

►Nerveless Nocks provide nearly two centuries of daredevil spectacles — pages 32-33

# Amusement TODAY

Your Amusement  
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NEWS Leader

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February 2024 | Vol. 27 • Issue 11

Digital Edition

## It's ready, set and go in Florida for IISF Trade Show, Extravaganza

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

GIBSONTON, Fla. — Events surrounding the **International Independent's Showmen's Foundation (IISF) Trade Show and Extravaganza** are set to kick off this year starting Sunday, Feb. 11, and continue through Saturday, Feb. 16.

All activities except for the golf tournament will be held on the grounds of the **International Independent Showmen's Association (IISA)**. The IISF is the fundraising arm of IISA.

"We are really excited about our 2024 event," said IISA's **Teresa Rimes**. "We are on par with our registrations as we traditionally are."

The **Showmen's League of America (SLA)** will hold an event during this week. The **Florida State Fair**, Tampa, Florida, will run Feb. 9-19. The **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)**, which traditionally has run its events during the same week as the IISA will run the week before this year.

Rimes said the week's events will begin with IISA's annual Superbowl Trade Show Kick-Off Party to be held at the IISA club bar area, on Sunday, Feb. 11.

On Monday, Feb. 12, the IISA Annual Big Hearted Jerry's Memorial Golf Tournament will be at the **Summerfield Golf Course**,



The IISF trade show floor (below) and outdoor exhibition space (above) is full of ride manufacturers, concession trailer manufacturers, game manufacturers and suppliers and novelty and food suppliers. AT/SUE NICHOLS, GARY SLADE

Riverview, Florida.

The IISF Trade Show kicks off on Tuesday, Feb. 13. It runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. that day, as well as on Wednesday, Feb. 14 and Thursday, Feb. 15. Hours for Feb. 16 are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The trade show includes ride manufacturers, concession trailer manufacturers, game manufacturers and suppliers, living quarter manufacturers, plush, novelty and food suppliers, lighting, electrical and part suppliers, industry organizations, vinyl and sign companies and tourist attractions.

"We even have 10 new exhibitors this year," Rimes said.

The ServSafe program will be back this year. This



program includes class materials, a study class and the certification exam, which is a required exam for all food service vendors in all states, including some local and city requirements.

The ServSafe program is scheduled for 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, Feb. 13 - 16. These sessions will be held in the upstairs IISA boardroom and are limited to 25 people

per session.

The H-2B Visa seminar has been set for 1:30 to 4:30 on Wednesday, Feb. 14, at the Carousel Pavillion.

► See IISF, page 6

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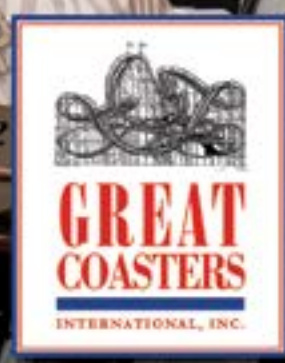
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**AT NOTEBOOK:** John W.C. Robinson, [jrobinson@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jrobinson@amusementtoday.com)

**FLINT'S VIEW:** Bubba Flint

## Remaining a news source



Robinson

For more than 25 years, *Amusement Today* has prided itself on being a true amusement industry news source. "News" is the key word in that statement.

Our coverage of the industry has always been to inform ... spreading the word of successes, innovations, concerns, openings and sharing opinions with the industry as a whole around the globe. The publication became a document of historical record for the industry, giving equal column inches to our challenges — such as the devastation of Hurricane Sandy or the COVID-19 shutdown — as to our celebrations — including new ride openings as well as the popular recognitions of the Golden Ticket Awards. *Amusement Today* has remained focused on being an objective news source that cares about the industry it's a part of.

For years, that news was shared through our print issues to our subscribers — as well as attendees of the various industry expos — with highlights appearing for all online. Since Fall 2019, all of *Amusement Today's* reporting and content have been available 100% for free to all via our Digital Edition. Efforts like this — and the consistent support of our advertisers — have continued to allow us to share news to all in the industry without fail.

Most importantly, every single article published in *Amusement Today's* pages has come from our staff working with industry members to share news objectively and fairly. Not one column inch of editorial has ever been sold in a "pay-for-play" model. There are no "advertorials." Press releases are edited and run in our pages (and online) as a service to the industry. And our staff continues to work with other industry professionals to ensure as complete coverage as possible.

It's when our industry works together that we thrive. Our advertisers support our media channels, our content shares the news globally, our readers ingest that news as they make their future plans and then support the advertisers as they implement those informed plans.

This is our industry, and we're here to support it. Your successes are our news, and we're here to report it.



**INDUSTRY VOICE:** Greg Chiecko, Outdoor Amusement Business Association

## Stronger together

The pandemic era taught us all several lessons about the importance of life, business, survival and collaboration. We have all made modifications to our lives from lessons learned. Fortunately, the collaborations formed have not only survived but excelled in our current times.

I'm speaking about the collaborated efforts between the Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA) and the International Association of Fairs & Expositions (IAFE). We have used the word partnership with our fairs and events, but now we have a much greater appreciation of the strengths and challenges of each other's business operations. During the uncertainty of the pandemic we used our Washington DC advocacy firm, HB Strategies, to assist the fair industry to legislate relief funds for the fair and carnival industry. In the end, our legislation did not get over the finish line,



Chiecko

but it did teach us that we are a greater strength when we all collaborate.

In recent months, the OABA has launched a grassroots effort to advocate for our members to be re-classified in the "P Visa" category through the Carnivals Are Real Entertainment (CARE) Act. We currently have a bill in the House of Representatives (HR 1787) and need the support of our fair and manufacturers and suppliers to help us achieve our goals. At the IAFE Convention in Salt Lake City we held a workshop on how to advocate for this bill.

I am happy to report that we overflowed the largest meeting room at the convention with our fair partners willing to help. As we attend state meetings, we find the same cooperative actions taking place. I believe that our collaborative efforts will finally solve our foreign guest worker labor problems.

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Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader

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**Address:** P.O. Box 5427, Arlington, Texas 76005-5427, USA

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**Phone:** (817) 460-7220

[AmusementToday.com](http://AmusementToday.com), [GoldenTicketAwards.com](http://GoldenTicketAwards.com)

### Founder & Publisher

Gary Slade • (817) 460-7220  
[gslade@amusementtoday.com](mailto:gslade@amusementtoday.com)

### Accounting & Classified

Sammy Piccola • (817) 460-7220  
[spiccola@amusementtoday.com](mailto:spiccola@amusementtoday.com)

### Advertising

John Robinson • (513) 256-1441  
[jrobinson@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jrobinson@amusementtoday.com)  
Gary Slade • (817) 460-7220  
[gslade@amusementtoday.com](mailto:gslade@amusementtoday.com)

### Editor & Production Manager

John Robinson • (513) 256-1441  
[jrobinson@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jrobinson@amusementtoday.com)

### Editorial

Tim Baldwin • (972) 697-9745  
[tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com](mailto:tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com)

Jeffrey Seifert • (817) 460-7220  
[jseifert@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jseifert@amusementtoday.com)

B. Derek Shaw • (717) 843-3050  
[bdshaw@amusementtoday.com](mailto:bdshaw@amusementtoday.com)

Pam Sherborne • (615) 308-3310  
[psherborne@amusementtoday.com](mailto:psherborne@amusementtoday.com)

**Monthly Contributors:** David Fake, Bubba Flint, Ron Gustafson, Susan Storey, Janice Witherow

**Association Memberships:** ACE, AIMS International, ASTM, IAAPA, IISF, IRT/iROC, NAARSO, NEAAPA, NJAA, OABA, PAPA, PACE, SLA, TTA, WWA

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# 2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

## Ben McTyre, Six Flags Fiesta Texas

**Ben McTyre** started his career in the amusement industry with a job at **Libertyland** in Memphis, Tenn., straight out of high school. In the four decades since, he has worked at several parks in the Entertainment and Design divisions and has been with **Six Flags** in various roles, including a stint at its corporate office, since 1992. Currently, McTyre serves as the manager of entertainment and design at **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** where he uses his talent and experience to oversee park design, events and the direction of the park's award-winning shows. His warm personality, efficiency and creative mind have served him well during his lengthy and respected career.

**Title:** Manager of Entertainment & Design.

**Number of years in the industry:** 44.

**Best thing about the industry:** Teamwork. I am fortunate to work with an incredible group of artisans, craftsmen, designers, creators, performers and management. None of our ideas would come to fruition without the hard work and contributions of all of these really talented people.

**Favorite amusement ride:** I love hypercoasters, but Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance is the most jaw-dropping attraction that I have experienced.

**If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ...** Doing something creative. Design, graphics, something along those lines.

**Biggest challenge facing our industry:** Competition in the labor market.

**The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ...** A park full of happy faces. It's the reason we do what we do.

**Favorite pizza topping:** Green olives.

**The view from my office window is ...** The cliff that surrounds Fiesta Texas. The park was built in an old quarry.

**All-time best road trip:** Driving from Oklahoma City to Boston with my two sons about 20 years ago. We made a lot of stops along the way to visit friends and family.

**It's February. My typical Valentine's Day plans are ...** Dinner with my wife Amanda.

**My dream vacation would be ...** To go to Italy with my wife, specifically Florence and Venice.



**Ben McTyre has enjoyed a more than four-decade career as part of the creative — and fun — amusement industry.**  
COURTESY BEN MCTYRE

**The song that always puts me in a good mood is ...** "September" by Earth, Wind & Fire. You can't help but smile while listening to it.

**When I need to decompress I go to ...** Work on a Lego set.

**Choose one: tickets to the Super Bowl or the World Series?** Super Bowl. Go 49ers!

**The best thing about living in Texas is ...** The Tex-Mex food and mild winters.

**My favorite phone app is ...** Apple News.

**What's your take on Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce?** If they're happy that should be all that matters.

**Three things I always have in my car are ...** Extra napkins, spare change and a Bruce Springsteen CD. Yes, I still have a CD player in my car.

**Favorite fast food:** Whataburger breakfast.

**In one word describe your backyard:** Tiny.

**The last time I rode a bike was ...** Four or five years ago.

**Favorite place to people-watch:** Six Flags Fiesta Texas (shameless plug).

**It is 9 p.m. Where can we typically find you?** At work or at home with the family.

## THE INDUSTRY SEEN

### AREA has a Chance meeting



CHICAGO — In their first ever meeting, safety was the topic of discussion by members of American Recreational Equipment Association (AREA) as seen in this December 14, 1963, photo at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago. Harold Chance (standing), president of Chance Manufacturing and president of AREA addresses the group about the need for strong safety programs in the amusement industry. Also seen is Dick Chance (seated to Harold's left), attending his first industry meeting. Seated to his right at the end of the table is Lee Sullivan of the Eli Bridge Company. In 1972, AREA would hold its first safety seminar when Harold and Dick Chance welcomed 35 members to the Chance Rides facility in Wichita, Kansas. AREA would change names in 1991 becoming AIMS International. COURTESY DICK CHANCE ARCHIVES

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## OABA, NICA to hold Florida activities

TAMPA, Fla. — The **Outdoor Amusement Business Association** (OABA) and **National Independent Concessions Association** (NICA) are holding their Florida Week activities February 4 – 10 at the **Sheraton Tampa Brandon Hotel**.

Educational workshops and a Tabletop Tradeshow are new components in this year's lineup.

For early arrivals, **Fare Foods** and NICA will host a reception with food and drinks for its members on Sunday evening, Feb. 4.

The schedule on Monday, Feb. 5, includes NICA's Legacy Celebration Banquet and Annual Meeting.

NICA's educational workshops will take place Tuesday and Wednesday, Feb. 6 and 7, while the Fare Foods Food Show will take place Tuesday from 5 to 9 p.m. and Wednesday from 3 to 9 p.m.

OABA will hold three workshops on Wednesday, Feb. 7, running from 12 noon to 3 p.m. Each will be one hour. The first will be How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love ASTM Standards, presented by **John Hanschen** from **Thomas Carnival**.

The next workshop will be hosted by **Drew Tewksbury** of **McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance**. He will present Managing Your Risk in 2024.

At 2 p.m., Smart Transactions: Reducing Chargeback in Your Business will be presented by **Brian Kames** from **123iMP**. This educational presentation

will focus on chargebacks, covering an overview of the concept and providing real-life examples.

At 3 p.m., OABA's lobby firm, **HB Strategies**, will offer a lobbying update on last year's activities and the strategy for 2024. This event is open to all OABA members.

At 4:30 p.m. on the same day, there will be a short reception, medal presentation and toast to the incoming Hall of Fame and Pioneer Award winners.

Thursday, Feb. 8, the OABA board of directors will meet that morning. New this year will be a Tabletop Trade Show from 1 to 4:30 p.m.

That evening, beginning at 7 p.m., OABA will hold its 8th Annual **Top Golf** Foreign Guest Worker Advocacy Fundraiser at the Tampa Top Golf family entertainment center.

OABA's 59th Annual Member Meeting and Chair Reception will be held on Friday evening, Feb. 9, when **Ben Pickett** from **Ray Cammack Shows**, will take over as OABA chair.

**Johnny Doolan** and **Bill Johnson** will be inducted into the OABA's Hall of Fame and **Eugene Siefker** will posthumously be receiving the Pioneer Award.

**Wayne McCary**, OABA Trustee and Hall of Famer, will be inducted into the Circus Ring of Fame at the Sarasota Circus Tent on Sat., Feb. 10.

•oaba.org  
•nicainc.org



The IISA Jamboree Museum Fundraiser for the Carnival Museum will be held 5:30 to 8 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 14.  
AT/SUE NICHOLS

## ► IISF

Continued from page 1

**JKJ Workforce Agency** and the **Small Business Workforce Alliance** will be conducting an educational and empowerment seminar, focusing on H-2B changes, as well as covering Supplemental Visas and P4 Visas.

The presenters will be **James Judkins** and **Leon Sequiera**.

Judkins said the new filing strategies with the release of the supplemental visas will be addressed.

"We will discuss how we got to this position," Judkins said. "What could happen to make it continue or kill it in the near future? How did we get to the brink of a new

visa category for the Mobile Entertainment Business?"

Judkins said they will look at the next steps in the process.

"I guarantee that this is a session that is going to be extremely interesting and open peoples' eyes and minds," Judkins said.

On Friday, Feb. 16, the Industrial Truck/Forklift Training has been set. Class includes handbook, certificate and permit card (for on-site equipment only).

From 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., class attendees will do a DVD preview and manual preview. Then from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m., attendees will conduct on-site training.

Class size is limited to 25 people.

A new event Rimes said they are trying out this year will take place Tuesday evening on the IISA grounds. Called Fiesta Night, there will be food and dueling pianos.

"We went to a dueling pianos performance and had so much fun that we decided to try it out here," Rimes said. "We will see."

The IISA Jamboree Museum Fundraiser for the Carnival Museum will be held 5:30 to 8 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 14.

The SLA will hold its meeting, memorial and social beginning at 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 15.

That evening, Casino Night has been set to run 6 to 10 p.m.

Rimes said in mid-January that they were considering having a tribute band come into the club, 10 p.m. to 2 a.m., which will be after the Casino Night event.

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Classic Toy Co., Inc. . . . .	703-710	Recreation By Design . . . . .	Outside Space
Cmd Enterprises LLC. . . . .	626-628	Red Bone Products, Inc. . . . .	1021-1022
Coin, Currency & Document Systems Inc. . . . .	512	Rhode Island Novelty . . . . .	504-507/603-607
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# PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► San Antonio Zoo opens new entrance — page 12 / Betson completes Spare Time installation — page 22

## Knott's Berry Farms' Camp Snoopy gets refreshing makeover

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

BUENA PARK, Calif. — For decades, Camp Snoopy at Knott's Berry Farm has been recognized as a spectacularly themed kids' area. Before the park was acquired by Cedar Fair in the 1990s, a partnership with Peanuts creator Charles Schulz provided Knott's with well-known and beloved characters. A makeover came to an area of the park being designed to reflect the High Sierras. Renamed Camp Snoopy and opened in 1983, the land was a hit. In fact, the theme has since been adopted by other Cedar Fair parks.

The mindset to the reimagined theme for 2024 is that when guests enter Camp Snoopy they feel like campers. Kids will join the charge to become



Beagle Scouts.

"We always listen to our guests and their feedback," said Ken Parks, corporate director of creative development, Cedar Fair. "Regarding Camp Snoopy, Knott's visitors wanted a place where everyone in the family could play together. Camp Snoopy and the Peanuts Gang have hosted multiple generations of Knott's guests, having been a park staple for



The new Family Coaster from Zamperla will provide a "first" coaster ride for many young kids. COURTESY KNOTT'S BERRY FARM

over 40 years. Reflecting the park's California history theme, the land's design language pays homage to the Golden State's High Sierras. Initially, a play place designed for kids under 12, this new take on the land focuses on giving the characters more of a presence and creating an immersive area."

Over time, Camp Snoopy has been enhanced and upgraded. The most recent time was in 2014 when three new Zamperla rides were added. Once again, the park has turned to the Italian manufacturer for new additions for 2024.

"We're once again thrilled to provide attractions for Camp Snoopy at Knott's Berry Farm. The park will be adding to the already established

Peanuts-themed rides we began providing nearly 30 years ago," said Ramon Rosario, director of sales, The Americas. "The evolution of Camp Snoopy is thanks in large part to the long-standing partnership and collaboration between our organizations."

Of the new rides being added, the most captivating one will be Snoopy's Tenderpaw Twister Coaster. For many families, this will be a child's first roller coaster experience.

"Even though it is pint-sized, the leaps we made in system design are huge," said Adam Sandy, roller coaster sales, Zamperla. "Zamperla went through its entire portfolio and upgraded every coaster system we offer — including the Family Coaster. We

made updates that decrease the cost of ownership over the life of the ride and increase guest comfort. The individual lap bars, new chassis design, magnetic brakes and booster lift hill are all huge improvements for operators and riders alike. Our standard Family Coaster is seen in many places, but this installation peeps it up with a boosted launch in the straight section opposite the station."

Like a giant backyard swing set, Sally's Swing Along is a Zamperla Super Happy Swing. It seats 16, including seats for adults.

Also from Zamperla is Camp Snoopy's Off-Road Rally. This revamp of the park's Rocky Mountain Trucking Company weaves

► See SNOOPY, page 10



The Super Happy Swing accommodates both adults and children. COURTESY KNOTT'S BERRY FARM



Fabbri Group Booster Maxx



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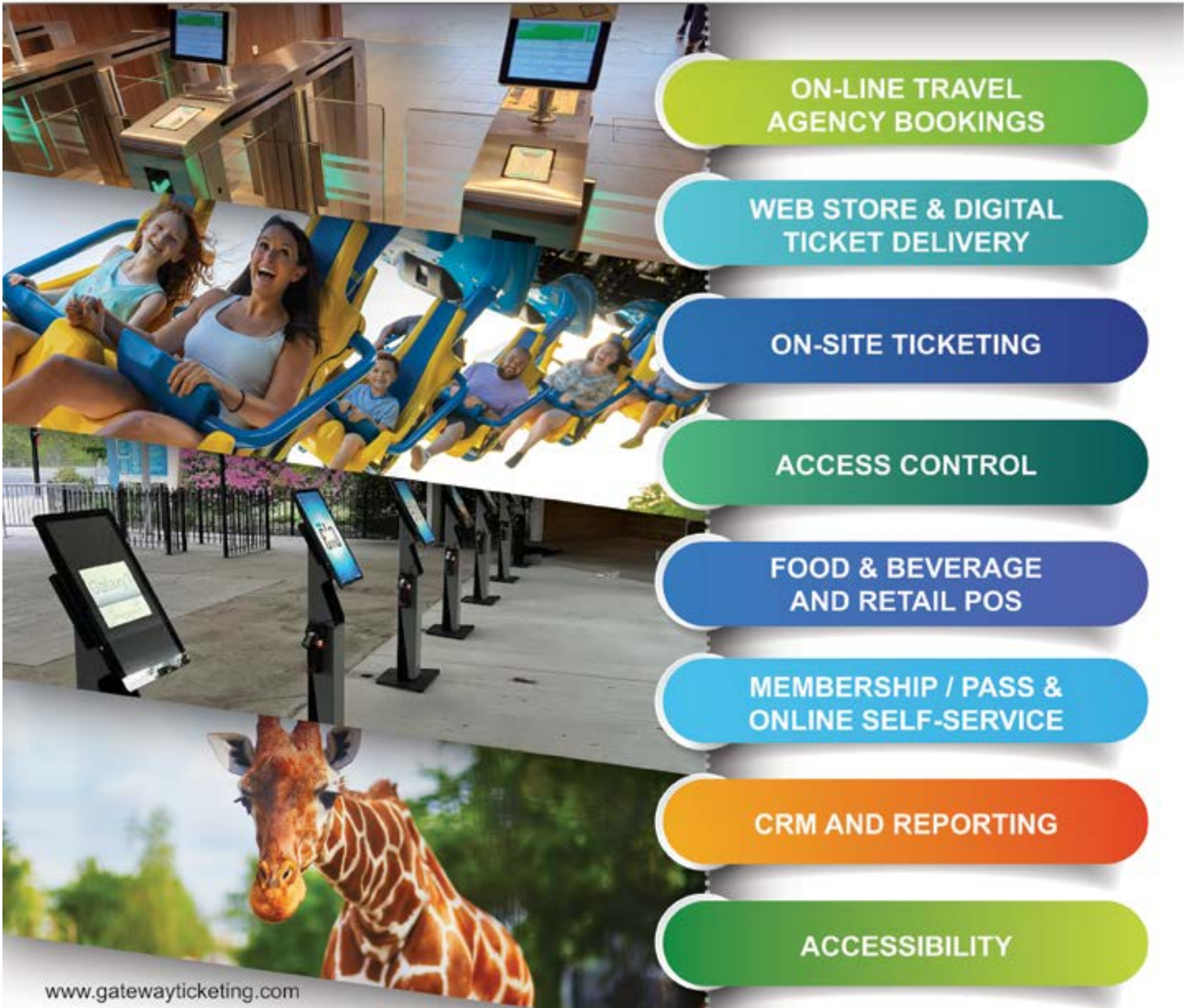


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Established more than four decades ago, Camp Snoopy receives a reimagining in 2024. COURTESY KNOTT'S BERRY FARM

## ► SNOOPY Continued from page 10

a story of celebrating the annual Camp Jamboree into a longer track and redesigned Jeeps to match the characters of the Peanuts IP.

"The Off-Road Rally replaces the Grand Sierra Trucking Company and Huff N Puff attractions," Parks told *Amusement Today*. "This new journey through the trees and fauna of Camp Snoopy lets riders hop aboard their own four-wheeler, which has been painted to reflect the personality of the Peanuts characters. The attraction features a brand-new story with lots of charming scenic vignettes along the path. The decision to switch from a train of vehicles, as was the case with

the Trucking Company, and move to individual cars was to add guest comfort and capacity, resulting in reduced wait times for the little ones."

In the past, a train ride called Grand Sierra Railroad offered families a mild train ride. Rethemed to Beagle Express, the steam engine will be replaced with a new electric locomotive. A series of new camp scenes will show the beloved characters preparing for the "Best Cabin" contest, potato sack races and other jamboree events.

All the changes to the ride lineup did dictate the retirement of a few attractions. The former children's coaster, Timberline Twister, was built by **Bradley and Kaye** and opened with Camp

Snoopy in 1983. It has been removed. The park's Ferris wheel, also from 1983, has been removed, as has a Camp Bus attraction, a family ride that has been at the park for more than three decades.

Woodstock's Air Mail, a junior drop tower from **S&S Worldwide**, finds a new home in an area soon to be called Camp Post Office.

New terraces grace the guest-favorite barrel bridge area, allowing parents to relax for a moment as kids burn off energy.

In addition to rides, Camp Snoopy sees some substantial upgrades that include an updated dining hall, Camp Snoopy Theater, new restrooms and an immersive new Snoopy Camp Store.

"The concept for this version of Camp Snoopy is to create a place that the characters inhabit and that serves as their summer camp. The Knott's team looked at the area as a whole, giving some existing elements a more purposeful role in the story of the Peanuts camp," Parks told *AT*. "The Camp Store is where the characters purchase their supplies, and the new interior décor of the store will reflect this. Snoopy's Camp Canteen (former Grizzly Creek Lodge) and The Camp Snoopy Theater also take on new roles in the camp



The makeover of Camp Snoopy is to create more immersive environments for the Peanuts IP. COURTESY KNOTT'S BERRY FARM



Knott's Berry Farm donated a lead car and other significant pieces from Montezooma's Revenge to the NRCMA. COURTESY NRCMA

## Knott's donates Schwarzkopf car to Roller Coaster Museum

With many things changing at Knott's Berry Farm, the **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives** has received a car from the park's 1970s launched coaster manufactured by **Schwarzkopf**. In addition, the park has donated the last car with the clutch plate for the flywheel, part of the loop track and the entry sign from the front of the queue line.

The attraction is currently undergoing a transformation that involves both a refreshed theme as well as new equipment, including a new train.

The NRCMA has an extensive selection of roller coaster vehicles, and the addition from Montezooma's Revenge is a strong asset to the nonprofit's growing collection.

In 2019, Montezooma's Revenge was designated as an ACE Roller Coaster Landmark by **American Coaster Enthusiasts**. At the time, it was the last remaining Schwarzkopf launched loop coaster operating in America. In the 1970s and '80s, these rides were dynamic and innovative. Several models populated the American theme park landscape.

Knott's has not released a full list of details and changes to the ride, as well as any completion target. The park announced the new name for the attraction will be Montezooma's Revenge: The Forbidden Fortress when it reopens.

—Tim Baldwin

story. The Canteen is where Charlie Brown and his fellow campers eat every meal. The crew service mess hall's interior décor feels like the Peanuts characters occupy the space. The new Camp Snoopy Theater is all about guest comfort. There is a new stage and seating area covered by a timber frame structure whose natural wood ceiling keeps the audience dry on rainy days and whose whirling fans cool the audience on high-temperature days."

With reimagined experiences for young ones and

families, Knott's continues — even in its compact real estate dictated by city streets — to offer a wide range of rides for the young, old and thrill seekers.

"With its unique balance of attraction offerings, Knott's holds a distinctive place in the SoCal theme park market," said Parks. "Its overall ride profile fuses thrill rides with family attractions that run a gamut of new to honored classics. This blend of experiences sets Knott's apart as a park with something for every family member."

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# San Antonio Zoo opens captivating entrance, adds event venues

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO — With more than 100 years of history behind it, the **San Antonio Zoo** not only embraces its heritage but is also modernizing its facility. Huge strides have been made in the past decade in both exhibits and infrastructure. Long-term plans are vast and ambitious.

San Antonio Zoo encompasses more than 50 acres and is located in the city's Brackenridge Park.

As 2023 came to a close, guests were enjoying a brand-new entrance to the park. Not only is the portal strikingly beautiful, but it comes with numerous advantages.

"It gives you a sense of excitement and adventure when you get there," said **Tim Morrow**, CEO. "It's really fun for me to watch it operate efficiently and safely. It really makes me happy watching people enjoy it."

As major additions are coming to the zoo, it was important to get this new

entrance in first, according to Morrow.

"The last entrance we had was built in the 1950s," he told *Amusement Today*. "It was a little underwhelming in terms of experiential arrival; it looked a little bit like a house. The sidewalks were too narrow, and guests had to walk in the streets to pass each other and stand in the streets to wait to get in because the ticket booths were so close to the street. It was bittersweet to see the old one go, as we all grew up with it, but as guests see the new entrance, they understand why we needed it."

Built in the 1950s, far before ADA protocols were ever conceived, the old entrance had its challenges. The new entrance provides a more seamless arrival in terms of both accessibility and groups.

"In 2018, we built our beautiful parking garage, and a lot of our guests were now coming from the other direction and had to cross through lines to get to this thin ramp,"



The new entrance to the San Antonio Zoo modernizes the arrival as well as adds beauty. The previous entrance (above inset) pushed guests right to the street as they approached the gate. AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY SAN ANTONIO ZOO



Morrow said. "Creating big ramps from both sides was a [goal] in this new entrance. We used a lot of local advocates in our thought process. We've added two adult changing stations at the entrance. We're able to get everyone in safely and efficiently. People feel welcome and not stressed from getting in."

The new entrance has a distinctive San Antonio vibe. "It's really important

for us for this new entrance to be the sights and the sounds and the smells of San Antonio," said **Hope Roth**, marketing and communications. "You'll have no doubt when you walk up that you are at the *San Antonio Zoo*. From the local artists to the papel we have hanging in the **HEB Plaza**, it truly feels like Fiesta in San Antonio."

"We used PGAV out of St. Louis for our design," added

Morrow. "They've worked at other attractions in the area, so they dove into the culture of San Antonio. From there we handed it over to local contractors and local artists. We have a flourishing art scene — murals and lots of color. Local artists are really invested in the project because they grew up here too."

One artist is finishing

► See ZOO, page 14

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**ZOO**

Continued from page 12

a bronze sculpture for the entrance. A temporary one in place will eventually move to the upcoming gorilla habitat.

As a 5019(c)3 nonprofit organization, the San Antonio Zoo relies on donations to secure the future of its wildlife care. By hosting events, the zoo can raise further funds for the continued development of the property.

“Our capital campaign is called Generation Zoo. The community has been coming to the zoo for 109 years and they really love it,” said Morrow. “It’s been going through this renaissance the last decade or so, so they are falling in love with it again.

The City of San Antonio supported us at the front gate with \$10 million. HEB came in with a show of support too. It’s key for us to get philanthropic support, city support and corporate support.”

Built into the new entrance are elevated terraces that serve as event venues. Adjacent to the terraces



Upper terraces built into the new gate create event spaces for organizations and conventions (above). The new plaza welcomes visitors with traditional San Antonio flair. Area artists and contractors made the project a labor of love for locals. COURTESY SAN ANTONIO ZOO; AT/TIM BALDWIN

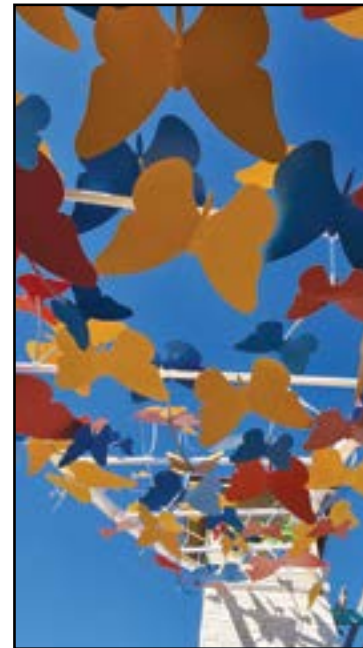
are new kitchens to cater for functions. While event spaces do exist inside the zoo overlooking animal areas, the new elevated terraces located at the front provide an easy in-and-out for functions with time limitations as well.

“This allows us a great event space right at the perimeter. We built out event spaces at the Giraffe Savannah and Rhino Savannah, which are beautiful during the day for luncheons and organization team building,” said

Morrow. “We’re a heavy convention town, so we are constantly looking for event spaces, and the rooftop terraces are another great new space for up to 300 people. It has beautiful views.”

Sorely needed were modern bathroom facilities at the front of the park, and now the zoo has eliminated that stress factor with updated facilities.

The new entrance plaza provides guests with up-close experiences with playful lemurs and its sky trail.



The historic Monkey House has also been restored and repurposed, preserving its architectural splendor.

Morrow’s passion for growth and enhancement is evident in his work and outlook. In 2025, a major new gorilla habitat called Congo Falls will be a substantial addition to the zoo, and plans go well beyond that, including a Ralston Event Center, which will overlook the new Congo Falls, as well

as the downtown.

“Tim has been with us for nine years. In that time period, the investment into the zoo has been over \$100 million,” said Roth.

“We are in a city where we are competing with Six Flags and SeaWorld and staying top of mind,” said Morrow. “They are putting in a lot of capital as well, and our zoo is in that world, and we need to be constantly growing and improving.”



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## Alton Towers "stinky" celebration for AromaPrime's 50th anniversary

ALTON, U.K. — To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the partnership between theme park smell maker **AromaPrime** and **Alton Towers Resort**, the attraction has added a smelly time capsule to its archive. AromaPrime and Alton Towers Resort have been working together since the early 1990s to create fantastical pongs at the theme park.

To mark AromaPrime's 50th birthday, and celebrate the long-time collaboration with Alton Towers Resort, the new time capsule has been filled with the park's many iconic whiffs, sealed for another half-a-century.

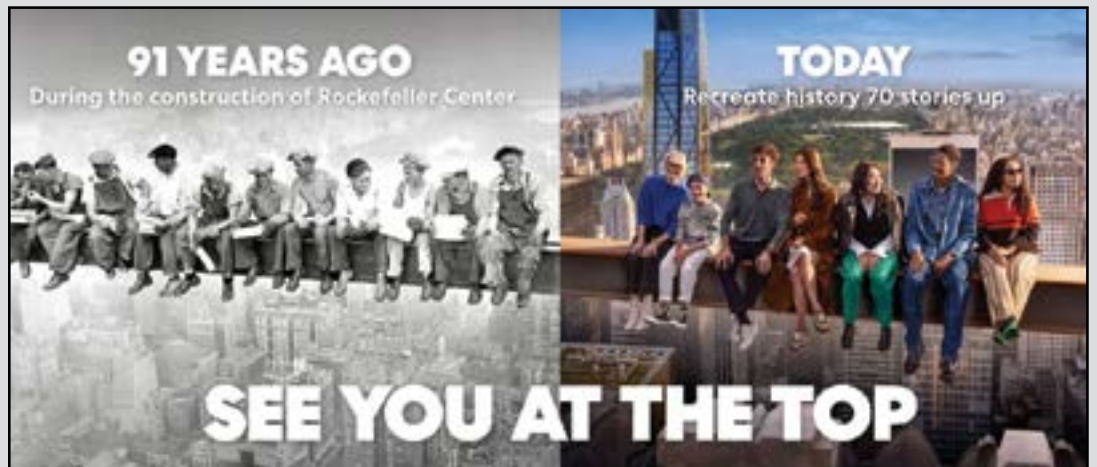
Founded in 1973, AromaPrime became the world's first scenting company to specialize in theme parks and museums.

Roller coaster designer **John Wardley** first worked with AromaPrime in 1989 to create a damp crypt smell

for Chessington World of **Adventures'** Vampire ride. Following the success of this project, John and the **Sparks Group** approached AromaPrime again in 1991 to find spooky scents for Alton Towers' Haunted House dark ride. Since then, Alton Towers Resort has scented many of its rides, with a custom Alien Egg Nest stench for Nemesis Sub-Terra, a smoky woodsmoke scent for the Wicker Man roller coaster and a musty aroma for Hex, to name a few.

"It is brilliant to celebrate the strong and creative bond we have with Alton Towers Resort," said **Liam R. Findlay**, of AromaPrime. "It was exciting to fill our time capsule with smells like Woodsmoke, Cabbage Soup and Musty, with the idea that those who open it up in another 50 years can sniff what the park once smelled like — time travel via smell!"

## Ride Entertainment partners with iconic New York City skyscraper



NEW YORK CITY — Ride Entertainment announced a new partnership with 30 Rockefeller Center to operate Top of the Rock's newest attraction, The Beam. "It is a true honor to steward such a groundbreaking attraction atop a historical and iconic New York City landmark," said Eli Paraoan, president of operations with Ride Entertainment. "It has been a pleasure working with the team at Top of the Rock and I look forward to growing our partnership for many years to come." Located on the 69th floor, two beams secure up to seven guests at a time before rising approximately 12 feet and rotating 180 degrees, giving unparalleled views of the New York City skyline from the most unique of vantage points. Guests also receive a souvenir photo, mimicking the iconic "Lunch atop a Skyscraper" taken back in 1932 (above). Operating and maintaining historical attractions aligns with Ride Entertainment's other New York-based attractions, including the operation of Forest Park Carousel (a National Historic Landmark) and the SeaGlass Carousel in The Battery — a one-of-a-kind carousel in lower Manhattan. With the addition of its operation of The Beam, Ride Entertainment now operates attractions at seven different locations throughout the New York City area. COURTESY RIDE ENTERTAINMENT

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# Third Carnival cruise ship launches with Bolt coaster from Maurer

AT: Jeffrey Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

GALVESTON, Texas — Starting at the end of last year with a cruise departing just before Christmas, Carnival Jubilee, the third ship in Carnival Cruise Line's Excel Class, started embarkations on seven-day itineraries to the Western Caribbean from its homeport in Galveston, Texas. As the third ship in the fleet's Excel class and a sister ship to the award-winning Mardi Gras and Carnival Celebration, Carnival Jubilee stands, with a size of 183,200 GT, as the largest vessel in the Carnival fleet, accommodating up to 6,600 passengers.

Crafted by the renowned Meyer Werft Shipyards in Papenburg, Finland. This ocean giant impresses not only with its grand dimensions, but also with its outstanding attractions. Particularly notable is the Bolt roller coaster delivering guests an exhilarating ride experience across its top deck.

The Bolt roller coaster is the result of innovative technology by Maurer Rides and was installed as part of Carnival Cruise Line's continuing success of the first two roller coasters aboard Mardi Gras and Celebration. With Spike propulsion, Bolt offers an exciting acceleration of 1.2 G Forces, allowing passengers to reach speeds of up to 60 km/h (38 mph), experiencing drops, dips and curves — all while enjoying a breathtaking view of the infinite horizon of the ocean.

This technological marvel was not only enthusiastically received by passengers but also obtained recognition from renowned institutions like *Popular Science* which honored the roller coaster as the "Best of What's New."

"Normal roller coasters use gravity to send thrill-seekers zooming and looping. But if you want to



The massive Jubilee (above) takes its place as the largest ship in the Carnival fleet. Jubilee's Bolt coaster allows guests to control the action while taking in stunning views from the ship's upper decks (right). COURTESY CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE



build a ride on a cruise ship — where stable, level ground is far from guaranteed — you have to get creative," according to *Popular Science*.

The Bolt roller coaster on the Carnival Jubilee provides passengers with an interactive experience, empowering them to control braking and acceleration during the ride. With a track length of 220 meters (722 feet) and a height of 57 meters (187 feet) above sea level, Bolt stands as a groundbreaking attraction offering guests an unparalleled experience on the high seas.

In addition to the Bolt Coaster, Jubilee is also home to the Carnival WaterWorks water park, featuring three large-scale spiraling slides, a giant dumping bucket, twin racing slides and more. The longest, Blue Lightning, is packed with headfirst, high-speed twists and turns throughout its 312-foot-long course. Orange Thunder incorporates a drop capsule that has thrill seekers standing before the floor drops out from under them, propel-

ling them down into a world of high-speed twists and wetness. Twister slide keeps on thrilling splash-seekers with 265 feet of turns and twists. All three body slides feature tinted translucent sections allowing spectators to join in on the fun of watching friends and family whiz through the enclosed tubes.

Those looking for less excitement can enjoy one of the five salt-water pool areas which are spread out across the ship. The Patio Pool is a beautiful infinity pool perched along the edge of the back of the ship on deck eight. When the ship is cruising, it offers stunning views of the ship's wake. The beach pool and whirlpools on deck 16 are open to everyone. Adults who want some peace and quiet can visit the serenity area on deck 18, a massive 21-and-over zone that includes shaded and full-sun spots, along with a large hot tub, a small

swimming pool and outdoor massage cabanas. The Tides pool is a second infinity pool perched looking over the aft of the ship on deck 16. The Havana Pool is for the exclusive use of guests occupying the Havana accommodations and Carnival Excel

Presidential Suites.

Carnival Jubilee, with Bolt onboard, is the crown jewel of a trilogy of ships that set new standards for cruise entertainment, promising guests an unforgettable journey filled with thrills and adventure.



The WaterWorks water park occupies the front section of deck 18 and features thrilling translucent body slides. COURTESY CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE



# Lubbock's Joyland Park sells final rides, IRM serves as broker

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

LUBBOCK, Texas — As the 2022 season was coming to a close, Joyland Park made the announcement that 2022 — its 50th season — would be its last. Owners David and Kristi Dean were hoping a buyer would come through. For a brief time, it seemed as if that was indeed going to happen, but those arrangements fell through. The Deans then worked with International Rides Management to sell the rides. During this process, David's health took a harsh turn, and the industry sadly lost one of its kindest family-owned park operators in 2023.

"All the rides have been sold but are not gone yet," Kristi told *Amusement Today* in January. "The parks or people that have purchased them are in the process of removing them between now and the end of March. As far as what is left is, it is mainly back-of-house items."

"As of Christmas Eve, all



Joyland Park's train (above left) was the final ride to be sold. Joyland's skyride went down the center of the park (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

rides were sold and accounted for," said Sam Shurgott, president, IRM. "Once we get clearance from the buyers, we can announce where they all went. We'll have a comprehensive list of their new homes around the country — and actually around the world."

Shurgott said there were 31 rides to sell. In addition to the U.S., Joyland had buyers from England and Mexico.

"The last two rides to go were the G16 train, which

went to a client who had purchased other rides in the spring, who came back and wanted to add to his wish list, and the O.D. Hopkins skyride was the final ride to go," said Shurgott. "The first ride to sell was the Tilt-A-Whirl."

Kristi said she has tried to stay out of the limelight as the park assets are being sold off. "I would prefer to handle all emotions at one time."

"The Deans approached me a few years ago to pos-



sibly retire in the future," Shurgott told *AT*. "We visited the park several times, both off-season and in operation and photographed everything in the park. The Deans felt they didn't have a buyer. However, two local families offered to purchase the park. When that deal fell through, they discussed with me if I'd be interested in a liquidation of the rides instead of one auction. I felt that was better to have Joyland live on forever

in other locations. It's IRM's goal to find the proper equipment for the right buyer."

"Yes, it's disheartening, but I am relieved to see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. Once everything is off-site, an announcement will be made where all the rides are relocated," Kristi said. "My goal is to make David proud. I feel that through Joyland's rides in their new locations, happy memories and fun carry on, and this is David's legacy."

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# SeaWorld San Antonio opens Aldabra tortoise habitat attraction

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — The term “creature comforts” might come to mind. Aldabra tortoises, weighing upwards to 500 pounds, are enjoying a new habitat at **SeaWorld San Antonio**. Aldabra Island is a new, state-of-the-art 7,000-square-foot tortoise habitat that accommodates the giant reptiles. The attraction features a climate-controlled shelter, a wading pond, a waterfall and spacious yards for the tortoises to enjoy. “Although SeaWorld did not have tortoises on display prior to the creation of Aldabra Island, two of the Aldabra tortoises shared a habitat in the adjacent **Aquatica** water park. The environment was created to eventually add even more tortoises,” said **Chuck Cureau**, marketing.

Aldabra Island is located adjacent to the park’s water ski lake and Alligator Alley. The new habitat has a designated indoor structure.

“The indoor space was



Interactions with Aldabra tortoises are a new addition to SeaWorld San Antonio (above left). Varying environments, including a waterfall and pond, are an amenity of the new habitat (above right). COURTESY SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO

created to give the tortoises a climate-controlled area should weather conditions deviate from what they are used to in their natural habitat,” Cureau told *Amusement Today*.

Because of the variability of the new habitat, it allows the animals to choose the area of the environment in which they want to be.

As one of the largest species of tortoises (second only in size to the Galapagos tortoise) the Aldabra tortoise was one of the first

species to be protected to ensure its survival for the future. Currently, Aldabra tortoises are considered “vulnerable” due to habitat encroachment and poaching. Over the last century, the number of tortoises has drastically declined.

“Aldabra Island is open for all guests to see the giant tortoises as they roam their spacious yard and pond and learn about them from zoological professionals that staff the attraction,” said Cureau. “Guests can

also see the tortoises in the indoor habitat through large glass panels.”

Guests desiring even closer interaction can purchase an Animal Encounter, in which during a 20-minute tour they can go behind the scenes and help prepare enrichment items, interact with and feed the tortoises and learn about their history. These tortoises are among the longest-living animals on the planet, some living well over a century.

Aldabra Island is the

first addition to the park in 2024. A thrilling new flume ride called **Catapult Falls** will open later this year.

“Although also a destination for thrilling rides and amazing events, SeaWorld has always held animals at its core,” Cureau said. “From rescues to messages of conservation to educational and fun presentations, SeaWorld’s goal is to teach people about animals and encourage them to respect the environment that we share with them.”

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## Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne  
[psherborne@amusementtoday.com](mailto:psherborne@amusementtoday.com)

**Playland** in Roeding Park, Fresno, California, received a reprieve last month just as it was planning its farewell weekend.

In social media posts on January 12, Playland owners announced the park will remain open and operational through June, as it continues to deal with the operational costs and marketing of the nearly 70-year-old amusement park inside Roeding Park.

The park has been struggling with low attendance and a lack of fundraising, despite an infusion of money and expertise from **Helm and Sons Amusements**, which took over operations of the park in June.

The company spent more than \$600,000 in facility upgrades and repairs and brought in several new attractions. Still, Playland struggled to meet its employee payroll and first hinted at a closure in October.

The weekend of January 13-14 would have been its final weekend.

Playland in Roeding Park is planning to be reopening on June 1, according to **Davey Helm**, whose company Helm and Sons Amusements purchased it and has been furiously updating and sprucing it up.

**Kings Island**, Mason, Ohio, closed its 2023 season on the high side. Officials there last month released details of some of its most ridden rides of 2023.

To no one official's surprise, roller coasters topped the list. Orion, the park's newest roller coaster gave the most rides in the park in 2023 with more than 1.5 million. The Beast, Diamondback, Mystic Timbers, Orion, the Racer and Banshee all gave more than one million rides.

Boo Blasters on Boo Hill, the haunted family indoor ride and top non-roller coaster attraction, gave just shy of 900,000 rides.

Since the park's opening in 1972, only three Kings Island rides have given more than 50 million total rides: the Racer, Beast and K.I. & Miami Valley Railroad.

Kings Island will open for the 2024 season in April.

**Legoland** in Carlsbad, California, is celebrating its 25th birthday in 2024. In January, park officials announced that the park is offering a limited-time ticket deal for kids as a part of the celebration.

Parents can get up to four kids' tickets at \$25 each with the purchase of a single adult ticket between January 8 and March

10. A one-day ticket purchased online averages around \$104.

The offer is valid for children ages 2-12. It's also offered with the 25th Birthday hotel package, **Sea Life** hopper ticket and the one-day Legoland ticket.

In other Legoland news, officials at **Legoland Florida Resort**, Winter Haven, unveiled last month the addition of a life-sized Ferrari 296 GTS Hybrid race car, made entirely of Lego bricks, as part of its all-new Lego Ferrari Build and Race Experience opening this spring.

When the new attraction debuts, guests will be able to see the Lego Ferrari up close and even sit in the driver's seat, as well as create their own Ferrari race car in interactive play zones before test driving it through three extreme test tracks.

Park officials took to heart guest requests for a shaded play area at **Sesame Place**, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Officials announced last month that they will install a new shaded play area, and it is set to open in the spring.

The new attraction, to be called 123 Playground, will be located just across the street from the Sesame Street Neighborhood. It will give adults a chance to relax and recharge, seated under the garden-inspired shading greenery, while children enjoy classic playground elements including slides, interactive panels and soft play mounds.

Employees of **Paula Deen's Family Kitchen** at **OWA** in Foley, Alabama, were surprised on January 10 to learn the restaurant abruptly closed.

The **Paula Deen**-branded restaurant is a franchise owned by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians (PBCI), which developed OWA, a 520-acre shopping, dining and entertainment development in Foley.

Shortly after the restaurant closure became public, the PBCI issued a statement saying that even though some social media posts suggested that employees weren't given notice before the closure, they had actually been notified prior.

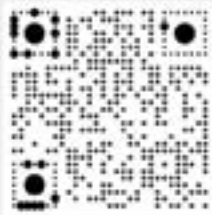
Paula Deen's Family Kitchen operated at OWA for just over four years, having opened in December 2019. At the time of its opening, two other Paula Deen restaurants had just closed in Destin and Panama City, Fla. Four locations are currently operating: Pigeon Forge, Tenn.; Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Branson, Mo.; and Nashville, Tenn.

A release from the PBCI also said they were providing displaced employees with "new employment opportunities within other areas of our property, at our other Tribal-owned businesses and through local employment resources."

Although no details were provided, the release also said a "new attraction" was coming to the now-vacant spot where the restaurant operated, slated to open this summer.



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# Betson Enterprises completes 80-game installation for Spare Time

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

OMAHA, Neb. — **Betson Enterprises**, a leader in distributing location-based amusement products, announced recently the completion of an 80-piece game room installation at **Spare Time Entertainment** in Omaha, Nebraska.

Betson's team worked closely with Spare Time Entertainment representatives to create a diverse mix of game selections to provide something for everyone.

The new game room includes redemption pieces like Nerf Arcade, Dodgeball Ultimate Arena Deluxe, Hyperpitch, Rick and Morty Blips and Chitz and more.

Video game enthusiasts are enjoying titles such as Fast and Furious Arcade Motion, Qube, Virtual Rabbids Ultra HD, Quick Shot and more.

Additionally, the game room features prize merchandisers, includ-



This is a look into the new 80-piece game room installation by Betson Enterprises for a Spare Time Entertainment location in Omaha, Nebraska. COURTESY BETSON ENTERPRISES

ing E-Claw machines, Showtime cranes, a six-player Prize Cube and Photo Studio Deluxe, an interactive photo booth.

The Spare Time Entertainment facility in Omaha installed the new game room adjacent to its existing attractions such as luxury bowling lanes, the

Game Zone arcade, Laser Tag, Escape Rooms, a restaurant, bar and more.

Spare Time



Entertainment's Amusements Operations Manager **Lyle Stewart** was pleased by the result and communications between Spare Time and Betson. **Britannie Betti**, northeast regional sales director at Betson Enterprises, led the Betson team that provided recommendations on game selection and layout to ensure optimal use of the available space to enhance the customer experience and maximize revenue.

With the Omaha location, Spare Time Entertainment, headquartered in Bristol, Connecticut, now has 18 locations across 13 states.

Along with the attractions, Spare Time centers offer birthday parties, special

events and social programming. It is a family-owned company. **Tim Corley** is the current president.

Betson Enterprises, headquartered in Carlstadt, New Jersey, is also a family-owned business that has offered revenue-generating solutions to its clients since 1934. The company offers concept-to-completion solutions that maximize the profitability.

Betson management has noted a recent surge in the family entertainment industry.

"With the introduction of new games and attractions over the past couple of years, a notable upswing is evident in the industry," said **Bob Dipipi**, vice president of sales and purchasing for Betson. "We see a positive trend with unique markets integrating game rooms into their entertainment offerings.

"Betson is excited about our 2024 installation calendar as we remain at the forefront of industry trends and deliver unmatched gaming experiences," Dipipi said.

•betson.com

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The Evergreen Miniature Golf Course in Door County, Wisconsin, opened in the village of Fish Creek in 2023 and offers a unique, 18-hole, completely ADA accessible course. COURTESY ADVENTURE GOLF & SPORTS

## AGS's Evergreen Mini Golf Course offers environmental education, fun

FISH CREEK, Wisc. — Door County, Wisconsin, a popular tourist destination, is home to several miniature golf courses, but the **Evergreen Miniature Golf Course** that opened there in the village of Fish Creek in 2023 offers a unique, 18-hole, completely ADA accessible mini golf course designed and constructed by **Adventure Golf & Sports (AGS)** using the company's eco-friendly Modular Advantage System. Unlike traditional mini golf courses built using concrete and adorned with classic props like windmills, oversized chairs, partially sunken sailing ship masts and similar, this course surrounds players with beautiful trees, gardens and educational exhibits about sustainable practices and the environment.

"I wanted a non-traditional course," said **Kerry Johnson**, entrepreneurial owner of the Evergreen Miniature Golf Course. Johnson, a former K-12 school educator explained: "I wanted it really nature-based and nature-themed to reflect the surrounding environment as much as possible but also add some beautiful water elements which [AGS] did."

"[AGS] have this amazing product. Because of the nature theme and focus on environmental education, the eco-friendly qualities of the modular advantage were obviously appealing with what we were trying to convey. I looked other places to see what else was out there and honestly they're the only ones that have this style course," added Johnson.

The Modular Advantage Mini Golf System used by AGS to build the course features patented, interlocking, flexible panels made of recycled materials that are permeable for water drainage. Excavation is minimal compared to concrete construction requirements, allowing trees, flora and fauna to remain intact, and the permeability helps eliminate ponding on the mini golf holes for a quick-dry, no mess operation.

"When I go to other miniature golf courses, it's just a very different quality, a different feel," stated Johnson. "It feels like a higher quality course than the harder cement-based courses. More of a natural feel. One of the things we hear a lot about is that it's one of the most beautiful courses people have been to. And I think that has a to do with the fact that we kept as many of the pine trees in there."

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



## FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson  
[jrobinson@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jrobinson@amusementtoday.com)

Boots' Banana Swing has officially opened as the newest attraction inside **Nickelodeon Universe** at **Mall of America**. The ride features the beloved character, Boots, from *Dora the Explorer* and allows guests to swing along with Boots through the breathtaking rainforest treetops.

The attraction is a custom-themed Happy Swing model from **Zamperla**.

**Intercard** has completed an arcade installation for **Round1 Bowling and Amusement's** newest location at the **Sun Valley Mall** in Concord, California. It is the 43rd of Round1's U.S. locations to install Intercard technology.

The Concord location features a mega-size arcade with a massive array of the latest games including hard-to-find Japanese games available exclusively at Round1. The Intercard system controls every aspect of arcade management including card sales, redemption and service.

"Round1 decided that Intercard would provide them with a stable, reliable, and efficient method for managing multiple complex sites and growing their business," said **Scott Sherrod**, CEO of Intercard. "We are exceedingly proud to be associated with an energetic company that is an innovator in our industry."

**Betson Enterprises** announced the completion of a 75-piece game room installation at **RollHouse Entertainment** in North Olmsted, Ohio.

In a strategic move to modernize the former **Buckeye Lanes**, a popular venue on the **Professional Bowlers Association** Winter Tour, RollHouse Entertainment removed 14 bowling lanes. It introduced a state-of-the-art 5,000-square-foot game room at the heart of the bowling center. This transformation positions the North Olmsted location as the flagship RollHouse establishment with the largest game room in the chain, catering to a more diverse audience.

Owners **Glenn** and **Sue Gable** — as well as their two sons, **Eddie** and **Warren** — have cultivated a longstanding relationship with **Britannie Betti**, northeast regional sales director at Betson Enterprises. The collaboration thrives on shared family values and a great working partnership, as Betti is now consulting on all seven RollHouse locations in Ohio.

**Chuck E. Cheese** is celebrating the grand reopening of its newly remodeled National City, California, store.

The National City location recently underwent renovations, including the addition of new arcade games and an interactive dance floor. The company celebrated the completed remodel with a grand reopening event on January 18, 2024, at the store.

"We would love for families to experience all that is new at the National City Chuck E. Cheese," Chuck E. Cheese spokesperson **Alejandra Brady** told local news media.

The National City store, which first opened in 1982, is now a modernized, rebranded version of the iconic family entertainment center.

The 15,000-square-foot store features new arcade, sports and kid-focused games, as well as a new interactive dance floor and large format video wall and screens with audio connected throughout the venue. The dance floor is where mascot Chuck E. Cheese performs "The Chuck E. Live! Show" every hour and the birthday show for birthday parties.

**Funlab**, Australian creator of competitive socializing experiences, is opening its mini-golf concept — **Holey Moley Golf Club** — in Austin, Texas, in March. The location will be the company's second in the U.S.

This will be the first brand-built-and-designed location in the fully renovated, yet historically preserved, former **Native Hostel** building in Austin.

Holey Moley is a mini-golf concept and venue that's taken Australia by storm and made its U.S. debut in Denver in September 2023. The Austin venue is set to be the first location opening in Texas with Houston slated for late Spring, followed by San Francisco, California, later in 2024.

"Austin is a natural fit for our irreverent Holey Moley concept," said **Blaise Witnish**, Funlab U.S.A. CEO. "The city is a desired destination and full of vibrant energy. Austin plays host to major annual city-wide events, is home to a thriving collegiate and business community, and its residents and visitors know how to have a good time. We're thrilled to bring our unparalleled entertainment experience and over-the-top venue to the people of Austin."



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# Alabama's 2023 Greater Gulf State Fair features six first-time rides



Since 2004, North American Midway Entertainment has been the carnival provider, bringing more than 50 rides. COURTESY GREATER GULF STATE FAIR

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AT: B. Derek Shaw  
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

MOBILE, Ala. — The **Greater Gulf State Fair** held annually is the last large American fair every calendar year, running through early November.

“GGSF 2023 had decent weather, with minimum threats of rain,” said **Josh Woods**, executive director. “I personally feel the economy at the late end of the season had an impact on our attendance as families are closely watching their expendable income,”

Attendance at the 69th annual 10-day (Oct. 27 through Nov. 5, 2023) fair came in at 72,000. Weekday openings were at 4 p.m., while on the weekends the fair opened at 11 a.m. some days and noon on others. Closing was at 10 p.m. on weekdays and midnight on the weekends. The theme was **Small Town USA**.

For the 19th time, **North American Midway Entertainment (NAME)** provided the amusements at the fair operated by the **Mobile Jaycees**. NAME offered 58 rides, of which 33 were major and 24 were kiddie, along with 33 game joints and 19 food stands. The six rides making their debut at the West Mobile site were **Outlaw Roller Coaster (Interpark)**, **X-Drive (KMG)**, **Flying Elephants (Kolmax Plus)**, **Parker City Saloon (Kid Power Systems)**, **Rockin’ Tug (Zamperla)**, and **Tea Cups (Kolmax Plus)**. That number of first-time rides was a first for the fair. The three most popular rides included **Giant**

**Wheel (Chance Rides)**, **Polar Express (Mack Rides)** and **Star Dancer (Technical Park)**.

“We have a great and close relationship with North American Midway Entertainment. NAME provides us with a clean and expansive midway. Their leadership and team are top-notch and always provide the best of shows for our annual fair,” said Woods.

The carnival provider enjoyed a positive outcome as well. “Our experience with the Greater Gulf State Fair was exceptional. Over the years, we’ve been able to develop a relationship with them where we work really well together,” said **Lynda Franc**, corporate marketing director for NAME.

Franc also commented about not encountering any employment challenges. “Fortunately, with this event being at the end of the season, most of our hiring has been done. We’ve been able to pick up travelers along our route, and while we do always seek local help, the Greater Gulf State Fair worked out quite well for us.”

Fairgoers can always count on being treated to jambalaya, po’ boys, boudin, and shrimp bayou, as well as classic state fair foods like chili dogs, BBQ, funnel cakes and corn on the cob. Top favorites include chicken-on-a-stick and funnel cakes at **The Chomping Grounds**, one of the fair’s most popular gathering places with more than 30,000 square feet of seated dining space. 2023 saw new unique items with some of the highlights being boiled pickle peanuts, crepes,

fair-themed rolled ice cream, and pickle pizza.

Woods shared what sets the fair apart from others: “We are the largest annual event in our city and county. In addition, our board of directors must be members of the Jaycees and all under the age of 40.” (Note: The Jaycees is a national leadership training and civic organization for people between the ages of 18 and 40. It is a branch of **Junior Chamber International**).

Adult admission was \$8, and child admission was \$4. A fast pass wristband cost \$10, and unlimited ride wristbands were \$25 each. Special promotions included a “two-fer” during the months of August and September which are two admission tickets and two unlimited ride wristbands for \$50. This is the best promotional deal as patrons save nearly 30%. After September and up until 3:59 p.m. on the first day of the fair, they ran discounted tickets. During the fair, promotion days are **Kid’s Night** (free child admission with the purchase of an adult admission), **College Night** (free admission with a college ID), and **\$5 Fridays** (\$5 flat admission for all ages and runs from 4 to 7 p.m. on Fridays).

The fair media mix is heavy on local television stations with their national affiliates, local radio stations and billboards around the city.

While a few national acts were in the concert lineup, the vast majority of the musical entertainment is from the surrounding Mobile area. This included **The Modern Eldorado’s**, **Danny Grant Cowboy Circus**, and **Brad Matchett Comedy Hypnotist**.

The fair itself experienced some employment challenges. “Finding patron-oriented seasonal employees continues to be a struggle,” Wood explained. “We have started implementing focus groups, a Junior Board of Directors and a young professional organization we call “The Big Wheel Society.” We are



Sunset at the Greater Gulf State Fair. The weather cooperated the entire 10-day run of the 69th annual edition. COURTESY GREATER GULF STATE FAIR

► See GULF, page 29

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

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# Pair of rides at Pennsylvania Farm Show turn dollars for scholars

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania does not have a state fair, however, the indoor **Pennsylvania Farm Show** is considered the “unofficial” version, minus the rides, except a pair used to raise scholarship funds for deserving students. Two rides are brought in each year generating scholarship revenue for both the **Pennsylvania State Showmen’s Association** and the Pennsylvania Farm Show Foundation. This year \$56,538 was raised that will be split between the two organizations.

The Pennsylvania Farm Show is billed as the nation’s largest indoor agricultural event, featuring 6,000 animals, 12,000 competitive exhibits and 300 commercial exhibitors within one million square feet of space on 23 acres with 11 halls and three arenas. Estimated attendance is over a half million people during the eight-day run, which takes place early each January.

—B. Derek Shaw



Promoted as the nation’s largest indoor agricultural event, the Pennsylvania Farm Show features 6,000 animals, 12,000 competitive exhibits, and 300 commercial exhibitors within one million square feet of space on 23 acres with 11 halls and three arenas. The building across Cameron Street on the right side is the Department of Agriculture. COURTESY PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Some of the showmen who staffed the carousel ride this year were (from l): Debbie Good; Lisa Bartlebaugh, Bartlebaugh Amusements; and Judd Good. Both Goods are principals of Goodtime Amusements. AT/B.DEREK SHAW



A Hampton tractor flat ride, provided by Penn Valley Shows, was housed in the Giant Foods exposition hall within the complex. (l to r): Jeff Good, principal, Goodtime Amusements; George Goetz, a concessionaire who travels with Goodtime; R. J. Harris and Allen Bartlebaugh, both with Bartlebaugh Amusements, were some of the operators of the tractor ride. Over 80 volunteers from the Pennsylvania State Showmen’s Association sold ride tickets and operated both pieces of equipment. AT/B.DEREK SHAW



Juls Bratton, director of sales for Marianna’s Fundraisers was on hand at the booth that also was promoting DelGrosso’s Park and Laguna Splash. This was their first appearance at the Farm Show since COVID-19. AT/B.DEREK SHAW

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A 1958 Allan Herschell 36-foot, three-abreast carousel was provided by Skelly’s Amusements, spending eight days in the family living section of the main hall of the 108th Pennsylvania Farm Show in Harrisburg. The carnival purchased the ride in 1984 after it operated for 26 years at Steeplechase Pier, Atlantic City. Brand new Americana scenery was recently added. AT/B.DEREK SHAW

# PGAM purchases a spectacular thrill ride from Technical Park

**AT: Ron Gustafson**  
Special to Amusement Today

WHITEVILLE, N.C. — Powers Great American Midways (PGAM) has purchased a new Loop Fighter from Italian ride manufacturer Technical Park, PGAM owner Les (Corky) Powers announced to *Amusement Today*.

The spectacular thrill ride features a pendulum that rotates 360 degrees, creating a unique spinning and loop sensation nearly 80 feet above the midway.

Seating for the ride is the same design used on Technical Park's Pegasus attraction, which allows free movement of arms and legs as each four-seat gondola spins freely. The ride capacity is 16 persons.

According to the manufacturer, the Loop Fighter delivers the same weightless sensation and G-force as its popular Street Fighter, but with the additional swing over and looping of random trajectories. Patrons must be a minimum of 55 inches tall to participate.

PGAM placed the order for the ride at the 2023 International Association of Amusement Parks and

Attractions (IAAPA) Expo in Orlando, Florida, this past November.

The single-trailer ride will be delivered in June.

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

Powers Great American Midways has purchased a Loop Fighter (right) from Technical Park which loads onto a single trailer (far right).  
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## ►GULF

Continued from page 26

utilizing these methods to build relationships with our community and also recruit volunteers and seasonal staff."

In addition to the Greater Gulf State Fair, the Mobile Jaycees is the parent organization of the Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo and the Azalea Trail Maids.

The Grounds, where the fair is annually held, is a year-round entertainment, convention and commercial venue home to several of the Gulf Coast's largest events, including the Greater Gulf State Fair. The 2024 edition is scheduled to take place October 25-November 3, with NAME again providing the arsenal of rides.

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

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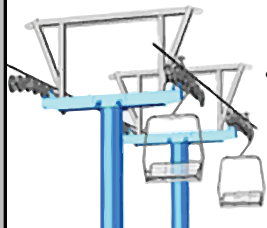
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## MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Quality versus quantity is the direction the **Nebraska State Fair** is heading this year. In seasons past, they offered 11 parades — one each operating day. Moving forward, the fair will reduce the parade count to six.

Parades will be held on the opening Friday, Saturday and Sunday and then Saturday, Sunday and Monday on the closing weekend.

"We're going to cover those weekend days. That's when we generally have the most participation," Executive Director Jaime Parr told *The Grand Island Independent*.

The fair aims to make each parade "really special," she said. "We want to make sure that we have great participation and enough people out there to watch it go through."

By reducing the number of parades, the fair hopes to achieve quality over quantity, Parr said.

The Nebraska State Fair returns August 23 – September 2 with **Wade Shows** providing the ride midway.

**Andy Deggeller**, CEO, **Deggeller Attractions**, Stuart, Florida, was elected director at large representing associate members of the **International Association of Fairs and Expositions** (IAFE) during their annual business session at the late November 2023 IAFE convention and trade show in Salt Lake City.

In 2006, Deggeller married **Jamie Anderson** of Tampa, the daughter of games concessionaire (and former LPGA player) **Candy Anderson**. He and Jamie have three sons.

"Andy Deggeller's leadership on the board and going through the chairs of the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association** showed the industry his acumen and dedication to the industry, especially in ensuring the collaborative relationships between the mobile amusement operators and the fairs they serve," said **Marla Calico**, president and CEO of the IAFE.

**Nancy Pitz**, executive director of the **Rocky Mountain Association of Fairs** (RMAF), since 2008, retired at the end of last year. Two weeks before her retirement, Pitz was named the 2023 State and Provincial Executive of the Year by the IAFE.

"Nancy first received this well-deserved recognition in 2015, making her one of only two individuals to

receive this award a second time," said Marla Calico, IAFE president and CEO. "We are thankful for the dedication Nancy has given the fair industry and the collaboration we have had throughout the years, not only as an outstanding executive of the Rocky Mountain Association of Fairs, but also her time as a member of the IAFE board of directors."

Pitz has been involved in the fair industry since 1995, serving as fair manager of the **Uinta County Fair**, Evanston, Wyoming; fair manager, **Jerome County Fair**, Jerome, Idaho; secretary for **Wyoming Association of Fairs** and as sponsorship and marketing assistant, **Twin Falls County Fair**, Filer, Idaho, where she plans to continue this year.

Grand Marshall for the **Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo** (HLSR) Downtown Rodeo Parade is **Arch "Beaver" Aplin III**, founder and CEO of **Buc-ee's**. The annual parade, a tradition since 1938, serves as a precursor to the rodeo season, celebrating western heritage and signals the start of the HLSR. The parade takes place later this month on February 24. Parade-goers can anticipate the familiar sight of the Buc-ee's beaver mascot alongside rodeo mascot Howdy.

Aplin, who created and owns a chain of 47 country stores, gas stations and electric vehicle chargers, will lead the parade. **Chris Boleman**, Rodeo president and CEO, shared the organization's excitement, stating in a release, "Buc-ee's is one of Texas' most notable brands, and we are honored to have Arch Aplin III help kick off our historic event. As many of our attendees travel long distances for our annual event, Buc-ee's is part of the Rodeo experience for many already."

The 92nd Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo starts on February 27 and runs through March 17. **Ray Cammack Shows** has the carnival midway.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** In the January 2024 issue of *Amusement Today* (page 24), a series of ten United States Postal Service forever stamps entitled, "Carnival Nights" were showcased. They feature stunning night shots of carnival rides. Upon closer investigation, those stamps — sold in 20 stamp panes — will not be released until the second quarter (exact date TBA). When AT learns the release date, it will be mentioned in this column.

# Steam Punk!



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Family team are pioneers in thrill, stunt industry'

## Nerveless Nocks daredevil shows date back nearly two centuries

**AT: Ron Gustafson**  
Special to Amusement Today

SARASOTA, Fla. — **Michelangelo Nock** and family have a tradition of living on the edge and embrace a daredevil lifestyle to prove it.

"In 1840 our family created Switzerland's original circus," Michelangelo, 58, said during an extended interview with *Amusement Today*. "We were really pioneers in the thrill and stunt industry and I'm the seventh generation doing this."

As owner of **The Nerveless Nocks Inc.**, Michelangelo and company produce a variety of extreme stunt shows seen around the world. Most notable are the **Sway Pole Extravaganza**, **FMX Motorcycle Stunt Spectacular**, **Monster Trucks**, **Cirque Equinox**, **Extreme Water Ski and Stunt Spectacular** and motorcycle **Globe of Death**.

### Flying over the Alps

"My grandmother performed a trapeze act suspended by a hot air balloon while it floated over the Swiss Alps," he said of the family's performance history. "Early on, we were an outdoor attraction, predating tented circuses. Being recognized as Switzerland's first circus speaks volumes because there was a lot of theatrical circus in the country at the time."

The original Nerveless Nocks troupe included **Eugene Nock Sr.** - Michelangelo's father - along with other family members, **Charles**, **Elizabeth** and



**Dorothy Nock and Joseph Bauer.** They made their U.S. debut in 1954 headlining **John and Henry Ringling North's Greatest Show On Earth** with the sway pole and balancing ladder acts.

The sway pole routine was such a huge success that the North brothers extended the contract for three more years.

In his published memoirs, John Ringling North referred to the exhilarating act as "palm trees swaying in a hurricane."

The performance to this day - nearly 100 feet in the air - is done without any safety harnesses or nets.

"Mom (**Aurelia Canestrelli**) and dad met in 1956 at the **Boston Garden** while both were performing for Ringling," Michelangelo noted. "My mother was from Italy and that is where the theatrical part of the family came



Daredevil performances have long been the family business. Pictured in the above inset is Pius Nockson with his sons (Charles and Pio) and daughters (Edete, Erica and Lotey). The smallest youngster is Eugene Nock Sr. Pictured above are the Nerveless Nocks today (l to r): Cyrus, Michelangelo, Angelina and Carolina. COURTESY MICHELANGELO NOCK

from. Her family was opera singers, but mom became a star circus performer."

### British and Swiss invasion

The Nocks were propelled into the television spotlight with the sway pole act on the **Ed Sullivan** variety show in February of 1964. It wasn't that more than 70 million viewers tuned in to see the fabulous daredevils strut their stuff, but rather to hear British pop sensations **The Beatles** in their U.S. television debut.

The hour-long show marked the beginning of **Beatlemania** sweeping across the world while the Nocks benefitted from the monumental exposure.

"After Sullivan, **Roy and Walt Disney** (brothers) called us for shows at the World's Fair in New York," Michelangelo recalled. "More television appearances followed including the **Hollywood Palace** show **Bing Crosby, Robert Goulet** and **Mitzi Gaynor**. My dad was even hired by billionaire **Howard Hughes** to do an outdoorsway pole show in Las Vegas."

Eugene Nock Sr. used wood poles in the Vegas show, which were considered extremely dangerous due to the desert climate. The show had to close when the poles became too dry for performances to continue. Soon after, the Nocks created the

Swiss Steel Pole to accommodate live performances.

### Nocks in the Dells

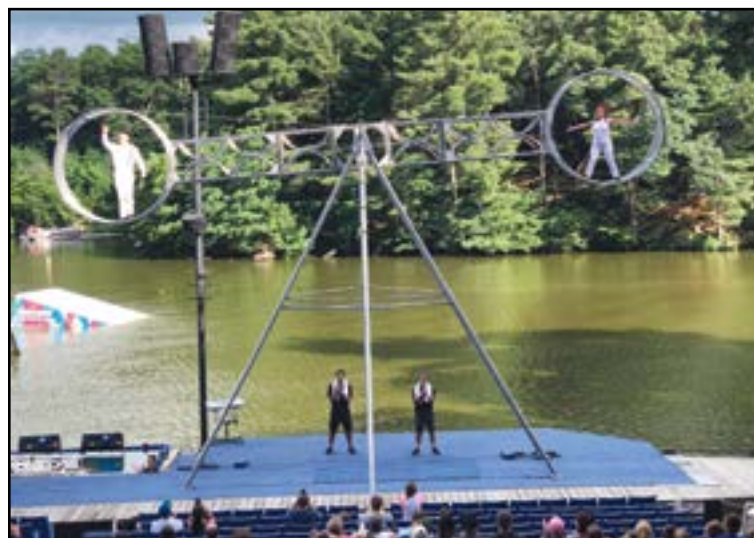
The family found a new and lasting partnership in the late '70s when helicopter trapeze artist **Dave Merifield** introduced them to water ski show pioneers **Tommy Bartlett** and **Tom Diehl**.

A performance deal was struck and Eugene and Aurelia were joined by sons **Eugene Jr.**, **John**, **Michelangelo**, and **Bello** to perform as part of the **Tommy Bartlett Show** in Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

Bartlett was also a recognized broadcast personality, serving as host of the radio's popular **Tommy Bartlett Show and Welcome Travelers**.

"He really put the Dells on the map," Michelangelo asserted. "We worked with Bartlett for 45 years until the show closed in 2020. He was the one who came up with the idea of a water circus"

The Nocks went all in during their Dells tenure by incorporating the sway pole act, Space Wheel, helicopter trapeze, motorcycle high wire, **Carolina** (Michelangelo's wife) **Espana Nock's Contortions**



Cyrus and Carolina Nock perform on the Double Space Wheel during the Tommy Bartlett Show in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin (above left). Cyrus Nock does a wheelie during a motorcycle thrill show (above right). COURTESY MICHELANGELO NOCK

► See **NOCKS**, page 33





This undated postcard showcases the Nocks family performing aerial acts (above left). Angelina Nock slides down an 80-foot sway pole head first (above middle). The Nerveless Nocks perform the Motorcycle Globe of Death (above right). COURTESY MICHELANGELO NOCK

## ►NOCKS

Continued from page 32

and the Globe Of Thunder.

Michelangelo acknowledged that the time with Bartlett allowed the Nocks to learn every aspect of the water ski show industry as well as speed boats and associated maintenance.

"Being around it for that long, you come to know it," he said of the experience. "We now do our own water shows (retaining the rights to the Bartlett brand) in Wisconsin and Georgia as well as traveling productions."

He said other permanent productions are done at theme parks, while mobile shows are featured at fairs and festivals. A portable Olympic-size pool holding 70,000 gallons of water is used for jet ski and jet pack acts.

"We hire Tommy Bartlett skiers - all of which are world champions," he explained. "Of the 150 or so water shows we do each year, there is always a family member there helping the oversee the production."

### Famous family members

While the heart of today's Nerveless Nocks continues to be a family affair (Michelangelo and Carolina and their children, Angelina and Cyrus), other Nocks have their own claim to fame.

Bello was a headliner for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in 2001.

"He did four headliner tours with them - the last being Bellobration" Michelangelo said of his brother.

Late uncle Pius "Pio"

Nock, was recognized as the original comic daredevil and a featured performer with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. He also appeared in the 1964 motion picture *Circus World* starring John Wayne.

Michelangelo readily credits his parents and uncle with teaching the younger generation all the ropes to be exceptional death-defying entertainers.

He emphasized: "My mother molded all of us. She was the master and all the glory to her!"

Brother, Eugene Jr., owns a helicopter and pilots for aerial trapeze shows.

"I've flown over every major football and baseball stadium in America doing that act," Michelangelo said of teaming up with his sibling.

The other brother, John, is "the most talented in acrobatics."

Carolina Espana Nock, a renowned trapeze artist,

represents a fifth generation of circus entertainers in her family. She is also the only woman to ever perform on the Double Space Wheel.

"She reinvented flying trapeze," Michelangelo said of his wife, who also makes most of the family's performance costumes. "Carolina was also named top female in the **World Stunt Association**, along with Romanian gymnast **Nadia Comaneci**."

Angelina is an accomplished sway pole artist, a world-class water skier as well as an aerial stunt performer. She is also the newest star and competitive driver in **Monster Jam** for **Feld Entertainment**, which produces a number of arena shows, including the latest edition of *The Greatest Show On Earth*.

Cyrus, who started entertaining at age 4, is now considered a top motorcycle stuntman of his generation. He has also been working

the revolving Space Wheel since he was 11.

### Simon says

Angelina and her father made the international spotlight in 2022 with their sway pole act on the popular NBC show **America's Got Talent Extreme** and again in 2023 on **America's Got Talent**.

"It was amazing and now people recognize us worldwide," Michelangelo said. He also credited British critic Simon Cowell, one of the show's hosts, with providing the opportunity.

"Simon is the guy on the top on that show and the ultimate critic," he added. "We connected with the world those nights and he just loved us!"

### The shape of things

Reflecting on the rigors associated with being a thrill show artist, Michelangelo said: "My dad told me years

ago to 'learn this stuff, because some day you will need it.'"

"I have to stay in shape to this day," he continued. "I still do the sway poles with my daughter and the motorcycle globe with Cyrus. It's still exciting for me because I get to relive what I did with my mother and father."

While he readily admits that his days of performing the jaw-dropping acts are counting down, Michelangelo says he may have to step out of the limelight "in another 10 years."

"I feel like I can still give a little more as a performer," he added. "We are doing upwards of 200 shows in the summer - two to three a day - and people like our values and integrity. When the time comes, I'll continue to be the owner, agent and producer for The Nerveless Nocks while our two kids carry on the family legacy."

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



Angelina and Michelangelo Nock perform on the sway poles at Georgia National Fair, Perry, Georgia (above left). The Aqua Craft thrill boat team in Perry, Georgia, pose for a promotional photo (above right). COURTESY MICHELANGELO NOCK

# WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► Cincinnati's Coney Island sold, closed — page 36 / News Splash — page 36

## ProSlide providing four RideHouse attractions to SeaWorld Parks

AT: Jeffrey Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO — Representatives from SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment joined ProSlide Technology during IAAPA Expo 2023 to announce multi-year installations of the popular RideHouse waterplay structures. Following the launch of the Count's Splash Castle at Sesame Place in San Diego in June of last year, ProSlide and SeaWorld announced plans to roll out three more similar RideHouse attractions at parks in San Antonio, Texas; Tampa, Florida; and a fourth location yet to be disclosed.

ProSlide's RideHouse is a fully customizable, multi-level modular attraction purposefully designed for families and young children. The slides are large enough to support adults, so a parent and child can slide down together. Each of the four installations cost approximately \$1.5 million each.

"What's great about a play structure such as this is that as you're making your way to the top of the slides, you're actually able to interact with a number of different water features on the structure. There's a sense of discovery," says Jeffrey Janovich, ProSlide Technology senior vice president for global stra-



The Castaway Falls multi-level waterplay attraction (above) offers more than 100 play elements at Tampa's Adventure Island. The Count's Splash Castle (below) opened last June at Sesame Place San Diego as the first of four ProSlide RideHouse attractions going into SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment properties. COURTESY ADVENTURE BAY, SESAME PLACE

tegic partnerships. "It's not just about sliding. It's about playing and engaging for a longer period of time on an elevated structure."

Tikitapu Splash is going into Aquatica San Antonio and Castaway Falls will launch at Adventure Island in Tampa. Both projects are scheduled to open in 2024. The fourth RideHouse is slated to open in 2025.

"Many of the original play structures had a very similar, almost identical look," noted Janovich. "The RideHouse gives each park the opportunity to have a play structure that is custom designed for their appli-



cation, site and theming requirements."

The Castaway Falls multi-level water-play attraction offers more than 100 play elements, four exciting

water slides and three giant tipping buckets, unleashing 1,300 gallons of water for the ultimate soaking. Among the waterplay features are soakers, flow pipes, hose jets, spray jets, water shooters, water curtains, tipping troughs, spinning and sliding buckets and much more. The new attraction replaces the former Splash Attack and is double the size.

"Castaway Falls will be making a big splash landing at Adventure Island this year. We can't wait for our guests of all ages to dive into all our exciting attractions, dining options and events," said Chris Baker, vice president of Adventure Island.

Tikitapu Splash will cover more than 15,000 square feet, feature four

waterslides, three tipping buckets and 104 spray and play elements including multiple geysers, colorful water cannons and gushing waterspouts for a soaking respite from the Texas heat. Tikitapu Splash will be located adjacent to Whanau Waters, a series of shallow water pools perfect for little ones and have its own colorful theming and water elements to make for the biggest and splashiest play area Aquatica has to offer.

"At Aquatica San Antonio, we are excited to make a big splash with the all-new Tikitapu Splash," said David Skelton, vice president of Aquatica. "Our commitment to fun and innovation has resulted in a 15,000-square-foot water playland extravaganza that will give the entire family even more ways to get wet and have fun."

In keeping with the park's paradisaical tropical theme, Castaway Falls resembles a splash-haven and fun-filled retreat designed for kids. It is a continuation of Adventure Island's park-wide modernization that has been taking place over the last few years that included the introduction of the Rapids Racer and Wahoo Remix waterslides along with the full-service Hang-Ten Tiki Bar. Last year, Shaka Laka Shores opened with 25 water play features in a zero-depth pool designed to entertain smaller children.

In Texas, the new play structure uses a theme inspired by the Māori culture of New Zealand. Tikitapu Splash takes its name from Lake Tikitapu — also known as Blue Lake — one of four small lakes found in the Bay of Plenty Region of New Zealand's North Island. The name Tikitapu finds its origins in Māori history, being a sacred necklace believed to have been lost in the lake by the daughter of a high-ranking chief.



Tikitapu Splash going into Aquatica San Antonio takes its name from New Zealand's Lake Tikitapu. The attraction features a tropical theme in keeping with the overall concept of both parks. COURTESY AQUATICA SAN ANTONIO



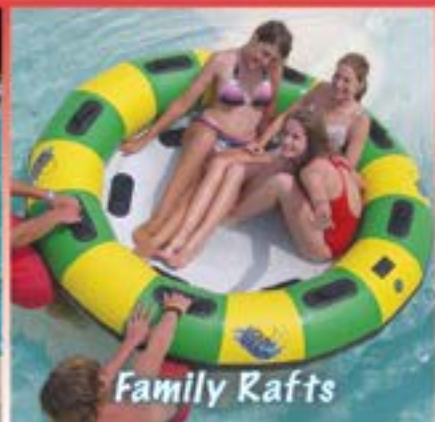
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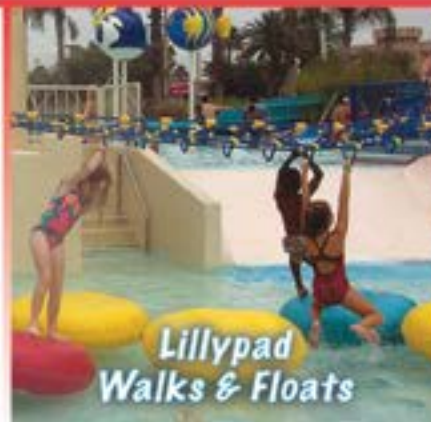
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The largest recirculating pool in North America — Sunlite Pool — is no more with the closing of Coney Island.  
AT/TIM BALDWIN

## Coney Island sold, closed; music venue forthcoming

AT: Pam Sherborne

[psherborne@amusementtoday.com](mailto:psherborne@amusementtoday.com)

CINCINNATI, Ohio — An Ohio River icon has closed. Cincinnati, Ohio's **Coney Island** — and its popular Sunlite Pool — shuttered for good on December 31, 2023.

Even though there has been a local outcry from organizations like the **Cincinnati Preservation Association** as well as Cincinnati residents to save some of Coney Island's historical significance, the **Music and Event Management Inc. (MEMI)**, a subsidiary of the **Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (CSO)**, which purchased the grounds in December, has not disclosed if or how they might do that.

What officials of MEMI have announced is that it intends to build a \$118 million, cutting-edge music venue and entertainment campus on the Coney Island grounds. This new venue will be in addition to the neighboring Riverbend Music Center and PNC Pavillion concert venues which are also owned by the CSO.

The new venue will include state-of-the-art sound systems and lighting, adaptable seating arrangements, larger seating capacity, modern amenities and first-class VIP and patron spaces.

Coney Island has been operating since 1886 with its Sunlite Pool added in 1925. The park and the pool are iconic Cincinnati features. The pool is famous for its size, 200 feet by 400 feet. The **Sunlite Water Park** was created later.

Owners of Coney Island, located along the banks of the Ohio River, sold off all its amusement rides and attractions in 2019, but kept the water park operating and even added some new attractions over the last couple of years.

No specific reason for selling the property has been provided by the former park owners but a statement released said: "We have been proud to provide a place where so many wonderful memories were created for families. We thank the millions of patrons and employees from Cincinnati and surrounding neighborhoods. You made this a special place for all of us. But the time has come for this historic destination to offer new and different options for entertainment-seekers looking for fun and unique experiences."

**Ronald Walker**, a local Cincinnati businessman, purchased Coney Island in 1991.

The preservation association has encouraged the symphony to be creative and develop the site while leaving the pool and adjacent gardens intact.

The target opening date for the new venue is spring 2026.

The park said every season pass that was purchased for the 2024 season will be fully refunded and credit card purchases and payment plan payments will be credited to the card used to make the purchase.

Any purchases made with cash or gift cards will be refunded via check and mailed to the address of the pass holder.

Gift card holders were invited to an exclusive event last month to purchase Coney Island merchandise on sale from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. These items included Coney Island branded apparel, accessories, drinkware and more.

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



## NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert

[jseifert@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jseifert@amusementtoday.com)

Expansion plans have been revealed for the **Grand Junction Recreation Center** in Grand Junction, Colorado. The new plans call for a center that is almost 20,000 square feet larger than originally proposed. The recreation center will include a lazy river, warm-water leisure pool, lap pool, water playground and warm-water therapy pool, among other attractions.

The recreation center has been decades in the making, starting with a local resident first proposing a center as part of a high school senior project in 2000. Fortunately, even after discovering how messy municipal government can be, **Lucas Bullen** was not deterred. After graduation, Bullen enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, but once he returned, he renewed his efforts.

After initially being rejected by city voters in 2019, the proposal for the facility proved successful in April 2023 by a 60 to 40 margin, calling for a city sales tax of 3.39 percent to fund the project.

The new center is expected to cost \$70 million, which also covers the costs of road improvements and infrastructure. It is expected to be completed in 2025.

The new football-themed water park under construction at **Hall of Fame Village** in Canton, Ohio, has been given a name. In December, officials announced the indoor water park will be known as **Gameday Bay**, which was decided after a public voting campaign.

"The water park is being built with the latest state-of-the-art technology and will include sports-themed 'zones' as well as very large jumbotrons that will be within all views, placed so fans never are far from watching their favorite team," according to a press release.

Plans are to have Gameday Bay open by the end of this year.

In December, **Barceló Mussanah Resort**, opened a new 1,200-square-meter (13,000-square-foot) water park. Located in Muscat, the capital city of the Sultanate of Oman, it is said to be the first of its kind in the city. Although mostly designed for families with children, the park does include a 28-foot-tall slide tower with three slides. The park is divided into three zones with the kids area having an interactive water play structure with a tipping bucket, a children's zone with the aforementioned slide tower, and a splash zone with gentle features for toddlers.

**Adrian Brea Gonzalez**, operations manager, said, "At Barceló Mussanah Resort, our commitment extends beyond providing exceptional guest experiences.

The recent introduction of our waterpark is a testament to our dedication to delivering outstanding, family-friendly recreation for all valued guests.

Sioux City, Iowa, could be home to a new water park. In December, the city council finalized the sale of land to local developers who want to build a new recreational water park called **Siouxland Splash**. According to the developers, the water park would have body slides, tube slides, a kids zone and multiple pools for all age groups. The local developers want to purchase 10 acres of a 42-acre parcel, with a 10-year option to purchase the rest of the land for possible expansion. Plans are to have the water park open for business in summer 2025.

The residents of Chico, California, are all set to enjoy a new aquatic recreation center. The Chico Area Recreation and Park District (CARD) received a \$6 million grant from the Land and Water Conservation Funds to further the development of what they say will be the first water park in Chico.

The park is to be built on land donated by billionaire philanthropist **Ken Grossman**, founder of the **Sierra Nevada Brewing Company**.

Amenities planned for the aquatic center include a 50-meter competition pool, warm-up lap pool, beach-entry recreational pool, water slides, interactive water play structure, cabanas, bath house and more. The competition pool will have a deep end for diving and can accommodate a floating obstacle course when not used for lap swimming.

The **CARD Aquatics & Recreation Center** is slated for its grand opening in the fall of 2025.

In March, voters in Searcy, Arkansas, will decide whether or not to go through with a \$93 million master plan.

Searcy city council approved two ordinances to be placed on the ballot. One is for a 20-year, half-cent sales-and-use tax primarily for a new community center. The other issue up for vote would allow a \$13.9 million bond to be taken and used on an outdoor aquatics center and improvements to Riverside Park. It would be paid for through the current advertising and promotion tax.

\$10 million is allocated for an outdoor water park adjacent to the existing indoor swim center. The features listed include tower slides, a lazy river, diving boards, a zero-entry pool, and a shallow-entry play pool.

# BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

▶ Wild Adventures breaks ground on campground — page 38 / Rides 4 U's Stephanie Magnani — page 42

## The small but mighty transportable wheels of Wadkins Expo Wheel

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

JOPPA, Md. — With a workforce of seven, **Wadkins Expo Wheel, Inc.** manufactures four of the company's 65-foot wheels each year, which is fine with them. Three of the staff include **Roger Wadkins, Sr.** and sons **Roger Jr.** and **Kevin.**

In 2003, fledgling **Sherwood Amusements** entered the carnival business, supplying midway rides for fairs and events in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Virginia. That business ended up focusing attention on the wheel operation.

Forward ahead two years, when Wadkins purchased the Expo Wheel company from **Bob Childress.** At that time, the operation was based in Easley, South Carolina. Moving the company 565 miles to eastern Maryland and adding Wadkins in front of the name, the company began operation as **Wadkins Expo Wheel, Inc.**

What they manufacture is a transportable Ferris wheel ride that can be set up at any event or location. The one-trailer, giant, gondola-style wheel has 16 cars, seating four to six riders per tub (adults vs. children) with a total capacity of 96 passengers. The wheel can also load two cars simultaneously. This comes complete with a computerized light show, making for



a colorful nighttime display. Ride set up takes three and a half hours, while tear down is a half-hour less. All ride builds take place outside as the company's indoor space does not have a high enough ceiling height.

"It takes us four months to build a wheel, from start to finish, give or take problems with getting materials and stuff like that," explained Wadkins. "In general, we meet all of our deadlines. We're trying all the time to upgrade and make everything nicer and easier to load so that it takes less time and manpower."

During the time Wadkins has had the company, **Danny Brown, Brown's Amusements,** Mesa, Arizona, has purchased three of them for their operation. Also purchasing a trio of wheels is **Chris Barton of Pride of Texas Shows.**

While the vast majority of their wheels remain in the United States, one has made its way to Australia (**FJF Amusements,** Kellor Park, Victoria) and seven went north of the border to Canada.

In 2023, they delivered equipment to **Tim Krise, TDK Entertainment, Baja Amusements** and **Randy**



The Wadkins Expo Wheel at right is owned by **Tim Krise, TDK Entertainment** and is shown **8-day Punxsatawny Festival on the Park** last July. The company's wheels are a midway icon, especially after dark (above). COURTESY STEFAN HINZ, TDK ENTERTAINMENT

**Kissel, Kissel Amusement Company** who will take delivery at the **Gibtown Show** later this month. "I'm already sold out for the 2024 season, but I'm taking orders for the '25 season," said Wadkins. 2024 deliveries will include **Classic Amusement,** Hayward,

▶ See WADKINS, page 39



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# Wild Adventures breaks ground on campground, opening fall 2024

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

VALDOSTA, Ga. — With plans to open a new seven-acre campground in the fall of 2024, **Wild Adventures Theme Park** in Valdosta, Georgia, officials announced the name and more details of the new addition in late 2023.

The newly named **Wild Adventures Safari Campground**, when complete, will offer a full-facility campground including a camp store and bathhouse. The campground will offer a mixture of RV and tent camping sites with special amenities like a fishing pond, walking trails, an exclusive entrance to Wild Adventures Theme Park and close-up experiences to interact with and learn about amazing animals.

**Jon Vigue**, vice president and general manager of Wild Adventures, said park officials are excited about being able to offer additional unique guest experiences.

“Our campground will provide families with new ways to escape, have adventures, and get close to very special animals from around the world,” Vigue said.

Vigue said the first phase of the campground will include 50 RV sites



Officials at Wild Adventures Theme Park in Valdosta, Georgia, along with some local city officials held a breaking-ground ceremony in December announcing the new Wild Adventures Safari Campground. COURTESY WILD ADVENTURES

and 10 tent camping sites. The campground will be open year-round, and during times when Wild Adventures is not open, campground guests will still be able to enjoy animal encounters and special event programming.

Guests also will have the opportunity to enjoy outdoor movie nights, S'more roasting over a communal fire pit, arts and crafts, frequent cookouts, an exclusive Safari Trail attraction only available to campground guests and more.

In addition to providing unique experiences to guests, the campground project will have an impact on the local economy as well. Park officials expect that Wild Adventures Safari Campground will draw tourists throughout Florida, Georgia and Alabama, creating jobs, increasing tax revenues and continuing the area's growth as a tourist destination.

“At Wild Adventures, we are always looking for ways to grow as the number one tourist destination in the region,” Vigue said. “We are focused on

improving our community by bringing jobs, revenue and memorable experiences to our community.”

Ahead of the opening of Wild Adventures Safari Campground in 2024, the theme park made major investments to bring to the area a brand-new Christmas event. Wild Adventures Christmas transported guests to a winter wonderland of over two million lights and a series of curated experiences and entertainment.

The holiday event offered an enchanting for-

est, a Gingerbread Village and a breathtaking light show on the lake which featured seven towering animated Christmas Trees.

More information will be released about that event as time gets closer.

Wild Adventures Theme Park is located at the halfway point between Atlanta, Georgia, and Orlando, Florida. It is home to more than 35 family and thrill rides, hundreds of exotic animals, dozens of concerts and special events each year and Splash Island Waterpark.

•wildadventures.com



The above artist rendering shows the placement of the new Wild Adventures Safari Campground as part of Wild Adventures. The campground with both RV and traditional tent camping sites are expected to open in the fall of 2024. COURTESY WILD ADVENTURES

## ►WADKINS

Continued from page 37

California; **McDaniel Brothers Shows**, Garfield, New Jersey and **Durant Amusements**, Russells Point, Ohio.

Wadkins and his company have been exhibiting at the **International Independent Showman Association Super Trade Show & Extravaganza**, Gibsonton, Florida, since they purchased the company 19 years ago. Roger, however, has been attending long before that. "I've been going there, myself, for the carnival industry, before we got into the manufacturing end, 30 to 40 years, I don't know, a long, long time before they put that stuff [exhibitors] around back."



Above left, this Wadkins Expo Wheel was on display at the **Gibtown Show, 2022**. The company is located at the back end of the outdoor portion of the event, a spot they have held for many years. Each wheel Wadkins manufacturers takes four months to build. AT/B. DEREK SHAW; COURTESY STEFAN HINZ



Reflecting back, Wadkins commented, "It was basically just a small parking lot. There was no parking lot across the street. There was no museum, none of that other stuff." In the day, I could park

where **Kevin Dalton** puts his rides. That was the only parking lot. There was no parking lot across the street. There was no museum, none of that other stuff." Wadkins was quick to add,

"I met a lot of good people."

He noted, "We are a low-keyed, family-run business. We don't have plans for getting bigger. We appreciate all the customers we have had over the

years. All our customers are friends. Someone is on call 24 hours a day. We're going to plan on being in business for quite a while yet. We hope to come up with a new idea in the next few years."

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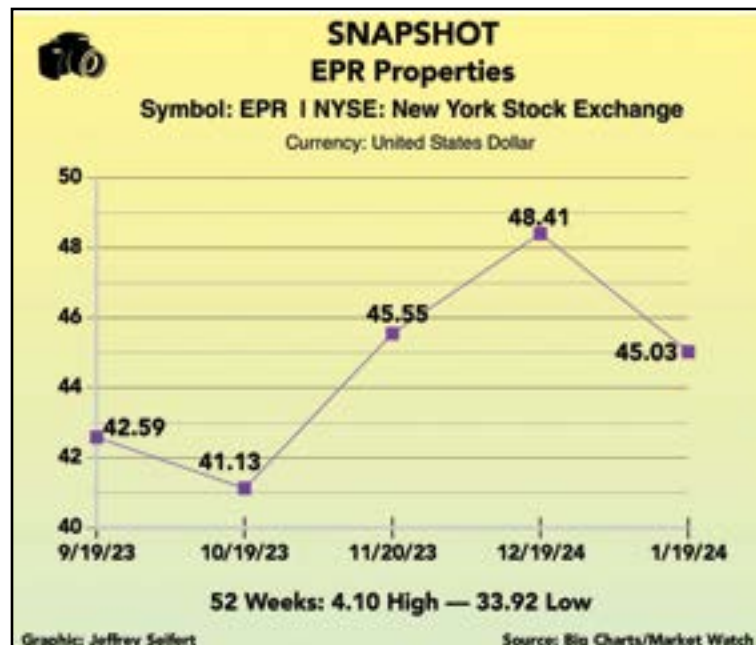
## MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 1/18/24	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
<b>PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS</b>					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	117.09	133.53	76.19
Bowlero Corp.	BOWL	NYSE	12.14	17.45	8.85
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	39.21	47.95	34.04
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	42.54	47.45	34.63
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	48.64	55.98	31.65
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	45.23	49.10	33.92
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	12.10	44.00	7.17
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	4540.00	5820.00	3890.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.94	2.27	0.87
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	17.15	28.45	16.15
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	42.86	51.35	34.12
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.38	0.47	0.23
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	125.99	130.97	59.37
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	50.76	68.19	40.86
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	24.54	31.29	18.29
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	740.00	822.00	684.00
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	92.62	118.18	78.73
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	10.22	16.34	9.27
<b>SUPPLIERS/OTHERS</b>					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	112.50	148.50	108
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1199.00	1515.00	781.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	13.85	25.96	9.84

Details and information available at [amusementtoday.com/stocks](https://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 1/15/24	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.992	(\$0.661)
Midwest	\$3.729	(\$0.645)
Gulf Coast	\$3.592	(\$0.632)
Mountain	\$3.755	(\$0.974)
West Coast	\$4.083	(\$0.605)
California	\$5.142	(\$0.288)

## CURRENCY

On 1/19/24 \$1 USD =	
0.9190	EURO
0.7881	GBP (British Pound)
148.01	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8662	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.5239	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3495	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

## BUSINESS WATCH

### Six Flags launches digital partnership

ARLINGTON, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** announced that it has launched the largest digital alliance in the theme park industry, partnering with **Google, HCL Tech, Dell, Snowflake, Fueled** and **Pure Imagination Studios**. The digital alliance — a first of its kind in the theme park industry — will offer cutting-edge technologies from best-in-class companies to benefit both guests and team members.

"Six Flags is leading the way on technology, harnessing the power of an alliance to accelerate innovation and seamlessly blend brands into the guest experience through multiple touchpoints in the park," said **Omar Jacques Omran**, chief digital officer at Six Flags. "Our guests will benefit from the latest technology to make their visit more personalized, enjoyable, and memorable."

The technological advancements spearheaded by this alliance aim to redefine the guest experience across multiple touchpoints. The company's initiatives focus on streamlining pre-visit planning through intelligent recommendation systems, elevating real-time engagement during the visit with personalized, AI-driven notifications and virtual assistant support as well as enriching post-visit interactions via insightful analytics that tailor future recommendations and offers.

### Gateway Ticketing releases major upgrade

GILBERTSVILLE, Pa. — **Gateway Ticketing Systems, Inc.**, has released its latest system upgrade to its premier ticketing system. Galaxy 7.8.15 is now available to download and install. Galaxy 7.8.15 has several new features and updates to help users increase sales and manage their business operations.

"We remain committed to improving our ticketing platform to enhance the guest experience and improve the ease of execution for the user," said **Tom Chiarella**, executive vice president and head of product for Gateway Ticketing Systems. "Our recent ticketing system upgrade reflects our commitment to delivering an unparalleled user experience. We've made strides to enhance efficiency, streamline processes and elevate your ticketing journey."

### Universal Studios Hollywood supports L.A.

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. — **Universal Studios Hollywood** is committed to philanthropy through its **Discover A Star Foundation**, which raised in excess of \$1 million in 2023 to benefit nonprofit groups within Los Angeles County that empower individuals and families to lead more fulfilling lives.

For 29 years, **Discover A Star** has been at the forefront of providing grants to select Los Angeles nonprofit organizations working to alleviate homelessness and poverty as well as critical children issues.

"Giving back to our community and making a difference in people's lives is as important to us as creating exceptional rides and attractions for our guests," said **Scott Strobl**, executive vice president and general manager, Universal Studios Hollywood and president of the Discover A Star Foundation. "I believe it is our responsibility to lead by example and I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished and the invaluable impact we consistently make year over year within our community. As Discover A Star marks its 30th year of giving in 2024, we look forward to making an even greater impact in the years to come."

In 2023, more than \$1 million was raised to benefit 38 notable nonprofit groups with the remarkable ability to affect the lives of more than one million Angelenos.



## ON THE MOVE

**Jeff Ellis Management (JEM)**, a full-service aquatic safety, risk management, and facility operations firm and part of the **Ellis & Associates** family of companies, has named **Jerica Cyr** vice president and chief operating officer. Cyr has more than two decades of experience in both the private and public sectors specializing in resort, water park and parks and recreation aquatic facility management. Most recently Cyr served as JEM's vice president of operations.



Cyr

"I am both humbled and honored to have the opportunity to lead the amazing team at Jeff Ellis Management," said Cyr. "Creating a professional pathway for those passionate about the aquatics industry secures a strong future for JEM and for our clients."

Founded in 2003, JEM provides turn-key aquatic facility management for leading resorts, cruise lines, municipalities and leisure destinations. In her new role, Cyr will use her extensive management and leadership experience to continue fulfilling JEM's commitment to providing consistent operations that exceed client expectations and industry standards. She will also focus on providing professional development and advancement opportunities for the JEM team and ensuring the organization's ongoing success.

The **Delaware State Fair** announced the promotion of **Danny Aguilar**, CFE to the pivotal role of general manager, effective January 1, 2024. Aguilar, who has served as the assistant general manager and marketing and sponsorship manager for more than 17 years, will be taking over the position from **William J. DiMondi**. The fair extends its appreciation to DiMondi for 16 wonderful years of dedicated service in growing the fair's success.



Aguilar

Throughout his tenure with the Delaware State Fair, Aguilar has consistently exhibited exceptional leadership qualities and a profound understanding of the fair industry. As the assistant general manager and marketing and sponsorship manager, he played a significant role in cultivating strategic partnerships, enhancing the fair's brand image, and driving increased attendance year after year.

"We are thrilled to announce Danny Aguilar's promotion to the role of general manager," said **Ron Draper**, president of the Delaware State Fair Board. "His unparalleled expertise, extensive experience, and unwavering dedication to the fair make him the ideal candidate for this position."

Officials with the **Ohio Expositions Commission** announced that **Adam Heffron** will be the new executive director of the **Ohio Expo Center & State Fair**.

The Ohio Expositions Commission voted Jan. 10 to accept a recommendation from Governor **Mike DeWine** and name Heffron as the agency's executive director. Current Ohio Expo Center & State Fair General Manager, **Virgil Strickler**, announced his retirement in June 2023, prompting the formation of a search committee and a nationwide search for the agency's next leader.



Heffron

"Today as we accept the governor's recommendation and welcome Adam back to Ohio, we also want to take a moment to once again thank Virgil Strickler for the incredible legacy he has created," said **Angela Krile**, Ohio Expositions Commission chair. "We are excited that Adam is bringing this leadership, tenacity and extensive event and fair industry experience to build on our strong foundation and take the Ohio Expo Center & State Fair into the next phase of success with the Expo 2050 Master Plan." Heffron will begin his position in March.

The **Showmen's League of America St. Louis Club** introduced **Diana Williford**. As its 2023-2024 president. She and her husband (**Steve**) own and operate a games concession company in Illinois.

"My roots run deep in this business," said Williford. "I am very proud of this industry. I am honored to be [the club's] president. I will do my very best to continue with this club's tradition of raising money for our scholarship program. We will also make supporting our Show Kids a priority. Our club is small, but we are mighty and the camaraderie between our Showmen and women is amazing!"



Williford

**Stern Pinball, Inc. (SPI)** announced the appointment of **Lloyd Dortant** as European marketing operations manager as part of the company's organizational commitment to investing in all processes of its rapidly growing global business.

Through new location development, enhancing the engagement and experience of Insider Connected, working with distributors, dealers and operators on brand new marketing initiatives including brand new pinball events, Dortant will develop pinball entertainment in new markets. He most recently worked for **Seeben Gaming** as a sales manager, director.



Dortant

## OBITUARY

## Dorothy Jane Baxter Vivona, OABA Hall of Fame member, passes at 89

PAWLEYS ISLAND, S.C. — Dorothy Jane Baxter Vivona, 89, passed away, surrounded by her loving husband and family on Thursday, December 28, 2023, in Pawleys Island, S.C.

Vivona was respected and admired by friends and peers alike. She was an active member of multiple industry associations. For many years she served as a director of The Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA), and in 2018, she was inducted into the OABA Hall of Fame. She was also proud of her contributions her family made to her hometown of Lebanon, Tennessee, where she was presented with an Honorary Doctorate from Cumberland University.



Vivona

Vivona got an early start in show business when she won 'Little Miss Wilson County Fair' at the age of 3. Foreshadowing her life to come, 12-year-old Vivona helped work at a newly purchased Ppopcorn wagon with her brother J.D. and wife Ann. While attending high school in Lebanon, she met her first husband, Billy Baxter, as they were both in the marching band together. After high school, she worked with her family in some of their early ventures, including a motor freight line and skating rink.

Eventually, the Floyd and Baxter families focused mainly on the amusement business. Jane and Billy began traveling together, providing rides at many fairs/festivals around the country. A highlight of the season was the State Fair of Texas, where she was a fixture for more than 40 years. There is even a street named after her on the fairgrounds. The two also had a 24-year run in Rossville, Ga., where the couple operated Lake Winnepesaukah amusement park.

After Billy passed away, Vivona met her current husband, Phil, at the Meadowlands Fair in New Jersey. The couple left Tennessee and moved to Florida. They both continued to be involved in their businesses, traveling mostly with Phil's company, Amusements of America.

Vivona may have been tiny in stature, but she was always a showman at heart and her larger-than-life personality and fun-loving spirit was infectious and will be missed by all who knew her and will forever love her.

## ASTM International member, former sub-chair Emmet Peter passes away

LEESBURG, Fla. — Emmett B. Peter III, 72, of Leesburg, passed away on December 24, 2023, surrounded by his loved ones. He is survived by his wife, Terre; his daughters, Lindsay and Kelsey; and his sisters, Marcia and Melanie.

After graduating from Leesburg high school, Peter received a bachelor's degree in engineering technology from Clemson University, and a bachelor's and master's degree in mechanical engineering at UCF.



Peter

Peter was an ASTM International member since 2001 and served eight years as the group's F24.24 sub-chair (2008-2016). ASTM representatives commented that Peter "...was always such a bright light, a calming force, and a great leader."

In addition to being an accomplished engineer, Peter was a lifelong car enthusiast who could "fix anything but a broken heart" and did all he could to help others.

# Focus *on the* HORIZON

## Rides, slides and a "hamster wheel"

SOMERVILLE, N.J. — If the saying, "jack of all trades" is true, then Stephanie Magnani is a manager of all things. Responding to a headhunter's invitation and intuition, Magnani applied for a position with Rides 4 U after graduating from Moravian University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and has not looked back since. "To this day, I still thank her," Magnani says of the headhunter's gut feeling about her. "When she called me about the role, she said she had a good feeling about me. She believed I would be good for the role because I was organized and liked talking with people. I did not know anything about the industry or the company, but I was intrigued. When I interviewed with Len (Soled), I realized I had found the very place I was meant to be."

Serving as the marketing and project manager for the New Jersey-based carnival, parks and family entertainment center (FEC) ride supplier, Magnani says others are surprised to learn where she works. "When they hear me say I work for Rides 4 U, they often ask if I spend my day just riding amusement rides. It always makes me laugh."

She describes herself as the middleman for Rides 4 U's projects, clients and events. "I have a degree in psychology, yet I have learned how to work with engineering documents and electrical drawings. I coordinate the shipping and delivery schedules for our clients, the colors and designs of rides with our team, and have learned how every little detail makes a difference. I never thought I would learn so much or that I would be able to have technical conversations about rides. I truly love going to work."

And while FECs and carnivals are the company's focus, Magnani shared she has been involved with client projects such as installing a single ride in someone's backyard and even supporting

the installation of a slide in the middle of Times Square in New York. "We do some crazy things," she explained. "We supplied the giant Toboggan Run slide that was part of Super Bowl Boulevard in New York City for Super Bowl XLVIII. Our whole team then went into the city and rode it together."

Rides and slides aside, the Rides 4 U team is what Magnani loves most about her role. "We really are one big family. Starting with Len and traveling through the entire team, everyone loves what they do. Rides 4 U has been there for me in every way possible since I began. The team was there when I met my husband, when we got married and when I had my son 17 months ago. They still are. I can't imagine being anywhere else."

"When I began at Rides 4 U, it was September," she remembered. "We were two months away from the IAAPA Expo and I was tasked with coordinating our team's travel, our booth and the rides we'd have on display, and the many logistics for the week. It was a lot to take in in a short amount of time. I adopted a bit of a "fake it 'til you make it" mentality, worked hard and learned. When I made mistakes, Len and everyone on the team was fair and helpful. Their support made me want to do well for them. That first Expo was amazing. There was so much to see and take in. I saw firsthand how big the industry really is. I still get excited when we are preparing for IAAPA Expo, Gibtown (IISA's annual trade show), a new client or special event."

"I love the people I work with and get to meet," she continued. "Everybody in this industry is supportive. We work in a fun business, and it's really cool to see how others react to our rides. For example, when we added the 'hamster wheel' car with our spinning coaster, we created something unique. When we brought

## Stephanie Magnani

Rides 4 U  
Somerville, N.J.



it to IAAPA Expo everyone would stand and watch because it was so different. People of all ages — all over — love watching it. The line of people who stand and watch is often just as long the one for people waiting to ride."

When she's not working, Magnani loves visiting the carnivals and parks. "I look at everything a little differently now," she explained. "When I first started at Rides 4 U I never really thought about where amusement rides come from. Now, I see everything from our perspective and the industry's. We have a local carnival that is supplied by Amusements of America, and I'm so proud when I can tell family and friends, 'We supplied this ride' or I can talk about something new we did with them. When I visit fairs and parks, I challenge myself to identify the ride manufacturers that created the rides."

Magnani also now enjoys sharing rides with her toddler. "We visited Turtle Back Zoo last

summer and rode the carousel for the first time as a family. My son kept looking around, taking in everything. Soon after that, we visited Jenkinson's Boardwalk, and he rode the kiddie train. He watched the other people and the lights as he rode around. It made me appreciate more than ever that I help create memories for families just like mine."

While Magnani recognizes not everyone finds their professional passion straight out of school, she knows she's found her place. When asked if she has advice for new graduates and others who are considering entering the industry, she says only three words are needed. "Go for it," she encouraged with a smile. "I want everyone to know, they will not regret their decision. This industry has great opportunities and great people. I continue to be excited by all we do and plan to remain here for a long time."

—Susan Storey

# SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Baynum, Palace partnership continues — page 48 / Ellis & Associates launches new resources — page 51

## Ride Training Camp, NWSC Seminar prepare to welcome attendees

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

GALVESTON, Texas, and PORTLAND, Ore. — Planners of the **International Ride Training (IRT) 2024 Ride Camp** and the **2024 Northwestern Showmen's Club (NWSC) Safety Seminar** are ready to go as the events close in.

The IRT 2024 Ride Camp, being hosted by the **Historic Pleasure Pier** in Galveston, Texas, is set for Feb. 5-9. Attendees will stay at the **Hilton Galveston Island Resort**.

The NWSC Safety Seminar is set for Feb. 19-23, on the campus of **Funtime Shows**, Portland, Oregon.

Both organizations are ready for good attendance.

If last year is indicative of this year for the IRT Ride Camp, planners have every reason to be excited. The 2023 event drew 160 attendees from over 65 parks worldwide.

The 2024 IRT Ride Camp will provide more than 50 hours of ride operational safety and service sessions to those who attend.

This year's Ride Camp Theme is **IRTV! Safety Television!** Much of the training is centered around this theme.

"We are in the amusement industry and training should be fun," said **Cindee Huddy**, an IRT partner. "At Ride Camp, attendees learn from the brightest and best in our industry on subjects



Above left is the 2023 International Ride Training Ride Camp of faculty with shirts that say "not all superheroes wear capes; some operate roller coasters," to go along with the camp's 2023 theme. The 2024 camp's theme is **IRTV! Safety Television** and will provide over 50 hours of ride operational safety and service sessions to those that attend. COURTESY IRT

including ride operations leadership, motivating our ride operators today, recruiting and retaining ride operators, reaching and advising staff on ADA requirements, leading leaders in ride ops, genuine training needs of trainers and those they train and many more sessions."

IRT has 14 faculty from different parks who share their knowledge, best practices and expertise during Ride Camp.

Additional speakers this year will include **Kathryn Woodcock**, professor at **Toronto Metropolitan University**, Toronto, Canada, and director of that school's Thrill Lab. Woodcock is involved in teaching, researching and consulting in the area of human factors engineering/ergonomics particularly applied to amusement rides and attractions. It is also applied to broader occupational and public safety issues of per-

formance, error, investigation and inspection, and to disability and accessibility.

**Nathan Caldwell** also will be on hand to speak to attendees. He is the author of the bestseller, *Empowering Kindness*.

Another speaker will be **Shaun McKeogh**, coming from Australia to share his expertise in organizational development, employee engagement, service excellence systems, attractions training and operations.

For more than 20 years, IRT has, provided direct operations training, auditing, advisory services, interactive safety education and coaching, training, auditing and leadership development. The company has been developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and general ride safety consulting for theme parks worldwide.

"IRT's goals are based on a true respect, love and passion for the industry,"



Huddy said. "IRT's team is comprised of former ride operators, managers and directors and each member understands the importance of giving tomorrow's operators the right tools and skills necessary to succeed in the amusement industry."

The 2023 NWSC Safety Seminar was an adventure. Days before last year's seminar, also in Portland, weather reports were forecasting snow and record-low temperatures for the week. And they were correct.

"The snow hit, and it came in fast and furious," said **Tracy Burback Munoz**, NWSC treasurer.

The planners decided that the show must go on.

Last month, Munoz said: "We are going to try and guarantee 'no snowstorm' this year so our instructors do not have to help in the kitchen (our gourmet committee could not make

it over the bridge). There is one thing I can say though — those guys and gals stayed true to 'The Show Must Go On.' They never skipped a beat."

**Jim Hall** from **Butler Amusements** is the 2024 NWSC president and will be hosting the seminar this year.

Planners are expecting 100 to 125 students.

Munoz said there are several things that set the NWSC's seminar apart from other industry seminars.

"We have hands-on classes such as welding, forklift certification, fire extinguisher, first responder aid, first aid, inflatables and lubrication, where they actually get down and do the work," Munoz said.

In addition, the club is able to offer four days of schooling for only \$200 (or \$75 for groups over 12) because the club is a nonprofit.

► See SEMINARS, page 44

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Avery Wheelock teaches a class with three others going on at the same time at the 2023 NWSC Safety Seminar (above). Planners are hoping the 2023 winter storm is a one-off. As shown below, the accumulated snowy weather created obstacles for attendees. COURTESY NWSC



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► **SEMINAR**  
 Continued from page 43

“Our goal is to get as many employees educated as possible,” she said. “We cater to the managers and the everyday employees that are working with the general public, not just upper management.”

The last day is set aside for NAARSO, AIMS, Carnival Tech 101 testing and First Aid classes at an additional cost.

“We want our students to leave the school having completed everything they need under one roof,” Munoz said.

Then the best twist of all. “Through our generous food sponsors such as *Amusement Today* (and our other supporters), our students are fed breakfast, lunch and dinner for no additional charge,” she said.

The NWSC Safety Seminar was established to promote continuing education by amusement industry professionals. The interac-

tive classes and hands-on settings deliver the ideal venues for raising the level of safety awareness within the carnival industry.

The NWSC Safety Seminar is aligned with **Portland Community College** for accreditation in their Continuing Education Units (CEUs) Program providing two CEUs for participation and completion of the seminar.

Examples of classes held during the week include active shooter, human cost of accidents, emergency evacuations, inspecting tools, a truck shop and game shop, ride signs, belts, pulleys and motors, fire extinguisher safety, accident lawsuits, specific ride inspections, daily inspections, creating manuals, natural and operating disasters, rigging, fasteners, oil and hydraulics and maintenance and coaster wheels and safety inspection.

- [ridetraining.com](http://ridetraining.com)
- [nwshowmensclub.com](http://nwshowmensclub.com)



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# AIMS International seminar celebrates three years of record growth

**AT: Susan Storey**  
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — “The best week of the year.” For those who work in the global attractions industry, that statement is often heard with the debut of a new ride, the announcement of a new park or as a regional park prepares for its seasonal operation coming to a close. To hear it uttered in January must mean something incredible has occurred.

January 7-12, AIMS International hosted the AIMS International 2024 Safety Seminar in Orlando, Florida, bringing together more than 800 attendees for hours of critical training, education, certification testing and more. Moving from its previous location in Texas, the annual safety seminar serves as both the kickoff to a new year and the place to unite attendees, sponsors and instructors in their passion for continued focus on industry safety.

Throughout the week, attendees took part in individual sessions and classes as well as tracks developed in partnership with experts in various areas of the industry. AIMS partnered with industry-leading organizations **Ellis & Associates (E&A)**, **International Ride Training (IRT)**, and **Urban Air Adventure Park** to curate and present aquatics, operations and adventure attraction-specific content.

The Adventure Attractions track provided focused education on safety, inspection and training for trampoline parks and adventure attractions. One of the fastest growing areas of the attractions indus-



**Safety Seminar kicked off its opening general session with record attendance. More than 800 were on hand for the week-long safety seminar. AT/GARY SLADE**



**The AIMS International Safety Seminar Ambassadors gathered for a group photo (above left). Pictured along the top row are (l to r): Cayce Cobaugh, Brendan Lynch, Matthew Saenz, Mason Johnson and Ryan McKenna. Along the bottom row are (l to r): Adriana Lopez Cajigas, Annie McGarry, Amy Lowenstein, Taiason Cole, Bella Cortier and Eliza Throne. Changing of the guard: outgoing AIMS Chairman David Bromilow, Mobar, passes his duties off to Pat Hoffman, The Hoffman Consulting Group, who will hold the position for the next two years (above right). AT/GARY SLADE**



try, such locations represent a unique niche that also requires the same attention to detail and focus on safety as destination parks.

“Urban Air recognizes the importance of elevating the level of safety in the family entertainment space and industry as a whole,” shared **Jay Thomas**, CEO, Urban Air Adventure Park. “We support the opportunity AIMS provides to allow Urban Air Adventure Parks to be a leader within the industry and to support and drive the highest

standards. The seminars allow us to sit at the table with state inspectors and those who have jurisdiction to learn how we can continually improve safety standards for our employees and guests nationwide.”

Attendees could choose between the focused tracks or customize their week based on the individual needs of their company, the personal certification goals and even new areas of focus. This year’s attendees attended an average of 40 hours of education.

**Scott Schaffer**, owner

and founder of **Upstop Media**, addressed more than 100 attendees on the topic of on-ride videography. “This was my first year speaking at the AIMS International Safety Seminar,” Schaffer shared. “I have filmed thousands of on-ride videos on rides around the world, and my focus has always been on safely mounting video equipment to meet the needs of a park, while also ensuring that everything is operated securely and safely.”

“Parks and attractions

operate in an age of content creators and social influencers,” he continued. “The desire for on-board videography is popular and critical to an attraction’s story. I was excited to share my professional experience with this year’s attendees, answer questions and hopefully help enhance the overall safety of our industry.”

Beyond classroom learning, the 2024 Safety Seminar welcomed a record 45 manufacturers, suppliers and

► See AIMS, page 47



**Mikayla Arnold of Ralph Alberts, Haley Knoebel of Premier Rides and Melissa Bamford of Baynum Solutions attended the 2023 AIMS International Safety Seminar (above left). Roger Berry to an opportunity to showcase the Chance Rides electric battery (above middle). Jason Freeman of Six Flags and Debbie Evans of Ellis & Associates took some time to catch up during the AIMS Safety Seminar (above right). AT/GARY SLADE**

## ▶AIMS

Continued from page 46

sponsors who hosted booths throughout the week. The length of the show allowed for in-depth conversations and discussions often missed during a frenzied week of an expo or convention. In addition, topics and questions important to frontline maintenance teams could be discussed, even allowing for feedback to the suppliers themselves from those tasked with maintaining their products.

"The growing number of manufacturers, suppliers and sponsors each year is a critical piece of seminar success," shared **Amy Lowenstein**, executive director, AIMS International. "Onsite activation expands the attendee experience in a positive way and their generous financial support funds many of the programs AIMS holds throughout the year."

Orlando-based **Skyline Attractions** took part as one of those sponsors. "This was the first time Skyline Attractions got involved as a sponsor of the Safety Seminar," said **Chris Gray**, partner and vice president, Skyline Attractions. "It was also the first time I personally took part in several years. AIMS International has come



**Dick Chance of Chance Rides and Michael Coleman of Zamperla share a few smiles during the AIMS Safety Seminar (above left). Jason Mons of S&S Worldwide and Har Kupers of Vekoma enjoyed catching up during the industry event (above right). AT/GARY SLADE**

a long way with this event and this week went well beyond our expectations. Our presence in the sponsor area was worth our time and investment. We forged new relationships and made new connections with parks of all sizes. What a week!"

Located next to Skyline Attractions, first-time sponsor and attendee, **SA-SO** echoed Gray's experience. "We began to get involved with the attractions industry during the pandemic," said **Marcos Garza**. "We came this week to learn while sharing our products and services. I cannot believe how welcoming and supportive everyone has been. No one treated me like a newcomer or a competitor. Everyone is focused on improving safety,

from the simplest tag all the way up to the coolest rides I've ever heard of."

Outgoing AIMS International Board President **David Bromilow** transitioned his role to **Pat Hoffman**, industry veteran, and president, **The Hoffman Consulting Group**. Hoffman, returning to the position as board president for his third time, was as energized and excited as ever. "We are experiencing record attendance this year," he said. "And while more than 800 attendees is amazing, I know we can expand to bring over 1,000 to this event."

Hoffman added that during his two-year term he hopes that together with Lowenstein, AIMS will double its manufacturer membership, expand certification opportunities and offerings, and continue to address how technology advances impact safety, inspection and ongoing maintenance.

"The need for education is greater than ever," Hoffman continued. "The attractions industry has an aging maintenance workforce. What we do and all we provide is a benefit to employers, the industry as a whole and the millions of guests we entertain."

Fellow AIMS International board member and past president, **Jim Seay**, president of **Premier Rides**, echoed Hoffman's focus on the future. "Safety is embedded in the culture of Premier Rides," Seay shared. "Our team's passion for safety drives us to proudly sponsor the AIMS Safety Seminar, to support the many incredible volunteers and to help create a comfortable environment for park operators, ride inspectors and manufacturers from around



**The seminar's Orlando location in 2024 allowed Eric Fluet of Get It Done Marketing, Kevin Messick of Northwest Coasters, David Mandt of IAAPA and Amusement Today Publisher Gary Slade to visit the IAAPA Headquarters while in attendance. COURTESY IAAPA**

the globe. This is the week to gather, to network and to exchange ideas and have discussions related to best practices, new technologies and lessons learned to further promote safety in our industry."

Seay also pointed out the continued growth of the Young Professional track as an important pathway to successful careers in the industry. "The Young Professional track creates the opportunity for the future leaders of the industry to learn from experienced industry professionals while networking and exchanging ideas," he said. "They also provide a fresh perspective as it relates to safety. We're proud of the program AIMS has developed and especially excited involvement from the young professionals who volunteer this week to help ensure this event runs smoothly."

"We are already looking ahead to the 2025 Safety Seminar," Hoffman added. "Each year we find new ways to improve our program and what we offer. The Spanish-language track is a key area of growth. Expanding our certifications and communicating how these certifica-

### FAST FACTS

**Attendance:**  
more than 800

**Instructors and speakers:**  
more than 160

**Scholarships:** 13

**Educational Tracks:** 14

**Number of hours:**  
more than 440  
of education

**Number of foreign language courses:** 39

**Exhibit booths:**  
45 manufacturers,  
suppliers and sponsors

**Raised by Silent Auction:**  
more than \$4,600



**The AIMS Ambassador team created the first-ever "Men of AIMS" themed-calendar and sold the copies as a fund-raiser to help with their expenses of attending the annual AIMS Safety Seminar. On hand at the seminar from their calendar appearance were back from left: Kevin Garrison, Recreation Engineering, Inc.; Rob Gavel, LJM & Associates; Kevin Russell, Herschend Family Entertainment; David Bromilow, Mobar; Jeff Abendshien, Recreation Engineering, Inc. and Andreas Tanzer, ProSlide Technology. Front row from left: Gary Slade, Amusement Today; Tony Claassen, Silver Dollar City and Tim Viox, Leisure Labs, LLC. Not pictured: Ryon Yemm, The Sheehan Group; Hugo Loyola, Fantasilandia and Bryan Creason, Ray Cammack Shows. COURTESY AIMS INTERNATIONAL**

tions meet state inspection requirements will continue to help parks meet those needs. It's an exciting time to be here — and to keep growing forward."

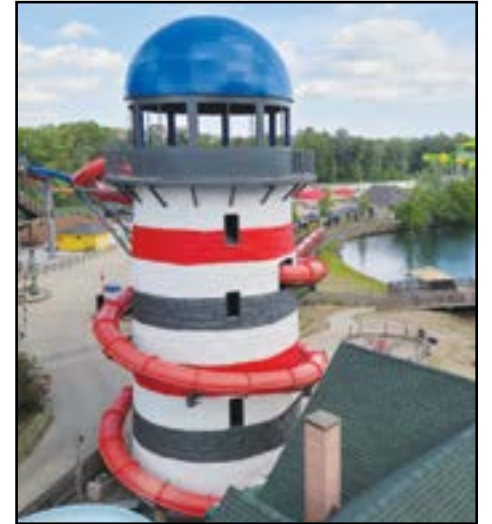
# Baynum Solutions, Palace Entertainment continue partnership

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

NEWPORT, Ky. — Now 40 years old, Baynum Solutions was established in 1983 as Baynum Painting Inc.

“There have been countless puns made over the years in reference to our coaster business having its ‘ups and downs,’” joked Chris Baynum, president. “I’m thrilled to say that after 40 years, we still have not reached the crest of the incline yet so we’ve not experienced ‘down.’ Hiring some of the most talented people in the world has been the key to our continued growth and ongoing success decade after decade. It seems that every year there is a new world record-breaker in our industry. Each year we break our own record! With our loyal client base and continued commitment to providing the highest level of quality and service, we hope to never reach the top of the hill.”

During this time, the company has developed a strong partnership with



The colorful ribbon color scheme was a hit on Kennywood’s Swing Shot (above left). Baynum workers refresh the Phantom’s Revenge roller coaster with new purple track (above middle). Lake Compounce’s waterpark icon stands as a centerpiece (above right). COURTESY BAYNUM SOLUTIONS

Palace Entertainment and its complement of parks.

“It’s a decades-long relationship with the park properties,” said Melissa Bamford, marketing, Baynum Solutions. “When Walt Bowser came on, he developed the avenue into the water park restorative services.”

The company believes Sandcastle is the first Palace water park with whom

Baynum partnered.

Bowser credits a relationship being developed with Jeff Savelesky, formerly the corporate director of maintenance, construction and safety.

In 2016, Savelesky and Bowser crossed paths, kicking off their professional journey with Palace at Sandcastle, Noah’s Ark and Splish Splash. What initially started as a work collaboration soon

blossomed into a cherished friendship that endures to this day. Despite Savelesky moving on, the ties with Palace Entertainment not only persisted but thrived, showcasing the lasting bond beyond professional realms.

“We have partnered with Baynum Solutions on everything from rides to slides, and Baynum has been up to the challenge,” said Jerry

Brick, director of construction and maintenance, Palace Entertainment. “Baynum has been great at helping us through picking out colors to using the right products for each job, which will help with the longevity of the work being done. It has been not only a rewarding task but one that has allowed us

► See BAYNUM, page 49

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► **BAYNUM**

Continued from page 48

to learn and grow with both Baynum and our parks.”

Palace Entertainment is a subsidiary of **Parque Reunidos** out of Madrid, Spain. Among its U.S. properties are **Story Land, Idlewild, Lake Compounce, Castle Park, Adventureland** (Iowa), **Wet'n Wild Emerald Pointe, Noah's Ark, Sandcastle, Splish Splash, Raging Waters, Water Country, Dutch Wonderland** and **Kennywood**.

“We've been in every one of those properties within the last two years,” Bamford told *Amusement Today*. “A couple of years ago we helped with the rebranding of a 20-year-old waterslide at Splish Splash. Palace came up with a rebrand and retheme, and we gave it a new color scheme and included the **iSlide** feature. We're certified installers for iSlide components.”

The park was extremely pleased with the project as the new life brought lines to the bottom of the stairs on what was an aging attraction.

Many properties have seen Baynum's handiwork year after year.

“Kennywood is a huge property for us,” said Bamford.

Baynum Solutions was utilized for the Steel Curtain touch-up when it was installed. The following years saw the total painting of Thunderbolt, Racer and Jack Rabbit wooden roller coasters. Phantom's Revenge is another major steel coaster at Kennywood that received a fresh new color scheme.

“We did four attractions in one year at Kennywood, and they weren't small,” said Bowser.

“A really special project was Thunderbolt,” Bamford noted. “It was in the queue for so long; it was years in the making bringing that project to fruition.”

Kennywood's topography can provide some challenges, particularly with its deep ravines.

“Typically, we can use lifts and ladders,” said Bowser. “On Phantom — with the topography and height — we use spider baskets and staging with specialty rigging and training. That's one of the things that sets us apart

— those unique challenges.”

In the past year, many buildings saw a refresh, as did the **S&S Screamin' Swing** in 2023.

“One of the unique scenarios with the Palace partnership is that we have such a great relationship at the GM/operator level and the maintenance director level between both of our teams. There's such a synergy there,” Bamford told *AT*. “Our technicians work so well with the maintenance

directors that are onsite.”

Baynum has worked on just over 100 projects for Palace. In 2023, six of the Palace Entertainment properties contracted with Baynum to work on coasters, slides, rides and bridges. In 2024, Noah's Ark and Adventureland Park will be using Baynum's services.

**Splish Splash rebranded a new slide with a fresh paint scheme and the installation of iSlide products.**  
COURTESY BAYNUM SOLUTIONS



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Representatives of CA Parks and Attractions, Cedar Fair, Disneyland Resort, Knott's Berry Farm, Pacific Park, Universal Studios Hollywood, Cal/OSHA Communications and Outreach Unit, Cal/OSHA Amusement Ride and Tramway Unit, Cal/OSHA Headquarters participate in the Alliance training activities. Alliance participants include Sabrina Lockhart, Jon Storbeck, John Nievesky, Jeff Gahagan, Dana Wyatt, Raffi Kaprelyan, Tim Ailanjian, Aimee Kool, Amy Lowenstein, Rick Achard, David Kang, Ruben Ramos, Adrian Hernandez, Charlene Gloriani, Brandon Hart, Ame Lazzara, Jeff Killip, Carl Paganelli, Bobby Park, Scott Prather, Kelley Roberts, Tomasz Koczwarra, Susie Park, Brian Taylor and Mark Schuller. COURTESY CAL/OSHA

## Agreement aligns the AIMS' industry expertise to California OSHA, ART Unit

**AT:** David Fake  
Special to Amusement Today

SANTA ANA, Calif. — On December 28, 2023, The Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA), Amusement Ride & Tramway (ART) Unit, and AIMS International entered a two-year Alliance Agreement to promote safety for patrons and employees of amusement ride and tramway (ski lift) facilities.

The collaborative relationship illustrates the value and commitment represented by the parties to foster safer and more healthful workplaces in California through education with the support of industry stakeholders.

The formation of the Alliance is intended to establish a collaborative relationship providing information and access to education and educational resources to promote workplace safety and health as well as improve the overall working conditions for California's workers.

AIMS will coordinate to ensure Cal/OSHA's Amusement Ride and Tramway and Enforcement units along with AIMS members participate in a limited number of safety and health technical education events related to familiarization and unique differ-

ences of the amusement industry concerning amusement rides and tramways, both fixed and portable.

Cal/OSHA and AIMS will develop educational resources and guidance documents specific to the amusement industry.

These scheduled events and educational resources will provide key staff in both organizations with an increased working knowledge of the safety and health hazards related to the amusement industry, as well as procedures, methods and techniques to mitigate hazards.

Additionally, Cal/OSHA and AIMS will develop educational resources and guidance documents specific to the amusement industry.

It is Cal/OSHA and AIMS' desire that the educational events and resources will promote an ongoing statewide joint dialogue on workplace safety and health beyond the parameters of the Alliance.

Cal/OSHA Alliances provide parties an opportunity to participate in a voluntary cooperative relationship with Cal/OSHA for purposes such as education, communication and outreach, and promoting statewide dialogue on workplace safety and health, providing valuable tools for both Cal/OSHA and its Alliance Participants.

Left to right:  
Bobby Park  
Cal/OSHA  
Amusement Ride  
and Tramway  
Unit, Amy  
Lowenstein AIMS  
International,  
Jeff Killip Cal/  
OSHA Chief were  
the cosigners of  
the Cal/OSHA  
– AIMS Alliance  
Agreement.  
COURTESY  
CAL/OSHA



# Ellis & Associates launches new aquatics education resources

**AT:** Jeffrey Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

MAITLAND, Fla. — **Ellis & Associates (E&A)**, a world leader in aquatic safety since 1983, marked the end of its 40th year with the launch of two new aquatics education resources designed to enhance safety for lifeguards and swimmers alike. E&A education resources are developed utilizing original source research, best practice studies, constantly advancing technology and data analysis.

With the rapid expansion of aquatic facilities to include an ever-growing variety of attractions and experiences, including splash zones, artificial swimming lagoons and surf venues, the new Shallow Water Attraction Lifeguard certification and Surf Park Training Module will give aquatic facility operators more resources to elevate

safety and risk management, as well as expand staffing opportunities.

“For more than 40 years, E&A has continually pushed to meet the needs of the aquatics industry, focusing on results-driven objectives and field-tested protocols that elevate the entire industry,” said E&A SVP and COO, **RAC Carroll**. “Our work partnering with water park, resort, surf and mixed-use developers and operators means that we can help clients build aquatic safety into both design and operations from the very beginning.”

The new Shallow Water Attraction Lifeguard certification course provides a training option that reinforces the concepts of attentiveness, scanning, vigilance and safety, including all aspects of lifeguard certification, with approval for guarding water at a depth of 3.5 feet or less. Shallow



**E&A's Shallow Water Attraction Lifeguard certification course reinforces the concepts of attentiveness, scanning, vigilance and safety for guarding water at a depth of 3.5 feet or less.**  
AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT

Water Attraction Lifeguard certification state approvals are currently being submitted across the U.S.

Dynamic wave surf parks present particular issues with surfers and swimmers in constant motion over a

large body of water, along with rapidly changing water depth as the surf wave moves laterally across the pool. Although stationary surf parks offer a much smaller footprint and less of an area to monitor, the rapidly mov-

ing water can create its own set of challenges. The Surf Park Training Module will better prepare lifeguards for the unique challenges that come with an inland surfing venue.

Ellis & Associates was founded in 1983 when water parks were still a relatively new idea. **Jeff Ellis** and his colleagues determined that the traditional lifeguard training designed for typical city pools was not adequate for either swimmer or lifeguard safety, and reform was needed. Ellis conducted further investigations and poured hours into research and experimentation, dedicating his time to finding a better way to lifeguard. That research helped him identify the issues surrounding aquatic safety and allowed his team to create a new, safety driven program geared towards accident prevention and accountability.

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**RICK BASTRUP**  
Foreword by Gary Slade, *Amusement Today*

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Designer Rick Bastrup reveals personal industry 'Adventures' in his new book

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

Many people who have worked in the amusement industry for most of their lives have an undeniable passion for it. **Rick Bastrup** was designing dark rides in his garage when he was in grade school, pulling neighborhood kids around his cardboard “scenes” in a wagon. It was no surprise to see him enter the field designing many beloved attractions.

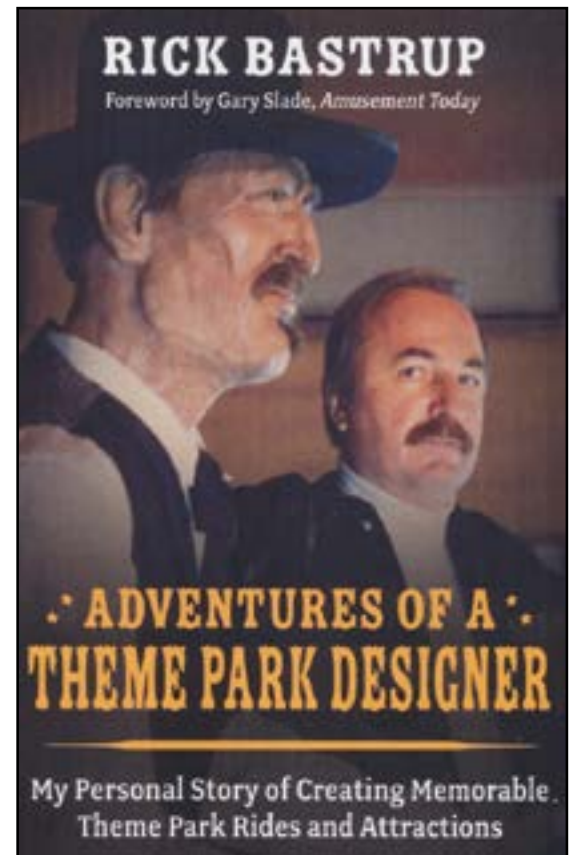
*Adventures of a Theme Park Designer* takes the reader through the very beginnings of **R&R Creative Amusement Designs**. Bastrup’s partner, **Richard Ferrin**, was the second “R” in the company’s name. The duo made illustrations and models for ride and park concepts and began presenting them to parks and manufacturers in Southern California.

Bastrup recounts early model building for Camp Snoopy at **Knott’s Berry Farm** in the early 1980s transitioned into the initial projects for the fledgling company. Considering the era — a time when record-setting hardware seemed more important than theming — each R&R project brought attention to detail and a truckload of imagination.

While theming of rides had been seen before, bringing that creative spark to water parks, miniature golf and family entertainment centers was particularly innovative. Each of the company’s projects had something distinct and noteworthy. Along the way, whenever something was new to them, the pair of gentlemen simply figured things out as they created. Bastrup also includes those learning curves, occasional mistakes and humorous anecdotes to various projects.

Often, the behind-the-scenes elements can be just as entertaining as the finished product. Bastrup tells of his observation that **Jaws** at **Universal Studios Florida** when being designed “needed another scene.” His idea of the captain steering passengers into a darkened shed to build suspense was a masterstroke of brilliance.

Other moments bring a chuckle. Anyone working in the amusement industry knows new attraction openings can come down to the wire. Bastrup’s first ride on **Adventure Express**, a heavily themed mine train at **Kings Island**, was scheduled to premier for the press, and he had been working in those final days to oversee the last details. He had never ridden the ride with all the effects working. Placed in the front seat with media personnel behind him, he prayed everything worked as it should.



The final scene in the temple was as dramatic as he had hoped, leaving him relieved. He later learned that the animation hadn’t even been electrically connected yet. Workers from **Sally** were making the animation move manually, unbeknownst to anyone riding. It was all working properly by the time it opened to the public.

As both he and Ferrin were musicians, they knew the power of music, and in the chapter called “The Process,” Bastrup emphasizes the impact audio makes on an attraction’s design.

*Adventures of a Theme Park Designer* spotlights many of the company’s 100-plus projects. Pictures and illustrations are spread throughout the 279 pages. The projects are so fascinating that the reader can’t help but wish photos were in color. Captions offering bits of detail and insight would also have been beneficial when looking at the pictures.

The amusement industry is constantly evolving and changing. When the numerous chapters discuss so many fun projects, it does show what sometimes gets sadly lost to time, whether it is attractions such as **Jaws** at Universal or **Phantom Theater** at Kings Island or parks such as **MGM Grand Adventures** in Vegas or **American Adventures** in Georgia.

An index of company projects is also included.

On a personal note, as someone who is passionate about this industry, I can’t help but be envious of such a fun and rewarding career.



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