



2025 AIMS Safety Seminar on track for success, attendance goal

AT: Pam Sherborne

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ORLANDO — AIMS International, a world leader in amusement safety education, was finalizing its preparations for the 2025 AIMS International Safety Seminar to be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton at SeaWorld Orlando, Florida, Jan. 12-17, 2025. This is the second year for the seminar to be held here.

Amy Lowenstein, AIMS executive director, said they are on target to reach the 2025 attendance goal. The 2024 seminar saw an attendance of more than 800 including students and instructors.

“As AIMS continues to grow, we are encouraged with the level of support for amusement safety education,” Lowenstein said. “As the world leader in this space, the annual AIMS International Safety Seminar has become the premier event of its kind.

“At this point, we are seeing similar trends to what we have seen in recent years,” she continued. “With the addition of industry-leading programming over the last couple of years, AIMS has expanded its reach into Aquatics, Operations and Adventure Attractions. Additionally, AIMS has added new certification for Safety/Security and Risk Management professionals.”

The 2025 seminar will include more than 400 hours of educational content on topics ranging from maintenance and inspection to



The 2024 AIMS International Safety Seminar kicked off its opening general session (above) with record attendance with more than 800 on hand for the week-long event. The 2025 edition of the seminar is on target to exceed that total. Below is a look inside an educational session held during the 2024 safety seminar. This year, there will be more than 400 hours of content offered to attendees. AT/GARY SLADE



aquatics, operations, portable amusements, adventure attractions, safety, security, risk management and more, according to Eric Fluent, Get It Done Marketing.

“When attendees register, they have access to the full schedule to select 40 hours specific to their desired learning experience,” Fluent said. “Additionally, attendees have access to an app that enables them to network, search courses and track their personalized schedule.”

Lowenstein said they have added two new accreditations with the addition of an Inflatables and



Trampoline Accreditation.

“And hot off the presses is our additional level of the AARMSS certification,” she said. “Successful program candidates can now obtain a Certified Amusement Safety and Security Professional (CASSP) certification,” she said.

Still a fairly new program, AIMS created the AARMSS certification in response to

a recognized need in the amusement industry for specific and in-depth safety education and certification. AIMS International has created the Academy of Amusement Risk Management, Safety and Security (AARMSS), a structured curriculum designed to elevate your program.

Based on the following foundational pillars: Safety, Security, Emergency

Management and Risk Management, the AARMSS curriculum is specifically designed to educate and equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively manage an amusement industry safety, security, and risk management program.

According to the AIMS website: “AARMSS courses

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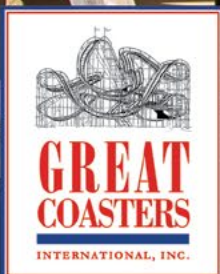
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AT NOTEBOOK: John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint

In other words, in it together



Robinson

I've been fortunate. I've been part of this industry since I was, quite literally, in diapers. And, while I've watched coasters get taller and faster as well as parks develop from pay-by-ride to season passes, I've also watched the industry behind-the-scenes grow and evolve.

More importantly, I've had a front-row seat as this industry's organizations grew from a simple method of sharing ideas between decision-makers to hosting massive expos and trade shows, becoming political influencers and even sprout into self-contained businesses.

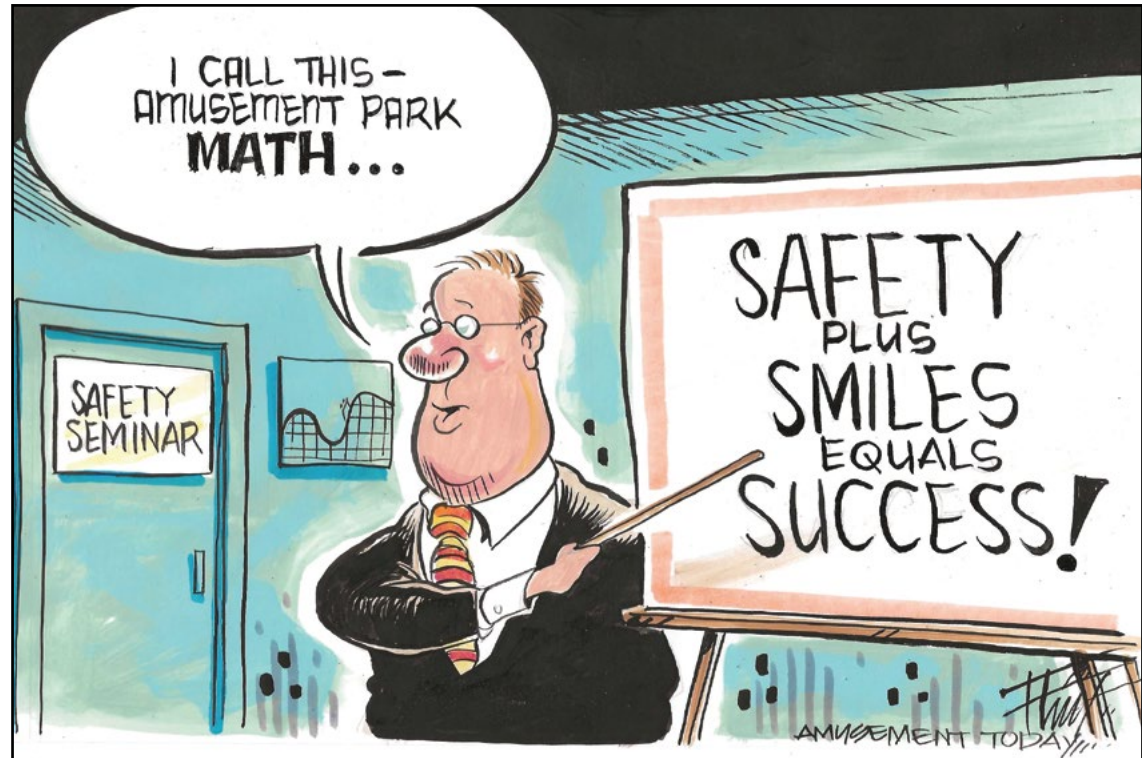
As they develop, parks and attractions have not really lost sight of their end goal and purpose: to make a business out of delivering smiles and memories to guests. However, the further industry associations evolve from their origins, I find myself wondering if they might benefit from refocusing on their beginnings and strengthening themselves by recalling the foundation upon which they were built.

At the recent IAAPA Expo 2024, amongst all the innovation, inspiration and flashy exhibits, I found myself aghast at seeing a ride manufacturer prominently promoting (and selling) a ride design that I knew had been created — literally imagined, engineered and marketed — by another manufacturer just a couple of years ago. I.e., one company stole another company's flagship ride. And yet, when this was pointed out to IAAPA, shoulders were shrugged and nothing was done.

Industry associations were built on the idea of sharing information, networking concepts and a gentleman's agreement to work together for the improvement and betterment of the industry.

During this time of year, I see AIMS International, Ellis & Associates, International Ride Training and NAARSO all work together with even more associations (such as NEAAPA, NWSC and PAPA) and companies to assure the highest level of safety training in the industry. The bottom line is, they still "get" it.

The larger associations need to keep their eyes on the foundation that built them and why they are in business. They are here for their members. They are here for this industry. They are here to protect that gentleman's agreement that keeps this industry working together. And they are here to protect our ideas.



INDUSTRY VOICE: Cindee Huddy, International Ride Training

A resolution that's worth keeping

I personally love the feeling of the New Year because it is an opportunity to have a fresh start! Reflecting on resolutions aimed at enhancing our lives, in the amusement industry one resolution stands out above the rest: the commitment to safety. Just like personal goals that often fade with time, safety initiatives can easily slip into the background amidst the hustle and bustle of daily operations. It's crucial to set concrete, actionable goals that not only inspire but also create a sustainable culture of safety. By embedding safety into the core of our operations, we can transform this New Year's resolution into an ongoing commitment that protects guests and employees alike while providing the ultimate in fun.

Our industry has the best in educational seminars; there is something for everyone. Encourage your team to stay informed about the latest industry standards and best practices by attending an industry seminar. By committing to continuous education, team members remain engaged and knowledgeable about



Huddy

evolving safety protocols. Most importantly take the applicable information and share best practices with the team back home. I encourage you to have a meeting with your team after any seminar to highlight the key takeaways.

Invest in ongoing training for each level of team members. Establish safety drills that include frequent operational scenarios in all departments or simulate emergency situations, enabling employees to respond effectively under real-life circumstances. Setting a goal of 100% participation for all departments in these drills can reinforce the importance of preparedness and accountability.

Regularly review and update safety goals based on audit findings, incident reports, guest feedback and evolving industry standards. Establish a consistent safety review process to measure compliance and effectiveness, ensuring that safety remains an integral part of your operations.

Happy safe and prosperous New Year! Let's make safety first so the fun follows in 2025.

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Give Kids the World Village, Morgan's Wonderland, National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives

2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Tim Baldwin

Holly Coston, NAARSO

When **Holly Coston** was brought onto the staff of **National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO)**, she was an immediate asset. She came to NAARSO with valuable experience and was hands-on from the beginning. She's a solid problem-solver and her coworkers have commented that she has helped them get out of jams when circumstances call. One of her greatest strengths is her connections. Her team members will quickly say, "She knows everybody." Her organizational skills are credited for advancing the organization since she came on board.

"I couldn't ask for a better ally," said NAARSO President **David Bertozzi**. He credits her with opening a lot of doors for him.



NAARSO's Holly Coston has shown herself to be a friend to many in the industry. COURTESY NAARSO

Title: Office Administrator.

Number of years in the industry: 30.

Best thing about the industry: Meeting all kinds of people, making friends and camaraderie.

Favorite amusement ride: SkyGlider — It's peaceful and I love watching when people get excited when they ride it.

If I weren't working in the amusement industry, I would be ... Working with children (they are the best!).

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Staffing.

The thing I like most about amusement/ water park season is ... Seeing old friends, watching families making happy memories, hearing stories about how long someone has been riding a ride and the history.

My personal thoughts on New Year's resolutions are ... Hmm, I don't make them.

The last movie I saw was ... Moana 2 with my grandchildren.

My Christmas decorations stay up until ... New Year's Eve.

The last time I held a newspaper was ... A month ago.

How much of your vacation plans for 2025 do you have planned out? None.

When it comes to pets, I have ... Two, Brutus (Shih Tzu Catan mix) and Tater (Corgi).

When it comes to snow, I say ... it's pretty to look at but not a fan of having to snow blow the driveway.

The biggest influence on your career was ... John Hinde.

Describe your bedroom in one word: Peaceful.

Going to the dentist is ... Stressful.

Which is more your speed: roller coasters or carousels? Roller coasters.

Friends are jealous of my ... Flexibility with my job and that I get to experience lots of fun.

Which topping makes the pizza a no-go for you? Anchovies.

My favorite part of winter is ... Sitting by the fire.

Which do you own more of: shoes or earrings? Shoes.

People are more apt to hear me sing ... Nothing, I only sing in the shower.

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

100 miles, two wheels ... one goal



ORLANDO — The 14th Annual IAAPA Charity Motorcycle Run was a success, raising funds to benefit Give Kids The World. Roger Berry (Ralph S. Alberts Co.) — shown above with Ryder, an eight-year-old pitbull — led the event this year, taking riders through the curves of Central Florida. Ryder enjoyed the event from the backseat of a Harley-Davidson belonging to AT's John W.C. Robinson. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



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▶AIMS

Continued from page 1

are unique to the Academy and cannot be found anywhere else in the AIMS International educational network nor at any other amusement industry educational seminar. The courses will be taught by subject matter experts from both within the industry as well as professionals from outside agencies, which specialize in the course topics."

Last year AIMS introduced the Advanced Weld Inspection and Welder Certification training class that turned out to be very popular. This class teaches advanced methods of weld inspections per **American Welding Society (AWS)** requirements.

In addition, attendees may take a welder qualification test per AWS D1.3-18 Structural Sheet Steel requirements. If successful testing is achieved, attendees will be issued an AWS Welder Qualification Record for future use.

Topics of the welding track include AWS Documentation, AWS Visual Weld Inspection,



The AIMS Safety Seminar is more than educational sessions, there are also multiple social and networking opportunities such as this cocktail hour from 2024. AT/GARY SLADE

Welding Processes, Welding Techniques and also AWS D1.3-18 WQR. Attendees will be able to perform an actual AWS D1.3-18 flat (2F) Horizontal weld test.

Attendees to this year's seminar will learn from world-class speakers, veteran instructors and the industry's top professionals sharing their expertise.

Tracks are developed in partnership with industry-leading organizations. They include:

- Aquatics in partnership with **Ellis & Associates**;
- Operations in partner-

ship with **International Ride Training (IRT)**;

- Adventure Attractions in partnership with **Urban Air**;
- Safety;
- Inspection I;
- Inspection II;
- Maintenance I;
- Maintenance II;
- Portable Amusements;
- Spanish Language; and
- Young Professionals.

Lowenstein feels a highlight of this year will be the keynote address being presented by **Jim Pattison Jr. of Ripley's Entertainment**.

"We are excited to have him join us to discuss the

importance of safety education, as he sees it not only at his facilities across nine countries but also through his travels worldwide in his previous role as IAAPA chairman," she said. "We are also looking forward to the AIMS Celebration night at **Fun Spot**."

The AIMS website's bio of Pattison stated: "Joining Ripley's in 1990, Pattison has held a variety of senior positions in the company, including operations of Ripley's attractions worldwide; now more than 100 attractions in nine countries, including **Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditoriums, Ripley's Aquariums**, haunted attractions, mirror mazes, arcades, sightseeing trains, family entertainment centers, mountain coasters, crazy golf, mini golf, illusion museums, traveling shows, **Louis Tussaud's Wax Museums, Guinness World Records Attractions**, and a **Great Wolf Lodge** resort hotel and water park in Niagara Falls, Canada. Pattison Jr. was named president in December 2007."

The typical week's schedule for the AIMS safety

seminar has classes running 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., beginning with the keynote address on Monday at 8 a.m.

Lunch is from noon to 1 p.m., Monday through Friday. Networking hour is 5 to 6 p.m., Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. AIMS Celebrates is set for 7 to 10 p.m., Wednesday. Exams are scheduled for 3 to 5 p.m., Friday. The Membership Meeting is set for 6 to 8 p.m., Monday. This is a members-only meeting.

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

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

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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Six Flags retires rides, announces additions — page 12 / Attendance down Mississippi State Fair — page 24

Efteling opens unique Intamin ride: Danse Macabre, rebrands area

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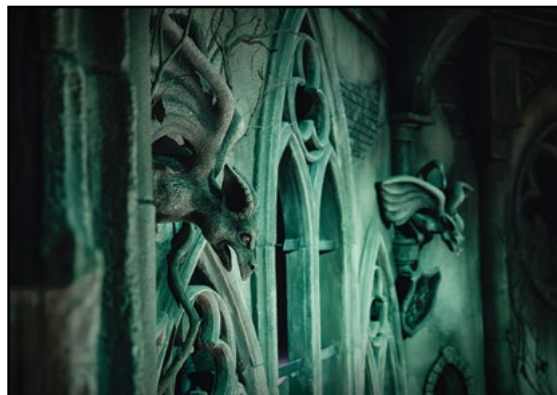
KAATSHEUVEL, The Netherlands — For decades, Efteling provided family-spooky fun with its haunted attraction Spookslot (Dutch for Haunted Castle). Built in 1978, the walk-through attraction was the first to be built outside the park's famed Fairy Tale Forest. The music, "Danse Macabre" by Camile Saint-Saëns (written in the 1870s), became synonymous with the attraction. Spookslot officially closed on September 24, 2022, as the theme park had bigger plans for the area.

On Halloween, the new area of Huyverwoud opened to the public with much to offer. The anchor attraction is now named for the music, Danse Macabre. The challenge for the park — with a 35-million-euro project — was to make it suitable for a wide range of demographics. The spooky atmosphere of the previous attraction is captured and enhanced in all new ways. In addition, new retail, entertainment and food options make the area immediately complete.

"It is the first time at Efteling that we are realizing a completely new themed area in one go, adding hospitality and retail in addition to a major attraction," said Jeroen Verheij, head designer. "The entire themed area has been designed with great respect for and inspired by



Danse Macabre is the only installation of an Intamin dynamic motion stage in the world (above). The 35-million-euro project is rich in detail (below) throughout the queue, attraction and new themed land. COURTESY EFTELING



the iconic building of the Spookslot Haunted House. I am proud that my drawings were brought to life so beautifully by all the skilled people involved."

Weaving in a new legend of an orchestra, along with conductor Joseph Charlatan, disappearing without a trace in 1876 during a music competition, there are numerous layers of mystery afoot. For generations, Charlatan's family

has questioned the disappearance, and as visitors roam the area, they can buy charms from the Charlatan family to protect them from what lies ahead.

The ride system for Danse Macabre is from Intamin. Called the dynamic motion stage by the manufacturer, it is the first of its kind in the world. Inside, an 18-meter (59-foot) turntable, has six smaller turntables incorpo-

rated into the larger circle. The ride is quite theatrical. Scenes, effects, animatronics and the music offer an eerie ambiance, as the entire platform rises and tilts. With the individual motion of the smaller turntables, a lot is happening during the ride.

"They were looking for an attraction that goes with their storyline with dancing and invited about 20 companies," said Gerard

Slenders, vice president, Intamin. "Then there was a short list of six, then a short list of three, but we came to them and said, 'We think we have something for you.' Then we had two brainstorming sessions."

The attraction is themed to a church abbey, with riders boarding church pews as their "vehicle." Each smaller turntable seats 18 per "choir stall" (in three rows), making for a full ride capacity of 108 guests. The hourly capacity is around 1,200.

To picture the ride experience, the ride spins like a coin before it falls flat. All the motion takes place as the room comes alive around the riders, making for all sorts of cool.

"We wanted to create an area where visitors could be frightened the Efteling way like never before, in the creepiest part of Efteling," said Koen Sanders, director of product, marketing and image, Efteling. "The whole area around Danse Macabre was designed with great respect for the old Haunted House, using some original or derived elements of the Spookslot. Everywhere you look there are creepy details that already put visitors right in the mood and bring them into the story."

The attraction is more than just the ride. The queue and thematic elements of the land make it engaging and immersive.

► See DANSE, page 8



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The six smaller turntables on the larger circular platform seat a total of 108 guests in a single ride cycle (above left). The largest orchestra assembled for Efteling was brought in for the recording of the music (above right). COURTESY EFTELING

► DANSE Continued from page 7

"After saying goodbye to the Spookslot Haunted House, we wanted to keep Camille Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre* musical piece and give it a leading role," Sanders told *Amusement Today*. "We wanted our visitors to actually dance to the music. With this in mind, we approached a number of suppliers, but none of them had an attraction that could achieve this. Intamin was working on something that could have the potential. So, we sat down with them to further develop this together. It would be a 'first,' but we were confident that we would take on this challenge together to create a completely new experience for our visitors."

"We had ideas from both sides. They wanted dancing and a platform. We did a platform 50 years ago with the *Drunken Barrels*," said Slenders. "We could do something with that."

"Despite the phases,

it is a prototypical ride," noted Intamin Executive Vice President **Sascha Czibulka**. "It has been working almost flawlessly since Day One. Even more important is that it has been totally well received from the audience."

Sanders said approximately 500 employees were involved in completing the project.

In an interesting move, the operator uniforms were created by piecing patches and parts from previous uniforms.

"The clothing of all employees working in the themed area and the *Danse Macabre* attraction will align with the creepy theme," Sanders said. "The clothing has been partly made from discarded Efteling uniforms that have been reworked and reused. This created a motley, worn-out look embellished with creepy details, tailor-made for the curious entrepreneurial Charlatan family. The idea of using thematic clothing in a sus-

tainable way came from the Efteling's Clothing Workshop."

The ride experience is about three and a half minutes. During the show, 64 speakers and hundreds of lighting fixtures help spin the tale. A surprise in the dark takes place at the end.

"The response was very positive, even beyond our expectations," said Sanders. "Guests are impressed by the ride experience of dancing to the '*Danse Macabre*' musical piece. They are amazed by the size of the area and like that the staff is adding to the storytelling and the creepy experience. They praise the level of detailing, outside as well as inside the attraction, and they are very happy that we paid tribute to the Spookslot Haunted House in many ways."

"It has a 9.5-out-of-10 rating from visitors," Slenders told *AT*.

Danse Macabre is for any brave mortal from 1.20 meters (47 inches) and up. The recommended age is 8

years and above.

"We wanted to ensure that all visitors can enjoy the whole area together as much as possible, including the exciting attraction of *Danse Macabre*," said Sanders. "Therefore, the 'waiting route' has been made as physically accessible as possible. Guests with disabilities can see in advance whether the attraction is suitable for them when they apply for a facility card. The attraction is accessible for wheelchair users with transfer; guests with disabilities must be able to walk a minimum of 13 meters and be self-reliant in case of evacuation. There is a special alternative experience for guests who are not eligible for this. In a special area, guests are taken through the experience of the attraction with images, sound and various show effects. This takes place simultaneously with the show, so the party can share their experiences together afterward."

Composer **René**

Merkelbach revived the music of *Danse Macabre* with an orchestra of 75 musicians. It was so large that not all of them could be in the studio at the same time.

"It is the largest Efteling orchestra ever! The wind instruments were, therefore, recorded separately from the strings, for instance, and the music was later merged," he explained. "Despite being a very well-known piece of music, we think we have some surprises. With this unique version, we pay tribute to the original Spookslot music. Connoisseurs and fans will certainly not be disappointed. Besides the attraction music, music for the guard tour is also included, including the mysterious music fragments you hear in the graveyard."

Another attribute of the ride is a project sustainable energy system that uses a heat and cold installation that warms the attraction without gas. The heat released while the machinery is in operation can be captured by the system to be used in other areas.

When experienced at night, the new area of Huyverwoud — with its cemeteries, forested setting and 65-foot-tall abbey enclosing *Danse Macabre* — the deliciously eerie setting makes for immersive atmosphere.

"Efteling did everything to get it really working on time," said Slenders. "Both parties [Efteling and Intamin] have thrown in enormous effort."



The Huyverwoud maintains the theming even within the toilet building (above left) and retail outlets (above right). COURTESY EFTELING



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Mack brings launched water coaster to Freizeitpark Plohn in 2026

AT: Tim Baldwin
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LENGENFELD, Saxony, Germany — Already announced for 2026, **Freizeitpark Plohn** has teamed up with **Mack Rides** to offer guests something beyond description. To call it a coaster doesn't categorize it properly as it also features two splashdowns. Water coasters exist around the globe — and are very popular — but the as-yet-unnamed attraction at the park is unlike any other.

The custom attraction features linear induction motors and a timed "high-five" element that banks riders in opposing boats toward each other as they pass. The ride will also offer several airtime moments and banked turns.

"We're using the water coaster boats we already have," said **Maximilian Roeser**, marketing, Mack Rides. "The LIM launch only requires us to get a metal piece on the bottom of the boats. We push the boats a little out of the water — but not by much — and launch it with the force



Freizeitpark Plohn's forthcoming water coaster features coaster track, launches and splashdowns. COURTESY FREIZETPARK PLOHN

of a Blue Fire coaster."

With the use of two launches, the ride stays relatively low to the ground, without a need for great height. This keeps the boats speeding through the ride's various maneuvers.

"The unique combination of high-tech, water fun and roller coaster is not available in this form anywhere else in the world," said **Jan Völkel**, junior manager, at the ride's announcement. "The action-packed yet family-friendly orientation of the major attraction will perfectly complement the diverse offerings of our park. It is no coincidence that we have once again specifically opted

for the trusted partnership with Mack Rides, and thus for a genuine 'Mack product.'"

Mack Rides installed its first Big Dipper coaster, **Dynamite**, at the theme park in 2019. Adding to the aesthetics of the ride, the installation of the ride will be primarily built over and within a lake. Roeser likes the numerous moments that the low elements touch the water.

"After the first launch and second launch, the boats will interact with each other," he told *Amusement Today*. "We are testing the LIMs right now. The layout always touches some part of the water to have

some sort of splash effect. It's a really nice interaction."

The boats will be timed to do the "high-five" element each cycle.

"New to our water coasters is this high banking," Roeser said. "In the olden times, anything we did was 40 degrees. Now we are going up to 60 degrees."

Even with the greater banking, the restraint system did not need to change.

Renderings show an observation platform in front of the ride's second launch, as well as a bridge that spans the lake. It will offer spectators multiple views.

"You can also look forward to the planned theming," added Völkel. "Here, too, we want to meet our own high standards for an elaborate design of the major attraction and also your expectations, in keeping with the location of the spectacular new feature at the ponds. You can be sure that this extraordinary innovation will be so elegantly integrated into the park structure that our park will not lose any of its natural charm."

As of press time, the attraction's name has not been released. While this attraction is under construction, Freizeitpark Plohn will add a new ride in 2025. A Wild Swing from **ART Engineering** will be placed in the center of the park, and its placement over the water will provide a mermaid motif. It seats 16 people in a back-to-back configuration. Designed for families, the dramatic swings provide butterflies in the stomach, but the ride does not flip upside down.

When the new coaster opens in 2026, it will bring the park's count to seven.



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Six Flags retires rides, announces 2026 additions well in advance

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — In November, just before IAAPA Expo 2024, the new **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** regime made a dramatic announcement. Contrary to the typical industry norm of waiting until the summer before to announce new attractions, Six Flags spilled the beans near the end of 2024 — more than half a year earlier, and a year and a half from when these new attractions' debut. Or at least teased them.

This announcement came on the heels of much online chatter about the closure of numerous attractions. Whether the early announcement was in response to any social media outcry is subject to speculation, but hints of the new installations included some very dramatic surprises.

Six Flags Great Adventure took the largest hit from social media with its closure of multiple rides. Two roller coasters, the stand-up **Green Lantern** and the world's tallest **Kingda Ka**, were on the chopping block. Fans listening to the online rumors rushed to get final rides on the 456-foot-tall roller coaster. Other rides will be removed, including the dual **Von Roll** skyway, **Intamin** parachute drop, **Huss Top Spin** and the record-breaking drop tower on the **Kingda Ka** structure. It was a lot for fans to process.

"We understand that saying goodbye to beloved rides can be difficult, and we appreciate our guests' passion," said Park President **Brian Bacica**. "These changes are an important part of our growth and dedication to delivering exceptional new experiences. We look forward to sharing more details next summer."

The optimistic announcement of a two-year, chain-wide \$1 billion improvement program was encouraging. **Great Adventure** has already



tested its new-for-2025 **Vekoma** super boomerang. Called **The Flash: Vertical Velocity**, it will debut in the spring. It was the tease of a 2026 attraction that whetted appetites. A new multi-launch roller coaster is reported to break several world records.

"As we continue to evolve, every new attraction is an opportunity to enhance the guest experience. With **The Flash: Vertical Velocity** debuting at **Great Adventure** this year, we're just getting started. While we can't share all the details about 2026 yet, it's clear that we're working toward something that will redefine adventure at Six Flags," Bacica said. "We're committed to delivering exciting new experiences while staying true to the traditions our guests love. With major plans ahead, we're focused on exceeding expectations and keeping our guests engaged for years to come."

Six Flags Over Texas got a little more specific. Announcing the permanent closure of **La Vibora**, the last remaining **Intamin** bobsled in the world, as well as the Larson loop called **El Diablo**, the area is being cleared for 2026. Six Flags has announced a record-breaking dive coaster.

"We're so excited to see **Spain** and **Mexico** expand in such a big way with the record-breaking dive coaster," Communication Supervisor **Melanie Stolze** told *Amusement Today*. "Just as **Spain** and **Mexico** brought **Texas** many of its cultural icons, the new coaster will become an icon for the thrill seekers of **Texas**. We can't wait for fans to see what we have in store."

Six Flags Mexico is adding a family thrill boomerang coaster in 2026.



La Vibora (above) was the last remaining **Intamin** bobsled in operation. It was manufactured in 1984. **Kingda Ka** (right) opened in 2005 as the tallest and fastest roller coaster in the world.

AT/TIM BALDWIN

merang coaster in 2026.

Six Flags Great America will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026. The former **Cedar Fair** (now merged as **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation**) has done a fine job on anniversary seasons at various parks in the last few years. In **Illinois**, the park will see commemorative events and a new children's section. This will follow the 2025 addition of a new **B&M** dive coaster, **Wrath of Rakshasa**.

Six Flags Magic Mountain will garner much attention in 2026 with the first-of-its-kind roller coaster. The park already boasts more coasters than any other park on the planet, so it is sure to be something special.

Also in **California**, **Knott's Soak City** will receive a water park refresh. The park opened in 2000.

Kings Island will debut a new family thrill attraction. In 2024, the park focused on families as well with the addition of **Camp Snoopy**.

"From world-class thrill rides to family attrac-



tions, **Kings Island** has always been known as an amusement park that has something for everyone," said **Chad Showalter**, regional manager, public relations. "Next season we're adding a new thrill, **RiverRacers** at **Soak City**, the only side-by-side dual racing water coaster in **Ohio**. And, in 2026 we will continue to balance our ride offerings with a new family thrill attraction. The details are still under wraps, but we know

our guests will love it."

In addition to new-for-2025 attractions, two parks will receive back-to-back years of capital investment. For the upcoming season, **Carowinds** will debut two family attractions: an **ART Engineering** coaster and a **Mack Rides** water battle. The recent release now reports that 2026 will bring a new record-breaking water ride. The park currently has no

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► **SIX**
Continued from page 12

water rides at all, although the new water battle in the children's area will tap into that. Of note, Carowinds does include the water park, **Carolina Harbor**. In mid-December, the park announced the removal of three rides.

"With the introduction of two new major family rides in 2025 and a record-breaking water ride in 2026, it's an exciting time at Carowinds. These investments speak to our commitment to providing a thrilling and fun experience for guests of all ages," said **Ashlyn Pechhio**, regional area manager. "We can't wait to share more about our record-breaking water ride, which will give guests an exciting way to cool down in the Carolina heat."

Also receiving a one-two punch is **Canada's Wonderland**. For 2025, the **Premier Rides** launched



A big loss to Von Roll fans is the retirement of the skyway (above). **Green Lantern** (right) is the second coaster being removed from Six Flags Great Adventure. AT/TIM BALDWIN

coaster, **AlpenFury**, will burst from **Wonder Mountain**. With the Six Flags announcement, the Ontario park will also install a record-breaking water attraction in 2026.

Projects already in place and under construction for 2025 include **DC Universe** (a **Zamperla** ride package) at **Six Flags Fiesta Texas**; **Siren's Curse**, North America's first Vekoma tilt coaster, at **Cedar Point**; **Georgia Surfer**, an Intamin

surf coaster at **Six Flags Over Georgia**; **Quantum Accelerator**, an Intamin launch coaster at **Six Flags New England**; and **Rapterra**, a B&M wing coaster at **Kings Dominion**.

Combined with the previously announced 2025 operating season updates, Six Flags is investing more than \$1 billion over the next two years. **Baynum Painting** will be painting a substantial number of coasters and attractions



in 2025. The updates also include new restaurant concepts and improved food and beverage offerings.

"Our capital investment plans for the next two years reinforce our commitment to providing unmatched thrills, immersive entertainment and lifelong memories to guests of all ages," said

Six Flags President & CEO **Richard A. Zimmerman**. "The new Six Flags has a unique opportunity to refresh and renew the guest experience, one so compelling that a visit to one of our parks will be viewed as an indispensable choice in family entertainment."

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Cimolai Technology making Top of the Rock truly exhilarating

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NEW YORK, N.Y. — Designing and building the first permitted amusement ride in the borough of Manhattan, New York City, New York, was just the tip of the iceberg for **Mike Teske**, senior technical and sales representative, **Cimolai Technology**.

The apex for Teske was to be able to design that ride enabling guests to revisit and duplicate one of the most iconic photos from earlier times in New York City, “Lunch Atop a Skyscraper.” That photo, taken in 1932, shows 11 ironworkers eating lunch on a beam 850 feet in the air during the construction of 30 Rockefeller Center.

The ride on the Top of the Rock called the Beam Ride, allows visitors to sit atop one of two beams that rise almost 13 feet into the air from the observation deck on top of Rockefeller



Center, which is already 70 stories high. It opened in December 2023. The beams are mounted on retractable poles. The two beams sit in an end-to-end design.

“Once in the air, the beams rotate 180 degrees,” Teske said.

The rotation offers guests a unique view of Central Park and the Manhattan skyline and positions itself precisely at the angle of the original photograph that ran in the



The new ride, the Beam Ride, on top of the Rockefeller Center, New York City, New York, enables guests to duplicate the iconic 1930s photo of 11 workers sitting atop of a beam eating lunch 830 feet in the air (inset). Manufactured by Cimolai Technology, the ride opened in December 2023. The ride is totally ADA accessible and its seats are designed to remain obscured for photographs. COURTESY CIMOLAI TECHNOLOGY

New York Herald-Tribune on Oct. 2, 1932. Over time, the photographer's name of that photo has been lost.

Tishman Speyer owns Rockefeller Center, purchasing it in 2000 for \$1.85 billion.

“They hired us to build the ride,” Teske said. “Also involved in the project was

The Hettema Group (THG)."

THG, an independent creative agency, specializes in uniquely creative design and production in the world of experiential entertainment. This company was involved in the creative direction, while Cimolai Technology was hired with

the actual construction.

The task of building the Beam Ride created some challenges for Teske and Cimolai Technology, but none of that couldn't be overcome by the Italian company that prides itself on provid-

► See ROCK, page 17

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► **ROCK**

Continued from page 16

ing special and innovative solutions for handling and lifting purposes.

Rockefeller Center was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1985. Because of that, Cimolai Technology had to work within some strict guidelines. For example, all the working technology and mechanics that enable the retractable poles to ascend and descend had to be adapted so that they didn't disturb the art deco ceiling of the floor under the observation deck. This gave the company approximately six to seven feet to work with below the observation deck to adapt the workings of the poles.

The observation deck floor is made from terracotta tiles. Some had to be removed to build the ride.

"But we replaced them with the same tiles," Teske said.

He said the beams and the retractable poles are

made from steel. The poles are covered with a wear-resistant color coating so that they blend with the beams.

Each beam holds up to seven passengers. The beams don't retract completely into the observation deck. They sit high enough above the observation deck to allow guests to be able to sit down comfortably. Teske said the ride is completely ADA-accessible.

Teske said he designed the seats and the seatbelts so that they are barely visible. This allows the photo of the guests to look like they are casually sitting on the beam like the 11 workmen did in that 1930s photo.

There is Plexiglas surrounding the Beam Ride on the observation deck.

The Beam Ride was awarded the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** Brass Ring Award for Best New Product in the Family Ride Attraction category during IAAPA Expo 2024.

The original photograph of the beam with the

The Beam Ride was awarded the Brass Ring Award for Best New Product in the Family Ride Attraction category during IAAPA Expo 2024. COURTESY CIMOLAI TECHNOLOGY

workers captured the imagination of millions of people when it was published, but any information that once was known about the subjects and the photographer was lost over time.

The Top of the Rock at Rockefeller Center opened an additional adventure called the Skylift. It is located on the 70th floor of the skyscraper on the observation deck where the Beam Ride is located. That adventure, which opened in October 2024, begins the moment the guests step onto Skylift's revolving, open-air glass platform, gently sending them three stories above the 70th-floor observation deck.

As the Skylift begins, a trio of illuminated tiered columns emerge from below and push the circular platform into the sky. Music



plays as the platform starts to rotate 360 degrees and make its way skyward. Skylift captures photos of each guest set against the backdrop of New York City's most famous landmarks.

Other features of the Top of the Rock at 30 Rockefeller Center include the interactive welcome gallery, multimedia shows in the elevator and theater and The Weather Room café and bar.

Tickets for the Beam Ride and Skylift can be added to the general admission cost and the Express Pass tickets. The attraction's operations are managed by **Ride Entertainment**.

FAST FACTS

- Located on the observation deck of 30 Rockefeller Center;
- Tishman Speyer hired The Hettema Group for the artistic direction and Cimolai Technology for the construction of the ride;
- The first permitted amusement ride in Manhattan;
- Two beams that seat up to seven guests each;
- Each beam rises almost 13 feet up from the 70-story-high observation deck;
- Beams rotate 180-degrees — offering a unique view of Central Park and the Manhattan skyline — positioning itself at precisely the angle of the original 1930s photograph "Lunch Atop a Skyscraper."



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Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
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Last month officials at **Gatorland**, Orlando, Florida, announced the opening of Sweet Tooth's Candy Store. The \$1.8 million specialty candy store features more than 60 varieties of specially crafted chocolates, confections and specialty candies, hand-scooped Hershey's brand churned ice cream, chocolate-dipped fruits, giant lollipops and bottled drinks.

To capture that perfect candy store vibe with Florida charm, the park, with the tag line Alligator Capital of the World, partnered with Virginia-based **Nancy's Candy Company**, Atlanta's **Macaron Queen**, and Minnesota-based **Abdallah Candies**. According to a news release, Gatorland wanted to spotlight family-run chocolate and candy businesses that share the same family values as Gatorland's owners, the **Godwin** family.

Along the coast of Lake Erie, **Cedar Point**, Sandusky, Ohio, has been a beloved amusement park in the region for more than 150 years. Memorabilia sharing that history is now on view in the **Cedar Point Historical Museum** within Downtown Sandusky's **Merry-Go-Round Museum**.

The majority of the items belong to self-proclaimed Cedar Point fanatic and Sandusky native **David Kaman**. Postcards, photographs, commemorative plates, banners and signage are just some of the items on display, not to mention an impressive collection of souvenir coffee mugs.

Holiday World & Splashin' Safari, Santa Claus, Indiana, will be celebrating its 25th anniversary of Free Unlimited Soft Drinks throughout the 2025 season. The park is launching an art contest for youth aged five to 12 to commemorate this milestone. Five winners will be selected by the Holiday World team, who will each receive two season passes for the 2025 season and inspire the artwork for Holiday World's 2025 souvenir cups.

The New England Aquarium in Boston, Massachusetts, is treating more than 200 sea turtles that have washed up on Massachusetts shores in critical condition. The turtles washed ashore during a week's span last month, stunned by the cold and hypothermia as temperatures have dropped.

The turtles are being cared for at the aquarium's Sea Turtle Hospital in Quincy, Massachusetts, less than 10 miles south of Boston along the Atlantic coast. Hundreds of cold-stunned sea turtles wash up on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, beaches each year.

Changing wind patterns and the drop in the water temperature cause many to become hypothermic, making it hard for them to navigate out of the bay.

Officials at **SkyPark at Santa's Village**, Skyforest, California, have announced the opening of a new attraction called the B Rail. Being touted as the first-of-its-kind on the SkyPark at Santa's Village website, the new attraction features a self-powered, single-rider mountain bike suspended on the park's historic 62-year-old Bumble Bee Monorail track. Designed to create the feeling of flight, the ride allows guest to pedal through the treetops and enjoy amazing views.

Bill Johnson, the ride's creator and park co-owner, was quoted on the park's website as saying: "For the first time in many years, the famous monorail track at Santa's Village is alive again. As a kid, I worked on the monorail ride, and as a grown-up, I've had the honor of reimagining it and bringing it into this timeline."

The historic **Loeff** Carrousel at **Riverfront Park**, in Spokane, Washington, is undergoing a digital transformation to restore its iconic band organ.

This effort aims to preserve the enchanting sound of the 1909 Loeff Carrousel band organ by converting its original punched-paper roll system to digital MIDI files.

The band organ, known for mimicking the sound of a 60-piece band, will soon utilize these MIDI files to digitize those rolls. According to a news story in the *Spokesman-Review* in late November, "The band organ has not been regularly played since the late 1980s when it was determined the organ would irreparably break if it continued to be used. The organ, which was made in Germany before 1900, has since sat silent while other music is played during carrousel rides."

A news story reported by *Philly Voice* stated that at a community meeting in Ocean City, Maryland, last month, **Icona Resorts** developer **Eustace Mita** revealed plans to include more children's amusement park rides in his proposal to build a 252-room hotel at the site of the shuttered **Gillian's Wonderland Pier**.

According to the news story, "The Jersey Shore hotel developer already had planned to keep and restore the giant Ferris wheel, carousel and wet boat rides from the former amusement park, which closed in October."

Mita purchased the land from the park owner four years ago. Mita's project has not yet been approved by local officials.

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First-ever Embed Connect Summit shares peer-to-peer knowledge

ORLANDO — Embed, set a new bar at IAAPA Expo 2024 in Orlando, Florida — holding an industry-first, "TED Talk"-style event for the FEC industry. The Embed Connect Summit was a testament to Embed's customer-centricity and commitment to layering value for members of the Embed family filled with peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and a cross-pollination of ideas. The event was held Monday, November 18, at Orlando's **Andretti Indoor Karting & Games**, a day before the IAAPA Expo 2024 showfloor opened up.

The event was designed to bring the industry's best FEC operators, mavericks and fun crusaders together

"The participants had different reasons for attending, and everyone enjoyed the fantastic keynote speakers, freebies from our Bonus Bar, breakout sessions covering tips and tricks to maximize their Embed system, all-day complimentary food and beverages, and the magic of networking with the industry's best of the



The FEC experts of Embed held the first-ever Embed Connect Summit during IAAPA Expo week in Orlando. The event was held at Orlando's Andretti Indoor Karting & Games and featured "TED Talk"-style sessions with Embed's Sara Paz (below left), Darren Ross of Service Freak Hospitality (below middle) and Amazon Web Services's Jeff Zable (below right). COURTESY EMBED



best," shared **Renee Welsh**, CEO of Embed.

Attendees learned from a wide range of topics,



including Creating "Popsicle Moments" with Service Innovations in Hospitality (presented by **Darren Ross**, TED Talks speaker and chief executive at **Service Freak Hospitality**), Getting Big Savings and Cutting Losses on Payment Processing Systems (hosted by **Mitchell Thompson**, enterprise sales manager at **Windcave** with Embed's **Jeremy Dickamore**), to Tech & Sociological Trends in Media & Entertainment, Sports & Games (offered by **Jeff Zabel**, strategic business development — immersive experiences at **Amazon Web Services**).



The cross-pollination of ideas and best practices sharing also covered how to leverage the Embed system with key strategies for revenue growth and cashing in on cashless with Mobile Wallet adoption-to-advantage journey, with **Sara Paz** (Embed's CMO and growth officer). Industry training and coaching icon **Beth Standlee** (founder and CEO of **TrainerTainment** and president of the **AAMA Board of Directors**) closed the grand event.

"The Embed family got to enjoy complimentary payment processing

consultations, free GoTrain staff training, limited-time offers on SaaS solutions, Embed eSHOP access and free game cards and wearables at our Bonus Bar," said Sara Paz. "This is all thanks to the dedicated Embed Success Squad — consultants, industry experts, payment gateway gurus, training professionals and SaaS experts — who painstakingly work to continue layering value to our solutions so customers can maximize their Embed system for transformational growth."

As part of the Connect Summit, the Embed team helmed the Embed Family Speed Networking session where operators rubbed elbows and shared knowledge transfer with industry giants like **Dave & Buster's**, tech partners and industry partners.

"It's the first Embed Connect Summit, and for their first, it was world-class with excellent speakers — an exceptional event! I know the amount of work that goes into these types of events, so 'Well done, Embed!'" shared **Bo Summers** of **Red Apple Bowling Center**. "It was a balanced educational Summit of info you need about the Embed system and digital tech market trends (AWS), and TEDx Talk speaker and service expert. And the focus was on me, the customer."

"We're so humbled with the amazing turnout at our first-ever Embed Connect Summit exclusive to members of the Embed family of FECs!" concluded Welsh.

•embedcard.com



Embed CEO Renee Welsh welcomed worldwide attendees from the FEC industry to the Embed Connect Summit. COURTESY EMBED

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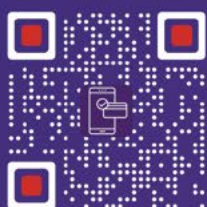
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Alterface introduces new service packages at Expo

ORLANDO — **Alterface's** booth at IAAPA Expo 2024 was nicknamed Alterface's Imagination Playground and offered a series of demos highlighting Alterface's constant innovation and commitment to client collaboration while showcasing its new, versatile service packages.

"With the introduction of our new service packages at IAAPA Expo 2024, Alterface is bringing the power to engage guests with interactive technology, cutting-edge experience design and immersive storytelling within the reach of more operators, producers and creatives," stated CEO **Stéphane Battaille**.

Designed to help integrate the company's latest technology and tools for immersive experiences, dark rides and walkthroughs, Alterface's new service packages provide options to support the experience design process from concept to completion. Customizable options in the realm of gameplay design, prototyping, technical support and ongoing maintenance help ensure clients can select the right Alterface services for their projects.

"By integrating our services during the design stage, clients can benefit from the company's holistic approach, developed to ensure seamless interactivity with the entire experience," added Battaille.

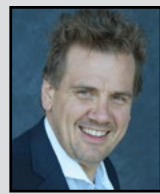
Alterface created its new prototyping service to take the guesswork out of attraction design. "We work directly with designers to determine the ideal experience for guests and then develop or modify the perfect technology to achieve that," said Battaille. Thorough testing, validation and a collaborative, iterative process help ensure the best solutions are implemented.

For clients just beginning the process of creating an attraction, Alterface offers interactive concept design, integrating interactivity from the very start into the many complex systems and elements. Successful attraction storytelling is built on the flawless connection between many dynamic systems, and Alterface's concept design services focus on bringing those elements together in a consistent way before a project moves into production.

These new service options are supported by several advanced tools designed to make creating and operating an interactive attraction even easier.

"We're continually expanding the range of tools available and honing our proven technology for ever greater efficiency and next-generation experiences," commented Battaille. "This is why Alterface continues to be a reliable choice for interactive technology solutions."

•alterface.com



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson
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Betson Enterprises announced the completion of a 75-piece game room installation at **Gametime Lanes and Entertainment** in Peabody, Massachusetts. This marks the second Gametime location that Betson has partnered with to supply games.

Led by Betson Sales Representative **Ray Borges**, the project was carefully planned to create a dynamic and engaging entertainment space tailored to the needs of Gametime Lanes and Entertainment. Borges worked closely with the Gametime team to curate a diverse selection of games that would appeal to guests of all ages and preferences, balancing a mix of virtual reality experiences, redemption games, and classic arcade titles. To further support the success of the arcade, the Gametime team participated in Betson Technical University — a comprehensive two-day training program designed to maximize revenue generation and minimize equipment downtime.

"We couldn't be happier with the incredible work Betson did for our new arcade at Gametime Lanes and Entertainment," said Steve Belmonte, owner and partner of Gametime Lanes and Entertainment. "Their team installed 75 games with precision and efficiency, transforming our space into an exciting entertainment destination."

Roller announced the company reached a major milestone when its customer base crossed the 2,000 mark. The software solution now supports 2,000 attractions around the world.

"To every operator who has joined us on this journey — thank you," stated Roller CEO and Co-Founder **Luke Finn**. "Thank you for the trust you have placed in us and for your partnership. Your feedback and collaboration are invaluable to us. We are absolutely committed to continually raising the bar through cutting-edge tools that make your life easier and help you grow your business."

Semnox Solutions announced it had received 1st Place in the **IAAPA** Brass Ring Award for Best New Product in the

Services, Equipment and Supplies category at IAAPA Expo 2024.

This year, Semnox's Parafait Classic Pro Kiosk earned the accolade for its transformative approach to ticketing. The Classic Pro Kiosk streamlines the guest experience by combining registration, waiver signing, and package selection into a seamless self-service process — eliminating long wait times and enabling a unified, efficient sale.

Designer toy brand **Superplastic** has unveiled its new attraction for **Area15** in Las Vegas — the Dopeameme Institute for Pleasure Research (D.I.P.R.).

Dopeameme — an experiential project by Superplastic — opened in Fall 2024 and creates vinyl art toys and digital experiences using its original characters.

Superplastic's first-ever physical location offers an immersive, story-driven experience. Guests are active participants as they explore mind-bending rooms, each designed to trigger a dopamine rush. During the 40-minute journey, they enjoy interactive visual, auditory and tactile experiences, and photo opportunities.

"D.I.P.R. marks a major leap in Superplastic's mission to expand our digital dreams and IP character universe into an unforgettable, IRL experience for fans," said Superplastic CEO **Jennifer van Dijk**. "Area15's pioneering success as a hub for next-gen entertainment provides us with a prime location, where we're inviting visitors to actively participate in a story-driven adventure that's as interactive as it is captivating."

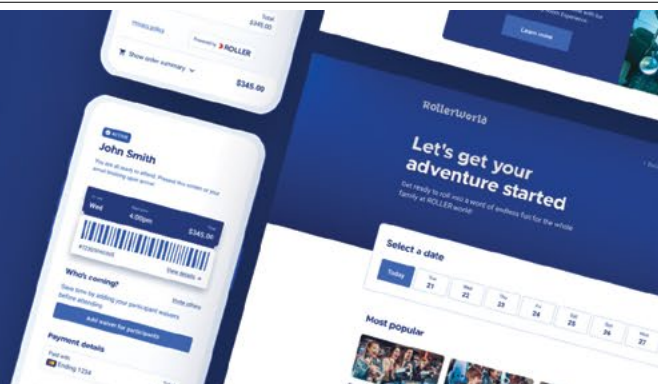
The Forge: Lemont Quarries is set to expand with three new outdoor activities in 2025, including an 18-hole miniature golf course, a nature-inspired Kids Discovery Zone and additional, enhanced yard games.

The Forge has partnered with **Adventure Golf & Sports (AGS)** and will begin construction this spring, according to a news release from the park. The interactive course is designed to cater to players of all ages and skill levels.

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Attendance down during 165th edition of Mississippi State Fair

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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JACKSON, Miss. — Attendance at the 13-day Mississippi State Fair was down by 3% from last year, with 506,952 people going through the turnstiles. This was the 165th edition.

“Although we did experience several unseasonably hot days during the first weekend, overall, the weather was pleasant throughout the fair,” said Michael Lasseter, director of the Mississippi state fairgrounds.

“North American Midway Entertainment (NAME) is thrilled to have returned to the Mississippi State Fair this year, bringing more than 60 exciting rides and a variety of games to the midway,” said Lynda Franc, corporate marketing director. “We aimed to create an engaging, family-friendly experience with attractions for all ages, including our KiddieLand and thrilling rides that brought excitement to the



mile-long midway. Our team worked closely with local and state law enforcement and the Mississippi Fairgrounds staff to ensure a safe, enjoyable environment for all attendees.”

The three most popular rides were the Sky Ride (O.D. Hopkins), Bullet Train (Pinfari Rides) and the Giant Wheel (Chance Rides). Making its debut at that spot was Down Draft (Battech Enterprises).

“North American Midway Entertainment is an outstanding company to work with. Their staffing and equipment are top-notch, and they handle any issues quickly and efficiently,” said Lasseter.

“We appreciate the support of Commissioner Andy Gipson and the fair organiz-



During the 13-day fair, 506,952 people went through the turnstiles, down 3% from the preceding year. The Sky Ride is always one of the most popular rides giving fairgoers a chance to see things from higher up. COURTESY MISSISSIPPI STATE FAIR

ers, whose dedication to safety and family-friendly activities aligned perfectly with our commitment to providing a memorable experience. We look forward to continued collaboration and to bringing even more exciting additions to future Mississippi State Fairs,” said Franc.

The fair is one of the larg-

est events in the state, offering a diverse blend of rides, food, exhibits, entertainment and agricultural activities. With the fair’s backdrop of the state capitol, it offers residents the chance to experience agriculture, often for the first time, through livestock shows, rodeos and various demonstrations. Within a

short walk, visitors can enjoy a free biscuit, watch a livestock show, see a sugar cane demonstration and attend a world-class rodeo.

Various promotions designed to generate traffic are orchestrated by the fair. Opening day, dubbed

► See MISSISSIPPI, page 25

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▶MISSISSIPPI

Continued from page 24

Mississippi Heroes Day, offered free admission for police officers, first responders, firefighters, healthcare workers, medical professionals and active military personnel. The fair annually hosts senior American day offering fun and entertainment for senior citizens. Activities occur in the Coliseum. Seniors are treated to coffee and muffins, and they can visit with vendors offering various services from insurance to healthcare. This year's special entertainment was **Ronnie McDowell**. The event was also attended by many church groups.

Traditional media including print, radio, television, along with digital advertising is an important component of their promotional mix. Advertising is also placed on billboards strategically located in high traffic areas across the Jackson metro area. Each year, the fair steadily increase its budget for online advertising.



With the fair's backdrop of the state capitol, it offers residents the chance to experience agriculture, often for the first time. NAME brought in 60 rides and a variety of games for the mile-long midway. COURTESY MISSISSIPPI STATE FAIR

Food highlights included chicken on a stick, taffy from the local family-owned-and-operated **Malone's Candy Company**, roasted corn, and the famous Mississippi State Fair biscuit made by the employees of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce. A favorite of fairgoers is the ribeye sandwich made by local cattle herders with the **Mississippi Cattlemen's Association** at the Beef Barn. One vendor also offered deep-fried marshmallows.

There were four days of national acts, along with local acts daily. National entertainers included **The Oak Ridge Boys, Matthew West, Ronnie McDowell and Dru Hill**.

Lasseter was asked about any employment challenges. "We have a mix of full-time and contracted staff. Given the fair's extended hours, it is beneficial to use contract help wherever possible."

NAME has their staffing needs figured out, as Franc explained: "As with many of



our events, we hire locally to support our traveling staff. This is how we've found to be the best way to address employment challenges, to find a balance between hiring folks that travel with us and providing job opportunities for local citizens of the fairs that we play."

Summing up the fair, Commissioner Gipson said, "The 2024 Mississippi State Fair was a great success. This year we adopted new technologies to make the state fair a more convenient and enjoy-

able experience for our half-million fairgoers. For the first time, fairgoers had the option to purchase admission tickets in advance, even receiving a discount when buying tickets prior to the opening of the fair. Fairgoers could also skip the lines by purchasing admission tickets at kiosks located at entry points, and they could easily load electronic ride coupons onto a reusable card, rather than having to purchase individual ride coupons. These improvements helped keep the lines moving so fair attendees could spend more time having fun with their friends and family and less time waiting."

The Mississippi State Fair is the largest agricultural event in the state of Mississippi. The fair draws visitors from across the country who stay in local hotels, dine in restaurants and shop at local stores. The economic impact of the 2024 state fair was estimated to be over \$30 million.

The fair returns later this year, October 2-12.

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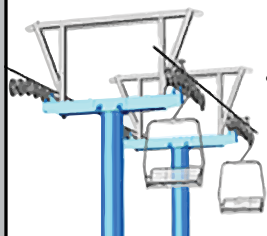


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MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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Ohio lawmakers approved a \$2.5 million increase for the **Ohio State Fair**, bumping its annual operating expenses up to \$19.1 million. The **Ohio Expositions Commission**, the state agency that annually organizes the fair, said it has observed inflationary increases in personal services, supplies, material, utility, maintenance and repair costs. In addition, it's short staffed, which the agency attributes to post-pandemic hiring slowdowns, leading to pricier outsourcing of its labor.

The commission operates the state's 360-acre site that hosts the state fair and the **Ohio Expo Center**, used as a convention and meeting hall in the offseason. It typically employs around 60 full-time staff, about 600 seasonal workers for the State Fair, and about 90 seasonal workers for non-fair events.

About 1 million people attended the state fair last summer.

The fairgrounds are undergoing a major taxpayer-funded facelift that began this year. The first phase of Gov. **Mike DeWine's** "2050 Expo" plan calls for razing and replacing most of the fairgrounds buildings to the tune of \$386 million, though the total overhaul could cost billions.

Expo New Mexico will find a new location for the state fair within the next few years, with the 236 acres it now occupies becoming a location for new homes, according to **Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham**.

"Those who have attended the fair recognize that we have outgrown the facilities and property here," said Commission Chair **Eric Serna** at a news conference at Expo New Mexico. "It's time to look at the growth of this fair to continue to be the best fair in the country, and under the governor's leadership and commission, we will move forward and seek the best possible options for the growth of our fair."

The fairgrounds site is state property. State, county and city officials must partner for any project regarding the state fair.

"We have made the decision preliminarily to ask for folks to focus on the center of the state... but there are a lot of spaces," she told the *Albuquerque Journal*. "Even though Albuquerque is a bit constrained, there are still plenty of opportunities in **Bernalillo County**."

"Third time's the charm, and I think we're going to do this right," **Mayor Tim Keller** said, referring to previous attempts to move and repurpose Expo New Mexico's location. No tentative dates have been set for breaking ground at a new location.

Filming of *Deliver Me from Nowhere*, about the making of **Bruce Springsteen's** "Nebraska," hit the Asbury Park, New Jersey, waterfront in mid-December. York,

Pennsylvania's **Majestic Midways** provided three rides for the biographical musical drama shoot: its **Chance Rides** Carousel and Zipper and its **Eli Bridge** Hi-5, 12-seat wheel. The film is based on the book *Deliver Me from Nowhere: The Making of Bruce Springsteen's Nebraska*, by musician **Warren Zanes**.

Rami Ratel, a principal with **Horizon Entertainment & Attractions** was responsible for lining up the carnival. Ratel was pleased with his experience with **Gotham Group** production company.

Jeremy Allen White plays the part of "the Boss" who visited the set in many of the filming locations. In addition to the Asbury Park waterfront, filming also took place at **Convention Hall, Frank's Restaurant & Deli** and the **Stone Pony**, which launched the career of Springsteen, **Jon Bon Jovi**, and **Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes**. Two of the three rides were there for one week, while the carousel will remain for a couple of months.

The film is set in the early 1980s as "Nebraska," Springsteen's sixth album, was released in September 1982. It is a departure from his usual sound.

The area has a long history with the artist having filmed the "Songs from the Promise" video and "Live from the Carousel" EP at the spot in 2010. The video for "Tunnel of Love" was shot in 1987 at the Casino, a concert venue, formerly adjacent to the Carousel House.

Deliver Me from Nowhere is being produced and distributed by **20th Century Studios** and **Disney**.

Due to the devastating effects from Hurricanes Helene and Milton, the **Circus Ring of Fame Foundation** is postponing its 2025 awards until next year. The destruction at St. Armands Circle Park, (a city park) Sarasota, Florida, local businesses in that area and the damage sustained on the plaques and circus wagon wheels were the reasons to suspend the event this year.

"Out of respect for the people of Sarasota, who have lost so much and are now focused on restoring their homes, reopening their business and recovering from the hurricanes' impact, we believe that all near-term efforts should be dedicated to recovery, repair and reopening," said **Bill Powell**, chairperson of the foundation, to **OABA's Showtime** magazine.

"During 2025, we need to fund extensive mitigation and complete repairs. Once we accomplish this, we can come together to celebrate," he added.

Organization members spent the end of 2024 and into this year restoring 160 bronze plaques that suffered from saltwater exposure causing delamination, fading and oxidation.

WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ FlowaPalooza returns to Epic Waters — page 28 / News Splash — page 28

Great Wolf Lodge opens its first resort in The Sunshine State

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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NAPLES, Fla. — Great Wolf Resorts Inc. held a grand opening on Thursday, November 14, 2024, of its newest resort and its first in the state of Florida. Among the dignitaries on hand to cut the ribbon were Great Wolf Resorts CEO John Murphy and former NFL player Rob Gronkowski who retired from the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2022. This is the 22nd resort for Great Wolf Lodge.

Great Wolf Lodge Naples has 500 family-friendly suites, but as with all Great Wolf properties, the key attraction is the 92,000-square-foot, climate-controlled indoor water park that is kept at a perfect 84 degrees year-round. The water park offers multiple high-profile water rides provided by ProSlide Technology of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. This lodge marks the 21st project in ProSlide's long-standing partnership with Great Wolf Lodge. In addition to the massive indoor space, this lodge also includes The Great Lagoon, an outdoor paradise that offers an all-around three-foot, six-inch deep water play area, with fountains and plenty of poolside seating for soaking up the sun. The popular Big Foot Pass, which challenges kids to test their agility as they cross a pool stepping on giant floating lily pads, using an overhead cargo net for balance, is duplicated with both an indoor and outdoor version. Also located outdoors is North Hot Springs, a large, luxuriously warm hot tub that provides an opportunity for guests to relax every muscle



and melt their cares away.

"As our 21st project with Great Wolf Lodge, the Naples resort really underscores the magnitude of our partnership with the Great Wolf team," expressed Nik Paas, ProSlide vice president, business development and strategic accounts. "It's a privilege to be entrusted once again with delivering authentic, high-performance water rides. We are all in, fully committed to supporting Great Wolf Lodge as they continue their tradition of creating unforgettable water park experiences for families and their packs."

Among the attractions in the Naples water park is Breakaway Bay, a five-person family raft Tornado 24 / BehemothBowl 40 hybrid slide with a configuration that is unique to this location. Multiple ride complexes offer a variety of slides to create memorable guest experiences. The largest complex features Rapid Racer, ProSlide's racing RocketBlast water coaster that has two-person rafts racing side-by-side. Other slides

include River Canyon Run, a Mammoth family raft ride; the TurboTwister mat racer Forest Flume; and High Paw Holler, a twisty body slide with a Flying Saucer 8.

In addition to the thrilling waterslides, the water park includes several family-friendly features commonly found at most Great Wolf Lodge locations, including Slap Tail Pond, a zero-depth entry wave pool with a maximum depth of five feet and gentle wave swells. Crooked Creek is a lazy river that winds its way under many of the slide attractions. Otter Cave Waterworks is a RideHouse 400 water play structure that includes four Twister slides and a 600-gallon tipping bucket. A smaller water play area, Otter Springs, is a RideHouse 100 designed for younger guests under 52 inches.

Admission to the indoor water park is included with a resort stay, however, guests not staying at the resort have the option to purchase a day pass. Availability may be limited, and passes may be restricted during certain

times of the year.

Although the water park is the signature attraction, Great Wolf Lodge Naples also offers many "dry" attractions and activities. Among the staples is Great Wolf's own MagiQuest which turns the lodge into a live-action game where adventurers set off on a quest utilizing a magic wand with special powers. At Oliver's Mining Company, kids can pan and sift through a bag of dirt to uncover minerals and gemstones. Ten Paw Alley is real bowling but designed to be family-friendly with smaller balls and shorter lanes. Unlike real bowling, no special shoes are required. Families can challenge each other to a round of miniature golf at the Howl in One Mini Golf course. For incredible electronic games, the kids will want to spend time at the Northern Lights Arcade, and when the kids get tired, the adults can move in as the arcade is open 24 hours. The Virtual Frontier offers a variety of experiences, including a futuristic game of dodgeball or a trek among the dinosaurs. The latest VR addi-

tion, MagiQuest: Powers & Puzzles, lets families test their Magi mettle as they solve puzzles, unlock powers and create magical mayhem within MagiQuest's Whispering Woods virtual world.

Howlers Peak Ropes Course has adventurous guests ascending to various levels, balancing on ropes, crossing bridges, climbing through obstacles, and even traversing down a curved rail zipline.

When it's time to feed the pack, there are plenty of restaurants to choose from. Great Wolf standards found in Naples include Freshwood Market with pre-made grab-and-go meals, and Hungry Wolf Food Hall which includes standby favorites, pizza, burgers, chicken fingers and more. Fireside, an outdoor-themed restaurant evokes the vibe of a warm summer's night in the woods and features fire-grilled specialties, including salmon, steak, short ribs and chicken. Timbers Table and kitchen offers breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets with several entrees and sides.

For snacks, guests can enjoy Woods End Creamery for ice cream and other treats or Dunkin' for classic donuts and coffee specialties. Adults can imbibe signature cocktails and local brews at the Tidal Wave Bar or head outside to The Outpost.

In the evening, just before bedtime, "The Legend of Luna" show in the lobby uses lighting technology, projection mapping, a video screen and special effects to tell a heartfelt fable about an adolescent wolf who longs to find her place in the world.

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FlowaPalooza returns to Epic Waters as tour stop

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — In previous years, Grand Prairie's **Epic Waters** indoor water park hosted the U.S. FlowRider Flow Tour competition, often serving as one of the prime stops of the tour. Prime stops have a weighted point scale, guaranteed prize money for the Pro Divisions and direct inclusion in the national tour standing for flow tour members. FlowRiders can be found at more than 180 water parks, resorts and even cruise ships all around the world.

Flowboarding, the act of riding boards on FlowRiders has become a popular sport and as with any sport, competition soon follows. Professional flowboarders have been traveling the country, promoting the sport since the first tour was started in 2006. For the past two years, Epic Waters hosted the coveted finals of the World Flowboarding Championship.

FlowaPalooza became more than just a tour stop. It was embraced by the city and expanded into a multi-day festival with live music, food trucks, multiple vendors, and even circus performers.

The only issue was that the prime stops took place in summer's peak season, and the heat took its toll on the vendors and the spectators. Sometimes it's just too hot to be outdoors in Texas. The solution was obvious — have the event later in the summer when the heat starts to break. During the last two years, the World Championship was ideal as it was held in late September/early October, but the World Flowboarding Championship likes to move to different cities every few years. The 2024 World Championship took place in Santiago, Chile. If Grand Prairie wanted one of the prime tour stops, it had to be held earlier in the season.

The decision was made to continue hosting FlowaPalooza, but not have it as a stop on the World Championship Tour. Instead, it was part of the 2024 Flow Tour, but it took place after the 2024 National Championship competition. The national meet was held August 24 and 25 a little further north at **Riversport** in Oklahoma City. This year FlowaPalooza took place October 26 and 27 as the final stop of Flow Tour 2024.

FlowaPalooza is the brainchild of **Richard Coleman**, CEO of **American Resort Management**, which operates Epic Waters as well as other facilities, such as the **Pump House Indoor Waterpark** at **Jay Peak Resort** in Jay, Vermont. The Pump House has also served as a host venue for previous flow tours.

Coleman discussed the event with *AT* and indicated it's still the same FlowaPalooza, but since it's later in the year, flowboarders can't use the competition to qualify for the national championship. However, it is still a tour competition, and there is prize money involved. After hosting two world championships, the city has solidified its reputation as a spectacular host, and boarders love coming to Grand Prairie's FlowaPalooza for the electrifying atmosphere.



NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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Developers in the country of Bahrain have started work on the first **Wavegarden** Cove surf park in the region. **Bahrain Surf Park - Club Hawaii Experience** will be located in Bikaj Al Jazayer, on the kingdom's southwest coast. Expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2026, the park is poised to become a major tourist attraction in the region attracting approximately 250,000 visitors per year.

The site will feature a surf academy, food and beverage outlets, a spacious terrace, a retail store, cabanas, events space and a large private entertainment area for corporate or school groups.

The Wavegarden system uses advanced technology to generate waves of different sizes, shapes and durations in a controlled environment, which makes it ideal for surfers of all skill levels. It can accommodate up to 90 surfers per hour.

The park is being developed by **Edamah**, the real estate arm of **Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company**.

Shaikh Abdulla bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, CEO of Mumtalakat and chairman of Edamah, said: "Excitement levels are high now that construction has begun on Bahrain Surf Park, featuring the Wavegarden Cove, which will be a game-changer for tourism in Bahrain. We are excited to introduce this world-class surf park to the region, offering an unparalleled experience for surfers of all levels."

"This development aligns with our vision to create unique attractions that showcase Bahrain's potential as a leading destination for leisure and entertainment."

In November, voters in Durham, North Carolina, have paved the way for a new water park — along with multiple road, sidewalk, park and other transportation improvements.

Voters approved two separate measures: \$85 million for parks and recreation bonds and \$115 million for streets and sidewalks bonds.

The parks and recreation bonds will be used for renovations at **Long Meadow Park** and **East End Park**, as well as building a large aquatic center across the street from **Merrick-Moore Park**.

The new aquatic center is set to include a lazy river, a waterslide, and multiple pools. When the aquatic center and the adjacent **Wheels Roller Skating Rink** projects are complete, the new complex plus the current park will comprise Merrick-Moore Park.

The park renovations and new facility additions are projected to open in the summer of 2028.

An inflatable water park has popped up at Singapore's **Changi Airport**. **Cosmic HydroPark**, a space-themed inflatable water park features six different attractions, a retail store for the purchase of swimwear, changing rooms and showers. Among the attractions are a large waterslide, an adult waterplay area with giant inflated floating rockers, a kids waterplay area and a water obstacle course with swings, trampolines, balancing beams, climbing towers and more.

The **Cosmic Hydropark** is scheduled to remain through February 16, 2025.

An airport may seem like an unlikely place for a water park, but Changi Airport is not just the primary hub for Singapore Airlines, it is also a renowned tourist attraction. **Jewel Changi**, a nature-themed entertainment retail complex linked to the passenger terminals, features Rain Vortex, the world's tallest indoor waterfall.

Other attractions include the slide@T3, a four-story dry slide that starts at the top of terminal three and goes to the ground floor; a butterfly garden; a sunflower garden; forest valley and two permanent swimming pools.

In December, Tampa businessperson **Tony Miller** announced that he had signed a deal to purchase a 35-acre site to build **Peak Surf Park**, a first-of-its-kind venue for Tampa Bay.

Peak Surf Park will utilize wave generation technology from **Surf Lakes** of Mulara, Queensland, Australia.

Currently, a variety of surf lagoons using different technologies exist, but Surf Lakes is perhaps one of the most aesthetically-peculiar technologies to date. A massive, steam punk, rust-colored plunger, with vapor coming out the top, displaces water and generates waves breaking in 360 degrees.

The central wave device (CWD) or plunger displaces water to create concentric swell lines. Surf Lakes uses a hydraulic/pneumatic system to lift and drop the CWD. Compressed air is pushed through a tube to lift the CWD, before releasing the air pressure and dropping it into the lake.

The process takes about six seconds and is repeated multiple times to create a set of waves. After each set, the compressed air recharges for the next set.

Surf Lakes currently has one facility operating in Mulara, Queensland. This will be the first installation of this type of wave-generation technology in the United States.



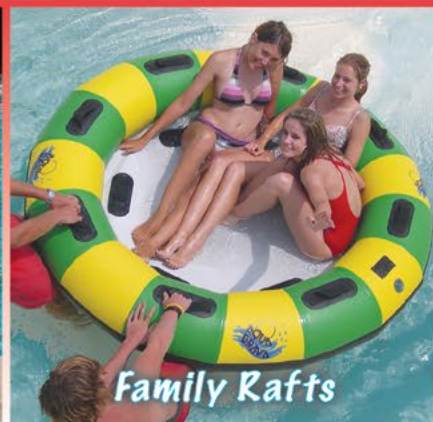
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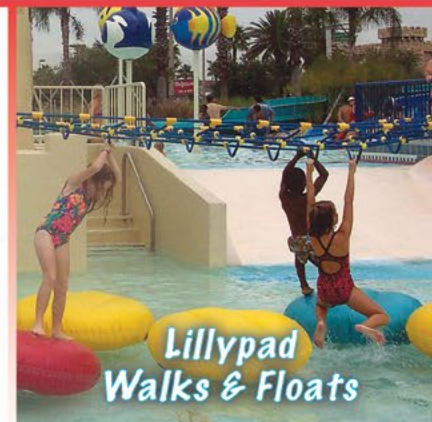
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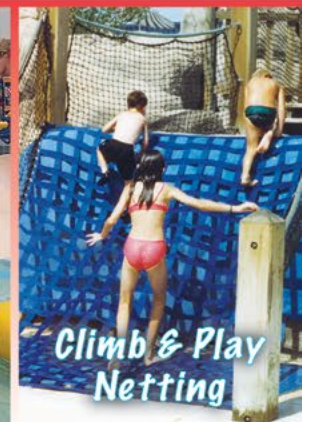
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Climb & Play Netting

BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Historian "Doc" Rivera passes — page 32 / Focus on the Horizon: Knoebels's Lauren Gedman — page 34

The Legacy of Schwarzkopf premieres as latest ACE documentary

AT: Tim Baldwin

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AUSTIN, Texas — On Saturday, November 9, a new documentary about the amusement industry had its world premiere at **Circuit of the Americas**, the world-famous Formula One race track.

Funded and produced by **American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE)**, the project is part of the organization's ongoing efforts to educate the public and support the amusement industry.

ACE approved the funding for the production of future documentaries in 2022, following the success of *The Legacy of Arrow Development*. The next subject to tackle? **Anton Schwarzkopf**.

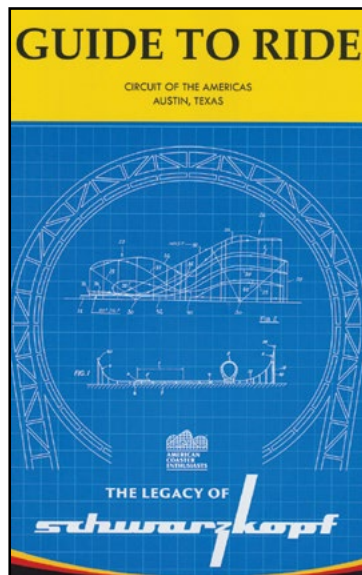
In the past two years, the crew has been diligent in their research, filming and interviews — not to mention the volunteered time.

"(We) had been discussing doing another film in the depths of the pandemic in 2020. After the *Legacy of Arrow Development* hit one million views, our conversations definitely accelerated," said **Kris Rowberry**, executive producer. "Filming officially began at Six Flags Over Texas in June of 2022; the same park that *The Legacy of Arrow Development* began filming back in June of 2015. The last day of shooting was in October of 2024 — less than a month before the first premiere in Austin. Our interviewee's schedule and the weather finally lined up."

In COTA's viewing hall, *Amusement Today's* **Tim Baldwin** welcomed everyone in attendance, many of



Amusement Today's Tim Baldwin moderated the Q&A with the film team prior to the world premiere (above). ACE President Elizabeth Ringas addressed the crowd and acknowledged the filmmakers' contributions (below). COURTESY JACK LATHROP; AT/TIM BALDWIN



whom had flown in from various states. In turn, he introduced ACE President **Elizabeth Ringas** who congratulated the film team on their accomplishments.

Following that, Baldwin introduced the film crew to the stage: Director **Nicholas Laschkewitsch**, Executive Producer Rowberry, Producer **Robert Ingle**, Producer **R.D. Dewberry**, On-Ride Producer **Scott Schaffer** and Narrator **Bob Randolph**.

Once seated on stage, the team fielded questions posed to them by Baldwin, which gave further insights into the making of the film.

Laschkewitsch noted that the new film was captured in 4K resolution compared to the first documentary, which necessitated a variety of equipment upgrades. (and storage space!) to make that happen.

"I am incredibly pleased with how the film turned out," Laschkewitsch said. "After

working on the project for years, I didn't know what to expect, but the reception has been overwhelmingly positive. We as a team have evolved immensely since we produced "The Lost Parks of Northern California" docuseries, which ultimately led to the *The Legacy of Arrow Development* in 2016. The amount of never-before-seen content in this film is staggering, with over 200 people contributing to the final product. Even Schwarzkopf

superfans are going to learn something new!"

"Timing production came down to two factors," said Rowberry. "Since this was an all-volunteer project, we had to balance time off at workplaces along with the operating schedule of the parks we wanted to visit. It was quite the balancing act to perform but made for many memorable moments on the road. Plus, we wanted to honor Schwarzkopf's 100th birthday, so finishing the film in 2024 was always our ultimate goal."

"Oktoberfest, simply put, is sensory overload," said Laschkewitsch. "The speed at which the German showmen operate their attractions is unlike anything seen in most the rest of the world. Knowing of Olympia Looping since I was a little kid, it was incredibly surreal to witness the coaster with my own eyes. Getting the chance to film and ride it was a true honor."

Prior to the start of the film, Ringas returned to the stage to auction off the No. 1 blueprint of a nomadic Schwarzkopf Wildcat which now operates at **Adventure Park USA** (Monrovia, Maryland). After a fierce back-and-forth tug-of-war, *Amusement Today* Publisher **Gary Slade** shut the proceedings down with a bid of \$1,000.

Then the lights dimmed, and the audience members were the first to witness the completed project. For 80 minutes, two years of work was wonderfully edited into Schwarzkopf's story. It was

► See LEGACY, page 31

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► **LEGACY**
Continued from page 30

exciting to see the legendary designer/manufacturer celebrated, and at the same time, heartbreaking to see several of his creations that have been lost to time.

Many images and pieces of footage were seen for the first time, some of which were provided by Schwarzkopf's family. *The Legacy of Schwarzkopf* captured his roots and his rise to creating some of the most marvelous devices — both coasters and flat rides. The film is a deep dive into the master's career, sometimes sprinkled with anecdotes and humor.

Several interviews featured contributions from Anton's son, **Weiland Schwarzkopf**, and Europa-Park Founder **Roland Mack**, who gave the project a spark of German authenticity.

"It was beyond humbling to know that all of the hard work the team went

through to bring this story to life was so greatly appreciated," said Rowberry.

But the night wasn't over yet. Circuit of the Americas — and its under-construction **COTALand** — is home to a 45-meter Schwarzkopf Wildcat. Named Texas Wildcat in Austin, it gave its first rides in December of 2021, and what could be more fitting than for people to leave the media venue and drive their cars close to the only remaining Wildcat model of this size? (Wildcats came in three sizes; the meter length refers to ground size, not height.)

Matt Hughey, vice president of operations, COTALand, found the venue to be an ideal host with the coaster on site.

"Personally, having ridden several of Schwarzkopf coasters and noncoaster rides, I believe Anton's creations are still some of the best rides on the planet," he said. "Because of my appreciation for Schwarzkopf, having the



Following the screening, attendees were able to ride an authentic Schwarzkopf coaster at Circuit of the Americas. AT/TIM BALDWIN

opportunity to host the premiere was a great honor and a wonderful chance to allow more people to see COTA and what our team can do when hosting an event."

For more than an hour, people enjoyed the smooth and graceful Texas Wildcat.

"The film captured the spirit of Anton and his vision of what he wanted for families and our industry," he added. "I was moved by the audience's roller coaster of emotions, and I saw smiles,

a few tears but overall, just an appreciation for Anton."

The coaster is open for special events. When construction of COTALand is complete, the Schwarzkopf coaster will be a part of the theme park.

"Owning a piece of history (The Texas Wildcat) is very prideful to me," Hughey told *Amusement Today*. "The Texas Wildcat is over 50 years old and still delighting guests. I often stand around the queue line listening to the guests. It's a little coaster, but as they exit

the ride, the opinion changes to 'Wow, that packs a punch, it's so smooth, let's ride it again!' This brings a smile to my heart. After all these years Anton is still winning them over, ride after ride."

ACE's latest documentary has begun its role in educating both the membership and the public at large on the amazing contributions Schwarzkopf made to the amusement industry. A second showing was made during IAAPA Expo 2024. After additional viewings in 2025, the film will be made available online, just as *The Legacy of Arrow* is today.

"Over the course of 60 days, and over 500 hours at the edit desk, the film came together" Laschkewitsch said. "When I first watched the completed documentary, it became very obvious to me how much we as a team had improved since the last project."

Anton Schwarzkopf was inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame in 1993.

J&J Foods showcases new Icee cotton candy



ORLANDO — IAAPA Expo grouped many edible offerings in the "Food & Beverage Pavilion" area of the trade show floor. J&J Snack Foods had lines of people to sample various goodies, whether it be funnel cake fries, frozen ICEEs or Slush Puppies, pretzel bites and more. The venerable Dippin' Dots dished up a new Cookie Monster flavor, and the innovation of Dot-chos was nothing short of creative brilliance. But a particular machine also drew spectators. A new self-service cotton candy machine (above left) made onlookers watch the automated process that took place behind a window of the machine. Customers can design their treat made-to-order using Icee flavors and choosing from multiple shapes — hearts, balloons, flowers, etc. As the creation is spun to life, the buyer watches the creation form through its many flavored layers and cut into shape. Once finished, it flips to another window where the customer can remove the colorful snack (above right). The machine is turnkey and easy for operators to add to their concessions. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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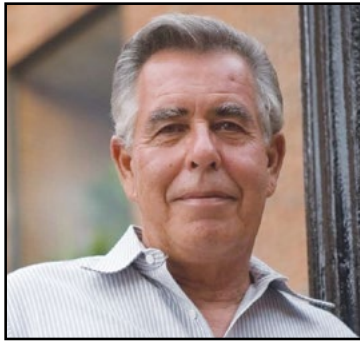
OBITUARY

Showmen historian "Doc" Rivera passes

RIVERVIEW, Fla. — David "Doc" Cooksey Rivera — a talented artist, historian, showman and Mason — passed away at his home on December 14, 2024, at the age of 77.

Born on September 28, 1947, in San Diego, California, Rivera lived a life as full and colorful as the carnival murals he painted. His early years were shaped by the steadfast love of his grandparents, who raised him until he was 12. Afterward, he briefly stayed with an uncle in Indiana, where a basement filled with circus billboards sparked his lifelong passion for the carnival world. At a young age, Rivera discovered a "new language" in those vibrant advertisements, charting the course for his future and fueling a dream that would take him across every state, many countries and oceans.

A veteran and voracious reader, Rivera was a man of



David "Doc" Cooksey Rivera

endless curiosity, intellect, and adventure.

Rivera was a dedicated Freemason and was also a passionate historian and artist, known for his large-scale murals and, as the executive director of the International Independent Showmen's Museum, where he preserved and celebrated the history of the outdoor amusement business. Over his 14 years in the role, he also wrote numerous articles and was nearly finished with a three-part documentary on the American carnival, solidifying his leg-

acy as a chronicler of this vibrant piece of Americana. His wife Debbie plans to finish the documentary in his honor.

"Dedicating a lifetime of service to the carnival and circus industries, Doc was a veritable walking encyclopedia, spanning knowledge from the earliest inception to the current modern-day workings of both industries," offered Sandy Arnold of the International Independent Showmen's Association. "His displays literally brought the walls and showcases to life. He worked tirelessly giving tours, researching grants and creating a social media platform where he so vividly composed colorfully descriptive articles accounting the industry's history, all the while touting the museum's mission; to love and preserve accurately the history of traveling carnivals and circuses."

ON THE MOVE

Merlin Entertainments announced that Chief Executive Officer **Scott O'Neil** has informed the board that he has accepted another opportunity. He is standing down from Merlin effective at the end of 2024. **Fiona Eastwood**, chief operating officer, will serve as interim CEO while the chairman and board conduct an orderly process to identify a successor.

During his time in the role, O'Neil oversaw several milestone achievements for the business, including the recent announcement of Merlin's partnership with **Minecraft** to bring the world's best-selling game to life in the real world, with the first permanent physical experiences at locations in the U.K. and U.S., and positioned the company for continued success.

"Scott has led Merlin Entertainments with passion and dedication, and I would like to thank him for his service to this company," stated **Roland Hernandez**, chairman of Merlin Entertainments. "We wish him well in all his future endeavours."



O'Neil

Indoor Active Brands — home to **Altitude Trampoline Park**, **The Pickle Pad** and **Crave Social Eatery** — has announced key senior management appointments to accelerate growth of their multi-brand concepts.

Chris Kuehn, a more-than-30-year franchise industry veteran, has been named president of Indoor Active Brands. Joining Altitude in May of 2024 as Chief Operating Officer, Kuehn oversaw marketing, operations and technology.

Among other key appointments, **Sean Naughton**, a 20-year family entertainment finance executive, has been named chief financial officer.



Kuehn

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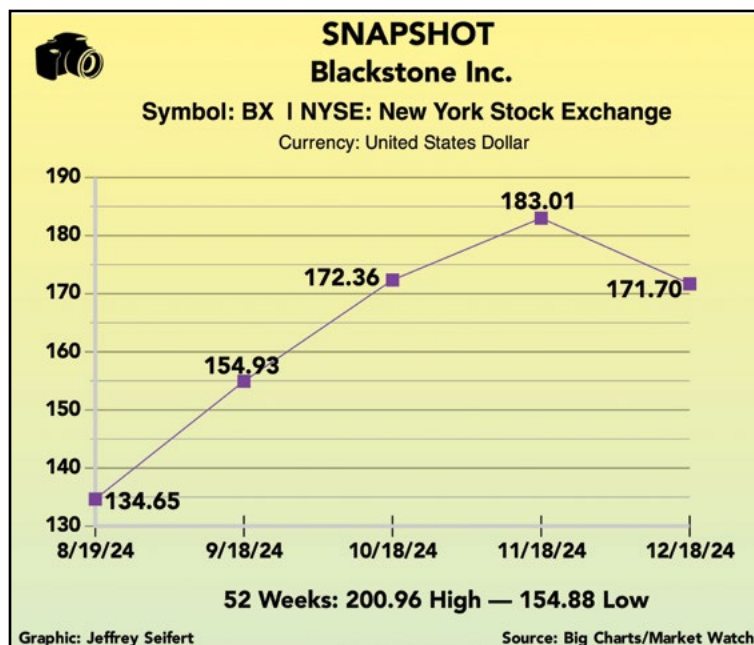
MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 12/19/24	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	168.91	200.96	114.88
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	37.40	47.11	36.43
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	26.20	69.82	25
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	43.17	50.26	39.65
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	8.93	13.25	5.85
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	2236.00	4835.00	2186.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.63	1.04	0.39
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	18.00	22.45	16.30
Lucky Strike Entertainment Corp	LUCK	NYSE	10.23	15.47	9.70
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	33.44	48.25	33.28
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.40	0.61	0.31
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	230.76	258.70	113.10
Six Flags Entertainment Corp.	FUN	NYSE	46.40	58.70	35.93
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	648.00	770.00	630.00
United Parks & Resorts Inc.	PRKS	NYSE	53.62	60.83	44.72
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	111.37	123.74	83.91
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	10.49	12.70	6.64
SUPPLIERS/OTHERS					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	150.50	205.50	108.50
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1226.00	1852.00	1122.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	7.29	16.89	7.25

Details and information available at amusementtoday.com/stocks

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

—SOURCES: Bigcharts.com



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 12/16/24	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.575	(\$0.394)
Midwest	\$3.450	(\$0.356)
Gulf Coast	\$3.190	(\$0.379)
Mountain	\$3.357	(\$0.576)
West Coast	\$3.726	(\$0.427)
California	\$4.597	(\$0.634)

CURRENCY

On 12/19/24 \$1 USD =

0.9552	EURO
0.7887	GBP (British Pound)
153.87	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8945	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.5875	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.4343	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Sydney's Luna Park has a new owner

PROVO, Utah — **Luna Park** of Sydney, Australia, has a new owner. Hospitality operator **Oscars Group** has acquired the landmark site in one of the Harbour City's most closely watched property deals of 2024.

While the final price for the amusement park is undisclosed, it was listed in June for about \$70 million, and included the business operations, buildings and long-term lease arrangements. The deal marks the end of Brookfield's ownership, which began when the Canadian investment firm acquired Multiplex in 2007.

Oscars Group, which manages 43 properties including resorts, hotels and pubs across Australia's eastern seaboard, secured the property against what Oscars Group managing director **Bill Gravanis** states is significant domestic and international competition.

"It is an iconic waterfront landmark on the best harbour in the world that presents a great opportunity for the Oscars business," Gravanis said. "Our goal is to further establish Luna Park as a top-five tourist destination for visitors, while also promoting it as an entertainment precinct for Sydneysiders."

Bowlero Corp. rebrands as Lucky Strike

RICHMOND, Va. — **Bowlero Corporation** has been rebranded to **Lucky Strike Entertainment**, effective December 12, 2024. This change reflects the company's evolution and commitment to offering a broader range of entertainment experiences, expanding beyond traditional bowling and positioning Lucky Strike Entertainment as a premier entertainment destination. As a part of this rebrand, Bowlero Corporation will also change its legal name to Lucky Strike Entertainment Corporation and its stock ticker symbol from NYSE: BOWL to NYSE: LUCK, further emphasizing the brand's evolution.

"The rebrand to Lucky Strike Entertainment represents more than a name change; it's a commitment to creating dynamic, all-encompassing entertainment experiences for a wide range of guests," said **Thomas Shannon**, founder, chairman, and CEO of Bowlero Corp. "As Bowlero Corp. continues to expand into new entertainment verticals, we recognize the need for a brand that reflects the full scope of our offerings. This positions the company to embrace a more diverse range of experiences and firmly establishes our future, furthering our leadership in the entertainment landscape."

Gateway Ticketing receives honor

GILBERTSVILLE, Pa. — **Gateway Ticketing Systems** announced its inclusion in the 2024 Best Places to Work in Pennsylvania list, ranked 30th in the medium employer category. This recognition highlights Gateway's ongoing commitment to fostering a supportive workplace that values collaboration, growth, and employee well-being.

The Best Places to Work in Pennsylvania program celebrates companies prioritizing workplace excellence. The selection process involved a thorough review of employee feedback on workplace culture, professional development opportunities, and overall satisfaction, alongside an evaluation of company policies and practices. Gateway's recognition reflects its efforts to create an environment where employees feel valued and supported.

"This honor reinforces the importance we place on building a culture of care, innovation and teamwork," said **Michael Andre**, president and CEO of Gateway Ticketing Systems, Inc. "While we continue to navigate challenges and adapt, our goal remains to provide an environment where our team members can succeed and contribute meaningfully to our shared mission."

Focus on the HORIZON

People management is no game

ELYSBURG, Pa. — It was proximity and friendship that first brought Lauren Gedman to Knoebels Amusement. “Our house was only eight minutes from the park,” she shared. “I drove past it every day on the way to school.” As a teen, getting a summer job at Knoebels was an easy decision to make. “My friends and I wanted to work someplace together, so we went to the park. I started out in food service, and while I enjoyed being a part of the team, meeting guests and working with my friends, when I was offered the opportunity to come back the next season as a games operator, I accepted the offer and loved every part of the department. It was where my heart was and where I belonged in the park.”

I remained with games and grew in experience and title, becoming games supervisor and then assistant manager while remaining a seasonal team member all through high school and college.”

Gedman graduated from Bloomsburg University with a degree in business management, and as the saying goes, timing is everything. “My manager in the games department was moving to another department in the park and encouraged me to apply to backfill her role. Full-time positions at Knoebels are hard to earn. I jumped at the chance.”

“I’m an introvert at heart,” Gedman continued. “However, I loved working in the games department. I never thought I would have the opportunity to not only remain in the department full-time but also run it. It was an exciting challenge and gave me the chance to push myself even further.” As a new manager, she also found a new circle and group of colleagues to work with and learn from. “When I worked in the games department, it was my singular focus; we were always focused on creating positive guest interaction and special moments with our guests. The move into

management gave me the chance to now work with other department managers and learn more about our entire business.”

Gedman also began to look at ways to make her department more efficient and successful, for her team members and the park’s guests. “Because I worked as a games operator for so many seasons, I knew what pressure points could cause stress for the team. I thought about the things that sometimes caused conflict or impacted our jobs. I brought that perspective and insight with me when I was promoted and set out to make positive adjustments that could fix those things. I came into an amazing department, with a strong foundation, but I also knew Knoebels trusted me to help the games area improve. Along with my experience and insight, I also listened. I listened to my new seasonal team members and asked what their pain points were. From there, as I got to know the other park department managers better, I asked for their best practices. I put it all together for the Knoebels games department and for our team members.”

Gedman pointed to the off-season as a time when connections with her fellow manager peers as one of her favorites. She said she learned from their experiences and perspectives while getting a better understanding of the entire park picture and overall business. “It’s in the off-season when the department heads all work together most. Yes, we are often decorating for Hallo-Fun or Joy Through the Grove, but we are also sharing, listening and connecting. I asked questions about their areas, their scheduling techniques and more. Their advice has helped with every step in my career path at Knoebels.”

In 2024, Gedman made the step from the front of the house to focus exclusively on the park’s team members. “I had worked in roles that focused on connecting team members with guests and

Lauren Gedman Knoebels Amusement Resort Elysburg, Pennsylvania



creating great interactions. When I moved to Human Resources, I began to extend those connections more by directly supporting and advocating for our team members. In HR we interact with every team member in the park. They are responsible for making our guests happy, and now I’m responsible for helping them so they can make those memories for others.”

Gedman said that her education continues, too. Today, she looks outside her daily role to better understand human resources and hiring trends. “One person calling off from a shift can determine if a game is open for our guests,” she said. “Several people calling off could mean a whole shop or restaurant may not be able to open. I want our team members to want to be at the park. By focusing on them, and advocating for them, I am also helping our overall guest experience.”

“During IAAPA Expo I attended a seminar that shared as of 57% of a company’s employees can be considered ‘disengaged’ — mean-

ing they just show up, do the job and leave,” she continued. “That number has stuck with me. As we prepare to open for the 2025 season, I am challenging myself to create and implement programs and ideas to help our team members feel connected to their jobs and enjoy what they are doing more than ever. That will translate to our guests’ satisfaction as well.”

An early quote from her first day as a Knoebels employee guides Gedman with each interaction at the park, be it a guest or fellow team member. “During orientation, our trainer shared the quote, ‘People will forget what you said or did, but they will always remember how you made them feel.’ We work in an industry that creates happiness for others. When our guests come to Knoebels they won’t remember each person they engaged with, but we do want them to remember the fun they had and how they felt during their visit. I’m proud to be a part of that.”

—Susan Storey

SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► E&A showcases EAVS technology — page 38 / Great Coasters updates Morey's Piers's Great White — page 52

Amusement industry safety innovators spotlighted at IAAPA Expo

AT: David Fake
dfake@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO — IAAPA Expo 2024 was held November 18-22 at the Orange County Convention Center and welcomed over 42,000 professionals from the global amusement and attractions industry. With more than 1,200 exhibitors showcasing groundbreaking products and services, this year's expo highlighted a growing emphasis on safety innovations across the sector.

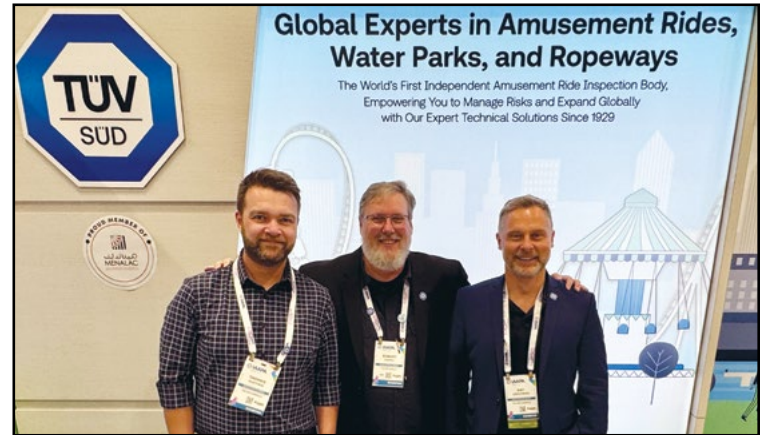
Of the exhibitors, over 150 companies focused on safety-related solutions aimed at enhancing ride maintenance, operational security and guest protection. Industry professionals were able to connect with leading suppliers and explore cutting-edge advancements in safety. Several key exhibitors provided highlights on their latest offerings.

Audio Innovators, Inc. demonstrated its advanced communication systems designed to improve safety protocols through reliable public address and emergency announcement solutions. Its weatherproof systems ensure clarity in critical situations while customizable soundscapes enhance guest experiences.

AIMS International emphasized its commitment to training and certification programs that ensure operational excellence and safety compli-



Representatives from PPG highlighted the importance of safety coatings and surface treatments for amusement park attractions (above left). The team from TÜV SÜD discussed their extensive safety inspection and certification services for amusement rides, water parks and ropeways (above right). Lars Koch, vice president at Eworks Pro (below left), demonstrated the company's advanced lighting systems tailored to enhance safety and ambiance for amusement parks. The AIMS International team members (below right) showcased the group's cutting-edge training and certification programs aimed at maintaining safety standards across the amusement industry. AT/DAVID FAKE



ance. The organization's new online courses allow professionals to access flexible and comprehensive learning opportunities.

KettenWulf showcased their durable precision-engineered chains critical for the smooth operation of roller coasters and conveyor systems. Built for extreme conditions, its chains prioritize reliability and safety under high-stress scenarios.

KumbaK, a leader in ride control technology, unveiled its latest safety

monitoring systems featuring real-time diagnostics and remote monitoring capabilities. The company's innovations in redundancy protocols offer operators unparalleled assurance in ride performance.

Maclan Corporation introduced a range of state-of-the-art components including polyurethane wheels, bushings and bumpers. These products enhance ride longevity

► See EXPO, page 36



During IAAPA Expo 2024, Safe-Strap Company, Inc. introduced its latest safety harnesses and restraint systems, emphasizing guest comfort and ease of use. AT/DAVID FAKE

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KettenWulf team members presented the company's durable, precision-engineered chains designed to ensure reliable performance for amusement rides (above left). Timo Klaus showcased Kumbak's specialized engineering solutions for amusement ride upgrades and safety enhancements (above right). TÜV Nord Group highlighted its real-time monitoring and safety compliance tools for amusement rides, showcasing their commitment to global safety standards (below). AT/DAVID FAKE

EXPO
Continued from page 35

and safety while reducing maintenance downtime. Its latest vibration-reduction technology minimizes wear on ride components.

Morboro, a specialist in ride and attraction insurance, highlighted comprehensive risk management solutions tailored to the unique needs of parks and attractions. Their tools for assessing and mitigating risks drew significant attention from operators.

NAARSO (National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials) underscored its role in advancing education and certification for ride inspectors. The organization's programs focus on maintaining high safety standards across the industry.

NEAAPA (Northeast Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions) spotlighted its advocacy for



safety standards and education. Collaborative efforts with regulatory agencies and updates on regional safety initiatives were key talking points.

Ralph S. Alberts Company, Inc. highlighted its custom-molded safety padding and restraint systems which improve rider comfort and protection. The company's new antimicrobial padding addresses health concerns in high-contact areas.

Safe Slide Restoration, LLC presented its expertise in waterslide refurbishment, showcasing eco-friendly gel coating and repair techniques that extend slide lifespans. Its solutions enhance surface smoothness and reduce injury risks for riders.

Safe-Strap Company, Inc. displayed its latest safety harnesses and restraint systems featuring

► See EXPO, page 37



Audio Innovators, Inc.'s Zach Hershberger, director of business development, presented the company's advanced safety communication systems, including the SafeWave Dispatch (above left). Maclan Corporation representatives showcased its state-of-the-art polyurethane wheels and components (above right). AT/DAVID FAKE

► **EXPO**

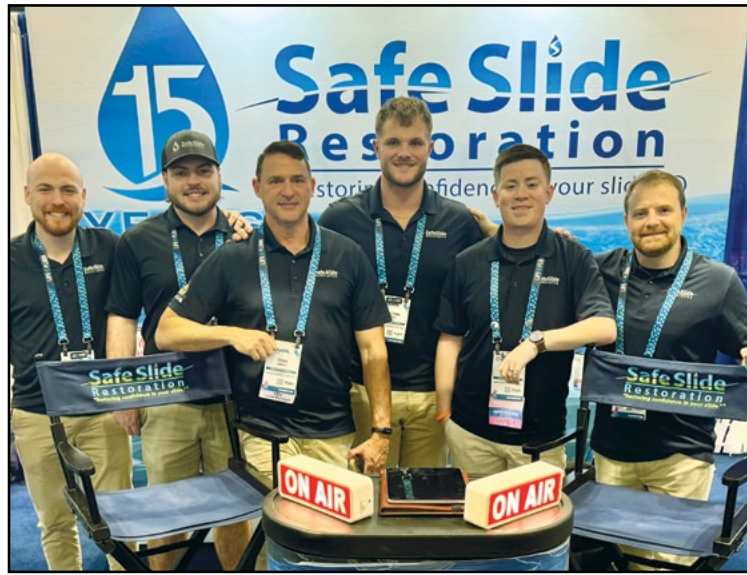
Continued from page 36

user-friendly designs that combine durability with guest comfort. These products simplify operation while maintaining high safety standards.

TÜV NORD Group, a trusted name in certification and inspection, demonstrated its comprehensive safety audit services. From ride commissioning to ongoing compliance, the company helps operators adhere to international safety standards.

Uremet Corporation's high-performance wheels essential for high-thrill rides drew attention for their ability to endure extreme conditions. Their predictive maintenance tools allow operators to address potential issues before they arise, ensuring seamless ride performance.

Once again, IAAPA Expo 2024 reinforced the



The Safe Slide Restoration team celebrated its 15th anniversary with innovative water slide repair techniques to enhance safety and performance. AT/DAVID FAKE

importance of safety as a shared responsibility within the amusement industry. Manufacturers, operators and industry leaders showcased a united front in their commitment to advancing safety through innovation, training and compliance.

As the industry grows, morphs and evolves, adopting and utilizing the

state-of-the-art solutions that these companies provide through their products and services is critical to maintaining high standards for both guest enjoyment and operator confidence. IAAPA Expo 2024 once again proved to be an essential gathering for driving safety and innovation forward.

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E&A extends aquatic safety protocol through EAVS technology

AT: Susan Storey
Special to Amusement Today

MAITLAND, Fla. — For more than 40 years, **Ellis & Associates (E&A)** has been recognized for having more marked "first and only" moments than any other aquatic service provider in the world. Incredible standards of excellence, dedication to swimmer safety and continued improvement and innovation have helped E&A serve global clients and support its commitment to zero drownings. As part of this effort to better serve its clients — and swimmers of all ages — E&A has added the aquatic industry's first-ever fact-based, data-driven product to aid in the analysis of aquatic safety incidents. The **Ellis Aquatic Vigilance System (EAVS)** is changing how facilities train, study and protect guest safety in and around water.

"Being at the forefront of aquatic safety and risk management requires us to create training programs and safety strategies that position E&A and our clients to be able to say we do everything possible to eliminate the potential for drowning and serious aquatic incidents from occurring," said **Joe Stefanyak**, vice president of education, Ellis & Associates. "Technology has moved into every aspect of society and as the organization best known for being on the cutting edge of enhancing aquatic safety, we continuously look for ways to advance our mission of eliminating drowning and catastrophic aquatic injuries. EAVS utilizes the latest technology in conjunction with our preeminent training and operational consulting services and allows us to take aquatic safety and risk management to a whole other level."

The EAVS high definition "smart" cameras are strategically placed to monitor movement on land, on the water's surface, and under water to help identify concerns before they become a problem. The cam-



eras capture live video and incorporate analytics that "learn" to identify patterns and behaviors specific to each client facility. Working in conjunction with a specially trained control room operator, this unique aptitude creates a situation that alerts lifeguards to a potential issue. Camera placement also makes prior operational challenges a non-issue and provides facilities with two sets of eyes constantly looking at the same bodies of water: the lifeguards and the EAVS operators.

The technology behind EAVS is in data collection and the ability to provide straightforward, factual information. Prior to EAVS, information related to drowning incidents was primarily self-reported and based largely on the collective recollections of those directly involved in the rescue along with those who may have witnessed some or all of the event. Gathered information could be biased, delayed and have holes that made piecing together exactly what happened difficult to reconstruct. It was also hard for facility managers to react to and potentially adjust operations after an incident. EAVS closes those gaps and provides straightforward video captured in real time from multiple angles and multiple cameras within the facility.

"For the first time ever, we can now aggregate metrics of these events with 100% confidence and, in turn, use the aggregated data to drive our training and risk management strategies," Stefanyak furthered. "Additionally, we now have over 15,000 video examples of what drowning really looks like, be it someone that is rescued within seconds or those who were not identi-



fied until later in the drowning process. We can use these videos as examples in our E&A training curricula to help show lifeguards exactly what a 3-year-old struggling in the pool looks like. This real-life video documentation makes it easier for lifeguards to identify and react to the behaviors drowning guests exhibit more quickly, and ultimately reduces the time it takes to assist."

EAVS is an integrated system that incorporates cameras, video analytics, communication alerts, two-way radio communications and data storage. The program has operated in partnership with leading aquatic facilities in the U.S. including **Great Wolf Resorts** and **Roaring Springs Waterpark**.

A long-time E&A partner, **Roaring Springs Waterpark** in Meridian, Idaho, was the first outdoor water park in the country to install EAVS. Complete with 57 cameras that provide more than 100 views above and below the water, **Roaring Springs' EAVS** system allows certified EAVS operators to watch the same water, at the same time, as trained lifeguards on stand, enhancing recognition and response for overall improved safety throughout the park.

"The EAVS system has been transformative at **Roaring Springs** by increasing confidence among our aquatics staff

that we have a second set of eyes on the water at all times, improving the safety of all guests," shared **Patrick Morandi**, CEO of **Roaring Springs**. "EAVS also provides a comprehensive video record to review incidents, conduct remote audits and enhance our training programs."

In 2023, **Roaring Springs** was recognized by the **World Waterpark Association** with the **Leading Edge Award** for being the first outdoor waterpark to install EAVS.

During **IAAPA Expo 2024**, E&A publicly shared the first-ever EAVS Data Set and analysis from aquatic safety incidents. By studying almost 300,000 collected data points, aggregated and analyzed from 10,341 real-life, video-recorded incidents over the past 15 months, EAVS provided E&A's leadership with unprecedented, factual insight into what truly impacts swimmer safety. Computer recording, analysis and alerts improve response time and track performance generating hard data that operators can use to improve overall performance.

The data allows lifeguards and water safety teams to see and analyze what is happening above and below the water, on deck and around the perimeter. Data from EAVS video records include critical details and information about the type of rescue performed; specific signs and symptoms exhibited by a guest in distress, such as bobbing, flailing or motionlessness; contributing

factors such as wave action, water depth, medical incident or horseplay; lifeguard/EAVS Operator recognition and response time and more.

Chicago-based indoor water park resort company, **Great Wolf Resorts** has seen how the system and data it provides enhances and supplements water safety protocols. "Great Wolf Lodge has always taken pride in its commitment to safety, and as part of that commitment we continually look at ways to improve how we deliver a safe environment for our guests and Pack Members," shared **Catie Christner**,



Christner

vice president of waterparks, **Great Wolf Resorts**. "We have a long-standing relationship with Ellis & Associates and share a mutual dedication to lifeguarding excellence. We were intrigued and excited by the Ellis team's development of the EAVS system. We quickly realized EAVS could help us improve our lifeguarding coverage. Once fully operational, we were pleased to see how EAVS provides us with greater visibility into many additional areas of our water park operations. EAVS has truly changed how we manage our water parks, giving us tools to improve lifeguarding, training, efficiency and overall risk management."

Today, **Great Wolf Resorts**



Stefanyak



Morandi

► See EAVS, page 40

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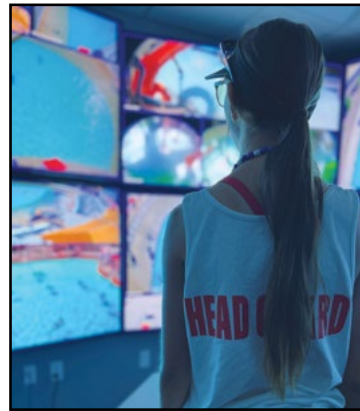
EST. 1980

►EAVS

Continued from page 38

uses the system at each of its aquatic facilities in the U.S. EAVS can be installed, customized and implemented in any size or type of aquatic facility. **Fort Wayne Community Schools** is the first school district in the U.S. to employ EAVS. In addition, **Gaylord Resorts** and **Six Flags Entertainment** have added EAVS to their water safety protocol and operations.

“EAVS is the right system for facility operators looking to provide safety strategies that enable them to confidently say they do everything possible to eliminate the potential for drowning and serious aquatic incidents at their facility,” Stefanyak stressed. “Technology is developing quickly, and to not embrace the opportunities technology provides limits our ability to make the most impact possible. The EAVS system augments current safety protocols by integrating cutting-edge video analytics and an unprecedented aggrega-



All Great Wolf Lodge resorts (above left) in the U.S. use EAVS. The system offers additional eyes on the water, along with critical data points and analysis to help train lifeguards and reduce incident response time. COURTESY GREAT WOLF LODGE, ROARING SPRINGS WATERPARK

tion of industry data to help the industry train, learn and respond to the signs of drowning, and improve swimmer safety.”

Stefanyak also shared that the EAVS system allows facility operators and trainers to more effectively hold random unannounced team member audits without impacting the guest experience or park operation.

“The technology allows for certain cameras to be panned, tilted and zoomed in on team members who are on-duty,” he explained. “They are unaware this audit is tak-

ing place, and the operator or trainer can easily observe their performance and then provide a critique that can be used as an educational opportunity via video record. It also allows for the immediate identification of staff behaviors that may need to be addressed and corrected in real time.”

EAVS can also help operators work through issues in the facility that are not related to aquatics.

“Although the primary focus of EAVS is the aquatic attractions, preventing aquatic incidents from occurring, and minimizing the recognition

and response times when incidents do occur, EAVS cameras also provide video surveillance of non-aquatic areas of the facility,” Stefanyak explained. “The system enables operators to pull video to help respond to guest behavior issues such as theft and assault, slip and fall claims and lost child tracking.”

“EAVS allows E&A and facility operators to gather a variety of metrics that help craft training and risk management programs and strategies,” Stefanyak added. “Until EAVS, critical information was gathered by voluntary self-reporting and

despite best intentions, that information had a natural bias and included selective reporting, often based on speculation. EAVS removes all of that and strengthens our ability to prevent drownings.”

E&A also credits the partnership it shares with its clients when it comes to developing, testing and implementing innovative new programs like EAVS. Trust, partnership and the shared mission to advance aquatic safety were key to EAVS coming to light.

“Thanks to the early leadership of organizations like Great Wolf Resorts and Roaring Springs Waterpark, we, as an industry, have gained invaluable data that will significantly inform how we continue to advance swimmer safety,” Stefanyak concluded. “As more aquatic facilities install and operate EAVS, the data, and key learnings derived from its use will continue to grow, helping to make all of us more efficient and effective in saving time, resources and most importantly, lives.”

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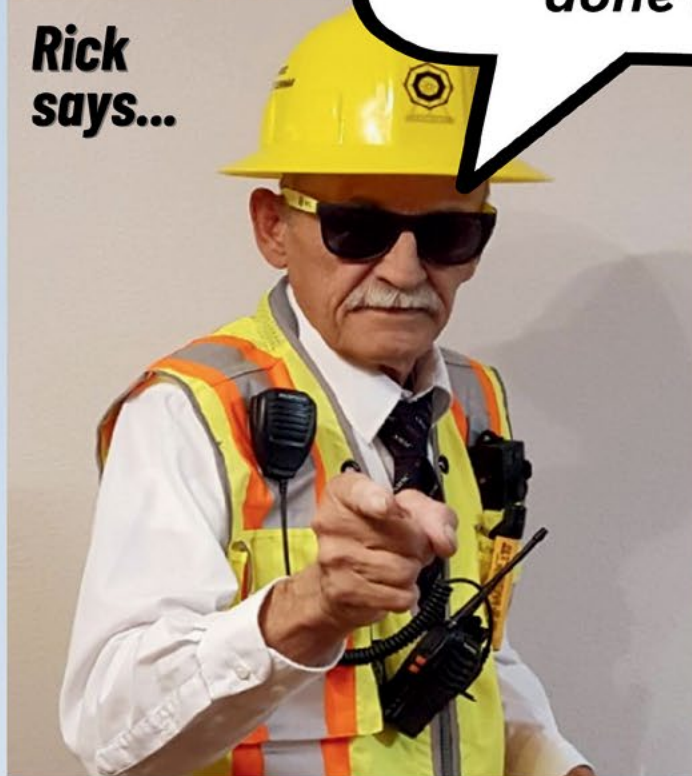


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Safety training seminars prepare to welcome students, industry

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

UNITED STATES — Off-season safety and training seminars ramp up quickly with timing on the line as an abundance of seminars, conventions and other industry events take place.

The following is a sampling of those safety and training seminars.

The **National Association of Amusement Ride Officials (NAARSO)** 38th annual Safety Seminar has been set for January 26-31, 2025, at the **Hilton Charlotte Airport Hotel**, Charlotte, North Carolina.

The seminar offers course programming and examinations for the following certifications: Limited Specialty; Inspection Certification Level I (basic), Level II (advanced) and Level III ; Operations Certification, Level I, Level II and Level III; Operations Certification, Level I, Level II and Level III and Aquatic Operations, Level I.

NAARSO is experiencing a growth at its seminar drawing in 2024 more than 450 attendees, including both students and instructors.

The event offers course instruction Monday-Friday, with the opening reception set for Sunday evening. There will be a hand-on training event at **Carowinds** and **Carolina Harbor Waterpark**. That hands-on event is set for Wednesday and transportation will be provided.

A closing dinner is set for Friday evening.

Examples of some of the curriculum topics include: math knowledge; OSHA; wire rope inspections; hydraulics; pneumatics; generators; electric; legal aspects; braking systems; amusement ride chains; accelerometer; rigging; ASTM standards; bearings; ARC flash safety and dark ride and walk



The 2024 Northwest Showmen's Club Safety Seminar is above, with attendance making a comeback from COVID and a 2023 snowstorm. From left to right: Anna Danau; Philip Manzo; Cindee Huddy, IRT owner and managing member; Cassidy Major and David Major are all smiles at the IRT booth at IAAPA Expo 2024 (right). AT/GARY SLADE; COURTESY IRT



-through inspections.

The **2025 International Ride Training's (IRT)** Ride Camp Safety Seminar for Ride Operators has been set for February 10-14, 2025.

IRT, a leading provider of safety training for amusement park ride operators, will hold its Ride Camp at the **San Luis Hotel and Resort**, Galveston, Texas. The hands-on training will be conducted at the **Galveston Historic Pleasure Pier**.

Day one of the event is for new instructor training and certification and the additional four-day event will focus on ride operator safety and recertification of operators, providing attendees with the knowledge and skills needed to ensure the safe operation of amusement park rides.

Cindee Huddy, owner and managing member of IRT, said the theme this year is Game On for Safety! Level Ops!

"The theme throughout camp will be focused on achieving the highest standard in ride operations and being your very best as a leader," Huddy said. "Attendees will learn skills to be both effective trainers and coaches in the field for your team of leaders who impact operators daily. When a leader has an excellent coaching plan and executes it

daily, it creates positive results and a winning team."

IRT's educational committee has been hard at work planning the seminar, Huddy stressed.

"This expert team has met monthly and has created a schedule and sessions that focuses on ride operator training techniques, coaching safety at all levels, operational leadership, crisis planning and execution, maintenance terminology for operators, what operators need to know about ADA in the classroom and out at the rides, preventing normalization of deviance, creating effective standard operating procedures training tips and techniques out at the rides and much more," she said.

The Ride Camp Keynote Speaker is **Heather L. Barnes**, owner of **Improv @ Work**. This energetic session of improv exercises is created to promote confidence with operational leadership and how to lead authentically. Barnes will additionally teach a session on the importance of executive presence for operations leadership and navigating difficult conversations.

"At IRT, ride operator safety knowledge is our top priority," Huddy said. "Our Ride Camp seminar is designed to

equip ride operators with the tools they need to ensure the safety of park guests and employees alike. We are proud to offer this comprehensive training program to amusement parks around the world."

In addition to the safety training, IRT client attendees will have the opportunity to earn Instructor Certification as an iROC Ride Operator Safety Specialist upon successful completion of the seminar. This certification is recognized industry-wide and demonstrates a commitment to safety and excellence in ride operations.

The 46th annual **Northwestern Showmen's Club (NWSC)** Safety Seminar has been set for Feb. 17-21, 2025, on the **Funtastic Shows Campus**, Portland, Oregon.

Classes during the seminar run from 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., throughout the week. Meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner, will be served everyday and are included in the seminar price.

NWSC's **Tracy Munoz** has stressed that there are several things that set the NWSC's seminar apart from other industry seminars.

"We have hands-on classes such as welding, forklift certification, fire extinguisher, first responder aid, first aid, inflat-

ables, lubrication, where they actually get down and do the work," Munoz said.

The last day of the NWSC's seminar is set aside for NAARSO, AIMS, Carnival Tech 101 testing and First Aid classes at an additional cost.

The NWSC Safety Seminar was established to promote continuing education by amusement industry professionals. The interactive classes and hands-on settings deliver the ideal venues for raising the level of safety awareness with in the carnival industry.

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

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

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Pennsylvania Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board holds meeting

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Representatives from the amusement industry, along with community volunteers selected at large, met at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture headquarters in mid-December for a Pennsylvania Ride Safety Advisory Board quarterly meeting. Input from this body is used to help the Bureau of Ride & Measurement Standards determine their course of action on each piece of equipment in the ride approval process. Typically, the options are approval, conditional approval or table the vote for the future.

Fred Strathmeyer, deputy secretary of agriculture, con-

ducted the meeting as Bureau Director **Walt Remmert** has recently taken another position in management within the department.

There were four ride/equipment approvals to come before the advisory board.

A 15-meter, 10-seat gondola wheel from Czech manufacturer **Bojuxcom, s.r.o.** was granted conditional approval. The ride is similar to the 25-meter wheel that is registered with the department; however this one has not, as this was the first time in the Commonwealth. Two Quality Assurance inspectors visited prior to their opening at Bright Nights, a 36-night holiday event at **WellSpan Park**, York, Pennsylvania, home of the **York Revolution** Atlantic

League independent baseball club, the operator of the event.

Modifications were needed with the power supply, installation of hair guards and other items. The ride was brought in by **Fun Time Family Amusements**, a Wise, Virginia, carnival operator. The board also noted that clarifications were needed in the operator manual.

Experiential Resources LLC, based in Lahaina, Hawaii, installed a zipline at **Nemacolin Resort**, Farmington, Pennsylvania. The two side-by-side ziplines reach a height of 75 feet during the 2,080-foot-long adventure. There are five towers and two bridges along the course. A **Hercules**-brand braking system ensures a smooth, reliable stop without manual intervention.

The attraction was given full approval; however, more training needs to be provided to attraction operators when they are releasing riders from the bally system at the conclu-

sion of the ride.

Pirate Ship Ahoy, manufactured by **Fun Attractions Inc**, a company based in China with an office in New Jersey, is a portable pendulum boat ride. Approval was tabled as no one from the company attended the meeting. Also, the translation to English in the operator manual needs to be cleaned up before the board can continue with this attraction approval.

Keen Designs Inc. built a custom-designed Mirror Maze for the family entertainment center area at **Camelback Resort**, Tannersville, Pennsylvania. The operation is based in Largo, Florida. The Quality Assurance inspectors who visited the site said the attraction was well put together. Approval was granted.

Some discussion took place regarding the major modifications being made to The Steel Curtain, **Kennywood Amusement Park**, West Mifflin, Pennsylvania. **S&S Worldwide**, Logan, Utah, is adding four additional col-

umns, with diameters of both 60 inches and 84 inches. Some of the new columns are being placed with 29-foot-deep holes using 40 yards of concrete. More discussion will occur after a series of ride cycles as well as accelerometer testing are completed.

Under public comments, **Tony Rossi**, managing director of maintenance, for **Hersheypark** mentioned they are in the construction phase of the largest S & S Screamin' Swing in the world. Dubbed Twizzlers Twisted Gravity, the swing ride will stand 137 feet high with speeds reaching up to 68 miles per hour. Ride approval will commence at a subsequent meeting.

Upcoming dates for the quarterly ride safety advisory board meetings the rest of this year include March 20, June 3, September 18 and December 2. All meetings start at 10 a.m., third floor conference room, Department of Agriculture, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg

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JW Winco now offering products promoting a standard system for conveying and guiding



NEW BERLIN, Wisc. — Conveying and guiding is a time-tested method for transporting parts or intermediate products between automated process stations. Despite advancements in agile handling robots, this efficient and clever conveyance method remains highly relevant. JW Winco is expanding its range of offerings with additional practical elements designed for common industrial applications. Among the new offerings are essential side guides, available in both simple plastic versions and more complex double-row cylinder and ball roller configurations. These guides enable the safe movement of even delicate parts. When parallel guide channels are used, middle guides with rollers on both sides can be employed. Segmented guides facilitate the creation of curves, with individual segments secured tangentially using appropriate retaining profiles. The range of compatible retaining clips, brackets, support feet, end pieces, connecting strips, end caps, braking rails, and lead-in guides provides maximum flexibility and professional solutions for a variety of unique scenarios. Adjustments and modifications can be made quickly and easily, often without tools. The materials used include plastic for retaining and guiding elements, and aluminum and stainless steel for carrier profiles and screws, ensuring versatility and durability. JW Winco's commitment to practical applications is evident in the variety of individual elements and assembly options available. COURTESY JW WINCO

ASTM proposes steam locomotive safety standards

W. CONSHOHOCKEN, Pa. — A proposed ASTM International standard will provide minimum requirements for the inspection and maintenance of steam locomotives that operate in amusement parks. Experts from both the amusement park and steam locomotive industries have joined together in ASTM's amusement rides and devices committee (F24) to develop the proposed standard.

According to ASTM member **Ron Lwin**, the proposed standard (WK88204) targets the amusement park industry but will also benefit any steam locomotive owner/operator. The initial standard will focus on inspection and maintenance of boilers and appurtenances. Future revisions will expand the scope to include brake systems, driving/running gears, and other areas.

"Steam locomotives have been around for over 200 years," said Lwin, lead auditor, Amusement Rides, Water Parks & Ropeways. "The original steam locomotive manufacturer is often no longer available to give recommendations for maintenance, and off-the-shelf maintenance manuals are not typically available. This proposed standard is intended to give the minimum maintenance requirements based on widely accepted historical practices."

Lwin notes that the main body of the proposed standard will contain bare minimum maintenance for suitable operation of steam locomotives, while the appendix will include more specific best practices.

More than 12,000 ASTM standards operate globally.

• astm.org

Saffire adopts FunTagg technology for RFID offerings

AUSTIN, Texas — Saffire, LLC announced a primary partnership with FunTagg — the carnival-industry provider of RFID ticketing systems — to now support Saffire's BlastPass/RFID product. This partnership amplifies the strength of these providers in the carnival and live event industries, making these technologies more readily available for operators & events throughout the country.

"Utilizing FunTagg's technology allows Saffire to stay on the cutting edge of technology for our clients," said **Aaron Pederson**, partner & president of Saffire, LLC. "This commitment to our joint industries will allow for enhanced service, equipment availability, and opportunities for our new and existing client base."

Saffire clients will see enhancements with enhanced RFID capabilities, including food and beverage sales; a mobile app, which improves attendee experience by allowing credits and wristbands to be loaded on their device which will allow faster access to rides and games as well as expanded avail-



ability of equipment and devices.

"The partnership with Saffire will expand the use of our technology to independent midways, music festivals, food festivals and anyone needing RFID technology services," said **Steve Riegel**, president of FunTagg. The company is known for developing technology tailored to the carnival industry. With the addition of Saffire's independent midway clients, FunTagg's RFID technology will be used at half of the top 50 events in the country. "We are committing to further development of the mobile app and enhanced reporting features for the operator."

Industry leaders have also voiced their support for this partnership.

"As an operator, I am thrilled to see these companies joining forces, especially as we travel to so many different sites throughout the country," said **Michael Wood**, operator of the largest traveling Ferris wheel in the U.S. "Not only is the combining of technology important, but being able to have expanded access to Saffire's dedicated support team and operations is vital to our success."

"The union of Saffire's BlastPass and FunTagg's ticketing technologies demonstrates a synergistic commitment to their fair and carnival partners' success. This collaboration is designed to empower outdoor amusement operators, fairs, and expositions to operate more efficiently, enhance their guest experience, and innovate in ways that will elevate the entire industry," said **Jim Sinclair**, Minnesota State Fair Mighty Midway and midway attractions coordinator as well as OABA board member.

The joining of the technologies will be complete in time for Fair Week in Florida & the Florida State Fair in February 2025.

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More than 200 attend the fall Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar trains and tests hundreds of amusement ride inspectors throughout Pennsylvania and other states each spring and fall. During the November 12-14 session, 65 instructors taught 193 hours of ride safety training to 215 attendees from various amusement operations, organized by third-party operator **Slaggett Risk Management** for the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture**, Bureau of Ride and Measurements Standards. This is done to help new and renewal inspectors meet their continuing education requirements for licensing as amusement ride inspectors.

Participants and instructors came primarily from Pennsylvania, however there were also attendees from 16 other states, includ-



CW Craven taught a variety of sessions Tuesday afternoon, including Introduction to Fasteners, Nuts, Torque & Bolts (above left). The Let's Talk Rides class was instructed by Mike & Sharon Hupalo with MAH Consulting (above right). A total of 193 instruction hours were provided during the three day program. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

ing California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. This is the 38th time the program has been offered.

Amusement parks that sent attendees included **Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom**, **Hersheypark**, **Dutch Wonderland** and

Palace Entertainment parks. On the waterpark side, **Great Wolf Lodge** and **Camelback Resort** participated.

There was a group of people from **C.E.C. Entertainment** (Chuck E. Cheese) in attendance. They are first-time inspectors that were being trained and certified for the trampoline attractions they are planning to install at some of their Pennsylvania

locations. These include Dickson City, Harrisburg, Philadelphia (Roosevelt), Philadelphia (Snyder Plaza), Wyomissing, Springfield, Warrington, Whitehall, Wilkes-Barre and York.

Each time the ride safety inspector classes are offered, attendees select the specialty classes they feel are beneficial for their abilities, career path, job description and employer benefit.

Some of the topics included what turns an accident into a lawsuit; creating a culture of safety; sling inspection; developing an ASTM compliant ride evacuation plan; engine, coach and car maintenance; inflatables – lessons learned; inspection of mud runs and land-based obstacle courses; mechanical bulls and surf simula-

▶ See RIDE, page 49

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► **RIDE**
Continued from page 48

tors; metal fatigue, corrosion and rust; rigging safety; hydraulics – schematic systems and expert witness – what to know; were just a few of the topics.

Joe Filoromo, ride safety supervisor for the Commonwealth, provided a recap. “We had record attendance again. It went well and smoothly with 10 to 20 classes (offered) during each time slot. There’s something for everybody as far as what they want to learn.”

The classes that Filoromo and his staff conducted focused on specific concerns. “We are concentrating on accidents that happened around the country and trends we’re finding around

the state as far as where we can do better with ride safety, be more proactive.”

“This is our 40th year with the Pennsylvania amusement ride safety program, the oldest inspector certification program in the country,” said Filoromo. Other state programs have adopted many of the practices put into play in Pennsylvania. This includes adopting the wide approval process along with training requirements for different certification levels. “Some states have named Pennsylvania certification as one of their recognized programs.”

He continued, “Because we have those certified inspectors on site (2,000 of them), our state people do QA inspections (Quality Assurance), to insure the



It’s rare that this father and son combination is in the same location at the same time. Leonard Adams II was at the seminar to renew his inspector license, while Leonard Adams III is a Quality Assurance inspector with the state serving the western part of Pennsylvania. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

credibility of those inspections. We also are able to concentrate on studying things that are happening and informing the people onsite of new things they might need to know that we’ve learned doing

research and studying incidents around the country.”

Testing was provided for Class 1 and 2 ride inspectors, general qualified inspectors and specialized inspectors. The Pennsylvania certification

is recognized in many states across the country, including Recognized Certified Maintenance Technician, the program in place in New Jersey.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has inspected and registered amusement rides under the Amusement Ride Safety Act since 1984 and regularly participates in education and outreach seminars that include classes and hands-on demonstrations. The next Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar is scheduled for March 4 - 6, 2025, at the Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center in Harrisburg. That one will have additional courses in water attractions, go-karts and bumper boats.

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Great Coasters gives Morey's Piers's Great White an upgrade

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

WILDWOOD, N.J. — In preparation for the 2025 season, officials at **Morey's Piers**, an amusement destination on the Jersey Shore, decided to give an upgrade to one of its most popular attractions, the Great White wooden roller coaster.

Along with other enhancements, this iconic coaster received brand new coaster trains, all designed to improve the rider experience.

"The project is complete now," said **Olivia Hain** of **Great Coasters International Inc. (GCII)**, the company that was hired by Morey's Piers to do the coaster work. "It was finished right before the 2024 IAAPA Expo in November."

The coaster is definitely ready to go.

The coaster has been a fan favorite for nearly three decades at Morey's and is known for its dra-



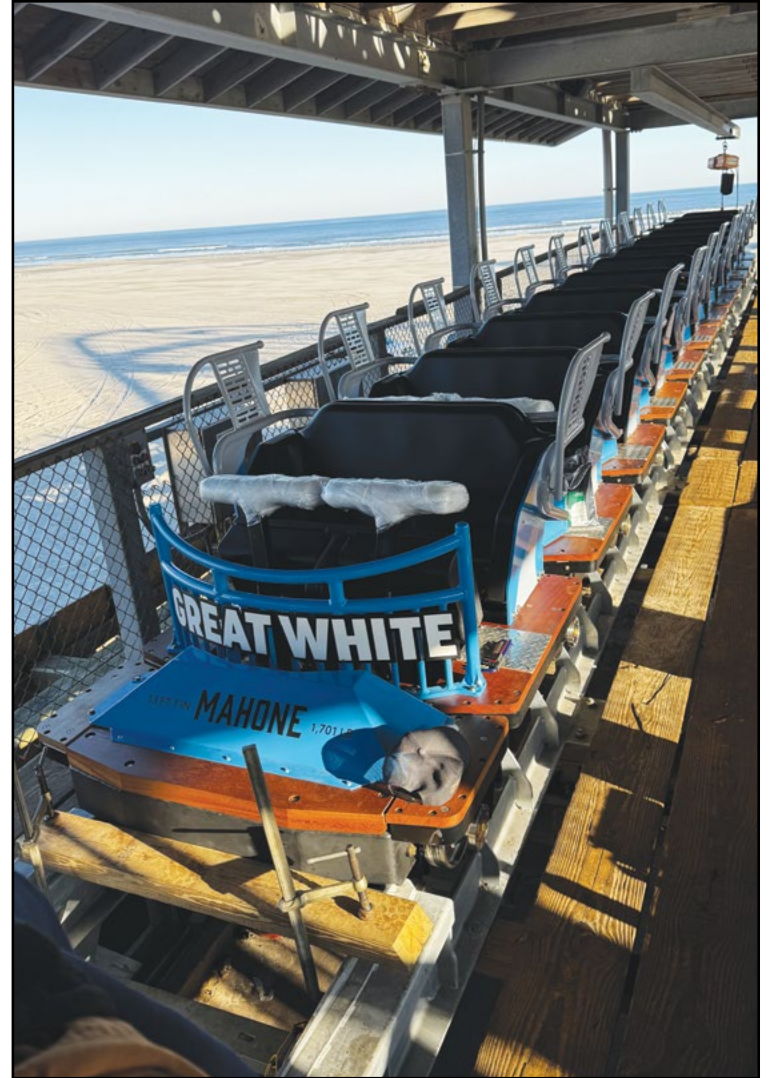
Great Coasters International Inc. not only supplied two new trains (right) for the Great White at Morey's Piers, it also re-tracked the lift hill (above) adding a layer of Ipe on the top layer. COURTESY GCII

matic drops and scenic sea-side views. It was originally built by **Custom Coasters International** with two trains by **Philadelphia Toboggan Company**. It began operating in June of 1996.

The upgrades offer a smoother ride with the addition of two new Millennium Flyer trains from GCII.

The new Millennium Flyer trains feature 12, two-passenger cars, each supported by a single axle. This innovative axle configuration allows the trains to more fluidly adapt to the track's curves, reducing the lateral "shuffling"

► See **MOREY'S**, page 53



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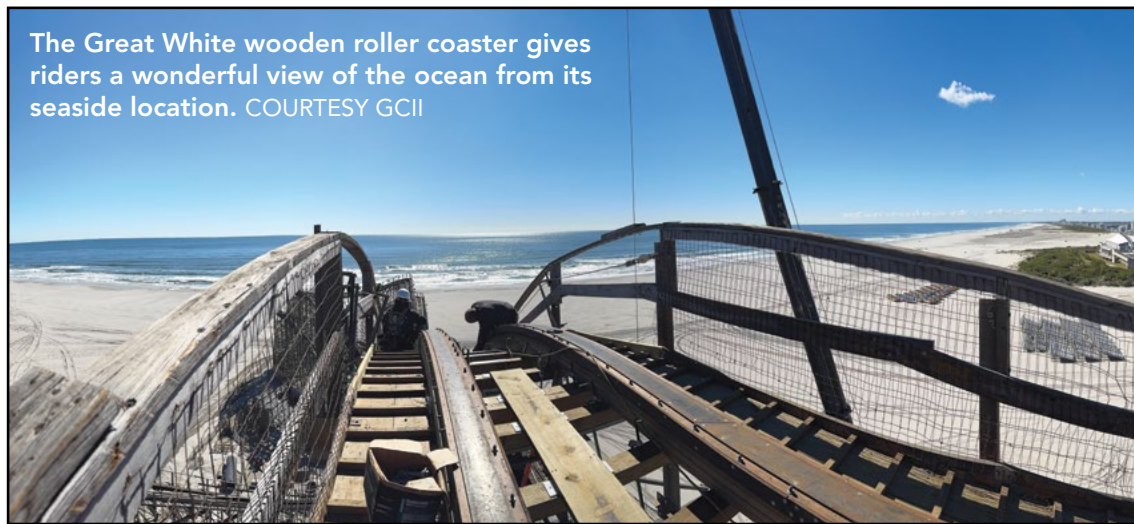
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►MOREY'S
Continued from page 52

associated with the previous train design.

According to Hain, the total work done on the coaster at Morey's by GCII included:

- Two brand-new GCII trains;
- The two trains had the nerf bars adjusted to fit the clearance envelope;
- New chain bed and chain;
- Re-tracked the lift hill and added a layer of Ipe on the top layer;
- Re-tracked the brake run and top layer added Ipe
- New transfer table, steel rail;
- New queue gates;
- Upgraded control



The Great White wooden roller coaster gives riders a wonderful view of the ocean from its seaside location. COURTESY GCII

system;

- New brake system (magnetic) and
- Re-tracked the coaster from brake run to the transfer table.

The Great White coaster reaches speeds over 50 mph, with a 105-foot drop. It is a classic double-out-and-back

design. The ride begins with a 25-foot drop beneath the boardwalk into a dark tunnel. The drop off the lift hill is 105 feet.

Track length is 3,300 feet.

The Great White is one of seven coasters at Morey's Piers. The others include:

- The Great Nor'Easter,

a **Vekoma** suspended looping coaster, which opened in 1995. It features a 95-foot drop and 2,170 feet of track;

•Sea Serpent, a high looping coaster boomerang coaster. It takes riders upside down three times forward with speeds up to 47 mph.

It also snakes around to

take riders backward inverting riders three times again. It is a **Vekoma** coaster and opened in 1984;

•Wild Whizzer, an **SBF/Visa** steel spinning coaster with a figure-eight layout. It opened in 2018 and is 190 feet long;

•Doo Wopper, a steel classic wild mouse coaster by **Zamperla**. It opened in 1998 and has 885 feet of track;

•Rollie's Coaster, a family coaster featuring three hills and a helix. It was built by **Pinfari** and opened in 1999, and

•Runaway Tram, a **Zierer** steel family coaster. This is Morey's Piers newest coaster having opened in 2019. It has a track length of 922 feet.

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VLocker solves guest storage challenges at Natural History Museum

AT: David Fake
dfake@amusementtoday.com

NEW YORK — The American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), one of the most iconic cultural and educational institutions in New York City, recently unveiled a game-changing solution to address longstanding visitor storage challenges. Partnering with global locker system innovator VLocker, the museum introduced a fully automated electronic guest storage system that replaced its outdated, manual-labor-intensive coat and bag check service. This state-of-the-art installation has significantly enhanced guest convenience and satisfaction, improved operational efficiency and added a new revenue stream for the museum.

Located in Manhattan's Theodore Roosevelt Park, the AMNH draws over five million visitors annually. As an institution spanning



By converting the AMNH's antiquated storage space into a modern electronic locker hub, VLocker has helped turn a previously outdated service into a self-sustaining and profitable solution for the museum. COURTESY VLOCKER

2.5 million square feet and home to 45 permanent exhibition halls, the museum faced growing frustrations over its antiquated coat and bag check system. Visitors were met with long lines at the manually operated coat check, causing bottlenecks during peak hours. Bags

and belongings left around the museum's galleries created additional security and aesthetic concerns.

"Our coat check system often resulted in items being left behind or lost, which impacted both guest experience and operational efficiency. We knew we

needed a modern solution that would streamline storage while aligning with our mission to enhance the visitor journey," noted Aaron Anleu, senior director of visitor services at AMNH.

VLocker, a global leader in electronic locker systems with more than 30 years of

experience, stepped in to provide a creative and cost-effective solution tailored to the AMNH's specific needs. In the first phase of the installation, VLocker deployed 260 standard-sized and 170 family-sized electronic lockers, supported by more than 10 user-friendly kiosks. The system is fully automated, allowing guests to securely store and retrieve their belongings with minimal friction.

Steven Wooley, VLocker's chief operating officer, highlighted the collaboration when he stated, "We are thrilled to partner with such a prestigious institution in the museum and entertainment industry. Our technology ensures a seamless guest experience, which complements the incredible atmosphere the AMNH has cultivated over the years."

What sets VLocker's
▶ See MUSEUM, page 56

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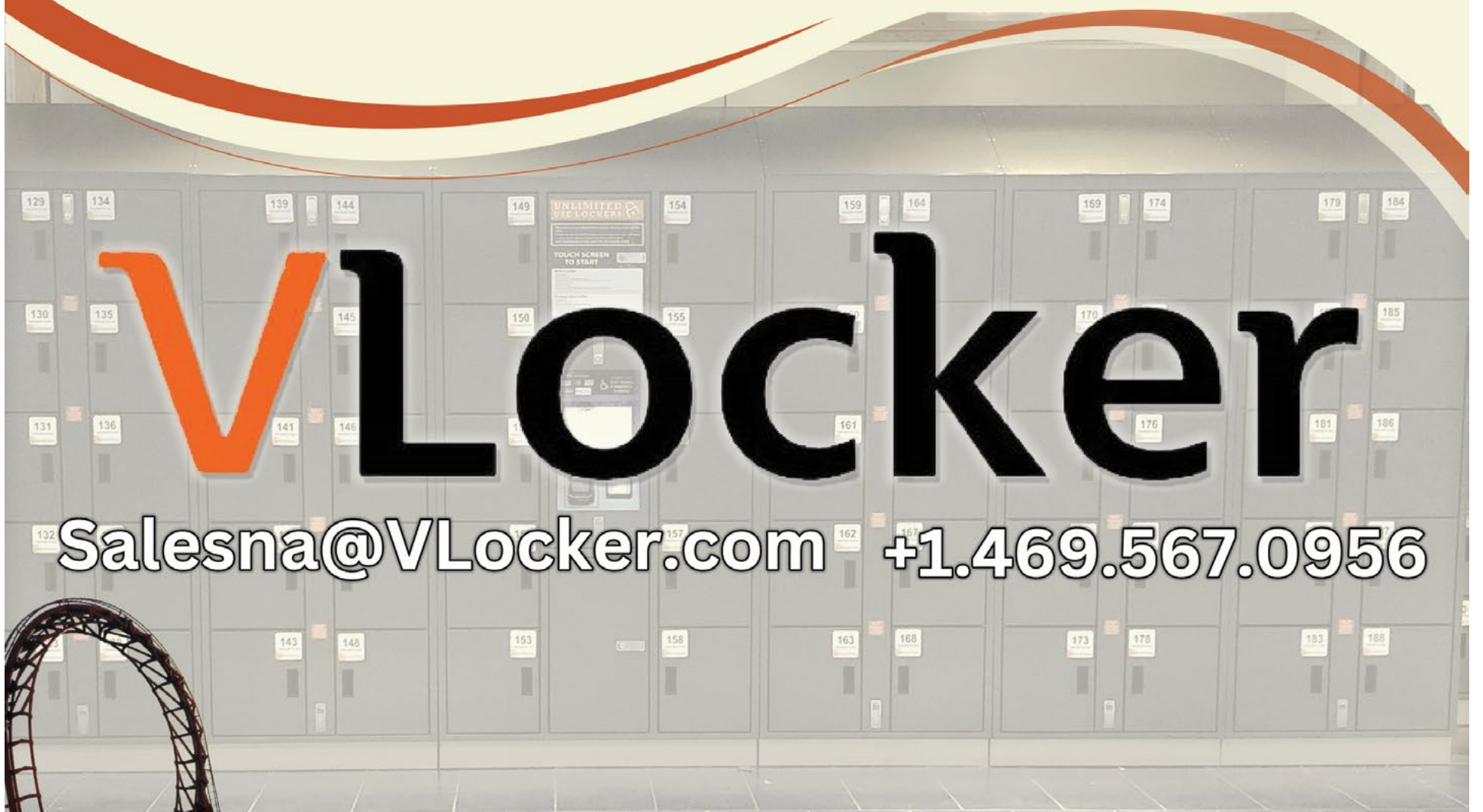
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► MUSEUM

Continued from page 54

VLocker

solution apart is its ability to eliminate operational bottlenecks. Unlike traditional systems, multiple guests can access lockers simultaneously, speeding up the process during both drop-off and pick-up. This innovation has greatly reduced congestion during busy school breaks and peak visitation days, such as Thanksgiving weekend when the first phase debuted.

One of the most significant benefits of the VLocker system has been the elimination of lost or mishandled items, which has provided AMNH with both enhanced security and an enhanced guest experience. Anleu praised the impact of the new lockers, stating, "Since the installation, we have experienced zero lost-and-found issues. Our security team has also seen fewer concerns regarding unattended items, which has further enhanced our operations."

Additionally, for the first time, visitors can securely bring their bags into the museum. VLocker's solution provides safe, monitored lockers that allow guests to focus fully on their exploration of the museum's exhibits, from the renowned dinosaur fossils to the immersive Rose Center for Earth and Space.

Beyond solving logistical and security challenges, the new locker system has created a revenue-generating opportunity for AMNH. By converting the museum's old storage space into a modern electronic locker hub, VLocker has helped turn a previously outdated service into a self-sustaining and profitable solution. This upgrade aligns with trends seen across the global attractions industry, where advanced storage systems are proving to be essential

for improving guest satisfaction while delivering financial benefits.

David VanderWier, sales executive at VLocker, emphasized the value of the partnership: "My aim for this project was to ensure our locker system builds upon the fun, excitement and educational value of a guest's overall experience at the museum. With a quick and easy rental and pick-up process, we've accomplished that goal."

VLocker's lockers are not only secure and durable but also integrate seamlessly with AMNH's operations. Advanced reporting capabilities provide the museum with monthly insights on locker utilization and financial performance, ensuring the system remains efficient and effective long-term.

VLocker's successful

installation at the American Museum of Natural History underscores its ability to provide innovative, reliable storage solutions to high-traffic attractions. With over 700 installations globally, VLocker has become a trusted partner for museums, amusement parks, family entertainment centers and other cultural venues.

By offering a fully automated, keyless solution, VLocker minimizes staffing needs, reduces operational costs, and enhances visitor convenience. Its lockers are built to withstand high-volume use, ensuring reliability in even the busiest environments.

"Many times, a guest's first and last experience at a location involves our locker system. It's an honor to partner with AMNH to ensure those moments contribute positively to their overall visit," added VanderWier.

With phase two of the AMNH installation set to be completed in February,

both VLocker and museum officials are optimistic about the system's continued success, thanks to guest comments regarding phase one that have been overwhelmingly positive, with visitors applauding the ease and convenience of the new lockers.

For parks, attractions and museums seeking to modernize their guest storage offerings, the AMNH-VLocker partnership serves as a compelling case study. By combining cutting-edge technology with operational insight, VLocker has delivered a solution that enhances the guest experience, improves security and generates sustainable revenue — all while supporting the museum's broader mission.

As visitor expectations continue to evolve, the success of this project demonstrates the vital role innovative storage solutions like VLocker's will play in elevating experiences at cultural and entertainment venues around the world.

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Atlantic Culinary Environments expands into amusement industry

DANVILLE, Pa. — **Atlantic Culinary Environments (ACE)**, known for its excellence in designing and manufacturing high-quality commercial food service environments, announced a significant expansion into the amusement sector, marked by two successful projects at **Hersheypark**.

ACE's inaugural projects in the amusement industry were for Hersheypark, encompassing the renovation of two key food service establishments: the Coaster Cafe — an employee eatery and cafeteria — and the Overlook Food Court — a dining and food service establishment for park patrons.

The collaboration was marked by open communication, efficient project management and superior craftsmanship. **Robert Gordon**, managing director of food and beverage at Hersheypark, had only positive comments regarding ACE for the company's ability to transform visions into reality.

"Atlantic Culinary Environments has been a tremendous partner in bringing our dreams to life at Hersheypark from concept to reality," commented Gordon. "Their team really listened to what our needs and wants were for each project and provided several solutions for us to ponder. The design team was very accommodating and did an excellent job of creating a warm, welcoming environment for our guests and team members to experience that was aligned with our vision and goals for each space."

Gordon also noted that the projects were completed ahead of schedule and ex-



Atlantic Culinary Environments announced a significant expansion into the amusement sector, marked by two successful projects at Hersheypark. The company innovated food service areas with dual service lines, offering a diverse range of culinary options as well as designing with scalability in mind. COURTESY ATLANTIC CULINARY ENVIRONMENTS

ceeded expectations.

"Throughout the entire process, lines of communication remained open, allowing us to maintain visibility of the construction timeline, awareness of equipment availability, and stay well-informed on the progress of the project," Gordon added. "The install team was extremely friendly and coordinated well with our in-house maintenance team to finish the projects ahead of schedule. We are incredibly pleased with the craftsmanship and quality of work provided. I look forward to working with Atlantic Culinary Environments again on our next food and beverage renovation."

During the project, the ACE team renovated a 6,700-square-foot customer dining venue into a streamlined culinary hub, enhancing



efficiency and guest satisfaction. It also introduced flexible zoning with community tables at the employee café and movable seating to accommodate varying group sizes, enhancing overall space utilization.

In addition, ACE innovated the area with dual service lines, offering a diverse range of culinary options from hot meals to grab-and-go selec-

tions as well as designing with scalability in mind, allowing Hersheypark to adjust operations based on fluctuating demand from weather, season and activity levels.

ACE enhanced checkout at the location with state-of-the-art Mashgin units, ensuring speedy transactions while improving accuracy and reducing operational costs. The company also enriched the atmosphere with engaging signage and graphics, infusing personality and charm into the dining space, setting a new standard for aesthetics in amusement park dining.

Finally, ACE prioritized inclusivity and safety with a dedicated non-allergen area, providing a welcoming environment for all guests and ensuring allergen-free dining experiences.

Since its founding in 1985, Atlantic Culinary Environments has been a premier provider of custom commer-

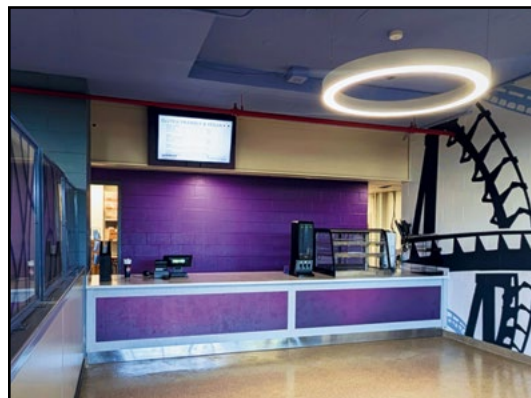
cial food service solutions. With a comprehensive suite of services including design, manufacturing, equipment procurement, and installation, ACE has built a reputation for excellence and innovation. The company's in-house CAD and Design Department — combined with their custom millwork and NSF-approved metal fabrication shop — ensure the highest quality in all its projects. ACE excels in both new construction and renovation projects, offering tailored solutions to meet the specific needs of amusement parks.

To lead this new phase of growth, the ACE team brought a wealth of experience and industry knowledge. With the company's strong track record of delivering innovative food service solutions, ACE is well-positioned to expand into the amusement sector. The team's expertise and industry connections are key in guiding this expansion.

"We are excited to embark on this new endeavor and bring our passion for the amusement industry to ACE," commented representatives from ACE in a release. "Our successful projects at Hersheypark are just the beginning of our journey in delivering exceptional food service environments within amusement parks."

With a talented team, Atlantic Culinary Environments is positioning itself to become a major player in the amusement industry. By leveraging ACE's proven track record, the company aims to set new standards in food service innovation within amusement parks.

Hersheypark is the only amusement park in the world focused on fun and chocolate offering a one-price admission with three sweet experiences. Hersheypark is the largest amusement park in Pennsylvania featuring 70 rides, 15 roller coasters, plus life-size chocolate-inspired characters. **The Boardwalk at Hersheypark** water park features 16 attractions and one million gallons of water (open summer). **ZooAmerica**, its North American wildlife park, is an 11-acre walk-through zoo with more than 200 animals.

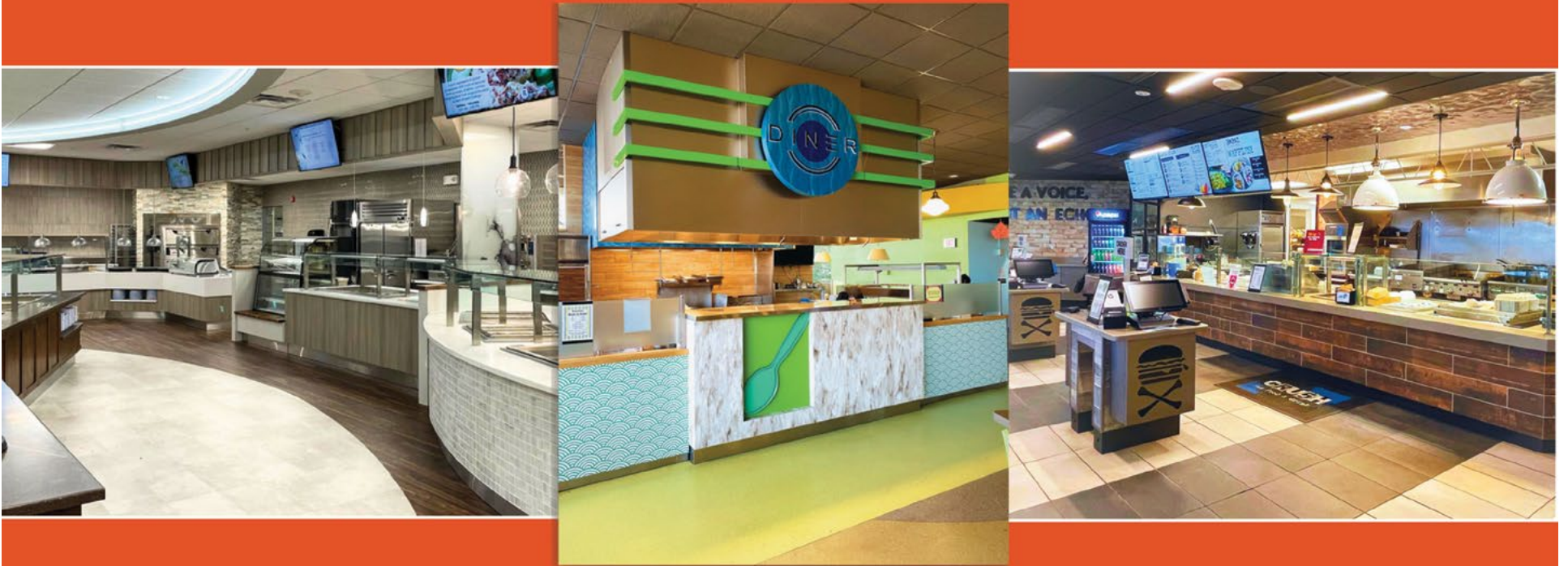


During the project, the Atlantic Culinary Environments team renovated a 6,700-square-foot customer dining venue into a streamlined culinary hub. It introduced flexible zoning with community tables at the employee café and movable seating to accommodate varying group sizes. COURTESY ATLANTIC CULINARY ENVIRONMENTS



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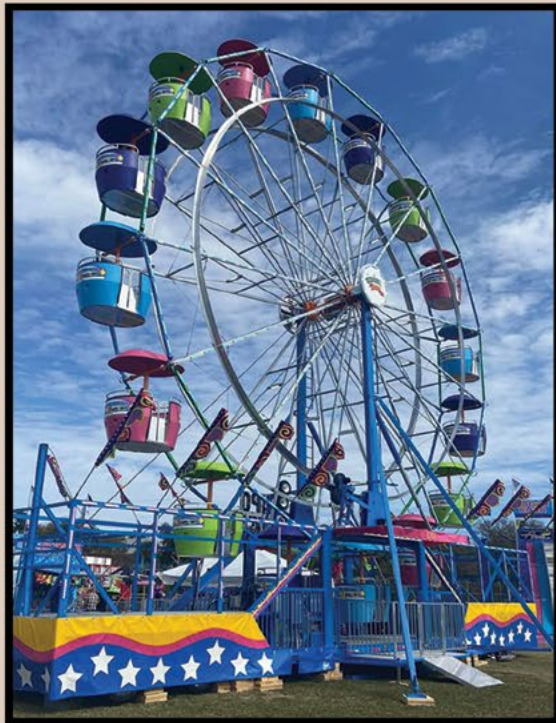


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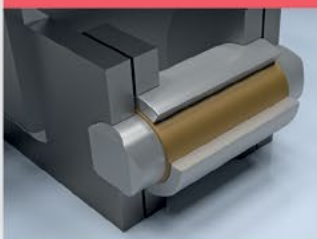


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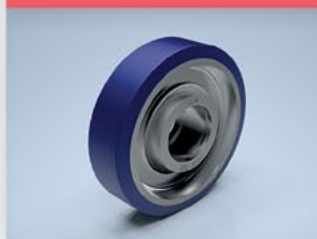
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IAAPA Expo 2024 sets records, celebrates, spotlights innovation

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO—Following a week-long event, IAAPA Expo 2024 at the Orange County Convention Center set records for the industry’s largest annual gathering. A total of 41,429 registered individuals — with 37,066 verified attendees — arrived from all corners of the world. More than 1,100 exhibitors and approximately 27,000 buyers kept the aisles of the trade show floor buzzing.

“With the success and growth of the other shows around the world, you would think there would be an impact, that the show here in Orlando would be diminished, but we find that not to be the case,” said Sascha Czibulka, Intamin.

“Part of the magic is when someone you haven’t seen in a year taps you on the shoulder,” said Drew Hunter, Sally Dark Rides. “The camaraderie — that’s the magic.”

According to IAAPA, there were 140 learning opportunities. Educational workshops and sessions provided best practices and thought-provoking knowledge.

“I attend one or two educational sessions per day with two goals: helping move our business forward and helping me grow as a leader. I find the options beneficial no matter what your role is as IAAPA continuously chooses educated, competent and trusted



speakers who happily become resources throughout the entire year,” said Brian Knoebel, Knoebels Amusement Resort.

“I always try to attend some of the educational sessions,” said Matt Eckert, park president and CEO, Holiday World & Splashin’ Safari. “IAAPA does an outstanding job with programming sessions that appeal to everyone in the industry. The speakers are experts in their field and are always able to provide valuable takeaways!”

New for 2024 was a special area in the North Concourse that offered a “Haunting Grounds” pavilion, where attendees could immerse themselves in Halloween offerings. IAAPA also celebrated the inductees into the Hall of Fame with a special ticket event on November 18.

The expo continued to raise funds and build a presence for the IAAPA Foundation. Nearly \$80,000 was raised throughout the week from con-

tributions from the live auction during Monday night’s Hall of Fame celebratory event and a weeklong silent auction. IAAPA matched the final dollar amount, bringing the total to \$160,000.

The expo really takes off with the electricity of the Kick-Off Event. With entertainers and speakers, as well as a look at what was new in 2024, it was a standing-room-only packed house full of energy. But it was Massimiliano “Massi” Freddi, CEO of Wonderwood and new IAAPA chairman, who captivated the audience with humor, insight and inspiration.

Of course, thousands upon thousands roamed the massive show floor finding new ideas and innovative products.

“We lift each other up. We remind one another that our jobs are to manufacture joy,” Deno “DJ” Vourderis, owner of Deno’s Wonder Wheel Amusement Park, told *Amusement Today*. “During the

summer season, it’s easy to lose sight of this. But when we all get together, grab a meal, and look at new possibilities on the show floor, we remember what’s really important. We regain optimism, and then we can build something new and exciting.”

“Meetings held at the IAAPA Expo are always of great value. It is here that we can meet one-on-one with vendors on future projects, to help us master plan for the long term. Having the ability to have access to ALL of our partners is a huge convenience for us and is a fantastic way for us to manage our time throughout the year,” Eckert added. “Every year, going into the IAAPA Expo, my goal is very simple: I want to learn something new — a new product, a new service, a new vendor, a new idea, a new process, a new friend. I can honestly say that has always happened. It is a week full of learning and the perfect way to build

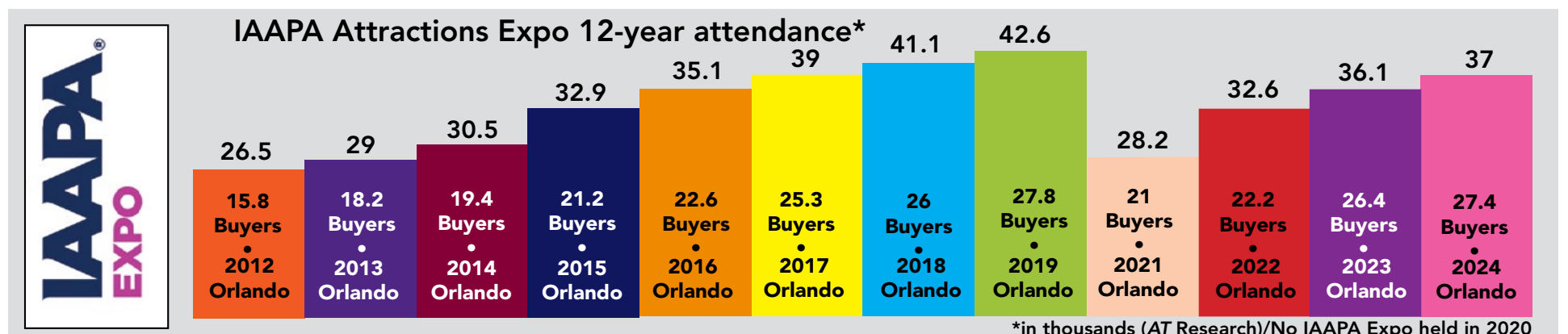
relationships that change our industry.”

“Knoebels recently held a post-Expo meeting with the 18 team members we sent this year. While discussing the lengthy list of takeaways, two words continued to emerge: ‘valuable’ and ‘beneficial.’ Hearing this, my family could not have been happier,” Knoebel told AT.

“The IAAPA Expo is a place to learn from colleagues who understand exactly what our lives are like, the joys and the challenges. We all look out for each other,” Vourderis noted.

As attendees exited on both Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, they were treated to a drone show that was fascinating to watch.

“We are always thrilled to see new attendance records, but what matters even more is ensuring the team makes a real difference and delivers a memorable experience for everyone,” said Jakob Wahl, president and CEO, IAAPA. “We also heard many positive comments about the Aisle of Fame, showcasing portraits of both past and new Hall of Fame Inductees, along with the expanded education program, the Kickoff Ceremony and the Leadership Breakfast. The Expo felt vibrant across all aspects, and it’s evident that everyone left Orlando feeling inspired — which is ultimately what matters most.”



Manufacturers enjoy growth, momentum from IAAPA Expo 2024

AT: Tim Baldwin
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ORLANDO — Meetings, shopping, exploring and sales made IAAPA Expo 2024 a solid week for the amusement industry. The aisles were busy and exhibitors saw great interest and activity. *Amusement Today* spoke to several.

Clair Hain of Great Coasters International, Inc. reflected on the company's 30th anniversary. "It was a long haul, but it goes by so fast. It doesn't feel like 30. We accomplished a lot with a lot more to come."

GCII's coaster at **Six Flags Qiddiya City** will begin testing in the spring. According to Hain, GCII had to address the intense heat. He says the solution was an extra feature the park wound up receiving as a courtesy. The coaster will sport Infinity Flyer trains.

Opening in 2025 is a woodie at Xiangyang, an OCT park in China.

Another 2025 opening is Wild Buffalo at **Mer de Sable** outside of Paris, France. This is a family woodie for what is a children's park. The length is 1,640 feet. Two trains of six cars will run on the rails.

"There's a lot of stuff going on with this ride," Hain said. "It goes underground in a tunnel and has some wild banking. It's going to be fantastic."

GCII is selling more Titan Track than ever, with many contracts signed at IAAPA Expo 2024. When asked if it was only on their rides, Hain said it was being applied to any wooden coaster designs.

Intamin has a broad portfolio of rides, and it showcased many of them. Late in 2025, when Six Flags Qiddiya City opens, it will debut Intamin's record-setting Falcons Flight.

"The sheer facts of the largest project in our company history are exciting, and we've done several large projects," said **Sascha Czibulka**, executive vice president. "The installation is completed and now the time of proof starts with commissioning."

An additional launched coaster and a 100-person



GCII celebrated its 30th anniversary on the trade show floor with a specially designed coaster car (above left). Intamin (above right) has numerous projects booked for 2025 and the years beyond. Vekoma's Tecuani Beast ride reveal was a true show-stopper (below left). Rocky Mountain Construction has a dynamic, interwoven dueling/racing raptor coaster headed to Walibi Holland (below right). AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY RMC



flying island from Intamin are also on tap for Six Flags Qiddiya City.

"This flying island does not have a counterweight," said **Gerard Slenders**, vice president. "You don't have a deep pit that the arm goes into without a counterweight."

"When we do a ride we haven't done in a while, we can look at it and see what new technologies can be applied," added Czibulka.

The company also promoted its new family LSM coaster to potential customers. "Our own developed LSM system compared to any other propulsion system is contactless, therefore no wear and tear. With more and more applications, the cost goes down. We also have looked at applying linear synchronous motors to family thrill rides," Czibulka told *Amusement Today*. "I call it a family coaster with lots of pepper and spices."

Intamin shared that customers are looking at the company's wide portfolio.

"People are coming for both water rides and coasters," he said. "But we see an increasing demand for immersive rides. The last multi-dimension coaster that opened — Uncharted — triggered more interest. Some are in the works. The dome ride theater at **SeaWorld Abu Dhabi** and **Danse Macabre at Efteling** have also been popular. Regarding the dome ride theater, some customers have looked at it, but have said, 'We don't need that high capacity;



can you do it smaller?' We have introduced a 40-passenger dome ride theater."

Mack Rides is exceptionally busy. In addition to two coasters and a water attraction at the upcoming **Epic Universe**, another project in Florida will debut in 2025. **SeaWorld Orlando** is opening an Airific flying theater, which will actually be comprised of two units. Each theater will seat 30 guests at a time in two rows of 15 in the flying theater. However, while those 60 passengers are experiencing the media content, 60 more passengers are loading behind them, and then the theater seating rotates to maximize capacity. Special effects in the seating are possible with this type of theater. This will debut in the spring of 2025.

For 2025, **Prater** will be adding a Big Dipper coaster, which features two rows of four seats, with the outer seats cantilevered from the track. "It's the first big coaster to come to the Prater in a very long time," said **Maximilian Roeser**, marketing, Mack. "It's a very compact layout.



One column actually goes into the ghost train ride."

At **Fantasia** in Austria, a new Stryker coaster called Helios is under construction for 2025. Another coaster will find its home at a water park, **Aquashow Family Park** in Portugal. This will be a dry ride, a launched roller coaster.

A water coaster planned for **Freizeitpark Plohn** will feature launched sections and other features. (See page 10.) The LIMS are being tested at Mack Rides Rocking Boat facility. That new product has been in development for numerous years. According to Roeser, the Rocking Boat will see its debut at **Futuroscope** in the summer of 2025, with a second one in contract. **Carowinds'** water battle is another water attraction for 2025.

Another new concept is Flow Ryde, a trackless dark ride conveyance system. It is currently used at **Europa-Park's** VR experiences.

In addition to coasters, two gameplay theaters — one for **Paultons Park** and one for **Europa-Park** will

debut in 2025. The one at Paultons Park is termed a medium-sized version, while the one at Europa-Park will be larger. The attraction at the latter will replace the circular Historama.

Lagotronics will do the targeting system for the two aforementioned dark rides. Europa-Park's will be mounted to the cars, while Paultons will have a cable to the shooting mechanisms.

"Paultons Park is the way we are revolutionizing dark rides," said **Michael Thiesen**, account manager, Lagotronics. "We started collaborating with Mack Rides a little more than a year ago. Ever since, the concept has been growing."

The story at Paultons Park surrounds a doctor who is fascinated with ghosts. In acquiring collectibles, ghosts escape, and the goal of the guests is to recapture them. Five vehicles have four passengers back-to-back on each side, with an inner circle and outer circle. Riders go around twice. Five physical

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scenes, which also involve media, and three large outer screens that engage visitors on a large visual canvas.

At Europa-Park, the system will be much larger with 144 players in the ride at one time. The engagement there, using the IP of the new cinema movie involving the Europa-Park mascots, is a racing theme, with the players focused on fuel.

Rocky Mountain Construction took the top prize, the Image Award, among exhibitor booths. Paired with **Larson International** for the first time, the booth was surrounded with buzz and energy.

Two raptor coasters are under construction for 2025. The popular compact model will be going to **Lost Island Theme Park** and will feature a 12-car train. The one for **Walibi Holland** appears to be a showstopper with a dueling/racing concept. One side (blue) is deemed more family-friendly as it doesn't go upside down, while the green track features six inversions. Interactivity is what really sells this ride.

"It's all about the line of sight," said **Joe Draves**, coaster designer. "You have to see the other train as much as possible. We wanted two drastically different rides."

Just after IAAPA Expo closed, **Gyeongju World** in South Korea opened a raptor track coaster before 2024 closed out. It is the popular compact model.

Larson, now under the RMC umbrella, was showcasing the Telescoping



Even with a class-5 restraint, Gerstlauer's concept for the Airtime Coaster (above) is geared toward families. Maurer Rides featured a three-attractions-in-one concept that combined a Spike coaster, drop ride and observation platform (right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

Flying Scooters.

"The concept is taking two things we've done for years that have proven to be successful for our customers," said **Hunter Novotny**, ride consultant. "We've combined the Star Dancer and the Flying Scooters, which addresses some of the shortcomings of both and creates something really special for the guests. With the telescoping feature, it creates stability during loading, and there will be an automated release of the lap belt which will increase capacity."

This new idea goes from eight gondolas to 12.

At **Gerstlauer**, projects are happening globally. Awaiting commissioning is **Palindrome** at **COTALand**, at the **Circuit of the Americas** venue.

"We have a family coaster going in **Jardin d'Acclimatation** in France, which has a surprise," said **Jan-Phillipe Roelle**, project manager. "The layout of a family coaster at **Holiday Park** (Germany) will have a decent length with a backward section."

For more thrills, a spin-

ning coaster is going into **Parc Asterix**. "It will be very well themed and have something unique as well," he said.

At **Walibi Belgium**, a triple-launched family coaster will join a neighboring Gerstlauer coaster at the park.

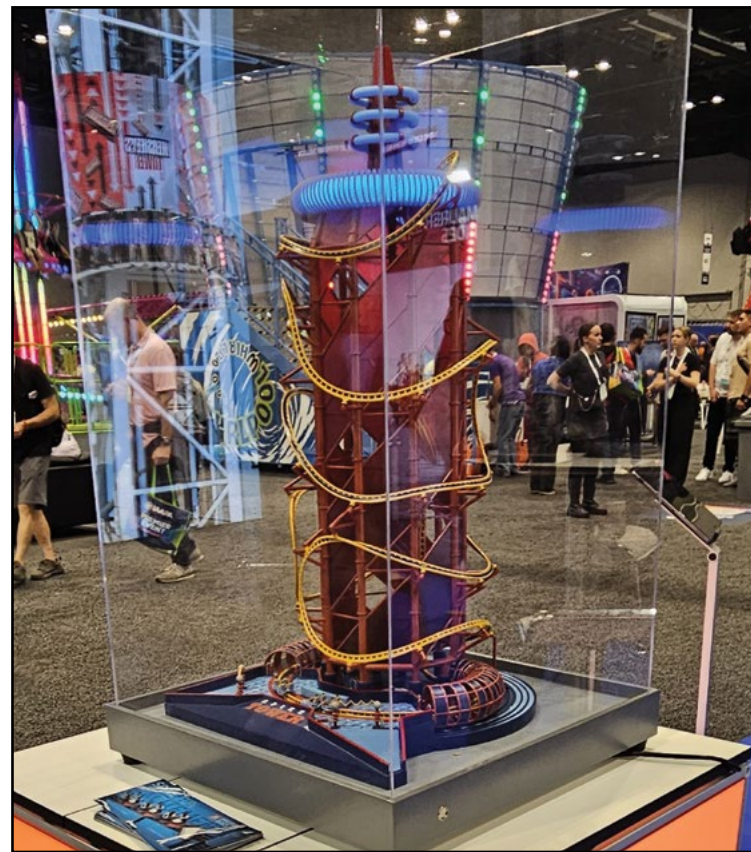
An Inverted Infinity Coaster is going to **Parque del Café** in Columbia.

Two heavily themed Sky Fly attractions will debut in May at Epic Universe.

New on the market for Gerstlauer was the Airtime Coaster. "It's a family coaster but it can do airtime, which is new," said Roelle. "It has a class-5 restraint, so it can do inversions, but we really consider it a family coaster because the height requirement is only one meter."

Gerstlauer is represented in North America by **Ride Entertainment**.

"We're very excited about the new additions to the Gerstlauer lineup —The Infinity Inverted Coaster and the Airtime Coaster," said **Kris Rowberry**, marketing. Ride Entertainment. "We're really excited to be working with a park in North America



that is looking to bring it here for the first time."

He feels the Infinity Inverted Coaster fits into any park's portfolio owing to the flexibility of a chain lift, a forward launch or a swing launch.

RE represents numerous companies in North America. "We're always looking forward to working with our other partners **KCL Engineering**, **Lagotronics**, **Metallbau Emmeln** and **Funtime** to continue to bring their attractions here to the U.S., where so many parks in Europe are loving them there," Rowberry said.

"We're looking forward to **Ziptrack Switchback**, coming to the United States. It's the next-generation zipline, but I can't go into further details on the first installation," he said.

In terms of RE's installation abilities, Rowberry told

AT, "We are busier than ever. No matter who builds the ride, we can still install it."

Vekoma wowed onlookers with its vehicle going to the just-announced **BON Luxury Theme Park** in Mexico. Called **Tecuari Beast**, it is one of five Vekoma attractions going into the park, scheduled to open in 2026, four of which are coasters. The other attraction is the dual, interactive **Beat It** shoot-the-chute introduced in 2023 at the Expo.

"Tecuari Beast sets a lot of records. It's a double-launch coaster," said **Ricardo Tonding-Etges**, North American sales. "This layout incorporates all the best parts of the best layouts of the coasters we have out there. And then we added some more. It's going to be really impressive. We expect it to be one of the best in the world."

Furthermore, North America's first **Super Boomerang**, **The Flash: Vertical Velocity** will open at **Six Flags Great Adventure** and a **Family Boomerang Rebound**, **ShootOut**, will open at **Oasis at the Lake of Ozarks**. **Santa's Village** in Canada is opening a custom-design family coaster, **Yeti Trek**, and a **Suspended Family Coaster** will open at **Aztlan Parque Urbano** in Mexico.

In Poland, an indoor family coaster is going into an expansion of the **Mandoria**



S&S Worldwide's Twizzler's Twisted Gravity reveal showed the massive size of the ride gondola (above left). Triotech announced that the company was chosen to do one of the attractions in Seven's new discovery centers. AT/TIM BALDWIN



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Sunkid took a Brass Ring Award for its new ride concept, the Rocking Tower, which combined an observation ride with a thrilling swing (above left). The Dynamic Mover vehicle from ETF showcased its independent movement — trackless without a wire (above middle). Above right, Chih-Hung Ouyang, CEO of Brogent (left) stands with David Adames of Niagara Parks at the media announcement of a flying theater headed to Niagara Falls. AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY BROGENT

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retail shopping center. The ride will be called Aquila.

Triotech announced in cooperation with Seven in Saudi Arabia that the company was chosen to do one of the attractions in the new discovery centers. “It will be Warner Bros. IP,” said Christian Martin, VP communications. “They are going to be entertainment/educational-themed indoor parks. For our attraction, you’ll be essentially going on a journey, simulated with giant screens and motion platforms.”

The experience will be immersion within 100 square meters.

“You’ll feel like you’re moving — and you do up and down — but the attraction doesn’t move. Twenty-four people experience it at a time. People are seated back to back with media content all around,” Martin said.

Triotech had previously worked with Seven on a Transformers attraction.

Triotech is a part of Six Flags Qiddiyah City by providing a dark ride attraction called Into The Deep. “it’s the biggest attraction we’ve done.”

Sally Dark Rides opened a SpongeBob dark ride in Las Vegas in 2024. Following that, two similar installations are under construction or in development in Turkey.

“An idea I’m pitching in a meeting is an original concept,” said Drew Hunter, vice president of creative design. “However, many of the parks

are using IPs because that resonates with the public. Right now, the company is doing better than ever.”

Sally also promoted its Mini Dark Ride concept. “Over the years, we’ve spoken with clients who were interested in purchasing an ‘E-Ticket’ style/level dark ride attraction but didn’t have the space in their park or FEC for a massive show building,” said Rich Hill, chief creative officer. “We ended up with a two-vehicle, four-room layout that used theatrical trickery like rotating stages, projection mapping, invisible UV paint and other fun effects to completely change the look of those

four rooms every time we pass through them.”

Maurer Rides had rides going in, as well as new ideas.

The Spike coaster system has new incredible maneuvers and elements for a train of riders.

“I like that they are eye-catchers, and you can really see the marketing,” said Steve Boney, executive business development. “We are able to make the newer elements with the new motor design. You see this shamrock or Kraken element, and it’s really identifiable — a selfie moment.”

While single vehicles have been seen on cruise ships, the drive for capacity has innovated the system.

Train length is scalable.

“What’s different this year is everyone has seen our motor, but now we’ve added a second motor, a redundant motor,” Boney told *Amusement Today*. “What this allows us to do is very similar to a jet airplane. You have two motors on a jet that gives you more power, but more importantly, on our roller coaster, you don’t need an evacuation platform anymore — which is very good for attractions with theming.”

Maurer Rides has an installation at Six Flags Qiddiyah City called Sea Stallion that will operate with eight, two-seater vehicles.

Also new for the show was the Spike Tower, which

showed riders accelerating around the side of the tower, and then once at the top, it becomes a drop tower. The drop can be controlled, so the customer could opt for the speed of gravity or a controlled, slower speed, which could be varied throughout the day. A customer-driven idea was an observation platform at the top of the tower, which would be three attractions in one.

S&S Worldwide stretched the typical vehicle reveal — literally. Instead of a coaster car, a 20-person Screamin’ Swing vehicle heading to Hersheypark

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made for a gigantic photo op.

"We'd brought in coasters going on 10 or 15 years," said CEO **Jason Mons**. "This achieved what the others had done, but it was exciting to let people see just how big it is."

"We are getting closer to our first Axis opening," said **Trever Dyer**, marketing. "Exit 10 in Riyadh is waiting for the rest of the building to be finished, but the coaster structure is in."

Interest across the S&S portfolio continues. "The trend right now is the family side of things," added Dyer.

At the Expo, management said two leads were nearing signing the next family concept. S&S leadership plans to erect a complete model of the company's Rail Ryder concept, which will allow for full cycling, as well as being able for customers to see exactly what they were buying.

They also noted they were hoping to reach out to further venues such as ski resorts and cultural centers. A skywalk experience has been fully engineered.

"A Rail Ryder can be used with an LSM system, so there wouldn't be a need for a big lift hill," Dyer added. "It can all be close to the ground. You could have that for summer guests who go to the resorts that aren't skiers."

The drop tower from S&S at Six Flags Qiddya City will be the world's tallest.

"We've re-engaged with customers with whom we haven't worked with in some time; we have some very exciting contracts," Mons told *AT*. "We're excited with where everything's going."

Sunkid was eager to speak on a new ride concept at the Expo called Rocking Tower. "We are enthusiastic because it is an addition and an expansion of our family ride portfolio," said **Johannes Wiedorfer**, marketing. "It's a combination of a tower and a swing, which approaches children a little older — higher, taller and a little more thrill than the rides we have in our portfolio."

The new concept won a Brass Ring Award at the Expo.



Zamperla showcased its family thrill launch coaster with a model showing the layout and elements (above). This ride is opening at **Parc Spirou** in France in 2026. **RES Rides** will debut three world's firsts in 2025, such as the **Air Loop Coaster**, and also introduced new flat rides such as **La Ola** (right).

AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY RES RIDES

Also introduced in 2023 was the Mountain Coaster 2.0. **Sunkid** has more than 70 installations of mountain coasters worldwide. With the newer model, they consider it the "smart version," where the carts maintain an anti-collision system. In addition, **Sunkid** feels the new design "looks cooler."

The mountain coasters are viewed as a "single-rail" type. **Sunkid** opened a 2.0 version in Norway in 2024. One followed in Poland and Kazakhstan after that. Two more are being installed in France, one that opened prior to Christmas.

"You are still able to get it to go as fast as it can. It still gives you the opportunity to operate it as a rider," said **Wiedorfer**.

Brogent announced a new attraction coming to **Niagara Parks**. Opening in 2025, a new flying theater will open just steps away from the world-famous attraction. It replaces the previous 4-D theater.

Chih-Hung Ouyang, chairman of **Brogent**, expressed the company's excitement about the collaboration: "This is the world's first flying theatre located within a renowned, globally known park, a symbol of how this unique experience can blend culture, geography, history, and technology to tell captivating stories in an entirely new way."

Brogent will provide **Niagara Parks** with theme design, flying theater film production and theater construction.

Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters Inc. reported to

be very busy with winter rehab work on trains from numerous parks. In addition to annual overhaul, **Tom Rebbie**, owner, told *AT* that a meeting was scheduled with a park operator overseas to replace existing rolling stock by another manufacturer with new trains from **PTCI**.

In 2024, **PTCI** also provided new trains for **Adventureland** in Iowa for its reimagined **Underground** attraction. "We had to re-engineer in reverse to make our trains fit their track," **Rebbie** said.

New trains went to **Hersheypark's Comet** as well.

ETF had its **Dynamic Mover** vehicle in motion. "This is our first trackless system without a wire," said **Rob Reignen**, area sales manager. "We have built trackless systems for 25 years, as well as track bound. We feel trackless has more possibilities. Without a wire, the technology scans the environment, so you don't need to clear the floor. The movement is also omnidirectional. There are two motors, one for the ride and the other for turning. We noticed big parks needed more, so it has much more acceleration, higher speed and higher turning of the cabin."

Vehicles can seat either six or eight. According to **Reignen**, the batteries only need to be charged overnight for 14 hours of operational use.

Zamperla echoed the family trend with the announcement of **Naruto**, a family thrill launch coaster at **Parc Spirou Provence** in France. The tire-launched coaster has a maximum height of 103 feet, a top speed



of 47 mph, switch track and a track length just shy of 2,200 feet (but with a reverse spike, it travels almost 2,400 feet). It is set to open in 2026.

"We are squarely looking at a very popular market," said **Adam Sandy**, roller coaster sales. "With that 42-inch requirement, you're looking at a 5-, 6-, 7-year-old. Following COVID, we looked around — even in our own portfolio — and saw a lot of good product for thrill at 48 inches and 36 for kiddie, but nothing in that broad appeal middle part. Dovetailing with that, we didn't want to just bring out product with a chain lift that didn't really move the needle."

The project, based on the anime character **Naruto**, has been 18 months in development.

Two of the company's double-heart coasters are opening in 2026 as well.

Michael Coleman, North American sales, told *AT* that from the ride side, there is more of a cohesive approach

to business growth. "The days of individual ride purchases as marketable investments have turned into redevelopment of areas and creating immersive environments," he said. "It's about developing revenue in other areas of the park. It's not about using the ride as the star but as a component to boost per caps. Visually stunning rides increase dwell time in a space."

Accessibility is also a big driver for **Zamperla**. "Accessibility is often referred to as ADA compliance. Our internal mantra for years has been providing rides that go beyond compliance," **Coleman** said. "We spent some time at **Morgan's Wonderland**, and being able to have people in wheelchairs roll on and roll off without having to transfer provides an opportunity to guests who otherwise wouldn't have it. Our mission is to provide smiles and shared experiences."

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Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters Inc. reported to be very busy with winter rehab work on trains from numerous parks. AT/TIM BALDWIN



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▶ EXPO

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The Gravity Group has seen enormous success with its engineered pre-cut track.

"Two years ago, we had 10 projects; last year we had nine projects plus the new ride. This year is looking to be very busy as well, comparable to those," said **Michael Graham**, principal. "Because of that, we have had a need for improving our facility. We have just moved. We bought a building this past year and renovated it with our team. It's our new home; it's wonderful and beautiful and everyone loves it."

Graham said meetings at the Expo went the full range of The Gravity Group's products, the engineered pre-cut track and new coaster installations.

"Two-thirds of our track business is repeat business every year," he said. "They want to do more areas, so that tells people that our customers are very satisfied with engineered pre-cut track."

RES Rides is opening three attractions in 2025. The company's first Air Loop coaster is going to Serengeti-Park in Germany. There, riders will be in control of their own seat on an inverted, powered coaster. Guests will be able to flip upside down at their choice.

"The Oracle will open as a traveling ride with a German showman, and it is also a world's first," said **Roman Rothe**, CTO.

Wave Twist L is the third world's first in 2025. This ride will open at **Adventureland** on Long Island. Called Wave Twister by the park, the attraction features two gondolas that shuttle back and forth on an L-shaped undulating track. The gondolas spin on a rotating platform that boomerangs back and forth on the track.

"We are expecting high interest, with clients wanting to go see it," Rothe said. "We are very happy to have this ride in our lineup."

Other attractions showcased at the Expo were Air Diver, a new flat ride and La Ola, which can seat two, four or eight per seat, totaling up to 32 passengers per ride cycle. RES prides itself on



A contract for a custom-themed version of a Zierer Drifter ride (above left) headed to Tobu Zoo was signed at the Expo. Rides 4 U had a wild hit with people lining up to take a spin on Zero Gravity and be stuck against the translucent wall (above right). COURTESY ZIERER; AT/TIM BALDWIN

being able to customize the thrill level to the customer's wishes. In 2025, **Gröna Lund** is installing an RES Super Swing called The Pump. Rothe said the park wanted the highest level of thrill.

Zierer enjoyed some sales on the show floor. The company was promoting its new Drifter attraction, a dry version of its popular Jet Ski ride. One was sold to **Tobu Zoo** in Japan during the Expo. Another sale made was a coaster for a family park in The Netherlands.

Regarding the Drifter, Area Sales Manager **Jeroen Nijpels** told AT: "For some parks, having water in contact with the ride is something they aren't comfortable with because the park is in an area where the weather is not so good for getting splashed or perhaps the cost of having filtered, clean water is prohibitive." Four Drifters have now been sold.

Nine gondolas on Drifter each seat two, and the interactive nature of the ride lets passengers swing out.

The upcoming season gives Zierer a satisfying workload.

A family coaster going in at **SeaWorld San Antonio** will be a part of a new Rescue Jr. Area.

For 2025, a Force 190 family coaster and Roundabout Ride are for projects also in Texas.

Many deliveries will take place in Europe: a Wave Swinger to France; two coasters and a Drifter Ride to Great Britain; A Kontiki and Family Tower to Belgium, **Plopsa Coö**; a Force Two family coaster and Family Tower to Poland, **Majaland Danzig**. A Family Tower is opening

soon in The Netherlands, **Bommelwereld**. Several rides were delivered for **Legoland Shanghai**. A Kontiki Boat will be delivered to a family park in the north of Germany. Zierer noted there are several other projects but the information could not be released yet.

Marina Ernst, marketing and sales, also spoke on accessibility. "Getting access to all people on our rides is very important to us," she said. "To feel included. I went to the breakfast with Morgan's Wonderland. It was something I really felt was impressive."

Sustainability is also top of mind at Zierer. "The things we focus on is the sustainability of our materials and processes in terms of environmental," said Nijpels.

Chance Rides awaits the opening of **Mattel Adventure Park**, now predicted for the fall of 2025. Two Chance coasters are a part of the park and resort complex.

When asked about what was on the horizon, **Jay Aguilar**, vice president of sales and marketing, told AT that their meetings were broad, as Chance has a portfolio that covers wheels, transportation devices, flat rides and coasters: "I'm going to say it's a mix. Some of the big boys are looking at transportation. Carousels and trains are still core products."

Aguilar estimates that 80 percent of the sales of electric trains are replacing those with fossil fuels. The remainder is new sites that don't have a train at all.

The company was pleased to see founder **Dick Chance** inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame. "Obviously, it's a great



honor," said **Heidi Knotts**, marketing. "It reflects well on the company he's built. We're pleased, honored, and excited for him."

Looking ahead, Aguilar reported that Chance has locked two contracts with what he refers to as "quite interesting sites" in 2025. One project he says is a very unique carousel, the likes of which the company has not done. The 2026 project is a carousel he gestures as "mindblowing."

Altitude Attractions brought something new to the show. A six-seat mobile Hammered was displayed. "We had a lot of guys who wanted it on wheels," said **Logan Checketts**, president. "Now we've got it."

Since the introduction of the four-passenger Soaring Eagle zipline, Altitude Attractions has sold four. Also in development is a new Rock On swing. "It's kind of a resurrection of the Swinging Cages," said Checketts. "We're making it a sit-down version of it. We're wanting it on the market next year." Powered by people, the reimagined version brings a novel attraction to modern safety standards. When available, it will be distributed through Rides 4 U.

"I've been (at the Expo) 39 years, and this ranks as one of the top five IAAPA shows I have attended, said **Len Soled**, owner, **Rides 4 U**. "The energy level and the amount of people interested in our equipment and buying our equipment — it has just been a fantastic show."

Rides 4 U hit all three of its markets — carnival, parks and FECs.

The showstopping ride on the floor was Zero Gravity,

a modern version of the old Rotor-style ride. With plexi-glass walls and captivating lighting, onlookers were stopped in their tracks, seeing riders pressed against the walls. Rides 4 U sold six just prior to the show and sold six more on the trade show floor.

Everything Rides 4 U brought sold. The Zero Gravity was a portable model and was sold to **North American Midway Entertainment**. A Pirate 32 is going to both **Poor Jack** and **Stewart Amusement** on the carnival circuit.

The spinning coaster on the floor went to **Malibu Jacks** in Northern Colorado, and four were sold on the floor.

A drop tower and Dance Party 360 were sold, but the owner didn't want their name divulged. An additional Dance Party 360 was also sold at the show.

"I used to come out of these shows, and my dad — who unfortunately passed away a year ago — would ask me, 'Hey, Lenny, did you sell any rides?' And I'd say, 'Dad, give me a week or two.' We had such a big success at this show. I woke up this morning on fire."



Altitude Attractions displayed a six-seat, mobile **Hammered**. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

Mobile industry exhibitors pleased with business at IAAPA Expo

AT: Pam Sherborne
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ORLANDO — Many exhibitors who were at the IAAPA Expo 2024 focus specifically on one portion of the amusement industry. But many suppliers have products that fit easily into several areas such as amusement parks, carnivals, festivals and other forms.

Below is a sampling that gear their products to both the mobile industry as well as supplying to the permanent segment.

Intermark Ride Group

Gina Guglielmi, Intermark Ride Group, said this year's show was excellent for all her suppliers including **Fabbri, Gosetto, Preston and Barbieri** and **RES**.

"We had meetings almost every 30 minutes with customers, existing and new clients," Guglielmi said.

Guglielmi said she doesn't comment on pending ride contracts, specifically with the larger park operations and new park projects.

But those on which she could comment included **Adventureland**, Farmingdale, New York, which is taking delivery of a new Wave Twist ride from **RES** in 2025.

Skyview Partners for the new **Oasis at Lakeport**, Missouri, resort and park project will take delivery of a new Booster Maxxx, a 50-meter, 16-seat model from **Fabbri Group** in 2025.

As far as trends, Guglielmi is seeing a resurgence in interest for wheels, giant wheels, over the past few years, new and second hand. In addition, she is seeing a resurgence to classic rides like pirate ships and Telecombat (**Fabbri Group**).

"Gosetto fun houses and dark rides are in high demand for both parks and carnivals," she said. "RES, one of the few ride suppliers that builds prototype rides and gets them sold, introduced multiple new rides at IAAPA including the Sun Seeker, Disc Swing, Oracle (thrill ride), Vertical Dark Ride, Sky Seeker and Water Coaster."

Preston & Barbieri's new Hyper Jump has been



Jim Frederiksen, Frederiksen Industries, stayed very busy during IAAPA Expo 2024 (above left). Bob's Space Racers continues to show and sell its water game (above middle). Above right, Kyle Myers of Majestic Rides stands behind the company's brand new round bumper car. AT/PAM SHERBORNE



a huge success, Guglielmi said, with both parks and traveling shows.

"Their Wave Swinger-Family Swinger ride continues to sell well to both industry segments," she said. "Used ride equipment sales are down, primarily due to the lack of good ride equipment available on the market now. Owners are holding on to older equipment and refurbishing more often due to the higher cost of new rides and longer delivery times."

Guglielmi felt that attendance at this year's show was significantly down from 2023.

"I knew of at least 20-plus carnival operators who did not attend, in addition to multiple parks, agri-tourism opps and FECs," she said. "Length of stay during the show was, as in most years, with owner-operators who make the buying decisions, departing on Thursday."

Bob's Space Racers

Dave Sandstrom of Bob's Space Racers saw a lot of new potential customers at IAAPA Expo 2024.

"I am seeing a lot of tire kickers of a younger generation," Sandstrom said.

He said on Wednesday of the show that Tuesday had been the busiest day his company has had in a long time at an IAAPA show.

New to the game lineup at the 2024 show was the Sidewinder, an attendant-free game.

"We are refreshing and bringing back some of our older rides," Sandstrom said. "It seems like this newer

generation likes the look of some of the older games. Simple is better."

Majestic Rides

Kyle Myers of Majestic Rides said his company was exhibiting its brand-new round bumper car.

"Our new car is getting quite a bit of attention," Myers said. "This one runs off of 48 volts, but we are working on a 90-volts car."

The car uses two joy sticks that have two independent motors.

Wisdom Rides

Wisdom Rides was showcasing its new large suspended portable coaster at IAAPA Expo 2024.

"It is good for both the carnival industry and the park industry," the company's **Jared Davis** said.

Davis said their first coaster will be going to a showman in Germany.

Eli Bridge Company

Patty Sullivan said her company was very busy last year and had a lot of interested visitors at her booth during IAAPA Expo 2024.

"We are now booked into 2026," she said.

She said they are selling a lot of wheels and even more Scramblers currently.

Reverchon

Alexa Reverchon said during IAAPA Expo 2024 that Reverchon delivered a spinning coaster to **Ray Cammack Shows** this past year. It is themed to Heidi.

Reverchon also is working on new designs with boats for its classic flume ride. The boats seat four

with separation aspects. According to Reverchon, the boats are not only new designs but have technical upgrades as well.

Frederiksen Industries

Jim Frederiksen, Frederiksen Industries, found himself busier at IAAPA Expo 2024 than he has been in a long time at an IAAPA show.

Frederiksen Industries manufactures the Fun Slide. The slides feature 20 decorative triangular lights containing a total of 220 Turbolite fixtures. These lights fold down for transporting. There also is an illuminated Fun Slide sign atop of the launch platform. The letters are two feet high and contain a total of 238 Turbolite fixtures. This also folds down for transporting.

► See MOBILE, page B10

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Continued from page B9

ARM Inc.

ARM Inc. representatives **Don Writsel** and **Andy Dugus** said the company was having a very good show during last November's IAAPA show. They said the company wasn't introducing a new ride at the show but was showcasing updated theming on their existing rides.

ARM has delivered hundreds of portable and park ride systems to customers worldwide since 1998.

KMG

KMG showcased its new ride, the Lunarix, at IAAPA Expo 2024. KMG's **Amy Kroom** said they have received several orders. She said they have one going to Australia and one to Holland in 2026. In the U.S., **Kissel Amusements** has purchased one also for delivery next year. Two others have been sold and have a delivery date for 2029.

KMG had exact duplicate models of the Lunarix and the X-Drive at the booth. The models were made by the **Kuylendam** company.

Kay Park Recreation

Kay Park Recreation's **Marilee Gray** said that after day two of IAAPA Expo 2024, the company had gained a record number of leads. In other words, the most they had ever received during an entire IAAPA Expo.

Kay Park is a manufacturer of commercial outdoor fur-

niture, including picnic tables, grills, benches, trash containers, drinking fountains, planters, umbrellas, bollards, shade canopies, bike racks, recycling stations and pet park products.

Gray said a sustainability idea of Kay Park has come to fruition.

"We are running totally on solar power," she said. "We had a delay waiting on one part, but when it finally came in, we shut down for one day and the part was installed. Now we can run our machinery more efficiently."

The solar power began running into the plant on Sept. 14, 2024.

Gray is Kay Park's advertising manager and senior salesperson. A new addition to the company is **Carlos Albino** as marketing director.

Magic Money

Magic Money's booth at the IAAPA Expo last November saw a lot of visitors. The company's **Zack Enright** said, "We have had an influx of customers."

Enright said Magic Money was introducing a lot of new upgrades and functions to its on-site kiosks programming.

"We are getting more and more carnival customers," Enright said. "At the **Ohio State Fair**, we had 100 points of sale. We also are going into other venues such as pumpkin patches."

Talley Amusements supplies the midway for the Ohio State Fair, Columbus. Mary Talley had reported earlier



Above left, Dale Hershberger (center) and his son, Zach Hershbergern (right) show an IAAPA Expo attendee one of Audio Innovators newest products. Megan Gannon and Ian Bottiglieri, Image Engineering, were busy during the expo talking to customers and giving demonstrators of some of the company's special effects (above middle). KMG had a model of its new Lunarix ride on display (above right). AT/PAM SHERBORNE



that she had obtained more kiosks from Magic Money because of the ease of use.

Moser Rides

Moser Rides had one of its spring rides on exhibit at IAAPA Expo 2024.

But it wasn't easy.

"We received the ride yesterday," **Stefano Moser** said on Wednesday of the show. "We stayed up all night putting it up."

The 30-foot-tall ride seats 12. It was drawing quite a bit of interest at the show.

Audio Innovators

Dale Hershberger said new for Audio Innovators this year was a water slide dispatch system, a wireless lighting system to let riders know when they could go down the slide.

The company supplies a large array of two-way radios,

audio message repeaters, window intercoms and an AI-Solar digital Safety Announcement System now built into a solar-powered system that allows installation without the need for power on the top of slide towers or parking lots.

National Ticket Company

Christine Brouse and **James Brouse** were on hand for National Ticket Company at IAAPA Expo 2024.

The two had been busy helping customers purchase its line of wristbands and tickets that can be used for admission, crowd management, special privileges, catering, age verification, height restrictions, group identification or any application where a visual means of identification is needed.

Waterloo Tent and Tarp Company

Waterloo Tent and Tarp was experiencing "business as usual," according to the company's **Bryan Schmitt**. The company specializes in shade structures and covers for rides, games, pools and playground equipment.

Schmitt said they have recently partnered with an Amish line of outside recycled plastic furniture. Some of that furniture was on display at IAAPA Expo 2024.

Alive and Kickin' Pizza Crust

This was the first year that Alive and Kickin' Pizza Crust exhibited at the 2024 IAAPA Show. The attendees waiting in line to sample the prod-

uct was an indication how the show was for the company.

"It has been fantastic," said the company's **Bill Filler**. "We are having a lot of interest in our product."

The pizza crust is already in many amusement parks and can be customized, from dough balls to par-baked crusts.

Sippers by Design

Lisa Dominique, owner of Sippers by Design, was happy with the business she was getting at last November's IAAPA Expo.

"We have had a lot of people coming by," Dominique said. "I am seeing a lot of old customers and new customers."

Sippers by Designs has been designing and manufacturing specialty custom-shaped drink containers for 21 years.

Image Engineering

Image Engineering produces engineering solutions for special effects and lighting installation.

The company's **Ian Bottiglieri** said Image Engineering has been in business for about 27 years producing special effect shows for events such as professional sports, concert touring and theaters.

It has been only about three years since it started productions at location-based themed attractions including parks, resorts and beach fronts.

They were seeing a lot of interested attendees, said **Megan Gannon**, who was also on hand for the show.

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More than 170 women came together at Sports & Social for the Amazing Women of the Attractions Industry mixer. An idea originally conceived by Una de Boer (WhiteWater) in 2018, this year's Monday night get-together was the most highly attended to date. AT/SUSAN STOREY



Melissa Oviedo, CEO of TEA, welcomes guests to the annual TEA Thea Awards Announcement and International Mixer at SeaWorld Orlando. AT/SUSAN STOREY



David Rosenberg (The SSA Group), Julie Estrada (Merlin Entertainments North America) and Brian Knoebel (Knoebels Amusement Resort) met on the patio during Extreme Legacy's Wednesday evening party. AT/SUSAN STOREY



Alex Yamich of Extreme Legacy and Karen Zondag of Disney were married by Ripley's Jim Pattison, Jr. in front of excited guests at the Ripley's/Premier Rides suite late Wednesday night. Kelven Tan of Dynamic Entertainment Technology (far left) and Cindy Emerick of Mattel Adventure Park (far right) posed with the happy couple. AT/SUSAN STOREY



The annual Tom Morrow NEAPPA Dinner and IAAPA Social took place at Maggiano's. NEAPPA President Chris Nicoli of Canobie Lake Park took a moment to pose with several of this year's event sponsors. COURTESY NEAPPA

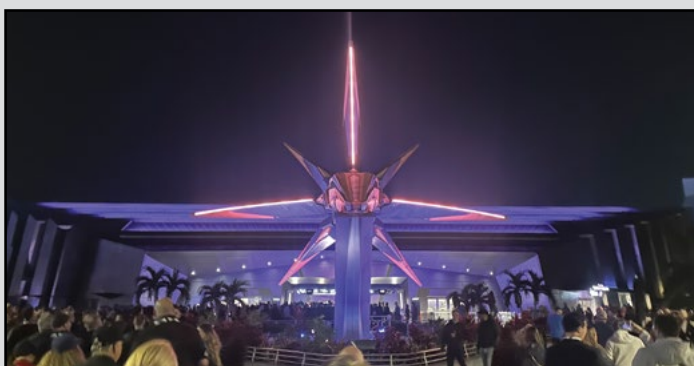


From left, Benna Sandlofer and Lorelei Schoendienst of Luehrs' Ideal Rides, Debbie Powers of Powers Great American Midways and Annie Shubert and Lisa Luehrs Cummings of McGowen Allied Specialty Insurance found time at IAAPA Expo 2024's Carnival Reception to share some laughs. AT/PAM SHERBORNE

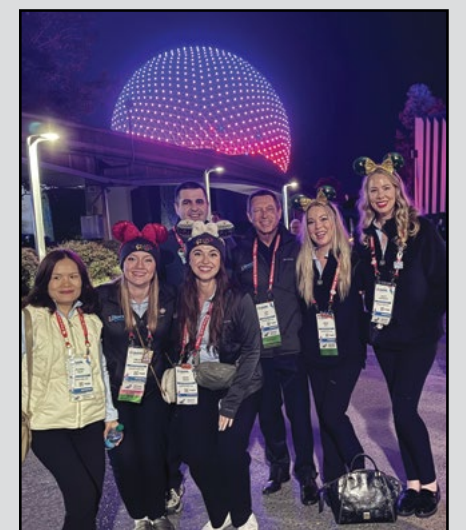
Two veteran showmen — John Doolan of Doolan Amusements (left) and Corky Powers of Powers Great American Midways (right) — took time out during IAAPA's Carnival Reception to share some thoughts. AT/PAM SHERBORNE



On two nights, attendees enjoyed a drone show after exiting the Orange County Convention Center. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Jim Seay and the Premier Rides team (right) experienced IAAPA Celebrates at EPCOT together. The sold-out event featured popular park attractions including Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind (above), Spaceship Earth and Frozen Ever After. AT/SUSAN STOREY, JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



Water park industry showcases continued growth throughout Expo

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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ORLANDO — The water attractions industry appears to be stronger than it has ever been before. Increased tourism and a continued interest in water recreation in 2023 paved the way for new growth in 2024. Several large-scale projects have either recently opened or are on track to open in the near future. Once again, operators have had to up their game in order to stay competitive.

While some suppliers continue to do what they do best, others seek ways to provide innovation to expand attraction offerings and keep the industry new and fresh. The creativity continues, and expanded attraction offerings keep the industry thriving. AT takes a look at some of the highlights of what the industry is doing to keep guests coming through the turn styles.

In recognition of their outstanding leadership and contributions to the water park industry, two supplier veterans were inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame. Geoff Chutter, founder and CEO of **WhiteWater** and Rick Hunter, founder, president and CEO of **ProSlide Technology**, have brought worldwide acclaim to their respective companies, making them among the most recognized names in the industry. Chutter and Hunter both started more than 40 years ago when the fledgling water park industry was in its infancy.

ProSlide Technology had a strong year with several high-profile projects and record-breakers opening in 2024. Some of this year's highlights include Eagle Hunt, at **Silverwood Theme Park's Boulder Beach**, in Athol, Idaho. Eagle Hunt opened as the longest Dueling RocketBlast Water Coaster in the U.S. On the other side of the country, Florida's **Rapids Water Park** in Riviera Beach, opened Mega Mayhem, ProSlide's longest Dueling PipeLineBlast/FlyingSaucer 20 water coaster. In Vietnam, ProSlide provided more than 30 water ride experiences to the newly opened **Sun World Sam Son Water**



Wubit's new Matchball tests participant's agility by allowing them to swing a rubber ball at each other (above). Hall of Fame inductee Rick Hunter of ProSlide shows off his Hall of Fame award as well as the company's new Hive attraction (right).
AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT

Park, including several firsts for the Asia-Pacific region as well as the region's tallest double TornadoWave and the largest BehemothBowl.

On the first day of IAAPA Expo 2024, crowds gathered at the ProSlide booth to watch Rick Hunter unveil the company's latest product, Hive. It promises to deliver a waterslide experience like never before. Inspired by the company's own FlyingSaucer, Hive takes the concept a step further by adding a full spiral double helix. Unlike typical waterslide helices, Hive is open in the center and can be made with translucent sections, giving the slide unmatched visuals. Hunter announced that Hive will open next year at two locations. **Zombezi Bay** at the **Columbus Zoo and Aquarium** will debut A Hive 20 installation utilizing two-person rafts. In keeping with the zoo theme and the name, Zoombezi's Hive will be part of a three-slide conservation tower and will be themed to bees. **Chimelong Water Park** in Guangzhou, China, will feature a Hive 35, a larger version that can accommodate five-person rafts. It will be part of a new mega tower including three other attractions.

WhiteWater completed a stellar year with several projects opening in 2024 including the Rise of Icarus in Wisconsin Dells. That

record-breaking tower at **Mt. Olympus Water & Theme Park** features five waterslides including The Fall, the tallest waterslide in North America, starting from a height of 135 feet. That attraction won Mt. Olympus a Golden Ticket Award for best new water park ride in 2024. Combining two of WhiteWater's popular slides, Walhalla, a fusion of a Boomerango and Manta, was awarded a second-place Brass Ring Award for best new product with a cost of more than \$2 million.

Another record breaker — this time for kids — opened at Waterbom Bali, in Indonesia. The first stage of the water park's new Kids Area opened with the World's largest AquaForms play structure. In Chongqing, China, WhiteWater is the sole supplier of the new Dream Space Water Park which is nearing completion and should open soon.

On a much smaller scale, Mini Blaster took the popular water coaster and scaled it down to make it suitable for young children. Mini Blaster was awarded a second-place Brass Ring Award for Best New Product with a cost of less than \$2 million. Fittingly, the first Mini Blaster debuted at **Schlitterbahn Water Resort New Braunfels**, the Texas water park that introduced the very first Master Blaster uphill water coaster back in 1994.

At a press conference



held on the second day of the show, WhiteWater unveiled five new products including Topspin, a high-banked corkscrew downward spiral element, that can be an attraction on its own or combined with elements. The company's popular Boomerango is now available as a covered Boomerango Squeeze, making it possible for indoor water parks to install the highly sought-after slide by keeping the bulk of it outside of the building. The first is scheduled to debut at **Kalahari Resorts and Conventions - Wisconsin Dells** as part of its 2026 water park expansion.

Polin Waterparks was recognized for its stunning Stingray waterslide. It was awarded a first-place Brass Ring Award for Best New Product with a cost of more than \$2 million. The first one opened this past year at France's **O'Gliss Park** in Vendée (see AT October 2024). Polin was also proud of its accomplishments at **Aquascope**, the new water park that opened at Futuroscope, a futuristic attraction in Chasseneuil-du-Poitou, France. Polin supplied a multiple waterslide complex that included a Polin Family Space Shuttle+Family Space Boat Combination known as an EpiCombo, Windigo, Looping Rocket, Black Hole, Spheres and Aquatube. Futuroscope was

presented with a World Waterpark Association Leading Edge Award at the WWA show in October 2024.

New to IAAPA Expo 2024 was **Polgün Waterparks & Attractions**. Although new to the show, the company has been around since 2002 and has completed projects in more than 48 countries. Based in Turkey, Polgün uses L-RTM technology to produce stunning slides in a variety of colors and patterns. The company does all of the fiberglass manufacturing and steel production in-house at a 70,000-square meter facility in Muğla City. The company employs more than 300 production staff, designers, engineers and managers along with a sales team.

At first glance, Polgün's Navatu waterslide bears similarity to Polin's Stingray, but the rides are fundamentally different. Navatu brings together body sliding, mat riding, single and double tubing, and family rafting — all in one ride. The two central towers are enveloped in a cascading water curtain that surrounds guests as they proceed up the spiral staircase. Navatu earned Polgün a first-place Brass Ring Award for a ride/attraction with a cost of more than \$2 million. When asked about the show, Ignacio Lauwers of Polgün told AT

► See WATER, page B14



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► WATER

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that there was a lot of interest and many inquiries.

Arihant Water Park Equipment of Maharashtra, India, built India's first water park in 1991. The company has more than 800 completed projects in 63 countries. This year, Arihant's Infinity Racer waterslide took home a second-place Brass Ring Award for ride/attraction with a cost of less than \$2 million. Infinity Racer is a mat racer slide that also goes uphill, then doubles back into a reverse landing.

Multiple aquatic design firms were on hand to help bring a project from concept to reality. Several had sharp, attractive booths to lure potential customers. **Martin Aquatics**, now in its fourth year at IAAPA Expo, garnered a second-place Brass Ring Award for Best Exhibit 700–900 square feet. The company has worked on more than 2,500 projects since 1987 and has several projects in the works for 2025 and beyond.

Aquatic Development Group (ADG) is looking forward to the opening of **Okana Resort & Waterpark** in Oklahoma City. That project has been in development for years and the hotel is taking reservations for its February 21, 2025, opening. The \$400 million resort, adjacent to the **First Americans Museum** includes a 404-room riverfront hotel, spa, 4.5-acre outdoor adventure lagoon, amphitheater, 100,000-square-foot indoor waterpark, restaurants, Native American marketplace and retail outlets.

Bavarian Inn Lodge Waterpark in Frankenmuth, Michigan, is getting close to opening its expansion. Originally hoping to be up and running by Christmas 2024, **Bavarian Blast Indoor Waterpark** encountered a few final-stage construction delays and has yet to commit to a firm opening date.

On the mountain coaster front, ADG has a coaster under construction at Grouse Mountain in North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Expected to open in the spring of 2025, the coaster

will descend nearly 300 feet along more than 4,700 feet of track and offer stunning views of the city of Vancouver.

Julie Kline, marketing manager at Aquatic Development Group, told *AT* that ADG had a very good run at the show and has multiple projects in the works for the upcoming years. The company has a new Epic Surf installation in the works, and she hopes to be able to announce details of that project in the coming months.

Among the projects that **OpenAire, Inc.** has recently completed is the aforementioned Bavarian Inn Lodge Waterpark. The new 170,000-square-foot addition includes a family fun center and an OpenAire glass-covered structure 175 feet wide by 287 feet long with a cupola over the slide tower.

Another project, currently in the design phase is a new glass-enclosed community aquatic center for Lima, Ohio. Current plans call for a 90-foot wide by 145-foot-long enclosure with a retractable roof and a 62-foot-wide sliding glass wall.

OpenAire has several projects in the works for 2025 and beyond but was not able to disclose any details at the time of the Expo. OpenAire continues to work with water parks, cruise ships, entertainment complexes, restaurants, and even private residences to provide roofing solutions that let the sunshine in.

New to the floor last year was **Crystal Lagoons**. Its stunning booth space with a video floor simulating water was back again this year. Last year Crystal Lagoons started developing Public Access Lagoons or PALs, with the first opening in the **Lago Mar** development outside of Houston, Texas. Four more PALs are planned throughout Texas.

Wibit Sports was on hand again with its line of inflatable floating obstacle/play courses. Connected by narrow bridges and walkways, Wibit courses test balance, agility and speed as guests traverse the floating Wibit course. New for 2025 is MatchBall. Unlike most Wibit challenges where players rely on their own agility,



New exhibitor Polgün Waterparks & Attractions won a Brass ring Award for its Navatu multi-slide attraction. AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT

Matchball pits players against each other by adding a swinging ball that players can use to knock their challenger off the course and into the water.

All Wibit products are suitable for installation in any type of water — freshwater, saltwater or chlorinated. Some have found their way into Crystal Lagoons installations.

Although **Wiegand. Waterrides** made a name for itself with its stainless-steel slides that seem to have an unlimited lifespan, the company is gaining notoriety with its fiber-glass reinforced plastic (FRP) slides. Opening in 2025 will be a new slide coaster launched with linear synchronous motors. Called the Aqua Slidecoaster, it will debut on **Norwegian Cruise Line's** Norwegian Aqua, which is slated to launch in April 2025. A second Slidecoaster will be installed on the Norwegian Luna scheduled to set sail in 2026.

Wiegand continues to work with several cruise lines, including **Aida, Costa** and **Royal Caribbean**.

SplashTacular is the largest U.S.-based waterslide supplier. Headquartered in Kansas, the company offers a complete turnkey product including design, engineering, manufacturing and installation with everything made in America. Although unable to disclose a location, at the time of the show, another of the manufacturer's unique standing waterslide attractions, SlipStream, will open in 2025.

Safety of course, is a priority at all facilities, but especially for the water attractions industry. **Ellis & Associates** held a press conference to announce that it has prepared for the first public release of its **Electronic Aquatic Vigilance System** (EAVS), an artificial intelligence-driven system to provide drowning prevention, safety and security. Early partners in pioneering the system include **Great Wolf Lodge Resorts, Roaring Springs Waterpark** and **Gaylord Resorts**.

Wess Long, president of **Star-Guard Elite**, told *AT* the company has grown and continued to expand and as result it had a much larger presence on the show floor with 11 team members in attendance. SGE looks forward to meeting with design firms, vendors and equipment manufacturers to maintain existing relationships. SGE also looks forward to meeting with friends in the industry even if they are not clients. Because they do a lot of collaboration with a number of different firms, the show provides an excellent opportunity to sit down and talk face-to-face with the people with whom they collaborate.

Scotland-based Murphy's Waves, known throughout the world for its high-quality wave generation equipment, had several high-profile projects in the last few years.

Murphy's was pleased with the completion of a 10-chamber "breaker" Wave Generator at **Mellors**

Splash City in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The new "breaker" wave pool attraction offers eight different wave patterns throughout the 3,500-square-meter (37,000-square-foot) pool, with the maximum wave height reaching almost 1.5 meters (nearly five feet).

Empex Watertoys has been doing water play structures and apparatuses for more than 30 years and has developed its own special fiberglass and plastic formulations that are designed specifically to last in aquatic environments.

Empex developed a new line of smaller devices that utilize a four-inch pipe. The smaller devices are designed to be a lower-cost alternative to the larger watertoys.

Raft and tube suppliers, **CPI, Zebec** and **ZPro** continue to supply the water park industry with the inflatable products and mats needed to partake in many of the new and exciting attractions the slide manufacturers continue to churn out. All three have also branched out to the amusement industry providing floatation collars for river raft rides as well as bumper car collars.

The water attractions industry seems poised for considerable growth in 2025 and beyond. Developers are realizing that continued expansion is necessary just to keep their market share. With several new substantial projects in the works and new players, particularly from the Middle East, entering the market, continued growth seems to be certain.

Inspiring, imaginative and interesting images from IAAPA Expo



Entrances of the south concourse of the Orange County Convention Center made arriving fun. AT/TIM BALDWIN



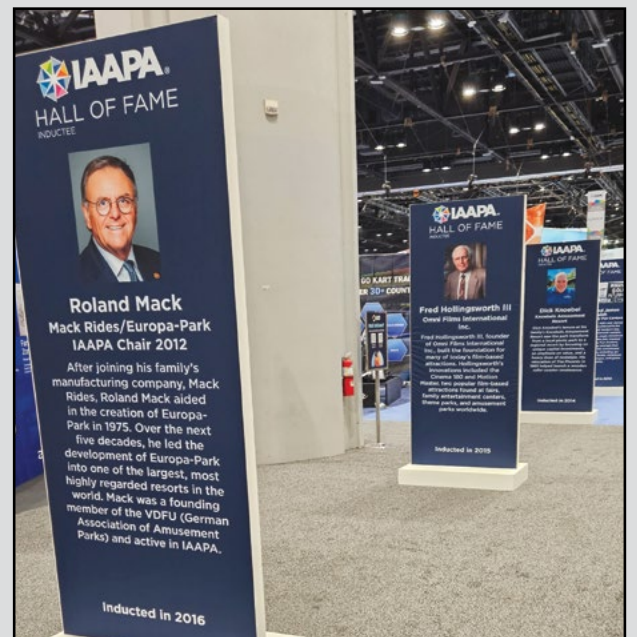
Rocky Mountain Construction won an Image Award for having the best booth. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Acrobatic feats were among the entertainment at the Kickoff opening ceremony. COURTESY PB AND J STUDIOS/IAAPA



Rapterra, the new wing coaster from B&M headed to Kings Dominion, captured the attention of onlookers. AT/TIM BALDWIN



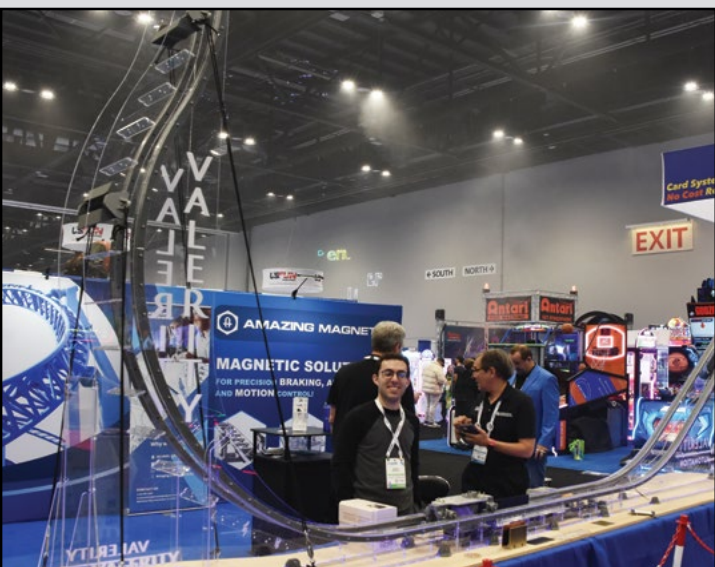
IAAPA beautifully placed its Hall of Fame recipients in an aisle on the trade show floor. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Whether looking, riding or buying, there was much to see at the IAAPA Expo. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Premier Rides revealed the lead car of AlpenFury at a press announcement. With its sled-like motif, the launched coaster is headed to Canada's Wonderland. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Technology is always on full display at IAAPA Expo, such as Valerity Automation's showcase of the use of magnets ride motion and braking systems. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

Surprises can always be found such as this gigantic Christmas tree, which housed a full service cocktail bar. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



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