



Mt. Olympus Water & Theme Park Resort opens record-breaking slide

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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WISCONSIN DELLS, Wisconsin — This past summer **Mt. Olympus Water & Theme Park Resort** opened the tallest waterslide in North America. The 160-foot tall slide tower serves as the platform for four **WhiteWater AquaTubes** and a Freefall slide. The tallest and longest, a high-speed AquaTube called **The Fall** starts from a record-breaking height of 145 feet and has riders spiraling through the 780-foot tube at speeds of up to 30 mph. Below The

Fall, four slides of varying lengths launch riders from a height of 57 feet. **The Rise of Icarus** was a collaboration between the **Laskaris** family, who owns the park; the architectural firm **Ramaker** and **WhiteWater**.

As construction was progressing in the spring, **Fotini (Fofu) Laskaris Backhaus**, director of marketing told *Amusement Today*, “We’re preparing for an incredible summer as we unveil America’s tallest waterslide, **The Rise of Icarus**, plus a brand-new

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Rising 160 feet, the **Icarus tower** supports the tallest waterslide in North America.
COURTESY MT. OLYMPUS WATER & THEME PARK

Vietnam's Sun World Sam Son Water Park enjoys its first summer



Among the more than 30 water attractions are ProSlide’s **TornadoWave** alongside a **FlyingSaucer 60**. Both utilize five-person rafts. COURTESY PROSLIDE TECHNOLOGY

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THANH HOA, Vietnam — **Sun World Sam Son Water Park**, Vietnam’s newest travel destination, officially opened to the public on June 30, 2024. The first phase of the park features a variety of waterslides and attractions spread over eight complexes. The park had a soft opening beginning May 18, 2024, with limited operations.

Sun World Sam Son was inspired by the cultural tapestry and legendary tales of Vietnam’s diverse ethnicities. Among its inspiration is the famous epic of the Muong people, “The Birth of Earth and Water.” This

creation story tells of a giant ancient tree that formed the land, skies and water, including mountains and rivers. Captivating landscaping blends indigenous architectural motifs and materials with international design styles to create a modern space for visitors evoking legends and the delicate balance between elements in nature. When complete, the massive 1,500 billion VND (US\$ 61.1 million) entertainment complex spanning more than 33.5 hectares (82 acres) will include a theme park and a water park and will be the largest entertainment com-

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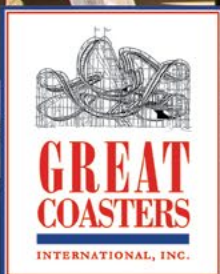
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AT NOTEBOOK: John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint

Splashing into our youth



Robinson

Whether we are five years old or 50, the water is our ultimate escape from the heat of the sun on a hot summer day.

Growing up, a sweaty day outside meant an excuse to find some water fun. Whether it was jumping in a pool, firing up a simple sprinkler to run through or just spraying the hose on our friends and family, water fun in the heat was the simplest fun and almost a summertime essential. It was wonderful when you found a friend who owned a pool, and the holy grail to discover one that actually had a simple water slide that would drop you into the deep end.

Well, fast-forward and we have turned our childhood loves of summertime water fun into an ever-widening, rapidly growing and wildly thrilling water park industry!

The garden hose has given way to the interactive play area. A backyard, inflatable wading pool has gone vertical in the water parks of today and added climbing structures and a giant splash bucket. The downhill speed of a Slip-N-Slide has evolved into a wild water coaster. And that simple water slide dropping into the deep end has been themed, illuminated and retooled into any number of thrilling combinations which dominate the skylines of these aquatic adventures.

Our beloved amusement industry continues to find innovative and imaginative ways to tap into those childhood delights and resurrect the simple, timeless fun of our youth.

As children, parents and grandparents ... when we visit water parks, we are all still kids in the backyard splashing into the delights of the cool water for fun. Through the splashtacular fun of water parks, we have found what Ponce de León never managed to: the elusive Fountain of Youth. And it's alive and well ... and still flowing!



INDUSTRY VOICE: Rick Root, World Waterpark Association

Safety: the cornerstone of our industry's success

In the water park and amusement industry, nothing is more important than safety. It is the foundation upon which our parks, attractions, and experiences are built. No matter our particular business or job function, we all have a role to play in supporting our shared goal: keeping fun safe. As we continue to innovate and push boundaries, our commitment to safety must always remain our top priority. Guests need to feel safe in our facilities, knowing that their enjoyment is supported by the highest standards of care and diligence.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize *Amusement Today* for its unwavering support of this mission. Through its ongoing coverage and dedication to highlighting the people, products and places that drive our safety innovations and best practices, *Amusement Today* has been a valuable partner in keeping safety at the forefront of our indus-



Root

try's dialogue. This collaboration ensures that operators, manufacturers and service providers stay informed, equipped and unified in their efforts to maintain a secure environment for all.

Looking ahead, I am excited for the upcoming 45th Annual WWA Show, taking place October 8-10, 2024, in Las Vegas. The show provides a vital opportunity for industry leaders to gather, share knowledge and further refine our collective approach to water park safety. It's a reminder that when we come together as an industry, we not only advance safety but also pave the way for continued growth and success. I look forward to the meaningful discussions and collaboration that will undoubtedly emerge from this year's event.

In the end, safety is what keeps our industry moving forward, ensuring that guests walk away with a smile and a plan to return.

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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Shawn Dowdy, Hawaiian Falls

Shawn Dowdy started her career as a 4th Grade Math and Science teacher, currently has a charcuterie board business and now serves as the operations manager for **Hawaiian Falls** in Texas...talk about a varied (and interesting) path in life! Shawn brings a positive energy, efficiency and a lot of imagination to her role, all while being focused on building quality relationships with employees and stakeholders.

Title: Operations Manager.

Number of years in the industry: 17.

Best thing about the industry: We get a unique opportunity to provide special memories for our guests that last a lifetime.

Favorite amusement ride: Last fall I rode The Branson Coaster in Branson, Missouri. It was the first coaster my daughter was tall enough to ride and it quickly made it to my number one favorite.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would ... Be teaching elementary school or building my charcuterie board business!

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Attracting and retaining guests. With many entertainment options available, water parks must continuously innovate and offer new attractions to attract and retain visitors.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ... The chance to provide employment opportunities to first-time job holders. We have a special opportunity to teach our 15-16 year olds how to be employees and how employers should treat them. My goal is to provide them with tools that they can take into the workforce that will last a lifetime.

It's October! My favorite Halloween candy is ... Carmel Apple Pops.

The last time I ate fast food was ... About 52 minutes ago, Chipotle!

My all-time best vacation was ... Our Baby-Moon cruise from Miami to the Bahamas. Anywhere with blue waters and sun...count me in!

My hidden talent is ... Bowling. I was a proud member of the Rowlett Eagle Bowling Club and made it to the state championship in 2009.

Favorite flavor of ice cream: Rocky Road.



Shawn Dowdy has had a varied career path but is enjoying a home in the water park industry. COURTESY HAWAIIAN FALLS

For me, the worst fall chore is ... Throwing away the rotten pumpkins from the porch. Yuck!

On a typical Sunday morning, you can find me ... Cooking breakfast for my family.

The one thing I always seem to put off is ... Laundry...I guess that's why my husband takes care of it all!

Favorite Super Hero: Courtney Castle, my park director.

I would best describe my kitchen as ... Clean with a few rogue Goldfish laying around.

Three things I would pack on a camping trip: 1.Toilet Paper 2. Water 3. Bug Spray.

The book I would recommend everyone read would have to be ... *The Road Back to You – An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery* by Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile.

If I was to join the circus, I would hands-down be ... The ticket-taker! Close enough to the chaos, but not a part of it.

The song that always gets me in a good mood is ... *Picture to Burn* by Taylor Swift.

The most adventurous thing I have done lately is ... At the end of summer we rode Beach Blasters, a dueling toilet bowl slide, six times in a row. It was for work, I promise!

I really love my ... Husband, Jeremy, and our two children, Addison and Beckham.

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Coasting on the greens



WEST MIFFLIN, Pa. — During the 2024 Golden Ticket Awards event hosted by Kennywood, attendees could participate in the third annual NRCMA Golf Tournament. The 2024 golf outing was held at Westwood Golf Club, just a short drive from Downtown Pittsburgh. The event raised \$5,000 for the National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives. Players enjoyed a day of fun in the sun and stopped to take photos to celebrate the day. Pictured above (l to r) are Pete Barto of PB Amusement, Brian Knoebel of Knoebels Amusement Resort, Kennywood's Kenny Kangaroo, Melissa Bamford of Baynum Amusement Solutions and Bradford Doolittle of Haas & Wilkerson. AT/GARY SLADE

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▶OLYMPUS

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kiddie area. This water park expansion is designed to cater to all ages, from the littlest adventurers to the most daring thrill seekers. We look forward to our guests making memorable moments with this addition."

Before the opening of Icarus, a similar slide tower, Daredevil Tower, at **Thrill Waterpark** on CocoCay, **Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's** private island in The Bahamas, opened with a similar record-breaking slide. That **WhiteWater** high-speed AquaTube dispatched from a height of 135 feet giving that location the record in 2019. But records were made to be broken. In 2020 **Dreamworks Water Park** in East Rutherford, New Jersey, opened a pair of 142-foot straight drop speed slides — **Thrillagascar** and **Jungle Jammer**.

It should be no surprise that the Laskaris family sought out a record-breaking slide. Just two years ago, Medusa's **Slidewheel** opened as the first of its kind in North America. That garnered a Golden Ticket Award for Best New Water Park Ride of 2022. At the time, Fofu Backhaus told *AT*, "The best thing about my dad is that he's able to recognize the greatest rides in the industry and bring them to Mt. Olympus. We love bringing on innovative attractions to keep our guests coming back for more!"

History repeated itself this year as The Rise of



The Rise of Icarus creates a striking new landmark along Wisconsin Dell Parkway. The Fall winds its way down the tower for 780 feet (right). COURTESY MT. OLYMPUS WATER & THEME PARK

Icarus gave the park another Golden Ticket Award for Best New Water Park Ride of 2024.

"The Rise of Icarus holds a special place in our family and park as we continually strive to introduce new and innovative attractions to our area," said **Maria Laskaris**, the park's social media marketer.

In Greek mythology, Icarus, the son of master craftsman Daedalus escaped from King Minos' prison using wings constructed of bird feathers and beeswax. Daedalus warned his son not to fly too close to the sun or the wax would melt. Icarus ignored the warnings and fell from the sky. The Fall recreates that plummet from the sky, but fortunately for riders, the outcome is a safe and controlled stop at the end of the journey. The giant slide starts with a short drop and rotates counterclockwise around the tower in larger and larger helices. As thrill seekers traverse the 780-foot slide, picking up speed, the color gradually changes from dark orange to bright

yellow. Near the finish a quick jog to the right sends riders screaming into the splashdown run-out. The journey through the slide takes about 30 seconds to complete.

"Since The Rise of Icarus opened, we've been thrilled by the overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic reactions. Riders can't get enough — they're rushing back up the tower to experience all five body slides. Each slide is fast and exhilarating, definitely worth the wait and anticipation!" said Backhaus.

For those who may not be able to endure the stair-climb to the 145-foot level, four other new slides can be enjoyed from less than half that height. The Voyage, The Flight and The Journey are enclosed AquaTubes offering exciting twists and turns a little less intense than their taller sibling. The fourth, The Drop, is a Freefall open waterslide with a steep, straight drop.

Later in the season, the park launched a new outdoor kids' section, **Icaria Splash 'n Slide**, also from

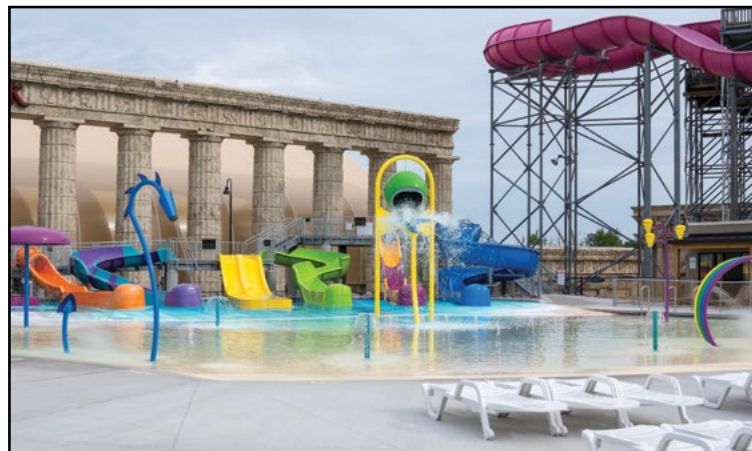
WhiteWater. The new 12,000-square-foot kids' area features 10 new slides, along with a water play activity area with splash toys and a tipping bucket. The waterplay area has a shallow water containment area and is covered with **Life Floor** to provide a safe and comfortable surface for kids to run around on. The 10 slides provide varying degrees of excitement with slides ranging from four to 10 feet tall giving adrenaline-junkies-in-the-making a chance to work their way up to challenge the larger slides or perhaps wait until next season to build up the courage to take on something a little taller.

In addition to the tower and the kids' area, the space around these two attractions increases the amount of deck space allowing the addition of more tables with umbrellas and more lounge chairs. Also new are the **Icarus Luxury Cabanas**. These enclosed cabanas come with sliding glass doors opening to a pair of chaise lounges. Since the cabanas are enclosed, they



can provide air conditioning — a rarity for an outdoor water park cabana. The **Icarus Luxury Cabanas** include five lounge chairs, a credenza with a lock box, a mini fridge, towels and VIP host service. These cabanas can accommodate up to eight people. Food and bar concessions, a new retail store and locker building are also part of the new area.

The **Demetrios Laskaris** family moved from Chicago to Wisconsin Dells in 1970 and opened a hot dog stand named "Big Chief" after a statue they had purchased at a trade show. **Demetrios' son Nick** began engineering and constructing the world's first multi-level go-kart tracks. With the addition of coasters, the former **Big Chief Go-Kart World** became **Big Chief Karts & Coasters**. In 2004 the park merged with nearby **Treasure Island Resort**, which included an indoor and outdoor water park. The co-owned complex became known as **Mt. Olympus Water & Theme Park**. Over the years several acquisitions have taken place, and the resort now has a total of more than 1,600 rooms, spans more than 300 acres and includes five roller coasters, 44 waterslides, a wave pool and, of course, eight go-kart tracks upon which the family built its legacy.



Icaria Splash 'n Slide gives little adventurers their own play area with 10 new slides as well as a spray pad with tipping bucket and shallow wading pool. COURTESY MT. OLYMPUS WATER & THEME PARK



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WHITEWATER
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A six-lane Pro-Slide Rally/Octopus Racer will keep lines moving quickly (above left). Sunkid delivered four customized systems to convey rafts to the top of the slide towers (above right). COURTESY PROSLIDE TECHNOLOGY, SUNKID

► SAM SON

Continued from page 1

plex in Vietnam's northern region both in terms of size and investment. DTJ Design provided the concept layout, and the park was built by DKT Technology and Hoa Binh Construction Group.

Supplied by ProSlide Technology of Ottawa, Ontario, the more than 30 water ride experiences include several firsts for the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, including the tallest double TornadoWave 60, and the tallest BehemothBowl 60, both taking advantage of large, five-passenger rafts for impressive capacity. Other notable multi-passenger raft rides include the always popular Tornado 60, and a massive FlyingSaucer 60 that includes three saucer sections along with alternating open and closed Mammoth River sections. These four water attractions are on two different towers and share a common

staircase, splashdown pool and a raft lift. Twister Zone, the TornadoWave is paired with the FlyingSaucer 60. The Surfing Stingray (Tornado) shares its tower with the Jaws Cave (BehemothBowl). Both towers utilize raft lifts provided by Sunkid, which provided a total of four lifts for the park.

A four-slide tower complex features slides that utilize two-person rafts and include favorites such as a TornadoTantrum and Wave fusion, CannonBowl 40 and a pair of PipeLine tube chutes.

For mat slide aficionados, a six-lane Rally/OctopusRacer has thrill seekers racing through a tight 360-degree helix before accelerating onto a multi-bump ride to the finish.

Another first for the park is Raging Anaconda, a ProSlide PowerRiver Generation 2. PowerRiver utilizes exclusive channel technology to create a float-

ing, river-rapid experience while traversing a downhill chute. For a more relaxing journey, the park also has a tranquil lazy river that meanders around and through the park.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with visionaries like Sun Group to strategically develop world-class water park experiences in Vietnam," said Steve Avery, VP business development — APAC. "This partnership underscores ProSlide's commitment to innovation and reflects our mutual dedication to creating unforgettable memories for guests. We look forward to witnessing the success of Sam Son Water Park and are excited about the future phases of the development."

The central area is highlighted with a 5,400-square-meter (1.3-acre) wave pool. Bay of the God Wave, inspired by the legend of Son Tinh and Thuy Tinh, is the largest and most prominent feature of the water

park. It boasts an artificial coastline stretching 150 meters (492 feet) and is surrounded by lounge chairs and private cabanas for places to sit and relax. Adjacent to the wave pool is a smaller shallow wading pool.

Young water-attraction fans will have a blast with an area designed just for them. A Kidz Adventure Tower with a Kidz TornadoWave are both firsts for the APAC region. The Kidz Adventure Tower features pint-sized versions of the iconic ProSlide adult rides on a smaller scale. A giant RideHouse water-play structure features multiple levels with interactive water features, a tipping bucket and several body slides. Smaller children or those too young to swim can enjoy playing with water toys in a zero-depth spray park.

The complex is opening in phases, and while visitors enjoy the existing water park, slides are

under construction in the next expansion phase. Although Sun Group has yet to release any details, construction photos show what appears to be a water coaster with uphill and flying saucer sections already in place.

Although the history of the city of Thanh Hóa goes back centuries, it was only within the last few decades that it transformed from a township to a city. As a result, a lot of its development is fairly new — although it has done well at preserving its proud history and cultural traditions. Thanh Hóa City is the capital of Thanh Hóa province, one of the largest in Vietnam. Its diverse ecosystem along with magnificent landscapes have made it a popular tourist destination.

Sun World, the entertainment brand of Sun Group, is a series of leading amusement parks and entertainment complexes in Vietnam, including Sun World Ba Na Hills, Asia Park, Sun World Fansipan Legend, Sun World Ha Long, Sun World Phu Quoc, Sun World Ba Den Mountain and Sun World Cat Ba.

Sun Group is a Vietnamese private economic group with an international scale. Founded 17 years ago, its goal is to contribute to the enhancement of Vietnam's status, improve the quality of life of its people, beautify and enrich the country, and make Vietnam an attractive destination to the world.



The massive wave pool dominates the center of the park (above left). The pool is guarded by giant statues of Son Tinh and Thuy Tinh. Kids and families can enjoy all the interactive features, various climbing opportunities and multiple slides of the giant RideHouse (above right). COURTESY SUN WORLD SAM SON

PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Phantasialand's new play areas — page 12 / Canada's Wonderland announces AlpenFury — page 22

Intamin's boundary-pushing Amazonia dazzles in Bellewaerde

AT: Tim Baldwin
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YPRES, Belgium — Mundo Amazonia is the newest themed land at Bellewaerde. It represents a huge investment by the park of €21 million (\$22.5 million). It is the largest investment to date, beating the previous year's record of €17 million. With a Brazilian flair, the new area reflects themes of South America.

The biggest new attraction accounts for about two-thirds of that investment. It is an innovative spinning rapids ride from Intamin. The attraction is called Amazonia.

Since the 1980s, rapids rides have been staples in theme parks. In-ground channels produce sections of splashing rapids that always elicit laughter. However, Amazonia delivers a rapids ride with elements never before seen. It truly takes the rapids ride

to new levels.

The first distinction is seen immediately after dispatch where rafts are turned 90 degrees onto an inclined conveyor belt. According to Intamin, this was a site restriction.

"There was a need to do a sharp 90-degree turn onto the inclined lift, and that's why this element comes right after the station," explained Sascha Czibulka, executive vice president, Intamin.

From there, the cool factor is quite literally elevated. Riders travel through not one but two troughs high above the ground. The second trough is reached by an elevator lift.

"Amazonia introduces numerous innovative elements, some of which have never been implemented before on a rapids ride," Czibulka told *Amusement Today*. "The ride features a high-speed inclined lift, and on the rotating vertical



The halfpipe element (above) is more common on a waterslide attraction, but it has now been implemented on a rapids ride. Much of the ride takes place in elevated channels (left). COURTESY INTAMIN



lift guests can enjoy panoramic views while ascending to the top at a rather high pace."

Following the rotating elevator lift to the second above-ground trough, riders experience something never before attempted on a rapids ride — a halfpipe element.

"The thrilling and picturesque halfpipe element is definitely the iconic highlight," Czibulka said. "After the final floating section, the boat enters the mining building where guests enjoy the world's first five-meter, bungee-drop element on a rapids ride. A surprising and thrilling finish to end a great ride."

Indeed, while most people are laughing and talking about how much they were splashed, closed doors put riders momentarily in the dark to experience the sudden drop. For those who aren't expecting it, the surprising moment is a total scream.

When asked if the drop was Intamin's idea or the park's, Czibulka responded, "The idea was a collaborative effort between our company and the park. After our design

team proposed various layouts and elements, we worked closely with the park to develop and implement this surprising and breathtaking feature. Therefore, the conceptualization and realization of this element were the result of a joint effort."

The halfpipe is something more commonly seen on a waterslide. AT asked Czibulka if waterslide elements can have a

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Amazonia is the anchor attraction in the new land. COURTESY INTAMIN



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place in the development of theme park water rides. He responded, "I think elements like the halfpipe have a lot of potential for amusement parks. They bring a thrill factor to the all-time favorite rapids ride and enhance the ride experience. The halfpipe is also an impressive structure to look at for visitors, which makes a water ride with elements like the halfpipe much more noticeable in a park."

Riders 120 centimeters (47 inches) can ride accompanied by an adult or 130 centimeters without.

Also in the area is a new small roller coaster, Brazilian Buggies. Supplied by Zamperla, it is a children's coaster the whole family can ride. If accompanied by an adult, children as small as 90 centimeters (3 feet) can ride or 120 centimeters unaccompanied. It replaces a previous children's coaster built in 1981 and retired in 2022.

Rio do Cocoa is a smaller children's flume from abc Rides to complement the existing log flume, which was renamed Rio do Café.

A new restaurant in the area is Tropical Takeaway. A new retail outlet has also been added.

Hundreds of trees and shrubs were planted



Above raft of riders drops into the halfpipe element. The above-ground structure makes for some fun drops. COURTESY INTAMIN



to help create the themed environment.

Bellewaerde was founded in 1954 as an outdoor park where visitors could discover exotic birds.

In time, the park was further developed into a safari

park with more animals. Eventually, amusement rides were added. The mix of nature and attractions offers a diverse selection of things to do. Bellewaerde Aquapark, an indoor water park was added in 2019.

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AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

BRÜHL, Germany — Phantasialand is known for its fantastical, immersive environments. In a creative move, the park has used a previous enclosure to create an attraction that is big and bold: Avoras.

Avoras is located in the Fantasy area of the park. Looming large, an iconic giant bird is actually an enormous play structure supplied by Kinderlandparks.

With entrances into its various climbing nets and zippy tube slides on various levels, it is engaging new fun for families. As there is no queuing to enjoy the attraction, the fun is immediate.

“Avoras is an attraction that allows basically the whole family to have fun from the get-go,” said Christina Herrmann, communi-



Avoras stands tall inside a circular structure. Everyone in the family gets involved in the many levels of Avoras.
AT/TIM BALDWIN

ications, Phantasialand. “Kids from all ages can climb the majestic bird from its feet to its wings all by themselves — over and over again. Avoras is built in a way that invites our guests to explore it any way they want. From bottom to top, from top to bottom, by walking along the winding

pathway around it or by climbing through its body or over its wings. This makes Avoras not only a lot of fun for guests of all ages — it also allows for instant fun without waiting in line or having to rush through.”

Thanks to a constant

▶ See PLAY, page 14



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Foreword by Gary Slade, *Amusement Today*

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▶ **PLAY**

Continued from page 12

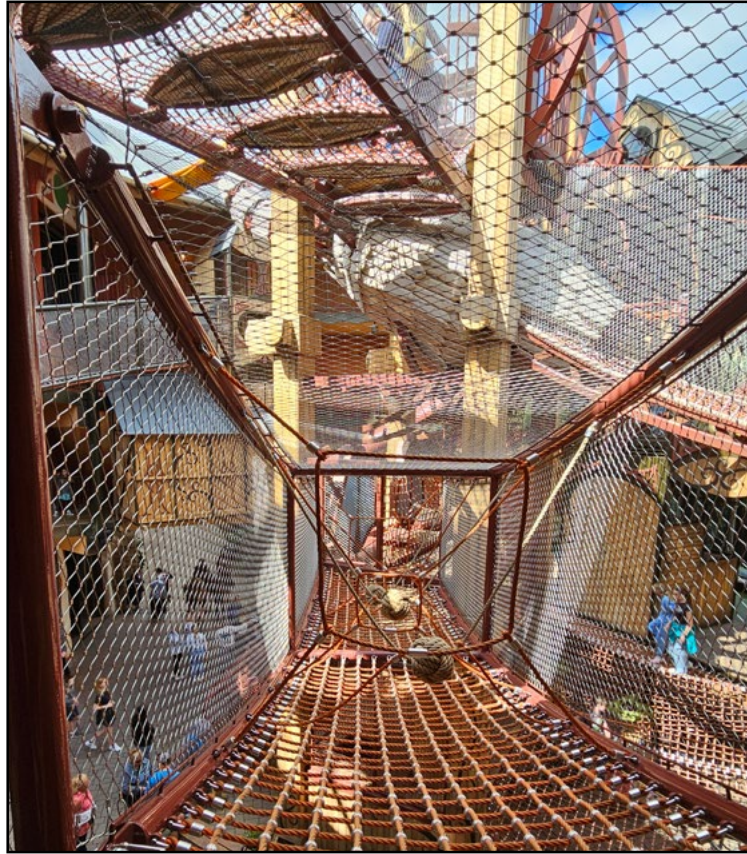
stream of new routes and various levels of difficulty, Avoras beckons spectators — from junior explorers to ace climbers and thoughtful birdwatchers.

The creativity of the attraction takes it beyond simple play elements. The bird motif, ready to soar into the sky, invites a sense of wonder as children — and adults — climb into the multi-story structure. Smiles are immediate, as are the photo ops.

Of note, while the attraction rises to various heights, the surrounding tower spirals its way up, avoiding a barrier of stairs, letting everyone get to the top.

While Avoras is new for 2024, the surrounding structure has been in place for some time. Previously, it had housed a **Zamperla** flat ride.

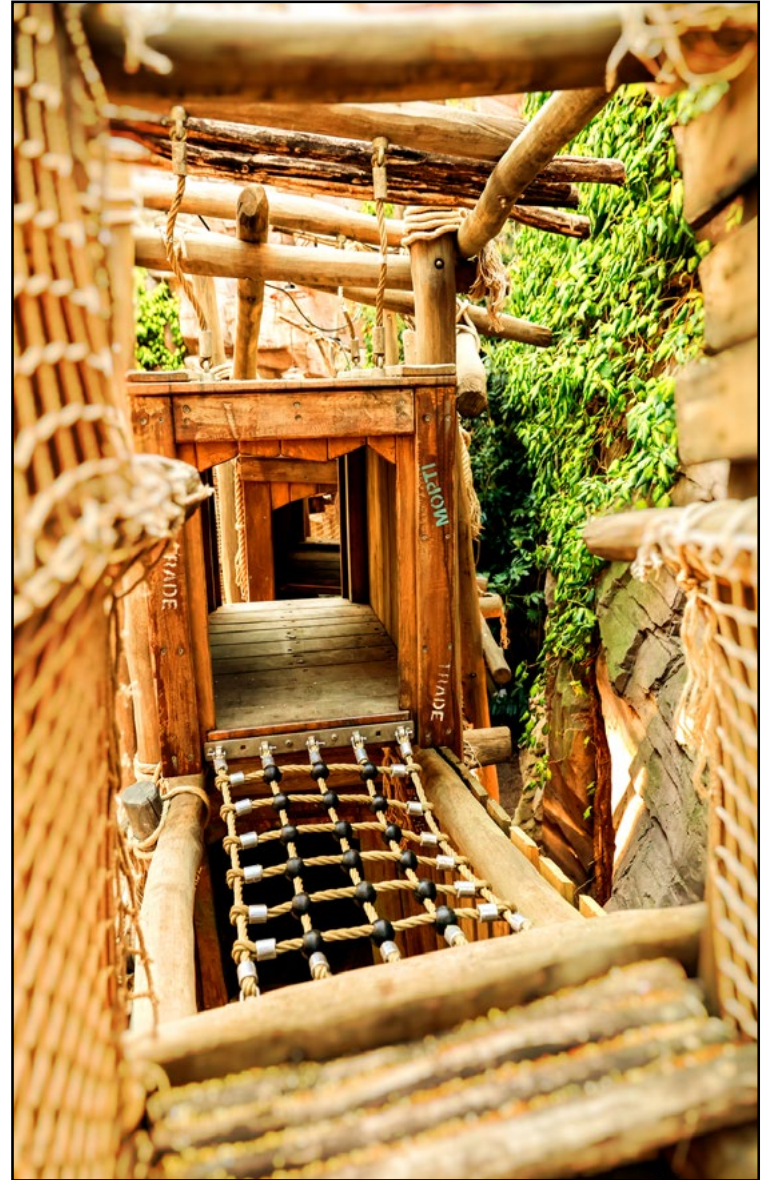
“The space where Avoras is now spreading its wings was formerly



the location of the attraction **Wolke's Luftpost** (Magic Bike), which has been relocated to a place nearby in the themed world **Fantasy**,” explained Herrmann. “This relo-

▶ See **PLAY**, page 16

Passages to climb through, bridges to cross and slides to zip down invite playful discovery (above). On the other side of the park in the **Deep in Africa** section, **Mopti's Monkey Depot** (right) has themed adventures for smaller kids. AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY PHANTASIALAND



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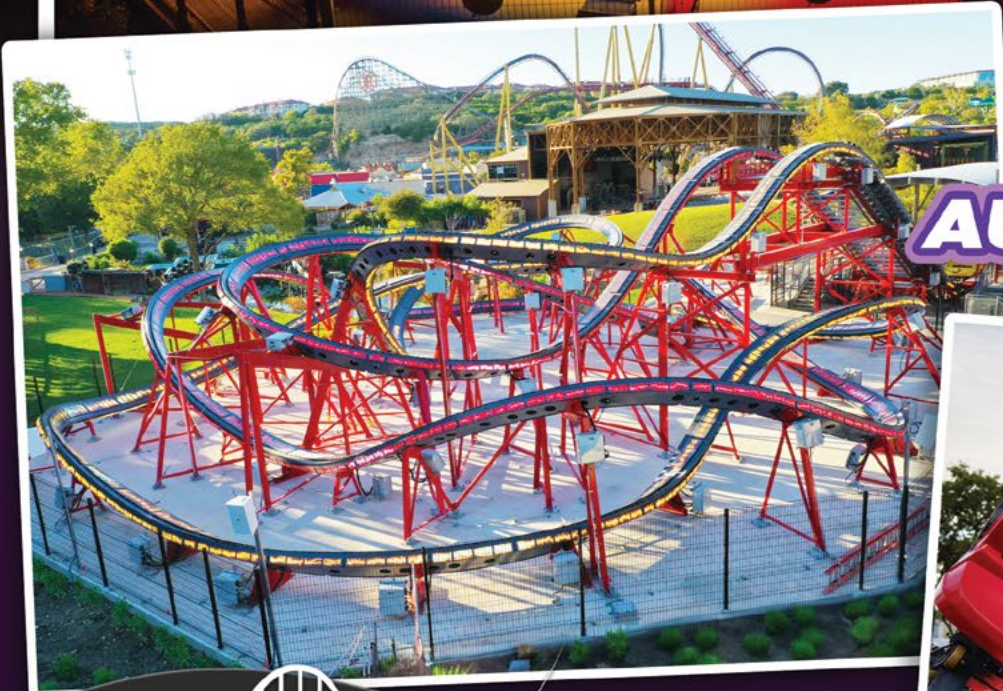
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►PLAY

Continued from page 14

cation opened up the chance to use the tower-like space next to Wuze Town to its full potential from the ground all the way up to the sky — without having to change its general structure. Just like we did with our Deep in Africa — Adventure Trail, which was built quite literally right into the middle of our inverted coaster, Black Mamba, in 2022. This is what defines PhantasiaLand and our aim: We always want to deepen the immersion, add new levels of adventure and fun — and surprise our guests with views and pathways they would not have expected.”

And speaking of the Deep in Africa section, the very youngest children have a new place

to climb and discover. Mopti’s Monkey Depot is a climbing playground that inspires adventurous imagination with its crates and ropes.

Heavily themed to the African area, the crates and netting blend into the environment, but the challenges are more welcoming for the smaller children away from the roaring Black Mamba coaster.

Adults can sit back in an adjacent themed relaxation area. Quite often, adults can be overlooked in children’s areas, so having a place to recline and rest is a thoughtfully designed perk, particularly as children are burning off energy.

Deep in Africa — Adventure Trail catered to bigger kids. With Mopti’s Monkey Depot, kids of differing ages now have places to play that fit their size and imagination.

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As **Six Flags** theme parks across the country that hold an annual Fright Fest began to open its fall doors last month, officials announced a new chaperone policy that was going into effect just prior to Fright Fest.

Under this policy, all guests aged 15 years old or younger must be accompanied by a chaperone who is at least 21 years old to be admitted to, or remain in, the park during Fright Fest.

Chaperones must be at least 21 years of age and present a valid government-issued photo identification with a date of birth at ticket entry. One chaperone may accompany no more than 10 guests aged 15 or younger per day. In addition, the chaperone must accompany their party during their visit, and be available by phone throughout their stay.

Guests 16 years of age or older may be asked to present a valid government-issued photo identification with a date of birth at entry to verify their age. If unable to verify proof of age, guests may be denied entry into the park.

Plans are on track for a new train ride to make its debut at **Bay Beach Amusement Park**, Green Bay, Wisconsin, next summer.

On Wednesday, the city’s parks committee is scheduled to take up an agreement between the city and the **Friends of Bay Beach**, the park’s fundraising organization, for new train tracks that will take park visitors along the water between the new all-inclusive playground and an area east of the Zippin Pippin roller coaster.

The \$1.25 million project will primarily be paid for by the Friends of Bay Beach.

As soon as **Arnolds Park Amusement Park**, Arnolds Park, Iowa, wrapped up its 2024 season, officials and staff there began the preparations for 2025.

Those preparations include refurbishing the entryway and restoring the Topsy House attraction.

Performing art phenomenon **Blue Man Group** announced Thursday that they will be making a return with a new home at Orlando’s **Icon Park**.

Blue Man Group performed at the **Sharp Aquos Theatre** at **Universal Or-**

lando’s Citywalk for 14 years before ending their run in 2021 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, the group will be making a comeback with a new 500-seat theatre in the heart of Orlando’s entertainment district, specifically designed to accommodate Blue Man Group’s multi-sensory performance, equipped with state-of-the-art acoustics, lighting and video capabilities to create an immersive experience for the audience.

Luna Luna: Forgotten Fantasy, the world’s first art-themed amusement park, is set to open for a limited time at **The Shed** in New York City on November 20, following a successful debut in Los Angeles.

A vibrant and whimsical experience, Luna Luna showcases carnival rides and attractions designed by some of the 20th century’s most renowned and innovative artists.

Highlights include a Ferris wheel by **Jean-Michel Basquiat**, a carousel by **Keith Haring**, a wave swinger by **Kenny Scharf** and a wedding chapel by **André Heller**.

Immersive pavilions by **David Hockney**, **Salvador Dalí** and **Roy Lichtenstein**, along with works by **Arik Brauer**, **Sonia Delaunay**, **Monika Gil’sing** and others, round out the collection.

The **Little Rock Zoo**, Little Rock, Arkansas, celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Over-the-Jumps Carousel last month. The carousel was manufactured by **Herschell-Spillman** engineering company.

The carousel is the last working one of its kind. Only four like it were built in 1924. It is special because the entire carousel moves together, unlike other carousels where the horses move individually.

The carousel was saved from destruction in 1942, and placed at the now-closed **War Memorial Park Amusement Park** in Little Rock. Expert restorer **Becky Witsell** meticulously led the restoration, revealing the original colors of the horses and chariots by removing more than 30 layers of paint.

Ground was broken on the expansion of the **Kansas Children’s Discovery Center** in Topeka, Kansas. The \$10 million project will expand the museum to roughly 30,000 square feet to accommodate new additions such as an indoor climbing structure, a 3,000-square-foot traveling exhibit gallery, an indoor-outdoor learning space, an inventive marketplace, three new learning lab classrooms and 10 new exhibits.

The **Sea Life Arizona Aquarium** at **Arizona Mills** mall in Tempe, Arizona, will open a new attraction called Animal Crossing: New Horizons National Aquarium Tour on October 4.

The attraction will run through November 17 and feature characters from the game, photo opportunities, **Nintendo** kiosks and meet-and-greet opportunities.

Kings Island announces Soak City expansion forthcoming in 2025

MASON, Ohio — In 2025, Kings Island’s Soak City Water Park will debut first-of-its-kind thrills and chills with the addition of RiverRacers, the first and only dual-racing water coaster in Ohio, and seven new kids’ water slides in the riverside-themed kids’ play area, Splash River Junction. Hundreds of new loungers and chairs also will surround the new area with seating options in both the sun and shade.

“Whether you’re a new waterslide rider or an experienced thrill seeker, Soak City offers the largest outdoor water park experience in Ohio,” said Mike Koontz, vice president and



On RiverRacers, racers board side-by-side rafts at the starting line and are launched down the first drop at up to 30 mph.
COURTESY KINGS ISLAND

general manager of Kings Island. “Our park guests have wanted the thrills of a water coaster for a long time, and you can never go

wrong adding new experiences for kids and families to cool off together, especially in Soak City.”

On RiverRacers, racers

board side-by-side rafts at the starting line where they are launched down the first drop at speeds up to 30 mph. Water jets drench and propel riders upward where they peel off into split turns that mirror each other, entering darkness, through an enclosed tunnel with special lighting effects. The race is on as racers zip through more twists and turns, rushing into an open-air, high-banking slingshot, whipping them around 180 degrees into a gravity-defying final mega drop to see who crosses the finish line first.

For the younger water adventurers, the wad-

ing pools of Splash River Junction give them even more to splash about with the addition of Salamander Sliders, featuring seven new water slides offering a variety of gentle slopes, dips and turns that are sure to bring a smile to anyone. Bluegill Lagoon is a reimagined ol’ fashioned swimmin’ hole, complete with a water tower that’s sprung a leak or two, making it the perfect way to cool off on a hot summer day. Families and friends can relax close by in the shade with more loungers, chairs and umbrellas.

The new capital is supplied by WhiteWater West. •visitkingsisland.com



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Halloween weekends and events promise wicked delights ...



Universal's Halloween Horror Nights is welcoming guests into the all-new haunt "Insidious: The Further" in 2024 (above left). Inspired by the successful *Insidious* film franchise, the terrifying journey through the darkness began August 30 at Universal Orlando Resort and September 5 at Universal Studios Hollywood. The event is also debuting the all-original haunted house, "Universal Monsters: Eternal Bloodlines" (above middle), headlined by an all-female assemblage of classic Universal Monsters — The Bride of Frankenstein, Dracula's Daughter, She-Wolf of London and the undead, mummified Egyptian princess Anck-Su-Namun. The return of the Universal Classic Monster's haunted house also reunites Grammy Award-winning musician Slash with Universal Studios in a collaboration that spans six seasons of Halloween Horror Nights. In addition, an ancient artifact unleashes an evil force that threatens to destroy the world in all-new haunted houses, inspired by Sony Pictures' latest film *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* (above right). The all-new "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire" haunted houses at Universal Studios Hollywood and Universal Orlando Resort bring the latest installment of the global Ghostbusters franchise to life as well as iconic ghosts, creatures and characters from the beloved classic series in authentic haunted houses that capture the horror and humor for which the films are known. COURTESY UNIVERSAL



Fun Spot America Theme Parks announced the debut of its all-new family-friendly event, Funoween. Starting September 30, guests will immediately be surrounded by the sights, sounds and tastes of Fun Spot's exclusive Funoween celebration. Décor featuring hundreds of pumpkins, gourds and more will be joined by the spooky sounds of eerie music throughout the frightfully fun park. Stationed around the park, guests can pose for boo-tiful selfies and peculiar pics at themed Foto Spots, each featuring a unique, monster-inspired motif. COURTESY FUN SPOT AMERICAN



Dutch Wonderland turns to Happy Hauntings for 15 days of interactive family-friendly thrills this fall. The event began on September 14, two weeks earlier than ever before. Families are invited to enjoy Halloween in 10 all-new ways as the park continues its multi-year expansion of the beloved Halloween event. For the first time ever, Daniel Tiger and all five of his neighborhood friends from Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood will be at the park for meet and greets throughout Happy Hauntings. The event will also feature a new hay maze as well as interactive theater. COURTESY DUTCH WONDERLAND



Movie Park Germany unveiled a new horror attraction for 2024 based on Paramount Pictures' record-breaking movie franchise *A Quiet Place*. The new IP attraction will focus on an intense experience. Guests will immerse themselves in well-known key scenes from the box office success — and find their way to freedom between vicious creatures, ominous settings and quiet passages. The new maze therefore fits in perfectly with this year's park motto "Stay Quiet, Stay Alive." COURTESY MOVIE PARK GERMANY

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... And spooktacular fun around every corner this fall season



Halloween Haunt at Kings Island is officially open. The annual event opened on September 21 and thousands came out to enjoy the park's six haunted mazes, six outdoor scare zones and the thrill of more than 20 of the park's most popular rides, including The Beast, Banshee, Diamondback and Mystic Timbers roller coasters. Halloween Haunt is open every Friday and Saturday night and select Sundays for seven weekends through Nov. 2. Guests can also be entertained by an array of five sinister shows, including Nyte Walkers (above) where the acrobatic and action sports world meet zombies. Nyte Walkers is the perfect theatrical combination of exciting stunts, a suspenseful storyline and creative staging, bringing the audience an action packed one-of-a-kind adventure. COURTESY KINGS ISLAND



During the month of October, Legoland New York transforms into a bewitching party filled with candy, seasonal shows, and Halloween themed Lego characters. The event runs all operating dates in October, with festivities included in general admission. The Monster Party begins the moment guests step into the park with a boo-tifully decorated entry arch. Inside, they can meet Lego monster characters like Spider Lady and Wacky Witch, and younger guests can make their way to the treat stations around the park. In addition, guests are encouraged to come in costume. COURTESY LEGOLAND NEW YORK



Area15, the playground for experiential entertainment located minutes from the Las Vegas Strip, will transform into "scArea15" this October. Guests can look forward to an array of Halloween happenings, including a Nevada Day celebration for families, a special Halloween-themed edition of Museum Fiasco, return of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* immersive viewing, a two-day scArea15 Massive with headlining performances by The Emo Night Tour, David J from Bauhaus, Baby Gravy (Yung Gravy & BBNO\$) and more. This October, the entire Area15 district will also be draped in otherworldly, eerie Halloween décor. As guests of all ages step inside, they'll be surrounded by endless photo opportunities, where immersive art and the supernatural collide. The spine-tingling realm will be complimentary to explore, making it a must-visit destination this Halloween season. COURTESY AREA15



Knott's Spooky Farm, the annual family-friendly Halloween celebration at Knott's Berry Farm promises that families can join in on the ghoulish fun as the park transforms with themed décor and wicked fun around every corner. Halloween-themed activities, including trick-or-treating, a lineup of original shows, costume contests and pumpkin decorating await. New this fall season, join Charlie Brown, Snoopy and their friends for Spooktivities, a mix of games, music and spooky storytelling. COURTESY KNOTT'S BERRY FARM

This Halloween season, Six Flags New England added new attractions to its annual Fright Fest event. The theme park, located in Agawam, Massachusetts, introduced a new show — "Love at First Fright" — when Fright Fest kicked off September 21. Camp Killamore is the event's latest haunted maze. In it, guests must survive a summer camp where campers have developed a thirst for terror. It joins four returning mazes: Nightmares, Terror Tales, Slasher Circus 3D and Midnight Mansion. COURTESY SIX FLAGS





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Canada's Wonderland, Premier Rides to unleash AlpenFury coaster

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

VAUGHAN, Ontario, Canada — The 2025 season at **Canada's Wonderland** is going to be a blast — literally. Unleashing next year will be **AlpenFury**, the park's 19th roller coaster. Anyone familiar with the park will know that guests upon entering are greeted by **Wonder Mountain**, the park's iconic focal point just beyond the entrance fountains. **AlpenFury** will blast right out of the mountain.

Amazingly, it will be the fourth roller coaster to interact with the mountain.

"Wonder Mountain has been our park's key landmark since we opened in 1981, so it's a 43-year-old piece of infrastructure that requires special consideration," said **Phil Liggett**, general manager. "And it's a busy space with three other roller coasters currently interacting with it, a Halloween Haunt maze and the pumps and chiller for the waterfall, plus other major utilities. Through the use of a 3-D digital scanner, we were able to capture the mountain's conditions and map out existing infrastructure so we can work around it and ensure the build goes as smoothly as possible."

AlpenFury will open with several bragging rights.

"For a launch coaster, **AlpenFury** will have the most inversions in the world," noted **Grace Peacock**, communications director. "While nine inversions were not specifically something we asked for, we



The fourth coaster to interact with Wonder Mountain (above), **AlpenFury** will blast through the top. **AlpenFury** will be the park's 19th coaster. COURTESY CANADA'S WONDERLAND

do look for attractions that stand out in the industry and give thrill seekers something they've never experienced before. The combination of being launched out of Wonder Mountain and then racing through one inversion after another — plus near miss elements — will be a lot of fun."

Some of the inversions have interesting names: **Banked Top Hat**, an angled section of track at the highest point of the ride; **Skyflyer Loop** pays homage to the park's former attraction and features an ascending helix that crests into a zero-G stall before diving into an inverting, descending roll (a unique turnaround near the park's front gate); **Ice Winder Roll** twists and then untwists riders in two inversions as they ascend and descend through an overbanked hill; and **Fire Serpent Roll**, a distant relation to the **Sea Serpent Roll**, twisting and



inverting riders through weightlessness and two unparalleled train-to-track near-miss interactions in a single element.

The manufacturer is **Premier Rides**.

"Ride development started in 2023 — and needed to — as the unique and challenging site required the highest level of collaboration between Canada's Wonderland and Premier Rides using the most advanced layout development technologies, including advanced drone 3D mapping," explained **Sara Seay**, vice president, Premier Rides. "From the first day of brainstorming, Canada's Wonderland wanted a statement, a record-breaking attraction that would deliver nonstop thrills and change the landscape of the park. Fourteen elements make up this ride, including inversions, zero-G experiences, vertical twists, magnetic launches, cross-overs/cross unders and significant airtime."



The nine inversions and superstructure will redefine the skyline at the front of the park.

COURTESY CANADA'S WONDERLAND

Showplace, our **Victoria Falls** — named for the waterfall in Africa — and attractions like our high divers, which were inspired by cliff divers in Acapulco, Mexico. While many of those origin stories have faded over time, we want to give **Alpenfest** official designation and will have **AlpenFury** be its centerpiece attraction. We'll continue to look for additional theming opportunities in the future."

The ride will begin with a launch through a tunnel in the mountain. After an LSM boost thrusts guests skyward to a height of 164 feet, the riders will soar through the nine dramatic inversions at speeds of 71 mph. The track length is 3,281 feet.

"We are extremely excited about the thrilling **Wonder Mountain** entry element," said Seay. "It would have been simple to have the train dispatch from the station and let gravity slowly take the train into **Wonder Mountain**, but Canada's Wonderland wanted the thrills to start right away. Working together we developed the awesome launch where you are shot through a twist-and-dive feature that drops you into the mountain. I am betting it will be a popular photo spot."

The ride will feature two trains that seat 18 riders.

"The vehicle design is literally cutting edge," Seay told *AT*. "Canada's Wonderland has amazing creative resources, and they went all out on the train details. In due time the park will reveal the design, and it will be well received."

With 19 roller coasters, Canada's Wonderland will have the second-largest collection of roller coasters on the planet.

"We pride ourselves on the diversity of rides we have to offer guests," said Liggett. "It'll be unlike any other due to the unique interaction guests get launching into and out of **Wonder Mountain** and the incredible nine inversions and near-miss elements. It's going to be a wild ride, and we believe guests are going to love it."

"We've worked with Premier Rides before, and they are an outstanding rides manufacturer, but beyond that, they were able to propose a coaster that met all our desired requirements," Liggett told *Amusement Today*. "This included the provision of a high-quality product, as well as a unique and thrilling experience that guests at our park — or anywhere else — haven't had before. We also needed a manufacturer who could work within our space requirements including **Wonder Mountain** and meet budget and construction timelines."

With the new coaster, the park will officially designate a specific area as **Alpenfest**.

"**Alpenfest** is a fun story that goes back to the park's early years," shared Peacock. "This area has always had Alps-inspired rides and infrastructure but was grouped into an area called **International Festival**, which stretched around **Wonder Mountain** and included the Greek-inspired **International**

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Chicago's Pinball Expo goes full tilt to celebrate its 40th year

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SCHAUMBURG, ILL. — Just as there is something about sports fans gathering that generates excitement or listening to your favorite dance tracks seems better at a lively nightclub, coming together with like-minded individuals can create an energy and buzz all its own. Forty years ago, Rob Berk probably couldn't envision the longevity of a pinball festival he founded. Now, four decades later, Pinball Expo '24 celebrates 40 years of pinball fans convening in the region. It boasts being the longest-running pinball show.

"Every year, the show grows a certain percentage, but this year since it's the 40th, there is something magical about the show," said Berk. "We have people coming from all over the U.S., as



This is the 40th year for Pinball Expo in the Chicago area. COURTESY JIM SCHELBERG

well as all over the world."

Berk was able to list numerous countries from which attendees will come, including Brazil, Italy, Spain, Poland, Canada, Mexico and Argentina.

"We've had record pre-registrations," Berk told

Amusement Today. "We expect well over 5,000 people."

The dates of Pinball Expo '24 are October 15 – 19, and the event takes place at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center. The Thursday, Friday and Saturday dates

are the largest with the event hall open. However, those arriving early can find special tours on Tuesday and Wednesday. Bus transportation takes pre-registered attendees to Chicago Gaming, Galloping Ghost Arcade, Logan Arcade and American Pinball. On Tuesday night, pinball-oriented movies will be shown.

The show floor has expanded to 100,000 square feet for this year's event.

Each morning, seminars take place before the event hall opens. Those who pre-registered in time can enjoy tours of Jersey Jack Pinball and Stern Pinball, both within 10 miles of the expo.

▶ See PINBALL, page 25

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Fans enjoy playing the latest games each year (above). Vendors allow fans to go home with tangible keepsakes (below). COURTESY JIM SCHELBERG





FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson
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Chuck E. Cheese announced new developments in its ongoing partnership with the **American Society for Deaf Children (ASDC)**. This collaboration aims to create more accessible and enjoyable experiences for all children, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In collaboration with ASDC, Chuck E. Cheese will launch a series of training videos for team members across all fun centers this fall. These videos will focus on teaching basic deaf culture, a variety of greetings in American Sign Language, plus best practices for serving and interacting with guests who are deaf or hard of hearing, ensuring a welcoming and accommodating environment for all.

"At Chuck E. Cheese, we believe in creating fun and memorable experiences for every child and family," said **Alejandra Brady**, senior director of communications and DEI, **CEC Entertainment**. "Our partnership with the American Society for Deaf Children reflects our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility. We're excited about these new initiatives and look forward to continuing our support for the deaf community and beyond."

• **Andretti Indoor Karting & Games**

is racing into Fort Worth this September to open its fifth Texas and ninth nationwide location. On September 25, just two months after opening its Grand Prairie location, the go-karting and gaming venue brought its adrenaline-pumping entertainment and family fun to Fort Worth.

"The decision to bring Andretti to Fort Worth was approved swiftly across the board. Filled with culture, history and community, Fort Worth embodies the values Andretti holds dear," said **Austen Schoensee**, general manager of the new location. "Following the incredible success we've seen within the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, we look forward to building our presence and bringing even more entertainment to DFW."

In addition to the racing simulators, Andretti Fort Worth features a dynamic assortment of attractions including multi-level track and high-speed electric superkarts, more than 100 state-of-the-art arcade games, a two-story laser tag arena, Hologate and Hypergate VR, Spark bowling and a 7D Xperience Motion Theatre.

• **Beat The Bomb**, the world's craziest team game, will open its doors on October 11 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The unit will be the company's fourth U.S. location, joining Brooklyn (N.Y.), Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

The 10,000-square-foot eatertainment venue is being built by **ARCO/Murray** in The Bailey Building, owned by **Thylan Associates**. This expansion follows a recent \$15 million Series B investment by **Otium Capital** and **Conversion Venture Capital**, which will support additional Beat The Bomb openings in Charlotte, Houston and Denver in the next six months.

"Beat The Bomb is about having an absolute blast with your team — win or lose!" said CEO and Founder **Alex Patterson**. "Step aside darts, ping-pong, shuffleboard, mini-golf and even escape rooms!"

At Beat The Bomb, teams of four to six players suit up in hazmat gear and take on one of three 60-minute "Bomb Mission" experiences — Paint, Foam, or Slime. Each mission offers a distinct set of team challenges and special effects endings. During the hour, teams must advance through five high-tech video game rooms that feature lasers, projection-wall mapping, RFID readers, touch screens and motion sensors.

• **Flight 509**, an aviation-themed multi-attraction family entertainment center, opened its doors earlier this year in the Spokane Valley section of Spokane, Washington. The 22,000-square-foot, ground-up development offers a set of attractions including a fully-themed two-level laser tag arena, centrally-mounted ropes course towering over the venue, multi-lane ninja warrior course as well as a foam ball-filled three-level Ballistics play unit, complete with dumping buckets, air cannons and geysers.

Flight 509 also offers four lanes of mini bowling, a four-pod Omni VR Arena, and an eight-unit bumper kart attraction.

Developers **Tim** and **Tammy Homer** selected industry consultant **Amusement Entertainment Management** to spearhead the project's development, including the formulation of the business case, investment strategy and coordination plan. The three-year undertaking included the construction of the facility, which has been designed to support family, adult, and corporate users with generous private event, conference and lounge areas.



Pinball Expo is the longest-running pinball event.
COURTESY JIM SCHELBERG

► PINBALL

Continued from page 24

"On those days, we have seminars and autograph sessions, so the bulk of the activities happen Thursday, Friday and Saturday," said Berk. "For anyone who has an interest in pinball, the tours are great opportunities to see the production line of how they make pinball machines from beginning to end. A lot of [suppliers] are bringing new games for the first time, which also brings a high level of excitement."

The expo has its own mascot, and for the 40th year, a commemorative comic book has been created to present "The Adventures of Flippy." Pinball fans were encouraged to submit content to the issue.

For the first time, the expo is partnering with the Video Game Summit.

Berk, 70, said, "I am a pinball enthusiast, and my son is a video game enthusiast. He collects some older systems. I met the organizer of the Video Game Summit, and I proposed we combine the shows together. He thought it was a good idea, so that's what's happening

this year."

The Pre-War Pinball Speakeasy is an experience organizers are very proud of. Attendees can get a firsthand look at the oldest pre-war machines and note their mechanical ingenuity.

Berk feels this specific event stands alone in comparison to others around the country with the autograph sessions allowing people to meet industry figures, the factory tours and tournaments.

"I love seeing the old faces and meeting new people," Berk told AT on what excited him year after year. "Plus bringing out new games. When you come to Pinball Expo, there is a level of energy when you enter the event hall — it's all positive energy. It's almost like a class reunion.

No matter what your interest is in pinball, there is something for everyone."

Single-day tickets are \$50, with a three-day pass running \$140. Larger packages include activities for the Tuesday and Wednesday events.

Thursday and Friday night's gameplay goes to midnight, with Saturday's schedule going until 2 a.m.



Autograph sessions are always popular with attendees.
COURTESY JIM SCHELBERG

B&B Theaters Red Oak innovate theater experience, blend with FEC

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

RED OAK, Texas — In order to compete with the convenience of streaming movies at home, theaters are upping their game with more luxurious offerings and additional amenities. It is common to see theaters with arcades and other such diversions, but **B&B Theatres**, the fifth largest movie chain in the U.S., has wowed its market in this southern Dallas suburb.

“Texas is a great market,” said **Dennis McIntire**, vice president, strategic development and innovation, B&B Theaters. “Working out of Kansas City, Dallas and Houston are so much bigger markets. They are so much more dynamic from a customer base. We’ve always been drawn to the suburban markets. As for Dallas itself, we haven’t found the right opportunity. We tend to be conservative in our growth approach. We’re growing a lot, but we don’t want to grow just to grow. Each market has to stand on its own.”

“The Red Oak location is like the mothership,” said **Kiki Johnson**, marketing coordinator manager, Red Oak. “We are the only location that offers everything. We have the movie theater side, but also bowling, the arcade and rock climbing, along with the outside activities.”

To say the facility is different than a typical theater would be an understatement.

From a movie-going experience, B&B Red Oak offers much more than just 12 screens on which to view a film. The theaters include the Grand Screen, the largest screen on the property, as well as ScreenX, which utilizes multiple projectors to create a 270-degree experience with images appearing on the side walls in addition to the large screen. Each of these theaters seats 240. To the delight of parents, the colorful Screen Play theater caters to parents with small children (showing kid-friendly films). Along one wall is a play structure, and at the front of the theater are play objects so that families can arrive 30 minutes



Each theater has its own feel and unique qualities. The Screen Play theater (above left) has play equipment at the side and front for families of young children to be entertained prior to the movie. Upon entering the facility The B&B Theatres Red Oak has a grandeur and elegance (above right). COURTESY B&B THEATERS; AT/TIM BALDWIN



prior to the show, and kids can burn off some energy. The Max Relax theater is fitted with heated chaise lounges, allowing patrons to stretch out beyond standard reclining options. The Lyric theater offers a more luxurious experience with the posh look of the theater, heated leather recliners and tray tables. If rented for private viewing, the Lyric is built with its own bathroom and bar in the theater. The 4DX theater immerses moviegoers with synchronized motion to the seats and environmental effects such as fog, fans and “snow.”

“Some people have called the 4DX theater like a mini amusement park,” said **Morgan Ingram**, marketing and communications specialist.

While the theater options are mind-bogglingly impressive, the Red Oak property also provides the community with a gathering space for the neighborhoods by offering more than just the theaters. B-Roll Bowling offers 16 lanes of state-of-the-art **Brunswick** bowling, featuring multiple colors, four gigantic video screens above the lanes and “cool” amenities. Outtakes Arcade features the latest redemption games, as well as lighted rock-climbing walls with varying difficulty.

The outdoor areas offer a lot as well. Four pickleball courts and two bocce ball courts are new to the B&B chain. A firepit creates a relaxation space to enjoy drinks with friends. There are even four



Sixteen lanes by Brunswick bring colorful bowling opportunities for families (above left). The Circa 1924 bar (above right) can be rented for groups up to 50, which has indoor and outdoor balcony spaces. AT/TIM BALDWIN



cabanas for rent for people to enjoy their reserved “space” as spectators or when live bands perform on the green space on Fridays and Saturdays.

The Red Oak location is the first to fuse all these elements into one property, perfectly blending theaters with FEC concepts and gathering spaces.

“That was all drawn up pre-COVID,” McIntire told *Amusement Today*. “We spent a lot of time on the right mix of attractions and amenities, and our design team did a great job of making it feel comfortable and exciting. The first time I walked into the building, I went, ‘Oh my, we’ve done good.’”

In the mood for a party? Three birthday rooms accommodate groups from 17 to 30 people. Upstairs is Circa 1924, a luxurious space with both indoor and balcony spaces, big screen TVs, a fireplace and a large bar.

The facility has a dining area and a full bar called Sterling’s.

“I’m a big fan of the food,” said Johnson. “I love the appetizers because I’m one of those people who like a little bit of everything. And the pizza is amazing. And we have people who come in just to eat or just sit at the bar without seeing a movie. And we have an outside bar too.”

Sterling’s has created its own craft cocktails with movie-themed names.

“We also host mixology classes once a month,” added Johnson. “Guests learn to make three special drinks. They enjoy their time as a date night or a girls’ night.”

When asked what has taken her by surprise since the theater opened in late March, Johnson replied, “The amount of business from the entertainment side. We have booked so many events here, even a wedding reception.”

“I’m surprised by how many people want to rent out theaters, even for a group of 20 people,” added Ingram. “People also want to tour our different theaters just to see

how each one is different.”

B&B Theatres are based in Missouri. The Show-Me State and Kansas have the largest complement of theaters. Texas is now third for the chain with five locations. The Red Oak facility could easily serve as a premier model for future locations — it’s that impressive.

“This is the future,” McIntire said. “We have four of these locations. Red Oak is obviously the biggest. We are a firm believer in the family entertainment model. In our world, it is referred to as the cinema entertainment model. We are a hundred-year-old theater chain, so we know there are going to be some places where that model is too big. Some markets aren’t going to be big enough for this type of setup. We’ve been working on these for a long time, and it turned out great. It has been a new building for all of us. Our ops team has done a phenomenal job running it. We’re having fun.”



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150th Ventura County Fair again runs an independent midway

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

VENTURA, Calif. — This year marked the 150th anniversary of the 12-day **Ventura County Fair** that ran in early August. The theme was “Fair-ever Young.” Final attendance came in at 254,393, which was down from 2023. The fair ran from noon to midnight each day, July 31 to August 11. Exhibit buildings were open from 12 p.m. to 10 p.m. daily, while barn hours were from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. Full gate admission (without a special promotion) was \$15 for adults and \$10 for children and seniors. Parking was \$20.

This fair is one of less than a dozen around the U.S. that operate an independent ride midway. Eight different carnivals brought in rides, including **Ranier Amusements, Kastl Amusements, Ray Cammack Shows (RCS), Bishop Amusements, Classic Rides, Helm & Sons** and **Southern California Rides**. There was a total of 44 rides onsite with 32 on the main midway and 12 in the kiddie area.

One new ride was at the fair this year; Crazy Spinning Coaster (**Zamperla**) was brought in by RCS. The most popular rides included the Grand Wheel (**Kroon**), Sleigh Ride and Wave Swinger (**Zierer**).

Ride midway revenue, and gross carnival sales were \$4,228,840 with a net profit to the fair of \$2,025,188.

“We had a good experi-

VENTURA COUNTY FAIR

ence with the carnival providers. That’s the beauty of an independent carnival; the operators all compete to have the best rides, good customer service and overall, they want to be the best they can for the fair,” said **Megan Hook**, media spokesperson with the **Tolland Group**.

There was a renewed effort this year to sell admission tickets online and in automated kiosks located on the fairgrounds. This method decreased lines and was “transformational,” board member **Leslie Cornejo** told the *Ventura County Star*.

The **National Football League** filmed part of a commercial during this year’s fair in the ride midway. The spot has not yet aired but could include a football being passed at the picturesque beachside setting.

“We use a variety of channels to advertise our fair, including the carnival,” Hook said in reference to media promotion. “We use a mix of video, drone footage, photography, and user (fairgoer)-generated content. We also utilize influencers. The majority of our carnival marketing is done through social media (paid and organic) and email marketing. For our carnival-only advertising, we spent less than



Nighttime is when all the rides are ablaze in color (above). Final attendance was reported at 254,393, which was down from 2023. The 150th Ventura County Fair operated from noon to midnight all 12 days. COURTESY VENTURA COUNTY FAIR, STEFAN HINZ

\$2,500 and pre-sold more than \$900,000 in carnival credits.”

Special promotions included \$3 before 3 p.m. on opening day, July 31. Other selected special days included youth day, family day, \$5 before 5 p.m., seniors and people with disabilities day, credit union member day, military appreciation day, first responders day and food share day.

Food offerings included a big variety of options — from classic carnival/fair food like deep-fried Twinkies to vegan. A few favorites were Tostilocos, beignets, elote and wood-fired pizza.

When asked what sets this fair apart from others, Hook said, “Its ability to combine the best equipment and operators that are available using the independent midway format, along with great weather, a beautiful beachside facility and the many dedicated volunteers. The fair is



just outside the greater Los Angeles area (65 miles), and, as such, we are able to tailor the fair to what the community has indicated it enjoys the most. The only drawback is the facility has extremely limited parking available, a challenge the fair works to overcome through a number of shuttle and off-site parking options.”

The fair’s grandstand concert series included I Love the 90’s (**Vanilla Ice, Tone Loc, Sugarhill Gang**

and **C+C Music Factory**), **Brantley Gilbert, Sublime, Dustin Lynch, Gabriel “Fluffy” Iglesias, Ludacris** and **Gary Allan**. This was the first year the fair offered a paid VIP concert ticket option. Fairgoers could still go free with paid fair admission as they have in the past, however, they had an elevated VIP option as well.

On the **805 Stage** were tribute bands scheduled throughout the fair duration, including **Queen, Tina Turner, Foreigner, Fleetwood Mac, Led Zeppelin, Elvis, Selena** and **Bruno Mars**.

The **PRCA Flying U Rodeo** had five sold-out shows on the final weekend. There were also nightly drone shows starting at 9 p.m.

“Like many other fairs, we have to hire/contract many companies and employees to put on a fair



The Grand Wheel was one of the most popular rides. Manufactured by Kroon, it was brought in by Ray Cammack Shows. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ

► VENTURA**Continued from page 28**

and making sure they are all doing what they need to be doing can be a little tricky," Hook said regarding employment challenges. "Communication and organization are key components in making sure each department runs smoothly."

"The fair experimented with a great number of changes this year, including special VIP sections of grandstand events, electronic ticketing for both admissions and the independent carnival midway, a new parking system and new layout changes. Staff will be evaluating and refining those throughout the year," said Hook. "Ventura is in a constant state of keeping changes that work, re-evaluating and discarding those that didn't, and keeps an open mind as to new ideas from the community, staff, board and all stakeholders."

The first Ventura County Fair took place in 1874 at the end of the local San Miguel Days harvest festival with attractions that included cock-fighting, bullfighting and horse racing, as well as nightly balls. The 66-acre Seaside Park property that includes the Ventura County Fairgrounds was donated to the county and the fair began to be held there in 1914.

The mission of the 31st District Agricultural Association, otherwise known as the **Ventura County Fairgrounds**, is to promote, support, educate, celebrate and preserve the diverse culture and traditions of their county and ensure that the Ventura County Fairgrounds is an exemplary multi-use community resource. The **California Department of Food and Agriculture** oversees county fairs in the Golden State.

The 2025 fair takes place July 30 – August 10.

• venturacountyfair.com

The fair has an independent midway. Eight different carnivals brought in 44 rides on two midways. Participating carnivals included Ranier Amusements, Kastl Amusements, Ray Cammack Shows, Bishop Amusements, Classic Rides, Helm & Sons and Southern California Rides. COURTESY VENTURA COUNTY FAIR



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Even hampered by weather, Warren County Fair still a success

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

PITTSFIELD, Pa. - The 93rd edition of the Warren County Fair ended on a high note after some stormy weather hampered the August 5 through 10, 2024, event on two days.

"We had 15,000 through the gates the last day," an enthused fair President Dale Bliss told *Amusement Today*.

"We had rain Friday, which cleared off in time for the 40th Anniversary of Motorsports at the arena," Bliss said. "It was an excellent night of modified truck and tractor pulls."

"Rain early Tuesday diminished our running hours, but the weekend came back strong," noted Christina Benner of midway provider Penn Valley Shows, Middleburg, Pa.

While final attendance figures were not available, Bliss said indications are the fair was "on par" with past years.

The two largest draws in the KeyBank Pavilion were country music artist Kenny Kershaw and country music tribute group The Highwaymen Live. Also on the pavilion schedule were the Warren County Queen Contest, woodmen's



The Warren County Fair midway was again provided by Penn Valley Shows. The company's Paratrooper (below left) is among the major thrill rides it provides at fairs and festivals. The provider also presented its Expo Wheel (below middle). The Beast (below right) was a new attraction for the midway. COURTESY WARREN COUNTY FAIR



contest and regional band 7 Mile Run.

Fair admission tickets included pavilion shows, midway rides and some arena events. Pre-sale tickets were \$7 and \$10 at the gate.

A \$10 additional admission was charged for The Monday Night Chute-Out Rodeo in the arena, with Battle on Pittsfield Clay Modified Truck and Tractor Pull tickets \$10 and \$15. Stockcar foot-

ball was among the popular arena events included with general fair admission.

"Penn Valley had a nice assortment of rides," Bliss said of the carnival, which has provided the midway for

three years. "They did an outstanding job for us and brought in their new million-dollar ride, The Beast."

"We purchased the ride in November of '22 from Technical Park and it was delivered this past March," Benner said of the spectacular 360-degree pendulum ride. "It was the first new ride Penn Valley Shows has purchased. We also added a factory-refurbished Expo Wheel this year, which was also at the Warren County Fair."

Other featured rides included Paratrooper and Round Up (Hrubetz), Loop-O-Plane (Eyerly), Hurricane (Dartron), Sea Ray (Mulligan), Fun Slide (Frederiksen), Monkey Mayhem (Larson), Carousel (Chance) and Farm Tractors (Dalton).

"It was another wonderful year of family and friends, new experiences and memories," Bliss noted. "A good time was had by all at the best fair around."

The 2025 edition of the fair is slated for Aug. 4-9.

•warrencountyfair.net

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A KMG Freak Out was among the popular midway rides. PGAM's Larson Loop, themed as Inferno, was also on the midway. COURTESY POWERS & THOMAS MIDWAY ENTERTAINMENT

Power & Thomas enjoy first season at the Big Butler Fair

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

PROSPECT, Pa. — Powers & Thomas Midway Entertainment was the new midway vendor at the 168th edition of the **Big Butler Fair**, held June 28 through July 6, 2024.

Of the 28 rides featured at the exposition, spectaculars included Swing Buggy (**Bertazzon**), Freak Out (**KMG**), High Flyer (**ARM**), Genesis (**Wisdom**) Speed (**Fabbri**) and Pharaoh's Fury (**Chance**).

Powers Great American Midways (PGAM), which held the midway contract for years, supported the lineup with its **Tivoli Orbiter** themed as Tesla, Wave Swinger (**Zierer**), Alien Abduction (Wisdom), Itsy Bitsy gondola wheel (**AMC**), and **Larson International Fireball** presented as Inferno.

Other Powers & Thomas attractions included Dizzy Dragons (Larson), Fire Chief (**Zamperla**), Jumbo Elephants and Dragon Coaster (**Kolmax**), Fun Slide (**Frederiksen**) and Grand Carousel (Chance). The show also featured its new double-deck funhouse New York New York (**Gosetto**).

Ride wristbands were \$35 each with individual ride tickets also available. Admission to the fair, which included all grandstand entertainment, was \$9 pre-sale, with a gate fee of \$8 before 4 p.m. and \$10 after 4 p.m. Kids under 6 were admitted free.

Country music artist **Sammy Kershaw** was the headline grandstand act on the closing night of the fair. Motorcycle riders were admitted to the grounds for \$5, a fair tradition on its final day. Other grandstand draws included tractor and truck pulls, demolition derbies, **Bull Ride Mania Rodeo**, and **Derbydog** figure-eight racing. Fireworks were featured on the evening of July 4.

Daily grounds entertainment included the **Aim High Canines**, **Brad Matchet Comedy Hypnotist**, **Bar C Ranch Exotic Petting Zoo**, **Rannels Rustics Chainsaw Woodcarvings**, **Syria Shrine Clowns** and **Agricadabra Magic Show**.



Powers & Thomas featured New York New York, a new attraction from Gosetto. COURTESY POWERS & THOMAS MIDWAY ENTERTAINMENT



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

As part of the October 3-13 **Octoberfest Pittsburgh**, the Roberto Clemente (Sixth Street) Bridge will be home to a 60-foot, **Nittany Rides**, 16-seat Ferris wheel. The all-electric 1968 model was purchased by **Rick Janesky**, principal with Ferriswheelrent.com, from **Fiesta Shows**, Seabrook, New Hampshire. He then spent two years and thousands of hours restoring the piece to pristine condition.

"It's a very precise, engineered wheel. It is drama-free and quiet," said Janesky. This is his first time operating a wheel on a bridge, as well as the first time for any event held in the Steel City. "The county did an extensive engineering evaluation," said Janesky. His company also owns a 1969 **Garbrick Amusements & Manufacturing** hydraulic 16-seat wheel. Both Nittany and Garbrick, related to each other, were located across the same street in Centre Hall, Pennsylvania.

The Blacksburg, South Carolina, operator will run the six-story wheel for 10 days from noon to 10:00 p.m. with his wife and daughter and possibly a local person for additional help due to the long daily schedule. The cost is \$5 per ride to enjoy spectacular views of the city and sister bridges high above the Allegheny River with superb views of Point State Park.

The wheel, located in the center of the 884-foot suspension bridge span, is part of Karneval, a family-friendly event that will also have mobile axe throwing provided by **Ace's Axe Throwing** and other games, including kid and adult high strikers, duck pond, ring bottle toss and Hammerschlagen (or Nagelbalken), a nail game where contestants drive spikes in a tree stump.

Oktoberfest Pittsburgh is a project of the **Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership** and **Flyspace Productions** in partnership with **Riverlife**.

There are very few states in the U.S. that have a triple-digit count of counties. At the 120th **Kentucky State Fair**, Louisville organizers were determined to get representation from as many of their 120 counties as possible for their annual "Pride of the Counties" exhibit. When all was said and done, 106 counties participated; however, all 120 of Kentucky's counties were represented through fair entries, participation in the livestock showing and online ticket sales.

"It gives you a reason to go out, get in your car and drive around our state and see what makes every county special," said **Ian Cox**, Kentucky State Fair spokesperson to *Spectrum 1 News*.

For example, Harrison County representatives set up fall decor and a large skeleton. "To be able to represent Harrison County is a great honor at the state fair," said **Audrey Middletown** of Cynthiana Tourism. "We're getting to meet people from all over, and it is awesome to let people know who we are, where we're at and how close it is."

The 520-acre fairgrounds drew over 600,000 attendees. **Kissel Entertainment** was the carnival provider.

For those who are wondering, Virginia has 133 counties, Georgia 159 and Texas a whopping 254 counties.

The **Canfield** (Ohio) **Fair** board recently hired **Skye Tancer** as the new fair manager, due to the retirement of 29-year fair manager, **Bev Fisher**, who was the first in that capacity. Tancer served in various roles with the **United States Airforce**, achieving the rank of senior master sergeant before her military retirement. She also had the distinction as the first female flight engineer at the Youngstown Air Reserve Station in Vienna Township. Recently Tancer was a development officer in major gifts for the **Youngstown State University Foundation**. **Dave Mannion**, Canfield Fair board president, told **Mahoning Matters**, "Skye is the perfect successor to Bev, and I am excited to see how she will utilize her skills, connections and experience to continue to move the fair and fairgrounds forward for the betterment of the Mahoning Valley."

The Canfield Fair is the largest county fair in Ohio and returns from August 27 through September 1, 2025, with **Reithoffer Shows** providing the midway fun.

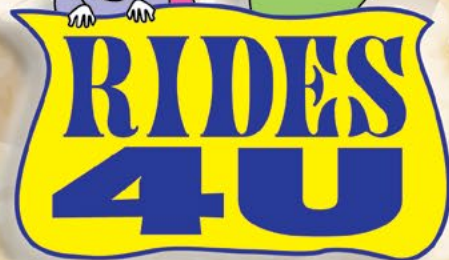
There has been a surge in attendance and/or revenue at many of the fairs already held across the USA this year. Some cite better weather, improving economy, cost-friendly pricing, top notch entertainment, strong agricultural competition, and special promotional days. Most fairs experienced a combination of these factors and other reasons.

Fairs that proclaimed a significant boost this year include **Wilson County Fair — Tennessee State Fair**, Lebanon; **Indiana State Fair**, Indianapolis; **Iowa State Fair**, Des Moines; **Los Angeles County Fair**, Pomona; **York State Fair**, Pennsylvania; **Pima County Fair**, Tucson, Arizona; **California State Fair**, Sacramento; **Maryland State Fair**, Timonium; **Illinois State Fair**, Springfield, **Kentucky State Fair**, Louisville and **Wisconsin State Fair**, West Allis to name just a few.

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Erie County Fair's 2024 edition sees attendance slip due to weather

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

HAMBURG, N.Y. — The 184th edition of the Erie County Fair (Aug. 7-18) saw attendance slip somewhat due to rainy weather during its 12-day run.

"We were down a little bit, but still hovering around the one million mark," Jessica Underberg, CEO/fair manager, told *Amusement Today*.

"We were threatened with rain on six of the days during the fair," she added. "Sometimes it was raining 20 minutes from the fairgrounds, but not here. Of course, that kept people away. The first few days we were getting the remnants of tropical storm Debby, and the final day of the fair was also rainy."

Despite the weather affecting attendance, Underberg noted, "Right now, we're the largest country fair in North America."

The 275-acre exposition has a long-standing reputation for a stellar entertainment lineup at the Buffalo News Grandstand, and this year also marked a milestone with midway provid-



The Nerveless Nocks Jetpack Circus performed during the 184th Erie County Fair in Hamburg, N.Y. COURTESY TOM WOLF IMAGING



A commemorative version of the Strates Shows train pulled into Hamburg, N.Y., to mark the 100th consecutive year the family-owned carnival played the Erie County Fair (above). A huge crowd was on hand for the special occasion as the scaled-down carnival train rolled in. Riding on the deck of the engine were (from the left): unidentified rail worker, Nick Strates, Jimmy Strates, Fair Manager Jessica Underberg, John Strates and wife Jennifer. States Shows was on the midway (below) at the Erie County Fair for its 100th consecutive year. COURTESY TOM WOLF IMAGING

er Strates Shows.

A century for Strates

The Florida-based carnival celebrated its 100th consecutive year at the Erie County Fair and fielded 75 rides and dozens of other attractions on the midway.

A highlight of Strates' centennial run at the fair was the resurrection of the James E. Strates Shows train pulling into Hamburg prior to the fair's opening. Though less than a dozen rail cars were used in the celebration, it didn't diminish the significance.

"That was a big deal," Underberg explained. "We knew this was important to the community and us."

**[See the story in the August issue of AT regarding the preparation of the train for this occasion.]*

Strates Shows was the last of the railroad carnivals in the nation when it mothballed its 50-plus collection of flatcars and



coaches at the close of the 2019 season.

Years prior, huge crowds would gather at the railyard just minutes from the Hamburg fairgrounds on "Train Day" to see the massive show pull into town.

Underberg was joined by members of the Strates family on the front deck of the engine as the train made its final voyage to the fair, with a light load of carnival equipment tied down on a few cars.

A large crowd cheered as the train rolled in, cameras and phones in hand to snap

photos of the special occasion.

"When you know you are doing something historically for the last time, it leaves an impact," the fair official said of the experience. "It gave us all goosebumps!"

At the fair

The carnival offered pay-one-price rides on weekdays (\$35 pre-sale) with ticketed (\$50 pre-sale for 120 credits) attractions on weekends. Pricing was \$2 more after Aug. 1.

The final Thursday featured two all-day ride wristbands for \$50.

Featured rides included Giant Wheel (Interfair), Fireball (Larson), Wave Swinger (Zierer), Thunder Bolt and Zipper (Chance), Himalaya (Bertazzon) and Sky Flyer (Zamperla).

"The Happy Together Tour does really well in our market and always has," Underberg said of the top grandstand draws. "The throwback country music night with Travis Tritt, Aaron Tippin and Pam Tillis and the comedian show (Gabriel "Fluffy" Iglesias) were big hits."

This year's Happy Together Tour lineup included The Turtles, Jay and The Americans, The Association, Badfinger, The Vogues and The Cowsills.

Tickets for headliners ranged from \$39 to \$73 with some other shows free with fair admission (\$17 pre-sale, \$22.60 at the gate; kids 12 and under free; fair parking was free).

Free fair admission was offered on opening day with a donation of four or more canned food items per person to benefit FeedMore WNY.

"It was a huge home run," Underberg said. "We collected 153,124 pounds — that's 76 tons! It was a record food drive and pretty close to a record day for attendance. There were 224 pallets loaded with food when we finished."

In summing up the 2024 edition of the fair, she was eager to say: "It was safe and fun and overall went very well. We had a little bit of weather here and there but were more fortunate than some others."

The 2025 Erie County Fair is slated Aug. 6-17.

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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► First Polin Stingray debuts in France — page 39 / Jungle Island unveils Jungle Splash — page 40

American water parks holding their own for the 2024 season

AT: Pam Sherborne

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UNITED STATES — Officials at many of the country's water parks wrapped up their 2024 season, ending on good notes and floats.

Some parks splurged on new attractions, while others took a step back and focused on customer relations.

Here is a sampling of what some of the parks did this year.

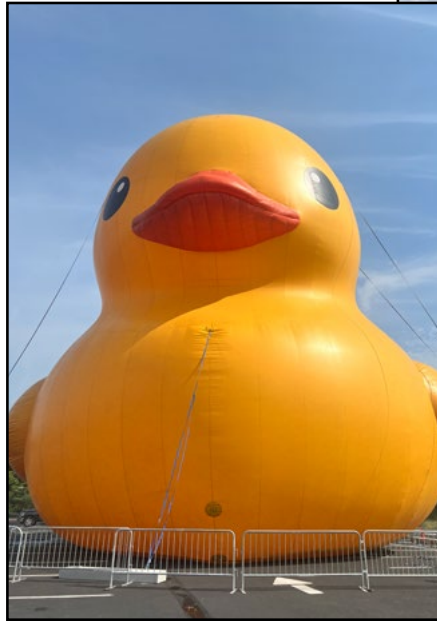
Splish Splash Water Park, Calverton, New York

Splish Splash Water Park had a great season and added newness and fun throughout the summer for guests of all ages, said **Danielle Trombetta**, director of marketing.

"We continue to see a strong return in season pass guests year over year," she said. "Splish Splash enjoyed bringing new and enhanced events all season long."

The park kicked off the season with the popular Nature Nick Animal Show opening weekend and during the park's enhanced Kids Fest weekends in June. The educational show included owls, hawks, snakes, a fox and more.

"We also brought back our annual Teacher Appreciation Week and Autism Awareness Day, where the park donated 700 tickets to the local chapter of **Autism Society**, in June," Trombetta said.



Splish Splash Waterpark (above right), Calverton, New York, had a very strong 2024, as it continues to see a solid return in season pass holders. The 2024 season was full of new and enhanced events. One of the highlights was the appearance of the World's Largest Rubber Duck. In honor of International Lifeguard Appreciation Day, the park hosted the beloved Mama Duck and baby duck, Timmy. Mama Duck (above left) stood more than 61 feet tall. COURTESY SPLISH SPLASH WATER PARK

The month of July was jam-packed with events from the enhanced concert series called Bands and Brews. On the weekends in July, local bands and breweries would come together to provide entertainment.

Also in July, the park introduced an all-new event for families called Winter Wonderland. The week-long event featured limited-time food offerings, holiday music, meet and greets with holiday characters and giveaways. Guests enjoyed live performers and snow upon entering the park.

One of the highlights of our 2024 season was the appearance of the World's Largest Rubber Duck. In honor of International Lifeguard Appreciation Day, the

park kicked off a full weekend and hosted the beloved Mama Duck and baby duck, Timmy. Mama Duck stood more than 61 feet tall and made her way across the country to several cities, including Greensboro, North Carolina, at Splish Splash Water Park's sister park **Wet 'n Wild Emerald Pointe**, at sister park **Raging Waters** in Los Angeles, California.

Splish Splash ended August by honoring local heroes during Hero Appreciation Week.

Trombetta said Splish Splash is always looking to provide an improved guest experience, and in 2024 it implemented a new Season Passholder Perks program. Passholders throughout the season had special give-

aways and bonus discounts.

"We saw several challenges this season as well," Trombetta said. "The weather continues to be a huge factor for us as Long Island saw several rainy weekends during the summer months. While this forced us to close the park for some operating days, we saw our guests return and ready to splash when the sun came back out."

The park introduced several new food and retail stands for the 2024 season.

Ben's Soft Pretzels offered guests delicious, hot and fresh pretzels in original and cinnamon sugar. Another new food stand named **Locos Tacos** opened this season.

When guests wanted

to take a break from sliding down some of the park's most popular rides, they had the opportunity to visit the newly expanded retail store next to the wave pool called the **Big Kahuna Bazaar**.

New lounge genies were added to some of the park's cabanas. These provided a secure spot for guests to place their belongings in a safe with a phone charger and a spot to keep their beverages cold.

Trombetta said no concrete plans for 2025 have been made; however, the park is always looking for ways to improve the guest experience and create new attractions and events ev-

► See SEASON, page 36

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DELLS NOAH'S ARK



MESA SUNSPASH

SEASON

Continued from page 35

ery season.

Nashville Shores, Nashville, Tennessee

Daniel Strobel, director of marketing, said 2024 went very well.

"We had a great year with a solid boost in ticket sales," Strobel said. "Despite the ups and downs in the economy, we rolled out some smart promotions, and our guests really responded. It shows that with the right approach, people are still excited to come out and have a good time with family and friends."

One of the year's big highlights at Nashville Shores was the success the park had with staffing.

"We really focused on hiring the right people and it paid off," Strobel said. "Our guests had a noticeably better experience, as reflected in the great reviews we received. We're excited and proud of the progress we made in 2024."

In 2023, Nashville Shores unveiled its latest attraction, the Riptide Racer, a multi-million-dollar investment that quickly became a hit. Manufactured by **Proslide Technology** and towering over five stories high and stretching longer than a football field, the Riptide Racer lets guests race headfirst on mats against friends and family, speeding through twists and turns to the finish line.

"It was a huge success last year and the thousands of visitors this season got to enjoy it too," Strobel said.

For 2024, instead of debuting a new ride, park officials shifted focus to improving the overall guest experience throughout the park.

"We expanded one of our popular concession areas, added a new bar, introduced more soft drink stands and made other improvements throughout the park," he said. "While



Nashville Shores (above), Nashville, Tennessee, located on Percy Priest Lake, had a great 2024 season. Officials there said they had a solid boost in ticket sales, which they are attributing, in part, to the smart promotions rolled out. In 2023, Nashville Shores unveiled its latest attraction, Riptide Racer, a multi-million-dollar investment that quickly became a hit (below). Manufactured by **Proslide Technology**, it towers over five stories high and stretches longer than a football field. Instead of following up in 2024 with another large investment, park officials put a focus on guest experience. COURTESY NASHVILLE SHORES

these updates may not have the same thrill factor as a new attraction, they're crucial for making sure our guests have a better, more enjoyable visit that keeps them coming back. And, it has proven successful."

For 2025, Strobel said the park doesn't have plans to install a new major attraction. But it does plan on doubling down on improving the overall guest experience.

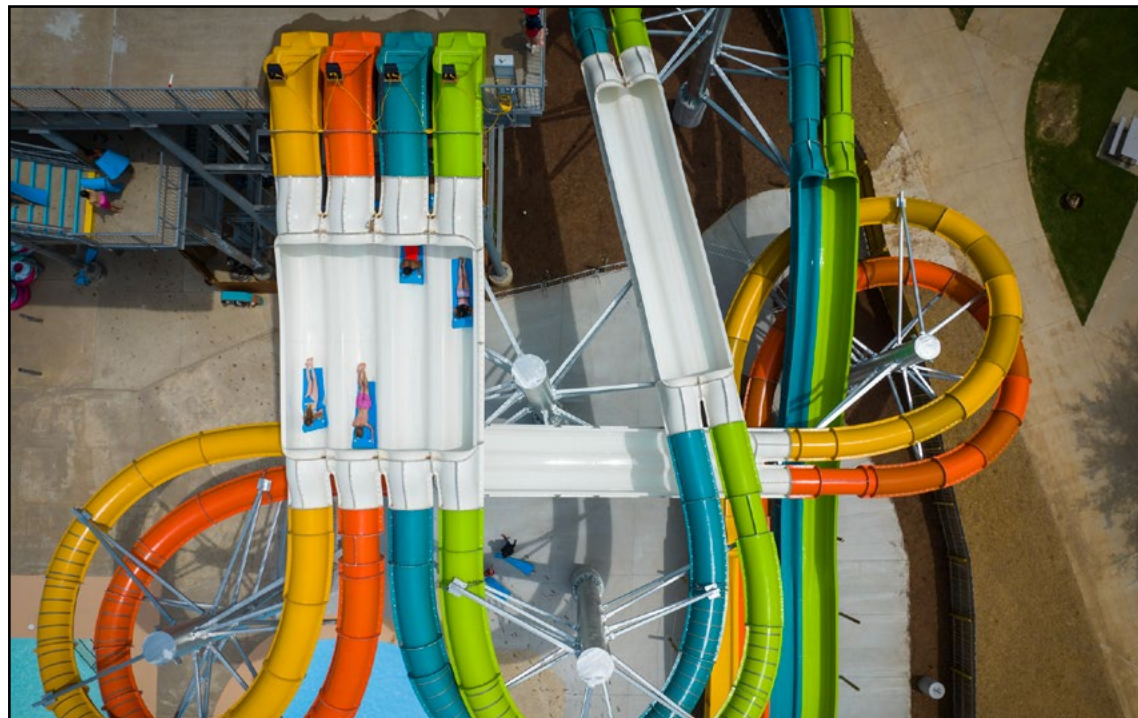
"It's all about keeping the hot food hot, the cold drinks cold and making sure every part of the park feels just right," he said. "We'll continue upgrading restrooms, adding more concession options, and expanding our special events to give guests even more reasons to visit."

"It may sound simple, but these improvements are key to making sure everyone has a great time and wants to come back again and again," he said.

Castaway Cove Waterpark, Wichita Falls, Texas

Castaway Cove Waterpark had a fantastic 2024, according to park officials.

"This summer marked our 20th anniversary, and we celebrated with a series of special events, including



official anniversary celebrations, foam parties and lively Friday night beach parties," said **Jimmy Holmes** of **H Two Management**, which handles communications and marketing for the park. "We also took a trip down memory lane on social media, sharing cherished moments from the past 20 years while our guests shared their own family memories."

One of the standout highlights of 2024 was the overwhelming support from the park's community during the 20-year celebration.

"It was heartwarming to see how deeply connected people are to Castaway

Cove, whether they visited as children, began their first job here or are now creating new memories with their own families," Holmes said.

The biggest 2024 challenge was the extreme heat. When temperatures soared to 105 degrees, it became too hot for some guests.

"We also made it a priority to ensure our staff stayed hydrated and didn't overheat," he said.

This season, Castaway Cove introduced a new pizza destination called **Paradise Slice**. New cabanas were added, and the amenities were enhanced in some of the existing cabanas.

Next season, the Cast-

away Waterpark plans to unveil a new multi-lane mat racer, manufactured by **WhiteWater West**. Guests will race through enclosed tubes that twist and turn, culminating in a dash to a black-and-white checkered finish line. The attraction will feature a timing system, so guests can track their speed and compete for the fastest time.

Splashway Water Park, Sheridan, Texas

Splashway Water Park saw a solid 2024 season even though attendance took a slight dip from 2023,

► See SEASON, page 38



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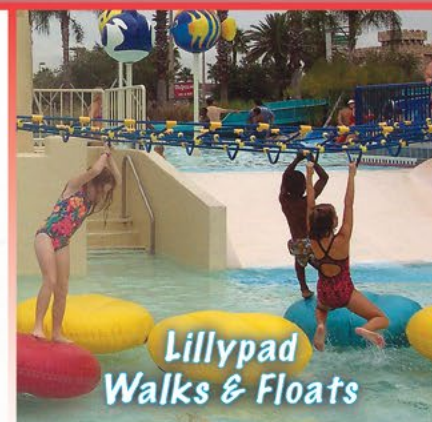
Inflatable Barriers



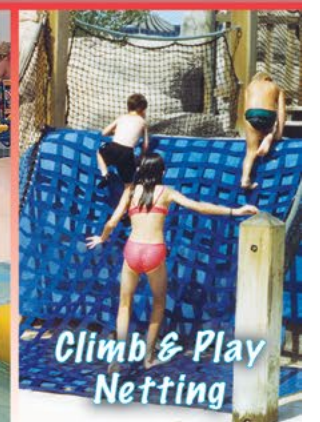
Family Rafts



Sidewinder Tubes & Rafts



Lillypad Walks & Floats



Climb & Play Netting



► **SEASON**
Continued from page 36

said **Clorisa Hartensteiner**, marketing director.

"It wasn't a huge dip, but it was a dip," Hartensteiner said.

She said she tried different things on the marketing front to boost attendance, but, in the end, they felt their potential guests were impacted by the economy.

"We just think it was a financially tight summer for many families," she said, even though she added there was a lot of rain in June and July.

Splashway has an adjacent campground. Added amenities to the campgrounds were done this year, but nothing new was added to the water park.

"There has been a lot of discussion happening for what we might do in 2025, but nothing we can really release right now," Hartensteiner said.

Myrtle Waves Water Park, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Myrtle Waves introduced a new slide called **Wild Water Racers** for the 2024 season.

Christina Watts, director of marketing and advertising for **Lazarus Entertainment Group**, said in a local news report that it is a mat slide, meaning people lay on a mat on their stomachs and slide down head first. Up to four people can go down the slide at the same time.

Although Myrtle Waves Water Park has more than 30 water slides and attractions, this was the first mat racer for the park.

This slide was moved from **Wild Water and Wheels**, a Surfside Beach, South Carolina, water park, which closed in 2022. The two water parks were owned by Lazarus Entertainment Group. A new company bought the old water park and is now re-developing the land.



Castaway Cove (left), Wichita Falls, Texas, celebrated its 20th anniversary this past season and had a fantastic season doing so. The only glitch this year were the extreme high temperatures but the park's new cabanas (above) helped get guests out of the sun for a break.

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France's O'Gliss Park debuts the first Polin Stingray Waterslide

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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VENDÉE, France — France's largest water park, O'Gliss Park, opened the first Stingray Slide supplied by Polin Waterparks of Kocaeli, Turkey. The massive slide transports visitors on a one-of-a-kind adventure, whirling on the wings of a manta ray from a starting height of 26 meters (85 feet). The slide had its grand opening on June 28, 2024.

Stingray is a groundbreaking addition to O'Gliss Park, showcasing the park's dedication to innovation and guest satisfaction. The attraction represents an investment of €5 million (US\$5.56 million), the largest since O'Gliss Park opened in 2016. The four-lane, eight-passenger, high-capacity racing tube slide offers an unparalleled experience within a compact design.

Michael Thibaud, CEO of O'Gliss Park, expressed his excitement about the new attraction: "The Stingray is a revolutionary waterslide that sets a new benchmark for water park experiences. We are thrilled to offer our guests this unique and exhilarating ride."

The journey begins at a custom-designed start tower, which features a unique roof structure that provides shade and a cooling mist, ensuring comfort as guests prepare for their adventure. The unique dual-tower structure is connected with a bridge that can be used for observation,



Looking down from the bridge, guests can see the four different slide paths as well as the gigantic bowls (above). The view from head-on reveals the stingray shape and ominous eyes keeping watch (below). COURTESY POLIN WATERPARKS

or for guests to transfer from one side to the other. Once guests enter one of the four flume entrances, they board a two-person raft and embark on an exhilarating ride through multiple interweaving paths that lead to two gigantic bowls. Each bowl features two distinct paths: one larger, longer, faster, and more thrilling, and one smaller, shorter, and especially entertaining. Riders experience the thrill of whirling around the sides of the bowls using centrifugal force, creating an exhilarating sensation. The variety of different experiences for each slide path ensures a unique experience with every ride and encourages repeat visits. Utilizing four lanes and two-person rafts, Stingray provides the park with a high-capacity slide capable of accommodating nearly 900 riders per hour.



Not only does Stingray offer multiple distinctive ride paths but its vivid, fiberglass theming and custom coloring are also inspiring and captivating. Taking advantage of the capabilities of Polin's state-of-the-art technology "u-texture," the slide is a monumental piece of artwork that is long-lasting, UV-protected and absolutely dazzling. As one of the largest slides in Europe, the massive, stunningly

beautiful Stingray creates a commanding presence at O'Gliss Park.

Polin partnered with Edsun of Tiffauges, France, a leisure park and outdoor recreation design firm. The company specializes in aquatic and outdoor activities for campsites, leisure parks and communities. Edsun has done thousands of projects for more than 30 years throughout France, Spain and recently the

Guadeloupe island group in the southern Caribbean Sea.

Sohret Pakis, brand ambassador of Polin Waterparks, added: "We are incredibly proud to partner with O'Gliss Park on this project. The Stingray represents the pinnacle of our design and engineering capabilities, and we are confident it will provide guests with an unforgettable experience. We would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our partner, Edsun, for their great support and collaboration in making this project a reality."

O'Gliss Park opened in June 2016 as a collaboration between Polin Waterparks, Edsun and Vendée-based Groupe Oceano Loisirs. At the time of its opening, the €12 million (US\$13.5 million) facility spanning 60,000 square meters (196,850 square feet) was the third largest water park in France. Oceano Loisirs also owns nearby O'Fun Park and O'Tel Park.

The coast of the Vendée area of western France extends along more than 200 kilometers (120 miles) of mostly sandy beaches along the Atlantic Ocean and the Bay of Biscayne. The area is edged with dunes and pine woods, along with coastal mudflats and marshes that attract unusual birds. The beaches are considered an oasis for nature lovers, and several nude beaches are scattered along the coast. The area attracts locals as well as tourists from the rest of Europe and overseas.



Polin Waterparks' state-of-the-art "u-texture" technology (above left) creates a variety of patterns with a gloss and sheen that is unmatched in the industry. A raft of two thrill-seekers begins its journey through the brightly-colored tubes (above middle). The bright colors and bold patterns are practically a work of art and give the slide a commanding presence. COURTESY POLIN WATERPARKS

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The massive inflatable includes slides, tunnels and three wading pools.
COURTESY JUNGLE ISLAND

Jungle Island unveils Jungle Splash, an inflatable water park experience

MIAMI, Florida — This past summer, **Jungle Island**, South Florida's eco-adventure theme park, opened Jungle Splash — a gigantic inflatable water park. This unique hydration destination will give families the chance to experience thrills while cooling off from the scorching Florida heat.

Jungle Splash stretches an impressive 115 feet wide by 115 feet long, stands 21 feet high, and is situated amidst the lush tropical landscapes and captivating animal exhibits of Jungle Island. The massive inflatable attraction features slides and tunnels that lead to three wading pools. One of the wading pools contains a dynamic multi-level climbing structure that even includes a tipping bucket.

Safety is a top priority at Jungle Island. Certified lifeguards are stationed throughout the Jungle Splash water park, ensuring a secure and enjoyable environment.

Although most of the activity takes place within the giant inflatable, Jungle Splash also includes The Flamingo beer garden offering refreshments and savory food items unique to Miami. The beer garden features a wide selection of brews from local favorites such as **South Beach Brewery** and **Tripping Animals**. The area also includes tables and guest chairs for relaxation; a large, inviting green space; or for a more exclusive experience,

cabanas can be rented for the day. Live entertainment is provided on the weekends and a multi-use space is available for events ranging from birthday parties to company outings and happy hours.

Food items can be ordered from the cabanas and the guest chairs and include a variety of creative options such as Havana Sweet burger, El Gigante hot dog, Chickenhouse hoagie, tasty grilled cheese sandwiches, loaded mac-and-cheese bowls, nachos and french fries. There's also a Caesar salad option and favorites like Colombian empanadas and tequeños. An equally impressive list of desserts and other sweet treats is also available.

"Jungle Splash demonstrates our commitment to providing extraordinary and unforgettable adventures for our guests. There's simply nothing like it in

South Florida," said **Jeremy Hauwelaert**, president and CEO of Jungle Island. "We are excited to offer families and thrill-seekers alike the opportunity to cool off, make memories and explore the wonders of Jungle Island like never before."

Jungle Island has been a South Florida landmark since 1936. It is located across from the cruise ports, between Downtown Miami and South Beach. The park takes guests on an epic journey through nature, animals, discovery and play. From a stroll through tropical landscapes and the thrilling six-acre Treetop Trekking aerial adventure park to behind-the-scenes VIP tours and unforgettable interactions with some of the world's most fascinating animals, Jungle Island offers a variety of real-life jungle experiences that emphasize exploration, education and enjoyment.

—Jeffrey Seifert



Cabanas offer a more exclusive experience.
COURTESY JUNGLE ISLAND

Wavegarden develops new bay waves system as safe way to learn surfing

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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SAN SEBASTIÁN, Spain — **Wavegarden**, creators of revolutionary wave-generating technology, is touting its bay waves as an optimal place to learn how to surf. The Bays, as WaveGarden refers to them, is an area after the main surfing area of a Wavegarden surf lagoon where reef waves start to diminish and form into bay waves.

For surfers who are starting out, The Bays offer possibly the safest and most optimal conditions to learn, facilitating rapid improvement. The slow-moving white-water and open-face waves that rise 50 centimeters (20 inches) high provide ideal rides lasting between 14 to 18 seconds. During a one-hour session, all surfers have the opportunity to catch 15 or more waves — something almost impossible to achieve in the ocean.

For business owners, The Bays, with its high capacity of 50 surfers (25 on each

side), represents 30 to 40 percent of the lagoon’s turnover. Additionally, as the bay waves are the continuation of the reef waves, known as reform, they require zero additional energy.

At one of the most recent Wavegarden facilities to open, **Surfland Brasil** in Garopaba, the depth in the bays varies between knee- and waist-deep, so surfers are never out of their comfort zone. There’s even a non-slip liner with a cushion underlay to further enhance safety.

Achieving the perfect conditions in The Bays has been no small feat. Surprisingly, it required almost as much effort as developing a good air section in the Reef area. What initially seemed straightforward — creating a whitewater wave that rolls towards the shore — turned out to be quite complex. Wavegarden’s main challenges included obtaining the optimum size and power and managing cur-

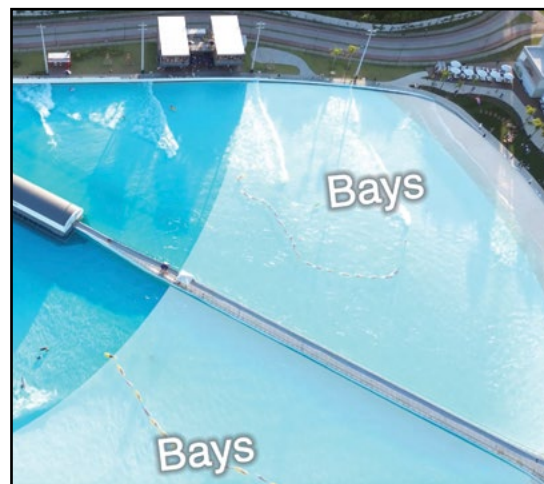
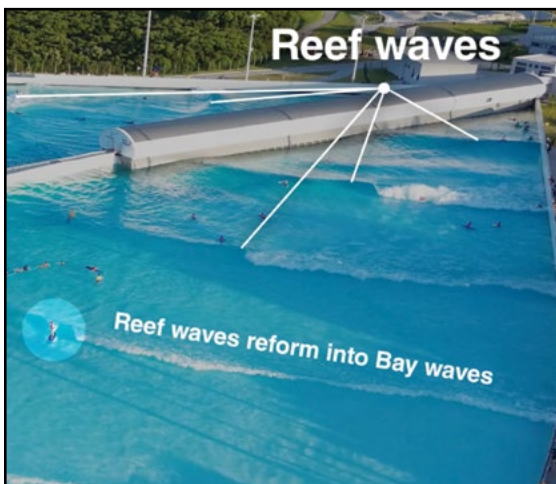
rents to ensure they move correctly without sweeping surfers away.

“The Bays of Surfland are the best of any wave pool in the world, an achievement that has taken many years of testing,” explained **Josema Odriozola**, CEO and founder of Wavegarden. “The challenge has been to tame the forces in the water, but I think now we have cracked the code.”

The lagoon operations team at Surfland has developed an innovative method of organizing students in a long line as they await their next wave. Students simply hold on to the leg rope of the surfer in front of them, which keeps everyone neatly positioned in the channel.

Wavegarden continues to lead the way in providing unparalleled surfing experiences, and the Wavegarden Bays are a testament to its commitment to innovation, safety and accessibility.

•wavegarden.com



Bay waves form when the reef waves start to lose energy and diminish in size (above). Students can organize in a queue by holding onto the leg rope of the surfer in front of them (right).
COURTESY WAVE GARDEN



WATER PARKS MARKET PLACE



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A family favorite for years, OctoExplorer is a submarine trapped under a giant octopus. The arms of the octopus serve as a staircase and soft bodyslides. Children can explore inside the submarine (left).
COURTESY NOAH'S ARK

Noah's Ark Waterpark opens reimagined water playground

WISCONSIN DELLS, Wisconsin — A beloved family attraction made a comeback to Noah's Ark Waterpark this past summer after having been missing for five seasons. Complete with a new look and modern enhancements, OctoExplorer has undergone a multi-year transformation project to bring back the iconic bright yellow submarine attraction.

Originally opened in 1994, OctoExplorer has been a family favorite for decades, and many visitors who enjoyed exploring the submarine as a child are delighted to see the attraction has returned for their kids to enjoy.

To bring back the under-the-sea themed attraction, Noah's Ark worked directly with **Fix Your Park**, a company based in Seguin, Texas. The first order of business was to refresh the paint, adding more vibrant colors to the four slides and the center submarine structure. The park has also integrated new technology throughout the attraction to enhance the adventure. Inside the submarine, guests will now find a television and surround sound system, creating an immersive environment that transports guests deep underwater.

"Noah's Ark offers a variety of attractions for our visitors of all ages. The return of OctoExplorer to our lineup offers even more variety for our smallest guests," said Noah's Ark general manager, **Christopher Mortensen**. "This attraction holds a special place in the hearts of many, and we are proud to honor its history while bringing it into the future with innovative updates."

Noah's Ark Waterpark dates back to 1979 when the **Waterman** family started an amusement center known as **Noah's Incredible Adventure** with a bumper boat ride and go-kart track. The following year the park added a miniature golf course, and Jungle Rapids, with three fiberglass waterslides — the first in the Wisconsin Dells area. In 1994 the park was sold by the Watermans to the **Gantz** family from Iowa. The park continued to add new attractions, and as the waterslides became more prominent, the park was eventually renamed Noah's Ark Waterpark. In 2012 the park was purchased by **Palace Entertainment**.

—Jeffrey Seifert



NEWSPLASH

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The former **Surf & Swim Water Park** in Garland, Texas, will be redeveloped as a new water park. The city-owned water park has been serving residents since 1984 but has been showing signs of deterioration for years and did not open for the 2024 season. The **Fain Group** of Fort Worth, Texas, was awarded a \$25 million contract by the city of Garland to demolish the current park and build a new one.

The new Surf & Swim will feature a lazy river, leisure pool, aquatic playground, children's pool, three new waterslides and shade structures. A party room for celebrating birthdays and other events will be available, along with a concession stand.

The project cost will be covered by the \$423.7 million bond package approved by voters in 2019, which included \$117 million for parks and recreation.

The new facility is expected to be completed by April 2026.

The **Bavarian Inn Lodge** in Frankenmuth, Michigan, has announced that among the new slides and attractions is a dueling racing slide built by **WhiteWater**. The new slide is part of the new **Bavarian Blast** indoor water park, which is scheduled to open soon.

According to a press release issued by the lodge, riders can go head-to-head against their friends on the slides, complete with a separating wall made of translucent fiberglass so racers can see one another mid-race. The lodge added that guests can reach up to 20 miles per hour before approaching the finish line.

The Bavarian Blast Waterpark has been in the works since late 2022 when it was announced. The new \$80-million expansion will add more than 100,000 square feet to its indoor water park and family entertainment center along with 16 new waterslides and several new family attractions.

A new pool is in the works in the city of Foley, Alabama. In July, the city finalized plans to build a new aquatic center to replace the 71-year-old city pool in Max Griffin Park. The pool, which has served the city residents since the 1950s, has had numerous upgrades over the years but is due for replacement.

Foley's population is rapidly growing, and city officials said the new aquatic center is a part of the city's efforts to keep up with the surge of new residents.

The new aquatic center will be a saltwater-based pool and be a standard regulation length for people who swim

competitively or for recreation.

In addition, the pool will have zero-entry access, which is a sloping entrance that gradually leads into the water. This design replaces traditional stairs and ladders, making it more accessible for swimmers who may find it difficult to use stairs or ladders to enter and exit the pool.

The new aquatic center is set to open by the end of 2026.

Soaky Mountain Waterpark in Sevierville, Tennessee, is adding a first-of-its-kind waterslide. Called Rafter's Rage, the new slide from WhiteWater will start nearly eight stories in the air and rafts holding six people will reach speeds up to 19 mph.

"Rafter's Rage will be different than most water slides with high banking turns and steep drops because instead it will feature four artfully crafted arcs that rafts will laterally accelerate over sideways," General Manager **Dave Andrews** said in a release. "This thrilling drifting experience — a world's first for a waterslide — will extend a rider's zero-G feeling, making it an incredible attraction."

The new attraction will be located adjacent to the park's Avalaunch water coaster behind the Black Bear Rapids Adventure River. The new slide is expected to be completed in time for the start of the 2025 season in May.

A new aquatic center addition for Campbell River, British Columbia, has started construction. The addition to **Strathcona Gardens** will occur in phases with phase one involving the aquatic center and wellness center.

The new aquatic center will feature an eight-lane lap pool, leisure pool, hot pool and wellness pool. The lap pool will include springboards and a climbing wall. The leisure pool will have a beach entry, a lazy river and a waterslide. Changing rooms, a sauna, and a steam room will also be part of the new aquatic center. The hot pool and wellness pool will have transfer edges and ramps to make them more accessible. The leisure pool will also have ramp access.

The old center with components dating back to the 1970s will be decommissioned and converted into a wellness center with five treatment and five assessment rooms, as well as a fitness area.

The new aquatic center is all new construction, which is expected to take 30 months.

Phase 2 of the project will focus on the ice rink arena. Plans are to improve seating and viewing areas and add an upper-level running track.

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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► **Morgan's Hotel announced — page 48 / Roy Gillian, founder of Gillian's Wonderland Pier, passes — page 51**

WWA attendees flooding into Vegas for 44th annual convention

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — Attendees to the 44th annual **World Waterpark Association** Symposium and Trade Show, set for October 8-11, will be greeted with an abundance of workshops, educational sessions, social events, networking events and a trade show full of suppliers showcasing their latest products as well as existing popular products.

The 2024 event take place at the **Paris Las Vegas Convention Center** in Las Vegas, Nevada. The trade show runs 12:30 - 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 9, and 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 10.

"We expect a strong turnout for this year's show," said **Rick Root**, WWA president. "Not only do we have an exciting and inspiring educational program and sold-out trade show to offer our attendees, but our host city is one of those locations that just brings something special to the table.

"Las Vegas is our attendee's favorite city for good reason," he said. "With so much going on from sunup to well past dark, attendees are guaranteed to take home fresh ideas, new products and plenty of memories of time spent with their WWA friends and colleagues."

Root said the trade show exhibit hall is sold out. The hotel room block at



The annual WWA Symposium and Trade Show is being held in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 2024 and will feature an exhibitor floor (above) will be full of suppliers showcasing their latest products as well as existing popular products. The event will also host the WWA's annual awards including the 2024 WWA Hall Of Fame inductions (below). AT/TIM BALDWIN

Paris Las Vegas is sold out, and rooms at the secondary hotel, the **Horseshoe Las Vegas**, will sell out.

"Our pre-show registration was trending ahead of our 2022 show at **Caesars Forum** and **Harrah's**," Root said. "It's clear that our members value their time together and look forward to joining their colleagues as they begin planning for the 2025 season."

In addition, Root said they have taken advantage of the location by hosting some great networking events, including the Annual Golf Tournament taking place on Tuesday, Oct. 8, at the **Arroyo Golf Club**.

The popular Annual Reunion Party will take place at **Cowabunga Canyon** on Wednesday, Oct. 9.



At this event, attendees will be able to mingle with hundreds of innovators who are taking the industry to the next level, all while enjoying behind-the-scenes time at this beautiful water park venue.

"We're so appreciative that the **Pyek Group** will be hosting our Annual Reunion Party at Cowabunga

Canyon this year," Root said. "The party they hosted at Cowabunga Bay in 2022 was one of our attendees' all-time favorite social events, and we can't wait to see what they have in store for this year.

"Nothing makes operators and suppliers happier than seeing water park attractions live and in-person

and hearing answers to operational questions during behind-the-scenes tours of new facilities," Root said.

Plus, we're giving our attendees a special night on their own to grab some of their favorite WWA friends, get out and explore all that Vegas has to offer, including amazing cuisine, tremendous shows and exciting nightlife options that you cannot replicate anywhere else.

Even though the WWA event officially kicks off on Tuesday, Oct. 8, several programs are starting on Sunday, Oct. 6:

- The Aquatic Facility Operator Certification Course. This two-day program is presented in conjunction with the **National Recreation and Park Association**. It wraps up on Monday afternoon, Oct. 7.

- The Certified Pool Operator (CPO) Certification Course. The **Pool and Hot Tub Alliance's** two-day workshop is designed to provide the knowledge necessary to operate and manage public pools and spas. The CPO class is widely accepted by health departments and fulfills the local and state requirements for certification for pool service technicians as defined in many states. It wraps up on Monday, Oct. 7.

- Ellis & Associates** Lifeguard Instructor Licensing Program. The com-

► **See WWA, page 46**

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▶ WWA

Continued from page 45

pany will conduct this Lifeguard Instructor Licensing program at a location off-site at a local client facility. This is a three-day program and will conclude on Tuesday, Oct. 8.

The two-day **StarGuard Elite** Lifeguard Instructor Development Course will begin on Monday, Oct. 8, and wrap up Tuesday, Oct. 9.

Several WWA University courses are set to run on Tuesday, Oct. 8:

- The WWA University: Waterpark Design, Development & Expansion Workshop is an optional event that brings together leading industry development experts, and licensed design professionals.

- WWA University: Ready, Set, Go! A Guide To Getting Started Workshop. This workshop is a practical guide for the first-time water park operator or those new to management positions.

- WWA University: Waterpark Maintenance School. It will feature top industry experts presenting topics designed to help water park operators improve their maintenance programs.

Also on this day is the WWA Advanced Water Quality Certificate Course.



The evening socials at the trade show are great ways for attendees to network.

AT/TIM BALDWIN

Water parks place a very high workload on most water treatment systems, including water collection, re-circulation, filtration, chemical control and chemical feed that demands.

According to Root, one of the things WWA's attendees anticipate most is the show's extensive education program. This year's show is again the largest water leisure education and training program anywhere and takes place over four days and features some of the industry's most experienced operators, developers and suppliers.

"We're excited to share this year's educational program with our attendees," Root said, "We'll be host-

ing more than 115 speakers who will discuss a variety of core and advanced topics in more than 40 educational sessions, panels and round tables."

WWA's educational program features the most comprehensive, water park-specific content available in the world today. Attendees can expect to take home the latest ideas on safety, operational trends, hiring, revenue generation, employee development, marketing and much more.

Two highlights within this year's program are the Keynote Sessions. First up, on Thursday, Oct. 10, is **Darren LaCroix**, who in his session, All In! One Decision Changes Everything, will share the secrets of resiliency, humor and fully committing to important goals and the opportunities this formula will yield in one's personal and professional life.

Then on Friday, Oct. 11, former NASA engineer **Maureen Zappala** is sharing ways to overcome Imposter Syndrome to move ahead without feeling like a fraud. In her session, Confidence Is Not Rocket Science, Zappala will share her powerful strategies that can be useful to recalibrate thinking.

Additional session highlights include Leveraging CRMs And Customer Data; Good, Bad, And Chal-

lenging Guests - Navigating The Exceptional And Exceptions; Influencer Marketing: Reaching Engaged Audiences And Maximizing Your Partnerships; Food And Beverage Trends 2024; Aww CRAP... Now What!?!; Now And Beyond: Future Proofing Your Waterpark; Ecology vs Economy: Can Waterparks Really Conserve Water?; Mastering Group Sales for Waterparks; Optimizing Revenue And Customer Experience With Dynamic Pricing; Unleashing The Magic: Mastering The Mascot; Employee Engagement And Incentives On A Budget.

Committee meetings are set to run on Wednesday morning.

Root said this year the WWA will be hosting more than 320 booths on the trade show floor, many of which will be showcasing new products, solutions and services that can help water park owners and operators achieve their goals more effectively and efficiently in 2025.

"WWA exhibitors are always motivated to spend quality time with those who walk the show floor," Root said. "They are ready to craft real-world solutions to problems an operator might be facing. We also anticipate the new ride innovations that keep our industry moving forward to make

their debut at the WWA Show, just as they have for the last four decades."

The new parks and expansion projects taking place in the water leisure industry are truly remarkable, said Root. They are bringing wholly unique experiences to the waterpark industry.

"The continued growth of surf attractions and facilities is also exciting," he said.

Some highlights of recent water park development include **Aquascope at Futuroscope**, Poitiers, France; **Blue Surf Bay**, Blue Springs, Missouri; **El Dorado Park**, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; **Meryal Waterpark**, Lusail, Qatar; **OKANA Resort**, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Rise of Icarus at **Mt. Olympus Water & Theme Park**, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin and **Thrill Island Water Park on Royal Caribbean International's Icon of The Seas**.

Also during the WWA convention, the Board of Directors Award will be presented. Award categories include the Executive Board Award, Kelly Ogle Memorial Safety Award, Al Turner Memorial Commitment to Excellence Award, Leading Edge Award, Wave Review Award, Chris Stuart Emerging Leader Scholarship Award and the annual WWA Hall of Fame inductions.



The trade show floor offers a wide range of exhibitors, including those who help water parks expand into the off-season with special events. AT/TIM BALDWIN

World Waterpark Association 2024 Symposium and Trade Show

List is current as of Sept. 19, 2024.

40 Below Company	1228	Fluidtrol	308 - 310	PVF Industrial	223
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accesso	1007	Foothill Communications, Inc.	411	Ramaker & Associates, Inc.	520
Admit One Products	541	Forsch Polymer Corp.	543	Ramuc/TUFF Coat Div of MRT	701 - 703
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Agri-Games	109	Frogg Toggs	710	Raypak Inc.	323-325
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AllChem Performance Products	330	GetOutPass	639	ReadyVIS - by Passero Associates	242
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API Water	123	Harwood Engineering Consultants, Ltd.	835	Resort Cabanas	530
Aqua Case / Aqua Leash / Aqua Dry Bag	911 - 913	Hayward Pool Products	500 - 502	RocketRez	731
Aqua Tile	1216	Headwater Construction Group	621	ROLLER	839
AquaBananas	711 - 812	Herborner Pumpentechnik GmbH Co. KG	918	Rust-Oleum	201
Aquafinity	229 - 231	High Score Amusement Ltd.	112	Ruth Lee Ltd.	1137 - 1139
Aquamator	1116	Hollaender Manufacturing Company	938	Safe Slide Restoration	717 - 818
AquaRevival LLC	319	Holtzman Group Hospitality Experts (HGHE)	903	Safepark USA	632
AquaSeal Resurfacing LLC	716	IAPMO R&T	102	Saftron Manufacturing	539
Aquatic Design Group	425	Ideal One Amusement Software	928 - 930	Sempermed USA	843
Aquatic Development Group (ADG)	511 - 612	InCord Play	433	Shade Creations by Waterloo	328
Aquatics Int'l	842	InterActive Play Waterparks	617 - 619	SIT Outdoor/Nardi	228
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Architectural Design Consultants Inc. (ADCI)	906	IAAPA	133	Slide Guys Restoration	1122-1124
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		Pulsar Systems	1107		

Morgan's Hotel announced, initiatives will change hotel industry

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO — In the past 15 seasons, **Morgan's Wonderland** has gradually made a name for itself. The award-winning amusement park has welcomed visitors from every state and more than 120 other countries. Creating the concept of "ultra-accessible," guests of all abilities have a place where everyone can have fun together. Such a simple but noble concept has expanded to **Morgan's Inspiration Island**, **Morgan's Camp**, **Morgan's Multi-Assistance Center** and **Morgan's Sports**.

Something new is on the horizon, and it is groundbreaking. **Morgan's Hotel** is scheduled to open in 2026. The vision was to far exceed the Americans with Disabilities Act standards. While designed for the common traveler, it will be easily accessible to everyone, regardless of age or ability.

Morgan's Wonderland and the original mission was founded by **Gordon Hartman**. In creating places to bring people together, an over-arching goal was to remove barriers.

"By removing barriers, we tremendously enhance the lodging experience for everyone," said Hartman. "This will certainly be a hotel for everyone, including those with disabilities who, going forward, will feel more included, valued and fulfilled."

Included in this mission is not just addressing physical disabilities but also the needs of an aging population. Using a statistic of one in five U.S. residents being of retirement age by 2030, Morgan's Hotel has been designed with wider hallways, larger guest rooms and easy access to elevators.

The hotel industry has taken notice. Currently, world-renowned chains such as **Hilton**, **Marriott** and **Hyatt** are all in nego-



When it opens in 2026, Morgan's Hotel will set the standard in ultra-accessibility.
COURTESY MORGAN'S

tiations to be the first to have their name placed on the innovative lodging. Hopes are that the San Antonio location will serve as a model for future ultra-accommodating hotels, prompting a cultural shift in the hospitality industry.

"We would love to see all hotels and hospitality leaders take notice of travelers with disabilities and consider how they can exceed ADA compliance by being ultra-accommodating," noted Hartman. "Simply investing in additional staff training on disabilities can enhance the guest experience immeasurably and let people know their property embraces guests with disabilities. Even small changes can make a big difference!"

Careful thought has gone into master planning.

"We held a town hall meeting and invited individuals with varying types of disabilities to engage by answering the question, 'What is your idea of the perfect hotel?' We received over 600 suggestions that directly informed the design of Morgan's Hotel," Hartman told *Amusement Today*. "Many individuals with disabilities expressed interest in having all the amenities travelers find in a typical hotel but request-

ed thought on how different needs will access those amenities. Some examples include making sure there is lowered counter space at the bar and quieter seating areas."

Still, the design is to make everyone comfortable and to enjoy their stay. A top-floor restaurant and bar will provide guests with scenic views as they relax and connect.

"We also need to be mindful of the adult traveler and what they would like to enjoy as part of a hotel," said Hartman. "One such issue was the lack of social places for adult individuals with disabilities to entertain, knowing it would be accommodating to everyone in the group. Our facility will allow guests to enjoy incredible views while socializing and forming lasting connections, regardless of ability level."

Even though the hotel will be located near the amusement facilities, it still caters to all tourists.

"Morgan's Hotel is suitable for all travelers, including everyday ones," Hartman explained. "We hope to cater to the business traveler who might need additional support, parasports teams compet-

ing in a local tournament, or any of the many visitors who come to visit San Antonio. We also hope to attract more conferences who could benefit from an ultra-accommodating hotel space."

When asked if typical travelers without any physical challenges would still enjoy the look and feel of the hotel, Hartman's response was an emphatic "yes."

"There has been special attention paid to details around the room, making it sleek and functional, despite whether a guest has a disability," he said. "Many of the ultra-accommodating features benefit all travelers by using Universal Design principles and enhancing the guest experience. We also make it a priority to create aesthetically pleasing spaces for all to enjoy."

Hartman added, "While accessibility equipment isn't automatically included in every room, we ensure that it's available upon request. This approach allows us to tailor each room to the specific needs of our guests, ensuring a comfortable and personalized stay for everyone, whether or not they require special accommodations."

There are various forms of "barriers," and something Morgan's seeks to ensure is that hearing and vision barriers are taken into consideration along with wheelchairs. This will include accommodations such as audio cues, hearing aid loops, and sensory-sensitive colors and lighting. Individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities will benefit by the use of incorporated elements such as color-coding, simplified wayfinding and quiet zones in public spaces.

"Barriers don't only occur within the built environment either, as they can be financial or social," said Hartman. "We are working hard to keep costs manageable for our guests and will have Inclusion Training for all staff members to minimize social barriers."

The staff will be trained in specific protocols: disability etiquette, assistance with mobility devices and accommodations such as hearing aid loops and sensory-sensitive colors and lighting. "Peace of mind" is the idea behind the created environment.

Net profits from Morgan's Hotel will go to Morgan's to pursue initiatives benefiting the special needs community.

Universal Orlando shares details about Universal Helios Grand Hotel

ORLANDO — Universal Orlando Resort shared new details about Universal Helios Grand Hotel, a Loews Hotel — a 500-room resort located at the much-anticipated Universal Epic Universe theme park opening in 2025.

Brought to life by the award-winning Universal Creative team and co-owned and operated by Loews Hotels & Co., Universal Helios Grand Hotel is a Mediterranean-inspired escape rising above the gardens and scenic waters of Celestial Park at Epic Universe. Designed to blend immersion and relaxation to create a hotel stay like no other, this palatial resort features tranquil sleeping accommodations, entertaining amenities for the whole family to enjoy, divine dining options, a stunning rooftop bar and the hotel's very own dedicated entrance to the new theme park.



Bright, inviting and warm, the guest rooms and suites of Universal Helios Grand Hotel (above left) evoke the tranquility of a blissful garden. A sparkling and stylish rooftop lounge, Bar Helios (above right) at Universal Helios Grand Hotel offers a delectable menu of creative tapas and familiar favorites, thoughtfully handcrafted specialty cocktails, and unmatched 360-degree views of Epic Universe. COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

Bringing the destination's portfolio to a total of 11 hotels and 11,000 guest rooms, Universal Helios Grand Hotel builds upon Universal's more than three decades of expertise in world-class entertainment and creative theming — combined with Loews Hotels' hospitality and service excellence

— to set a new standard in immersive hotel experiences. Here guests can unwind in the serenity of a sunlit retreat in one moment and then within minutes find themselves in the heart of exhilarating theme park adventures. Universal Helios Grand Hotel is so much more than just a

place to stay; it's the crown jewel of Epic Universe and the pinnacle of Universal Orlando's hotel experiences. As guests step into this radiant sanctuary, they will be transported to a fantastical world within the palace of Helios, the Greek god of the sun, adorned with beautiful details of celestial pat-

terns and elegant yet casual Mediterranean design elements. And through the lobby's magnificent floor-to-ceiling windows is a breathtaking vista of Celestial Park — boasting some of the best views of Epic Universe in the entire hotel and immersing guests in the park's brilliance by day and night.

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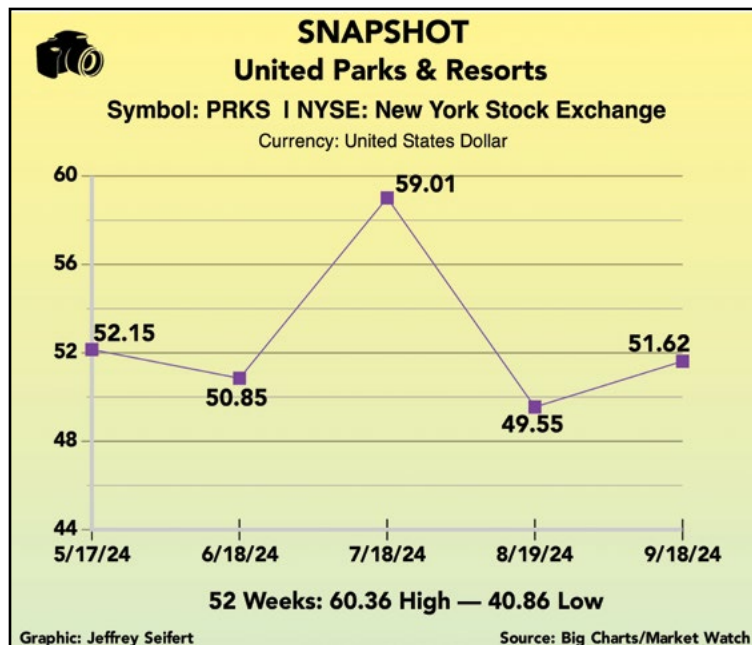
MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 9/20/24	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	158.12	161.25	88.59
Bowlero Corp.	BOWL	NYSE	11.49	15.47	8.85
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	40.11	47.11	36.43
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	32.30	69.82	29.31
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	48.71	49.63	39.65
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	10.22	44.00	7.02
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	2702.00	5080.00	2417.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.71	1.22	0.65
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	18.15	22.45	16.15
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	37.31	48.25	33.44
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.42	0.61	0.23
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	174.05	174.48	78.35
Six Flags Entertainment Corp.	FUN	NYSE	41.46	58.70	34.04
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	686.00	770.00	672.00
United Parks & Resorts Inc.	PRKS	NYSE	52.18	60.36	40.87
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	93.75	123.74	78.73
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	8.24	12.70	6.64
SUPPLIERS/OTHERS					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	189.00	205.50	108.00
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1461.00	1852.00	1026.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	10.70	16.89	9.05

Details and information available at amusementtoday.com/stocks

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

—SOURCES: Bigcharts.com



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S.)	As of 9/16/24	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.585	(\$0.952)
Midwest	\$3.481	(\$1.011)
Gulf Coast	\$3.172	(\$1.180)
Mountain	\$3.588	(\$1.276)
West Coast	\$3.818	(\$1.442)
California	\$4.733	(\$1.459)

CURRENCY

On 9/20/24 \$1 USD =

0.8974	EURO
0.7545	GBP (British Pound)
142.91	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8476	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.4689	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3572	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Dave & Busters release latest financial report

DALLAS — **Dave & Buster's Entertainment, Inc.**, announced financial results for its second quarter ending August 6, 2024.

"We are pleased with the progress we are making on our strategic initiatives and on the strong financial results achieved during the quarter," said **Chris Morris**, Dave & Buster's chief executive officer. "During the quarter, we grew Revenue and Adjusted EBITDA, expanded our adjusted EBITDA margins and generated strong operating cash flow which allowed us to invest in the business and return cash to shareholders. We have also continued to make significant progress toward our strategic goals. Our fully programmed remodels continue to perform well and we are excited about the remodels that have recently opened and will open throughout the remainder of Fiscal 2024 and beyond."

Total revenue was \$557.1 million, an increase of 2.8% from \$542.1 million in the second quarter of 2023. Comparable store sales decreased 6.3% versus the comparable 93 days of 2023.

United Parks & Resorts reports second quarter

ORLANDO — **United Parks & Resorts Inc.** reported its financial results for the second quarter and first six months of fiscal year 2024.

"We are pleased to report another quarter of strong financial results," said **Marc Swanson**, chief executive officer of United Parks & Resorts Inc. "We grew attendance and revenue during the quarter despite not seeing any material improvement in weather during the quarter compared to prior year. We also achieved a record level for in-park per capita spending, which is a testament to the continued success of our strategies and investments in this area."

In the second quarter of 2024, the company hosted approximately 6.2 million guests, generated total revenues of \$497.6 million, net income of \$91.1 million and adjusted EBITDA of \$218.2 million. Attendance increased approximately 47,000 guests when compared to the second quarter of 2023. The increase in attendance was primarily due to increased demand. The increase in total revenue of \$1.6 million compared to the second quarter of 2023 was primarily a result of an increase in attendance, partially offset by a modest decline in total revenue per capita. Total revenue per capita declined modestly due to a decrease in admissions per capita partially offset by an increase in in park per capita spending.

Second quarter results for Comcast

PHILADELPHIA — **Comcast Corporation** reported results for the quarter ending June 30, 2024.

"In studios and theme parks, we faced difficult comparisons to last year, but our upcoming film and TV content and the debut of Epic Universe bode very well for the future," stated **Brian L. Roberts**, chairman and chief executive officer of Comcast Corporation. "More broadly, I am excited about the growth opportunities ahead, as our teams innovate and collaborate to connect our customers, viewers and guests to the moments that matter."

Revenue for theme parks decreased primarily due to lower revenue at the company's domestic theme parks, driven by lower guest attendance, as well as the negative impact of foreign currency at international theme parks.

ON THE MOVE

IAAPA has welcomed **Jessi Quillen** as the association's vice president of digital strategy. With a background in global digital marketing and technology spanning more than 15 years, Quillen brings a wealth of experience from the retail and tourism sectors, specializing in CRM, web and loyalty experience.

**Quillen**

Originally from the western United States, Quillen's journey has taken her across the country and overseas to the U.K. She is looking forward to leveraging her expertise in digital strategy to drive IAAPA's initiatives and create innovative solutions that align with the needs of the association's members.

"I was fortunate to start my career in a company that fully embraced technology, which allowed me to develop a deep understanding and love for digital strategy," shared Quillen. "I am now extremely excited for the opportunity to work for IAAPA and create something amazing! I believe in this industry, the company's leadership, and I'm eager to learn and do more in this space."

Falcon's Creative Group, a division of **Falcon's Beyond Global, Inc.**, announced **Matthew M. Martin**, an accomplished theme park industry creative executive, has joined the team as a vice president of design. In this newly created position with the company, Martin will lead a team of creative directors as he conceptualizes ideas and drives the design development pipeline that sets new standards for themed immersive experiences.

**Martin**

"For decades, as both a client and a design contemporary, I always considered Falcon's Creative Group to be the pinnacle of what the theme park industry has to offer," said Martin. "It is truly an honor to merge my years of design experience and unique global history with their forward-thinking team and game changing projects to ideate the next level of amazing."

With more than 30 years of global experience in the themed entertainment industry, Martin has led creative teams in all phases of design and development of world class theme parks, themed immersive attractions and experiences. Most recently, he was creative director for **Saudi Entertainment Ventures** where he oversaw the vision, development and brand enhancements of multiple billion-dollar entertainment destinations across the Kingdom. Previously, Martin was a creative producer and art director for **Universal Creative**.

In a strategic move to strengthen its global reach, **Triotech** announced the nomination of **Nicolas Fournier** as sales director. Fournier brings more than 15 years of experience in business development, with a decade of expertise in the entertainment sector. He will focus on expanding Triotech's position in the family entertainment centers market

in Canada and Europe, as well as managing distribution in these regions.

"We're excited to welcome Nicolas to the Triotech team. His deep experience in entertainment, coupled with his strategic insight, makes him the ideal choice to propel our growth and expand our global footprint," commented **Yannick Gemme**, vice president sales and marketing at Triotech.

**Fournier**

Fournier expressed his enthusiasm about the new role, stating: "I'm thrilled to join the Triotech Team and contribute to our continued success. Triotech's commitment to pushing the boundaries aligns perfectly with my passion for creating exceptional guest experiences."

IAAPA announced the addition of **Linda Freeman** as its global director of health and safety and security. With more than 24 years of experience in the amusement industry, Freeman brings a wealth of knowledge and a unique perspective, having worked closely with manufacturers, operators and inspectors since 2000.

Freeman's extensive background includes being a functional safety engineer and instructor at **Rockwell Automation/Allen-Bradley**, where she played a crucial role in ride and show automation, from design and startup to maintenance and retrofits. Her expertise in integrating cutting-edge technology with creative intent ensured that attractions not only delivered the wow factor and did so with the highest safety standards.

**Freeman**

Freeman's commitment to safety extends beyond her professional role. She is an instructor and previous board member for **AIMS International**. Additionally, at **ASTM Committee F24**, she co-chairs a task group on cybersecurity for safety-related control systems and served on the IAAPA Global Security Committee, where she contributed to the development of security education.

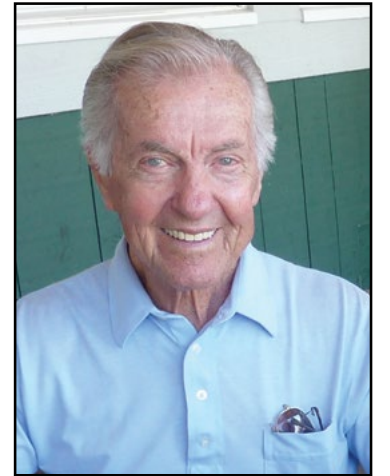
Atlantis Resorts has announced the appointment of **Paul Baker** as president of Atlantis, tasked with overseeing operations at the iconic **Atlantis, The Palm** and the ultra-luxury experiential resort **Atlantis The Royal** in Dubai. Baker will also assume responsibility for **Atlantis Sanya**, the first Atlantis resort in China, in the near future.

**Baker**

Reporting directly to **Philippe Zuber**, CEO of **Kerzner International**, Baker will manage the entire spectrum of operations, strategic direction, and continued growth of Atlantis Resorts, including Dubai's entertainment and luxury destinations. This significant leadership appointment marks an exciting new chapter for Atlantis, building on its global reputation as one of the world's most sought-after resort brands.

OBITUARIES**Roy Gillian, founder of Gillian's Wonderland Pier, has passed**

OCEAN CITY, N.J. — Roy Gillian, 94, of Ocean City, N.J., passed away on Saturday, August 17, 2024 at his home.

**Roy Gillian**

The loving husband of Patricia Gillian, he was a former mayor of Ocean City, N.J., and the founder of Gillian's Wonderland Pier in Ocean City, N.J. He started Wonderland Pier with just 10 rides on a large parcel of boardwalk real estate that had sat empty for a decade after a fire had destroyed Stainton's Playland, a previous entertainment complex, according to Wonderland's history. Under his leadership, Wonderland Pier grew into a major attraction anchoring the northern end of the boardwalk.

Ed Myers, a longtime friend who worked for Gillian and his family for more than 40 years, spoke at Gillian's memorial services. Myers, who served as general manager of the Gillian water park on the boardwalk during his long career with the Gillian family, said all of Gillian's employees felt "lucky" to work for him and considered him a role model.

"You always wanted to do a good job for Roy. You never wanted to disappoint him," commented Myers. "He created an atmosphere among us that he wanted us to be a part of."

Gillian grew up in Havertown, Pennsylvania, graduating from Haverford High School in 1947. He served in the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1953.

In 1957, he and his brother Bob took over the Fun Deck amusement park, founded by their father, David Gillian, in 1930. Roy left the family business to found Wonderland Pier in 1965 at Sixth Street and the Boardwalk. He also founded Gillian's Island and Adventure Golf.

He was an Ocean City

commissioner from 1963 to 1967, Cape May County Freeholder from 1971 to 1976, Commissioner of Cape May County Municipal Utilities from 1982 to 1986 and mayor of Ocean City from 1986 to 1990. He was a member of the New Jersey Amusement Ride Safety Board.

A skilled pianist who loved to entertain with his piano playing through his adult life, he was the orchestra leader of Roy Gillian & His Orchestra from 1947 to 1951. He was a past chairman of the board and director of Ocean City Home Bank for 34 years, past president and board member of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), and past president and director of the New Jersey Amusement Association (NJAA). He was the past president of Shore Medical Center and past president of the Jersey Cape Diagnostic & Training Center.

In addition to his wife of 39 years, he was the caring father of Steven Gillian and Jay Gillian (Michele); father-in-law of Betsy Belleville Gillian; stepfather of Tammy Essington Defelice (Chet), Michael Essington (DeeDee); grandfather of 12; great-grandfather of nine; and his devoted caregiver, Josh Rogasky. He was predeceased by sons John Gillian and James Gillian.

Focus on the HORIZON

Perspective completes picture

ORLANDO — Perspective is everything and for John Smith, operations manager of aquatics and water safety at Aquatica Orlando, the (slide) view at the bottom helped ignite his passion.

As a native Floridian, John Smith has always loved being around water, so an early part-time job in aquatics was a natural fit.

"My first job in the industry was with Blizzard Beach," he said. "I was a slide operator. My role was what it sounds like — I stood at the top of the park's large slides and assisted guests before they slid down."

That view from above also helped him recognize what he really wanted to be doing. "I would watch the lifeguards in the catch pools assisting the guests and knew I wanted to do what they did."

While in college that goal was realized when he was hired as a lifeguard at Discovery Cove. The role also allowed him to see how the park operated, and he was drawn to the business side of the complete operation.

"I earned a degree in Molecular and Microbiology," he said. "My family had hopes I would go on to medical school, but because of my role at Discovery Cove and several electives I took while at the University of Central Florida, I discovered my real passion is for business."

"I began to look at the operation of the park as a big puzzle. I saw how management's role — a role I began to want myself — is to use the right tools to put that puzzle together. For instance, each day we need to schedule and rotate lifeguards around the park. We often must make instant adjustments by moving positions around, adding in new ones or even reducing them to meet needs based on guest attendance and our budget. There is a thrill in that. And we redo a slightly different puzzle every day."

Smith continued to hone his skills and learn from park leaders.

"I was not shy about having conversations with senior leaders,"

he explained. "I wanted to learn more about their positions and the park and get their advice so I, too, could grow in my role and career."

That advice led to a move to Texas to work at Aquatica San Antonio.

"The opportunity allowed me to take a management role as well as see and experience more about the company. I also could benchmark the park with Orlando's."

While in Texas, Smith began to focus on the type of leader he wanted to be.

"My vice president was very interested in getting feedback from us," he said. "She listened to the team and asked for suggestions so she could improve as our leader and better assist us. She valued honest feedback and wanted input. I saw firsthand how servant leadership builds and strengthens the team."

"Today, I try to use the same approach with my team members. During our one-on-one meetings, I will ask for their feedback," Smith furthered. "I believe striving to be a better version of your previous self is important."

Smith returned to Florida — "my heart was in Orlando," he explained — as a full-time manager for Aquatica Orlando. He brought with him the management qualities he admired while thinking about leaders he had worked with. He found himself applying the good traits and improving on the not-so-good ones.

"I constantly think about everything I have learned since I began as a lifeguard," he said. "Now as a manager with a team, I lean into the style and approach of those I learned from and admire, while also remembering approaches I struggled with and wished had been different. Those aspects inspire me to do better and strive not to make similar mistakes. I really believe it's important to be the leader I want to see."

When asked about his biggest surprise as he made the shift from front-line employee to management, Smith laughed and said,

John Smith Aquatica Orlando Orlando, Florida



"Well, I finally see how algebra is a part of everyday life." He explained that learning how every decision has a financial implication has been interesting. "First and foremost, we do something because it is the right thing to do. However, we must also remember each move has value. It will factor into our annual budget and have an impact somehow. So, we need to make wise decisions and try to balance everything. It's another layer of the park puzzle that I enjoy working with."

As Smith trains and inspires new hires, he reminds them, "You are a lifeguard first." He never lets go of that fact. When walking around the park as duty manager, if a lifeguard signals that they need a restroom break or rest for a moment, he does not hesitate to help. "I will take their tube and step in," Smith explained. "Safety is always first. We help each other, and no space is left unattended."

Smith also says working as a water park lifeguard is a special one that few people understand.

"When I first became a lifeguard, I did not recognize how

encompassing the skills we learned truly are. Now I'm a trainer and I'm sharing those same skills with our team, many in their first jobs," he shared. "I think most people come into lifeguarding believing they will only need to pluck someone out of the water once in a while. A lifeguard's role and training in secondary care is so much more than that."

"As lifeguards, we are taught CPR and first aid administration, as well as trained to recognize allergic reactions, the signs of a stroke, even opioid overdose," he noted. "Secondary care is ever evolving — and critical. It can make all the difference to someone."

When asked if he has advice for the next generation of lifeguards looking beyond the slide, Smith says two things: "Passion and confidence. Go toward your passion and embrace it. You never know where you'll find it. And while doing that, don't be afraid to have conversations with others. Approach leadership, ask questions, and get their insight. Those are the first two pieces of your own big picture."

—Susan Storey



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SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Europa-Park reimagines dark ride — page 56 / SKYnext welcomes industry students — page 60

When a death occurs in the water, is it necessarily a drowning?

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

In August of 2024, a 28-year-old, fit swimmer in a CrossFit competition in Fort Worth lost his life. While it is more common to see children drown than adults, instances of strong swimmers succumbing to drowning incidents aren't necessarily rare.

In 2008, open-water marathons were introduced to the Summer Olympic Games. With this publicity, athletes participating in open-water competitions have been on the rise. Athlete Francis Crippen died during a World Championship race in 2010. He was a six-time U.S. National Champion.

Why elite athletes are meeting tragic fates isn't necessarily clear. Theories exist, one of which is immersion pulmonary edema. This condition refers to instances where evidence of fluid in an athlete's lungs exists after intense exertion. But swimmers could also have had a cardiac event, stroke or seizure. The fact is when these cases happen in water, the cause of death is almost always classified as "drowning."

Dr. Justin Sempsrott, the founder of **Lifeguards Without Borders** and medical director for **StarGuard Elite**, noted that open-water events such as CrossFit competitions and triathlons cause intense stress on ath-



At a StarGuard Elite training session at Perfect Day at Coco Cay, attendees participate in open-water rescue exercises.
AT/TIM BALDWIN

letes' hearts at the beginning of a competition.

"A mass start can really drive the heart rate and physiologic stress much higher than during training," Sempsrott said.

Research indicates that about two-thirds of triathletes who experienced cardiac arrest in competition occurred during the swimming portion.

"You add in the true proper adrenaline dump to maximum exertion and that could be enough to tip their coronaries over," said Sempsrott. "They have the big one that day."

People with a predisposition to this can be triggered by swimming, adrenaline and emotional stress.

"They may never know they have genetic triggers for drowning, and then it

occurs," said Sempsrott. "They may have a completely clean autopsy, and we can't figure out why they drowned. That's the most likely reason a strong swimmer can have a [cardiac event] caused by exertion."

Not every health occurrence happens in open water either.

If a first-time seizure occurred in the water, it would be unlikely to show in an autopsy if it led to drowning.

When a health event happens with lifeguards present, quite often the assumption was that the lifeguards "weren't doing their job" and the swimmer drowned.

Wave pools can have similar situations as open-water competitions.

"In an environment

like a wave pool where it is dynamic and changing, it's very often a site where people overestimate their abilities," Sempsrott told *Amusement Today*. "Open water is similar in that way. Even if it's calm, there can be fear and anxiety from being out of that controlled, measured pool. In a wave pool, when the water starts suddenly moving, the cycle of panic and inability to sufficiently swim and then needing rescue can happen very quickly, even with people who believe themselves to be competent swimmers."

He noted that a slide or other attraction has a lifeguard observing a single rider, whereas a wave pool can't give one-on-one attention.

"Young, healthy, fit people sometimes drown.

Period. Full stop. We need to maintain vigilance when they seem to be a competent swimmer. Even at events or races where it seems to be healthy athletes, we need to be vigilant," he emphasized.

"Sudden cardiac irregularities can happen both with people in their 20s, 30s and 40s as well as those older in the 60s and 70s population," Sempsrott said. "If someone collapses coming out of a locker room, then we know it is a medical event and not simply a case where they got a cramp and couldn't continue swimming. When it happens in the water, that can make it more difficult."

The challenge is distinguishing the situation when it is fluid. Sempsrott points out that if the situation were

► See **DROWNING**, page 55

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Lifeguards at wave pools must be vigilant with dynamic water currents, groups of people and varying levels of swimming skills making for challenging observation circumstances. COURTESY STARGUARD ELITE; AT/TIM BALDWIN

► DROWNING
Continued from page 54

a well-known swimmer who while doing a routine training session went under, then a lifeguard would know it was a medical event, but in the busy activity of a wave pool, a lifeguard isn't as apt to recognize that when a swimmer is unknown and is seen at the bottom.

In a standard drowning situation, the "ABCs" are prioritized — airway,

breathing and circulation, with the incorporation of an AED. For a medical event, the AED is the most important intervention.

"With the absence of knowing which pathway to take, it is important to train in such a way that you have a uniform response to where an AED is included in the response," noted Sempsrott.

In the case of a child being submerged, the clearer path is to treat it as a drowning.

"It's difficult. Even among medical experts, there is confusion around the definition of drowning," explained Sempsrott. "The medical definition is respiratory impairment following submersion. If someone drowns because of a seizure in water, how do we treat this medically and how do we prevent it from happening again? We often use the word *drowning* to mean different things. The lifeguard may

not know it was a medical event that precipitated the drowning. From a public relations standpoint, the next layer is that an operator cannot disclose the private health information of the person. Personal health information is protected."

The term *medical emergency* covers a lot of bases. An operator can legally say that to a media outlet because even a drowning is classified as a medical emergency. In alignment

with that, a facility can add that lifeguards responded correctly in accordance with their training.

In assessing the situation, Sempsrott stresses that context clues are everything: "Be vigilant. If a lifeguard recognizes a competent swimmer suddenly goes under, [there is reason to believe] that it is a medical event. It's very difficult. That's why it's important to have a universal response protocol."

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Europa-Park reimagines 1980s dark ride as Castello dei Medici

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

RUST, Germany — Everyone loves a good dark ride, and Europa-Park has several. In the five decades the park has been open, one could trace the evolution of dark ride technology through the park's various dark rides over the years.

In 1982, the park made its first expansion with a new "country": Italy. Two dark rides anchored that area, the largest of which was Geisterschloss (Ghost Castle). With an omnimover-style of conveyance from Mack Rides, guests enjoyed slowly traveling from scene to scene, seeing what creepy and terrifying



New, three-dimensional sets make the updated version dramatically different. COURTESY EUROPA-PARK

figures were there in the dark.

Europa-Park has a formula for updating older

attractions into newer, flashier modern ones. This season, the park worked with Ghost Castle and completely redesigned it, but the charm was still retained.

"Many of us, including myself, loved the Ghost Castle when we were young, and we want future generations to be able to experience this joy too," said Ann-Kathrin Mack, partner at Europa-Park and responsible for Mack Solutions. "The new theming ensures that the ride is exciting but not too scary, but it can still be a little test of courage — just like it has been in the past."

This new reimagining helps give a cohesive feel to the Italian area. As this updated tale goes, it draws upon a historical figure of the early Italian Renaissance, Lorenzo de' Medici. The attraction tells the story of the rise

of Medici, which comes to an abrupt stop thanks to the treacherous Pazzi family. Lorenzo is after revenge and comes into possession of an old stone tablet with strange symbols and meaningful writings. The text, written in an unknown Latin language, promises eternal life to anyone who follows its instructions. Medici dedicates his entire life to pursuing this plan.

Once aboard, visitors are transported through the palace in small gondolas as ghostly voices can be heard and eerie figures can be seen everywhere. During the four-minute dark ride, guests find out what Medici experiences and whether he will ultimately manage to escape death. Mack Solutions is responsible for the storytelling, which features impressive special effects, projections and illustrations.

"For Europa-Park's 50th birthday in 2025, we wanted to showcase this traditional ride, which has transported almost 100 million guests, as a new ride," said Mack. "It is important to us that we always keep the entire infrastructure at the highest possible standard."

In the redesign, not only were new sets and animatronics implemented, but the removal of older materials creates a better, modern attraction.

"The safety standards in all rides are at the very highest level," Mack told *Amusement Today*. "With a comprehensive and detailed safety concept, Europa-Park ensures every day that the staff and the more than 100 attractions meet the highest safety standards."

Europa-Park is Germany's largest theme park. All roller coasters and other attractions are subject to an annual inspection by the TÜV, supplemented by daily internal checks before the park opens.

"All attractions are equipped with numerous safety systems and sensors and complete a total of over 100 million rides per year," she said. "Year after year, Europa-Park invests considerable sums in safety measures, maintenance and modernization. All activi-



The Mack family pose with characters outside the updated Geisterschloss. COURTESY EUROPA-PARK

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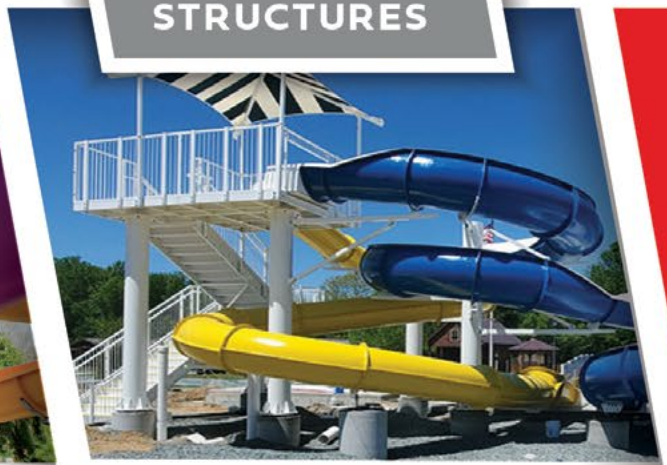
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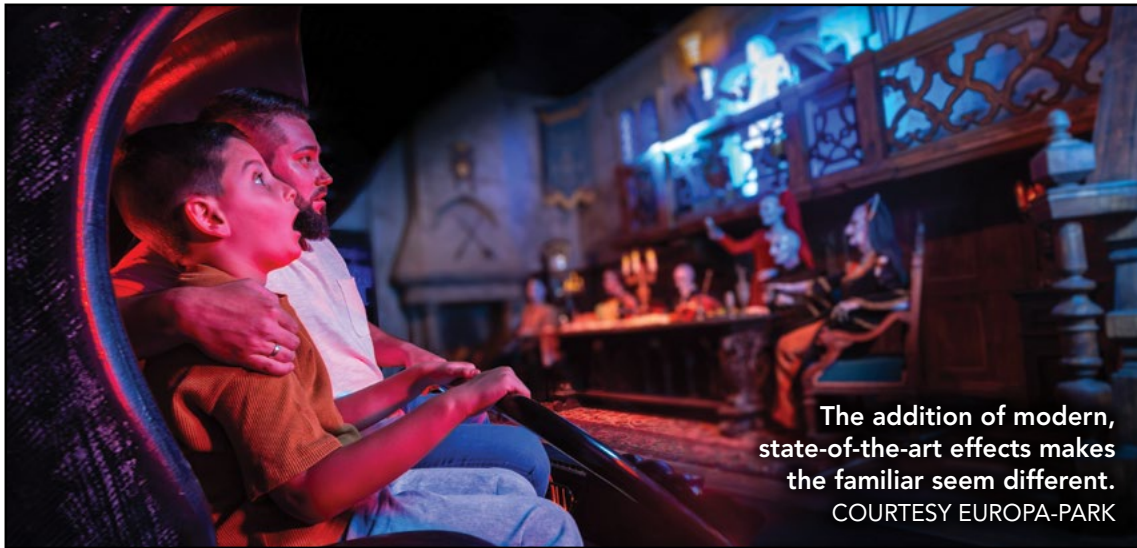
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The addition of modern, state-of-the-art effects makes the familiar seem different. COURTESY EUROPA-PARK

► **EUROPA**
Continued from page 56

ties are planned and carried out in close cooperation with the relevant authorities. Europa-Park is also in regular contact with safety experts and industry specialists to ensure that all measures meet the latest standards.”

This modernization comes with much more than just safety improve-

ments. New three-dimensional sets and effects give an enhanced experience for riders.

“We kept the basic idea — including the ride [system] itself — but brought everything up to be state-of-the-art and integrated new storytelling,” said Mack. “Visitors loved the old ghost train and now give the new attraction very high marks. The mix of old and new has been a success and we have placed particular emphasis on preserving the original character of the ride during the redesign. Our designers, architects and technicians at Mack Solutions have worked hard to retain the iconic elements of the old ride and combine them with state-of-the-art technology.”

Lighting, projections and added animatronics have made the experience like new.

“The interior is completely new, even though visitors will find many familiar elements. Some classic scenes have been reinterpreted and dressed in a modern guise, so that our guests can both refresh old memories and experience new things,” Mack said. “Of course, many of the tried-and-tested scenes and elements have also been retained. I particularly like the final scene. It’s very effective. The guests drive into the huge mouth of a monster.”

It is worth noting that this attraction, which opened in late July, was in addition to the park’s newest “country” (now up to 17), Croatia, which featured the park’s largest and extreme roller coaster, Voltron Nevera [see June 2024 AT]. On the other side of the park, the newly built Austrian Mountains have created a transformed area surrounding the Alpenexpress roller coaster and log flume with new adventure trails, making all three attractions completely intertwined [see August 2024 AT].

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Skyline Attractions welcomes industry students to SKYnext 2024

AT: Susan Storey
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — As professionals in the attractions industry focus on developing what's new and what's next for guests of all ages, it is equally important to focus on *who's* next. Since its founding in 2014, Skyline Attractions has been committed to investing in the next generation of creators. The company hosted its first event for future leaders in the industry in 2015 and today continues to help students make connections, learn how to network and envision careers beyond college. The Skyline Attractions young professionals event, SKYnext, has become a popular and highly regarded two-day networking experience. Last month, the Skyline team welcomed 52 attendees from 19 states and two countries to Orlando for SKYnext 2024. Areas of study included Mechanical Engineering, 3D Computer Animation, Marketing, Industrial Engineering and Supply Chain Management. Several had also taken part in internships with Premier Rides, Universal Orlando, and Walt Disney World, while others were seeking similar opportunities.

"This was our sixth in-person event," shared Tyler



More than 50 students from 28 universities took part in Skyline Attractions' SKYnext young professionals event. Jess Lawler of Merlin Entertainments in North America spoke and gave SKYnext attendees advice for the future by sharing her career path and answering questions (below). COURTESY SKYLINE ATTRACTIONS

Mullins, design engineer, Skyline Attractions. "Giving back to the industry is a core value at Skyline Attractions, and SKYnext has been our way to do just that. Students from 28 colleges took part this year. They came from different places and experiences united by a shared interest and goal to work in the attractions industry."

A SKYnext alumnus, Mullins understands firsthand the lasting impact networking and connection opportunities can have on young professionals.

"Through SKYnext, we bring together a diverse group of young professionals so they can learn from current industry leaders," he continued. "Speakers share their per-

sonal experiences and career paths. These young industry professionals will one day build the next generation of theme parks and attractions."

Industry leaders from around the United States took part in SKYnext. Speakers included Anya Tyler, project manager at CAVU Designwerks; Jess Lawler, head of social and digital content, North America, at Merlin Entertainments; Jerry Brick, director of construction and maintenance at Palace Entertainment; Dionté Henderson, senior manager, ride and show engineering at Universal Creative; Michael Shelton, vice president and executive director for IAAPA North America; and Northwest Coasters' projects manager and superintendent, Allen Messick as well as Anna Messick, mechanical installer. IAAPA's global headquarters served as the host location for SKYnext, providing the perfect backdrop for the attendees and the speakers to share and learn from each other.

First-time SKYnext speaker Jessica Lawler said, "It was an honor to speak at SKYnext. Our industry is filled with incredible people, and I enjoyed sharing my career journey with the students who attended. I was impressed by their questions and enthusiasm. At Merlin Entertainments, we believe in giving back, and Skyline Attractions created the perfect event that allows industry professionals to do just that. I hope to one day call these students my colleagues."

The attendees also traveled to Orlando ready to take in every moment.



Eliza Throne, a senior at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in western New York, has always had a passion for theme parks and ride design. The engineering major is the president of RIT's Theme Park Enthusiasts Club and has attended several ASTM F24 meetings and has volunteered as a 2024 AIMS Ambassador. Throne saw SKYnext as the perfect opportunity to further her industry knowledge and make new connections as she prepares for graduation. "This was my first time attending SKYnext," she shared. "It was enlightening to hear from speakers with different backgrounds in the themed entertainment industry and learn about their career paths and experiences. I thoroughly enjoyed every moment." Before heading back home, Throne also embraced the chance to experience one of Universal Orlando's Halloween Horror Nights.

Like Throne, SKYnext's attendees were eager to visit Orlando's famous parks and attractions. As part of the SKYnext agenda, they had the opportunity to attend a behind-the-scenes tour at a local attraction and visit Fun Spot America together. The

unique experiences provided memorable moments while furthering conversations with each other and members of Skyline's team.

"The attractions industry is collaborative and supportive," Mullins continued. "Along with our incredible speakers, we are grateful for our sponsors. Great Coasters International, Inc., Vekoma, Amusement Today, Merit Fasteners, and IAAPA partnered with us this year. SKYnext was created for students. The generosity of our sponsors allows us to keep costs low, so anyone who hopes to attend, can. We could not have put SKYnext together without them."

After six years of hosting students, Skyline's team continues to be impressed by SKYnext's attendees. "The sheer talent and drive of this next generation of theme park professionals is insane," Mullins finished. "Many students have already completed crazy projects, including ones with 3D printing, programming and engineering analysis. Each year I'm inspired by their passion and drive. I am already looking forward to meeting our next class of SKYnext students."

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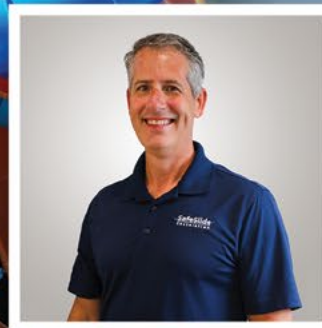


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"The AARMSS program helped me gain a deeper understanding of not only amusement-related safety and security but overall facility design and operation as it relates to identifying and eliminating threats and ensuring our guests and hosts have a safe experience. The expert instructors provided real-life case studies and presented the content in a way that every facility operator can relate to and implement in their day-to-day operations," stated **Daniel Dambros, Kentucky Kingdom**, director of operations, safety, and security.

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Safety flows at workshops, activities during WWA Trade Show

AT: Pam Sherborne
 psherborne@amusementtoday.com

LAS VEGAS, Nev. —Safety is the top priority of operators of any type of entertainment venue; water parks are no exception. And, along with workshops and sessions giving water park owners and operators updated methods of marketing and technology, a large part of the agenda at

the **World Waterpark Association's (WWA)** annual convention is focused on safety.

In fact, like water, it flows over every aspect.

This year's WWA Convention Symposium and Trade Show offers a plethora of safety options. The event will be held at the **Paris Las Vegas Convention Center** in Las Vegas, Nevada, October 8-11.

"Safety is the water park industry's most important priority," said **Rick Root**, president, WWA. "The WWA Show reflects that commitment with a focus on relevant topics designed to keep families safer in our facilities."

These include: 50 Safety Tips In 50 Minutes; In-Service Remix; Navigating The Waves Of Progress: The

Evolution Of Drowning Treatment; Normalization of Deviance; Waterpark Inspection Essentials: Ensuring Safety And Thrills For All; Managing The Aftermath Of A Critical Incident At Your Park; Indoor Waterpark Inspections and Incident Command Table Top Exercise.

Root said water park convention attendees are laser-focused on providing guests with the safest, cleanest and most fun place to enjoy water recreation as a family. They use their time at the WWA Show to stay informed about the latest trends in training, technology and operations that they can take back and implement at their own facilities.

"In addition, the water leisure industry will continue to focus on drowning prevention initiatives including National Water Safety Month and the World's Largest Swimming Lesson (WLSL)," Root said. "Having grown the WLSL program from just under 4,000 participants in our first year to reaching more than 400,000 in 54 countries in the last 15 years, we're excited to see where we can go from here."

Along with the specific WWA sessions on safety, several all-day programs begin before the official WWA show kickoff. These begin on Sunday, Oct. 6, and include the Aquatic Facility Operator (AFO) Certification Course. This two-day program is presented in conjunction with the **National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)**. It wraps up on Monday afternoon, Oct. 7.

It focuses on demystifying the science and art of water-quality maintenance and

pool management while earning your AFO certification in this comprehensive program for pool and park managers. Attendees will participate in lectures, view audio-visual presentations and analyze a variety of technical and reference materials. AFO certification is accepted by all agencies that require certification. Tests and certifications are issued by the NRPA.

There is also the Certified Pool Operator (CPO) Certification Course. This **Pool and Hot Tub Alliance's** two-day workshop is designed to provide the knowledge necessary to operate and manage public pools and spas.

The CPO class is widely accepted by health departments and fulfills the local and state requirements for certification for pool service technicians as defined in many states. It wraps up on Monday, Oct. 7.

Ellis and Associates Lifeguard Instructor Licensing Program will be conducted at a location off-site at a local client facility. It is a three-day program starting on Sunday, Oct. 6, and will wrap up on Tuesday, Oct. 8.

The two-day **StarGuard Elite** Lifeguard Instructor Development Course will begin on Monday, Oct. 8, and conclude on Tuesday, Oct. 9.

The StarGuard Elite Instructor Development Course is designed to prepare lifeguard instructors to provide a quality education program for lifeguards, using experiential activities based upon adult learning principles and an emphasis on understanding and utilizing effective facilitation skills.

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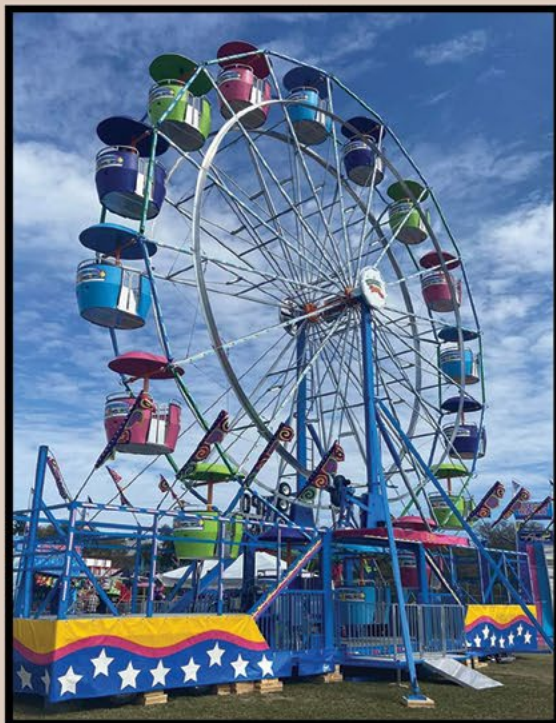


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Pennsylvania Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board holds summer meeting

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Pennsylvania's amusement ride safety program is designed to ensure all rides operating in the commonwealth meet rigorous safety requirements. This is partially accomplished with the Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board, which recently held its summer meeting. Since there was not a quorum present, no official action was taken. However, discussion was held about the two attractions on the agenda.

Goodtime Amusements, Hellertown, Pennsylvania, recently purchased a Scooby Doo portable train ride from **Ital-Resina**. The carnival had previously been given tentative approval; however, a couple of the board members had concerns about incomplete information contained in the ride manual, especially electrical power and grounding issues, particularly when used in an outdoor environment. No one from the manufacturer was present.

Tony Rossi, managing director of maintenance at **Hersheypark**, Hershey, Pennsylvania, gave a presentation about its fifth walk-thru haunt attraction at the park that is part of the Dark Nights Halloween



event. The Estate of Evil is located in the former Tidal Force catering pavilion across from the Tidal Force water ride. The backstory is owners of the brownstone residence keep disappearing. When a new owner takes over, they soon disappear as well. There is a live wait staff that comes with the haunt in the form of 14 actors, six "ushers" and two supervisors. The actors travel through the 13 rooms that guests will meet throughout their behind-the-scenes journey. Dark Nights also has three scare zones. One of the state's quality assurance inspectors visited before the haunt opening on September 13.

Founded in 1984, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Ride and Measurement Standards is one of the oldest in the country registering more than 800 amusement ride owners and 10,000 individual amusement rides and attractions annually.

The final ride safety advisory board meeting of the year is set for December 10, room 309, Department of Agriculture, Harrisburg.

•pa.gov

Hidden costs of cashless payments can eat profits

DALLAS, Texas — The post-COVID world appears to be a cashless one. However, by accepting credit and debit cards, attractions are faced with the reality of an increase in operating fees via the credit card processing companies.



Dickamore

"Different card processing fees — hidden fees, yearly/monthly fees, authorization fees, batch fees and review trackers — can make operators lose 40% of their revenue to processing fees alone," said **Jeremy Dickamore**, Embed's vice president of global payments.

With the increase in expenses, operators often feel the need to pass the costs to guests as convenience fees, presenting them with two pricing options: get charged a higher price for credit card payments and a lower price if they choose to pay with cash. Yet this business model only tends to recoup about 3% of the costs of accepting credit cards.

"Venues are better served by building credit card processing fees into the standard price," explained Dickamore. "Ninety percent of consumers prefer to pay cashless, and, when they do, they tend to spend more. Eighty-three percent of customers resent and stop visiting businesses that charge for their preferred payment method."

Embed offers free rate analysis consultation to help operators think twice to cut their losses and take advantage of the savings they might get from simply switching to another provider. "It's three times more expensive to handle and process cash transactions," added Dickamore. "So Embed is raising awareness of losing revenue from paying published rates instead of effective rates."



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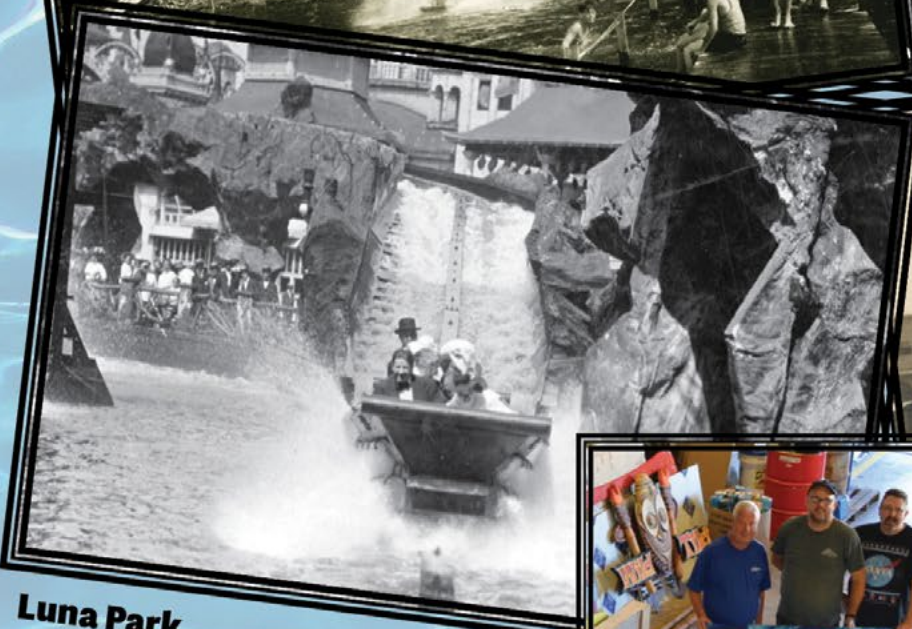


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