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Twizzlers Twisted Gravity
takes riders 137 feet in the air
while traveling up to 68 mph.
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HERSHEYPARK

The world's tallest Screamin' Swing opens at the sweetest place on Earth

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HERSHEY, Pa. — Just in time for the Memorial Day holiday weekend, the **S&S Worldwide**-manufactured swing ride opened at **Hersheypark** in late May. Dubbed Twizzlers Twisted Gravity, the pendulum swing is of massive proportion. Taking riders 137 feet in the air while traveling up to 68 mph, with multiple zero-G moments, the attraction seats 40 passengers in two sets of swings, each one holding a total of 20 riders. This is accomplished with a ride cycle of one minute and 10 seconds.

"The Screamin' Swing is an amazing experience with both positive and negative G's. You're going to experience something unlike you have ever experienced before," said **Jason Mons**, president and CEO of S&S Worldwide. "Being built on the side of the hill, you experience heights even greater than 137 feet, giving you views all around the park or depending on where you are sitting, looking right down the side of the hill into the creek."

There are four candy-branded seating areas between two gondolas: Twizzlers strawberry and cherry, Hershey's chocolate and black licorice-flavored designs.

Jeremy Underkoffler, senior director of attractions for Hersheypark, spoke about how this attraction came to fruition. "We had a Screamin' Swing on our list for many years. We wanted additional flat rides. We heard from our guests that we have great coasters and a great mix of rides. We are missing high-thrill flat rides. [We] contacted S&S and started to talk through the process of what that would look like. We looked at a couple of different locations a few years ago. When we got to this project, moving forward, we chose this location, removing the old amphitheater. We felt the location we chose would make it unique, not just another flat Screamin' Swing. We're excited about where we put it. It gives it a very unique experience."

Mons confirmed the ride was in discussion for quite some time. "We started talking to them about this shortly after the S&S triple towers at Hershey (2017). They

► See SCREAMIN, page 6

Paultons Park continues recent growth with new Ghostly Manor addition

*Lagotronics and
Mack Rides create
gameplay theater,
dark ride attraction*

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

RAMSEY, England — Things are exciting at **Paultons Park**. The park has shown substantial growth with new attractions in recent years. And things aren't even remotely slowing down. On May 17, the park debuted its newest attraction, Ghostly Manor.

Supplied by **Mack Rides** and **Lagotronics**, the new gameplay theater/dark ride is an excellent use of space. Built in the round, players board seats of four and interact with scenes in both the interior of the ride system and the exterior. The inner scenes contain physi-

cal theming, while the larger spaces when facing outward are interactive screens.

"We chose to implement a Gameplay Theatre attraction due to its small footprint and ability to pack so many scenes within a small ride area," said **Lawrence Mancey**, marketing and technology director. "Being able to utilize our existing 4-D cinema building was a big win for us and the work to create Ghostly Manor has completely transformed that area of the park."

As the story goes, fictional character Dr. Kinley, a paranormal investigator, has accidentally released ghosts into his manor. It is up to the guests to recapture them.

"Dr. Kinley, the central character, is brought to life visually using high-quality

► See GHOSTLY, page 8



Family interaction makes the new Ghostly Manor gameplay theater at Paultons Park a real scam.
COURTESY PAULTONS PARK



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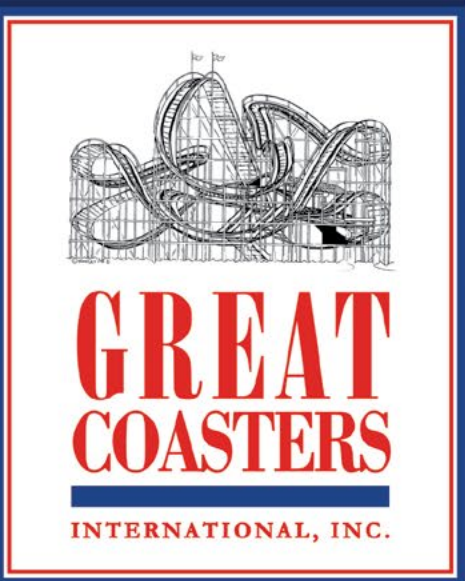


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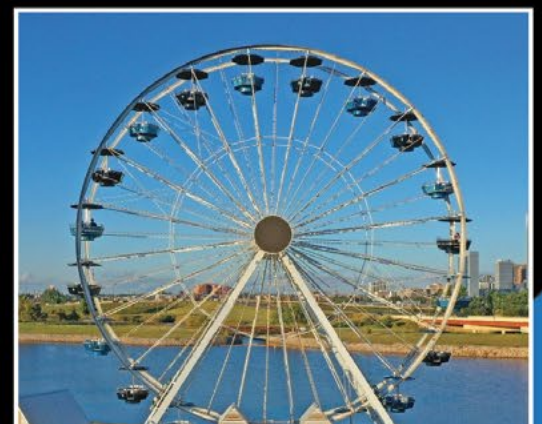
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AT NOTEBOOK: John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

Icons and landmarks



Robinson

I can type this line with fairly definitive certainty: At some point in our lives, nearly everyone has traveled to Florida and had a family member or friend wish them well by saying, "Say hello to Mickey for me!" Doesn't really matter that Florida has a wealth of landmarks, attractions and history ... to the majority of the population, it's immediately recognized as the home of Walt Disney World.

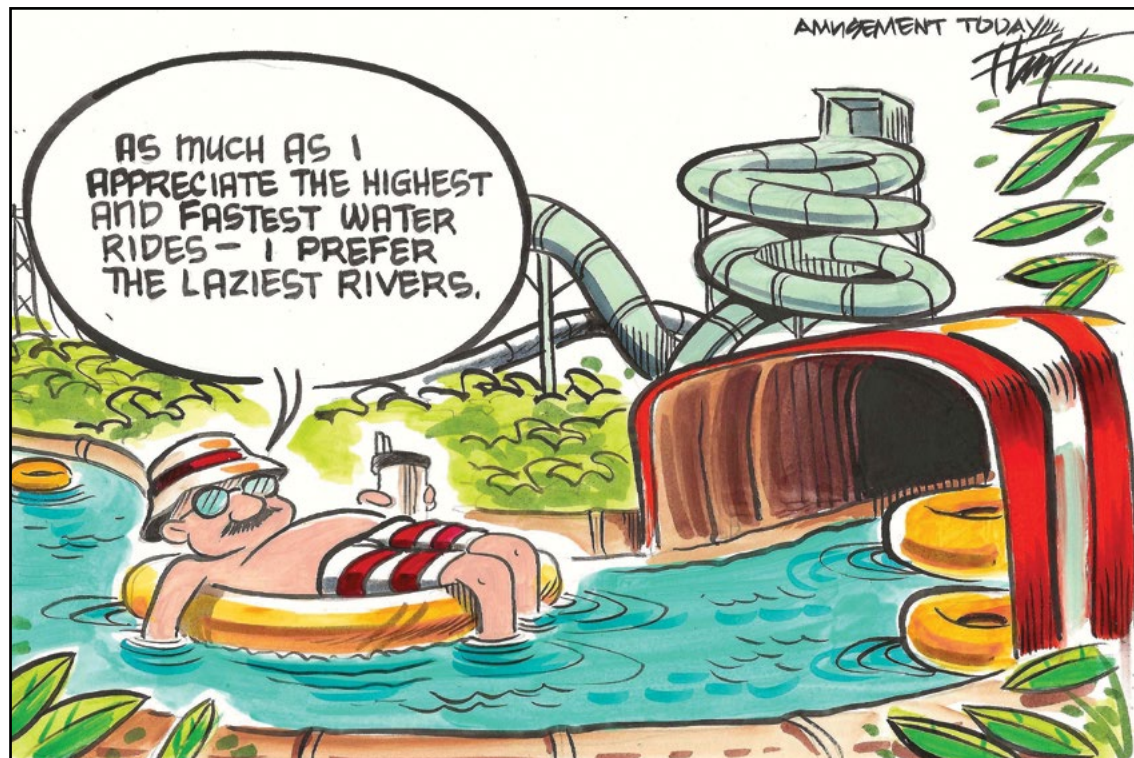
This unique association of family fun and amusement parks isn't limited to Mickey Mouse and the Sunshine State. When I travel and meet new people, I mention I'm from Cincinnati, Ohio and it's inevitable I'll field a curiosity or two about our Cincinnati Bengals and Kings Island. Quite recently, I enjoyed a few days in Sandusky, Ohio, for Ohio Bike Week. However, despite rolling on motorcycles and riding to a major bike rally, as soon as someone heard we were traveling to Sandusky, "Are you checkin' out Cedar Point?" would roll off someone's tongue and a discussion of past visits would ensue.

Tennessee has the starry skies and beautiful Smoky Mountains, but try talking about it without hearing about Dollywood. The Dallas Cowboys's AT&T Stadium might dominate the Arlington, Texas, skyline, but every visit concludes with coming home to the question "How is Six Flags Over Texas these days?" or similar.

Our attractions have been the home of family fun — and the centerpiece of tourism — for so long, they have become more than destinations. They are part of our pop culture. They are just as much what defines the area as its geography and history.

Part of the beauty of America is that every state has a feel and a style. Local communities each have a flavor, a drink you have to taste and food you have to sample. And while local history is recorded in statues and plaques, parks and attractions have become monuments to family fun that capture our imaginations across borders and statelines.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: DJ Vourderis, Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park

Amusement industry Americana

This Independence Day, we approach the quarter millennium of the United States of America's existence. I wanted to draw some parallels between the nation and vocation I am proud and blessed to have been born into.



Vourderis

In 1776, the Founding Fathers had little in common. They were often rivals, just as many of us in the amusement industry compete with each other. Like them, we know that our greatest strength comes when we work together for the greater good, and that there is nothing we can't do when we work as a team. My uncle always says, "A rising tide lifts all ships." When we unite our efforts, we all succeed.

We stand on the shoulders of giants who came before us, figures like George Washington in the 18th century and George Washington Ferris in the 19th. Their lives and dedication to liberty empower us to help others pursue happiness. Those men were not

perfect, but they strove to be more perfect. Similarly, our parks will never be truly complete. They are always evolving, continually seeking to create a brighter tomorrow for all.

Amusement parks give us the opportunity to bring joy. This is vital; this is the most important thing. I don't think we ever stop and think about the responsibility we all have. Regardless of what country we're from or what role we play, we are necessary. This is not a business simply about profit and loss; this is a community centered on promise and possibility.

Lastly, on this, our 249th year, we are the United States of America. And to the Republic for which it shall always stand, we are One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice — not for the few, not for those that look like us or sound like us — what makes us great is liberty and justice for all. Our industry and nation need not dwell on the past for their golden age; that bright future lies ahead of us.

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

Chris Baker, SeaWorld Orlando

A Texan at heart, **Chris Baker** began his career at **Six Flags Over Texas** and has since joined the **United Parks and Resorts** team having worked at **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay** and **Adventure Island**. Currently, he leads operations at **SeaWorld Orlando**. Baker is a devoted husband to his wife Lisa and a loving father to his three daughters. Those who work with him always admire his boots-on-the-ground approach and his expertise when it comes to budgeting and plan preparation. When it comes to the guests, he is quick to make sure his team delivers. Although transplanted to Florida, he always welcomes his Texas friends when they come to visit.

Title: Vice President of Park Operations, SeaWorld Orlando

Number of years in the industry: More than 34 years. I started in February 1991 at Six Flags Over Texas.

Best thing about the industry: Is the energy of theme parks and the amazing people I get to work with as we bring joy to families and friends. Theme parks are one of the few activities where people truly decompress and enjoy quality time with each other.

Favorite amusement ride: Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind; it combines great storytelling and a thrilling ride.

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

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Employee turnover. Team members are the greatest asset of any theme park — they truly make or break the guest experience. Investing in their work environment and career development isn't just rewarding, it's essential to our success.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ... the excitement of guests enjoying time with family and friends and making core memories.

The food item I would prefer to fix outside is ... Cinnamon Bread! Best treat ever!

The last time I was on a waterslide was ... last month, at Aquatica Orlando with my kids.

In which decade were you the best dressed? The 2020s... when my daughters took over choosing my outfits.

The sitcom I could watch every day is ... *The Office*.



Now with a career in Orlando, Chris Baker's roots in Texas helped him to adjust to another warm climate. COURTESY CHRIS BAKER

My favorite part of the workday ... mornings; walking the park in the early morning. It's the calm before the day begins. It's an opportunity to regroup and reset as we prepare for another exciting day.

In a single word, my living room is ... relaxing.

The place I would love to show my three girls is ... Hawaii

When flying, three things I want in my carry-on would be ... phone, airpods and peanut M&M's.

The thing I miss most about Texas is ... Rangers Opening Day, the Comal River, family and friends.

My favorite color of any car I've ever owned was ... dark blue.

Which would you choose — a free plane ticket to Paris or not having to cook for a month? Paris, travel always.

Pick one: cowboy hat or baseball cap. Baseball cap, but I do like a good cowboy hat.

The hottest I've ever been was ... on a Houston/Galveston vacation in August — any year.

The athlete I have the most respect for is ... Dirk Nowitzki.

The oldest thing I own is ... baseball cards that I collected when I was 10 years old.

When it comes to me growing a beard, my wife says ... go for it!

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

'Family' birthday at Lake Winnie



ROSSVILLE, Ga. — Lake Winnepesaukah Amusement Park marked a historic milestone this week as community and industry leaders joined family, friends and longtime partners to celebrate the park's 100th anniversary. "This celebration belongs to my whole family; I only wish they could all be here to see us reach this milestone," reflected Tennyson Dickinson, park director of Lake Winnepesaukah and great-granddaughter of founders Carl and Minette Dixon. "I want to thank everyone who has ever walked through the gates, and every happy child who loved the park and decades later brought their children to enjoy it." Dickinson and her mother — Adrienne Rhodes, park president and granddaughter of Lake Winnie's founders — are centered above alongside community and industry dignitaries during the park's birthday celebration on June 17, 2025.

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► SCREAMIN

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contacted me in July of 2023 and said they figured out where they wanted to put it. We sent a contract in January 2024 and basically had one year to have the ride delivered to the site. Where they chose to put it, in the hollow, is amazing. It looks like it is going to revitalize that area, opening up some walking paths.”

The site installation was not without a few speed bumps, Underkoffler explained. “Obviously, building right next to the creek presents its own level of challenges. This is quite a structure that had to be built, to hold the whole structure in place. There was a lot of drilling that needed to happen. Of course, we didn’t have the best winter, as well, so that contributed. Then even leading up to opening, some rainy days. Overall, everything went very smoothly. We hit our deadline of opening by Memorial Day weekend. I’m really excited to be able to hit those deadlines.

“We have a great relationship with S&S, with



The attraction takes riders 137 feet in the air above Spring Creek (above left). Sitting in downward-facing seats, riders will experience looking straight down to the creek and walkway. Each ride cycle seats up to 40 passengers in four candy-themed ride vehicles. COURTESY HERSHEY PARK

Jason and all the rest of his team,” said Underkoffler. “We had that relationship when we opened the triple tower. That open line of communication continued. When we did choose this attraction, for this location, they were ready to support us. They were with us the whole way, all the way through commissioning. They are great partners.”

The North Logan, Utah, manufacturer had an equally pleasant experience with this customer. “The installation went great. Hersheypark is an incredible park. Our team worked very, very well with

their team, very closely with both Hershey and their contracted installation company. We were able to get that done right on time for them,” said Mons.

He then shared a testimony from **John Long**, president, CEO and Chairman of the Board of **Hershey Entertainment & Resorts**. “John came up to us the day we were there for media and said they’ve had 21 years of opening rides on time, and they were grateful to us for continuing with that legacy of on-time ride openings,” said Mons.

“I think our swings are a very underrated ride. The thrust you get out of the air of swinging back and forth is incredible, not to mention the positive and negative G’s that you experience on that ride. It’s one that I think everyone should experience. I just think they hit it out of the park with the theming on that [ride.] It’s a fun, exciting ride. It drives customers to that part of the park. It revitalizes the park, and the IP is just spot-on for what they have done there. They’ve done a good job all around.”

At the beginning of every new project, S&S meets with all their employees.

“We let them know what we are working on, how we’re going to handle it through the company, what the project number is going to be — all of those business details. The project manager’s



responsibility is to oversee the totality of the project, incorporating customer IP, all of that stuff. At the beginning of this project, knowing Hershey and knowing the support the parks and resorts provide to the Hershey endowment (Foundation), I felt like we needed to go one step further,” said Mons.

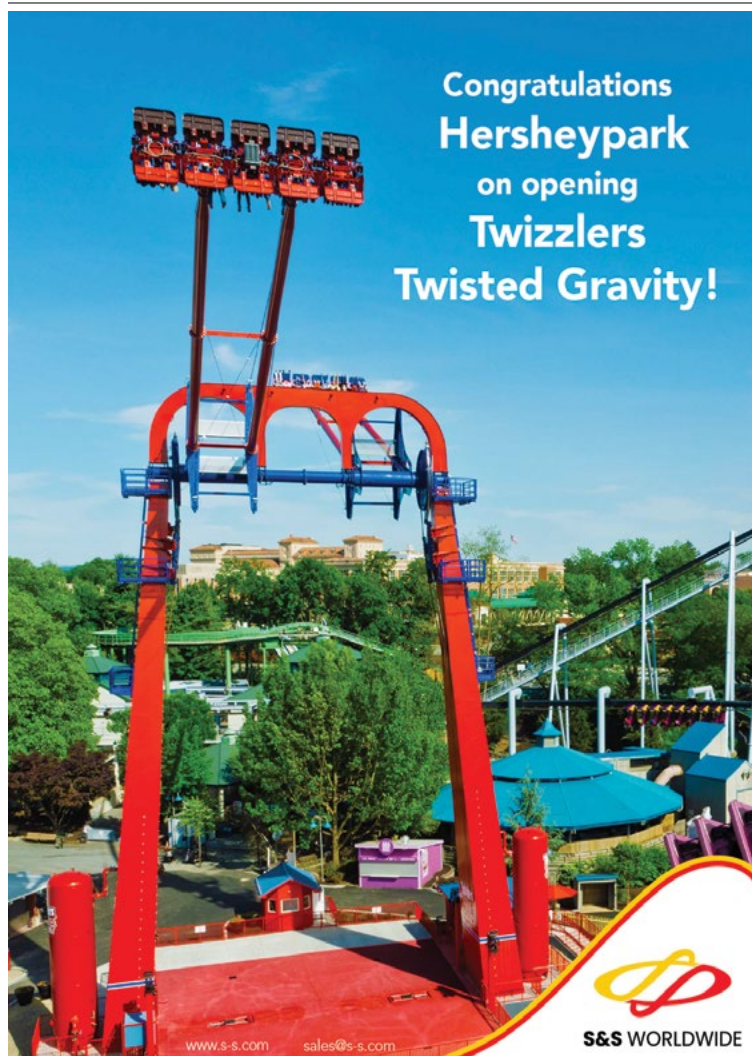
“We invited the construction manager at the time, **Tony Rossi**, to join our company on a Zoom presentation. All the company was assembled in the room. Tony gave a 20-minute presentation on Hershey, on the park, on the endowment and how S&S was doing more than just building a ride, that we were helping to support that endowment. We were part of that endowment legacy, moving forward. That created a very special connection for my employees to the park and this project. I still have

employees a year and a half later express gratitude and excitement for having been part of something more than just the sale of a product.”

Twizzlers Twisted Gravity has already made a big impression. “It’s a unique attraction. The location is definitely what sets this apart from other models of this ride. The ability to have it swing out over Spring Creek, you really have elements of a coaster, with height and speed on a flat ride. We’re excited to bring that to Hersheypark,” said Underkoffler.

The new ride is the dominant attraction located in the Comet Hollow section of the 182-acre park. It was built on the site formerly occupied by the Hersheypark amphitheater (1973-2016 with Halloween Dark Nights utilizing it as a haunt area more recently).

• hersheypark.com



The massive ride sits on a bluff in Comet Hollow. Ride queuing takes place on the right, with guests lining the steps. It is located beside the Overlook Food Court with the Coal Cracker flume ride directly across the midway. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

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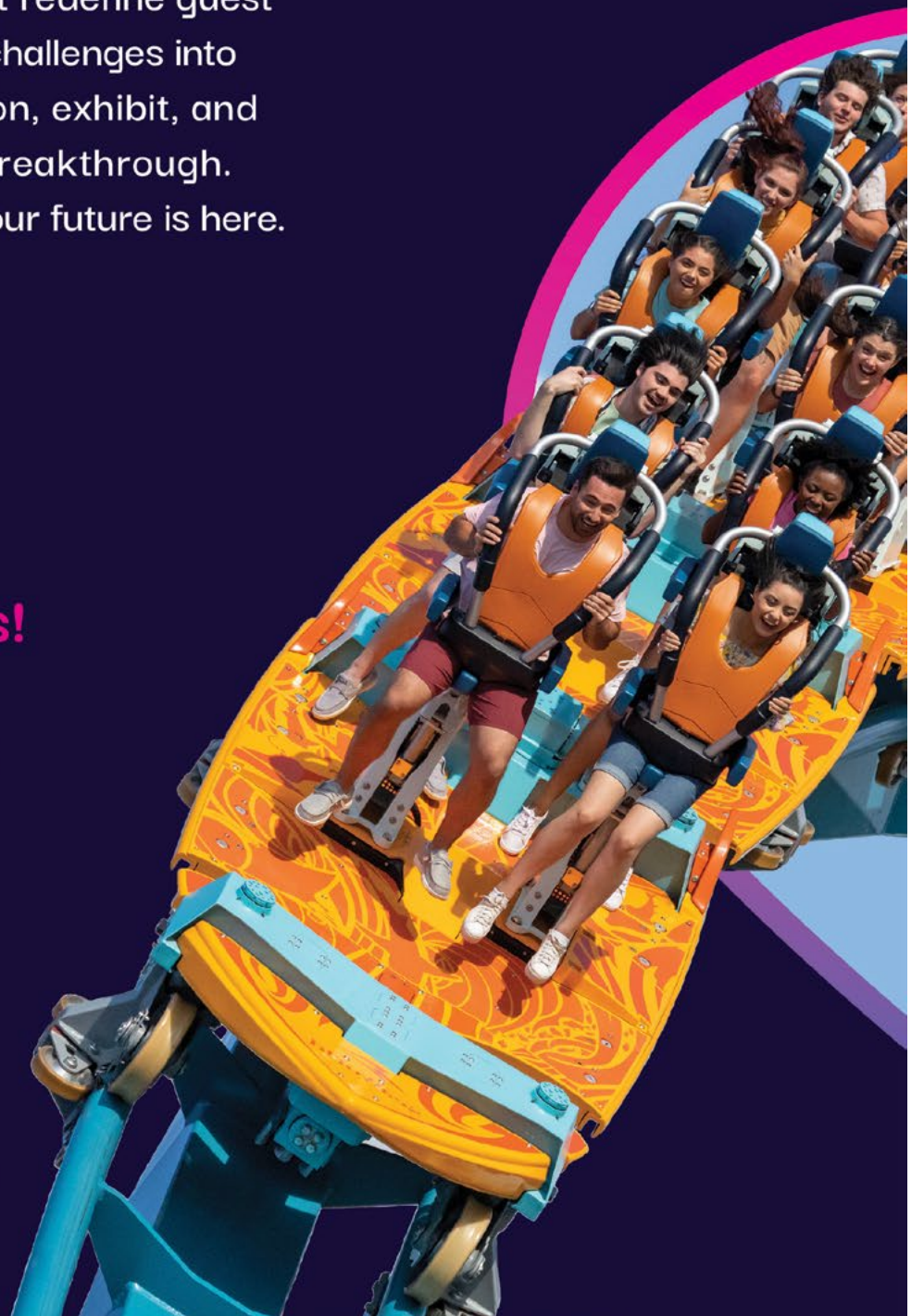
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►GHOSTLY
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3D modelling and animation,” said Mancey. “**Rival Animation** helped us to create the statue at the front of the attraction, as well as the in-ride information screens.” Lagotronics provided the gameplay, while Mack Rides supplied the ride system. Earlier this year, the two companies partnered at **Europa-Park** on a similar style attraction.

“This ride has one vehicle in each scene. It is not only media based but also uses theming,” said **Mark Beumers**, CEO, Lagotronics. “It has three varieties of gameplay. One is big media screens, another is scenery with projection mapping on top of it, and the third is scenery with animatronics. We provide three types of interactives. It makes it really unique.”

There are eight scenes, seven of which feature gameplay, and the final scene reveals scores. “This version has five vehicles,” said **Dirk Engelhardt**, area sales manager, Mack Rides. “There are



Paultons Park’s transformation of a former 4-D theater brings new life to the area of the park. COURTESY PAULTONS PARK

outer scenes where you shoot at screens to collect points, but the interior scenes are themed, physical sets with screens integrated.”

The five vehicles are two-sided, making for 10 benches of seats for guests. The seats rotate during the ride experience to turn toward the inner and outer scenes.

With more than four minutes of gameplay, the pre-show storyline and engaging queue, it makes for a long experience.

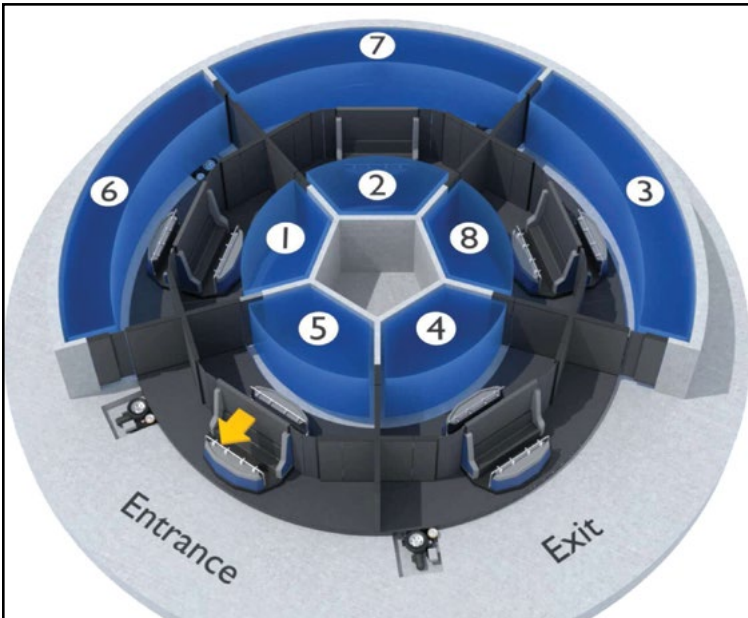
“This is 2-D projection, so you could say [the operations] are a bit simpler,” said Engelhardt. “But the real theming makes it feel more

like a dark ride. The movement is set up like Europa-Park, but it is smaller, about 15 meters in diameter. You could place this in empty buildings. The setup of our structure can be done without foundations; it’s made of material you can set up directly on the floor and put up all the settings and screens around it.”

“One of the key strengths of this version: it delivers a dark ride experience in a footprint not much larger than a typical flat ride,” added **Kathrin Haefele**, marketing, Mack Rides. “That makes it a strong option for parks with limited space or looking to add something indoor and family-friendly without major infrastructure work.”

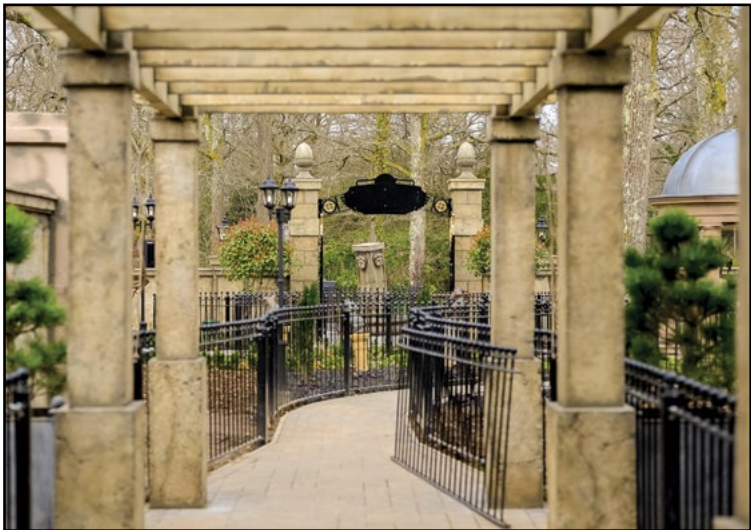
The phasers are not mounted to the vehicle but handheld instead.

“Even though the ride features physical theming throughout, the system is designed to move smoothly and precisely around the sets,” Haefele noted. “It runs on a compact guided track with controlled vehicle rotation, which allows for close interaction with the scenery without compromising safety or motion. It’s all about



This illustration shows how the eight scenes and load/unload areas utilize a tight footprint. COURTESY LAGOTRONICS

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Paultons announces 2026 expansion

Just as Ghostly Manor was debuting, **Paultons Park** wasted no time in telling guests what was coming next. The park is investing £12 million in 2026 for a new themed land: Valgard – Realm of the Vikings. It is the largest investment in the park to date.

The new area will propel the park’s audience from families to those with older kids. The park’s first roller coaster with inversions will debut. Called Drakon, it will be a Euro-Fighter coaster from **Gerstlauer** that will feature a vertical lift and two upside-down elements. Another thrill ride will be a Wild Swing from **ART Engineering**.

Keeping the younger ones in mind, a new playground will be added to make sure there is something for everyone. In addition, a themed high-capacity restaurant will complement the area.

An existing coaster, Cobra, will be rethemed to Raven, making it more cohesive to the new land.

“As an independent, family-owned theme park, we’re incredibly proud of the investments we make to deliver the very best guest experience,” said **James Mancey**, deputy managing director. “We’ve opened two brand-new rides in the last two years and with the build of Valgard firmly underway, we’re excited to open a further three, bigger-and-better-than-ever-before rides, between now and summer 2027.”

A new water-themed attraction has been teased for 2027, also in the Valgard area.



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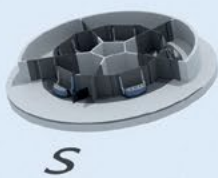
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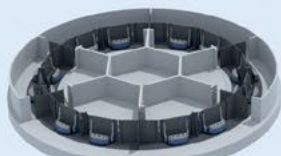


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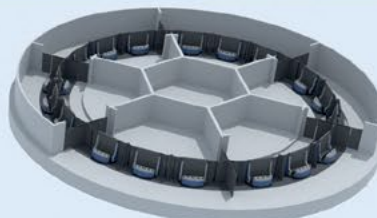
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►GHOSTLY

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immersing riders while keeping things tight and efficient behind the scenes.”

The park’s target audience is anyone aged five years and older. Guests arm themselves with phantom phasers.

“Even with the smaller version of the game-play theater, you can still do 500 people an hour,” Engelhardt told *Amusement Today*. “The investment for the whole thing is interesting compared to real dark rides. The interactivity in the small space makes it possible for a park like Paultons Park to invest in a dark ride. It’s affordable.”

The installation of the ride system took only a few weeks. Lagotronics was then able to come in and create the gameplay, along with **Themics** for the scenery.

“The cooperation with Paultons Park has been an absolute pleasure from the first idea of this ride until



Lagotronics and Mack Rides were the suppliers of the new family attraction.
COURTESY PAULTONS PARK

the ride was opened for the visitors,” Beumers said.

“It was our very creative colleague **Michael Thiesen** who first came up with the idea to present the spooky-themed Gameplay Theater to Paultons Park for the existing 4-D cinema building,” Beumers told *AT*. “The ride was a perfect fit in this building, and the ghostly theme was derived from the Old Mansion that once stood in Paultons Park. Everybody loved the idea.”

Paultons Park commissioned **Leisure Expert Group** to completely develop the design in great detail. A collaboration between Lagotronics and **Mack Media** refined the media content.

Paultons Park is responsible for the façade, garden and queue, giving the entire attraction a cohesive feel.

“Our in-house team of engineers and landscapers completed a lot of the work outside Ghostly Manor and

in the pre-show areas, creating an immersive experience through the queue and ride areas, and it’s been fantastic for these experienced teams to collaborate with such skilled external partners to create a high-quality experience we’re really proud of,” said Mancey.

“We have worked with the very best technical and theming experts in the attractions business to create Ghostly Manor,” said **James Mancey**, deputy managing director. “Our teams

and partners have done a remarkable job at creating our very own haunted house, brimming with entertaining paranormal activity. Ghostly Manor really does look like it’s always been part of Paultons Park.”

At the end of the ride, players can compare their scores to see who has the best ghost-hunting expertise.

“Ghostly Manor has proven to be one of the most popular rides at Paultons Park since it opened in May. We’ve seen scores of families take on the ghost hunting challenge several times during their visit to try and beat their previous scores and each other,” said Lawrence Mancey. “The opening of Ghostly Manor wouldn’t have been such a success without the help of our partners. The reliability of the attraction has been excellent and the support from Mack Rides, Lagotronics, Themics, and the Leisure Expert Group has been fantastic throughout the entire process.”

•paultonspark.com.uk

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Walibi Holland premieres first RMC dual racing Raptor coaster, YoY

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

BIDDINGHUIZEN, Netherlands — There's nothing like having a marketing niche for a new attraction, and **Walibi Holland** has some new bragging rights. This spring, the park debuted YoY, a unique attraction supplied by **Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC)**.

Called YoY, it is said to sound like "joy" when pronounced in Dutch. "The name had to express the sensation when riding it: Joy, happiness, not fear for example," said **Sayenne Dollevoet**, marketing. "We liked to use the 'Y' because it stands for two tracks joining into one."

"I was excited to attend the grand opening for YoY. The park did a fantastic job with the opening ceremonies, including fireworks, performers, treats, and custom swag. It was great to see the guests smiling as they exited the latest RMC," said **Darren Torr**, RMC president.

With all its superlatives, there is certainly a promotional clout behind the new coaster.

YoY is the world's first single-rail dueling coaster. It is also Europe's fastest, tallest and steepest dual coaster.

"When deciding on a new roller coaster, we liked the concept of the single rail; you are closer to the track, giving you a different experience," Dollevoet told *Amusement Today*. "It was not only new to Walibi but also for the parks around us. We had worked with RMC on Untamed in 2019, and we



YoY features two tracks, one with inversions and one without. Interaction is what makes YoY different than all other coasters at the park. COURTESY WALIBI HOLLAND

liked their eagerness to go to the edge with the layout."

But what makes the ride particularly distinctive is that the two sides of the roller coaster are dramatically different. One side is deemed the "chill" side, while the other is the "thrill" side. What does that mean? The chill side does not feature any inversions, while the thrill side offers six.

"We serve two target groups: families and teenagers/young adults," said Dollevoet. "We created one attraction for both groups."

But even with those differences, the interaction between the two trains of riders is what really sells the ride.

"My personal favorite element is the 'Top Gun' stall where the thrill side inverts above the chill family side," Torr told AT.

RMC refers to its single-rail coasters as Raptor tracks.

"The idea of thrill versus family racing Raptors

was discussed in 2019 just after the opening of the Untamed IBox conversion. Walibi wanted both racing and dueling elements with as much variety and interaction as possible," said **Joe Draves**, layout designer. "The Top Gun Stall was placed in prominent view at the front of the plaza, as it was both a park and RMC favorite racing element."

The six inversions on the thrill side (green) are a barrel roll, drop, zero-G stall, cut back, two corkscrews and a barrel roll.

While the chill side (blue) doesn't feature inversions, riders shouldn't expect a leisurely Sunday drive either.

Both sides offer the high-five moment. The green track is intended to represent nature, while the blue track symbolizes water.

"The biggest design challenge was keeping the trains in sync throughout the elements, as both tracks are wildly different," noted



Draves. "The family side carries a slightly higher average speed than the thrill, primarily due to having the thrill side invert over the underlying family ride at four different points along the track. With all other things equal, the heavier of the two trains should take the win."

YoY features four trains with eight riders positioned

single file in each train.

"This was the first time a Raptor has gone through the TUV approval process. We are pleased that our efforts to work closely with TUV led to a successful, drama-free opening," said Torr.

"We're excited to further demonstrate the capa-

► See WALIBI, page 12



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From the start, the two trains race each other.
COURTESY RMC

►WALIBI
Continued from page 11

bilities of our Raptor track and trains and how versatile they are. RMC is committed to providing parks and parkgoers with unique experiences,” said **Hunter Novotny**, international ride consultant. “This project has been a great example of what is possible with great partners.”

Part of the 2025 expansion includes a new water-front restaurant, **Flavors**. Within, guests find gourmet takes on grilled cheese sandwiches along with terrace views of the park’s lake and new coaster.

As an additional bonus, the new area now features the best views of two other roller coasters: the tangled **Xpress Platform 13** from **Vekoma** and the 154-foot-tall **Goliath** from **Intamin**, the tallest roller coaster at the park. **Walibi Holland** now boasts several diverse roller coasters in its arsenal. As previously noted, the park worked with RMC before with the creation of **Untamed** in 2019. **Walibi Holland** now has nine coasters for its audience, which range from children’s fare to intense thrillers.

“We could not be prouder of our team to pull this unique ride together,” **Novotny** told **AT**. “Not

FAST FACTS

YoY

Supplier:
RMC

•

Speed:
80 kph/51 mph

•

Height:
29 meters/95 feet

•

Inversions:
Thrill 6, Chill 0

•

Length:
655 meters/2,149 feet

•

Trains:
Four, eight-seater trains

•

Ride time:
90 seconds

•

Maximum drop:
27 meters/89 feet

only seeing the interactive moments that came into reality, but to be able to include them in the first family versus thrill coaster. Having both demographics in a single footprint and letting family and friends race regardless of their thrill level is a huge accomplishment.”

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July 4th holiday marks centennial anniversary for Belmont Park

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — **Belmont Park** is turning 100 years old on July 4, and officials there have an array of ways that guests may join in the action with celebrations and promotions running throughout the 100 Days at Belmont. Celebrations began May 26 and will run for 100 days, ending September 26.

There is even a new ride for the 2025 season for guests. The new Tiki Typhoon is a Roundup built by **Dartron Industries**.

"This was added at the beginning of the year," said **Maddison Sinclair**, spokesperson for the park. "We add something new every year."

Sinclair said they will have an official ceremony on July 4 to denote the historic milestone with local politicians and park officials on hand.

"But we won't be able to celebrate with fireworks or drones," she said. "We are in the flight path."

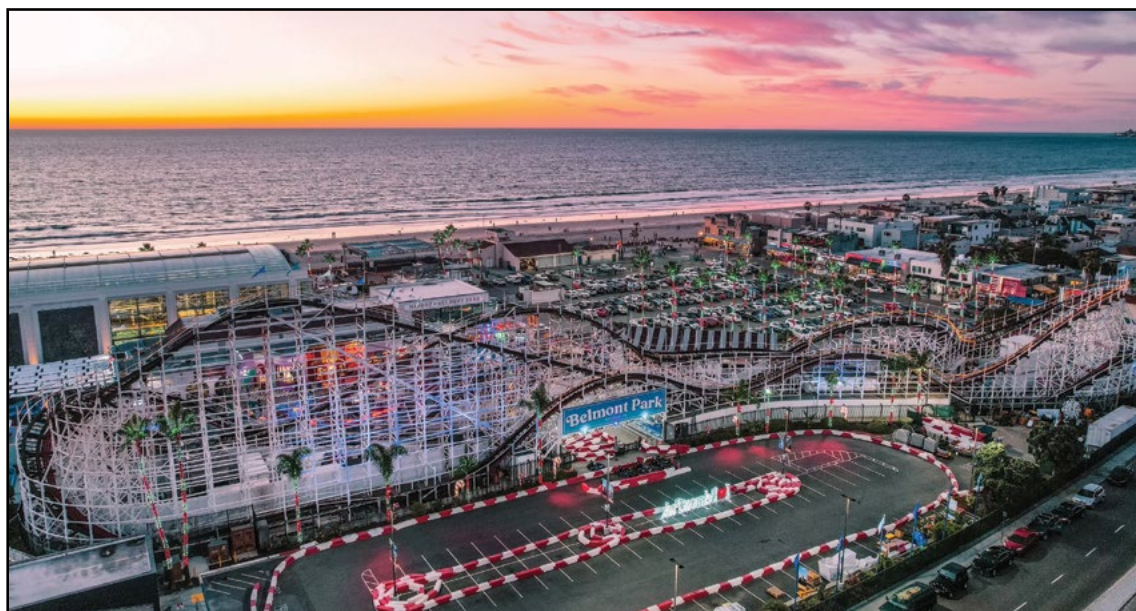
So, park officials focused on the centennial promotions for the 100th celebration, Sinclair said.

One promotion is the Lifetime Pass giveaway. Park officials created three ways for guests to get into the running. They are by sharing a favorite memory, by purchasing a ride-and-play wristband online and snagging a digital wristband, and by becoming a season pass holder online or on-site.



Belmont Park has helped celebrate its centennial season with the addition of Tiki Typhoon, a Dartron Industries Roundup.

COURTESY BELMONT PARK



Belmont Park, San Diego, boasts over 25 rides and attractions and still, after 100 years, offers rides on the Giant Dipper and a swim in the Plunge Pool. From the beginning, the Giant Dipper wooden roller coaster has been very popular as shown below on opening day July 4, 1925. COURTESY BELMONT PARK

Another promotion is being billed as the "Weight to Win a Subaru" car giveaway. The Subaru Forester is stationed at the park's south entrance. Guests try to guess the weight of the car. The closest entry to the actual weight wins.

Visitors might think they can just look up the weight of the Subaru, but park officials have added extra weight to the car to make it more interesting. Guessers scan a QR code and enter the weight prediction. The winner will be announced on September 13. The winner has to be on-site to claim the prize.

A third promotion is the 100Days for \$100 at the Plunge. San Diego locals may receive 100 days of unlimited Plunge Pool Access for just \$100 with the purchase of a Centennial Summer Membership during the 100 Days of Belmont. The offer is valid for San Diego County residents and first-time members only.

An interesting historical fact about the pool is that it originally was filled with salt water. The pool, also celebrating 100 years, is 60 feet by 175 feet and holds 400,000 gallons of water.

"**Spencer Meinburg**, who is the general manager at the Plunge, said, 'From my understanding when the Plunge was originally built, it had tunnels from the ocean that brought water directly in and out,'" noted Sinclair. "He added that 'Sometime in



the 1940s it was converted to freshwater due to the corrosion caused by the salt water."

After 100 years, it is still a popular attraction at the facility.

Dollar Dipper Days marked a fourth promotion. Guests may ride the historic wooden Giant Dipper coaster for \$1 per ride on Tuesdays.

The Giant Dipper roller coaster at Belmont Park is a true icon. Celebrating 100 years, it has a colorful history of ups and downs. According to the history of the coaster on the Belmont Park's website, the coaster "has survived several earthquakes and even a fire."

"Today, it remains one of the few traditional wooden coasters in the country, offering riders a thrilling experience that dates back to the golden age of amusement parks," the website states.

The coaster was designed by Frank Prior and Frederick Church. It was added to

the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987.

To get the coaster up and ready to shine for its centennial, Sinclair said the park replaced all of the wood on the coaster last year.

"It was a huge project," she said. "Belmont Park worked with **Great Coasters International** to replace the wood."

Taco Tuesday at El Jefe marked an additional promotion. Every Tuesday during the 100 Days of Belmont, tacos are \$1.

Additionally, the park featured Belmont Birthday Bites. Visitors can celebrate with birthday-themed treats. Those include Birthday Cake Soft Serve at **Dole Truck**; Birthday Cake Milkshake at Belmont's; Birthday Cake Ice Cream at **Dippin Dots**; Birthday Cake Ice Cream and assorted Centennial-themed pastries at Sweet Shoppe.

And if that is not enough, park officials shut down half of the park earlier this year to replace the concrete there.

"We are normally the slowest from January through March," Sinclair said. "So, during that time this year, we closed half the park to make that update."

A milestone anniversary such as 100 years would not be the same without limited edition retro Belmont Park merchandise, including T-shirts, hoodies and hats

Belmont Park welcomed its first guests on July 4, 1925, under its original name **Mission Beach Amusement Center**.

It was developed by **John D. Spreckels** to attract people to the **Mission Beach** area. According to Belmont Park's website historical data, Spreckels passed away not long after the park opened.

"His organization granted the entire entertainment center to the city of San Diego for the enjoyment of its people," the website states. "The Mission Beach Entertainment Center remained popular through the 1930s and 1940s and was eventually renamed Belmont Park in 1955."

The park began to show some decline in the late '60s and '70s, falling into disrepair and eventually closing in 1976.

Actually, it was really all about the coaster. Right after the closing of the park, a group of local citizens tried to restore and reopen the coaster. In 1989, a developer, the **Belmont Park Retail Center**, contacted the **Santa Cruz Seaside Company**, responsible for the boardwalk of the same name, to see if they were interested in restoring and operating it.

"Over two million was spent on restoration and one new train," according to the website.

But that was all it took to get it back online, open the park and end up with what is seen today. The park includes over 25 rides and attractions, games, food and drink and more.

Belmont Park has been owned by **Pacifica Enterprises LLC** since 2012.

• belmontpark.com

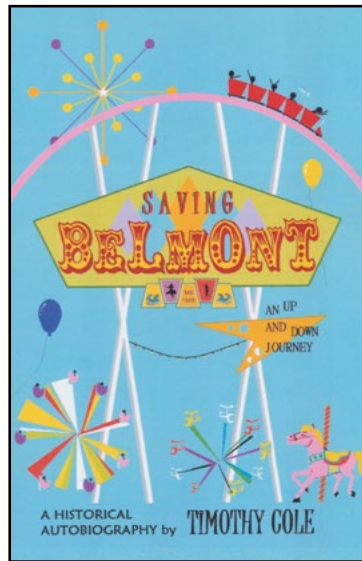
Saving Belmont offers autobiographical tale of park's ups, downs

REVIEW: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Belmont Park in San Diego opened in 1925. While it has always been an integral part of the city's culture, positioned right on Mission Beach, its story has never been smooth sailing. Celebrating a century milestone this year, a new book tells the full tale in a most unique way.

Author Tim Cole's life has been linked to the seaside establishment since his childhood. It helped fuel his passion for carnivals, rides and roller coasters. His role in saving Belmont Park — and in particular its Giant Dipper roller coaster — cannot be overstated.

One could assume that *Saving Belmont* would recount 100 years of history — and that's certainly there — but Cole turns this type of book on its head. As noted on the cover, the



book is an autobiography.

Part One conveys the first 35 years of Belmont Park's existence. Some people may believe the amusement center was successful for decades before its eventual closure in the 1970s. While partially true, the beloved San Diego fun spot was always a bullseye for uncertainty, changing ownerships and tumultuous city regula-

tion. Cole documents this in spectacular detail, quite possibly the most thoroughly researched book on the subject.

It's in Part Two that the book grabs the reader by the shoulders by bringing in the human element. With a childhood involving frequent relocation, school cruelty and arguably abusive parents, Cole found solace in building things in miniature and becoming preoccupied with certain fascinations — *Mary Poppins*, *Lost In Space*, Susan Dey and roller coasters.

As the book progresses, the two separate tales of the author's life and the ups and downs of Belmont Park's own existence eventually converge.

By Part Three, Cole's and Belmont Park's journeys became particularly linked. Much of this was owing to the formation

of the Save The Coaster Committee, to which Cole belonged. Officially associated with the coaster restoration process, Cole found to be a source of therapy for him as employment, college and homelife caused him to have, as he says, "crippled self-esteem."

Part Four not only brings the celebration of the Dipper's return in 1990 but also the elation Cole felt for almost a decade of work. It makes the separation between Cole and Belmont all the more heartbreaking before the book's conclusion.

"When I initially began putting the book together in 2004, it was going to be just the history of the evolution of Belmont Park behind the scenes," Cole told *Amusement Today*. "But nobody, say, in Montana, is going to care about what happened to

a little seaside park in San Diego. But a larger audience might like an 'unlikely success of the underdog' story, so I gave the Giant Dipper a humane side that people could relate to. As an underdog myself, who was the most emotionally attached to the project, and since we both had up-and-down lives, I thought the two would mesh nicely."

A review wouldn't be complete without observing that Cole could have substantially benefited from an editor. But it is the depth of his detail combined with the moving emotion of his personal journey that rises above perfect punctuation and minor spelling issues. He is a gifted storyteller. *Saving Belmont* is a historical book on the amusement industry like no other.

Saving Belmont by Tim Cole is available for purchase on Amazon.com.

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Cedar Point adds exciting new games to multiple midway areas

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

SANDUSKY, Ohio — Visitors to Cedar Point were greeted this year with 15 new games spread out in three different areas and visitors are responding positively, according to park officials.

“This year we were excited to offer 15 new games to our already great lineup of games, along with updates to many of our existing game locations,” said Dan Austin, games manager for Cedar Point. “We’ve received positive reactions from our guests. They’ve appreciated the new and improved games offerings.”

Austin said the park has been able to bring back some classic games like Bowler Roller, Whac-A-Mole and Hy Strykers.

“We already had a great selection of games, but we were able to expand the variety for our guests,” he said. “Every guest has a different skill set and we now have even more options for them to choose from.”

Austin said nine new attendant-free games were added to the Main Midway which is called Big Ticket Games. These games are



Cedar Point brought back some classic games to its midway with a new Bowler Roller game by Bob's Space Racers (above left). Also installed this year were newer midway challenges such as Bob's Space Racers Bazooka Blast (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN



player-ready, and they consist of individual-style games and group race games. These include Bazooka Blast, Short Range Basketball, Clown' Around Water Race, Balloon Bust and Whac-A-Mole.

“We partnered with Bob's Space Racers (BSR), which has developed these attendant-free games that you may see often at family entertainment centers,” Austin said. “At Cedar Point, we’ve taken a whole lineup of games and created a unique opportunity for our guests to play their favorites and accumulate their big tickets to redeem them for any prize in the lineup at our Big Ticket Redemption Center.”

Austin said the park's Big Ticket Redemption Center has prizes that range from one ticket up to 25 tickets. The Big Ticket Games have options to allow guests to win up to nine tickets in one play.

In addition, guests don't have to walk around with their prizes all day. They can hold onto their tickets and come back at the end of their day to redeem their tickets or use them on a return visit.

“The addition of these games also allows us to have them open earlier and later in the day,” Austin said.

The Big Ticket Redemption Center also is new.

“Our Big Ticket Redemption Center is located directly in the middle of our lineup of games on the

Main Midway,” Austin said. “We’ve upgraded almost all our games throughout the park this past year.”

The maXair Midway has seen the additions of Can Smash, Spot On and a seagull-themed game called Gone Fishin', all from BSR.

Austin said Can Smash is a fresh take on the park's former Tin Can game; guests can win their choice of prizes by knocking down all the cans off the platform in two throws. Spot On and Gone Fishin' are designed for guests who are looking for a winner-every-time option and are great choices for our younger guests.

Spot On is a colorful game table where guests can win a prize that correlates with the color their ball

lands on. For the Gone Fishin' game, the park chose to embrace the park's most famous bird, the seagull.

“At this custom game from Bob's Space Racers, guests go fishing for three fish and their total weight will determine what prize level they win,” Austin said. “Our prizes are seagull-themed and many are exclusive to Cedar Point.”

The Gemini Midway has seen the return of Hy Strykers. There are both full-size and kiddie-size Hy Strykers. Kids can play a winner-every-time option on the kiddie size game and older guests can test their strength on the full-size version. The new Strykers bring sounds and lights to the midway which really provides a fun atmosphere.

For the first time ever at Cedar Point, a game has been added to Camp Snoopy that is Snoopy-themed. The park partnered with BSR for this game as well.

“The Snoopy's Balloon Bust is a traditional balloon bust game that takes place inside Snoopy's iconic doghouse and has already been a huge hit,” Austin said. “At the game, guests can win a variety of Snoopy and Woodstock prizes.”

•cedarpoint.com

FAST FACTS

Cedar Point midway additions

Main Midway:
Bazooka Blast, Short Range Basketball, Clownin' Around Water Race, Balloon Bust, Bowler Roller and Whac-A-Mole

MaXair Ride Area:
a seagull-themed fishing game dubbed "Gone Fishin'," Can Smash and Spot On

Gemini Midway:
two new Hy Strykers, full-size and kiddie-size

Camp Snoopy:
Snoopy Balloon Bust game



Nine attendant-free games from Bob's Space Racers were installed along Cedar Point's Main Midway. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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Six Flags Great America, B&M join forces once again with 'Wrath'

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

GURNEE, Ill. — Some partnerships go way back. When Bolliger & Mabillard (B&M) branched out on its own, Six Flags Great America stepped up as the first customer. Iron Wolf, a standup coaster, debuted in 1990. Thirty-five years later, the pair are still collaborating on wild thrills.

Just shortly after Iron Wolf, the first B&M inverted coaster debuted at the park in 1992. Again, Six Flags took a chance on a new style of ride. Batman The Ride was such a revolutionary hit, the genre became a global industry sensation. In fact, Batman The Ride was so groundbreaking, it was the youngest attraction ever to receive the designation as an ACE Roller Coaster Landmark (rides designated for their historical significance) from American Coaster Enthusiasts.

This spring, Wrath of Rakshasa brings the total number of B&M coasters operating at Great America to five, tying the record for most at one park. With the retirement of the original installation from 1990, it is clear that the partnership has been a good one.

"It's been an incredible



Wrath of Rakshasa features a 96-degree drop and five inversions, both records for a dive coaster. Each train features three rows of seven.

AT/TIM BALDWIN

honor to continue the legacy our park has built with B&M with the addition of Wrath of Rakshasa," said John Krajnak, regional general manager. "This marks the sixth collaboration with them, and each has been a testament to their unmatched professionalism and innovation. We're extremely proud of how this coaster turned out. It's a stunning addition to our lineup and a powerful new chapter in the long-standing story between Six Flags Great America and B&M."

Opening on May 31, the new dive coaster breaks records for the genre. One of them is inversions. Other models (of the 18 built by B&M), might see taller heights or longer lengths, but Wrath of Rakshasa is the first to pump adrenaline with five upside-down elements: an Immelmann, dive loop, zero-G roll, corkscrew and barrel roll. All this happens without a block brake, making it a nonstop rush for riders without a chance to catch their breath.

The thriller also boasts the steepest drop on a B&M dive coaster: 96 degrees. After pausing at the precipice in the genre's signature move — a hold for three seconds, staring straight down — trains dive beyond the line of sight in a steeper-than-vertical plunge of 171 feet.

The ride is situated across



from the Arrow multi-looper, Demon. Both are positioned in the County Fair section of the park. While it may seem an odd fit to the area, the entrance has carnival-style posters that entice onlookers to see the rakshasa. Despite the quirky tie-in, the park gets major kudos on an original name. Statues, props and signage in the queue note that rakshasas are a mythological race of malevolent demons — perfect for a white-knuckle, pulse-pounding roller coaster.

"The park team played a major role in developing the name and theme for the ride," conveyed Rachel Kendziora, regional area manager, social media. "From the beginning, we wanted something bold and original that would stand out while also tying into the dark, rich history of our fan-favorite coaster, Demon. The name 'Wrath of Rakshasa' captures that perfectly — it's mysterious, powerful and rooted in ancient mythology. The storyline and theming take guests into a dark, myth-inspired world where they come face-to-face with the wrath of the Rakshasa, literally!"

The ride is situated on a plot of land where multiple

rides have been, going back to the park's original triple-arm Ferris wheel.

"We're always looking ahead and evaluating which areas of the park offer the best opportunities for new attractions," Krajnak told *Amusement Today*. "This particular location stood out — not only did it align with our plans for future growth, but placing it near Demon allowed us to create an exciting connection between two bold, high-energy coasters. It's a strategic use of space that enhances both the guest experience and the storytelling."

Riders are positioned in three rows on each train, with each row seating seven, making for a total ridership



A loose-items mechanism takes loose articles from one side of the loading side of the station to the unloading side.
AT/TIM BALDWIN

FAST FACTS

Wrath of Rakshasa

Supplier:

Bolliger & Mabillard

Height:

180 feet

Largest drop:

171 feet

Speed:

67 mph

Inversions:

Five

Length:

3,239 feet

Trains:

Three,
each seating 21 riders

Record-setting angle:

96 degrees

of 21 per circuit.

"For me, nothing beats sitting in the middle of the front row as you experience that beyond-vertical drop," Kendziora beamed. "It's a thrilling pause that really makes you catch your breath and think, 'What am I doing here?'" What makes it even more unique is the incredible view of the park's skyline — something we've never seen before. Since the coaster is positioned right in the heart of the park, it offers a perspective that's completely unique. It's truly breathtaking."

The park now boasts 16 roller coasters. Standing at 180 feet tall, Wrath of Rakshasa is the second tallest roller coaster at the park



The signature moment on a dive coaster is being held over the precipice for a few seconds before being released. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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Gardaland celebrates 50 years with new attractions, food, more

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

CASTELNUOVO DEL GARDA, Italy — **Gardaland Resort** kicked off its 50th anniversary year on April 5 by debuting two new experiences for guests, the **Animal Treasure Island**, an experience designed for international development, and **Dragon Empire**, a remodeled area that pays homage to the traditions of the Orient.

Gardaland, owned by **Merlin Entertainment**, is Merlin's first property to offer the **Animal Treasure Island** experience, which was developed by **Merlin Magic Making**, the creative studios of Merlin Entertainments.

"Following their opening in 2025, the new areas of **Animal Treasure Island** and **Dragon Empire** received an extremely positive reception from visitors, playing a significant role in renewing Gardaland's identity for its 50th anniversary," said **Renata Sortino**, park spokesperson.

Sortino said to officially celebrate the 50th anniversary of Gardaland on July 19, the park is organizing a special evening.

"It will be an emotional occasion, designed to celebrate the park's history with our guests," she said. "Although we cannot yet reveal the details, we can promise that it will be a unique event with surprises, shows and a truly unforgettable atmosphere. It will be an opportunity to experience the magic of Gardaland in an even more



With an investment of over \$11.5 million, **Animal Treasure Island**, is taking Gardaland visitors on a unique and exclusive adventure through a water dark ride that is entirely underground. COURTESY GARDALAND

extraordinary way."

Along with the new experiences and the special celebration, Gardaland also is offering a variety of anniversary merchandise, including mugs, keychains, pins, magnets, a commemorative gold coin and a new comic book featuring **Prezzemolo**, the beloved mascot of Gardaland Resort.

Gardaland doesn't release the names of suppliers, per park policies.

Sortino said both areas have enriched the park's offering and represent a strategic turning point for Gardaland.

"They offer accessible, sustainable experiences with high narrative value, in line with current entertainment trends based on original intellectual properties (IPs), immersiveness and emotional involvement," she said. "Gardaland thus celebrates its past while also positioning

itself as a cutting-edge destination that can speak to all generations and look to the future with ambition."

With an investment of over \$11.5 million, **Animal Treasure Island** is taking Gardaland visitors on a unique and exclusive adventure through a water dark ride that is entirely underground, encompassing over 64,583 square feet with 20 new highly engaging scenes.

The mysterious island goes beyond the simple experience of an attraction and offers a new narrative and sensory experience, according to park officials. The characters, while maintaining their characteristics as animals, are represented with values and behaviors that allow visitors to easily connect with each one of them and find themselves in their personalities. This connection between character and visitor hopefully is creating a lasting impression.

For the attraction, over 250 speakers are creating 360-degree binaural audio, while an original soundtrack and dedicated hardware ensure unprecedented immersion.

"Cutting-edge immersive technology enhances the ride, combining with detailed scenography and multi-level storytelling to transform the attraction into a cinematic experience in motion," Sortino said. "Visitors responded enthusiastically, praising the quality of the experience and the emotions it evokes."

Animal Treasure Island is part of an international roll-out project by Merlin Entertainments, which plans to replicate the experience after its inauguration in Gardaland in 2025 in other parks owned by the group.

Visitors to the newly remodeled **Dragon Empire** are being welcomed into the themed area by a striking blue-and-red gateway, adorned with red lanterns, fans and five-colored ropes, transporting them into a vibrant world of colors, music and celebrations. Enthralling shows and captivating melodies throughout the **Dragon Empire** area will make every visit a truly unique and unforgettable experience.

In the heart of the remodeled area, attractions are holding further surprises for visitors.

"The attractions were designed to appeal to a cross-cultural audience," Sortino said. "The new

area brought a new level of immersion, with revamped spaces for catering and shows. This strengthened the park's identity as a place of discovery and amazement."

Sortino said the **Rocket Factory**, a **Teacups** ride built by German manufacturer **Mack Rides**, is now an indoor attraction in the **Dragon Empire** area. It also has been particularly well received.

Along with the new areas, the food offerings have also been updated to reflect the new themes.

"Inside **Dragon Empire**, two food outlets have been renamed, the **Dragon Empire Hamburgeria**, a fast food offering a menu based on gourmet hamburgers, and the **Chiosco Senza Glutine**," Sortino said. "The latter is specially designed for those suffering from celiac disease, ensuring an inclusive offer without sacrificing taste."

At **Animal Treasure Island**, the pirate theme also is reflected in the food offerings. Visitors can choose between the **Bandits' Tavern Restaurant**, which serves Mediterranean and Italian cuisine, and the **Armadillary Covo Burger**, a fast food specializing in hamburger-based menus, perfect for a quick and adventurous break.

Gardaland officials unveiled a new commemorative logo that blends symbolism, tradition and innovation as well for the special milestone.

During the announcement of the new areas **Sabrina de Carvalho**, CEO of Gardaland, said: "We are proud that Merlin has chosen Italy and Gardaland for the launch of **Animal Treasure Island**. It will be a new and immersive experience that is suitable for everyone, characterized by an adventurous spirit and a fascinating awe-inspiring setting."

Gardaland officially opened on July 19, 1975. The resort includes Gardaland Park, **Gardaland Sea-Life**, **Legoland Waterpark**, **Gardaland Hotel**, **Adventure Hotel** and **Magic Hotel**. It is adjacent to Lake Garda.

•gardaland.it



The **Rocket Factory**'s remodeling as an indoor attraction has been well-received (above left). Also new for this season is a revamped **Dragon Empire** themed area (above right).

COURTESY GARDALAND

Santa's Village Amusement and Water Park adding three rides

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EAST DUNDEE, ILL. — **Santa's Village Amusement and Water Park**, opened its 66th season on May 17 with new features to offer guests in 2025.

Included in the "what's new" category are three rides new to the park. They are the Lil' Monster Rally, the Reindeer Rocker and the Coconut Competition.

"The Reindeer Rocker is currently open, and guests have been thrilled with this new addition," said **Lindsay Kosanovich**, sales and marketing manager at the park. "The Lil' Monster Rally and Coconut Competition are slated to open later this summer."

Kosanovich said the Reindeer Rocker was acquired from a family entertainment center in New Jersey. It is an **SBF/Visa** Top Dancer Mini model swinging platform ride designed to thrill both kids and adults. Height restrictions are 42 to 52 inches with a supervising companion. Guests



Santa's Village Amusement and Water Park added three new rides this season including the Reindeer Rocker from SBF/Visa (above left). Opening in the water park later this summer is the brand new Coconut Competition by Fibrart, it is a four-lane, mat racer (above right). COURTESY SANTA'S VILLAGE AMUSEMENT AND WATER PARK

over 52 inches can ride alone.

There are 12 seats, and it goes approximately 15 feet in the air.

Len Soled, Rides 4 U, said the Reindeer Rocker came from **Funplex**, Mt. Laurel Township. He was pleased to see it up and running at the park.

Soled said Santa's Village bought an SBF/Visa Pirate Ship 32 and had it installed and operating at the end of last year.

"It holds 40 people at one time and has a very simple

drive system," Soled said. "We thought at one time that the Pirate Ship might not continue to be as popular, but we are still selling dozens of them a year. Ours has a free-standing base so all you really need to install one is a slab of concrete."

The Lil' Monster Rally is a **Hampton** Umbrella ride with six cars. It was purchased from **Joyland** in Lubbock, Texas, after that park's closure. It has since been refurbished. This is a classic kiddie ride and perfect

for guests under 54 inches.

The Coconut Competition is a brand-new, four-lane mat racer slide manufactured by **Fibrart**. It is 350 feet in length.

Kosanovich said the Star Jets was the only ride retired after the 2024 season.

The new rides boost the park's ride arsenal to about 23.

The addition to the water park adds one more to the three exciting slide offerings.

Santa's Village also brought back an iconic feature at the first of 2025.

"With our park's rich

history, we were also excited to bring back the Polar Dome Ice Rink this past January," she said. "This was a beloved centerpiece of the park that had been closed for ice skating for over 20 years."

The Polar Dome ice skating rink opened January 17. After its 20-year closure, the park gave it a refreshed look. It offers a range of activities, including public skating, recreational hockey, Learn-to-Skate USA programs, themed events and birthday parties.

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Rides 4 U spins graffiti, street culture into rideable art installation

AT: David Fake
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NEW YORK — The Lower East Side just gained a little midway magic. The Public Hotel has parked a 360-degree burst of street culture in its front courtyard: a six-horse carousel hand-painted by Chicago graffiti star **Jordan “POSE” Nickel** and engineered by **Rides 4 U**. The pint-size machine was designed with a smaller diameter “to fit in [the] outdoor courtyard,” turning **Ian Schrager’s** property into its latest must-snap Instagram moment.

POSE spent two intense weeks in a Connecticut studio layering comic-book flashes, pop-art palettes and hidden messages onto every horse and panel.

“New York was my amusement ride,” the artist says. “I don’t want to give too much away ‘cause it’s meant to be explored and owned experientially by the viewers and riders.”

The finished piece, titled “Down the Rabbit Hole,” nods to the city’s 1980s graffiti heyday



Chicago-based graffiti artist POSE transformed this Rides 4 U carousel into a riot of color and culture outside the Public Hotel, where visitors can ride the art through August. AT/DAVID FAKE

while dropping Alice-in-Wonderland breadcrumbs — think flowers bursting through concrete and oversized emergency axes begging for escape.

For Rides 4 U, the commission was anything but ordinary. “Rides 4 U made it a turnkey project,” the company notes, handling everything from priming the fiberglass steeds to shepherding city permits, disassembling the equipment for paintwork and re-erecting it on Chrystie Street. “All we had to do was get it ready for the artist — POSE did

the rest.”

Public Hotel’s carousel extends Schrager’s long-running conversation with streetart that began at **Studio 54** and the **Palladium**, where legends such as **Basquiat** and **Haring** once left their marks. “I’m honored to add another layer to that legacy,” POSE told curator **Roger Gastman**, after completing the project.

The ride will whirl daily through the end of August — roughly a six-month engagement before it may tour other Schrager properties. Admission is free, and unlike most



gallery pieces, this one begs you to climb aboard. That physical interaction, POSE says, turns spectators into participants and “lets the art live in real-time.”

For the amusement industry, “Down the Rabbit Hole” is a savvy mash-up of classic ride hardware and contemporary urban storytelling. It proves that a small-footprint carousel can still spin big num-

bers on social media while delivering the low-maintenance reliability park operators expect. With summer crowds already lining up for selfies, the project underscores a truth midway vendors have known for decades: nothing moves people quite like a ride they can touch, photograph and remember long after the music stops and the lights dim.

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From spray cans to saddle seats — POSE’s hand-painted “Down the Rabbit Hole” carousel New York’s street art legacy with a touch of wonderland whimsy. AT/DAVID FAKE





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Waldameer's 2025 season brings new ride, park enhancements

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ERIE, Pa. — **Waldameer Park and Water World** opened for its 129th season on May 3 with several things to celebrate. Park President **Steve Gorman** now hopes that the not-so-great spring weather turns into great summer weather. “We have been slow due to the cool and rainy weather,” Gorman said. “We close early when the weather is bad and guest numbers are low. Since we opened this year, we have already exceeded the number of those closures that we would have in a normal year.”

But Gorman is excited about the park enhancements. A new ride debuted on opening day. Park officials introduced a new food area with some new food items. Several rides were being celebrated for milestone anniversaries and other updates were made to help alleviate long lines.

The new ride, the Time Twister, is a **Zamperla** Nebulaz ride. It consists of four pendulums attached to the sides of a central rotating tower. It stands about 30 feet high and holds 30 people at one time. It also is a continual ride, which moves riders



Waldameer Park and Water Park kicked off its 129th season in May with a brand new Zamperla Nebulaz ride the park has called "Time Twister." It consists of four pendulums attached to the sides of a central rotating tower. COURTESY WALDAMEER

on and off quickly.

“It has really done well,” Gorman said. “It sits very well in the spot, and people are enjoying riding it and watching it.”

Gorman said the park removed a Spider ride to fit the Time Twister into place. The Spider had been operating since 1977.

Several rides including the Whacky Shack, a **Chance** wipeout and Ravine Flyer 3 are being celebrated for milestone anniversaries. The Whacky Shack, a dark ride by **Bill Tracy**, is

55 years old this year. The Wipeout is 30 years old, and the Ravine Flyer 3 by **Miler** is 25 years old.

“Our big wave pool is 10 years old and continues to be very popular,” Gorman said. “Our **SBF/Visa** compact spinning coaster we call the Whirlwind is five years old this year.”

Also, during the off-season, park officials tore down a building that housed a food location, a retail location and was also being used as the entrance into the water park. In its place, they built two new

buildings. One is a new food location called Tasty Tater, popular for its fries.

“We added new food items such as fish, shrimp and Italian sausage,” Gorman said. “It is doing well. Our employees really like it, too.”

The other new building has retail and also

encompasses the entrance to the water park. They have been able to expand the number of gates into the water section from one entry point to six.

“Obviously, the line goes much faster now,” Gorman said.

In other park enhancements, drink-only stations were added and restrooms were expanded. Both of these updates are helping to alleviate long lines.

“I just really don't like to see people standing in a line for basic needs,” Gorman said.

An announcement they have already made for the 2026 season is a new water park attraction.

“We went ahead and made that announcement early because it will start being assembled this summer in the parking lot,” Gorman said. “Announcing it now will help lessen the number of questions we will get.”

The park transitioned to its summer operating hours on June 7.

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During the offseason, the park also tore down one building and built two in its place. One building has retail — Swim Shop and also encompasses a new entrance to the water park (above). The other building has become a new food location called the Tasty Tater (below). COURTESY WALDAMEER



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Sea Life Florida opens with vision, innovation and all-female team

AT: David Fake
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WINTER HAVEN, Fla. — A significant addition to Florida's attraction landscape debuted on June 6, as **Sea Life Florida** officially opened at **Legoland Florida Resort**. Home to what is being touted as "the world's first 'theme park under the sea,'" this immersive aquarium merges education, entertainment and advanced aquatic design in a facility specifically tailored for children and families. As the newest gate to join the Legoland Florida portfolio since **Peppa Pig Theme Park** opened in 2022, Sea Life Florida represents a strategic expansion of the resort's offerings, signaling a bold new chapter for **Merlin Entertainments'** Sea Life brand in the United States.

The 18-month construction project culminated in a grand opening celebration that included a thematic "kelp-cutting" ceremony, student participation from a local elementary school, and a scripted performance featuring marine characters and puppets. But beyond the pageantry, Sea Life Florida establishes itself as a purpose-driven attraction committed to conservation, accessibility and next-generation guest engagement.

"This isn't just an aquarium — it's a space where children can learn to care about the ocean by seeing it through their own eyes," said **Franceen Gonzales**, president of Legoland Florida Resort, during the ceremony. "Sea Life Florida allows young guests to engage directly with marine life in an environment

that is both mesmerizing and educational." Gonzales emphasized the importance of immersive design for families and noted that the facility is fully indoors and climate-controlled — making it an ideal year-round addition to the resort's entertainment mix.

Designed for the entire family, but with special attention being paid to children ages 2 to 12, Sea Life Florida's experience is curated through their perspective, with lowered viewing windows, colorful exhibit pathways, and interactive features such as crawl-through tunnels and pop-up domes.

The 180-degree ocean tunnel offers a particularly memorable encounter, allowing guests to stand face-to-face with sharks and rays as they glide overhead. Themed zones such as a haunted shipwreck, a seahorse nursery, and a theme park under the sea, including a whimsical coral "carousel" create a layered experience that balances scientific enrichment with creative storytelling.

Curator **Sarah McMahon**, who oversees animal care and exhibit integration, described the opening as the culmination of years of planning and teamwork. "This project has been years in the making, and every detail was designed with intention," she said. "When a child locks eyes with an octopus or watches a stingray pass within inches, that moment of wonder has the potential to ignite a life-long commitment to protecting the ocean." McMahon also praised the aquarists and operations team, calling them "the heart and soul of Sea Life Florida."



The 'Theme Park Under the Sea' exhibit (above) with its Coral Palace at Sea Life Florida combines creative themed design, education and rigorous animal care, creating a safe and captivating underwater experience with conservation at its core. The ocean has new leaders — from aquarists to curator to park president, Sea Life Florida is led entirely by women (below). AT/DAVID FAKE; COURTESY SEA LIFE FLORIDA/S. BECHARA

Notably, Sea Life Florida is led by an all-female team — a distinction that sets it apart not just within Merlin Entertainments and Legoland Florida, but also within the wider amusement and zoological fields. From Gonzales at the executive level to McMahon and her aquarist team, the leadership is unified not only by gender but more importantly by a shared dedication to animal welfare, conservation and guest impact. Gonzales remarked, "It's been inspiring to see this team bring the facility to life with such precision and care. Their work reflects the highest standards of professionalism and passion for the craft."

While not the largest Sea Life in the brand's portfolio, from a technical standpoint, Sea Life Florida is the most advanced to date. The infrastructure includes more than 150,000 gallons of exhibit water, 1,000 cubic yards of concrete, and 160,000 pounds



of steel reinforcement. Each exhibit utilizes a dedicated life support system (LSS) to ensure optimal water quality and minimal animal stress. Specialized systems manage salt and freshwater environments separately, with advanced UV filtration, denitrification and glass AFM media replacing conventional sand filters. These systems are supported by redundancies including backup generators and climate-control systems engineered for hurricane resilience.

Animal acquisition and welfare were central to the facility's design. All animals were sourced sustainably through other Sea Life centers or reputable rescue organizations. The exhibit features over 150 species and 3,000 individual animals, including blacktip reef sharks, cownosed rays, lionfish, groupers, moray eels and a giant Pacific octopus. A dedicated quarantine facility, necropsy lab and water quality lab are all located on-site to ensure the highest standards of husbandry and care.

In addition to its guest-facing and operational strengths, Sea Life Florida underscores Merlin Entertainments' broader commitment to environmental sustainability. Single-use plastic bags have been eliminated across Legoland Florida Resort, and a guest round-up initiative throughout June will benefit **Sea Life Trust**, the global nonprofit dedicated to marine conservation.

Looking ahead, Gonzales announced that the resort will debut a state-of-the-art indoor roller coaster in early 2026, reinforcing Legoland Florida's continued momentum and diversified development. In the meantime, Sea Life Florida offers an immediate and compelling new touchpoint for families seeking both recreation and meaningful engagement.

With its emphasis on design, mission and leadership, Sea Life Florida demonstrates how purpose and play can coexist — an achievement sure to resonate not only with guests but also with fellow amusement industry professionals.



During the sea-themed grand opening event, Legoland Florida President, Francine Gonzales, was given the honor of "kelp-cutting" making the opening official (above left). The fully indoor aquarium is tailored to families with children. COURTESY SEA LIFE FLORIDA

Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
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Valleyfair, Shakopee, Minnesota, unveiled its 2025 season schedule of events prior to opening, listing the return of some of its tried and true and announcing a brand-new festival.

The park opened for the 2025 season on May 11, and its **Soak City** water park turned on the faucet on May 24.

Some of the tried-and-true events include the popular ValleyScare, September 20 to October 25, Latin Days, August 2-3, and Corn Fest, August 16-31.

The park is kicking off its new festival, which will take place two weekends this month. Called Juicy Lucy Festival, it will take place July 12-13 and 19-20. The festival is all about Minnesota's famous burger with the same name, the Juicy Lucy.

Guests should expect a lineup of the burger as well as other Minnesota favorite foods, as well as dozens of local brews, ciders and cocktails. There also will be a variety of local bands.

Carowinds, the amusement park and waterpark that sits on the border of North and South Carolina, opened this year with two new attractions, one for all and one for just those old enough.

The one for those just old enough, Snoopy's Racing Railway offers a ride for everyone. Twisting around a track at more than 30 m.p.h., the kids' roller coaster is part of expansion in the Camp Snoopy area.

At the Carolina Harbor Shore Club, inside the **Carolina Harbor Waterpark**, adults now have an exclusive 21-plus, pool where alcoholic drinks are served from a swim-up bar.

Officials at the **Six Flags**-owned park said the recent openings further Carowinds' effort to satisfy every guest.

Dorney Park and Wildwater Kingdom, Allentown, Pennsylvania, tries to not only entertain its guests inside its fences but also enjoys reaching out to the community. In a recent heartwarming show of community spirit, the Dorney Park Cares Team volunteered their time and talents at **Camelot for Children**, a nonprofit in Allentown, Pennsylvania, that provides social and educational opportunities for children with disabilities and those facing chronic or terminal illnesses.

The Dorney Park Cares Team is a group

of Dorney Park employees and volunteers who actively participate in community outreach and charitable activities. They focus on volunteering time and resources to support local organizations and causes, often partnering with nonprofits like Camelot for Children.

The team tackled a range of facility improvement projects, including landscaping, painting, minor repairs and tidying shared spaces. Their efforts helped ensure Camelot's campus remains safe, welcoming and ready to host enriching summer programs for children and families.

The **Blackpool Tower** is a 518-foot-tall tower in Blackpool, England, known for its iconic red structure and the Blackpool Tower Eye, its observation deck at 380 feet. The tower, which opened in 1894, has been managed by **Merlin Entertainments** for 15 years. But that is set to change come August 1, when the management of the tower will be handed over to the authority's in-house **Blackpool Tourism Ltd** company.

The major tourist attraction features various attractions like the Blackpool Tower Eye, the Blackpool Tower Circus and the Blackpool Tower Ballroom.

Blackpool Council leader **Lynn Williams** said in a local announcement that it was an "exciting" new chapter and a "new era" for Blackpool's tourism industry.

Merlin Entertainments said it "fully supported" the move, according to the release.

In 2010, Blackpool Council bought Blackpool Tower bringing it into public ownership for the first time to safeguard the future of the iconic attraction.

Virginia Governor **Glenn Youngkin** signed a steel beam during a Ceremonial Steel Signing at the Governor's Special Event at **Kalahari Resorts and Conventions** in Spotsylvania, Virginia, on June 4, 2025.

The \$900 million resort is expected to feature 907 guest rooms, a 175,000-square-foot indoor water park, 10 acres of outdoor pools, a 90,000-square-foot family entertainment center and a 150,000-square-foot convention center when it opens in November 2026.

Ringling College of Art and Design is launching its inaugural Theme Park Design Competition for high school juniors and seniors from September 1 to November 30, 2025, according to a story in the online version staugustine.com.

According to the story, the competition is geared toward high school students interested in an entertainment design career. Entrants will be required to design an outdoor mobile merchandise cart to be used within the theme park.

The Sarasota, Florida, college's mission is to inspire today's high school students to see themselves as tomorrow's immersive experience designers and raise their awareness of this exciting industry.



A colorfully themed on-site 300-room hotel designed with families in mind will serve as the entrance to Universal Kids Resort as well as offer a place to stay, play and relax after all the fun of the park. COURTESY UNIVERSAL CREATIVE

Universal Kids Resort reveals immersive themed lands, hotel

FRISCO, Texas—**Universal Destinations & Experiences** revealed the themed lands kids and families will experience at **Universal Kids Resort** — a first-of-a-kind resort specifically designed and developed for families with young children. Opening in 2026 in Frisco, Texas, Universal Kids Resort will feature lands themed around beloved characters including **DreamWorks Animation's** Shrek, Puss in Boots, Trolls and Gabby's Dollhouse; **Nickelodeon's** SpongeBob SquarePants; **Illumination's** Minions, as well as *Jurassic World*.

"It's an amazing opportunity to bring these iconic stories to life for kids and families to experience, interact with and play together," said **Sarah Gibbon**, vice president and executive producer, **Universal Creative**. "At each point, we considered how we could design a place especially for kids where they could explore, imagine and adventure with their families and friends. They'll be able to do all this while being fully immersed in some of their favorite stories — ones full of curiosity, laughter and joy."

The central hub of Universal Kids Resort will feature shady lawns and interactive play areas that give kids and their families plenty of space to rest and play. Plus, guests can meet characters like Gabby from DreamWorks' Gabby's Dollhouse in a unique immersive retail experience.

Antares opens at Conny-Land



ALTENDORF, Switzerland — **RES Rides** has set another record with the opening of the world's tallest Roller Ball at Conny-Land, Switzerland's largest theme park. The Roller Ball — named **Antares** — rises to more than 110 feet and is perched on top of the new building that houses the bumper cars, creating a unique combination of rides with efficiency of space. "Our park has limited ground space, so we came up with the idea of putting the Roller Ball on top of the Bumper Cars, so we didn't use any extra space. Plus, now we have the highest roller ball in the world!" said Conny-Land's CEO Roby Gasser. COURTESY RES RIDES

New rides, retail bolster Lagoon's 2025 season; The District added

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FARMINGTON, Utah — Both management and guests at **Lagoon** are excited about the 2025 season because of the breadth of what's new.

Two new rides anchor The District, a transformed area of the park. Time Tinker, a Nebulaz from **Zamperla**, provides the hypnotic spectator appeal. Steamworx, a Wild Swing from **ART Engineering**, offers additional new fun for the families.

"What's fun is that the Nebulaz fits so many themes. We have made more with custom designs than standard ones," said **Ramon Rosario**, director of sales, Zamperla. "We spoke with the park about an attraction that would bring energy to a quiet area of the property and engage a wide variety of riders. With a minimum height requirement of 42 inches, this ride really hits the sweet spot of being fun for families but also rewarding for thrill-seekers."

The gyrating attraction with its rotating arms captivates onlookers.

"Our artistic team worked with Lagoon on a theme that had unique colors, lines and a hyper-vintage feel," Rosario told *Amusement Today*. "The exposed mechanical systems of the Nebulaz are what make it a fantastic vehicle for the retro-futuristic Victorian design that is synonymous with the steam-



A new steampunk area of Pioneer Village is called The District. Two new rides welcome guests: Steamworx from ART Engineering (above) and Time Tinker supplied by Zamperla (right). COURTESY LAGOON

punk aesthetic."

Owing to a minimum height requirement of 36 inches, Steamworx has a wide demographic. Accented with beautiful steampunk detailing, the Wild Swing sweeps 16 riders at a time up and over in both directions. Although the gondola rocks freely with the motion, guests are never turned upside down, making for fun, mid-level thrills.

"The combination of size, dynamic-but-not-too-aggressive motion and our seat restraint system results in a great family attraction. With the small footprint and good theming options, the Wild Swing is a perfect ride for all amusement parks," said **Georg Behringer**, CEO, ART Engineering.

The Wild Swing is a big seller for ART Engineering.

This will be the first installation in the U.S.

"The variety of the customized theming for the Wild Swing is amazing. 'Steampunk' is the theme of the new area. All of us loved this idea," added Behringer. "We have adapted the ride with a dark base color and customized mechanical applications in golden and copper colors. The result is a perfect match."

"Utah is home to many large families. As such, family rides have been a big hit with our guests," said **Adam Leishman**, spokesperson, Lagoon. "Adding two new family rides, Steamworx and Time Tinker, as well as retheming our children's helicopter ride from 1963 was an easy decision. Pioneer Village is a recreation of a frontier town (with authentic build-



ings and artifacts) from the mid-1800s, the Steam Age. A steampunk-themed area was a natural fit! On a side note, Pioneer Village is celebrating its 50th year in 2026."

The new rides help comprise an area called The District, where the park states, "World inventors are revered and their creations come alive with the hum of grinding gears and the hiss of steam." A children's helicopter ride has been rethemed to Rivets and Rotors to complement The District. It is a redeveloped area within Pioneer Village. Snakebite Saloon is also new.

"Snakebite Saloon is the repurposing of a building in Pioneer Village that was originally a classic Bonanza shooting gallery," Leishman told *Amusement Today*. "Snakebite Saloon is now filled with

antiques and ephemera from the Pioneer Village collection and offers a wide selection of beer, snacks and merchandise. Part speakeasy, part general store, it's a great place to sit and enjoy refreshments with friends and family."

But that's not all. Years in the making is an astonishingly beautiful new building. Peacock Parlour is a substantial new addition to the park's main midway. Completely rebuilt following a 2021 fire that destroyed the former Carousel Candy shop, along with mini bumper cars, the new outlet contains a touch of elegance.

"The name Peacock Parlour came from all of the lovely peacocks that roam the park and dazzle our guests," said Julie Freed, director of special events. "Peacocks are such magnificent creatures; we had so much fun incorporating those gorgeous peacock elements into the design of the building. I love the one-of-a-kind stained glass made in Italy, the Grand Entrance and all of the feather motifs."

Part of the building is also dedicated to a new sweet shop.

"Carousel Candy is such a nice contrast to Peacock Parlour with the bright blue exterior and mint green interior. I love being able to see the lollipops on the roof from the front entrance!" Freed added.

Lagoon is a family-owned and-operated amusement park dating back to 1886.



Peacock Parlour (left) is an ice cream shop with many peacock motifs beautifully spread throughout. Carousel Candy (above) offers sweets in the most elegant of shops. COURTESY LAGOON

60 to Escape continues to grow with new locations, experiences

GURNEE, Ill. — A new **60 to Escape** opened in Gurnee, Illinois, in February of this year, making it the third location of the centers that offer a variety of escape room experiences.

According to the company's website, at 60 to Escape guests have 60 minutes to complete an immersive adventure. In each different theme, guests are surrounded by fun and challenging clues, puzzles and codes.

Games at 60 To Escape game rooms are hand-crafted by experienced puzzle designers and set builders to create immersive and fun experiences, stated the website.

The experiences in the Gurnee location include Blast from the Past, Save the Arcade! The story goes that a local arcade owner has gone missing, and it is up to the players to find out what happened. Another is titled Become a Thief, where the team has to pull a heist and steal a priceless jewel from a local museum. Then there is Duke's



Farm, where guests are trying to save the world; Containment, where guests have to restore power before it's too late; and Mystery Manor, where guests endeavor to lift a curse and more.

60 to Escape opened its **Southridge Mall** location in Milwaukee, Minnesota, in mid-February 2020, and the 60 to Escape in **Woodfield Mall** in Schaumburg, Illinois, opened in October 2024.

At the Woodfield Mall in Schaumburg, a game called Lockbuster Video has been very popular. Guests enter what looks like a Blockbuster Video story of the 1990s, where an animatronic manager is after them for late fees.

Each facility includes an indoor miniature golf course called Putt Portal Mystery. It is made up of escape room puzzles, according to a release announcing the newest of the centers in Gurnee.

60 to Escape Owner **Steve Kristof** said in that release that "mini golf is in my blood."

"It's an iconic game for all ages," Kristof said. "With Putt Portal Mystery Golf, we wanted to fuse our escape rooms into the concept and reinvent a classic, adding something entirely new to the game for our patrons."

Most locations also offer private bookings, meaning only one group will participate in a room.

—Pam Sherborne

Netflix House brings the streaming giant into the FEC industry

AT: Pam Sherborne

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PHILADELPHIA, Pa. and DALLAS, Texas — **Netflix** has announced it will unveil its first two family entertainment locations, **Netflix House**, in late 2025. One is expected to be located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at **King of Prussia Mall**, and the second in Dallas, Texas, at **Galleria Dallas**.

According to information on the Netflix website, the centers will span more than 100,000 square feet and will be permanent, year-round homes for fans, bringing some of Netflix's most popular shows and movies to life. Those popular offerings will include *Wednesday*, *Squid Game*, *One Piece*, *Stranger Things* and *A Knives Out Mystery* franchise.

These will be brought to life through first-of-their-kind immersive story-driven experiences.

And in 2027, Netflix House will expand with a third location in the heart of the Las Vegas Strip at BLVD Las Vegas.

Fans will not only imagine playing a game of Red Light, Green Light of *Squid Game*, but will actually get to play it. Then guests may



find themselves suddenly in Hawkins, Indiana, rescuing a few friends from the Demogorgon in *Stranger Things*.

"Finally, a place where the Netflix story you can't get enough of becomes something real that you can play, shop and taste," **Marian Lee**, Netflix's chief marketing officer said in the announcement on the Netflix website. "This is fandom coming to life where you can actually step

inside the worlds you've been watching and loving for years, whether going on an epic adventure with the Straw Hats, taking a journey into Hawkins, Indiana, or grabbing a cocktail inspired by your latest obsession.

"With fresh experiences dropping regularly, there's always a new reason to come back," Lee continued. "We are thrilled to welcome our new neighbors in Philadelphia, Dallas, and Las Vegas to explore Netflix

in a whole new light, enhanced by the unique charm and culture of each city."

The centers also will offer NetFlix Bites, dishes inspired by Netflix shows and movies.

"Building on more than 40 previous live experiences for *Bridgerton*, *Money Heist*, *Stranger Things*, *Squid Game*, *The Perfect Bite* and Netflix Bites, Netflix House is the next step, allowing fans of all ages to become the main

characters in their favorite stories," according to the netflix.com announcement.

Guests will be able to top off their day with a round of mini-golf and visit the retail shop to buy such merchandise as a Hellfire Club T-shirt.

Each Netflix House will regularly update its offerings; guests may have a different adventure every time they return. Each Netflix House will also have regular features.

•netflix.com



As part of its massive expansion, Las Vegas's Area15 has installed a Boeing 747 — one of Burning Man's most iconic large-scale art pieces — which is set to become a multi-use event and nightlife venue. COURTESY AREA 15/DAVID BECKER

Area15 expansion progressing, scheduled to open this August

LAS VEGAS — Area15, the experiential art and entertainment hub parallel to the Las Vegas Strip, released the first looks of the latest development in its 20-acre expansion set for a rolling opening beginning in August 2025. The new area — dubbed Zone 2: The Terminals in the Area15 District — comprises eight buildings totaling 300,000 square feet of retail, entertainment and food-and-beverage space, as well as a fully installed **Boeing 747**, one of **Burning Man's** most iconic large-scale art pieces, set to become a multi-use event and nightlife venue.

Spanning 150 feet in length, the installed Boeing 747 will be reimagined as a one-of-a-kind elevated nightlife experience. Originally conceptualized by **Big Imagination Foundation** as the largest mobile art car ever created for Burning Man, the fuselage will anchor Area15's expanded open-air collection of interactive art installations. When the expansion is complete, the Area15 District will boast 60 sculptures and 30 murals in its collection, making it the largest permanent installation of monumental art of its kind in the Southwest.

"The installation of the 747 and the vertical rise of Zone 2: The Terminals aren't just construction milestones — they're symbolic of the momentum we've built," said **Winston Fisher**, chief executive officer, Area15. "We're redefining what experiential development can look like by merging visionary brands, radical creativity and the future of immersive entertainment."

With the Area15 expansion's first attraction — **Universal Horror Unleashed** — slated to open this August, the completion of these dramatic building exteriors marks a pivotal moment in Area15's evolution from a single, 200,000-square-foot building featuring pioneering immersive entertainment experiences to a next-generation retailtainment district spanning 40 acres.

The newly completed buildings will also house a curated mix of extraordinary tenants, including the **Museum of Ice Cream's** largest flagship location, **Dolls Kill**, **The Escape Game**, **Felix & Paul Studios' Interstellar Arc** and **iFly Indoor Skydiving**, as well as eateries including **Saint Honoré Doughnuts & Beignets**, **Chilango's Tacos** and **Nacho Daddy**.



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson
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Roller celebrated its ongoing partnership with **Activeon**, a leading global operator of trampoline parks and family entertainment centers. Over the past two years, the two companies have worked together to optimize multi-location operations, enhance guest experiences and drive data-backed decision-making across an expanding network of venues.

"Having Roller has worked very well for us. It has simplified operations and provided the tools we need to enhance both staff and guest experiences," said **Christine Grieg-Lie**, chief operating officer at Activeon. "Roller HQ is a must-have for any business with multiple brands and dozens of venues like our team. Giving the main office control over the venue setup — determining what kinds of product, what stock items — makes it so easy to control and manage without having to worry about having too many cooks in the kitchen."

Activeon currently operates 72 venues across multiple brands, including **Rush**, **Jump House**, **AirHop** and **Superfly**. With Roller HQ, Activeon now has a centralized system that enables consistent operations, standardized data collection and improved reporting.

North Myrtle Beach's **Professor Hacker's Lost Treasure Golf** is celebrating 30 years of family-friendly fun in 2025. This year marks several exciting milestones for the company: the 30th anniversary of its first-ever location at **Lost Treasure Golf North Myrtle Beach**, 25 years at **Lost Treasure Golf Ocean City**, Maryland, and **Lost Treasure Golf Branson**, Missouri, 20 years at **Lost Treasure Golf Lancaster**, Pennsylvania and **Dinosaur Canyon Golf** in Branson, Missouri.

Founded by **Tom Merrell**, **Jim Sidwell Sr.**, **Jim Sidwell Jr.** and **Chris Bethea**, Professor Hacker's Lost Treasure Golf has grown to 12 locations nationwide, becoming a cherished part of summer vacations and road trips for generations of families.

Sacoa Cashless System announced the successful installation of its system in 13 **Knock Out** venues, the new entertain-

ment concept by **Cinemex**, with more locations set to open soon.

"We're very happy with our partnership with **Miguel Laguna** [Operations Manager of Knock Out] and his team," expressed **Sebastian Mochkovsky**, CEO of Sacoa USA. "They are true professionals, and we're excited to continue building a strong relationship together."

Launch Entertainment renovated a vacant **Babies R' Us** location in North Attleborough, Massachusetts, to become a new family fun center which was scheduled to open in June 2025.

The FEC offers a number of games, including mini golf, bowling, axe throwing, an arcade and sports court.

Samantha Lorton, director of PR and marketing for Launch, said the high-traffic location was appealing to the company, and the 40,000-square-foot building allows for more attractions than other locations.

Diversified Partners, a Scottsdale-based real estate brokerage and development firm, announced that **The Rush Funplex**, an indoor FEC, will anchor its new 14-acre development in Phoenix, Arizona. Construction is expected to begin in late 2025 or early 2026, with a grand opening slated for December 2026.

"The Rush Funplex is extremely excited about coming to Laveen. We look forward to being part of the explosive growth and activity in this area," stated **Matt Gertge**, owner of The Rush Funplex.

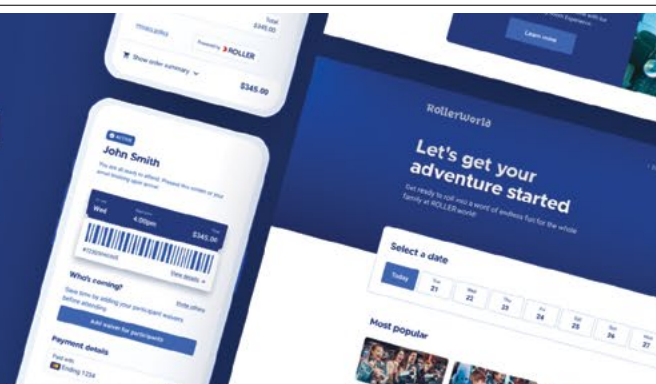
The fully indoor, 75,000-square-foot facility will bring a variety of attractions to the growing Laveen community, including go-karts, bowling, a rock-climbing wall with foam pit, laser tag, mini-golf, an arcade, bumper cars, kiddie cars, private party rooms and a café.

This will be the second Arizona location for The Rush Funplex, which currently operates six locations in other states. The company's first Arizona location is scheduled to open in Goodyear as part of another Diversified Partners development.

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NOLA Motorsports Park adds miniature golf course from AGS

AVONDALE, La. — Adventure Golf & Sports (AGS) has designed and installed an 18-hole Bunkers & Bumps style course recently on property owned by the NOLA Motorsports Park on the outskirts of New Orleans. The park plans to combine the mini golf course along with oversized yard games, arcade games, a future craft pizza kitchen and sports bar and coffee bar along with existing go-karting into a new FEC adjacent to the automotive racetrack dubbed **Throttle & Swing**.

When David Pace, CEO of NOLA Motorsports, arrived in 2020, there was a go kart track on a piece of property that added some value to the racetrack and was doing well financially.

"But it needed something else to add to it," stated Pace. "Driving 20 minutes to half an hour just to spend eight minutes on go karts and then



AGS used 75,000 pounds of recycled rubber to create elevation changes on the new course located just outside of New Orleans. COURTESY AGS

you're done and you're like 'what else is there to do?' I had to figure out what was the best piece to add to it. I knew from my research, seeing what PopStroke has done with Tiger Woods, that that was the new fad.

"The newest, hottest site out there is a mini golf course that looks like a real course, not something with windmills and animation. After meeting with AGS at

IAAPA [Expo] and talking to a couple different places, I realized they had the ability and seemed like the best group for us to head down this path."

The AGC Bunkers & Bumps style mini golf course was designed and installed over the top of a portion of a huge asphalt parking lot adjacent to the motorsports park. It is an eco-friendly, miniaturized

professional-looking golf course using interlocking, patented, permeable panels.

"We had to do some site work prior to them getting here," offered Pace. "We just had to create a drainage field underneath and cover it with a layer of sand. Then we turned it over to them."

AGS used various layers and permeable turf to cover the panels, creating slopes, rolling terrain and faux sand bunkers. Unlike traditional mini golf that often uses bricks, walls, obstacles and themed elements for boundaries, Bunkers & Bumps relies on various terrain designs and rough turf to shape holes.

AGS used 75,000 pounds of recycled rubber to create elevation changes on the course, with some of the hole elevations changing three to five feet.

"It's quite a challenging course," said Dustin

Tandy, the AGS crew supervisor of the installation. "Players really need skill to read the greens."

"It's larger than most 18-hole miniature golf courses, and it's got two cups per hole. One of them is always plugged, so we're able to make it so that the experience is never the same," commented Pace. "We can rotate the holes that are plugged or unplugged anytime we want."

"We have par 3s and a par 4. The majority of holes here are par 3. One hole is at least 50 to 75 feet long and we have faux sand traps and some blue turf to serve as faux water hazards."

Rain runs off and drains throughout the course and there is no water pooling. The holes around the outside leading edge of the golf course are ADA compliant with the inside holes a bit more challenging.

•agsgolfandsports.com

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LA County Fair's attendance is badly hampered by the weather

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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POMONA, Calif. — “Weather was a challenge the first two weekends of the fair. The first weekend [we] saw rain, and the second weekend we saw high temperatures. Fortunately, the last two weekends had good weather and our attendance picked up,” said **Renee Hernandez**, director of communications, **Los Angeles County Fair**. “Plus, as we’ve seen throughout the industry, the economy was a factor — people aren’t spending money for entertainment this year as in years past.”

Attendance counts show that 683,008 guests came through the gates, which is down from 787,843 fairgoers in 2024. The theme of the 103rd edition of the 16-day fair was “Art Unleashed.”

Carnival provider **Ray Cammack Shows (RCS)** brought 69 rides, 40 games and 20 food concessions. Nearly half of the rides were kiddie ones.

RCS had five new rides at that spot. They included: the **Raptor** roller coaster (SDC), **Heidi** spinning roller coaster (**Reverchon Industries**), **Aviator** (**Lamberink B.V.** swing ride), **Dragon** kiddie roller coaster (**Kolmax**) and **Royal Wheel** (**Mondial World of Rides**). There were four roller coasters at this year’s fair. **Aviator** was the tallest ride on the midway,



The Los Angeles County Fair has been held in Pomona since inception in 1921. In the distance are orchards, the San Gabriel Mountains and nature trails. **Raptor**, the SDC coaster previously owned by Steve Vandervorst, has been renamed and proved to be one of the more popular rides (below). COURTESY LA COUNTY FAIR, STEFAN HINZ



standing at 160 feet.

The most popular rides included **Heidi** and **Raptor** coasters, **Aviator** and **Overdrive (Kolmax Plus)**.

“This was RCS’ 39th year with the LA County Fair. They are an excellent partner that values safety and fun for our guests,” said Hernandez.

“Because we are in Los Angeles county, people don’t expect the hometown, agricultural feel of the fair but promoting agriculture is part of our mission,” explained Hernandez. “We work with **Cal Poly Pomona’s Huntley College**



of Agriculture to provide programming in our Big Red Barn and The Farm neighborhood. Cal Poly students not only talk about animals but about food, nutrition, gardening and sustainability.”

The fair continued its legacy of community

support. On three food-drive Thursdays, guests donated nearly 95,000 cans of food. Donations benefit **Inland Valley Hope Partners**, **L.A. Regional Food Bank**, **God’s Pantry** and the **Pomona Unified School District’s** community schools

initiative. Also, the last two weeks of the fair, they offered a sunset special of \$15 admission after 4 p.m.

A revamped petting zoo introduced visitors to various mini animals, including pigs, cows, donkeys and horses, while the popular **Skate-R-Cade** returned for its second year, spinning thousands of laps around an expanded rink for 2025.

Music took center stage at **NextFest LA**, which lit up four stages with top indie bands, artists and DJs from across southern California. Meanwhile, a special exhibition from the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art** added another cultural touch to the festivities. Still, the fair’s timeless trio — food, carnival rides, and animals



Attendance counts show that 683,008 guests came through the gates, which was down from 787,843 fairgoers in 2024. This was RCS’ 39th year with the Los Angeles County Fair. The Laveen, Arizona-based operator brought five rides that were at the Pomona fair for the first time. COURTESY LA COUNTY FAIR, STEFAN HINZ

► See LA COUNTY, page 36

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For additional information or to schedule an audit, members should contact
jeff.smith.oaba@gmail.com.



Ray Cammack Shows brought 69 rides, 40 games and 20 food concessions. In the foreground is their Reverchon spinning coaster, Heidi. In the background are two of the four wheels that were at this year's fair. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ

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LA COUNTY

Continued from page 34

— remained the heart of the experience.

"This year, we didn't count calories, we counted smiles," said **Walter Marquez**, president and CEO of Fairplex. "With everything from farm animals to fantastical food, it's one-of-a-kind fun that only the Fair can deliver."

Fair attendees can be counted on to consume a great deal of food, including these stats from **Chicken Charlie's**:

- 7,500 meatballs for the new meatball mozzarella corndog, a first-time food offering

- 2,000 chili peppers for fire-roasted chiles with queso blanco and hot Cheetos

- 10,000 pounds of chicken

Dominic Palmieri III, the renowned Midway Gourmet, provided these numbers:

- The **Chocolate Strawberry Cup** stands sold over 2 fields of red, ripe strawberries and used more than 5,000 gallons of chocolate

- **Biggy's** used almost 1 ton of fresh chopped garlic for garlic fries

- 55 gallons of **Mike's Hot Honey** — that's a whole barrel!

- 4,000 pounds of pickles used for **Mike's Hot Honey Pickles**

- 1,500 pounds of bacon-wrapped pork belly

- 2,500 pounds of popcorn kernels

- One whole orchard of granny smith apples for sweet, caramel and candy apples

- 12,000 pounds of sugar for cotton candy, lemonade, and warm-baked chocolate chip cookies

In conjunction with the 2025 theme, "Art Unleashed," the fair partnered with several Los Angeles County art institutions to provide programming and activations at the fair, including **The Getty Museum**, **Los Angeles County Museum of Art**, **LA Opera** and **Bob Baker Marionettes**.

The fair offered a dozen nights of concerts, including **WAR**, **Cheap Trick**, **The O'Jays**, **Tower of Power**, **Zapp**, **Midnight Star**, **Los Angeles Azules** and **Chris Young**. Due to maintenance of the grandstand, the concert series was moved to a new field venue.

Nearly 80 community organizations participated in events or hosted booths in the fair's community corner, including the **Girl Scouts' Takeover Day** and informational exhibits from local businesses, veterans' organizations and LA County departments.

The Los Angeles County Fair evolved from a commercial-industrial show first held along the **Southern Pacific** railroad siding in downtown Pomona in 1921. The following year, the LA County Fair began on 43 acres of a beet and barley field. Now 500 acres strong, the fair is one of the top destinations in southern California during its run. In 2022, it moved its dates from September to May.

The 2026 fair returns May 7-31, (tentative dates) with the theme, "Play Your Way."

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MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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Scottsdale, Arizona held a first-time event that started in late April. Known as the **Scottsdale Fair and Festival**, the ten-day event ran from April 25 to May 4 at **WestWorld of Scottsdale**. Included were carnival rides from **Helm and Sons**, along with games, exhibits and food.

The organizer was **Universal Fairs**, which began in 2007. Other fairs they organize include Birmingham, Alabama; Atlanta, Georgia and Memphis, Tennessee, where the company is based. In addition to fairs and festivals, Universal Fairs also creates boat shows and hunting and fishing events.

The carnival brought nearly 30 rides to the spot which also included 70 commercial vendors.

Deggeller Attractions only played three days at a spot that was to last three weeks. Virginia Beach, Virginia, officials forced a very early end to the **Mt. Trashmore** carnival, saying they couldn't provide enough security staff.

The carnival added additional security measures this year in the wake of a shooting near the grounds last year, killing one teenager and injuring another. However, that was not enough. The actions included additional Virginia Beach sheriff's deputies patrolling the carnival site and **Virginia Beach Police Department** officers monitoring parking lots, metal detectors, and rules for accompaniment of minors.

Joel Cadwell with **National Event Management**, the company that organized the event, learned Sunday afternoon that the carnival would be forced to close at the end of that evening, after only three days.

"We have 150 employees with this company," Cadwell told 13NewsNow WVEC-TV "With all this equipment and personnel, [they're] going to be out of work for the next three weeks. You can't just go set a carnival up, you have to pre-plan it, like we did this one."

Cadwell continued, "These citizens do not deserve this. This is not a tourism event, this is a community event. These are citizens of the city of Virginia Beach, most of them. This is their event."

City spokeswoman **Ali Weatherton-Shook** confirmed the closure in a statement emailed to 13NewsNow that read: "The Mt. Trashmore Summer Carnival will close after Sunday, May 25, because of staffing shortages, including a lack of public safety officers and deputies.

Deggeller had 20 rides along with food and games that were supposed to play there through June 17.

Chris Atkins has been named the new general manager of **Thomas Carnival, Inc.** He brings over 30 years of experience in the

carnival industry, most recently working as an independent ride operator and unit manager with **Goldstar Amusements**. Atkins' new role is also a homecoming as Atkins grew up at Thomas Carnival, learning the ropes from his father, **Tom Atkins**, and uncle, **John Hanschen**. He has served as president of the **Showmen's League of America** and as a board member of the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)**.

New York State Association of Agricultural Fairs Association recently announced its 2025 fair pass is available for purchase. For \$125, purchasers receive free admission and parking at over 40 member fairs, including the **New York State Fair**, Hamburg. The pass covers one ticket holder and one companion. Member fairs are listed on the website: nyfairs.org

Proceeds from the sale of the passes are used to continue the state association's commitment to promote New York agriculture. Carnival rides are not included on the pass.

In early June, the **Darke County Agricultural Society** (Ohio) Board of Directors approved hiring **Keith Ludwick** as its new fair manager.

Born in Youngstown, he spent much of his career in Las Vegas, in the hospitality and construction industries. Ludwick wants to be able to maintain much of the history and tradition of the fair. However, from his time on the Las Vegas Strip, he believes there are other aspects he can bring to the fair.

President **Marla Werner** compared the crash course he is receiving over the next couple of months to drinking water from a fire hose. He will get some assistance as he learns the ropes with the board approving the hiring of previous fair manager **Laura Ahrens** as office manager. They also hired **Julie Nietzelt**, a former employee with experience and understanding of how the front office works.

The Darke County Fair, Greenville, Ohio, returns August 15-23 with **Primetime Amusements** providing the midway.

The **Calgary Municipal Land Corporation** and the **Calgary Stampede** recently announced plans to develop a 320-room, 13-story boutique hotel in the park. It will be a full-service property on an 85,000-square-foot parcel of land. The hotel will feature 15,000 square feet of meeting and ballroom space and 14,000 square feet of food and beverage offerings, including restaurants, a lobby bar, a coffee shop and a rooftop lounge.

The cost is approximately \$330 million to build the hotel, which includes the land sale and development. Construction is expected to begin later this year, with completion anticipated in late 2028.



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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► Bellevue Bay Indoor Waterpark rises in Nebraska — page 42 / News Splash — page 42

Chimelong Water Park debuts the world's first ProSlide Hive

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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GUANGZHOU, China — **Chimelong Water Park**, located within **Guangzhou Chimelong Tourist Resort**, has opened its largest and most ambitious expansion to date with two, global, first-of-their-kind attractions and a third record-breaking slide. All three attractions were provided by **ProSlide Technology** of Ottawa, Canada.

Included in the expansion is the world's first launched **HydroMagnetic LIM Mammoth Coaster** featuring Asia's first **FlyingSaucer 60**. The attraction advances the **HydroMagnetic** raft propulsion system by introducing a launch. Previous installations of ProSlide's **HydroMagnetic Mammoths** begin with a lift hill. Additionally, the massive slide incorporates a pair of **FlyingSaucer 60** elements. ProSlide's patented **FlyingSaucer** is an innovative high-speed feature that combines a compound curve outer wall with a flat plate in the center, providing a unique, open element. The **FlyingSaucer** is currently offered in four different sizes, with the 60 model being the largest. The new water coaster uses six-person cloverleaf rafts specifically designed for the **HydroMagnetic Mammoth** slides.

The **ProSlide Hive**, unveiled at **IAAPA Expo 2024**, was inspired by the company's own **FlyingSaucer**. **Hive** takes the concept a step further by adding a full spiral double helix. Unlike typical water-slide helices, **Hive** is open in the center and can be made



Dispatching from the same tower (above left), the **Hive** slide features cooler colors of blue and green while the **Double Tornado** features a warmer palate of yellow, orange and red. The **Hive** (above right) features translucent outer sidewalls, fused with alternating blue and green fiberglass inner walls and an open center. COURTESY PROSLIDE



with translucent sections, giving the slide unmatched visuals. **Hive** is debuting this year at two locations. **Zoombezi Bay** at the **Columbus Zoo and Aquarium** will debut a **Hive 20** installation utilizing two-person rafts. The **Hive** at **Chimelong** is a larger **Hive 35** version that can accommodate five-person rafts. **Chimelong's Hive** features translucent outer sidewalls, fused with alternating blue and green fiberglass inner walls. The **Hive** element is in the middle portion of the massive slide that also includes a **Double TornadoWave**.

Once guests climb aboard the five-person circular rafts, their journey begins with an open chute that leads into an enclosed chute highlighted with vertical translucent stripes. That drops into the new **Hive** element which leads to another enclosed tube punctuated with horizontal design elements. After being dazzled, riders suddenly drop into daylight sending them climbing the wall of the first **Tornado Wave**. Following a

moment of weightlessness, the raft reverses direction and plunges again into the second wave wall. Guests enjoy a second moment of weightlessness before gliding into a straight section that leads to the final splashdown pool. The **Hive** slide is part of a new mega tower that includes another record-breaking attraction.

Sharing the tower complex with the **Hive 35** is an enormous **Double Tornado 60**. Not only is this an industry first, but it also gives **Chimelong Water Park** three **Tornado 60s** — more than any other park in the world. Similar to the **Hive** slide, the **Double Tornado** also used five-person circular rafts brought to the top of the tower by a shared lift. Also, like the **Hive**, the **Double Tornado** takes advantage of the **Mammoth's** different configurations including open sections, enclosed sections, translucent patterns and darkness.

These **Hive** and **Tornado** attractions anchor **Chimelong's** reimagined entrance pavilion. These two water rides now domi-

nate the landscape and create breathtaking views for guests as they enter the water park. The **Hive** slide is predominately blue and green while the **Double Tornado** features a yellow, orange and red color palate.

Chimelong Water Park opened in 2007 as part of the **Guangzhou Chimelong Tourist Resort**, which covers an area of more than 300,000 square meters (74 acres). It is frequently ranked among the world's best water parks by the **Themed Entertainment Association (TEA)**, a "must-visit" water park by **IAAPA**, and is among the world's most visited water parks. Along with the water park, the resort includes the **Chimelong Paradise** theme park, **Chimelong Safari Park**, and **Chimelong Birds Park**. The **Chimelong International Circus** performs daily at the resort's large indoor theater.

ProSlide and **Chimelong** have partnered on several world-leading projects, including two **IAAPA**

Impact Award Winners — the **ProSlide Tornado (2007)** and the **ProSlide BehemothBowl (2008)**. This latest expansion symbolizes the shared dedication of **ProSlide** and **Chimelong** to push the envelope in the water park experience, setting new standards of innovation and excitement.

"**Chimelong** continues to raise the bar for water park entertainment, and it's been incredible to support their vision," said **Jeff Janovich**, Senior Vice President, Global Strategic Partnerships. This latest expansion introduces a family ride complex featuring the world's first **Double Tornado 60** and **Double TornadoWave** with the world's first **Hive 35**, alongside the world's first six-person **LIM Launched HydroMagnetic Mammoth** water coaster. Seeing so many of our high-performance attractions featured in one park speaks volumes about their ambition to lead the industry and deliver world-class experiences at every turn."

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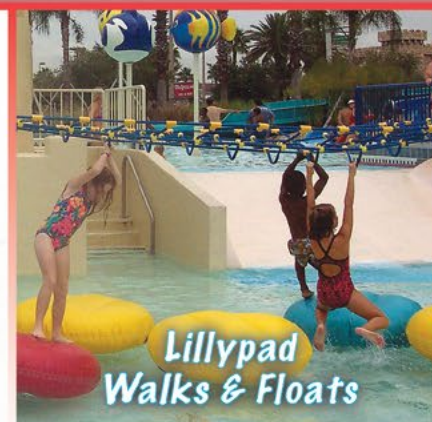
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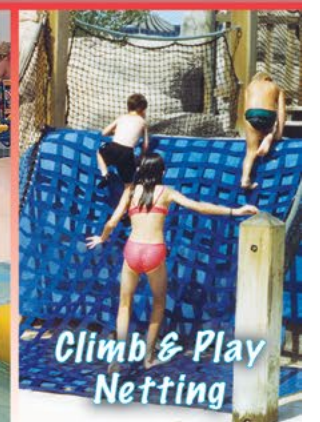
Family Rafts



**Sidewinder
Tubes & Rafts**



**Lillypad
Walks & Floats**



**Climb & Play
Netting**



Bellevue Bay Indoor Waterpark is poised to become the crown jewel of the Bellevue Good Life District that is expected to draw hospitality, entertainment, retail and other development. COURTESY HOLLAND BASHAM ARCHITECTS

Nebraska giving rise to new Bellevue Bay Indoor Waterpark

BELLEVUE, Nebraska — In May, ground was broken on the **Bellevue Bay Indoor Waterpark**, with the anticipation that it will become a premier attraction for neighbors and tourists in the Omaha area.

The indoor water park, developed in partnership with **American Resort Management (ARM)** of Grand Prairie, Texas, is designed to deliver year-round aquatic fun with state-of-the-art waterslides, a lazy river and an interactive splash zone with eight children's slides.

Similar to other ARM projects, the massive 140,000-square-foot facility park will include a 60,000-square-foot glass-enclosed structure with a retractable roof manufactured by **OpenAire** of Mississauga, Ontario.

Martin Aquatic of Orlando, Florida, is providing the concept design as well as infrastructure including hydraulic, structural, filtration, chemical and electrical specifications. Plans call for seven body and tube slides that will launch from inside a glass tower that rises above the roofline of the main structure. The lazy river is to be connected to a swim-up bar, and a family-friendly activity pool will offer basketball and rock climbing. The structure will also house a FlowRider wave machine. An adjacent outdoor wave pool will be available for use in the summer.

Architectural services including interior design, construction documents and construction administration are provided by **Holland Basham Architects** of Omaha, Nebraska.

Bellevue Bay Indoor Waterpark is scheduled to open its doors in late 2026. It is the first project and crown jewel of the state-approved Bellevue Good Life District. The 550-acre district is expected to draw hospitality, entertainment, retail and other development to stimulate local employment and create new business opportunities for residents and entrepreneurs. It is also expected to draw tourism revenue to the city and state and help ease the local property tax burden.

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development has approved four districts under the Good Life Transformational Projects Act, which was enacted in 2023 and subsequently revised in 2024, with further legislative changes anticipated.

"This is more than just a water park — it's a symbol of growth, opportunity and the bright future ahead for Bellevue," said Mayor **Rusty Hike**. "With this ground-breaking, we are setting Bellevue on a new path toward prosperity, attracting visitors, boosting our economy and enhancing the quality of life for our residents."

Richard Coleman, ARM CEO, added, "We are thrilled to bring this world-class indoor water park to Bellevue. This project is a testament to the city's vision for economic development and tourism, and we are honored to be a part of it. Bellevue Bay Indoor Water Park will be a destination that families will enjoy for generations to come."

—Jeffrey Seifert



NEWSPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

The former **Maui Sands** hotel and indoor water park will be partially demolished for redevelopment. The indoor water park and hotel first opened in Perkins Township, Ohio, in 2008.

Despite its prime location near **Cedar Point** and other indoor water parks in Sandusky, Maui Sands had its share of issues and developed a bad reputation. The original owner tried to open the property before it was fully completed. Ownership changed hands several times and maintenance fell by the wayside. In 2019, it was shuttered by the city health department and condemned.

The four-story building housing the water park will remain, but the buildings to the east and west of the central core will be demolished.

Erie County's land bank was able to procure a \$500,000 grant from the Ohio Department of Development for demolition.

The current owner, **Simnier LLC**, is leading the redevelopment. Specific details — including the project's amenities, time line, overall cost and funding sources, along with the potential of a new water park — haven't been released yet.

Aside from Sinmier, support has come from various partners, including Erie County's land bank, Perkins Township's government, **Shores & Islands Ohio**, as well as local businesses.

"Perkins Township is pleased to see that demolition is finally going forward at the Maui Sands property," said **Tim Coleman**, township trustee. "For many years, this site has attracted trespassers using this property for illegal and unwanted use, causing property damage, and health and safety concerns."

This summer **Waco Surf** in Texas is unveiling three new mini slides designed specifically for young children. The additions are part of an ongoing effort to make the water recreation park more family friendly.

Waco Surf began as a cable-tow surf park in 2002. A wave generation pool was added in 2018. Since that time, the park has continued to expand to become a full-fledged resort with a hotel, water park, cabins, surf houses, RV sites, bars and eateries, giant waterslide ramps that launch guests into the air, and a mile-long lazy river that claims to be the longest in the world.

The **JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge Resort & Spa** was recently sold to a Tennessee-based hospitality real estate investment firm. The 950-room resort re-

cently underwent extensive renovations that included transforming the former pool area into the AquaRidge Waterpark.

The property was previously owned by **Trinity Investments**, a private real estate firm with offices in Honolulu, Los Angeles, Miami and London.

The new owner, **Ryman Hospitality**, specializes in upscale convention center resorts and entertainment experiences. Ryman's portfolio includes the **Gaylord Hotel Resorts** in Tennessee, Florida, Texas, Maryland and Colorado.

For the time being, travelers staying at the resort will see little to no impact as a result of the change of ownership. The resort will remain a JW Marriott for the foreseeable future.

Mark Fioravanti, president and CEO of Ryman Hospitality, hinted there may be changes in the future when he said his trust looks forward to "pursuing both near and long-term value creation opportunities at this property."

The city of Princeton, West Virginia, will install a Twin Tides wave pool from **Aquatic Development Group (ADG)**. The city has been planning additions to its municipal complex for some time now, including a new community center. Now, they've finalized funding to extend those additions across the street for a new, dual-entry wave pool.

The distinctive Twin Tides wave pool first made an appearance in 2016 at the Jim Allen Aquatic Center in Shawnee, Kansas, where it has proven to be extremely popular.

Princeton expects the new pool to be a draw for both locals and out-of-town visitors.

"There's nothing else like it, really, in the tri-state area, and you'd have to drive several hours to see a wave pool similar to the one that will be added here," said **Samuel Lusk**, the economic development director, City of Princeton. "It will add additional facilities for the community to enjoy as well as new facilities to attract new residents and folks to this area."

Concept art also shows a splash pad at one end of the pool, a picnic shelter, plenty of seating areas, as well as a bathhouse with showers, lockers, concessions and office space for Princeton's Recreation Department.

The city has worked closely with a local bank to finalize the \$4,000,000 in bonds needed to begin the wave pool. This is in addition to the \$475,000 already secured by the city. Construction is expected to take 12 to 18 months.

Introducing lateral drift with *Wall Runner*



The world's first drifting banked water slide, "Rafter's Rage", is now open at Soaky Mountain Waterpark in Sevierville, Tennessee, USA. Offering never-before-felt drifting sensations, Wall Runner is unlike anything currently on the market. With speeds of up to 33 km/h, riders accelerate laterally to the apex before gravity takes over, keeping speeds, and fun, high.

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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► **Women of Influence: Brooke Patterson** —page 46 / **Technology on display at Epic Universe** — pages 50-51

Six Flags offers upgrades in dining; introduces executive chefs

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Following the merger of **Six Flags** with **Cedar Fair** last summer, several of the Six Flags legacy parks have fast-tracked their culinary offerings. Several parks have not only upgraded their kitchen facilities but also refreshed restaurants to make them both more efficient and more aesthetically pleasing.

One of the improvements is the speed of service. Adopting the established and proven Cedar Fair model that uses cafeteria-type lines, guests can see their new elevated options and move through the process more quickly. This serves more people at a faster pace.

One such example is the Sangerfest Halle at **Six Flags Fiesta Texas**. The project has literally been years in the works, undergoing major shifts in approach under different leadership. This May, the long-awaited facility made its debut, making it the premier place for dining at the San Antonio theme park.

"Even though it has gone through various iterations, it has landed on what it truly should be," said **Jeffrey Siebert**, regional general manager. "One of the benefits of merging with Cedar Fair is the legacy and nature of the culinary experiences and food and beverage program in general. Right after the merger, the new leadership came to visit where our Sangerfest project had been stopped. It had gone through a variety of designs. It was a



Years in the making, the redesign of Fiesta Texas' Sangerfest Hall offers efficiency and elevated food options. Rudy Martinez (below left) and Priscilla Hamilton (below right) are two new executive chefs in the Six Flags legacy parks.

AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY SIX FLAGS

golden opportunity to create what it could and should be in a modern-day theme park."

The remodel not only has elevated the dining options, but the entire Sangerfest facility seems more spacious. In addition to the capability of two different food lines for the busiest days, a drink refill location at the side serves those people who just need a beverage more quickly.

"It is truly designed to get food very fresh and very fast," Siebert said. "Once you've selected your entrée and sides, you move to four points-of-sale registers that are designed for high volume. It's designed for maximum capacity."

New seating has been ordered to compliment the German aesthetic of the hall.

Rudy Martinez is Fiesta Texas' new executive chef. He was one of the first hired into the Six Flags legacy parks.

"A lot of what I do with the staff and culinary team is



putting in the love and raising the quality," Martinez said. "We do have our bar and standards, but we're taking it to the next level — revising our menus, stepping away from frozen to hand-breading our tenders."

"It's a scratch kitchen. We can design and create and offer any type of culinary item you can imagine," Siebert told *Amusement Today*.

Even though more diverse options are on



Firehouse BBQ is one of three redesigned restaurants at Six Flags Over Georgia. COURTESY SIX FLAGS

► See DINING, page 46

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BoldMove rethemes, engineers Expédition Nautibus in Brussels



This ambitious renovation into Expédition Nautibus merged two previous attractions into a unified new experience. The entire queue line was redesigned to seamlessly connect both attractions. COURTESY BOLDMOVE NATION

BRUSSELS, Germany — **The Grand Aquarium de Saint-Malo** unveiled the completely reimagined Expédition Nautibus underwater experience in May. After an extensive refurbishment and retheming, the beloved submarine adventure now offers visitors a more complete immersive experience, blending state-of-the-art technology with captivating storytelling. By merging two attractions, The Abyssal Descender and Nautibus, Expédition Nautibus now offers a unified and immersive journey with a compelling storyline.

The **BoldMove Nation** team led the transformation, introducing a brand-new storyline, immersive theming as well as a totally re-engineered ride system (the previous one had become obsolete). The queue line and preshow areas have also been entirely redesigned. The submarine vehicles have undergone a full technical overhaul, including complete rewiring and new automation systems with electrical cabinets. It results in a highly improved dark ride, synchronizing all components into a breathtaking underwater experience. Despite a tight three-month timeline to complete the entire transformation, smart and creative solutions were implemented to maximize impact.

"Three months was a real challenge," commented **Sébastien Challard**, development engineer with BoldMove Nation. "Especially in terms of sourcing materials — we had to coordinate with multiple suppliers. It was a true technical and logistical effort!"

► DINING

Continued from page 45

offer, the park knows that the staple comfort foods of burgers, pizza and chicken tenders are still vital, with each of those being a nicer product, such as the tenders being marinated overnight and hand-breaded each day. Side dishes include Brussels sprouts, fried apples, mac and cheese and more.

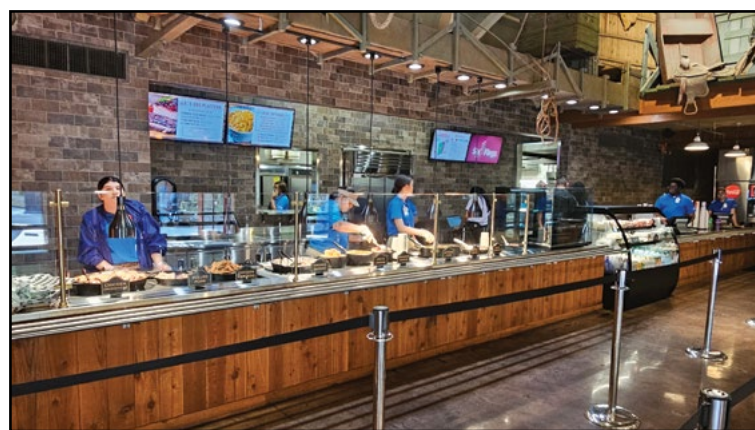
"The guest reaction has been everything we hoped it would be," said Siebert. "The whole family can find something they all enjoy together. You no longer have to go to all these crazy individual lines and meet back up together. It's a much more guest-friendly service."

In addition to Sangerfest, the '50s diner, Pete's Eats, has had furniture upgrades that make the dining experience fit the themed environment.

"We're not using frozen patties in our diner burgers. We're using fresh, quality patties that we are seasoning and cooking to order," said Martinez. "Instead of regular white bread, we're



The Riverboat Café at Six Flags New England (above left) has been reintroduced with new aesthetics and efficient customer service to move large groups of people. At Six Flags Over Texas, JB's Smokehouse (above right) is one of the transformed outlets that boasts a new look, new menu and faster service. COURTESY SIX FLAGS; AT/TIM BALDWIN



using a potato bun. One of our focuses is to dig down to make sure the quality ingredients are there. We recently purchased a new smoker and started making our own rubs for our brisket."

Even with the elevated options, Martinez' background finds a fondness for the burgers.

"I can't get away from the double-patty, double-cheese," he smiled. "When I see that juice and see people get their napkins ... I scored. Mission accomplished."

Six Flags Over Georgia has welcomed Executive

Chef **Priscilla Hamilton**. As a child, she watched her mother make things from scratch — even ice cream. It led her to culinary school, and she brings expertise in both casual dining and fine dining, with an appreciation for presentation.

"I love creole food, Cajun, and Asian is one of my favorites," said Hamilton. "I always love to incorporate that."

The park has installed upgraded kitchen equipment in its restaurants. Three restaurants have received the refresh treatment: Firehouse BBQ, Promenade Primo's Pizzeria and Dee Jay's Diner.

Six Flags New England is seeing similar improvements.

"We are thrilled to welcome Chef **Josh Streeter** to the Six Flags New England family. His exceptional talent and innovative approach to culinary arts will elevate our entire food and beverage experience," said **Pete Carmichael**, regional general manager. "We can't wait for our guests to taste the difference — from enhancing park favorites to exciting, new additions."

Streeter is a western Massachusetts native and has an extensive culinary background. He worked on a team that earned two Michelin stars in San Francisco. Subsequently, he taught culinary school, became head chef of a variety of kitchens including universities, hospitals, retirement communities, bakeries and most recently **MGM Springfield**. Streeter says those experiences make him well-versed in creating high-quality food for all ages.

"I'm really excited to be part of the Six Flags New England team and bring fresh, new flavors to the park," he said. "It's a great chance to get creative and offer guests something delicious."

In addition to Chef Streeter, Six Flags New England is reintroducing its flagship restaurant, Riverboat Café, after a total renovation. Guests can enjoy the new look of the dining area, additional seating and new kitchen equipment that will allow for new menu items and higher quality, fresh ingredients.

"The Riverboat Café is centrally located in the park, right next to our thrilling new coaster, Quantum Accelerator," Carmichael said. "We believe the renovation of the Riverboat Café perfectly complements the excitement of the coaster, adding a whole new dimension to our park that all guests can enjoy."

Six Flags Over Texas has transformed two of its restaurants. JB's Smokehouse and All American Café are offering upgraded menu items with greater efficiency. In the Mexico area, new items capturing the flavor of the section are nothing short of delicious. At La Cantina, made-to-order tortas are paired with choices of elote (Mexico street corn), house-made chips and salas and creamy pinto beans.

The parks are already developing plans for 2026. In addition to the restaurants, Refill Stations are being installed around the parks making it more convenient for guests to get beverages more quickly.



Six Flags Over Texas's La Cantina offers cultural cuisine, including tortas and elote. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

At **Great Wolf Resorts**, **Brooke Patterson** is the keeper and champion of the family-focused brand. Her straightforward approach, coupled with an eye on process, helps give families something to howl about.

Listening is the pack leader

CHICAGO, Ill. — As a leader at a company named for an animal with sharp hearing, it's appropriate that Brooke Patterson credits listening as a core competency. The chief brand officer at Great Wolf Resorts, Patterson points to time spent in the heart of the resorts as the moments when she learns the most. "Listening and observing is the best way to discover new things," she explained. "At our lodges, I get so much from watching our guests and our 'pack members.' I see firsthand what is working and areas that potentially need additional attention and further thought. It's a great way to gather new data points and firsthand knowledge.

"At Great Wolf Resorts, our focus is the guest," Patterson continued. "I enjoy walking through our lodges and seeing families connecting. Being in that moment fuels me and pushes me to do better. Our guests know Great Wolf is a safe and fun place to celebrate milestones and watershed moments. As we continue to evolve the brand, we are committed to providing meaningful experiences for families."

The guest experience is delivered through Great Wolf's pack members, and Patterson says watching and listening to them is just as important as the guest experience.

"Understanding the challenges our pack faces and the needs they have to do their jobs is vital. It helps us understand if a new program or attraction is viable. Our pack members ultimately have to deliver the experience to our guests. Being present in our resorts always inspires and educates me."

Perhaps early foreshadowing of her eventual role at Great Wolf, Patterson switched her college major from pre-med to hospitality.

"I was on the swim team and one of my coaches was a professor in the hotel school," she explained. "He told me he thought I'd like that area

of study. His suggestion led me to hospitality, and I never looked back."

Upon graduation, Patterson began her career with Celebrity and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines and later moved to Starwood Hotels Resorts. Volunteering in different areas and departments helped her hone her skill set as well as discover what she did — and did not — like to focus on.

"It's important to always be curious," she explained. "Offering to take on a project or help support something that is not in your normal scope of work helps you learn and understand. You also never know where that could lead; advancement opportunities you weren't aware of can come from supporting another team."

"I also believe in having the confidence to ask questions," Patterson furthered. "It can be uncomfortable to show vulnerability, but I've always found that when I've reached out and asked for help, others have been willing to assist and teach me. In previous roles, I've faced challenges and supported areas that needed to be turned around. Often, they were in departments or disciplines that were new to me. Not fearing possible failure and having the confidence to reach out for advice and assistance helped me bring success to each project."

Coupled with that is the willingness and confidence to make difficult decisions. "When you know something is not working, or not right, it is okay to say so," she added. "Not everything is meant to work, and it's just important to identify something that is not working as it is to identify a winner."

When Patterson joined Great Wolf Resorts in 2017, "It felt like coming home," she said. "The scale and size of the resorts, along with the entertainment we provide, blended everything I had done in my career."

After leading Great Wolf's attractions and entertainment area



for two years, Patterson turned her focus to the company's brand. The shift allowed her to combine creativity with her passion for process and organization.

"We have such an amazing opportunity each time we build a new lodge," she said. "That includes creating sustainable, executable and viable programs and services for our guests. The process can be challenging, but it's also energizing."

"Great Wolf's key focus is families," she stated. "And no matter where they come from, they are united by their desire to disconnect from the day-to-day and reconnect together. We strive to provide a complete getaway experience with broad appeal entertainment and activities. For many years we were known just for our indoor water parks. Today, we want our guests to think of us as the place for meaningful, special times together."

"The Solstice Class of ships at Celebrity Cruise Line showed me it's possible to evolve a brand," she continued. "At Great Wolf, we've had so many milestones that can be seen throughout the theming and design of our newest, Generation

4 lodges. This also includes core Lodge traditions like the guest favorite, MagiQuest. We've evolved MagiQuest into a meaningful game and experience that can't be found anywhere else."

Patterson believes thoughtful communication is the key to success when evolving existing programs and services or introducing new ones, and Patterson points to "word economy" as a trait that has helped her. "Early in my career, I had an early leader who said it was so important to always be thoughtful and mindful of what we communicate and how we communicate it. Successful communication and collaboration come from being thorough and respectful. I have never forgotten that."

Amidst the day-to-day operation of hotels across the country and the development of new programs and guest services, Patterson knows she's found her niche. "This is a vibrant and dynamic industry," she finished. "I'm excited to continue to drive what's next for Great Wolf, our pack members and our guest families." That's something to howl about, encouraging others to do the same."

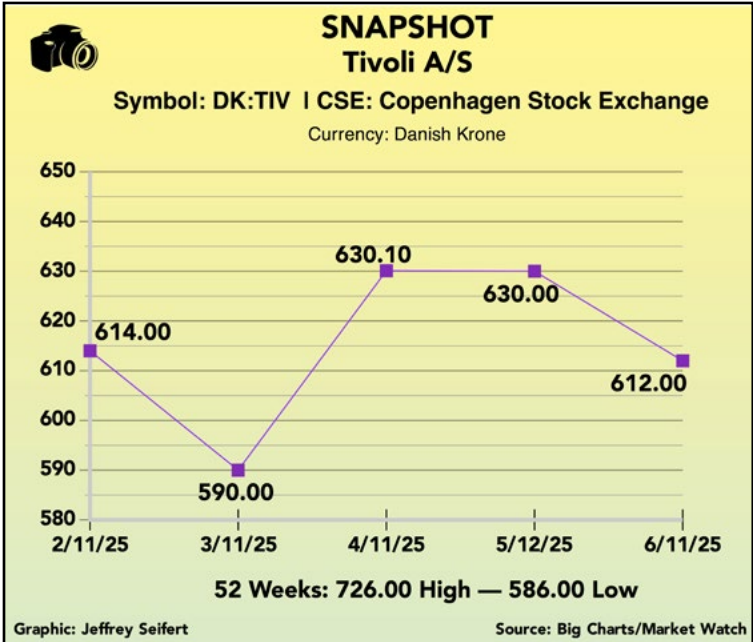
—Susan Storey

MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 6/18/25	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	137.49	200.96	115.66
Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	34.26	45.31	31.44
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	32.06	43.73	15.08
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	57.17	57.72	40.6
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	5.82	13.25	3.62
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	1990.00	3235.00	1934.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.70	1.04	0.39
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	18.65	20.90	14.80
Lucky Strike Entertainment Corp	LUCK	NYSE	9.93	14.92	7.66
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	33.94	47.26	25.30
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	N/A	0.48	0.35
Royal Carribean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	267.78	279.89	130.08
Six Flags Entertainment Corp.	FUN	NYSE	30.34	58.70	28.02
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	618.00	726.00	586.00
United Parks & Resorts Inc.	PRKS	NYSE	42.57	60.83	37.68
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	117.86	120.50	80.10
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	10.57	12.70	6.64
SUPPLIERS/OTHERS					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	97.30	205.50	82.00
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1505.00	1852.00	1031.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	8.36	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 6/16/25	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.621	(\$0.213)
Midwest	\$3.537	(\$0.084)
Gulf Coast	\$3.212	(\$0.260)
Mountain	\$3.548	(\$0.134)
West Coast	\$3.902	(\$0.082)
California	\$4.739	(\$0.134)

CURRENCY	
On 6/19/25 \$1 USD =	
0.8695	EURO
0.7438	GBP (British Pound)
144.95	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.8172	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.5376	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3671	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

DreamPark secures \$1.1M seed sunding

SAN FRANCISCO — **DreamPark** announced it secured \$1.1M in seed funding led by **Long Journey Ventures**, with participation from Founders Inc. The investment will accelerate DreamPark's mission to "...make Earth worth playing again" by transforming ordinary spaces into extraordinary adventures through mixed reality (XR) technology.

"We're building the world's largest theme park — one that exists everywhere and is accessible to everyone. We want to make getting out to play worthwhile again," said **Brent Bushnell**, co-founder and business officer of DreamPark. "This investment allows us to expand our footprint of access points across the country rapidly, develop partnerships with premium IP holders, and continue enhancing our technology to deliver magical experiences that bring people back to real-world spaces."

Positioned at the forefront of mixed reality innovation, DreamPark is capturing a significant early advantage in the global XR live event market, valued at \$3.6 billion in 2024 and projected to surge to \$190.3 billion by 2034 at a 48.7% CAGR. This explosive growth trajectory presents an opportunity that DreamPark's technology and business model are esigned to address.

Gateway customers launch Galaxy 8

GILBERTSVILLE, Pa. — **Gateway Ticketing Systems** announced that several customers have now completed successful upgrades to Galaxy 8, the company's most advanced ticketing and guest experience platform to date.

These early adopters are already reporting strong operational benefits, including streamlined workflows, faster transactions, and real-time data insights.

"The biggest indicator for me has been that we don't have a single reported issue that can be attributed to Galaxy 8," said **Luis Almonte**, executive director of **Discovery Cube Los Angeles**. "Within one week, we had everything on-site upgraded, and two weeks later, our webstore was fully upgraded as well."

RWS Global expands into Middle East

NEW YORK — **RWS Global** announced its plans to open a headquarters in Riyadh, expanding the company's significant footprint in the Middle East. This expansion shows RWS Global's commitment to the region's continued investment in innovation across entertainment, tourism, leisure travel and sport. The RWS Global team has already forged partnerships with leading businesses in the region, currently working on some of the largest projects under development.

"After a decade of building incredible experiences in the Middle East, we are thrilled to expand the presence of RWS Global by opening a headquarters in the region," said **Ryan Stana**, chairman and CEO of RWS Global. "As we develop our partnerships with some of the most exciting global companies operating in the Middle East, having a permanent presence in the market is paramount to our continued growth and allows us to be more available for our clients as we create magical experiences tailored to a wide range of visitors."

Canada's Marineland announces sale

NIAGARA FALLS, Ontario, Canada — Canada's **Marineland** announced that it will begin the process of selling the rides located at the park. The sale includes a range of classic attractions, from thrill rides to family-friendly favorites.

Bill Ossim of **Rides Plus, LLC** is assisting Marineland with the sale of the rides, along with **Yves Gillissen**. These rides will be available for purchase by amusement operators, entertainment companies and qualified buyers. Details of the sale will be managed through a formal inquiry process.

International Rides Management begins donations of park memorabilia

WILDWOOD, N.J. — **International Rides Management** (IRM) based in Wildwood, N.J., has begun to empty out its storage unit of park artifacts, including vintage signage, DVDs/VHS tapes, coaster wood and printed amusement company sales catalogs from companies around the world. Many of these items have been acquired by current President and Owner **Samuel Shurgott** through his tenured career in the industry and also items that have been acquired when Shurgott acquired International Rides Management in late 2019.

Through several ownership changes, International Rides Management had several offices in various locations around the country and acquired many catalogs, blueprints, color printed photos, ride manuals, patent information, park brochures and many more items.

"I think we have more three-ring binders of **Chance Rides** manuals than anyone in the free world," quipped Shurgott.



During IAAPA Expo 2024, IRM Rides and Samuel Shurgott (pictured) made multiple donations of rare park artifacts to the National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives. COURTESY IRM RIDES

"In March of 2023, we attended **ACE Western Pennsylvania's** annual CoasterBash and set up a sales table to being to sell some of these items," stated Shurgott. "We also donated a huge wooden sign from the now defunct Rampage water slide at **Conneaut Lake Park**. The **Conneaut Lake Area Historical Society** was there

to give a presentation, so that went quite well. That evening, IRM made the decision to begin to identify items for reassignment."

In the next year, IRM plans to have some more items for the **Conneaut Lake Area Historical Society**. Most recently, the company started making donations to the **Heinz History Center** in

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, this past October. Items included parts from the **Kennywood Racer**, including two structure pieces and a section of lift chain.

In November 2024, during IAAPA Expo 2024, donations were made to **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives** (NRCMA) of several items, including two large signs from **Morey's Piers** in Wildwood, N.J., a rare roller coaster sales book from **Bill Cobb and Associates** as well as the queue entrance sign from **Avalanche Run** bobsled coaster formerly of **Cedar Point** in Sandusky, Ohio.

"**Gary Slade** from *Amusement Today* has done so much — along with many other board members including **Richard Munch** and **Mark Rosenzweig** — to get that coaster museum up and running with a huge collection, and this was the least we could do to contribute," said Shurgott. "We want as many people to enjoy the amusement industry as possible."

•irmrides.com

ON THE MOVE

TouchTunes Music Company, LLC announced the appointment of **Scott Levine** as chief executive officer.

A seasoned executive with over 25 years of experience transforming and growing digital media and entertainment businesses, Levine brings a proven track record of innovation, product leadership and operational excellence to the role. His appointment signals a new chapter of innovation and momentum as TouchTunes continues to shape the future of in-venue entertainment.

"Scott is a transformative leader with a rare blend of strategic vision, product expertise, and a deep understanding of how people connect through entertainment," said **Charles Goldstuck**, executive chairman of TouchTunes. "His track record of building innovative platforms and scaling digital businesses makes him the ideal person to lead TouchTunes into its next phase."

InterCard has added **Amanda Sue Walker** to its team as sales assistant and trade show coordinator. She reports to **Rob Geiger**, InterCard North American sales manager.

Walker has worked with leading organizations in cybersecurity including **Apex Service Partners**, **Data Connectors**, **Darktrace**, **CrowdStrike**, **Check Point** and **Okta**. Her work included collaborating with the U.S. government and security agencies.



Levine



Walker

Her deep understanding of software and customer service makes her a great fit for InterCard's team of experts.

As the return of the **Orange County Fair** nears, the event's board of directors announced it has found a new chief executive officer. **James Canfield** will succeed **Michele Richards**, who announced in January she would retire in May.

"I am very excited to return to California and to have the great opportunity to lead OC Fair & Event Center into a new era that builds on its rich legacy while advancing innovation and community-focused programming," Canfield said in a news release. "I am very much looking forward to opening day of this year's OC Fair."

Canfield most recently served as senior director and general manager of the **Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex** in Alabama. Canfield's installment as CEO begins effective July 1, 2025. The annual fair returns July 18 and runs through August. 17.

The **Northern Wisconsin State Fair Association, Inc.** has hired **Brian Maki** as its incoming executive director, replacing the current **Rusty Volk**, who will retire on January 1, 2026. Maki has more than 20 years of experience in upper-level leadership, with a successful track record of soliciting and maintaining sponsorships for **Volume One** signature events. He has



Canfield

extensive experience in recruiting, interviewing, evaluating, hiring and training employees, as well as proficiency in developing and administering advertising and event sponsorship agreements.

"Brian is well known in the Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls community and has a successful track record of building relationships with businesses and sponsoring events," stated Volk. "I look forward to working with Brian and assisting him during this transition period."

Maki has knowledge of the agricultural community from his work with *The Country Today* newspaper, the *Tradin' Post Buyer's Guide* and was on the promotions and communications committee for the 2021 Farm Technology Days.

Dave & Buster's Entertainment, Inc., announced that it has promoted **Les Lehner** to the position of chief development officer. Lehner most recently served as chief procurement officer and head of **Main Event** development.

"We are fortunate to be transitioning leadership of our development efforts to Les — an exceptionally capable leader within our executive team," said **Kevin Sheehan**, board chair and interim chief executive officer. "Les has been a versatile and highly effective contributor to our organization, overseeing procurement, cost optimization and Main Event development."

The company announced that **John Mulleady**, current chief development officer, will retire.



Maki



Lehner

Epic Universe opens portal to future of theme park technologies

AT: David Fake
dfake@amusementtoday.com

ORLANDO — When the gates to **Universal Epic Universe** officially opened on May 22, 2025, guests didn't just step into a park, they entered a technicolor world charged with innovation. Beyond its impeccable and immersive storytelling, the real magic lies behind the scenes. It is there that a symphony of ride manufacturers, scenic designers, lighting engineers, music composers and VFX pioneers have collaborated with **Universal Creative**. Together, these maestros have written an ode to otherworldly places where guests are "travelers" and portals are used to jump between themed "worlds."

Celestial Park, one of the five opening-day worlds within Universal Epic Universe, serves as an anchor or hub — a "world between worlds." It is home to two rides set amid cosmic versions of turn-of-the-century world's grand exposition-style gardens, pools and fountains. Hidden from sight is an intricate tapestry of lighting and sound systems that control LEDs and music that morph with the arc of the sun.

Encompassing 40 hours of bespoke compositions across 16 ambient music zones,



In Celestial Park, more than seven million LEDs and 40 hours of original music blend technology and mythology into a breathtaking multisensory experience. AT/DAVID FAKE

the park's soundtrack transitions from a daytime symphony to a nighttime sonata, intensifying in sync with the setting sun. **Catherynne Jean**, a director with Universal Creative, describes the nighttime transformation as a "luminescence ceremony," where musical swells unite with rising light and ebb into a mesmerizing dance across foliage and facades.

Key to that transformation are the seven million individually controllable LEDs embedded throughout Celestial Park, all orchestrated by **Electronic Theater Control (ETC)** lighting consoles and **Alcorn McBride** show-control systems. From gateway portals to fountain tiles, every fixture responds via DMX (Digital Multiplex)

protocols with RDM (Remote Device Management)-enabled fault reporting — allowing the park to manage racks of dimmers, relays and intelligent fixtures from a centralized show control hub. **Birket Engineering's** president, **Steve Birket**, whose company installs electrical and lighting components for theme parks worldwide, told Orlando's *WESH-2 News*, "This park is the state of the theme-park industry — AI-customized rides to dynamic visual effects, lighting included."

By working with top-tier ride makers such as **Mack Rides**, **Intamin** and **Gerstlauer**, and scenic houses like **Brian Morrow Productions**, **AECOM**, **4Wall**, **THG Creative**, and **JK2 Scenic**, combined with Birket Engineering,



KUKA robotic movements, **Holovis** sensory staging and **Christie-led** VFX, Universal has built an ecosystem where lighting, music and motion are foundational storytelling tools, not afterthoughts.

Take for example, **Stardust Racers**, Celestial Park's signature attraction, a dual-track, dual-launch Mack Rides/Universal Creative-designed and Mack Rides-built coaster that pierces the sky at 62 mph. The trains race along their tracks with orchestral fanfares by day. By night, changes

to the onboard audio and train-underslung lighting make riders feel like they are riding aboard blazing comets racing through a celestial storm. The visual show for grounded nonriders is equally impressive. The ride's synchronized day-to-night soundtrack swap was no accident — it underscores the entire park's deeper emotional shift from daytime exploration to nighttime awe.

Within the themed worlds of *How to Train*

► See TECH, page 51



Portal LEDs hum in violet tones as fountains and music rise in harmony. The nightly 'luminescence ceremony' signals the start of Celestial Park's transformation. AT/DAVID FAKE





Racing through the stars by night, Stardust Racers transforms into a blazing comet ride with synchronized lighting and onboard audio. AT/DAVID FAKE

►TECH

Continued from page 50

Your Dragon's Isle of Berk, Wizarding World of Harry Potter's Paris-set Ministry of Magic, and the Universal Monsters-themed Dark Universe, DMX-controlled lighting patches layer scene-specific hues. **David Rosenblum**, show systems and lighting lead for Universal Epic Universe, explains that using ultra-precise DMX and RDM systems allows "lighting levels to shift imperceptibly as guests move zones," fueling emotion without distraction.

On the Battle at the Ministry ride, Electrosonic and Creature Technology Co. have integrated light-tracked animatronics, lit to match dynamically with the ride's emotional action tempo. From warm-up glows to sudden chills during cinematic reveals, all is triggered in sync with motion cues of the elevator-themed ride vehicles manufactured by **Simtec Systems**. Through this fusion of light, sound, motion and drama "you can take disbelief and turn it into someone's reality," notes **Jody Keller**, vice president of advanced technology at Universal Creative.

Back in Celestial Park, the day-to-night musical arc reaches its crescendo each evening. With elements of Greek mythology woven into the hub world, Jean describes the transition from day to night as starting with "bright odes of Apollo," who rules by day, then shifts to a "luminescence of the night" as Luna takes her rule each evening, while melodies soften and LEDs bloom across trees and fountains. "Beautiful music," she says, "builds until a burst of light signals the official arrival of night."

With Universal Epic Universe, Universal has



introduced music that evolves. Daytime scores blend orchestral and playful tones—a nod to adventurous exploration. Evening sets are more reverent and mysterious—mirroring the now-illuminated landscape of the park. Fourteen original scores and 16 audio zones ensure that no two areas feel the same.

Universal Epic Universe offers a treat for the senses at any hour. But as night falls over this \$7 billion marvel, the park undergoes its daily metamorphosis. Portal LEDs hum in violet tones, melodies

waft through the air, and fountains dance in rhythm. It is then that guests pause to soak in the orchestrated kaleidoscope of sensory textures—a glowing fusion of light, sound and feeling.

Universal Epic Universe doesn't merely invite guests to visit a new amusement park—it opens a portal and invites travelers into a dimension where light and sound are as integral to the immersive themed experience as the unique ride systems, elaborate sets and lifelike animatronics with which they seamlessly coexist. This is the story Universal Creative and its constellation of collaborators proudly tell through Universal Epic Universe—a story that also makes a bold statement on the limitless future of themed entertainment technology.



On the Battle at the Ministry ride, Electrosonic and Creature Technology Co. have integrated light-tracked animatronics, lit to match dynamically with the ride's emotional action. All is triggered in sync with motion cues of the elevator-themed ride vehicles (above) manufactured by Simtec Systems. AT/DAVID FAKE

ERRATA: Amusement Today regrets an error in the June 2025 issue's coverage of Epic Universe. The Stardust Racers attraction was designed and constructed in a collaboration between Universal Creative and Mack Rides. AT apologizes for the accidental inclusion of RMC in the original story.

See You at Carowinds for the 2025 Golden Ticket Awards

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The opening night reception will take place in Carowinds' award-winning Aeronautica Landing. AT/TIM BALDWIN

Golden Ticket Awards preparations underway; event registration open

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — *Amusement Today* and host **Carowinds** are making preparations for the 28th annual Golden Ticket Awards. The event will take place on September 5 and 6. Registration has opened. The event is free to attend for all who work within the amusement industry.

"There are so many takeaways each year. *Amusement Today* is always pleased to hear from attendees how much they enjoyed being a part of it," said AT Publisher **Gary Slade**.

"It is such an honor to host the Golden Ticket Awards. We couldn't be more excited to welcome the finest from our industry to the Carolina state line for a celebration of our shared passions and commitments," said **Brian Oerding**, park manager, Carowinds. "Our team is planning a great weekend, full of unique experiences, collaborative networking and Carolina hospitality. We're looking forward to a fantastic event."

The Golden Ticket Awards weekend is much more than just the awards ceremony. For two days, industry professionals have opportunities to share best practices, enjoy behind-the-scenes looks at operations and enjoy award-winning rides. Food, drinks and celebration make for an unforgettable weekend.

Supremely convenient for 2025 is that the host lodging accommodations are right on property. **Springhill Suites by Marriott Charlotte** is located steps from the front gate.

The event kicks off Friday evening with a private reception in the park's beautiful Aeronautica Landing. However, many industry friends enjoy an "only slightly" competitive annual golf tournament. For a third year, this charity event will raise funds for the **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives**.

"The Golden Ticket golf tournament has a way of turning friendly competition into full-blown drama," joked Melissa Bamford, organizer. "It's the perfect mix of laughs, rivalry and genuinely great people. And underneath it all, we're playing for something bigger: preserving the legacy we all love through the National Roller Coaster Museum."

That golf outing will take place at **The Divide Golf Club** in Matthews on September 5, starting at 8 a.m.

"My favorite part is the networking opportunities," said Golden Ticket Awards Communications Coordinator **Tim Baldwin**. "Everyone has a chance to congratulate colleagues on their winning accomplishments, but to find those relaxing moments to really share with one another is priceless. People come away with such stories and heartfelt learning moments."

Last-minute nominations can be made for select industry categories: Best New Show, Leadership, Best New Attraction Installation and Best Innovation. The deadline for making those nominations is June 30. Nominations can be submitted at: goldenticketawards.com.

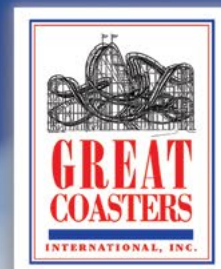
Registration will remain open through early August, but don't delay. Attendance is limited to those who work within the amusement industry. There is no cost to attend, but registration is required.

• goldenticketawards.com



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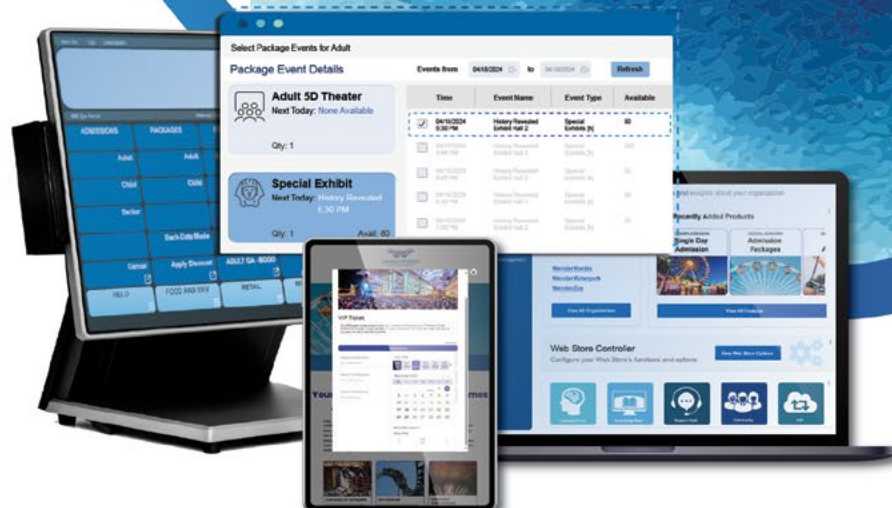
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SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Kennywood's Steel Curtain reopens — page 58 / Europa-Park builds its own fire station — page 62

Maclan celebrates 50 years of keeping wheels turning forward

AT: Susan Storey
Special to Amusement Today

LAKELAND, Fla. — Since 1975, the **Maclan Corporation** has made sure the wheels on theme and amusement park rides go round and round. Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the family-owned-and-operated company has remained true to its core values of quality work, serving customers and treating employees like family. “It does sound cliché to say everyone at Maclan is family, but we wouldn’t have it any other way,” shared **Maegan Wallace**, head of amusement sales and marketing, Maclan Corporation. “Each other reflects how we treat our customers. We believe in the power of the handshake and standing by our word.”

Maclan’s origin story started as a small company that served the phosphate mines in Polk County, Florida. That all changed in 1977 when the company got a call from the still-very-new theme park, the **Magic Kingdom**, which was located 30 minutes up the road. The rest has been rolling history. The team at Disney initially approached Wallace’s father and Maclan Owner and President **Phil Lane** to pour a polyurethane part for the Grand Prix (now Tomorrowland Speedway) ride’s front bumper bracket. After supplying that service, Lane and his team met with Disney’s maintenance department to look at the attraction’s wheels. At that time, Disney was sourcing polyurethane wheels from California



and was seeking a new alternative. A solid plastic that serves as a wear material on wheels, polyurethane gives wheels longer lifespans, better durability and a smooth ride. The park needed a solution close to its Florida home, and Lane saw an opportunity.

“We were local and able to meet Disney’s needs,” Wallace explained. “From that point on, we became the local wheel supplier for that attraction. That then led to supplying wheels for the rest of the park’s rides.”

As Walt Disney World grew, so did its relationship with Maclan. At the start of their partnership, Maclan supplied 55,000 wheels a year to the Magic Kingdom alone. That number has spun millions of times over.

The relationship with Disney also allowed Maclan to innovate and develop new products. To help with EPCOT’s Spaceship Earth, Maclan developed a new paraphenylene diisocyanate (PPDI) product to significantly extend the lifespan of the attraction’s ride vehicle wheels. The PPDI material became a game-changer with Spaceship Earth and the overall wheel manufacturing process for the industry. PPDI is now used on coaster wheels around the world.

Supplying wheels for amusement rides is a constantly rotating business,



Founded in 1975, Maclan Corporation is a family-owned and operated business that supplies wheels for amusement rides around the world. Pictured above are family members (l to r) Richard “DJ” Lane, Phil Lane and Maegan Wallace. The company has partnered with RMC for many years, including supplying wheels for Fun Spot Atlanta’s largest roller coaster, ArieForce One (right).
COURTESY MACLAN

and Maclan’s team manufactures, replaces and supplies wheels every day of the year. The process of replacement includes stripping the old layer of polyurethane and reapplying a fresh new layer. Depending on the design, speed, size, weight and overall use of the ride, some wheels need to be replaced as often as every 30 days, while others can last for more than a year. It’s a continual process that ensures park rides keep moving. “Our first work with the theme park indus-



try originated with calls from the parks themselves seeking to replace and repair their wheels,” Wallace said. “Over time, we recognized we could serve customers better if we were part of the initial ride design phase.”

Wallace credits the **IAAPA Expo** as the catalyst that helped Maclan expand beyond parks.

“Our experience and partnership with Disney enabled

us to become experts at manufacturing wheels for all types of attractions, particularly roller coasters,” she explained. “We also developed processes for inspection and documentation to that help customers keep everything in working order, and schedule and plan for rehab and replacement. It was at IAAPA Expo in 2012 that we began to talk directly with ride

► See MACLAN, page 56

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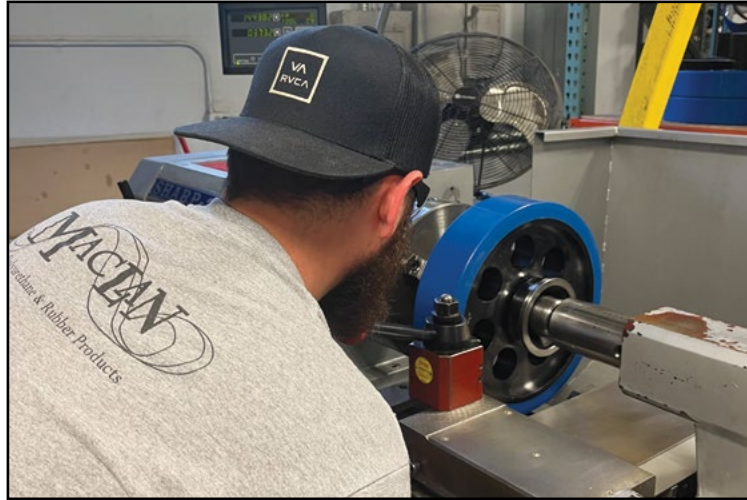
► **MACLAN**

Continued from page 55

manufacturers. We discussed how bringing us in during the design phase would benefit both the park client and the ride manufacturer themselves. Our goal was to help streamline the process and help reduce downtime and replacement time and costs.

"In 2016 we began a partnership with **Vekoma Rides**, becoming one of two exclusive wheel manufacturers," she continued. "That opened doors to new international business, and we've been rolling ever since!"

Additional partnerships followed and today Maclan also supplies wheels for global ride manufacturers **RMC** and **S&S**. "My dad often says, 'Name a ride, we've probably supplied wheels for it,'" Wallace added. "Our manufacturer and vendor relationships, along with the relationships we've built through our work with **AIMS**, **PAPA**, **NEAPPA** and **IAAPA** have helped us serve customers



Based in Lakeland, Florida, Maclan's manufacturing facility is spread across 10 acres and includes two warehouses. As an exclusive wheel manufacturer for Vekoma Rides, Maclan wheels will be turning on Cedar Point's new Vekoma Tilt Coaster — Siren's Curse (above right, insert). COURTESY MACLAN, CEDAR POINT

around the world."

While the company has remained based in Lakeland, Florida, Maclan's facilities have expanded to include over 80,000 square feet of manufacturing space and multiple warehouses. Today, Maclan employs 50 people.

"We are a specialized company working within a specialized industry," Wallace furthered. "No one comes to us with a degree as a polyurethane expert.

We hire and train our employees from the ground up. Everyone on our team understands and owns every part of the process. Maclan is known for providing quality products and excellent customer service. The wheels on a ride make it smooth, fast and safe. We are proud to be the go-to wheel supplier for the amusement industry."

"Our family values can be seen in every aspect of the business," Wallace said. "We

guarantee our work and will fix anything a customer asks. No questions asked."

"My brother and I are proud to work alongside our dad in this business," she added. "Family-owned businesses are special; they are both tough and amazing. The amusement industry is filled with family-owned parks as well as vendors and suppliers. It's a unique community to be a part of."

"Maclan has been on a



wild ride," Wallace concluded. "From mining to Mickey Mouse to serving parks in Dubai, Vietnam and beyond, we've had an incredible first 50 years. We are excited to keep wheeling and wheeling for another 50 years — and beyond."

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Be an instructor at the 2026 AIMS International Safety Seminar

If you're an experienced professional in the amusement industry, there's no better platform to share your knowledge and passion for safety than the **AIMS International** Safety Seminar. As the global leader in amusement industry safety education, AIMS International is calling on industry veterans, trainers and subject matter experts to step forward and help shape the future of safety through teaching and mentoring at the 2026 AIMS International Safety Seminar, taking place January 12-16, 2026, in Orlando, Florida.

Each year, AIMS International partners with over 130 volunteer instructors to deliver more than 350 hours of unmatched educational content. These instructors represent a broad spectrum of disciplines from attraction operations, maintenance and inspection to aquatics, safety, security and adventure attractions. This diverse expertise ensures that attendees gain valuable insights across all aspects of amusement facility management. By becoming an instructor, you not only support the professional development of your peers, but you also elevate safety standards across the entire industry.

Why teach at AIMS?

Sharing your expertise at the AIMS Safety Seminar is more than just a professional opportunity, it's a responsibility. As amusement attractions evolve and guest expectations grow, it's more important than ever that the safety knowledge driving our industry remains fresh, engaging and relevant. The insights you bring could help an operator handle a critical situation, guide a technician to identify potential hazards before they escalate, or inspire a manager to implement new, life-saving procedures.

Whether you're a seasoned presenter or a first-time speaker, your voice matters. Many first-time instructors return year after year, forming long-lasting professional relationships and discovering new ways to make an impact. Your participation will not only help shape the educational experience for hundreds of attendees, but it will also contribute directly to improving safety practices in real-world amusement settings.

Instructors at AIMS aren't just presenters, they're mentors, innovators and leaders. You'll be joining a network of the industry's top professionals,

world-class speakers and veteran trainers who are committed to a common mission: improving safety and operational excellence across amusement facilities worldwide. The relationships you build and the knowledge you share will resonate far beyond the seminar classroom and into the day-to-day operations of parks and attractions around the globe.

Now is the time to get involved

The Call for Instructors for the 2026 AIMS International Safety Seminar is open through July 31, 2025. Whether you're a returning instructor with a tried-and-true course or someone ready to present a fresh idea, we encourage you to submit your proposals today. Even if you've previously taught at an AIMS Seminar, a new form must be completed for each course you wish to offer.

Be a part of the legacy of safety, innovation and excellence. Visit aimsintl.org to complete the Call for Presentations form and help lead the charge in safety education for the amusement industry.

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Kennywood's Steel Curtain reopens after 13-month modification

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

WEST MIFFLIN, Pa. — Featuring 4,000 feet of track, The Steel Curtain at Kennywood Park originally opened in 1919. This high-speed, 220-foot-tall steel roller coaster features nine inversions, the most of any coaster in the United States. However, as time wore on, there became a heightened focus on Steel Curtain's reliability.

On July 26, 2023, the ride closed. The next fall, the park began a process to reinforce the support structure with a modification project to increase the reliability and longevity of the ride. Throughout the project, Kennywood worked with the ride's manufacturer, S&S Worldwide, Stengel Engineering and Glynn Group to add three new columns diagonally along the main part of the structure, along with several dozen additional structural members placed in high-stress areas, including additional flanges and bracing. This lateral stiffening was done to decrease structural movement, reduce maintenance costs and provide a more reliable ride experience.

"We take pride in our rides," says S&S President and CEO Jason Mons. "So, when we discovered that the structural movement of The Steel Curtain could impact its longevity, we started making plans both internally and with the park."

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



Kennywood worked to strengthen high stress areas.

Three new columns were added diagonally along the main section of ride structure.

At right is a closeup of one of the additional support columns as well as the new pavement that was cut in.

COURTESY DAVE HAHNER

oscillations were concerning. This led to finding a solution to improve reliability and longevity in seven areas throughout the ride structure. In addition, a trim brake was added in the last third of the ride, which will be used as needed.

TÜV, the German organization also known as the Technical Inspection Association, was brought in to conduct the final inspection.

Amusement Today spoke with Jason Mons, president and CEO of S&S about the modifications.

Amusement Today: How did the project go?

Mons: I couldn't be happier with the way the project went and the way our relationship developed with



Kennywood and Parques Reunidos (park owner until recently). This was a true collaboration with all sides coming together to express individual goals and work through the project.

When Kennywood asked us to assist them in reviewing the ride, we were very willing to participate. At S&S, we believe we are "Where Excitement Begins." We know the legacy of our rides will live long after they leave our factory and installation is completed. We have S&S products that have been in operation for more than 30 years, and we continue to support parks with their Arrow rides that have been in use for over 50 years. We are dedicated to being long-term partners with our customers. This involves being willing and available to support the parks and to work with their engineers, maintenance and management to ensure the rides provide enjoyment to park patrons for generations."

What was entailed with the modifications?

S&S takes safety seriously, so the safety of guests was never in doubt. The intention of the work was to ensure the ride would be around for many years to come. Working with

industry veterans, Stengel, Parques Reunidos and Palace Entertainment, we performed an intense analysis of the existing structure and identified areas that would benefit from modifications to enhance the longevity of the ride.

To conduct the analysis, S&S engineers documented the ride as built with laser scanners and optical measuring devices and performed and analyzed Strain Gage testing results. This ensured the new structure would fit perfectly as designed, minimizing work efforts and making for efficient work on site.

S&S service technicians and SkyHigh, a company of highly skilled tradesmen experienced in coaster installation, collaborated to provide the technical staff, iron workers and welders necessary to modify the structure to engineered designs and perform the installation work.

Were there any challenges along the way?

A project like this is never perfect; but taking time in the beginning to review the ride, perform site inspections and be open with Stengel and Kennywood allowed us to stay focused on the summer

opening deadline and helped us to adjust when typical issues came up.

From the beginning, the entire team knew it was critical to align our efforts to ensure the ride would open for the summer season. With so many groups working together, staying on schedule was critical. Everything from the shipping of parts from suppliers, crane and installation work, on-site testing, to final inspections by government officials had to be carefully monitored to avoid delays.

Even with this planning and focus, some issues were unavoidable, but we worked with our partners to stay on track. When international trade policies created shipping delays, S&S worked with SkyHigh to provide additional crews to recover the schedule. Even the unpredictable weather in Pittsburgh couldn't stop us. Whether facing unseasonable cold or persistent rain, the crews collaborated to overcome challenges, adjusting shifts and hours to keep the schedule moving forward.

What was it like to work with Stengel Engineering on the modifications?

We have worked with Stengel for many years. Stengel led the engineering and design efforts for Maxx Force at Six Flags Great America as well as many other S&S rides. When it was determined to bring Stengel in to participate, neither the park nor S&S had any concerns for their involvement.

The new supports and other structure bracing are hard to identify, except for a slight variation in paint color.

"This is a comeback worthy of the black and gold at one of the best theme parks in the United States," said Ricky Spicuzza, general manager of Kennywood at the Steel Curtain reopening media event. "The Steel Curtain is now ready to deliver nonstop thrills all summer long. We're excited to welcome fans back to experience our most iconic coaster, now better than ever." The Steel Curtain reopened May 24.

•kennywood.com



With only a slight variation in color, the new supports and other bracing are hard to identify. COURTESY KENNYWOOD

Aquarium de Paris, VLocker reinvent visitor experience

PARIS, France — **Aquarium de Paris** faced a pressing challenge: how to offer visitors a secure, convenient way to store their belongings in a post-2015 world. After the Paris terrorist attacks, the site — which is nestled between the **Eiffel Tower** and **Trocadéro** — was forced to suspend all cloakroom services due to heightened security measures. Yet, visitor demand for storage never went away.

“We had recurring requests for a cloakroom,” stated a spokesperson for the aquarium. “But due to safety, staffing and financial constraints, we could no longer operate a traditional check-in system.”

The solution? An innovative, automated locker system that would not only meet security requirements but also improve the visitor experience and generate revenue.

The turning point came when the aquarium’s CEO, **Alexis Powilewicz**, visited Chicago’s **Shedd Aquarium** and discovered — a secure, monetized locker system is rarely seen in French Cultural institutions, where lockers are typically free. The team quickly saw the potential.

VLocker offered exactly what Aquarium de Paris needed: security, simplicity and practicality.

“We have strict rules about items like helmets and scooters, which aren’t allowed inside,” explained an aquarium representative. “Thanks to the lockers, we no longer have to turn people away — we can offer a practical alternative. That’s helped reduce revenue loss and boosted satisfaction.”

From a security perspective, the lockers have proven solid and reliable. More importantly, they’ve become a vital part of the aquarium’s visitor services.

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Silverwood changes Tremors wooden coaster to steel; new trains

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ATHOL, Idaho — Silverwood Theme Park opened its gates on May 3. When guests arrive this year, there will be a noticeable difference.

Having opened in 1999, Tremors was the second wooden roller coaster at Silverwood Theme Park, following the success of Timber Terror in 1996. Both coasters were designed by Custom Coasters International.

Tremors has been highly regarded among coaster fans, boasting a unique and exhilarating layout with its four underground tunnels. These below-ground moments are the inspiration for the ride's moniker.

But 2025 brings a seismic change. Changing a wood coaster to a steel coaster can rattle the coaster world, and this quake comes with more than one partner.

Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC) has been called upon to convert the remaining wood track to its steel 208 RetraK.

"Traditional woodies are wonderful rides, but they require constant upkeep and skilled carpentry support. Additionally, the track must be inspected daily," said **Darren Torr**, president, RMC. "Over time, the wood track degrades and creates a very rough ride that will neg-



Tremors now boasts RMC's 208 RetraK throughout the course. The steel track can be seen above and right, along with one of the new Millennium Flyer trains from Great Coasters International. COURTESY SILVERWOOD

atively impact guests' ride experience. Also, the rough ride leads to excess wear on trains and structure, which increases operational costs. RMC is thrilled to work with Silverwood in pioneering the replacement of wood track with RMC's patented 208 RetraK system, which is based on proven I-Box track technology. The traditional I-Box track is optimized for direct replacement and is built to the same profile as the existing wood stack. To minimize maintenance, weathering steel is utilized. Aesthetically, the weathering steel patinas also provide a great rustic look that complements the existing ride vibe."

RMC had constructed many of the park's attrac-

tions in the earlier days of the company, including many in the park's water park, Boulder Beach. In 2021, the manufacturer supplied Stunt Pilot, a single-rail coaster.

When Tremors opened in 1999, attendance hadn't grown into the large crowds Silverwood enjoys today. The park has seen considerable expansion with the notoriety of being a top-tier attraction, so more capacity is needed. For 2025, this makeover includes two new Millennium Flyer trains from **Great Coasters International, Inc.**

Bathed in blue, the trains are adorned with the Tremors logo on the front. To accommodate the second train, a



new transfer track and maintenance shed was built.

"Silverwood is committed to enhancing the guest experience, and we are thrilled that Tremors will give our guests more opportunities to enjoy an increased throughput and smoother ride for years to come," said **Jordan Carter**, director of marketing and entertainment.

"208 RetraK can be spliced into existing wood track, allowing parks to upgrade over time," Torr told *Amusement Today*. "Or, for the most economical install, all wood track can be replaced, which provides the added benefit of opening up the use of polyurethane wheels which further enhances the rider experience. Once upgraded, guest experience is significantly improved via a vastly smoother ride that RMC verifies via accelerator testing. Additionally, operational expenses are dramatically reduced due to the longevity of the steel track."

Silverwood has been installing 208 RetraK each of the past three seasons.

"With each installation, both the track system and install methodology have been further refined

and improved," said Torr. "The system has proven to be a huge success and is now being installed across the world as parks elect to improve ride quality and reduce operating expenses."

"We are excited to work with our partners in our backyard to help them increase their uptime and longevity of their wooden coasters," said **Hunter Novotny**, international ride consultant, RMC. "The 208 RetraK solution was a great fit for the park as it solves the issues that they were facing with the ongoing maintenance and inspection requirements to keep the rides running smoothly. This product offers a 'set and forget' solution that should ensure that the rides bring smiles for years to come while allowing for reallocation of operational expense and efforts."

Tremors stands 85 feet, but the first drop is 99 feet as it plunges into the first of the four tunnels. The track length is 3,158 feet.

"With the 208 RetraK system, we are able to provide sections of track in a single offseason while providing the parks a turnkey solution for the manufacturing as well as installation," said Novotny.



The park built a new transfer track and shed to accommodate two trains. COURTESY SILVERWOOD



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Europa-Park builds its own fire station; increases area safety

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

RUST, Germany — Even with the famous amusement resort having been in the town for five decades, Rust remains relatively small with just over 5,000 citizens — which is rather ironic when the **Europa-Park** resort can have more than 35,000 people within its gates on a busy day.

The town of Rust has a volunteer fire department, which has come to the aid of the park in the past 10 years when two fires have tragically destroyed some beloved attractions. (All have been rebuilt since.)

Being forward-thinking, management has completed a brand-new fire station right on the property at the resort. It was ready for the 2025 season.

Holger Hannemaan, head of the fire brigade at Europa-Park, speaks fondly of the town's volunteer fire department: "The Rust fire



With six bays, the new Europa-Park fire station is at the ready with whatever size vehicle is needed (above left). For smaller situations, a variety of service vehicles are on hand to meet specific needs (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN



brigade is very well equipped for a village of this size, in the event of an incident."

Now with a permanent team at Europa-Park, the resort is ready to reciprocate. "Cooperation between us as the main fire brigade and the Rust volunteer fire brigade is excellent," noted Hannemann.

He points out to *Amusement Today* that district administration determines specific plans and

requirements, which must be followed. "This ensures that sufficient firefighters and equipment are available. The requirements plan is renewed every few years and adjusted if necessary," he explained.

Positioned right on the main road of the resort, the new building began construction last year and was completed this spring. The facility has six bays and 920 square meters (9,900 square

feet) of usable area. Currently, the park says the brigade consists of 50 employees.

When visiting, AT noticed a variety of sizes for emergency vehicles. It was explained that sometimes a smaller fire within the park (or parking lot) wouldn't require a full-sized fire engine, and a smaller vehicle would have easier access to such cases. As with everything at Europa-Park, efficiency

is top of mind.

The employee areas have restrooms, a kitchen, a lounge, laundry facilities, sanitary facilities and offices. More work-related are a training room, parts workshop, cleaning materials room, breathing apparatus workshop and rooms for fire protective clothing. Whether for practicality or tradition, two fire poles provide sliding access from the top floor to the lower floor.

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The very first AIMS Asia Pacific Safety Seminar was held at the Pan Pacific Singapore from April 21 to 25, 2025, and featured world-class speakers and top industry professionals. COURTESY AIMS INTERNATIONAL

AIMS International hosts the first Asia Pacific Safety Seminar

DALLAS, Texas — AIMS International, the world leader in amusement safety education, announced its expansion into the Asia-Pacific market with the first-ever AIMS Asia Pacific Safety Seminar. This highly anticipated event was held at the Pan Pacific Singapore from April 21 to 25, 2025, and featured world-class speakers, the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) Singapore and many top industry professionals.

AIMS partnered with CASY Engineering Consultancy, Yogeeswaran Sivasithamparam and Girish Jagajeevan to bring this event to the Asian market and successfully execute it at the high level the industry has come to expect from AIMS International.

Amy Lowenstein, AIMS International executive director, delivered the keynote address speaking to best practices from North America, followed by 40 hours of amusement safety education across the five-day event. A variety of sessions covered topics from maintenance to inspection, operations, electrical, permitting, welding, corrosion, risk assessment and ASTM F-24 Rides Standards.

"The passion and engagement throughout the week was inspiring," said AIMS board member Rob Gavel. "We are grateful to Yogee and his team for their enthusiastic support and efficient management of the seminar."

The AIMS Asia Pacific Safety Seminar will return to Singapore in April 2026. Industry members are encouraged to keep an eye on the AIMS website for dates and registration information for attendees and instructors as well as sponsorship opportunities.

•aimsintl.org



To make the Asia Pacific Safety Seminar happen, AIMS partnered with CASY Engineering Consultancy, Yogeeswaran Sivasithamparam and Girish Jagajeevan. Pictured above are (l to r) Amy Lowenstein of AIMS International, Girish Jagajeevan, AIMS board member Rob Gavel and Yogeeswaran Sivasithamparam. COURTESY AIMS INTERNATIONAL

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- Keeps a daily duty log of maintenance work performed and accurate records of preventative maintenance.
- Maintains a safe and clean working environment.
- Performs other job-related duties as assigned.
- Ability to read and interpret blueprints and schematics.
- Working knowledge of PC software — Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, etc.

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- Electrical control experience is necessary to work on amusement rides
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 - Excellent customer service skills
- Interpersonal skills to deal effectively with all business contacts
 - Professional appearance and demeanor
- Ability to effectively communicate in English, in both written and oral forms
 - Excellent trouble-shooting abilities.
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- Post-high school training in related field
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Physical Demands: The physical demands described here are those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee will be required to constantly required to move from one worksite to another, communicate with others to exchange information, use repetitive motions with the wrists, hands, and/or fingers, operate machinery or power tools, and operate motor vehicles or heavy equipment.

The employee will be required to occasionally climb ladders, stairs, and the like, move in different positions to accomplish tasks in various environments including tight and confined spaces, remain in a stationary position, often standing or sitting for prolonged periods, and assess the accuracy, neatness and thoroughness of the work assigned. The employee may also be required to balance, stoop, kneel, crouch, reach, push, pull, grasp, talk, or hear. Specific vision abilities required by this job may include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception and ability to adjust focus. The physical demands will require the employee to constantly lift or move objects up to 20 lbs. and occasionally lift or move objects up to 100 lbs. or more. Must be able to work weekends, evenings, and holidays. Must be willing to work a flexible schedule.

Work Environment: The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is constantly exposed to outside weather conditions, including wet and/or humid conditions, low and high temperatures, and rain and wind, and occasionally be exposed to moving mechanical parts; high, precarious places; fumes or airborne particles; toxic or caustic chemicals; extreme cold; extreme heat; risk of electrical shock; explosives and vibration. The noise level in the work environment is loud. Hazardous conditions may occur.

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