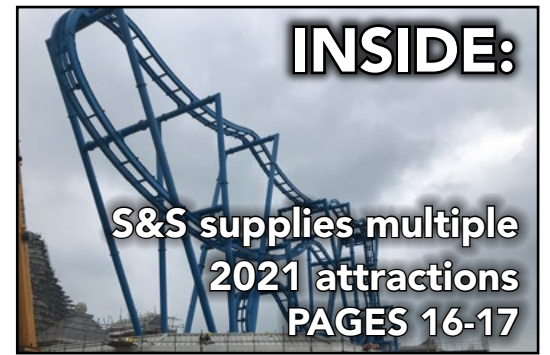


► Dollywood performs off-season upgrades, creates more outdoor space — page 40

Amusement TODAY

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS!

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April 2021 | Vol. 25 • Issue 1

Digital Edition

Amusement Today begins its 25th year of publication

► Special 16-page BONUS SECTION



Wiegand's new interactive CoasterKart opened at Rowdy Bear Ridge Adventure Park. COURTESY WIEGAND

Tennessee's Rowdy Bear Ridge opens Wiegand's interactive CoasterKart

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn.—A new coaster concept by German manufacturer Wiegand Sports U.S.A. called CoasterKarts is now up and running at Rowdy Bear Ridge Adventure Park in this popular destination city.

This is Wiegand's first installation of the interactive attraction in North America. Based on the first-day rider response on March 13, the ride is already a hit.

"Everyone really seems to like it," said Mark Williford, park owner. "When you start out at the station, you really feel like you are driving it."

The reason for this is due to the fact that riders on CoasterKart do have some speed control. Williford's cars have a hand throttle used much like a throttle on a motorcycle. So with a twist of the wrist, the karts throttle up.

Each car seats two riders side by side. Williford purchased a total of 12 cars, but said he will most likely run 10 at any one time.

While the company recommends a length of at least 1,640 feet, Rowdy Bear boasts a track 2,500 feet long.

Jessica Wedel, sales and



The North American installation is receiving a great response from riders and potential purchasers. COURTESY WIEGAND

project manager, Wiegand Sports U.S.A., said the maximum speed is about 25 mph. Speeds can be pre-set. For example, Williford said the operator can set a minimum as well as a maximum and can set curve speeds. The speed boost works with a linear inductor motor, the same concept Wiegand has used in its Alpine Coaster.

Rowdy Bear's CoasterKart includes a tunnel and water features, and it twists and turns around existing rides.

Williford said he is finding that the ride is appealing to a wide demographic. He also said because riders have some speed

► See KART, page 6

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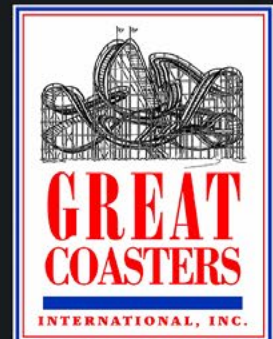
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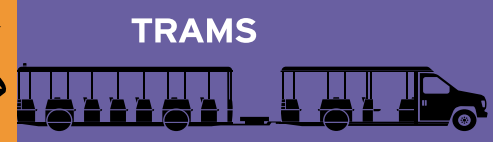
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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

AT NOTEBOOK: Gary Slade, gslade@amusementtoday.com

Open for business



Slade

When Texas Governor Greg Abbott opened the State of Texas up for business in mid-March it signaled what we all hope is the beginning of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Texas ruling opened ALL business at 100% and no longer requires masks, although it continues to give business owners that want to enforce mask wearing the right to do so. The ruling also came in time for the Texas schools spring break schedule.

Combine this with the massive ongoing vaccine rollout not only in Texas, but all across the nation, and its clear now we are finally seeing light at the end of the tunnel.

The stay-at-home mandates have also worn on families and most are ready to get out and about to enjoy the arrival of spring. That has been evident this week (March 15-19) by seeing the parking lot at Six Flags Over Texas (Arlington) with cars extending well into its big overflow lot...a sight rarely seen in 2020. Word from my neighbor, a worker for the City of Grand Prairie, reported both early opening times and solid crowds at Epic Waters Indoor Waterpark — more good news.

Just as this column was being written, our emails filled up with news that the California parks have been given the okay to begin limited capacity reopening. And we've received many other notices of family-owned parks releasing their guidelines online for guests to follow as they, too, begin their operating procedures for reopening. All positive signs.

We remind the parks that many of our suppliers are still hurting and will be until new ride orders can be placed. It may seem small at the moment, but ride replacement part orders are a lifeline right now for suppliers. If your facility needs to restock its ride spare parts shelves, for the benefit of all, please place that order immediately.

Here's to our greater amusement industry and hoping all will soon be "open for business."

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

Saying thank you

The issue you're reading currently begins the 25th year of publication for *Amusement Today*. In 1997, Gary Slade decided the amusement industry needed a better news source than what was available. He wanted the industry to have an easy way to share information, opinions and details. Nearly a quarter of a century later, his idea is going strong.

For me, this issue marks the beginning of year seven of taking on the role of production manager for *AT*, handling the publication's layouts and needed design work. It also signifies the beginning of my third year as editor for *Amusement Today*.

To be honest, the latter was a role I took on out of necessity. A sudden change in staff and pre-existing commitments left *AT* in a position where someone needed to step into the role and take off running. As some have said I'm prone to saying too much in my life, I simply said, "Ok, let's do it" and stepped forward.

The previous few years have turned out to be some of my favorite — and most memorable — in this industry as a result (and that's coming from someone who's been part of this industry since



Robinson

the day he was born). It continues to be the greatest job in the world.

But I would not have this title, would never be able to succeed at producing each issue and Gary Slade's continued vision for *Amusement Today* could not exist nearly 25 years later were it not for the consistent and outstanding efforts by the *AT* staff ... which I'd prefer to call the "AT family."

This family rallies around each other every issue to create content, double-check one another, share information, assist with photos, deliver ads and continue to assure that *Amusement Today* is the industry's leading news source. They care about this publication and they love the attractions industry.

When COVID-19 began to shut things down, there was an idea to produce our COVID-19 Special Edition issue. It literally took one phone call for the entire *AT* family to willingly work pro bono to produce its content and help provide a start to guiding the industry through the times to come. Just one moment of many that they've pulled together.

For those reasons, for continuing Gary's dream, for helping me live my own, for being a family ... to the *AT* staff ... I want to say "Thank you!"

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



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

Deliveries: 2004 E. Randol Mill Road #502, Arlington, Texas 76011, USA

Phone: (817) 460-7220

Fax: (817) 265-NEWS (6397)

Websites: www.AmusementToday.com, www.GoldenTicketAwards.com

Founder & Publisher

Gary Slade • (817) 460-7220
gslade@amusementtoday.com

Accounting & Classified

Sammy Piccola • (817) 460-7220
spiccola@amusementtoday.com

Assistant Office Manager, Circulation

Savannah Breen • (817) 460-7220
sbreen@amusementtoday.com

Advertising

Sue Nichols • (615) 477-5432
snichols@amusementtoday.com

Editor & Production Manager

John Robinson • (513) 256-1441
jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

Editorial

Tim Baldwin • (972) 697-9745
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Jeffrey Seifert • (817) 460-7220
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

B. Derek Shaw • (717) 843-3050
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Pam Sherborne • (615) 308-3310
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

Monthly Contributors

David Fake, Bubba Flint, Lottie Minick, Richard Munch, Janice Witherow

Association Memberships

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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Gary Slade, Amusement Today

This month's 2-Minute Drill needs no introduction. He is a friend to everyone, loves Texas and has a great big heart. In celebration of the beginning of *Amusement Today's* 25th year of print, **Gary Slade** — owner and publisher of *AT* — is April's industry profile person. Gary got his start in the business in 1978 working as a ride operator at **Six Flags Over Texas**. During his newspaper career, he stayed active in the industry producing editorial stories and doing ride photography for suppliers. Gary was on the board of directors for **AIMS International** for nine years and still sits on the board of directors as past president for one of his passionate projects, the **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives**. He has worked tirelessly for the industry, championed many causes and as a result, been honored with several special distinctions such as **IAAPA's** Impact Award, the Al Turner Memorial Commitment to Excellence Award and **NEAAPA's** Alan E. Ramsay Safety Award. Gary's infectious personality, his undeniable laugh and his genuine love for people make him one of a kind. Thank you, Gary ...and congratulations on beginning 25 years of *AT*!

Title: Owner and Publisher.

Number of years in the industry: 43. I started in 1978 as a ride operator on the Chaparral Antique Cars (Arrow) at Six Flags Over Texas.

Best thing about the industry: Without a doubt, it's the friendships that we make from all sides and locations of this great industry.

Favorite amusement ride: Whatever roller coaster ride I'm on at the moment, followed by log flumes and dark rides.

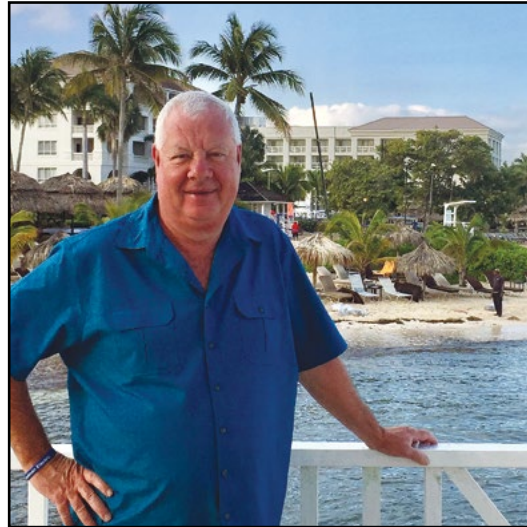
If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ... Covering Texas high school football games for local newspapers, including the awesome six-man football teams.

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Short term, our industry parks and suppliers need a quick recovery from the COVID pandemic. Long term, our industry needs to find a way to start a trade training program for training ride mechanics so they are familiar in both the electrical and mechanical design of rides.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ... The thrill and fun that these facilities provide to the guests. The everyday stress is gone, just for a moment, every time you hear the scream or laughter coming from an amusement ride.

Pick only one ... season tickets to the Cowboys, Rangers or Mavericks? Texas Rangers, of course!

The best part of being on the board for the National Roller Coaster Museum is... Seeing now that we are making a difference in preserving amusement industry history, and we are getting so close to having an actual building that can open to the public.



Amusement Today begins its 25th year with this issue. Above, its founder and publisher, Gary Slade, relaxes in the Florida sun during a recent vacation. AT/GARY SLADE

The biggest change over the last quarter-century about AT is ... As a former pressman and quality control coordination for the *USA Today* pressroom in Arlington, I never thought I would see the day when I turned off the printing press and made a switch to all digital. Now that it's done, it was the correct move for *AT*, especially during the COVID pandemic.

My favorite things about living in Texas are ... The food, the people and the cost of living.

When I say The Lone Star State, you say ... Pride. Native Texans, of which I'm proud to be one, have a unique pride for Texas, one I don't see as much in other states.

My favorite Texas food is ... It's a tie between any TexMex meal or chicken fried steak.

One of the neatest things that has happened to me in this industry is ... The friendships are first, but with that comes unique travel opportunities that will always be remembered and cherished.

In one word, the last 25 years heading up Amusement Today has been ... Educational.

When I'm not working, I enjoy ... Doing anything in the yard or working on my garden.

My last vacation was ... in Treasure Island, Florida, with my dear friend Dick Knoebel.

Favorite childhood memory: Riding with my dad on the Zephyr wooden roller coaster at Pontchartrain Beach Amusement Park in New Orleans while on family vacation.

In 10 years, I would like to be ... Retired from *AT* and spending more time working on organizing the archives for the National Roller Coaster Museum.

My go-to Happy Hour drink is ... Beer, and yes, Yuengling beer is on its way to Texas!

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Teddy's travels



MONTOURSVILLE, Pa. — Teddy, the fuzzy friend from Ralph S Alberts Co., Inc. made an appearance at the front gates of Dollywood during the park's March 12 opening (above). The company has distributed the popular bears to help inject some positivity into the industry as the 2021 season begins. Dick Knoebel of Knoebels Amusement Resort posed with the plush character during his recent birthday celebration (left). COURTESY RALPH S. ALBERTS CO., INC.

Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

Blame the tennis courts

This month's column comes from **Dean Bradley**, one of the best clients we ever had at **Minick and Associates**. He and my husband, **Bob Minick**, formed a great friendship.

I blame **Bill Haralson** for my friendship with Bob Minick. In the mid-1990s, the well-known feasibility professional was helping me figure out if we could expand our **Wheels Inn** amusement offerings by putting rides onto a couple of indoor tennis courts. I asked, "How many rides can you fit in two indoor tennis courts?"

"I have no idea," Haralson replied, "but Bob Minick would know."

Minick was best known at the time as the groundbreaking designer of the **Time Out** indoor amusement park at a mall near Cincinnati, Ohio. He was also traveling to Asia on a regular basis designing **Whimsy's** chain of multi-level FEC locations.

When we finally opened, Minick's multiple talents as a designer, ride expert, a value engineer and artist were on full display. With his help, we managed to squeeze eight rides and attractions including: a Crazy Bus, a tub ride, bumper cars, an indoor wheel and the largest indoor roller coaster in Ontario.

This was just the beginning of Bob Minick's and my friendship, all stemming from Haralson's singular suggestion.

Lottie Minick is a 46-year attractions industry veteran and co-owner of Dallas-based Minick Associates, a design firm founded by her late husband, Bob. Her monthly column features behind-the-scenes anecdotes of her own and from those who have worked in the business. Got a fun industry story? Email minickassociates@gmail.com.



The track length of coaster at Rowdy Bear's is 2,050 feet with a tunnel, water features and twists and turns. There are an abundance of options securing this ride in just about any location and terrain. COURTESY WIEGAND

► **KART**
Continued from page 1

control, "riders want to ride over and over again."

And, of course that is fine with him.

"There is a lot of interest," Williford said.

The CoasterKart at Rowdy Bear can be seen from the major parkway and thoroughfare between Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg. During busy times, the bumper-to-bumper traffic will allow passersby to have ample time to see the ride. Williford got a taste of that over the March 12-13 weekend.

On the company's side, Wiedel said there has been quite a

bit of interest as well.

"We have lots of CoasterKart's in the works but nothing definite yet," she said.

Wiegand officials feel they definitely have a hit with the CoasterKart. The advantages to the ride abound. For example, the track can be added to existing terrain or to a specially designed area. It can reach heights of 16 feet without any foundation needs. This means that the system is both simple to install and environmentally friendly.

The company touts the ride as being very low maintenance and only requires two operating staff. There are no height requirements making it a very family-friendly ride and it can

be operated year-round independent of weather conditions.

In addition, it can be installed indoors or outdoors, making it a great choice for malls and family entertainment centers.

Design options include roads, slopes and paths, overpasses and underpasses, curves, gyroscopic construction, jumps, waves, thematization and photo points.

There also are different variations of the speed control mechanisms. Williford chose to use the hand throttle for his cars, but they can be equipped with a lever on the handle bar or a foot pedal.

Wiegand announced last September that the Pigeon Forge location of Rowdy Bear

was to get the CoasterKart. Original plans were to have it completed by late fall 2020, but the coronavirus pandemic delayed construction.

Williford owns another location of Rowdy Bear in Gatlinburg, **Rowdy Bear Mountain Coaster Amusement Park**. There, he has a Wiegand Alpine Coaster, one of 270 successful global installations of that type of attraction.

Unlike the mountain coaster, the CoasterKart is an entirely powered ride system with electrical bars installed into the track to power the motor on the karts. The track is also wider on the CoasterKart.

• wiegandslide.de
• rowdybearmountain.com

FAST FACTS

CoasterKart by Wiegand Sports U.S.A.

First location in North America:
Rowdy Bear Ridge Adventure Park, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

Track length:
2,050 feet

Interactive:
Riders able to control speed

Capacity:
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Required operating staff:
Two

Seasonal requirements:
Year-round operation

Terrain:
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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

►Genting SkyWorlds nears opening — page 10 / Austin's completes major expansion — page 18

New York parks have been given the greenlight to reopen in 2021

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NEW YORK—After 18 months of being closed due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, **Dennis Vourderis**, part of the family that has owned and operated **Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park** since 1983 in Coney Island, New York, is beyond excited about finally hosting visitors to his 100-year park.

"We are getting prepared to reopen," Vourderis said, March 15. "We had a job fair last week and had good applicants that we are ready to hire. We are ready to get visitors back in here and we are ready to start making some money."

On February 17, New York Governor **Andrew Cuomo** gave the green light to outdoor amusement parks that rides and attractions could reopen on April 9 at 33% capacity, along with approved state health protocols such as face coverings, social distancing and cleaning and disinfecting.

The announcement also included guidance for reopening indoor family entertainment centers on March 26 at 25% capacity. Cuomo also gave the green light to summer sleep-away camps.

Vourderis said it was still not out of the realm of possibilities that his park could reopen on March 28.

"My attorney has told me that our proposal is still on the governor's desk, so we will see," Vourderis said. "The governor's office has been very responsive."

Some of the state's lawmakers, on behalf of local amusement park operators, have been urging the New York Department of Health to issue guidance on the reopening of



The new Legoland New York Resort, Goshen, New York, (above) had originally set July 2020 for a grand opening. Officials there are now making preparations for a grand opening in 2021. The Great Escape in Queensbury, New York, did not open at all in 2020 (below left). Seabreeze Amusement Park (below right) has not set an official opening date for 2021 although a normal operating season begins mid-May. COURTESY LEGOLAND, SIX FLAGS GREAT ESCAPE; AT/TIM BALDWIN



amusement parks. Coney Island is just one area that felt devastating losses in 2020.

However, Vourderis is very optimistic for 2021, both for his park and for Coney Island. Vourderis is adding a new **Vekoma**, 68-foot-tall roller coaster to his park. The Phoenix coaster was supposed to open last year along with celebrations for De-

no's 100th anniversary.

"Containers with ride parts are shipping," he said. "We have received the first few. They are in storage right now, because the foundation hasn't been completed yet, due to COVID-19. The foundation will be finished soon. The containers will continue to arrive and hopefully we will be able



to open that ride this season."

Vourderis said even though 100th anniversary celebrations were planned and then scrapped for 2020, "we will find a way to celebrate this year."

Luna Park at Coney Island also has plans for new attractions for 2021 including four new rides. That park is preparing its opening for 2021,

although there hasn't been a specific date announced.

Alessandro Zamperla who runs the park with his wife, **Tracee Zamperla**, had been quoted earlier wanting some type of concrete reopening guidelines.

"These are the parameters

► See NEW YORK, page 8

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Cedar Fair, Six Flags announce opening dates for all parks in 2021

NORTH AMERICA — With the COVID-19 vaccination program in full swing, major theme park operators are planning for a full season in 2021. **Cedar Fair Entertainment Company** announced plans to welcome back guests to all of its parks for a fun-filled season in 2021. In addition, **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** is preparing to open all of its theme parks and water parks and welcome guests back for the 2021 season.

"Our primary goal for the 2021 season is to fully reopen all of our properties and provide our guests with fun, dynamic and memorable experiences they can share with their family and friends," said **Tim Fisher**, Cedar Fair chief operating officer. "We are optimistic that attendance levels at our parks and resort properties will significantly improve in 2021, particularly as COVID-19 vaccines become more broadly available. We have a loyal season pass base of 1.8 million passes outstanding, and customer surveys show a strong intent to visit amusement parks this year. In anticipation of this improving demand, we are poised to resume normal operations."

Six Flags is celebrating its 60th anniversary season with safety at the forefront and innovative special events along with tasty, new culinary offerings.

"Our guests and team members are ready for the return of fun and signature Six Flags thrills in 2021," said Senior Vice President of Park Operations **Bonnie Weber**. "Last year, we set the standard for operating our parks safely, and entertained millions of guests in adherence to government and CDC health guidelines at 21 of our 26 parks. We offered a local and outdoor entertainment venue spanning dozens to hundreds of acres where families and friends could safely spend time together. We kept our guests and team members safe by requiring masks to be worn in the parks, providing contactless temperature and security screenings, enhancing our cleaning and sanitization measures, and closely monitoring attendance throughout operating hours in order to maintain proper social distancing."

"All of our properties that reopened in 2020 exemplified high-quality immersive entertainment in a safe, sanitized and stress-free environment, and we intend to build on that strong foundation in 2021," add Fisher. "We want all of our guests to have fun and feel safe when visiting, so we've developed extensive reopening plans that incorporate guidelines and recommendations from medical experts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and health officials."

On March 18, Six Flags announced it was reopening **Six Flags Mexico** that day. In addition, both of its California properties — **Six Flags Magic Mountain** and **Six Flags Discovery Kingdom** — will open to members and season pass holders on April 1 and 2, and to the general public on April 3, 2021.

► NEW YORK Continued from page 7

that would allow us to open," he was quoted as saying.

Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park and Luna Park at Coney Island normally open on Palm Sunday in March.

Officials at **Six Flags Darien Lake**, Darien, and **The Great Escape**, Queensbury, have been busy with hiring events in preparation for the 2021 season. Neither park opened at all in 2020.

Six Flags Darien Lake has set an opening date for May 21. The Great Escape plans to reopen on May 1 for weekends and select dates, with daily operations beginning May 24.

Seabreeze Amusement Park in Rochester is also gearing up for 2021. Officials haven't set a specific opening date, but normal operations run from mid-May until mid-September.

The park, owned by the **Norris** family, also did not open at all in 2020. Preparations were made and officials waited until July to finally announce a 2020 season was not to be. It was the first year in the park's 141-year



Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park, Coney Island, New York, is ready and set to go for the 2021 season.

COURTESY DENO'S WONDER WHEEL

history that it did not have an operating season.

Stephanie Johnson, divisional director of **Legoland New York Resort**, Goshen, New York, released a statement in March saying: "We are thrilled with Governor Cuomo's announcement for the reopening of family attractions, including outdoor theme parks."

"This means Legoland New York Resort will be able to celebrate its grand opening this season as planned and we

look forward to sharing more details soon," Johnson said.

Legoland New York officials had originally set the grand opening for July 2020. Although a definitive date has not been set for 2021, a confirmation of a 2021 opening has been given.

The new Legoland park will feature seven themed areas, more than 50 rides, shows and attractions and a 250-room hotel. Park officials expect to hire more than 1,000 employees.

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CONFERENCE: Nov. 15-18, 2021 | **TRADE SHOW:** Nov. 16-19, 2021

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Genting SkyWorlds nears opening, begins revealing attractions

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

GENTING HIGHLANDS, Malaysia — Touting the tagline “Southeast Asia’s most anticipated theme park,” top brass at **Genting Malaysia Berhad**, one of the leading leisure and hospitality corporations in the world, are beginning to unveil what will be a world-class destination theme park. With about 10,500 rooms across the resort’s seven distinct hotels, the entertainment mix includes gaming, dining, retail outlets, international shows and business convention facilities.

What’s next? A new theme park. Previously, **Genting Theme Park** entertained visitors from 1978 to 2013. The resort offered indoor and outdoor attractions but closed the outdoor theme park in 2013 when Genting Resorts implemented a 10-year masterplan. The desire to make the theme park a world-class showcase has taken longer than desired, but the thematic results are nothing short of striking. The 26-acre park is the result of \$800 million in investment and innovation.

All of this takes place 6,000 feet above sea level, making for a destination in and of itself. Year-round climate is subtropical and has spring-like temperatures of lows in the 50s and highs primarily in the 70s, making for comfortable conditions. While temperatures are ideal, the resort receives several inches of rain a month, with an annual rainfall of almost 97 inches.

No set opening date is confirmed, but the park is optimistic for a summer debut.

Genting SkyWorlds is the name of the newly imagined theme park. The logo features an amalgamation of clouds, stars and the façade of the park. The clouds symbolize the resort’s “elevated” positioning.



According to a press statement: “The five stars represent the Genting brand’s five core values of hard work, honesty, harmony, loyalty and compassion.”

“Genting SkyWorlds is the result of many years of hard work by our dedicated team members and our partners from all over the world. We are almost ready. We are putting the finishing touches to this amazing theme park. We believe we will deliver the very best experience to our guests throughout this journey,” said Mr. **Lee Thiam Kit**, head of business operations and strategies, Resorts World Genting.

An ambitious nine themed lands will greet visitors once gates open: Eagle Mountain, Central Park, Liberty Lane, Robots Rivet Town, Andromeda Base, Ice Age, Studio Plaza, Epic and Rio. Many of these areas’ themes are indicative by the names, but some still intrigue future guests with final details being kept under wraps. Some of the themes are original concepts developed by the park, but SkyWorlds has partnered with 20th Century Studios to also provide attractions based on such IPs as *Night at the Museum*, *Ice Age*, *Rio* and *Planet of the Apes*, among others.

Dynamic Attractions has two centerpiece rides for the park’s grand opening: a cutting-edge Synergy Coaster as well as its highly popular flying theater. After previously unveiling the thriller at IAAPA Expo as *Duel Power Coaster*, Dynamic Attractions changed the name of the product line to Synergy Coaster to eliminate any confus-



Nine themed lands spread over 26 acres will greet guests, some of which will be based on 20th Century Studios properties. COURTESY GENTING SKYWORLDS

ing aspects of the terminology.

“It has been thrilling to see this theme park come to life,” Executive Vice President of Business Development **Cindy Emerick Whitson** told *Amusement Today*. “Genting SkyWorlds has done a great job, and we are very proud to be their partner. They have set new benchmarks in theme attraction designs and ride experiences; being part of that is a privilege. The park’s location is extraordinary, set in the beautiful highlands. There’s no doubt it will be a beacon in entertainment for Asia.”

SkyWorlds has named the Synergy Coaster *Mad Ramp Peak*, and it is expected to be a marquee draw. It will be one of a handful worlds’ firsts once the park opens its gates. With a coaster-like feel, this powered attraction will seat riders on six-passenger vehicles that mimic motorcycles racing through a California-inspired canyon. Along the way, sec-

tions of switch track send trains along other paths so that vehicles can align at rally points to race each other.

“It’s a very complicated and expensive piece of hardware,” said **Gregory Pearn**, head of theme parks, **Resort World Genting**. Eager to welcome riders, Pearn noted the showpiece was an investment of more than \$50 million.

Also in the mix is an **S&S-Sansei** air-launched tower. The company hints that it was requested to develop a first-of-its-kind feature. While not at liberty to discuss the element in detail, S&S doesn’t reveal any spoilers by saying it is incorporated into the storyline of the attraction’s queue.

Zamperla had previously provided multiple attractions for the indoor theme park. For SkyWorlds, an *Air Race 6.4* is getting a thematic overlay.

“The customer request was to recreate the experience of climbing into a *Marine Drop*

Ship and swoop over a distant planet,” said **Nicolas Trentin**, marketing manager, Zamperla. “Our art department has worked hard on colors and materials in order to reproduce the required scenario at our best, creating super-customized vehicles with different visual effects and an impactful lights package.”

Other manufacturers are supplying rides. In all, the park has 26 attractions. The intention is for the ride mix to be for all audiences, embracing a wide range that exists within families.

“In terms of size when compared to **Universal Singapore**, we are a little bit smaller, but we still have the same amount of attractions,” said Kit.

“Part of our entertainment is our food,” said Executive Vice President of Leisure & Hospitality **Dato Edward Halloway**. “Every single item in every part of the park will be different. You’ll have such a wide variety; it will be amazing.”

“We’re working with partners like **Alibaba** for virtual queue technology,” said Pearn. “It will really enhance the guest experience so that everyone gets to do everything during their day.”

Management fully admits that the hopes of opening in 2020 were hampered by the global health crisis. Currently, when the time to open does arrive, they feel it is in the best interest to ease into it until capacity restrictions are no longer an issue. When realized fully, the park is designed to accommodate 20,000 guests.

•gentingskyworlds.com



Mr. Lee Thiam Kit, Head of Business Operations and Strategies, Resorts World Genting, places the final piece of the jigsaw puzzle mirroring Genting SkyWorlds’ map (above left). In the foreground is Eagle Mountain Peak, housing the ride system for Mad Ramp Peak, a marquee ride supplied by Dynamic Attractions. COURTESY GENTING SKYWORLDS



Innovative Leisure completes projects for Haven Holiday

LEICESTER, U.K. — Among **Innovative Leisure's** completed 2020 projects were two new developments for two of **Bourne Leisure's** Haven Holiday parks in the U.K., both involving high ropes and junior ropes courses.

At the **Golden Sands Holiday Park** in Mablethorpe, on the east Lincolnshire coast, Innovative Leisure completed the installation of a Sky Trail high ropes course in addition to a Sky Tykes junior ropes course for younger guests.

Additionally, at **Caister on Sea Holiday Park**, also on the east coast near Great Yarmouth in Norfolk, the company completed a similar installation with the venue adding a new Sky Trail high ropes course, complimented by a Sky Tykes junior ropes course.

Both of the Sky Trail courses are 10-pole, single-level attractions. Each has 19 different adventure elements, offering challenges such as walk the plank and the rolling log, along with the thrilling roller rail element.

Bourne Leisure's **Simon Palmer**, head of activities and leisure, commented: "These new high ropes activities fit in with our strategy of improving the on-site offering to our owners and guests. They create an exciting focal point for family groups and allow us to do more hourly capacity than previous traditional versions. The junior courses have already performed well at two other Haven sites."



COURTESY
INNOVATIVE LEISURE

Jaw dropping Croc Drop coming to Chessington World of Adventures

CHESSINGTON, U.K. —

Merlin Entertainment has revealed details of the new **Croc Drop** attraction, set to open at its **Chessington World of Adventures Resort** theme park near London in 2021. Supplied by **SBF Visa**, the drop tower will form part of the park's **Forbidden Kingdom** area. The tower will plunge riders more than 80 feet into the giant jaws of **Sobek**, the ancient Egyptian Crocodile God and protector of the Nile. The multi-million dollar attraction is the first new ride for the resort since 2013. It replaces the **Rameses Revenge** ride — a Top Spin ride by **Huss Rides**, which was removed from the park in December 2019. COURTESY CHESSINGTON WORLD OF ADVENTURES



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Herschend now the majority partner of Kentucky Kingdom

AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Herschend Enterprises has become a majority partner and operator of **Kentucky Kingdom and Hurricane Bay**. An announcement in February made that clear and Herschend officials were onsite to start preparations for the reopening of the park set for May 8.

Kentucky Kingdom and Hurricane Bay share a parking lot with the **Kentucky Exposition Center** where the state fair is held. The land the park sits on belongs to the state so it took a collaborative effort between **Kentucky Kingdom, LLLP**, the **Kentucky State Fair Board**, **Kentucky Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet** and **Kentucky Finance and Administration Cabinet** to make the ownership change possible.

Negotiations were said to have begun with Herschend Enterprises sometime last year.

No cost figures have been released, but, according to legal counsel of the state's Finance and Administration Cabinet, the sale involves a "base price" paid up front for Kentucky Kingdom, but the "overall sale price" would be determined by the park's profitability in the three years following the acquisition.

The change of ownership marks four times the park has changed hands. It was originally opened by the Kentucky State Fair Board in 1987. After one season, it went bankrupt. Local businessman **Ed Hart** stepped in and reopened the park in 1990. After eight years of success, Hart sold the park to the Six Flags company, which operated it until 2009 after which it was shuttered.

Hart stepped back and reopened the park again in 2014. He has operated the park until now.

Hart said he was pleased to be able to turn the park over to a new generation of leadership.

"Herschend is an outstanding operator, who will, undoubtedly, take Kentucky Kingdom and Hurricane Bay to the next level," Hart said. "We expect their involvement will add greatly to the Commonwealth's thriving tourism industry," Hart said.

Herschend will implement a strategic plan to expand the operation of Kentucky Kingdom Theme Park to be consistent with the guest experiences offered at other Herschend-owned-and-managed locations.

Future plans for the Louisville amusement and water park include building the appeal for multi-generational families; hosting family-friendly seasonal and themed events and festivals and enhancing product and guest experiences through rebranding and the addition of Herschend-owned programming, such as costume character appearances. There also are plans to expand the season to provide entertainment to more park guests and build relationships with state and local tourism partners to increase awareness of the what the attraction has to offer.

Georgia-based Herschend is a family-owned themed attractions and entertainment company. It operates popular tourism attractions such as **Dollywood** in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee and the **Newport Aquarium** in Northern Kentucky. It also owns and operates **Silver Dollar City**, Branson, Missouri and **Wild Adventures Theme Park**, Valdosta, Georgia, as well as other entertainment attractions.

As part of its commitment to the park, Herschend Enterprises brought **Craig Ross**, Dollywood's president for the past 10 years, to serve as Kentucky Kingdom's interim general manager.

"This is an exciting moment, and I am so honored to work alongside the community, our season pass holders and our valued guests in building a bright future for this beloved park," Ross said. "We strongly believe in using guest and community input to create amazing experiences and will be reaching out to the Louisville community for input on enhancements they'd like to see at the park, including attractions, shows and events. This feedback will be critical in creating a long-term plan for success and growth."

Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne

psherborne@amusementtoday.com

The **Georgia Aquarium**, Atlanta, opened its **Sharks! Predators of the Deep** exhibit in late 2020, allowing visitors to get a closer look at the feared sea predators.

But with intent to turn fear to fascination, aquarium officials have taken it one step further with the new immersive dive cage experience. Guests are being offered the opportunity to experience the exhibit underwater in cages that can hold up to seven guests along with two professional divers.

Each guest is provided a wetsuit, booties, and an optional full-face diving mask. Those who do not feel comfortable with the diving mask can request a mask and snorkel.

The experience lasts around two and a half hours, as each participant is required to go through an educational orientation before taking the plunge.

Joyland Amusement Park in Lubbock, Texas, reopened its gates on Saturday, March 13, after facing challenges throughout 2020.

In March of last year, the park was forced to shutdown amid coronavirus concerns. For months, the park sat empty before Texas Governor **Greg Abbott** issued an Executive Order in early June allowing it to reopen at 50 percent capacity.

In July, Joyland was again forced to close after it was struck by severe storm damage.

Park owner **David Dean** said the park had faced adversity before, but nothing like the issues brought on by 2020. This year is Joyland's 49th operating season. The park hosted a hiring event on March 6.

Meanwhile, another family-owned and operated southwest amusement park, **Western Playland**, Sunland Park, New Mexico, has scheduled its reopening for April 2.

It has been closed since March 23, 2020.

In Amarillo, Texas, family-run **Wonderland Amusement Park** is preparing for its 70th anniversary year in 2021. Plans are to open the park on April 3.

Business suffered during the pandemic as one of the primary sources of revenue, school field trips, disappeared due to the cancellation of school. In fact, over half of the park's business usually comes in April and May with the buses transporting school students from regional schools for their parties.

Park officials are planning to roll out special anniversary pricing soon.

Job fairs were held at the park last month.

Peter Luger Steak House, a New York City eatery, teamed up with **Madame Tussauds New York** to spice up its social distancing and pro-

mote being able to expand its dining capacity from 25 to 35 percent, while at the same time promoting the museum's reopening.

The restaurant, located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, "borrowed" some of Madame Tussauds' wax figures and used them to fill seats that needed to remain empty for pandemic social distancing protocols.

During the week of February 25, guests were provided with a star-studded dining experience as they found themselves being able to greet **Jon Hamm** at the bar, enjoy a moment of elegance with **Audrey Hepburn**, share a laugh with **Jimmy Fallon** or take a photo with **Al Roker**.

The iconic wax figures remained at Peter Luger Steak House through March 1. After that, the figures were back on the red carpet at Madame Tussauds New York, which has reopened its doors to guests with new safety and cleaning protocols.

To entice visitors, the museum is offering a specially-priced \$29.99 ticket for "locals," which limits eligibility to residents of New York's five boroughs, New Jersey, and Connecticut's Fairfield and New Haven counties.

The **Looff Carousel**, Spokane, Washington, reopened last month for the first time in nearly a year since the March 17, 2020 closure due to the coronavirus pandemic. Riverfront Park Director **Jon Moog** told a local news agency that the March 1 opening marked something of a "second opening" for the Looff Carousel. The attraction previously reopened in May 2018 after shutting down for nearly a year and a half for \$9.2 million in renovations.

Under Phase 2 of the State of Washington's coronavirus restrictions, the Looff Carousel must abide by a 25% occupancy limit for indoor entertainment spaces like the circular carousel rotunda, which Moog said is capable of holding 313 people. Yet even though the maximum occupancy under the restriction is 78, Moog said he expects social distancing requirements to potentially limit that number even further.

After having to lock the gates in early December, Oakland, California's **Children's Fairyland** began welcoming back families at a limited capacity on March 19.

Attractions being enjoyed right now include the slides, some play areas and sets, as well as the gardens. Visitors may also greet Fairyland animals again, like Gideon, the park's miniature donkey, and Pixie, a miniature horse.

Because Children's Fairyland, located along Lake Merritt, is an amusement park in Alameda County, one of four Bay Area counties that was still stuck in the state's most restrictive tier in the pandemic lockdown system where theme parks remain closed, it made modifications to reopen as a zoo, said Fairyland Executive Director **Kymerly Miller**.

The park's puppet shows, toddler story-times, live performances and rides are still shuttered until Alameda County reaches the orange tier, which no Bay Area counties had entered as of March 4. That tier allows smaller amusement and theme parks to open outdoor attractions at 25% capacity or 1,000 people per day.

Children's Fairyland began opening just on the weekends at the first of March and went to five days a week by the end of March.

By June 7, park officials plan to open seven days a week.

Busch Gardens Tampa debuts Giraffe Bar with specialty cocktails

TAMPA BAY, Fla., — Beginning on March 19, **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay** began welcoming guests to a new bar that offered visitors a panoramic view of animals on the park's Serengeti Plain.

Dubbed The Giraffe Bar, the new facility opened at the park's Serengeti Overlook and featured a mixologist-curated selection of specialty cocktails as well as wines and local craft beers.

The drink menu includes frozen specialty cocktails such as the The Hungry Tusker, which features Amarula African Cream Liqueur (a South African favorite made with the fruit of the African marula tree), Hula Hawaiian Dark Rum, coconut and pineapple flavors.

Sparkling cocktails on draft including the refreshing "Thorn and Berry," inspired



The new Giraffe Bar features panoramic indoor and outdoor views of the park's expansive Serengeti Plains. Flights of specially selected local craft brews — including Toucan and the Safari Graze — will be presented on an Instagram-worthy hand-carved giraffe tasting paddle (above right). COURTESY BUSCH GARDEN TAMPA BAY

by the bar's namesake giraffes that strip thorns off of branches to eat leaves, and the "Masai Margarita," named after the Masai, the largest species of giraffe native to East Africa.

There are also be non-alcoholic beverages available.

In addition to drinks, the bar feature a chef-curated menu of shareable bites like bourbon-glazed wings, brisket mac and cheese as well as smoked brisket-loaded French fries. Bavarian soft pretzels and vegetarian items like loaded hum-

mus are available.

The bar offers air-conditioned indoor space as well as shaded outdoor space with patio seating. Multiple TVs give sports fans a chance to cheer on their favorite sports teams.

The bar replaces the dark

oak bar previously located there. Serengeti Overlook is also home to the park's redesigned and re-imagined Oasis Pizza. The redesigned eatery serves favorites such as handmade pizza, chicken tenders, fresh salads and freshly baked desserts.



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Fun Spot America serves up "huge" Mardi Gras food and fun

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — Since February 5 and continuing through April 11, Fun Spot America Theme Parks in Orlando and Kissimmee have been jazzing up the parks daily with special treats and events with "Fun Spot's HUGE Mardi Gras," celebrating everything New Orleans.

Anyone who has visited or lives in Florida or Georgia over the past 10-plus years is certain to recognize CEO John Arie, Jr. and the parks' tagline, "It's huge!" from television and radio advertising spots. The company took that slogan and incorporated it into this new seasonal event, which is jazzing up the crowds filing into the area for spring break, after being cooped up inside for the last year.

So much so that Fun Spot's Vice President of Marketing, John Chidester said, "Our business and attendance have grown 30% year-to-date and continues to exceed our expectations."

Both parks are festively decorated, themed music plays throughout the parks, and a



Fun Spot America Theme Parks' Huge Mardi Gras has also been a huge success. So much so, business and attendance have grown 30% year-to-date, according to the parks' spokesperson. COURTESY FUN SPOT AMERICA

wide range of special food and drinks are located around the parks. Fun Spot is not stretching the truth when they say, "With all this festive fun, you do not have to be in New Orleans to feel the N'awlins love. So, whether you are craving something with a little spice, a sweet treat, or a drink to sit back and relax with, we have quite a few Bayou Bites menu options from which to choose, all of which are homemade and WHO-DAT delicious!"

These special offerings include: Spicy Sausage Jambalaya, Voodoo Chicken (boneless fried

chicken wings tossed in a sweet and spicy Thai chili sauce served with fresh-cut fries tossed in Cajun seasoning), fried Gator Bites (Orlando Only), Andouille Sausage Po' Boys, Cajun Fries, Beignets (Fried pastry dough finished with powdered sugar — a New Orleans staple), Fat Tuesday Funnel Cakes, King Cake Sundaes (vanilla soft-serve ice cream with cake crumbles, cinnamon sugar and caramel topped with Mardi Gras sprinkles), as well as a variety of Mardi Gras Festival-colored, caramel apples, cotton candy, and popcorn.

No Mardi Gras celebration would be complete without several themed libations available for the of-age adults. These include: the HUGE Hurricane (rum, passionfruit and orange juices, and a splash of grenadine), the Blue Bayou (vodka, blue curacao, pineapple and lemon juices, and sour mix), and finally Voodoo Juice (coconut rum, banana liquor, with pineapple and orange juices).

In addition to delicious festive dishes and drinks, children aged 12 and under are welcomed to line the park each Saturday

afternoon for the Children's Mardi Gras Parade. Here, Fun Spot trains are decorated in Mardi Gras colors and Fun Spot revelers toss beads to children as the parade makes its way through the parks. Children celebrating their birthday party at each park that day will also become the honorary kings and queens of the parade and are invited to follow the trains on the parade route.

But as Chidester noted, "Children of all ages love our Mardi Gras Parade and bead toss.

► See FUN SPOT, page 15

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►FUN SPOT
Continued from page 14

They dance along to the zydeco music and love catching beads. It is so much fun for everyone!”

In Orlando, the park’s escape room, the area’s newest, has even received a Mardi Gras refresh as The Backwater Bayou. Fun Spot’s website explains the escape room theme in this way: “As guests walk through an alley off of Bourbon Street, before too long they’ll find themselves in the backwater swamp. But be careful, they’re not to disturb the swamp queen if they plan to escape on time.”

“All of the delicious seasonal food choices have been a hit with our guests. The most popular so far is our Fried Gator Bites, served with a one-of-a-kind, Who Dat Mardi Gras savory sauce. Our new Backwater Bayou Escape Room has proven to be a HUGE hit with our guests. It’s the third escape room we’ve built in the past five months here in Orlando and our biggest and best one yet! The attention to detail, puzzles, and overall ambience allows you to feel like you’re actually in the Bayou,” Chidester said.

With the success this event has seen, it is a natural follow-up

question to ask what is next for Fun Spot America Theme Parks. Chidester commented that an announcement will be made in the coming weeks of what is next.

But new events are not the only things Fun Spot America Theme Parks have in the planning stages. However, Chidester was a bit more coy when asked if new rides and attractions are also on tap. He simply said, “Yes, we will have an announcement once all the details are finalized. So, don’t forget to follow us on social media to continue to stay up to date on all Fun Spot America news.”

•fun-spot.com



Whether craving something with a little spice, a sweet treat, or a drink to sit back and relax with, Fun Spot America Theme Parks’ Bayou Bites menu for everyone, all homemade with Who-dat deliciousness. COURTESY FUN SPOT AMERICA

Fun Spot America adds corporate chef

ORLANDO — In early March, Fun Spot America Theme Parks announced Terence S. Reis as its corporate chef. Reis has more than 30 years of experience in hotels and restaurants including Hyatt, Hilton, Sheraton and Radisson Hotels. Most recently he served as the Corporate Chef at Palace Entertainment overseeing the culinary operations of 21 parks in the United States, and Raging Waters in Sydney, Australia. COURTESY FUN SPOT AMERICA



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S&S supplies trio of 4D Free Spin coasters, drop towers in 2021

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

LOGAN, Utah — An assortment of new rides from **S&S Sansei Technologies** are scheduled to open in 2021. Two of the products from the company continue to prove popular with parks and customers.

After its first debut in 2015, the company's 4D Free Spin coaster has been a hot item. The **Six Flags** chain has scooped up seven of them in the last half-decade.

"The 4D Free-Spin has been a home run for us. In just seven years we have put several in North America," said **Josh Hays**, executive director of sales and marketing. "This year's launches into the Middle East and China are so exciting for us. We know that once customers get a taste of this ride, the demand for other parks to follow along will skyrocket. This ride is really a signature attraction of S&S. When people see it, they know what it is. It doesn't blend in with other coasters."

In addition to track being stacked on a vertical plane, 4D Free Spin coasters have a distinctive look with massive vehicles that extend cantilevered beyond the rails. Magnetic plates initiate flips to where riders are often caught off-guard at the motion. Even though the action is wild, the seats were engineered to rotate comfortably around the body's central core.

"The positioning of the seats outside the rails really offers an experience you don't get on most coasters. And because we spin the rider around their heartline, the inversions are not as intense as they might look from the ground. It's a very re-rideable ride," Hays explained.

The positioning of seats also encourages re-rides as family and friends are seated face to face. With seating on both sides of the track, the multiple options can potentially offer four completely different ride experiences in addition to the riders' own weight factoring in.

In 2021, three more will add to the installation total. The first 4D Free Spin to operate in all of China will be at **Ocean Flower Island**



The S&S 4D Free Spin Coaster has become linked with many IP themes, such as the *John Wick* movie franchise in the upcoming Motiongate installation (above, inset). Ocean Flower Island Fairyland's unnamed 4D coaster (below left) features a unique track layout. *Dragon Slayer* (below right) prepares for its late spring debut at Adventureland in Iowa. COURTESY MOTIONGATE, S&S SANSEI TECHNOLOGIES, TOM NICKERSON



Fairyland in Danzhou. As of press time, the name of the roller coaster has not been released. However, this ride features slight differences in track layout. It is designed to meet Chinese code which doesn't allow for as big of a G force as ASTM, prompting S&S to approach the situation with a modified layout. It is a little less extreme, making it unique.

Based on the action series films, *John Wick*, the installation at **Motiongate** (called *John Wick: Open Contract*) in Dubai will take guests first through a themed storyline before they board the coaster vehicles.

Dragon Slayer adds a nostalgic nod to the ride it is replacing at **Adventureland** in Altoona, Iowa. The name play

is centered on *The Dragon*, a retired looping coaster that was built at Adventureland in 1990. This installation also has its own distinctions from the primary model popular with S&S. It still has the same height of 110 feet but has a shorter track length in a more compact space. Coaster connoisseurs may be able to discern the difference.

Hays told *Amusement Today*: "I think the compact footprint is such a great selling point. We can install a 4D Free Spin for much less than a standard roller coaster. So it becomes this perfect marriage of great footprint and budget friendly attraction."

"Another great thing about the 4D Free Spin is it has been associated with some of the best IP in the



world. Six Flags has themed several 4D Free Spins with various DC Comics heroes and villains. The new ride opening at Motiongate Dubai will be themed to *John Wick* — another blockbuster movie franchise. We are very lucky to have our coaster themed to such valuable IP."

S&S unveiled its first tower ride in 1994. Dubbed *Space Shot*, the pneumatic air launch was an immediate thrill. Soon to follow was the *Turbo Drop*, which blasted riders down. Combo towers followed offering both thrills, and the company has had remarkable success with the product. To date, 183 have found homes in parks globally.

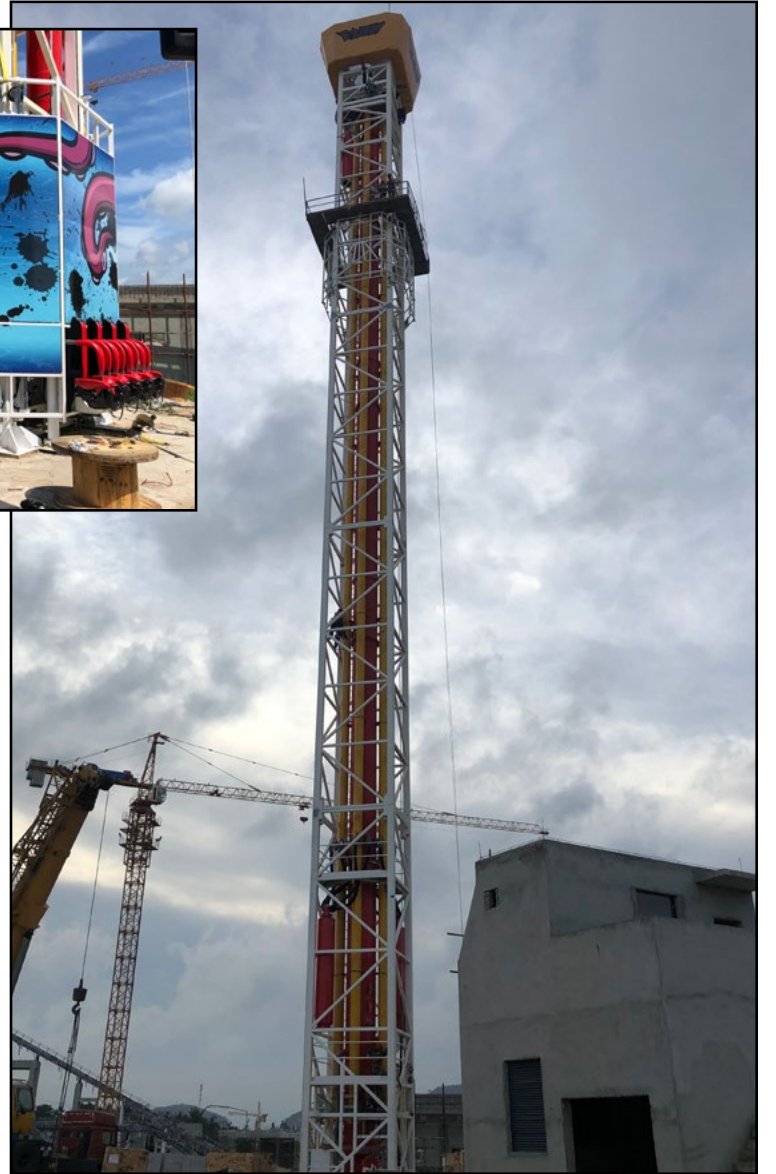
"S&S introduced tower rides in the mid-1990s, and they have withstood the test

of time. Guests are drawn to the extreme drop and launch speeds. It's a thrill that is really only matched by our *Air Launch Coasters*," said Hays. "There's something about the launched rush that never gets old. Whether it is a *Space Shot* or a *Turbo Drop*, it catches the rider by surprise every time and never fails to thrill."

Three are being added to China. The thrill portion of these installations stand 189 feet, but because of decorative toppers to the ride, each one has a signature height.

In addition to the 4D coaster, Ocean Flower Island Fairyland will also be opening a combo tower. Seating 16, the ride stands 220 feet

► See S&S, page 17



Air-launched towers have become synonymous with S&S over the past 25 years, including three going into China for this season. COURTESY S&S SANSEI TECHNOLOGIES

► **S&S**
Continued from page 16

and features a pagoda topper.

Hainan Ocean Paradise in Lingshui, China, will be debuting a 16-seat new combo tower as well, this one standing at 192 feet.

Chongqing Sunac Land, a **Wanda Theme Park**, has opted for solely the Space Shot experience. That installation will reach 209 feet.

Because of their height, the tower rides make an iconic presence.

"They add so much to the

park's skyline," Hays said. "Our towers are usually the first thing a guest sees as they approach the park. It's that first clue that they are finally there. It's the sight that moves the anticipation needle past the red line."

Since the turn of the millennium, Asia has become a powerful player within the amusement industry. With new parks opening every year, China has seen an incredible influx of new attractions.

"China is such a growing market. The demand for

towers is as strong as it's ever been," Hays told AT. "Most new parks recognize that they have to have a tower ride in the park. It provides a unique thrill for park guests, adds to the beauty of the park skyline and becomes a great landmark. We are fortunate to have a product that has such great staying power. Not many rides still have demand 25 years after they were first introduced. We love all of our products, but our towers are special to us because that's where it all began."

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FEC transitions into entertainment complex

Austin's completes major indoor expansion; debuts indoor rides

AT: Tim Baldwin

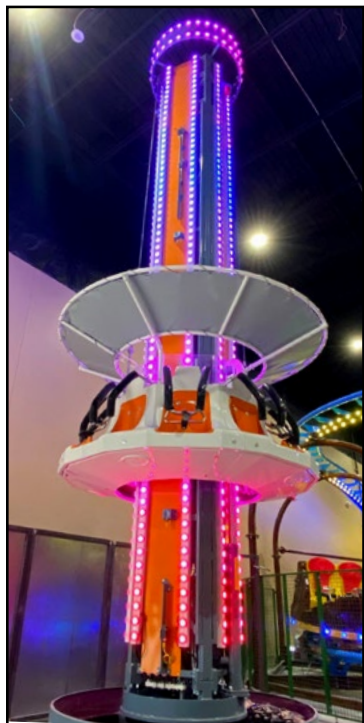
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

PFLUGERVILLE, Texas — Built in 2003, the facility known as Austin's Park n' Pizza is changing. Not only is the indoor portion of the family entertainment center growing significantly, so is the audience.

"It's now evolving. With the expansion, we are now more than just a family entertainment center. It's more of an entertainment complex for all ages," said Michael Goss, president and owner. "We're rebranding now as just Austin's instead of Austin's Park n' Pizza."

Prior to the new additions, the FEC offered an impressive range of activities. Two miniature golf courses, three go-kart tracks, carnival rides, batting cages and bumper boats were in the outdoor offerings. An XD Theater, bowling alley, laser tag and a wide lineup of arcade/skill games, along with billiards provided year-round climate-controlled indoor fun. The food facilities were impressive with modern, attractive facilities with an executive chef creating hand-crafted dishes — it's more than just pizza. Austin's Bar & Grill satisfies even the most discriminating palates.

This spring, a 35,000-square-foot addition brings new opportunities. Located adjacent to the bowling alley, a previous field now offers a lot more for visitors.



An SBF Drop N Twist Tower (above left) and a Visa Spinning Coaster 5.0 (above right) were both added as the indoor attractions to Austin's. The coaster's wood-like texture adds a bit of extra fun to the spinning cars. Both rides were supplied by Rides 4 U. COURTESY AUSTIN'S



Inside, two new rides are the facility's first ones placed indoors. Provided by Rides 4 U, the coaster is much larger than the Fiesta Express children's coaster located outside. It stands 20 feet tall and has a track length just shy of 400 feet.

"This coaster is more elevated," said Len Soled, owner, Rides 4 U. "It has more of a drop. The height elevation adds thrill; it's a whole new dynamic to the spinning car. It comes pretty close to the roof."

When asked about the ride selection, Goss told *Amusement Today*: "I've been buying rides from Len for years. It was a no-brainer through our relationship through the years. We looked at other coasters and towers, but Len just offers a quality product."

Austin's has the third of this model of coaster in the country. The ride is manufactured by Visa.

The name of the coaster is Barreling Rapids and sports a woody theme.



The new Revl Social Club expansion at Austin's is an over-21 only area featuring 10,000-square-foot space with five rooms hosting billiards, darts, a TV-screen-filled bar (above left), ping pong (above right) and curling (below). COURTESY AUSTIN'S

"We didn't go with the standard mold. With the theming, we used an existing mold that looks like a wooden barrel. It looks like you cut a tree down," Soled said. "It's not a standard look. It's a little bit unique."

"It's a great ride. The figure-8 structure on it I think gives you a better spin," Goss said.

Soled noted that in the future, if the park wishes to modify the train with a rollover car, that's an option Austin's has.

Adjacent to the coaster is a Drop 'N' Twist drop tower, by SBF. It stands 30 feet tall and seats eight.

Originally, laser tag was upstairs and occupied about 2,500 square feet of space. Relocated into the new expansion, the laser tag experience now boasts 4,200 square feet in the new building. Art Attack and Delta Strike were partners in the installation.

Almost 100 games supplied by Betson will find homes in a new large game room. This more than doubles the facility's previous offerings now surpassing 150 game options.



One of the more transformative spaces is Revl Social Club. Featuring its own entrance, the adults-only (21 and over) 10,000-square-foot space has five rooms: billiards, darts, a TV-screen-filled bar, ping pong and curling. The restaurant adds 250 seats of food service. The large bar adds another 40 seats around its perimeter.

"Billiards and darts are kind of classic. We've just taken them to the next level with the themed rooms," Goss said. "We were looking for other social activities. We looked at axe throwing, but there is a lot of that going on. We wanted something different. A couple stand-alone bars were doing ping pong here and in Europe, so we liked that aspect; once again it's classic."

Perhaps the club's most eyebrow-raising (in Texas!) decision was the addition of curling. Its creative streak is significant.

"Curling is one of those things like when you are sitting around designing something on napkins," smiled Goss. "We wanted something else, a social activity, and we got to talking about the Olympics. Someone said, 'Do you ever watch curling?' We got a good response and we installed three curl-

ing lanes. People up north are seeing a little bit more of it with a company called Street Curling. It's just one of those things that make you laugh, and if it makes you laugh you just go with it."

Like billiards and darts and other activities, ping pong and curling are revenue streams from renting by the hour.

The expansion in its entirety has taken about a year. The shocking onset of a global pandemic shifted plans last spring.

"We had just poured the 35,000-square-foot concrete pad and driven pilings going 20 feet into the ground. We got shut down," Goss told *AT*. "Construction work continued another week. Things got worse and we hit pause. The construction company was understanding; they were great to work with. We made the decision to start again right after Labor Day. Walls and roof were up in November."

The winter months were spent moving in equipment and finishing the look.

Permits and such dictate the final details, Austin's was expected to open the expansion by the first week in April.

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Australia's Intensity Albury adds Intercard cashless tech



COURTESY
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ST. LOUIS — Intercard recently completed its third installation for Village Entertainment's Intensity group of family entertainment centers. The installation at Intensity Albury followed the similar upgrades at the chain's Marion and Erina Fair locations.

The installation is the latest in a move to cashless technology for the veteran arcade chain. Management realized that the coin and ticket system the FEC had been using was outdated and that cashless was a wise investment for the future.

"Intensity Albury will usher in a new beginning with the Intercard system," said Brion Cummings, national business manager for Intensity. "Albury will be our third location reopening with Intercard and enjoying a great range of benefits not to mention no more weekly coin collects, minute-by-minute reporting, birthday parties not requiring staff to activate free games and a range of different packages. [The upgrade] essentially brings Intensity into the 21st century."

"[Our] cashless technology allows Intensity to operate more efficiently while reducing the costs associated with coin-operated amusements," explained Jerry Heinz, Intercard's Asia-Pacific sales manager. "Intensity has already reported that revenues in their [previously] upgraded centers have increased 160% over the prior year."

Intercard's next installation for Intensity is scheduled for November 2021 at the center in Hobart, Tasmania.

• intercardinc.com

Family starts pop-up mini golf business



BRENTWOOD, Calif. — Caddy's Course is a pop-up miniature golf course that opened in December 2020. Entertaining locals and visitors through the holidays and the New Year, the course was a hit with the local community and out-of-town visitors. The course uses a nine-hole modular MiniLinks course from Adventure Golf & Sports (AGS). The MiniLinks course uses a patented interlocking panel system and is designed for indoor and outdoor use. When the course opened in December, the owners leased space next to Brentwood on Ice (a downtown ice rink) and decorated the pop-up course with Christmas items.

COURTESY ADVENTURE GOLF SERVICES



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson

jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

A new family entertainment center is coming to Florence, South Carolina. Tilt Studio will soon call Florence's Magnolia Mall home. The FEC will occupy a former J.C. Penney location and is set to feature activities such as laser tag and mini golf.

The company has locations all over the U.S., but this will be its first South Carolina location.

"This is exciting," offered Marketing Coordinator for Magnolia Mall Shanna Wilson. "The closest thing we have is probably an hour and a half away from here, and we do service a lot of residents in the Florence county area, so I think this is perfect to give them something to do."

Tilt Studio is expected to open up toward the last quarter of 2021.

Five Jefferson City, Missouri, business owners have bought the area's former Capital Bowl bowling facility property and plan to turn it into a family entertainment center with an arcade, bowling lanes and a full restaurant and sports bar.

Scot Drinkard, one of the new property owners, told the local press that the new FEC would be "...like a mini Dave & Buster's."

"The whole place is probably going to be more adult-driven but family-friendly and kid-friendly," Drinkard said.

There will be 12 bowling lanes and a VIP room with four more bowling lanes. The VIP room will be available for parties or team-building for businesses. "It's got a little bit different LED lighting, and it's just a little bit fancier," Drinkard explained.

The former Capital Bowl property sustained heavy damage from a May 2019 tornado. Capital Bowl, which first opened as West Gate Lanes in 1961, announced in October 2019 it would not reopen.

There will also be indoor sports simulators to play sports such as kickball, soccer and football. Much of the plan is still in the design phase, but the inside of the building is completely gutted, and work on the exterior facade of the building has started. The building's exterior will be left up and covered with new materials.

Drinkard expects construction to be done by the start of 2022. The project will cost approximately \$5 million.

Creative Works has teamed up with MajorMega to bring their Hyperdeck virtual reality attraction to more markets.

Hyperdeck is a virtual reality attraction that features a full-motion floor allowing players to pitch, roll and rumble, providing a theme park level experience with zero motion-sickness. Multi-sensory effects combined with heat and hurricane wind simulation take player immersion to an unprecedented new level.

Under the new partnership, Creative Works became the exclusive distributor for MajorMega products in North America.

"We recognize the need to continue bringing new experiences and attractions to our clients," commented Creative Works President Armando Lanuti. "The team at MajorMega has

created an amazing attraction in Hyperdeck, and they have more incredible experiences in development. It was an easy decision for us to partner with them and we can't wait to bring these attractions to our clients."

Brothers Ken and Chris Milligan, who ran Vivid VR Gaming in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and then Depew, New York, for five years, have begun to accept reservations for Orions Landing, a new 5,000-square-foot family entertainment center in Hamburg, New York. The facility is under soft opening through late-March and the grand opening is planned April 10.

"While there's a wide array of games available, the virtual reality area will command the most attention," said Ken Milligan.

Each competitor stands in their own COVID-friendly, 10-foot-by-10-foot bay, separated by stage curtains. The bays are in groups of four to enhance the multiplayer aspect.

The Milligans have outfitted each bay with professional VR technology — motion sensors, two motion controllers (one for each hand) and HTC Vive headsets — and have worked with developers to alleviate trouble spots, like wire management, that plague individuals when VR gaming at home.

"It's moving, like a movie might make you feel emotional when you don't see something coming," explained Milligan. "Take that visceral feeling and multiply it by 10. With the headset on, you're in a completely different place."

iFly Indoor Skydiving announced a new franchise was awarded to HiFlyght LLC in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The franchisee is owned and operated by three retired Air Force colonels with diverse and extensive aviation backgrounds who are classmates from the Class of 1979 at the United States Air Force Academy.

Set to open in late 2021, the new location will offer the same iFly experience that fliers have come to expect, complete with the latest Gen 9 vertical wind tunnel technology. The facility will include a state-of-the-art 14-foot flight chamber to serve all range of flyers, as well as private rooms to host STEM education events, birthday parties and corporate meetings.

"We look forward to welcoming first-time flyers, professionals and our active military and service academy flyers to this state-of-the-art facility," said a spokesperson for HiFLYght.

Kevin Fiur, president of iFly's Tunnel Systems Division, stated: "We're very excited to add the HiFlyght team to our family of franchisees. We are rapidly expanding the number of markets where we will offer like-minded entrepreneurs the opportunity to own their own business by investing in our wind tunnel technology. With our recent designation as an SBA franchisor, we're quickly expanding our ability to give new business owners the chance to bring the dream of flight to their local markets."

iFly Colorado Springs will be located in the Colorado Springs' Polaris Pointe complex.

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Clint Novak, General Manager, Fun-Land of Fredericksburg

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Southwest Florida & Lee County Fair enjoys record-breaking days

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

NORTH FORT MYERS, Fla. — “Four record breaking days. I think this was the happiest crowd we’ve ever seen. It truly was a fun fair this year,” said Southwest Florida & Lee County Fair Manager Fran Crone. “We had beautiful weather! One day of rain, but after the rain stopped, they filed in. Most days were cool/warm, and the nights were beautiful. Very little actually ‘hot’ or ‘cold.’”

With the theme, “The Red, White and Blue,” the 11-day fair was a success. “We are one of the first ‘larger’ fairs to open in 2021. We went forward with a very positive attitude, let our community know that we follow CDC guidelines, and we added this into our advertising.” Although masks weren’t required, they were encouraged. A good portion of fair activities took place outside apart from the events that occurred in the Lee County Civic Center.

While attendance figures haven’t been finalized, officials say the fair numbers will be near their usual 100,000 mark when verified.

Again, this year the ride midway was provided by Reithoffer Shows, Inc. They brought in 40 rides, 14 of which were kiddie ones. This was down slightly from previous years to allow for social distance spacing. In addition, the carnival operator brought in 46 games and 17 food concessions. The top three rides were the Super Himalaya (Bertazzon) Gentle Giant Wheel (Chance) and the Galaxy Coaster (Interpark).



Reithoffer shows brought in 40 rides that were laced all the way around the Lee County Civic Center water feature. Below are a few of the taller rides at the 11-day Southwest Florida & Lee County Fair. The event normally runs in late February into early March. COURTESY SOUTHWEST FLORIDA & LEE COUNTY FAIR, REITHOFFER SHOWS, INC.

Some of the lineup included two dark rides, three walk-through fun houses along with a house of mirrors, four roller coasters (2 adult, 2 kiddie) and two big wheels.

“Our new ride this year was the Dragon Coaster (Jung Max) that we took delivery on last year but only set it up for one event late October 2020,” said Rick Reithoffer, president of the show. “All of our time in 2020 was spent on going through each and every one of our rides and refurbishing, repairing, repainting, and adding new canvas. They all look like new rides!”

“I know on the second Sunday they said it was their highest grossing day ever here at the Southwest Florida &



Lee County Fair,” said Crone.

Reithoffer talked about the COVID-19 practices their company put into play. “When the pandemic hit last year, we quickly developed protocols to implement on our midways to allow for our events to open but only had a couple that came to fruition. We are more than pre-

pared for the 2021 season! We have hand sanitizing stations at most every ride and concession, signage all throughout the midway, a thorough sanitizing system in place for every piece of equipment, face masks are required for all our employees and extra fencing to space out queue lines.”

When asked about their relationship with the fair staff and their board, Reithoffer said, “Our fair partner has always worked diligently with us to provide the best possible fair experience for our guests.”

► See SOUTHWEST, page 23



Above left is a portion of the midway as seen from atop the Euro Slide. A portion of the Lee County Civic Center can be seen in the background. Everyone who came to the fair was out for a good time as is evidenced by some of the prizes won at the I Got It game (above right).

COURTESY REITHOFFER SHOWS, INC., SOUTHWEST FLORIDA & LEE COUNTY FAIR



Above is a new roller coaster ride from Jung Max that Reithoffer Shows took delivery on in 2020. It had only played one location, debuting in October. COURTESY REITHOFFER SHOWS, INC.

► **SOUTHWEST**
Continued from page 22

Weekdays the fair started at 4 p.m. except on Wednesday when it started at 2 p.m. Weekends, the gates opened at 11 a.m.

Promotions included Opening Day \$1 Gate admission, and \$1 Rides. That offer almost tripled their attendance numbers for the first day. The Senior/Military/Grandparents Day was another record-breaking day. "We opened our gates at 2 p.m. to allow for a few hours before the crowd started filing in. We offered a Kiddie Land ride band this year for \$10 from 2-5 p.m. only," said Crone. She also talked about a few other special offers. "Our second Moonlight Madness was huge as we witnessed a new crowd that came in early to eat and walk around and then stood in line at the ticket booths to purchase their ride bands. We always start the sale at 8 p.m. at the front gate, but this crowd was happy to pay extra just to get in and eat and beat the crowd. Our final Sunday is a 'Last Blast Special'. We had rain on our second Saturday, but Sunday made up for it. Our second Sunday and final day was a huge day, another record-breaking day. A huge, happy and hungry crowd."

The fair developed a media mix/advertising budget that utilized billboards, radio, television commercials on all local stations along with some printed matter as well.

Top food favorites always include **Pickle Barrel** sirloin tips as well as **Maria's Cuban Catering**, and **Gina's Gourmet Palace** (Chinese). "A new upcoming food is holy macaroni — gourmet mac & cheese bowls — freshly made

macaroni and cheese dish with any and all the toppings you could ask for. The **Ragin Cajun** has chicken, shrimp, sausage, green peppers, tomatoes and jalapenos. They are a must try," added Crone.

The fair manager was quick to commend fair leaders for their vision in offering an event this year. "A huge thank you to our board of trustees for believing and moving forward with plans to have a full fair and to welcome our community with open arms," said Crone. The 2022 edition of the fair runs February 24 – March 6.

Reithoffer is cautiously optimistic for the portable industry this year. "We are very pleased to be open and operating again. The public is ready for their fairs to resume and we have hope for the future of our industry again. I have hope for 2021 to be a big year!"

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MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

After serving as interim CEO of the **Del Mar Fairgrounds** (California), since August 2020, **Carlene Moore** was recently named the new chief executive officer. Initially Moore joined the staff as deputy general manager in February 2019 following an extensive search by the board. Previous experience includes serving as CEO of the **Napa County Fair Association**, Calistoga, California.

"I am very grateful for this opportunity and I look forward to working with the board, our talented team, and all of our partners, stakeholders and the community to continue the rich tradition of the Del Mar Fairgrounds," Moore told **KUSI-TV**. "This place and the events that are held here have created special memories for generations of San Diegans. I'm honored to be part of the fairgrounds' future."

Land owned by the city of Amarillo, Texas, Potter County, and **Amarillo Independent School District** and what to do with it was discussed at a recent meeting with county commissioners. The mayor and director of planning made a presentation. The plan is to hire a consultant to consider possibly expanding the footprint of the nine-day **Tri-State Fair & Rodeo** grounds. The site is also home to **The Tri-State Exposition** complex.

"We're gonna hire a consultant, all of the entities together are gonna hire a consultant to come in and say here's what we think you need to do, to make this a place that people want to come and hang out with their families," said Judge **Nancy Tanner** to **KAMR/KCIT-TV**.

Most of the land the fair uses is leased from the county.

During the recent Florida Week activities in mid-February, the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)** had a very successful fundraising evening during the **TopGolf** event. Between the 50/50 raffle, silent and gypsy auction, the organization raised a total more than \$65,000. All money generated went to support the OABA's H2B agenda.

Last year the **International Association of Fairs & Expositions (IAFE)** Zone I convention was scheduled to be held in York, Pennsylvania, however COVID-19 struck, and the event was canceled. Last held at the **York Fair/York State Fair** 21 years ago, the May 13-15 meeting will feature networking, workshops, and numerous insight opportunities. The event also includes a zone meeting and general session. Friday afternoon will feature a visit to historic sites in downtown York. Zone 1 includes fairs from Pennsylvania to Maine.

"We're real excited to host. We have speakers and presenters from all across the country," said **Bryan Blair**, **York State Fair** CEO.

Numerous IAFE officers will be present including IAFE President and CEO, **Marla Calico**; along with Chair **Gene Cassidy**, **Eastern States Exposition (Big E)**; First Vice Chair **Jeremy Parsons**, **Clay County Fair**, Spencer, Iowa; and Second Vice Chair **Jennifer Giesike**, **Washington Town & Country Fair**, Washington, Missouri. Speakers include **Jay Strates**, **Strates Shows**; **Rick Pickering**, **California State Fair**, Sacramento; **Jessica Underberg**, **Erie County Fair**, Hamburg, New York; **Kelly Tuckwiller**

Collins and **Marlene Pierson-Jolliffe**, both with the **State Fair of West Virginia** and **Rick Trout**, **York State Fair** police chief.

The seven other zones will be holding their regional meetings later this year.

Last year, **Nevins Amusements** in Moriches, New York, closed its carnival operation after 75 years in business. This year, the 13 acres that served as the winter quarters on Long Island was sold to the **Peconic Land Trust**, who in turn donated the land to the town of Brookhaven for use as public walking and hiking trails, bird watching and other passive recreation.

The closure and ultimate sale were because of COVID-19 restrictions last year. "You hate to stop making money," Harold Nevins, told **Newsday**. "We had a carousel and a lot of different things. In today's business, you have to keep working. Money doesn't grow on trees."

The land was purchased from the Nevins with a grant from the **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**.

The **International Festivals and Events Association (IFEA)** has created a series of 'Bring Back Events' messages encouraging people to take the proper steps and do the right thing to bring COVID-19 under control. The three available messages all have the Bring Back Events moniker with Wear a Mask, Safe Distance and Get Vaccinated themes. Organizations are encouraged to use and share these ads on their web sites and social media platforms. The IFEA also has event-oriented masks that can be ordered.

Re-purposing fairgrounds for different types of revenue generation has been a way of life over the past year for many venues across the country. Creative uses have included drive-through food, dessert and snack pick-up, merchandise stands, socially distanced food fairs and concerts, Halloween-themed and holiday light display events. This is in addition to rentals for COVID-19 testing and vaccination and pro bono use as homeless shelters.

Los Angeles-based **FunFlicks Outdoor Movies** is reaching out to fairgrounds to continue the age-old family tradition of watching a good movie together. In an era of social distancing, pop-up drive-in movie theaters and concerts are a great way to enjoy an event while staying safe.

The company provides rentals that include inflatable movie screen, concert grade sound, HD projection and event staff to safely set-up and stay for the duration of the event. "We thought that initiating this campaign to work with local fairgrounds would be a great way for us to bring our communities back to the fair in a unique way. We miss our local fairs but if we can provide a little hope for them and create some revenue stream, we have to help," said **Chad Hunter**, president and CEO said in a media release. "If fairgrounds in each community host drive-in movies, I know that it will bring back that nostalgic feeling of going to a drive-in movie back in the day, and at least for that moment in time, fill the community with happiness. Happiness and positivity are the key to life, so let us work on bringing back happiness to our communities."

Central Florida Fair sees 'satisfactory' turnout despite pandemic

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO— The **Central Florida Fair**, which ran from March 4-14, 2021, celebrated its 109th year as a not-for-profit in Central Florida.

The fair was founded in 1910 by a group of community leaders who sought an outlet to celebrate the agricultural industry in Orlando and the surrounding area. It is the largest not-for-profit fair in Central Florida and among the top five largest fairs in the state. It is centrally located just minutes from downtown Orlando on 87 acres and provides ample free parking to its attendees.

Today the fair continues to provide youth from Orange, Seminole, Volusia, Lake, Osceola and Brevard Counties (collectively known as "Central Florida") a showcase for livestock, horticulture, food arts and sciences, and creative arts projects through its educational programs and community events.

It has generated over \$3 million in livestock sales and close to \$4 million in premium awards to local 4H/FFA youth over the past 13 years. Because it is a private not-for-profit organization, it does not receive city, county or tourism funding, like many other entertainment venues in the area.

The fair further supports the community by distributing thousands of free tickets to underprivileged children, as well as opening the fairgrounds early one weekday for school groups and chaperones to enjoy the exhibits and entertainment for free.

2021 was the first year the fair has occupied its new 40,000-square-foot Livestock and Event Pavilion and restroom facility. Construction began in December 2019 and was completed last fall. The new pavilion was financed with Industrial Revenue Bonds and fundraising and grant opportunities and replaced a smaller pavilion that was built through a state grant in 1986 and utilized through the fair's 2020 show.

Used primarily to showcase the fair's Livestock Youth Program, the new pavilion will also be used outside of the fair as an event and concert space, joining the Orlando Amphitheater outdoor concert facility, also on the fair's property.

In 2020 the Central Florida Fair ran from February 27 through March 8, and while its attendance and revenue were still negatively affected by the



The Central Florida Fair is the largest not-for-profit fair in Central Florida and among the top five largest fairs in the state. It is centrally located just minutes from downtown Orlando on 87 acres and provides ample free parking to its attendees. COURTESY CENTRAL FLORIDA FAIR

year's fair commencing.

onset of the coronavirus, it was fortunate enough not to be dealt a complete loss like so many fairs last year. It was able to just squeeze in its annual run before the nationwide COVID-19 cancellations and closures that began on March 12. The fair was down almost \$1.2 million in revenue in 2020 from 2019.

Since last year's fair, it has been a year of concern for the organizers of the Central Florida Fair, especially for **Shawn Krauel**, the fair's president and CEO, because there was no certainty up to its opening day that the fair would not be required to cancel its 2021 run.

"We were all too aware how hugely detrimental canceling the fair altogether would be to our already struggling operation," Krauel told the *Orlando Sentinel*. But as the fair's start date grew closer, it became more certain that the show would go on, albeit with considerable modification and changes to its normal operation.

His objective was to keep guests as safe as possible by promoting social distancing, encouraging frequent hand washing, and requiring masks for guests ages six and older. For the staff, they were required to undergo temperature checks before each shift, wear face coverings, and sanitize their surroundings regularly.

"We're the entertainment capital of the world, so people see Ferris wheels and roller coasters every single day," he said. "But here, what you get is a mix of the old traditions of the Central Florida Fair, which has been here for 108 years, long before Mickey Mouse."

"We're a nonprofit and we don't get any funding from the city or county," said Krauel. "It would be catastrophic if we weren't able to do it," he said prior to this

For almost a full year Krauel and his team have been devising contingency plans on how to make the fair happen and still provide a safe experience for the fair's volunteers, staff, vendors, and guests. And while Florida as a state has no mandated COVID-19 restrictions, there are city and county government precautions/restrictions in place that still needed to be maintained. Even so, the Central Florida Fair has taken those precautions a step further than even the local requirements to ensure everyone's safety.

The Central Florida Fair took guidance from the **Florida Federation of Fairs & Livestock Shows**, which suggests the wearing of masks, practicing social distancing on the midway and in lines, restricting the number of patrons per ride in some cases, and increasing cleaning protocols, to name just a few.

"Florida's fair industry works every day on safety plans and precautions to keep guests and employees safe from COVID-19," said **Daniel West**, the federations executive director. "We've had other situations we've had to adapt (to), not as extreme as COVID-19, but we've had to work through it," he said. "Fairs are important to Florida, and they're an economic driver for the counties."

"How each county fair addresses COVID-19 depends on the expectations from county governments and health departments," said West. "Many fairs are keeping their entertainment options lower-key, knowing large crowds gathered to see big-name entertainers is not feasible in a pandemic. Of course, all activities come with a certain amount of risk. Our goal is to follow CDC guidelines and industry standards to reduce the risk to you



The Central Florida Fair staff pose inside the fair's new 40,000-square-foot Livestock and Event Pavilion and restroom facility. COURTESY CENTRAL FLORIDA FAIR

and your family."

Midway operators have also stepped up and assisted fairs in addressing safety precautions regarding the food services and rides they provide. "We looked at things we needed to do as an industry, and the midway operators took the lead," West said.

According to the Central Florida Fair's midway operator, **Frank Zaitshik**, President of **Wade Shows**, his plan requires participation from his team members, vendors and guests alike. "We all have a role to play in order to enable us to operate as safely as possible while bringing excitement back to an event near you. By working together, we can reduce risk and continue the midway traditions that have made memories for generations," he said in a statement.



Zaitshik

To accomplish this promise, Wade Shows has created a mitigation strategy which they have posted on their website. The plan outlines what they as an operator and their food

vendors will do to maintain the safety of guests, as well as what is expected of the guests.

One of the ways Wade Shows is taking leadership in the fight against COVID-19 is through the use of their FunTagg Digital Ticketing App, which brings ride/food ticket purchase and redemption to guest's smart phones, greatly reducing interpersonal interactions between operators, vendors and the fair's guests.

"Our rules and procedures include the best elements of mitigation plans from amusement parks, carnivals, fairs and festivals as well as guidance from the CDC and state health organizations. Coupled with our own ideas and innovations, we can bring the fair the best the industry has to offer," said a statement on Wade Shows' website. "While the midway experience will change and it will not be the 'same as normal,' we believe we can strike a prudent balance between safety and family fun if we all work together to provide a safe, healthy environment."

In 2022, the Central Florida Fair returns for its 110th year from March 3-13.

•centralfloridafair.com

WATER PARKS & RECREATION

▶ News Splash — page 28 / Private wave pool opens in Dubai — page 30

South German resort town opening Therme Lindau Spa in May

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

LINDAU, Germany — A unique premium wellness resort will open in May on the eastern side of Lake Constance in the south of Germany.

Therme Lindau is a transformation of the **Eichwaldbad** outdoor swimming pools that were popular for decades. Located at one of the most beautiful sections of Lake Constance, Therme Lindau will offer opportunities to swim, relax, play and enjoy exciting new offerings. In addition to sports and family pools with waterslides, there will be several indoor and outdoor thermal and relaxation pools as well as six indoor and six outdoor saunas. Once open, the new spa will become the largest and most diverse wellness resort in the area.

Lindau is a popular tourist location near the Austrian, German and Swiss borders. The town is famous for its historic architecture with churches and buildings dating as far back as 1180. Gardens, theaters and outdoor activities such as cycling, sailing, hiking, and swimming are enjoyed by visitors from multiple countries. Lake Constance is fed by meltwater from the Alps via the Rhine River as well as underground aquifers. Geothermal activity in the area produces a number of natural hot springs and mineral wells. Lindau hosts several summertime festivals and events, and direct rail connections from Munich, Stuttgart, Ulm and Zurich provide a steady influx of tourists. Since 1951 the city has hosted an annual meeting of Nobel Laureates. Students from all over the world can meet with honorees to discuss scientific developments.

Gently embedded in the landscape with old trees, the new Therme Lindau resort is an architectural masterpiece concisely designed to be harmonious with its surroundings. The building's elements are derived from the surrounding area with rock slabs and large stones augmented with native plantings. Lively and calm zones, hard and soft shapes, and the interplay of light and shadow create a versatile bathing experience. The entrance area and changing wing are situated in the back of the building away from the shore. From there, the



The Therme Lindau facility features massive glass window walls to provide undisturbed views of Lake Constance and the Alps. Large open areas connect the spaces and pools on the main floor with relaxation and dining areas on the upper floor (below left). COURTESY 4A ARCHITECTS STUTTGART



building opens up into two stories with large glass walls facing the lake. The bathing level in the interior is designed like a landscape with various areas delineated by giant stone walls. The fitness areas and restaurants are located on the upper floors. The upper floors and lower section are connected to one another through large open sections.

The thermal baths and vitality baths include several indoor and outdoor pools with many water attractions and temperatures ranging from 90°F to 100.4°F. The water in the vitality baths contain salts and trace elements, with different water qualities offering various health-promoting effects. Some of the pools contain still water while others feature massage jets. After enjoying time in the sauna and then cooling down, loungers can partake in a two-story relaxation room with a fireplace and plush chairs and lounge beds. Large panoramic windows allow spectacular views of Lake Constance and

the nearby Alps.

A beautiful sand beach located to the east of the facility is particularly attractive for families with children. A 50-meter outdoor swimming pool and an indoor 25-meter sports pool with a high-dive platform, an outdoor and an indoor slide and a toddler pool complete the range of offerings for sports and family areas. In order to avoid conflicts of use, the saunas and thermal baths are clearly separated from the sports and family pools. At the edge of the beach area, a pier extends out into the lake and a large promenade offers leisurely strolls along the shore. Outside of the regular bathing season, the beach and promenade will remain open for walkers to enjoy. Access to Lake Constance is made available with nearly 1,000 feet of shoreline complete with boat launch areas.

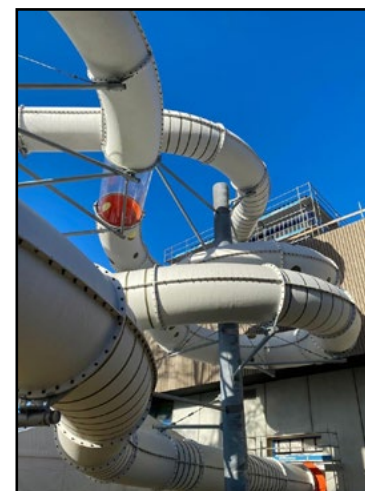
Wiegand Waterrides supplied the slides for the new resort. An enclosed tube slide starts from a roof extension on top of the building. As is typical, the bulk of the slide is outside of the



A Wiegand tube slide includes a clear acrylic section (above) to give riders a surprise view of the surrounding lake. Most of the slide structure is located outside the main building. The clear acrylic section and light stripes are seen at right.

COURTESY
WIEGAND.WATERRIDES

building with just the entrance and the splash pool located inside. From the outside the slide appears to be plain white, but once in the tube, guests will experience bright orange colors, various daylight stripes and other shapes that will illuminate darker sections, as well as a surprise clear acrylic section with a view of the lake. A second body slide with similar colorations, starts from the same rooftop location, winds through the tube slide and ends in a splash runout inside the building. Additional slides are located at the outdoor pool along the beach.



Although primarily designed for the summer season, Therme Lindau will operate all year long. Various ticket options are available with the very basic ticket allowing for limited two-hour access to the family pools or the thermal baths and sauna. Higher priced deluxe packages include complete access to the resort along with a full day of activities with a couples massage, private spa, dinner and drinks.

•therme-lindau.com

Amber Rock Resort, water park proposed for abandoned quarry

DERBYSHIRE, England — Developer Hillcrest Limited has submitted plans to several local authorities to build a water park resort in a former limestone quarry in central England. Known as the Amber Rock Resort project, the current concept calls for a huge water park, 116-bed hotel, restaurant, shops as well as apartments and holiday lodges. The Derbyshire area is rich in minerals and was mined for lead as far back as Roman Times. In the 1800s, the 44-acre Crich Quarry supplied limestone for the Butterley Company, an English manufacturing firm that provided iron for several bridges over the River Thames. In the 1960s, limestone from the quarry was used for road building, railway ballast and cement. The quarry ceased operation in 2010.

Plans for redevelopment of the Crich Quarry first surfaced in 2011, and the designs for the resort have been updated and revised a number of times over the years. The former quarry would be extensively cleaned and many of the materials left in the quarry could be recycled. In its current state the quarry is an eyesore. The area is also unsafe



As seen in the concept art, a five-story glass hotel will line one-side of the cliff walls, allowing for views of the water park and boating lake. COURTESY PENNYROYAL DESIGN GROUP

but that doesn't stop teenagers and urban explorers from frequently trespassing.

Some of the quarry faces could be turned into climbing walls with zip lines traversing from a viewing platform at the top of the walls down to the floor of the quarry. The lowest level will feature a man-made lake with small recreational boats.

The water park is planned to be built on two levels and form the centerpiece of the resort. It would feature several waterslides, a raft ride, lazy

river, an outdoor pool, diving well and a swim-up bar. Other recreational facilities planned include a sports hall, badminton courts, bike trails, playground and mini golf.

The apartment block is to include a supermarket, florist, photographers, bakery, a bowling alley, laundry services and craft classrooms. The five-story hotel will be constructed with its back to the quarry wall, with all rooms having a glass front looking into the resort area. The holiday apartments

offer different suite sizes ranging from one-bedroom to four-bedroom family suites.

On its website Hillcrest Limited indicated that its vision for Amber Rock will restore the old quarry within a beautiful rural backdrop, preserve its heritage and boost the local economy.

A message on the website states, "We want the Amber Rock resort to become an asset for the community. The Amber Rock resort will actually increase the environmental value of the area

through improved biodiversity and added landscape amenities. Celebrating the unique features and history of its location, Amber Rock will also preserve the local environment and protect the community for years to come, ensuring the site will never be used for mineral extraction or future industrial use."

Local reaction has been mixed. City planners see the potential boost to businesses and tourism. Many local residents are concerned that additional development would bring about an increase in traffic and congestion. Derbyshire County is already home to several outdoor attractions including Peak District National Park, three large reservoirs, and several public properties and gardens that are in the care of the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or National Beauty.

Consultation on the Amber Rock proposal took place through March 22, after which Hillcrest will submit a plan to the various city and county councils in April. If approved, clean-up, development and construction of the resort is estimated to take five years.

—Jeffrey Seifert

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Cedar Fair has announced that **Castaway Bay**, the hotel and indoor water park resort at **Cedar Point**, will remain closed this year. Renovations were announced in late 2019, but were put on hold throughout most of 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Planned renovations include updates to the guest rooms, public areas and to the property's exterior. Refurbishment of the 38,000-square-foot water park is also likely to take place, but there have been no announcements of any new attractions.

Castaway Bay originally opened in 1989 as the **Radisson Harbor Inn**. Cedar Fair acquired the property in 1996 keeping the Radisson brand until 2003. The hotel was transformed into a water park resort, opening in November 2004. It was the only Cedar Point hotel to operate year-round.

On March 15, Orlando's **Westgate Lakes Resorts & Spa** opened Treasure Cove Water Park. This latest amenity to the resort includes a pirate-themed splash pad, wave pool, 575-foot lazy river, two 30-foot-tall waterslides and an aquatic jungle gym. The water park is also equipped with a Rikki Tiki Tavern offering quick bites and speciality drinks.

Westgate Lakes Resort and Spa is a full-service resort located on Big Sand Lake, right off I-4 near the East Concourse of the **Orange County Convention Center**. The new water park brings more water recreation opportunity, adding to the existing seven adult pools, seven kiddie pools, six hot tubs and two swim-up bars.

The **Grand Lodge Hotel** in Rothschild, Wisconsin, is closing its **Logger's Landing Indoor Waterpark**. In a statement issued to guests via its website and Facebook page, the lodge stated: "Due to continued hardships from the COVID-19 pandemic



NEWSPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

and recent staffing challenges unlike any we have seen in our portfolio, we're closing the waterpark portion of the Grand Lodge Hotel for the safety of our guests and team."

The hotel closed March 22 but was scheduled to reopen on April 5 to allow the team to regroup and reorganize.

Operated by **Stoney Creek Hospitality**, The Grand Lodge has been in operation for more than a decade. It is built in the style of the large indoor water park resorts popular in Wisconsin Dells but is located 100 miles farther north near **Granite Peak Ski Area** and **Rib Mountain State Park**.

Great Wolf Lodge, Manteca, California, has once again postponed its grand opening — this time until further notice.

A statement from the lodge reads: "Once the state's COVID-19 mitigation efforts allow businesses like ours to operate, our resort in Manteca is prepared to open safely and responsibly with a comprehensive plan to safeguard our guests and 'pack members' we call our Paw Pledge Program."

Amusement parks in California have been approved to open on April 1, 2021, but it is unclear if indoor water parks are included in that category. Great Wolf Lodge will not announce an opening date until the **California Department of Public Health** has given water parks clearance to open.

The 500-room resort, which includes a 95,000-square-foot indoor water park, was originally scheduled to open July 1, 2020, and has been

sitting idle since that time.

Even though the California Department of Public Health has yet to allow water parks to open, there are other opportunities for outdoor water recreation. Cable parks and wakeboarding sites can reopen under the current guidelines.

Cable parks have been around since the 1950s but have been gaining in popularity recently. They offer a way for water skiers and wakeboarders to enjoy their sport without having to find a boat to pull them around. Instead, an overhead Rixen cable (named for the inventor) installed over a lake or other body of water, pulls skiers and boarders around the lake. Social distancing is not a problem because participants are kept a safe distance from each other by the mechanical attachment. Several cable parks currently operate in the state of California.

Waves Resort Corpus Christi water park is to be demolished. The park's current owner, **Diamond Beach Holdings LLC** announced that all structures on the property will be torn down in order to allow for new development.

The former **Schlitterbahn Corpus Christi** opened in 2015 but struggled to pay back construction loans and eventually defaulted on the loans. In May 2018, **IBC Bank** took over ownership of the property at a foreclosure auction and Diamond Beach Holdings was contracted to operate the park.

Diamond Beach invested an additional \$15 million in the property adding an outdoor theater, a performance stage, and 30,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor event space. It also invested in overall upgrades to the entire property.

The resort closed its doors last May in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.



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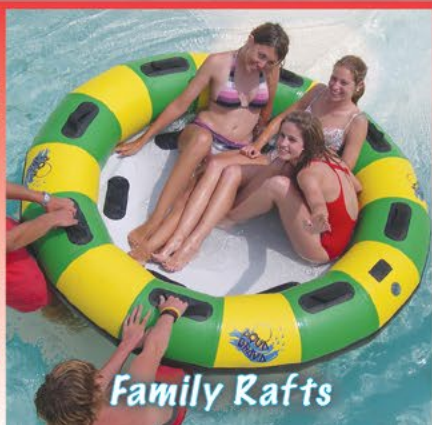
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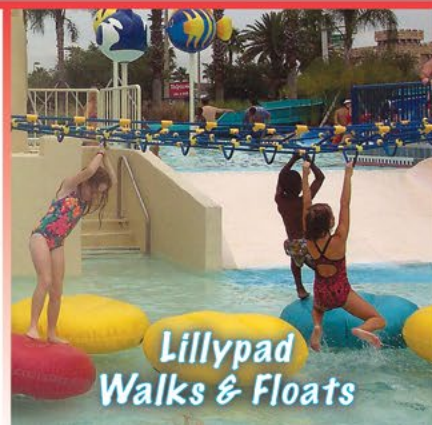
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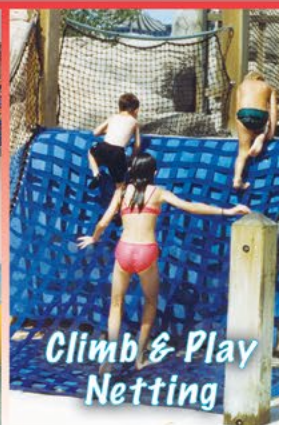
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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► GKTW Village celebrates anniversary — page 34 / Women of Influence: Suzanne Pfordresher — page 38

California parks, attractions finally receive guidance for reopening

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

CALIFORNIA — It couldn't have come soon enough for the beleaguered amusement and theme park industry in California — a pathway to reopening.

California Public Health officials released the updates to the state's Blueprint for a Safer Economy reopening framework focusing on ballparks, stadiums and the state's larger theme and amusement parks to open with significantly reduced capacity, mandatory masking and other public health precautions. These changes take effect April 1.

This means that any theme and/or amusement park operating in the red, orange and/or yellow tiers (yellow being the least restrictive, purple is the most restrictive) can open its doors on April 1 provided that other health mandates are being followed. And, with, of course, limited capacities.

That was certainly good news for the amusement and attractions industry.

"We are beyond excited about the news of potentially reopening our rides in April after about a year of closure," said Daniela Bower, public relations and brand strategy, Belmont Park, San Diego. "We are ready to open our rides on April 1st, but will need to adjust if that is not possible at that point. We're hopeful that the trends continue to improve and our community can move past this pandemic year soon."

The system is based on the number of vaccinations given, the number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 of population and the test posi-



Amusement and theme parks in California welcomed the announcement from the state's Public Health Department releasing guidance on reopening to guests in 2021. The guidance allows for reopening by April, but — as of mid-March — specific dates had not been set for Knott's Berry Farm (above), Six Flags Discovery Kingdom (below left), and Disneyland parks (below right). COURTESY KNOTT'S BERRY FARM; AT/TIM BALDWIN



tivity rate. Those parks in the red tier may open April 1 with 15% of capacity. Those operating in the orange may increase to 25% of capacity and the yellow moves up to 35%.

San Diego County moved into the red tier last month shortly after the updated guidance came out. Belmont

Park had already reopened some limited outdoor activities such as the go-karts, rock wall and sky ropes.

SeaWorld San Diego had opened with limited activities and operating days on Feb. 6, operating under guidelines for zoos. The park is not expected to go back to normal daily op-

erations until late June.

Legoland California, located in Carlsbad, also is within San Diego County. That facility has held some limited activities such as Build 'N Play Days that were to run March 5-May 2 on select dates. There was no reopening day posted on the park's website.

The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk in Santa Cruz County entered into the red tier March 9. Officials there haven't set a definitive reopening date as yet but are currently reviewing new guidelines and making preparations.

► See CALIFORNIA, page 32



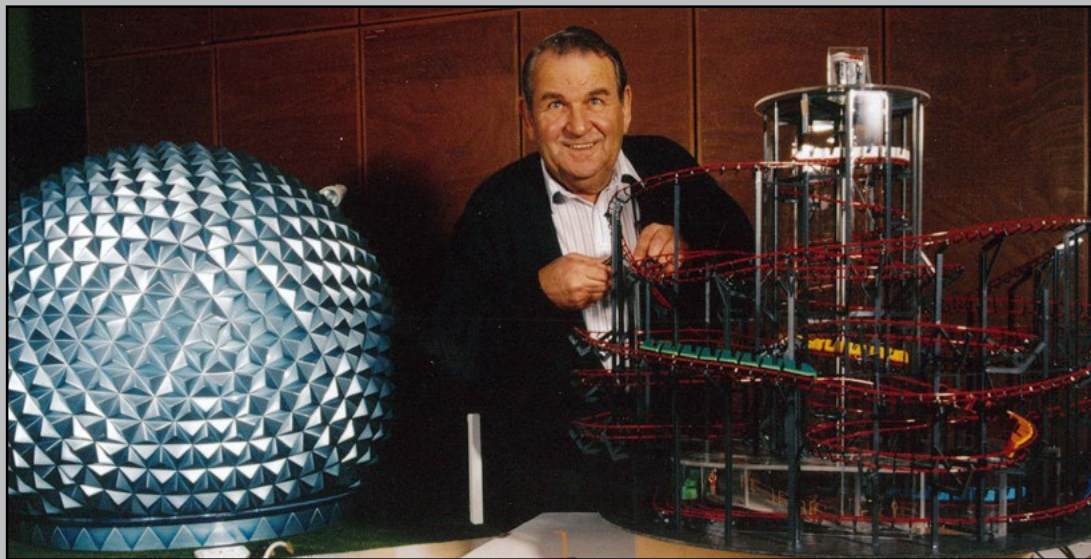
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Franz Mack is seen here in front of a model for the park's Eurosat indoor coaster. COURTESY EUROPA-PARK

Europa-Park honors Mack family patriarch on his 100th birthday

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

RUST, Germany — Those in the industry who have had the opportunity to visit with the Mack family, the operators of **Europa-Park**, know full well the tight bond between family members. In honor of what would have been the 100th birthday of patriarch **Franz Mack**, the family and park announced a tribute to the industry legend on March 7.

German-born avant-garde artist **Ottmar Hörl** was commissioned by the Mack family for an installation titled simply "Europe." The art installation will be comprised of 100 figures, each representing Europe in some way. The art concept will be placed near the bronze monument of Franz Mack in the gardens of Europa-Park.

"Our father was a great role model for all of us right into the last days of his life, said son and Europa-Park co-founder **Roland Mack**. "He showed the values of modesty, hard work, perseverance, sincerity, emotions and openness in every part of his life and thus had a lasting impact on our family and our company."

When Europa-Park opened in 1975, the goal of half a million visitors a year seemed ambitious. Today, it is the largest theme park in Germany and second only in attendance in Europe to **Disneyland Paris**. The park exceeds that original goal by more than ten times annually. The six world-class hotels make the resort a dream destination location.

Inspired by international travel with his son Roland, Franz Mack felt a theme park near the location of **Mack Rides** in Waldkirch would be an ideal way to showcase the company's many ride offerings. Throughout his career, he met with customers and clients with the utmost professionalism, hospitality and dedication to quality and attention to detail.

Amanda Thompson, managing director of **Blackpool Pleasure Beach** and current chairman of the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** said: "When I was still a producer of ice shows, Franz Mack once welcomed me with open arms in Europa-Park on a cold February day and accompanied me to a rehearsal for the



The new art installation honoring Franz Mack will be placed near the bronze statue of him in the park adjacent to the park gardens. AT/TIM BALDWIN

ice show. After that he often picked me up, we went through all the new areas of Europa-Park that were just being built, and he showed me everything that was happening. He was so proud of Europa-Park. He always had time to show me everything and every detail. I still remember his radiant smile and his kind hospitality very intensely. I will always miss his wisdom. He was a really wonderful man with a very big heart, who always laughed a lot when we were together. The valuable time with Franz Mack has enriched my life."

Some of the more signature attractions at the park from the 20th century are attributed to his handiwork. He designed the indoor Eurosat roller coaster, which opened in 1989, as well as the Euro-Mir high-speed roller coaster that went into operation in 1997. Both feature an iconic spiral tower lift, an attribute that generated a lot of attention in the industry. He developed the model himself, already into his later years.

His advice to his sons and grandchildren just weeks before his death is still remembered by family members: "Always be humble and keep at it." Franz Mack died at the age of 89 in 2010. He was inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame in 2005.

Officials at Belmont Park, San Diego, "are beyond excited" to reopen after a year of closure. The park is set to open April 1. AT/TIM BALDWIN



► CALIFORNIA Continued from page 31

Orange County is home to **Disneyland Park** and **Disney's California Adventure Park**, Anaheim; and **Knott's Berry Farm** in Buena Park.

Disney CEO **Bob Chapek** announced mid-March that Disneyland would reopen in late April. A specific date was to be given soon.

Downtown Disney had been opened for food and shopping and had been expanded inside Disney California Adventure onto Buena Vista Street to help with capacity.

Knott's Berry Farm also hasn't set a specific date for reopening, but did provide information on its Facebook page that officials are looking at sometime in May. The park was to hold a virtual job fair on March 13 and planned to hire up to 1,700 employees at that time.

Orange County health officials did say it might actually be possible for Orange County to have moved into the orange tier by April allowing for even more visitors.

Los Angeles County officially moved into the red tier on March 12. This move allows the opening of **Universal Studios Hollywood** April 1. However, the facility's website stated a reopening date would likely come sometime in May.

The **Six Flags** company has two parks in California. **Six Flags Magic Mountain** is located in Valencia, Los Angeles County. **Six Flags Discovery Kingdom** is in Vallejo, Solano County. Solano County moved into the red tier on March 10.

Six Flags spokesperson **Sandra Daniels** said in late-March the company has not set an opening date of April 1 for both California parks.

"But we are getting close and may have an announcement next week," Daniels said. "It is just premature for us to

comment right now."

California's **Great America** is located in Santa Clara, Santa Clara County. This county moved into the red tier on March 2. Park officials announced they would reopen on May 22.

California has had some of the strictest COVID-19 protocols of any state in the U.S. The large theme parks and amusement parks have been shuttered now for almost a year, although many of them created new events, such as food fairs, drive-throughs, etc. — and still are. It has helped them remain relevant in this time and has helped them maintain some of their employees.

Yet, the prolonged closed doors have been devastating to not only the parks but the communities in which they are located.

Last December, California issued separate reopening guidelines for small and large theme parks. These guidelines allowed smaller facilities with a capacity of less than 15,000 visitors to reopen in the orange tier while large theme parks could return only after reaching the yellow tier.

At the first of February this year, two members of the California state legislature proposed a bill that would adjust the state guidelines to allow all amusement parks — regardless of size — to open safely within the same tier. The bill's main thrust was that authorities should "treat large and small theme parks equally."

Proponents of the bipartisan bill hoped it would create pressure on Newsom to change the guidance. During the proposal of the bill, Legoland California President **Kurt Stocks** was quoted in local news as saying "the Carlsbad theme park has developed a reopening plan that exceeds guidelines given to other state businesses and industries."



Rey's iconic speeder (above) can be spotted outside the entrance to the new Star Wars Trading Post store, which replaced the closed Rainforest Café restaurant. Inside this store is a variety of merchandise from the entire franchise and novelties inspired by the *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge*, themed land inside Disneyland and Magic Kingdom parks. COURTESY DISNEYLAND RESORT

Disneyland Resort converts Rainforest Cafe, opens new Star Wars Trading Post

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ANAHEIM, Calif. — The Star Wars Trading Post at Disneyland Resort's Downtown Disney District in Anaheim, California, opened on February 19, 2021 in the location formerly occupied by Rainforest Cafe. Star Wars Trading Post is certain to become the go-to place for all things Star Wars for old and new fans alike.

The store's design is described by Disney as inspired by a hidden jungle Resistance base and the merchandise location offers something for every "traveler on their galactic journey."

Rey's iconic speeder can be spotted outside the entrance to the new Star Wars Trading Post. Inside the store is a variety of Star Wars merchandise from the entire movie franchise as well as novelties inspired by "The Mandalorian" series on Disney+ and *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge*, the themed land inside both the Disneyland and Magic Kingdom parks.

Downtown Disney District reopened in its first phase on July 8, 2020, and extended its opening to a second phase including Buena Vista Street on November 19, 2020.

In September of 2020, a smaller incarnation of the Star Wars Trading Post took over the WonderGround Gallery location also in the Downtown Disney District, but unknown at the time was the fact that this was only a temporary location

while the permanent home of the store was being readied.

The Star Wars Trading Post at Disneyland Resort's Downtown Disney District is the second installment of these stores and joins the already open store of the same name at Walt Disney World Resort's Disney Springs.

Until Disney's January announcement of the retail store's new home, it was rumored that the Rainforest Cafe may return to Disneyland Resort in some form. Many believed it would reopen in the same location, because when the restaurant initially closed in June of 2018, it did so due to Disney's plans for a new luxury resort hotel on the site of the location. When those plans were scrapped, other merchants in the area, such as **Earl of Sandwich**, reopened at their original locations. It is now certain that Rainforest Cafe will not return to its former home at Disneyland Resort, if at all.

The restaurant chain is owned by Landry's Restaurants Inc., which continues to operate 22 Rainforest Cafes around the globe, including four at other Disney destinations: **Disney Springs** and **Disney's Animal Kingdom** in Florida, **Disneyland Paris** in France, and outside of **Tokyo Disneyland** in Japan.

On March 18, 2021, Disneyland Resort reopened Disney California Adventure utilizing a new "A Touch of Disney," limited capacity ticket. And while guests will recognize the magical Disney environment the moment they step into

the park, A Touch of Disney is different from a traditional visit to the Disneyland Resort theme parks. The dining experience (no attractions will be opened in this phase) offers a selection of iconic food and beverage items from both Disneyland Park and Disney California Adventure, from the world-famous Dole Whip to the classic Monte Cristo sandwich that is usually found in New Orleans Square. Many items will be served snack-sized, ideal for enjoying a variety of bites and sips from mid-day through the evening.

Guests will find these favorites at locations around the park, including six seasonal and creatively themed marketplaces. Along with Disney cuisine, guests will hear a custom curated selection of reimagined Disney songs. The soundtrack will be broadcast throughout the park, setting the stage for A Touch of Disney as a radio announcer shares jingles and reminders about many can't-miss experiences.

The introductory \$75 ticket includes admission, parking for the experience at Mickey & Friends parking structure, unlimited downloads of Disney PhotoPass photos taken during the day of the experience, and a \$25 A Touch of Disney dining card valid towards the purchase of food and non-alcoholic beverages (subject to restrictions).

Close to 1,000 cast members will return to work as a result of the A Touch of Disney experience, in addition to the recent reopening of outdoor dining on Buena Vista Street.

PAPA spring meeting is held virtually

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

PENNSYLVANIA — With the continuation of COVID-19 mitigation efforts, the **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks & Attractions** organization held its meeting with only the 10 board of directors virtually on a Monday in late February. Typically, the event is a two-day gathering at the **Hershey Lodge & Convention Center** in Hershey, Pennsylvania, attended by over 100 people from throughout the industry.



Most of the discussion focused on COVID-related topics and what operations may be like this summer, along with enforcement of the wearing of masks, based on current state policy. Catering during the pandemic was also discussed. One park is looking into a liquor license and what that means — restaurant style within a certain area or open container throughout the property.

This meeting marked the changing of the guard.

Brian Gorman, VP of operations of **Waldameer Park & Water World**, served as the PAPA president in 2019-2020. In part, these were comments he made in a recent PAPA newsletter. "I have always valued our organization and the businesses and people that make it such a wonderful industry to work in. I can think of no other industry that shares ideas so freely or has such a camaraderie between attractions and manufacturers.



Gorman

But it is obvious why this is. The rewarding feeling, we get when we see our guests enjoy a day at our facilities is our greatest motivation."

"While the past two years have not been without struggle, I cannot express enough gratitude to all the members who came together as an organization to create guidelines to keep our staff and guests safe during a pandemic. These guidelines not only created a safe way to enjoy our parks, but also proved to our Commonwealth that no one had a more vested interest in the safety of our staff and guests than we do," said Gorman.

Starting the first year of a two-year term as president is **Mike Fehnel**, general manager of **Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom**. Here is part of what Fehnel shared as he takes the helm: "I couldn't be more excited to be selected as the next president of PAPA. This organization has a rich history, with its listing of past presidents and a Hall of Fame that contains a distinguished group of leaders that have shaped our industry for more than 85 years. I will strive to walk in their footsteps and help to facilitate the collaboration that is needed as we navigate the challenges of our industry."



Fehnel

Rounding out the officer team are First Vice President, **Scott Silar**, **Hersheypark**; Second Vice President, **Rick Knoebel**, **Knoebels Amusement Resort** and Secretary/Treasurer, **Dick Knoebel**, **Knoebels Amusement Resort**.

The **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks & Attractions** organization was formed in 1935 with **R.L. Plarr** from **Dorney Park** serving as the first President. In 1946, famed roller coaster designer **Herbert P. Schmeck** from **Philadelphia Toboggan Company** was president. The organization serves amusement parks, water parks, attractions, suppliers, manufacturers, and associations throughout Pennsylvania and beyond.

•paamusementparks.com

Powers Midway gets first A.R.M. portable Sky Hawk ride

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

WINTERSVILLE, Ohio – **Powers Great American Midways** recently debuted the first **A.R.M. (USA) Inc.** Sky Hawk portable tower swing ride at a still date in Anderson, South Carolina, in late March. Standing nearly 100 feet tall, Sky Hawk can accommodate 24 riders. (The park model stands nearly 150 feet tall.)

“Sky Hawk’s overall design is based on our popular Vertigo swing tower, with one major adaptation — prone passenger carriers. The idea of lying a passenger flat, as if flying like their favorite superhero, has always been a conceptual idea, now it is a reality,” said **Mike Gill**, president.

Depending on the specific model, passengers load from either a platform portably or ground level in a park setting.

Sky Hawk owners have the option of choosing between two seating arrangements. The first is the standard model, with all passengers lying flat, or prone, in the flying position. The second is a combination of



half prone positions and half seated upright in a traditional Vertigo swing seat. Gill explained the benefit of the half and half second option: “[It] offers a choice for passengers that may want to come back and experience Sky Hawk’s flight from a new perspective. Or an alternative for those who may want to accompany their friends or family members but would prefer to be seated upright. Sky Hawk is thrilling for the whole family.”

Sky Hawk can be seen at the rescheduled **Florida State Fair**, Tampa, April 22 to May 2.

•armrides.com



Portable models stand at nearly 100 feet. Purchasers have two seating options available: standard — where all 24 seats are in the prone position (inset) — or half prone and half upright seating. COURTESY A.R.M.

GKTW Village celebrates its 35th anniversary, adds ice cream shop

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — After almost a full-year delay, **Give Kids The World Village** held a grand opening of **Henri’s Starlite Scoops** ice cream shop in conjunction with the nonprofit’s 35th anniversary celebration. The celebration also highlighted the announcement of several changes, updates, and additions to the Village for the coming year.

Designed through a unique collaboration of **Walt Disney Imagineering** and **Universal Creative**, with support from community partners and individual donors, every aspect of **Henri’s Starlite Scoops** has been built with accessibility in mind. This out-of-this-world venue serves unlimited ice cream treats to wish families staying at the nonprofit resort all day, every day, from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Custom-built 28-inch-tall ice cream chests in lieu of the traditional 34-inch cases make it possible for all children, including those in wheelchairs, to pick out their favorite flavors. Similarly, lower countertops, an accessible ice cream toppings bar and an open floorplan enable those in wheelchairs to easily navigate the venue and enjoy its immersive theming.

Walls inside the rotunda feature false windows that offer a glimpse into space, as if guests are dining inside a 30-foot flying saucer, which sits atop the building. Historic photos and NASA memorabilia — including a space suit, moon rover, and a **Give Kids The World** flag which **John Glenn** took with him on a **Space Shuttle Mission** — complete the out-of-this-world venue, which



Give Kids The World President and CEO Pamela Landwirth speaks at the grand opening ceremony of **Henri’s Starlight Scoops** (above left). Walls inside the rotunda feature false windows that offer the illusion of a glimpse into space. AT/DAVID FAKE

pays tribute to the life and legacy of **Give Kids The World** founder, **Henri Landwirth**.

The late Landwirth, an Auschwitz survivor, managed the **Starlite Motel** in **Cocoa Beach, Fla.**, in the 1960s. It was there that he befriended many NASA employees, including the **Mercury Seven** astronauts, and newsmen, such as **Walter Cronkite**. These friendships with NASA employees and astronauts provided Landwirth with their support. Through contributions from founding partners, Landwirth created **Give Kids The World** in 1986 to fulfill his long-ago pledge to one day prevent other children from missing out on childhood as he had.

Since then, the 89-acre, whimsical nonprofit resort has delivered happiness and hope to critically ill children and their families through weeklong, cost-free wish vacations. More than 176,000 critically ill children and their families from all 50 states and 76 countries have been welcomed to **Give Kids The World Village** to laugh

together, play together, and create unforgettable memories away from hospital stays and medical treatments.

“Children with critical illnesses face countless appointments, treatments and hospital stays, and they are often told “no” due to the limitations of their illness. Unlimited ice cream is an important part of giving wish children and their families a week of “yes” where they can forget their worries, experience joy, and spend priceless time together,” says **Give Kids The World** President and CEO **Pamela Landwirth**. “We are grateful to the many treasured partners who have made it possible for us to continue our 35-year legacy of transforming lives one precious moment at a time.”

The Village was preparing for the ice cream shop’s grand opening back in March 2020 when the Village closed due to the **COVID-19** pandemic. It reopened to guests on January 17, 2021.

In addition to the opening of **Henri’s Starlite Scoops**, **Give Kids The World Village**



also announced several additions and changes to the Village. Many of these have been made possible by amusement industry partnerships and contributions to **Give Kids The World**.

Serendipity II will be the Village’s brand-new themed pirate ship and stage. Located at the **Park of Dreams** pool, the stage is used for outdoor entertainment events including the Village’s popular **Once Upon A Village** party featuring pirates, princesses and mermaids. This exciting new amenity will feature many innovative design elements through a collaboration of **Steamlabs Design Group**, **Icarus Exhibits Orlando**, **Electrosonic AV Design** and **Outdoor Screen SNA Displays**. **Serendipity II** will open in May 2021.

JJ’s Express is **Give Kids The World Village**’s wheelchair-accessible train which circles the **Amberville** pond and chugs through a jungle and cave. The train will be undergoing a complete renovation, transforming the attraction into an engag-

ing, immersive Jurassic-themed experience. Changes include a new story line and audio, a paleontologist dig area and other new visuals, and two new character voices: **The Conductor** and **The Paleontologist**. The design and build team include **Crafted AV** and **Scenario**. Work began when the train was removed for its complete overhaul and is expected to be completed by the end of April 2021.

Merlin’s Magic Space is a collaboration with **Legoland** and the **Merlin’s Magic Wand Foundation**. It will bring uniquely themed treatment rooms installed within a charity partner facility that provide much-needed respite and an opportunity to experience the unique magic of **Merlin** for children who are unable to visit **Merlin Entertainment Attractions**.

Mayor Clayton’s **WonderLab** is a fun, interactive learning center with an emphasis on crafts and technology. The venue will serve as a focal point for creativity and exploration, with a goal of inspiring curiosity; fostering collaboration; and spreading child-like wonder to visiting wish families and the local community. It will feature whimsical interactive architectural elements that spark the imagination, in addition to hands-on educational programming which inspires children and adults to learn a wide range of skills from fun crafts to high-tech robotics. Mayor Clayton’s **WonderLab** will open in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Extreme Village Makeover II will see 142 of the Village’s 166 wish family residential villas completely renovated over the course of seven days in February 2022.

•gktw.com

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MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 03/22/21	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	73.69	76.25	33.25
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	48.52	52.50	15.37
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	56.37	58.58	31.70
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	192.98	203.02	81.09
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.08	0.17	0.07
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	46.75	51.84	15.17
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	6230.00	6500.00	2365.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.62	0.89	0.38
Lefoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	20.65	23.05	9.70
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	39.03	42.04	8.92
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	88.97	99.24	22.25
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	853.00	869.00	490.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	50.02	52.96	8.44
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	47.75	51.75	9.93
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	734.00	750.00	590.00

STOCK PRICES ABOVE ARE GENERALLY QUOTED IN THE FOREIGN CURRENCY IN WHICH THE COMPANY IS LOCATED

Worldwide Markets: ASX, Australian Securities Exchange; CSE, Copenhagen Stock Exchange; LSE, London Stock Exchange; NYSE, New York Stock Exchange; NASDAQ, National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; SEHK, Hong Kong Stock Exchange; SZSE, Shenzhen Stock Exchange; TSEC, Taiwan Stock Exchange, Corp.; TYO/TSE, Tokyo Stock Exchange

—SOURCES: Bloomberg.com; Wall Street Journal

BUSINESS WATCH

Six Flags announces 2020 financial results

ARLINGTON, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** reported a decline in revenue and earnings, as anticipated, for fourth quarter and full year 2020 as compared to the same periods in 2019. Because of limited park operating schedules and capacity restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, total attendance for full year 2020 declined 79% compared to 2019. This loss of attendance was partially offset by higher guest spending per capita. The company continues to make progress implementing its transformation plan to modernize the guest experience and to reinvigorate long-term profit growth.

Attendance trends in 2020 continued to improve over the course of the year, increasing from 35% of prior year levels in the third quarter to 51% in the fourth quarter, for the parks that were open. Several of the company's parks modified their operations by providing drive-through or walk-through experiences for the holiday season, and the company's parks in Mexico were able to operate for a portion of the quarter. As a result, every park that was open in December 2019 was able to open in some capacity during December 2020.

"I am extremely proud of the way our team members responded in a challenging year. They found innovative ways to safely operate our parks and entertain millions of guests in the face of the pandemic," said **Mike Spanos**, president and CEO. "Our focus is to open all of our parks for the 2021 season and be prepared to satisfy the pent-up demand we anticipate for outdoor entertainment close to home."

Dynamic Technologies name adopted

TORONTO — **Dynamic Attractions** parent company, **Empire Industries Ltd.** announced that, effective Monday, March 1, 2021, its name will change to **Dynamic Technologies Group Inc.** and its stock trading symbol will change to TSXV:DTG. For its American investors, the company's OTC ticker symbol remains unchanged. Dynamic Technologies Group also launched a new website on March 1, 2021.

Guy Nelson, the company's executive chairman and CEO said, "The name change is reflective of many things, not the least of which is the strategic pivot the company has been making towards creating and leveraging its proprietary technology. One of the company's core values is its commitment to innovation which has become a pre-requisite for success in the future. Over the past five years, the company has invested over 500 person years of engineering to develop its amusement ride technology, knowhow and intellectual property. This technology will be applicable in the global amusement park industry and has application in the location-based entertainment business sector, especially post-COVID as demand increases for world class entertainment experiences."

Dynamic Technologies is scheduled to open SkyFly: Soar America in late Spring 2021 in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. The attraction will take guests on a flying adventure over Alaska's glaciers, Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, the Great Smoky Mountains and the nation's most beautiful natural wonders.

Accesso continues, expands resort alliance

ORLANDO — **Accesso Technology Group PLC**, a technology solutions provider to leisure, entertainment and cultural markets, has expanded its partnership with **Alterra Mountain Company** to provide six of the company's North American mountain destinations — **Snowshoe Mountain Resort** in West Virginia; **Deer Valley Resort** in Utah; **Mammoth Mountain** in California; **Steamboat** in Colorado; **Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows** in California; and **Blue Mountain Resort** in Ontario, Canada — with mobile food and beverage (F&B) technology.

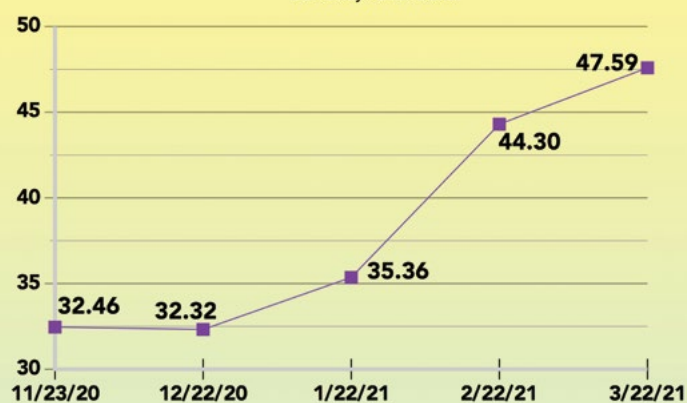
Alterra Mountain Company currently leverages acceso's guest experience management technology, The Experience Engine™ (TE2), to power the app for its global season pass, Ikon Pass. The new and enhanced integration of technology enables more than 40 food and beverage service locations across six ski areas to provide guests access to mobile ordering and restaurant arrival time booking functionality. This augmented use of the TE2 solution also extends Alterra Mountain Company's ability to establish guest profiles through a centralized guest identity and stored wallet feature and linking of mobile F&B purchases and restaurant arrival bookings.

Six Flags Over Texas was enjoying good attendance and filling parking lots throughout March. AT/GARY SLADE



SNAPSHOT

Six Flags Entertainment Corp.
Symbol: SIX | New York Stock Exchange
Currency: U.S. Dollar



52 Weeks: 51.75 High — 9.93 Low

Graphic: Jeffrey Seifert

Source: Big Charts/Market Watch

DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 3/15/21	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.148	\$0.359
Midwest	\$3.169	\$0.578
Gulf Coast	\$2.988	\$0.484
Mountain	\$3.276	\$0.534
West Coast	\$3.270	\$0.316
California	\$3.951	\$0.326

CURRENCY

On 3/22/21 \$1 USD =

0.8401	EURO
0.7209	GBP (British Pound)
108.86	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9290	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.2912	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.2498	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

ON THE MOVE

Mad Systems Inc. announced the addition of **Toni Losier** to its growing team. Losier will be representing the award-winning audio-visual company while based in Orlando, Florida, covering the East Coast region for business development and client retention.

Losier brings over 20 years of experience in the audio-visual industry to the Mad Systems team, and quickly found her place in the company after joining in July of 2020. "I'm super excited for my new venture with the Mad Systems family!" said Losier. She noted that she looks forward to "being a part of our growth of our business and continue to maintain existing relationships while creating new ones."



Losier

In her career in the pro AV field, Losier started out building racks and gained extensive experience as a site supervisor and project coordinator before moving on to business development, where her previous hands-on experience allows her unique insights into all aspects of the AV and interactives industry.

Mad Systems Inc. owner **Tricia Rodriguez** said: "We are thrilled and pleased to have her, and are very excited to see her growth in the industry with us."

Roland Reyes joined **Noah's Ark Waterpark** (Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin) as the park's new general manager on January 4, 2021. He brings with him an impressive background within the amusement and attractions industry.

Reyes traces his water park roots back to **Knott's Berry Farm** in California, where he got his start as a seasonal employee more than 30 years ago, climbing through the ranks to become park manager at **Knott's Soak City**. While serving in that role for 10 years, Soak City's lifeguard program annually achieved Platinum service status from **Ellis & Associates**.



Reyes

With California water parks closed in 2020, Reyes temporarily joined the Noah's Ark team to support operational changes during a challenging season.

"Everything we learned last year positions us to make this summer better for our guests and the Noah's Ark Team," stated Reyes. "I'm so excited for the opportunity to lead Noah's Ark Waterpark and provide the Dells community with a clean, safe and fun experience."

Cedar Fair Entertainment Company announced that **Seenu Sarma** has joined its executive team as senior vice president and chief procurement officer.

"Seenu's arrival is well-timed and coincides with our broader initiative aimed at optimizing the efficiency and cost structure of our business infrastructure," said President and CEO **Richard A. Zimmerman**. "I'm confident his strategic expertise in designing and building out centralized procurement programs, as well as his broad-based experience with the likes of world-class companies such as **Dean Foods, Deloitte** and **NASA**, will help streamline our acquisition of equipment,



Sarma

products and services, and improve our operational effectiveness from top to bottom."

Sarma holds an MBA in finance and corporate strategy from the **University of Chicago**, and a master's and bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, respectively, from the University of Houston and Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute, Indiana.

Dynamic Technologies Group Inc. announced that **Jerry Pierson** has been appointed president and chief operating officer of the company.



Pierson

Pierson has over 25 years in the themed attraction business and has been leading Dynamic's organization in the U.S., based out of Orlando, for the past three years in addition to managing the controls department for the company.

"Controls integration and mechatronics technology and the associated intellectual property have become a core competency and forms the nucleus of the Dynamic's IP," stated **Guy Nelson**, executive chairman and CEO. "Our pivot as a company to leveraging the intrinsic value of our IP, makes Jerry the perfect person to assume the president and COO position for Dynamic Technologies Group." This promotion includes being president and COO of Dynamic Attractions, Dynamic Entertainment and Dynamic Structures.

Hao Wang, who joined the company's Dynamic Attractions division in 2017, will be leaving his post as president and COO for personal reasons, and returning to his home in Toronto.



Wang

"I am pleased to announce that Hao has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the company effective immediately, which will help to make a smooth transition of leadership to Jerry in managing Dynamic Attractions and the ride manufacturing division," added Nelson. One of the initiatives that Hao put in place was to develop a strong and cohesive management team in an effective organizational structure with efficient operational processes, as well as a succession plan for the company's key functions.

Terrie Zajo has been appointed general manager of the new \$27 million **Kings Island Camp Cedar**, under construction in Mason, Ohio. Scheduled to open in late spring, the luxury outdoor resort will feature modern cottages and full-service RV sites, all located less than a mile from the park's front gate.



Zajo

Zajo brings more than 30 years of experience to her new role, having held management positions at **Great Wolf Lodge, Duke Energy Convention Center** and **Paramount's Kings Island**.

"Terrie is a well-respected hospitality executive," said **Mike Koontz**, vice president and general manager of Kings Island. "With her significant experience in food and beverage, guest services, waterpark operations and retail, she is an ideal choice to successfully operate a destination resort and further expand the Kings Island experience to overnight guests."

OBITUARIES

Kiddie Rides U.S.A. owner Gary A. Mandarino passes

AURORA, Colo. — Gary "Gutch" Anthony Mandarino, 66, beloved ultra-talented musician, animatronics engineer, and artist of Aurora, Colorado, died February 10, 2021. Mandarino was co-owner of Kiddie Rides U.S.A., based in Denver, Colorado.

One of his many talents was to design, create, and build props for Tom Savini's TerrorMania in Monessen and the TransWorld Haunt and Worped Studios in Colorado.

His company, Kiddie Rides U.S.A., was a specialised refurbisher and vendor of kiddie rides and his company was one of the few dedicated to this form of coin-operated amusements left in the U.S., a market that only 10 years ago had over 50,000 rides installed in the U.S. alone.

Mandarino's main lifelong passion was performing music. That started in 1972 when he bought his first Fender bass guitar. He quickly learned to play on his own and joined several smaller groups before his major debut with the City Rhythm Band in the late 1970s. He performed with several local bands over the years, including performing as an opening act for Everclear, as well as performances at Breckenridge Ski Resort and Denver Broncos Monday Football Night Pre-Game.



Mandarino

True circus industry legend Carla Wallenda gone at 85

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Carla Wallenda, a member of the Flying Wallendas high-wire act and the last surviving child of the famed troupe's founder, has died. She was 85.

Wallenda was born February 13, 1936, and appeared as a toddler in a 1939 newsreel as she learned how to walk the wire, with her father and her mother, Mati, looking on. But she said her first time on the wire was much earlier.

"Actually, they carried me across the wire when I was 6 weeks old," she said in a 2017 interview with a Sarasota TV station. "My father rode the bicycle, and my mother sat on his shoulders, holding me and introducing me to the public."



Wallenda

She spent her first years on the Ringling show. The Wallenda highwire troupe appeared on the big show until the strike year, then departed for the 39-41 seasons, but returned 42-46. By the time Carla was 10 years old she'd spent at least seven years on the train, under the big top, doing spec with the Doll family, eating in the cook tent, and traveling with the Greatest Show on Earth.

Most recently Wallenda appeared with her son, Ricky, in his highwire act at the Broward County Fair, November 26, 2010, along with 12-year-old Bri, thus marking another first as youngest and eldest walked the wire together. Wallenda was the world-record oldest active aerialist, and longest unbroken streak celebrating 62 consecutive seasons as an aerialist.

Concessionaire Mieczyslaw "Meester Mike" Zdebiak

TORONTO — Mieczyslaw (Mike) Zdebiak, affectionately known as "Meester Mike," passed away on Saturday, February 20, 2021, in Toronto at the age of 77.

Living in Toronto, he spent many a summer's day at the CNE. Subsequently, as young teenager Zdebiak had a summer job working in the concession stands of the OABA legend Bert Murray. Zdebiak realized that his calling was in the concession business. He soon found himself managing and operating Conklin Shows' entire food operation. In 1980, Zdebiak ventured out on his own. He was a great presence not only at the CNE but also Western Canada and the U.S. He instilled a strong work ethic in his employees which in turn saw loyal patrons return year after year to his stands in order to enjoy his carnival foods.



Zdebiak

Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Suzanne Pfordresher became the vice president of marketing and sales for Palace Entertainment this past January but has spent close to 20 years in the amusement industry.

Palace Entertainment is a subsidiary of Madrid, Spain-based **Parques Reunidos** which operates various attractions including amusement parks, zoos, and water parks around the world.

One lost note defines a future

WEST MIFFLIN, Pa. — On a slip of paper shoved into the top drawer of a college dorm desk, Suzanne Pfordresher, not really knowing it or, perhaps, really knowing it, began writing the story of her life.

It was her first semester at the University of Florida in Gainesville where she had decided to major in business administration.

"I jotted down goals on that piece of paper, things that were important to me," she said.

It wasn't an assignment. Just some thoughts. She has since forgotten most if it, but there was one item which still stands out to her.

"I wrote down on that sheet of paper that [my] career goal was to be the head of advertising for a major theme park/attractions company," Pfordresher said.

Dreams do come true. But not always by themselves.

Pfordresher was born and raised in Miami, Florida. She grew up in a family business, but it wasn't the attractions business. Her father, having had a passion for photography, had and still has a photography supply business in the Miami area. It has been in her family now since the 1920s.

Pfordresher was shown early that if one follows their passions and heart, they will be happy and successful.

Her family might not have been in the amusement industry, but they loved the attractions.

"I have so many wonderful memories of visiting Walt Disney World with my family growing up," she said. "During our trips, my father would always spark up conversations around the business of attractions. How does this work? What would we do if we could add something to the park?"

"These conversations inspired me to not just enjoy the attractions experience, but to want to know more about everything that went into managing successful attractions."

Between Pfordresher's junior and senior year at the University of Flor-

ida, she landed a paid internship at SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Tampa Bay. It might not have been the most glamorous — she delivered SeaWorld and Busch Gardens brochures to hotels along International Drive.

She was thrilled.

During her senior year of college, while her friends were busy looking for and interviewing with large marketing firms in cities like Atlanta, she kept her sights on SeaWorld. She was persistent and looked at openings there often.

"But at the end of the day, I was told that there weren't any openings in the marketing department."

There was, however, an opening, a job of which she already knew the ins and outs, delivering those brochures along International Drive.

She wasn't discouraged at all. She said of her choice to take that job, "It was the best decision I have ever made."

She was inside now, full time. She loved her job and the team she worked with. She kept her eyes open for other opportunities.

That opportunity came not long afterward when she landed the position of marketing coordinator supporting SeaWorld's annual pass program.

That next step ended up being the beginning of a near 15-year stint at SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment.

Her progression within the company was steady and consistent. She eventually became the manager of that annual pass program. From there, she moved into the position of senior manager, marketing strategy and planning, and then on to senior manager in lifestyle marketing and then later in CRM marketing.

She progressed into the positions of corporate director of consumer activation, then corporate senior director of advertising and brand management.

In 2016, she became the vice president of marketing and sales.

"I loved my time at SeaWorld," she said. "They became my instant family and stayed that way."

Suzanne Pfordresher

Vice President, Marketing and Sales
Palace Entertainment
West Mifflin, Pennsylvania



In fact, she met her husband, Tom Pfordresher, who was working for SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment as well. They eventually married and now have two children, a daughter and a son, ages 8 years and 6 years, respectively.

In 2018, another opportunity was presented to her. A job opened up at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA). The association was looking for a vice president, global marketing and industry insights.

She was torn. SeaWorld felt like her home. But the global connections she would make at IAAPA excited her.

"I just said, 'I gotta go for this. It's just that simple.'"

She got the job offer and spent three years at IAAPA. It was truly a wonderful adventure for her.

"The world really became a lot smaller and I am forever grateful for the time I spent at IAAPA," she said.

But, after a couple of years, she began to feel that familiar pull.

"As a part of IAAPA, we become the support part of the industry," she said. "Professionals from around the

world would come and tell us what they were doing, how they were driving their businesses. I would get so excited for them."

She found herself wanting to sit on their side of the table instead of the side where she found herself.

Without warning, that opportunity again arose. A recruiter touched base with her in late 2020. Palace Entertainment, a subsidiary of Parques Reunidos, was looking for, yes, a vice president of marketing and sales. She was very interested.

She went after the position, landed it and began in January of this year.

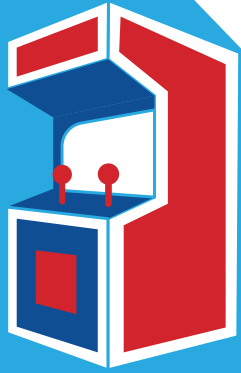
As far as being a woman in the amusement industry, she has found it to be an advantage.

"I don't feel like I have anything standing in my way. I have met many dynamic women in the industry," she said. "There are many opportunities."

And she is thankful for that 18-year-old Suzanne who stuffed that long-lost note in that desk drawer.

"I would like to think that that 18-year-old Suzanne would be happy at the way things turned out."

—Pam Sherborne



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▶ NW Showmen's Club 2021 safety seminar — page 42 / AIMS Safety Award winner announced — page 45

Dollywood enhances roller coasters, creates space in off-season

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — While guests may think theme parks go dormant in the winter, those working in the industry know there is nothing further from the truth. Dollywood has set forth an ambitious schedule of projects to improve the ride experience of multiple roller coasters and the inclusion of wider spaces for guests to spread out.

"We are always listening to what our guests are telling us, and we try to implement that input whenever possible," said Pete Owens, vice president of marketing, Dollywood. "One thing we have heard during the last few years — and also during the pandemic — is that there are areas of the park where the guests desire more space. As we continue to see increased visitation, we know providing that space is important. We are listening to them, and we've undertaken several projects over the last few seasons with this in mind."

Certainly, the demands of social distancing of recent months and the previous season have brought space concerns to the forefront.

"We have added a plaza area in Country Fair where many families now stop to recharge and spend time, and we also created a new plaza at Wilderness Pass as another respite for guests in that area of the park," Owens told *Amusement Today*. "We've also been able to utilize that area during several of our festivals, so that was a project that served several purposes. As we designed Wildwood Grove, much effort was directed into ensuring walkways were wide with ample seating opportunities. We've widened walkways in several areas of the park, and



Dollywood's chapel saw maintenance and refurbishment in the off-season (above left). The park widened a major walkway (above right) in the park to eliminate tight spaces for guests. Lightning Rod (below) has been outfitted with new steel track to make for a more reliable experience. AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY CURTIS HILBUN



this season, guests will notice we have removed a few structures to create increased dining space at two of our most popular culinary locations, Dogs N Taters and the Hickory House."

With the addition of more seating near Hickory House, Dollywood's blacksmith shop will move just across Craftsman's Valley to its former location adjacent to the Robert F. Thomas Chapel.

"Our Robert F. Thomas Chapel is an iconic fixture that likewise received a lot of attention while we were closed," said Amber Davis, publicist. "Crews gave our country church a facelift with new footers, wood, paint and roof."

The chapel was originally built on site and dedicated to the memory of Dr. Robert F. Thomas on May 26, 1973.

Big undertakings by the park involve four roller coasters.

"When the park really started adding major attractions in the early 2000s, everyone learned how important they are to the complete Dollywood experience," said Wes Ramey, public relations manager, Dollywood. "We are a world-class park with world-class rides, and we want to ensure that our guests are able to enjoy them during their

time at the park. For that reason, it is crucial for our rides maintenance and operations teams to be in-tune with each attraction. In addition to the normal — and sometimes unexpected — maintenance these teams give to our rides, those hosts really do study and learn the attractions for which they are responsible. They almost treat them like people with the care they put into understanding them. That is why we've undertaken projects on several attractions this season, including Lightning Rod and Mystery Mine. These rides are a vital piece to the Dollywood experience and our teams take great pride in making sure our guests have an opportunity to ride them when they are here."

After modifications made late last season and during the winter, Dollywood's Lightning Rod roller coaster opens this season featuring a hybrid track structure that includes both a wood stack "Topper Track" and a steel "Ibox" track installed by the ride's manufacturer. Nearly two-thirds of the ride's track has been converted.

"We believe that converting sections of Lightning Rod from Topper Track to IBox will improve the overall reliability of the ride," said COO Jake Kilcup,



Rocky Mountain Construction, the manufacturer of the ride. "No changes were needed to the launch system, only the track it attaches to. The IBox track system is an all-steel build, which is more rigid. This will help distribute the dynamic loads of the coaster through the structure in a more uniform fashion."

Thunderhead, the park's other Golden Ticket award-winning coaster, is seeing continued love as well. A multiyear renovation begun by Great Coasters International Inc. on its crowd-pleasing design saw the transformation of typical lumber used in roller coaster building to the newer, stronger ipe wood, with which GCII has been finding enormous success. The Dollywood team is continuing the transformation, focusing on handrails

and certain sections of track in this last off-season. Thunderhead is expected to be completed in the next off-season with the final main sections of track that remain to be converted to ipe at that time.

For the park's Mystery Mine roller coaster (Gerstlauer, 2007), Dollywood has analyzed areas that could be improved.

"In order to enhance the guest experience, we are extending the track after the first outside drop. Additionally, they are reprofiling some of the turns and transitions to provide our guests with a smoother ride," Ramey told AT.

RMC is also involved in the park's coaster-like dark ride, Blazing Fury. Dating back to 1978, the fireman-inspired storyline uses powered vehicles to

▶ See DOLLYWOOD, page 41

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PICTURED: ROLLIE'S COASTER, MOREY'S PIERS

►DOLLYWOOD

Continued from page 40

traverse rails through scenes of nighttime shenanigans. Within the indoor attraction, maintenance work has taken place.

“We are building some custom track for the Blazing Fury project,” said Kilcup. “We’ve actually done that in the past as well, essentially just replacing what was originally there with an RMC-style rail.”

“We’re especially intentional with the upkeep of attractions that are longtime favorites,” noted Davis. “We want Blazing Fury to be around for many years to come because it is synonymous with Dollywood. Our teams invest a lot of resources and effort into this beloved coaster. This past off-season, we focused on track work. Guests should expect a smoother experience when they chase the ‘Fire in the Hole!’ in 2021.”

While most of these improvements aren’t immediately noticeable by guests, the improvements will be felt. For marketing, the park has its year-round festivals to welcome guests in 2021, starting with the Flower & Food Festival beginning April 23. Dollywood opened for its 36th season on March 13.

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NW Showmen's Club puts on strong, yet smaller safety seminar for 2021

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

PORTLAND, Ore. — Organizers of the Northwestern Showmen's Club (NWSC) annual safety seminar had initially thought they would just cancel the 2021 event this year due to coronavirus pandemic concerns.

However they found there were other concerns as well, specifically of those ride inspectors that needed the seminar to keep their certifications current.

"We ask each year for our industry leader to volunteer their wisdom and time to teach our classes for free," said Tracy Munoz, one of the event's organizers. "Now it was time for us to give back to those instructors that have so freely given to the seminar their time."

So instead of scrapping the seminar, they decided to go with a two-day, limited-capacity event that catered to ride inspectors. It was held Feb. 23-25 on the grounds of Funtastic Shows in Portland and looked much different than in years past. Normally the seminar caters to 125-plus students, but it was downsized to 50 for 2021.

"It was a great seminar," Munoz stated. "The smaller-sized group gave time for more in-depth questions and discussions between the inspectors. The knowledge packed in that room was amazing."

The 2021 seminar was hosted by NWSC President Rick Spromberg. Some of the class subjects included basic electronics, wire and rope, fire extinguishers, incident documentation, signage, slips, trips and falls

and a discussion "Hands on — What you see before rides are assembled."

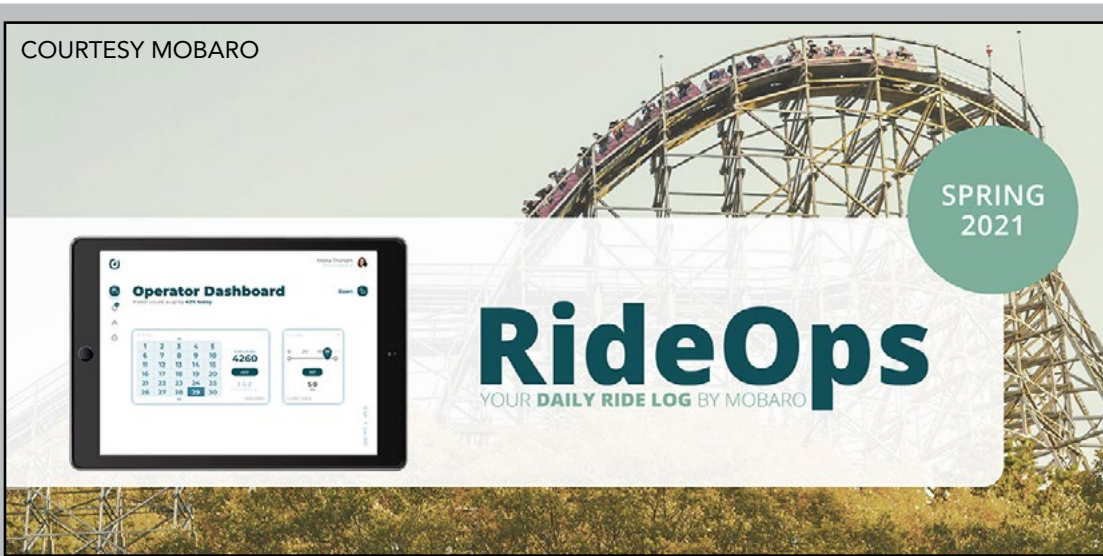
The NWSC plans to be back in full swing for the 2022 seminar, which has been scheduled for Feb. 21-25.

•nwshowmensclub.com



The 2021 Northwestern Showmen's Club Safety Seminar was different than in the years before. With pandemic concerns, the club hosted a scaled-down seminar Feb. 23-25. The two-day event was open for only 50 students. Event organizers focused on those ride inspectors needing the courses to keep their certifications current.
COURTESY NORTHWEST SHOWMEN'S CLUB





MobarO safety system introduces daily ride log RideOps

LONDON, U.K. — In Spring of 2021, **MobarO** will launch a new app for the MobarO solution, aimed at supporting ride operators and supervisors. RideOps enables users to log vital ride operating data and the workflows taking place at each ride.

This new additional functionality joins the existing functions within MobarO's maintenance, operations and safety system.

"I look forward to being able to show the industry our new app called RideOps. It will provide attractions with an on-ride, live daily report log in support of the preopening check processes making the entire process paperless and intelligent all in one platform," MobarO's David Bromilow told news outlets.

MobarO's system helps operators to document and ensure rides are safe. Now, RideOps allows them to also record data like ridership, dispatch count, dispatch/cycle times, utilization and queue times, within the company's customizable reporting platform. This gives attractions a detailed view of their ride operations and supports them in making data-driven decisions.

•mobarO.com

New safety measures implemented for COVID-19 at Florida's Pasco County Fair

DADE CITY, Fla. — Hundreds showed up for the opening night of the **Pasco County Fair** — which ran February 15-21, 2021 — but the operation was different than previous years.

Fair organizers have been in regular contact with representatives from other fairs across the state to join heads and find out what works and what doesn't in the current COVID-19 world.

Organizers attended a weekly conference call that has been known to last for hours.

The fair's President **R.J. Huss** explained that there is a lot going on behind the scenes to make sure fairgoers are safe.

"We also invested in a fogging machine, we tripled the amount of hand sanitizing stations throughout the fair," said Huss. "You can see a lot of signage. I think people have gotten used to the mask idea."

Some fairgoers wore masks throughout the fair, though that was not required on the midway, only in exhibit buildings. Most attendees maintained a proper



The welcomed return of the Pasco County Fair was socially distanced with plentiful masks.

COURTESY WLFA-TV



social distance.

Vendors who had been hit hard by the pandemic were looking forward to the return of fairs and other outdoor festivities for months. **Eddie Porcelli**, also known as "Spaghetti Eddie," was one of them.

"To be told you can't do this, and you can't do this, and you can't earn a living — Not knowing where your next

food, paycheck is going to come from, I have insurance bills to pay, I have mortgages to pay," said Porcelli.

The fair's website reminded guests to "Be considerate of others around you and follow social distancing protocols" and that "adherence to the guidelines will assist in our efforts to present a safe and successful fair."

•pascocountyfair.com

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International Ride Training hosts annual Ride Camp, busy in 2021

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The team of **International Ride Training (IRT)**, which provides operational safety services to the amusement industry, has been finding ways to navigate through COVID-19 restrictions and protocols to continue to bring to its clients a high level of training.

In addition to virtual platforms and on-demand, IRT just concluded an in-person ride camp at **Carowinds** on March 24. A ride camp is IRT's International Ride Operator Certification (iROC) school.

"We have to get everyone certified," stated **Cindee Huddy**, one of partners involved with IRT. "We have had an 'honest ton' of ride operator training and education so far in 2021."

IRT administers its iROC through carefully crafted levels of certification designed specifically to maximize training effectiveness and retention of safe operating concepts in real-world performance. IRT has designed each of these certification levels to ensure that the iROC program is administered competently and consistently at each iROC facility. Certification is offered for instructors, trainer as well as ride operators.

Huddy said IRT began 2021 on February 15 with the on-demand Ride Camp that began February 15. They had 40 different speakers in pre-recorded sessions and a variety of topics. They covered about 30 topics.

"Then we had a week-long Virtual Ride Camp for six parks that still had COVID travel restrictions" she said. "It was really a special group that bonded even though on-line."

Then, the IRT team went into action with a two-day, in-person Ride Camp at Carowinds, March 22-24.

That event was actually the first of the regional events. Other camps are set for **Mall of America**, Bloomington, Minnesota, March 31-April 1; **Kings Island**, Mason, Ohio, April 7-8 and **American Dream**, East Rutherford, New Jersey, April 14-16.



Above is a look of IRT's 2021 iROC Virtual Ride Camp. Below, ride operators participating in IRT's iROC Ride Camp session held at Carowinds, Charlotte, North Carolina, March 22-24, enjoyed participating at an in-person event. COURTESY IRT



"We have coined new F words for 2021: flexibility and fluidity, and, so far, it has rung true but with challenges," Huddy said. "Ride operations teams that we have the privilege to work with are ready and excited for the season to come. IRT is ready to visit parks conducting audits and training all season long as well."

The on-demand Ride Camp that kicked off 2021 for IRT received great reviews, Huddy said.

The virtual training session was next and included those clients needing certifications in Canada, California, Washington and Idaho, places where there were still travel restrictions.

"We used Zoom and it worked amazingly," offered Huddy.

IRT uses what they call teach backs during their ride operations training seminars. They were able to utilize this during the virtual seminar. Students sent in videos of themselves conducting their own training.

"We were able to watch the videos and evaluate them via Zoom," Huddy said. "It was really a special group that bonded even though on-line. The Zoom platform worked out great."

Huddy said there were about 60 students at the Carowinds event.

From Charlotte, the team goes right into additional regional seminars. Huddy expects them to draw about 20 students for each one.

And aside from those regional events already scheduled, the IRT team is possibly looking at additional events.

"We may end up going to New Orleans, Louisiana, and to Kilroy, California."

They expect to reach over 150 students in the first few months of 2021.

Huddy said they definitely expect to be back to the one big in-person iROC Ride Camp for 2022.

•ridetraining.com



Karrah Folk, director of operations, Cedar Point, Sandusky, Ohio, and Steve Motzkus, manager of operations, Carowinds, Charlotte, North Carolina, demonstrating a component of ride operator safety, Preparedness, for students at the 2021 iROC Ride Camp held March 22-24. COURTESY IRT

AIMS Safety Award winner announced during 2021 Virtual Seminar

AT: Mary Jane Brewer
Special to Amusement Today

The AIMS International Board of Directors is pleased to announce that **John Riggleman** was selected as the recipient of the 2020 AIMS International Safety Award, which is presented annually to the individual or organization that demonstrates leadership, innovation and foresight in improving safety in the amusement industry. The award was presented virtually to Riggleman during the 2021 AIMS International Virtual Safety Seminar on Monday, January 11.

Before retiring in 2020, Riggleman was the Sr. director of global operations standards & harmonization on the international operations team of **Universal Parks & Resorts** where he led a team working on maintaining the consistency of manuals and training documents for all Universal parks in Orlando, Hollywood, Osaka, Singapore and preliminary work on the newest **Universal Studios Beijing**. His team also wrote and maintained the Universal Operational Performance Standards which included all procedures used in building new attractions and new parks in conjunction with other Universal Creative documents.

Having worked in the theme park industry for over 47 years, Riggleman worked in progressive leadership roles in operations and safety at **Cedar Point, Soak City, Busch Gardens Williamsburg, Water Country U.S.A., Worlds of Fun, Oceans of Fun, SeaWorld, Hard Rock Park** and **Epcot**. In addition, he was the general manager at **Elitch Gardens** and **Wild Waves**.

His passion for the industry encouraged him to become very involved with several industry organizations and related organizations, including sub-chairman of **ASTM F24.40 (Operations)** and the **ASTM Executive Committee**, chairman of the **University of Central Florida/Rosen College of Hospitality Management Theme Park Advisory Board** and adjunct professor of **Risk Management in Theme Parks** and **Product Development in Theme Parks**, and a member of the education committees for **AIMS** and **NAARSO**.

One of his favorite activities was working with **Dr. Kathryn Woodcock** on the **Ryerson Thrill Ride Competition** held at **Universal Studios** where the participation of college students across the U.S. and Canada grew from 24 students in 2016 to

120 students in 2019. John also provided several guest speaker engagements to theme park engineering clubs at several universities both live and virtual.

Riggleman graduated summa cum laude with a Masters of Business Administration with a concentration in Finance from **DeVry University**, as well as magna cum laude with a B.S. in Medical Technology and B.A. in

Chemistry from **West Virginia University**. He was also awarded membership in **Phi Beta Kappa** from West Virginia University.

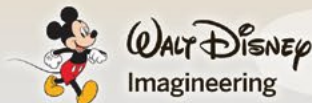
The 2021 AIMS International Safety Award nominations are now being accepted. The nomination form can be found at aimsintl.org/about/awards and the award will be presented during the 2021 Golden Ticket Awards sponsored by *Amusement Today*.

•aimsintl.org

Mary Jane Brewer (left) presents the 2020 AIMS International Safety Award to winner John Riggleman (right).
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BREAKING NEWS

Showmen's League donates \$50,000 to Outdoor Amusement Business Association

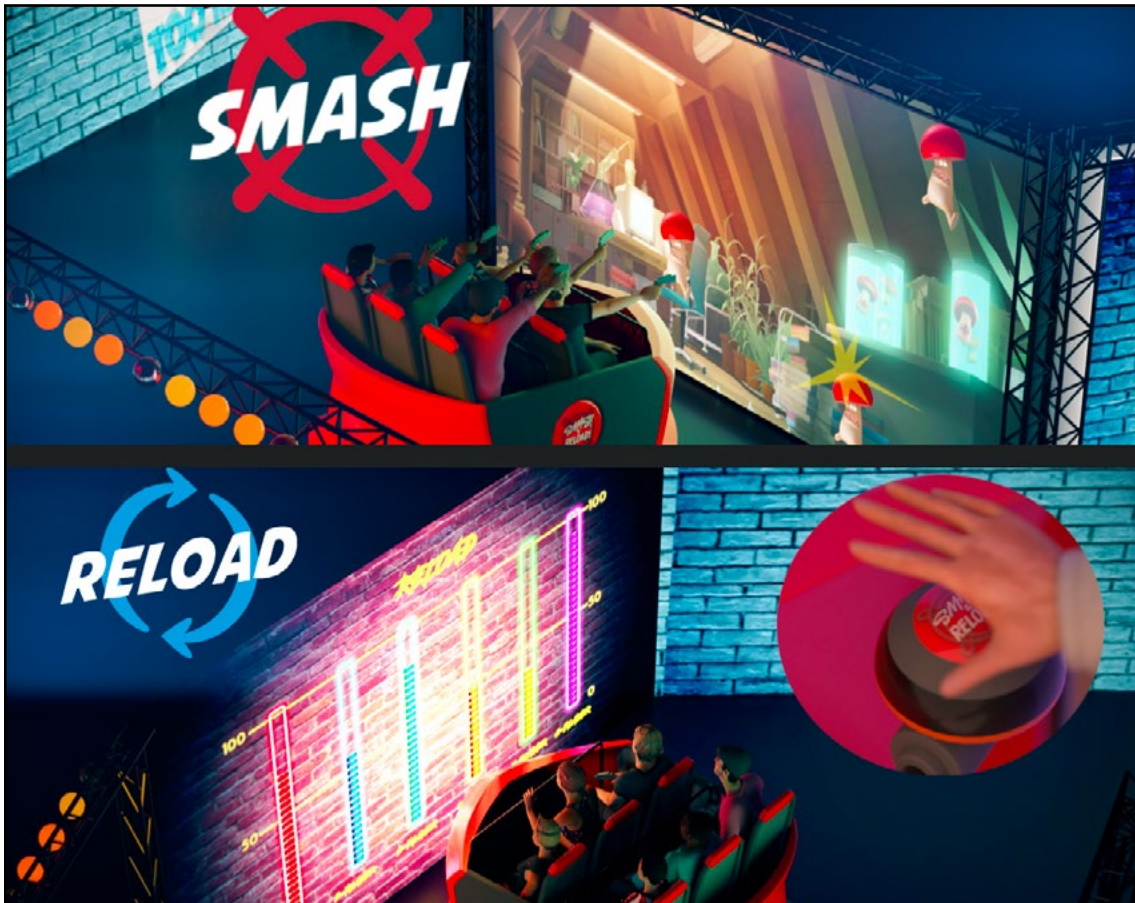
WEST SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — **The Showmen's League of America (SLA)** recently announced a decision to support the operations of the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association** with a donation of \$50,000 to be issued by May 1, 2021. SLA's Board of Governors voted to provide the donation during their February 26, 2021, meeting.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged both organizations' ability to raise operating funds — the carnivals, circuses and concessionaires who normally support OABA have been closed for an entire year — many events have now been cancelled for the second year.

There is a long tradition of support between the SLA and OABA. Each has supported the other through fundraising efforts, programming, convention and educational activities. Their mission statements are similar, with the League tending to the fraternal needs of outdoor show people, and OABA to the business needs.

SLA President **Bob Thorson** stated: "The Showmen's League is so glad to be able to support OABA. This pandemic has taken its toll — we have lost many members due to Covid-19 illnesses, and our livelihood has certainly been negatively impacted. We hope that the worst is over, and we can start a new era of our great industry."

Triotech and BoldMove partner up for Smash & Reload dark ride experience



The unique gameplay for all ages guarantees fun inside and outside the attraction, as eye-catching leaderboards broadcast the high-energy spectacle to onlookers. COURTESY BOLDMOVE NATION

BRUSSELS — **Triotech**, supplier of multi-sensory interactive attractions, and **BoldMove Nation**, specialist in media-based 'happy worlds,' are increasing their partnership.

Both companies announced a powerful collaboration to build **Smash & Reload**, billed as the world's smartest and funniest compact dark ride. Triotech has applied engaging show control and interactive technologies to build the entire ride. As concept designer, BoldMove devised the gameplay and media content

with partner **Polymorph**.

Ernest Yale, CEO of Triotech, commented: "Smash & Reload merges a challenging gameplay with a fun story, yet with an impressive throughput on a compact footprint. It's a great addition to our existing portfolio as it appeals to a broader audience and extends our reach into new areas. We are very pleased to combine efforts with BoldMove and we are confident visitors will be thrilled with joy!"

The attraction's unique blend of witty characters with a fun experience is the signature

of Concept Designer **Benoit Cornet**, CEO of BoldMove Nation. He offered: "This attraction will be accessible for all ages without any boundaries, guests just board the vehicle, load their device and enjoy the ride. Their experience will be boosted by Triotech's multi-sensory approach, applying impressive sound, light and interactive technologies."

The ride can stand alone or can be easily combined with other attractions in an FEC, theme park, leisure or retail venue.

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April 2021 | Vol. 25 • Issue 1

Digital Edition • BONUS SECTION B

Covering the industry for close to a quarter of a century

Amusement Today enters its 25th year of publishing industry news

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

ARLINGTON, Texas — On the cover page of this issue, it notes Volume 25. Once *Amusement Today* wraps up its coverage for this volume, it will complete a quarter of a century of providing readers with news, profiles and industry perspectives through various features. When the first issue of *AT* was printed (the cover of which is seen in this bonus section) there were a handful of trade magazines covering the amusement park scene.

Gary Slade knew from a young age that he was captivated by parks, rides and roller coasters. Following a photo-journalism path, his education eventually got him involved with the industry via a part-time job at *Six Flags Over Texas*, enthusiast publications and his photography skills.

Encouraged by industry friends **Bruce Neal** at *Six Flags* and **Sherrie Brammall** at *Schlitterbahn*, Slade launched a new trade newspaper covering the business of amusement parks. Having photographed many ride openings for manufacturers, he also found support from suppliers to enter the publications world. Cashing out 900 hours of unused sick leave and 12 weeks of unused vacation time, Slade left the local paper where he was working. *Amusement Today* was born in 1997. By the time the IAAPA Attractions Expo was held that November, the founding publication received the industry's highly-coveted Impact Award.

"To become the first non-ride supplier to win the Impact Award for Best New Product — when we don't build amusement rides — that was huge," Slade admitted. "I've been proud of every award we've received since. They all



The *Amusement Today* staff (above) in attendance of IAAPA Expo 2019 prepare for a day on the Orlando showfloor (l to r): Tim Baldwin, Publisher and Founder Gary Slade, Savannah Breen, Cynthia Wright, David Fake, Susan Nichols, Pamela Sherborne, Jeffrey Seifert and John W.C. Robinson. During IAAPA Expo 1997, Founder and Publisher Gary Slade poses with the IAAPA Impact Award presented to *Amusement Today* in its first year of publication (right). AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON, GARY SLADE

mean we were doing something right for the industry."

With the production end of publication being handled by business associates Slade knew from his newspaper days, he concentrated on editorial, advertising sales and drumming up new subscriptions. With his knowledge of industry contacts, as well as sales experience from his past, advertising wasn't a major obstacle. Using formulas and math calculations for his first ad rates, a popular selling point was that the new publication's rates were almost half of what *Amusement Business* — the industry's most well-known publication at the time — was pushing.

Finding his vision for making the publication distinct was the big goal. It was a blank slate.

"I came across a copy of *Amusement Business* when I was young. I always enjoyed it. But I thought there was a better way to do it. I didn't feel they showed enough of

the product. *AB* was very heavy on people and group photos," he said.

From its beginnings, new attractions being built in theme parks, amusement parks and water parks have been highly showcased. Along with it is coverage of trade shows, people within the industry and touches of history and preservation.

In its second year of publication, *AT* introduced the Golden Ticket Awards (see page 12B). In many aspects, the two brands are inextricably linked. From its very origins, the award designations were thoughtfully considered with a focus on balance, numerous aspects of the industry and timing to assist the parks that are honored. As the Golden Ticket Awards have evolved over the years, so has an event surrounding them. The awards are the core focus of an industry event, but opportunities from attending the event are



even more important.

"During the summer, we only get to see people who come to visit us and many days we're lucky to get a few minutes to spend. During the weekend of the

Golden Ticket Awards, we get to relax together and really take the time to catch up," said Leah Koch, public relations, *Holiday World &*

► See AT, page 4B



AMUSEMENT VIEWS

AT NOTEBOOK: Gary Slade, gslade@amusementtoday.com

Where did the time go?



Slade

With this issue, *Amusement Today* begins its 25th year of publishing news to the amusement industry. It seems like yesterday when the first staff was pulled together to produce the inaugural 24 page issue.

The journey has been challenging but it has also been fun as well as rewarding.

While many new relationships have been made in this 25-year journey, there were those who strongly lobbied for the launch of AT.

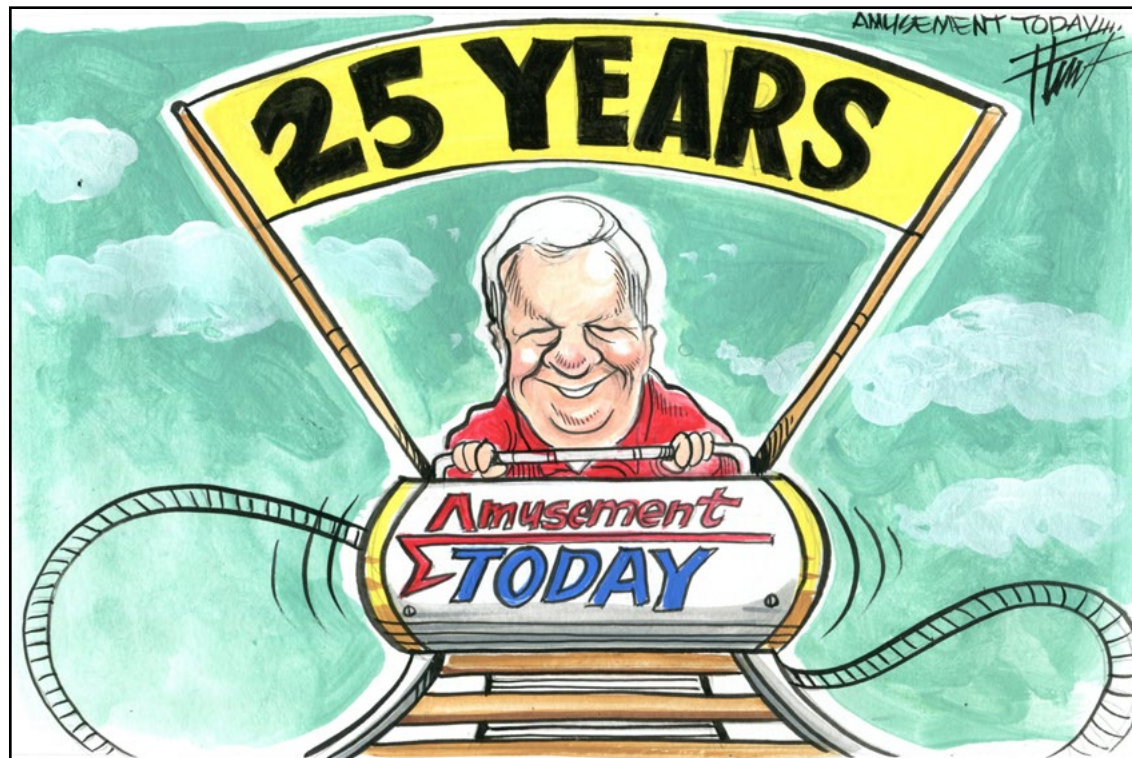
Although some are no longer with us, I can't thank enough Bruce Neal, Six Flags Over Texas; Sherrie Brammell, Schlitterbahn Waterparks and Paul Roads, Wonderland Park for their encouragement to launch AT. From the supplier side, Jerry Pendleton, Hopkins; Denise Dinn, Custom Coasters; Dana Morgan, Morgan Worldwide; Carey Don Risinger, Lemon Chill; and Mel Eddy of Zierer all became regular monthly advertisers that gave us that much needed first year ad dollar base, for which we are thankful.

Nick Laskaris, owner of then-Big Chief in Wisconsin Dells, became our first paid subscriber. Larry Cochran, head man at Six Flags give us our single largest subscription of more than 70 copies going to the corporate staff and its board of directors.

I can't thank enough all of the dedicated staff, both past and present, that has helped build AT into the leading newspaper journal it is today. One dear friend must also be recognized, H.V. O'Brien, publisher of *Eastland County Today* newspapers turned me loose as a young lad in the news and sports room to let me learn first hand about writing story leads and how to cut stories from the bottom to fit the available space. I pray that one day H.V. gets his proper recognition by the Texas Press Association — he is a true legend for home town weeklies.

This special Bonus Issue takes a look back by remembering some special covers, and regular features found in AT. We hope you enjoy it as we say 'Thank You' to all for your continued support of *Amusement Today*!

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: Tim Baldwin, tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Life's a roller coaster

One of the most overused cliches is the term "roller coaster." It is used for everything from weather forecasts to the stock market to mood swings. Everybody immediately knows the term means up and down as almost everyone in the country has an instant identification of what a roller coaster is and what it does.

As *Amusement Today* enters its 25th year of publishing, it has seen many ups and downs in the amusement industry. The past year has been one of biggest drops. It's like the coaster has plunged into the ride's largest dive — and into a tunnel! Thankfully, the ride isn't over.

News is ever changing. Just when one thinks that everything is in its place, something can instantly uproot the whole thing. A year ago, the news of the pandemic seeped into our mindset. AT was prepared to acknowledge it and then increased its importance at the last minute before going to press. Who could have guessed that within days the world would be overwhelmed into a panicked lockdown?

We immediately pivoted into a special COVID issue. It was nothing like we had produced before.



Baldwin

A year later, optimism is on the rise. Vaccines are showing a significant impact, and parks are seeing operating schedules resembling some normalcy. Using the roller coaster analogy, we are now on the second lift hill of our ride. The best part remains.

If I am to find those silver linings in dark situations, the rest of the ride is going to be much more fun. I will no longer be put off by the boarding process of an airplane. If I see a park is crowded, I will be happy for the management. If a project is delayed, I know it is still coming and things take time. In all honesty, the sky will be bluer and my ride — my actual ride on my favorite coasters — will feel particularly more satisfying. I will savor each one I take this year.

From a journalist standpoint, the ups and downs of the job will still be there. However a renewed sense of my love for reporting on the industry is sure to captivate me all over again. *Amusement Today's* coverage of park news in its 25th year of publication will eventually culminate in a 25th anniversary a year from now. Being out in the environment I love will make that celebration especially sweet.

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

AmusementTODAY
Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader

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

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Phone: (817) 460-7220

Fax: (817) 265-NEWS (6397)

Websites: www.AmusementToday.com,
www.GoldenTicketAwards.com

Call **(817) 460-7220** for advertising, circulation or editorial inquiries



Founder & Publisher

Gary Slade • (817) 460-7220
gslade@amusementtoday.com

Accounting & Classified

Sammy Piccola • (817) 460-7220
spiccola@amusementtoday.com

Assistant Office Manager, Circulation

Savannah Breen • (817) 460-7220
sbreen@amusementtoday.com

Advertising

Sue Nichols • (615) 477-5432
snichols@amusementtoday.com

Editor & Production Manager

John Robinson • (513) 256-1441
jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

Editorial

Tim Baldwin • (972) 697-9745
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Jeffrey Seifert • (817) 460-7220
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

B. Derek Shaw • (717) 843-3050
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

Pam Sherborne • (615) 308-3310
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

Monthly Contributors

David Fake, Bubba Flint,
Lottie Minick, Richard Munch,
Janice Witherow

Association Memberships

ACE, AIMS International, ASTM, IAAPA, IISF,
IRT/iROC, NAARSO, NEAAPA, NJAA, OABA,
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AMUSEMENT TODAY

Today's news for tomorrow's amusement industry

VOL. I NO. 1

APRIL 1997

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Great White attacks Sea World of Texas

To help celebrate the park's 10th anniversary season, Sea World of Texas in San Antonio opened the Great White, a Bolliger & Mabillard shark-themed inverted roller coaster. Two vertical loops, two corkscrews, a zero-G roll and a high speed spiral are incorporated into the ride.

Sea World officials hope the new coaster, which

opened with the park's season on March 8, delivers a boost to its recent sagging attendance figures.

The coaster is the first of its kind in Texas and the Southwest and represents the largest capital expansion since the park opened in 1988. It also marks the fifth major expansion in the park since Anheuser-Busch acquired Sea

World in 1989. It is also the first time Busch Entertainment Corp. has added a roller coaster to any of its Sea World parks. Sea World of Texas already has Texas Splash-down, an Arrow log flume and Rio Loco, an Intamin river raft ride, along with several kiddie rides.

Set in the southeast quadrant of the park and near

the games area, the 108-foot tall, 2,562-foot long ride was an instant hit with the public on opening day, with screams heard across several sections of the park.

The ride's entrance line also features a viewing area for SeaNet, a laser tag game that is located in the Great

See GREAT WHITE, page 2

Hersheypark spends \$5.7m on expansion

Hersheypark, Hershey, Penn., has announced plans to continue the expansion of Midway America, the nostalgic themed area that began last summer with the opening of The Wildcat wooden roller coaster. The coaster was built by Great Coasters, International.

According to Franklin Shearer, vice president of the Hersheypark Group, a total of \$8.2 million will be spent

See HERSHEY, page 3



Television star David Hasselhoff enjoys a ride on the Manhattan Express at the New York New York Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. See story on page 10.

Adventureland adds two rides

Officials at Adventureland Park in Des Moines, Iowa, have released the details of two new rides called The Mixer and The G-Force that are being added to the park for the 1997 season. Both rides will be ready for the park's opening day on April 26.

The Mixer is only the fourth ride of its kind in the United States. Manufactured by Zamperla in Vicenza, Italy, the Mixer is a thrill ride that produces three separate motions simultaneously. The results provide riders with random and unexpected

movement that tests the endurance of even the most seasoned ride enthusiasts.

The action starts as dual platforms spin counter-clockwise on a horizontal plane while at the same time the

"The Mixer is definitely a thrill ride," commented Jack Krantz, owner of Adventureland. "We're very careful in selecting new rides. We usually select rides that have a broad appeal to

all ages and endurance levels, but the Mixer is definitely at the thrill end of the ride scale."

The second ride, The G-

See RIDES, page 3

ADVENTURELAND

platforms are rotated in 360-degree vertical loops in opposite directions. The third simultaneous motion raises the platform 48 feet in the air and tilts them at a 60 degree angle.

POSTMASTER: Dated material. Please rush! Mailed Wednesday, March 26, 1997.

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Above left, AT founder Gary Slade and Andrew Mowatt, WhiteWater's vice president of North American sales, pose in a fiberglass slide section while touring the manufacturing plant in 2000. Above right, AT Publisher Gary Slade (right) is seen atop the Mack Rides installation of Journey to Atlantis at SeaWorld Orlando late in 1997. AT/FILE

▶ **AT**
Continued from page 1B

Splashin' Safari. "This is the event each year that turns colleagues into friends."

"It is invigorating and recharging getting together each year among friends and colleagues who share the same challenges and rewards," added **Marq Lipton**, vice president, marketing and sales, **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**.

As with any business, there are highs and lows. Waves rippling through the economy have impacts no matter the industry one is in.

"The recession was tough, and the one that really hit hard was the aftermath of 9/11. After [that incident] we lost 73% of our ad revenue. I had to borrow to keep the company alive — and we did — and got it paid off," Slade said.

Soon thereafter, AT became a daily resource for thousands in the industry with the launch

of **Extra! Extra! Your Desktop Edition**. The daily email newsletter compiled the industry's headlines, highlights from the latest print issue of AT as well as supplier news releases in a quick and easy-to-use format. The daily presence helped entrench AT as one of the leading industry news sources.

The metaphorical roller coaster of the industry continued as COVID-19 effectively illustrated that the unexpected can be around any corner.

"The two years leading into the pandemic, revenue was high. [The industry] was good again. Then the pandemic hit. It has been far worse [financially] than 9/11. What's made it worse is the length. One full year of our industry being shut down has been devastating on all accounts," Slade said. "The pandemic has caused so much uncertainty and those question marks remain."

The immediate impact of

the pandemic saw AT produce a unique special issue focusing on the industry and how it was dealing with the effects of closure and COVID-19. The issue featured content created and produced by the AT staff pro bono and was produced as a digital edition only, distributed for free via email, at amusementtoday.com and on the publication's social media channels. Like most businesses battling the financial crisis presented by the pandemic situation, AT had to pivot. The success of this one-off special edition opened the door for a successful new direction for the publication.

"We made the decision to shift from printing and shipping to going all digital. That decision single handedly saved *Amusement Today*," said Slade. Beginning with the May 2020 issue, all issues of AT were distributed to the industry for free as a digital edition.

Vaccines offer optimistic opportunities for recovery. As the industry perseveres, its central purpose remains the same — entertaining guests.

Many of AT's distinctive attributes — 2-Minute Drill, Women of Influence, cartoons, coverage of the Roller Coaster Museum and Archives and the safety seminars — has helped widen its offerings. Over the years, expansion to cover the carnival circuit, FECs and more has broadened the publication's coverage. Slade takes particular pride with the Safety section added in recent years.

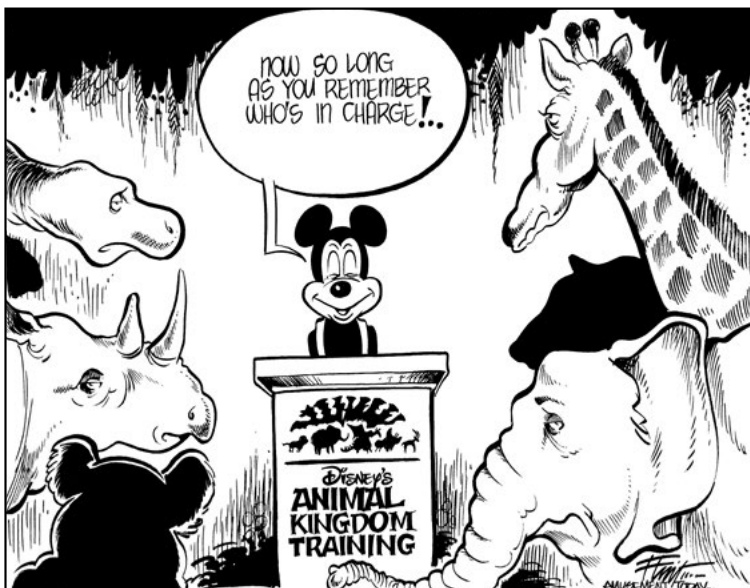
"Certainly, as a ride operator at Six Flags Over Texas, I got introduced to safety [when I was young]," he said. "It's instilled in everybody who has worked in an amusement park. I got to see the behind-

the-scenes look at safety. Fast forward [a few decades] to conversations with **Harold Hudson** and **John Hinde** — they were very instrumental in getting me on the AIMS board of directors. I served on the board for nine years and gained so much insight into work our industry continues to do. Along the way, we started an AIMS column. **Jim Seay** encouraged me to get more stories in the paper from maintenance and operational standpoints. So, I started looking at it and asking questions in that regard. That's how it grew. We reached a point that we were running as many safety pages as we were business pages, so we separated it out into its own section."

Slade feels the focus on safety was a greater move than even that of the Golden Ticket Awards, as it opens key information to fellow parks and partners globally in the industry.

"We have those bad days in the industry we have to talk about, but more importantly, the Safety section is about the good days," he noted. "We try to help keep more good days out there than bad days."

As it has continued to evolve, *Amusement Today* continues to adhere to its roots as an industry news source. Featuring unique and informative stories in its pages, offering industry headlines via its daily email newsletter and constant breaking news through its social media channels and website, AT has made itself into a newspaper for the modern era. "I would love to go back to print," Slade commented. "We will print in some format for the trade shows."



Above is Publisher Gary Slade's favorite editorial cartoon ever by *Amusement Today's* cartoonist, Bubba Flint. The artwork coincided with the opening of Disney's Animal Kingdom. Flint's first toon with AT was in the November 1997 issue. AT/FILE

FAST FACTS

Amusement Today

Incorporated:
January 1997

Published:
First issue April 1997

Founded by 3 West Texas newspaper veterans:
Gary Slade, Rick Tidrow, Virgil Moore III

January 2001:
Gary Slade becomes sole owner of *Amusement Today*

January 2009:
Amusement Today launches its daily email newsblast of industry headlines
EXTRA! EXTRA!
Your Desktop Edition!

BY THE NUMBERS

April 1997 - March 2021

4: web offset printing plants contracted during the first 24 years of issue printing

24: page count of first issue April 1997

104: page count of largest issue, November 2008 and November 2018

200: average number of headlines each week emailed via **Desktop Edition!**

323: total issues distributed

864: largest page count in one year

1998: year AT launched the Golden Ticket Awards industry survey/ranking

2000: year AT launched Pre-IAAPA coverage issue at 36 pages

2007: year the Golden Ticket Award winners, editorial coverage becomes its own issue

14,592: total number of pages AT has published April 1997 to March 2021

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APRIL 2001

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Six Flags Georgia pager system makes virtual queues a reality

Eric Minton
Amusement Today

Leonard Sim recalls visiting Universal Studios in Orlando, Fla., in 1995 and waiting in a long line for one attraction. Ride staff announced a technical delay, and a third of the queuing people left. Sim and his wife moved up, but a half-hour later came, only to end with another "20-minute delay" announcement. More people left, and now the Sims were near the front.

They waited another 30 minutes only to be told of yet another delay, and this time they joined the exodus.

Walking away after two hours of futile queuing, Sim's wife made a fateful admonishment to her husband: "You're an inven-



Photos courtesy Lo-Q

Leonard Sim, founder of the Lo-Q Virtual Queuing System, now in place at Six Flags Over Georgia in Atlanta.

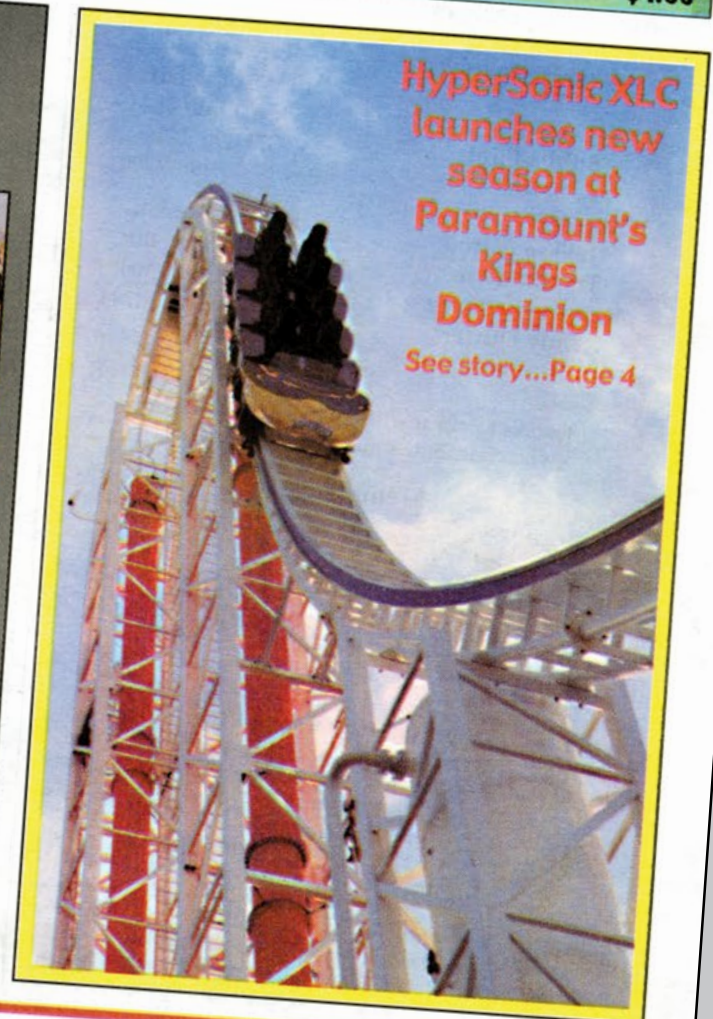
tor. Fix this."

The software engineer developed the Lo-Q Virtual Queuing System installed at Six Flags Over Georgia in Atlanta this year, the most advanced example of a trend in reducing line lengths emerging at parks across the

country, including Universal Orlando.

"It's necessary to get rid of drudgery in an entertainment environment," Sim said. "You don't have to get rid of all the lines; a line can be a social and themed experi-

See Q-bot, page 3



Parks, haunters descend on annual Halloween trade show

Eric Minton
Amusement Today

Goulish props, costumed characters, lessons in make-up, and seminars on running haunted houses attracted amusement operators from around the world to the 17th TransWorld Halloween, Costume and Party Show at Rosemont's Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in March.

The International Association of Haunted Attractions (IAHA), conducting its annual business meeting in conjunction with the trade show, elected new board members and officers for the

year.

Drawing 1,200 vendors exhibiting 700,000 square feet of party favors, costumes, and Halloween decorations, the Chicago gathering has become the year's most important trade show for haunted attractions thanks to the recent proliferation of companies exhibiting props and monster make-up. Amusement parks sending creative teams to the show included Universal, Paramount, Six Flags, Cedar Point, Busch Gardens, SeaWorld and Hong Kong's Ocean Park.

"Everything we've done improved from our being here," said Dave Zimmerman, executive vice president and COO of Lowry Park Zoological

Gardens in Tampa, Fla. The zoo debuted a Halloween festival in 1999 and attracted 13,000 people, a figure that more than doubled last year to 27,000 after Zimmerman attended his first TransWorld.

Michael Getlan, of Amusement Consultants Ltd., in New Rochelle, N.Y., was making his first foray to the show after running a haunted house in the batting cage of his Smiles Entertainment Center in Millford, Conn., last year. "This is way bigger than I thought it would be," said Getlan, who also attended seminars on producing haunted attractions held the day before the trade show.

See HAUNT, page 5

AT'S ANNUAL PARK & PRICING GUIDE IS HERE! SEE PAGES 16 & 17

2 MINUTE DRILL

A fixture in the pages of *Amusement Today* since 2005, the popular 2-Minute Drill column showcases the more personal — and often lighter — side of attraction industry professionals. Since its inception, the column has been written and compiled by Janice Witherow. Her unique and thought-provoking questions have allowed subjects to share their voice in an honest and humorous manner. Below, AT has showcased all of its 2-Minute Drill guests from over the years, a variety of personalities from across the industry. Nominate a subject for a future 2-Minute Drill by emailing editorial@amusementtoday.com.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| Adam Kingsley Universal Orlando | Jack Mendes Bob's Space Racers | Patty Sullivan Eli Bridge |
| Adam Sandy Ride Entertainment Group | Jane Cooper Herschend Family Entertainment | Paul Couch Dollywood |
| Adrienne W. Rhodes Lake Winnepesaukah | Jason McClure Cedar Point | Paul Noland IAAPA |
| Aleatha Ezra World Waterpark Assoc. | Jeff Bailey Seabreeze | Paul Norton Silverwood Theme Park |
| Alethea Roads Wonderland Park | Jeff Filicko Kennywood | Pete Barto S & S Worldwide |
| Amanda Thompson Blackpool Pleasure Beach | Jeff Novotny Larson Int. | Peter Osbeck Gröna Lund |
| Andreas Anderson Liseberg | Jeff Pike Skyline Attractions | Phil Bender Cedar Fair Entertainment |
| Angela Wright Crealy Adventure Park | Jeffrey Siebert Six Flags Fiesta Texas | Phil Wilson Extreme Engineering |
| Angus Jenkins Chance Rides | Jerry Aldrich Amusement Industry Consulting | Raffi Kaprelyan Canada's Wonderland |
| Anne Irvine Irvine Ondrey Engineering | Jerry Brick Lake Compounce | Ramon Rosario Zamperla |
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| Bill Alter W. A. Alter, Inc. | Jim Seay Premier Rides | Reed Gonzalez Beech Bend Park |
| Bill Spehn Cedar Point | Jody Kneupper Wet 'n' Wild Splashtown | Rich Raman Kaman's Art Shoppes |
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| Bob Dean Leisure Labs, LLC | John Arie, Jr. Fun Spot | Richard Zimmerman Cedar Fair Entertainment |
| Bob Masterson Ripley Entertainment | John Chidester Holiday World & Splashin' Safari | Rick Bastrop R&R Creative |
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| Brett Clark Universal Orlando | John Wood Sally Corporation | Ron Gustafson Quassy |
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| Brian Knoebel Knoebels | Karen Oertley AIMS International | Ronald Rynes Kiddieland |
| Brian Witherow Cedar Fair Entertainment | Kathy Archer S&S Worldwide | Ryan DeMaria Canobie Lake Park |
| Camille Jourdan-Mark Michigan's Adventure | Kelly Bernish Global SHE Solutions | Ryan Stana RWS and Associates |
| Carl Crider, Jr. DelGrosso's Amusement Park | Ken Whiting Whiting's Foods, Inc. | Sam Shurgott Morey's Piers |
| Chip Cleary Palace Entertainment | Kevin Bell J&J Amusements | Sara Paz Embed |
| Chloe Hausfeld Jack Rouse Associates | Kevin Norris Knott's Berry Farm | Sara Seay Premier Rides |
| Chris Baynum Baynum Painting | Kevin Robinson SeaWorld San Diego | Sarah Donhauser ZDT's |
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| Chris Ozimek Schlitterbahn Kansas City | Kimberle Samarelli NJAA | Scott Cooper Wet 'n' Wild Phoenix |
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| Denis Weston MagiQuest | Mark Rosenzweig Ride Entertainment Group | Talley Green Lake Winnepesaukah |
| Dennis Speigel International Theme Parks Services | Marty Keithley Knott's Berry Farm | Ted Molter San Diego Zoo |
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| Emily MacKay Oaks Park | Matt Eckert Holiday World & Splashin' Safari | Tim O'Brien Ripley's Believe It or Not |
| Eric Anderson Quassy | Matt Oimet Cedar Fair | Tim Sorge Swings-N-Things Family Fun Park |
| Eric Dziedzic Story Land | Melissa Bass Coca-Cola | Tim Timco S&S/Sansei |
| Eric Gilbert Six Flags Discovery Kingdom | Melissa Timco Baynum Painting | Timo Klaus KumbaK |
| Erick Elliott Busch Gardens Williamsburg | Michael Browning Urban Air | Todd Nelson Kalahari Resorts |
| Franceen Gonzales Great Wolf Resorts | Michael Fehnel Dorney Park & WW Kingdom | Tom Canfield Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk |
| Gabi Salabi Triotech | Michael Graham The Gravity Group | Tom Major Castaway Cove |
| Gary Slade <i>Amusement Today</i> | Michael Mack Europa-Park | Tom Oilver Six Flags Over Texas |
| George Frantzis Quassy | Michael Schwitek Frontier City | Tony Fiori Ray Cammack Shows |
| Gerardo Arteaga Fantasilandia, Chile | Michael Turner Gateway Ticketing | Tracy Sarris IALEI |
| Gina Guglielmi Intermark Ride Group | Mike Apple Six Flags Over Texas | Tracy Velasquez Cliff's Amusement Park |
| Grace Peacock Canada's Wonderland | Mike Price Hawaiian Falls | Walt Bowser Millennium Elastomers |
| Greg Hale Walt Disney World Resorts | Monty Jasper Cedar Point | Wendy Crain San Diego Coaster Company |
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| Hal McEvoy CEO of IAAPA | Pamela Landwirth Give Kids the World | Will Morey Morey's Piers |
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Vol. 10, Issue 1

APRIL 2006

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Six Flags Great Escape Lodge opens to record crowds
Aquatic Development Group
creates unique indoor waterpark

Scott Rutherford
Amusement Today

Even though a frigid Canadian wind may be whistling down the snow-covered slopes of the Adirondack Mountains, it's a balmy 80 degrees at White Water Bay, the indoor waterpark at the new Six Flags Great Escape Lodge in Lake George, N.Y.

Located adjacent to The Great Escape theme park, the recently opened White Water Bay and The Great Escape Lodge have been playing to record crowds. The Lodge, with 200 guest rooms, hosted 1,150 people for its opening weekend in February.

Admission to White Water Bay is included in the guest room rate up to four people per room, then its \$25 for each additional person. Six Flags Great Escape season pass holders receive a 10 percent discount on the room rate. The indoor waterpark is not open to the general public. Operating hours vary.

A major component of the Lodge is the White Water Bay indoor waterpark, which is the result of a collaboration

between Aquatic Development Group, Inc. of Cohoes, N.Y. and Six Flags, Inc.

Shortly after the park's debut, *Amusement Today* spoke with Ken Ellis, president of ADG, about his company's new endeavor.



"We have had a long working relationship with Six Flags and have completed 17 projects for them over the last eight years or so," said Ellis. "Our role in this project started very early on in working on the overall site plan for the hotel and waterpark. As the project became more focused, we concentrated our efforts on the design of the waterpark building and waterpark features.

"The waterpark is housed within a 34,000-square-foot building but we increased the area by incorporating a 5,000-square-foot mezzanine where we placed an interactive water-play structure. So, in essence,

▶ See LODGE, page 4



PHOTOS COURTESY AQUATIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP
White Water Bay, the indoor waterpark at the new Six Flags Great Escape Lodge in Lake George, N.Y., hosted 1,150 people during its opening weekend.

INTERNATIONAL
SEE PAGES 7-9

AMUSEMENT PARKS
SEE PAGES 10-17

WATERPARKS
SEE PAGES 18-21

BUSINESS
SEE PAGES 22-25

MIDWAY
SEE PAGES 26-30

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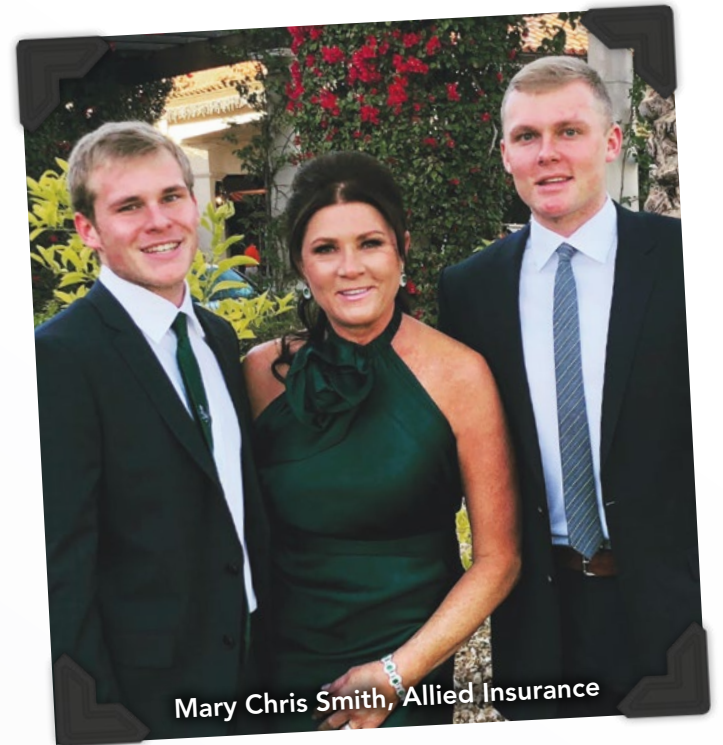
Women INFLUENCE

Beginning in 2018, *Amusement Today* raised the bar in recognizing the women of the attractions industry. Written by AT's Pamela Sherborne, the Women Of Influence monthly column has continuously spotlighted female leaders from amusement parks, theme parks, water parks, family entertainment centers, traveling shows as well as the support industry of suppliers and educators.

With nearly 40 women already profiled (listed below, in order of their profile) and several more to come in the issues ahead, the Women of Influence who have propeled this industry forward in the past — and who continue to pilot it into the future — show no signs of stopping.

Readers can nominate a subject for a future Women Of Influence column by emailing editorial@amusementtoday.com.

- Mary Chris Smith Allied Insurance
- Anya Tyler Skyline Attractions
- Patty Sullivan Eli Bridge Company
- Adrienne White Rhodes Lake Winnie Amusement Park
- Patty Beazley When Pigs Fly Ride Training
- Franceen Gonzalez White Water West Industries
- Jane Cooper Herschend Family Entertainment
- Amanda Thompson Blackpool Pleasure Beach
- Linda Hays Cliff's Amusement Park
- Linda Freeman Rockwell Automation
- Leanna Knoebel Muscato Knoebels Amusement Resort
- Beverly Burback Funtastic Traveling Shows
- Karen Oertley AIMS International
- Violet Cormier Funtown Splashtown U.S.A.
- Charlene Cammack Leavitt Ray Cammack Shows
- Maegan Wallace Maclan Corporation
- Katie Dean Joyland Amusement Park
- Jessy Coffeen Uremet Corporation
- Joann Cortez Hyland Hills Park and Recreation District
- Roxanne Pope IAAPA
- Charlotte Van Etten Vekoma Rides Manufacturing BV
- Marla Calico International Assoc. of Fairs and Expositions
- Gina Claassen Herschend Family Entertainment
- Glenda Cassata Cook Bob's Space Racers
- Christine Buhr Shakers Fun Centre
- Kim Samarelli New Jersey Attractions Association
- Gina Guglielmi Intermark Ride Group
- Debbie Powers Powers Great America Midways
- Nancy Nelson Gorman Waldameer Park & Water World
- Melissa Plante CLM Entertainment Group
- Paula Roads Borchardt Wonderland Amusement Park
- Cathy Lawson Wings & Waves Waterpark
- Ann-Kathrin Mack Europa-Park
- Renee Welsh Solutions Group, Embed
- Sue Nichols *Amusement Today*, 5centride
- Laura Woodburn Krolczyk Hersheypark
- Sara Seay Premier Rides
- Rebecca Wood The Great Escape
- Suzanne Pfordresher Palace Entertainment



Mary Chris Smith, Allied Insurance



Roxanne Pope, IAAPA



Renee Welsh, Embed

AMUSEMENT TODAY™

Celebrating Our 15th Year

Vol. 15 • Issue 1 APRIL 2011

S&S Screamin' Swing takes flight at Dollywood



STORY: Scott Rutherford
srutherford@amusementtoday.com

Adventurous guests visiting Dollywood this season will find an exciting way to see the Great Smoky Mountains thanks to the park's newest thriller – Barnstormer. Located in the Tennessee themer's Owens Farm section, adjacent to the Mountain Slidewinder flume ride, Barnstormer is a \$5.5 million dual Screamin' Swing supplied by S&S Worldwide.

Inspired by the jovial antics of 1920s stunt pilots as they flew their fixed-wing airplanes, Barnstormer features two pendulum arms with seating for 32 riders. Seated back to back, riders travel progressively higher on each swing of the Barnstormer's arms, reaching a maximum speed of 45 mph and 230 degrees of rotation. At its peak, the Barnstormer crests 81 feet above the barn's rooftop.

Dolly Parton recalls with fondness her memories that inspired the production and theming for her park's new-

est attraction. "When we were kids, we were absolutely amazed when we saw an airplane do stunts in the sky," said Parton. "Their tricks would entertain us for hours on end, and I just know that my new Barnstormer ride is going to be every bit as exciting to folks today. I can't wait to see the looks on folks' faces as they dip and soar!"

While thrillseekers enjoy spins aboard Barnstormer, Dollywood's younger guests will find plenty to keep them occupied at a new children's section created around the new barn. The activity-filled play area includes Lil' Pilots Playground, which is home to a wooden bi-plane replica. Additionally, Granny's Garden & Pig Pen offers play

► See **DOLLYWOOD**, page 4

Dollywood's new Barnstormer seats 32 riders and achieves a maximum speed of 45 mph and 230 degrees of rotation. At its peak, the Barnstormer soars 81 feet above the barn's rooftop.
COURTESY DOLLYWOOD



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FASTFACTS



This month's issue of Amusement Today marks the beginning of 15 years as we begin our 15th Volume. Below are three interesting facts on AT's 15 years:

- 7,072 pages published.
- 93 tons of newsprints used.
- 283 Golden Tickets awarded.

We will never forget ...

Through nearly 25 years and more than 300 issues, *Amusement Today* has helped the industry say goodbye to many friends, leaders and family. Below, *AT* takes a moment to remember those whose legacy was transcribed within its pages.

Anderson, Mike Interlink Team
 Alberts, John "Nick" Life Time Employee Reithoffer Shows
 Atencio, Francis Xavier Former Imagineer, Animator of Walt Disney
 Bacon, Karl Created Arrow Development
 Barbera, Joe Hanna-Barbera, Creator
 Barth, Rudolph German Fairground Showman
 Batt, Harry J. Jr. Former President of Pontchartain Beach
 Baynum, Lloyd Thomas Father of Founder Baynum Painting
 Bennet, "Bob" Robert Retired Six Flags President
 Bennett, Patricia Rolle Amusement Operator
 Berni, Anthony A. Helped Run Canobie Lake
 Berni, Howard Amusement Industry Luminary
 Bigler, Fred Former Engineer For Von Roll and Six Flags
 Blackburn, David Thomas Six Flags Vice President
 Boykin, Robert Voice of State Fair "Big Tex"
 Boylin, John P. Jr. Principal Owner of Camden Park
 Brady, Eleanor Co Owner/Operator, Six Gun City (N.H.)
 Brady, James Paul Founder of Six Gun City
 Brady, Jon Game Distributor
 Brammall, Sherie Former PR and Marketing, Schlitterbahn
 Breitenstein Larry Sales, Chance Rides, Inc
 Brooks, Herb Jr. Hershey Entertainment And Resort Company
 Bruggencate, Herman Johan En Efteling
 Bryan, George Drayton Manor Theme Park Founder
 Bryan, Vera Drayton Manor Theme Park Founder
 Bujalka, Laurie Owner Glory Amusements
 Bullard, Horace Coney Island
 Burris, Walt VP/GM of Carowinds
 Butler, Butch Owner of Butler Amusement
 Butterfield, Lloyd VP of Operations, Trancas Capital/Zuma Holdings
 Calabrese, Dena Founder of Themendous
 Calloway, Steve VP of International Projects For Six Flags
 Campbell, Collin Disney Imagineer
 Capell, Bill Park Owner And Showman
 Cartmell, Robert Historian, Artist and Founding Member of ACE
 Cassidy, William "Bill" Former Pretzel Dark Ride Manufacturer
 Cesari, Carmen Park Eatery Manager
 Chance, Michael Dean President, Chance Rides
 Chance, Richard "Harold" Co Founder of Chance Manufacturing
 Choate, Lloyd "Mokey" Owner, Star Amusement
 Clark, Luther Builder, Six Flags Over Texas
 Coburn, Ronald Braxton Founder of North Carolina Ghost Town Park
 Cohen, Alvin Founder/Owner, Adventureland
 Coleman, Robert Edward Coleman Bros. Shows
 Coli, Bob Previous Owner of Darton Industries
 Collins, Mary Past President, NEAAPA
 Comstock, Wayne Hight Light Corporation
 Conner, John William Conner Family Amusements
 Connors, Kathleen "Kathy" Bob's Space Racers
 Coppola, Ralph Founder, Innovative Concepts In Entertainment, Inc
 Cormier, Ken Founder of Funtown Splash U.S.A.
 Coulter, Richard J. Richard J Coulter & Associates
 Crandall, Bill Six Flags, New Wave Rides
 Crandall, Kurt Ray Intermountain Lifts Inc
 Croul, Richard Creator of The Modern Recreational Waterslide
 Curry, Frank Circus Producers And Rodeo Clown
 Davis, Joann Co-Owner of Carnival Time Show
 Davis, Marc Disney Artist
 Dawson, Bill Longtime Industry Veteran
 Deagen, Jerry Six Flags Over Georgia Artist
 Dean, Katherine Co-founder, Joyland
 Delgrosso, Fred Amusement Park Cofounder
 Delgrosso, Mafalda "Murf" Founder, Delgrosso's
 Dills, Carl Amusement Ride Safety Expert
 Dourin, Guy Founder, Calypso Waterpark
 Driskill, Robert Owner, Carnival Amusement
 Esposito, Harold Sally Corporation
 Evans, John C. Gold Medal Products
 Evans, William Owner, West Point Park
 Fanelli, Mark Owner of Mark Fanelli's Travel Amusements
 Field, Jules Former Aquatics International Publisher
 Fiori, Tony Director of Marketing Ray Cammack Shows
 Florimont, Edmund J. Fantasy Island Owner
 Foertsch, Frieda Holiday World First Lady of Flowers
 Frantz, Fred Water Play Co
 Freed, Peter Lagoon Amusement Park Pioneer
 Freeman, Bob Formely with Six Flags Great Adventure, Riverside
 Fussner, Richard King's Island And Lagoon Park
 Gallagher, Wayne Maintained Fairs Around The Country
 Gardella, Cynthia L. Daughter of Founder of DelGrosso's Amusement Park
 Germain, Jewell Sherman "Jerry" Jerry Germain Rides
 Gillian, James (Jimmy) former Owner, Gillian's Water Park and Golf
 Gisiger, Bruce Director of Food Service At Lake Compounce
 Goldsack, Robert "Bob" Industry Historian
 Golzbein, Nat Owner of York's Wild Kingdom
 Good, Irvin "Irv" Goodtimes Amusement
 Gorder, Terry Van former Pres. of Magic Mountain, Knotts Berry Farm
 Gosdinski, Julio Griffith Park's Carousel Man
 Green, Judson Former Disney Parks President
 Grund, John W. Industry Attorney
 Guthrie, "Pat" Francis Veteran Showman
 Hagen, Mark "Rick" Longtime Employee At Waterloo Tent
 Hall, Ward Former Director Oaba
 Hamid, George Former Owner of Steel Pier
 Hammond, Cliff Founder of Cliff's Amusement Park
 Hanson, Richard Gold Star Amusement
 Hardin, June Founder Wapello Fabrications

Hardman, John A. Six Flags Texas Puppeteer
 Harris, Don Former Executive Director of BPAA
 Hayden, Connie Owner, Rock River Rides
 Heald, Syd Temple Amusement Leisure Worldwide
 Henning, Doug Magician Veda Land
 High, Sam Former PTC President
 Hildonen, Mark WaterSnoGo
 Hinde, John Industry Safety Expert
 Hix, Steve Wayne Int'l Recreational Go-Kart/Miniature Golf
 Hoban, Robert J. Six Flags Maintenance VP
 Hoffman, Raymond The Great Allentown Fair
 Holer, John Founder of Marineland In Niagara Falls
 Horn, Roy Famous Magician, Philanthropist
 Hoss, Howard Concessionaire
 Hughes, Carl Former Kennywood Park President
 Hughes, Morgan "Mickey" First European ride importer
 Hunt, Lamar Creator of Kansas City's Worlds of Fun
 Hutcherson, Michael VP of Herschend Family Entertainment
 Inners, Wayne E. "Jake" CEO, Majestic Midways
 Jensen, Boyd Former IAAPA Chairman
 Johnson, Jack Playland Park And Bell's Park
 Jones, Chuck Famed Bugs Bunny Animator
 Jones, Clay Owner of Beech Bend Park, Raceway
 Kaliff, Mendel S. "Mickey" Kaliff Insurance
 Kau'i' Anake Walt Disney Entertainer
 Kell, Raymond Water Wizz of Cape Cod, NEAAPA Member
 Kerzner Sol Developer, Atlantis, The Bahamas
 King, Barbara Co Founded/President of Landscape Structures Inc
 Kissel, Robert "Bob" Kissel Amusement Co
 Knight, George W. Knights Action Park & Caribbean Waterpark
 Knoebel, Barbara Wife of Owner of Knoebels Amusement Resort
 Knott, Marion Knotts Berry Farm
 Knudsen, Jens Nygaard Lego Figure Designer
 Koch, Philip Owner of Lake Rudolph Campground
 Krantz, Jack Founder of Iowa's Adventureland
 Laaker, Jeff Architect of Seaworld Marine Park
 Laguardia, Joe Served New York State Fair
 Lamb, Michael Severn Chief Executive of Severn-Lamb
 Landwirth, Henri Founder of Give The Kids The World Village
 Lanfredi, Gianna Pinfari
 Larson, Roland Former OABA Director
 Larson, Walter Founder of Larson International
 Laskaris, Jim Big Chief Karts & Coasters
 Laward, Richard Caravan Concession
 Lepre' Robbi' Helen Busch Gardens Creative
 Lindquist, Jack Former President, Disneyland
 Loose, Steve Longtime GM of Water World In Hyland Hills
 Love, Jerry Worldwide Ticketcraft
 Luehrs, Bill Co-Owner/Operator of Luehrs' Ideal Rides
 Mack, Franz Founder of Europa-Park
 Mangels, Albert G. Final Owner of Mangels Amusements
 Mandarino, Gary A. Kiddie Rides U.S.A., Owner
 Mann, John CEO of JMA Inc.
 Marchino, Joe Curly Fries, Founder
 Mathis, Dewey Chance Employee
 Matur, Lawrence Great America Circus Owner
 Maurer, John NJAA
 McCarthy, Robert J. Carny Priest
 Mcconnell, Everett Former Lincoln Park Manager
 McCullough, Jimmy Original B&B Carousel Owner
 Mcdaniel, Barbie Wife of Member of Vandervorste Family
 Meachem, Wendell Longtime Waterloo Tent Employee
 Merrick, Lee W. Founder of Wisconsin's Little A-Merrick-A
 Millay, Anne Wife of Founder of SeaWorld and Wet 'N' Wild
 Miller, Diane Disney Daughter of Walt Disney
 Miller, Jeff Wisdom Rides
 Miller, Ron W. Walt Disney Co. CEO
 Minick, J.R. "Bob" Industry Designer
 Minker, Steve Carnival Concessions Manager
 Monday, Jerry Century Vending Owner
 Moore, Mark Fouder, Uremet
 Morey, William H. Morey's Surfside Pier
 Morrell, Robert Co Founder Story Land
 Morrow, Tom Operations of Canobie Lake
 Moser, Alfeo Inventor/Founder Moser's Rides
 Moss, Hale President, Wilson County Fair
 Munari, Corrado Founder, Italy's Le Park and Soli Bumper Car
 Nash, Darrell Silver Dollar City
 Nash, Gerald World's Fair Pavilion Designer
 Naughton, John Former NEAAPA President
 Neal, Bruce Six Flags official
 Nelson, Steve Owner/Operator of Joyland Amusement Park
 Niedzwiecki, Jack Ran Knoebels Bumper Cars
 Nolan, Kevin Lee Former Owner of Nolan Amusements
 Norini, Thomas Kiddieland GM
 Norton, David Norton Auctioneers
 Norton, J. Harwood "Stretch" Former Owner of Lake Compounce
 Oestreich, Phil Co Owner of North Pole
 Ott, Robert F. Dorney Park Luminaries
 Ott, Sally Plarr Dorney Park Luminaries
 Owens Jr, John W. Marketing Director/GM, Volusia County Fair
 Panacek, Mary John Belle City Amusements
 Patrick, Gene Six Flags Creative Staff Member
 Patrick, Steven Beattie Former Ride Engineer For Disney, Universal
 Paul, Benjamin Combs SkyTrans Manufacturing
 Pendleton, Jerry and Sylvia Founder, SkyTrans Manufacturing
 Pero, Anthony "Tony" Managed Ocean Park

Pilzak, Ray Amusement Business
 Pope, Owen Longtime Disney Employee
 Pope, William T. Owner of Pope's Concession
 Portemont, Marilyn Owner, Johnny's United Shows
 Powell, Tom Industry Veteran
 Prather, James "Jamie" Owner, Premier Vending
 Price, Harrison "Buzz" Disney Legend
 Provencher, Arthur J. Last Owner of Benson's Animal Park
 Pugh, Jeff Outdoor Amusement Business Veteran
 Pugh, Tara Pugh Concessions
 Rabaiotti, Luigi Carpenter, Canobie Lake
 Ramsay, Alan Owner of Clm Entertainment
 Rea, Billy A. Advertising Sales for Amusement Today
 Reithoffer, Elizabeth "Bette" Reithoffer Shows
 Reithoffer, Patrick E. Jr Carnival Industry
 Repine, Mark J. Top Waterslide/Conveyor Installer
 Richardson, Spurgeon Former President, Six Flags Georgia
 Roads, Paul and Aletha Founders, Wonderland Park
 Rolle, Frederick J. "Fritz" Lifelong Jersey Shore Concessionaire
 Russel Smith, C. Jr. Pink Thing Ice Cream Cart at Six Flags
 Saffa, Anne Former Owner of Jenks Amusement Park
 Saffa, Farris P. Former Owner of Jenks Amusement Park
 Safie, Mike Jr. Fajume Rides
 Schilling, Jeff Founder/Owner Creative Works
 Schofield, Angela Haas & Wilkerson Employee Daughter
 Schwarzkopf, Anton Roller Coaster and Ride Designer
 Scurlock, John Tom Space Walk Founder
 Shaw, William C. IMAX Co Founder
 Sherman, Jan Producer For Sally Rides
 Shin Kyuk-Ho Lotte Group
 Showalter, Stuart Customer Service Manager At Chance Rides
 Shuper, Jeffery Veteran of Carnival Industry
 Sieffert, Al Pa. State Showmen's Association
 Silar, Jack Park Manager And Safety official
 Sklar, Martin A. "Marty" Walt Disney Co Imagineer
 Smith, Dave Founder of Disney Archives
 Smith, David H. Chairman of The Board of Allied Insurance
 Smith, Larry Raging Rivers Owner
 Soriani, Sergio Amusement Ride Manufacturer
 Spackman, Thomas Former Indiana Beach Owner
 Spencer, Marian Ohio Civil Rights Crusader
 Spieldiener, Reinholds Founder of Intamin
 Stadnyck, Nancy Chance Chance Rides
 Stapf, Lowell Harvey Instrumental In Texas Fair Carousel Restoration
 Stephan, Edwin Founder, Royal Caribbean Cruise Line
 Story, Gary Former IAAPA Chairman, Six Flags
 Stricker, Ralph Owner of Sticker's Grove Amusement Park
 Sullivan, Lee President, Eli Bridge Company
 Swika Jr, Stephen S&S Amusements, Owner
 Synder, Janie Muller Big Rock Amusement
 Synder, Scott Founder of Zebec, Inc
 Takashi, Masatomo Tokyo Disneyland
 Taylor, Chuck Splash Adventure Waterpark Manager
 Taylor, Russi Voice of Disney Minnie Mouse
 Thompson, Frank Six Flags/Paramount Parks, ITPS
 Thompson, Dorris Matriarch of Blackpool Pleasure Beach
 Thompson, Geoffery Director of Blackpool Pleasure Beach
 Todd, Roy C. Founder of White Swan Park
 Toomer, Ron and Betty Industry Legend, Roller Coaster Designer
 Tosato, Claudio "Magician of Jukeboxes"
 Trimper, Christopher Trimper's Rides
 Trimper, Granville Ocean Park Turner
 Turner, Donald G. Founder, Lasergate Systems Inc
 Turner, John Longtime Ripley's Believe It Or Not Manager
 Ulaky, Rita Owned And Operated Canobie Lake Park
 Vakulskas, Rev John Carnival Priest
 Vandergriff, Tom Arlington Mayor
 Ven, Maarten Van De Co-Founder, Kumbak
 Vivona, Dominic Sr Founder of Amusements of America
 Vivona, Morris Sr. Founder of Amusements of America
 Vondriska, Jeannie Vondriska Leisure Consultants
 Voss, Ruth King's Island Ambassador
 Vourderis, Lula Deno's Wonder Wheel Park
 Wallenda, Carla Circus performer, Flying Wallendas
 Ward, Angelica "Big Ang" Wheelock Rides
 Warren, Jim BRC Imagination Arts Chief officer
 Wasmund, Karen Wasmund, Park Owner And Operator
 Waterman, John Water Park Legend
 Weber Jr, Al CEO, Apex Parks Group
 Weber, Tom Founder/President, The Weber Group
 Weinstein, Harry Former Owner of Dorney Park
 West, Ira Legendary Theme Park Designer
 Whalen, Leo Boardwalk's Lucky's Leo's
 White, Evelyn Dixon Owner of Lake Winnepesaukee
 White, William Hays "Bill" Six Flags/Hurricane Harbor, Silver Dollar City
 Wilhelmsen, Arne Co Founder Royal Caribbean Cruise Line
 Wilkerson, Ralph "Bill" Chairman and CEO, Haas & Wilkerson Insurance
 Wine, Larry Former Six Flags Park Manager
 Wisdom, Jerry Wisdom Industries
 Wolff, Marvin Key Force Behind Queen Mary Attraction
 Wood, Charles R. Founder of Storytown U.S.A.
 Yaffee, Ed First Employee of Firestone Financial
 Young, Ed Former Owner of Lenape Park, NJAA Member
 Zdebiak, Mieczyslaw "Meester Mike" Food Concessionaire
 Zonas, George Quassy Amusement Park
 Zumsteg, Joe Rhode Island Novelty Sales Representative

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www.amusementtoday.com

\$250 million indoor water park resort opens Great Wolf Lodge raises a winning howl in Southern California

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

GARDEN GROVE, Calif. — Combining fanfare and family affair, and mixing in plenty of splash, a wiley-but-welcoming wolf mascot and a whole lot of happy kids, Great Wolf Lodge Southern California opened here March 4.

There was good reason for the excitement. This is the first California location for Madison, Wis.-based Great Wolf Resorts, Inc. (GWR), North America's largest chain of indoor water park resorts. Built at a cost of \$250 million, the project — a partnership between GWR and Colorado-based real estate development company McWhinney — took about a decade to



plan and two years to complete. It is the largest of the brand's 13 resorts.

It also exemplifies the old real estate maxim: "Location, location, location." With a Harbor Boulevard address about a mile south of the Disneyland Resort, Great Wolf Lodge brings a world-class indoor water park

— the region's first — and 603 spacious suites to Orange County's themed entertainment hub. It will generate an estimated \$8 million in annual tax revenue for the City of Garden Grove.

"Southern California is one of the top destinations for family fun in the country — and we are thrilled to bring our unique experience to the area," said company CEO Rubén A. Rodríguez in remarks to the gathered media and guests.

Added Chad McWhinney, CEO and co-founder of McWhinney: "We are proud to partner with the respected team at Great Wolf Resorts to expand upon McWhinney's



Great Wolf Resorts CEO Rubén A. Rodríguez, flanked by Southern California project partner Chad McWhinney and company mascot Wiley the Wolf, welcomes media and guests to the new Great Wolf Lodge in Garden Grove. on March 4. COURTESY GREAT WOLF RESORTS

► See GREAT WOLF, page 4

Six Flags, Samsung roll out coaster-enhancing VR system High-tech thrills to be applied to nine rides



A virtual reality system developed by Six Flags and Samsung will be bringing new excitement to nine of the theme park chain's U.S. roller coasters this season. The optional game-play gear offers two different action-adventure experiences synched to each ride's course elements. COURTESY SIX FLAGS ENTERTAINMENT CORP.

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — Six Flags Entertainment Corp. is raising the thrill factor on several of its U.S. roller coasters this season with a special effects-filled, on-ride video system upgrade.

The theme park company, in partnership with Ridgefield Park, N.J.-based consumer electronics maker Samsung Electronics America, Inc., is augmenting the attractions with fully immersive virtual reality (VR) experiences using Samsung Gear VR, powered by Oculus. With the aid of gyros, accelerometers and proximity sensors, the optional-use headset system synchronizes the realistic, 360-degree action of a virtual reality world with each ride's drops, twists and loops — creating a new kind of adrenaline rush

from the basic coaster experience. "This remarkable technology is a definite game-changer for theme park rides," said John Duffey, president and CEO of Six Flags. "It represents everything our brand stands for — delivering the most thrilling and innovative rides and attractions in the world."

Marc Mathieu, chief marketing officer for Samsung, agreed.

"What makes this partnership so compelling for consumers and the broader tech industry alike is that both companies are committed to pushing the boundaries of what's possible — and bringing a VR coaster to life is certainly a new and thrilling proposition," Mathieu said. "This transforms the modern roller coaster into a totally new, one-of-a-kind sensorial experience."

► See SIX FLAGS, page 4

NEWSPAPER

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Amusement TODAY Invites You to a World-Record Breaking Event HOSTED BY CEDAR POINT. September 9-11, 2016 • Sandusky, OH

Golden Ticket Awards make their mark on the amusement industry

"For annual awards there are none bigger than the Golden Tickets," said **Pete Owens**, vice president of marketing, **Dollywood**. "Our best is voted on by the people who use them and the manufacturers who create them. We cherish all of the awards we have won and look forward to getting better year after year to compete against our peers."

The Golden Ticket Awards began in 1998.

"The Golden Tickets were a holdover from the old *Inside Track*, [an enthusiast publication] which I was a part of," said **AT Publisher Gary Slade**. "I knew in the background the opportunity was there; the industry had embraced it."

From the beginning, Slade and *Amusement Today* strived to strike a balance in representation. Knowing population density varies across the country, a concentrated focus has been to have the same number of voters from each quarter of the United States, so parks in more highly populated areas don't necessarily have an unfair advantage. That has continued to this day. As the awards grew, more international representation came on board.

"[AT staff member] **Sammy Piccola** came up with the name. **Bruce Neal of Six Flags Over Texas** gave me the advice to do something unique, something different. He pointed out that plaques were too commonplace. He showed me a baseball encased in acrylic, and once we had the Golden Ticket designed (by **Ted Davidson**), Bruce said,



Winners assemble for a group shot following the close of the 2019 ceremony hosted at Silverwood Theme Park. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



'Put this in an acrylic brick and it will dominate anything else on the shelf.' It was a collaboration," recalled Slade.

In those first years, following the results being published, the awards were shipped to each recipient. Occasionally an *AT* staff member could deliver an award in person, which made for a good photo op for the paper.

"**Will Koch of Holiday World** saw the marketing power of the Golden Tickets,"



Seen in 2006, **Will Koch** and **Holiday World** were great supporters of the Golden Ticket Awards since the beginning (above left). The Golden Ticket Awards event has been a chance for the industry to celebrate and let its hair down, as **Dick Knoebel** demonstrated by receiving **Knoebels 2017 "Best Carousel"** Golden Ticket while riding an inflatable carousel horse (above right).

COURTESY S. MADONNA HORCHER; AT/DAN FECHT



said Slade. "He was the one that was very instrumental in when the tickets should be announced. He knew when parks were scheduling slots for brochure printing for the next year. It was **Koch's** idea to have the awards announced live at **Holiday World**. It was simple. We had about 12 people show up at the first event."

But that changed. Taking baby steps in the years following, more people attended, and the ceremony grew. Within a few years, it became a weekend event. It took no time for parks wanting to step in and welcome the industry to their parks. **Kings Island**, **Schlotterbahn**, **Cedar Point** and **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** were among the first.

"The **Knoebel** family has always believed the Golden Ticket Awards to be the Oscars of the amusement industry. We are so very, very humbled every time our park is mentioned amongst some of the greatest amusement destinations around the globe," said **Brian Knoebel**, co-owner, **Knoebels Amusement Resort**. "Winning a Golden Ticket is a true testament to everything our family believes in, but we recognize the prestigious award is not possible without an amazing team who makes our dream a reality."

In time, the awards evolved. Some categories rotated while some were considered annual core awards. After many years, some were retired into Legends. One significant addition was

that of **Publisher's Picks**. It was a way for Slade to select individuals or companies in the business to be acknowledged for their contributions, talents and dedication. This was particularly notable in a year like 2020 when the awards had to take a step back during a global health crisis and think outside the box.

One constant through the voting process was the passion of the voters. "They are dedicated! The awards mean something to them," said **Tim Baldwin**, Golden Ticket Awards Communications Coordinator. "Back in the days of paper ballots, some people would overnight their ballot to get it in. The results stood testament of their expertise. They know they are among the most well-travelled experts the industry has seen. It's important to them."

Not only did the awards evolve, so did the event.

"We had another opportunity fall into place," said Slade. "At the time we were trying to do our end-of-summer event, it was about the time that **IAAPA** decided to stop hosting their end-of-summer social gala. The industry picked up our event and embraced it as that summer meeting. It was giving them the opportunity to go travel. It's about the friendships."

"Whoever would have thought what the Golden Ticket Awards would eventually become and mean to the industry?" noted **Janice Witherow**,

Golden Ticket Awards Event Coordinator, *Amusement Today*. "I'm so proud of the *AT* team for developing such a premier awards show and networking event for our business — something we all look forward to each year."

"I think the Golden Tickets carried on that goodwill from the **IAAPA Summer Meeting**. **IAAPA** built one hell of a good networking event. And we have continued to keep that going, not only catching up on each other's personal lives, but also their business. What they did right, what they did wrong. They learn from it. The awards are a reason to get together, but that's two hours out of a two-day event. The rest is about friendships and relationships," said Slade.

FAST FACTS

Presented:
1998 - Present

Total Number Golden Tickets Awarded:
545

Top 5 Golden Ticket Award Winning Parks:

Holiday World & Splashin' Safari, 57

•
Schlotterbahn, 43

•
Cedar Point, 41

•
Dollywood, 40

•
Islands of Adventure, 37

Amusement TODAY

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Your Amusement Industry NEWS Leader



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Refreshed categories reinvigorate 22nd annual Golden Ticket Awards

www.amusementtoday.com

Silverwood and Rocky Mountain Construction host amusement industry

ATHOL and COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho — When pondering places that exhibit some of the nation's finest amusement parks, Idaho is not a location that might quickly come to mind. That would be a misstep.

Silverwood Theme Park may not have the advantage of being surrounded by plentiful populated cities, but that hasn't stopped the park leaders from creating a worthwhile destination in the countryside of Athol, Idaho. Opened in 1988, the park had a simple beginning.

"We are extremely excited to welcome everyone to Silverwood. My father created this family-owned park 31 years ago, and it has been a lifelong dream to showcase what he created to the industry," said **Paul Norton**, general manager, leading up to the event. "I hope they will be amazed. As soon as they come up the steps and see the carousel and Victorian architecture, I think they'll be blown away. I think they'll say, 'We're in North Idaho and THIS is here?' I see that reaction every day.

"The history of the park started with the Victorian town and the early 1900s steam train my father purchased. It was like any kid playing with a train. My father just built this town around it. The park has an old feel to it. You feel immersed back in time," said Norton.

Silverwood sits on more than 400 acres. As the small park grew by adding rides, eventually the property became a regional destination. In 2003,



Silverwood Theme Park played host to industry professionals from around the globe at the 22nd annual Golden Ticket Awards. COURTESY LISA ZIGWEID

Boulder Beach Water Park was added and was included with park admission. An annual Halloween event, Scarywood, began in 2009.

Coaster fans flock to "Roller Coaster Alley." Large roller coasters beckon motorists as they pass the park on the roadway. The park's first installation was the historic **Knott's Berry Farm Corkscrew**, which was the first modern-day roller coaster to turn riders upside down. In a move applauded by preservationists, the ride was relocated to Silverwood in 1990. It has been declared an ACE Roller

Coaster Landmark by **American Coaster Enthusiasts**. Large wooden coasters from **Custom Coasters, Inc.**, followed with **Timber Terror** and **Tremors** later in the 1990s. A large **Vekoma** steel coaster, **Aftershock**, was erected at the park in 2008.

Among all the rides, the 30-minute train ride remains the heart of Silverwood. In recent years, the park has reimagined the journey with new sets, stories and theming along the way, increasing the ride's popularity like never before. Golden Ticket attendees enjoyed special reserved cars during the event.

"The train is the key element to the park, but so is the landscaping. We're surrounded by beautiful mountains, and we spend extra time and care on the landscaping," said Norton.

The Golden Ticket Awards weekend is often referred to as "The Networking Event of the Year." Friday evening, Sept. 6, attendees were treated to an evening at nearby **Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC)**. Dinner, drinks and live music took place at the birthplace of many Golden Ticket Awards winners.

"We are absolutely excited

to welcome the amusement industry to Idaho," said **Fred Grubb**, president of RMC. "I think people will be surprised at the beauty of the area, the friendliness of the people and how big our facilities are. We are proud of what we do here, so hosting the opening reception has been something we were looking forward to for a very long time."

Networking continued on Saturday, Sept. 7, with a welcome reception and tour of **Boulder Beach** sponsored by **WhiteWater West**.

Tours of **Scarywood**, the park's culinary department and an overview of the park's integration software provided additional networking opportunities and operational takeaways for attendees.

Following a dinner hosted by Silverwood, the main event took place. The 22nd annual Golden Ticket Awards saw a complete refresh in 2019 (see page 2) and the event was alive with delighted new winners and returning recipients.

The **Coeur d'Alene Resort** served as the accommodations facility for the Golden Ticket Awards. Industry professionals were able to enjoy a final night of networking following the ceremony, among the other noteworthy amenities of the resort.

Complete coverage of the Golden Ticket Awards will be featured in *Amusement Today's* November 1/Pre-IAAPA edition.

All stories this issue by **Tim Baldwin**

NEWSPAPER

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Industry honors for *Amusement Today*

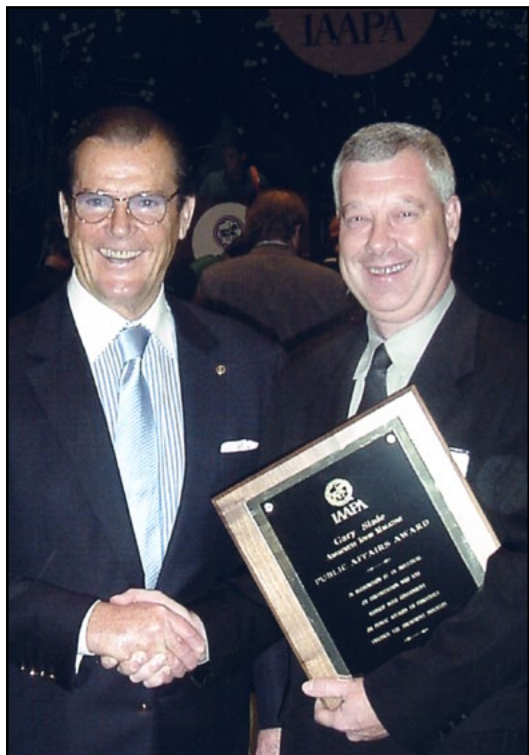
Amusement Today was created to serve the amusement and attractions industry. Through its continued efforts of reporting, sharing and compiling industry news, *AT* has gone above and beyond in its service to the industry. And, the industry has recognized it.

In its first year of publishing, *AT* was recognized by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) with its Impact Award for Best New Product. Since then, *AT* has received multiple awards and recognitions from industry associations for its dedication to safety, public affairs and bringing amusement professionals together.

While *AT*'s annual Golden Ticket Awards celebrate the "Best of the Best" across the amusement industry, that same industry has acknowledged that *Amusement Today* is — in fact — one of the "Best of the Best."



WVA Chairman Steve Miklosi presents *AT* Publisher Gary Slade with the AI Turner Memorial Commitment to Excellence Award in 2017. AT/FILE



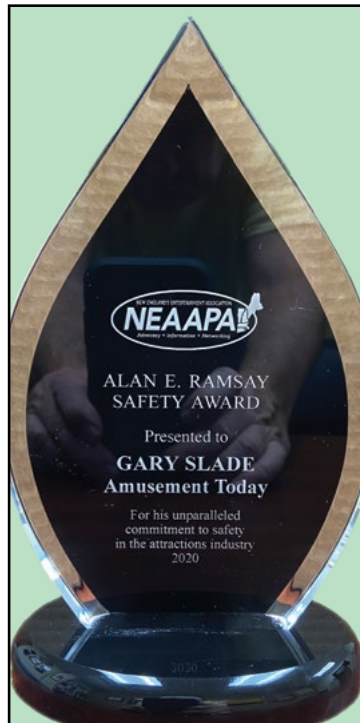
Roger Moore (of James Bond 007 fame) presents Gary Slade with the IAAPA Public Affairs Award in 2002. AT/FILE



Harold Hudson (right) presents *AT* Publisher Gary Slade with the AIMS Lifetime Contribution Award in 2019. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



In 2013, NJAA's John Maurer and Kimberle Rolle Samarelli recognized *AT* Publisher Gary Slade for his dedication and commitment to the New Jersey amusement industry. AT/FILE



In 2020, Gary Slade and *Amusement Today* received NEAAPA's Alan E. Ramsey Safety Award. AT/FILE

AWARDS AND HONORS

1997

- Amusement Today* Publisher Gary Slade is presented with the **Mayors RoundTable Award** (Arlington, Texas) for outstanding achievements in promoting tourism to the city. With this award, Slade was recognized as an **Ambassador of Good Will** for the City of Arlington, Texas.

- IAAPA presents *Amusement Today* with the coveted **Impact Award** in the Services category for Best New Product for the new industry publication. *AT* also earns an Honorable Mention at the show.

1999

- Amusement Today* takes First Place in IAAPA's **Services** Category for its introduction of the Golden Ticket Awards.

2000

- AT* receives Honorable Mention from IAAPA in **Services** category for its Bonus Section coverage on two new park openings: Jazzland in New Orleans, La. and Magic Springs in Hot Springs, Ark.

2002

- Gary Slade joins the **National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives** as a member of the board of directors where he remains today. He served as Chairman of the Board from 2009-2017. During his chairmanship, the NRCMA constructed its first storage and archive facility in Plainview, Texas, and launched an ongoing fundraising effort to build the Mark Moore Memorial museum building on property located next to the current group of buildings.

- Gary Slade is presented with IAAPA's **Public Affairs Award** for his efforts on behalf of the industry in the area of public affairs.

2004

- Gary Slade joins the Board of Directors for **AIMS International**. In November 2004, he launches AIMS News & Notes page in *Amusement Today*, a monthly safety-related page.

- Amusement Today* wins IAAPA's **Brass Ring Award / Class 9** for its Media Kit entry.

2008

- AIMS International proclaims January 14, 2008, as **Gary Slade Day** during the 2008 AIMS Safety Seminar for his ongoing generous support and long-term dedication to promoting AIMS International, the annual safety seminar and industry park safety.

2010

- Six Flags Over Texas presents *AT*'s Tim Baldwin, Jeffrey Seifert and Gary Slade with an **Award of Appreciation** for their dedication and efforts in preserving the photo history of the park leading into its 50th anniversary celebration.

2013

- City of Santa Clara, Calif. presents Gary Slade with a Mayor's Proclamation commencing **Golden Tickets Awards Weekend** in the City of Santa Clara during the annual Golden Ticket Awards event.

- The New Jersey Amusement Association (NJAA) presents Gary Slade with an **Award of Dedication** for the support of NJAA during the destruction of Superstorm Sandy. Beginning with the December 2012 edition, *AT* launched 12 months of dedicated Sandy amusement-related editorial coverage that totaled 34 pages and included the launch of a dedicated NJAA News Page titled "Restore, Rebuild & Reopen." The page was used as a link between the NJAA and its N.J. members as the page was posted on *AT*'s electronic outlets while power and city services were still being restored along the shore.

2017

- The World Waterpark Association presents Gary Slade with the 2017 **AI Turner Commitment to Excellence Award** for his consistent business and professional excellence, providing leadership and fostering a sense of community in the World Waterpark Association membership.

2019

- During the 2019 Golden Ticket Awards event at Silverwood Theme Park, AIMS International presents Gary Slade with the **AIMS Lifetime Contribution Award** to recognize an individual or organization with outstanding dedication and service to AIMS.

2020

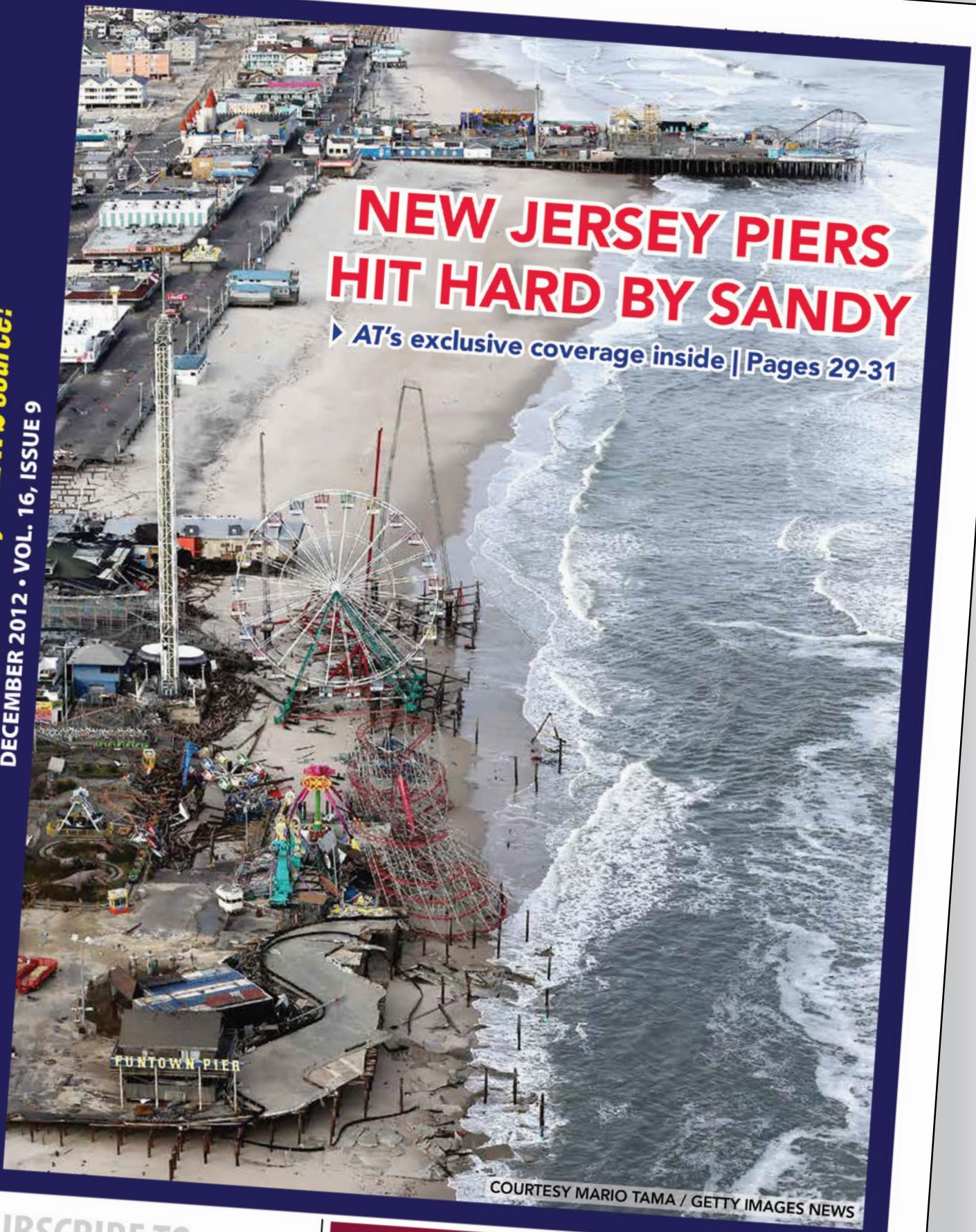
- The New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions named Gary Slade as NEAAPA's 2020 winner of the **Alan E. Ramsay Safety Award** for "unparalleled commitment to safety in the amusement parks and attractions industry."

Editor's note: Numerous Amusement Today employees have been honored by the American Coaster Enthusiasts and other groups for their photography of the amusement industry.

AMUSEMENT TODAY

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NEW JERSEY PIERS HIT HARD BY SANDY

▶ AT's exclusive coverage inside || Pages 29-31

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The December 2012 issue of Amusement Today featured in-depth coverage of the devastation of Hurricane Sandy. It remains the only issue of Amusement Today to sell out completely. AT/FILE

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