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Chickasaw Nation opens unique Okana Resort in Oklahoma City



AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. — The long-awaited **Okana Resort & Indoor Waterpark** opened its doors on February 21, 2025. The \$400 million project by the **Chickasaw Nation**, features a hotel, conference center, restaurants, arcade, family entertainment center, a 100,000-square-foot indoor water park and a 4.5-acre outdoor adventure lagoon. The resort is located near the **First Americans Museum** in Oklahoma City in an area of the city known as the Horizons District.

The resort is poised to become a landmark attraction in Oklahoma City and reflects the Chickasaw Nation and Native American artistry and culture. Throughout the resort, visitors will find thoughtful nods to Native American heritage. **Exhibit C Gallery**, a 10,000-square-foot retail art gallery showcases the work of First Americans with unique artwork and rotating exhibits. Originally opened in Bricktown, the gallery was relocated to the Horizons District adjacent to the museum and the Okana resort. Artist studio suites will be exclusively available to Native American artists who want to rent space to research, develop and create their art in a collective area. The studios will create an immersive experience where visitors will be able to watch and interact with the artists as they create their art, giving guests a glimpse into the artists' creative processes and creating moments of personal connection.

The resort includes an 11-story, 404-suite hotel, a 27,000-square-foot conference center, a full-day service

► See OKANA, page 6



Oklahoma City's newest cultural and entertainment center, the Horizons District is anchored by the new Okana Resort and the First Americans Museum (above). The open top of the Tidal Twist Tornado (left) made for an easier fit in an indoor environment. COURTESY AQUATIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP, PROSLIDE TECHNOLOGY

Knott's Berry Farm reimagines arcade, adds new midway games

AT: Pam Sherborne
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BUENA PARK, Calif. — It isn't always about the rides at amusement and theme parks, games can create exciting attractions, and, knowing that, officials at **Knott's Berry Farm**, Buena Park, California, decided to knock it out of the park for their guests this year.

A newly revitalized and reimagined arcade at the park made its official debut February 21 of this year.

► See KNOTT'S, page 8



Factory Floor, the 5,000-square-foot arcade newly reimagined at Knott's Berry Farm features the new RiliX Coaster VR game (above left). Bob's Space Racers supplied five new games to the enhanced Boardwalk area at Knott's Berry Farm, including a Glo Water Game dubbed Dune Buggy Dash (above right). COURTESY FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, BOB'S SPACE RACERS



AMUSEMENT VIEWS
Page 4



PARKS & CARNIVALS
Pages 10-42



WATER PARKS
Pages 43-48



BUSINESS
Pages 49-58

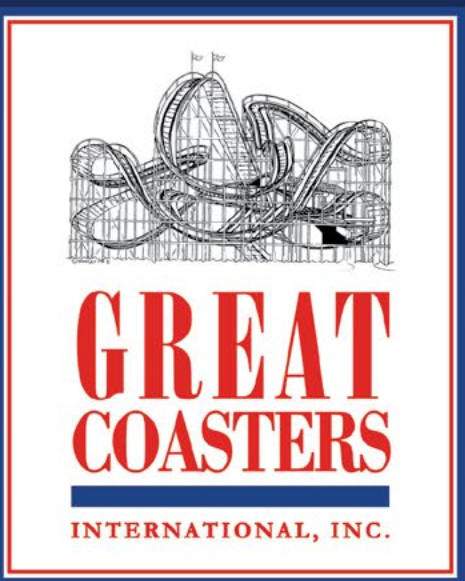


SAFETY
Pages 59-69



CLASSIFIEDS
Page 70

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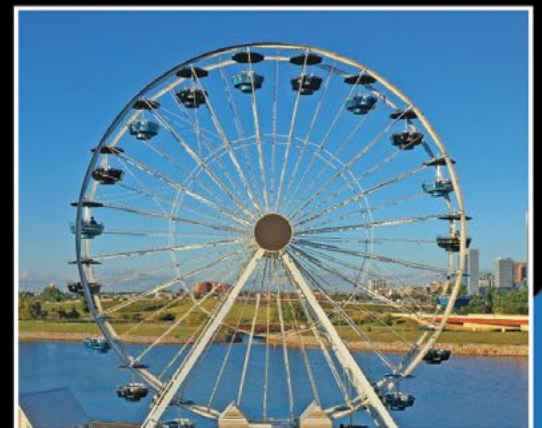
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AT NOTEBOOK: John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

Legends stand tall



Robinson

This issue of *Amusement Today* contains our popular "What's New" Guide. This established bonus section lists every attraction or parks that are new, redone, rethemed or relocated and that are set to open in the coming season. For everyone enjoying their local parks and attractions, "what's new" is usually the main talking point as the weather warms up. Guests ask, "What can we do here that we've not done before?"

Yet, for the well-traveled and well-seasoned guests, often the question is "What can I do here that I can do nowhere else?" Aside from the heavily-themed rides of Disney and Universal, the answer to that question is (more often than not) a classic attraction from yesterday. These are the rides that were once commonplace, but now only a precious few — if not only one — remain in operation.

Enthusiasts from all over seek out classic Zipper rides from Chance or Roll-O-Planes from Eyerly along carnival and fair midways because of their rarity. However, the popularity of classic, rare attractions is not limited to the mobile amusement industry.

Kennywood made headlines a couple of seasons ago with the unveiling of a refurbished Kangaroo ride, a last-of-its-kind ride running better than ever thanks to the team at Premier Rides. Every seat on the more than 60-year-old ride is filled on nearly every ride cycle.

While Cedar Point's record-breaking roller coasters remain the park's main draw, countless guests take a break from the intense thrills to laugh on the ultra-rare Cedar Downs Racing Derby ride. Across the country, guests cool off after hot days in the California sun at Knott's Berry Farm on the one-of-a-kind Calico Mine Ride dark ride. And, of course, while nearly every park has a carousel ... there's only a precious few such as Knoebel's where guests can still eagerly reach to catch the brass ring aboard the meticulously cared for hand-carved horses.

What's new changes each and every year. Rides get faster, coasters get taller, themes get more elaborate and the limits of the amusement industry are stretched further. However, amongst what's new today — in a few decades — will eventually be rare and sought out as the new legends of tomorrow. In the meantime, yesterday's legends still provide unique experiences all over the world.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Wes Ratcliff, Roller

Why diversification is the new growth strategy

Family Entertainment Centers (FECs) have always been about one thing: fun. But today's definition of fun looks a lot different than it did a decade ago. With so many options at their fingertips, from streaming to gaming to immersive tech, capturing and keeping guest attention has never been more important. That's why the most successful operators aren't standing still; they're evolving right alongside their audience.

Across the board, we're seeing FECs diversify their offerings to stay competitive and unlock new revenue streams. It's no longer just about mini golf or arcade games; modern FECs are adding everything from axe throwing and escape rooms to VR experiences and, increasingly, go-karting.

These additions aren't just trendy — they're strategic. Diversification helps venues increase per-guest spend, attract a wider



Ratcliff

audience and encourage repeat visits. Karting, for example, can be an anchor attraction that drives bookings, expands party offerings and introduces new ways to boost revenue.

At Roller, we're proud to support this evolution. Our all-in-one venue management platform was built to help operators meet guest expectations, streamline operations, and unlock new growth opportunities. As FECs diversify, we're expanding our capabilities to meet that demand.

The future of FECs is bold, diverse and full of opportunity. As someone who's been in this industry for years, I'm more optimistic than ever about where we're headed. FECs are evolving into all-in-one destinations that deliver variety, value and unforgettable experiences, and the operators who embrace change and invest in innovation are the ones writing the next chapter of our industry.

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



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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Tim Baldwin

Roman Rothe, RES Rides

Transitioning from chief technical officer to CEO of **RES Rides**, **Roman Rothe** has a love for making new things. His coworkers will be quick to tell you he is a gentle giant and is respected for his knowledge of ride engineering with a quest to deliver something different for the industry. Owing to caring people skills, he treats people in the company like family, as well as clients. "Our clients get to know Roman as a friend, which is why they don't just buy one ride from us," noted a peer. He is a trusted individual within the amusement industry, and no matter how big or small a question may be, he can always be reached on the phone. He is now the sole owner of RES Rides.

Title: CEO

Number of years in the industry: 15

Best thing about the industry: As an engineer, the best aspect for me in the industry is the technical details and how everything comes together when designing or building a ride: the dynamics, fluids such as water and oil, different materials, and especially inventing new rides with new movements and creating new sensations, all while moving people safely.

Favorite amusement ride: Air Loop, opening this year at Serengeti Park in Germany. There might be more spectacular layouts out there, but the style of this coaster is one of a kind, which makes it my favorite.

If I weren't working in the amusement industry, I would be ... It's hard to imagine doing anything else, but I suppose something to do with the mechanics of engineering moving parts. Maybe designing race cars or aircraft.

Biggest challenge facing our industry: As an engineer, the biggest challenge that I enjoy is how to come up with new rides that are different from anything else out there.

The thing I like most about amusement/ water park season is ... The most exciting part of each new park season is installing and launching new rides for the park's opening. This year we have three world's-first ride openings.

The entrée I cook the most is ... probably pasta. Easy and quick to do. However, on the weekends I prefer to barbecue on one of my many grills.

The last time I was on a horse was ... probably 30 years ago, the horse wasn't very happy and neither was I!



Roman Rothe of RES Rides is known as a gentle giant with a love for grilling, people and being at home whether he is in Switzerland or Texas.
COURTESY ROMAN ROTHE

My favorite place to travel to as a child was ... the U.S.A. I still like traveling to the U.S.A., especially when I'm overseeing installations and get to stay a while!

Which music do you like the best?

Well, I like Texas, and I drive a GMC pickup truck so, yes, I like country music. But I like all kinds of music too.

What's your favorite sport? Hockey. I've been playing hockey for 20 years. I hardly have time to play these days.

Best advice I would give students graduating college would be ... Be interested in what you do and do it to perfection. Don't rely on your degree — it's just a paper.

The thing I refuse to get rid of is ... My barbecue grills. I have six of them!

Which would scare you more — being on a rocket or being in a submarine? I actually would like to be on both.

Would you rather have a fancy car or a fancy wardrobe? Car. Like a GT500.

Favorite holiday in Switzerland that the U.S. does not celebrate: August 1, which is our July 4.

Pick one: appetizer (starter) or dessert. I'm all about the entrée, and it is always steak. I don't do vegetables.

The most interesting thing out my kitchen window is ... My GMC pickup truck. You don't see many of them around Switzerland.

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Peeking through the portal



ORLANDO — The grand opening of Universal Orlando's new theme park Epic Universe is just around the corner. Throughout April — and prior to the park's official ribbon-cutting — industry representatives such as Ryan Mull and Mark Rosenzweig of 3dx Scenic were able to enjoy special preview days. The team from 3dx are posed in front of the portal to the Dark Universe, home of the classic Universal Monsters. Portals throughout the park link the various themed lands of Epic Universe.
COURTESY MARK ROSENZWEIG

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► OKANA

Continued from page 1

spa, 13 unique restaurant and beverage outlets including steakhouses, buffets and cafes, three outdoor event spaces and two outdoor amphitheaters. The highlight of the Okana resort is, of course, the massive indoor water park — the largest in the region. The water park features a 6,200-square-foot wave pool, a 420-foot lazy river, high-end cabanas, an adults-only pool, FlowRider surf simulator and 15 water-slides for children and adults. Other adults-only spaces include a warming pool; a tanning pool; The Dive Bar, with premium beverages and sophisticated mixology; and the Okasis Lagoon swim-up bar where guests can enjoy frozen specialty cocktails while taking in stunning views of the city and the resort.

Aquatic Development Group (ADG) of Cohoes, New York, served as the Chickasaw Nation's representative for the entire project and the design/build firm for the indoor water park and the outdoor lagoon. ADG played a pivotal role in shaping the resort, designing an immersive, cohesive and fun experience for guests. ADG provided the concept development for the resort and construction management of



The park's water coaster, Wild Rapids, starts with an impressive drop and then takes guests on a wild ride throughout the water park over several other attractions. COURTESY PROSLIDE TECHNOLOGY

both water parks including foundational work and the installation of water attractions. ADG also provided its **WaveTek** wave generation equipment for the wave pool.

Other key players involved with the project include **Architectural Design Consultants Inc.** of Lake Delton, Wisconsin; **Wynne/Jackson Inc.**, a Dallas-based real-estate development firm; and **McAfee & Taft**, Oklahoma's largest law firm.

"We are thrilled to see Okana Resort come together so seamlessly, bringing to life an exciting vision for a one-of-a-kind destination in Oklahoma City," said **Jim Dunn**, president of ADG. "It has been an incredible col-

laboration with great clients, and ADG is honored to have played a role supporting this project — not only as a water feature designer/builder but also through our developer services program. This holistic approach allowed us to help shape the resort from concept to completion. The partnership between the Okana team, the Chickasaw Nation and ADG has truly resulted in something special."

Working alongside ADG, **ProSlide Technology** of Ottawa, Ontario, provided a full suite of exciting water attractions, with several high-profile slides as well as mini-sized versions of slides that mimic the adult attractions but are designed specifically for kids.

"ProSlide's industry-leading ride technology introduces a new dimension of adventure to Okana's water rides," says **Jeff Janovich**, SVP, global strategic partnerships at ProSlide. "From our heart-pounding RocketBlast with the highest drop we've designed on a coaster to date, to a custom-themed RideHouse, we developed every attraction to deliver the ultimate guest experience, rain or shine."

Among the notable ProSlide attractions is Wild Rapids, a RocketBlast water coaster with three uphill blasts, two FlyingSaucer 20 turns and ProSlide's highest water coaster drop to date. Aqua Duel is a dual chute slide that allows riders aboard two-person rafts to race each other to the finish. The enclosed-tube slide has three rally points where a

low-wall divider separates the chutes allowing riders to see their competition as they traverse the slide. To add to the excitement the tubes cross each other before and after the second rally point so when the tubes meet up, they are on the opposite side from which they started.

Tidal Twist features all the action of the original Tornado but incorporates an open top and "notched" sidewall allowing for better visuals and an easier fit into an indoor environment, it is paired with a large Flying Saucer 45 and utilizes five-passenger rafts. WhipSplash, a Tornado Wave switchback, will have guests climbing the walls — literally, as riders onboard two-person rafts seated facing each other, encounter not one, but two switchback elements that send the raft of riders up a steep wall then has them suddenly reversing direction.

Complementing the raft slides is a dueling PipeLine pair of high-speed bodyslides and Racing Rapids, a three-lane mat racer that also incorporates rally points. For families and kids, a Custom RideHouse 300 provides multiple levels of play with plenty of interactive water features, multiple slides and a tipping bucket.

The outdoor adventure lagoon, set to open later this year, provides an expansive recreational area with body slides, an inflatable obstacle course, a swim-up bar, and a unique "fly" pool where guests can zip, jump and slide into the water. When that area opens, it will fea-

ture the fourth largest pool in the country.

At the grand opening, **Governor Bill Anoatubby** said, "This ceremonious occasion offers a moment for us to reflect on the achievements made since breaking ground at the site in 2022. Cultural tourism has long been integral to our investment and enterprise strategy. We recognize the significance of the tourism industry for Oklahoma, given its inherent appeal as a destination for cultural tourism, showcasing both First American heritage and world-class attractions. We are confident that Okana, First Americans Museum and Horizons District will attract increased visitation to Oklahoma, functioning as both a destination and a hub for those interested in exploring other regional attractions.

"The City of Oklahoma City has been an exceptional partner throughout every stage of Okana's development, from initial conception to its ultimate construction, as we realize this shared vision. The Chickasaw Nation and Oklahoma City have consistently maintained a mutual respect; understanding that mutual benefit is achieved through collaboration. We value our partnerships with other forward-thinking leaders and governments who are willing to engage in cooperative endeavors."

"There is nothing else like Okana in our state," Oklahoma City Mayor **David Holt** said. "This will be a regional draw and a game-changer for OKC. And it's even more unique because it is tied to one of the most meaningful museums in the world, the First Americans Museum. Visitors to Okana will have both a fun and an impactful experience."

The name "Okana," is derived from the Chickasaw words for water (oka') and friend (inkana').

According to a representative of the Chickasaw Nation, this name captures the essence of the resort, highlighting the tribe's deep connection to water and their welcoming spirit. "Okana" emphasizes Oklahoma's rich history and promising future, marking it as a destination for visitors of all backgrounds.

•okanaresort.com

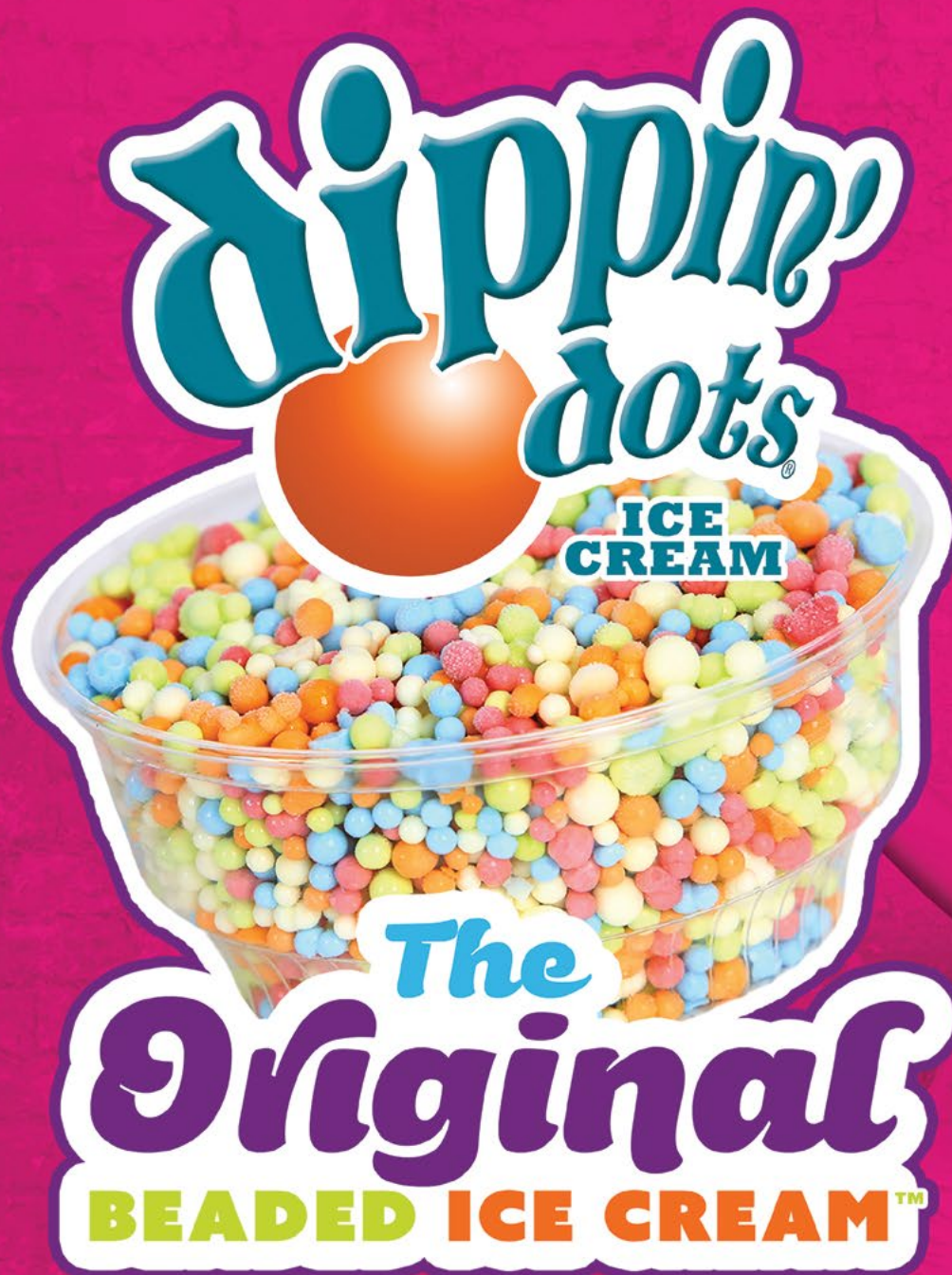
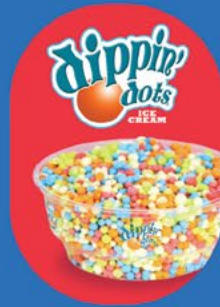


A Custom RideHouse 300 will keep families entertained with multiple levels of play with interactive water features, slides and a tipping bucket. COURTESY AQUATIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP

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The newly renovated Factory Floor arcade at Knott's Berry Farm offers 70 cutting-edge games supplied in partnership by Family Entertainment Group. COURTESY FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

► **KNOTT'S**
Continued from page 1

The Boardwalk Arcade, located under the Bear-y Tales Return to the Fair attraction, was rethemed to the Factory Floor Arcade.

In another area of the park, officials installed a mixture of park model group race games and midway skill games. That area, called the Boardwalk Pavilion, opened March 28 for the park's Boysenberry Festival, which runs March 28 to May 18.

"Guests have reacted positively to the change," said Knott's Casey Burroughs. "It is always a balance when changing venues that our guests have become connected to. The new Factory Floor Arcade

hosts new and exciting games and a refreshed layout to allow guests to easily navigate the venue. We were also able to leverage our Knott's Berry Farm storytelling and introduced a factory feel to the space to match our attraction and retail neighbors."

For the renovated arcade, Knott's officials partnered with **Family Entertainment Group (FEG)**, a nationally recognized leader in the amusement and entertainment industry specializing in the design, development and operation of amusement facilities.

"This partnership introduced a refresh of the entire venue with new redemption counter, new games and thoughtful and intentional layout to maximize

the guest experience," Burroughs said.

The Factory Floor, with 5,200-square-feet of entertainment space, was transformed into a 1920s factory-themed area. The theming includes features such as immersive décor elements like faux brick walls, steel beam treatments and a newly themed redemption counter.

Guests have access to approximately 70 cutting-edge games, including two of the latest virtual reality attractions: Godzilla and RiliX Coaster, according to Scott Brown, vice president of marketing, FEG.

Burroughs said the supplier of those new games was Raw Thrills.

Players can redeem their winnings at the arcade's new redemption

FAST FACTS

Factory Floor Arcade

Opening Date: February 21, 2025

Theme: a 1920s factory-themed area

Size: 5,000 square feet

Number of games: 70

Supplier: Family Entertainment Group

Knott's Berry Boardwalk

Opening Date: March 28, 2025

Location: adjacent to Xcelerator roller coaster

Games: Dune Buggy Dash, Beach Ball Bust, Gearhead Knock Down, High Tide Toss and Surf's Up

Supplier: Bob's Space Racers

counter, stocked with a variety of exciting prizes.

Enhancements also included updated lighting and an overall refresh to complement the atmosphere of Knott's Berry Farm's Boardwalk area. That is where new park-model group race and midway skills games are located provided by **Bob's Space Racers (BSR)**.

"The work with BSR took place in the Boardwalk area adjacent to Xcelerator," Burroughs said. "We introduced the new games to the area in

partnership with BSR."

Larry Steele, BSR project manager and sales said the games BSR supplied included the Glo Water game, which Knott's named Dune Buggy Dash; a Balloon Bust Knott's named Beach Ball Bust; a Can Smash Knott's named Gearhead Knock Down; Colors Game Knott's named High Tide Toss and a Roll-A-Ball Knott's named Surf's Up.

"We are continuing to work on the games and fine tune the experience," Burroughs said.

• knotts.com



Bob's Space Racers' games at Knott's Berry Farm are located in an area called the Boardwalk Pavilion (above left). Games include a Can Smash dubbed "Gearhead Knock Down" (above right), the "High Tide Toss" Colors Game (below left), a Balloon Bust Knott's named "Beach Ball Bust" (below middle) and the "Surf's Up" Roll-A-Ball (below right). COURTESY BOB'S SPACE RACERS





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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Dollywood celebrates 40th season — page 16 / Slick City adds Dallas-area location — page 32

Six Flags Over Georgia debuts Intamin's first Ultra Surf coaster

AT: Tim Baldwin

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AUSTELL, Ga. — For almost six decades, **Six Flags Over Georgia** has been thrilling its Atlanta (and beyond) audience with a great variety of thrills. This spring, the park has debuted something different than it has ever done before.

Georgia Gold Rusher is the first Ultra Surf coaster from Intamin.

Initially intended for a 2024 debut, the delay to spring of 2025 allowed the park to do a little bit of rethinking. Originally, the ride was announced as Georgia Surfer, but over the fall and winter, the attraction was reconceptualized, and now it is something even more special.

"There's a real effort to



Water effects (above) make for a cooling and visual effect. Reverse spikes (right) on Georgia Gold Rusher rise 144 feet into the air. COURTESY PARK PARADISE, SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA

get back to our storytelling roots, and the debut of a new roller coaster is the perfect opportunity to showcase this commitment. Georgia Gold Rusher's name, story and theming are a perfect fit for its location in Lickskillet," said **Chris Foshee**, regional manager, public relations. "We gave Georgia Gold Rusher a new paint job and made some mild modifications to the train."

The theming is much more suitable for Georgia Gold Rusher's location within the park, as it is now near the Lickskillet mining town area. The theming throughout the queue — pick axes, barrels, lanterns, mining cars, etc. — leans into that storyline. A fictitious character, prospector Willy Gibson, was created to tell the story of a steam-powered hydraulic exca-

vator traveling through a sluice to pan for gold.

Actually, it is a linear-synchronous-motor launch system, contrary to Willy's story. Intamin has had a decades-long reputation for installing numerous types of launched coasters.

"Launching the first of anything always brings a unique kind of energy, but especially with a ride like this," said an Intamin spokesperson. "There's a lot of anticipation from both the public and within the industry. It's a chance to showcase innovation and push boundaries. The excitement is both in the reveal and in seeing how guests respond in real time."

"The addition of Georgia Gold Rusher gives our park a unique attraction that can't be experienced anywhere else," Foshee told *Amusement*



Today. "It is the ideal addition to our diverse lineup of attractions, and it caters to families and thrill seekers alike."

Passengers are divided into two round gondolas, each seating 10. The restraint is Intamin's comfortable overhead lap bar. Once secured, the 20 passengers are launched back and forth over a 590-foot stretch of track. Zipping forward and backward, the multiple passes over the launch system build momentum up to 60 mph. This speed sends guests near the top of 144-foot-tall reverse spikes.

"It delivers major thrills such as airtime, launches and spinning action within a surprisingly compact footprint," said an Intamin spokesperson. "For parks that are tight on space but still want a headliner attraction, this kind of design is a game-changer. It's proof that you don't need massive scale to create a high-intensity, high-replay-value ride."

The Ultra Surf coaster pushes the technology established by Intamin on its Halfpipe and Surf coasters. The inclusion of the

► See GEORGIA, page 12

FAST FACTS

Georgia Gold Rusher

Manufacturer:
Intamin Ltd.

Speed:
Up to 60 mph

Height:
144 feet

Ride Time:
60 seconds

Length:
590 feet of track;
multiple passes combine
to almost 2,000 feet



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Gosetto Dark Ride



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►GEORGIA

Continued from page 10

airtime hill and 10-passenger gondolas over the former six-person seating ups the game of the shuttle-type attraction.

"The ride vehicles are designed to rotate freely, but they're also influenced by the motion of the ride itself and the passengers' load case," Intamin told AT. "So, while the spinning isn't motorized or completely controlled, it's not entirely random either. The layout and forces and speed of the track help trigger and amplify the spin. That *spin-incited* term reflects how the ride's dynamics naturally provoke motion, which makes each ride cycle feel a

little different."

Still, the ride is compact. The linear nature of its design and water feature made it an appropriate replacement for a defunct shoot-the-chute ride.

Speeding over the airtime hill, as well as hanging weightless on each of the spikes, makes for great tummy tickles.

"I was surprised by the entire experience — its speed, airtime, smoothness and suspense," said Foshee. "It packs a punch. I thought I had ridden similar attractions before, but Georgia Gold Rusher is truly unique."

According to Intamin, even though the track length is 590 feet, riders travel close to 2,000 feet



The rotating gondolas (above) offer a different ride experience each cycle. The near-vertical moments (right) offer moments of weightlessness.

COURTESY SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA, PARK PARADISE

during the journey because of its shuttle nature.

Even though the "surf" theme was discarded, there is still a water element to the attraction as riders speed through the trough. However, the ride vehicle

itself never comes in contact with the water.

Because of the unpredictable nature of the spinning, each ride is different, making for an exciting reason for visitors to re-ride.



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SeaWorld San Antonio reimagines children's area with Rescue Jr.

AT: Tim Baldwin
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SAN ANTONIO — This spring, **SeaWorld San Antonio** offered new fun for its families with the opening of **Rescue Jr.**, a new area aimed at kids and families with young children. A handful of existing attractions were renamed and refreshed. But it is the newer additions that are sure to delight families.

"Rescue Jr. will catch children at a young age and instill the idea of being aware of wildlife, rescuing animals in need, and conserving the natural environment," said **Chuck Cureau**, marketing, SeaWorld. "This message can be seen throughout the new area, particularly during a game of 'Eye Spy' that Ocean Quest Express train riders will play while riding. In addition, the new 'Rescue Jr. Extravaganzabration' is a block party that gets kids into the action as they learn about taking care of the environment through activities that encourage reducing, reusing and recycling."

Front and center as guests approach the area is **Beach Rescue Racer**. Built by **Zierer**, the roller coaster stands 49 feet tall and has a length of approximately 1,300 feet.

"It was great working with the project team of SeaWorld San Antonio as well as in general with **United Parks & Resorts**," said Marina Ernst, marketing, Zierer. "It's always a pleasure for us to realize their wonderful ideas on theming concepts. The design of this custom layout got finalized within a couple loops with SeaWorld engineering team and worked out just great. One of the main goals was to make

sure rider restrictions are similar to other kiddie rides within the group, which could be realized with this coaster type and layout."

Of note, for those transferring from a wheelchair, a side section of the coaster car can be removed. This facilitates easy in and out in a very quick manner, as that piece is easily put back into place.

"The coaster has a removable side panel, which is the ADA version for the vehicles of Zierer's Force coaster type," noted Ernst. "SeaWorld was also involved in developing this system, and the cooperation on this was very beneficial due to the information given by our project manager."

While being family-friendly, the coaster still delivers surprising thrills and forces that should please every rider — all done exceptionally smoothly.

"Our new **Beach Rescue Racer** roller coaster really excites me because it's the perfect intermediate coaster for kids," Cureau told *Amusement Today*. "It's a step up in intensity from previous kiddie coasters, with just the right height, speed and curves to challenge youngsters as they work their way up to some of SeaWorld's more intense coasters like **Steel Eel** and **The Great White**."

Beach Rescue Racer replaces a former children's coaster (also from Zierer). This newer model is taller, longer and faster, while still not being intimidating. The park has noted that the former coaster has not been destroyed; they are looking at options for the ride.

Riders on **Beach Rescue Racer** can be as small as 38 inches if accompanied by a supervising companion (or 48



Zierer supplied SeaWorld's new family coaster (above), which offers the right amount of thrill for everyone. Ocean Quest Express (below) helps drive home the message of animal conservation as riders look out for animals in danger. AT/TIM BALDWIN

inches to ride alone).

Two new attractions from **Zamperla** help fill out the area. **Seabird Swing** is for guests 36 inches and above. **Ocean Quest Express** is a train ride that has guests 30 inches and taller taking a ride to look for sea creatures to save.

"SeaWorld asked us for attractions that were focused on adding theming and capacity to their **Rescue Jr.** area," said **Ramon Rosario**, sales director, Zamperla. "The chain has leaned into their storytelling around conservation. They asked us to provide rides with broad appeal and theming opportunities. The **Midi Family Swinger** and **Rio Grande Train** were perfect vehicles for this request. Both were used as vehicles for sharing Sea World's larger messages of conservation and nature preservation with the park's youngest visitors."

These Zamperla rides join an existing **Rockin' Tug** that has been refreshed, as well as a carousel.

A significant space in **Rescue Jr.** is a new splash area provided by **Vortex**.

"The **Sea Splash** play area will provide another way for young guests to cool off in the hot Texas heat. The new area is larger than the previous wet zone, and has more elements designed to splash and sprinkle in creative ways," Cureau noted.



Zamperla provided two new rides to the area, including **Seabird Swing**. COURTESY ZAMPERLA



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► See **RESCUE**, page 15

BoldMove's Rogue Rides provides new trackless vehicle option

AT: Tim Baldwin
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BRUSSELS, Belgium — Founded in 2021, **BoldMove Nation** has specialized in themed rides and attractions, immersive experiences and innovative concepts. In just a short time, the company has earned multiple industry awards.

Its latest introduction is **Rogue Rides**, an omnidirectional and trackless ride system.

"Rogue Rides is a story dating back four years ago, so it is not really a project of yesterday," said **Ley De Pooter**, business marketing manager, BoldMove Nation. "I started looking at alternatives for dark ride vehicles. What came to my mind was that I saw very little evolution in the industry. The technology was pretty much fixed."

In developing this new ride system, the company put the customer's needs and wishes at the forefront.

"Basically, one-third of the budget of a dark ride typically falls into the ride system," added De Pooter. "They were basically invisible to the eyes of the public, and they do not do much. We wanted it to be a little more visible or contribute to the



The **Rogue Rides** vehicle can accommodate five with separated seating (above left) or six passengers (above right) with bench seating. **Rogue Rides** vehicles are omnidirectional and feature onboard sound and lighting. COURTESY BOLDMOVE NATION

experience of the visitors."

He noted that there were two camps in which operators fell — track-based and trackless. De Pooter and his team examined the strengths and weaknesses of both. This led to the origin of **Rogue Rides**.

"The vehicles are certainly ideal for small and large spaces. Thanks to the flexibility of the vehicle movements, multiple vehicles can be in the same room, each following their own path without interrupting each other," he told *Amusement Today*. "This can give some very nice interactions for guests in the ride."

While designed by

BoldMove, **Rogue Rides** is an independent product as well. The vehicles are freely available to work with any company.

"No wheels are visible. It's kind of floating on the ground," described De Pooter. "Special lighting will also be integrated into the dark ride experience."

The aim is to have a vehicle that is as simple as possible to install, which helps to reduce costs.

Selling points of the vehicle's design include multi-usage console interactivity, induction-charging long-life battery, immersive sound system and omnidirectional wheel technology. There are no



wires or sensors used in the trackless technology.

"We are using the sole intelligence and laser guiding system of the vehicles," said De Pooter. "In this case, you can have proximity with decorations because we teach the vehicle that it is theming and not an obstacle. This is a very, very

big change versus what has been done before. It's a truly smart vehicle."

The omnidirectional movements offer possibilities for storytelling. Guests can experience a skid, drift, rotation or sideways movement. This maximizes space.

"Without even moving, the vehicle can start spinning, or move sideways, forward or backward," he said. "It's a very big achievement for a limited space. Those are kinds of movements not to be found in a dark ride, or not in an easy way."

Testing has proved a unique characteristic of a feeling of acceleration. All this is accomplished smoothly. However, the vehicle can reach a fast speed of 1.5 meters per second.

Aesthetics in design were top of mind for the BoldMove team.

"Theming matters, look matters," De Pooter said. "We've been putting a lot of energy in making the vehicle look cool and the seating is comfortable. We believe that part of the investment of the park is really paid for by the fact that the experience starts

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► See **ROGUE**, page 15

► RESCUE

Continued from page 13

The entire Rescue Jr. area replaces Sesame Street Bay of Play. While several of the United Parks & Resorts properties still partner with **Sesame Workshop**, SeaWorld San Antonio is one of those that has not retained that license.

For 2025, SeaWorld San Antonio has introduced free admission to preschoolers, a bold business move.

"We recognize that our park has a strong 'stroller following,' and Rescue Jr. was built to give parents of younger children thrilling yet appropriate experiences for their age and size," explained Cureau. "Paired with the Preschool Card that gives children ages 3 to 5 years old unlimited admission to the park for the entire year, Rescue Jr will help keep families coming back time after time and help usher in the next generation of animal conservationists."

While there haven't been notable changes to retail and food-and-beverage options in the area, new themed mer-



Beach Rescue Racer can accommodate riders as small as 38 inches.

AT/JEFF SEIFERT

chandise aligning with the rescue and conservation message complement the offerings in nearby stores.

"Also, the SeaWorld Animal Ambassador Team will make periodic appearances in Rescue Jr. allowing guests young and old to get up close with some of the many rescued terrestrial animals that have a forever home at SeaWorld," said Cureau.

► ROGUE

Continued from page 14

before the loading and after the unloading."

Seating can vary with the customer's needs. The number of seats, individual lap bars or bench seating can work with the customer's vision.

"There are currently two versions," De Pooter told AT. "The first version with separate seats is for five people; the other version with benches can accommodate up to six people."

A wheelchair-accessible vehicle is also available.

"We have the freedom of designing everything we want, literally," De Pooter said.

During operation, vehicles can receive signals so that they do not "pile up" for unloading. They can slow down if certain points are blocked or if a risk is present. The company refers to guests boarding at load points as "taxiing." Anyone needing additional time does not prohibit the flow of vehicles since there is no linear station.



If desired, passengers can be secured with individual lap bars.
COURTESY BOLDMOVE NATION

"With this creative loading and unloading, there are many more possibilities, and there will be no hiccups. The ride can remain in a nice flow at all times!" De Pooter explained.

Battery life is always of concern to park operators. Rogue Rides uses lithium iron phosphate batteries, which BoldMove believes is the cutting edge of technology and very safe in terms of fire hazards.

"We found a way to actually have a vehicle that can operate almost continuously, unlimited autonomy,"

he said. "We are using wireless charging. Every time a vehicle is stopping in a certain place, it will automatically start charging itself."

In terms of safety, it meets all requirements and has an embedded safety system. A remote emergency stop is also implemented.

Rogue Rides gives a conscientious nod to sustainability with its materials as well as the energy-saving batteries.

BoldMove is refreshing its Smash & Reload ride with these vehicles for all new customers.

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Dollywood celebrates 40th season with new restaurant, parking lot

AT: Pam Sherborne

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PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — As **Dollywood Parks and Resorts** started its 2025 season opening on March 15, park officials began showing off some of the additions and improvements made during the off-season to showcase its 40th season in operation.

Some of these changes include the new Wilderness Pass Restaurant and a new 750-space parking lot, both of which will open later in the spring. But guests were able to get a glimpse of both. In addition, there are a number of other enhancements for the coming season.

Since the opening of this season, **Pete Owens**, vice president of marketing and public relations, said the park has been hit-



Dolly Parton has always been hands-on at the theme park and resort area which carries her name. At right she celebrates the theme park's 40th operation season. Above is a photo from the park's opening in 1986. COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

ting higher-than-normal numbers.

"We knew our guests would be excited to help us celebrate our 40th season, and they haven't disappointed," Owens said. "Last year was a record-breaking season in terms

of attendance and we're currently pacing ahead of 2024, so there definitely is a strong response from our guests ready to experience the year with us."

Owens said there are several celebratory elements still to come in 2025, including Play On, a retrospective show that celebrates 40 years of Dollywood entertainment, as well as a 40th tribute-themed drone show this summer.

"We're giving families plenty of reasons to come make memories with us in the Great Smoky Mountains," he said.

Projects like the new parking area and Wilderness Pass Restaurant are important pieces of the company's half-billion dollar, 10-year expansion plan that was announced in 2021 by **Dolly Parton** and **Eugene Naughton**, president of **The Dollywood Company**.

The new restaurant, which cost more than \$6 million, is set toward the back of the park, between the Fire Chaser and Mystery Mine roller coasters.

It is being referred to as a "semi-quick" service restaurant. Guests will order in a food line and then take their food to one of the tables inside or outside. The restaurant seats about 400 guests.

On the menu are such

items as braised smoked beef, pulled pork, rotisserie chicken, mac and cheese, collard greens, baked beans, corn salad and kale salad.

A number of other enhancement projects throughout Dollywood are bringing new excitement to guests. These include refreshes in Country Fair and The Village. Guests in Country Fair will find a new splash pad and expanded seating area for parents and the youngest Dollywood fans seeking a quick break in the action. The Village received bright new touches and the reimagining of the Imagination Playhouse.

The Imagination Playhouse, which features plays based on books from Dolly's Imagination Library, becomes a permanent fixture this season, offering its much-loved

shows for younger guests from March through the end of September.

Naughton said the expansion strategy should allow Dollywood Parks and Resorts to remain among America's top theme park destinations.

"We really do offer something different here," said Naughton. "Our hosts go far beyond the everyday tasks they complete at excellence each day. Our hosts make a true connection with our guests, making them feel like they're part of the family. It's been that way since the park opened."

The park plans to offer a number of entertainment shows in celebration of the 40th season, both new, remastered and the tried and true.

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New this year at Dollywood, in celebration of its 40th operating season, is the Wilderness Pass Restaurant, part of the park's \$500 million, 10-year expansion plan. COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

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Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
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Elitch Gardens Theme and Water Park, Denver, Colorado, a premier theme park destination, opened the gates for its 135th season on April 19, ushering in what is anticipated to be the longest operating season in Elitch Gardens' history, according to park officials.

Elitch's will operate on a part-time basis until May 22 and then go to full-time operations. The water park portion of the park opens Memorial Day weekend and closes after Labor Day.

Kansas City's **Worlds of Fun** announced changes to some of its roller coasters ahead of the 2025 season, including the closure of one of the theme park's most popular attractions.

According to the Missouri's theme park's website, Timber Wolf, which opened in 1989 as the first wooden roller coaster at Worlds of Fun, will be closed for the 2025 season. Plans for the ride will be disclosed at a later date.

The **San Antonio Zoo**, San Antonio, Texas, celebrated the centennial anniversary of one of its most storied attractions.

On April 10, **Kiddie Park** at the San Antonio Zoo held Kiddie Park's Centennial celebration as the oldest kids' amusement park in the United States.

The event featured a time capsule dedication, a limited-edition Fiesta Medal unveiling giveaways and plenty of family-friendly entertainment, according to a story on local News4SA.

The first 100 guests received a free Kiddie Park 100th Birthday Balloon and celebratory cupcake.

According to Kiddie Park's website, that park officials have preserved the park's 1920's style by maintaining all the original rides, including the old-fashioned Ferris wheel and a famous hand-carved **Herschell Spillman** carousel.

Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom, Allentown, Pennsylvania, announced last month that it will once

again work with **Tickets for Kids Charities** to distribute a thousand complimentary, single-day admission tickets for the 2025 season. Dorney Park estimates that the total contribution is worth more than \$70,000, according to the press release announcing the arrangement.

Public Relations Manager **Ryan Eldredge** said in the release that the park is increasing the number of tickets donated this year to the organization in order to expand access to the thrills of the park.

"We remain committed to our region and the children who live here," Eldredge said. "As we did in 2024, we will continue to give back and to find ways to help our community. Expanding access to the park and providing opportunities to those less fortunate is just one way that we can show that Dorney Park cares."

Tickets for Kids provides free access for low-income and at-risk kids to attend the arts, cultural, educational and athletic venues of their community. The organization's mission is to inspire hope, dreams and achievements for a lifetime.

The partnership will begin when Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom opens to the public for the season on Friday, May 9, 2025.

A **Western Santa Cruz Galápagos** tortoise, named Mommy, who is longtime resident of the **Philadelphia Zoo**, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, has become a first-time mother at the estimated age of 100.

According to a story that ran in the *New York Times*, Mommy, who has lived at the zoo since 1932, laid 16 eggs last November. The first hatchling emerged on February 27 and the others followed with the last one hatching on March 6. Four have hatched so far.

The dad is named Abrazza, and he is also estimated to be about a century old, stated the news article.

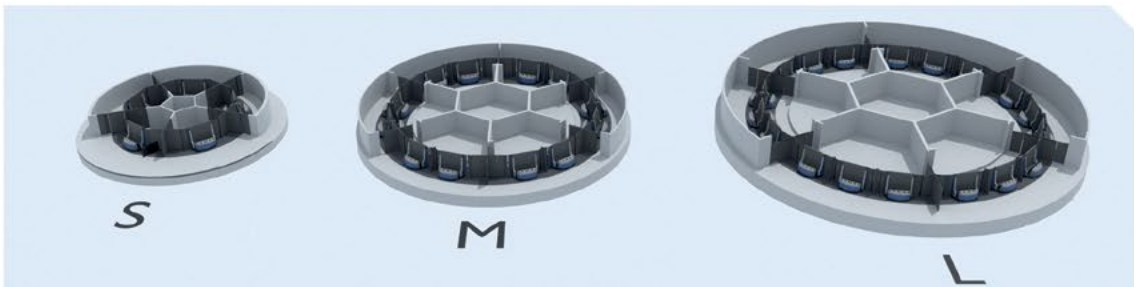
"The hatchlings, none of which have been named, are expected to be on view to the public starting on April 23, the zoo said. They are doing 'fantastic,' according to the zoo's director of herpetology, **Lauren Augustine**," the story stated.

The hatchlings' arrival is significant because Galápagos tortoises are considered critically endangered by the **International Union for Conservation of Nature**.

According to the Philadelphia Zoo, there were only 44 Western Santa Cruz Giant tortoises in all of the zoos in the U.S., before the new arrivals.

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Zamperla supplies Morgan's Wonderland's accessible Happy Swing

AT: Tim Baldwin
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SAN ANTONIO — When Morgan's Wonderland opened in 2010, it was a new concept — and an innovative one. Founded by Gordon Hartman and inspired by his daughter Morgan Hartman, he envisioned a theme park where barriers that prohibited people with special needs from playing with others didn't exist. In time, the entire Morgan's Wonderland mindset has expanded into numerous facilities and attractions, from campgrounds and water parks to hotels and sports complexes.

In 2024, the theme park embarked on its largest expansion to date. Adding four rides, one of them was from the renowned industry manufacturer Zamperla. The Italian supplier delivered Jette's Wonder Bikes for riders of all abilities.

"The reaction to Jette's Wonder Bikes was phe-

nomenal; guests loved it," said Morgan's Wonderland President Richard Pretlow. "As with all our ultra-accessible attractions, it is unique in that a wheelchair user can use the hand crank, or the ride operator can move it up and down."

In April of 2025, Zamperla and Morgan's Wonderland partnered again and installed Joy's Happy Swing adjacent to Jette's Wonder Bikes.

"Working with the Team at Morgan's Wonderland is always a great experience," said Michael Coleman, North America sales, Zamperla. "Joy's Happy Swing exemplifies the partnership between our organizations to drive inclusivity and access forward. The theming is a colorful and appealing collaboration between Morgan's marketing team and Zamperla's art department."

"Zamperla has been a terrific partner," noted Pretlow. "This is a project



Morgan's Wonderland Founder Gordon Hartman (second from left) and Park President Richard Pretlow (second from right) join families on the new Joy's Happy Swing, a fully accessible ride designed and manufactured by Zamperla. COURTESY MORGAN'S WONDERLAND

that Zamperla is very passionate about. They often say, 'Everyone has the right to smile.' We look at it the same way. Everyone has the right to have fun. We appreciate their take on ultra-accessible attractions."

"Our Happy Swing 9 has typical seating for eight guests and a wheelchair-accessible platform," explained Coleman. "Additionally, the ride is equipped with two transfer seats and mindfully

designed safety equipment to ensure guests of all abilities have the opportunity to enjoy their experience."

The maximum speed is 5.5 meters (18 feet) per second.

"It is for everybody, but there is some thrill to it," said Pretlow. "It can pack some Gs when it really gets going."

The ride comes with flowers and custom signage that implemented a 3-D printing process for some of the decorations.

"On this particular ride, our engineering and production teams didn't just crank out another attraction, they took it upon themselves to create design improvements for the accessible platform and transfer devices to facilitate the ease-of-operations," Coleman told *Amusement Today*. "Ultimately, our partnership with Morgan's will continue to drive accessibility and inclusion forward to new heights."





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Legoland announces new indoor coasters for Florida, California

AT: Pam Sherborne

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POOLE, United Kingdom — **Merlin Entertainments** has announced the addition of two new indoor roller coasters that are being constructed at the **Legoland Florida**, Winter Haven, Florida, and **Legoland California**, Carlsbad, California, parks, but few details have been released as yet. The two coasters are expected to open in 2026 at a cost of \$90 million, combined. Construction is now underway on both coasts.

Stephanie Bechara, senior public relations and marketing manager for Legoland Florida, said near the end of April: “[We will] be sharing additional details about the indoor coaster later this summer. We’re happy to be working with **Art Engineering** again, who has collaborated with us on previous attractions in other Merlin attractions,” she added. “Their expertise and innovative approach ensure that this new ride will be another exciting addition to



Construction is now underway for a new indoor coaster — opening in 2026 — at Legoland Florida (pictured) and Legoland California. The two coasters are expected to cost \$90 million combined. COURTESY LEGOLAND FLORIDA

Legoland Resorts.”

In the release announcing the two coasters, Merlin Entertainment officials called them the “first-of-their-kind.” They are being geared toward children ages two to 12 years old.

At Legoland Florida, the roller coaster is expected to replace the former Flying School **Vekoma** suspended coaster that operated from 2004 to 2023.



The \$90 million in-park investment in the two theme parks is the largest in the park resorts’ histories.

“While the details remain under wraps, one thing is clear,” said Legoland Florida Resort President **Franceen Gonzales**, in the announcement. “This new ride will take our guests on an unprecedented adventure, setting a new standard for fun and imagination.”

“As we prepare to unveil

this exciting new attraction designed, cocreated and imagined by the amazing creative team at the **Lego Group** and the unmatched talent of our **Merlin Magic Makers**, we hope the mystery and anticipation add to awesome thrills to come,” CEO of Merlin Entertainments **Fiona Eastwood** said in a press release. “These new coasters are unparalleled for Legoland Resorts, promising to elevate

two of our premier Legoland Resorts to new heights, utilizing the latest technology and embracing the Lego DNA, as only we can do.”

So, while Legoland fans eagerly wait, Legoland Florida officials hope the new **Sea Life Florida Aquarium** will fill some of that excitement.

Bechara said a soft opening of this new attraction will begin May 23.

“This allows us to welcome guests in a more gradual way while our marine animals continue settling into their new environment,” she said.

Visitors will encounter more than 3,000 animals representing 150 different species from Florida’s waters and around the world. It also will feature 25 interactive exhibits, including the main ocean display.

The aquarium will encompass 200,000 gallons of water, a vibrant freshwater gallery, a colorful stingray bay and a hands-on invertebrate touch pool.

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- Big Kahuna (Waterworld) — gravity driven water coaster — \$29,000
- Hang Ten (Surf Coaster) — enclosed, unlit single mat slide — \$29,000
- Pipeline Plunge — enclosed translucent tubular body slide — \$19,000
- Big Creek Beach (Whitewater) — dump bucket, water cannons, four slides — \$59,000
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AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

FRISCO, Texas — Dating back to 2002, the Texas Pinball Festival has seen significant growth. So much so, that it is considered one of the largest such festivals in all of North America.

Paul McKinney, one of the organizers of the festival, has been with the event since the beginning. “We had 1,800 with pre-registration. We should get close to 5,000,” he said as the event was being set up. “We’re easily one of the biggest.”

Even though the event was in late March (21 through 23), weather impacted some exhibitors, vendors and attendees, as did the power outage at **Heathrow Airport**. Still, people came from beyond the U.S.

“From an international perspective, we run about six percent. Germany, the U.K. ... we have about 20 signed up from Spain,” McKinney told *Amusement Today*.

Those who attended enjoyed more than 430 pin-



The Texas Pinball Festival offered more than 430 games for attendees to enjoy. Stern Pinball's booth showcased its new Dungeons and Dragons machine (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

ball machines, as well as some other games. There are always vintage machines that are a century old to give newcomers a sense of history.

There were new vendors in addition to returning favorites. Those go beyond just pinball parts and services. Art, collectibles, food and more are interspersed throughout the event. In all, it is so massive that displays extend from the main show

floor into the corridors.

“I absolutely love coming to the shows and seeing people play and seeing smiles on their faces,” said **Brian Eddy**, game designer, **Stern Pinball**. “These festivals bring people together with the social element — and pinball is a social game. You get to see new games here as well as old ones. And you make new friends.”

Stern was one of the companies showing off a new



game: Dungeons and Dragons (D&D). Numerous machines were made available.

“What I really love is that we take people on an adventure,” Eddy told AT. “Whether you understand D&D or know nothing about it, you’re going to be going on a fantasy adventure. All those elements of the D&D world have been brought to life in pinball. When they get into a dragon battle, it’s a fierce battle. It’s

pretty intense. You see people really react to that, which is exactly what we wanted.”

Other new games that drew crowds were **Evil Dead** from **Spooky Pinball**, **Merlin’s Arcade** from **Turner Pinball**, **Avatar** from **Jersey Jack** and **Portal Pinball** by **Multimorphic Pinball**. Today’s new machines are impressively detailed.

Jersey Jack announced at the show that it obtained the rights to the *Harry Potter* franchise.

Tournaments are, of course, part of the festival, as are specific machine awards determined by a panel of judges: Best Antique, Best 1960s, Best 1970s, Best Restoration, Best Custom Pinball, and so on. Seminars are also a highlight for the geeks in the pinball community.

In addition to all the pinball-oriented activities, both Friday and Saturday nights had live music for people to enjoy.

“My vision for this show is a first-class show,” McKinney said.

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Holiday World & Splashin' Safari acquires Santa's Cottages Resort

SANTA CLAUS, Ind. — **Holiday World & Splashin' Safari** announced its acquisition of **Santa's Cottages**, a lodging destination in Santa Claus, Indiana. Santa's Cottages is a 23-acre lake-side resort with walking trails, lakes, playgrounds and a pool.

This marks the first business acquisition in Holiday World's 79-year history.

"We're so excited to officially be in the lodging business, and this is only the beginning," said **Leah Koch-Blumhardt**, fourth-generation owner and director of communications at Holiday World & Splashin' Safari. "Holiday World has always been a destination for families from all across the Midwest, but it amazes us how many families come from nearby cities, such as St. Louis, Indianapolis and Nashville and make it a single-day trip. As we grow into lodg-



COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD & SPLASHIN' SAFARI

ing, we hope more families will choose our parks as a multi-day destination."

Minutes from Holiday World & Splashin' Safari, Santa's Cottages offers a peaceful, nature-filled stay with various types of cottages, which include

fully furnished units with kitchens, fire pits and spacious outdoor gathering areas. The property includes multiple lakes for catch-and-release fishing and fish feeding, playgrounds, hammocks, a basketball court and a

pool with a splash pad.

"Santa's Cottages is a business our family has always admired," added **Lauren Crosby**, fourth-generation owner and director of entertainment and events at Holiday World & Splashin' Safari. "Pat

and **Brenda Arnold** built a beautiful resort, a few cabins at a time, after their successful real estate careers. Much like my great-grandfather, **Louis J. Koch**, who started Santa Claus Land in 1946 after retiring from his family's tin business, the Arnolds had an indisputable entrepreneurial spirit. We're honored to carry on that tradition."

Holiday World & Splashin' Safari recently announced that 2025 will be its longest season in recent history. Holiday World is opening for select season passholders during the weekend of May 3, and opens to the public on May 10. Splashin' Safari will open May 17 and both parks are open daily beginning May 23. Fan-favorite events, such as Holidays in the Sky, Friday Night Live! and Happy Halloween Weekends are all returning for the 2025 season as well.

IRM Rides completes the total retirement of Joyland Park

LUBBOCK, Texas — **Joyland Park** had an incredible 50-year run as the place for family fun in Lubbock, Texas. Sadly, in the fall of 2022, a deal for new ownership fell through and owners **David** and **Kristi Dean** made the decision to go through with their retirement plans and sell the assets of the park starting in January of 2023.

"We identified the entire contents of the park, including all games, foodservice equipment, picnic tables, arcade machines, tools and everything else inside the park that could be sold to benefit another park," recalled **Sam Shurgott** of **International Rides Management** (IRM). "Once we were onsite a few weeks later, it was quite the feeling of being overwhelmed at times, with 50 years of tools, signage and buildings filled with more than just memories. Luckily for my team, David and Kristi were hands-on owners and operators, and they knew what everything was used for."

By mid-January of 2023, IRM began offering the first rides and games, and on the first day of availability the items were selling to new homes.

Las Anitas was the major buyer of several rides. The family-owned amusement park, water park, wedding, convention and bowling center purchased the vintage **Eyerly** Rollo Plane, Joyland's 1917 **Parker** Carousel and the **ARM** Super Drop. This was the first ARM drop tower featuring the circular passenger gondola. **Lake Pontchartrain** fans will be happy to read that Joyland's **Mack** Musik Express also found a home here.

In addition, **Derby Amusements** in Kentucky galloped away with the **Chance** Space Shuttle,



Shurgot (far left) of **IRM Rides** smiles as **Wonderland's** **Paul** and **Paula Borchardt** (middle) look over Joyland's attractions alongside longtime friends and Joyland owners **David** and **Kristi Dean**. **Wonderland** is now home to Joyland's **Bonanza Shooting Gallery**. COURTESY IRM RIDES

and **Funland** in the United Kingdom acquired the **Tech Park** Super Miami. **Knoebels** purchased the **Eyerly** Rock-O-Plane and was able to have a soft opening for the attraction in October 2023.

The **Eyerly** Spider was sold to **Fun Spot America** theme parks and webbed its way to the company's Atlanta location.

"David and Kristi Dean operated Joyland in Lubbock, Texas, for just over 50 years providing thrills and excitement for local families," commented **Fun Spot Theme Parks** in a statement. "When their classic Spider ride became available, **John Arie Jr.**, CEO, Fun Spot America, saw the opportunity to make sure the Dean family legacy was

allowed to continue. It was David and Kristi's belief that families should never forget the importance of having fun. It was their wish when they sold the park that the greatest legacies they can leave are those happy memories."

The water park at **Las Antias** received Joyland's **Whitewater** Vortex Double Flume wet/dry slide and the **Bailey Rides** Big Splash Speed Slide. The **Reverchon** Wild River Log Flume also was purchased and installed for the 2024 season in the amusement park section.

Joyland had a great lineup of skill games for all ages. The Shoot Out the Star Game went to **Blue Sky Amusements** in New York. Water Wars went to **Grand Texas** in Texas, and the Bonanza Shooting Gallery went to **Wonderland** in nearby Amarillo, Texas. **Pan Amusements** partnered with IRM to provide Joyland with a brand-new Pirate-themed, eight-gun shooting gallery. The unit was never installed, and now operates at **Quassy Amusement Park** in Connecticut. The eight Skee Ball machines with the 13-foot-long tables were the first items to sell at the park going to **Ocean City, N.J.'s Playland Castaway Cove**.

All of Joyland's equipment found new homes in the amusement industry or in private collections. The large yellow sign that was located at the entrance of Joyland was removed and sent to the **National Roller Coaster Museum**.

It was David Dean's wish that Joyland would live on forever in family memories. With the rides moving to operate in new locations around the world, that wish has come true.



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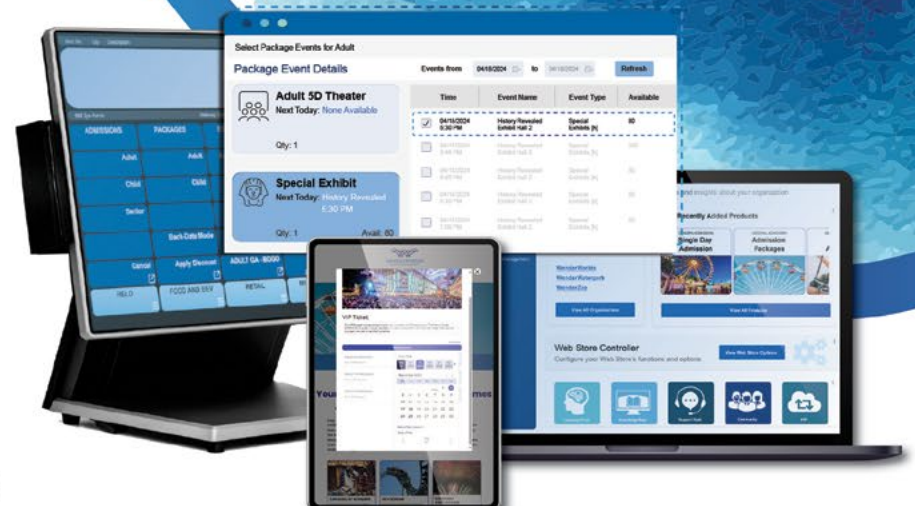
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AAMA's FEC of the Year Alley Cats pilots Embed's Ecosystem

AT: David Fake
dfake@amusementtoday.com

BURLESON, Texas — **Alley Cats Entertainment** has long been a fixture in the Texas family entertainment scene, but its most recent accolade of being named FEC of the Year by the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) for its Burleson location is the culmination of decades of family-run dedication and, more recently, an impressive leap forward in guest experience and operational efficiency powered by technology partner **Embed**. While the FEC itself continues to deliver unforgettable memories to guests across three vibrant locations, it is the behind-the-scenes digital transformation, one spearheaded by Embed's next-generation ecosystem, that's turning heads across the industry.

Founded in 2007 by **Brian and Connie Smith**, Alley Cats has deep roots in the amusement world. The brand evolved from a putt-putt mini golf franchise dating back to the late 1960s, operated by the Smith family. "I've been with the family for 30 years," said **Guy Mack**, director of technology. "I've watched it grow from a small mini-golf center into a multi-attraction entertainment hub with laser tag, bowling, rock walls and the arcade — the arcade being our most consistent and lucrative attraction year-round."



The team from Alley Cats Entertainment accepted the 2025 AAMA FEC Location of the Year award at the 2025 Amusement Expo International (above left). Embed's GoTrain team blended practical instruction with gamified fun and excitement as it joined Alley Cats team members at the Arlington, Texas, location (above right) for hands-on training and Mobile Wallet launch support. COURTESY ALLEY CATS ENTERTAINMENT, EMBED



That arcade, once reliant on tokens and paper tickets, has undergone a significant metamorphosis, and Embed has been the engine driving that change. Replacing the coin jams and ticket tangles of old, Alley Cats adopted Embed's smartTOUCH card readers, kiosks, Mobile Wallet and more, creating a seamless guest experience that's as frictionless as it is fun.

"You can now load a game card at a kiosk, swipe to play and have your tickets digitally loaded — all without touching a single token," Mack explained. "And the best part? It just works — even if the internet goes down, everything stays operational except for credit card purchases."

Alley Cats was invited to pilot the Embed Ecosystem

— an integrated suite of solutions including POS systems, kiosks and guest engagement tools—before its official launch at Amusement Expo International in March 2025. The FEC played a hands-on role in shaping the platform's future.

"I was both excited and honored to be selected for the test group," said Mack. "I believe it strengthens the positive relationship between our businesses and, as a technology enthusiast, I appreciate being involved in the development of new innovations. The impact of the Embed Ecosystem really changes our day-to-day operations in interacting with our guests."

It is a rare opportunity to co-develop with a supplier, and Alley Cats seized it. The new integrated wireless tablet functionality of the Embed Ecosystem means the Alley Cats team can help guests directly on the game room floor. "That's a huge value-add for both our team and our guests," Mack concluded.

That relationship goes far beyond technology deployment. Training, an oft-dreaded pain point in tech rollouts, became a moment of team building and excitement thanks to Embed's GoTrain program.

"They didn't just show up and run a PowerPoint," said **Josh Hamilton**, marketing director. "They brought hands-on training,

live support on launch day and even gamified the onboarding. Staff felt confident and energized."

That energy translated into results. Mobile Wallet reload transactions saw a staggering 674% growth in just four months, from September to December. Parents love the convenience of adding funds from their phones while their kids are still mid-game. And the customization is so complete that users think they're engaging with a proprietary Alley Cats app — not Embed's.

"Most people don't know what Embed is unless they're in the FEC industry," Hamilton added. "That's why it's so important the Mobile Wallet looks and feels like Alley Cats. It's fully branded for us."

Marketing efforts received a digital boost as well. Embed provided a full suite of branded assets via their eSHOP platform, and their Success Squad helped strategize guest adoption. From strategic consultations to interactive HypeTrain registration drives, the collaboration wasn't just technical — it was cultural.

"Embed made it fun," Hamilton said. "The Mobile Wallet BINGO challenge, the promotional tables at each center — they just made it exciting."

Alley Cats' win at the AAMA's FEC of the Year

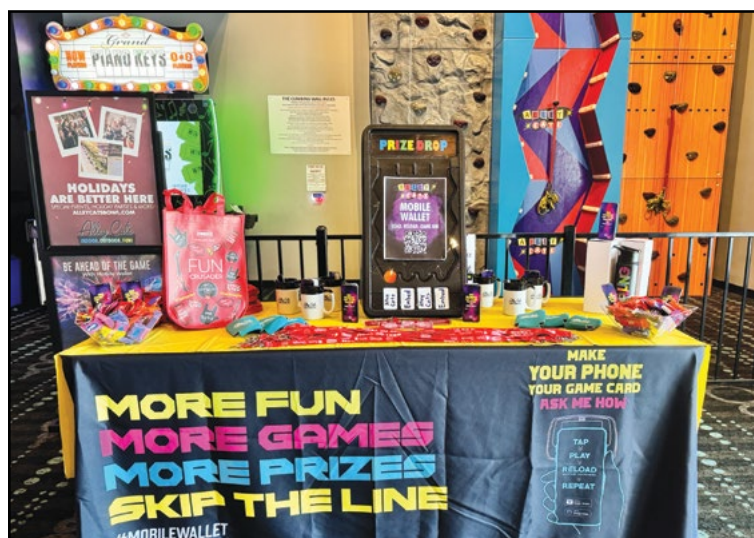
awards — specific to its newest location in Burleson — celebrates much more than family-friendly fun. It acknowledges a thoughtful, innovative approach to entertainment operations that others in the industry would do well to observe. And with discussions underway for a potential fourth location, possibly in Houston, it's clear Alley Cats isn't slowing down.

What sets Alley Cats apart, even with all the bells and whistles, is its soul. "We're still family-owned, and it shows," Hamilton said. "The CEO writes the checks. We have relatives working alongside us. We've managed to scale while keeping that local, family-first vibe."

That authenticity, paired with strategic partnerships like the one with Embed, positions Alley Cats as a model for how FECs can honor their legacy while embracing the future. From tokens to tap-to-play, they've shown the industry that modernization doesn't mean losing your roots; it means growing deeper ones.

As the amusement industry looks toward the next wave of guest engagement, those keeping an eye on Alley Cats Entertainment, as well as its partnership with Embed, will find a roadmap to innovation that's not just award-winning, it is game-changing.

•embedcard.com



From branded kiosks to immersive Mobile Wallet launch stations, Alley Cats and Embed partnered to drive digital adoption with color, energy and customer-first messaging that resonates with families and fun-seekers alike.

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Slick City slides into its first location in the Dallas-FortWorth area

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

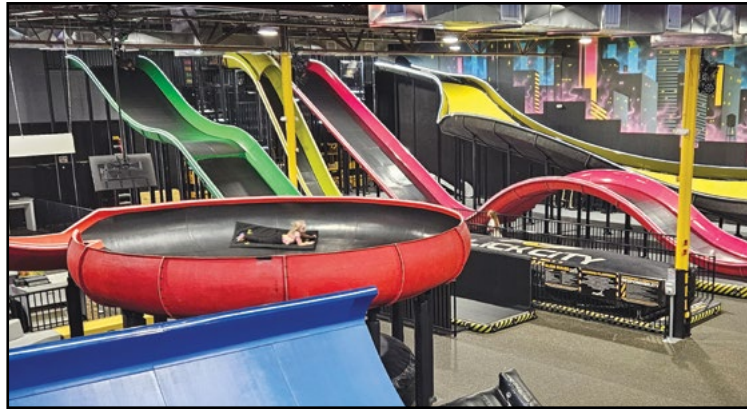
ARLINGTON, Texas — Record-breaking growth in 2024 has put **Slick City** in a position of being the fastest-growing FEC brand.

Texas has already become a vital market. Four have opened with more on the way. Two are in the Houston area. The first North Texas location was in Denton. Now, the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex has one right in the heart of it, Arlington.

The Arlington location was previously a large furniture store (among other things). The indoor park is 30,000 square feet. The tallest slide is 20 feet tall.

"They look for warehouses or **Best Buys**. The Denton location was a remodeled trampoline park," said **Jesus Quevedo**, Arlington general manager. "First seeing the location in Denton was very impressive. It's a lot to take in."

The Dallas-Fort Worth area has a population of approximately 7,000,000. Already, the



The Arlington location is the fourth Slick City to open in Texas. The wide range of thrills caters to both kids and adults in the family. AT/TIM BALDWIN

metroplex is host to several amusement industry offerings.

"It's a very interesting concept — waterless waterslides," Quevedo told *Amusement Today*. "It's something brand new to take their kids to. We try to provide an overall good experience."

As Slick City is a relatively new concept, AT asked Quevedo how families knew the Arlington facility was in the works before the sign even went up.

"The brand is expanding on its own, and people are hear-

ing word-of-mouth," he said. "A lot of people were excited. Our soft opening during spring break — right at the beginning of spring break caused our staff to see the full effects — we saw a lot of success."

The complement of nine slides has each family member finding favorites. Each slide is a different design which offers elements such as speed, jumping a gap, falling through a center hole or flying into the air as if off a ski jump. One set is side-by-side racers that allow family and friends to compete.



"They like the more daring ones," Quevedo smiled. "We have the Mega Launch and Long JUMP. The Mega Launch and Royal Flush are unique to this area. I like that the appeal stretches so far, even to adults. It is a diverse group of people we are seeing."

The Arlington location features LED-outlined slides, two basketball air courts and a children's Junior Jungle play structure, in addition to birthday areas, concessions and arcade games.

"With the Junior Jungle,

even the little kids have their private area and feel safe," said Quevedo.

For about the price of two visits, families can purchase a month-long pass. Seasonal and annual passes are also available.

According to company releases, the Slick City brand has gone from three locations to 60 in just over a year. Not all have opened yet, but many are under construction or in development. The company has 55 patents filed or granted.

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Do The Beach is the next generation of adventure park ownership

AT: Susan Storey
Special to Amusement Today

PORT CHARLOTTE, Fla. — The first-ever **Do The Beach** inflatable adventure park will open this summer in Port Charlotte, Florida. Along with fun and family memories, the location, an all-in-one-immersive destination for families, brings a new, holistic and innovative approach to adventure park management for guests and potential business owners.

Debuting in North Port, Florida, Do The Beach's 21,000 square feet of fun will feature 14 interactive attractions, including the Giant Sandcastle Slide, a first-of-its-kind 20-foot-tall inflatable slide, and the Plunge Slide, the world's first free-fall inflatable experience, as well private party rooms, an arcade and an observation deck.

Beyond the theme, color and attractions, Do The Beach Port Charlotte is also the first location for the new adventure park company, founded by leading inflatable adventure park manufacturer, **Galaxy Multi Rides**. During IAAPA Expo 2024, Galaxy Multi Rides launched the new brand, complete with a competitive business model, adorable mascot, welcoming design and award-winning attractions Galaxy is known for. Most importantly, the Do The Beach franchise model was created to help entrepreneurs become successful business owner-operators.

"Galaxy Multi Rides has opened over 100 independent inflatable parks over the last seven years," shared **Mike Whincup**, COO of Do The Beach Franchising LLC and head of design and marketing at Galaxy Multi Rides. "Our family-owned-and-operated company has become a world leader in creating inflatable attractions, multi-player action games and mechanical rides. Clients have hired us because of our incredible safety record, and they recognize the quality and efficiency of our products. Do The Beach is a new venture that puts our decades of experience together with our industry relationships and



Robin and Mike Whincup

brings something new and exciting to the market."

The heart of each Do The Beach location is the adventure park itself. "The anchor point of course is the bright, colorful inflatable park," said Whincup. "Guests are immediately immersed in the beach theme as they bounce among the inflatables and interactive attractions, explore air court basketball, dodgeball and soccer, and play on signature adventure parks favorites."

"Soft play structures and obstacle courses also fill the space," he continued. "The design and layout take all guest ages and ability levels into account. For instance, the dedicated toddler zone is part of the park but has its own entrance and dedicated space for parents' piece of mind."

"We are proud of the reputation we've built within this industry as the go-to manufacturer of inflatable adventure parks," Whincup stated. "Several years ago, we began to identify a gap for both customers and business owners. We saw the opportunity to develop a brand identity for these destinations that would leave an impression on childhood memories. After putting pen to paper and applying personality to the traditional adventure park design, Do The Beach was born."

The Galaxy team brought in **Curt Skallerup**, formerly of **Altitude Parks**, as cofounder to help streamline the franchise ownership program.

"With Curt's experience, particularly in franchising and operating adventure parks, we have created a unique 'franchise in a box' concept for potential owners," explained



Whincup. "For each Do the Beach location, we provide the attractions and play structures; the branding, theme and design for the entire space; the operations standards and the partners who will help bring it all together. This helps simplify setup and operations and helps to fast-track to journey to financial success."

"Our many years in the industry and proven record of success have allowed us to develop an impressive list of established vendor and partner relationships. We have brought them together to help potential Do The Beach franchise owners identify and find the right location, secure financing and create every aspect of their park. We'll work alongside them through construction, installation, training and opening. This partnership approach ensures that franchise owners will receive the best possible support every step of the way and that guests will receive the same quality, memorable experience across the brand."

Do The Beach locations provide entrepreneurs and business owners the opportunity to own and run an adventure park that attracts the entire family.

Do The Beach inflatable adventure parks are fully themed immersive environments reminiscent of a day at the beach.
COURTESY GALAXY MULTI RIDES

"The power of family traditions, particularly birthday celebrations, are incredible revenue generators for adventure parks," Whincup furthered. "The design and story for Do The Beach lean into this core market, particularly for families with children ages 6 to 10."

"When parents are comfortable, they will stay longer," he continued. "They will bring their kids back. Do The Beach is a clean, safe adventure park experience complete with quality food — including quality coffee — that transports families to our beach and provides them with a few hours of fun."

"We designed Do The Beach to be different. From the moment they enter, guests are surrounded by the bright and eye-catching beach story and theme. The design and concepts were done in-house by our team," Whincup shared. "By combining everything we have learned from developing, building and installing parks with our partners' expertise and operations know-how, Do The Beach is the next generation of adventure park — for guests and owners."

The beach theme and storyline extend through every corner of the park, including training and internal team lingo. "We refer to our play attendants as lifeguards," Whincup

added. "At Beach Snacks, we serve food and beverages out of a replica Airstream camper. Every detail has been considered and addressed."

While Do The Beach is new, Whincup says its foundation is grounded in tradition and reputation. "The core values at Galaxy have always been safety, honesty and integrity. Those are paramount and the client always comes first. We have brought that approach and philosophy to Do the Beach."

Whincup stresses the Do The Beach model to success is driven by its partnership philosophy.

"Franchisees are supported every step of the way," he explained. "We provide the manufacturing and attractions, the tools and know-how, from financing options to training and marketing, along with the relationships that will help ensure new owners have a smooth investment experience and become as profitable as possible. If we do our job right, everyone is a winner!" "I'm excited and humbled about what's next," he finished. "Our family has proudly been a part of the inflatable park business story and now we are writing a new chapter so that other families can become business owners, build wealth, and create fun for others. I can't think of anything better."

•dothebeach.com

TouchTunes revamps music app, promotes more social activity

LASVEGAS—TouchTunes Music Company, LLC unveiled its new mobile app during the 2025 Amusement Expo International. Built to enhance the social music experience of the jukebox in bars and restaurants across North America, the new mobile app highlights TouchTunes' record of innovation while reinforcing its mission of sparking joy through shared entertainment experiences.

"We were the first business in our space to come up with a mobile app back in 2010," commented TouchTunes Chief Marketing Officer **Robert Tomkinson**. "People thought we were a bit ahead of the game, but it changed the industry. And now, the vast majority of our revenue comes through the mobile app, and it's been a few years since we last updated it."

The completely revamped TouchTunes app was redesigned for a new generation of music lovers, elevating the bar and venue experience. Whenever someone plays a song on the jukebox, TouchTunes now enables other patrons in the venue to share reaction emojis via the app, giving everyone real-time feedback on their DJ skills. TouchTunes' Social Reactions now make it easier than ever to connect with friends or strangers by giving and receiving reactions for songs that set just the right vibe.

"At TouchTunes, we believe in the power of music and in-person experiences," said **Charles Goldstuck**, executive chairman of TouchTunes. "Unlike apps that encourage solitary listening, our products create moments of shared joy. Our platform brings people together with the perfect song for any mood, whether celebrating a special occasion, competing in a darts league, or simply sharing a drink with friends."

"We took the opportunity not just to add a few features here and there, but to rebuild the app from the ground up," stated Tomkinson to *Amusement Today*.

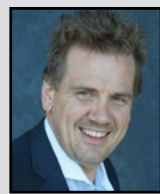
"It's always a great feeling when you choose a song that really resonates with another person, or when someone else plays your jam," added Tomkinson. "Now, any user can give or receive that dopamine rush, even strangers in a crowded bar, via Social Reactions in the TouchTunes app."

The new mobile app has improved search functions, plus numerous curated playlists to discover new ones. Users can create personalized playlists and queue songs onto the jukebox in just a few taps. They can also start an evening out with a new interactive map to zoom in and choose a venue to match a vibe.

TouchTunes will soon unlock more ways for users to "Play Your Heart Out" by releasing a cutting-edge cashless mobile payment system called TouchTunes Pay. Seamlessly integrated into the new mobile app, this will allow users to pay for in-venue entertainment — starting with **BullShooter** electronic darts — directly via the app, all with no extra hardware required for jukebox or dartboard owners and operators.

The new app is now available to download for anyone with an iPhone or Android users. TouchTunes has 4.9 out of 5 stars and 1 million ratings in the Apple App Store.

•touchtunes.com



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

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

An 18-hole Modular Advantage Mini Golf course was recently designed and installed by **Adventure Golf & Sports (AGS)** at the 188-acre **Lake Arvesta Farms** in South Haven, Michigan. The course features a variety of obstacles inspired by the crops and land of West Michigan from beach balls, driftwood, a blueberry harvester, firetruck and a lighthouse, to farm implements and crates used for transporting fruits to a garden hole with vegetables planted on all sides of the hole. The course also features a "buried building" on one mini golf hole that recalls the shifting sands that buried the Michigan shoreline town of Singapore in the late 19th century.

"I said, 'If we're going to build a water park, it's going to have a golf course on it,'" said **Brian deBest**, owner of Lake Arvesta Farms. "And when we started designing the water park, I wanted the golf course to be on a hillside so when you're at the water park or you drive in to the water park, that is the backdrop of the facility."

The course design was inspired by a color rendering of a mini golf course designed by deBest hanging in his current office for more than 25 years. The rendering was of a proposed mini golf course he and a partner had proposed for downtown South Haven that never materialized.

The **International Adventure of Trampoline Parks (IATP)** announced the continuation of its exclusive partnership with **The Insurance Center**, offering IATP members access to discounted insurance rates tailored specifically for trampoline and adventure parks. This ongoing collaboration ensures that IATP members continue to receive competitive rates and comprehensive coverage for their businesses.

As part of this exclusive member benefit, trampoline and adventure park owners will continue to have access to specialized insurance solutions, including liability, property, workers' compensation, and more. The Insurance Center's deep understanding of the trampoline and adventure park industry ensures that IATP members are receiving the best coverage options available at discounted rates.

Slick City Action Park has achieved rapid growth in 2024, becoming the fastest-growing business in the active FEC industry. A key factor propelling the brand's success is its unique all-ages appeal, with 26% of guests aged 18 and older and 36% being high school students or older. The expansion is evident: from zero to 41 franchises awarded, from three open corporate stores to 12, from a handful of employees to more than 50 and from several hundred thousand square feet of signed leases to over a million.

"This past year's success is a testament to the incredible team behind Slick City," said **Bron Launsby**, CEO and founder of Slick City. "As we look at 2025, it's our franchisees' time to shine and we're thrilled to bring this one-of-a-kind experience to all age groups nationwide."

In the next 120 days, Slick City is on track to open 10 more parks, including its first franchise locations in Brownsburg, Indiana; North Columbus, Ohio; Frisco, Texas; West Plano, Texas; South Tulsa, Oklahoma; Scottsdale, Arizona; Woodbridge, Virginia; South Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; South Chicago, Illinois; and Riverview, Arizona. The company aims to open an additional 10 parks in the second half of the year.

AMC Theatres announced that moviegoers can now enjoy **Dippin' Dots**, America's original beaded ice cream brand, during their movie at AMC theatres across the country.

This announcement and rollout follow a highly successful test of Dippin' Dots products in select AMC markets over the last year. The national expansion to AMC concession stands brought Dippin' Dots to U.S. AMC locations starting April 2.

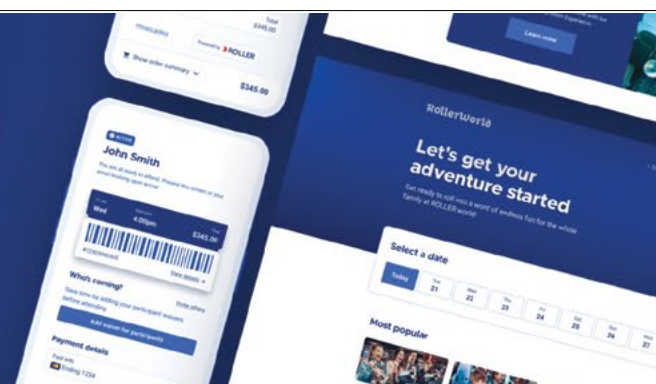
"Partnering with AMC Theatres is a natural fit," said **Dan Fachner**, chief executive officer at **J&J Snack Foods Corp.** "We know that moviegoers are looking for fresh and exciting new options at the concession stands."

Limited-time flavors will rotate throughout the year, offering guests fresh and exciting options at AMC locations in the coming weeks and months.

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Miami-Dade County Fair goes well, nearly a half million visitors

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

MIAMI, Fla. — For 21 days each year, the **Miami-Dade County Fair** takes place, held in Tamiami Park. Typically, nearly a half million people attend. (At press time, attendance figures were not announced.) The 73rd edition on the 86-acre property took place March 13 through April 6 with the theme “Retro Rewind.” It has been held on the fairgrounds at Tamiami Park since 1972.

“We kicked off the season in style at the Miami-Dade County Youth Fair — and what an opening it was!” said **Lynda Franc**, corporate marketing director for **North American Midway Entertainment (NAME)**. “This year marked a major milestone as NAME introduced digital ticketing



in Miami for the very first time — and it rolled out beautifully. Guests enjoyed a smooth, seamless experience, and the fair team couldn’t have been happier with the upgrade.”

RFID wristbands and cards were available to use on the rides.

NAME brought 88 rides, located in three zones: Majorland, Kiddieland and Kiddieland Too. Nearly half the offerings appealed to the younger set. This year there were two Ferris wheels and one observation wheel.

“We debuted two exciting new rides: Downdraft by **Battech Enterprises** and the Monkey Maze by **Owen Trailers Inc.** — both were



NAME brought 88 rides to the 73rd edition of the fair, with nearly half being kiddie ones. The company did not book in any other carnivals. One of the new attractions to play that spot was the **Owen Trailers Monkey Maze** (below). COURTESY NAME/SCOOTER KOREK

big crowd-pleasers,” said Franc. “As always, our fan-favorites stole the spotlight, with the Sky Ride (**Bergathon**, operated by NAME), the stunning Super Wheel by **Ronald Bussink/Dutch Wheels**, and the always-thrilling Euroslide from **SFB Visa** leading the pack.”

The Farmland, Indiana-based carnival offered eight games and six food stands supplementing the ones presented by the fair.

NAME celebrated its 20th anniversary in business last fall. The carnival provider has an arsenal of 230 rides and a traveling and temporary staff of more than 5,000 people.

The fair is laid out so that all the components are mixed. Every ride, food location and game operation is dependent on the others around them for their success. This philosophy is designed to



provide fairgoers with the best possible experience.

Advance tickets could be purchased for as little as \$5 on select days or for \$12 at **Sedano’s Supermarkets** throughout the area. On-site tickets were available at the fairground’s main gate for \$16. Throughout the 21 days, there were numerous \$5 Days. This included admission, \$5 food deals and \$5 games. Free admission was offered every Thursday for the military and first responders. A college day at the fair with free admission also took place. Children

age five and under, as well as seniors 65 and older, enjoyed free admission every day. All entertainment and attractions were free with admission.

Entertainment included daily parades, pig races, a circus and live music. The Show Me Safari offered a petting zoo and camel rides, while Jukebox on Ice, was a retro-themed ice-skating show. The fair also held its first corndog eating competition this year.

Strolling entertainment

► See MIAMI, page 40



The rides were placed in three amusement zones: Majorland, Kiddieland and Kiddieland Too.

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Showmen's Museum preserves the history of fascinating industry

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

RIVERVIEW, Fla. — Step right up and see what is, perhaps, the greatest collection of traveling shows memorabilia on earth.

It's all located on the spacious campus of the **International Independent Showmen's Museum**, just minutes from downtown Tampa.

Inside are more than 54,000 square feet of colorful exhibits ranging from a full-size Ferris wheel to a massive HO-scale carnival model that took more than 26 years to construct.

And there's plenty to see outdoors, with a highlight being the Human Cannonball truck used by daredevil **Edmondo Zacchini** (1894-1981), a member of the Zacchini family of circus performers.

In operation since 2013, the museum was founded by a number of showmen determined to preserve the heritage of their fascinating industry.

Among them was the late **Ivan Arnold**, owner of **Arnold Amusements**, Traverse City, Michigan, who served as president of the museum from its inception until his passing in 2021.

"It was dad's dream come true," daughter **Sandy Schmidt** told *Amusement Today*. She owns and operates the **T.J. Schmidt & Co.** carnival, also based in Michigan, and is on the museum's board of directors. Her brother, Tom, now



Above is the International Independent Showmen's Museum James L. Frederiksen Building in Riverview, Florida. The museum's Executive Director Lee Stevens is photographed on a stairway landing leading to the second floor of the historical collections. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

serves as museum president and oversees the operation of **Arnold Amusements** with his brother, Jon.

"We've got to preserve our history and are looking for new exhibits all of the time," **Tom Arnold** said of the museum. "And we're excited for **Lee Stevens**, our new executive director."

Longtime director passes

Stevens was appointed to the role by the museum's board of directors during a February meeting, replacing **David "Doc" Rivera**, who passed away last December. Rivera, who held the position for 14 years, was an avid artist, historian and author.

Stevens has a strong background in the industry, having performed with the **Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus** from 1989 to 1995, and also created successful stage shows for the fair industry. He served two terms as pres-



ident of the **International Independent Showmen's Association**, which operates the museum and is also in the Showmen's Ring of Fame.

"I can't replace him," Stevens said of Rivera's legacy at the helm of the exhibition. "He saw things differently, was a fantastic artist and knew how to build exhibits."

Sideshow exhibit

One of the most prominent indoor displays is a fac-

simile of a circus sideshow, or what is commonly called a 10-in-One among show folks as the tented attractions many times had up to 10 acts under one canvas.

"They were billed as big circus sideshows because the acts came from the circus," Stevens explained.

The exhibit includes a stage where the acts would provide a preview of what was inside the tent — complete with mannequins dressed in authentic

costumes. Colorful hand-painted sideshow banners surround the display.

A rare antique **Conderman** Ferris wheel grabs immediate attention on the main floor of the museum. Built in the early 1900s in Hornesville, New York, the 40-foot wheel was donated by the **Wheelock** family, which operated a Syracuse-based carnival in New York from 1946 to 2024.

A brightly-lighted Sportland arcade facade shows the way into another large display where a vintage kiddy boat ride, carousel horse and antique midway games apparatus are exquisitely exhibited.

Photos, carnival and circus posters and various other antique equipment await visitors as they stroll through the museum, including a number of original works by Rivera.

And there is no stone left unturned when it comes to traveling shows as you see items from Wild West acts, auto thrill shows, medicine shows and more throughout the complex.

Huge donor

The two-story structure housing the museum is named after **James L. Frederiksen**, owner of **Frederiksen Industries**, Tampa, maker of the popular Fun Slide for parks and carnivals. Frederiksen donated \$1.2 million to finish the building in 2010

► See MUSEUM, page 40



A 1917 Packard truck (above left) on display in the museum from Reithoffer Shows, a family-owned carnival in operation since 1896. Jim Frederiksen (above middle) has donated more than \$2 million to the museum. The Human Cannonball truck (above right) welcomes visitors to the museum. AT/RON GUSTAFSON



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The Super Wheel (Ronald Bussink/Dutch Wheels) is always a popular attraction at the fair. This 150-foot observation wheel has 36 enclosed gondolas offering a spectacular view. COURTESY MIAMI-DADE COUNTY FAIR & EXPOSITION

►MIAMI

Continued from page 37

was another aspect of the fair with the Stilt Circus, a strolling DJ, The Fritters costumed characters and clowns, Tadpole and Katie.

Food selection ranged from delectable confections to savory surprises. The 150 different stands offered carnival staples, creative fusion dishes and everything in between. A returning favorite included funnel cakes by **Mama Jane Harris** of **The Best Around**, known for their red velvet funnel cake. Other food included smurfberry elephant ear and La Piña Mexicana, which was ice cream and snack combined.

Some of the 30 new food items included elote corn dogs, deep-fried corn, overloaded shrimp fritters, soul food egg rolls and pistachio churros.

Children who wanted to explore the world of agriculture enjoyed a special treat during the annual Howdy Tours. Led by Howdy, the freckle-faced agriculture ambassador, this educational experience was designed for second and third graders. The tours taught kids about

plants, and animals and how everyday products like milk and butter are made. In addition, there were 41,000 student exhibit entries. The competitive divisions included culinary, fine arts, performing arts, technology education, fishing gear, fashion design, creative writing and more.

The Miami-Dade County Fair & Exposition, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to enriching the community by promoting education and South Florida agriculture while showcasing and rewarding youth achievement. It accomplishes this by producing a first-class fair with quality entertainment and providing facilities for year-round events.

Throughout its history, the fair has contributed more than \$11 million to the community in Miami-Dade County and has positively impacted countless lives of adults and children since 1952. In 2024, the organization provided more than \$357,768 in academic scholarships, cash premiums, plaques and awards.

The fair returns March 12 – April 5, 2026 (except March 16-17, 30-31).

•thefair.me/thefair

►MUSEUM

Continued from page 38

and another \$1 million last year for an expansion. He also has his 1950 **Allan Herschell** American Beauty carousel on loan to the museum as part of the main floor display.

"The frame of the building was there, but no second floor," Frederiksen recalled of the museum's beginnings. "I was on the board at the time and we ran out of money. Ivan Arnold designed the building and was pushing to get it done, so I donated the \$1.2 million."

As for Frederiksen's most recent donation, "We're putting up a 28,000-square-foot addition to protect more wagons from the weather," noted museum **Vice President Tom Gaylin III** of **Rosedale Attractions & Shows**, Baltimore, Maryland. "We're also in negotiations with the Strates family (**Strates Shows, Inc.**, Orlando, Florida) to bring in a couple of rail cars to show how a railroad carnival moved."

Strates Shows was the last of the railroad carnivals in the nation, which ceased transporting its equipment by rail in 2019. The large carnival now moves along its East Coast route via truck.

Gaylin also said the museum is in the process of acquiring a rare **Spillman Engineering Co.**, carousel. Spillman operated in the 1920s and 30s in competition with Herschell. The two North Tonawanda, New York, companies were in partnership in 1901 before going their separate ways.

While many volunteers and donors have come for-



This lighted facade welcomes guests into a large exhibit area in the museum. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

ward throughout the years, Tom Arnold was also quick to point out a \$50,000 gift left to the museum by **Sherry Boland**. Those funds helped cover the carnival and circus wagons in front of the building as well as complete concrete pads for the outdoor exhibits. **Jon Arnold** has also heavily participated in the restoration process of a number of the wagons.

More outdoors

"We obtained the cannonball truck after many years of deliberations with the Zacchini family's estate," Stevens said of the outdoor exhibit. Museum volunteer **Gene Chaffee**, a renowned rebuilder of carnival rides, refurbished the truck to its current condition.

The spring mechanism that launched Zacchini high into the air is among the items currently stored at the museum.

Numerous carnival and circus wagons, some restored and others awaiting a facelift, and the center drive mechanism from a vintage **Philadelphia Toboggan Co.** carousel are among other outdoor exhibits.

Meeting the challenge

Stevens is excited about his new role and what the future holds for the museum.

"We had a group come in Friday with a completely different view of the sideshow business," he said. "During our tour, I had the opportunity to give them the back story and change their perspective of us and sideshow people."

He also readily admits that the museum is best suited to an adult audience with an appreciation of the industry's history.

"I would like to see a larger crowd appeal," he continued. "We do need more visibility, and I'm working hard on that. The more people that come through the museum, I believe the more people that will come. And we can always use more volunteers."

"Lee is articulate, intelligent and personable," Gaylin said of Stevens. "He is excellent in dealing with tours and the public, and he is bringing more recognition to the museum."

The mission of the International Independent Showman's Museum is to preserve the history of traveling shows in America. From all indications, the nonprofit organization has lived up to its motto.

Other officers serving the museum are **Jim Elliott**, secretary, and **Helen Robke**, treasurer. The board of directors includes **Jim Christian**, Chaffee, **Joey Evans**, **Colin O'Keefe**, **Joanne Perkins**, **Debbie Rivera**, **Schmidt**, **Gator Lidey**, **Paul Jeanotte**, **Mike Weekley**, **Wilber Cook**, **Jon Arnold**, **Elliott**, **Barb Larkee**, **Scotty Oaks**, **T.T. Redick**, **David Starkey** and **Betty Tanner**.

•showmensmuseum.org



A center drive unit (circa 1925) from a Philadelphia Toboggan Co. (PTC) carousel is on display outdoors. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

Amusement Services Australia debuts first Sartori Zero Gravity

COWES, VICTORIA, Australia — Amusement Services Australia has taken delivery of the first Sartori Zero Gravity ride. The attraction made its debut at the Sydney Royal Easter Show this April.

The Zero Gravity is an enlarged version (XXL) of the company's best-selling attraction Techno Jump, which has sold more than 100 units since its introduction in 2002. The XXL version is characterized by 14 arms of nearly 20 feet in length — more than 20% longer than the standard version. Each arm houses one vehicle with three seats each allowing for a total of 42 passengers and each seat is equipped with single shoulder restraint systems.

The ride's footprint during operation is just over 60 feet in diameter. All of its pneumatic com-

ponents (compressors and cylinders) have been oversized in order to provide a "Zero Gravity" effect.

The ride is transported on a four-axle trailer — two tandems of two axles each — which is 59 feet long and entirely designed on request and ad-hoc by Sartori to contain the entire ride and its components without having to dismantle them. The ride designed according to the EN13814 standard has already obtained approval to be able to travel and operate without constraints in any Australian state/territory. The same trailer can also be built with the three-axle configuration.

The entire machine — including the vehicle chassis — was entirely built in the Sartori factory in Montagnana, Italy.

•sartoriamusement.com



The Sartori Zero Gravity (above) is an XXL version of the company's top-selling Techno Jump attraction. The ride is transported on a custom, four-axle, 59-foot-long trailer (right).
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MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Jason Brockshus is the new CEO and manager of the **Clay County Fair & Events Center**, Spencer, Iowa. He started in mid-April, following the retirement of **Jerome Hertel**.

Brockshus has been part of the fair team since 2021, serving as partnerships director, growing sponsor relationships, expanding agricultural education initiatives, and working with the Clay County Fair Charitable Trust. His career includes leadership roles in agribusiness, farming and education — including serving as an ag instructor and FFA advisor, and as owner of **Brockshus Dairy LLC**.

"Jason brings a strong background in agriculture and leadership to the position," said **Greg Lear**, chairman of the fair board. "He's passionate about the fair and is well-prepared to continue our traditions while helping the fair evolve."

"My focus going forward is to be a good steward of the fair," Brockshus said. "Agricultural education has always been at the core of what we do, and I look forward to honoring the traditions that so many people love while also finding new ways to engage future generations."

The Clay County Fair, founded in 1917, is called "The World's Greatest County Fair," attracting more than 300,000 visitors each year during its nine-day September 6-14 run. The fairgrounds also host more than 300 events annually through the Clay County Fair & Events Center. **Goldstar Amusements** is the carnival provider.

The **North Carolina State Fair**, Raleigh, will be home to a new building in the next few years. The Midway Event Center, a two-tiered food hall, will replace the 70-year-old Lunch Stand building close to **Dorton Arena**.

It will feature indoor and outdoor seating and multiple event spaces. A variety of food will be served, including fair food while the fair is in session.

The construction project will include an update to the flower and garden area, integrating it with Heritage Circle. The entire project is slated to take three to four years.

The 2025 fair returns October 16-26 with **Powers Great American Midway** providing the amusement rides.

A piece of Vancouver's history has been uncovered at Hastings Park, home of the **Pacific National Exhibition (PNE)**. A German field artillery piece used in World War I (1914-18) was recently unearthed by work crews while excavating the site of a new amphitheater being built on the grounds.

Canadian forces used the site primarily for training, parading and deploying troops during WWI.

"The German guns that were captured

by Canadian troops were returned to Canada as trophies following the war and were staged in city parks and civic buildings in cities across the country," said **James Calhoun**, curator of **Seafarth Highlanders of Canada Museum**.

"We can only speculate as to why they were buried. It might be because they were heavy and too cumbersome to move. It might just be because somebody wanted to keep them. So, our hope is there are more guns buried there,"

The PNE is working with City of Vancouver archeologists and archivists to determine the artifact's history, along with the next steps to return it to the Canadian Forces as a museum piece.

One of the most unusual April Fool's Day (April 1) stunts by any north American fair this year was one concocted by the **State Fair of Texas**.

The fair posted to social media, "FairMates," which it described as "the only dating app where Big Tex is your ultimate wingman!" The faux dating app was proposed as a way for fair lovers to find their perfect match by bonding over some fried food and rides.

Some of the phony features were "Swipe-A-Snack," where users would swipe through fair foods to see how their tastes match, and the "Big Tex Mixer," where users would rate their love for fair activities.

The funniest part was the disclaimer: "Using this app may result in deep-fried food cravings. Falling in love may lead to photo ops with Big Tex. We are not responsible for the amount of time your date wants to spend at the fair, the number of midway prizes they want to win, or the number of times they want to ride the Love Bug."

The **Outdoor Amusement Business Association** and **Showman's League of America** are partnering on a joint venture to preserve the history of carnivals in North America. They are working with author **John Thornton**, who wrote *Carnie King: The Story of Patty Conklin and Conklin Shows*.

The upcoming Volume 1 book will highlight the rich history of 25 carnivals throughout the continent, preserving their legacy for future generations. Until June 1, submissions between 12 to 15 pages or 6,000 to 7,500 words are being accepted for consideration. Photos (historical and current) should accompany each submission.

The first edition will come out this fall with a second volume of 25 more carnival histories being released in 2026.

Those interested in being considered should forward their history and photos to **Scooter Korek** at Scooter@namidway.com or contact him at 601-862-1434.

WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► Both Typhoon Lagoon, Blizzard Beach to open this summer — page 46 / NewsSplash — page 46

Bavarian Inn Lodge unveils impressive Bavarian Blast Waterpark

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

FRANKENMUTH, Michigan — The highly anticipated expansion to the **Bavarian Inn Lodge** held a soft opening on March 21. At an impressive 170,000 square feet, **Bavarian Blast Waterpark** takes the reins as the largest indoor water park and family fun center in the state. The water park opened for guests who were staying at the Bavarian Inn Lodge along with a limited number of day passes. The soft opening allowed visitors to take a first look at the \$80-million state-of-the-art facility. A formal ribbon cutting event is scheduled for May 12.

Aquatic Development Group (ADG) of Cohoes, New York, provided its expertise to bring the project to life, supplying everything needed from concept development to execution. The water park is housed within a mostly glass structure built by Ontario, Canada's **OpenAire**. Part of the building façade is designed to match the existing Bavarian Inn architecture, but one end is a massive glass wall with views of Heritage Park. The entire building is topped with a 175-foot-wide by 275-foot-long skylight with a raised cupola over the slide tower. **Adirondack Studios** headquartered in Argyle, New York, provided creative design, sampling and mock-ups, fabrication and installation services for the whimsical characters and environments located throughout the waterpark. These include fiberglass animal



The 170,000-square-foot addition is bright and airy thanks to a 175-foot-wide by 275-foot-long **OpenAire** skylight (above). Water spills from the top of **Cuckoo's Chaos** (below) to douse guests beneath. COURTESY ADIRONDACK STUDIOS, BAVARIAN INN

water sculptures and spouts, brightly colored Bavarian-style birdhouses, and a two-story castle adjacent to the park's wave pool. The general contractor for the expansion was **R.C. Hendrick & Son, Inc.**, the same company that built all previous six phases of the lodge as it has expanded over the years.

"Working with a multi-generation, family-owned business like the Bavarian Inn to help them bring this once-in-a-lifetime vision to life has been nothing short of spectacular for ADG," said **Ray Lauenstein**, ADG's director of business development — specialty construction. "As a family-owned business ourselves, we understand the importance of these kinds of projects—not just for the current generation, but for the future legacy of the resort. We were deeply engaged with the



owner, who had a specific vision for how he wanted the resort to look and operate, and most importantly, for what they were leaving for the next generation."

Canada's **WhiteWater West** supplied 16 water slides as well as an interactive play area. High-profile slides include a Python, Constrictor, Parallel Pursuit, Aquatube and Freefall Plus. As is common with indoor

water parks, the loading area and splashdown are inside the indoor water park, but the bulk of the slides are outside to save space. Several of the slides take advantage of WhiteWater's **AquaLucent** patterns to provide unexpected bursts of light and color in various patterns to create visual movement as thrill seekers traverse the slide. Patterns include AquaLucent rings, horizon-

tal stripes and large dots. In addition, the enclosed racing sections of the **Parallel Pursuit** slide have a translucent stripe between the upper half and lower half of the trough that runs the entire length of the section enhancing the atmosphere with the addition of light.

Two interactive play areas are designed just for the kids. **Puddle Platz** is designed for the youngest set and includes five small slides, two aqua domes, a water table and a tot bounce. **Bavarian Blasts's Cuckoo's Chaos** is a pre-teen area boasting four more water slides with both open and enclosed tubes: **Pretzel Twist**, **Buttered Noodle**, **Schnitzel Swirl** and **Bavarian Blitz**. The tower looks like a giant cuckoo clock and instead of the usual tipping bucket, water spills from the area just beneath the cuckoo bird.

The Bavarian Inn opted for something a little more adventurous than the typical lazy river. The 300-foot-long "not so lazy" **Greta's River Run** is a little faster than usual and has tubers floating past blooming flowers, a vegetable garden and a bird bath. **Greta** and her froggy friend squirt playful water sprays at guests floating by. **Willy's Waves** wave pool spans 5,130 square feet and offers adjustable wave patterns from small and gentle to roaring waves five feet in height. The park plans to offer different wave intensities at various times of the day.

An indoor/outdoor heat-

► See **BAVARIAN**, page 44







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►BAVARIAN

Continued from page 43

ed pool includes Bootlegger Bar — Michigan's first adult-only swim-up bar. The swim-up bar offers a wide variety of beverages, including popular and local brews, Bavarian Blast cocktails, specialty mixed drinks, frozen drinks, glasses and bottles of wine, and more all served in a laid-back poolside atmosphere. Guests can swim through an opening in the wall to pass from inside to outside and vice-versa.

The indoor space includes plenty of comfortable seating with tables and chairs. Those looking for a more exclusive stay can book one of the 20 private cabanas. The cabanas are ideal for families or groups of up to 10 looking to relax in their own private space while still being close to all the action. Situated along the activity pool, wave pool, lazy river or on the mezzanine, these exclusive spots will provide shade, comfortable seating and a chance to

to take a breather from a day of water park adventures. The cabanas are equipped with a 55-inch TV, a mini fridge, security safe, cushioned bench, lounge chairs, table and chairs, and a fan. Included is a server who can deliver food and drinks.

In addition to these aquatic adventures, the Bavarian Blast expansion brings exciting new features to the lodge's family fun center, including a three-story ropes course, rock climbing walls, four rock 'n' roll mini bowling lanes known as Lexi's Lanes, an expanded arcade games area with more than 180 arcade and redemption games, a laser tag arena, Build-A-Bear workshop and more.

The Bavarian Inn made a name for itself with its food offerings. Those not wanting to venture to one of the Inn's restaurants will find several options within the water park. Guests can grab Bavarian-style burgers, Haus-made Bratwurst, chicken tenders, pizzas, flatbreads and salads at Chef Willy's Cafe. Snacks and drinks can



The 20 private cabanas are ideal for families or groups looking to relax in their own private space.

COURTESY BAVARIAN INN

be found at Fritz's Frozen Fun Spritz & Sips. Guests can snack on several items ranging from frozen smoothies to specialty lemonades to pickles to rice krispy treats.

Bavarian Inn started in 1950 when William and Dorothy Zehnder purchased the Fischer's Hotel. Fischer's was already famous for its all-you-can-eat family-style chicken dinners, and the Zehnders continued that tradition but added traditional German food as well.

Although the restaurant was losing money in the late 1950s, the family decided to expand instead of closing. The new addition boasted a Bavarian motif, setting the stage for what was to come. In 1967, a 50-foot Glockenspiel was added which included a 35-bell carillon. Soon other businesses in the area built or remodeled buildings in the Bavarian style and Frankenmuth became a well-known tourist town that attracts more than 3 mil-

lion visitors annually.

The Bavarian Inn is still family-owned and is now a seven-acre resort that includes the Bavarian Inn Restaurant, Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth River Place Shops, and the ResidenZ at Bavarian Inn. Facilities include the lodge with 360 rooms, 12 dining rooms, an existing indoor multi-pool area with two waterslides, an 18-hole miniature golf course, full-service conference center and now the Bavarian Blast Waterpark. The 1,200-seat Inn still serves its famous Frankenmuth chicken dinners along with authentic Bavarian specialties. The Inn serves more than 900,000 meals annually.

Michael Keller Zehnder, president of Bavarian Inn Lodge, stated, "Throughout the four generations of leadership at Bavarian Inn, our mission has always been to create enjoyable experiences. This expansion stands as a testament to our continuous dedication to this pursuit."

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Beginning in late May — for the first time since 2019 — both Typhoon Lagoon (above) and Blizzard Beach will be open every day through September 7, 2025.

COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD

Both Walt Disney World Resort water parks to open in 2025

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — For the first time since 2019, all six parks at the **Walt Disney World Resort** will be open. Starting May 21, daily water park fun at both **Disney's Blizzard Beach** and **Disney's Typhoon Lagoon** returns to the Florida resort. Along with the reopening of both water parks, guests staying at a Walt Disney World Resort can enjoy all splashes for free on their arrival day.

Water park fun has been a signature part of the destination since **River Country** opened in 1976. While it closed in 2001, Typhoon Lagoon and Blizzard Beach came onboard to provide new water park offerings and have continued to delight millions of guests. Typhoon Lagoon, which opened in 1989, is home to one of the world's largest outdoor wave pools and is known for its swept-away tropical oasis theme. According to the 2023 **TEA/AECOM** Theme Index Report, Typhoon Lagoon was the third most visited water park in the world in 2023. Along with daily operation throughout the summer, the park is also bringing back its popular evening event, **Disney H2O Glow After Hours**. The separate-ticket beach bash celebrates sunset with Disney's signature guest extras: music, dancing, character meet-and-greets and complimentary snacks all night long.

When the 66-acre **Blizzard Beach** opened on April 1, 1995, its signature attraction, the **Summit Plummet** was heralded one of the tallest and fastest freefall waterslides in the world. Riders plunge 12 stories almost straight down a 360-foot-long, high-speed descent slide that is just as thrilling today as it was when it debuted 30 years ago. **Blizzard Beach's** unique theme — a wintry, slippery ski resort — has provided a “flurry” of fun for guests and serves as the perfect complement to sister park **Typhoon Lagoon's** beachy oasis. In 2022 **Blizzard Beach** updated the **Tike's Peak** area of the park. Complete with wading pools, an igloo fortress, snow chutes and miniature snow-banked slides, the winter wonderland water world was aptly inspired by the Disney animated film *Frozen* and includes depictions of its beloved characters.

The announcement that Walt Disney World will once again have a double dose of water park experiences available to guests signals the resort's readiness for a busy summer season and on into next year. Disney has already announced it will continue to offer the free water park admission on day of arrival promotion for resort guests in 2026.

—Susan Storey



NEWSPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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The village board of Bradley, Ill., gave its okay to a resolution allowing the administration to proceed with the sale of \$30 million in general obligation bonds. The bonds will be used to finance a two-acre water park facility on the site of the former **Northfield Square Mall**. The water park is to include a glass-structured indoor facility similar to **Epic Waters** in Grand Prairie, Texas.

The 20-year bonds will be paid in part through the village's business district and hotel taxes. Park entry fees also will be used to repay the debt.

Mayor **Mike Watson** indicated the project is moving forward at a rapid pace, but they are not being reckless, as the time for movement has arrived.

“We want to live and see it,” said Watson. “We don't need to sit around and talk about this for the next 10 years.”

The project is under the direction of **American Resort Management LLC**, of Erie, Pa., and engineering consultant **Ramaker**, of Sauk City, Wis.

HydroDash, the floating **Wibit** obstacle course at **Palawan Beach** in Singapore reopened in February. The newly revamped course with the addition of 12 new features now spans 60 by 61 meters (39,200 square feet) and features 30 obstacles.

Palawan Beach, one of the more serene and quieter beaches, was forced to close last June when oil began washing up on the beach. On June 14, 2024, the dredging ship **Vox Maxima** collided with the refueling vessel **Marine Honour** causing about 400 metric tons of fuel oil to spill into the surrounding waters. The resulting spill forced the closure of several beaches on the island resort of **Sentosa** during peak tourism season.

Kalahari Resorts & Conventions, which operates some of the largest indoor water parks in the United States, is considering a resort in **Allen, Texas**, a northern suburb of the **Dallas-Fort Worth** metroplex. The proposed location would include indoor and outdoor water parks, a hotel with more than 900 rooms and a large convention center. If it comes to fruition, that would give the state of **Texas** two **Kalahari** resorts with the first having opened in **Round Rock** on November 12, 2020.

According to the city, **Kalahari** representatives are committed to involving residents early in development should the project commence, as they did in **Round Rock**. Architectural and site planning could take at least a year, as well as a comprehensive development review

and zoning approvals.

“With its welcoming spirit, family-focused values and vibrant growth, **Allen** is a community that truly embodies what we stand for,” said **Todd Nelson**, CEO, owner and founder of **Kalahari Resorts** in a statement. “We are always exploring opportunities to bring America's largest indoor water park resort experience to more families. While we do not have finalized plans at this time, we are encouraged by the positive discussions with the city and state representatives we've had up to this point.”

The **Dallas-Fort Worth** metroplex was the fourth-largest metropolitan area in the U.S. according to the 2020 U.S. census, and had the highest numerical growth of any metropolitan area in the nation.

Planning continues on the project to replace a 38-year-old swimming pool at **Willowood Park** in **Marion, Iowa**.

In November, voters will be asked to approve a bond referendum to fund the estimated \$39 million redevelopment plan that will include a new aquatic center.

The proposed concept includes six distinct areas, each with a unique focus and appeal. The six areas include a lazy river, a leisure pool, a wave pool, a 25-yard lap pool with a ninja warrior obstacle course, a splash pad and a diving pool.

The current **Marion** pool opened in 1987. The aging facility is experiencing ongoing and increasing maintenance challenges. It is expected that significant repairs and improvements will need to be made to keep it in operation.

The city council of **Jacksonville, Fla.**, has approved legislation granting a rezoning request, which will allow for the development of a surf park.

The proposed **Jacksonville Surf Park** will feature a large lagoon with waves powered by **Wavegarden** of **San Sebastián, Spain**. The project will be spearheaded by **Western Australia's Aventura**, a global creator of integrated surf park developments.

In addition to the **Wavegarden Cove** surfing lagoon, the surf park plans include a boutique hotel, restaurants and retail space, a surf academy, a health and wellness center, and an event space with conference rooms.

Subject to further regulatory approvals, construction is expected to start in 2026, with the **Jacksonville Surf Park** opening to the public in the fourth quarter of 2027.

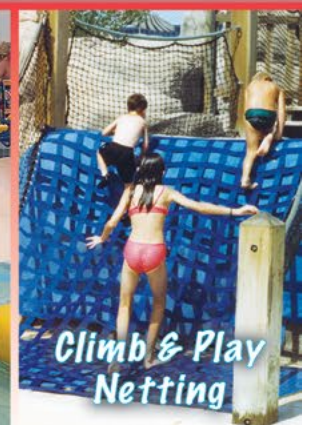
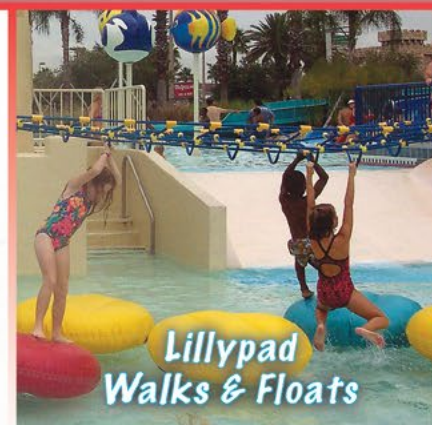
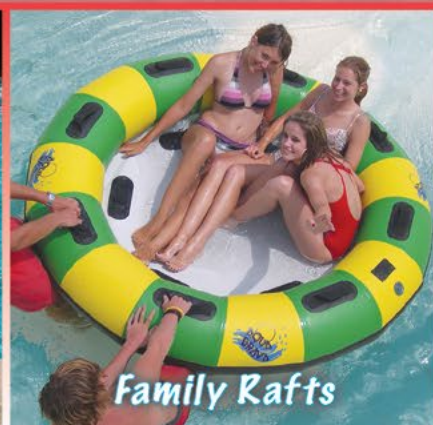


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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Life Floor offers safety on hot surfaces — page 51 / Recycling lockers for missions, homeless shelters — page 52

Spekboom Lodge is latest revenue stream at San Antonio Zoo

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO — There's cool, and then there are things so unique, so enticing that one goes: "That's SO cool!"

Welcome to Spekboom Lodge at San Antonio Zoo.

As part of the multiple projects of "phase one" of expansion of the historic zoo, Spekboom Lodge, San Antonio Zoo's new overnight suite where visitors can sleep alongside giraffes, zebras, ostriches and other African species, is set within the heart of the newly renovated Naylor Savanna. As 2024 wound down, the zoo's new accommodation welcomed its first guests.

The inside of the 600-square-foot accommodation is decorated beautifully. It's both thematic and inviting. However, the elevated nature of the lodge allows for overnight guests to look down on the various animals just feet away.

Set within the vibrant Naylor Savanna, Spekboom Lodge provides a private escape for up to four guests. The suite boasts a primary bedroom with a king bed, a living area, two twin beds, a bathroom, an outdoor balcony and a well-equipped kitchenette.

Zoo President **Tim Morrow** explained the origins of the ultra-exclusive idea: "As we visit zoos around the United States, we had noticed that some had



Spekboom Lodge at San Antonio Zoo is erected in the heart of the animal habitats of Naylor Savannah. The interior (below) is beautifully decorated with modern amenities. COURTESY SAN ANTONIO ZOO; AT/TIM BALDWIN

campsites set up, but not necessarily at an animal habitat and not high end. We knew from other locations that have been opening at private facilities that there was a demand for a safari-like experience without the cost of traveling to Africa, so we went to work. **Jesse Vargas**, our COO, and I both grew up in the theme park industry, so we don't necessarily think in a traditional zoo mindset, which helps us create unique experiences and habitats."

"I've been around the animals all the time. I walk past this space four or five times a day," said Vargas. "Of course, I love the animals because they are in our care, but spending the night in this space, in their home overnight, made me fall in love with them. I was

able to spend time in their space and watch behaviors I had never witnessed before. The animals at night behave completely differently. They are spread out during the day, but at night, they come together to go to sleep. My wife probably has two hours of video."

Vargas notes that there are books and a television within the living area, but they are unlikely touched.

"The show is outside the window, and we literally fell asleep watching them," Vargas told *Amusement Today*.

When including the overlook deck, the guest space is 750 square feet.

The accommodation comes with numerous perks, including room service up to midnight. If guests wish to leave and do something else-



where in San Antonio, a valet picks up guests on a cart and transports them to their car.

"There's hardly ever a time when you can't pick up the phone and get a burger or pizza, salad and full bar," noted Vargas.

That's just the start. Guests of Spekboom Lodge enjoy exclusive zoo access, allowing exploration up to two hours after closing

and an hour before opening, ensuring a peaceful and private experience. The stay includes complimentary access to zoo attractions like the carousel and scenic train rides. Additionally, unlimited animal encounters come complimentary with the lodging, including a behind-the-scenes tour

► See ZOO, page 50

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►ZOO

Continued from page 49

of the new state-of-the-art Giraffe Barn. A personal concierge can handle all needs for visitor stays.

This isn't the zoo's first venture into overnight experiences. Tailored to more family-friendly budgets and group activities, sleepovers within zoo buildings can be curated for as few as 10 people. However, the single-accommodation of Spekboom Lodge takes it to a new level of luxury and exclusivity.

"I feel this has been designed so perfectly," said **Hope Roth**, marketing and communication. "I was afforded the opportunity to go to Africa last May and stayed at a lodge. I was very much anticipating [the zoo] not to be at the level of staying on a reserve in Africa. This is as good or better as an experience than we had there. I joke that it is less expensive than going to Africa and without the jetlag."



The outdoor balcony is ideal for relaxing and looking down at the exotic animals (above right) below. AT/TIM BALDWIN

The cliff wall of the giraffe enclosure was just recently discovered to be the source of the rock used to build the famous Alamo.

The name might cause guests to inquire about its meaning.

"Spekboom is actually a plant, also known as elephant bush, and is found across South Africa," said Morrow. "Spekboom Lodge is built on the former location of our historic elephant habitat, so we thought it was fitting. There is also a lodge in South Africa with a camp called Spekboom,

which is doing rhino conservation work. These two things combined were the inspiration for the name. We have the plant in pots at Spekboom Lodge."

The zoo's philosophy is a stay at Spekboom Lodge is more than just an escape; it is a contribution to its vital mission. A portion of each stay directly supports the **Giraffe Conservation Foundation**, the only global organization dedicated to ensuring the survival of these magnificent creatures. Pricing for Spekboom Lodge varies seasonally, starting at \$700



(low season) and going up to \$1,600 during peak season. Typical nights are \$1,200. A two-night minimum stay is required to experience this unique getaway. San Antonio Zoo is a nonprofit facility.

Even with a pricier cost, the innovative idea has proven popular. According to the zoo, the occupancy rate is at 87 percent.

"You really feel like the whole zoo is yours — like your very private zoo," Roth said.

"Spekboom Lodge is performing even better than we could have imagined,"

Morrow told AT. "It has shown us that we can be the zoo for all and still create unique experiences within the traditional zoo visit that are exclusive and help provide funds for the zoo and conservation. Moving forward you will see more of these opportunities at San Antonio Zoo and I would guess at other zoos around the country."

Booking.com and social media have been the primary sources to get the word out.

"We're seeing people book from all over the country," Vargas added.



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Life Floor offers safety aspect of heat dissipation for hot surfaces

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

MINNEAPOLIS — As water park season approaches, every facility becomes focused on safety. Preventing drownings is always top of mind, but parks have been limited in everyday circumstances in the protection of feet from the burning effects of concrete and asphalt.

At their worst, bare concrete and asphalt can surpass temperatures of 130 degrees or more. Even composite decking, metal grates and railings can pose a danger.

The first line of defense is appropriate footwear worn by the guest. But as not all guests choose to do so, the need for more answers is evident.

As the water park industry continues to innovate, new products that have come online to address the ongoing concern of extreme heat.

Life Floor, which has been lauded for its colorful aesthetics, goes beyond looks.

So often, kids play games saying, “The floor is lava.” But in hot climates with direct sunlight, that’s not too far-fetched. Human skin feels discomfort when surface temperatures exceed 110 degrees. First-degree burns start at 118 degrees F (48 C); second-degree burns occur seconds after contact with surfaces that reach 131 degrees (55 C).

Life Floor provides a solution for protecting guests. Unlike typical hard surfaces, Life Floor tiles are engineered to dissipate heat quickly, preventing



Life Floor is known for its colorful designs. COURTESY BAYNUM SOLUTIONS

them from reaching hazardous temperatures.

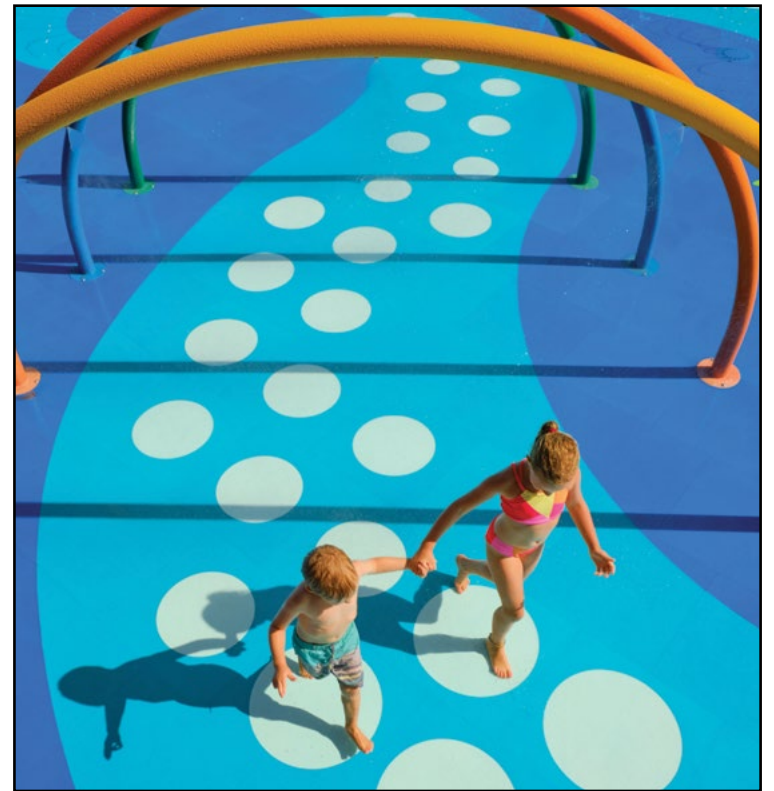
“On Life Floor, it takes heat five seconds or less to dissipate as soon as it’s touched. Our tiles are made from a foam-rubber material which is comparable to stepping onto a heavy-duty flip-flop,” said **Briana Valente**, marketing manager, Life Floor. “Our tiles don’t get dangerously hot and will at most reach 110 to 115 degrees on the surface unless there are extremely high ambient air temperatures to begin with. For example, in Arizona’s record-breaking 115-degree weather, our products might increase in temperature to 120, but they still will not burn skin on contact.”

Wet feet are not enough as those situations can increase heat transfers from hot concrete. Children may be more vulnerable as their thinner skin may cause slower reaction times.

“Life Floor is also a Certified Autism Resource accredited by IBCCES,”

noted Valente. “We attained this certification because creating autism-friendly spaces is important and ties into the sensory needs required for diverse play spaces. This also ties into the heat dissipation conversation because the environmental temperature is a strong sensory experience.”

Life Floor CEO **Jonathan Keller** is also chair of NSF 50 Task Group on Safety Surfacing. He has stated: “The biggest thing we’ve been trying to do is to get the aquatics industry to be in line with the dry play industry. Specifically, there are so many pool codes that state surfaces should be slip-resistant, but they don’t reference specific standards. Up until this point, there wasn’t a standard that codes could point to and reference in their code. Now, this allows everyone to use the same criteria and empowers health departments to point to a specific set of resources to guide their work. Aquatics now have products that are



certified and meet rigorous criteria which in turn benefit the end user.”

Also, further safety aspects include slip resistance even when wet and impact attenuation which absorbs falls, reducing injury risks. Impermeable and hygienic, Life Floor surfaces resist water absorption and bacterial growth, simplifying maintenance.

The company also emphasizes that the surfaces are UV and chemical resistant, maintaining performance and color integrity even in harsh environmental conditions.

In addition to the tiles being safer, they also are more fun and imaginative.

As testimony to Life Floor’s performance, success has already been found in extremely hot climates. Texas municipality complexes have installed Life

Floor to eliminate guest complaints about burning-hot pool decks. Likewise, **Atlantis the Palm Dubai** has installed Life Floor for surfaces in direct sunlight, preventing burns in one of the hottest climates on Earth.

Baynum Solutions is an authorized partner in installing Life Floor.

“We’ve worked with major parks and aquatic facilities across the country to install Life Floor in environments where guest safety is paramount,” said **Jacob Round**, sales representative, Baynum Amusement Solutions. “Whether it’s in Texas communities, where summer temperatures make walking barefoot a challenge or in high-profile destinations, we’ve seen the difference this product makes. It’s more than just a surface — it’s a game-changer in aquatic safety.”

“We choose our partners based on their commitment to our core values and brand tenets of safety, design and accessibility,” Valente told *Amusement Today*. “Because of that fact, we enthusiastically partner with Baynum and champion their expertise and high-quality craftsmanship. Our mission is to make all aquatic spaces safe and beautiful for all people, and Baynum aligns completely with that mission.”



Heat dissipation and slip resistance are two safety factors of Life Floor. In addition to being cooler, the cushioned surface makes for a softer experience. COURTESY BAYNUM SOLUTIONS

VLocker recycles used lockers for missions, shelters to aid homeless

AT: Pam Sherborne
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WILMINGTON, Del. — The old adage of “out of the mouth of babes” rings true many times, but for one industry company, the ring is very simple. The company, **VLocker**, a global supplier of electronic lockers, listened to the child and is now giving back to a vulnerable group in society, giving them some security where there is very little.

VLocker has been facilitating the installation of refurbished lockers, and even sometimes new ones, to missions and homeless shelters. And the response has been overwhelming.

“These lockers offer a safe and secure place for personal items, documents and belongings, allowing individuals to attend doctor appointments, job interviews or simply enjoy a coffee without the burden of carrying everything they own,” said **Steven Wooley**, VLocker COO. “This initiative aims to restore dignity and provide opportunities for those less fortunate.”

Just lately VLocker facilitated the installation of refurbished lockers from **Sky Zone**, Greenfield, Wisconsin, to **Metropolitan Ministries** in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Metropolitan Ministries' CEO **Bill Rush** said that although not all were functioning at the time when *AT* reached out, he was very happy to have them.

“VLocker's donation has made a tremendous



VLocker recently helped facilitate the relocation of lockers to the Wichita Falls Faith Mission, Wichita Falls, Texas, (above) which had come from The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Indiana. The company also relocated lockers from Sky Zone, Greenfield, Wisconsin, to Metropolitan Ministries in Chattanooga, Tennessee (below). COURTESY VLOCKER

impact on our guests,” Rush said. “First, it has reduced the barrier to secure documentation such as food stamps, identifications, employment applications, etc. Secondly, it has provided them with a sense of belonging. Having an address is empowering to people who are unhoused.

“Finally, it has provided MetMin with the ability to serve our guests with dignity, respect, and hope,” Rush said.

VLocker also just recently helped facilitate lockers to go to the **Wichita Falls Faith Mission**, Wichita Falls, Texas.

The lockers came from **The Children's Museum** of Indianapolis, Indiana. VLocker paid for the removal and the museum donated 260 to the Falls Faith Mission.



RAS delivered the lockers to Faith Mission to be used at two of the facilities in Wichita Falls.

Wooley said Faith Mission also has been very happy to have them.

Wooley said VLocker is only the portal to help connect locations with old and refurbished lockers to people who can give them a new home. Wooley said they

pick them up and remove them, then ship them. Shipping is normally paid for by shelters, missions and donations by local charities and/or governments.

But getting back to that old adage, “out of the mouth of babes,” is the backstory on how this began.

Wooley said the company's commitment to supporting the homeless community is deeply personal and rooted in a journey that began with his own family.

“As a parent of 11-year-old twins born prematurely at 28 weeks, I have faced numerous challenges, particularly with my daughter **Savanna**, who has cerebral palsy,” Wooley said. “Our quest to provide her with the best care has taken us across the country, attending various camps, therapy sessions and intensive care programs.

“In 2019, we traveled

to Austin, Texas, for a two-week intensive therapy program,” he continued.

“During our stay, we frequently passed a tent camp near downtown Austin, which sparked many questions and conversations with Savanna, then just five years old. She was deeply curious and concerned about how families and children could live in such conditions. Her empathy and desire to help were evident even at that young age.”

His family's first initiative was a fundraiser in partnership with **Avon** and a local embroidery shop. The fundraiser was to raise funds to purchase Avon's Skin So Soft bug spray to donate to the local homeless community. In just three months, they had raised enough funds to buy over 500 bottles of bug spray.

That addressed his daughter's first concern about people living outdoors.

“Over the years, our family and community have continued to find ways to give back,” Wooley said. “A pivotal moment came when we had a surplus of old lockers at one of our locations. Unsure of what to do with them, I mentioned it at dinner one night. Savanna, with her characteristic insight, suggested, ‘Daddy, can the homeless use them?’

“This simple yet profound question led to the creation of VLocker's global initiative to provide lockers to the homeless,” Wooley said.

VLocker has worked with companies donating lockers around the world. In addition, the company collaborates with a group in Australia to provide “bed in a bag” solutions, bed rolls that double as backpacks. These innovative products help maintain a dignified appearance while improving the quality of life for many.

The initiatives by VLocker are not likely to stop anytime soon.

•vlocker.com



Metropolitan Ministries, Chattanooga, Tennessee, has been very happy with the refurbished lockers. Guests are able to use them for documentation, food stamps and simply to have an address. COURTESY METROPOLITAN MINISTRIES

NEAAPA hosts successful education conference, annual meeting

MYSTIC, Conn. — Over 140 industry professionals from across the **Northeast's Entertainment Association** (NEAAPA) region and beyond gathered to learn, network and celebrate distinguished contributors to the attractions industry at the 112th Anniversary Education Conference & Annual Meeting, held at the **Hilton Mystic Hotel** in Mystic, Connecticut, on March 3 - 5, 2025.

NEAAPA represents the attractions industry across Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont, including the manufacturers and suppliers that support the sector. This year's multi-day event was a dynamic forum for education, collaboration and recognition.

The event kicked off with a meet-up of Family Entertainment Center (FEC) members, focusing on points-of-sale systems. **Leinad Borman** of **Semnox Solutions** and **Dorothy Lewis** of **Xpressposts Marketing** led the session, showcasing new features and services available across various platforms.

Following this, a crucial safety and security session — Managing and De-Escalating Aggressive Behavior — was led by **Casey Ford** of **Canobie Lake Park**, providing valuable insights on fostering positive interactions between guests and employees.

Attendees later enjoyed a private reception at **Mystic Aquarium's** Main Gallery, home to a variety of marine life, including sand tiger sharks, green sea turtles and comb jellies. **Suzette Tibus**, CEO of Mystic Aquarium, welcomed the attendees before they concluded the evening with dinner at the hotel.

Tuesday, March 4, began with an education session by **Kevin McNulty** of **NetWeave Social** — Rise of the Machines: AI is Here... Now What? — which explored the integration of artificial intelligence into digital



Kevin Naughton of Naughton Insurance (above left) and Steve Lipkin formerly of NANCO/Nancy Sales (above right) were inducted into the NEAAPA Hall of Fame during the annual Education Conference & Annual Meeting. NEAAPA President Chris Nicoli looked on as Secretary Ed Hodgdon gave remarks during the business meeting (below). COURTESY NEAAPA

platforms in the attractions industry. This was followed by the NEAAPA Roundtables, covering topics from human resources and training to security and food and beverage operations.

During the NEAAPA Board of Directors meeting, **Ed Hodgdon** was re-elected secretary for the 15th time. Later sessions included Effective Onboarding and Retention, led by **Kevin Joly** of the **Employer's Association of the North East (EANE)** and Learning from Z to A: Rethinking Training for Our Newest Generation which was presented by **Laura McNerney** of **Leadership Learning Group** and offered fresh insights on adapting training methods to younger employees.

The NEAAPA Vendor Showcase followed, highlighting event sponsors introducing their latest products and services. Attendees then enjoyed a Broadway-themed reception and dinner, complete with a showbill-style program, designed by **RWS Global**.

The annual business meeting was chaired by outgoing NEAAPA President **Chris Nicoli** of **Canobie Lake Park**, who expressed gratitude to the board and his employer for their support. The President's Award was presented to **Kenzie Goode** of **Canobie Lake Park** for her exceptional contributions to NEAAPA and her work on the annual meeting.



Twelve new members and 22 milestone members were recognized, including **Six Flags New England** (85 years) and **Philadelphia Toboggan Company** (95 years). An ad-hoc committee's updates to the Association's By-Laws and Articles of Organization were approved unanimously.

Newly elected officers were announced during the meeting and included President **Erik Beard** (**International Ride Training**), 1st Vice President **Ron Patalano** (**Roger Williams Park Zoo & Carousel Village**), 2nd Vice President **Melissa Plane** (**CLM Risk Management**) and Treasurer **Charlene Conway** (**Carousel Family Fun Center**).

Board members who were re-elected for three-year terms include **Tom Brady** (**Stag Hollow Mining**), **Cindy Brewer-Lavoie** (**Southwick's Zoo**), **Cory Cormier** (**Funtown Splashtown U.S.A.**), **Steve Gioe** (**Level99**) and **Sandra Manougian** (**Fun World**). **Anthony Berni III** (**Canobie Lake Park**) and **Melissa**

Bamford (**Baynum Solutions**) were elected to fill shorter-term roles.

New NEAAPA President **Erik Beard** turned the stage over to Awards Committee Chair **John Guertin** for the evening's awards presentation.

Award winners that evening:

- Alan E. Ramsay Safety Award: **Steve Vourderis** (**Deno's Wonder Wheel Park**) for maintaining a safe and exceptional experience in **Coney Island**.

- Paragon Award for Marketing Excellence: **Story Land** for its innovative 70th season promotions and the introduction of a new Halloween event.

- Meritorious Service Award: **Tom Tessitore** for his 14 years of dedicated board service.

The event concluded with the prestigious Hall of Fame inductions, welcoming **Steve Lipkin** (formerly of **NANCO/Nancy Sales**) and **Kevin Naughton** (**Naughton Insurance**). Both are past presidents of NEAAPA and join their fathers in the Hall

of Fame, bringing the total number of inductees to 52.

Additionally, the 50/50 raffle raised over \$2,000 for the Pinnacle Scholarship Fund, with the winner generously donating their portion back to the fund.

There were also two second-chance prizes, provided by **RWS Global**, which included a show poster of "The Lion King" signed by the Broadway cast, copies of Playbills and other exclusive items.

The event would not have been possible without the support of NEAAPA's sponsors. Providing support for this event came from:

- Gold Sponsors: **Dip-pin' Dots**, **Mini Melts**, **Naughton Insurance**, **Rhode Island Novelty**, **RWS Global**, **SB Value** and **VLocker**

- Annual Meeting Dinner Sponsors: **Canobie Lake Park** and **International Ride Training**

- Annual Meeting Reception Sponsors: *Amusement Today*, **Great Coasters International** and **Premier Rides**

- Education Session Sponsors: **Haas & Wilkerson Insurance** and **MV Rides**

- Afternoon Break Sponsors: **Carousel Family Fun Center**, **Funtown Splashtown U.S.A.**, and **Robbi Promotion Advertising**

- Morning Break and Registration Sponsors: **CTM Media Group** and **Santa's Village**

- Event Badge Sponsors: **North American Amusement**

- Non-Alcoholic Beverages provided by **Coca-Cola Northeast**

NEAAPA's upcoming events:

- Spring Leadership Seminar: May 19, 2025

- Summer Meeting and Golf Tournament: July 28-29, 2025, at **Palace Playland Amusement Park** in Old Orchard Beach, Maine and **Funtown Splashtown USA** in Saco, Maine

- Tom Morrow Social and IAAPA Dinner: November 19, 2025, during the **IAAPA Expo** in Orlando, Florida.

• neaapa.com

After turning for 125 years, things continue to look up at Eli Bridge

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

JACKSONVILLE, Ill. — The framework of a Ferris wheel stands outside a commercial building here, serving as a stately reminder of the unique product produced behind the facility's walls for more than 100 years.

Eli Bridge Co. has been constructing Ferris wheels at 800 Case Ave. since 1919, with the ride on display — Big Eli No.1 — honoring the memory of company founder **William E. Sullivan**.

The 45-foot attraction made its debut on May 23, 1900, in the city's community park before hitting the road and running at numerous county and state fairs. Sullivan purchased the ride back after its tour so he could build his next wheel. Big Eli No. 1 went back on the road before being repurchased by Eli Bridge Co. and moved to the Jacksonville factory in 1937 as a memorial to Sullivan.

A renowned bridge builder, Sullivan's interest in Ferris wheels was sparked by a visit to the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where he rode **George W. Ferris Jr.**'s mammoth "Ferris Wheel."

This year, Eli Bridge Co. marks another milestone as the company is celebrating its 125th anniversary.

Still in the family

Another remarkable fact is that the Sullivan family has remained at the helm of the business throughout its history. **Patty A. Sullivan**

serves as current president and chief executive officer, a post she has held since 1996. She grew up at the Jacksonville facility and worked in accounting before serving as executive vice president from 1989 to 1991.

"I'm extremely glad we made it to our 125th," she told *Amusement Today*.

Yet, she admits moving into its second century of building rides didn't come without some huge challenges.

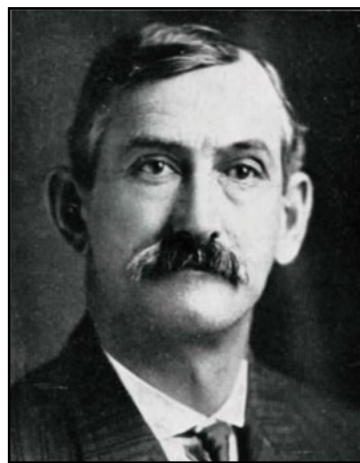
"When I think back to 1996, the company was in bankruptcy, and it was quite a long, hard road coming back from that," she reflected. "I'm so fortunate that the bank was willing to work with us and that we had such loyal, faithful employees. They (employees) are the reason we survived, and they are like family to me."

The company executive remains a familiar face at industry trade shows and events, keeping not only the product line but also the family legacy in front of existing and potential customers.

Started in a small facility

There is a storied history behind Eli Bridge Co., which became an icon in the amusement industry long before others entered the field.

Following the success of his first wheel in 1900, William E. Sullivan turned his attention to creating wheels with interchangeable parts, according to a company history published in 2000. His new designs were



Eli Bridge Co. was founded by William E. Sullivan (above). James E. States Shows' Big Eli wheel is shown on the midway in Dunkirk, New York, in 1927 (right). COURTESY ELI BRIDGE CO., STRATES SHOWS

lighter, easier to erect and had greater appeal to both park and carnival operators.

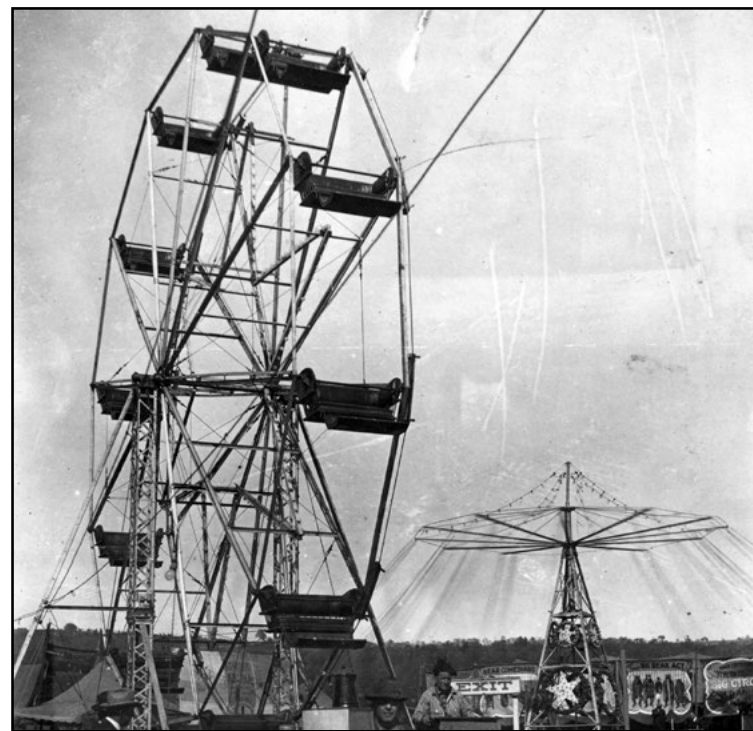
Sullivan's first factory was a mere 30 by 60 feet — including office space — in Roodhouse, Illinois, about 20 miles from Jacksonville. By 1916, according to the history, space to expand in Roodhouse was exhausted, and plans were made to move to Jacksonville.

Today the company's manufacturing facility is more than 66,000 square feet, including a 55-foot-tall assembly room where wheels can be erected and tested. The building also has a two-story office.

Big wheels keep on turning

Since its inception, Eli Bridge has built more than 1,400 Ferris wheels.

"Ground models are up to 1,215," noted General Manager **Tim Noland**, who has been with the company for 18 years. "And that's just what we are tracking. There were others in the company history that were not tracked because



they were one-of-a-kind."

Among the one-offs noted was an 84-foot gondola wheel built in 1909 for an exposition in Seattle, Washington.

Prior to the Great Depression of 1929, Eli Bridge Co. showcased four sizes of wheels in its west yard. They ranged from the Baby Eli No. 6 — smallest at 16 feet 9 inches tall — to the No. 16, a 55-foot-tall, 16-seat ride called the Aristocrat. The Baby Eli was eventually replaced by a modernized version named Little Eli Wheel, the first of which was sold in 1989. The company produces the Little Eli, No. 5 and No. 16 wheels to this day.

The greatest number of Big Eli wheels produced in one year was 47 in 1950, the history states.

Next big attraction

As in many businesses, innovation is paramount to survival, and Eli Bridge seized a remarkable opportunity when it purchased the rights to build a precursor of the Scrambler family thrill ride in 1950.

A Georgia man had pat-

ented the original design, and Eli's engineers reconfigured the attraction to make it more operator and set-up friendly. The result was a resounding success after the first new Scrambler shipped from the plant in 1955.

"We built 17 in 1955 alone," Noland said while sifting through company records related to the ride. "Another 17 were built the following year with 22 sold in '57 and 24 in '58."

The ride has found a home in many stationary parks as well as with carnivals as its double-rotation offers a thrill like no other.

Lee A. Sullivan, Jr., (1925-2016), who became the third generation of the family to lead the company in 1966, is credited for making Eli wheels fully trailer-mounted. The first result was the company's HY-5, a folding No. 5 wheel that is erected and operated on its trailer. The first HY-5 was purchased in 1968 by the former **Pugh Amusement Co.** of Lancaster, Ohio.

According to Noland, around 90 HY-5 wheels have been sold through the years.

The larger Aristocrat wheel became trailer-mounted in 1989 and called the Eagle 16, with the first being sold that year to **Rosedale Attractions**, Baltimore, Maryland.

The 60-foot wheel went through another transition in 1992 to become the Double

By the numbers and what's in the name

Eli Bridge Co. is best known for providing Ferris wheels and Scramblers to amusement park and carnival operators. A quick glance at the production numbers of those two rides:

Big Eli Wheels: more than 1,400 built. Largest production year: 1950 with 47 sold with one currently on the production schedule.

Scramblers: 453 and counting. Largest production year: 1958 with 24 sold. A trailer-mounted version is currently being built for a customer.

Why Eli? The company's history and even newsletters dating back to 1916 speculate that the company name perhaps came from an old saying: "Get there, Eli," which meant to accomplish something in a hurry. Another speculation is that inventor Eli Whitney was an icon to W.E. Sullivan because of his designing cotton gins with interchangeable parts. Regardless, the company name stuck and was even trademarked for its wheels.



Eli Bridge Co. manufacturing facility is in Jacksonville, Illinois. The company has produced more than 1,400 Ferris wheels during its 125-year history. COURTESY ELI BRIDGE CO.



Eli Bridge Co. President Patty Sullivan and General Manager Tim Noland at the company's booth during the International Independent Showmen's Foundation Super Trade Show & Extravaganza. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

►BRIDGE

Continued from page 54

Eagle Wheel with facing seats that could be loaded two at a time.

Eagle series wheels now number 39, Noland said.

During Lee A. Sullivan, Jr.'s, era, the company also introduced a series of trailer-mounted kiddie rides, including the Little Wheel, Little Scrambler and the Little Swing ride.

In 1998 the company introduced a heavily-themed kiddie ride, Construction Zone, with a capacity of 48 children. The ride features dump trucks on a circular track with lots of artwork for eye appeal.

SpiderMania, a relatively tame family swing ride with a motion similar to a Scrambler, is the latest attraction from the company, making its debut in 2003. The ride seats up to 48 riders. The first unit was sold in 2003 to **Ray Cammack Shows**, Laveen, Arizona.

Lagoon Amusement Park, Farmington, Utah, has a version themed as Dragonfly.

Tried and true

There is no doubt that Big Eli Wheels and Scramblers have survived the test of time as many of the earliest models are still in operation around the world.

"No. 1 is sitting in front of our shop, while No. 17 is running in the city's community park," Noland emphasized. "The Rotary Club still runs the wheel (No. 17) during summer events."

The Rotary Club wheel was built in 1907 and traveled the fair circuit for many years, returning to the Jacksonville factory in the



Pictured is the cover from a 1948 edition of *Big Eli News*. COURTESY ELI BRIDGE CO.

late 1950s for updates before being sold to the organization. Today, the city owns the ride with the Rotary Club maintaining and operating the attraction.

Scramblers, too, became trailer-mounted starting in 1978. While those early models were on 40-foot trailers, the company now produces the ride as a 28-foot version so it can be moved over the road as a double load.

"We still build park models," Noland added. "A park model was sold in 2023 to an operator in Nebraska. That was Scrambler number 453. We've also had older Scramblers brought in to be trailer-mounted. That actually happens a lot."

The company has also developed a single-frequency drive system using two five horsepower motors, which is incorporated in the new trailer-mounted Scramblers. Park models can also be converted to the modernized drive, doing away with the traditional long drive train.

"There is less maintenance, and the ride runs quieter, too," Noland said of the update.

Sullivan family legacy at Eli Bridge Co.

It's unusual for a company to reach its 125th anniversary and even more remarkable for it to remain in the same family all those years.

Here is an overview of the Sullivan family legacy at Eli Bridge Co., according to the company's centennial history.

William E. Sullivan (1861-1932): Founder and president.

Julia Crayne Sullivan (1864-1962): Wife of William E. Sullivan, served as director for 53 years, vice president for 36 years.

Lee A. Sullivan, Sr. (1889-1968): Son of William E. and Julia Sullivan. Factory superintendent and secretary-treasurer after the company moved to Jacksonville. Became general manager in 1925 and president in 1932.

Leta Sullivan (1894-1976): Daughter of William E. and Julia Sullivan. Worked for the company for 63 years, including secretary-treasurer.

Olive Sullivan (1892-1983): Daughter of William E. and Julia Sullivan. Worked as sales representative and collection agent.

Lee A. Sullivan, Jr. (1925-2016): president, chairman of the board.

Katherine Sullivan: Daughter of Lee Sullivan, Sr. Served as a company director and in the accounting department.

William E. (Liam) Sullivan (1923-1998): Son of Lee Sullivan, Sr. Served as sales representative, company director. Known as "Uncle Bud" to the family. Television and motion picture actor.

William A. Sullivan (1951): Son of Lee Sullivan, Jr. Served as parts manager, sales assistant, sales manager, vice president for operations, general manager and president.

Patty A. Sullivan (1953): Current president and CEO. Also worked in accounting and as executive vice

As for Big Eli wheels, Noland pointed out that original No. 5 wheels are structurally pretty much the same now as they were 100 years ago. The difference is that new wheels are all electric rim-driven instead of cable-driven. With the introduction of HY-5II wheels, the spoke configuration went from angle iron to tubular steel.

"We've also improved our touchscreen interface on wheels to make it more operationally friendly," he said. "It will help prevent too many seats being loaded on one side and getting the ride out of balance and makes it a lot easier to train new operators as most people are used to touchscreens."

The interface also allows for remote access for troubleshooting.

No slowdown

The company of 18 employees remains busy, according to the general manager.

"We have a new 28-foot trailer-mounted Scrambler ready to deliver to a customer and have another one in production," he pointed out. "We can do three or four new rides a year, while keeping up with our capacity for parts."

Sportswear and equipment retailer **Scheels**, based in Fargo, North Dakota, has been a huge customer of Eli Bridge since 2004. With 30 stores in 16 states, the brick-and-mortar business has put 16 Big Eli Wheels in existing locations and has another wheel scheduled to be delivered next year.

"They started with our No. 5 and are now purchasing our No. 16 wheels as the

stores have gotten bigger," Noland explained.

As for Eli Bridge marking its 125th anniversary, he said, "It's hard to wrap your head around 125 years for a company. For me, it's gratifying to see kids enjoying our rides. Seeing that makes it full circle on all the work we have done here in our shop."

Patty Sullivan echoed those comments, saying, "I travel to a lot of parks and carnivals, and it's always exciting to see kids and families on our rides. People still get a thrill going over the top on our Ferris wheels as our seats are not enclosed. It's like, wow, we're out here flying in the air. And it's fun to see kids in line to ride our Scrambler — knowing our rides are still providing thrills after all these years."

•elibridge.com



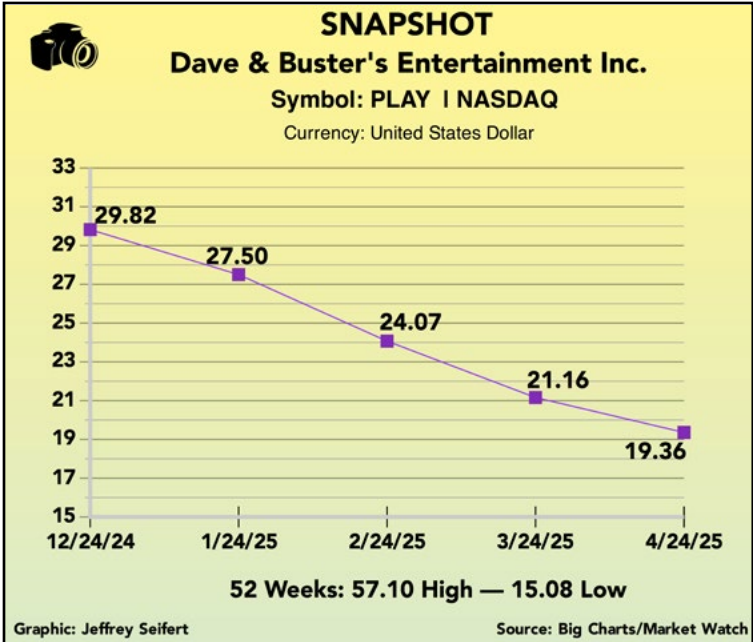
NAME operates this ground-mount Scrambler on one of its units (above left). Dragonfly is a themed Eli Bridge Co. SpiderMania swing ride at Lagoon Amusement Park in Farmington, Utah (above right). COURTESY NAME, LAGOON

MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 4/23/25	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	127.00	200.96	115.66
Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	34.47	45.31	31.44
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	19.48	57.10	15.08
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	49.29	54.25	39.87
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	7.63	13.25	3.62
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	2193.00	3530.00	1972.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.81	1.04	0.39
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	17.00	22.45	14.80
Lucky Strike Entertainment Corp	LUCK	NYSE	8.88	14.92	7.70
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	30.77	47.26	25.30
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.375	0.48	0.35
Royal Carribean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	207.50	277.08	130.08
Six Flags Entertainment Corp.	FUN	NYSE	35.46	58.70	28.02
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	635.40	746.00	586.00
United Parks & Resorts Inc.	PRKS	NYSE	44.26	60.83	37.68
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	87.29	118.63	80.10
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	8.33	12.70	6.64
SUPPLIERS/OTHERS					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	93.70	205.50	82.00
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1222.00	1852.00	1031.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	6.60	16.89	5.42
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 4/21/25	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.614	(\$0.433)
Midwest	\$3.475	(\$0.460)
Gulf Coast	\$3.195	(\$0.512)
Mountain	\$3.477	(\$0.406)
West Coast	\$3.813	(\$0.341)
California	\$4.755	(\$0.489)

CURRENCY	
On 4/24/25 \$1 USD =	
0.8793	EURO
0.7523	GBP (British Pound)
142.39	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8251	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.5645	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3848	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Vekoma expands with Orlando headquarters

ORLANDO — **Vekoma Rides** opened its new and expanded office in Orlando, Florida. This strategic move highlights the company’s commitment to enhancing its presence and delivering exceptional products and services to its growing customer base in the region. The company selected Orlando as the site of its new office, which will serve as its official headquarters for operations across the Americas. The new location is expected to create new jobs over the next 18 months.

“Our new and expanded office is a result of our growth in the market and a testament to our solid plans to increase our presence and our support to local customers in the Americas market,” said **Ricardo Etges**, vice president of sales and marketing, Americas. “We needed more space to accommodate our increasing number of team members, as well as to create room for further growth of the local group.”

Since 2020, the company has been significantly growing its presence in the U.S. market, both by expanding its local team with different disciplines, as well as developing and installing new groundbreaking rides throughout the region.

“Vekoma’s growth in Orlando reflects both their commitment to the industry and the strength of the relationships built through IAAPA,” commented **Jakob Wahl**, CEO of **IAAPA**. “From a one-person team to a growing regional headquarters, they’ve shown what’s possible when innovation and collaboration come together.”

Merlin partners with RWS Global

POOLE, U.K. — **Merlin Entertainments** announce the appointment of **RWS Global** as its preferred entertainment production partner for six global destinations. The partnership will complement Merlin’s core in-house entertainment offering.

RWS Global is developing more than 100 experiences at these Merlin Resorts in 2025 alone, building upon beloved shows with exciting new entertainment offerings for all to enjoy and experience. Guests can expect new, innovative productions and immersive storytelling, all designed to bring even more core memories to the guest experience.

“Merlin is committed to providing world-class entertainment for every guest,” stated **Kathy Bagshaw**, global director of events and entertainment operations at Merlin Entertainments. “Through this exciting new partnership, we have the opportunity to continue delivering first-rate entertainment that guests have come to know and love at our resorts and elevate it to an even higher level.”

As RWS Global and Merlin expand entertainment offerings at resorts around the globe, the two businesses will work to bring together the best people from around the world to bring immersive experiences to life.

“We are delighted to join Merlin in building the future of in-park experiences, ushering in a new era of entertainment, and elevating the guest experience at its attractions around the world,” added **Ryan Stana**, chairman and CEO at RWS Global.

Dolphin Company files for Chapter 11

CANCUN, Mexico — **The Dolphin Company** announced that it has voluntarily filed Chapter 11 cases in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware. This strategic move aims to address short-term liquidity needs and resolve challenges regarding the company's capital structure, while ensuring the continuation of its operations and placing a strong emphasis on animal safety and wellbeing.

"This restructuring will best enable the company to restructure under Chapter 11, a well-recognized court-approved process, while improving the welfare of our animals, ensuring a seamless experience for employees, and delivering an enhanced guest experience," said Independent Director **Steven Strom**.

Management has expressed its intent to collaborate closely with authorities to address ongoing requests and investigations.

ON THE MOVE

The **Meow Wolf** CEO for more than three years, **Jose Tolosa**, stepped down at the end of April 2025. He will be replaced in the interim by board member and former **Walt Disney Company** executive **Rebecca Campbell**. An external search is underway for the next Meow Wolf leader.

"I'm incredibly proud of what we've built together, and I'm confident the company is poised for an even more magical and mind-expanding future," Tolosa said in a statement. "With a strong foundation now in place, I'm proud to pass the baton and excited for what's next — for Meow Wolf and for me."

Campbell joined the board in January 2024 after more than two decades of experience at Walt Disney, where she held roles like chair of international content and operations and president of **Disneyland Resort** and the company's **ABC**-owned television stations.

"Meow Wolf's bold creativity and community spirit are what drew me in from the start," stated Campbell. "I'm honored to support the team through this transition and excited to help build on the incredible foundation already in place."

H. Betti Industries Inc. announced the appointment of **Todd Cravens** as president of **Betson Gaming**. In this expanded leadership role, Cravens will oversee all aspects of its growing gaming division, with a focus on expanding market share, building the product portfolio and accelerating growth in new and existing markets.

"Todd has quickly proven himself to be a dynamic and transformative leader and a key member of our senior Leadership team," said **Bob Geschine**, president of H. Betti Industries. "In a short period of time, he's elevated not just our gaming business but added value across the entire enterprise. We're excited for what's ahead as he takes this next step."

Since joining the company in January 2025 as senior vice president of gaming, Cravens has made an immediate and measurable impact across the business. His leadership has helped sharpen Betson's gaming strategy, align the team and focus on new revenue streams, while also bringing operational discipline and strategic vision to other areas of the company.

Betson Enterprises announced the appointment of **Stuart Wood** as the new director of export consultant for the

Middle East, U.K. and EU regions.

"In this new role, Stuart will be responsible for driving international sales of the **Raw Thrills** product line through established and emerging distribution channels. He will also play a key role in growing Betson's global footprint and strengthening relationships with key partners across the region," stated Geschine.

Wood brings more than 28 years of experience in the FEC sector, most recently serving as vice president of arcades at **HB Leisure**. Prior to that, he held the position of international sales manager at **Bandai Namco**, following his early career as a sales executive at **Crown Direct**.

"I am thrilled to be working with Betson at such an exciting time," said Wood. "I look forward to leveraging my experience and network to help expand the company's international presence and contribute to Raw Thrills' ongoing success in global markets."

Family Entertainment Group (FEG) announced the appointment of **Jim Viola** as chief people officer, reporting directly to CEO **Rex Jackson**. In this role, Viola will lead the company's human resources strategy with a focus on fostering a high-performance, purpose-driven culture that aligns with FEG's commitment to delivering exceptional guest experiences.

"I'm excited to join Family Entertainment Group and work alongside Rex and the leadership team," said Viola. "I believe great teams create great guest experiences — and FEG's mission resonates deeply with me. I look forward to shaping a culture where people thrive and the business continues to grow."

Viola is a seasoned HR executive with a strong track record of leading transformation and cultivating service-driven cultures within complex organizations.

Bandai Namco Amusement Europe appointed **Anna Gavrylova** to its sales team. Gavrylova will play a key role in expanding Bandai Namco's presence in the Latin American and CIS regions.

Based out of the London head office, Gavrylova joins the company in an official capacity, having spent the last 18 months working as a Bandai Namco-exclusive consultant.

She brings a wealth of industry experience in project businesses and a strong international background to the company's business development team.



Tolosa



Campbell



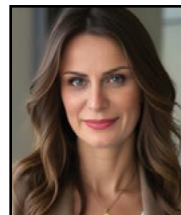
Wood



Viola



Cravens



Gavrylova

OBITUARIES

Rehoboth Beach Funland's founder Fasnacht passes away at the age of 96

DELHI TOWNSHIP, Pa. — Allen R. Fasnacht, 96, of Hershey, died peacefully surrounded by family on Sunday, March 23. He was born November 10, 1928, in Derry Township to the late Allen M. and Esther Snavelly Fasnacht. Fasnacht was a graduate of Hershey High School, Hershey Junior College and Penn State University.



Fasnacht

In 1949 he married the former Jean Walmer whom he met in kindergarten. They enjoyed 64 wonderful years together. In 1956 after a job in accounting, Al and Jean, along with his parents and brother Don and wife Dee purchased Willow Mill Park in Mechanicsburg.

In 1962, the family purchased the former Sports Center on the boardwalk in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, renaming it Funland, where Fasnacht worked for the rest of his life. It brought

him great joy as he worked with hundreds of employees and many family members, teaching strong ethics of fairness, hard work and the Golden Rule. For over 60 years, Al was a cornerstone of Funland — not just through his dedication to the park, but through the countless meaningful and lasting connections he built with guests, employees and the community. Fasnacht had a truly profound impact on so many people, and he did it quietly, with humility and kindness.

A devout man of faith, he was deeply involved in the life of Hershey First United Methodist Church where he and Jean raised their family and where he served as Sunday School leader, choir member and finance committee member.

He was also a longtime member of Hershey Rotary Club, the Delaware Business Leaders Hall of Fame and the Pennsylvania Amusement Parks and Attractions Hall of Fame.

Mogen Holmen, formerly of Costa del Sol's Tivoli amusement park, passes

BENALMÁDENA, Spain — Mogen Holmen, who was director of the Tivoli amusement park in Benalmádena on the Costa del Sol of Spain for more than 30 years, died on April 2, 2025.

Holmen arrived in Benalmádena from his native Denmark at the age of 28. He was working in his home country when someone offered him the job of director of an amusement park in Spain. At first he turned it down, but the offer piqued his interest. The next day he accepted. He became the right-hand man of Tivoli's first owner, the Dane Ben Olsen. This was explained by Holmen himself in the documentary *Tivoli*.



Holmen

In the film, Holmen gives details of how he was

shocked, in the early years, by the fact that Spanish women dressed completely in black and that the shows held in the park during the years of the dictatorship had to be controlled. He also talks about his relationship with the other Tivoli employees: "We were like a big family," he said in the documentary.

"He was a comical man, ironic in the way he expressed himself and very affable, a person who respected everyone and who knew how to ask for things. We all liked him," recalled Juan Francisco Carmona, a former employee at Tivoli, told local publications.

Holmen joined Tivoli around 1975. After his retirement, Holmen did not completely disconnect. Former employees commented that Holmen has always been closely linked to Tivoli and has come to more than one of the rallies they had organized.

Focus *on the* HORIZON

Staying true guides Robbins

ORLANDO — “I grew up very close to Lake Compounce. It was a generational experience for our family,” shared Matt Robbins. “My grandparents went to Lake Compounce when they were young, as did my parents. Then I did. We always had fun together, and it made sense that I looked to the park for my first job.”

While still in high school, Robbins got a part-time role as a slide attendant in the water park. “I did that for two years and then became a lifeguard. Eventually, I worked my way up to assistant aquatics director.”

Like most twenty-somethings, Robbins used his time at the park to discover more about himself and a potential career path. “I spent seven years in aquatics. I loved the park and helping our guests, but I always felt I could do more in a different capacity. I found myself drawn to the park’s maintenance department.

“I’m a hands-on learner,” he continued. “When I approached the team, they gave me the opportunity to work on the park’s wooden coasters. I also shifted my education focus to learning the carpentry trade. I embraced my job and learned everything I could as I worked on the coasters and with the department. I also began to meet and learn from the manufacturers and suppliers when they came to the park.”

During the offseason of 2016, Robbins decided to expand his industry experience even further and accepted an opportunity as a show ambassador for the IAAPA Expo.

“That week was an eye-opener,” he said. “Even though I had worked for an amusement park for seven years, I didn’t really know how or where the rides, slides, supplies and everything in between came from. I learned a lot that week, made new connections and began to network. I met people from all over the world — each with different roles, each working in a different aspect of the industry, yet they were all united by a shared camaraderie and passion.”

Robbins applied what he learned at the Expo to his role at the park and returned as a Show Ambassador each November for four years. During his third rotation, he found a new opportunity.

“I had a connected relationship with Martin & Vleminckx (M&V) through Lake Compounce and my time as an ambassador. During the 2019 Expo they told me they were looking for a new assistant project manager to run the assembly and fabrication of two wooden coasters. It was the perfect next step for me, and I relocated to Orlando, Florida.”

Robbins made the shift from operator to supplier and focused on the new coasters, one of which was headed Down Under.

“Together with The Gravity Group, we built Leviathan, Australia’s first new wooden coaster in 35 years for Village Roadshow’s Sea World. During that time, I even lived in Australia. It was amazing.”

Construction of Leviathan took place during COVID, and Robbins found himself living halfway around the world during the global pandemic. Owing to the relationships he built as a show ambassador, he reconnected with two friends who lived in the country. “It helped me realize just how special this industry is and how supportive its people are with each other.”

Leviathan opened in December 2022, “This was the first project I worked on from start to finish. During the grand opening, I was excited to stand at the exit of the queue and listen to the guests. Seeing their smiles and hearing their reactions reinforced for me that I am meant to work in this industry.”

After that opening, Robbins returned to Orlando. In 2024, the company approached him with the opportunity to move into sales supporting ride accounts in North America.

“It was the right next step for me,” he said. “It brought together my experience with park maintenance, my knowledge and understanding of operational pain points

and the connections and relationships I have been building with current clients and potential ones!”

As he prepared to move into the sales role, he leaned into the advice Emily Popovich had given him when they first met. “She told me, ‘Always remember the people you are talking with are just people; their title is not important,’” Robbins said. “She said everyone works hard to create experiences for others so that they can have fun, and in that way, we all share a goal. I haven’t forgotten that, and I remind myself before every meeting that we’re having a conversation and discussing ways to create fun.”

As Robbins continues to make new connections and sell new rides and experiences, he also represents M&V at industry meetings and conferences including IAAPA, SeaTrade, AIMS, IRC and more.

“In addition to client meetings, I like to take time to meet students interested in careers in this industry, particularly aspiring engineers. When they ask for advice I tell

them, ‘Don’t be afraid to get your hands dirty.’ I encourage them to consider taking a summer job in the maintenance area of their local park. It will give them the opportunity to learn the lingo, understand how the rides work and the nuances that make them special.”

Robbins also reminds others that it is possible to stay true to yourself as you seek your right career path. “I really enjoyed working at Lake Compounce,” he said. “It was there that I discovered how much this industry excites me. I also trusted myself when I realized that aquatics was not the perfect fit. By exploring other areas within the park, and being willing to learn something new, my passion led to my profession. This industry offers so many opportunities, and there is no singular or ‘right’ way to enter it.

“I am energized by the smiles I see from guests when they are on the rides we work on and build,” Robbins finished. “I really can’t imagine doing anything else.”

—Susan Storey

Matt Robbins Martin & Vleminckx Orlando, Florida



SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Six Flags adds FLX Shade — page 65 / StarGuard Elite holds successful conference — page 68

Six Flags Great America enhances original B&M inverted coaster

AT: Tim Baldwin

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GURNEE, Ill. — In 1992, Six Flags Great America introduced a first of its kind. The amusement industry is always looking for innovative attractions. Some ideas come and go with limited success. There is no denying that the original Batman The Ride, the first inverted roller coaster to take riders through inversions while suspended below the track, sent shockwaves through the industry.

Bolliger & Mabillard (B&M), still a young company at the time, was making its mark. With a few stand-up coasters under its belt, B&M introduced the inverted coaster as its second genre in its portfolio. Since then, the Swiss company has manufactured 32 such rides, with other competitors following in its footsteps to capitalize on the idea. Batman The Ride caught so much attention globally, it was the sought-after ride for more than two decades. It was so groundbreaking, that it was the youngest recipient to be honored as an ACE Roller Coaster Landmark by American Coaster Enthusiasts in 2005, just 13 years into its career.

For 2025, the ride has received some noteworthy attention.

"What started as only a repaint quickly grew into a larger restoration project," said Park President John Krajnak. "As we refreshed the ride's colors, our team saw an opportunity to bring new life to the entire experi-



As guests approach the attraction, new enhancements to the theming make the 30-plus-year-old attraction look fresh. Many of the storytelling elements in the queue have been restored or upgraded. COURTESY SIX FLAGS

ence — restoring some original elements in the queue, platform and overall atmosphere. The idea came from so many people — our team members, passionate guests and longtime fans who love this ride. With so much enthusiasm behind it, we knew this was the perfect time to reinvest in such a ground-breaking attraction while it was already down for painting."

In addition to painting, much of the queue received aesthetic and thematic upgrades.

"We focused on restoring the original elements that guests remember from 1992 while also using new technology to take the experience even further," Krajnak told *Amusement Today*. "It's the best of both worlds — nostalgic but even better. Sounds, sights and special effects were not only brought back but enhanced, creating a fully immersive,

sensory experience. From synchronized lighting and fog to dynamic audio timed perfectly with the ride's movements, every detail was designed to stay true to the themed experience while making it more thrilling than ever."

In an age when theme parks are returning to the concept of rides being more immersive and telling stories, Six Flags is embracing the importance of that.

"This project was about more than just refreshing a ride — it was about enhancing the entire experience for everyone, from longtime enthusiasts to young guests riding for the first time in 2025," said Krajnak. "It's not just a roller coaster; it's a fully immersive journey from the moment you step into the queue to the final moments of the ride cycle. The queue itself helps tell the story, pulling guests deeper into the world before they



even board. Whether you've ridden it hundreds of times or are experiencing it for the first time, there's something to appreciate at every turn. It's an elevated experience that makes every ride feel special."

Rachel Kendziora, regional area manager, social media, agrees, finding the project to be exciting. "What excites me the most is that we're offering a brand-new ride experience to guests, without this being a completely new attraction," she said. "We've already received such positive feedback from guests who got to experience about 60% of the project's improvements in 2024. People are loving how immersive it is, and for those who've been riding since 1992, it really takes them back to those first days. Hearing that feedback and seeing how much guests are enjoying it is what makes



this project so special. As for the 'cool factor,' I love the synchronized fog and lights when the ride leaves the station. Not only do riders experience it, but even guests waiting in the queue and the ride operators get to be part of it, too."

Six Flags Great America opened for the 2025 season on April 18. When the park debuts its new coaster, Wrath of Rakshasa, later this spring, it will bring its coaster arsenal up to 16 rides, five of which are from B&M, tying the world record for most B&M coasters in one park.

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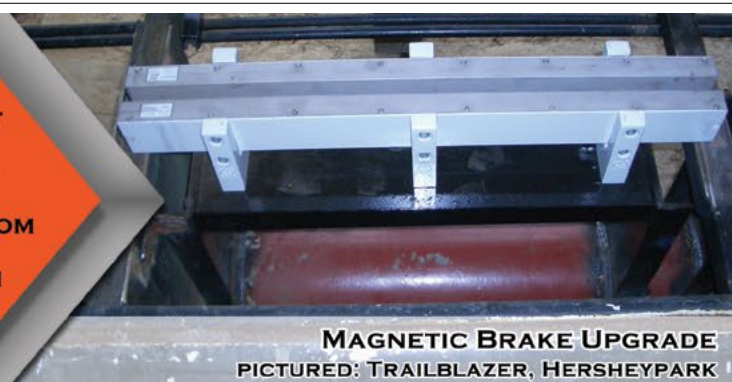
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The Nashville Zoo created a new and improved entryway into the park that has been landscaped. COURTESY NASHVILLE ZOO

Nashville Zoo continues to expand with new exhibits, parking offerings

AT: Pam Sherborne

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Nashville Zoo, located just six miles from Nashville, Tennessee's, vibrant downtown area, continues in growth in both size and offerings. It has seen plans come to fruition and continues to create its future.

A new area that will open this year is the Leopard Forest. An exact date for its opening has not been set as yet.

"The all-new Leopard Forest will be home to Amur leopards, Colobus monkeys, De Brazza's monkeys, Klipspringers and Rock hyraxes," said Leah Trice, the zoo's communication specialist. "It is located along the path to the existing giraffe habitat and will feature four separate habitats."

Along with the two types of monkeys, Klipspringers are small antelopes known for their agility and ability to jump between rocky outcrops. Rock hyraxes are rabbit-like mammals that resemble guinea pigs but are more closely related to elephants. These four species are native to Africa.

The Amur leopard is not native to Africa. It is native to the mountainous forests of Eastern Russia and Northern China. It is the most critically endangered leopard and one of the most threatened cat species in the world.

In other zoo news, Trice said over the last few months, "We have had a lot of babies born and saw the arrival of our new highland cow, Hamish, who has made a big splash."

Over the past year, the zoo has brought to fruition one of its biggest projects to date. That was its two-story parking garage. It added 1,800 more guest parking spaces to its inventory, which has certainly helped on peak days. The Nashville Zoo draws about one million guests each year.

"It has been a great addition to the zoo as it makes the park more accessible to our visitors," Trice said. "It was designed for guests to experience, much like an exhibit, before entering the zoo. It features covered parking, beautiful murals and a landscaped walkway with a waterfall and ramp that brings guests directly from the garage to the zoo's Entry Village. It has made parking and traffic flow easier during our busiest days."

Along with other exhibit openings, the Komodo Dragon continues to be popular. It opened in 2023. The habitat was built to house up to two adult males, three adult females and juvenile Komodo dragons.

It is located on the path to the Zoo's HCA Veterinary Healthcare Center and features inside and outside viewing areas. The large outdoor yard allows guests to see the giant lizards run for their treats during keeper talks. Zoo officials welcomed two Komodo hatchlings last year.

The zoo is currently in phase II of its ongoing Grow Wild initiative and will see the construction of a 40-acre African savanna and village, plus an education facility with large classrooms

and inspiration to learn about animal care and conservation.

Phase III will round out the African experience, with a leafy forest slated to house okapi, bongo antelopes, red river hogs and primates including mandrill, guenon and a family of gorillas.

The Nashville Zoo opened 27 years ago. In addition to the diverse animal community, guests can try out rideable features like the Soaring Eagle Zip Line, the Wild Animal Carousel and visit the 4D theater to catch interactive movies.

And there is still room to grow. The zoo encompasses nearly 200 acres, and less than half of the property is currently developed.

•nashvillezoo.org



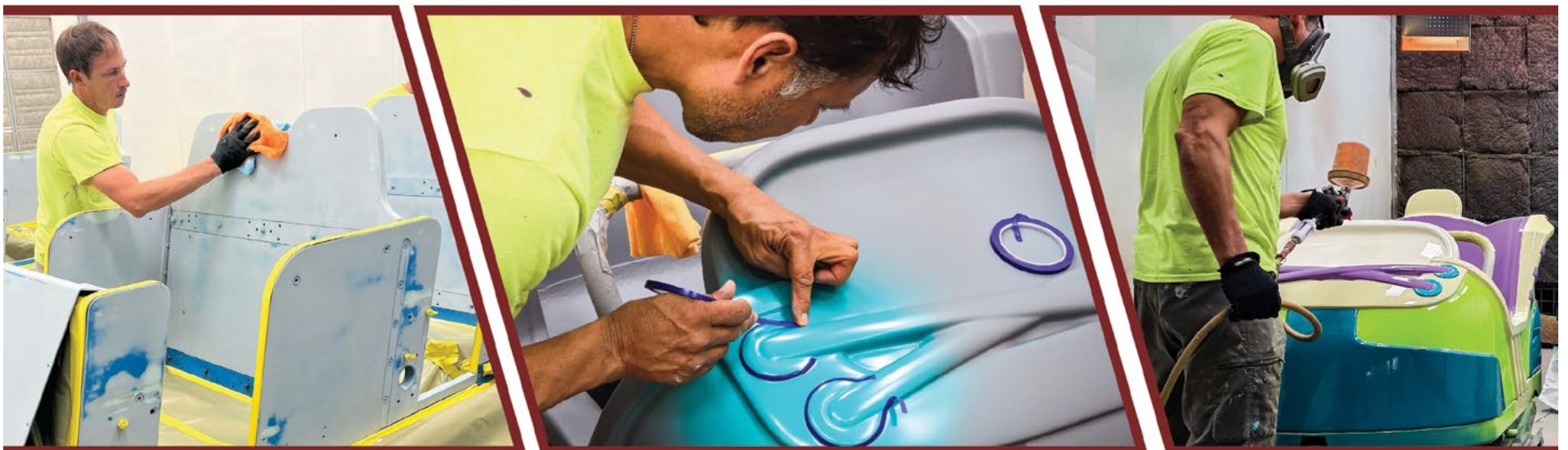
The new Komodo Dragon habitat at the Nashville Zoo includes indoor and outdoor viewing areas. COURTESY NASHVILLE ZOO



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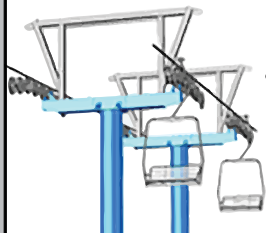
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ASTM working on standards for dry slides, playgrounds

W. CONSHOHOCKEN, Pa — **ASTM International's** amusement rides and devices committee (F24) invited all interested parties to join in developing a proposed standard covering dry slide systems. The committee is particularly interested in participation from designers and operators of both older and new slide systems.



ASTM member **William Bussone** stated that, while dry slides are an extremely old ride type, in the last decade many new types of slides have been introduced. These include large indoor dry snow tubing slides and drop or jump slides that land in an airbag or a similar impact attenuation device.

"Dry slides have become adventure attractions, whereas traditionally they were more of a typical carnival-style ride, such as burlap sack fun slides," said Bussone, managing engineer, **CBE Consultants**. "Different jurisdictions currently have a mishmash of internal rules about how to handle slides, so the regulatory landscape is confused and confusing."

According to Bussone, developing the proposed guide (WK93943) is an attempt to collect most slide types under a guide that provides consistent direction for how to approach design, manufacture and operation of a slide as an amusement ride.

In addition, ASTM International's sports equipment, playing surfaces and facilities committee (F08) is developing a proposed standard that will cover the specification, purchase, installation and maintenance of synthetic turf for playground surfacing.

"Synthetic turf has been used on athletic fields since the 1960s but in more recent years for playground surfacing as well," offered ASTM's **Jeff Mrakovich**. "Although there are no standards specifically for turf used on playgrounds, there are plenty of standard test methods in use on athletic fields."

Tests described in these athletic field standards are relevant for playgrounds as well. These tests included characterization of synthetic turf, including durability, flammability, presence of heavy metals or other possible toxic content and drainage capability.

•astm.org

Ohio State Fair receives funds for safety upgrades

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio State Representative **Ismail Mohamed** announced that the Ohio Controlling Board has awarded \$1,056,092.25 in state funding to the **Ohio Expositions Commission** to support improvements at the **Ohio State Fair and Expo Center**.

"The Ohio State Fair is a big part of our community's culture and economy," said Mohamed. "It brings families from all over Ohio together, and these improvements will make it a safer, more comfortable, and family-friendly experience for everyone."

The funding will go toward several upgrades aimed at improving safety, accessibility and guest experience, including 12 metal detectors (\$216,000) to improve guest safety, two guest shuttles (\$85,792) to reduce rental costs and improve mobility, one Mamava breastfeeding pod (\$27,900) to provide private space for nursing mothers, new perimeter fencing (\$361,286) for enhanced security and one street sweeper (\$365,114) to maintain clean, safe grounds year-round.

This year's Ohio State Fair will be held from July 23 to August 3, 2025. Advance admission tickets went on sale May 1.

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Call for AIMS International Safety Seminar ambassadors

Are you — or do you know — a college student, recent grad or young professional with top-notch customer service skills and a desire to get involved? We're looking for enthusiastic interns to join us at the annual **AIMS International Safety Seminar** as AIMS Ambassadors in January 2026.

Being an ambassador is more than just a volunteer role — it's a fantastic opportunity to network, learn from industry leaders and gain valuable skills that will make you stand out in your career. You'll work alongside a passionate team, meet people from all walks of life and get involved in the world's premier safety education seminar. Trust us, this is an experience you won't want to miss.

Still not convinced? Hear from two of our past ambassador coordinators — **Eliza Throne** and **Matthew Saenz** — about their experiences.

"The ambassadors play a crucial role in running the AIMS International seminar. It's a very purposeful job," commented Throne, past ambassador coordinator. "You have

such a direct impact on the flow of the seminar and the happiness of the attendees, from the moment they register to when they leave at the end of the week. You're the one collecting course information from instructors in the months leading up to the event, checking in attendees and answering questions throughout the week. Your ability to think on your feet and communicate with the right people when there's an issue directly impacts the success of the conference. Honestly, it's a lot of work, and some days are exhausting, but it's so rewarding. You'll grow your leadership and event management skills by making decisions on the fly. One of the best parts is meeting so many people from different backgrounds that you wouldn't meet otherwise. This opportunity opened doors for me to explore different areas of the themed entertainment industry and connect with attendees, instructors, other ambassadors and AIMS staff. Everyone relies on each other, which builds trust, understanding and lasting

friendships and networks."

"Looking back at my two years as an ambassador, what stands out the most is the sense of community it gave me in the amusement industry," stated Saenz, alumni ambassador coordinator. "I've met so many amazing people from all different roles and career stages — seasoned professionals and executives like our instructors, sponsors, and AIMS board members, as well as students and young professionals just starting out. It's powerful to see so many people united by their passion for the industry and their commitment to safety. And that's just the start! The Ambassador Program also helped me form strong bonds with my fellow ambassadors. We supported each other through tough moments, celebrated our wins together and shared plenty of laughs. More than just professional connections, I've gained lifelong friends."

Visit aimsintl.org/get-involved/ambassadors to learn more.

Space for this AIMS page is provided courtesy of *Amusement Today* as a corporate partner of AIMS Intl. Content is provided by AT & AIMS.



2025 Ambassadors L-R [Front] Brandon Kurecki, Natalia Skinner, Sofia Lanzi, Genesis Flores, Gabo Nunez Rojas, [Back] James Brown, Justin Peng, Eliza Throne, Mathew Saenez, Joely Ronchetti, Kylie Dryden, Brendan Lynch

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Pennsylvania ride safety advisory board holds quarterly 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-March for a quarterly meeting of the **Pennsylvania Ride Safety Advisory Board**. 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 a future meeting.

Tammy Luckenbill, who was recently selected as the new director of the Bureau of Ride & Measurement Standards, conducted the meeting.

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

Hersheypark is adding a 40-seat Screamin' Swing from **S & S Worldwide** of Logan,

Utah, which the park is calling **Twizzlers Twisted Gravity**. The high thrill pendulum ride has a static height of 137 feet, making it the tallest in the world. It will travel at speeds up to 68 mph, going past horizontal, pulling up to 4 Gs. There will be multiple zero-G moments and three operating modes from "mild to wild" as **Tony Rossi**, director of maintenance described it.

The ride was recently topped off. Two quality assurance inspectors from the state were on hand to view the moment. The swing was granted tentative approval. It is expected to open during the park's summer season.

A good portion of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of the major modifications being done to the **S & S Worldwide Steel Curtain** roller coaster at **Kennywood Amusement Park**, in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania. The extreme ride has been down since July 2023.

Stengel Engineering of Munich, Germany, was

contracted as a third-party company to do an independent review. A vibration analysis was conducted, as the structure oscillations were concerning. This led to finding a solution to improve reliability and longevity. To that end, four additional towers and four concrete piers have been added to allow for diagonal bracing and lateral stiffening. This is being implemented in seven areas throughout the ride structure. In addition, a trim brake was added in the last third of the ride, that will be used as needed.

The advisory board decided to treat this as a new commissioning with new ride approval needed after submission of all the necessary paperwork. The board was willing to hold an online meeting, if needed, before the next scheduled meeting.

Candyland Adventure Indoor Playground, Springfield, Pennsylvania, received approval for the installation of an **Angel Playground Equipment** indoor

play structure. The company is based in China. The facility, which opened in January, is designed for children ages 2 to 12, with climbing, sliding, jumping and exploring opportunities. The facility will have two attendants on duty.

A soft play attraction designed by **Leicon BV** of Belgium was approved by the board for **Kids Empire**, Collegeville, Pennsylvania. The three-story attraction has slides and many other play elements. The company operates 100 locations in 20 states. It started in France 18 years ago and has been in the United States for eight years. This location will operate with seven attendants.

A human crane will be in operation at **Kalahari Resorts & Conventions**, Pocono Manor, Pennsylvania, after approval was granted by the board. Manufactured by **Zhongshan Star Animation Technology Co., Ltd**, China, the stand-alone attraction lets players step into a giant crane game and become the claw, trying to grab various prizes.

The attendant lowers the crane for each player to try their luck.

Board member **Jim Spang** praised the recent Pennsylvania Ride Safety training program that took place in early March. Between the two put on by the state and the Parks and Carnival Education (PACE) training program, more than 600 people get certified or recertified each year.

Gary Chubb discussed the upcoming PACE seminar. It is presented by **National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO)** and is scheduled for October 28-31 in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, with **Sesame Place** being the location for the "hands-on" training day.

Upcoming dates for the quarterly ride safety advisory board meetings for the rest of 2025 include June 3, September 18 and December 2. All meetings start at 10 a.m. in the lobby conference room at the Department of Agriculture, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg.

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AT/TIM BALDWIN

Six Flags adds FLX Shade

ARLINGTON, Texas — Like many parks, Six Flags Over Texas offers restaurant seating both indoors and outside. This year, one of the park's established eateries (which offers both) received an upgrade for the outside tables. Because of the Texas heat, shade is essential.

"I was initially intrigued because it was FLX structures," said **Charles Laureano**, senior director of operations and maintenance, Six Flags Over Texas. "They use composite materials similar to the old euro bungee attractions."

FLX Shade is manufactured by **FLX Shade LLC**, and **Extreme Legacy** serves as the official distributor. When introduced in 2022, FLX Shade was awarded Best New Product at **IAAPA Expo 2022**.

"It provides more shade with less structure — over 50% less in steel and hardware," said **Phil Wilson**, CDO, Extreme Legacy. The FLX poles that support the sails are only two and a half inches in diameter! Our sails are the best in the industry, with a 10-year warranty."

The mounting process does not require deep pilings.

"It survived a stormy winter. We are looking at applications at **Hurricane Harbor**," Laureano told *Amusement Today*.

"A sea of umbrellas have to be attached to every table, and they aren't designed to take heavy winds," said Wilson. "Six Flags liked the abundance of shade with the minimal support, and these can sustain heavy wind loads. And if need be, they can quickly and easily be removed."

Installation takes between eight hours to a couple of days. "Self-installation is allowed," Wilson said.

—Tim Baldwin

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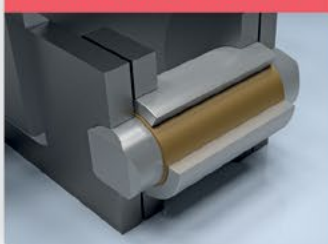
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StarGuard Elite holds successful conference aboard cruise ship

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO — In January, **StarGuard Elite** (SGE) celebrated its 10th annual Conference for Aquatic Management Professionals (CAMP) which took place for six days from January 25 to January 30, 2025. The conference was held aboard **Royal Caribbean's Voyager of the Seas** cruise ship. SGE CAMP 2025 featured multiple workshops on the latest trends and cutting-edge technologies in aquatic safety presented by five speakers and the SGE team. This year's conference hosted a sold-out class of more than 140 water park professionals.

Conference speakers included **Tracy Stayton**, a leader, coach and speaker certified by the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching; **Dr. Justin Sempstrott**, a full-time emergency medicine doctor and the medical director for SGE; **Dr. Seth Hawkins**, an anthropologist, writer and



Attendees gather at Labadee for a group photo at SGE's CAMP 2025 held aboard Royal Caribbean's Voyager of the Seas. COURTESY SGE

physician, double-boarded in both emergency medicine and EMS (field medicine); **Paul Snobelen**, a specialist in community resuscitation programs and paramedic services; and **Pete Dequincy**, aquatics manager at East Bay Regional Park District in Oakland, California, and a certified instructor trainer in water safety, lifeguarding and emergency medical response.

A port day on Monday at Royal Caribbean's private resort, **Labadee**, on the northern coast of Haiti, gave

attendees an opportunity for a hands-on training session in the water. By visiting various facilities, attendees have the opportunity to observe and interact with different SGE operations throughout the week. CAMP-goers were able to experience on-site operations and hands-on training on Wednesday at **Perfect Day at CocoCay**, Royal Caribbean's exclusive island water park resort, which is accessible only by ship.

While at sea, workshop topics included lead-

ing trends in aquatic safety, operations best practices, the latest practices in drowning science and treatment, maintaining aquatics safety, and how to handle real-world crisis communications. Snobelen kept attendees up to date with reports on the latest developments and new features offered by various Automated External Defibrillator (AED) devices. Drs. Sempstrott and Hawkins presented an important look at providing emergency care in unique settings.

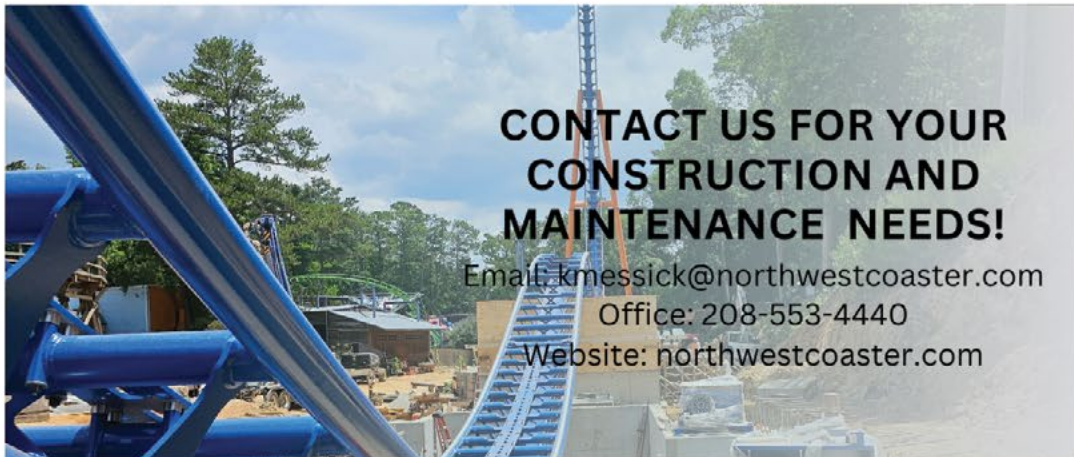
SGE serves more than 400 private and public organizations in 31 countries, including pools, water parks, hotels and resorts, park districts, cruise lines, private islands, training centers, swim schools and lakefronts, among others. SGE programs prepare lifeguards and other aquatic staff to operate safely, focus on risk prevention and be crisis-ready. Training programs provide globally recognized, world-class training designed to meet the specific requirements of aquatic facilities worldwide, enabling them to exceed established industry standards.

SGE's risk prevention consultation offers comprehensive safety and operational expertise, from initial concept to established operation. Services encompass design reviews, risk assessments, regulatory compliance, operational development and redevelopment, attraction consulting, post-incident support and more.

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Advertiser Index

ADVERTISER	PAGE #
Aeria Insurance	13
AIMS International	63
Altitude Rides & Attractions	16
ARM	39
ART Engineering	25
ASTM International	62
Baynum Solutions	61
Bob's Space Racers	9
Chance Rides	3
CPI	69
Eli Bridge Company	62
Ellis & Associates	43
Embed	31
Fabbri Group	14
Gateway Ticketing Systems	29
Gerstlauer Amusement Rides GmbH	27
Get It Done Marketing	18
Great Coasters International	2
Haas & Wilkerson	49
Hodgdon Consulting	62
Hoffman Consulting Group	60
Intamin	11
Intermark Ride Group	10
Intermountain Lift	60
International Rides Management	24, 42
Irvine Ondrey Engineering	66
J&J Snack Foods/Dippin' Dots	7
Kay Park Recreation	5
KumbaK Amusement Engineers	65
Lagotronics	32
LJM & Associates	42
Mack Rides	19
Maclan Corporation	64
McGowan Allied Insurance	71
Mobaro	60
Montgomery Inn	35
Morgan's Wonderland	23
Nation Roller Coaster Museum and Archives	42
Naughton Insurance	18
Northwest Coaster	68
Norton Auctioneers	70
Park Plus Insurance	26
Precision Chain	67
Premier Rides	59
R&R Creative	18
Reverchon	22
Rides 4 U	36, 70
Roller Software	34
S&S Worldwide	21, 65
Safe Slide	44
Sartori Amusement Rides	41
Severn Lamb	20
Sippers By Design	37
SkyTrans Manufacturing LLC	62
Sunkid	13
Swanee River Railroad	62
Vekoma Rides	17
Whitewater West	45
WHR, Inc.	15
Wiegand Sports	18
World Wildlife Zoo	70
World's Largest Swim Lesson	50
Worldwide Safety Group	60
WWA	48
Zamperla	72
Zebec Water Sports	47



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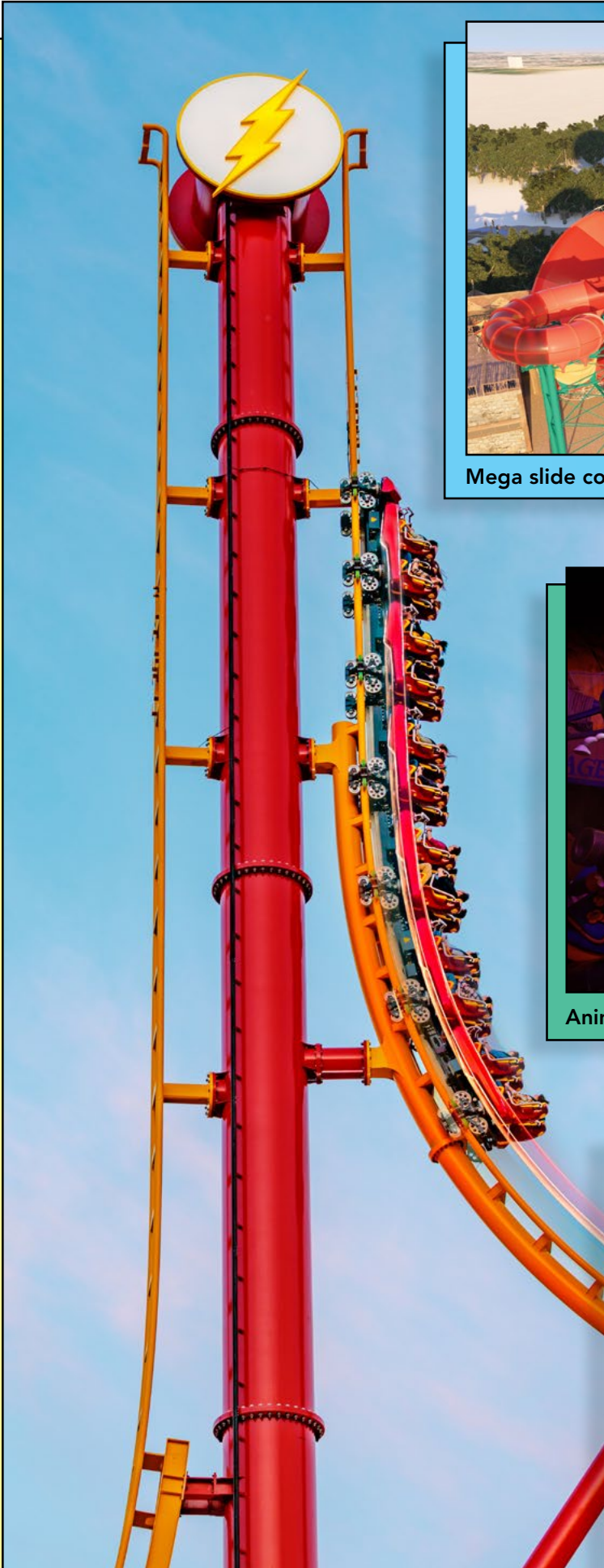
Amusement TODAY

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Issue 2



2025 Amusement Today's "What's New" Guide



Flash: Vertical Velocity, Six Flags Great Adventure
COURTESY SIX FLAGS GREAT ADVENTURE



Mega slide complex, Chimelong COURTESY PROSLIDE TECHNOLOGY



Twizzler's Twisted Gravity,
Hersheypark
COURTESY HERSHEY PARK



Animal Treasure Island, Gardaland COURTESY GARDALAND



Big Bad Wolf: The Wolf's Revenge, Busch Gardens Williamsburg
COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS WILLIAMSBURG

2025 WHAT'S NEW GUIDE | INTERNATIONAL

Compiled by Jeffrey Seifert

This is a list of announced and confirmed projects for 2025 as of press time. Some manufacturers may have more projects for this year that have yet to be announced. These projects may open later this year.

Australia

Big Banana Fun Park, Coffs Harbour....Mountain Coaster
Dreamworld, Coomera....King Claw — Intamin Gyro Swing 40
Warner Bros. Movie World, Gold Coast....new Wizard of Oz precinct with Flight of the Wicked Witch — Vekoma Suspended Family Coaster; Kansas Twister — Vekoma Family Boomerang (opened Dec 2024)

Austria

Böhmischer Prater, Vienna....Zierer Flitzer
Fantasia, Strasswalchen....Helios — Mack Rides Stryker Coaster
Viener Prater, Vienna....Wiener Looping — Mack Rides Big Dipper Coaster (custom)

Bahamas

Bimini Vistas Adventurers Bahamas, Bimini....Severn Lamb 9000 Series Road Tram
Belgium Bobbejaanland, Lichtaart....World of Dinos — walk-through indoor dinosaur attraction
Plopsa de Panne, Adinkerke-De Panne....25th celebration parade; Plopsaland Village hotel expansion; Wild Swing — ART Engineering
Walibi Belgium, Wavre....Mecalodon — Gerstlauer family coaster

Brazil

Animália Park, Cotia....Big Air Coaster — SBF Visa Big Air; Cyclone — SBF Visa Cyclon Coaster
Beach Park, Aquirez....WhiteWater world's tallest water coaster
Beyond The Club, São Paulo....Wavegarden Surf Lagoon
Bondinhos Canela, Canela....Wiegand Wie-Flyer
Nações at Thermas dos Laranjais, Olimpia....WhiteWater slide tower with two Epic first-of-their-kind six-person raft rides: a Family Master Blaster + Orbiter + Anaconda Fusion and a Family Master Blaster + Constrictor + Galaxy Bowl Fusion
Parque Unipraias, Balneário Camboriú....SGT 1000 Intamin 53m wheel
T-Rex Park São Paulo, São Paulo....Magic Tornado — Zamperla powered coaster
Wet'n'Wild, Sao Paulo....Polin Waterparks Rift (Cobra Themed) and Navigatour

China

Beijing Shihingshan Amusement Park, Shijingshan....Cuprid Roller Coaster — Hebei Zhongye family coaster; Hebei Zhongye inverted coaster
Chimelong, Guangzhou....ProSlide World's first launched HydroMagnetic LIM Mammoth Water Coaster with FlyingSaucer 60; mega complex with a Double Tornado 60 (world first), Hive 35 (family raft, world first), Double TornadoWave 60
Fantasy Valley, Xiangzhou....Mad Racers — GCII wood track/steel structure coaster
Happy Valley, Chang'an....Jinma Rides mine coaster; Mack Rides water coaster; GCII wooden coaster
Happy Valley, Nanshan....LSM launch coaster
Ji'an Happy World, Jizhou....Jinma Rides suspended roller coaster
Jin Ying, Yuexiu....Fun Fruit Worm — Kiddie oval coaster; Jungle Mouse
Legoland Shanghai, Qingpu....New park with multiple attractions including Big Lego Coaster — Bolliger & Mabillard family inverted coaster; Dragon — Zierer Force Five; Zamperla family coaster; WhiteWater AquaPlay 1050
Legoland Sichuan, Meishan....New park with multiple attractions including Bolliger & Mabillard family coaster
OCT Fantasy Valley, Xiangyang....Wrath of the Yeti — Huss Park Attractions King Kong
OCT Happy Valley, Nanjing....Perfect Storm — Huss Park Attractions 38-seat Top Spin



OCT Yueqing Maya, Yueqing....ProSlide Tornado 60 + Double TornadoWave 60, 6-Lane RallyRacer SuperLoop + FreeFall + TurboTwister, Dueling Pipeline +FlyingSaucer 20 (x 2), RideHouse 700 Pro -the world's first, Kidz Zone; ADG wave pool and action river
Squirrel Kingdom, Luqiao....family coaster
Star World - Nanhu Amusement Park, Baiyun....Quantum Trek — Jinma Rides Reciprocating Roller Coaster

Denmark

Bakken, Klampenborg....Zamperla Crazy Bus
Djurs Sommerland, Nimtoffe....Adventure Trail — climbing path with suspension bridges
Fårup Sommerland, Blokhus....New entrance portal, café and merchandise facilities
Legoland Billund, Billund....All-access pirate-themed playground; world's largest Lego store
Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen....Severn Lamb battery electric Road Trains (people movers)

Egypt

Pyramiza Sahl Hasnesh, Hurghada....Polin Waterparks King Cobra, Double Flying Saw, Rift, Racer Twin Hybrid, Mini Magicone+Sphere Combination, King Cobra, Dragero, Kamikaze-Freefall, Aquatube, Black Hole, Rafting Slide, Looping Rocket, themed waterplay structure
Radamis, Sharm El Sheikh....ProSlide Four-person RocketBlast with FlyingSaucer 30 (x 4), Custom complex: Hive 20 (x 2), TornadoWave 12, Tornado 18 SwitchBack (x 2), Dueling FlyingSaucer 20, Kidz Zone (7 flumes), RideHouse 400, ProRallyRacer (4-lane) with SuperLoop and FreeFall
RemalResort Waterpark, Sharm El Sheikh....Polin Waterparks Black Hole+Uphill Flying Boats Combinations, Flying Saw+Sphere Combination, Rift, Windigo, Looping Rocket, Freefall, Body Magicone, Aquatube, themed waterplay structure, spray action area
Rixos Radamis, Sharm El Sheikh....Polin Waterparks Double Rift, Magicone, Looping Rocket, Dragero, Family Rafting+Big Hole Combination, Kamikaze, Freefall, themed waterplay structure, spray action area

England

Adventure Coast Southport, Southport....Reopening of former Southport Pleasureland; new steel coaster
Alton Towers, Alton....Toxicator — Huss Park Attractions record-breaking Top Spin
Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Blackpool....Launch Pad — retheming of former Ice Blast S&S Space Shot



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Fantasy Island, Ingoldmells....Magic Mouse XXL — spinning mouse coaster
Flamingo Land, Malton....Extensive refurbishment of Log Flume
Funland Hayling Island, Hayling Island....Dragon’s Rush — Zierer circular ride
Legoland Windsor, Windsor....Lego City Deep Sea Adventure — return of upgraded Mack Rides submarine ride
Paultons Park, Romsey....Ghostly Manor — Mack Rides dark ride with Lagotronics gaming system

Ethiopia

GAST Conference & Wellness Resort, Debiri....Zhipoa four-ring coaster

Finland

Linnanmäki, Helsinki....75th anniversary celebration; Zamperla Crazy Bus and Rocking Tug

France

Ch’ti Parc, Avion....Ch’ti Turbo — Modern Amusement Group spinning cars coaster; Pomme — Big Apple/Wacky Worm
Cigoland, Kintzheim....Zierer 40-seat Wave Swinger
Coco Park, Saint-Avoid....Kiliç Lunaparkbtwin helix coaster relocated from Dinsaures Parc
Dennly’s, Dennebroeucq....Zamperla Watermania
Didi’Land, Morsbronn-les-Bains....Spinning Coaster — SBF Visa spinning coaster
Font-Romeu Pyrénées 2000, Pyrénées-Orientales....Mountain Coaster
Fraispertuis, Jeanménil....Zamperla NebulaZ
Futuroscope, Chasseneuil-du-Poitou....Mission Bermudas — Mack Rides Rocking Boat attraction
Jardin d’Acclimatation, Paris....Défi du Dragon — Gerstlauer tire-launch family coaster
La Récré des 3 Curés, Milizac....Tremor — Funtime 80-meter freefall
Mer de Sable, Ermenonville....Wild Buffalo — GCII wooden coaster
Nigloland, Dolancourt....Cabaïana Resort — Latin-themed cabins
Papéa Parc, Yvré-l’Evêque....Le Totem — SBF Visa 38-meter freefall tower
Parc Astérix, Plailly....Cétautomatix — Gerstlauer spinning cars coaster
Parc Dino-Zoo, Étalans....Zamperla NebulaZ
Winnoland, Saint-Pierre-du-Perray....Wild West Coaster — Vekoma Kalypso Coaster

Georgia

Malibu Park, Gagra....Vekoma junior coaster relocated from Happylyon (Russia)

Germany

Bayern-Park, Reisbach....HegnaHutschn — ART Engineering Wild Swing
Edelwies, Neukirchen....SBF Visa spinning coaster
Erlebnisberg Altenberg, Altenberg....Speed Coaster — Wiegand Alpine Coaster
ErlebnisBocksBerg, Goslar....Drachenblitz — Wiegand Alpine Coaster
Europa-Park, Rust....50th anniversary celebration; Grand Prix EDventure — Mack Rides Gameplay Theater with Lagotronics gaming system
Fort Fun Abenteuerland, Wasserfall....Großer Adlers freier Flug — ART Engineering Wild Swing
Freizeitpark Plohn, Lengenfeld....Aqualuna & die Wunschschaukel — ART Engineering Wild Swing
Hansa-Park, Sierksdorf....Einar’s Fjord — Zierer Kontiki
Holiday Park, Hassloch....Blinky’s Outback Expedition — jeep jungle tour
Karls Erlebnix-Dorf Elstal, Wustermark....Erdbeer Fluggefühl — Gerstlauer Sky Fly
Karls Erlebnix-Dorf Loxstedt, Bemerhaven....Erdbeer Raupenbahn — SBF Visa family coaster; human powered kiddie coaster
Karls Tourismus, Rövershagen....Zamperla Barnyard Jumping Tower
Oskarshausen, Freital....Wiegand Mountain Coaster
Potts Park, Minden....Braus & Saus — ART Engineering Family Spike Launch Coaster
Ravensburger Spieleland, Meckenbeuren....Scotland Yard — dark ride
Schwaben Park, Kaisersbach....Hofgudi — Baschnagel Freizeitgeräte playground

Serengeti-Park, Hodenhagen....Gozimba — Ride Engineers Switzerland powered air loop coaster
Silberbergbahn Bodenmais, Bodensmais....Silberberg Coaster — Wiegand Alpine Coaster

Greece

Adriana Hotel, Rhodes....Polin Waterparks Multislide, Freefall, Aquatube, Aquatube+Freefall Combination, Racer Sphere, Black Hole+Rafting Slide Combination, themed water play structure

India

Wonderla Amusement Park Chennai, Illalur....Bolliger & Mabillard inverted coaster (Batman)

Iraq

Janaen Karbala Waterpark, Karbala....Polin Waterparks Wave Slide, two pieces Tunnel Freefall+Kamikaze, two pieces Twister, two pieces Aquatube, Surf Safari, Aquatube+Body Slide Combination, Turbolance, Rafting Slide+Black hole Combination, Black Hole+Space Shuttle+Spheres Combination, Blach Hole+Uphill Navigatour+Rafting Slide Combination, Windigo, Space Hole, Looping Rocket, spray action area

Ireland

Curry’s Fun Park, Galway....Dracula’s Castle — Gosetto Ghost Train;
Funtasia Theme Park, Drogheda....WhiteWater Master Blaster and Parallel Pursuit (mat slide)

Italy

EuroPark Milano Idroscalo, Segrate....Go-kart track
Gardaland, Castelnuovo del Garda....50th season celebration; Animal Treasure Island — dark ride/boat ride; Parsley and the Mystery of the Hidden Worlds — 4D film; A.I. The Future is Here show
Mirabilandia, Savio....Cowabunga Carts — Zierer Force 190 coaster; Zierer Wave Swinger

Japan

Greenland, Arao....Zierer 56-seat Wave Swinger

Kuwait

Messilah Beach, Jumeirah....WhiteWater large adventure play structure

Kyrgystan

Balayk Park, Bishkek....Pax Company boomerang coaster

Malaysia

Genting SkyWorlds, Genting Highlands....Andromeda Base — Dynamic Attractions SFX Coaster; Mad Ramp Peak — Dynamic Attractions Synergy Coaster
Skytropolis Indoor Theme Park, Genting Highlands....Bolt — Beijing Shiboala powered coaster

Netherlands

Attractiepark de Waarbeek, Twekkelerweg....Cloud Flight — Wood Design balloon ride
Bekse Bergen, Hilvarenbeek....Speelland — indoor play area (opened 2024)
Bommewereld, Groenio....new indor park with Bulderbaan — Vekoma Family Coaster; rides from Metallbau Emmeln, Zamperla, Gosetto, Zierer, Sunkid
Drouwenerzand Attractiepark, Drouwen....new park entrance
Duinrell, Wassenaar....Duinrell Express — retheme of previous mine train
Efteling, Kaatsheuvel....Danse Macabre — Intamin motion platform ride in the dark; Efteling Wonder Hotel (opened Oct 2024)
Madurodam, The Hague....DeWindjager (wind hunter) — ETF Ride Systems



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trackless Multi-Mover dark ride exploring the history of wind power
Plopsa Indoor Coevoerden, Reindersdijk....ART Engineering Wild Swing
Toverland, Sevenum....Troy (wooden coaster) retracking
Walibi Holland, Biddinghuizen....YoY — Rocky Mountain Construction dual raptor track coaster

New Zealand

H20 Extreme, Upper Hutt....WhiteWater three AquaTube slides

Norway

Dyreparken, Kristiansand....Kiddie driving school
Hunderfossen Themepark, Fåberg....Zamperla Sky Tower 27

Philippines

Pradera Islands Park, Lubao....Attack of the Aswang — Preston & Barbieri coaster

Poland

Energylandia, Zator....Western Camp Resort — cabins, tepees and tent camping
Hossoland, Brojce....New theme park with multiple attractions including Vekoma suspended family coaster, Vekoma family coaster and Vekoma junior coaster
Mandoria, Rzgów....Aquila — Vekoma family launched coaster; Zierer circular ride

Portugal

Aquashow Family Park, Quarteira....Furacão — Mack Rides launched coaster

Russia

Dream Island, Moscow City....Intamin vertical launch coaster; Intamin Hot Racer; Big Apple/Wacky Worm-style coaster; Intamin family launch coaster
Kaleidoscope Park, Belgorod....Zamperla Twister Coaster

Saudi Arabia

Banana Beach, Dhahran....Chicken Coop — kiddie coaster
Seven Yanbu, Yanbu....Transformers — S&S Worldwide Axis Coaster
Six Flags Qiddiya City, Al Muzahimiyah....New park with multiple attractions including Falcons Flight — record breaking Intamin steel coaster; Iron Rattler — Vekoma Tilt Coaster; Colossus — GCII wooden Coaster; Sawmill Falls — Mack Rides water coaster; Sea Stallion — Maurer Rides spike coaster; Spitfire — Intamin LSM launch coaster; Sirocco Tower — S&S Combo Tower; Enchanted Greenhouse — ETF Ride Systems/Alterface/Jora Vision greenhouse ride

Seychelles

Cheval Blanc Seychelles, Quatre Bornes....WhiteWater FlowRider Wave in a Box

Slovakia

Fantázia Liptov Park, Liptovský Mikuláš....Vesmír — InterTech indoor coaster with spinning cars



South Korea

Gyeongju World, Gyeongju....Sköll & Hati — Rocky Mountain Construction raptor coaster; Time Rider — Intamin 45m eccentric Wheel
Legoland Korea, Chuncheon....Mack Rides spinning coaster

Spain

Parque de Atracciones de Zaragoza, Zaragoza....Kiddie driving school
PortAventura Park, Salou....Stampida — Great Coaster Titan Track
Puy du Fou España, Toledo....War of Independence show
Water World Lloret, Girona....ProSlideDouble TornadoWave 60

Sri Lanka

New Saniro Airport Sports Complex, Wadumalla....Xi'an Shuobo multi-element coaster

Sweden

Furuvik, Gävle....Pelle's Play Adventures — climbing structure; Upptäck Mån — adventure trail
Gröna Lund, Stockholm....Pumpen — RES Rides Super Swing
Kolmården, Norrköping....Trollskoggen (Troll Forest) — 4000-square-meter play area with climbing castle and water features
Liseberg, Gothenburg....Kraftverket — Huss Park Attractions Break Dance 5
Skara Sommarland, Skara....New Tivoli area with Free Fall — 20-meter SBF Visa Drop 'n Twist; Houdini — SBF Visa Top Dancer; Lilla Pariserhjulet — Mangels Ferris wheel

Switzerland

Atzmännig, Eschenbach....Sunkid Mountain Coaster
Conny-Land, Lipperswil....Antares — Ride Engineers Switzerland Roller Ball

Taiwan

The Formosan Aboriginal Culture Village, Yuchi Township....Severn Lamb 30-year-old park train conversion from diesel-hydraulic to a fully battery-electric

Turkey

Land of Legends, Antalya....SpongeBob's Crazy Carnival Ride — Sally Dark Rides/ETF Ride Systems Mystic Movers dark ride
Regnum Carya Hotel, Antalya....WhiteWater slide complex, AquaPlay 1750 and kids' area
Vogue Hotel Supreme (Candyland), Bodrum....Polin Waterparks Dragon Racer and first-of-its-kind Triango

United Arab Emirates

DXB Entertainment Waterpark, Dubai....Polin Waterparks Stingray, Double Rift, Looping Rocket, Navigatour, Wave Pool, Jacuzzi Pool, Lazy River, spray action area
Grand Hyatt Dubai, Dubai....WhiteWater three slide tower complex with multiple slides; FlowRider
Miral, Al Ain....Polin Waterparks water play structure and spray action area
Yas Waterworld, Abu Dhabi....Expansion project with WhiteWater Shoot-the-Chute integrated into a water slide tower

Vietnam

Ha Nam, Hanoi City....ProSlide PowerRiver Gen 2, Dueling RocketBlast with FlyingSaucer30/20, BehemothBowl 60 + Tornado 60, SwitchBack + CannonBowl 400, OctopusRacer 6, TornadoWave 60 + Mammoth, RideHouse 600 Pro, Kidz Adventure Tower, Kidz Tubing Complex, Kidz Body Slides
Sam Son, Thanh Hóa....ProSlide MammothBlast, 2x SkyBox + 2x Freedall, Dueling PipeLine
VinWonders Grand Park, Ho Chi Minh....Marvelous Adventure — Vekoma Family Boomerang coaster

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2025 WHAT'S NEW GUIDE | NORTH AMERICA

Compiled by Jeffrey Seifert

This is a list of announced and confirmed projects for 2025 as of press time. Some manufacturers may have more projects for this year that have yet to be announced. These projects may open later this year.

CANADA
British Columbia

Grouse Mountain, North Vancouver....ADG mountain coaster

Nova Scotia

Atlantic Splash Adventure, Hammonds Plains....Rocky Mountain/Larson Flying Scooter

Ontario

Canada's Wonderland, Vaughan....AlpenFury — Premier Rides custom Sky Rocket coaster

Niagara Parks Flying Theatre, Niagara Falls....Flying Theatre — Brogent flying theater (replacing Niagara's Fury)

Santa's Village, Bracebridge....Yeti Trek — Vekoma family coaster

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Moon Palace, Punta Cana....ProSlide RideHouse 150, RideHouse 300, SplashPad

MEXICO
Jalisco

Nuevo Vallarta Resort, Puerto Vallarta....Severn Lamb trains with two Lincoln (battery-electric) locomotives

Mexico

Aztlán Parque Urbano, Mexico City....Laka Laka — Fabbri spinning cars coaster; Serpentikha — Vekoma Family Suspended Coaster

Nayarit

VidantaWorld's BON Luxury Theme Park, Las Jarretaderas....New theme park with multiple rides including Vekoma Switchback Coaster; Vekoma Family Coaster; Vekoma Family Suspended Coaster; Vekoma double-launch coaster; Mack Rides Inverted Powered Coaster

Quintana Roo

Hotel Xcaret México, Playa del Carmen....Hotel expansion project including WhiteWater slide tower with five slides

Riviera Maya Resort, Playa Del Carmen....Severn Lamb Land Rover Road Trains (people movers)

UNITED STATES

Alaska

Skagway Cruise Terminal, Skagway....Severn Lamb (battery-electric) road trains

Arizona

Mattel Adventure Park, Glendale....Hot Wheels Boneshaker — Chance Rides family coaster; Hot Wheels Twin Mill Racer — Chance Rides Hyper GT-X

Arkansas

Parrott Island, Fort Smith....Topspin — new slide tower with WhiteWater Topspin, Flatline Loop and two Head Rush slides

California

Historic Hawes Farms, Anderson....Lil' Dipper Roller Coaster — Allan Herschell Little Dipper

San Leandro Family Aquatic Center, San Leandro....WhiteWater AquaPlay 150

Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, Vallejo....Baynum repaint of Medusa B&M floorless coaster

Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, Valencia....Safe Slide Restoration refurbishment and recoating of all waterslides



Wave Swinger,
Quassy Amusement Park
COURTESY
WOODDESIGN
AMUSEMENT RIDES

Colorado

Fun City, Estes Park....SBF Visa spinning coaster

Colorado

Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park, Glenwood Springs....Little Feet Playland — nature inspired playground for kids

Connecticut

Great Wolf Lodge, Mashantucket....New resort with ProSlide Two-person Dueling RocketBlast, FlyingSaucer 8, Mammoth, RideHouse 400, Tornado 24, BehemothBowl 40

Lake Compounce, Bristol....Gravity Group retracking of Wildcat and GCII Titan Track on Boulder Dash roller coasters

Quassy Amusement Park, Middlebury....Family Coaster — SBF Visa spinning coaster; Wooddesign Amusement Rides BV, 42-seat Wave Swinger with an Aladdin theme, Gravity Group retrack of Wooden Warrior (300 feet)

Florida

Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, Tampa....Wild Oasis Kids Area — drop tower, climbing structure, splash pad

Epic Universe, Orlando....New theme park with multiple rides including Mack Rides dueling/racing coaster; Mack Rides spinning coaster; Intamin launched coaster; Universal Boom Coaster

Holiday Inn Resort Orlando Suites Waterpark, Orlando....WhiteWater FlowRider Double, RainFortress 3 with three body slides (AquaTube, Head Rush)

SeaWorld Orlando, Orlando....Expedition Odyssey — Mack Rides Airific flying theater

Georgia

Fun Spot America Atlanta, Fayetteville....Hook & Slice — SBF Visa Reverse Time

Six Flags Over Georgia, Austell....Georgia Gold Rusher — Intamin Ultra Surf coaster

Wild Adventures, Valdosta....Water's Edge expansion with Zamperla GoGo Bounce and Midi Family Swinger; Horizon Wheel — Chance Century Wheel

Hawaii

Wet'n'Wild Hawaii, Kapolei....WhiteWater 65-foot twin enclosed tube double flatline Loop with Aqua Drop and lighting effects

Idaho

Silverwood Theme Park, Athol....Tremors and Timber Terror — Rocky Mountain Construction 208 retrack; Millennium Flyer trains on Tremors

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Siren's Curse,
Cedar Point
COURTESY
CEDAR POINT

Illinois

Six Flags Great America, Gurnee....Wrath of Rakshasa — B&M Dive Coaster

Iowa

Adventure Bay at Adventureland, Altoona....Hyperlight Slide — iSlide Hyperlight
Lost Island Theme Park, Waterloo....Fire Runner — Rocky Mountain
Construction raptor coaster

Kentucky

Kentucky Kingdom, Louisville....Discovery Meadow — new themed area
with new and rethemed attractions including a 4,800-square-foot play-
ground; Zamperla Flying Tigers and GoGo Bounce

Maryland

Jolly Roger Amusement Park, Ocean City....Orient Express — Wisdom
Rides family coaster

Massachusetts

Six Flags New England, Agawam....Quantum Accelerator — Intamin
Family Straddle Coaster
Starland Sportsplex & Fun Park, Hanover....SBF Visa spinning coaster

Michigan

Bavarian Blast at Bavarian Inn, Frankenmuth....Water park expansion with
16 WhiteWater attractions including Python, Constrictor, Parallel Pursuit,
Aquatube and Freefall Plus
Michigan's Adventure, Muskegon....Shivering Timbers — Rocky Mountain
Construction 208 retrack

Missouri

Oasis at Lakeport, Osage Beach....New entertainment district and park
with Shootout — Vekoma Family Boomerang coaster and Vekoma
Family Suspended Coaster
St. Louis Wheel at Union Station, St. Louis....Zamperla compact spinning
coaster, Galleon 42, Flying Carousel; Horizon Wheel
Silver Dollar City, Branson....new walkway between Fire District and Grand
Exposition, portal signage and photo ops by 3dxScenic
Supersplash Waterpark, Linn Creek....R & R Creative Amusement Designs show

Nebraska

Vala's Pumpkin Patch, Gretna....Zamperla Midi Family Swinger

New Hampshire

Santa's Village, Jefferson....Zamperla GoGo Bounce

New Jersey

Pirate's Castaway Cove, Ocean City.... 3dxScenic 60-foot replacement
Pirate Ship at entrance
Six Flags Great Adventure, Jackson....Flash: Vertical Velocity — Vekoma

Super Boomerang coaster, 3dxScenic ride portal
Steel Pier, Atlantic City....Premier Rides spinning cars wild mouse coaster;
Premier Rides Sky Rocket II coaster
Storybook Land, Egg Harbor Township....SBF Visa spinning coaster

New York

Adventureland, Farmingdale....Wave Twister — Ride Entertainment
Switzerland Wave Twist L

North Carolina

Carowinds, Charlotte....Snoopy's Racing Railway — ART Engineering family
launch coaster; Charlie Brown's River Raft Blast — Mack Rides Water Battle

Ohio

Cedar Point, Sandusky....Siren's Curse — Vekoma Tilt Coaster
Kings Island's Soak City, Mason....RiverRacers — WhiteWater Blaster Battle dual-
racing water coaster; Splash River Junction — new kids area with seven slides
Zoombezi Bay, Powell....ProSlide Hive 20 (x 2), first-of-its-kind mat
RallyRacer with FlyingSaucer 8 (x4), TornadoWave 12 / TORNADO 18
SwitchBack; dimensional sign by 3dxScenic

Oklahoma

Okana, Oklahoma City....New resort and water park with ProSlide
RocketBlast with FlyingSaucer 20 (x 2) & 30, TornadoWave 12 SwitchBack,
Dueling Pipeline; FlyingSaucer 45 / TN 32, mat RallyRacer, Twister Drop
Slides (x2), Kidz Zone: Kidz Twister; Kidz MiniRiver, Custom RideHouse
300 with premium theming: KidzTwister (x3), Kidz BOWL 14, Twister (x2);
ADG Wave Pool, EpicSurf, 420-ft. lazy river.

Pennsylvania

Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom, Allentown....Reimagined Lightning
Falls & Cascade — WhiteWater open and enclosed waterslides
Hersheypark, Hershey....Twizzlers Twisted Gravity — S&S Screamin' Swing
Kennywood, West Mifflin....Reopening of The Steel Curtain roller coaster
after structural modifications; return of Olde Kennywood Railroad with
Gimbels Flyer locomotive and Kenny Express (previously Thomas Town)
Knoebels Amusement Resort, Elysburg....Zamperla Power Surge
Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium, Pittsburgh....SSA Group and Cinchio food
pickup lockers.
Waldameer & Water World, Erie....Time Twister — Zamperla NebulaZ;
New entrance to Water World

South Carolina

Family Kingdom, Myrtle Beach....Technical Park Loop Fighter
Frankie's Fun Park, Greenville....SBF Visa spinning coaster



Quantum Loop, Six Flags New England COURTESY SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND

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A large, detailed pirate ship set piece with a figurehead of a pirate.

A sign for the Motorbike Factory attraction, featuring a motorcycle and the text "MOTORBIKE FACTORY".

A carousel with a large, ornate horse figurehead and the Kennywood logo.

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Flip Side, Family Kingdom
AT/RON GUSTAFSON



Beach Shore, SeaWorld San Antonio
COURTESY SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO



Peppa Pigs Balloon Ride, Peppa Pig
Theme Park AT/GARY SLADE

Tennessee

Dollywood, Pigeon Forge....Play On — special 40th season musical show paying tribute to Dollywood's history
Pigeon Forge Racing Coaster, Pigeon Forge....Racing Coaster — Wiegand Alpine Coaster
SkyLand Ranch, Sevierville....Wagonwheeler Swing Tower — Zamperla Vertical Swing
Soaky Mountain Waterpark, Sevierville....Rafter's Rage — WhiteWater first-of-its-kind Wall Runner with drifting sensations

Texas

Castaway Cove, Wichita Falls....WhiteWater four-lane mat racer
Cotaland, Austin....New Park with multiple rides including Palindrome — Gerstlauer custom Infinity Coaster; Circuit Breaker — Vekoma Tilt Coaster
Kemah Boardwalk, Kemah....ARM/RMC Supershot Tower
Morgan's Wonderland, San Antonio....Joy's Happy Swing Zamperla all-access Happy Swing
NRH20, North Richland Hills....ProSlide two-person Dueling RocketBlast with Flying Saucer 20 (x4)
Peppa Pig Theme Park, North Richland Hills....New theme park with multiple rides including Daddy Pig's Roller Coaster — Zamperla family launch coaster; Mr. Bull's High Striker — Zamperla Jumping Star; Grampy Rabbit's Dinosaur Adventure — Mettallbau Emmeln custom Pony Trek; Peppa Pigs Balloon Ride — Technical Park
San Antonio Zoo, San Antonio....WhiteWater Vantage attractions management platform
SeaWorld San Antonio, San Antonio....Beach Rescue Racer — Zierer custom coaster; Zamperla Midi-Family Swinger, Rio Grande Train; Vortex splash ground
Six Flags Fiesta Texas, San Antonio....New DC Universe themed kids area with Cyborg — Zamperla NebulaZ; Shazam — Zamperla Sky Tower; Metropolis Transit Authority — Zamperla aerial train
Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, Arlington....New ProSlide Kidz Zone and Splashpad — RideHouse 600, Kidz MiniRiver, Kidz ProRacer, Kidz OctopusRacer X2, Kidz Tornado 18
Six Flags Over Texas, Arlington....Baynum repaint of Titan Giovanola coaster; food and beverage enhancements

Utah

Lagoon Park, Farmington....Steamworx — ART Engineering Giant Swing;

Time Tinker — Zamperla NebulaZ; restored Carousel Candy store and Peacock Parlor

Virginia

Atlantic Park, Virginia Beach....Wavegarden surf lagoon
Busch Gardens, Williamsburg....Big Bad Wolf The Wolf's Revenge — B&M family inverted coaster
Kings Dominion, Doswell....Rapterra — B&M launched Wing Coaster
Massanutten Family Adventure Park, Massanutten....Mountain Mayhem Coaster — MND Group mountain coaster
Water Country USA, Williamsburg....New ProSlide RideHouse, Kidz Twister, Kidz MiniRiver

West Virginia

Brush Creek Falls Resort, Princeton....Brush Creek Holl'r — Wiegand Mountain Coaster

2025 WHAT'S NEW GUIDE | TRAVELING SHOWS AND CRUISE CSHIPS

Compiled by Jeffrey Seifert and Ron Gustafson

CRUISE SHIPS

MSC World America....WhiteWater Adventure Trail
Norwegian Aqua....Wiegand.Waterrides launched water coaster - dual
Royal Caribbean Star of the Seas....Largest waterpark at sea. WhiteWater FlowRider; Wiegand.Waterrides category 6 waterpark

TRAVELING SHOWS

Amusement Services Australia, Cowes, VIC, Australia....Sartori 14-arm Techno Jump
Blue Sky Amusements, East Moriches, New York....Luna-Park Rides Ferris wheel
Casey's Rides, Utica, Kentucky....Luna-Park Rides Star Tower
Fantasy Amusements, Chicago, Illinois....Children's ride, Dalton Kids Rides
Funtastic Traveling Shows, Portland, Oregon....Sartori 14-arm Techno Jump
Powers Great American Midways, Corfu, New York.... Sartori Twin Twister; KMG X-Drive; Technical Park Loop Fighter;
Schaustellerbetrieb Welte, Siebnen, Switzerland....Sartori 12-arm Techno Jump
Swikas Amusements, Mayfield, Pennsylvania....Luna-Park Rides Ferris wheel
Warwick Enterprises, Great Britain....Sartori 14-arm Techno Jump

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