the highest quality wheels and products, with the service operators expect, at a recognizable value.

Uremet Corporation was founded in 1992 and initially focused on bonding polyurethane to metal and developing manufacturing expertise and quality standards to consistently process polyurethane. Today Uremet is a leading provider of amusement wheels for the tallest and fastest rides in the world.

PPG Inc., Ralph S. Alberts Company and

Safe Slide Restoration are reinventing the industry's approach to restoration, preservation and safety. They are also responsible for doing this in a way that is aesthetically pleasing and durable.

PPG Inc. is a leading manufacturer of acrylic polyurethane paint. Their Ultra Low VOC line provides exceptional durability and vibrant color, along with easy application within parks. Its complete system has less than 50 g/L VOC and is AIM Compliant — the perfect choice for park signage and structures. Its MAP Ultra Low VOC can be brushed or rolled

within the park as recently as just before the park opens. PPG also offers a High-Performance Clear Coat line for chlorine resistance and protection against UV rays, impacts and abrasion.

Ralph S. Alberts Company is one of America's most resourceful, full-service, multifaceted custom molders. Each product they create is uniquely designed, molded and manufactured to meet the needs of the customer, creating a cost-effective and accurate product. They provide flexibility in tooling and molding techniques, coupled with fast

delivery of custom parts, taking pride in their service and their commitment to exceeding its customer's expectations since 1963.

Safe Slide Restoration is a water park restoration company specializing in coatings and restoration for water slides, play features, pools, and steel. Each Safe Slide team member is certified and dedicated to their customer's experience. Each process begins with park Inspections into restoration and carries through to providing a protection plan that keeps parks safe for the operator, their investment, and their customers.

Audio Innovators Inc. of Riverview, Florida, has been serving the industry since 1975. It offers solutions to keep communications flowing without interruption regardless of the situation by providing audio message repeating units, window intercoms, solar SAS, two-way radios and radio rentals.

Engineering innovators like **Kumbak, Birket Engineering** and **Safe-Strap**

► See SUPPLIERS, page 36

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► **SUPPLIERS**

Continued from page 34

Company are making the impossible a reality through their tireless efforts in holding us in place in a comfortable, safe way, or even “building a better mouse trap” for aging attractions and engineering once unimaginable products like cool stream.

Kumbak, “The Amusement Engineers,” is focused on providing specialized technical expertise to the worldwide amusement industry. With over 20 years of experience in the design, engineering, in-service support and improvement of roller coasters and other ride systems, Kumbak offers a wide range of technical services, products and assistance to amusement and theme parks and to companies involved in

the development and manufacture of new attractions.

Birket Engineering is a control system integrator, specializing in life-safety ride- and show-control systems for the themed entertainment industry. Birket designs, assembles, installs and commissions the hardware and software systems that control the world’s best-known attractions. It is proud to have equipment installed in every **Universal Studios** and **Walt Disney Company** park around the world. Birket’s latest innovation is cool steam release systems to prevent burns.

Safe-Strap Company LLC has been serving the amusement industry for more than 30 years. Working with both manufacturers and end users, Safe-Strap produces quality seat belts and replacements. The com-



AIMS International took time during IAAPA Expo to discuss its new Adventure Attractions and Risk Management, Safety & Security programs, which will be part of its annual Safety Seminar. AT/DAVID FAKE

pany continues to stay innovative to meet the changing needs of the industry with seat belts that are produced in the U.S.A., which allows them to control the process, ensuring quality, durability and the ability to customize.

And finally, insurance companies like **McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance** indemnify operators against the unimaginable. The company is the home of the IAAPA Elite Insurance Program. McGowan Allied Specialty

Insurance brings together an unmatched team of risk management professionals with over 40 years of expertise. Since 1983 it has continued to be solely dedicated to the amusement and entertainment industries. The strength of their partnership is delivering in-depth knowledge of the industry and advanced technology that brings a solid partner to the industries’ business needs. During the pandemic, McGowan Allied provided its clients with the assurance that they could get through the bad times and there was a light at the end of the tunnel.

Amusement Today applauds the tireless efforts and dedication of these and all the industry heroes for their contribution to keeping the amusement industry safe through innovative and timely products and services.

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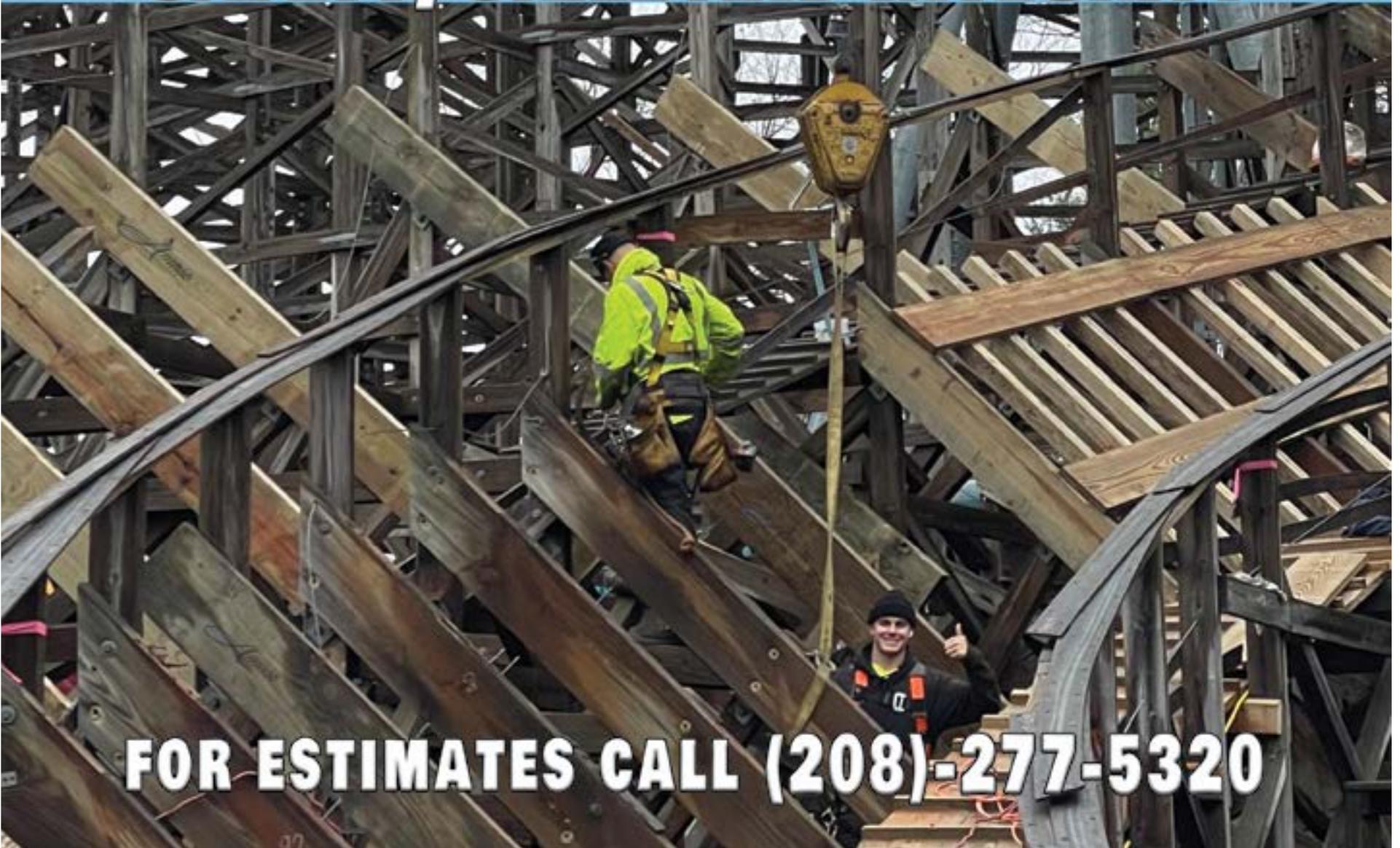
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EWorks Pro set to offer next-level LED lighting for attractions

AT: David Fake

Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — While EWorks Pro had a Booth on the floor at IAAPA Expo 2023, Peter Gaughn, Eworks Pro president, invited *Amusement Today* to a private suite at the Hilton connected to the Orange County Convention Center for a sneak-peak demo of the future of LED lighting.

"We've kind of taken LED lighting and advanced it five to 10 years into the future," said Gaughn "We are doing this privately because we don't want to freely showcase this technology on the show floor quite yet."

Gaughn then introduced Lars Koch, Eworks Pro vice president. Koch is truly the king of LED engineering.

Koch has been supplying the amusement industry with ride electronics and state-of-the-art lighting solutions since the 1980s. But it was in 2005 that Koch and Eworks Pro designed and manufactured the first full-color LED sys-



EWorks Pro's latest LED technology offers high-resolution LED packages that operate using a microprocessor that automatically adjusts amps to show no visible variation in brightness. AT/DAVID FAKE

tem in the world to be placed on a large-scale Ferris wheel. That order was placed by Will Morey, president of Morey's Piers in Wildwood, New Jersey, for their 165-foot Giant Wheel. The technology, relatively new at the time, created energy and excitement with visitors, which brought crowds and revenue to the park.

Since that first installation, Eworks has designed and installed LED lighting systems for hundreds of amusement rides from large Ferris wheels to portable car-

nival rides. The company continues to be the front runner in advancing LED technology for the amusement industry.

"The new lights are still looking the same way as they did years ago. They have the same shape, and you don't see a big difference at first glance. It is what is under the hood that makes the difference," explained Koch.

He went on to explain that the new lights have the same color and fixture, but now each LED has four pixels. "It's like HDTV versus the

old TV where the resolution is much higher," he said. "If you put the new lights in a series on the spoke of a Ferris wheel, you can make a much finer resolution picture on it. You can show a video for example. With the old LEDs when you have high fixtures close to a power supply, it's full brightness, but if you have a 200-foot run of cable in between the first and last fixture, the cable resistance makes the 36 volts only 24 volts, visibly lowering the output of the fixture at the end of the run. The new LEDs are very smart nowadays. They adjust themselves automatically and are just as bright as the first one."

He explained there's a processor chip in each LED. If there are 36 volts at the first light, that is the nominal voltage, but the last one is only 24 volts, due to copper resistance. The magic of the new LEDs is that the first fixture uses 36 volts and 100 milliamps. The last one is only 24 volts, but the processor

automatically calculates that it needs 180 milliamps to be just as bright as the first one.

"There is no need to manually adjust it. It is just baked into the DNA of these lights, so they are all equally bright every time," Lars added.

An added safety feature of the new lights is that they operate at a lower voltage than their predecessors.

Koch explained that many Chinese-manufactured LED packages operate at 48 volts or 60 volts DC. Adding that if something goes wrong on a ride with those LEDs installed, the operator risks catastrophic issues.

"People's lives are really at stake because they cannot escape that high DC current," concluded Koch.

It is easy to see why EWorks Pro is the most advanced amusement LED lighting manufacturer, as well as the most respected manufacturer in the amusement LED lighting industry.

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L I G H T I N G

Dollywood finds partners on road to increased sustainability

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — With the **Great Smoky Mountains** literally at **Dollywood's** doorstep, the overwhelming beauty of nature is always top-of-mind for both park guests and hosts. It is this natural atmosphere that inspires some of Dollywood's newest ways to maintain that splendor for years to come.

Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful (KTNRB) recently was named "2023 Nonprofit Recycler of the Year" by the **Tennessee Recycling Coalition** for a program launched at Dollywood. Through the program, approximately 350,000 cigarette butts have been recycled and turned into items like plastic outdoor furniture. That effort is just one of the recycling programs in place at Dollywood Parks & Resorts, and it takes place under the watchful eye of Dollywood's Grounds Manager **Bobby Johnson**.

Johnson has grown the park's recycling efforts during his tenure and has recently launched his most-ambitious program yet, one that he hopes will see the Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, park reach a goal of ultimately having 100% of its refuse not reach a landfill. Dollywood, along with partner **The Coca-Cola**

Company and Tennessee-based recycling company **iSustain**, are working as a team to increase recycling efforts to help eventually achieve that goal.

After searching for a recycling partner that could help with the unique needs of the theme park environment, Johnson found **Soddy-Daisy**, Tennessee-based **iSustain**. Founded by **Dawn** and **Mark Huber**, the company works with companies to identify the best and most effective recycling plans based on a number of factors.

"As a National Recycling Solution Provider for industry, it is exciting to be partnering and helping Dollywood make an impact right here in our home state and our treasured Smoky Mountains," said Mark Huber, vice president of business development for **iSustain**. "Dollywood faces unique recycling challenges due to their expansive property size and the sheer number of guests visiting each day, along with a diversity of waste. Across North America, implementation of creative recycling, zero landfill programs and full circularity solutions is the specialty of **iSustain**."

•isustainrecycling.com

E&A introduces EllisDocs customizable app service

MAITLAND, Fla. — For 40 years, **Ellis & Associates** (E&A) has been modernizing and improving aquatic safety. E&A has introduced more than 45 innovations in aquatic safety and launched yet another innovation this year at IAAPA Expo 2023 in Orlando, Florida.

EllisDocs, the proprietary new app-based technology solution, allows aquatic facilities — big or small — to digitize inspections, record-keeping and reports in one easy-to-use app.

"**EllisDocs** was created for aquatic facility managers by aquatic facility managers," said **Richard A. "RAC" Carroll**, senior vice president and chief operating officer of E&A. "Each **Ellis and Associates** member of the development team has more than a dozen years of experience managing aquatic facilities. Every day, our **Jeff Ellis Management** leaders are managing tasks and walking the deck just like every other aquatic facility manager in the world. The combined resources of our fulltime team, **Jeff Ellis Management** team, and our associates around the world, will contribute to the continuing improvements of the app, allowing **EllisDocs** to change as the industry changes, always staying on the forefront of innovation and technology."

EllisDocs comes loaded with dozens of templates, and the app is easy to customize. Functions include issue and track checklists, generate notifications and alerts, insert photos into reports and checklists, record daily inspections, record chemical levels, complete and store rescue reports, store photos, rack and document in-service, as well as generate reports and analyze data.

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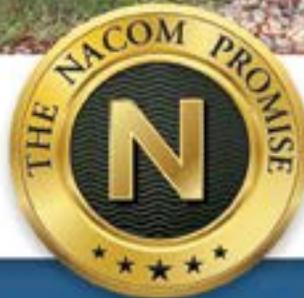


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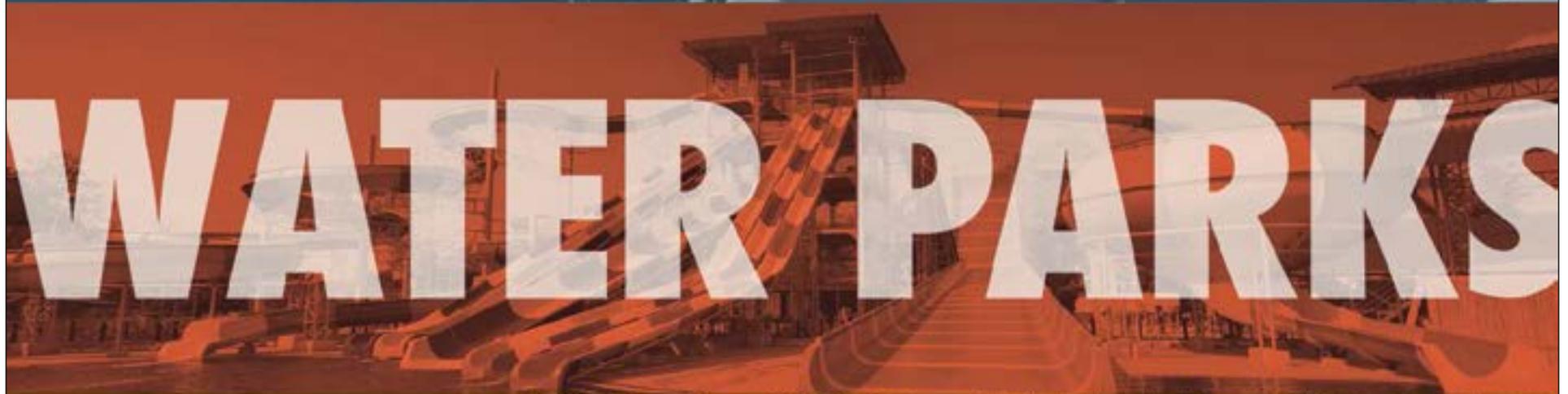
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FEC "Squad goals" redefined: Embed's Success Squad, GoTrain

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — On November 1, just ahead of IAAPA Expo 2023 in Orlando, Embed announced its latest industry-first products, Embed Success Squad and Embed GoTrain. The two new offerings are the newest additions to Embed's ever-growing catalog of free add-ons provided to FECs within the Embed Family.

Amusement Today sat down with Embed CEO Renee Welsh to discuss these products at the Expo and to discuss how Embed is championing customer success and ushering FECs into a new era of transformative growth with the release of the new products.

AT: Tell us what Embed is bringing to the table with Embed Success Squad and Embed GoTrain.

Welsh: Because we are the [technology and services] market leaders, what we really feel is important is for us to add as much value to our customers' businesses as possible. What we're launching here at IAAPA is the Success Squad. We are effectively committed to our customers, and we've actually created an entirely new team that has SaaS experts from companies with payment gurus like **Apple**, and **Google** and **Microsoft** help our customers get the most out of the Embed system.

Embed offers these products at no additional cost to its customers. How does that work?

Yes, and these offerings are just the two latest among a lot of freebies like Stats and Mobile Wallet that we're already offering to provide free marketing collateral to our customers.

Basically, we are offering access to a website of marketing material that can be branded specific



Renee Welsh

to the customers. They can brand in their own IP and effectively zone out and market properly to their customers. Let me take you through them to better illustrate how this is accomplished.

Mobile Wallet was launched in 2019. It's used globally now by hundreds of customers. The success of this product has really been a highlight for us. It was our first step from business-to-business-to-consumer and really stepping into looking at how our technology can impact the guest experience and also drive value and revenue to the operators.

What we've seen is that the average reload value has increased from credit cards from \$30 to \$50. In some cases, though, our data shows that it's far in excess of \$50. We think that's driven by multiple factors. One is just the customer's confidence that they're not losing the game card, it's in their own electronic wallet. So, they're confident to reload it at a higher value rather than being concerned about losing [the card].

I think this has really revolutionized the opportunity to build loyalty and a relationship with the guest, even though 60% of those reloads are done outside the venue.

All this data is very prevalent in our marketing. We really have focused on the value this adds to the operator. Because there's a lot of time spent in processing cash and



Embed announced its new Success Squad and GoTrain products ahead of IAAPA Expo 2023 with the new product lines heavily showcased at the company's booth on the exhibit floor.
AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



credit cards versus our mobile wallet saving time operationally while increasing their revenue as a result of these products.

The second thing we now have as part of our Success Squad is our payment gurus with years and years of experience in payments. And this is a live example of what we've been able to achieve over the last few months with a guru in place. Our customers obviously take credit cards on the premises and via the mobile wallet, and there's merchant fees associated with that. There's also a lot of hidden fees that I don't think people are aware of.

So, what we've been able to do with Success Squad is send [a guru] into venues to really look at and consult with them to assess what they're really paying. In one case, we've managed to save an operator \$57,000 a year, which equates to over \$500,000 over 10 years. This is a perfect example when we talk about game changers or

life changers. It is revenue that is already being generated in the venue. They're just increasing their profitability as a result of Embed going in and having a look at it for them and telling them where they can save overhead costs.

What about GoTrain? How does that provide value added to the FECs in the Embed family?

With GoTrain, we've created a new gamified on-premise training experience. Our team effectively descends on the customer's operation and trains all their staff on how to maximize Embed's solution. They do this in the form of a fun game show for the staff.

And all of this is in person?

Yes. All in-person. We do that intentionally because we build relationships and rapport with that person. Being onsite enables us to really have that one-to-one discussion about the value we can add.

What feedback have you received from your current customers?

The training is transformational. We've had phenomenal feedback from our customers. It is

a great service we provide and it's all complimentary. We feel like it's a step in the right direction in terms of our commitment to our customers.

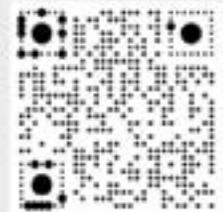
Are you already thinking ahead about what is the next game changer you will be offering your customers, the Embed Family?

I think that it would be remiss of me not to mention AI and machine learning. Everyone's hearing about it. It's being challenged in different areas and supported in others, but we're looking at how it can benefit our operations, particularly from a labor perspective and from a dynamic pricing perspective. We feel that there's a lot of opportunity there to use that technology in the right way to benefit the operators.

Also, with our new reader being offered as "unlocked," it will open a lot of capabilities in the new year. We always feel that there is an opportunity to get smarter and better at how we build loyalty and how we build a relationship with our guests. So, that's another thing that we are always looking at.



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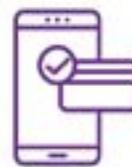
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Palace safety medallion for staff, others throughout industry

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

WEST MIFFLIN, Pa. — Last January, **Palace Entertainment** rolled out a safety recognition award for staff throughout their North American operation, recognizing the service they are providing in the safety arena.



Jim Bowe

Initially, the medallion was presented to full-time safety personnel at seven of their parks. The people all came from various backgrounds in the amusement industry: **United States Air Force** fire department, construction industry, **U.S. Navy** safety officer in diving, fire captain, waterpark lifeguard, and a lifeline helicopter medical evacuation director.

The award was created by **Jim Bowe**, director of health, safety and environment for Palace Entertainment.

He has a background in communications and background investigations in the U.S. Air Force.

“We like to put a positive spin on this work within [the] Palace [organization]. It gives us immediate recognition to somebody, you know, give them an ‘at-a-boy’ and give them something tangible to hold onto,” said Bowe. “They’re not going to get a plaque [that’s] engraved and wait for that to come. If you see somebody doing



Palace Entertainment rolled out a safety recognition award: a two-sided “Safety First” medallion. COURTESY PALACE ENTERTAINMENT

a great job, you can come up to them, give them a handshake and hand them one of these coins.”

Anyone in the Palace organization can get one, but it is not intended for everyone to get one.

“Each parks safety officer and general manager have these. At the corporate level, department directors

and managers [have received one],” said Bowe. Each park can award them to deserving individuals who excel in the safety arena. Bowe also awards them when he is traveling to parks within the chain when merited. “If we see something, we can just give one to somebody directly. Sometimes we

[award] them as part of a presentation.” Over 100 were given out in the inaugural year.

“At **Story Land** (Glen, New Hampshire) we have a first-year, 14-year-old that noticed a guest sitting there, on a pathway, that something didn’t look

► See PALACE, page 47

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► **PALACE**

Continued from page 46

right. An employee talked to the guest, [and] asked if he needed anything. He felt that something just wasn't right. He had the MPs come and check it out. It turned out, the person was in medical distress and was life-lined away with a cardiac issue," Bowe said.

Reaction within the organization has been well received. "It's really nice (although it's kind of embarrassing for teenagers) to be able to stand somebody out in front of their peers at the morning meeting, award them this coin and tell everybody what this person did. Again, it's something that is positive," said Bowe.

He encourages the park where the award is given to write a follow-up letter to the recipient from the general manager or safety officer.

At **Dutch Wonderland**, a safety medallion was awarded to a mechanic who went above and beyond and designed a warning system for the area where the railroad train goes underneath the monorail station in the back of the park.

"It's sort of a blind spot, in the whole tunnel area. One of our mechanics invented, on his own, a sensor system so the train [operator], when approaching there, will see a warning light flashing when they approach if there's anybody in that tunnel. So, it's an alert system that monitors where guests ought not to be," Bowe reported.

It is starting to be known throughout the industry.

"We've given a couple out in the industry. We gave one to **Phil [Slaggett]**, to recognize him for the [Pennsylvania Ride] Safety seminar twice a year; It has an impact on safety here in Pennsylvania. **M.J. Brewer** was awarded one last year

for all of her work there at **AIMS International**. It's starting to spread outside. First, the knowledge of it has to spread within our company, and then other people start to find out. I think the concept is something that can be really valuable," Bowe said.

Visitors to the corporate offices have noticed the ones that

Palace employees have on display, generating interest and questions.

"My goal is that it becomes something that people want, and they start watching for safe behavior. Our job is to keep guests from getting hurt. Anytime we can put a positive spin on it and recognize the things that are done right, it's much

better to use the carrot than to use the stick to discipline somebody."

Reflecting on his background, Bowe said, "I know within the military, these coins are sought after. You and I and most people, tend to know when we've done something wrong, and we don't want to necessarily be beaten up by it. At the

same time, it's not very common to go and just tell people you have done a good job and noticed. That's the whole idea. So, hopefully, we can continue to grow this and get it to continue to expand [with] the concept being that our managers start looking for things that go right and not just those things that go wrong."

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More than 150 attend fall Pa. Amusement Ride Safety Seminar

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Offered semi-annually each spring and fall, the Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar trains and tests hundreds of amusement ride operators throughout Pennsylvania and other states. During the seminar — which ran November 7-9, 2023 — 71 instructors taught more than 200 hours of training to 163 students in attendance. courses ranged from various amusement operations and ride safety training. In addition, testing was conducted by third-party operator Slaggert Risk Management for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Ride and Measurements Standards. Participants and instructors came primarily from Pennsylvania, however, there were also attendees



There were 163 attendees for the fall Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar. This view was from a general session on the Pennsylvania Ride Safety Inspection act, inspector qualifications and reporting system. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

from California, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Virginia. This is the 36th time the program has been offered. Two-thirds of the instructors were new.

Amusement parks that sent attendees included Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom, Hersheypark,

Lakemont Park and Palace Entertainment parks. On the portable side, Carnival Concessions, Reinhart Amusements and Sunshine Shows were in attendance.

Each time the ride safety inspector classes are offered, attendees select the specialty courses they feel are beneficial for their

abilities, career path, job description and employer benefit. Some of the topics included What Turns an Accident Into a Lawsuit; Creating a Culture of Safety; sling inspection; developing an ASTM compliant ride evacuation plan; engine, coach and car maintenance; inflatables – lessons learned; inspection of mud runs and land-based obstacle courses; mechanical bulls and surf simulators; metal fatigue, corrosion and rust; rigging safety; hydraulics – schematic systems and Expert Witness – What to Know.

One of the new sessions this time was Acronyms Found in the Amusement Industry, presented by

Charma Wilderson with Safe Strap Co LLC. They included many like NDT, PSE, ANSI, ISO, ASCE, OSHA, PE, IFEA, IISA, TEA, SLA and of course PDA (Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture). She covered those found in all aspects of the industry, including organizations, associations, certifications/ accreditations and trade shows.

Phil Slaggert, coordinator of the ride safety seminar, provided an overview. [The training is for] “license holders in the Commonwealth from general qualified to class two to class one, [and covered] inflatables, extreme sports, walk-thru attractions and a new set of courses for hayrides and trackless attractions. We added a couple of classes to our event management track — lessons learned from the first attack on the trade center and Stop the Bleed.”

Troy Benner, owner of Sunshine Shows, talked about his take on the program halfway through the fall offering: “It’s been very well received, as far as the people they are learning a lot from. Next

▶ See SEMINAR, page 50

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Pictured are some of the staff of the Amusement Ride Safety Division. Seated (l to r): Randall Arndt; Joe Filoramo, division supervisor and Leonard Adams, III. Standing (l to r): Dennis Paczkowski, Tony Catalano and Phil Slaggert, coordinator of the ride safety seminar. Arndt, Adams, Paczkowski and Catalano are all amusement ride Quality Assurance Inspectors. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

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First time instructor, Jonathan Werner, operations manager for Pennhurst Asylum and Eloise Asylum haunted attractions conducted numerous sessions. These included Emergency Action Plans for the Haunted Attractions Industry, Escape Rooms: Considerations for Public Safety and Youth Protection for Haunted Attractions. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

► **SEMINAR**
 Continued from page 48

class coming up (for him) is going to be corrosion and wear of metals, where there's a lot of things about electrical to learn."

feels the training value is "100%. Any information you have is better than no information, as far as making things safer for the public."

Networking is also invaluable at these sessions. "Word of mouth means a lot, as far as learning [about] incidents and accidents that happened throughout Pennsylvania and making things better and improving equipment to make them safer," Benner said.

Instructor **Jonathan Werner**, operations manager for **Pennhurst Asylum** haunted attraction and **Eloise Asylum** haunted attraction, (Spring City, Pennsylvania and Westland, Michigan) commented on a course he conducted: "What we just presented was a crash course in emergency action plans for the haunted entertainment industry, with a focus on proper procedures and building and training programs. One of the most important takeaways is that pre-planning will always, always be the best decision, and that trying to react to a situation is never the best course of action. You take the time before, put your stuff in place, make sure your framework is in place, and then you're just following

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► See SEMINAR, page 52



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SAFETY MARKET PLACE

► SEMINAR Continued from page 50

a blueprint. You're not just coming up with it on the fly." He added, "I think safety programs like this are quite literally one of the most important things in the entire industry."

Testing was provided for Class 1 and 2 ride inspectors, general qualified inspectors and specialized inspectors. The Pennsylvania certification is recognized in many states across the country, including RCMT (Recognized Certified Maintenance Technician), the program in place in New Jersey.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has inspected and registered amusement rides under the Amusement Ride Safety Act since 1984 and regularly participates in education and outreach seminars that include classes and hands-on demonstrations. The next Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar is scheduled for February 27 - 29 at the Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center, Harrisburg. That one will have additional courses in water attractions, go-karts and bumper boats.

• paridesafety.com

The Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminars are not to be confused with the annual PACE (Parks and Carnival Education) seminar, jointly sponsored by the Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association (PSSA) and the Pennsylvania Amusement Park & Attractions Association (PAPA). That seminar, presented by the National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO), is scheduled for late October 2024. Dates, classroom and hands-on locations to be determined. PACE offers inspector training for Pennsylvania certified inspectors and / or NAARSO levels.

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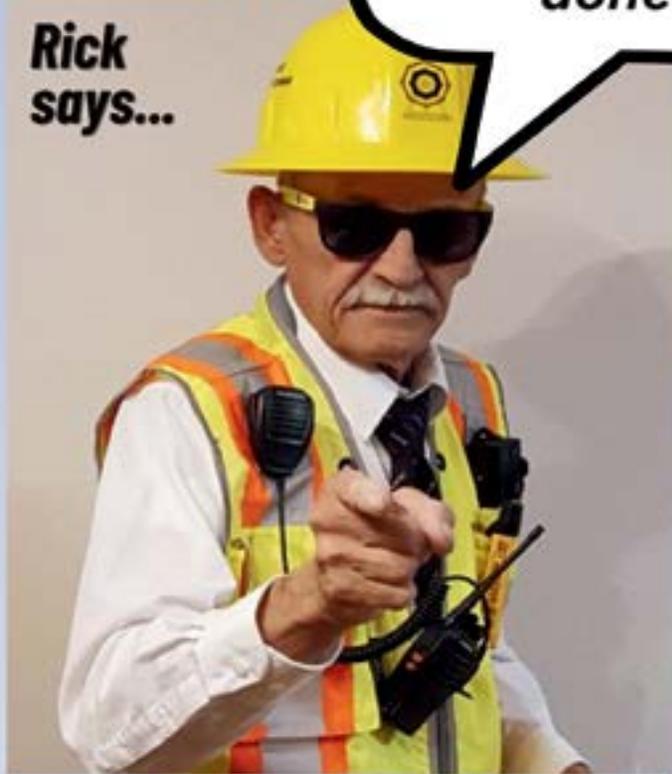


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Pa. Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board meets in December

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Pennsylvania’s amusement ride safety program is designed to ensure all rides operating in the state meet rigorous safety requirements. This is partially accomplished with the Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board which meets four times each year. Representatives from the amusement and fair industry, along with community volunteers selected at large, met at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture headquarters in early December for a Pennsylvania Ride Safety Advisory Board meeting. At each quarterly meeting, members discuss and either accept, conditionally accept, table or reject new ride approvals that are submitted. Input from this 11-person body is used to help the Bureau of Ride & Measurement Standards



determine their course of action on a particular ride approval process. (Note: All communities mentioned are in Pennsylvania.)

Walt Remmert, director of the bureau, filling in for **Fred Strathmeyer**, deputy secretary of agriculture, updated board members on the newest board member, **James Spang, Jr.** He is serving for the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs, taking the spot held by **John D. Blaney**, who resigned due to health reasons. “Mr. Spang comes to us from the **Great Allentown Fair** where he has been involved for more than 40 years. He comes to

the board with a wealth of experience in police activities, security and emergency management with a career — multiple careers, actually — in law enforcement and emergency management spanning decades,” said Remmert.

There were six ride/ attraction approvals and one safety alert to come before the advisory board, along with two control system updates. It was noted that an additional 29 rides are going back to summer 2022 still waiting for final approval. Some applications are incomplete, while many of those will be on the March meeting agenda.

Remmert also mentioned since 1992, the state has records on 850 operators with 12,000 attractions.

Approval was given to the Ninja and Ropes course, **Nova Trampoline Park**, Wyoming (**Angel Playground Equipment**); Bittler miniature railroad train (formerly **Don Hanson’s Amusement Park**) Retherford Village LLC, Benton (**Bittler**); Extreme pendulum ride, **BJP Rides**, Douglasville (**Bojux s.r.o**); Cannonball 40, **Kalahari Resorts**, (ProSlide Technology, Inc.) and Climbing Wall, **Sakanac Rock — Camp Sakanac**, Spring City. A safety alert was issued for the Wipeout (or Meltdown) obstacle course at all four **Urban Air Adventure Parks** in the Commonwealth. In essence, the alert said that trampolines are not

allowed to be used as fall mitigation.

After the approval portion, **Steve Gorman** with **Waldameer Park & Water World**, Erie, reported on two control system updates being done to two of their rides. **Irvine Ondrey Engineering** is updating the control system to Ravine Flyer II (**The Gravity Group**) with a system by **Entech**. The **O. D. Hopkins** Thunder River Log Flume control system is being updated by **WhiteWater West**, which used a system provided by the manufacturer.

2024 dates were set for ride safety advisor board meetings: March 11, June 11, September 12 and December 10. All meetings take place at 10 a.m., third-floor conference room, Department of Agriculture, Harrisburg.



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In addition to rides, Reverchon provides maintenance service

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAMOIS-SUR-SEINE, France — When one hears the name **Reverchon**, rides such as flumes, spinning coasters and bumper cars come to mind. It is a French company that is family owned since 1927. But there is another branch of the company that is less familiar: **Reverchon SAMC**.

“It’s a subsidiary of the main company,” said **Alexa Reverchon Gauran**, communications. “Reverchon is a family-owned business created by my great grandfather almost 100 years ago. Twenty years ago, our grandfather developed this subsidiary which is mainly maintenance for parks but for the rides that have been manufactured by other [companies].”

SAMC stands for Service Attractions Maintenance Composites. SAMC has been a specialist in attractions maintenance, offering turn-key services in the field of ride maintenance and specializes in composite materials.

“We also have this ser-



Alexa Reverchon Gauran and Nicholas Reverchon are seen at their booth at IAAPA Expo 2023 in Orlando (above left). Reverchon is known for its spinning coasters (above right) and other rides, but they offer maintenance service as well. COURTESY REVERCHON



vice, SAMC, for other rides, and we do their rehabilitation. We help [parks] if they have an issue — a safety issue or technical parts. We help the directors of maintenance,” she said.

She told *Amusement Today*: “Body, boats, buoys, slides, scenery, structural reinforcements, thematic modifications, models, molds, composite parts, protection, technical public access — we work in collaboration with parks for rehabilitation, development projects, long-term cycling or on-site emergency intervention.”

Currently, clients are heavily concentrated in France and the other areas in Europe. For such work, SAMC is contracted by the operators of the rides. It collaborates with renowned parks and groups such as **Compagnie des Alpes, Looping** and others on long-term development projects, cyclical maintenance and on-site emergency interventions.

One such example was an old-time car ride at **Cobac Parc**, where SAMC worked on cleaning, molding, painting, rehab and reassembling. “One of the main goals

is to assist as much as possible the technical teams on their daily work,” she said. “[Regarding] passenger safety, SAMC offers a global service, working with technical teams to design systems that optimize long-term maintenance times, which are costly in terms of human resources and energy.”

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nections with the chassis.

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“In addition to the production of many kinds of rides, as a reminder, we manufactured our first flume ride in the 1970s. Years later, we were also the inventor of the original spinning coaster in the 1990s,” Reverchon Gauran stated.

To date, the company has sold more than 3,000 rides.

“Regarding the EXPO in Orlando, we would like to remind [customers] that we presented new safety bars for our spinning coaster,” said Reverchon Gauran. “These offer more security that complies with the new standards EN 13814, ASTM. Each guest will have their own safety bar. This option can be installed on existing rides, or it can be the opportunity to redesign the ride entirely with our team.”

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Morgan's Wonderland is underway with biggest expansion ever

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO —

When Morgan's Wonderland opened in 2010, it was instantly recognized as a special place. Founder and Creator Gordon Hartman wanted to build a theme park designed where children and families of all abilities could play together. Since then, the park has welcomed close to 3 million guests from all 50 states and more than 120 countries.

"It's now time to refresh and add new elements that will constitute our largest expansion since we opened in 2010," said Hartman.

For 2024, the park is adding \$6 million in new attractions. For this new influx of capital to happen, the park temporarily closed its gates for heavy construction to begin. Following Halloween, the park closed for four months.

"Everything we do that has Morgan's name on it is big," Hartman told *Amusement Today*. "We felt by listening to people and what they wanted to see and the kind of improvements we could make, we needed to bring back some original elements of the park, the look of it. Even with maintenance, we need to take time out and bring it back to its original luster. We've been hearing people ask about the lake and if we can use it."

Manufactured by Altitude Rides and Attractions in Utah, Rocket's Sky Flight Adventure will be a Soaring Eagle zipline that will fly over the lake. A first-of-its-kind, four-seater carriage can accommodate riders with disabilities and special needs. This same



Rocket's Sky Flight Adventure will be the first four-seater Soaring Eagle; the carriage is seen here at Altitude Rides and Attractions' headquarters (above). A 4D Cinema (right) will provide a roller coaster-type experience for visitors of all abilities. AT/GARY SLADE; COURTESY MORGAN'S WONDERLAND

company successfully created the first-of-its-kind two-seater zipline at Morgan's Wonderland Camp that accommodated specific needs and is now committed to increasing capacity and allowing more riders to enjoy the thrill of ziplining at Morgan's Wonderland. In this new iteration, a pair of riders will sit back-to-back in the carriage allowing for two different experiences on one zipline. The carriage also will have room for respiratory equipment or other gear required by the rider with special needs, plus additional restraints for riders with poor head and upper body control.

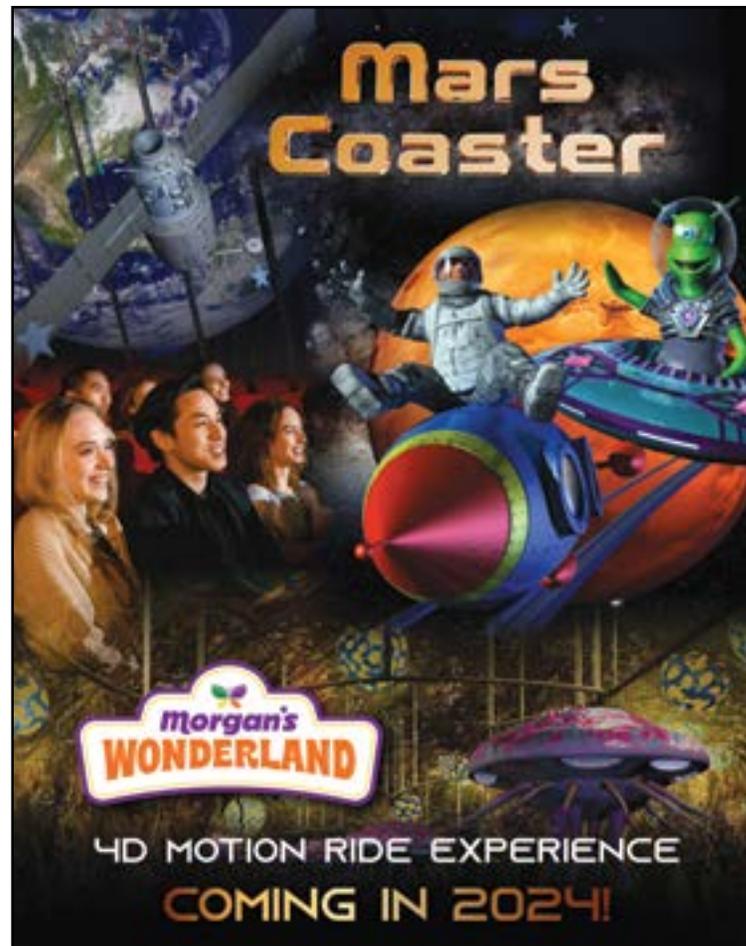
"It's eye-opening — and mind-opening — to hear and understand what they are doing," said Logan Checketts, president, Altitude Rides and Attractions. "Who they are serving and why they are doing it ... the whole process that goes into it makes you peel back some thought processes and makes you

look at it in a whole new way. It goes down to the basics; we're making modifications on this that I never would have thought about in my entire life — mounting oxygen bottle holders and respirator boxes, footrests and neck rests and bands that hold their head in place. There are so many considerations. People care about each other; when you take a fresh look at this and what their needs are, it's inspiring."

A passenger boat ride will also take visitors out on the water. Two barges will offer guests a ride on the lake, possibly lasting about 10 minutes. A catch-and-release program allows guests to fish, but the new addition lets guests take full advantage of the lake.

"All passengers, including guests in wheelchairs, will board the covered boat from a newly-constructed pier and dock adjacent to the Pirate Island playscape, then enjoy a smooth cruise around the lake," said Richard Pretlow, park president. "Passengers on the boat ride will have the best view of guests enjoying the new zipline crossing directly over the lake."

A 4D Cinema can have rotating content for certain seasons of the year, but one goal achieved was to be able to create a roller coaster-like experience even for people who cannot leave their wheelchairs. Electric actuators will deliver smooth and accurate motion effects. For the media content, a custom video screen sized for guests



of all abilities, and a motion-disengage option for those who do not wish to experience coaster-like sensations will be available.

The attraction is being supplied by SimEx-Iwerks.

"We learned about what [Morgan's Wonderland] was doing about a year ago," said Mike Frueh, senior vice president, licensing and distribution. "We have another attraction at the San Antonio Zoo, and while there we took a look at Morgan's and knew this is a place that we wanted to do something. They were looking for a roller coaster type of simulation but one all the guests could experience. We're proud to be a part of that expansion. We have a whole [media] catalog that they can explore."

Jette's Wonder Bikes, a wheelchair-accessible ride named for a park mascot, keeps with the park's butterfly theme of enabling everyone — especially those with special needs — to soar to new heights of enjoyment. It is supplied by Zamperla.

"It has been a collaboration through and through," said Michael Coleman, North American sales, Zamperla. "The application of their internal IP into our existing all-access Magic

Bikes was a seamless transition. It's an evolution of what we did at Give Kids The World. As an organization, we take an approach to accessibility beyond compliance. We want to provide ultra-accessible rides to the market."

The goal is to have the expansion completed this spring.

"I'm excited about the growth," said Pretlow. "When you look at the park, it's such a great facility, and what we do is so great. Coming here makes you see the industry differently. I'm excited we're able to expand on that."

Upgrades to food outlets and other park facilities will complement the new additions.

"Even though the park is closed, we don't have to lay off any staff," Pretlow told AT. "We still have plenty going on during the off-season, and we're supporting them with that. We're preparing for new training."

Of note, because the park could not offer "A Wonderland Christmas" in 2023, SeaWorld San Antonio stepped in and allowed season pass holders to enjoy its holiday festival in support of Morgan's Wonderland.

"It's the power of partnership," Pretlow said.



Jette's Wonder Bikes from Zamperla has two fully accessible vehicles to accommodate wheelchairs. COURTESY MORGAN'S WONDERLAND



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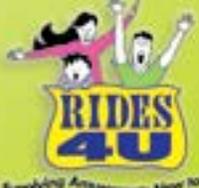


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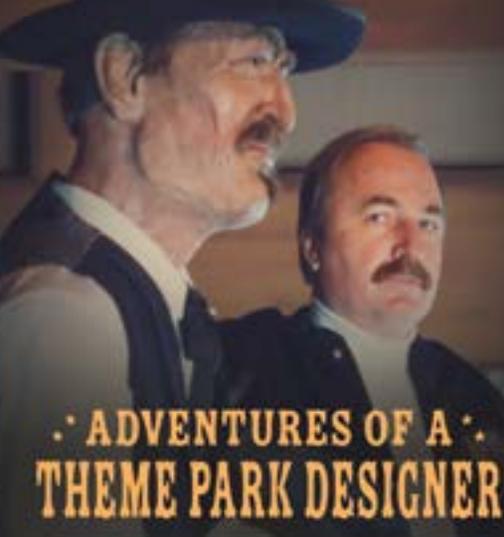
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IAAPA Expo sets records, encounters rain, showcases new ideas

More than 26,500 buyers on show floor; highest since 2019

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO — To call it a busy week would be an understatement. Considering that the global pandemic isn't necessarily that far in the rear-view mirror, the energy and strength of the amusement industry were evident at the IAAPA Expo 2023.

"This was my 33rd show; I will tell you it was the highest energy level I had ever seen," said **Michael Shelton**, vice president and executive director for IAAPA North America. "People were so engaged and excited to be at this show. It speaks to the strength and prosperity of this industry. I thought the energy level was unmatched by any show I had ever been to."

Held at the Orange County Convention Center, exhibitors filled more than 550,000 square feet of space, which included spilling out the hall into the north and south parking lots. According to the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions**, 1,147 companies exhibited.

Attendance was notably strong, even with the growth of the European and Asian Expos earlier in the year. In IAAPA's eyes, it was a record-setting attendance. Of 41,236 registrations, 36,173 badges were picked up, which was the most ever for any Expo.

"What we started doing [is looking at] actual badges picked up on site," Shelton told *Amusement Today*. "We thought it would be better to be transparent with our members and our visitors on true traffic. That number of badges picked up was

the highest in attendance at our show. It's a great way to report it. Certainly, marketers love the big number, but I think knowing that actual 36,000-plus people came and enjoyed the show is a worthwhile and notable number."

Official dates were November 13 – 17, with educational sessions beginning on Monday. Tuesday's Opening Ceremony kicked off the core days of the Expo in standing-room-only fashion. In addition to catching glimpses of new installations around the world, attendees enjoyed performances from area parks. IAAPA's leadership also addressed the crowd.

"I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the thousands of dedicated attractions professionals who make IAAPA Expo the thriving global community it is today," said **Jakob Wahl**, president and chief executive officer for IAAPA. "Your passion and dedication to continuously innovate and share best practices with each other is what makes this event so special. It is wonderful to see everyone collaborate for the good of the attractions industry and bring joy and smiles to millions of guests all around the world."

Once the trade show floor opened, the aisles were full.

"We added some new things this year, such as the alcohol beverage and innovation pavilion," said Shelton. "It shouldn't come as a surprise that it was popular, but it was extremely popular. That's such a growing segment of our industry — alcohol in the parks — alongside our attractions."

In addition to a trade show floor filled with everything an operator might need to find, there were also 140 learning opportunities



Thousands descended upon the entrances to the trade show floor (above). Several learning opportunities took place during the week of IAAPA Expo (below). AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY IAAPA NEWS

for attendees, whether it was seminars, networking receptions or EDUSessions.

Brian Knoebel of **Knoebels Amusement Resort** has long been a coordinator of one of the Expo's popular family-centered operations workshops. He finds it to be a positive experience year after year.

"I recognize that regardless of my title, as a leader, I need to grow in this ever-changing world," he told AT. "Although Knoebels is a traditional amusement park, our business needs to adapt while maintaining our traditional nature. IAAPA's educational sessions allow me to learn from industry leaders who may share our challenges and can hopefully share solutions, too!"

Knoebel was quite pleased with how his session was received: "Co-hosting the annual Family Matters session with **Extreme Engineering's Phil Wilson** is an honor. It's very rewarding to hear the positive comments from attendees, panelists and



even my own family. This session facilitates challenging conversations that can be tough to initiate between family members. This year, our focus was generating discussions between owners and their staff. I challenge you to find another educational session that creates so much constructive dialogue!"

Melissa Bamford of **Baynum Solutions** also finds the educational program to be an asset to the Expo.

"Sitting on a panel this year held immense personal significance, as it allowed me to pay forward the invaluable

guidance and opportunities IAAPA once provided me as a first-time attendee, 15 years ago," she said. "The IAAPA education program is such a catalyst for personal and professional development—fostering growth, knowledge exchange and a shared passion for innovation."

EDUSessions lasted for a full hour, while EDUTalks were shorter opportunities at 20 minutes. The schedule of classes ran through Thursday, giving ample time for operators to find the

► EXPO

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information they needed.

“Our session received overwhelmingly positive feedback, scoring a remarkable 4.9 out of 5, which speaks volumes about the engagement and relevance it held for attendees,” said Bamford. “Given the esteemed expertise of my fellow panelists — **Sarah Kelley, Jonathan Smith, and Adam House** —seasoned professionals with years of industry experience and storied beginnings, I’m unsurprised by the reception our session received. **Jessi O’Daniel’s** ‘Swiftly’ moderation brought it all together beautifully.”

Bamford felt O’Daniel’s **Taylor Swift** theme throughout the session kept it hilarious and engaging for attendees, as well as the panelists.

“Hearing about best practices — or just their practices! — issues, solutions, and just shared situations from other industry professionals at seminars is inspiring, and I always learn something,” said **Terri Adams**, general manager, **Natural Bridge Caverns**. “Visiting with and rekindling friendships with peers, as well as meeting new people, gives me folks to reach out to or bounce thoughts off of. Seeing the suppliers and getting to talk to them



EPCOT’s **Voices of Liberty** were one of the entertainment segments during the Opening Ceremony (above left). More than **550,000 square feet of exhibit space** kept attendees occupied for the whole show (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN



directly about the vast variety of goods and services at the Expo is inspiring!”

Colleague **Winter Prosapio** (Natural Bridge Caverns, communications) agreed with Adams about the importance of networking: “A crisis is not the ideal setting to determine where you stand on a volatile issue — and more of us are being drawn into these situations every day. I recommend leadership spot hot topics that are arising nationally and discuss how these issues could impact the business. The most important guidance: be sure your decisions align with your brand values.”

Another takeaway for Prosapio: “Today’s crisis environment means we often have to rely on others to speak

up — now is the time to connect with organizations. From your local health department to vendors to educators and political leaders, it’s likely at some point you’ll need this network to help you when things get challenging.”

Other highlights of the week:

- EDUTours allowed visitors to go behind the scenes at various parks in the region to look at attractions up close.

- A seemingly endless cavalcade of coaster car “reveals” gathered hundreds for publicity announcements.

- **Scott O’Neil**, CEO of **Merlin Entertainments**, spoke at the Leadership Breakfast. His keynote address highlighted his leadership philosophy and perspectives on the attractions industry.

- A record-setting drone show captivated those looking to the skies after exiting the hall on Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

- Fundraising efforts for **Give Kids The World Village**, a charitable organization dedicated to creating magical wish vacations for critically ill children and their families, were accomplished through various events held throughout the week. These included the 20th Annual IAAPA International Charity Golf Tournament,

the 13th Annual IAAPA Charity Motorcycle Run, and the 17th Annual IAAPA Footprints from the Heart 5k Fun Run and 1 Mile Walk. Those events, plus donations made from generous IAAPA attendees, raised an impressive total of \$160,000 to support the Give Kids The World mission.

- A 7.5-hour Themed Experience & Attractions Academic Symposium was offered on Friday.

- The week’s annual social, IAAPA Celebrates, was hosted by **SeaWorld Orlando** and included networking, park-exclusive food and beverage and hours of fun.

One of the most prevalent comments heard in discussions was that it was the rainiest IAAPA Expo in most people’s memories. While the rain wasn’t necessarily torrential, it was continually “present.” Fortunately, it did not cancel the two drone shows or the social event at SeaWorld.

“I think I rode Mako 20 times without getting out,” said **Jake Kilcup** of **Rocky Mountain Construction**.

Also prominently featured at the IAAPA Expo this year was the IAAPA Foundation. The foundation’s mission is to inspire and support life-changing careers in the global attractions industry and the Expo

fundraising initiatives raised a remarkable \$26,000 which will go toward academic, experiential and industry scholarships.

Hosting the event in Orlando is estimated to contribute more than \$100 million in economic impact to the region at its current size and attendance.

On a humorous note, the energy of the show took its toll on name badges by the end of the week (or even after a couple of days).

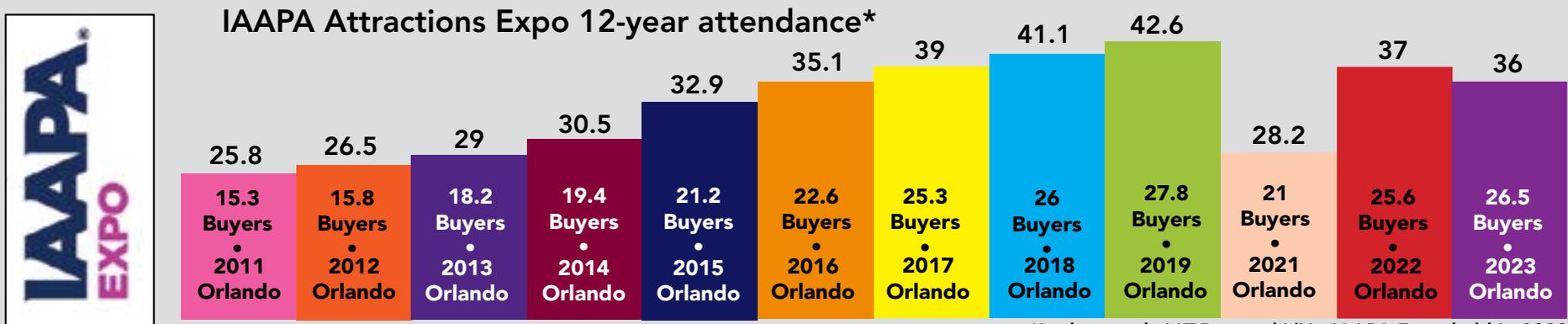
“In all honesty, we as an organization have made a commitment to sustainability, and that includes our badges,” smiled Shelton. “What we were trying to do in a good-hearted way was to get rid of the plastic badge holders. Obviously, when we got to the show and they got rained on and beat up moving around on the floor, the stock we picked was not up to snuff. It’s definitely something we’re going to have to work on for next year. It’s a long show. You’re asking for a paper badge to hold up through inclement weather and lots of interaction — and it’s now the ticket to everything — even as a 105-year-old organization, we’re always still learning things. We learned a valuable lesson there.”

IAAPA Expo 2024 is scheduled for November 18 – 22.



Press announcements involving reveals are a popular draw for social media influencers. AT/TIM BALDWIN

IAAPA Attractions Expo 12-year attendance*



*in thousands (AT Research)/No IAAPA Expo held in 2020

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IAAPA Expo 2023 — industry manufacturers, suppliers are busy

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO — With contracts filling 2024 projects, 2025 — and beyond — ride manufacturers are finding the industry healthy.

“2023 has been a record year for **Intamin** with the highest number of ride openings,” said **Sascha Czibulka**, executive vice president. “

Intamin’s **Dome Ride Theater** snagged two **Brass Rings Awards**: Best New Product and an **Impact Award**.

“The jury thinks this particular attraction is above all the rest,” he said of the **Impact Award**. “We are exceptionally proud that they feel this will have an impact to our industry for years to come.”

Passersby on the trade show floor were captivated by the **Falcon’s Flight** vehicle headed to **Six Flags Qiddiyah**.

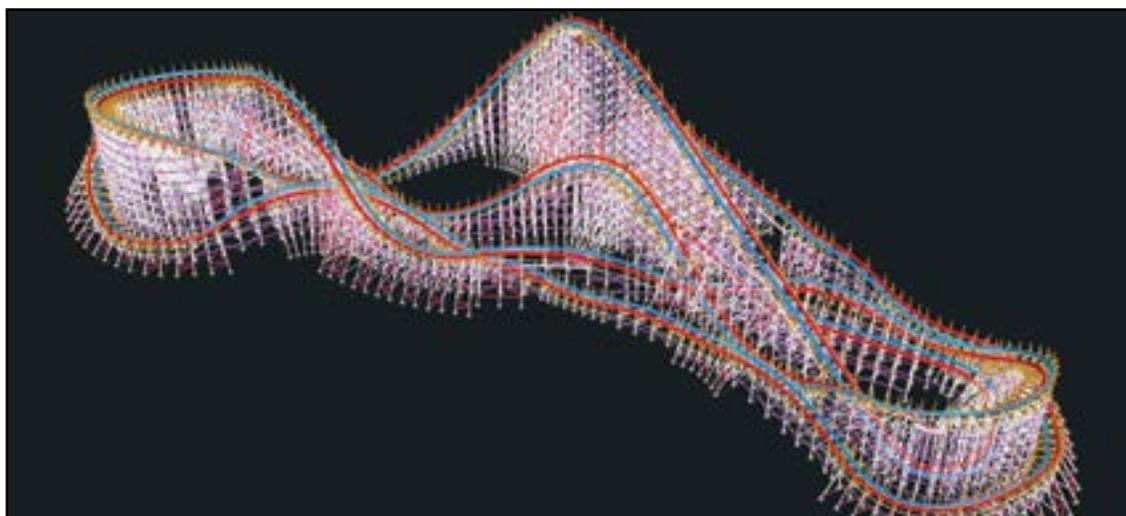
“The width of the train is wider and allows for more room,” said Czibulka. “That is a result of engineering with the wider gauge of the track. The simple reason is we have higher speeds and higher loads.”

Falcon’s Flight will be the tallest, longest and fastest roller coaster in the world when the park opens.

“For 2024, we have a little bit of everything,” Czibulka said. “We have a launched coaster in the Middle East; the first **Ultra Surf** coaster [**Six Flags Over Georgia**], a family coaster with both a lift and launch at **Drayton Manor** as well as a spinning coaster in the Middle East (also yet to be announced).”

According to Czibulka, water rides still have a certain percentage on the books and said there is an increased demand for them. He also said the fusion between coasters and dark rides is a growing trend, such as its recent partnership in **Uncharted** at **PortAventura**. Immersive rides with media content are being developed.

While not everything at the **Qiddiyah City** project was a “reveal” on the show floor, the impact of this signif-



Great Coasters International is building its first steel-structure coaster in China (above). **Intamin’s Falcon Flight** lead car was a spectacular eye-grabber (right). COURTESY GCII; AT/TIM BALDWIN



icant new park was evident throughout the show. **Great Coasters International, Inc.** had a vehicle for **Colossus**, a wooden coaster being constructed at the park.

“The ride had changed shape many times,” said **Clair Hain Jr.**, president. “It went from a small family ride to a huge project to a family ride. It’s a mid-2,000s length of track that has a steel structure and **Ipe** wooden track.”

The coaster will sport **GCII’s Infinity Flyer** trains, which Hain feels work best with the rules and regulations of the region.

Under construction is a new coaster for **OCT Xiangyang**. It will open in 2024.

“It is the first-ever wood and steel hybrid coaster in China. **GCII’s** first in Asia for sure,” said **Olivia Hain**, marketing. “The hybrid of wood and steel structure makes a

superior layout of the ride that has never been experienced before, and guarantees strong visual appeal, high-thrills, and non-stop fun.”

In surprising news, a **GCII** coaster that was previously announced would not open because the park leadership fell through will open after all with new management. The park is now **Real Madrid World** in Dubai and is being rethemed.

Darien Lake and **Lake Compounce** will receive new **Titan Track** on their wooden coasters. Other refurbishments are taking place throughout the U.S., as well as **Efteling** (which was a three-year plan but is being

completed in two).

Snagging the first press announcement reveal was **Zamperla**. The trains for **Top Thrill 2** at **Cedar Point** had onlookers excited.

“We’ve been happily overwhelmed with the response,” **Adam Sandy**, roller coaster sales, told *Amusement Today* at the Expo. “That’s from a lot of types of people. Enthusiasts love it, because it’s beautiful and it’s going on an iconic ride, but what has made us happy is that we’ve had a lot of maintenance people pointing out to their team why they like it.”

Sandy was pleased to point out that the wheels

avoided overheating. “We worked with **Uremet**, and holistically, this project has been one of partnerships. **Cedar Fair** and **Zamperla** are doing something very different and complicated while working together along with **Uremet’s** applications on the wheels. They are among the largest wheels (530mm) used on a roller coaster, and we used a custom compound to make sure with three launches in quick succession that we had heat dissipation off the wheels.”

In the past five years, **Zamperla** has heavily invested in its roller coaster technology and engineering and knew the company was ready to take on a project of this magnitude.

“Certainly, it was a step, but it wasn’t a big leap for us. We were well prepared for this,” said Sandy. “But again, we approached it with **Cedar Point** as a partnership. It has been one team working on this project to make it successful.”

In addition to **Cedar Point**, **Zamperla** has coaster installations headed to **PNE** in **British Columbia** and a powered coaster at **DreamWorld** in **Australia**. Two projects will also open in **China**.

Zamperla had new products to discuss with customers. One was brought to the floor, the **Go Go Bounce 8.4**.

“The introduction has gone far better than I even expected,” said **Michael Coleman**, **North America** sales. “It’s got great action, but with the 36-inch height requirement to ride with an adult, it’s a thrill ride for that

▶ See SUPPLIER, page 5B



Zamperla brought a **Go Go Bounce 8.4** that attendees could ride. It was popular (above left). **Chance Rides** has sold 435 **C.P. Huntington** trains (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

► **SUPPLIER**

Continued from page 4B

36-inch-tall kid."

Seating 32 riders, the Go Go Bounce is a magnified version of the company's Jump Around. "It's an opportunity to capture that shared, multi-generational experience," Coleman added. "It's a substantial piece of machinery. It has a presence."

The debut generated immediate leads.

Zamperla has several flat rides going into Six Flags parks. Also on tap is a Barnyard going into **Story Land** in South Dakota. Attractions will also be headed to **Oasis at Lakeport**, a new park under construction at Lake of the Ozarks.

Chance Rides is delivering a wheel to **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**. This location has a lot of history," said Jay Aguilar, vice president, sales and marketing. "The ride will have some special features."

Chance Rides is excited for the debut of **Mattel Adventure Park** to open in 2024. The new theme park will feature two Chance roller coasters — one for the family and one with higher thrills.

"The theming Chance has worked on together with **Epic** and the IP holder to meet expectations of both guests and ownership — Mattel is amazing," said Aguilar. "The Hyper GTX coaster will launch riders. That level of thrill is something we have not done in the past."

Still, the base of the company — C. P. Huntington trains, carousels, people



Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters Inc. celebrated 100 years exhibiting on the IAAPA Expo floor (above left). Many attendees took a spin — or drop — at the Altitude Attractions booth (above middle). Zierer introduced Drifter as one of its newest offerings (above right). COURTESY PTCI, ZIERER; AT/TIM BALDWIN

movers, observations wheels — also attracted attendees at the Expo.

"Something interesting happened this year," noted Aguilar. "I've been with the company for seven years, and we don't talk to too many people with carnivals. This week, I've had four conversations with [carnival operators]. The carnival market is talking to us again."

He also noted that many new C.P. Huntington trains were in Chance's queue. "We are booked all the way to September, and we [deliver] one train a month. Once that complement is delivered, the company will have supplied

435 C. P. Huntington trains.

"Something we didn't do in the past formally, but now we are concentrating on new product development," Aguilar added. "We have multiple interviews with clients to listen to the voice of the customer for what they are looking for."

While the show floor can seem familiar to long-time attendees, new products and innovations are continually introduced, but companies themselves have changes as well. 2023 was the first year for **Larson International** to be under the **Rocky Mountain Construction** (RMC) ownership.

"We have two booths this year. We're introducing customers to each of the product lines," said **Hunter Novotny**, Larson. "We've got a lot to offer, so we are making introductions to customers we've had in the past and continue to foster those relationships."

The two booths were close to each other for 2023.

"We are thrilled to have received a Brass Ring for the Wild Moose product," said **Darren Torr**, president, RMC. "We've been talking to customers and felt there was an underserved market for a family junior coaster but something that has a

little more thrill and pop to it. Typically, we say we are selling screams and selling smiles with a family coaster."

Torr likens it to "Dr. Suess" track.

"We [designed] this ride to drop in to replace aging wild mouse coasters from an economic standpoint," he said. "You'll see Wild Moose coasters in production shortly."

On display was the new car headed for **Silver Dollar City's Fire In The Hole**. RMC has completed work on the track and now is busy getting the cars shipped to the park.

Torr hinted that RMC's

► See SUPPLIER, page 6B



Fabbri promoted its latest thriller, Fly Impact, at 60 meters tall. AT/TIM BALDWIN



► SUPPLIER

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Raptor product line is taking off internationally. “If you’re an RMC fan, we’ve had some quality meetings with new parks we haven’t dealt with in the past. We’ve accomplished our goal of laying the groundwork.”

The longest-running exhibitor at the IAAPA Expo is **Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc.** PTCI celebrated 100 years of exhibiting in 2023.

“I’ve only been with the company for 47 years, so I can’t account for all of them,” joked **Tom Rebbie**, president. “We’re very proud to have that No. 1 ranking.”

The company revealed new coaster trains headed to **Hersheypark**. The retro vibe of the rolling stock had gold-tinted plating that offered an elegant touch.

“Hershey came up with the coloring they wanted to do,” said Rebbie. “Our painter, **Brad Little**, painted one side panel and said, ‘I can make it better.’ I came back a couple of days later and he put this glitter into it and made it pop. We took them to our PAPA meeting and met with them. They saw the second one and said, ‘That’s what we want.’”

Rebbie indicated that the succession of cars will have a changing color scheme that will work great as a whole. In addition, each lap bar will have a sensor, and the ride operator can see if each bar is up or down.

PTCI is working with **Adventureland** in Iowa on the refurbishment of **The Underground**, an indoor coaster.

Zierer was busy during



Sally's booth featured Mr. Krabs, who will be going into the new dark ride at **Circus Circus** (above left). **Skyline Attractions** showcased its **P'Sghetti Bowl** trains (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

the show. The company's books are closed for 2024 and is looking at 2025 and 2026.

“There is a lot of interest in our Family Freefall Tower,” said **Bill Ossim**, North America sales. “Depending on the decoration at the top, it’s about 35 to 40 feet tall. Ten seats rotate around the center. Our tower can be programmed to what the customer wants. We can make it more thrilling with a little more freefall or we can do the bouncing, and it is very versatile in terms of working with the park’s theming.”

Zierer has sold more than 60 of the towers.

While NDAs kept specific details under wraps for some coaster projects, Ossim said a Force coaster is being delivered in China. A custom design is under production. **Legoland Windsor** is installing a coaster as well. “The Force coaster series is just a great series for many different levels of thrill,” he said.

The **Ellipse Flyer** is a modern version of the company's **Magic Carpet** ride, which Zierer was promoting at the show. The updated



version has rotating seats. Another new attraction was **Drifter**, which is similar to the **Jet Ski** layout, but it is not on water. When a lever is released, the cars whip out.

“You’ll probably see one in the states by 2025,” said Ossim.

At **Altitude Rides and Attractions**, President **Logan Checketts**, talked with *AT* about a very special **Soaring Eagle** zipline going into **Morgan's Wonderland** [see page 58] as well as other installations. “There has been an immense amount of attention in **Hammered**. They see people riding, and they see the riders’ faces,” he said. “People have come back and said it’s the most fun thing they’ve ridden and ride it over and over.” He said interest was for both mobile units and stationary installations. The mobile unit was new, and the first installation was sold to **Fun Crew USA** (an event company) at the show.

Checketts said several customers have returned to retrofit the **Soaring Eagle** ziplines with four-seater carriages.

“A lot of **Gosetto** rides

have come and are coming to the United States this year!” said **Giada Gosetto**. “At the beginning of 2023, we delivered a two-floor fun house to **Reithoffer** in Florida: 16 meters long on a semitrailer, all hot galvanized with 16 tricks. It’s easy and quick to assemble.”

The company was also involved with **Daniels Wood Land** and other partners on **Treasure Hunt: The Ride** in **Monterey, California**. According to Gosetto, it involved a redesign of the four-seater car.

“I would also like to communicate that we just delivered a traveling dark ride in Mexico in September,” she added. “It has eight, two-seat cars. Located in **Guadalajara**, it is having a lot of success for the family **Alcazar**.”

Gosetto reported there will be news for the United States in 2024.

Giancarlo Manca was proud of a **Fabbri** accomplishment: “We sold a world-record **Booster**: 75 meters. It is going to the Middle East. We have a lot of records with sales. We have a lot of sales with classic rides and wheels.”

On display at the **Fabbri** booth was a model of **Fly Impact**, a new product at 60 meters, the first of which was sold to a location in Spain.

“People think that **Fabbri** is always with showmen and carnivals, but it’s not true,” Manca told *AT*. “We [work] probably 70 percent with amusement parks and 30 percent carnivals.”

Wheels, Giant Booster, Crazy Dance and **Pirate Ships** are the biggest sellers for parks from the **Fabbri** portfolio.

Mack Rides will have sig-

nificant installations next year.

“**Hyperia** at **Thorpe Park** will probably be our fastest coaster on average speed,” said **Max Roeser**, marketing. “After the first drop, it’s full speed ahead. It has some crazy stunts and negative G forces of -1.2 of positive G forces of 4.5 and you hit the brake run at 80 kmh.”

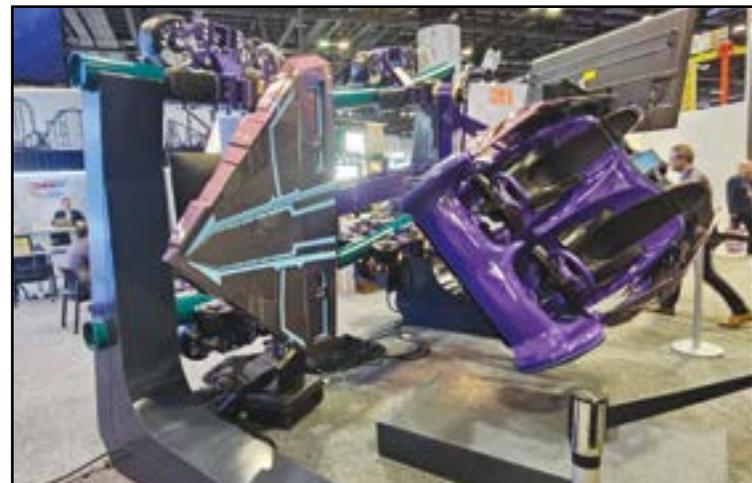
Mack Rides had a flying theater on display. One had opened recently in **Viet Nam**, and the distinction of **Mack’s** version is that the seating (on multiple levels) is back-to-back, with one side loading, while the other side experiences the media content. The company has two new contracts for locations in the U.S. for 2025.

“A lot of people are not concentrating on capacity with cinema. Some parks have four theaters or two theaters, and now we can have high capacity with one theater,” Roeser said. “It’s a really good innovation of ours.”

Europa-Park has three **Mack** installations in 2024. **Voltron** is the park’s — and quite possibly the company’s — most ambitious coaster with seven trains, switch track, numerous inversions, two launches and elaborate theming. Because of a fire last summer, a new flume and powered coaster will be installed to replace the damaged attractions. The replacement trough of the flume will be built differently which allows for durability, longer spans and ease of installation.

Other projects include a water coaster in **Park del PAL** in France for 2024, a launched coaster for

► See SUPPLIER, page 7B



Ernest Yale, CEO of **Triotech** (left), was excited to announce **SuperFly**, a standing simulator (above left). Kids couldn’t resist playing with the equipment at **SBI Sweden** (above middle). **S&S’ Axis** vehicle themed to **Transformers** gathered much attention (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

► SUPPLIER

Continued from page 6B

Aquashow Park in Portugal in 2025 and the years-in-development Rocking Boat attraction in 2025. During the Europe show, a contract was signed for a custom Big Dipper coaster for **Fantasia** in Austria, also for 2025.

Another concept in development is a continuous dark ride where riders are seated back-to-back. In an interactive shooting experience, passengers on the outside aim at media content on screens, but after rotating to the center, players shoot at physical scenes.

Ride Entertainment represents numerous companies in the U.S. **Gerstlauer** is the longest partner with RE, and the coaster manufacturer is excited about the Infinity Inverted Coaster, the first of which opened at **TusenFryd**. The flexibility of this attraction is its ability to be launched or a traditional lift, as well as a shuttle. Restraints allow for upper-body freedom.

In addition to sales of rides for **Skycoaster**, **Metallbau**, **Funtime**, **Lagotronics** and **KCL Engineering**, RE is also known for its installations.

"One of the coolest things about the Installation Division is that you get to work on projects that you didn't necessarily sell," said **Kris Rowberry**, communications and marketing. "We're able to work on them and bring them to life."

Among the installations will be **Palindrome** at **COTALand** and a junior coaster going to **Santa's Village** in New Hampshire. Following **Palindrome**, RE will be installing **Circuit Breaker** in Austin as well.

Sally Dark Rides unveiled an animatronic heading to **Circus Circus**. Dubbed **Sponge Bob's Crazy Carnival Ride**, it will open in spring of 2024.

"Mr. Krabs is our official host for the ride; he'll greet you before you go in," said **Drew Hunter**, vice president of creative design. "It's going to be a fun, colorful, wild and crazy undersea adventure. It is an interac-



Vekoma brought both the first and last gravity-themed cars headed to Holiday World. AT/DAVID FAKE, TIM BALDWIN

tive ride. Sally is doing four animatronics plus other animated props. **ETF** is doing a wonderful vehicle, which is **Sponge Bob**-centric."

For this ride, Sally teamed up with **Paramount** and **Nickelodeon**.

"Color! It has intense color. You can't be sad going into this ride," Hunter said. "If you're a fan of the **Sponge Bob** world, you're going to be on **Cloud Nine**."

The Gravity Group showcased the lead car of **Bobcat**, which is heading to **Six Flags Great Escape**.

"This is still a family coaster, without a doubt," said **Chad Miller**, engineer and partner. "But it's a little bit larger. Our [previous ones] have been in the 40 to 45-foot range. This one's 54 feet tall. It's got a little more umph. It's a family coaster, but we are amping it up a little bit."

Bobcat will be the first coaster to be built with the company's award-winning precut track.

"After COVID, parks reopened and didn't feel comfortable investing huge amounts into new rides, so they started fixing up older rides," Miller said. "We were fortunate that we had developed our precut track. After testing it on **Kentucky Kingdom**, when parks came back online and looking to refurbish rides, we had precut track ready to go. The precut track makes so much sense to so many people. The first year we worked on three coasters, and the following year we worked on 10 coasters."

The Gravity Group is doing an extensive renovation on **Wildcat** at **Lake Compounce** and the second side of **The Racer** at **Kings Island**. There are smaller

projects as well.

The company has also developed a bracket and system for on-ride video to take place on its **Timberliner** trains. They operate for a day on a single charge.

Lars Hartmann, international sales manager of **HUSS**, said, "Shot'n Drop Multi Media is an indoor drop attraction. We have screens from the very bottom to the very top. At the top is a big dome where you have the multimedia immersive experience with onboard sound."

The tower is 58 meters tall. Riders are lifted to a height of 36 meters (118 feet) in stages with media content and various levels. In a 360-degree dome, storyline visuals culminate into a moment of descent at 45 kmh/28 mph.

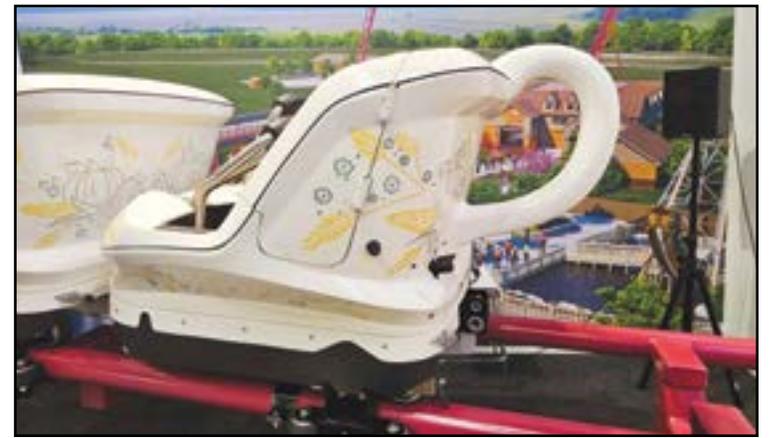
The ride seats 28 passengers.

"My favorite part is you are not dependent on any outside weather conditions," Hartmann said. "It's really a fully immersive experience."

HUSS also launched seven new rides in 2023. "High capacity, easy to maintain, easy to operate — basically on a small footprint ... you have an opportunity to satisfy a lot of guests in a short period of time," he said. New introductions were **Break Dance 5**, **Spinning Cruiser**, **Magic Second Generation**, **Troika Second Generation** and **Booster Revolution**.

Premier Rides announced the company would be replacing 900 feet of track on **Busch Gardens' Loch Ness Monster**. The iconic ride, now preserved, is receiving some thematic upgrades as well.

Severn Lamb was busy with both appointments and



walkups. **AT** was told that new tram projects for 2024 were headed to the U.S. and Central America. Trains were headed to Mexico as well.

"They are traditional American-style trains but with some quirky theming specific to the park they're going into," said **Patrick Lamb**, managing director. "It's going to be great; they look fantastic."

Lamb points out that all installations are battery-electric, making it more environmentally friendly. Air onboard still emulates a steam whistle.

Looking beyond 2024, **Jack Tunstall**, project sales engineer, reported **Severn Lamb** has heavy interest currently in the Middle East. "Saudi Arabia is looking good at the moment," he said. "There are a lot of interesting developments, so we are really trying to break into that market. People movers and transport is going to be very critical out in hot climates and be sustainable."

"We are known for new," said **Roman Rothe**, CTO, **RES Rides**. "People come and say, 'Roman, show me what's new.' We always have at least one new ride concept at every exhibition."

RES was promoting **SkySeeker M24**, a swirling swing ride, at the show. Twelve gondolas seating two passengers swing out during the ride cycle, but what differentiates **SkySeeker** from similar rides is that the seats rotate while swinging.

"It's interactive," **Rothe** said. "People have a button that activates a brake to where it is not rotating."

"**RES's Vertical Dark Ride** won a **Brass Ring** for **Best New Product** in the **Family Attraction** category," said **Deborah Eicher**, marketing. "This ride was installed at **Conny-Land** in Switzerland."

Seating 10 passengers, a gondola rises 16 meters in a 20-meter building, featuring a story while rising. Things "go wrong" at the top, and riders tilt and freefall to the bottom.

Wave Twist L, a shuttle-type coaster with two gondolas offering two types of rotation, has been sold to a park in the U.S. It will debut in 2025.

SunSeeker is a flat ride that loads 48 passengers at one time, and 12 gondolas rotate in various directions.

Chris Gray of **Skyline Attractions** was eager to showcase the **P'Sghetti Bowl** coaster, which opened at **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** and **Six Flags Over Georgia** in 2023. The family coaster won **Best New Product** (Under \$2 million).

"Something remarkable happened," he said. "We had appointments for the first two days, but the crowds continued throughout the week."

Gray indicated his leads from the show continued to be for the U.S.

Noble Rides had a coaster vehicle on display on the show floor. "It's headed to **Oasis** at **Lakeport**," said **Jared Moody**, director of sales for North America. "It's going to be for thrill seekers and teenage kids."

He spoke of another project, a 52-meter observation wheel in **Mission Grove**, Michigan, through a group called **ICC**. In addition to the large wheel, a selection of other rides from **Wisdom** have been contracted.

"From the film side,

► See SUPPLIER, page 8B

► SUPPLIER

Continued from page 7B

we've brought 10 new titles to the show. It's the most we've brought in any particular year," said **Mike Frueh**, SVP, licensing and distribution, **SimEx/Iwerks**. "Two in particular have been extremely well received. *Frostbite* is the third in the series of the *Dino Island* films. *Dino Island II* was the first 3D motion ride. *Ready Player One*, which is a **Warner Bros.** film, has an incredible ride sequence in it. We've had many people come to the booth, and that film is close to their heart."

Frueh stated that about half of the new films are nature and aquatic-based owing to the theme of zoos and aquariums. Iwerks has 4D theaters in more than 25 zoos.

Alterface was speaking about its *Mobile Solution*. Somewhat of a theater on the go, a "big box" moves from location to location. It unfolds into an attractive setup (including stairs) that has cinema-style ticket booths, queuing, a place for photos and an interactive theater that seats 12.

Laurence Beckers, creative director, says it is an introduction into the carnival market for Alterface. "We have different content, so it can change to offer different experiences."

Action League is Alterface's attraction in which gaming meets ride motion on a rotating platform. It is scalable from 36 to 72 players at a time. "It's like a teacup but you have interactivity and competition," Beckers said. "The queue line is upstairs and goes around the attraction, so you can see what is happening inside before you ride. It's like a show."

The first installation of Action League will be in China, using Alterface's IP of *Popcorn Revenge*.

S&S Worldwide discussed its newest offering, RailRyder [see page 14] in closed meetings, but attendees on the aisles were mesmerized by the company's Axis vehicle themed to *Transformers*. Opening in 2025, the first installation of the Axis genre will be going to **Exit Ten**, a **Saudi**



Extreme Engineering introduced the new **Ollie Loop flat ride concept**. COURTESY EXTREME ENGINEERING

Entertainment Ventures park. It is a multi-level indoor park. "We continue to get a lot of interest in it," said CEO **Jason Mons**. "The showpiece itself is still stopping people. We've been displaying since 2019 but with generic theming. People are very excited about the *Transformers* theme."

The project will send riders around the track for two circuits. The first installation is an LSM launch coaster. A second is sold and will use a traditional lift.

At the **Brogent** booth, marketing director **Stefan Rothaug** said the company is now producing movies actively. "What we do now is create movies completely independent from Brogent — for the licensing market and all flying theaters."

Brogent has been working on a film called *It's Africa*, a live-action panoramic movie in 10K resolution showcasing the beauty of the continent. Part of this is in response to changes in flying theaters from using projections to LED dome screens.

Rothaug said the Expo was the first time Brogent showed off more than just the flying theater, such as immersive tunnels and different theater types.

Maurer Rides met with customers to talk about the various incarnations of its Spike Coaster System. The latest is *Water Fight*.

"We made this elegant design, and someone said, 'Hey! Can we add slides to this?' Why not?" joked **Steve Boney**, executive business development. "What if we have targets that vehicles can shoot on the platform? Hit people or hit a target to

dump buckets?"

The attraction intertwines the Spike coaster with waterslides and visitors enjoying both on the tower can shoot at each other.

"It's got a lot of energy," said Boney. "Here, interacting with the waterslide platform, drivers try to move out of the way, it becomes an active experience [for both]."

A Spike coaster will open with Six Flags Qiddiya in 2025.

Kids on the show floor immediately played with the attractions at the **SBI Sweden** booth.

"That's the effect our stuff has. What I love is kids can't resist it," said **Markus Jonsson**, CEO. "We are seeing great interest in the construction equipment, the digger and the grabber."

Self-operated kids' vehicles, ranging from cars to tractors to boats, are all available, as well as the construction equipment.

"We have a turnkey solution with the whole cage with theming and lights," Jonsson said. "It's safe and easy to maintain and run."

SBI sold attractions on the show floor.

Extreme Engineering introduced *Ollie Loop*. Based on a skateboard term, it's a theme for a new flat ride.

"We can do any theme on that flat ride ... surfboards, space shuttles, etc," said **Phil Wilson**, EVP sales and marketing.

The *Ollie Loop* lifts, rotates, tilts and undulates six riders around a central 15-foot tower. Riders only have to be 40 inches. The price for a single unit is about \$350,000.

"We developed *Twist*

Tower exclusively for **Urban Air**, and we have 23 of those going in," Wilson said. "Through the development of that attraction, we were able to repurpose some of that technology into a new ride. The R&D is there; we're just applying it differently. If we had an order today, we could get it to a client in 18 months."

The company's *Cloud Coaster* is now introducing side-by-side seating for a train of 12 passengers.

After *Flex Shade* was introduced last year, it has really taken off for **Extreme Engineering**.

Triotech was excited to announce *SuperFly*, an immersive attraction that mixes a simulator with a flying theater. Guests stand on motion platforms, and the media content is enhanced with special effects such as scents, leg ticklers, water and wind. The first installation is going to **NEB's Fun World** and will feature 23 platforms for a total of 46 people per ride.

Bold Move is a company that has been around for three years but has a team with more than 20 years of experience in the industry.

"Our business is to make dark rides but also queue lines, everything to entertain people while moving by either vehicle or foot," said **Benoit Cornet**, CEO.

"Last year we opened *Champi' Folies* in France. It is based on a dark ride system called *Smash and Reload*," he told *AT*. "It's an ultra-compact dark ride. It feels like a very big dark ride, but it takes up less than 2,500 square feet."

Cornet said the company is working on two more dark rides for 2024, as well as a queue line for a water coaster, which will feature interactivity.

"Guests will discover the story of the person who is missing on the expedition," he said.

Many booths had ride vehicles, but if there was one to be declared the "most adorable," it would have been at the **Vekoma** booth. **Holiday World's** *Good Gravy!* coaster had two cars, the front and back showcasing the gravy boat theme.

In addition to the two **Family Boomerang** coasters

for the U.S., Vekoma reps are pleased with the dual installation headed to **Emerald Park** in Ireland.

"That's a *Suspended Thrill Coaster* intertwined with a *Family Boomerang*," said **Carin Davits**, marketing. "That's going to be our main project in Europe."

In addition to its coasters, Vekoma brought new concepts to the show: a suspended dark ride and an interactive dueling water ride. [Look for an in-depth article in *AT's* February issue.]

A tilt coaster with multiple inversions is being installed at **Six Flags Qiddiya**.

By the end of the show, **Rides 4 U** always has to catch its breath.

"We were fortunate to take many orders still for the 2024 season," said **Len Soled**. "Our factories have added extra production. We are one of the few suppliers out there — because of **SBF Visa** — to be in a position to still get summer deliveries to the people."

Two of the rides on the show floor were headed to **Malibu Jacks** in Iowa and one to **Blue Sky Amusements**.

Soled said he sold three coasters at the show to **Frankie's Fun Park**. Additional orders for the drop towers and *Mini Break Dance*. "We are thrilled and have a lot of follow-up," said Soled.



Rides 4 U has found bringing multiple rides to the show helps boost sales. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

Mobile industry reports busy sales schedule at IAAPA Expo 2023

AT: Pam Sherborne
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ORLANDO — Suppliers to the mobile industry reported growing 2023 sales and streams of potential buyers and “tire-kickers” at the IAAPA Expo 2023 held Nov. 13-17, at the Orange County Convention in Orlando, Florida.

“It’s been an insanely busy year for ride sales,” said **Gina Guglielmi, Intermark Ride Group.**

Guglielmi represents ride manufacturers **Fabbri Group, Gosetto Rides, Preston & Barbieri, Moser Rides, RES-WillTec, TOA Trains, Wattman Trains and Trams and Mason Waterslides.** The company also sells various used rides.

Guglielmi reported that **Cole Shows** took delivery of a Gosetto New York New York-themed two-story fun house in 2023. **Fiesta Shows** also purchased a two-story fun house. That carnival’s ride was on the boat by the time the IAAPA Expo took place.

Guglielmi said the **Fiesta Shows** Gosetto fun house is sporting a new design theme.

The **Alcazar** family of Mexico purchased a Gosetto dark ride, **Alegre Fantasia.**

Tom Talley, State Fair Spectaculars, was to take delivery in 2024 of a 40-meter Booster by Fabbri Group, Guglielmi said.

Paul Joseph, Jolly Shows, is expecting his Fabbri 40-seat Pirate Ship either this month or next.

Reithoffer Shows placed an order at the IAAPA Expo for a Fabbri 40-meter Booster.

NAME carnival took delivery in 2023 on a 48-seat Preston and Barbieri Family Swinger ride. **Deggeller Attractions** was to take delivery at the end of last month on a 48-seat Family Swinger.

Todd Armstrong, Amusement Midway Providers, will take delivery of a newly designed Preston and Barbieri six-lane slide with a stunning light package in early 2024.

Hunter Novotny, Larson International, said the IAAPA show was a success for his company as well.

“The show this year was great,” Novotny said. It was



Fiesta Shows purchased a two-story walk-through Gosetto attraction/fun house, themed **Fun Factory** (above left). Above right, **Bob Cassata** (left), owner and founder of **Bob's Space Racers**, and **Jack Mendes** (right), president of **Bob's Space Racers**, were both on hand to collect their 50-year plaque from IAAPA for the company's 50 years of exhibiting at the IAAPA Expo. **Tom Talley, State Fair Spectaculars,** is taking delivery of a 40-meter Fabbri **Booster**. The ride is shown below leaving the factory in late November. COURTESY FIESTA SHOWS, IAAPA/BOB'S SPACE RACERS, INTERMARK RIDE GROUP

great to see the show floor bustling again.”

He said business in 2023 was good.

“We have been lucky to have great customers and continued support from the industry,” he said.

Wisdom Rides' Mariyah Pope said that the company has been busy as well.

“Right now, we are backed up with **Himalayas** and **Gravitrons**,” Pope said. “We also have a **Tornado** on the production line.”

Wisdom sold two **Gravitrons** were sold during the IAAPA Expo.

Len Soled, Rides 4 U, said he went into the IAAPA Expo 2023 with a good display of rides. Along with selling used rides, **Rides 4 U** represents manufacturers **KMG** and **SBF/Visa Group** and sells to the mobile industry, family entertainment center (FEC) and park industries.

Soled brought a **Spinning Coaster**, an **SBF/Visa** ride that continues to sell very well.

“There are more than 200 of those out in the industry,” Soled said. “We had an **SBF/Visa Drop 'N Twist Tower** that also continues to do well.”

He said he also had a new **Mini Break Dance** with a new theme at the show. **Bill Reiss, Blue Sky Amusements,** wanted the custom theme and is calling the new break dance, **Dance Party.** That also is an **SBF/Visa** ride, but not to confuse it with the **SBF/Visa Dance Party** ride.

“We actually have a ride called **Dance Party**,” Soled said. “But **Bill** wanted this

new theme on his **Mini Break Dance**, so we did it. He is very pleased and took delivery of it at the IAAPA show. We had a lot of interest in that.”

Soled said he is fortunate to be able to market to all entertainment segments of the industry and is still able to deliver some products in 2024.

Mike Gill, A.R.M., said the IAAPA show was fantastic.

“We were very fortunate to have many ride contracts secured before attending the show, and when I thought it couldn't get any better, it did,” Gill said. “Commitments in our main ride lineup continue, with sales to both parks and carnivals for **Drop Towers, Vertigo Swing Towers, Rock Star, Steam Punk** and **Screamer.** In addition to new ride sales, we have also experienced many requests for complete ride rehabs. A



few owners have chosen to reinvest in their top-producing and popular attractions, with major mechanical rebuilds, technology upgrades, and new theme work.

“All in all, the amusement industry is thriving from our perspective, and we are very thankful to be a trusted supplier,” he said.

Bob's Space Racers celebrated its 50th year of exhibiting at the IAAPA show. Attendees at the company's

booth were able to learn about and play with some of the company's new attendant-free games such as **Bowler Roller, Balloon Bust, Bazooka Blast, Strike Zone II, Roll Down Add'em Up, Basketball, Cat Rack** and **Roll-A-Ball.**

The updated **Whopper Water FEC** is designed for bigger arcades or family entertainment centers. One of its brightest **Bob's Space Racers'** games at the show this year was the **Top Glo 2 FEC** game.

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Water park industry splashing down into continued growth in 2023

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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ORLANDO — The water attractions industry has seen vigorous growth this past year and shows no signs of slowing down. Last year water park owners were able to experience recovery approaching pre-pandemic levels. Performance in 2023 paved the way for new growth. Several large-scale projects have either recently opened or are on track to open in the near future, forcing operators to up their game in order to stay competitive.

Suppliers continue to provide innovation to expand attraction offerings and keep the industry new and fresh. AT takes a look at some of the highlights of what the industry is doing to create new experiences that keep guests coming back for more. The creativity continues and expanded attractions offerings keep the industry thriving.

WhiteWater West had a strong year with several projects opening in 2023 including the **The Island Waterpark** at the **Showboat Hotel** in Atlantic City, New Jersey and **Studio City Water Park** in Macau, China. WhiteWater's elevated AquaForms 12 was awarded the Brass Ring Award for products of less than \$2 million. The first AquaForms 12 opened at The Island Waterpark this past summer.

This year also saw the



ProSlide's model of Saifa at Siam Water Park shows how well the slide was integrated into the existing terrain. AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT

opening of two 2022 projects. At **Meryal Water Park** in Lusail, Qatar, WhiteWater had all of its hardware complete in time for a 2022 debut to coincide with the FIFA World Cup, but delays with the rest of the Qetaifin Island development kept the entire project from opening on time. After missing its targeted opening, the massive project seemed to languish but eventually started to show signs of life. Meryal Water Park finally saw its first guests in November 2023.

Pirate's Cove Aquapark on board the recently launched MSC Seascope, is heavily pirate-themed with several activities including an adventure trail, AquaPlay 150 with a tipping bucket,

three waterslides and a pool making it one of the largest and most interactive water attractions at sea. Giant Kraken tentacles wrap around several of the features, helping to bring the pirate story to life. MSC took delivery of the Seascope in July of 2022. Following final touches and sea trials, Seascope took a transatlantic repositioning cruise in November and began regularly scheduled cruises out of Miami in December 2022. This past year was its first full season with alternating seven and 14-day cruises in the Caribbean and Bahamas.

ProSlide Technology Inc. once again had a stellar season with several high-profile projects opening in 2023. Some of the recent highlights include Saifa, a dueling PipelineBlast at **Siam Water Park** in Tenerife, Spain. That project garnered a Brass Ring Award for best new water park ride at a cost of more than \$2 million. Other notable projects in Europe included the early spring opening of the Vikingløp, a massive eight-lane racing slide at **Europa-Park's Rulantica** water park in Germany. It is the largest rally racer to date.

In the U.S., a RocketBlast at **Waldameer** in Erie, Pa., continued that park's continued expansion of its **Water World** water park. That proj-

ect took home the Golden Ticket Award for Best New Water Park Attraction in 2023.

Looking ahead, ProSlide announced an impressive lineup of upcoming projects for 2023, including a RocketBlast water coaster for **NRH20** in North Richland Hills, Texas; **Boulder Beach** at Silverwood in Athol, Idaho; and **Rapids Waterpark** in Rivera Beach, Florida.

SeaWorld was also on hand to announce a multi-year deal for new waterplay structures for its properties, with three of those opening next year.

New to the floor this year was **Crystal Lagoons**. Its stunning booth space with a video floor simulating water was awarded a Brass Ring for best exhibit 700-900 square feet. The booth was also the Image Award winner, which is given to the most outstanding exhibit regardless of category. As noted in this issue's water park section, Crystal Lagoons has started developing Public Access Lagoons or PALs, with the first opening in the **Lago Mar** development outside of Houston, Texas. The Crystal Lagoons booth was busy throughout the show and representatives of the company were very pleased with the number of inquiries and interest shown in the product.

OpenAire, Inc. of

Oakville, Ontario, recently completed a massive project enclosing the Island Waterpark at the Showboat Hotel in Atlantic City, New Jersey, with its largest retractable roof glass structure to date. The 100,000-square-foot enclosure is 550 feet long and includes two cupolas that extend above the main portion, and each of these cupolas has its own retractable roof. The structure also includes large sliding glass doors that open to the boardwalk.

OpenAire has several projects in the works for 2024 but was not able to disclose any details at the time of the Expo. OpenAire continues to work with water parks, cruise ships, entertainment complexes, restaurants, and even private residences to provide roofing solutions that let the sun shine in.

Aquatic Development Group (ADG) continues to promote its EpicSurf product. EpicSurf produces a real wave of water with a depth that can be adjusted from three to six feet for a more authentic surfing experience. The deep-water wave allows the rider to use an assortment of boards while surfing, including a full-size surfboard with fins (or skegs) instead of a modified flowboard. **Julie Kline**, marketing manager at Aquatic Development Group, told AT that ADG has multiple projects in the works, including one at a mixed-use Crystal Lagoons-centric community in Leander, Texas, and another for world-renowned electronic musician, **deadmau5**.

Other completed projects include the first phase of a multi-year expansion of **Roaring Springs Water Park** in Meridian, Idaho, which has plans to become one of the largest water parks in the U.S.

Duck Creek RV Park in Muskegon, Michigan, is another ADG expansion project. The water park there now includes an expanded outdoor venue and an indoor water park with a glass enclosure provided by OpenAire.

On the coaster side of

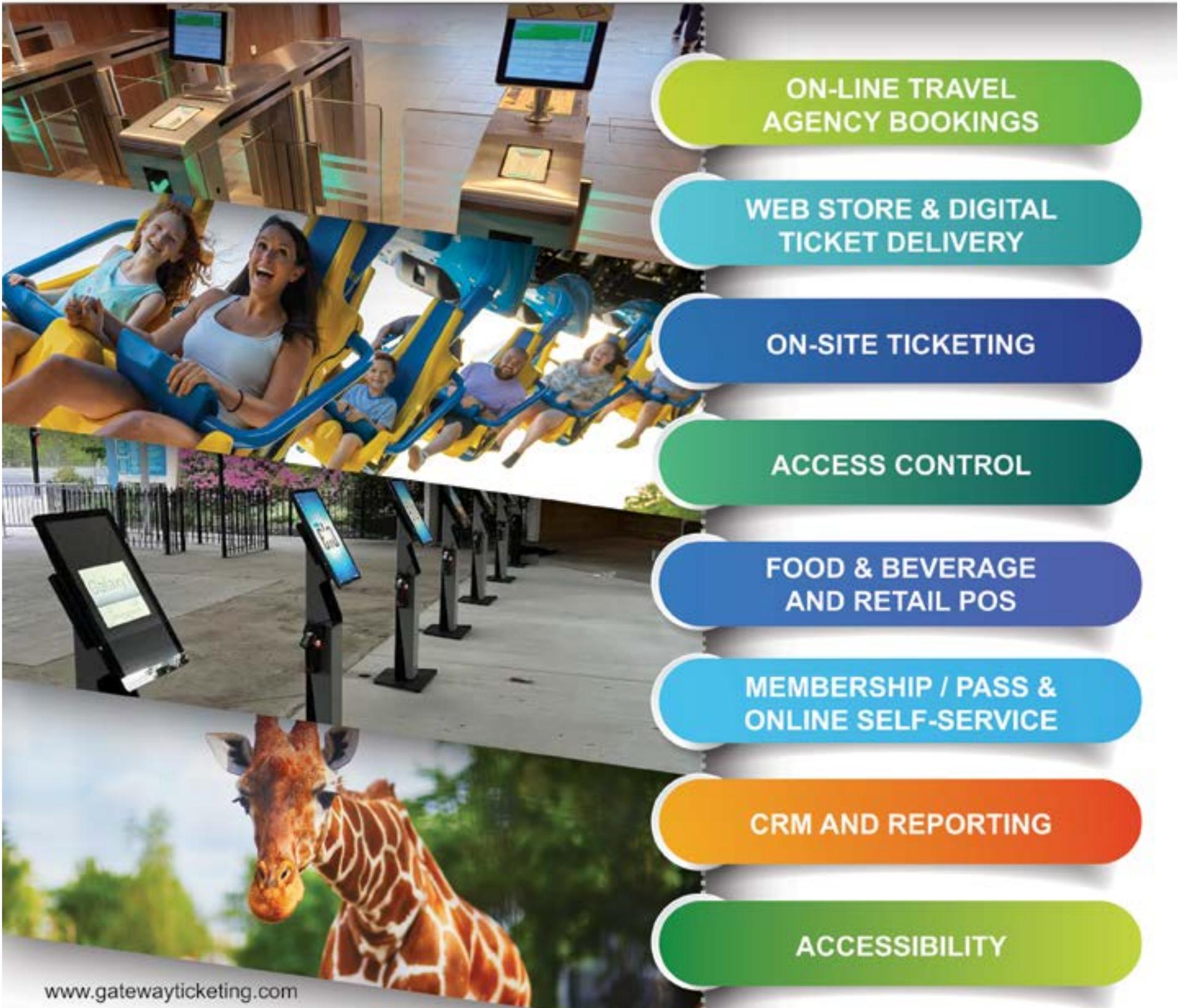


During WhiteWater's press announcement, a photo was shown of the award-winning AquaForms 12 installed at Island Water Park, Atlantic City. AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT

► See WATER, page 12B



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Crystal Lagoon's stunning, award-winning booth, was getting a lot of attention during the expo (above left). OpenAire was proudly displaying its latest and largest glass-enclosed structured to date — Island Water Park (above middle). Many attendees were doing a double-take watching video of Polin's newest concept ride — Zip 'N Slide (above right). AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT; COURTESY POLIN WATERPARKS

► WATER

Continued from page 10B

things, ADG opened a new mountain coaster at the **Golden Skybridge** in British Columbia, and one at **Ruidoso's Water Park** in Alto, New Mexico.

Projects that ADG has in the works include the massive **Okana Resort** in Oklahoma City that includes a two-story indoor waterpark and an 11-story, 404-room hotel, conference center and museum.

Polin Waterparks was raising eyebrows with a video that showed a combination waterslide and suspended coaster.

Although all of the engineering details have yet to be worked out, Zip'N Slide utilizes a raft-like vehicle with an overhead arm sliding down a waterside flume. Just before plunging over a waterfall the overhead arm engages a suspended track and the vehicle is whisked away from the flume and becomes a suspended coaster.

Last year Polin was touting its Rift slide, which gave riders the illusion that they were going to go through a vertical loop on a raft. This year the Double Rift with twin symmetric slides adds a competition aspect to that unique looping attraction as well as doubling the capacity. Polin walked away with a second-place Brass Ring Award for best water park ride attraction less than \$2 million for the Double Rift slide.

Another interesting new product is Triango, a raft waterslide that opens into a triangular section with two possible ride exits. Numerous

variables including the number of riders, their weight or their position within the raft will influence the path taken by the raft. Triango was awarded a second-place Brass Ring for best new product concept award — attraction.

Wibit Sports was on hand again with its line of inflatable floating obstacle/play courses. Wibit once again had on display its new Wibit Peakz floating modules that rise one, two or three meters above the water's surface. Connected by narrow bridges and walkways, Wibit Peakz tests balance, agility and speed as guests traverse the elevated Wibit course.

Peakz was first introduced last year, but Wibit has continued to add new designs to both its Peakz and regular obstacle designs.

All Wibit products are suitable for installation in any type of water — freshwater, saltwater or chlorinated. Some have found their way into Crystal Lagoons installations.

Vortex Aquatic Structures International's forte is its splashpads, aquatic play structures and architectural displays for city parks, hotels, resorts, shopping centers and commercial spaces. Vortex was back again with its show-stopper Dream Tunnel — an immersive aquatic attraction that uses water screens, mists, lasers, lights and audio to create a dream-like world. The tunnel can be experienced as a walk-through or float-through attraction and interchangeable dreamscape experiences can keep guests coming back for more.

A fully functional Dream Tunnel was on display, and since 2021 has generated long

lines of curious visitors seeking to experience the illusory environment. In July 2022 **Super Aqua Club** in Pointe-Columet, Quebec, opened the first Dream Tunnel, branded as Zephyr River with a magical jungle-like theme.

Although **Wiegand Waterrides**, made a name for itself with its stainless steel slides that seem to have an unlimited life-span, the company is gaining notoriety with its fiber-glass reinforced plastic (FRP) slides. This past summer Wiegand acquired the Dutch company **Van Egdome**, a full-service design company for waterslides, water playgrounds and water spray parks, which will help expand Wiegand's portfolio.

In July Wiegand completed the installation of four stainless steel waterslides at **Kristall Palm Beach** in Stein, Germany.

This past summer Wiegand introduced the X-Slide, which introduces a first-of-its-kind waterslide crossing. Guests aboard two- or three-person rafts travel through a crossing, then make a quick 270-degree turn and travel through the same section again. For its creativity, Wiegand was awarded the Brass Ring for best new product concept — attractions.

Wiegand continues to work with several cruise lines, including **Aida**, **Costa** and **Royal Caribbean**. Although not confirmed, it is likely that several of Wiegand's slides were installed on Royal Caribbean's newest ship, **Icon of the Seas**.

SplashTacular is the largest U.S.-based waterslide supplier. Headquartered in Kansas, the company offers

a complete turnkey product including design, engineering, manufacturing and installation with everything made in America. Although its primary client base is municipal, hotel, resort, and private water parks, the company has experience with larger clients as well, including **Six Flags** and **ProParks**.

One of the highlights of this past summer was the installation of an aquatic play structure for **Casitas Water Adventure** in Ventura, California. The 42.7 million **SplashTacular Mega Play** replaced an older, smaller play structure that was past its prime.

Scotland-based Murphy's Waves, known throughout the world for its high-quality wave generation equipment, had several high-profile projects in the last few years.

The big excitement at the show was the signing of a contract for a project in Saudi Arabia. **Murphy's Waves** was contracted to design, manufacture and install a ten-chamber "breaker" Wave Generator at **Mellors Splash City** in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The new "breaker" wave pool attraction will offer eight different wave patterns throughout the 3,500-square-meter (37,000-square-foot) pool, with the maximum wave height reaching almost 1.5 meters (nearly 5 feet).

Empex Watertoys has been doing water play structures and apparatuses for more than 30 years and has developed its own special fiberglass and plastic formulations that are designed specifically to last in aquatic environments.

Empex developed a new

line of construction equipment-themed water features for an installation at **Diggerland** in West Berlin, New Jersey.

Raft and tube suppliers, **CPI**, **Zebec** and **ZPro** continue to supply the water park industry with the inflatable products and mats needed to partake in many of the new and exciting attractions the slide manufacturers continue to churn out. All three have also branched out to the amusement industry providing floatation collars for river raft rides as well as bumper car collars.

Martin Aquatic Design & Engineering, which just started exhibiting at IAAPA Expo 2021, was back again. The company has worked on more than 2,500 projects since 1987 and has several projects in the works for 2024 and beyond.

Among **Water Technology Incorporated's** (WTI) project portfolio are several high-profile projects including **Studio City Indoor Water Park** (Macau, China) and **Bedford Center YMCA** (Bedford, Texas). Both of these projects were featured as 2023 Dream Designs and showcased in *Aquatics International Magazine*.

The water attractions industry seems poised for considerable growth in 2024 and beyond. Projects that were delayed or put on hold during the pandemic have come to fruition, and developers are realizing that continued expansion is necessary just to keep their market share. With several new substantial projects in the works and new players, particularly from the Middle East, entering the market, continued growth seems to be certain.

IAAPA EXPO 2023



High attendance provided opportunities for meet ups with fellow industry professionals. AT/TIM BALDWIN



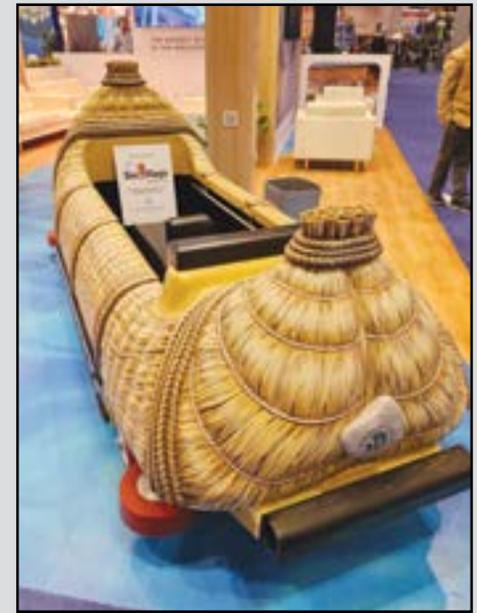
IAAPA officials and Opening Ceremony emcees kick off the event to a standing-room-only audience. COURTESY IAAPA NEWS



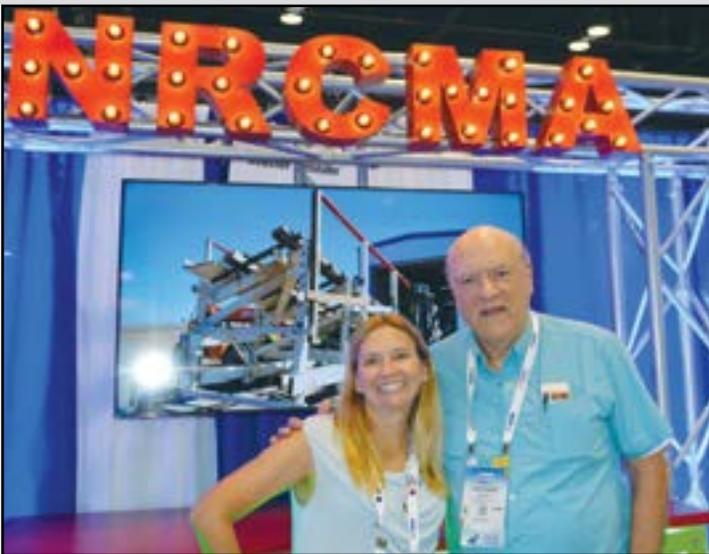
At the close of the floor on one of the days, industry veterans took a moment to remember — and toast to — Joe Heflin, who passed away a few months before the IAAPA Expo. AT/TIM BALDWIN



The lead vehicle for Bobcat was on display at The Gravity Group booth. AT/TIM BALDWIN



WhiteWater West displayed a flume boat headed to Six Flags Qiddiya. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Elizabeth Ringas, current president of American Coaster Enthusiasts, posed with the organization's first president, Richard Munch, at the National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives booth. AT/FILE



Ron Sutula, general manager of Island H2O Water Park, was given a 25th anniversary memento from Wet 'n' Wild in Brazil as part of the opening team. Alain Baldacci had the commemorative book and plaques made. AT/GARY SLADE



Jeff Pike of Skyline Attractions was so excited about the company's Brass Ring Award that he brought it to the Northeast Entertainment Association dinner. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Amusement Today's Gary Slade and WhiteWater West's Andrew Mowatt network at an evening social. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Operators seeking new games could find a plethora of options, including attendant-free games. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Molly, John and Becky Chidester of Fun Spot America were seen at the Hyatt Regency. AT/GARY SLADE



Orlando's area attractions made for fun evenings or just a step away from the trade show crowds. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Wheels on Zamperla's Top Thrill 2 vehicle had many people commenting on their huge size. AT/TIM BALDWIN



In addition to the SeaWorld Orlando Penguin Trek vehicle reveal, the Bolliger & Mabillard booth showcased Six Flags Fiesta Texas' Dr. Diabolical's Cliffhanger dive coaster car. AT/TIM BALDWIN



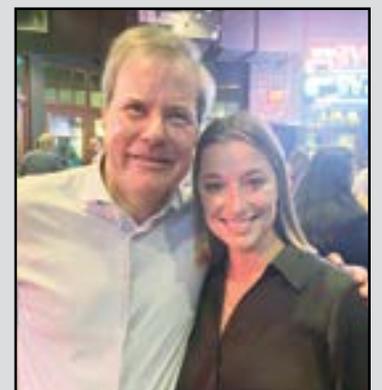
The trade show floor offers everything a park might need — even Christmas decorations. AT/TIM BALDWIN



AT Publisher Gary Slade and Jim Glover network at a WhiteWater West evening social. AT/FILE



Len Soled sat down with AT's Tim Baldwin near the end of the show to share the week's successes. AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT



Timo Klaus of Kumbak and Melissa Bamford of Baynum Solutions connected at an after-hours party. AT/GARY SLADE

Give Kids The World Village gets creative with fundraising efforts

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KISSIMMEE, Fla. — Navigating a pandemic is hard enough. For a nonprofit, it's particularly tricky. When COVID-19 created a global crisis in 2020, **Give Kids The World Village** used its supporting partners to create something special while families were not able to visit the village. Creating Night of a Million Lights, locals and visitors had the rare opportunity to see the village. Management had the main buildings and villas decorated with holiday lights. Part of the tour was done by tram, the remaining was enjoyed by a walk at one's own pace.

When families returned, bringing in thousands of visitors was too much of an intrusion. Last year, Give Kids The World partnered with **Island H2O Water Park** to move A Night of a Million Lights there.

In 2023, the Village pivoted once more. Bringing the lights back to the villas and buildings, Give Kids The World had three types of fundraising options for

the holidays. A big one was the Holiday Soiree on November 11. Donors attended a plated dinner during a night filled with entertainment and décor. A live auction that evening scored some big bids. The total raised from the event was \$220,000. There were 35 silent auction items along with several live auction items.

"I am feeling exuberance. We are so thrilled," said **Pamela Landwirth**, president, at the conclusion of the Soiree. "We're used to doing big galas pre-pandemic with 1,600 people, but when we did it here, it really resonated because people at the galas before had never been to the Village. They needed to make that connection — and that's what tonight was."

During Soiree, people were able to explore some of the special and heartfelt buildings that visiting families are able to experience during their time there.

"So many people were thanking us for what we do," Landwirth told *Amusement Today*. "When



Attendees at the Holiday Soiree, as well as visitors who signed up for the VIP tours, enjoyed seeing Give Kids The World Village decked out for the holidays (above). Arrangements for the Holiday Soiree called for a more intimate setting than previous galas, but it took place at The Village (below). AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY AXEL SOMEILLAN/SOMEILLAN ENTERTAINMENT LLC

we had Night of a Million Lights and people saw the Village, we got so many volunteers and donors. The Soiree allowed us to do this gala without impacting the families."

Previously, galas had been in larger ballrooms at Orlando convention hotels.

Other fundraising options were VIP tours for smaller, intimate groups on eight nights to see the decorations or for companies to rent Holiday Dessert Parties on the balcony of the Village's Town Hall.

Cindy Elliott, director of public relations, added, "The Holiday Soiree has been in the planning stages for about six or seven months. The intimate events allow us to provide the families with a magical 'wish trip.' It's good to see us completely full. In October, we had 910 families, which is a record in our 37-year history."



Attendees at the Holiday Soiree networked inside the Castle of Miracles.

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Give Kids The World Village is always a special place, but even more so when decorated for Christmas.
AT/TIM BALDWIN



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