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Efteling opens Symbolica dark ride, its largest-ever project

ETF provides vehicles; Garner Holt Productions supplies animatronics

AT: Andrew Mellor
amellor@amusementtoday.com

KAATSHEUVEL, The Netherlands — On July 1 the Dutch theme park, Efteling, opened its latest major attraction to the public in the shape of Symbolica: Palace of Fantasy, a €35 million (\$41.1 million) investment built to mark the park's 65th anniversary year.



Symbolica is an indoor, family attraction designed as an enchanting palace in which nothing is what it seems. It joins other major fantasy-based indoor attractions such as Droomvlucht, Fata Morgana and Carnival Festival.

Located in the center of the park at the end of the Pardoes Promenade, Symbolica is surrounded by a palace garden partly inspired by the gardens of other large palaces. The garden is unique for its themed design and also incorporates a roof garden in which approximately 800 solar panels have been included for the generation of sustainable energy.

Symbolica: Palace of Fantasy was constructed over a period of a year and a half and is the most expensive and larg-

► See EFTELING, page 5



Symbolica features a seven-minute dark ride which utilizes a trackless system from Dutch company ETF Ride Systems. A wide variety of scenes have been created for visitors to enjoy throughout the Symbolica dark ride. The King's Hall (below and right) is one of the rooms Efteling guests can enjoy. COURTESY EFTELING



NEWSPAPER

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NEWSTALK

MAILBAG

Readers reply to August columns

To the editor:

My name is Justin La Fond and I am the general manager of Hawaiian Falls water park in Mansfield, Texas. I recently read your "Barefoot Challenge" editorial in the August issue of *Amusement Today*. I was very intrigued by your research and can say that it is something that we battle day in and out every summer.

We are a city-owned/privately operated water park, so as you can imagine, the city gets to have their say in a lot of our operational decisions. One being that we are not allowed to have soaker hoses or a hose of any type used to cool of the hot concrete. We do provide water shoes in our retail shop, but I agree with you that is not the answer. We would love to provide a solution to this problem, but we as a company have yet to come up with one that works for the guests.

I would love to hear your opinion on this and look forward to hearing back from you. Thanks for taking the time to publish your article, it was a good read.

Justin La Fond

Park Director, Hawaiian Falls, Mansfield
justinl@hfalls.com

To the Editor:

Directed to Tim Baldwin ("Barefoot Challenge," Aug. column): I couldn't agree with you more on the hot paths in water parks. We have spent a lot of time upgrading our water park facilities beyond new thrills — adding shade, more seating, free Wi-Fi and better food with more capacity. In many cases, this has made the hot paths better, but I'm not convinced we couldn't do more. We have a saying "what interests my boss, fascinates me." With this email I think Richard (Zimmerman) and Greg (Scheid) are going to be fascinated.

Directed to Andrew Mellor ("Quality Counts," Aug. column): Your editorial got my attention. My history allows me to separate between the quality that Disney and Universal can deliver and what is financially rational for regional parks. I'd like to believe that at Cedar Fair, our standards are the truly the best in the regional park business. There were times in the past when we got a little behind the curve, but I am extremely proud of the work Richard and his team have done over the past few years. I am hopeful that whatever park you visited was not one of Cedar Fair's, but if it was I hope you provide us your feedback in more detail so that we can be responsive.

Gary [Slade], in case you ever wonder whether some of us pay attention to *Amusement Today*, wonder no more.

P.S.: We are fortunate to work in this industry and holding ourselves — and the industry more broadly — to high standards is a noble pursuit.

Matt Ouimet

CEO, Cedar Fair Entertainment Company
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FLINT'S VIEW: *Bubba Flint*



EDITORIAL: *B. Derek Shaw, bdshaw@amusementtoday.com*

In-park real estate blight

I've been visiting amusement park/theme park midways around the world for more than five decades, and I've come to realize that proper midway traffic flow is paramount to every successful operation. However, I've noticed something that started in the mid 1970s that continues today — abandoned or unused queue houses (a term I've coined, for lack of an existing one).

These overflow ride line pavilion areas are typically built of wood, metal frame or other material and many times are covered in canvas to provide protection from the sun. Sometimes these areas are just a concrete pad with rows of back-and-forth queue chutes with metal railing.

It starts out innocently enough. When a new attraction first opens (usually a roller coaster or other major ride), park owners and management are optimistic about crowd acceptance, and rightly so. To satisfy that potential demand, long queues are planned that may wrap around the ride to help keep the line off the midway. As an added "infrastructure bonus," architects and designers build into the plans a queue house or two to help alleviate any midway congestion. Sometimes attractions have a long queue twisting through the structure instead, eliminating the need for queue houses.

However, history typically proves that a particular



Shaw

attraction will enjoy a few years of "extreme popularity" before yielding to the next new thrill ride and/or patrons' changing tastes and thrill preferences. Demand changes as time goes by, with queue houses that remain unused standing as relics to past demand. In fact, a few parks have initially constructed these buildings only to have never used them in the ride line for which they were built. In some cases, parks have

torn down their queue houses and replaced them with small attractions.

Why not, from the ride's inception, invest in portable stanchions, chain or retractable belts, thus allowing the park to expand and contract the length of the queue on an "as-needed" basis. Many parks have already been doing this in their parking lots with cones and pylons. This move then allows the real estate to be used for other purposes: additional ride theming, another smaller attraction, a food or drink area, or more landscaping.

The benefits to the park include savings on the overall attraction cost, no forlorn symbols of past demand and the opportunity to repurpose the area for some other revenue-generating purpose. Or better yet, the option to leave the space, "au naturel."

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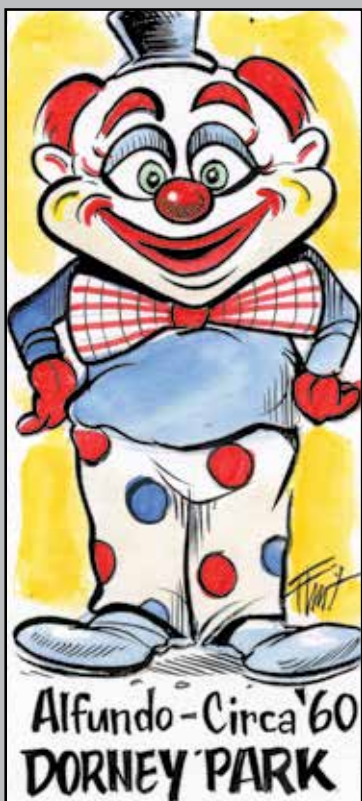


Beyond being a beloved institution and landmark in its home state, Lake Compounce in Bristol, Conn., is America's oldest amusement park. The location's appeal as a public gathering spot dates to 1846, when thousands were lured to witness an experiment conducted by a local inventor; property owner Gad Norton then turned his acreage into a picnic park. A casino was opened and trolley service arrived in 1895. Rides and attractions eventually were added. Along with Quassy Amusement Park in nearby Middlebury, Lake Compounce is co-hosting this year's Golden Ticket Awards, to be presented during the weekend of Sept. 8-9 by *Amusement Today*. AT/GARY SLADE

CHARACTER CORNER

Alfundo, Dorney Park

For more than 50 years, Alfundo, the Clown delighted visitors to Dorney Park. Short for ALLentown has FUN at DORney, the clown was a creation of famous dark ride designer Bill Tracy. The huge clown head, made of fiberglass featured outstretched arms that simulated juggling of five lighted balls with flashing lights going from one side to the other. He graced the original park entrance until 1989 when he was moved to the new park entrance. An Alfundo costume character spent time in the park. Alfundo had a little gas powered car that allowed him to run around the park and a small greeting stand called Alfundo's House. Alfundo the character faded away in the 1980s. The old park sign hung on for another decade but started to fall apart in the 1990s and was eventually removed. CARTOON BUBBA FLINT; HISTORY JEFFREY SEIFERT



2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow



While Sara has traveled all over the world, her favorite place she's visited is Easter Island, a remote Chilean island famous for the enormous stone heads its inhabitants once built. COURTESY SARA SEAY

Sara Seay, Premier Rides

Sara Seay is enjoying quite a ride in her career in the amusement industry! She began in the business at Lagoon Amusement Park in Utah and is now the director of sales and marketing for **Premier Rides** where she travels the world promoting the company and its attractions. Sara loves adventure, family and friends and is a big Baltimore Ravens football fan. She recently had her dream wedding in Marco Island, Fla., to Jim Seay of Premier Rides.

Title: Director of Sales & Marketing.

Years with Premier Rides: 12.5 years.

Best thing about the industry: It is filled with opportunities for growth. At Lagoon, I first experienced the rewards of a strong work ethic, earning promotions and taking on more responsibility. The opportunities continue with Premier, which include global travel, forming friendships and experiencing different cultures.

Favorite amusement ride: I have a classic and a contemporary favorite. As a 13-year veteran of Lagoon, my favorite classic is the wooden roller coaster, designed by John Miller and built in 1921. My favorite contemporary is Full Throttle at Six Flags Magic Mountain.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be: A photographer for National Geographic.

Biggest challenge facing the industry: Safety is such an important aspect of all we do, regardless of the capacity in which we work in the industry. It's a constant challenge because expectations, technology...and even threats...are always evolving, and we must stay ahead of it.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season: I love seeing special family memories in the making.

Favorite breakfast food: Bacon, extra crispy! It's also great for lunch and dinner as well. And in a Bloody Mary!

The most memorable trip I have ever taken would have to be: Easter Island.

When I need advice, I turn to: I have several very close friends and confidantes of varying ages and experience in the industry who have provided support and advice over the years.

My favorite pizza topping is: Classic pepperoni.

When dipping tortilla chips, do you prefer salsa, cheese or guacamole? Guacamole — on salads, fish tacos and scrambled eggs too!

My all-time favorite Michael Jackson song is: I like a lot of his songs but enjoy his Fosse-inspired dance style more.

My latest big bargain was: Just saved \$30 on a \$75 flower arrangement for my mom.

Fall is here! My favorite activity is: Flying with my husband Jim over the Chesapeake Bay to Maryland's Eastern Shore. I love seeing the fall colors from the air!

It's Friday night at 7pm. Where can we typically find you? Hopefully by 7pm on Friday we have left the office!

The last time I went in the Ocean was: The Indian Ocean off Phuket, Thailand in June.

Are you a little bit country or a little bit rock 'n roll? I enjoy all kinds of music. I've been fortunate to attend both the Grammys and the CMAs, and even had the pleasure of meeting several amazing artists over the years including industry colleagues Gene Simmons and Dolly Parton.

One week ago today I was: Picking Maryland blue crabs on the deck over the water at Baltimore's Captain James' Crab House.

The first thing I do when I get home from work is: Prepare dinner for the puppy.

When I say football, you say: [Hums] Ooh-oh-oh-oh-oo-oh!! Go Ravens!!

Last guilty pleasure: *Big Brother* — how did I get pulled in?!

Growing up I wanted to be: A roller coaster designer. As a high school senior, I entered the Physics Day design competition hosted by Lagoon, and won 3rd place in the state! Realizing I enjoyed other facets of hospitality more, I switched majors from Mechanical Engineering to Hospitality Management. It's amazing how it came full circle professionally.

When I look out my kitchen window I see: Living on a pier affords us unique nautical views such as great blue herons, migrating ducks and, of course, all the ships and boats. My favorite is watching the historic tall ships sail by.

Favorite TV show: *Game of Thrones*.



The Botanicum is just one of the many scenes visitors experience during their ride through Symbolica. COURTESY EFTELING

EFTELING
Continued from page 1

est attraction at Efteling. It revolves around the interplay of universal themes such as reality, dreams and fantasy, which makes the experience unique and suitable for all ages. It is located in the magical Fantasierijk, where King Pardulfus rules. Lakey O.J.Punctuel is his lackey who prepares visitors for their audience with King Pardulfus.

The main element of Symbolica is a seven-minute dark ride which utilizes a trackless

vehicle system from Dutch company ETF Ride Systems. Guests are seated in one of 34, six-seater Fantasy Carriages which follow a route through the attraction moving forwards, backwards, fully rotating, overtaking others and sometimes accelerating in certain scenes. Visitors can also choose from three different routes, all of which ensure an individual adventure through the Palace of Fantasy. Hourly capacity is 1,400.

The animatronics in the attraction were provided by Garner Holt Productions, while

other contractors included Heijmans, Hoppenbrouwers, Gubbels and Allround Dakexpert.

“We have tried to build a differentiating family attraction, especially to celebrate Efteling’s 65th anniversary,” says Fons Jurgens, chairman of Efteling’s board of directors. “And to now see that whole families come to Efteling for a ride in Symbolica is very moving. And I am not just speaking for myself, but especially on behalf of all the people who were involved with the construction of this phenomenal attraction.”

FAST FACTS

Name/Park

Symbolica: Palace of Fantasy family dark ride
Efteling, Kaatsheuvel, The Netherlands

Type of attraction

A covered family attraction, an enchanting palace in which nothing is what it seems.

Opened

July 1, 2017

Investment

35 million euros (U.S. \$41 million)

Themed Palace Garden

Symbolica’s Palace Garden is partly inspired by the gardens of other large palaces. The garden is unique for its theme-based design, in which approximately 800 solar panels have been included for the generation of sustainable energy. The solar panels were installed in April, after which the roof was covered with 800,000 square meters of plants for roof vegetation.

Show Details

The new attraction revolves around the interplay of universal themes such as reality, dream and fantasy, which makes the experience unique and for all.

Ride Experience

A maximum of six people step into a carriage and then choose one of three different routes. Each route offers a different adventure with interactive elements through the Palace of Fantasy.

Ride System Specifications

Vehicles: 34 Fantasy Carriages — vehicles that can move in any direction, to ensure a unique ride experience.

Ride system: The 7-minute attraction is ‘trackless’ meaning visitors cannot see how the Carriages move.

Capacity: 1,400 visitors per hour

Attraction Suppliers

Heijmans, Hoppenbrouwers, Gubbels, ETF Ride Systems, Allround Dakexpert and Garner Holt Productions (animatronics).



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INTERNATIONAL

► Walibi Belgium announces €100m investment plans — Page 8

Germany's Hansa-Park celebrates 40th anniversary

AT: Andrew Mellor
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SIERKSDORF, Germany — Situated on the bay of the Queen of the Hanseatic League in northern Germany, Hansa-Park, the country's only theme park by the sea, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

Open from early April to the end of October, Hansa-Park offers a unique combination of theme park and Baltic Sea beach, with more than 125 attractions available for all ages. Currently a total of 36 rides and four live shows are provided, along with special events which include Visit of the Shadow Creatures, a scare event, and Autumn Magic by the Sea, which takes place during the last 16 days of the season and transforms the park into a sea of lights, garlands and glitter and features a parade of light and fireworks display.

For 2017, the worldwide unique reverse free-fall in the dark of Europe's second highest coaster, Oath of Kärnan, built by Gerstlauer, has

received enhanced theming and is now more intense. The free-fall speed has been more than doubled from approximately 5 meters per second to 11 meters per second. Additionally, the theming of the ride has been completed and now more than 1.5 million bricks cover the facade of the tower of Kärnan and intricate wood carvings and cast iron work give the fortress a majestic appearance.

A totally new attraction that has also opened for the park's anniversary year is Kärnapulten, located next to Kärnan and created to "defend the fortress and its tower" according to the park. A Gerstlauer Sky Fly ride, it allows guests to perform a range of flight maneuvers, including somersaults, up to 22 meters (72 feet) up in the air using two joysticks in an interactive family experience.

Also new this year is the Little Tsar steel roller coaster



The Oath of Kärnan coaster has received enhanced theming and now offers a more intense ride experience. COURTESY HANSA-PARK

from Preston and Barbieri, a family ride ideal as younger visitors' first coaster. Carefully designed and woven into a story just like its larger

counterparts, it offers smaller guests coaster fun in true Hansa-Park style.

A new 4D film, *Mystery Mansion 4D*, has also been

on offer this year at the Fantastic Cinema. Also new was the variety show Let's Celebrate and a new special effects show.



The new Little Tsar family coaster (left) is from Preston and Barbieri. Kärnapulten (right) is a Gerstlauer Sky Fly ride which allows guests to perform a range of flight maneuvers. COURTESY HANSA-PARK



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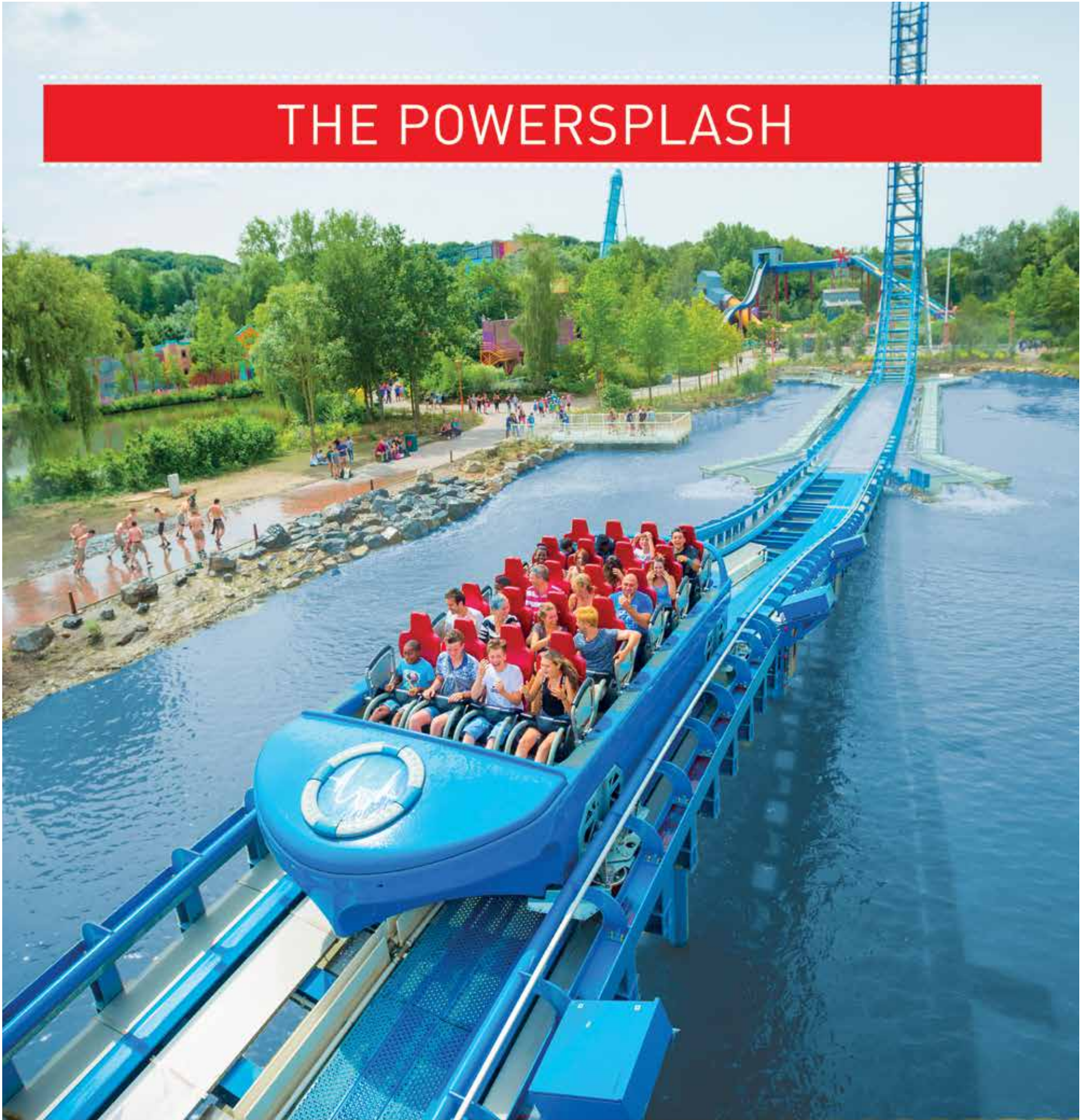
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INTERNATIONALSM

Walibi Belgium announces €100m investment plans

AT: Andrew Mellor
amellor@amusementtoday.com

WAVRE, Belgium — Walibi Belgium, part of the Compagnie des Alpes Group, has announced a major €100m (approximately U.S. \$118 million) investment plan over the next few years that will see the addition of a host of new attractions and facilities and the retheming of each area of the park.

The aim of the work is to reconfigure the site and to make it the key amusement park in the country targeting all ages. By the time the new developments have been completed three quarters of the park will have been transformed in a program unequalled in Belgium.

“This ambitious development plan will allow us to further establish our position as the largest and most sensational Belgian amusement park for visitors of all ages,” said CEO Jean-Christophe Parent. “Walibi has always played a pioneering role in offering its audiences new and unique sensations. We

are confident that in the future, families and young people looking for an exciting day will be satisfied.”

The development plans reveal that new attractions will be added each year up to 2023. Next year, for example, will see the installation of a new family coaster, located close to the Challenge of Tutankhamon, along with refurbishment work in the lower area of the park. The indoor water park Aqualibi will also benefit from the investment funds with the creation of a 700-square-meter (7,535-square-foot) aquatic playground for younger children, in particular those who have yet to learn to swim. This expansion will result in Aqualibi covering an area of 7,000-square-meters (75,347 square-feet), all complete with a tropical atmosphere.

In 2019, three other zones will see renewed theming, while new elements in the park will include an interactive indoor family attraction, a children’s coaster and a



Walibi Belgium will add a host of new attractions and facilities (above) in a major redevelopment program over the next five years. Right, Walibi Belgium’s indoor waterpark Aqualibi will also benefit from the redevelopment work taking place at the park. COURTESY WALIBI BELGIUM



► See WALIBI, page 9



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►WALIBI
Continued from page 8

large new restaurant.

2020 will see the renewal of the western area and the addition of a new interactive water attraction, among other items, 2021 will be a landmark year according to the park with the addition of a major new roller coaster in a new area of the venue. This will be the park's tenth coaster.

A family attraction and the further redevelopment of another area of the park, in addition to new water-slide attractions in Aqualibi, will complete the investment plan in 2022 and 2023.



By the time the redevelopment work is complete, three quarters of the park will have been transformed.
COURTESY WALIBI BELGIUM

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WATER PARKS & RESORTS

► ProSlide delivers big new product for Kalahari Sandusky — Page 12

Six Flags opens Hurricane Harbor Oaxtepec in Mexico

ProSlide, ADG contracted to refurbish park

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

OAXTEPEC, Morelos, Mexico — Following nearly two years of planning and reconstruction, Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Oaxtepec opened to the public this summer. The water park dates back to the 1940s when the Mexican government built a competition pool with a diving well to host swim meets and train swimming teams. In the 1970s, the 67-acre property was converted into Parque Acuático Oaxtepec, a water park that was a tourist destination for the populace of nearby Mexico City for more than 35 years. The company that leased the property from the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS), Promotora de Centros de Esparcimiento, ran into economic and legal problems, closed the facility at the end of the 2011 season and returned the property to IMSS.

IMSS sought other operators and eventually struck a deal — four years later — with Six Flags Entertainment, owners of Six Flags México in Mexico City. Six Flags contracted Aquatic Development Group and ProSlide to renovate the shuttered park.

Philip Hayles, vice president of development for ProSlide told *Amusement Today*,

“The park had been closed for four years, so it definitely needed some fit and finish. Ironically, we actually did a number of the original slides.”

The original attractions that remained at the park were restored with gelcoat and paint. Several new attractions were introduced and ADG developed a plan to connect the preexisting portion of the park with the new development. Upgrades to the existing section included an updated filtration system, holding tanks for chemical treatment and a reconfiguration of the electrical system.

Six Flags invested heavily in the park to bring the property up to modern-day standards. In addition to equipment refurbishment and upgrades, new attractions were added along with new culinary and retail establishments. ProSlide provided two major attractions: Twister, a Tornado 60; and Big Surf, a Behemoth Bowl 40 + TornadoWave. ADG added a 30,675 square-foot wave pool with a Wavetek system capable of producing waves up to 2.5 feet in a variety of different patterns. According to ADG, it is the largest wave pool in Latin America.

Nine eateries at the park offer a variety of choices including local Mexican food — roasted chicken, salads, nachos and tacos; American favorites — burgers, hot dogs, wings, French fries; and Italian food — mainly pizza. Most restaurants are included with the annual dining pass plan.



Play structures (above) provide plenty of interactive activity for the park's younger guests. Right, private cabanas appear to be floating in a pool. COURTESY ADG



Adults can enjoy a beer and order food at the Beachside Grill. Shops include the Big Surf Shop featuring Hurricane Harbor-themed souvenirs, and Island Traders which offers swim suits, beach towels, sun screen, flip flops and other water park essentials.

Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Oaxtepec is Six Flags Entertainment's first water park outside the United States.

“We are immensely proud

to open this incredible park to guests in the Oaxtepec area and beyond,” said Six Flags International Development Company President John Odum. “This investment underscores our com-

mitment to providing thrills for all ages and expanding the Six Flags experience to guests all over the world.”

► See SIX FLAGS, page 14



A lazy river (left) carries floating guests through lush vegetation. ProSlide provided a Tornado 60 and Behemoth Bowl 40 + TornadoWave combination slide. COURTESY ADG

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ProSlide delivers big new product for Kalahari Sandusky

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SANDUSKY, Ohio—The first Kalahari Resort opened in Wisconsin Dells, Wis., a location known for multiple water parks. Following its success in 2000, the second was built in Sandusky, Ohio and opened in 2005, making for the beginnings of a family of indoor water park resorts. At the time, it was the largest indoor water park in America at 173,000 square feet. A third property opened in 2015 in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania.

Since its opening, Kalahari Sandusky has expanded with a convention center starting with 100,000 square feet in 2006. Today the convention center boasts 215,000 square feet.

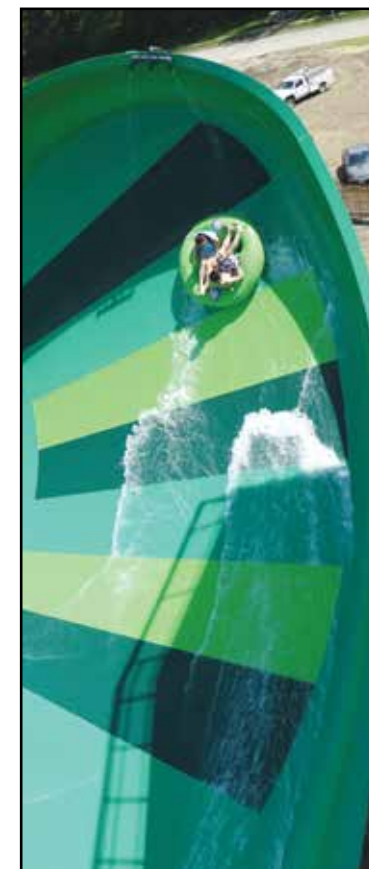
Open year round, the resort is geared toward indoor recreation. In addition to the water park offerings, it features multiple dining venues, a spa and fitness center, mini golf, mini bowling, and an arcade.

For 2017, the resort in Sandusky has boosted its outdoor activities in dramatic fashion. While various pools, hot tubs, ropes courses and other physical activities had been on offer, the new 5-attraction complex supplied by ProSlide Technology is making a big impression on the resort guests.

"The feedback has been phenomenal," said Brian Shanle, general manager. "With three of the attractions accommodating two people, families and friends are rid-



Kalahari's new five-attraction slide complex from ProSlide is making an impression with guests. The Stingray (right) accommodates two riders per tube. AT/TIM BALDWIN



ing together, which is great for sharing these experiences together as it brings people closer. Time away from the stress of work and life is therapeutic, and our guests are raving about how incredible these new icon slides are."

The new slide complex sports a palate of vivid colors, with each slide claiming its own hues. There are five different experiences coming off the tower:

- **Stingray** – a serpentine course leads into a 45-degree tunnel which builds speed as it drops into a five-story Wave wall that delivers weightlessness

- **Sahara Sidwinder** – riders are banked high on the

curves on this saucer slide as a drop and dive sensation creates high speeds

- **Tornado Alley** – two high-energy funnels are incorporated into the layout where 24-foot drops produce high-banking swings and moments of zero gravity

- **Serengeti Spinner** – a serpentine enclosed slide with back-to-back curves and tight spirals

- **Extreme Rush** – a drop capsule ride that launches riders into a near vertical plunge

"Our Extreme Rush drop slide is a favorite for the thrill seekers. A pulsing heartbeat begins on entering the chute, then a terrorizing countdown...the fear really

rises until the bottom drops out," said Shanle. "Still, I think the overall favorite has to be the Stingray. Blasting up the wall leaves you hanging in zero gravity. Being one of the two-person raft rides also lets you face the person who is screaming along with you."

"The ride selection for the new slide complex was a consultative process with key members of the Kalahari team," said Jeff Janovich, vice president business development, ProSlide Technology. "We discussed a number of possible ride combination options and with their feedback and input, we reached the ultimate slide choices based on adding at-

tractions that they didn't already have, included some new rides on the market, provided variety and created a complex that looked impactful to the guest as they walked out to the outdoor water park area."

During the busy summer months, the major expansion to the outdoor areas have helped diversify the fun on offer and also help spread the guests more efficiently throughout the resort complex.

"This complex has something for everyone," said Janovich. "The Flying Saucer is the newest ride of the bunch and its steep banked curves keep riders accelerating through the turns. Overall, this complex has experiences that range from fast to extreme with each ride delivering a distinct thrill. The TornadoWave 45 (Stingray) and the Double Tornado 24 (Tornado Alley) places riders face-to-face in double tubes. Watching their partner's look of terror as they fly up the Wave wall is a great memory. The real thrill seekers will go for the SuperLoop (Extreme Rush) with the SkyBox drop capsule. You go from zero to full speed in a split second."

"Our loyal fans know we will keep adding new, exciting attractions to enhance Kalahari," said Shanle. "We have a reputation for pushing the limits in our resorts."



The Sahara Sidwinder (above left) features high-banked curves and dive sensations. The neighboring Tornado Alley (above right) sends pairs of riders into two large funnels along its twisted journey. AT/TIM BALDWIN



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►SIX FLAGS

Continued from page 10

Oaxtepec is located south of Mexico City, about two-hours away by car. The temperature is warm all year long with an average of 80 degrees Fahrenheit. The Oaxtepec area is known for its lush vegetation and natural water springs. It has been treasured for its variety of plant life going all the back to pre-Columbian times. When it was conquered by the Aztecs, they formed a leisure center and royal gardens for nobles where flowers and other plants were

cultivated — creating perhaps the first botanic garden in the world. When the Spanish arrived to the region, they marveled at the beauty of the place.

Hurricane Harbor is within a state-owned park, Centro Vacacional IMSS, that features towering palm trees, lush lawns, a dome-covered botanic garden and a scenic aerial cable car. Six Flags Hurricane Harbor is open daily through August 20, weekends through December, and then daily again during the Christmas holiday season. The 2018 operating season has yet to be determined.



The wave pool is said to be the largest in Latin America. COURTESY ADG

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NEWSPLASH

AT: Jeffery L. Seifert

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Residents of Aurora, Colo., will be getting a new recreation center and indoor water park, thanks, in part, to the usage of marijuana. The 56,000-square-foot facility, which carries a price tag of more than \$30 million, will be funded by a marijuana tax.

"The funding was really creative, actually. Our city council members have decided to use marijuana tax revenue to fund the project. They really thought this was a huge community impact and it absolutely is. This is a way to use that money to make a difference for a lot of people," said **Sherri-Jo Stowell** with **Aurora Parks, Recreation and Open Space**.

The recreation center will include a large aquatic center that includes a water slide, lazy river and wave pool. Employees of Aurora Parks, Recreation and Open Space spent 15 months meeting with the community to gather input to help with the design process.

Vacationers to Bermuda can now experience the latest floating obstacle course trend. **X20 Adventures Inflatable Water Park** opened at the site of the old **Nine Beaches Resort** in Sandys Parish. The resort closed in 2010 for renovation but has yet to reopen.

The floating obstacle course, provided by **Wibit** of Germany, can accommodate 100 guests at a time. The park is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. As is typical with these types of parks, guests purchase one or more one-hour sessions. A typical session runs \$25, but discounts are available for early birds or those purchasing multiple sessions. There are also group specials for corporate outings or birthday parties.

The park features free parking, shaded seating areas, restroom facilities, and a variety of food and drink outlets including snacks and traditional local favorites.

In July, **Bananas Fun Park**, Grand Junction, Colo., opened Coconut Cove, an interactive water play structure. Bananas Fun Park is an FEC that features a variety of family activities including go-karts, laser tag, miniature golf and a games arcade. The new water play structure offers splashy fun for kids during the summer season with more than 50 water features, multi-level platforms and a 10,000-gallon tipping bucket. Coconut Cove also features a splash pad with 12 different spinning toys and bubbler jets for small children.

The new attraction includes a tank that holds 27,000 gallons of water. A filtration system keeps the water clean and safe. The AquaPlay and AquaSpray units were provided by **WhiteWater West**.

A floating water park/obstacle course has opened for the summer in Manley Mere, England. **Cheshire Aquapark** offers multiple floating attractions from **Aquaglide's** Aquapark series. Aquaglide, based in White Salmon, Wash., has been providing inflatable water play products since 1995.

Because of the cooler water temperatures, a 50-minute session includes a wetsuit as well as a buoyancy aid. Children under 17

years of age must be accompanied by an adult, with no more than six children supervised by an adult. The park features other water sports including stand up paddle boarding, kayaking, sailing and open-water swimming. Off water activities include a land adventure/fitness trail.

In an effort to provide respite from a heat wave, **The Wave** water park in Dublin, Calif., offered residents free admission. The water park opened a section of its sports pool and splash zone to the community for free on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings between 6 and 8 p.m. during the heat wave. The water slides were closed but members of the community were welcome to beat the heat in the pool and splash zone. Temperatures in the Tri-Valley area were approaching 100 degrees during the heat wave. The average temperature in July and August is 71 degrees.

Sandcastle Water Park, Pittsburgh, Pa., was forced to close Saturday, July 30, as a result of flooding. The Monongahela River overflowed its banks and deposited mud and debris onto the lower level of the park. Fortunately the park staff was able to move pump motors and furniture out of the flood zone and onto higher ground when the river began to rise. Once the water receded everything was covered with foul-smelling mud. Cleanup took more than two weeks but the park did eventually re-open on August 8. Midwinter floods are not uncommon but the last time the park had to close due to flooding in the middle of summer was 21 years ago. Sandcastle is owned by **Palace Entertainment** and during the closure, Sandcastle season pass holders were invited to use their season pass at two other Palace properties — **Kenwood** and **Idlewild & SoakZone**.

Terminus Wake Park in Emerson, Ga., has added a floating aqua park to its lineup. The popular cable wake park northwest of Atlanta opened in 2013 and was Georgia's first full-sized cable park. It offers three manmade lakes with an overhead cable 32 feet above the lake that can tow up to six people at a time. The new Aqua Park utilizes equipment from **Aquaglide's Aquapark** series and includes a floating trampoline, swinging catapults, ladders, climbing structures, and slippery bridges. A 45-minute session costs \$15 during the week and \$20 on weekends.

The citizens of Racine, Wisc., will be able to enjoy a new aquatic center thanks to a \$6.5 million donation from **S.C. Johnson**. The **S.C. Johnson Community Aquatic Center** at **Pritchard Park** will feature two separate swimming pools — a lap pool and an activity pool — along with waterslides, a water play structure and a water sprayround with a zero-depth pool for young children. Additional features include a rock climbing wall, basketball courts, multiple shade structures, lounge chairs and 4,800-square-foot building to house changing areas and a concession stand. The facility has a target opening date of June 2018.



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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

▶ Lake Compounce updates four rides — Page 18; FAIRS — Pages 30-36

Worlds of Fun wows guests with new gate, more rides

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Cedar Fair believes in a sense of “arrival.” In recent years, the company has taken that first impression for arriving visitors seriously. At Cedar Point, the park’s multiple entrances have all been reimagined. At Carowinds, a new dramatic entrance has a 325-foot coaster swooping above it. Now, Worlds of Fun in Kansas City has its turn.

Opened in 1973, the park originally had what most industry folks would term a “front gate,” and then an additional side gate for further convenience, particularly for those in farther parking lots. Guests were transported to the front gate by tram. In 1997, that front gate closed and was replaced by a go-kart track. Tram service was discontinued and the side entrance became the only entrance to the park.

Two decades later, this scenario has finally received its dose of dazzle.

“The new gate has been the ‘wow factor’ for the 2017 season,” said Eric Burke, public relations manager for Worlds of Fun and Oceans of Fun. “People have come into the park for the first time this year or in several years, and they turn that corner and it’s just jaw dropping. People are always wanting to see something new and exciting and now they get that right away. That big iconic balloon was something we wanted showcased right at the very beginning of their adventure.”

The hot air balloon has long been the park’s icon. The theme to Worlds of Fun when built in the early 1970s was Jules Verne’s book, *Around the World in 80 Days*. From the beginning, the balloon with swaged ribbons has graced maps, souvenirs and lo-



Above, Worlds of Fun has impressed returning guests by reimagining the park’s entrance. The older entrance is seen at right. COURTESY WORLDS OF FUN



gos in the decades that followed. For the 2017 season, that balloon is prominently featured at the new entrance.

“The new LED board over the turnstiles is pretty incredible,” added Burke.

While the new entrance may have surprised many a guest, once inside, they have found two new rides that have added color and flair. Falcon’s Flight (Huss Condor) and Mustang Runner (Huss Troika) were among a package of rides Cedar Fair acquired for many of its parks this season.

“They have been well received,” Burke told *Amusement Today*.

Burke says two rides were retired to make room for the new additions. A children’s bumper car ride and a small carousel, both original to the park, had reached the end of their lifespan. He said that required maintenance made it a good time to transition from those old rides.

Both new rides feature circular configurations of seats, each rotating in different methods.

As summer had ended, the Worlds of Fun team had reached a high level of energy for the remainder of the season. In the past, the park had closed following the popular *Haunt* event in October. For the first time, Worlds of Fun is offering *Winterfest*, and more than a year of planning has gone into the holiday event.

The 300-foot *Steel Hawk* (Mondial Windseeker) will remain silent during *Winterfest*. Lights will be strung from the top to the bottom forming a 300-foot Christmas tree.

“I’m hoping we can see it from space,” Burke said. “Millions and millions of lights will be throughout the park.”

Burke also reported that a ten-foot platform will also support a seven-story Christmas tree that will have two million lights alone. Choirs and organizations will orchestrate a tree



Falcons Flight and Mustang Runner are the park’s two newest rides. Both are by Huss. COURTESY WORLDS OF FUN



lighting ceremony every night of the festival.

More than a dozen new shows will debut at *Winterfest*. Other holiday activities and se-

lected rides will also be available for the new festival. “It will just be that Christmas fever everywhere,” said Burke. “They are having fun with it.”

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Lake Compounce updates four rides

AT: B. Derek Shaw
 bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

BRISTOL, Conn. — The oldest continuously operating amusement park in the United States (1846) had upgrades and improvements done to a few of its major rides this season.

Extensive work was done to Wildcat (1927, Herb Schmeck) roller coaster by Martin & Vleminckx. Park Manager Jerry Brick explained, "We had them take out the entire nine tallest bents and structure, the lift hill, the north fantail track and two more sections underneath, that intertwined. It was one of those projects that as you tore more down, you just kept going on it."

After Martin & Vleminckx finished what they were contracted to do, the park continued fine-tuning the structure. "The Wildcat structure had a lot of diagonals and horizontals in the bents that were nailed and we have been replacing them with thicker dimensional lumber and bolting them instead of nailing to tighten up the structure. We also have done a few other sections of [just the] top two layers of track and tightening the track gauge," said Brick.

The next tweak was the replacement of the existing three-bench Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters trains with Great Coasters International Millennium Flyer single seater cars.



Brick explained the thinking process: "One of the things that prompted the switch was that first off the other trains were older, but as we were looking we thought the two seat, one bench cars with the articulating axles would dramatically change the ride which it has. The other is that we now added lap bar monitoring which was an improved safety [feature] for the ride."

Brick was asked how the new trains are handling the rebuilt structure. "It is running well and very fast. I was surprised at how much faster the ride is compared to last season. The train hugs the corners very well."

The final adjustment to that ride is a new safety system done by Automated Control



Lake Compounce updated four rides this season including the park's Wildcat coaster with new track and structure, new GCII train (left) and a new control system (above) with video monitoring.
 AT/GARY SLADE

Systems. "We had Kerby Waldren from ACS, who did the work for Phobia Fear (Premier Sky Rocket II steel coaster) last season, do a new control system for the Wildcat and he did a great job for us," said Brick. "We kept him waiting a bit as the structure took a bit longer, and he will be back in the fall to do a few small things, but the work he did was excellent."

In addition to the work on Wildcat, Martin & Vleminckx was also busy across the midway doing some overhaul work on the final approach to the station of Boulder Dash (Custom Coasters Int. wood coaster). Again Brick provided the details: "We have various areas re-tracked. A lot of it was (the) top two layers and maybe a little bracing, but the biggest thing we did was take out the triple up on the return near our trolley barn and replaced it with a double up. It definitely helped and is a different ride experience."

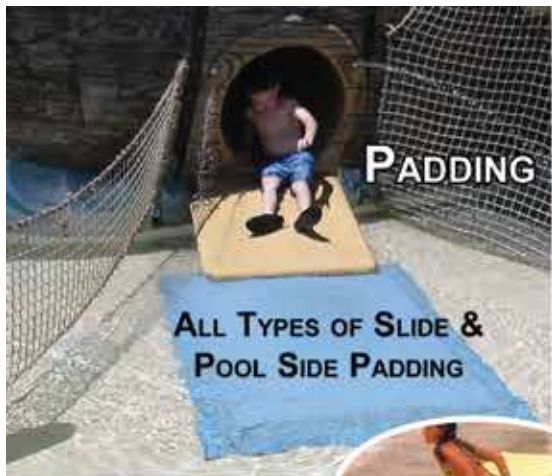
The American Flyers ride (Bisch Rocco eight-tub Flying Scooters park model) received some primping. "The American Flyers needed to get some TLC and while we were doing it, we hired J3 designs out of Elba, N.Y. to do a thematic concept and he really did a good job along with our paint team to get a great look on the ride," explained Brick.

Finally, Ghost Hunt (Sally Corp. dark ride) received upgrades. "Lagotronics was hired to replace the targets and guns throughout the ride with an updated system," said Brick. The scenes remain unchanged. "During that time we did some painting, sound and light improvements throughout the ride so it should be a good experience for our guests and they seem to be loving it."

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Six Flags Fiesta Texas announces first-of-its-kind coaster for 2018

Rocky Mountain provides the Raptor Track single-rail ride

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — On August 3, Six Flags Fiesta Texas started the announcement wars by officially revealing the first big attraction of 2018 in the U.S. Wonder Woman Golden Lasso Coaster will debut early next spring. The new ride is being hyped as the world's first single-rail coaster. Typical steel coasters have two rails, but this innovative new design of track resembles more of an I-beam or monorail track. Company officials joke that its width of 15.5 inches is not much wider

than a sub sandwich.

This is a significant selling point. The slender sleekness of design offers very little for the rider to see when looking over either side of the ride vehicle. Because of the nature of the track system, fewer supports are needed giving riders even less to see.

Called Raptor Track, the new concept has been on display at the Rocky Mountain Construction booth at the IAAPA Attractions Expo the past two years. It is now becoming a reality.

"It's very exciting to have our new ideas come to fruition," said Fred Grubb, founder, Rocky Mountain Construction. "We are thrilled as a company to have the opportunity to provide this track technology to



Six Flags Fiesta Texas will debut Wonder Woman Golden Lasso in the spring. It will be the first coaster to feature Rocky Mountain Construction's Raptor Track and will include inversions, an overbanked turn and a 90-degree first drop (right). Riders will be positioned in new trains that sport a single-file configuration. COURTESY SIX FLAGS FIESTA TEXAS



Six Flags."

"The single rail and single-seat trains allow for super tight turns, both horizontal and vertical," said Alan Schilke, design engineer. "The ride can include vertical drops and inversions in a tiny footprint and provide greater thrill per foot of track than any coaster out there."

Fiesta Texas had also worked with Rocky Mountain Construction on the 2013 attraction: Iron Rattler.

When asked what attracted the Six Flags team to the new Raptor Track, Park President Jeffrey Siebert told *Amusement Today*: "It will be the first of its kind, which part of our DNA is innovation. What you can do with that track — the quick maneuvers, the ultra-smooth aspect of it. With a single track, it eliminates the occasional bumps that are sometimes the result of two rails that are slightly out of alignment. You can really create really fun twists and turns, extreme drops, and in this case, it will be the first ride in our park that drops you straight down at 90 degrees."

Standing next to the quarry walls that form the backdrop to Fiesta Texas, the new coaster will rise above the cliff's edge at 113 feet and feature a first drop of 100 feet. A top speed of 53 miles per hour is obtained as the train snaps through more than 1,800 feet of track. "People have recently referred to the Raptor Track as 'riding on a ribbon in the sky.' It has its own unique and extreme

look," said Grubb.

Siebert looks forward to many of the rides maneuvers: "Midway through the ride, there is a real fun series of serpentine turns and a deep drop to the lake feature below. There are three inversions and an overbanked turn — I'm referring to it as the most action-packed coaster we've ever built in the park's history."

The new addition will sport three trains and incorporate a moving station.

"There is no doubt in the past years we have continued to add moving stations to existing rides to increase throughput," said Siebert. "As we were looking at adding our new coaster with an eight-seat configuration, it was very important to continue that tradition and legacy of using the moving station because any time we've done it, it is clear that we have increased the ride throughput. This year we introduced a moving station on Thunder Rapids; last year we added it to our Scooby-Doo Sally dark ride attraction and it almost doubled the ride capacity; and the year before that we added it to Pandemonium, which doubled its capacity as well. So, for Wonder Woman it was very important to come up with a moving station concept."

The new installation will be erected on the former site of Power Surge, a Shoot-the-Chute that opened with the park (see p. 23 & 26). The park will utilize the water reservoir from that attraction

as part of the theming package in the 2018 addition.

Wonder Woman has been in the planning stages for close to two years, Siebert said. Theming to the ride will incorporate a storyline from this year's hit movie *Wonder Woman*. Greek architecture from the mythic island of Themyscira and a crashed plane from soldier Steve Trevor will be on view as guests queue for the ride.

Siebert remarked that the track and train configuration is one of the unique attributes to the ride. "The track you're riding on is not much wider than a ruler. You are straddling that with one leg on either side of the track. The track is right underneath you almost like a saddle. You are maneuvering over the track versus being in the middle of the track which creates a neat dynamic and a really cool feel," he said.

Grubb agrees. "The single file trains make for an even more thrilling ride as riders 'hug' the narrow track," he said. "Tighter turns, steep drops and three inversions are going to make this coaster a fantastic ride experience. It's like riding a motorcycle."

Schilke laughed, "It's like sliding down a giant stair banister — that happens to go straight down."

If all goes to plan, the park is setting a spring break opening target. Wonder Woman Golden Lasso will be the park's tenth roller coaster and the fourth to feature design and engineering by Schilke.

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Amusement industry invited to the 2017 Golden Ticket Awards

Lake Compounce, Quassy to host industry at Networking Event of the Year

BRISTOL, Conn. — *Amusement Today*, Lake Compounce and Quassy Amusement Park invite working professionals in the amusement industry such as park owners, operators and management and ride manufac-

turers, designers, suppliers and vendors, to be part of the fun at “The Networking Event of the Year” during the 2017 Golden Ticket Awards on Friday and Saturday, Sept. 8-9.

GTA attendees are encouraged to register for the event at www.GoldenTicketAwards.com and to make reservations for hotel accommodations immediately at one of the two Host Hotels as rooms are booking



fast: the Doubletree by Hilton in Bristol, Conn., or Homewood Suites by Hilton in Southington, Conn. Special discounted rates are available at each property by identifying yourself as a Golden Ticket Awards guest. The dead-

line for hotel reservations has past but rooms remain available on a first book basis. Please refer to www.GoldenTicketAwards.com for detailed information and rates.

“I’d like to personally extend the invitation to our industry to join us in what promises to be a wonderful weekend in Connecticut,” says Gary Slade, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Amusement Today*. “Now is the time to reg-

ister and secure your hotel reservation for the 20th annual year of the Golden Ticket Awards.”

The host parks, Lake Compounce and Quassy Amusement Park, are busy gearing up for an unforgettable two days. The Golden Ticket Awards are presented to the “Best of the Best” in the amusement industry and are calculated from an international poll conducted by *Amusement Today*.

Parks say farewell to three classics

NORTH AMERICA — To make room for future additions, three parks have publicly bid farewell to rides that have served their guests in the parks’ history.

Two attractions have been with their respective properties since each park opened. Universal’s Islands of Adventure wowed guests when it opened in 1999 with Dueling Dragons. This massive attraction intertwined two Bolliger & Mabillard inverted roller coasters — among the most popular rides of the 1990s — and brought riders on each track in visual proximity with each other three times during the ride. The most dramatic of these “duels” was the head-to-head face off entering the attraction’s vertical loops. The visual spectacle of this moment — to both riders and spectators — was unlike anything anyone had ever seen in the industry.

In time, a loose object incident changed the park policy to prevent them from dueling.

► See **RIDES**, page 26



Georgia Cyclone gave its farewell rides on July 30. The Dinn-Summers wooden coaster operated for 28 seasons. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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5 p.m. to 9 p.m. – Cocktails at Quassy’s Carousel Theatre stage area, Restaurant & Bella and Bessie’s Sweet Shoppe

5 p.m. to 7 p.m. – Rides on the award-winning *Wooden Warrior, Frantic, Reverse Time, Tea Cups, Grand Carousel, Free Fall’N Drop Tower, Quassy Express train, Skipper’s Clippers* and *Up, Up & Away*

5 p.m. to 8 p.m. – Live entertainment

5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. – Appetizers at Bella & Bessie’s Sweet Shop & Potato Patch In The Park

6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. – Dinner at Quassy Restaurant and Patio Party area overlooking Lake Quassapaug

8:15 p.m. – 3-D Fireworks Spectacular over Lake Quassapaug

9 p.m. – Event closes

Saturday, September 9 *Lake Compounce Amusement Park*

11 a.m. to 4 p.m. – Free to roam & enjoy Lake Compounce

2 p.m. – Campground Tour or Tour of Revenue Areas

3 p.m. – Tour of *Haunted Graveyard* setup or Tour of the Maintenance Area

4 p.m. – Cocktail hour with music and catering

5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. – Dinner

6:30 p.m. – Procession to the *Starlight Theater*

7 p.m. to 9 p.m. – The 2017 Golden Ticket Awards ceremony

9 p.m. – Post-Party at the *Croc Pot* overlooking the *Lazy River* (featuring: Music, dessert bar, open bar, and fire pits)

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►RIDES

Continued from page 23

The makeover of that corner of the park made a name change as well: Dragon Challenge. Loosely fitting into the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, the attraction had its spectacular queue line tweaked from the original Fire and Ice motif to those of Potter-esque dragon names.

The loss of this groundbreaking attraction, not only to make way for a new Harry Potter attraction, but also attributed to the massive ride reaching the end of its structural lifespan after more than 18 years of multi-train daily operation, will be deeply felt in the coaster fan communities. The ride closed Labor Day.

Another park original attraction to say goodbye was Six Flags Fiesta Texas' Power Surge. An Intamin Shoot-the-Chute, Power Surge was tucked away in the background of the park's southeast corner. Structurally



As Amusement Today went to press, Universal Studios Orlando has announced Dragon Challenge will close for good on Labor Day. Opened as Dueling Dragons in 1999, the interaction between trains was state of the art in the amusement industry. AT/GARY SLADE

it utilized Fiesta Texas' majestic quarry backdrop. With the park's water park included with admission, the attraction suffered from declining ridership over the past quarter century as other ways to

cool off became more popular. While park management found it melancholy to bid farewell to an original attraction, they freely admit that their Scrambler gave more rides than Power Surge



Park President Jeffrey Siebert and Marketing Manager Jeff Filicko take one last ride aboard Fiesta Texas' Power Surge. COURTESY FIESTA TEXAS

did in its final years. Low ridership and high operational cost factored in to using the space for the park's 2018 attraction. Power Surge closed July 21.

Six Flags Over Georgia closed one of the park's two wooden coasters for good on July 30. Georgia Cyclone was built in 1990 among the wooden coaster resurgence brought on by Dinn and Summers. Having served the park guests for 28 seasons, the ride has been retired. Based on the Coney Island Cyclone, this wooden coaster was

one of several interpretations the theme park chain introduced that paid homage to the New York original. Over the years, most have gone away, this being the third to close. The future of this ride will be made clear with the announcement of the 2018 Six Flags lineup of attractions.

Having been given a two-week notice, many enthusiasts made a final trek to Six Flags Over Georgia to pay their respects and log one more round in their memories.

—Tim Baldwin



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More Marvel, Pixar, 'Star Wars' attractions in store

Disney blitzes D23 Expo with worldwide theme park news

AT: Dean Lamanna

dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Throngs of hardcore Disney fans attending this year's D23 Expo, held July 14-16, got way more than two big mouse-earfuls as The Walt Disney Co. announced a slew of attractions and experiences planned for its properties globally.

More than a dozen new projects representing well over \$1 billion in new investment were revealed along with sneak peeks at major attractions now in active development. Bob Chapek, chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, and several Imagineers were on hand to provide details.

"On the heels of the many new and incredibly popular experiences that just debuted this year, the best is yet to come," Chapek said. "We have ambitious plans for our parks and resorts around the world."

The most anticipated revelations surrounded the under-construction *Star Wars*-themed lands at Disneyland in Anaheim and Disney's Hollywood Studios at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando.

A scale model of *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge*, the official name for the lands, was unveiled at the event. Each land will have two anchor attractions, including one that puts guests right in the middle of a battle between the First Order and the Resistance inside a hangar bay on a *Star Destroyer*. Visitors also will have the chance to "fly" the *Millennium Falcon*.

Chapek described the many characters that guests will meet, including BB-8, Chewbacca, Rex and Kylo Ren. Representing the company's largest single-themed land expansion at 14 acres per park, *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* will open in 2019 — debuting



Chapek



first at Disneyland and then at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

New fun on land, at sea

Looking ahead to Walt Disney World's 50th anniversary in 2021, there are grand plans to complete the transformation that started with the debut of New Fantasyland in 2014.

Among them are changes at Epcot that will help realize the original vision of the park while making it more timeless and relevant. Patterned after the top family attraction at Disneyland Paris, a *Ratatouille* attraction will be added in an all-new space in the France pavilion at World Showcase. Epcot also will be home to an E-ticket *Guardians of the Galaxy* ride based on the movie franchise.

In Epcot's Future World, a new Green Mission at Mission: Space already is taking guests on a stunning tour around Earth, while an updated Orange Mission is making the trip to Mars even more spectacular. Adjacent to this attraction, a new restaurant inviting guests to travel high above our planet for an orbital dining adventure is in the works.

Disney's Hollywood Studios will welcome Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway, the first-ever Mickey-themed ride-through attraction. With an original story and theme song, the ride will take guests on a journey inside the wacky and unpredictable world of the Disney Channel's Emmy Award-winning *Mickey Mouse* animated shorts, using new technologies to transform the flat cartoon world into a three-dimensional experience.

The biggest ride-related announcement, ending months of speculation: a version of the most popular attraction at Shanghai Disneyland — the *Tron Lightcycle Power Run* indoor launch roller coaster — is headed to Walt



Disney is moving ahead with the transformation of Paradise Pier into Pixar Pier at Disney California Adventure (above); at the Walt Disney World Resort (below), a *Guardians of the Galaxy* attraction and *Star Wars*-themed hotel are planned. COURTESY THE WALT DISNEY CO.



Disney World's Magic Kingdom. It will be located in a new area near Space Mountain.

Also in the Magic Kingdom, a new live entertainment venue inspired by the iconic, early-20th century Willis Wood Theater in Kansas City, Mo., will bring world-class performances to Main Street, U.S.A.

The creations of Pixar Animation Studios, meanwhile, will play a much-larger role in both Anaheim and Orlando.

In addition to next summer's opening of *Toy Story Land* at Disney's Hollywood Studios, Paradise Pier at Disney California Adventure will be transformed into Pixar Pier — showcasing more Pixar characters and stories from hit films such as *The Incredibles* and *Inside Out*.

Disney's waterborne family leisure offerings are growing, as well, with yet another ship to be added to the Disney Cruise Line. The new vessel makes a total of three additional Disney ships that have been announced over the past year; when completed by 2023, the fleet will have nearly doubled its size to seven.

Themed rooms and 'zooms'

On the accommodations front, Disney will attempt its most experiential concept ever with a *Star Wars* Hotel as part of Walt Disney World's corresponding new themed land. At Disneyland Paris, the company is adding Disney's Hotel New York — The Art of Marvel, themed around the world of Super Heroes including Iron Man, The Avengers and Spider-Man. Guests at the latter resort will be able to explore the

Marvel Universe through comic art, films and memorabilia displayed in art gallery fashion.

Having just opened the high-end, Pacific Northwest-themed Copper Creek Villas and Cabins at Walt Disney World in July, the company is planning its 15th Disney Vacation Club property, the Disney Riviera Resort, to be located near Epcot and tentatively completed by fall of 2019.

Transportation also is being upgraded and enhanced at Disney's Central Florida property.

Already operating is Minnie Van, which utilizes Minnie Mouse-themed taxis in collaboration with

the rideshare app Lyft. The service currently is available to guests staying at Disney's BoardWalk Resort and Disney's Yacht and Beach Club resorts.

Now in development, and stirring some nostalgic excitement, is a new sky ride system called Disney Skyliner that will give guests a birds-eye view of Walt Disney World. It will connect Disney's Art of Animation, Pop Century and Caribbean Beach resorts, as well as the proposed new Disney Riviera Resort, with Disney's Hollywood Studios and the International Gateway at Epcot.

• disney.com

Disney partners with The Void for VR fun

In a move as experimental as it is experiential, The Walt Disney Co. is wading into virtual reality (VR) at its Central Florida and Southern California properties.

Star Wars: Secrets of the Empire, described as a "ground-breaking hyper-reality experience," will open at Disney Springs at the Walt Disney World Resort and Downtown Disney at the Disneyland Resort by the year-end holidays.

The attraction will enable participants to engage with friends, family and *Star Wars* characters through a variety of environmental effects melding the physical and digital worlds.

Disney and Lindon, Utah-based The Void are collaborating on the project, with Lucasfilm and ILMxLab participating.

Notably, Disney CEO Bob Iger was reported to have said earlier this year that he was not interested in outfitting park guests with VR headsets. The company has spent billions throughout its history creating highly detailed themed attractions in which to immerse visitors.

However, Disney has always explored cutting-edge technology, and Iger has acknowledged that future attractions are likely to involve augmented reality — blending digital and actual settings and action. In working outside its theme parks with this new *Star Wars*-themed attraction, the company will be giving VR a solid test run just beyond the gates.

—Dean Lamanna



A new guest transportation system called Disney Skyliner will connect several resort properties with Disney's Hollywood Studios and Epcot. COURTESY THE WALT DISNEY CO.

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Ohio State Fair ride accident impacting all aspects of industry

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

FAIRS



COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio officials investigating the amusement ride accident that killed one person and injured seven others at the Ohio State Fair July 26 were not releasing specifics as *Amusement Today* went to press.

Calls to the Ohio Highway Patrol, the entity leading the investigation, and to any investigator involved went unreturned.

The tragedy on the opening day of the fair involved a Fireball ride, manufactured by KMG, which is based in the Netherlands, and owned by fair carnival provider Amusements of America. One of the ride's six gondolas broke away from the swinging, spinning structure during operation, killing 18-year-old Tyler Jarrell.

At *AT* presstime, four of the seven injured remained hospitalized.

Various theories and opinions as to the cause of the accident, based largely on bystander video footage, emerged in its aftermath. By *AT*'s presstime, no overall official statement had been released about what led to the ride's failure — although KMG's own investigation identified "excessive corrosion" inside the affected gondola's connecting arm as the apparent cause.

There was an outpouring of support for the families involved. Amusements of America and KMG immediately released statements to that regard, as did several amusement industry associations.

2017 Ohio State Fair attendance drops 13 percent compared to 2016

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Officials with the Ohio State Fair reported approximately 801,031 people attended the fair this year during its run July 16-Aug. 6.

This was a 13 percent decrease from the 2016 total of 921,214 visitors.

"The last several years have seen attendance figures grow almost annually, but total attendance does fluctuate from year to year based on a number of factors," explained Virgil Strickler, fair general manager.

"This year, of course, was not a normal fair year," he noted. "Opening day's tragic ride accident, which closed the midway for several days, coupled with a few days of cool, rainy weather, certainly contributed to the dip in attendance.

"Nevertheless, we thank the hundreds of thousands of devoted fairgoers who supported this great end-of-summer tradition."

The day after the accident, Ohio Gov. John Kasich addressed reporters on the fairgrounds. "We can't speculate on what we'll find," he said. "What we do know is there will be lessons learned in one way or another that can then be passed on to many of the amusement parks and fairs all across America.

"This will not define the Ohio State Fair. [It] will carry on."

National media have reported on beefed up ride inspections and possible changes due to the accident.

Following are some of the developments reported in the wake of the accident:

- Immediately following the ride accident, KMG issued a statement. In that statement, the company said, "Until further details are known, operators of Fireball/Afterburner (FRB24) and Move-It (MVT24/MVT32) type amusement rides are instructed to close operations of the ride until further notice."

- On July 27, Tivoli Mfg. Ltd. released a statement noting: "The construction of the Fireball seat is the same design as the Spin Out vehicle (also designed by KMG B.V.). KMG B.V. has ordered the shutdown of all affected Fire-



A KMG Fireball ride in stationary (above) and operating (below) modes. AT FILE PHOTOS

ball and Spin Out type rides while the incident is under investigation.

"In conjunction with KMG B.V., Tivoli is also requiring the shutdown of all Spin Out (El Niño, Maelstrom, The Claw) Rides while KMG B.V. Completes their investigation.

"During this investigation all Spin Out rides manufactured by Tivoli Enterprises Ltd. are now subject to an inspection of the areas surrounding this attachment."

- On July 27, producers of the Delta Fair and Music Festival, Memphis, canceled their contract with Amusements of America to provide the midway during the Sept. 1-10 run.

- Records released showed that Amusements of America had just previously operated the Fireball at the New Jersey's State Fair Meadowlands, June 22-July 9. In New Jersey, the Department of Community Affairs is responsible for inspecting all carnival rides. Every ride is required to undergo a series of inspections that start when it is assembled for the first time, followed by daily inspections when the machine is in use.

- Documents made available on the Ohio Department of Agriculture website showed that Amusements of America's Fireball ride had been inspected several times over the course of several days as it was being assembled on the state fairgrounds. The documents showed that



the ride passed inspection.

In addition, the available Ohio documents, which go back to 2014, showed the ride received annual visual weld inspection of structural components and an ultrasonic examination of gondola pins by an independent engineering firm. The ultrasonic examination is designed to detect flaws, and no defects were found in either inspection.

- On Aug. 7, KMG representatives conducted their own investigation of the broken ride. The company released a statement which said "excessive corrosion" caused the arm to break apart.

Albert Kroon, product manager for KMG, elaborated in the statement that "excessive corrosion on the interior of the gondola support

beam dangerously reduced the beam's wall thickness over the years" and "led to the catastrophic failure of the ride during operation."

- The North Carolina Department of Labor issued a memo to all amusement device owners stating that, effective Aug. 14, "all owners of amusement devices designed with tubular steel components such as sweeps, structural supports, or tubular steel used in direct connection to passenger carriers, are required to be tested for structural defects by a certified nondestructive company. This requirement will be conducted annually in addition to what is required by the manufacturer of record for all devices having tubular steel components in its design."

Alameda County Fair, California State Fair draw hundreds of thousands

AT: Pam Sherborne
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FAIRS

PLEASANTON, SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Two of the state's top fairs wrapped up in July, with one showing an attendance increase and the other falling short of 2016 figures.

The **Alameda County Fair**, Pleasanton, which ran June 16-July 9, drew 463,783 fairgoers this year, up from the 450,806 in 2016. The California State Fair, Sacramento, dropped from 673,237 last year to 636,628.

"We can't just pinpoint one thing," Darla Givens, California State Fair's media director was quoted as saying immediately after the fair.

She said it was hard to find that one particular thing that may be keeping fairgoers away from the state fair event. This year the fair experienced eight days out of 17 where temperatures rose into triple-digits.

The **California State Fair** has experienced a drop in attendance since 2015, which saw 787,833 people.

The Alameda County Fair extended its days this year, opening on a Friday instead of the following Wednesday, then staying open all of the days during its final week. The fair traditionally closes on Mondays and Tuesday and did that

the first two weeks this year.

"It's been one of the best fairs in every way," said Alameda County Fair CEO Jerome Hoban. "We sincerely appreciate the community's enthusiasm and support for the first-ever Opening Day Cattle Drive and Western Weekend."

Hoban said other highlights this year included the concert lineup, the Fourth of July celebration, live Action Sports and a great season of horse racing.

Other popular events included an RV Demolition and the 4th annual Snackdown, which crowned Doritos Corn on the Cob the new Grand Champion. Other top winners included the Deep-Fried Mac & Cheese Balls, Chicken & Rice Pineapple Bowl, and the Gelato Donut Sandwich.

Butler Amusements provides the midways for both the Alameda County Fair and the California State Fair. There were about 53 rides at the Pleasanton fair. New rides there were the Inversion, manufactured by KMG, and The Jumping Jungle Funhouse, manufactured by Kid Power.

Butler brings in 70 rides to the State Fair. New this year there was Alien Invasion, manufactured by Wisdom Industries, and the Super Shot Drop



Tower, manufactured by Larson International and ARM.

Food sales this year at the State Fair grossed an estimated \$8.5 million and there was an estimated \$4.2 million in carnival ride sales.

One new event this year at the California State Fair was the dedication of "Best of CA: Celebrating Farm Workers' Rich Contributions to Food and Agriculture."

Returning was soccer, with the Sacramento Republic FC playing two games at Papa Murphy's Park.

Butler Amusements provided about 70 rides to the California State Fair, Sacramento. Right, the Super Shot, manufactured by ARM and Larson International, was new to the California State Fair this year. Below, the California State Fair, Sacramento, did experience a drop in attendance, but those who did attend enjoyed the sights and sounds as well as transportation on the overhead tram seen here.

AT/PAM SHERBORNE



FAST FACTS

By the Numbers:

Alameda County Fair, Pleasanton, Calif.
June 16 - July 9

Carnival: **Butler Amusements**

53: Number of Rides

60 Cowboys, 150 steers: Opening Day Cattle Drive

16,998: BBQ Turkey Legs Consumed

17,834: Competitive Exhibit Entries

32,904: Funnel Cakes Consumed

34,103: Corn Dogs Consumed

45,662: Horse Racing Track Attendance

463,783: Attendance

\$703,574.26: Jr. Livestock Auction:

By the Numbers:

California State Fair, Sacramento
July 14 - July 30

Carnival: **Butler Amusements**

56 counties out of 58: Number of Counties Represented

70: Number of Rides

18,100: Turkey Legs Consumed

19,931: Competitive Exhibit Entries

32,500: Horse Racing Track Attendance

35,100: Funnel Cakes Consumed

75,000: Corn Dogs Consumed

\$270,344: Jr. Livestock Auction

636,628: Attendance



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Canada's Calgary Stampede and K-Days report successful runs

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

FAIRS

CALGARY, EDMONTON, Alta. — Two Alberta, Canada, fairs reported increases in attendance this year over 2016, pleasing fair officials and crowds alike.

The 2017 **Calgary (Alta.) Stampede**, July 7-16, drew 1,214,972 people representing a 10.4 percent increase over 2016's rainy fair.

K-Days, Edmonton, Alta., July 19-30, drew 816,000 visitors this year. That is a 13,000 increase over 2016.

Stampede organizers credited warmer and sun-

nier weather as an attendance booster as well as special events that surrounded Canada's 150th birthday. Fair officials also pointed to a series of promotions on ticket prices that had to attribute to the increase in visitor numbers.

"You actually see an increase in an audience that normally couldn't afford to come down, or pick special days for their opportunity," said Calgary Stampede CEO Warren Connell.

But, even with some especially steep ticket discounts this year, including a \$1.50 entrance fee on July 11 to cele-

brate Canada's 150th birthday, Connell said total revenue is "right on par" with the past two years.

After last year's dismal attendance due to poor weather, crowds were back with a vengeance this year. On July 8 this year, 107,692 people passed through the gates, more than 10,000 better than the same day a year ago.

Danielle Savoni, public-relations manager for the Stampede, said the public embraced all that was new on the grounds.

"Craft breweries have been big and music at the Coca-Cola Stage," Savoni said.

She added that many Stampede-goers were from the U.S., who ventured across the border to enjoy the fun and Canada's low dollar that hovered around \$.78US during times throughout the fair.

Rodeo collected big crowds as the best in the world competed for up to \$2 million in prize money. Chuck wagon teams raced for more than \$1 million.

NAME (North American Midway Entertainment) provided the midway at the Stampede as well as for K-Days. The carnival provided about 60 rides to the Calgary event and just under 50 to K-Days.

It was during K-Days that



A competitive Pow Wow is a very popular event at K-Days, Edmonton, Alta. It is presented in partnership with the fair and the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation. COURTESY K-DAYS

NAME shut down its 2001 KMG Fireball after the Ohio State Fair, Columbus, ride accident involving that same ride. The carnival made a statement that the ride would not be put back into operation until its safety could be determined. NAME's Fireball had been recently refurbished.

Rain dampened attendance during K-Days first weekend, but improved as the days progressed.

"Mother Nature might have thrown us a curve ball the first weekend, but she came through for us," said Tim Reid, Northlands president and CEO.

Reid partly attributed the numbers to the inaugural K-

Days Rodeo. Other popular entertainment included 22 acts on the TD South Stage, a competitive Pow Wow presented in partnership with the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, roaming midway entertainment and a fully programmed EXPO Centre.

This year saw strong activation outside the K-Days grounds with several barbecues and pancake breakfasts. Many were held by community organizations looking to harness the excitement surrounding the city's largest summer festival.

As an ongoing tradition at K-Days, Northlands supports a variety of not-for-profit organizations.



N.A.M.E. (North American Midway Entertainment) provides the midway for both the Calgary (Alta.) Stampede and the K-Days, Edmonton, Alta., seen in this photo. Both fairs reported increases in attendances this year over the 2016 events. COURTESY K-DAYS

Rosedale Attractions and Shows having a good season

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

FAIRS

FISHERSVILLE, Va. — Rosedale Attractions and Shows has been playing the Augusta County Fair, Aug. 1-5, for 19 years and have enjoyed it every year.

"This is a night fair," said Rosedale Amusements' owner Tom Gaylin. "It is a smaller fair. We have about 20 rides here. It is really a nice fair."

AT visited Gaylin just days after the Ohio State Fair ride accident on July 26. He had had visits from local media wanting comments about the Ohio incident and ride safety. Gaylin said it had become tiring.

"You know, I have known Amusements of America (the Ohio fair carnival provider and owner of the Fireball) for a very long time," he said. "We operate in very similar ways. We have our children and our

grandchildren on the midway. They ride these rides. I will not operate a ride that I don't think is safe for my grandchildren. If there is a questions with operation, I will shut it down."

Gaylin said he is constantly upgrading, redoing and purchasing. For this season, he purchased a new Otterbacher bunk house and is having his Chance Zipper refurbished by Mike Featherston, Gold Star Manufacturing. Denny's Electronics is installing a light package on that ride.

He has new flags from Chestnut Identity Apparel and new canvas from Waterloo Tent and Tarp. He bought a used Larson International Electric 7 Tilt-A-Whirl from D & K Amusements.

Gaylin purchased about 17 rides from the now shuttered Billet Amusements. He kept six of them and is in the

process of refurbishing them. The remaining 11 rides helped him barter for a Tivoli Orbiter from Sherwood Amusements. He is now having that redone as well.

Rosedale Attractions, based in Baltimore, Md., plays five spots in Virginia, then heads back north. The Augusta County Fair is the first Virginia date, followed by the Richmond County Fair, Warsaw, Va., Aug. 8-12; Clark Co. Fair, Berryville, Va., Aug. 14-19; Chesterfield (Va.) County Fair, Aug. 25-Sept. 2; and Amelia (Va.) County Fair, Sept. 4-9.

The carnival then heads back to Maryland to finish up the season, which starts in April and goes through October.

Rosedale Attractions is a family business. On the midway with Gaylin is his wife, Barbara, and their twin sons Jason Gaylin (Dottie Gaylin) and Joey Gaylin. Their two

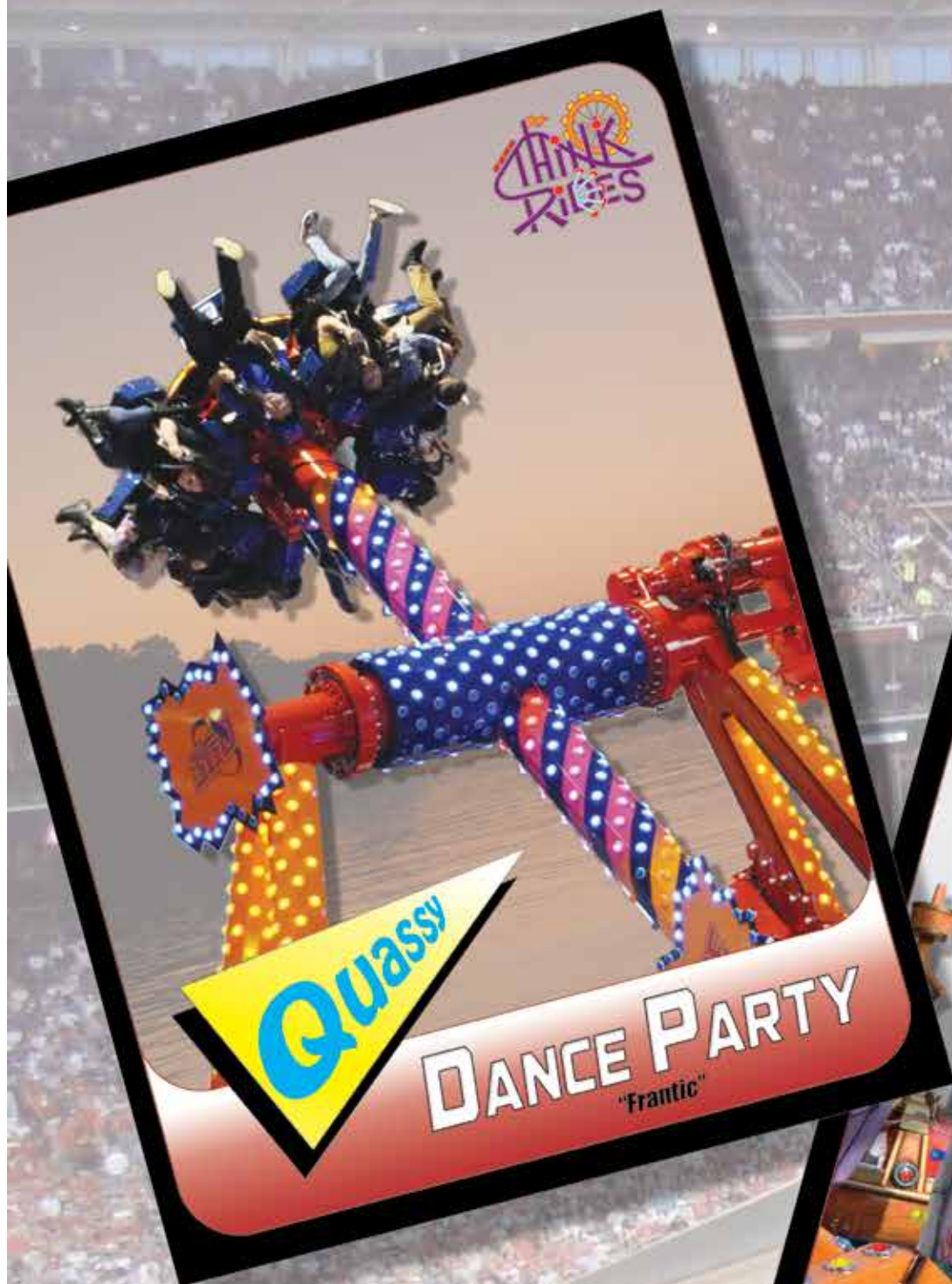


Rosedale Attractions' Tom Gaylin and his wife, Barbara Gaylin, are seen here with their grandsons, Aiden Gaylin, left, and Jordan Gaylin. They were on the midway of the Augusta County Fair, Fishersville, Va., Aug. 1-5. AT/PAM SHERBORNE

daughters, Nichole Gaylin-Smith and her husband, John Smith, and Michelle Gaylin Farrow and her husband, Ray Farrow, and their families also take part in the business.

Two other families Gaylin considers extended family are Bill and Sue Shreve and Kristy and Wayne Hinton. These families have game concessions and help move the show.

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On the Road: Powers Great American Midways



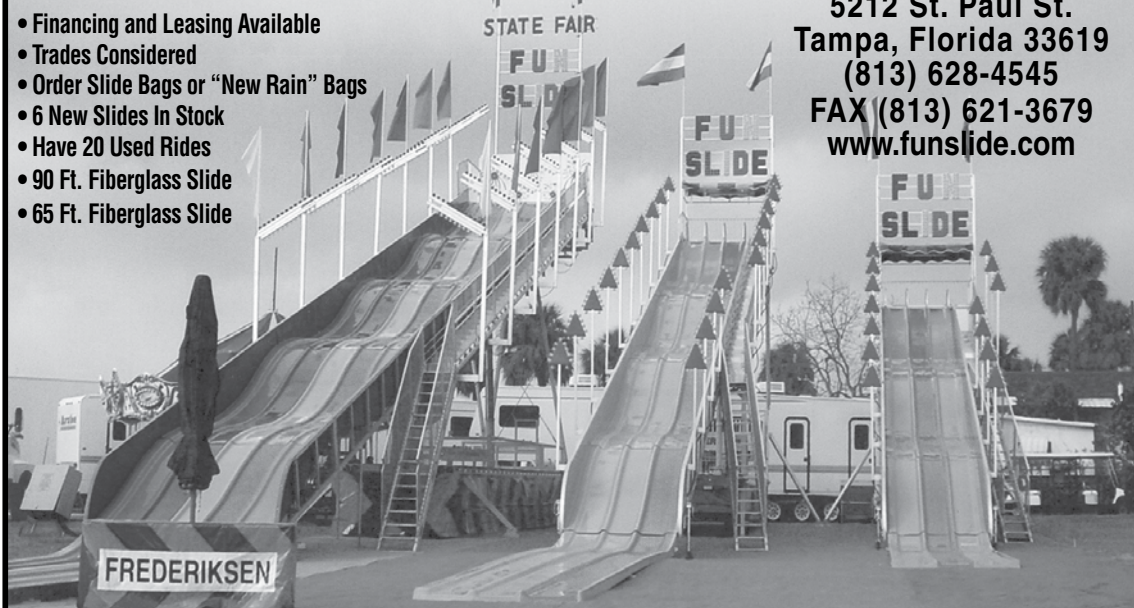
Powers Great American Midway personnel were on hand at the Big Butler Fair. Shown here are (l to r): Joe Zutter, Mark Janas, Charlie Corl, Debbie Powers, Dean Corl and Corky Powers. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

Right, Powers Great American Midway took procession of a new Kolmax-plus (Ostrava, Czech Republic) Dodgem Autoscooter ride for the 2017 season. Measuring 80 by 55 feet the 30-ton, one-trailer (including cars,) crowd pleaser is named Chop Shop. Below, the 162nd Big Butler Fair, Prospect, Pa. had 34 rides provided by Powers Great American Midway, who has been playing this spot the past 30 years. The nine-day event, always over the Fourth of July holiday, operates on a 150-acre site, eight miles west of Butler, Pa.
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MIDWAYLIGHTS

COMPILED: Pam Sherborne
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Officials at the **Kentucky State Fair**, Louisville, showed fairgoers many changes during its 2017 run, Aug. 17-2.

The midway was perhaps the biggest change. It was renamed Thrill Ville and was relocated on the main lot in front of Freedom Hall. **NAME** (North American Midway Entertainment) provides the midway at the fair.

Another big change was the new traffic express lane, which officials hoped would alleviate traffic tie-ups.

A new app was introduced by Kentucky State Fair officials aimed at helping fairgoers get their hands on advanced tickets to the fair. It was available on Google Play and the App Store. A fairgoer not only could get advanced tickets from the app, but they also were able to plan their fair trip with a complete schedule and discover Tastes of the Fair favorites. Beacon technology allowed users to see where they were in real time on a map of the fairgrounds. The app also found the easiest route to other locations at the fairgrounds, including bathrooms and food vendors.

Another fair, the **Illinois State Fair**, Indianapolis, continued its trek into the digital age. In 2016, the fair unveiled a new mobile app that allowed fairgoers to customize their visit to the state fairgrounds. This year, the fair offered an online payment option for gate admission, parking passes and mega passes with more features added as this year's fair dates approached. The Illinois State Fair ran August 4-20.

The fair was able to scan fairgoers' phones instead of fairgoers having to print hard tickets. Of course, that also was option through the app.

And, still another state fair offered a digital upgrade to fairgoers. **Magic Money LLC**, announced in July that its full-service Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) based event management system was to be utilized at the 2017 **Iowa State Fair**, which took place August 10-20 in Des Moines.

Fairgoers at the Thrill Park could easily access all rides and games simply by scanning their Magic Money wristbands. This year marked the first time the fair implemented digital software to facilitate ride and game payments.

Officials at the **Washington State Fair**, Puyallup, were set and ready to go at the first of August, announcing new and tried and true events.

Some of the new attractions this year include the best of Washington craft beer and music previewed daily with 24 taps. A beer created, with inspiration from The Fair, **Puyallup River Brewing** will debut a new brew at the End of Summer Bash, on Labor Day. The beer will then be sold exclusively at the Washington State Fair in various locations throughout the grounds.

The Giant Insect Adventure, a new paid exhibit, will let fairgoers enter into a world where insect models tower over humans 40 to 120 times larger than the insect's actual size.

Washington's Imagination Workshop is another new exhibit. Kids of all ages create, dig and build with a variety of tools and toys.

Back by popular demand is the Super Headquarters after being a hit last year. This exhibit invites fans to visit a variety of superheroes on particular dates. A schedule is provided by the fair.

The Washington State Fair Western Rodeo

Parade and Cattle Drive down one of Puyallup's major road arteries is set for Sept. 8. It includes equestrian drill teams, school marching bands, horse hitches and costume characters.

Funtastic Shows provides the midway with more than 70 rides and attractions.

The **Eastern States Expositions, the Big E**, is scheduled for Sept. 15-Oct. 1, and officials there are busy getting preparations in order.

Attractions and exhibits this year include the Michelangelo Sistine Chapel: The Exhibition, sponsored by **Uncommon USA**, Eastern States Exposition: A Walk Through History; Camel Kingdom; Everything that Matters in the Kitchen Cooking Show with Dianne Linderman; CARS, CARS, with a new group of collector, classic and custom cars lining the grounds, among just a few shows.

And, of course, fair foods are always a draw, and from the Big E signature desserts such as the Big E Cream Pull and Big Eclair, to The Big E Crazy Burger, there is an endless supply.

New 2017 foods include: Amy's Sweet Treats' Belgian Waffle Sandwich; Hofbrau Joe's Burger Bomb; the West Springfield Lions Club's Flatliner Burger; the Coffee Break's Deep Fried Holy Cannoli; Tots-A-Lot's Gourmet Tater Tots; the Deep South's Waffle Chicken Bites; Pop 'N Fresh's Pumpkin Pie Funnel Cake; Porky's BBQ Brisket Sundae; Burgundy Brook Café's Sweet Pepper Bacon; Deluca's Chicken Parmigiana Sandwich; and Hofbrau Joe's Clam Box will offer Fried Shrimp Tacos.

The Big E midway is provided by **NAME** (North American Midway Entertainment).

NAME (North American Midway Entertainment) provides the midway at the Kentucky State Fair.

A combination of good weather, Clydesdales and family entertainment helped push fair attendance over 200,000 for the first time at the **Monroe (Mich.) County Fair**, July 30-Aug. 5.

A total of 33,032 people came to the 2017 fair on its final day Saturday, boosting the total for the entire seven-day fair to 205,230.

And the Clydesdales "definitely" had something to do with it, said **Darryl Diamond**, who completed his first fair as manager after working with 4-H for a couple of years.

Fair attendance easily topped the previous record of 192,647 set last year by 12,583 and the 190,158 people who came in 2015.

NAME (North American Midway Entertainment) provided the midway.

The giant Ferris wheel co-owned by **Frank Zaitshik**, **Wade Shows**, and **Michael Wood** made its debut on the independent midway of the **Wisconsin State Fair**, West Allis, Aug. 3-13.

It was the first of three consecutive appearances at state fairs for the new attraction over the next 30 day. The Lamberink RL45 debuted at the 2017 **Florida State Fair**, Tampa, in February.

It has been off the road since so that the owners could install lights on the 36 gondolas and rerack it to fit 11 trailers.

After the Wisconsin event, the wheel was to be part of the independent midway at the **Minnesota State Fair**, St. Paul, Aug. 24-Sept. 4. The third spot is the **Oklahoma State Fair**, Oklahoma City, Sept. 14-24. Wade Shows provides that midway.

California Mid-State Fair a success

PASO ROBLES, Calif. — Multiple new attractions, a new midway provider and the new 100,000-sq.-ft. Paso Robles Pavilion helped boost attendance at the 2017 **California Mid-State Fair**.

The unofficial attendance was 428,615 during the July 19-30 run.

FAIRS

The lower ride prices were one reason for selecting Helm and Sons. Individual ride tickets were priced at 50 cents each and the number of tickets per ride varied from four to 12. The maximum price per ride regardless of the ride (even the largest, most extreme rides), were no more than \$6.

Food and beverage sales saw a jump in 2017 over 2016, as well, with food sales increasing 14 percent and beverage sales up 19 percent.

Revenue from the 2017 livestock auctions also were up compared to last year. A total of \$2,483,911 was raised on 851 animals. Of that, \$445,000 came from the Replacement Heifer Sale, a 29 percent increase, and \$2,038,911 came from the Junior Livestock Auction.

Livestock entries also were up this year.

For the first time in 49 years, more than 90,000 concert tickets were sold for the 2017 Bud Light Concert Series.

Attendance at the annual Cattlemen & Farmers Day hit an all-time high with over 1,000 lunch and dinner tickets sold.



Helm and Sons Amusements, Inc., of Colton, Calif., was selected as the new carnival provider for the 2017 fair. The carnival brought in almost 35 rides to the fair.

"I can't even begin to tell you the number of compliments we received regarding the new carnival this year," said Mid-State Fair CEO Michael Bradley.

Despite having lower overall ride prices than in past years, the new carnival generated \$555,500 in revenue for the fair, slightly above the 2016 figure.

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BUSINESS, SAFETY & CLASSIFIED

▶ OBITUARIES — Page 38 / MARKETWATCH — Page 39 / SAFETY — Page 43-45 / CLASSIFIEDS — Page 46

NEAAPA Summer Meeting held at Edaville Family Theme Park

AT: Ron Gustafson
Special to Amusement Today

CARVER, Mass. — Edaville Family Theme Park was the host of the New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions' (NEAAPA) Annual Summer Meeting on July 25.

More than 80 members were registered for the day-long event, sponsored by member suppliers Premier Rides, Baltimore, Md., Dippin Dots, Paducah, Ky., and NXT Capture, Orlando, Fla.

Following late-morning registration, the group gathered for lunch at the park's barbecue pavilion where General Manager Brenda Johnson and CEO/President Jon Delli Priscoli welcomed everyone to the property.

During his talk, the park president pointed out that Walt Disney once visited the property decades ago as Disney was developing plans for his California theme park, Disneyland. He also told the gathering that the many antiques prominently displayed throughout Edaville are from his private collections. The vast compilation includes toy trains, dolls, signs and vintage farm equipment in the park museum.

Tours of the historic park, which is surrounded by cranberry bogs, took place after lunch with Johnson and Delli Priscoli leading the way.

NEAAPA members were treated to a firsthand look at how Edaville, purchased in 2002 by Delli Priscoli, has changed in recent years.

Adjacent to the Cran Central Junction building stands a vintage 1953 Eli Bridge 60-foot Ferris wheel overlooking the pond and park entrance. During the holiday season, the ride



Jon Delli Priscoli (right) took NEAAPA members on a tour of Edaville during the organization's summer meeting at the Carver, Mass., park. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON/NEAAPA

provides a spectacular view of Edaville's Christmas Festival of Lights, which features more than 18 million lights.

The Cran Central ride area further back into the property includes classics such as an Eli Bridge Scrambler, Sellner Tilt-A-Whirl and a rare Allan Herschell Astronaut. The park recently added a Spinning Lady Bug Coaster from SBF/VISA Group of Italy. The ride was supplied by Rides 4U of Somerville, N.J., a NEAAPA member.

In 2015 Edaville opened Thomas Land, based on the popular Public Broadcasting cartoon series *Thomas & Friends* about a number of steam locomotives that work on the fictional island of Sodor.

"I completed the project in six months," the park owner said of the massive expansion which includes 11 new rides, shops and a show featuring the trains. The mix of family rides in Thomas Land are from Zamperla, another NEAAPA supplier member.

Of course, the star attraction at the park is riding aboard the Edaville Railroad pulled by Thomas himself. Many NEAAPA

members took in the leisurely excursion during the afternoon.

More than 30 attended the association's board meeting at 4 p.m. in the Thomas Land Party Room with NEAAPA President Dorothy Lewis presiding.

A traditional cocktail hour followed with dinner served after the park closed at 6 p.m. in a tented area overlooking the pond. Featured speaker during dinner was Gina Romano vice president, marketing and sales, of new NEAAPA member supplier Martin & Vleminckx of Haines City, Fla.

As a board member of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions' Foundation, she discussed the value of the foundation and member properties in helping to shape the leaders of tomorrow within the industry.

NEAAPA members will gather again during the IAAPA Attractions Expo in November in Orlando, Fla. NEAAPA has a booth on the trade show floor, an annual luncheon and the Tom Morrow Dinner & Social, honoring the late past president, who was also known as Mr. NEAAPA.

• www.neaapa.com.



This Eli Ferris wheel provided a backdrop as the NEAAPA Summer Meeting at Edaville drew to a close. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON/NEAAPA



An afternoon tour included the Edaville shops, where historic trains and a calliope (foreground) are being restored. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON/NEAAPA



More than 30 were on hand for the NEAAPA board of directors meeting at Edaville. COURTESY RON GUSTAFSON/NEAAPA

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Marty Sklar, legendary Walt Disney Co. Imagineer, dies at 83

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — **Martin A. “Marty” Sklar**, a trailblazing **Disney Imagineer**, died at his Hollywood Hills home on July 27. He was 83.

During a career spanning 54 years, Sklar worked closely with **Walt Disney** and was instrumental in creating, enhancing and expanding Disney’s creative vision. Honored as a Disney Legend in 2001, he was known and revered by fans around the world for his work bringing Disney’s theme parks to life.

“Everything about Marty was legendary — his achievements, his spirit, his career,” said **Bob Iger**, chairman and CEO of **The Walt Disney Co.** “He embodied the very best of Disney, from his bold originality to his joyful optimism and relentless drive for excellence. He was also a powerful connection to Walt himself. No one was more passionate about Disney than Marty; we’ll miss his enthusiasm,

grace and indomitable spirit.”

A native of New Brunswick, N.J., who later made his way to California, Sklar was a UCLA student and aspiring sports journalist as editor of the university’s *Daily Bruin* newspaper when he was recruited to create *The Disneyland News* for Walt’s new theme park in 1955. After graduating the following year, he joined Disney full-time and would go on to serve as Walt’s right-hand man — scripting speeches, marketing materials, and a film showcasing Walt’s vision for **Walt Disney World** and **Epcot** in Central Florida.

During this early period, Sklar also joined **WED Enterprises**, the forerunner of **Walt Disney Imagineering**, and later became its creative leader — spearheading the development of Disney theme parks and attractions for the next three decades. He retired as executive vice president and Imagineering Ambassador



Martin A. Sklar

on July 17, 2009: Disneyland’s 54th birthday.

Disney marked the occasion by paying tribute to Sklar with the highest recognition in the company’s parks and resorts division, dedicating a window in his name on Disneyland’s City Hall.

Describing him as “the ultimate Disney Imagineer and Cast Member,” **Bob Chapek**, chairman of **Walt Disney Parks and Resorts**, recalled of Sklar: “From his days working as an intern with Walt to engaging with fans

at [this past July’s] D23 Expo, Marty left an indelible mark on Disney parks around the globe and the guests who make memories every day with us. He was one of the few people fortunate to attend the opening of every single Disney park in the world, from Anaheim in 1955 to Shanghai just last year.”

Added **Bob Weis**, president of Walt Disney Imagineering: “Marty was one of Walt’s most trusted advisors and helped turn his most ambitious dreams into reality. For us, it’s hard to imagine a world without Marty, because Marty is synonymous with Imagineering. His influence can be seen around the world, in every Disney park, and in the creative and imaginative work of almost every pro-

fessional in the themed entertainment industry.”

Sklar’s impact and achievements were recognized with a number of prestigious awards and accolades, including the Lifetime Achievement award from the **Themed Entertainment Association**, induction into the Hall of Fame of the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions**, and the prestigious Professional Achievement Award from **UCLA**.

Sklar is survived by his wife of 60 years, Leah; a son, Howard; a daughter, Leslie; and four grandchildren.

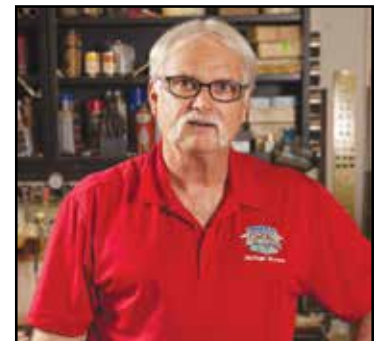
Memorial donations in Sklar’s name may be made to Ryman Arts at www.ryman-arts.org.

Sally Corporation mourns death of Harold Esposito

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — **Sally Corporation** announced the passing of a key team member and friend: Animation Supervisor and long-time employee **Harold Esposito**, who died suddenly on Aug. 4.

“For over 30 years, Harold was a vital member of the Sally family. We lost a great friend and brother today,” said CEO **John Wood**. “Throughout his career he led the way as we developed animatronic figures and show action equipment for parks around the world. He always embodied a can-do spirit that helped us design and develop extraordinary creations in our animation department.”

Harold seemed to be born with innate problem-solving mechanical skills and always maintained a willingness to mentor others along the way. He began his career with the **Disney Imagineers**, producing figures for **Epcot** and **Tokyo Disneyland**. In the early ‘80s he returned to Jacksonville and joined the Sally team. We were extremely fortunate to have him



Harold Esposito

as a member of our family. His memory will be cherished by all who were blessed to know him.”

“Harold was an extraordinary, one-of-a-kind leader who envisioned some of Sally’s most memorable and loved animatronics,” said **Todd Gillrup**, Sally’s VP of operations. “Harold led his fabrication team with lifelong industry experience and brilliant imagination.”

Esposito’s colleagues also noted that he was commonly known for his quirky personality, motorcycle riding, practical jokes, an occasional craft beer with friends, and especially his love for his wife, Margaret.

Obituary clarification

The obituary of theme park designer Ira West in the July issue of Amusement Today contained some inaccuracies. West did not work as a film industry set designer. He had a bachelor’s degree in industrial design from UCLA and his first full-time job, following his service in the U.S. Navy, was at Cannell & Chaffin interior design in Los Angeles. Additionally, West lived in the L.A. coastal community of Pacific Palisades. He continued designing theme parks well into the 1990s.



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MARKETWATCH



COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 08/10/17	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	32.30	35.09	23.33
Merlin Entertainments Group/ Legoland	MERL	LSE	463.90	537.50	422.5
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	64.25	72.56	56.23
Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	40.73	42.18	30.02
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	101.35	116.10	90.31
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.81	1.77	0.73
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	67.75	81.61	65.50
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	1138.00	1282.00	950.00
Haicahang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	1.69	1.95	1.53
Lefoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	8.13	9.00	7
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	30.51	34.53	23.38
Parques Reunidos Servicios Centrales S.A.	ES:PQR	MCE	15.86	17.45	11.99
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	12.68	20.13	11.1
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	54.51	65.19	47.61
DreamEast Group Ltd.	HK:0593	SEHK	13.10	14.2	12.5
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	605.00	676.00	425.00
Village Roadshow	VRL	ASX	3.99	5.45	3.22

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—SOURCES: Bloomberg.com; Wall Street Journal

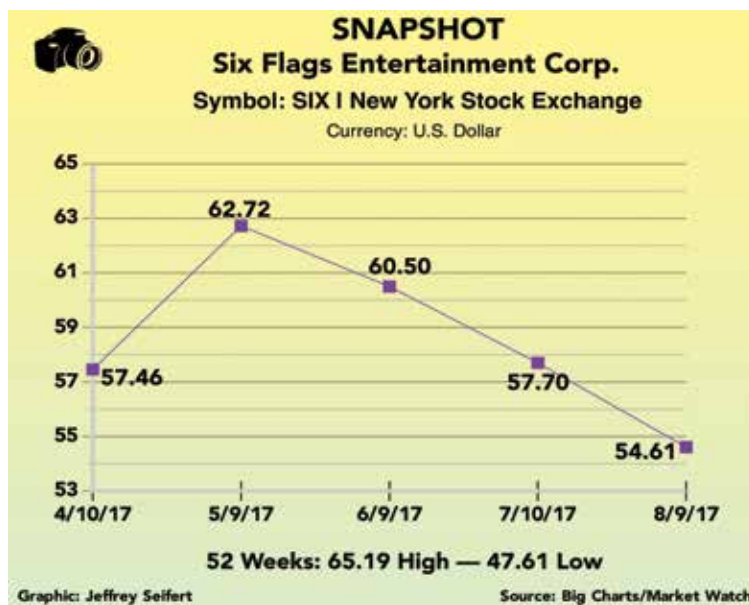
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West Coast	\$2.747	+\$0.293
California	\$2.930	+\$0.223

CURRENCY

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1.2693	CAD (Canadian Dollar)



BUSINESS WATCH

Disney reports Q3 and nine months earnings

BURBANK, Calif. — **The Walt Disney Company** (NYSE: DIS) reported on Aug. 8 quarterly earnings for its third fiscal quarter ended July 1, 2017. Diluted earnings per share (EPS) for the quarter decreased 5 percent to \$1.51 from \$1.59 in the prior-year quarter. Excluding certain items affecting comparability, EPS for the quarter decreased 2 percent to \$1.58 from \$1.62 in the prior-year quarter. Diluted EPS for the nine months ended July 1, 2017 decreased to \$4.55 from \$4.63. Excluding certain items affecting comparability, EPS for the nine months increased to \$4.63 from \$4.61. Parks and Resorts revenues for the quarter increased 12 percent to \$4.9 billion and segment operating income increased 18 percent to \$1,168 million. Operating income growth for the quarter reflected an increase at our international operations, while results at our domestic operations were comparable to the prior-year quarter. Segment results benefited from the timing of the Easter holiday, which fell in the third quarter of the current year compared to the second quarter of the prior year.

SeaWorld reports second quarter results

ORLANDO, Fla. — **SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.** (NYSE: SEAS), a leading theme park and entertainment company, reported on Aug. 8 its financial results for the second quarter and first half of 2017. During the second quarter of 2017, the company generated revenue of \$373.8 million, an increase of \$2.6 million, or 1 percent, compared to the second quarter of 2016. The increase in revenue reflects an increase in attendance for the quarter, due primarily to the shift in the timing of Easter into the second quarter of 2017. The company reported a net loss of \$175.9 million, or a loss of \$2.05 per diluted share in the second quarter of 2017. Net loss for the second quarter of 2017 includes a non-cash goodwill impairment charge of \$269.3 million related to the full impairment of goodwill for the company's SeaWorld Orlando park. In the second quarter of 2016, the company generated net income of \$17.8 million, or \$0.21 per diluted share. During the first half of 2017, the company generated revenue of \$560.1 million, a decrease of \$31.3 million, or 5 percent, compared to the same period in 2016.

Cedar Fair reports second quarter results

SANDUSKY, Ohio — **Cedar Fair Entertainment Company** (NYSE: FUN), announced on Aug. 2 results for the second quarter ended June 25, 2017, discussed attendance and guest spending trends through July and declared a quarterly cash distribution. For the quarter ended June 25, 2017, net revenues increased 1 percent, or \$5 million, to a record \$393 million compared with \$388 million in 2016. This increase reflects a 2 percent, or 134,000-visit, increase in attendance and a 3 percent, or \$1 million, increase in out-of-park revenues when compared with the second quarter of 2016. Average in-park guest per capita spending was comparable with the same period last year. Excluding a non-core, stand-alone water park that was closed in September 2016, attendance on a same-park basis increased 3 percent, or 203,000 visits. Today, the company also announced the declaration of a cash distribution of \$0.855 per LP unit, which is consistent with its targeted annualized distribution rate of \$3.42 per LP unit. The distribution will be paid on September 15, 2017 to unitholders of record as of September 6, 2017.

Six Flags reports second quarter revenue

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** (NYSE: SIX), recently announced that for the quarter ended June 30, 2017, revenue increased \$15 million or 4 percent, as compared to the same period in 2016, to \$422 million. This was primarily driven by a 5 percent increase in attendance to 9.5 million guests and an 18 percent increase in sponsorship and international licensing revenue, partially offset by a 2 percent decline in guest spending per capita. Adjusting for the approximately 380,000 guest visits that shifted from the first quarter to the second quarter due to the timing of Easter, second quarter 2017 attendance grew 1 percent.

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MUSEUM PROGRESS REPORT

This space is provided courtesy of Amusement Today, a corporate partner of the National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives.

ACE members tour NRCMA's building progress

Members of the American Coaster Enthusiasts (above) hailing from five states recently paid a visit to the NRCMA storage/archival facility in Plainview, Texas, while also visiting two traditional Texas parks: Joyland and Wonderland. They were visibly impressed by the displayed collection and found the forward momentum incredibly encouraging. Below are two views of the growing vehicle and signage collections currently on display at the facility.

AT/TIM BALDWIN, GARY SLADE



THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

Presented by the National Roller Coaster Museum

AT: Richard Munch



SEPTEMBER

•**1968:** The 'Greatest Ride Ever Built', the Cyclone Racer, ended its 38 year reign at **Long Beach**, California, on September 15, 1968, when it gave its last ride. Over the next month, it was demolished for new road construction leading to the permanently docked **Queen Mary**. Ironically, in recent years, much has been written about the twin-tracked coaster, designed by **Frederick Church** in 1929. Several news articles have claimed there may be plans in the works to bring back the giant coaster. Although it would be in a new location, time will tell if politicians and city representatives might see the benefit of recreating something that remains in the minds of its citizens, as a tool to bring tourism to the city.

•**1971:** On September 6, **Coney Island**, the river front amusement park in East Cincinnati, Ohio, officially closed. It opened on June 21, 1886 as **Ohio Grove**, the Coney Island of the West - the name was later shortened to simply Coney Island. Because of the countless flooding from the Ohio River during the eight decades of operation, **Taft Entertainment** had the opportunity to purchase the property in 1969. The following year, a new enterprise named **Kings Island**, was already under construction in Mason, Ohio, replacing the famous amusement center. While many of the park's rides were moved to the new location, Coney Island's last wood coaster, the 1947 Shooting Star, was razed although partially recreated in the new park with the Racer - as a high capacity twin tracked racing coaster. Coney Island eventually reopened in 1973 utilizing its enormous pool and picnic venues.

•**1977:** Taking a small pay cut, **Tom Rebbie** saw potential in taking on a new position with the **Philadelphia Toboggan Company** in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. On Sept. 19, Rebbie worked drilling holes in the floor boards of new coaster cars for \$4.25 per hour (he had left a job that paid \$12 more a week in salary). Under the direction of company president **Sam High III**, Rebbie assumed the position of General Manager in 1985. Rebbie purchased the company outright with a partner in 1991, changing the name to **Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters**. The world's oldest roller coaster company moved to a larger facility in nearby Hatfield in 1999. Rebbie has kept up with the industry with new products such as the **PTCI 360 Coaster Cars** and the **Accessible Transfer Seat** (now patented). One could almost say that Rebbie has never looked back during his successful 40-year stint in the amusement industry.

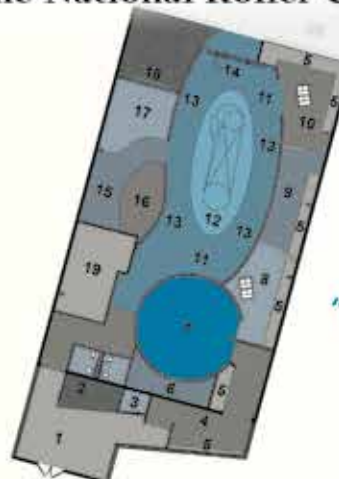
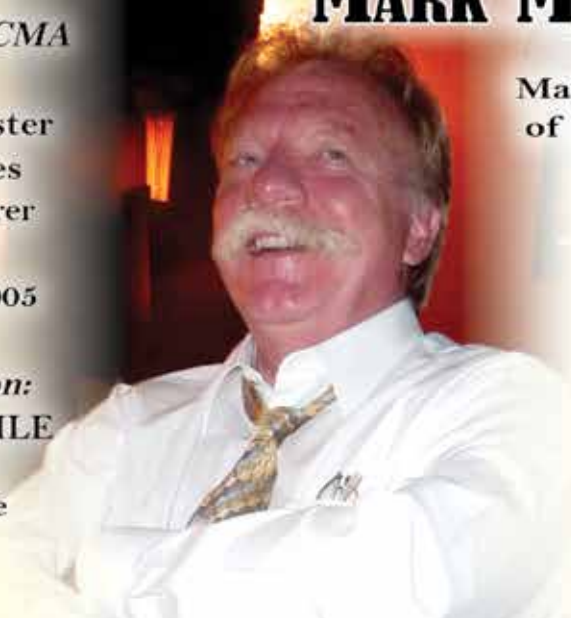
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Ride Entertainment receives 2017 Bright Lights Award

STEVENSVILLE, Md. — Ride Entertainment Group recently announced that its prolific and pioneering work in the attractions industry earned the company the 2017 Bright Lights Award for Innovation and Entrepreneurship from Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot.



The Comptroller's Bright Lights Award recognizes and celebrates innovation in the private and nonprofit sectors. One company from each of Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City were honored. Headquartered at the Chesapeake Bay Business Park in Stevensville, Ride Entertainment received the Bright Lights Award for Queen Anne's County.

"We have a great commitment to developing world-class entertainment systems, and we're honored to represent Queen Anne's County and the state of Maryland as leaders in our industry," said Ed Hiller, CEO of Ride Entertainment. "We're an adventure and amusement powerhouse that came from humble beginnings, so we're excited to receive this recognition and make our home state proud."

The company is known for its many record-breaking roller coasters and award-winning family attractions including Skycoaster, the world's most popular thrill ride; the SeaGlass Carousel, located at the Battery in Manhattan, New York; hair-raising roller coasters at Dollywood and many others.

"Fueled by Ed Hiller's innovative and entrepreneurial spirit and with the help of his dedicated and hardworking employees, Ride Entertainment has become one of the world's largest entertainment sales enterprises," said Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot.

• rideentertainment.com

PEOPLE WATCH

Swanson named SeaWorld CFO

ORLANDO, Fla. — SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc., has named **Marc G. Swanson** as chief financial officer and treasurer. Swanson most recently served as SeaWorld's chief accounting officer, a position to which he was appointed in 2012. He is a member of the board of directors of the **SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund** and the board of trustees of the **Orlando Science Center**. SeaWorld also announced the appointment of **Elizabeth C. Gulacsy** as chief accounting officer, replacing Swanson. Gulacsy served previously as corporate vice president, financial reporting, for the company.



Swanson

Coca-Cola Orlando Eye hires new GM

ORLANDO, Fla. — The **Coca-Cola Orlando Eye** has announced that **Jacob Kristensen** has been hired as the attraction's new general manager. As general manager, Kristensen will oversee all operations for the Orlando Eye, including business development, marketing and engineering. "Jacob Kristensen is a welcome addition to the Coca-Cola Orlando Eye team," said **Patrick Connor**, southern general manager, **Merlin Entertainments**. "Kristensen's experience in the industry and proven track record for increasing profitability and attracting new audiences made him a prime candidate for this role." Most recently, he was the director of sales and development at the **Center of Science and Industry (COSI)** in Columbus, Ohio.



Kristensen

Stark joins Live Oak Bank

WILMINGTON, N.C. — **Live Oak Bank** has announced the promotion of **Marien Stark** as a loan specialist to the Family Entertainment Center lending team.

Her background in accounting and finance make her a perfect fit for this new role. Marien will join industry expert, **Ben Jones**, in helping entertainment and bowling centers identify financing opportunities to grow and update their businesses. "Marien brings the perfect blend of financial and lending experience to the Family Entertainment and Bowling Center lending team. With the growth of the industry overall, Marien is helping to expand our current reach and open new market segments. The depth she adds to the team will also ensure that our core business and existing customers are well cared for and supported," stated Ben Jones, FEC Lending general manager. Before joining the FEC team, Marien worked with Live Oak's eLending department. During this time, she focused on loans under \$350,000 for several industries but primarily served FEC borrowers.



Stark

Jackson named GM Legoland Fla.

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. — **Rex Jackson**, a marketing and sales executive who helped lead **Legoland Florida Resort** from a single theme park into a multi-day vacation destination, has been named the resort's new general manager, U.K. parent company **Merlin Entertainments Group** announced. Jackson joined the resort in 2014 as vice president of marketing and sales and will begin his new role Aug. 1, succeeding **Adrian Jones**. Jackson inherits responsibility for the day-to-day operation and strategic direction of the sprawling vacation resort, which has drawn millions of visitors from around the globe since it opened in 2011. "Rex is keenly aware of what makes the Legoland brand so special," Jones said, "and what makes our resort so incredibly unique among vacation destinations."



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Partnering with the industry on sensible regulation

Oklahoma labor commissioner rewrites state's ride safety rules

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. — As the mom of two growing boys, Melissa McLawhorn Houston is no stranger to amusement parks and water parks.

As the labor commissioner for the Oklahoma Department of Labor, she also happens to be responsible for overseeing the regulation and safety of amusement rides operating in the state.

Over the past year, Commissioner Houston — working with the industry and the state's five full-time ride inspectors — has carefully reviewed and revised Oklahoma's amusement ride and equipment regulations. The old rules, which had not been updated in over two decades, did not fit current business models.

"I'm an attorney and my background is in public policy, where I've done a lot of work in terrorism and public safety," said the former Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security chief of staff, a survivor of the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, who helped establish the first anti-terrorism legislation in the U.S.

"When I came into office as labor commissioner, I didn't know a lot about the amusement industry. But I am a mother



McLawhorn

and have spent time at amusement parks and on rides, so I was very interested in learning how we regulate them."

Houston discovered that Oklahoma was one of 30 states with state-level regulation over amusement rides, requiring registration and insurance verification as well as mandatory inspections.

"I was curious as to why we regulated the industry when other states do not. Honestly, I thought this was an area that we might deregulate completely, but the more I learned about it, the more I learned about the importance of reasonable regulation. And I was impressed by how operators in our state are so committed to safety."

Before making changes, Houston also wanted to understand whether government was being helpful or harmful to the



industry in Oklahoma.

"What it doesn't need is a regulator playing 'Gotcha!' or one who is trying to profit from the regulation," she said. "If there is mutual concern for the public's safety, then why can't we work together to create an environment that provides the best possible safety? My process is not just to spend time in the statutes and administrative rules, but to visit with the people impacted by this agency."

Indeed, seeking input from the industry was key. Houston told *Amusement Today* that she consulted with various amusement businesses around the state — including park owners, operators and rental companies — to determine what was working and what wasn't in order to draft new, sensibly categorized regulations designed to improve safety and lift some operator burdens.

Among those responding to her office's outreach effort were Frontier City and White Water Bay, both in Oklahoma City; Andy Alligator's Fun Park and Water Park in Norman; and, on the event side, the state capital's Oklahoma State Fair. "They thought it was good for the industry as a whole," said the commissioner.

From these initial meetings emerged a series of summits. "All members of the industry were invited to give us their input," Houston said. "Once we put together some initial drafts of the rules, we sent them back out to members of the industry for further input, which allowed us to change the rules again. It was a very open, very transparent process, and I tried to make sure we had a diversity of viewpoints."

The endeavor proved an ongoing education for the commissioner.

"Because the regulations hadn't been updated in more than 20 years, there wasn't really a distinction in statute," she said. "The whole regulatory environment had been creat-



Oklahoma Labor Commissioner Melissa McLawhorn Houston (above center) at Frontier City with her inspection and support team (from left): Allen McElyea, Jeffrey Day, James Choate, Paul Peepers, Brittoni Lantz, Jim Buck and Christina Foss. COURTESY OKLAHOMA DEPT. OF LABOR

ed around traveling carnivals. How many inspections you do, when you do the inspections — all of that. A permanent-site ride operator and an out-of-state, traveling carnival are different business models, as is the state fair in Oklahoma City. To have a regulatory environment that doesn't treat those different business models differently is problematic for both the industry and the regulator."

Previously, the Department of Labor's inspection fees were divided into two categories: Kiddie Rides and "everything else" — sometimes resulting in disproportionate and unfair inspection fees. Criteria recently developed by the commissioner and the department's inspectors have led to the following new amusement ride and equipment categories, which will help indicate the appropriate level of inspection and fee: Permanent, Temporary, Inflatable, Substantial, Water and Other.

"The inflatable industry is one we're continuing to work through," noted Houston, "because we do have an issue with too many inflatables that are not following the rules. Regulating that industry has been a challenge. Our inspection is once a year in the warehouse; it doesn't address when an inflatable is inflated, on site and staked. We did a summit specific to the issue of inflatable staking, and we brought in members of the industry for

their input. They've been so helpful in working with us on best practices."

In order to address the state's \$400,000-plus ride inspection program shortfall for fiscal year 2016, the commissioner's regulatory overhaul includes moving fees and penalties to administrative rule from statute, fee increases phased in over three years (at the industry's request), and a reconciliation of the program's revenue and expenditures every year. Rules to remove some inspection frequency burdens also have been put in place.

Additionally established is the Department of Labor's ability to hold bad actors accountable with fines. "That was something that I heard a lot from the industry — where you have people who are registering, providing insurance and doing everything right, and then you have somebody from out of state come in and set up and be gone within 48 hours. People could call and make a complaint, but there was really nothing in statute that we could do."

Emphasized Houston: "If we're issuing a fine, it's because somebody is not following the rules or is endangering the public. And the Department of Labor doesn't keep the fine money; it goes into our general revenue fund at the state legislature."

For the park patron side of the amusement safety equation, the Department of Labor

— prompted by operators — has addressed the issue of ride height restrictions through a Ride Awareness Month. The well-promoted campaign, held before school summer break, has found the department and the state school system partnering to convey the importance of obeying height restrictions posted on amusements.

The commissioner also acknowledged her agency's need to respond to larger industry developments, such as the tragic ride accident at the Ohio State Fair in July (see story, page 30).

"Every time a tragedy occurs, it causes us to pause and evaluate our policies to ensure we are doing everything we can to protect riders," she said. "As soon as we received word of the Ohio accident, we began researching whether the operator or ride, or similar rides, had operated in the state. We reached out to our stakeholders, including the Oklahoma State Fair, to share information and outline next steps."

Houston is unfazed by the debate over federal involvement in ride safety regulation.

"We've done a really good job of regulating this industry in a way that protects the safety of the public but is not overly burdensome," she said. "We've struck that balance, and I'm very proud of the work and updates that we've done. I think Oklahoma truly is a model for the rest of the country."



NEWS & NOTES

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We welcome the opportunity to meet colleagues at numerous industry events that take place during the fall season. You'll find a strong AIMS presence at the **Euro Attractions Show** in Berlin, Germany, and the **ASTM** meeting in Scottsdale, Arizona, both in October. Be sure

to stop by the **AIMS International booth #4527** during the **IAAPA Attractions Expo** in Orlando, Fla., November 14-17.

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