HIKING & OUTDOORS | KIDS & FAMILY | OPENINGS & CLOSINGS

Get Ready to Slide: Arlington's Slick City Action Park Is Opening This March

The new location is for activity-seeking parents, with thrills for all-ages slide lovers.

By Gloria Diez Giella | March 14, 2025



Talk about a pink slip. Slide your way to Arlington for a new concept park. **Courtesy of Slick City Action Park**

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Is it an amusement park? An indoor entertainment center? A trampoline park? Not quite. But a fresh new way to have fun is coming to Arlington this March when Slick City Action Park opens its doors. **Described on its website** as the world's first indoor slide and air court park, this 25,000-square-foot playground intends to bring on a slippery good time.

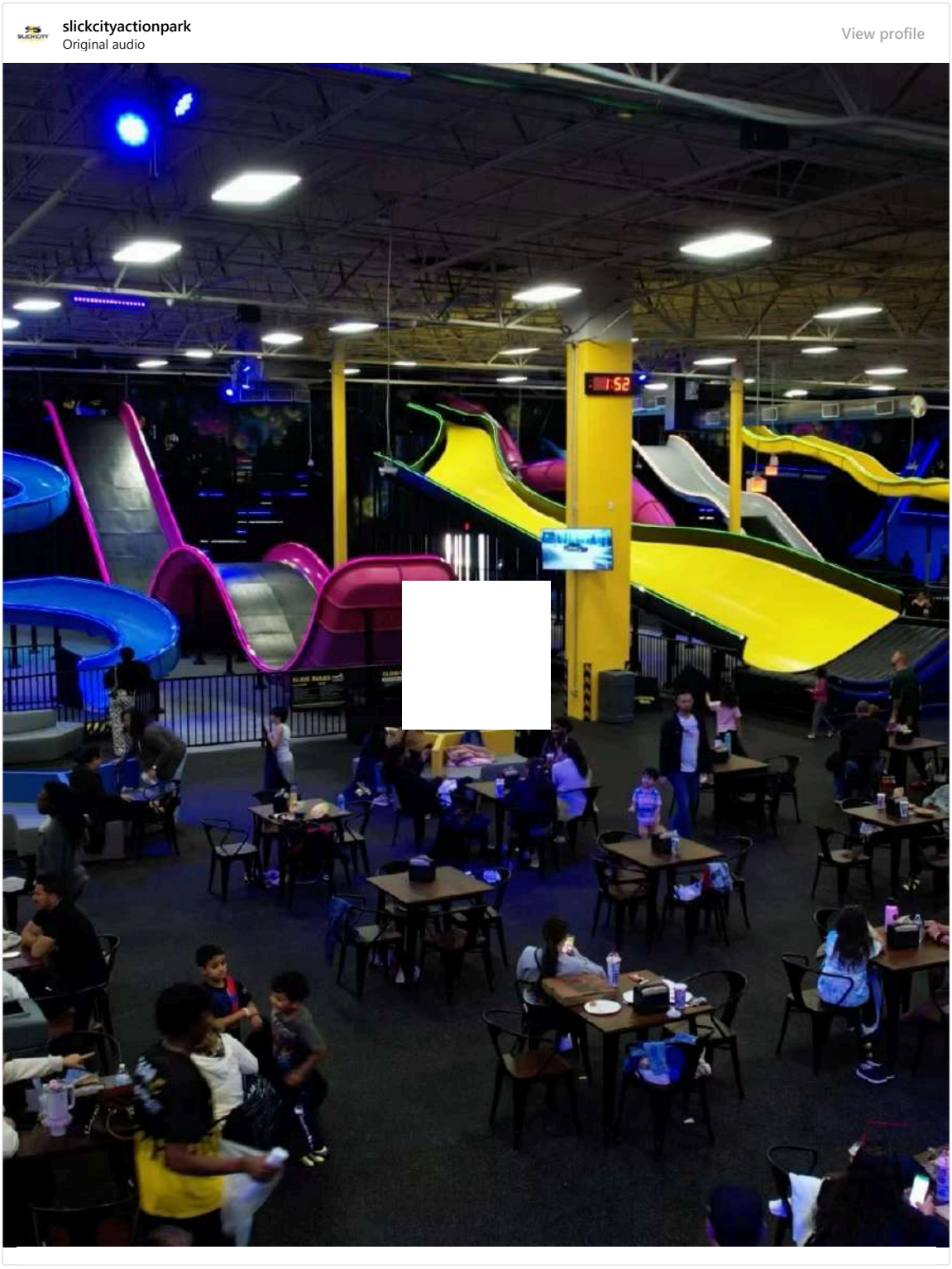
Arlington marks the company's second location in the DFW metro area. The first opened **in Denton** in September 2024 and is already packing in the crowds, with plenty of positive Google reviews to back it up. Slick City also has two other locations in the Houston area, plus seven more across the country and an impressive 17 under construction.

"Our growth in Texas has been nothing short of spectacular," said CEO Bron Launsby in an opening announcement release. "The community has given us an enormously warm welcome, and I'm proud to continue our expansion."

Slick City Action Parks was founded in 2021 when Launsby partnered with the inventor of Slick Slide, Gary Schmit, to bring a new and exciting concept to the adventure park industry. What makes

this “waterless slide park” unique is its proprietary technology that allows super slippery, non-friction slides. Guests use a special proprietary mat to slide through the different attractions. Another of Slick City’s crew’s goals is “keeping all innovation processes in-house, with 48 patents filed or granted for their proprietary slides so far.”

Some of the slides guests will find **at the Arlington location** are Rush, Mega Launch and Avalanche. A special shoutout goes to the Royal Flush, which will make its debut in the DFW market and is exclusive to this location in Texas – though it can be found at other Slick City parks, according to the release. Slick City Arlington will also have two action-packed sports air courts for basketball and dodgeball. (An air court is a mashup of sports courts and trampolines where participants play sports while bouncing.)



Slip Into Fun

Slick City Park, located at 1100 W. Arbrook Blvd. in Arlington, is open to all ages. While the actual slides are reserved for anyone 4 years old and older, toddlers under 45 inches tall have the Junior

Jungle, which allows them to start training their meteoric-jump skills from a young age. The youngest kids seem to be the group getting the most out of the park – according to users' reviews throughout the web – the Slick City team strongly insists that the slides will entertain all ages, and even hosts adults-only nights.

Adults Only Night is an “exclusive evening of entertainment tailored just for adults,” according to Slick City Park website. In this out-of-the-box soiree, guests can “unwind with friends or make new connections in a fun atmosphere designed for those 18 and older.”

The new park in Arlington is kid and adult-friendly.

Courtesy of Slick City Action Park

The Arlington location opens on March 15. Visitors can choose between a 90-minute pass for $25.99 or a 120-minute one for $30.99. Junior tickets (ages 3 and under) start at $13.99. Heads up: As with most indoor parks, you’ll need to buy anti-slippery branded socks. But hey, CitySocks are only $4.99 for a pair.

Slick City Action Park is also “generating 75+ job opportunities in the community,” said Kevin Dugal, vice president of operations of Slick City Action Park, in its opening announcement release. Slick City held a job fair in March looking for “enthusiastic, guest-focused individuals with passion and dedication to join the Slick City Action Park team,” it added in the statement. Applications are always welcome.

Whether or not slides are your thing, this will be a great addition to the entertainment options in Arlington, especially on Texas' devilishly hot or rainy days. The non-slide lovers in the group can access the park as spectators and, well, spectate (or catch up on text messages) without paying for a ticket.

POV: You're escaping work emails in Arlington.

Courtesy of Slick City Action Park

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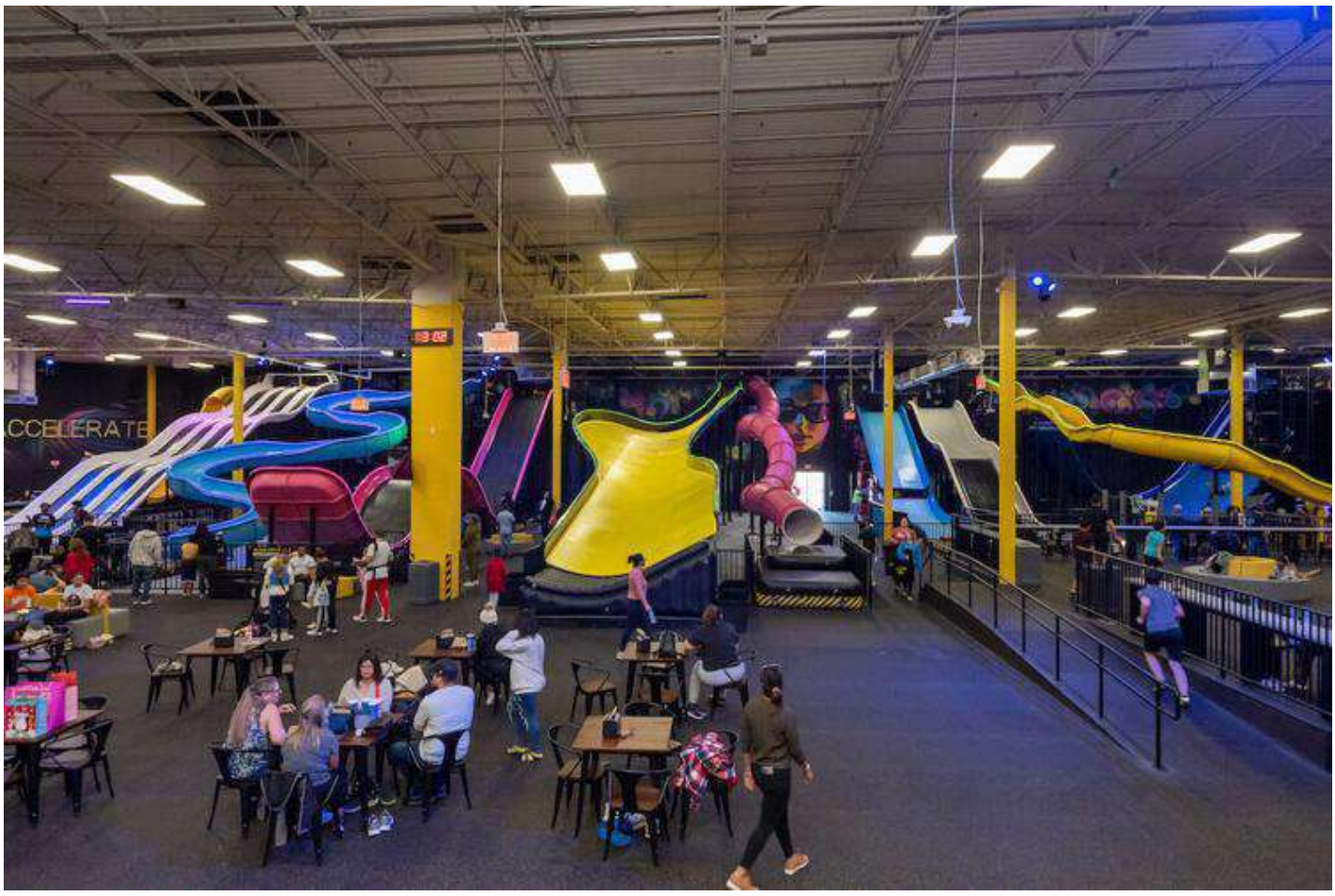
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Former Sky Zone Franchisee Launches Slick City as Slide-Centric Indoor Park Franchise

Matthew Liedke
Apr 2, 2024



Slick City, an indoor park concept featuring numerous types of slides, has launched its franchise system as it looks to grow.



Slick City Action Park founder and CEO Bron Launsby

The square footage of a Slick City park can var , with ouston's at 5 ,000, Denver's at 40,000, and St. Louis' at 30,000; the average, as listed in the franchise disclosure document, is 25,000 square feet.

Because of the size and equipment requirements, the initial investment to open a park is between $1.5 million and $3.1 million. While the upfront cost is high, Launsby said there's a good return on investment, with the brand's first location doing $4.1 million in sales.

"It's a pretty strong model of payback for the owner," Launsby said. "It is a larger investment than a lot of franchise sy: tems, but the profits are also much higher as well."

Launsby noted the vetting process and financial requirements are stringent to ensure there aren' parks that go undeveloped.

"We need to make sure they're a match for us, and they're pre-approved from a financing source," Launsby said. "We definitely have a variety of candidates. There are a number of them that have franchise e perience, but also a fair amount that don' . We have accountants, doctors, attorney: , real estate people, you name it. For me, it's about having somebody who really is passionate about the brand and not ust looking at it as an investment."

Indoor family entertainment franchises were especially challenged during the pandemic but have demonstrated stronger performance in recent years as sales rebound. Sky Zone, Altitude Trampoline Park and Launch Trampoline Park all posted double-digit sales in 2022 and are pushing new franchise development. Other emerging brands, such as KTR, which counts Olympic medal-winning skateboarder Jagger Eaton among its fans, are also looking to grow.

Matthew Liedke

Fun Across America – Slick City Action Park and Rush Xtreme Fun Park

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BY REPLAY EDITOR ON MARCH 1, 2025

COLUMNS, FAVORITES & SPECIAL REPORTS, FEATURED, FUN ACROSS AMERICA



Adrenaline Showdown

Slide Into Fun or Take the Extreme Challenge – You Decide!

by Barry Zelickson

Looking for indoor entertainment that delivers unforgettable thrills? Whether you're planning a family outing, hanging with friends or chasing your next adrenaline rush, the state of Arizona boasts two standout destinations that promise action-packed fun: Slick City in Peoria and Rush Extreme Fun Park in Chandler. These venues redefine what it means to have fun indoors, each offering a unique twist that will leave you and your crew buzzing. Let's dive in and see what makes these spots must-visit destinations!

Slick City Action Park – Peoria, AZ



Similar to a trampoline park concept, Slick City instead offers a revolutionary indoor “slide park,” delivering a one-of-a-kind experience. With 10 jaw-dropping slides, a multi-level playground, and activities for all ages, this Peoria hotspot promises pure, unfiltered joy.

This Slick City Action Park is their fourth location out of 12 parks already open at the time of this writing. However, they are rapidly expanding to a city near you with at least 12 more locations coming soon. Speaking of opening soon, as this issue hits your mailbox, a new Slick City is expected to be open near our home base in Maple Grove, Minn., which I can’t wait to check out.

Our team was fortunate to get a preview of this location, which wasn’t set to open until later in the week of our visit. Assistant GM Jack Stooks provided us with a first look at what this new facility has to offer. As Jack explained to Nate, in order to create the best sliding experience, both the slides and the mats have a special material to create a frictionless motion. As Jack put it, “You can really catch some air and speed making it a really fun time.” Jack should know as he helped build all the slides at this location and our host Nate agrees, finding that these slides aren’t just for kids, but super exciting for adults too!

Imagine a venue where the thrills begin the moment you walk in. Bright colors and sleek designs pull you into a world dominated by colossal slides that dare you to jump in. From the Mega Launch, which sends you soaring through the air onto a giant cushion, to the Blue Wave, a half-pipe slide that lets you glide back and forth on a massive drop, there’s no shortage of excitement. For the brave, the Royal Flush drops you 20 feet into an airbag, spinning you into a whirlwind of fun.

But it's not just about slides! The Sport Air Court is perfect for showcasing your dunking skills, while the Junior Jungle caters to younger adventurers. Hungry? The City Café has you covered with treats to refuel your energy.

With inclusivity and innovation at its core, Slick City is perfect for everyone – thrill-seekers, families and even spectators who prefer to watch the action unfold. Don't miss the chance to experience this fast-growing franchise that's already taking the U.S. by storm.

Rush Xtreme Fun Park – Chandler, AZ



Just a short drive from Peoria, Rush Xtreme Fun Park in Chandler offers a totally different vibe – high-energy adventures packed with trampolines, obstacle courses, and heart-pounding attractions. If you're ready to test your skills, courage, and endurance, this park delivers in spades.

CEO David Allen walked us through this sprawling indoor entertainment facility that combines trampolines, obstacle courses and a variety of other attractions. It's a high-energy destination that caters to kids, teens and adults looking for an action-packed day of fun.

During our tour, David explained “our goal is to have enough variety so when people come in, they love it so much they want to come back for more.” Mission accomplished, I say! As we entered the park, it was hard to decide where to start with so many options to choose from in this exciting setting.

Walking into Rush Xtreme feels like stepping into an action movie as it boasts a wide range of attractions designed to keep guests engaged and entertained including:

Trampoline Zones: Wall-to-wall trampolines encourage free jumping, flips and tricks. Separate areas for dodgeball and basketball allow for organized games and challenges.

Ninja Warrior Course: This obstacle course tests your strength, agility and endurance with a series of challenging elements, including balance beams, rope climbs and swinging obstacles.

Foam Pit: Perfect for practicing flips or simply diving in for a soft landing, the foam pit is a favorite among kids and teens.

Climbing Walls: Rush Xtreme features climbing walls of various difficulty levels, offering a vertical adventure for guests of all ages.

In addition, the venue has a variety of extreme attractions for the true adventurer. Hats off to Nate who was willing to give each of these unique experiences a try. First, he enjoyed the Drop Slide as he was lifted 30 feet in the air for the most exhilarating freefall you’ve ever experienced.

Then, he tackled the Stairway to Heaven. This is 13 columns, each one higher than the next, that you must step on until you get to the 13th. At that one, you’re almost 17 feet in the air! But don’t worry, the Rush Xtreme team gets you harnessed up for safety and if at any time you feel you have reached your limit, you can jump off and glide gently to the ground. For his next experience, Nate took to the sky walk course – what David says he believes is the largest indoor sky walk in the U.S. which will take you 20 -25 minutes to complete.

After working up an appetite, we had plenty of great food options to refuel us for our next adventures. Check out our Fun Across America episode to see Nate testing out the avocado fries with raspberry sauce (a must-try!). Finally, Nate decided to show his courage on the Leap of Faith as he jumped from the ledge, trying to catch and hold onto a punching bag several feet away on this challenging element. What do you bet, he succeeds and catches it?

Rush Xtreme Fun Park's expansive range of attractions and emphasis on extreme activities set it apart. The park's ability to cater to a wide age range and athletic skill level makes it a versatile destination for group outings, birthday parties, and team-building events. Rush Fun Parks have seven locations between Arizona and Texas with their newest, Rush Max, recently opening in San Antonio with another complete new set of attractions.

• • •

From the slide-centric thrills of Slick City to the extreme adventures at Rush Xtreme, these Arizona attractions offer unforgettable experiences for every kind of adventurer. Whether you're flying down slides or scaling new heights, both venues promise a day packed with laughter, energy, and memories to last a lifetime. Not sure which one to pick? Why not visit both and decide for yourself? Either way, your next great adventure starts here.

Catch More Adventures – Every week, Fun Across America spotlights a new destination that brings communities together through fun and excitement. Check out our latest episodes and meet our amazing partners who make these adventures possible: American Specialty Insurance, Birthday University, Foundations Entertainment University, Rides-4-U, Roller, Semnox and TrainerTainment.



Barry Zelickson

Barry Zelickson, is the co-creator of Fun Across America, a YouTube channel travelogue show. Zelickson has worked in the entertainment field for almost 30 years and has been awarded several IAAPA Brass Ring awards including one of the association's highest honors, Family Entertainment Center of the World. His other projects include commercials, infomercials, feature films, documentaries, live events and entertainment centers.

Nate Reinhart, host and co-creator of Fun Across America, is a content creator for NalterDeeds and NalterCards on YouTube and content consultant for creators and businesses alike. After a shoutout from MrBeast, Nate has accumulated over 250,000 subscribers on his YouTube channels.



Nate Reinhart

Barry Zelickson Fun Across America Nate Reinhart Rush Xtreme Fun Park Slick City Action Park

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Innovation on the Slide: How Slick City and VLocker are redefining the entertainment experience



May 28, 2025 12:27 am

In the dynamic world of family entertainment, standing still is not an option. For Bron Launsby, co-founder of **Slick City**, innovation is not just a strategy — it's the lifeblood of the business. What started as a singular attraction inside a

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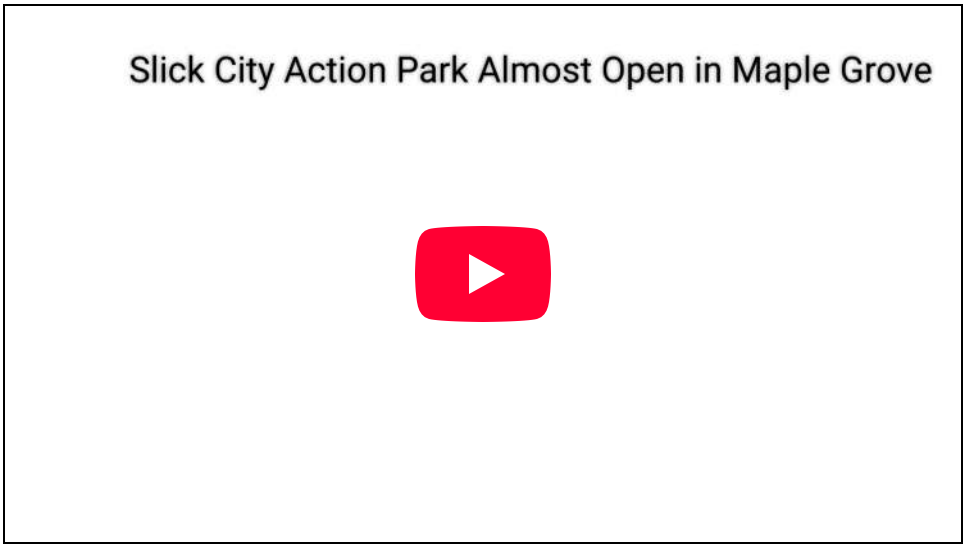
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SLICK CITY ACTION PARK ALMOST OPEN IN MAPLE GROVE

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Slick City Action Park, an indoor adventure park with slides and other attractions, is almost ready to open in Maple Grove.

“What you’re looking at is Minnesota’s first indoor slide park,” said owner Mike Kelly. “We’ve got 14 slides — it’s almost like a water park without the water.”

Kelly expects the facility to be “birthday party central.”

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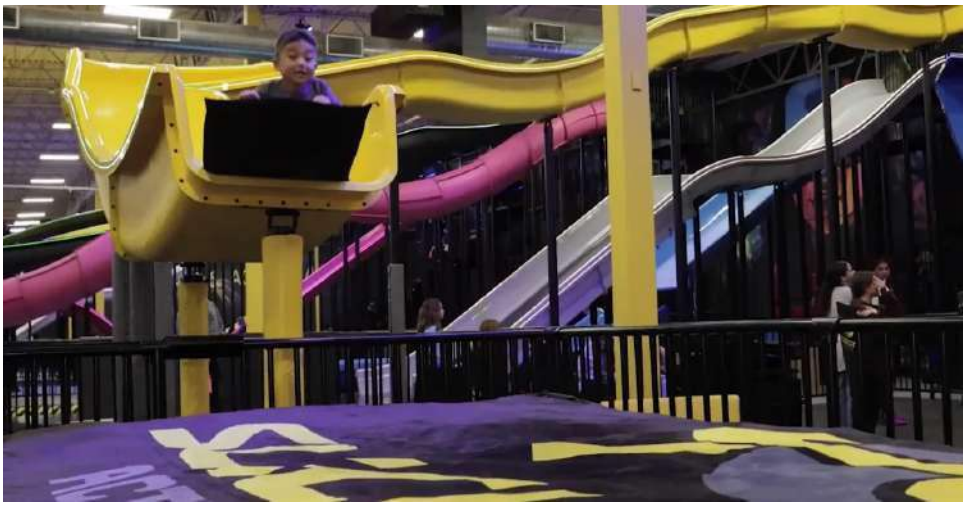
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“[It’s] a ton of fun. We also have a dodgeball court, two basketball courts, trapeze, swings, zipline, [and a] full cafe,” Kelly said.

When using the slides, riders go head-first on a mat.

“These mats are kind of state-of-the-art,” Kelly said. “And you just fly down these slides.”



Slick City Action Park, an indoor adventure park with slides, a zipline, dodgeball and a café, is almost ready to open in Maple Grove.

Located at 10900 Fountains Drive, it’s situated in the large industrial buildings off Elm Creek Boulevard.

The **Maple Grove location (https://slickcity.com/mn-maple-grove/)** will be the first Slick City Action Park in Minnesota.

Their other locations are in Texas, Arizona, Denver, St. Louis, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin.

Kelly and his wife Annie decided to open a Slick City franchise in Maple Grove after visiting the St. Louis location in 2023.

“She had the kids down there, went into Slick City, she called me like 20 times, like, ‘we need to bring this up to Minnesota,” Kelly said. “Maple Grove is perfect, right? I mean this is a dream location, sitting right next

to Arbor Lakes. I think I’ve been told that the second most visitors in Minnesota come here. You know, Mall of America first, Arbor Lakes and all the shops here second. So, fantastic location.”

Slick City is hosting a ribbon cutting and grand opening at 4 p.m. next

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POSTED FEBRUARY 16, 2024

Slick City Action Park Begins Offering Revolutionary Indoor Slide Park Franchises

SLICK CITY

St. Louis, MO – Slick City – inventors of the world's first indoor slide park designed for all ages – is thrilled to announce it is launching into the franchising world.

The brand, which currently has three corporate locations in Denver, CO, St. Louis, MO, and Houston, TX (with Phoenix, AZ coming soon), is excited to begin their franchising journey after generating tremendous success at their first locations and receiving a surge of franchise inquiries, with over 300 groups sending proposals. Slick City plans to grant at least thirty protected franchise territories across the US in 2024. Between franchise and corporate locations, eight openings are planned by year end, and even more in 2025.

As experienced out-of-home entertainment spaces continue to boom post-pandemic, now is the perfect time for potential franchisees to partner with Slick City to deliver inspiring, engaging, and entertaining experiences to communities across the U.S. The brand's

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first locations have been hugely popular since opening, with an AUV (Average Unit Volume) of $4.1m, and earning an average EBITDA margin of 45.9% across the first 20 combined operating months. With the out-of-home entertainment market valued at $287.3 billion in 2022 and estimated to surpass $497.9 billion by 2031, Slick City's sales to date are demonstrating incredible demand in a rapidly growing industry.

In addition to solid historical financial data, Slick City offers franchisees the benefit of partnering with a highly experienced leadership team. Slick City was founded in 2021 by Bron Launsby, an accomplished entrepreneur in the family entertainment space and a board member of the International Adventure and Trampoline Parks Association, when he partnered with the inventor of Slick Slide, Gary Schmit, to bring a new and exciting concept to the adventure park industry. The team has since grown to include senior management and advisors from Burger King, Sky Zone, Universal Studios, and other major experiential, retail, and franchise brands.

Bron's experience as a multi-unit franchisee fuels Slick City's dedication to exceptional network support and a framework that promotes franchisee ROI and profitability. Including vertically-integrated manufacturing that reduces startup costs, heavily tested operational systems, vetted suppliers, and a

unique royalty step-down program that rewards successful operators.

However, strong sales performance, an adept team, and a focus on a frictionless franchisee experience are just the icing on the cake; the heart of Slick City is the core experience: its patented and proprietary dry-slide technology. Schmit developed the original Slick Slide during eight years of R&D, including consultation with a professor of tribology (the study of friction and wear) who worked on NASA space stations. The result, after years of focused development, is a nearly frictionless slide experience equivalent to a water slide, but without any water! Schmit's Slick Slide LLC now serves as a vertically-integrated manufacturing affiliate providing special franchisee pricing that keeps Slick City opening costs relatively low in the entertainment space, especially for such a unique and proprietary product. Slick Slide has also been aggressive in defending their intellectual property against use by would-be competitors, with over 40 patents filed or granted and several favorable settlements already reached, which helps protect the unique experience inside every Slick City Action Park.

"We are overjoyed to finally announce the opportunity to franchise Slick City," said CEO and Founder, Bron Launsby. "We've cultivated a strong brand vision and mission based on creating an inspiring, engaging, and frictionless experience for both the franchisee and the

consumer. I'm thrilled to find new, motivated partners to join the Slick City family as we grow the brand."

Slick City is dedicated to constant innovation, and the brand will introduce new slide designs frequently. These new attractions are designed for easy retrofits onto existing modular slide towers, and their rollouts will ignite guest excitement about return visits. Besides pass sales to access Slick City's proprietary attractions, franchisees' revenue streams will include birthday parties, food and beverage, merchandise, group events, and fundraisers hosted at Slick City locations.

Beyond a patented and unique product, Slick City also has a veteran leadership team ready to onboard and equip new franchise owners for success. "Franchisees will receive the unparalleled training and support of Slick City's experienced and knowledgeable leadership team," continued Launsby. "We are looking for franchise partners who are passionate about providing a great guest experience, have a background managing a business or experience in the family entertainment and franchising spaces, and most importantly, like to have fun; providing a great time for everyone is at the root of everything Slick City does."

Unlike other out of home entertainment parks, Slick City is an all-ages brand. The unique attractions are created for both the young and young-at-heart to enjoy and create new experiences with their loved ones, and has

an unusually high rate of paid visits by adults and parents; currently more than 24% of revenue is generated from passholders over the age of 18! The all-ages appeal extends into exciting in-park events like Adult Night, Glow City, and especially birthday parties. Slick City has received awards and accolades including "Best Place for a Kid's Birthday Party" in St. Louis.

The initial franchise investment for a Slick City location is $1.5m – $3.1m (dependent largely on the size and existing condition of the lease space selected by the franchisee and approved by Slick City), and Slick City Franchise Group also offers discounted initial fees for those interested in becoming multi-unit owners.

For more information about Slick City's franchise opportunity, please visit www.SlickCityFranchise.com

About Slick City

Founded in 2021 by Bron Launsby and Gary Schmit, Slick City's mission is to combine proprietary, *"We've gotta do that!"* attractions with an exceptional guest experience to inspire, engage and entertain thrill-seekers of all ages. Slick City offers a first of its kind experience as the world's first "waterless water park" that truly appeals to all ages. With three locations currently open near St. Louis, Denver, and Houston, the brand has seen incredible demand in the first years of operating. Committed to growth, innovation and the success of its

network, Slick City unveils new proprietary slides frequently while protecting the benefits of its research and development for its affiliate partnership, including vigorous patent protection. It has 40 patents filed or granted (and counting) in the US and abroad for their proprietary slides. The brand is eager to expand rapidly throughout the U.S. and is looking for potential partners with a background in location-based, fast-paced business management who love to have fun and create engaging and inspiring entertainment experiences for others.

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Slick City Action Park Begins Offering Revolutionary Indoor Slide Park Franchises

NEWS PROVIDED BY
Slick City Action Park →
Feb 15, 2024, 11:43 ET

Slick City unveils their franchise opportunity as they work towards their mission of bringing all-ages fun to cities throughout the U.S. with their proprietary and cutting-edge "dry slide" technology

ST. LOUIS, Feb. 15, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- **Slick City** – inventors of the world's first indoor slide park designed for all ages - is thrilled to announce it is launching into the franchising world.

Continue Reading



Slick City Action Park Begins Offering Revolutionary Indoor Slide Park Franchises



Slick City Launch Slide



Slick City Launch Slide



Slick City Ramp Slide



Slick City Park Rendering

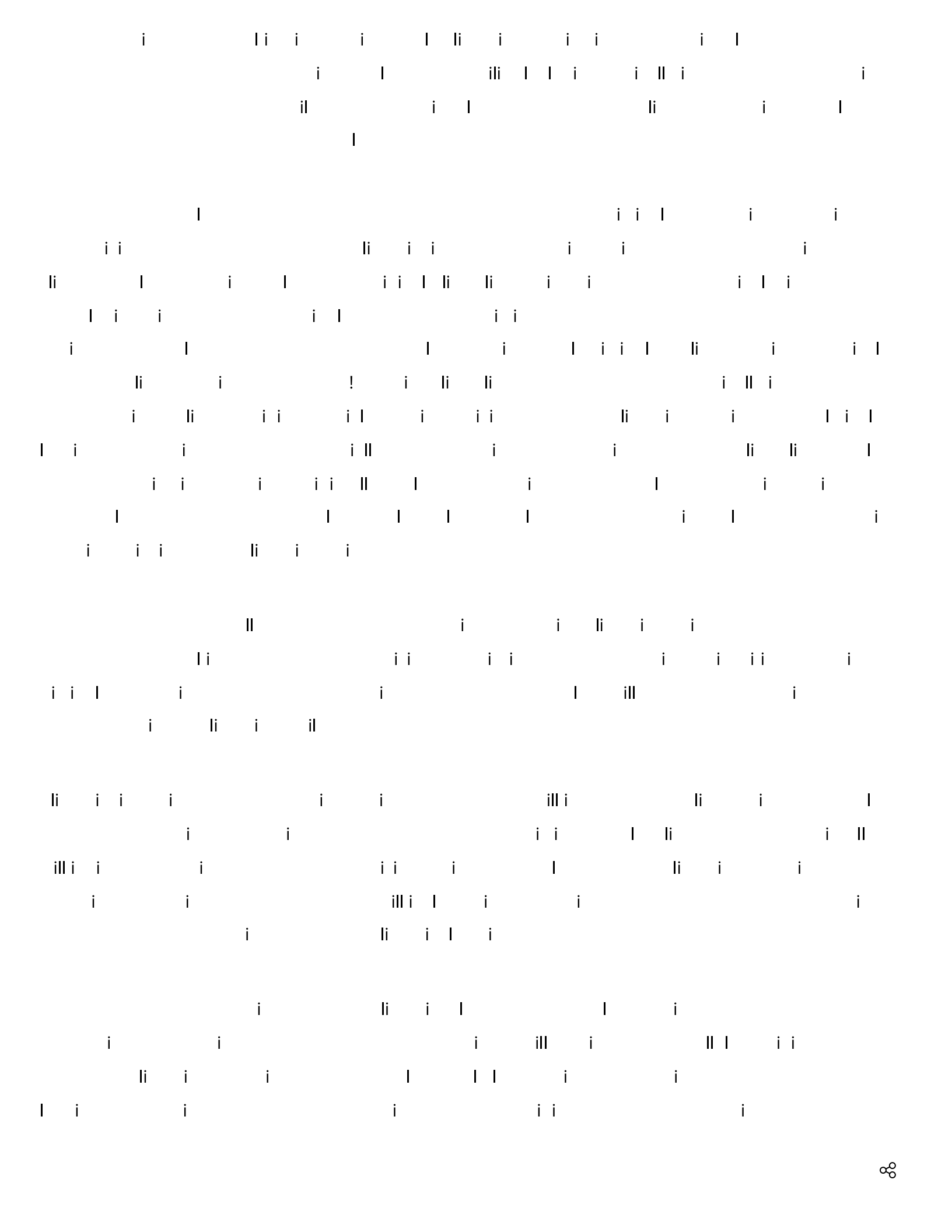


Slick City park photo

The brand, which currently has three corporate locations in Denver, CO, St. Louis, MO, and Houston, TX (with Phoenix, AZ coming soon), is excited to begin their franchising journey after generating tremendous success at their first locations and receiving a surge of franchise inquiries, with over 300 groups sending proposals. Slick City plans to grant at least thirty protected franchise territories across the US in 2024. Between franchise and corporate locations, eight openings are planned by year end, and even more in 2025.

As experienced out-of-home entertainment spaces continue to boom post-pandemic, now is the perfect time for potential franchisees to partner with Slick City to deliver inspiring, engaging, and entertaining experiences to communities across the U.S. The brand's first locations have been hugely popular since opening, with an AUV (Average Unit Volume) of $4.1m, and earning an average EBITDA margin of 45.9% across the first 20 combined operating months. With the out-of-home entertainment market valued at $287.3 billion in 2022 and estimated to surpass $497.9 billion by 2031, Slick City's sales to date are demonstrating incredible demand in a rapidly growing industry.

In addition to solid historical financial data, Slick City offers franchisees the benefit of partnering with a highly experienced leadership team. Slick City was founded in 2021 by Bron Launsby, an accomplished entrepreneur in the family entertainment space and a board member of the International Adventure and Trampoline Parks Association, when he partnered with the inventor of Slick Slide, Gary Schmit, to bring a new and exciting concept to the adventure park industry. The team has since grown to include senior management and advisors from Burger King, Sky Zone, Universal Studios, and other major experiential, retail, and franchise brands.



background managing a business or experience in the family entertainment and franchising spaces, and most importantly, like to have fun; providing a great time for everyone is at the root of everything Slick City does."

Unlike other out of home entertainment parks, Slick City is an all-ages brand. The unique attractions are created for both the young and young-at-heart to enjoy and create new experiences with their loved ones, and has an unusually high rate of paid visits by adults and parents; currently more than 24% of revenue is generated from passholders over the age of 18! The all-ages appeal extends into exciting in-park events like Adult Night, Glow City, and especially birthday parties. Slick City has received awards and accolades including "Best Place for a Kid's Birthday Party" in St. Louis.

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Slick City Action Park Celebrates Highest Average Unit Volume and Growth in 2024, Plans More Aggressive Expansion in 2025

Slick City Franchise Group LLC
April 1, 2025 • 5 min read

World's First Indoor Slide Park Achieves $4.9 Million AUV with 60 Parks Signed or Open, Aims for 120 in 2025

CHESTERFIELD, Mo., April 01, 2025 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Slick City Action Park, the world's first indoor slide park featuring proprietary dry-slide technology, has disrupted the active Family Entertainment Center (FEC) space. The company has achieved rapid growth in 2024, becoming the fastest-growing business in the active FEC industry, with the highest Average Unit Volume (AUV) of $4.96 million AUV and 41.04% average EBITDA margin across all open locations during the full fiscal year 2024. A key factor propelling the brand's success is its unique all-ages appeal, with 26% of guests aged 18 and older and 36% being high school students or older. Slick City's rapid expansion is evident: from zero to 41 franchises awarded, from three open corporate stores to 12, from a handful of employees to over 50, and from several hundred thousand square feet of signed leases to over a million.

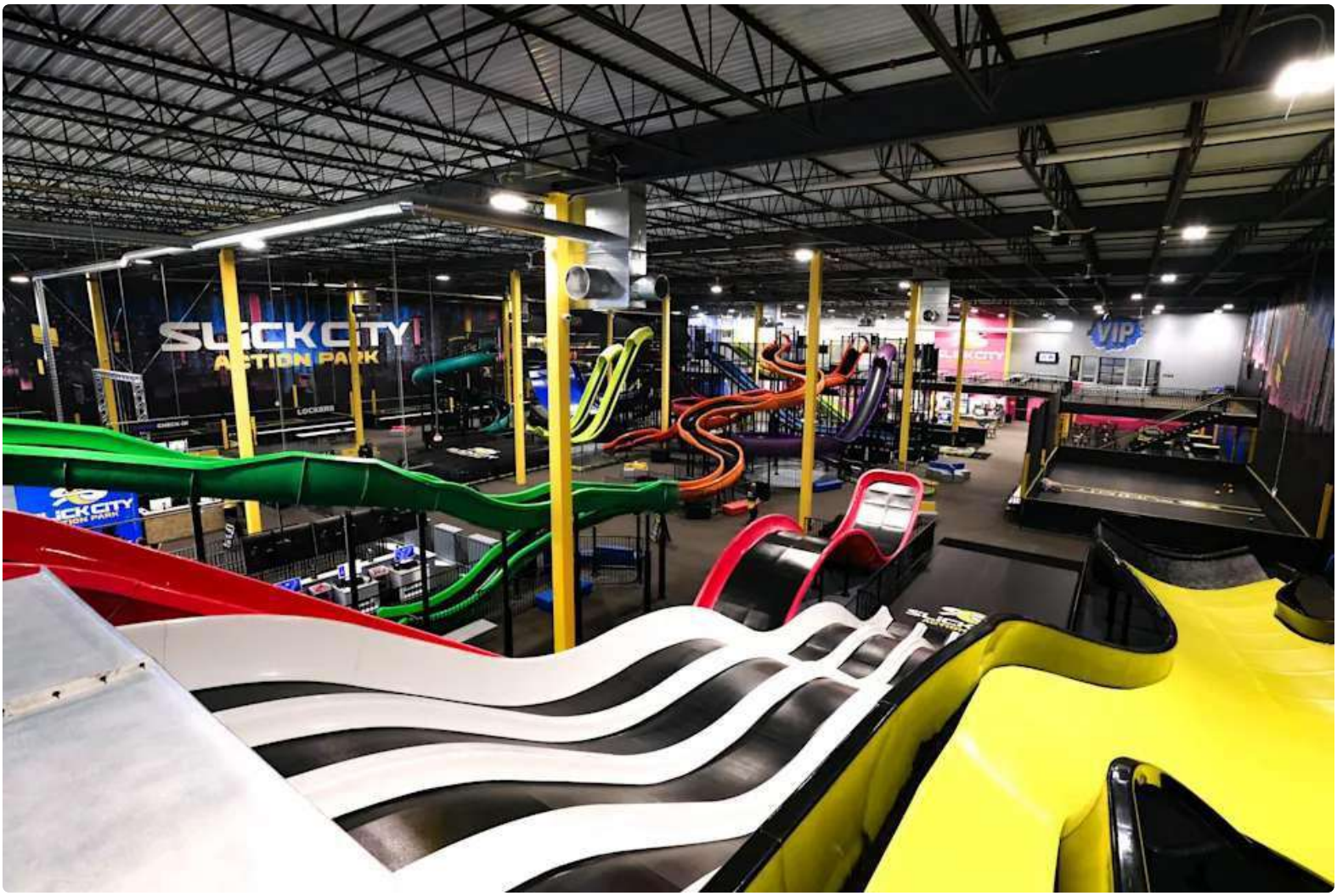
Slick City began its franchising efforts at the start of 2024 with an aggressive target of 30 franchises sold in the first year. The company's team of industry veterans exceeded that goal by awarding 41 territories in under 12 months. This rapid expansion included signing over 1 million square feet of real estate across 28 corporate and franchise leases, and the opening of the first 12 corporate and franchise parks. In the next 120 days alone, Slick City is on track to open 10 more parks, including its first franchise locations in Brownsburg, IN; North Columbus, OH; Frisco, TX; West Plano, TX; South Tulsa, OK; Scottsdale, AZ; Woodbridge, VA; South Oklahoma City, OK; South Chicago, IL; and Riverview, AZ. Slick City aims to open an additional 10 parks in the second half of the year.

Beyond the expansion of signed and opened parks, Slick City's 2024 performance included significant financial gains. The AUV increased substantially from $4.19 million in 2023 to $4.96 million in 2024, with new open park data contributing to this growth. The brand also maintained

exceptionally high profit margins, with an average EBITDA of 41.04% (more details are available in the 2025 FDD).

Slick City sets itself apart in the family entertainment sector through its patented and proprietary slide technology, designed to appeal to all ages. Since opening its first location in Denver, CO in early 2022, Slick City has introduced a first-of-its-kind entertainment experience, featuring thrilling attractions across its first 12 open corporate and franchise locations. This March, Slick City celebrated its first franchise opening in Maple Grove, MN, in the Minneapolis metro area and anticipates opening in Brownsburg, IN, in the Indianapolis metro area, in the coming weeks.

“This past year’s success is a testament to the incredible team behind Slick City. There’s simply nothing else like it on the market and the enthusiasm we’ve seen from our discovery day conversations and franchisees speaks volumes,” said Bron Launsby, CEO and Founder of Slick City. “As we look at 2025, it’s our franchisees’ time to shine and we’re thrilled to bring this one-of-a-kind experience to all age groups nationwide.”



Slick City Action Park

Launsby is an accomplished entrepreneur in the family entertainment space, a board member of the International Adventure and Trampoline Parks Association and a former Family Entertainment Center multi-unit franchisee himself. He built Slick City with the perspective of a franchisee top of mind.

At the heart of Slick City's appeal lies its cutting-edge attraction research and development, spearheaded by co-founder Gary Schmit, who also established Slick Slide. This revolutionary attraction company, a vertically-integrated affiliate of Slick City Franchise Group, acts as the dedicated manufacturing and R&D arm of the business. Slick Slide delivers a complete "park in a box" to franchise and corporate locations by producing and installing every attraction in every park. Slick Slide pioneered the exhilarating attractions that define the parks, delivering unmatched sensations of speed and elevation, similar to a waterslide – but without the water – and unlike anything else on the market. With 20 unique slide designs and a robust pipeline of new slides and attractions, coupled with modular construction that allows for easy cost-effective retrofits of future slide designs into existing locations, the brand continues to push boundaries with proprietary, pioneering innovations. Slick Slide has been aggressive in defending its intellectual property against use by would-be competitors, with 55 patents filed or granted globally, and counting. Slick Slide has already utilized the patents to win favorable settlements, ensuring the unique experience within every Slick City Action Park remains exclusive.

Slick City and Slick Slide's combined management teams currently consist of over 50 team members. In anticipation of continued rapid growth, the company plans to expand its corporate team (known as the City Support Team) to over 100 members by the end of the year. This strategic expansion has included the recent hiring of several key individuals: Chief Development Officer Matt Lambeth, Franchise Project Manager Tamra Peters, Franchising Manager Megan Anderson, District Manager Jorge Pina and Designer Michelle Liechty.

Slick City is actively looking for qualified franchise candidates across the country. For more information, visit www.slickcity.com/franchise

About Slick City Action Park

Founded in 2021 by Bron Launsby and Gary Schmit, Slick City's mission is to combine proprietary, "We've gotta do that!" attractions with an exceptional guest experience to inspire, engage and entertain thrill seekers of all ages. Slick City offers a first-of-its-kind experience as the world's "waterless slide park" and unlike other brands in the family entertainment industry, it is truly made for everyone. Slick City is constantly working on what's next, unveiling new slides and other attractions frequently and focusing on keeping all innovation processes in-house, with over 55 patents filed or granted for their proprietary slides so far, and counting. Slick City has 60

locations open or coming soon across 27 states, and continues to build momentum. The brand is eager to continue expanding throughout the U.S. and is looking for potential franchise owners who are experienced in business management, family entertainment, or franchise industries. To find the closest location near you or to learn more about franchise opportunities, visit www.slickcity.com.

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A photo accompanying this announcement is available at https://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/7bd7f220-551d-425d-8963-d21c59d03d65.

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March 2025 | Vol. 28 • Issue 12 Digital Edition



Amusement Expo International continues to experience consistent growth, with the 2025 edition expected to set records. It will be held March 17-20, 2025, in the Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nevada.
COURTESY AMUSEMENT EXPO

2025 Amusement Expo poised to shatter records

AT: *Pam Sherborne*
psherborne@amusemaenttoday.com

LAS VEGAS, Nev. — **Amusement Expo International** (AEI) continues to experience consistent growth, with the 2024 event being the largest in its history. The upcoming March 17-20, 2025, event in Las Vegas had already sold out exhibit space by mid-February.

AEI is set to be held at the **Las Vegas Convention Center,** Las Vegas, Nevada. The educational portion will run March 17 and 18, while the trade show runs 19 and 20.

The overwhelming demand for exhibit space underscores AEI's leading role in the out-of-home entertainment industry. Organizers are making every effort to accommodate companies on the waitlist, highlighting their ongoing commitment to improving the event and reinvesting in the sector.

The theme for this year is "Power Up," a deep dive into the technologies, business models and strategies that will drive profits and propel businesses in the out-of-home and family entertainment industry.

AEI is unique in that it is owned and hosted by two leading professional associations, the **Amusement and Music Operators Association** and the **American Amusement Machine Association**. AEI brought on the **Billiard and Home Leisure Expo** in 2022. It is owned by the **Billiard**

▸ See AMUSEMENT, page 6

Slick City's growth isn't slowing; new location opens in Houston

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

HOUSTON — From the humble beginnings of a single location to becoming a nationally recognized brand, **Slick City** shows no signs of slowing down. The first Slick City location opened in Denver, Colorado, which was followed by four additional locations in Missouri, Arizona and Texas. With experience in the corporate world, Founder **Bron Launsby** envisioned success in becoming a franchise brand.

Growth came quickly. By the end of 2024, nine parks had come online with two more about to open their doors. During this year the number of properties will double — with even more lining up.

As the holidays approached, the Willowbrook location in Houston opened its doors just before 2024 wrapped up.

"It has been super successful. It's crazy how all these slides attract so many people," said **Jorge Pina**, district manager. "It's for kids and adults. We've had people that are like 86 or 90 years old doing it."

There is no doubt that part of the success is the aesthetic allure of the slides — colorful, shiny and outlined with LED lighting. What kid wouldn't want to rush to it? Ironically, about one-fifth of revenue is attributed to adults aged 18 and over.

According to reports, Slick City Action Parks owns 48 patents.

Slick Slide, a sister company, provides all the structures and mats. A special surface is painted onto the slides, and the mats zip over the coating at fast speeds.

"When we clean them, we don't use water," said Pina. "We use acetone. Plus, if we see a slide performing slower, we can use a special oil. We call it the 'slick sauce.'"

All mats fold and have handles to make it easy to carry. Every slide is ridden head-first, which enhances the fun.

"One of our brand taglines, 'Fast as Friction,' while fun, also alludes to the scientific nature of our slides and the coefficient of friction between the slide surface and the mat material," Launsby told *Amusement Today*. "Through extensive research involving the field of tribology, analysis utilizing professors at **MIT**, consultation with former astrophysicists at **NASA**, and loads of trial and error, we've developed a coefficient of friction with the experience of

▸ See SLICK, page 8



A large variety of slides keeps kids engaged. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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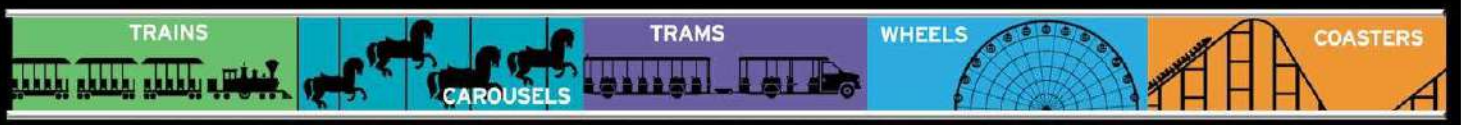
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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

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

The big top soon to stop



Robinson

Driving across the country with my parents back in the early-1980s, it was well-established that Las Vegas would be a multi-day stop. However, this was a time before roller coasters and family entertainment had stepped into the lights of the famed Vegas strip. In fact, minors were barred from setting foot on the actual casino floors. At only about eight years old, what fun would Las Vegas be for me?

However, having a family deep in the amusement industry was to my advantage ... because my father knew exactly where to arrange our stay: Circus Circus.

Live circus acts could entertain my youthful eyes. An array of midway games lined the concourse, captivating the attention of this eager traveler. There were magic shops and stuffed animals and delicious park treats such as cotton candy and popcorn. In the midst of Sin City, here was a child's paradise.

And it was a brilliantly smart business back then. My father could enjoy the Blackjack tables while my mom took me around the indoor midway. It was a business model which proved so strong that — in the 1990s — Vegas took the idea and ran with it ... creating a family-friendly version of itself, with coasters on top of buildings, arcades in every hotel, animal and pirate shows for youthful eyes to enjoy, as well as entire amusement parks inside casino walls. What Circus Circus had pioneered became the norm for the city for several years.

Alas, like everything in Vegas, time takes its toll and things evolve. This past year, while attending Amusement Expo 2024, I opted to stay at Circus Circus once again. Time had run down its walls, the entire facility just didn't compare to the modern Vegas we'd come to know. The nostalgia was special and the new Spongebob dark ride from Sally was a treat, but no longer were the lights shining as bright at the destination which captured my attention as a child.

In the past month, it's been revealed that the land Circus Circus sits on is up for sale. The eventual sale will likely spell the end for this once one-of-a-kind destination. The innovative idea that evolved into the cornerstone of family entertainment for the entire Las Vegas Strip will likely soon be no more. However, the memories it created and the world it pioneered will live on as immortal.

FLINT'S VIEW: *Bubba Flint*



INDUSTRY VOICE: *Yannick Gemme, Triotech*

The next wave of entertainment



Gemme

What do guests expect from entertainment experiences? The U.S. market has rebounded, but the landscape has changed. While revenues have returned to pre-pandemic levels, operational costs remain high, forcing operators to rethink their approach. At the same time, guest expectations have shifted toward interactive, social and competitive entertainment, driving new trends in attractions.

Interactivity and group-based experiences will shape the next wave of attractions. Guests no longer want to simply watch. They want to compete, collaborate and influence the action in real time. This demand is fueling the growth of interactive multiplayer attractions where players can challenge each other, track scores and return to improve rankings. Attractions that integrate gameplay mechanics, high-energy experiences and leaderboard systems create a sense of engagement and replayability.

Meanwhile, venues are evolving. Large malls are seeing a resurgence as entertainment destinations, with arcades and FECs playing a key role in revitalizing these spaces. Hybrid concepts like competitive gaming bars, interactive social hubs and immersive multiplayer experiences are also gaining traction. These venues go beyond traditional games, creating an environment where guests connect, compete and socialize. This aligns with the growing trend of competitive socialization, now making its mark in the U.S. market.

Beyond interactivity, operators are also focusing on venue adaptability and efficiency. Many are investing in attendant-free attractions and cashless systems to streamline operations and reduce staffing needs, helping them maintain profitability despite rising costs.

The demand for shared experiences, interactivity and engagement is higher than ever. Operators who invest in attractions that blend competition, immersion and high replay value will be best positioned for long-term success in this evolving market.

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

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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Tim Baldwin

Shane Huish, Bullwinkle's/Cowabunga Bay

Shane Huish has the amusement industry in his blood. The Huish family was heavily involved in family entertainment centers, so it is small wonder that today he is owner and operator of **Bullwinkle's** and **Cowabunga Bay**. From a roller coaster enthusiast in his younger years, the passion transitioned into the family business. With experience in both the family entertainment center sector as well as water parks, he has a wide range of knowledge and expertise. Throughout his life, he has been a collector of industry memorabilia, of which many aficionados would be quite jealous. He loves welcoming visitors from the industry to his various properties and is known for a huge smile.



Family entertainment is a family business for Shane Huish of Bullwinkle's and Cowabunga Bay. COURTESY SHANE HUISH

Title: Owner/Operator

Number of years in the industry: I started in 1976 as hourly, but officially 37 years.

Best thing about the industry: It's fun!

Favorite amusement ride: It was Montezooma's Revenge, but now I revert to Olympia Looping.

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

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Security — Unruly and self-entitled guests.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is .... I like that it has an annual start and finish. I know where the finish line is; I just have to keep running.

Favorite superhero movie: *The Incredibles!*

When I was a kid, our family always did this for spring break: We always went to Magic Mountain (upon my insistence).

The last time I wore a suit was .... My birthday.

The thing from the '90s I would love to see brought back would be .... Freedom from cell phones.

If my vote determined the Oscars, my choice for Best Picture of 2024 would be ... *Wicked*!

Hot dogs — ketchup or mustard? Chili and Cheese and then mustard

In a single word, the inside of my car is ... immaculate.

My favorite moment from my wedding was .... Meeting Elvis (Vegas wedding, of course, he wasn't the real one).

Which would you prefer to have in your personal game room — pinball or air hockey? Pinball and it would be Monster Bash.

The worst thing to happen to me while on vacation was .... I drank the water in Mexico…it also used to be my favorite roller coaster.

When flying, window or aisle? Window.

The first roller coaster I ever rode was ... Matterhorn.

Pick one: lying on the beach or skiing down a mountain? Beach.

The Broadway show I've seen the most is ... "Starlight Express."

The thing I worried about the most when raising a kid was ... That I would do it wrong. They are turning out pretty good, so I guess I had nothing to worry about.

Who should be the next James Bond? Travis Kelce.

Favorite National Park: I'm not a big nature person. Can Disneyland count?

The most I ever paid for a cocktail was ... I live in Vegas, so every cocktail is expensive. I once paid more than $50 for a tequila shot.

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Freddi enjoys fun times, friends



GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — As part of his duties, Chairman of IAAPA Massi Freddi (second from right) visits IAAPA members around the globe. On one of his tours, Freddi traveled to North Texas. *Amusement Today* staff members Tim Baldwin (far left) and Jeffrey Seifert (middle) were excited to show him, along with IAAPA Vice President Michael Shelton (third from right), member facilities in the area, incluing Bolder Adventure Park. Freddi was intrigued with the diversity of attractions concentrated in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. AT/TIM BALDWIN

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Organizers of the 2025 AEI event are offering over 23 educational sessions and roundtables that land within four essential categories that include human resources, artificial intelligence, arcade's significant comeback and the future of location-based amusements.
COURTESY AMUSEMENT EXPO

AMUSEMENT

Continued from page 1

Congress of America.

The AEI show is managed by **W. T. Glasgow Inc.**

According to feedback from previous attendees, the accessibility to games and services as well as the company leaders who represent them at AEI is vital. The hundreds of exhibits feature the latest product and service innovations for the out-of-home entertainment industry which includes virtual reality (VR), amusement arcades, family entertainment centers, digital music and much more.

AEI offers multiple options for networking, bringing together industry leaders, game and entertainment professionals and other experts. The event is designed to foster connections through various events such as Beers and Cheers, educational roundtables, the popular industry gala and an amazing keynote luncheon. This year that keynote luncheon will feature **Dana Monique**, who is expected to deliver an inspiring, powerful message through an incredible musical performance.

Attendees can maximize their industry knowledge at AEI's two-day education conference, a must for sustained business growth. Participants can explore more than 23 sessions and roundtables within four essential categories that include Human Resources, Artificial Intelligence, Arcade's Significant Comeback and the Future of Location-Based Amusements.

Some of the educational seminars that are set include Making Real Money from Virtual Reality; The Unconference; **Bob Cooney**'s Big Picture: The State of VR, AR and MR; The Future of Land-Based Entertainment; AI 201: Custom GPTs for Amusement Business Efficiency; From Arcades to Classrooms: VR's Role in Education; Can VR Be Social? Insights from **Mirra VR** and **Two Bit Circus;** Laser Tag: Off-Peak Marketing Ideas to Maximize Revenue; Optimizing Your Venues: Performance, Data, Technology, Food and Beverage; Path to Capital: Strategies for Securing Loans & Financing; Augmenting Reality: Engaging New Audiences with AR Technology; Emerging Industry Trends: Everything Old is New Again and How to Evaluate Games and Attractions.

Others include: Numbers Don't Lie: Where is Laser Tag Trending?; Reflections and Insights from the Unconference; Salesmanship: Create Winning Partnerships with Your Locations; Employee Evaluations and Best Practices; The Downloadable Theme Park; Laser Tag: Anchor vs. Afterthought; Mastering the Balancing Act, How to Achieve Growth Without Sacrificing Stability; The Premium Experience Economy; Today's ATM Operations; Industry Roundtables and The Next Generation of Location-Based Experiences: Narrative, Immersion and Interactivity.

Tuesday afternoon the Unconference Reflection and Wrap-up along with the special guest keynote will be held. The All-Industry Gala Reception will follow that evening.

Exhibit hall hours for Wednesday, March 19, are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with Beers and Cheers Reception with Industry Awards to follow from 5 to 6 p.m.

On Thursday, March 20, the exhibit hall will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

•amusementexpo.org

FAST FACTS

Event:
Amusement Expo International Conference and Trade Show

•

Date:
March 17-20, 2025, Las Vegas Convention Center

•

Format:
Two days of education (March 17-18) followed by two days of trade show (March 19-20)

•

Attendees:
Over 4,500 industry professionals expected

•

Exhibitors:
More than 1,000 exhibit booths providing access to thousands of games, amusements, and co-locating show attractions

Amusement Expo International 2025 show board

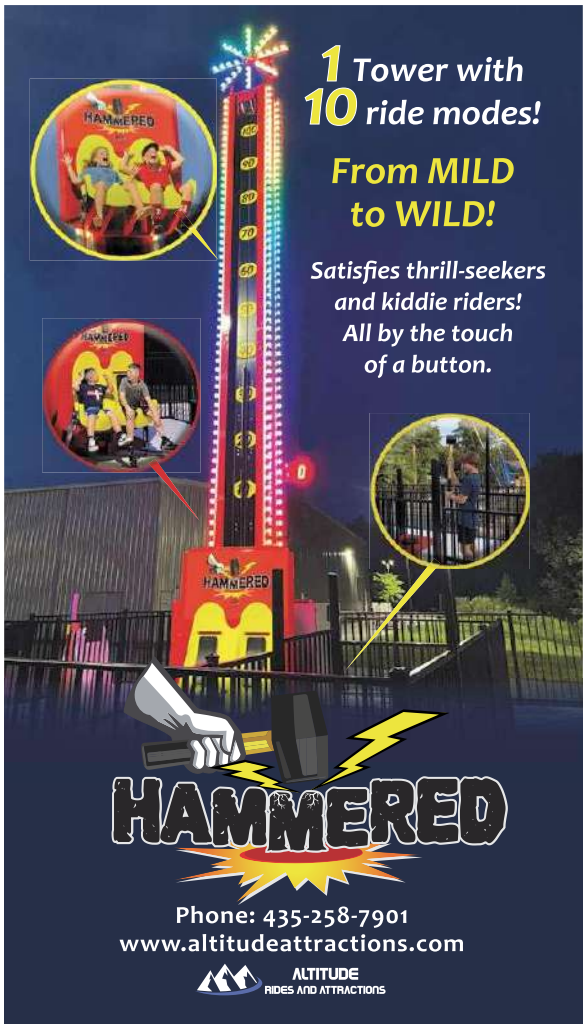
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Joe Camorata, Alpha Omega Sales
Jeff Blair, Sureway Gaming
Allen Weisberg, Apple Industries, Inc.
Tim Zahn, American Amusement Arcade



2025 Amusement Expo International exhibitor listing

List is current as of February 17, 2025.

4Leaf Technologies 1912
A&A Global Industries 917
A.E. Schmidt 1541
Adrenaline Amusements 848
ALAN-1 1901
All American Classic 1110
Allpoint Wireless 1807
Allstar Vending 1004
Alpha Omega Sales 330
American Alpha, Inc. 2026
American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) 2312
American Changer Corp. 311
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Amusement & Music Operators Association (AMOA) 2332
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Anirollz 1058
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Ardosias Santa Catarina LTDA 1608
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candymachines.com 911
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Captain's Auction Warehouse 937
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Cardinal Xpress 1641
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VTail LLC 1706
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Wedges/Ledges 2048
Western Equipment Finance 2051
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Wider Matrix (GZ) Technology Co.,Ltd 2053
Workforce.com 2253
World Plush Inc 705
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SLICK
Continued from page 1

a dry slide similar to that of a water slide — our secret recipe, if you will."

The most popular slides seem to be Maga Launch, Big Wave and Fast Lane, but the selection of slides is impressive.

"Countless hours of modeling and testing to ensure safety and performance helps determine what works," said Launsby. "Then we donate our bodies to scientific research, cross our fingers, close our eyes and test it ourselves."

Each slide lands on a cushioned surface.

Launsby added, "All slides are carefully modeled based on their coefficient of friction, coupled with their pitch and shape to determine the trajectory a body will take at different sizes and what landing would be appropriate. To go a step further, we've added an additional layer of safety to our airbags in an 'undercushion' to prevent any opportunity for user error in inflation or deflation."

Not everything is slides, however. Basketball is provided on a fun, springy court. Likewise, the Freestyle Air Court can let kids play dodgeball or perform gymnastic stunts. Acrobat Alley finds kids hanging by a rope and zipping along through the air. Most of the activities are for ages 4 and up, but there is a play structure called Junior Jungle that lets younger siblings still have ways to play.

Certain locations have go karts, although the Willowbrook location does not. Various locations have larger arcades as well.

While wristbands are timed, the length of stay can be extended with games or food and beverage.

"We have everything kids like," said Pina. "Mozzarella sticks, hot dogs, chicken tenders, pizza. We have **ICEE**, **Dippin' Dots** and **Blue Bunny** ice cream."

Guests purchase wristbands for a 90-minute or two-hour block of time. Participants can play for as long as they like on all the recreational activities. Like most physical recreation properties, guests sign waivers and must obtain the proper footwear (which only needs to be purchased once at $4.95).

Lockers are provided by **VLocker** in each facility. Customers can use them to lock up backpacks, valuables and personal items.

"We are thrilled to partner with Slick City, providing electronic guest storage lockers that enhance the visitor experience," said **Steven Wooley**, COO, VLocker. "Our lockers offer secure, convenient storage, allowing guests to fully enjoy the exciting attractions without worrying about their belongings. This partnership is a perfect fit, as both our companies are committed to innovation and customer satisfaction. We look forward to supporting Slick City's rapid growth across the U.S. market."

Roller is another partner of Slick City.

"Recently, Roller, the point-of-sale supplier for all Slick City parks, and VLocker have worked to integrate and innovate to improve the guest experience even further," added Wooley. "With this new and exciting partnership for all three brands, guests can now pull out a form of payment once, go straight to the lockers, and get to having fun without feeling as if they are being nickeled and dimed at each pay point in the park."



Slides in Slick City mimic those in the water park industry. Like a waterless waterslide, the attraction below drops sliders through a hole. COURTESY SLICK CITY; AT/TIM BALDWIN



"This is my first time using Roller, and I love it," Pina told *AT*. "Even when I'm not here, I can access [data] on my cell phone. It's easy for me to switch between locations."

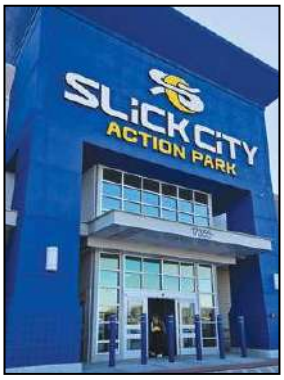
Previously, the building was occupied by **Bed, Bath and Beyond**. According to the company, the majority are second-generation boxes (previous stores, gyms. FECs, trampoline parks, etc.). However, the company is willing to "build to suit" for potential franchisees.

"Every single park is unique, and we approach it that way," said Launsby. "From the layout of the slides, the slide sizes, how they interact with each other — we are always maintaining our focus on the experience. We want the sliders to be wowed — not only by the experience of going down the slides, but the entire experience – visually, tactically, all should be exhilarating!

Slick City Action Parks — once plans in place reach fruition — will eventually be in 18 states with more than 50 locations.

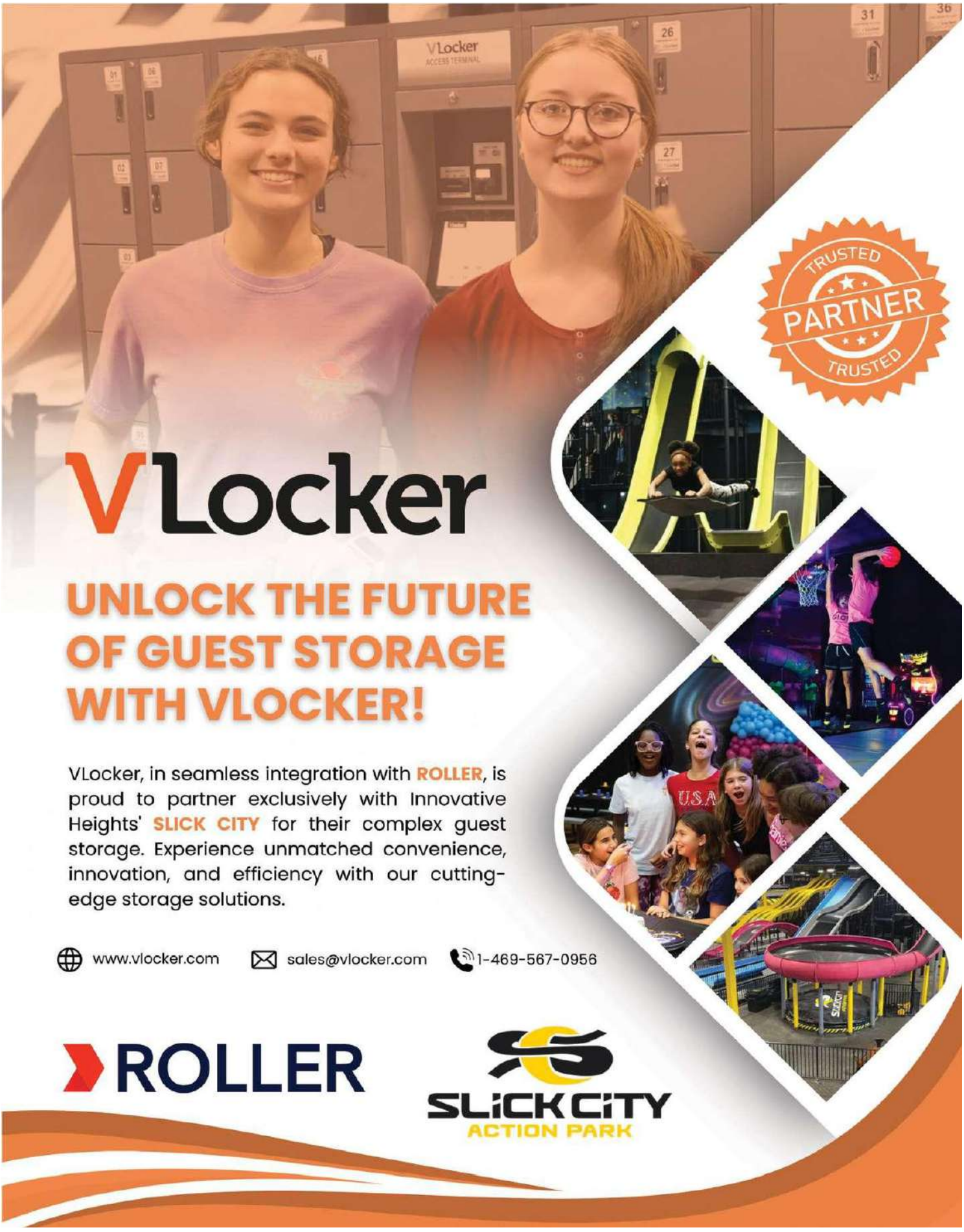
•slickcity.com







In addition to slides, other recreational activities are offered (above left). The engineering of the slides comes from Slick City's sister company, Slick Slide. Customers catch airtime on some of the slides (above right). AT/TIM BALDIN; COURTESY SLICK CITY


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Urban Air Adventure Parks add slide complexes — page 20 / Meow Wolf opens fifth location — page 24

Warner Bros. Movie World opens *The Wizard of Oz*-themed land

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

QUEENSLAND, Australia — Follow the yellow brick road. Or so guests will be inclined.

Warner Bros. Movie World has opened the world's first themed area (which the park calls a precinct) to the legendary film, *The Wizard of Oz*. And when all things "wicked" seem quite timely, the new land is sure to enthrall guests.

"The Wizard of Oz precinct is like nothing we have ever done at Movie World, where incredible theming and technology complement the physical ride elements to provide a unique and immersive guest experience," said **Clark Kirby**, CEO, **Village Roadshow**.

"We have been incredibly buoyed by the response from our guests to The Wizard of Oz precinct over its opening period with strong visitation numbers visiting across our peak period," said **Bikash Randhawa**, COO, Village Roadshow. "It has been extremely pleasing to see so much positive feedback from guests of all ages who are really enjoying the precinct's theming and rides."





Warner Bros. Movie World's new precinct is based on the classic film, *The Wizard of Oz*. Flight of the Wicked Witch (above) is a smooth, suspended family thriller around and through the Wicked Witch's castle. COURTESY LUKE SCIACCHITANO, VEKOMA



Kansas Twister features a pair of family boomerang coasters from Vekoma. COURTESY LUKE SCIACCHITANO

The theming is what tells the story. Visitors find an Emerald City palace as a starting point for the two new roller coasters added to the park. Once inside, they are bathed in green with Oz, the Great and Powerful addressing them. Then they make the choice between the two rides. One entrance is to Flight of the Wicked Witch; the other takes guests to Kansas Twister.

"The iconic Royal Palace of Oz is the centerpiece," said Randhawa. "Guests then enter the Wizard's Chamber where a mix of projection mapping and audio technology lay the platform for the journey ahead with the Wizard issuing the challenge. For Flight of the Wicked Witch, guests enter through the Spell Room on an elevated platform to be surrounded by beautiful red poppies before a dramatic change in mood as they encounter the much darker Haunted Forest."

The thematic touches immediately take guests to scenes in the movie.

"As they traverse the Forest, they then make their way to the Witches Castle where the ride platform is located," explained Randhawa. "The Flight of the Wicked Witch coaster track has riders soaring through the skies with the Wicked Witch's winged monkeys and reaching speeds of up to 67 kilometers per hour as they travel along the 453-metre track which zigzags through the castle."

The second coaster is actually a pair. Two side-by-side family boomerangs allow family and friends to see each other as they race and duel on twisted track that curves and spirals around a farm-like landscape.

"For Kansas Twister, guests first enter through Dorothy's house as the tornado is in full swing with audio and visual technology combined with sloping floors fully encapsulating guests to experience what being in the eye of a tornado would feel like," Randhawa told *Amusement Today*. "After coming out of the tornado, guests then enter the heavily themed farmhouse where they board the dueling coaster to experience a whirlwind journey through the Kansas Farmlands on two racing tracks of 225 and 220 meters in length and reach speeds of up to 58 kilometers per hour."

See OZ, page 12



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Kansas Twister not only races the other train, but also travels forward and backward.
COURTESY VEKOMA

OZ

Continued from page 10

Both roller coaster attractions were supplied by **Vekoma**.

"Movie World needed rides (especially coasters) that could cater to the family demographics, with a lower rider height restriction. Road Runner is an extremely popular coaster at the park and they felt that they needed more," said **Ricardo Tonding-Etges,** sales, Vekoma. "In this case, we discussed different successful family-thrill rides and the idea of combining two of our most successful ride models, the Suspended Family Coaster and the Family Boomerang, came up. Even better, the dueling Family Boomerang, with the racing factor and the higher capacity. The interaction of the three coaster tracks and trains in one area is also mind-blowing and world's first. The coasters offer a unique combination of different family-thrill experiences, with suspended, sit-down, forward, backward and racing experiences, all at one place."

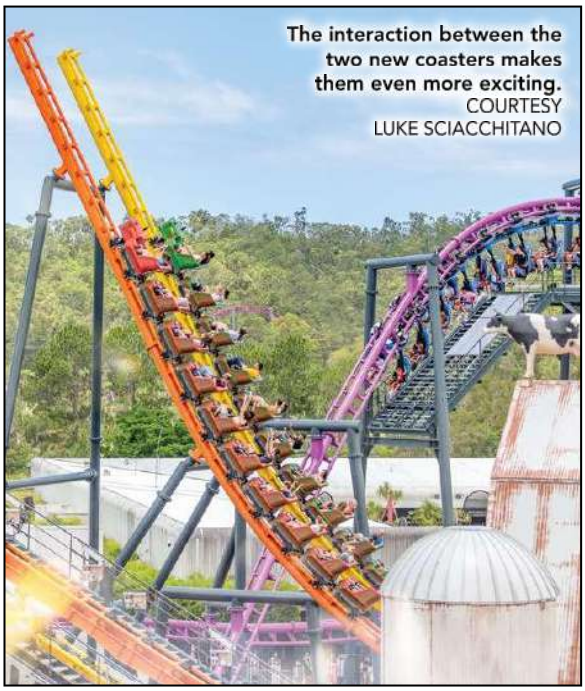
"When looking at new attractions for the park, our focus is always on bringing innovative experiences that will complement our existing line-up of attractions, and these two new rides have done exactly that," added Randhawa. "We worked closely with Vekoma to identify their Suspended Coaster and Dueling Coaster as the best attractions for this precinct as they have the perfect combination of family-friendly height restrictions and high-capacity throughput, mixed with moderate-level thrills to provide something for guests of all ages and comfort levels."

The area, which also includes munchkin-sized buildings and the yellow-brick road as photo ops, was all built on the site of a removed suspended looping coaster.

"The Wizard of Oz precinct was constructed in the retired Arkham Asylum coaster footprint," Randhawa noted. "Our Group Projects team did an amazing job working with our partners at **Warner Bros. Discovery Global Experiences** to maximize the space and truly transform the area to this world-first precinct themed around the 1939 film."

"Village Roadshow Theme Parks and Movie World are great partners, and we were extremely happy and honored to be able to work with them again on such a massive project," said Tonding-Etges. "When Arkham Asylum - Shock Therapy reached the end of its lifespan, it was definitely time to develop something new together. The Wizard of Oz precinct is unique, beautifully themed and full of life — kudos to the park team and everyone involved!"

"We knew *The Wizard of Oz* IP holds a very nostalgic and emotive place with viewers and that our guests would have a strong connection with the precinct, but to see the next generation of children visiting the precinct dressed in Dorothy outfits, singing along to the songs, and seeing the pure elation on their faces when the characters are in the precinct has been a wonderful and positive surprise," Randhawa told *AT*. "We have seen some beautiful organic social posts coming through with families recreating scenes from the movie, and it has been amazing to see how popular our Wizard of Oz-themed merchandise has been, with many of our items such as the Toto plush toy and Dorothy dress selling out."



The interaction between the two new coasters makes them even more exciting.
COURTESY LUKE SCIACCHITANO



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Sally Dark Rides introduces fresh concept with its Mini Dark Ride

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Those who spoke with representatives from **Sally Dark Rides** last November at IAAPA Expo 2024 were able to see a new concept from the dark ride company. It was called the Mini Dark Ride.

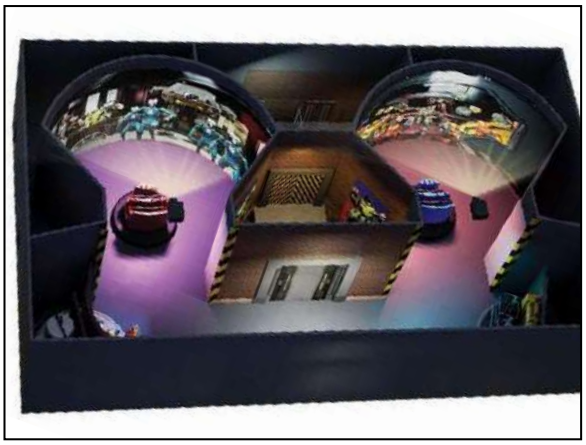
"The Mini Dark Ride was created through necessity," said Rich Hill, chief creative officer. "Over the years, we've spoken with clients who were interested in purchasing an 'E-Ticket' level dark ride attraction but didn't have the space in their park or FEC for a massive show building."

Typically, with dark rides acquiring a certain amount of real estate when big ideas are conceived, it would appear that Sally was seeking a logical solution.

"With the industry not having a product that fit that mold perfectly, it seemed like a fun design challenge for our team to take on," Hill told *Amusement Today*. "During the height of COVID, we had something you don't usually get as designers — time to tinker!"

Sally prides itself on being a provider of turnkey solutions. "One contract, one signature" is a motto that simplifies things for the customer.

"Determined to find a solution to the 'no-space' problem, we took a long look at our popular large dark rides like Justice League and Sesame Street from a guest experience perspective. Distilling the most impactful ride elements down into their purest form seemed to be the key," said Hill. "The first thing we identified was ride motion. Traveling briskly through physical sets and scenery is important in a quality dark ride. Also, having impactful encounters with animatronic characters along the path seemed to be a key ingredient. Additionally, wrap-around media screens were important to the mix. They allow us to travel (virtually) long distances at high speed. Finally, having an individual, first-person experience where you don't encounter other ride vehicles made the ride feel larger and more custom tailored."



Sally has designed a Mini Dark Ride that gives a high-profile experience in a smaller, confined space.
COURTESY SALLY DARK RIDES

The meeting of the minds among the Sally team brought about results.

"Taking those elements and playing with their arrangement, we ended up with a two-vehicle, four-room layout that used theatrical trickery like rotating stages, projection mapping, invisible UV paint and other fun effects to completely change the look of those four rooms every time we pass through them," Hill explained to *AT*. "Ride programming is inspired by the ball-and-cup magic trick, having the first vehicle duck into a central room, allowing the second vehicle to pass by unseen."

This concept resulted in a nine-scene, individual experience that — from the guests' POV — feels exactly like a 20,000-square-foot dark ride in only 2,000 square feet, according to the renowned manufacturer.

The idea was pitched at the recent IAAPA Expo. Throughput is theorized to be 300 riders per hour. However, a third or fourth vehicle can be added with more "spokes," or for increased capacity, vehicles that seat eight or 10 are an option.

"The reaction from clients and the industry has been very positive," said Hill. "While the Mini Dark Ride isn't a replacement for a traditional E-Ticket ride, it does allow an entire new segment of the attractions industry access to a style of ride it once thought too big or expensive. Yes, as you might imagine, this new style of ride is also *very* budget-friendly!"



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Busch Gardens Tampa Bay's Wild Oasis readies for spring 2025

AT: *David Fake*
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TAMPA, Fla. — **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay** is set to debut Wild Oasis in Spring 2025, a dramatic transformation of the former Jungala area that aims to redefine family-friendly entertainment with a blend of immersive attractions, interactive play elements and a multi-species animal habitat. With design led by Busch Gardens' parent company **United Parks & Resorts** and ride manufacturing by **Moser Rides**, this reimagining seeks to recapture the vibrancy of the space while aligning with the park's broader vision of seamless integration between animal encounters and themed attractions.

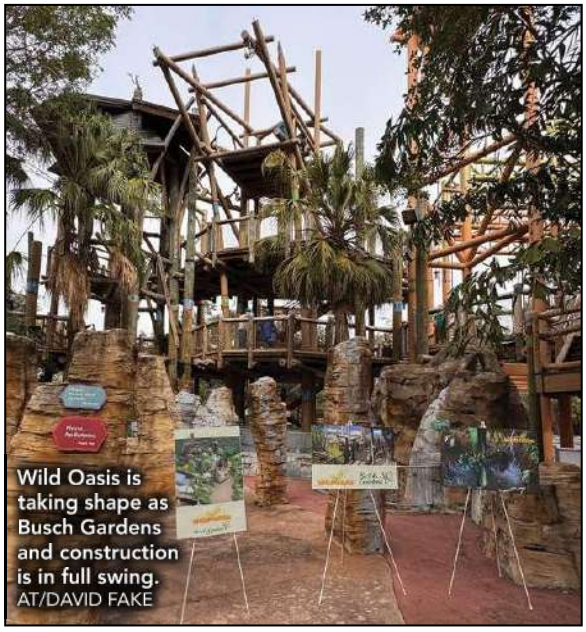
Originally opened in 2008, Jungala provided a jungle-inspired setting with up-close animal encounters, aerial playgrounds, and smaller-scale rides. Over the years, the area saw dwindling guest engagement, with several attractions falling into disuse. **Erick Elliot**, vice president of engineering and general services at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, acknowledged the need for change: "Bringing Wild Oasis to the Jungala area of the park is really exciting; this is something we've been looking forward to for a long time. It brings the excitement back to this part of the park in a way that hasn't been seen before."

Wild Oasis is engineered to cater to families and younger guests while preserving the park's signature blend of thrill and nature. It introduces Tree Top Drop, a reimagined and fully rebuilt 35-foot drop tower featuring multimedia integration via digital screens and onboard audio enhancements.

"[Moser Rides is] completely rebuilding the ride from the ground up — new seats, new thematic elements, and a fresh on-ride story that will be revealed soon," explained **Tony Perry**, project manager for Wild Oasis.

The Canopy Climb makes its return, featuring a four-story climbing structure with net tunnels and rope bridges spanning 200 feet, offering guests a treetop perspective of the park's newly developed ani-

▸ **See BUSCH, page 18**



Wild Oasis is taking shape as Busch Gardens and construction is in full swing. AT/DAVID FAKE



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Fun Spot America Atlanta opens Hook & Slice



ATLANTA, Ga. — On Saturday, February 1, 2025, Fun Spot America Atlanta opened an exciting new attraction, a Mini Reverse Time ride by SBF-Visa Group. The golf-themed ride dubbed "Hook & Slice" combines spins and twists with high-flying action. Last fall, Fun Spot America announced it would open five new attractions across its three parks in 2025 and Hook & Slice is the first to debut. The rides come to the parks through a deal brokered by Rides 4 U of Somerville, New Jersey. The attractions had been previously installed at The Funplex Myrtle Beach which closed permanently after the 2024 season. COURTESY FUN SPOT AMERICA

▶BUSCH

Continued from page 16

mal habitats. Complementing the kinetic energy of these attractions is Enchanted Falls, a water play zone with splash towers and fountains, providing much-needed relief from Florida's heat.

The most significant shift in Wild Oasis is its approach to animal interactions. The new Habitat Hideaway offers multilevel viewing experiences, allowing guests to observe capybaras and giant anteaters from underwater vantage points and squirrel monkeys from elevated perches.

"One of the things I'm most excited about is giving guests the chance to see these animals from so many perspectives, just like they'd experience in the wild," said **Kayla Wendzel**, zoological curator for Busch Gardens.

The habitat was designed with both guest engagement and animal welfare in mind.

"We worked closely with species survival plans and other zoos to ensure responsible animal sourcing. Conservation and education are core elements of this project," Wendzel added. This messaging aligns with the broader mission of United Parks & Resorts as it positions itself as a leader in ethical animal experiences within the theme park industry.

Wild Oasis incorporates an educational component through Rainforest Quest, an interactive scavenger hunt that challenges guests to discover hidden stations throughout the land. **Nick Pelisek**, manager of creative design at United Parks & Resorts, emphasized the park's decision to focus on physical engagement rather than digital screens: "We wanted this to feel like a real exploration — so there are no touchscreens."

Wild Oasis represents more than just a new land — it's a reinvestment in Busch Gardens' commitment to immersive, educational and family-centric experiences. With a blend of hands-on animal encounters, kinetic play structures and refreshed thrill elements, it sets a new precedent for what a modern family adventure realm can achieve. As Erick Elliot summed it up: "This is a place where adventure, education and fun collide. We can't wait for guests to experience it for themselves."

Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
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Amusement parks and attractions in North America began gearing up in early 2025 for the season ahead by starting efforts to staff up.

Officials at **Kings Island**, Mason, Ohio, announced in early February they would host multiple hiring events over the next two months. This park is looking to hire about 5,000 seasonal employees.

Knott's Berry Farm, Buena Park, California; **Six Flags Magic Mountain,** Valencia, California; and **Dorney Park**, Allentown, Pennsylvania, all are hoping to hire 2,000 employees during weeks-long hiring blitzes for seasonal jobs.

Meanwhile, **Six Flags Great Adventure,** Jackson, New Jersey, declared the weeks of February 1 through 22 as National Hiring Weeks. Officials there want to hire up to 4,000 seasonal employees.

Cedar Point, Sandusky, Ohio, and **Michigan's Adventure** in Muskegon also were using mid-February to begin hiring.

Six Flags Darien Lake, Corfu, New York, wants to hire 1,500 seasonal workers for the 2025 season before opening day on May 16. The amusement park started holding hiring events in February to start filling open positions.

Canada's Wonderland, Vaughan, Canada, has already started its hiring campaign. They are looking for 4,000 seasonal employees.

•

Adventureland, Farmingdale, New York, has announced it will be freezing its prices. The park is keeping its admission rates, group rates, season pass rates and birthday party rates at the same prices as the 2024 season.

"At a time when everything around us is going up, we are proud and excited to be able to provide our guests this price freeze on admission," said **Jeanine Gentile**, Adventureland Park Manager. "We are still making additions to the park, so you will definitely see some great changes for this upcoming season. But one thing that will not be changing is the admission prices for the 2025 season!"

For the first time, the amusement park is offering payment plans through FlexPay for online orders of $100 or more. This brand-new option will allow visitors to book tickets and purchase season passes online now and conveniently pay over time. Daily tickets and season passes are currently available for purchase online.

Last year, Adventureland announced plans for a multi-year, five-phase $15 million redevelopment. Now in phase two, this season will include two new outdoor games, Wave Blaster and Jungle Run. Additionally, plans are in place to install three new concession stands and a third restroom facility. Park officials also are debuting Wave Twister, scheduled to open this spring.

The opening weekend of the 2025 season will be March 22 and 23.

•

An expansion to Muskegon's art museum in MIchigan is officially opening to the public after more than four years and $15.4 million in fundraising and construction.

The **Muskegon Museum of Art** expansion was unveiled on February 6.

•

Officials at **Elitch Gardens**, which is co-owned by **Revesco Properties** and **Kroenke Sports and Entertainment**, said its 2025 season will begin in April as usual in its current location next to **Ball Arena** in downtown Denver, Colorado, despite expectations the park would relocate.

But there are still questions regarding where Elitch Gardens will go once a 62-acre redevelopment project, known as the River Mile project, gets started.

Officials at Revesco Properties have said for years Elitch Gardens will move, but where it will move to and when are not known.

•

The **Metropolitan Museum of Art**, New York City, New York, announced new details for this year's Met Gala and The Costume Institute's spring exhibition, Superfine: Tailoring Black Style, on view at The Met Fifth Avenue from May 10 through October 26, 2025.

The exhibition and benefit are made possible by **Louis Vuitton**.

Major funding is provided by **Instagram, the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation, Africa Fashion International** founded by Dr. **Precious Moloi-Motsepe**, and **The Perry Foundation**.

•

Falcon's Beyond Global is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its **Falcon's Creative Group** division, a themed entertainment company that has delivered over $120 billion worth of experiences worldwide across 27 countries. Founded in 2000 as **Falcon's Treehouse** by CEO **Cecil D. Magpuri**, the company has grown from three employees to over 200 team members.

The company specializes in master planning, attraction design and experiential design, collaborating with major brands including **Disney, Universal Studios, SeaWorld, Marvel** and **National Geographic.** Notable projects include **Aquarabia** (Saudi Arabia's first water theme park), **Heroes and Legends at Kennedy Space Center,** and **IMG Worlds of Adventure** in Dubai.

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FEC

Urban Air Adventure Parks add slide complexes in two locations

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com



Multiple slides give guests at Urban Air a range of choices. AT/TIM BALDWIN

SOUTHLAKE and FORT WORTH, Texas — By January of this year, 200 **Urban Air Adventure Parks** had opened their doors. While the company has seen phenomenal growth since opening its first store in 2011, it isn't a cookie-cutter formula. Urban Air is always innovating.

When the first facility opened (Southlake), the main focus was trampolines. Kids love them, but soon the company was branching in numerous directions, and now Urban Air properties have a wide portfolio of offerings.

"We've taken the trampoline concept and blown it up by adding ropes courses, warrior courses, climbing walls and dodgeball," said **Tim Sharp**, brand president, Urban Air.

Each facility may have something different to offer. "Some parks have go karts, sky rider, indoor skydiving — we look to innovation and finding new things," Sharp told *Amusement Today*. "We try them out, and if they resonate with the customers, we roll them out across the country."

Virtual reality and amusement rides can also be found at certain locations.

The original store was eventually relocated and is now somewhat of a "test kitchen" for other properties.

The newest concept is indoor slide complexes — think water park attractions without the water. Mats are the conveyance to provide the speed on the slick surfaces.

"It's no secret that slides are becoming a thing in many areas, and we are looking for new ideas. Slides have been around forever — I rode slides as a kid," Sharp commented. "We saw the ability to integrate this exciting new slide technology into our parks to give our guests another choice."

When asked who the supplier was, Sharp replied, "We actually are the manufacturer. **Urban Air Attractions** is the licensed manufacturer." Other than go karts and hard rides, Urban Air Attractions creates all the trampoline equipment, slides, sky rider and other recreational structures.

The selection of slides is not typical playground equipment. Lighted luminescent rings, wedge-shaped attractions and jumps make for slides with a cool factor.

"You look at this and see there are five different slides," Sharp pointed out in Southlake. "We wanted five different experiences. Kids' attention spans these days might be less than when we were kids; we want to keep them invigorated by having something to do. We wanted them to have a 'wow' factor."

In Fort Worth, an additional slide called The Scoop is installed.

"We look at the space, and the space says you can put 'X' in, and change [the setup] to fit the space," Sharp explained.

In Southlake, the facility retired what they refer to as platform attractions (basketball, Wipe Out, etc.). Sharp explained that those products were viable, but they had been around for five or six years, so they didn't consider repurposing them elsewhere.

"We look to keep the parks refreshed, and we want it to look new," he said. "We give guests a new view, so they never get tired of us."

The slide complex is both colorful and has attractive lighting. Sharp reported that the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Offering broad choices was the first learning lesson Urban Air gained from its first years.

Of the slides, two are standard feet first-type slides that let kids — and adults — slide through colorful rings. Two others — launch slides — send riders head-first down a steep drop and then off a ski slope-style edge that sends visitors airborne, landing on their stomachs atop an inflated air pillow. The surf slide oscillates back and forth. The scoop slide swirls at the bottom as if going down a drain.

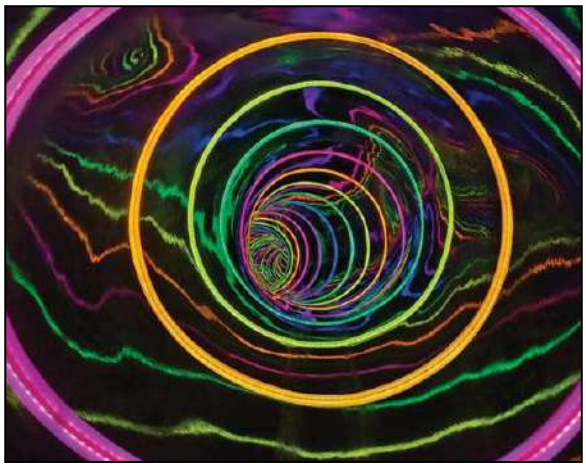
The slides in Southlake stand 18 feet tall. The Fort Worth complex is 23 feet, and Sharp says some properties have ceilings as high as 34 feet if they choose to go the slides route.

"We feel positive about these first two test installations that we want to put them in more facilities," Sharp told *AT*. "We held a franchisee open house on December 10 to talk about [the specifics] of putting them in."

The slides maintain a 40-inch height requirement, following ASTM standards and analysis of G forces. Sharp is on an ASTM committee studying indoor attractions such as these, and he says it behooves the industry to always keep safety top of mind.







Riders go airborne on the launch slides (above left). A surf slide offers more of a halfpipe experience (above middle). When sliding down the enclosed tube, visitors experience a tunnel of colorful rings (above right). COURTESY URBAN AIR; AT/TIM BALDWIN

FEC

Soft Play works with Thanksgiving Point, opens Jurassic Jungle

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Thanksgiving Point partnered with Soft Play to create the components of the Jurassic Jungle at the complex. With hands-on and interactive components, children are learning about dinosaurs while playing. COURTESY SOFT PLAY

LEHI, Utah — A new attraction at **Thanksgiving Point**, a nonprofit indoor and outdoor farm garden, and museum complex in Lehi, Utah, has children and familes alike excited and has had both groups making multiple trips since it opened on December 17, 2024.

The new attraction, located in the complex's Museum of Ancient Life, is called Mountain America Jurassic Jungle and is a five-story expansive indoor play world. Through play, the area teaches children in a hands-on way about prehistoric creatures through animatronic dinosaurs, slides, bridges, games, puzzles, playground elements and audio and visual effects that immerse children in the experience.

"Jurassic Jungle has been an absolute hit," said **Abby Allard**, Thanksgiving Point communications manager. "The first few weeks after opening, almost every single day was sold out. Over 20,000 tickets were reserved the first week we put them on sale and member tickets were reserved nearly a month in advance."

Thanksgiving Point partnered with **Soft Play** for the components of the new attraction.

Allard confirmed it has been extremely positive.

"Guests are very excited about the size and interactivity within the venue," she said.

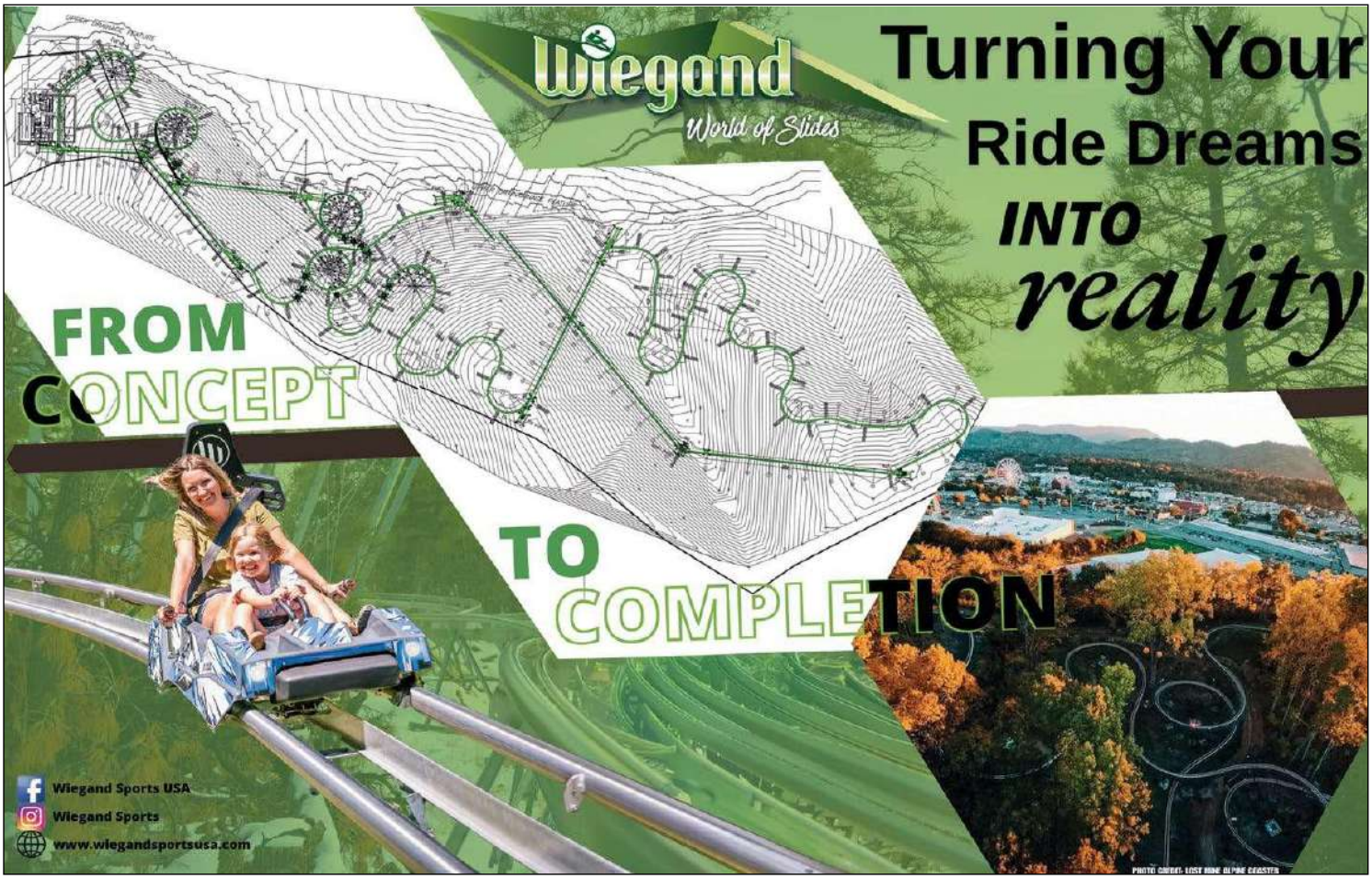
Rich Albright, vice president and general manager for Soft Play, said Soft Play's approach to helping attractions' owners bring their venues alive is to deeply understand the broader market trends that their clients are moving toward, as well as the park owners' overarching strategy and develop tailored play solutions to meet those needs.

"It's a blend of getting the play value right, getting the design right, the look and feel, as well as getting the economics right," Albright said. "I emphasize the word tailored, because each activation presents unique challenges, making a one-size-fits-all solution ineffective."

Albright said Soft Play has a portfolio of projects that demonstrate the capability to completely transform a space. The company has transformed spaces from retail spaces to theaters (including an **IMAX** theater), converting spaces that function as a stand-alone revenue generation or as part of a broader experience.

"Our goal is to ensure a capital payback in a period that makes fiscal sense for the owner," Albright said. "We have seen payback periods as short as six months and nearly all of our projects

▸ **See SOFT, page 22**





SOFT

Continued from page 21

recouping investment in less than 18 to 24 months."

Albright said determining what components to use in a space is more art than science.

"But we have a world-class design team that works directly with the park owner's design team to discuss options of structure, design and play value," he said. "Our design process is highly collaborative, typically with several iterations. We need to be play experts that offer broad solutions, but we also need to listen."

Albright continues to see a trend toward extensive theming. From dinosaur-inhabited jungles such as Mountain America Jurassic Jungle at Thanksgiving Point to exploring outer space like Planet Play at the **Kennedy Space Center**, to incorporating licensed solutions like **CoComelon**, more operators are driving toward those immersive environments.

Mountain America Jurassic Jungle is a structure built with almost two miles of steel, 122 sculpted elements and 14,000 feet of netting that keep the kids safe. There are animatronic dinosaurs, multiple slides, places to climb, a turning tunnel, a light board and illuminated fossil bones.

One of the main interactive components for them, as far as interactivity, are the RFID wristbands. Guests can explore the venue — searching for yellow beacons — with the wristband tracking their progress.

"If they find all the beacons, they get a free prize from our gift shop," Allrad said.

In some of the larger spaces Soft Play has done, the company has made sure there are areas for kids just to run.

The company is also seeing the emergence of Phygital play. "Activations that include play elements that are highly interactive, from digital problem-solving games, which could be STEM-based, to immersive competitions that use technology to create unique gameplay," Albright said.

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FEC

Meow Wolf opens fifth location in Houston, focuses on music vibe

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com





Upon entering public radio station ETNL, visitors find the crew has disappeared. After entering the station manager's office (above left), they enter the first portal into other dimensions (above right). Within the realms of Radio Tave is Cowboix Hevvven, a honky tonk in which customers can sit alongside beings from other dimensions trapped there eternally (below). AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY MEOW WOLF

HOUSTON — Gradually, **Meow Wolf** is becoming a nationally recognized brand. Those who have experienced the mind-bending properties are immediately captivated. Late in 2024, the company's fifth location opened its doors.

Called **Radio Tave**, the immersive art experience is unlike previous installations, owing to its emphasis on music. Houston-based artists were a top priority in this installation. The local flavor and the city's vibrant art scene provide a distinctive influence.

"We're beyond excited for everyone to experience Radio Tave," said **Jose Tolosa**, CEO of Meow Wolf. "The artistic talent of this city is unparalleled, and we've worked hand in hand with Houston's best to create something that will leave people transformed."

"We have over 50 artists that are local to Houston that are represented," said **Laura Siebert**, director of marketing. "If you go through the exhibit, you can find some Houston Easter eggs. One hallway [features] the history of Houston hip hop. In the bark of one of the trees, there is a hole you can look into and see the NASA Space Program."

Meow Wolf installations are all about exploration. There is a story to be told, but visitors discover it in their own way. At this location, a radio station crew has seemed to disappear, but rumors have it that they are still broadcasting from another dimension.

The mysterious ETNL radio station is a starting point. Radio Tave is the most sound-driven Meow Wolf location to date. ETNL is a community radio station that now spans dimensions taking ticket holders with them.

"Everything you hear is from local musicians," Siebert told *Amusement Today*. "We do have big things planned for the summer to incorporate more Houston bands and musicians into our campaign. We have a lot of fun stuff coming up."

The overused phrase "Everything is bigger in Texas" has some clout here. The sheer size of the facility is one of the largest footprints among the various surreal properties. While vast, the sensory overload is also deeply immersive.

"There is a common thread of a storyline that goes throughout the location, but in addition to that there are some anchor spaces — obsidiopolis, the amalgam, the radio station itself — where the storyline is more incorporated in those spaces," said Siebert. "Once you get out of the main anchor spaces, you are now in The Strange in which all the locations live within."

If none of that makes a lick of sense, then that is exactly what makes Meow Wolf so amazingly captivating. It's like an art exhibit meets fun house meets *Lost In Space*. The innate qualities of Meow Wolf that make it inexplainable to others makes it so fun to tell friends and at the same time so baffling in how to do so.



Radio Tave has integrated advanced interactive technologies — from augmented reality to immersive soundscapes that respond to visitors' movements — to create an artistic wonderland.

As Meow Wolf does, the existing space has been repurposed for this grand reimagining. The building had been vacant for years, but previously it was a paper factory.

Cowboix Hevvven is a futuristic, albeit weird, food and drink spot, which Meow Wolf states: "serves up divebar food." It's a Texas twist where country meets cosmic. The otherworldly honky tonk serves those who have ticketed admission, but it can be catered for private events during non-exhibition hours, as can the large space in the center of Radio Tave. Cowboix Hevvven is a new take on the Meow Wolf concept as food and drink are served within the mind-trippy experience. There, it is perpetually Friday Night and the interdimensional beings (who might be seated at the table) can never leave.

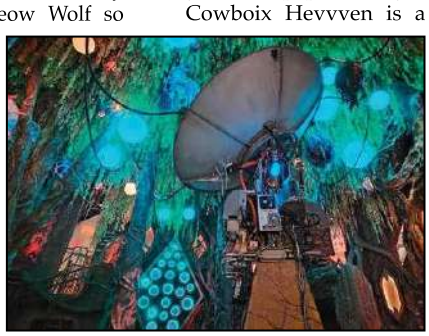
"It is an interdimensional bar that is in The Strange that is a hub for Tavers — who are people that can transport from one dimension to another through portals," Siebert said (as naturally as anyone else would offer directions). "All the characters who were transported here from ETNL Radio are stuck there for eternity."

Of note, ETNL pays homage to the original Meow Wolf location, **House of Eternal Return**, in Santa Fe.

Community engagement is at the heart of Meow Wolf Houston's mission. Partnerships with local schools, community organizations, and cultural institutions have been established to ensure that its impact extends beyond the walls of the installation. These partnerships include art education programs, community workshops and special events that aim to make art accessible to a wider audience. By fostering a sense of community and inclusivity, Meow Wolf Houston strives to be more than just an art installation — it seeks to be a vital part of Houston's cultural fabric.

"The surprises are constant; I've never walked through and not seen something new," Siebert told *AT*. "The reception in Houston has been very surprising to me, a native Houstonian. Everybody appreciates the art and the interactivity. We are here for Houston; Houston is representing Houston. We are a part of this larger collaboration; we want to be a part of the community."





Obsidiopolis (above left) is a story-driven art exploration dimension within Radio Tave. Art meets cosmic is rule of thumb in Meow Wolf installations. AT/TIM BALDWIN



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

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Betson Enterprises announced the completion of a 30-piece game room installation at **GoodTimes** in Troy, Alabama. This marks the second collaboration between Betson and GoodTimes.

Under the guidance of Betson Sales Representative **Bob Sommer**, the arcade was designed to deliver a dynamic and wide-ranging experience for guests of all ages. Sommer worked closely with the GoodTimes team to carefully select an engaging mix of games, including redemption favorites and arcade staples. **Nina Byron**, from Betson's finance department, also collaborated with GoodTimes to provide flexible leasing and financing options, ensuring a comprehensive arcade package tailored to their business needs.

"Expanding to a second location was a massive undertaking, and there were many moving parts," shared **Scott Good**, owner/general manager of GoodTimes.

•

Growing movie chain **RoadHouse Cinemas** has chosen **Intercard** cashless technology for the new arcade at its Tucson, Arizona, location. It is Intercard's second installation for RoadHouse, which already uses the company's system at its location in Colorado Springs, Colorado. **Saul Scribner** of Intercard did the installation.

The huge new arcade boasts more than 86 games managed by 126 card readers connected to three kiosks and three POS stations. It is part of a 36,000-square-foot expansion of the cinemas that adds 14 lanes of bowling, **Topgolf** Swing Suites and ax-throwing.

•

Sacoa Cashless System announced the successful installation of its products at the newly opened **In The Game Fremont Street** arcade, operated by **Family Entertainment Group** (FEG), on the iconic Las Vegas Fremont Street.

The modern venue chose to install Sacoa's latest reader, the Spark Reader, as well as its three-time award-winning K4 Kiosk, POS and Redemption 2 system. These integrated solutions enhance the guest experience by providing seamless transactions, efficient customer service, and streamlined prize redemption processes.

"We are thrilled to partner with Family Entertainment Group and contribute to this exciting new destination on Fremont Street," said **Sebastian Mochkovsky**, C.E.O. of Sacoa U.S.A.

In The Game Fremont Street is a cutting-edge entertainment venue featuring a diverse mix of games and attractions.

•

Beat The Bomb, the world's first immersive social video game company, has opened its sixth U.S. location and the first in Texas. Centrally located in Houston's historic Fifth Ward, the venue joins existing locations in Atlanta, Brooklyn, Charlotte, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

"Houston was an obvious choice for the newest location of Beat The Bomb," CEO and Founder **Alex Patterson** said. "Its vibrant arts community, lively social scene and strong corporate presence align perfectly with our mission to create human connection through our immersive, colorful gaming technology."

The 10,000-square-foot location includes The Bomb Bar, a full-service bar with an array of cocktails, wine and colorful bomb slushies, as well as a 1,500-square-foot beer garden.

Beat The Bomb offers a unique gaming experience where teams of four to six players don hazmat suits, dodge lasers and crack codes to help disarm an explosive Paint Bomb, Foam Bomb or Slime Bomb.

•

New England FEC operator **Apex Entertainment** announced a new, four-year partnership with **Rockland Trust** for the naming rights to its popular go kart track in Marlborough, Mass. With new graphic treatments, branded karts, and other elements around the track, the newly named **Rockland Trust Speedway** opened to drivers on February 20, 2025.

"When Rockland Trust opened an office in the APEX Entertainment Center Plaza, it created a perfect opportunity for us to partner with the bank to create a brand experience for the 5,000 or more weekly guests we serve at APEX Entertainment," said **George Aronstein**, chief operating officer of APEX Entertainment.

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FEC

Sandy Creek Mining Co. supplies interactive fun for 35 years

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
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Sandy Creek Mining Company exhibits at IAAPA Expo to show off its product. AT/TIM BALDWIN

FOSTORIA, Ohio — Founded in 1991, **Sandy Creek Mining Company** enters its 35th year of business. Supplying a unique (and entertaining) product — sluices, the company has grown. Today, it has serviced more than 800 locations in more than 26 different countries.

"Sandy Creek Mining was founded in 1991 by **Woody** and **Terrie Woodruff**," said son and General Manager **Justin Woodruff**. "We started small, with just $5,000 and a few buckets of rough gemstone material."

The concept is simple. Customers purchase a bag of, well, dirt. Eager participants take their bags in hopes of unearthing gemstones using a sluice.

"We began in the show cave industry (**National Caves Association**) and have expanded into amusement parks, agritourism, FECs, museums and everything in between," Woodruff explained. "Our product's educational and hands-on nature makes it a natural fit for any location that caters to families and young people."

The dual water system of their sluice packages assures clear and pristine water flows while customers pan for their treasure. Stainless steel linings in the construction add strength and longevity.

When asked where Sandy Creek obtains the prized gems, Woodruff told *Amusement Today*, "We source gemstones and fossils from mines around the world, including Brazil, India, Madagascar, Columbia, Peru, China, South Africa, Nigeria, Canada and Morocco. Many of these materials are mined commercially for jewelry, while others, like iron pyrite ('fool's gold') or Fluorite are often mined for their mineral content. Once the deposits are found, they are extracted and shipped to us for further crushing and cleaning, if necessary."

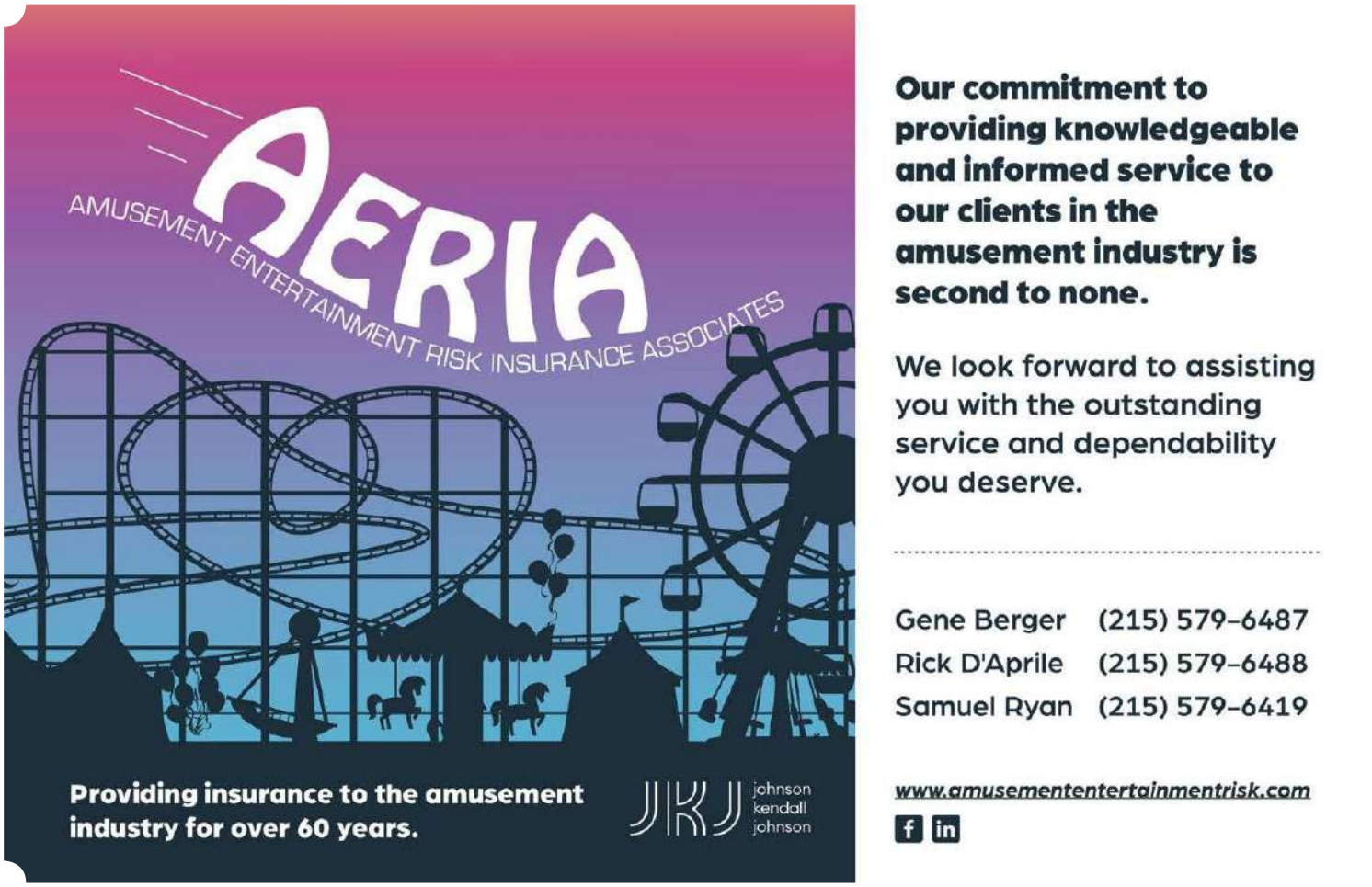
According to their formula, the rough mining material retails for two and a half to three times its cost. "Repeat business is excellent, and we're proud to be one of the largest profit centers, second only to admissions/ticketing, for many of our customers — both large and small," said Woodruff.

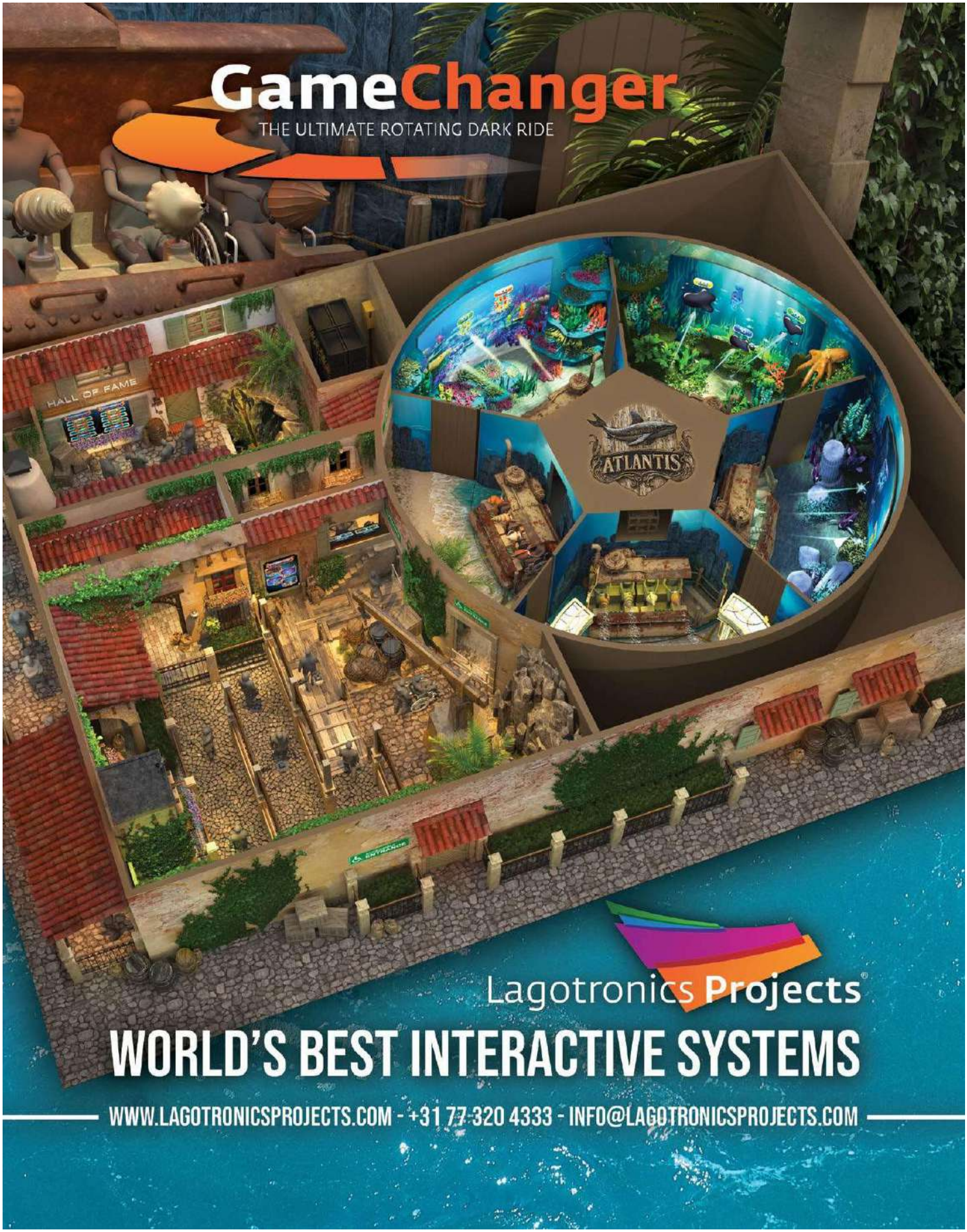
Because of the interactive nature of the experience, mining is a natural fit for themed environments, from caves to theme parks.

"Our largest installation is at a theme park in Haikou, China, and can accommodate 200 guests at a time," Woodruff told *AT*. "Our largest domestic project is at **Natural Bridge Caverns** in New Braunfels, Texas, which can accommodate approximately 125 guests at a time and features large water towers, waterfalls and a unique 'around the porch' design. Natural Bridge has been a customer for some 28 years and we are proud to say we have most of the original customers we started with 34 years ago."

And new customers are still coming.

"We're excited to be expanding with multiple amusement parks in the USA in 2025 and continuing to grow within the agritourism industry with several new locations planned. We also have plans for new FECs and camp locations in 2025," said Woodruff.




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MIDWAYS

Attendance up 120,000 at the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo

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The midway (above) experienced bigger crowds as the weather was more cooperative this year with several warm days. In the background is Talley Amusements's 33-meter Lamberink Ferris wheel. The carnival provider utilizes Magic Money (below), a cashless midway ticketing system. AT/SAMMY SPICCOLA



FORT WORTH STOCK SHOW & RODEO

FORT WORTH, Texas — The weather this year was an inverse of the 13 days of cold temperatures experienced during the 2024 **Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo** (FWSSR). While there were a few evenings in the 20s, most of the daytime temperatures were in the 50s and 60s, with three days soaring into the 80s. The 23-day show that ran January 17 through February 8 ended with an estimated attendance of 1,263,920, nearly 120,000 more visitors over 2024. The theme this time was "Hustle and Show."

"Unlike last year, we experienced abnormally warm temperatures for our 2025 Show, which gave a crucial boost to attendance. Large crowds returned and guests appeared to enjoy themselves," said Communications Director **Matt Brockman**.

The fluctuating temperatures made it tricky for **Talley Amusements**, the carnival provider. "It's a big gamble to play in January [in Fort Worth]," said **Mary Talley**, co-owner of the show.

Fortunately, the hometown carnival only had a 12-mile trek from its quarters to the stock show. Talley brought in 50 rides, the majority of which were from Talley Amusements with some from other family members and a few booked-in pieces. In addition, Talley provided numerous food stands and games. The new rides this year were a **Wisdom Rides** Himalaya, which the carnival has named Thunderfest, along with an **A.R.M. USA** Rock Star called Hard Rock. The most popular rides were Thunderfest and a **Lamberink** 33-meter Ferris wheel. "We have the prettiest wheel rolling," said Talley.

She said the stock show staff is "like family for us."

"We began as a livestock exhibition in 1896, and livestock and horse shows remain a bedrock of our identity," said Brockman. "Our carnival/midway compliments our entertainment offerings perfectly with something for everyone from toddlers taking their first-ever ride on the Choo Choo Express or the Teacups all the way to teenagers and adults getting their adrenaline charge on exciting thrill rides like the Cliff Hanger, Tilt-A-Whirl or Kamikaze. We have a great working relationship with Talley Amusements."

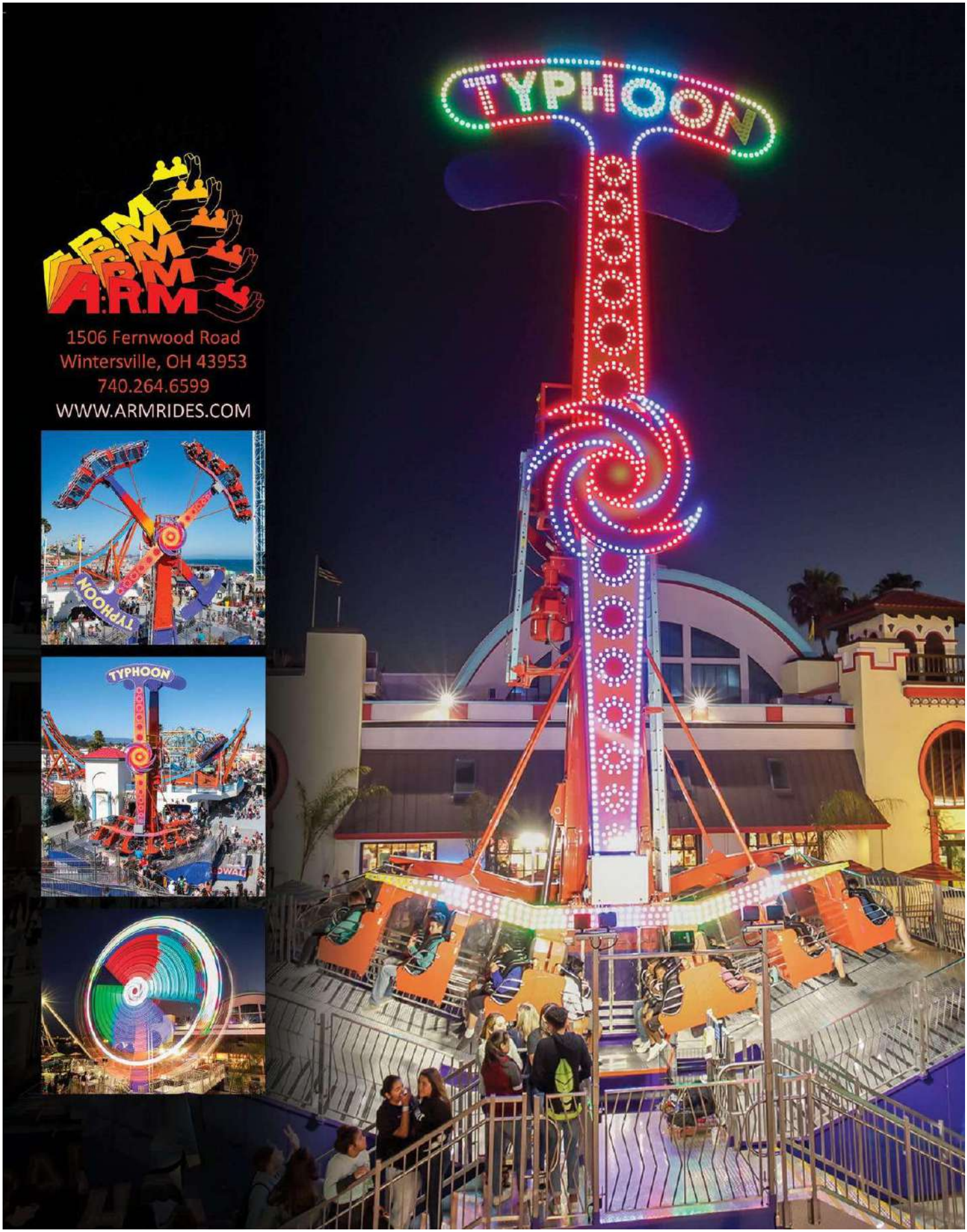
The stock show has strong support from the section of the city where it resides. "Located in the heart of our vibrant city's cultural district, we are very fortunate to be strongly

▸ **See WORTH, page 30**



All told, Talley Amusements brought 50 rides in for the 27-day event. COURTESY FORT WORTH STOCK SHOW & RODEO




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A.R.M. USA's Rock Star, which Talley calls Hard Rock was new to the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo. It first debuted in July 2024 at the Ohio State Fair, Columbus. AT/SAMMY SPICCOLA

▶WORTH

Continued from page 28

embraced by local residents and the greater North Texas community. Showcasing our traditions and the western lifestyle is important to us while also being innovative in our efforts to appeal to an increasingly diverse local demographic," said Brockman.

In 1918, the stock show organized the world's first indoor rodeo. 107 years later, the FWSSR ProRodeo tournament is among the top five professional rodeos in the United States. The stock show and rodeo advertise its product across numerous media, including digital (paid social, display and search), along with television, radio and print.

Pulido's Rodeo Kitchen was featured in one of the large cattle exhibition facilities. The longtime local favorite Mexican restaurant was a hit with both exhibitors and guests alike.

The auditorium entertainment series was quite successful with **Clint Black** and **Pug Johnson**; **Jim Gaffigan**, **Aaron Lewis** and the **Stateliners** and **Chris Janson**. Local and regional acts performed in the Roadhouse and Corkyard venues.

Brockman reflected on this year's show: "Organizing an event like ours takes a tremendous amount of work. Our amazing staff goes the extra mile to make sure the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo is the best it can be. Our volunteer base also does an excellent job in ensuring our guests, exhibitors and competitors are treated well. It's a labor love for the event that is truly legendary — the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo."

The 128th stock show returns January 16 through February 7, 2026.

•fwssr.com



New to the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo this year was a Himalaya from Wisdom Rides, which the carnival calls Thunderfest. AT/SAMMY SPICCOLA



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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Austin Texas-based **Thomas Carnival, Inc.** recently sold all its stock to **Five Star Amusements LLC**. Thomas Carnival will continue operations under the new stockholders, with current management remaining in place. **John Hanschen** has committed to serving in management through at least the 2028 season. The operation provides traveling carnival midway entertainment across 11 states each year.

Five Star Amusements is owned by **Timothy** and **Jessica Bessette.** Jessica is the daughter of **Mike** and **Connie Featherston**, who own **Gold Star Amusements.**

Hanschen stated in a release: "We are excited to announce this new arrangement, which aims to perpetuate the service provided by Thomas Carnival for almost 100 years. The 2025 season will mark my 50th year, and the 2027 season will celebrate our 100th consecutive year on the road. All written contracts currently in place for carnival services at fairs and events will be honored as promised. The new stockholders will determine how many additional fairs and events the company will pursue beyond our current commitments. Change is necessary; operational costs pose a significant challenge, and we have not always kept pace with the increases. Our longstanding friendship and collaboration with the Gold Star group and the Featherston family will aid in this transition, and I am committed to enhancing our customer service."

•

A change is coming to the operational season of the four-day **Bradford Agricultural Fair,** Starke, Florida. For more than 60 years, the fair was traditionally held in early March. That continued this year with **Hildebrand Amusement Rides** as the carnival provider. This year there are two fairs as they permanently move to the fall, with an early October timeframe.

"It's a bit of a change, but we think moving to the fall will be a positive one," **Bob Milner**, president of the fair, told **WJCB-TV**. "So far, everything has been very positive. People are excited because of the better weather and the chance to avoid competing with other events."

The fall fair will feature more attractions, bigger rides, additional food vendors and expanded entertainment options.

•

This year the **Greater Ohio Showmen's Association** (GOSA) celebrates its 75th year in operation. The nonprofit organization, with 455 members, represents midway providers at fairs and festivals across the state of Ohio. This includes food, rides and game businesses.

GOSA was instrumental in creating the Ohio amusement ride safety advisory council, and the first rider responsibility law in the United States. GOSA has two seats on the advisory council, as well as representation on the Ohio food services advisory board and the Ohio game rule advisory board.

"Ohio's ride safety regulations are among the strongest in the country, which help ensure a safe experience for fairgoers. ODA commends the Association for their strong industry representation, dedication and focus on safety," said **Brian Baldridge**, director of the **Ohio Department of Agriculture.**

"Our amusement industry is evolving every year with more sophisticated rides, menus, food options and staffing challenges," said **Bill Sterling** GOSA president. "We need to leverage our advisory affiliations and continue to work in concert with our members, government, and industry partners advocating for common sense regulation to achieve efficient operations while staying on our toes to meet every challenge. And we will, as we have done for the past 75 years."

•

The **International Association of Fairs and Expositions** (IAFE) is conducting a 2025 economic impact study that will provide insights into the economic and fiscal contributions of fairs to their host communities.

All fairs in the United States (regardless of whether they are a member) are encouraged to participate by completing the form that can be found on the IAFE website. "The more fairs that participate, the better and more meaningful the tool will be. We are aiming for a 70% response rate to ensure the most accurate information possible in the final report," said **David Grindle**, president and CEO of the organization.

The form asks simple questions, including both fair and non-fair attendance and revenue, public sector support, sales tax rate and lodging tax rate.

The final report will be made available to IAFE members early this summer.

•

A piece of DeKalb County Indiana's history, a former vehicular bridge that spanned the CSX railroad tracks, will be brought back to life. The **Auburn Board of Works and Public Safety** sold the bridge pieces to the **DeKalb County Fair Association** for $1.00 earlier this year.

The bridge will further connect the fairgrounds to a lot used for camping and parking. "One of the most important considerations with the old railroad bridge was ensuring it remained within DeKalb County, given its historical and cultural significance to our community," said Auburn Mayor **Dave Clark.**

The 147-foot-long steel Warren Pony Truss timber rail bridge stood for more than 75 years. It was dismantled by the county in 2014 because railroad officials feared it could collapse onto the tracks. In 2021, the city acquired the dismantled bridge from the county.

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MIDWAYS

Nearly 400,000 attend Florida State Fair, midway revenue solid

AT: *Ron Gustafson*
Special to Amusement Today

TAMPA, Fla. — The **Florida State Fair** soared past last year's attendance mark with nearly 400,000 passing through the turnstiles during the Feb. 6 to 17 expo.

The fair estimated 397,992 attended the 12-day event, posting a 17.5 percent increase over 2024.

"Strong winds and rain impacted the majority of the final Sunday, affecting total daily and final attendance figures," said **Cheryl Flood**, CEO of the Florida State Fair Authority. The fair closed the following Monday, Presidents Day.

Fairgoers were not hesitant to take in all the fair had to offer, and midway revenues were reflective of that trend.

Midway money

"We had record per-cap spending and the third highest midway revenue ever at the fair," an enthusiastic **Frank Zaitshik**, owner of Michigan-based **Wade Shows**, told *Amusement Today*. "We were within a nose of having an all-time ride revenue record and the last Saturday of the fair was a record for us.

"I'm proud of our team as we had to make to tight move from West Palm to Tampa," he added. "It required a lot of pre-planning and pre-setup — they just did a great job."

Of the massive arsenal of 88 rides on the midway, only one had not been "stickered" for the fair's opening on Thursday, Feb. 6, Zaitshik noted.

"The Thunderbird opened on Friday as it was a new ride," he said of the attraction's one-day delay.

Operated by **Iconic Midway Rides**, Spring Hill, Fla., Thunderbird is a tower swing ride standing at a jaw-dropping 175 feet. It is the first large mobile ride of its stature in North America built by **Lamberink** of The Netherlands.

Iconic also provided its **KMG** XXL giant 130-foot pendulum-themed as Kraken, which was erected adjacent to Thunderbird. Both mammoth rides were highly visible from nearby Interstate 4. Iconic's **Larson International** loop, themed as Infinity, was also on the midway.

"This year's Florida State Fair had as good of a selection of rides of any midway in America," the show owner stated. "It took a lot of cooperation from others to have this great midway."

Powers Great American Midways, Corfu, N.Y., led the pack in supplementing the layout with six rides. They were Sky Hawk (**A.R.M. USA**), Tesla (**Tivoli**), Crazy Cabs (**SBF/Visa Group**), Zero Gravity (**Battech Enterprises**), Jumbo Elephants (**Kolmax Plus**) and Dragon Coaster (**Jung-Max**).





A two-story funhouse (above) was one of more than 80 attractions on the Wade Shows midway at the Florida State Fair. The giant Lamberink wheel and State Fair Super Slide were highlights at the fair (right). AT/GARY SLADE

Dreamland Amusements, Lake Tahoe, Nev., and **Wonderland Midway**, Brooklyn, N.Y., each pitched in with a couple of rides, while **Wood Entertainment**, San Antonio, Texas, provided three pieces, including the Sky High 155-foot Ferris wheel. The Lamberink wheel was purchased in partnership with Zaitshik in 2017.

"We also had our new Candy Adventure funhouse/glasshouse combination with a 130-foot front," Zaitshik said. It was built by **Chuck Wheeler** of Ohio's **Amusement Wraps**.

Kudos for the carnival

Flood praised Wade Shows' midway, stating: "Our younger guests were dazzled by the new Candy Adventure offering a sensory journey through a sweets-inspired funhouse. The Florida State Fair was excited to work with Wade Shows to offer fairgoers new thrills on the midway for 2025, including Thunderbird and Kraken. All of the new experiences meant more memorable moments for our guests."

The midway had more exciting offerings, including the 210-foot, eight-lane slide State Fair Super Slide (SFB/Visa). Zaitshik said his giant slide plays only the state fairs of Florida, New York and North Carolina.

Other spectaculars Wade provided included: Alpine Bobs, Sea Dragon, Giant Wheel and Zipper (**Chance Rides**), Cyclops (KMG), Hit In 2000 Himalaya (**Mack Rides**), Mega Drop (**Fabbri Group**), Mighty Mouse Coaster (**Zamperla**), Quasar themed as Music Express (A.R.M. USA/ARM UK), Orbiter (Tivoli), Rock Star and Vertigo (A.R.M. USA), Street Fighter 360 (**Technical Park**), Super Cyclone coaster (**Interpark**) and Waver Swinger (**Bertazzon**).

The carnival also operated its Sky Ride along Lake Road in the fairgrounds.

Ride wristbands for all ages were $35 each Monday through Thursday and $45 Friday through Sunday and Presidents Day.

Fair admission was $7 for kids 6 to 11, Monday through Thursday, Friday through Sunday and Presidents Day

See FLORIDA, page 34




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Thrill rides were a major part of the Wade Shows midway at the Florida State Fair. AT/GARY SLADE



Thunderbird swing soars 150 feet into the air at the Florida State Fair. AT/RON GUSTAFSON



FLORIDA

Continued from page 32

$11; Adults 12 to 54 paid $12 Monday through Thursday, Friday through Sunday and Presidents Day $16. Seniors 55-plus paid $11 Monday through Friday. Parking was free.

Entertainment a hit

Flood also pointed out highlights of the fair's entertainment lineup.

Sunny Nights was an evening water stunt show produced by renowned daredevil and circus performer **Bello Nock**. It featured the fair's mascot, Sunny, and LED illumination on the center water feature at the fairgrounds.

The fair official said food-eating contests were expanded to feature a different food each day of the fair and the presentations were a fan favorite.

Capacity crowds were on hand for **Jurassic Kingdom,** produced by **Colonia Productions**. The interactive show for kids had multiple daily performances. Fireworks were presented on weekends.

Circus and motorcycles

The **American Motor Drome Company**'s vintage Wall of Death featured motorcycle daredevils performing gravity-defying stunts in its silo-shaped structure, while **Aaron Radatz** dazzled audiences with his unique illusions on The Mall. **Cycle Circus Live**, the largest FMX freestyle show of its kind, was presented at the Grand Prix Arena with a demolition derby held in the covered arena.

Circus Hollywood performed daily shows under the big top along Mall Way with the **Royals' Spectacular** trapeze near the Gate 2 entrance.

Six music stages placed throughout the fair were busy each day with a variety of acts from tribute bands to the Navy Band Southeast's ensembles.

Exhibits and more

There were more than 1,900 exhibitors at this year's expo and more than 1,500 creative exhibitors, plus hundreds of vendors in Expo Hall.

Agriculture shows were held daily with the Champion of Champions Contest and Awards Ceremony on the final day.

Cracker Country, a living history museum on the fairgrounds with 13 original structures from the 1800s, was open to the public during the expo's run.

The 2026 Florida State Fair is slated for Feb. 5 to 16.

- **floridastagefair.com**
- **wadeshowsinc.com**



WATER PARKS & RECREATION

Adventure Bay adding Hyperlight Slide — page 36 / News Splash — page 36

Splash, play, repeat: Tech behind Splash Lagoon's arcade success

AT: *David Fake*
dfake@amusementtoday.com







Splash Lagoon guests enjoy a virtually effortless fun arcade experience riding Virtual Rabbids: The Big Ride (above right), with the help of Embed's cutting-edge cashless solutions.Guest engagement is enhanced with custom-designed game cards (top left) and marketing materials from Embed's eSHOP platform (bottom left). COURTESY EMBED, SPLASH LAGOON

ERIE, Pa. — For more than two decades, **Splash Lagoon Indoor Water Park Resort** has stood as one of the premier indoor water parks in the United States. Owned by **Scott Enterprises**, a family-run hospitality powerhouse with over 70 years of community-driven success, Splash Lagoon has welcomed millions of visitors looking for year-round aquatic adventure. With nine water slides, an interactive tree house, and one of the largest indoor wave pools on the East Coast, the park offers an immersive experience that extends far beyond the water.

Yet, while the water park remains the star attraction, Treasure Island Arcade, the 6,500-square-foot gaming haven within Splash Lagoon, has quietly become an additional key revenue driver and guest favorite at the resort. With more than 100 games and cutting-edge attractions, including the wildly popular Virtual Rabbids: The Big Ride and Godzilla Kaiju Wars VR, the arcade delivers thrilling experiences that keep families entertained long after they've dried off from the waves of Splash Lagoon.

A major contributing factor to Treasure Island Arcade's success is the cashless technology and support provided by **Embed**. Its innovative technology and partnership have helped modernize and streamline operations at the arcade and provide a seamless and data-driven guest experience.

With spring break season now in full swing, the park faces one of its most intense staffing challenges as high school and college employees return to their studies, creating a labor shortage. Embed's solutions, particularly GoTrain virtual training sessions and Mobile Wallet technology, have stepped in to streamline operations, reduce reliance on on-site staff, and improve the guest experience during these high-demand weeks.

For more than a decade, Embed has been an integral part of Treasure Island Arcade's transformation.

"We've been working with Embed for years, and the impact has been outstanding," said **Ryan Cherry**, general manager at Splash Lagoon. "One of the biggest advantages they bring to the table is their customer service. Their response time is incredible. If a reader goes down, you're losing revenue, and Embed understands that urgency."

At the core of Embed's support is the Mobile Wallet, an innovation that has redefined the guest experience. Instead of waiting at kiosks or counters, visitors can reload funds instantly from their smartphones, ensuring uninterrupted gameplay.

"The convenience of Mobile Wallet has been fantastic," Cherry emphasized. "Parents love that they can reload game cards from anywhere — whether it's from their hotel room or while dining [nearby]. It's all about making it as easy as possible for guests to have fun."

Splash Lagoon's commitment to staying ahead of industry trends means leveraging deep data analytics, and Embed's STATS dashboard has become a game-changer.

"In an arcade, data analytics is everything," said Cherry. "A great game in the wrong location might not perform well. With STATS, we can track spending patterns, optimize game placement and even adjust prize payouts to maximize engagement and revenue."

The numbers speak for themselves. Within six months of integrating Mobile Wallet and STATS, the arcade experienced a 200% increase in Mobile Wallet reload revenue, a doubling of reload volume and a tripling of guest registrations. Registered guests were more likely to return, reinforcing the long-term value of these digital solutions.

Operational efficiency has seen a boost thanks to Embed's GoTrain virtual training sessions. Arcade floor staff who underwent gamified training saw their Mobile Wallet reloads increase by almost triple, while the average reload value nearly doubled.

"Training is a massive challenge in our industry because of seasonal staff turnover," Cherry noted. "Embed's approach has made it easier than ever for our team to get up to speed quickly and provide top-tier guest service."

The shift toward a cashless, frictionless experience is not just a convenience — it's an expectation. Recognizing this, Treasure Island Arcade has fully embraced Embed's ecosystem, from smartTOUCH card readers to the custom-designed arcade cards available through Embed's eSHOP.

"Personalized cards are a big win for us," Cherry explained. "Guests love them, they help reinforce our brand after they leave the arcade."

In addition, Embed's eSHOP has simplified the process of acquiring marketing materials and equipment.

"Our team has used eSHOP to order promotional items, and it's been a great resource," Cherry said. "Being able to easily access what we need, just makes our jobs easier."

Splash Lagoon and its Treasure Island Arcade show no signs of slowing.

"We're always keeping an eye on new trends and ensuring our guests have fresh experiences every time they visit," Cherry said. "With Embed's support, we can continue to innovate, optimize, and deliver top-notch entertainment."

As the FEC landscape continues to evolve, partnerships like the one between Splash Lagoon and Embed exemplify how the right technology and operational strategy can create not only a better guest experience but also drive sustainable business growth.

For Splash Lagoon, the journey doesn't end here — it's just getting started and Embed is ensuring that future-proofed fun is leading the way.





Adventure Bay adding Hyperlight Slide for 2025

AT: *Jeffrey Seifert*
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

ALTOONA, Iowa — When the summer season kicks off on May 24 at **Adventure Bay**, **Adventureland Resort**'s water park, guests will be able to enjoy a new attraction. The park's former Typhoon waterslide has been transformed into Hyperlight, offering an all-new waterslide experience.

The Hyperlight slide offers a full-sensory experience with the addition of vivid lights and dynamic sound. Riders should prepare to hold onto their tubes and get ready to launch into a galaxy far away as they race through the tunnel to the bottom. With several different combinations of laser lights and sound to choose from, no two rides will be the same on Hyperlight

Hyperlight is a slide augmentation provided by **iSlide Technology** of the Netherlands. The new slide will include color-changing lights, lasers and dynamic surround sound for a full sensory experience. The existing Typhoon waterslide was an enclosed **ProSlide** Mammoth with an enclosed Tornado 18. It uses a two-person round raft.

"Our park team is continuing our massive park-wide transformation project in 2025 with yet another new experience for our visitors to enjoy," said Adventureland Resort General Manager **Mike Lusky**. "This summer, the thrills are going to shine brighter in Adventure Bay as we introduce the completely reimagined Hyperlight water slide, offering summer fun in a whole new light for every rider."

Hyperlight is the first new upgrade coming to Adventure Bay since 2012. The park was acquired by Palace Entertainment in 2021 and the organization has made several park-wide enhancements including the addition of a roller coaster and log flume in 2023.

Adventureland was founded by **John F. "Jack" Krantz**, who in the 1970s felt that the state of Iowa was lacking fun, family activities. He started with a hotel, Adventureland Inn, which opened in 1973. The park, Adventureland, opened in June of the following year after a delay caused by a tornado. It was modeled after **Disneyland** and was touted as Krantz's Midwestern take on one of the greatest theme parks of all time. In 1978, the park added a wooden coaster named Tornado, in reference to the actual tornado that delayed the park's opening four years earlier. The Krantz family operated the park for nearly half a century. When Jack Krantz died in 2006, the park was left to his four children. They continued to operate the park until 2021 when it was sold to **Palace Entertainment**.

The first water attraction to open at Adventureland was Kokomo Kove in 2008, a large water play structure provided by **WhiteWater West**. The attraction included seven waterslides and more than 100 water features spanning multiple levels, topped with a tipping bucket. Two years later five slides were added along with changing areas, lockers for rent, lounge chairs, food service and a full-service bar. The new area became Adventure Bay water park. The Breaker Beach wave pool was added in 2012 along with Shipwreck Shores, a kiddie pool with a pirate ship-themed water slide for kids and a swim-up beverage center just for kids.



NEWSSPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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The City Council in Miamisburg, Ohio, is making plans to repair and reopen the closed **Sycamore Trails Aquatic Center**. The center, which opened in 1996, closed in late 2023 owing to issues with the piping infrastructure that led to significant water loss.

The council expects the revamp to cost at least $12 million. The plan is to have a center with five independent bodies of water including an eight-lane 25-yard competition pool; a three-lane, 42-foot-long exercise pool; a fenced-in kiddie pool with splash features and toddler slides; a zero-depth entry recreational pool with climbable floats, in-water basketball and volleyball areas; and a splash pad that was installed in 2023. The project is also set to include a 22-foot slide tower with three body slides.

"What we're intending through this design is five separate bodies of water that are all independently mechanically functional and heated and chemically treated ... so any shutdown or mechanical issue or anything in one facility does not affect all of them," said **Ryan Davis**, the city's parks and recreation director. "They can all kind of operate independently. It actually gives us a lot of flexibility, both from an operational perspective and from that mechanical perspective as well."

The aquatic center revamp also will feature more seating, shade and improved accessibility.

•

With surf parks popping up all over the world, it may be hard to believe that one has yet to be built in China. That is about to change, however, as China will see the opening of its first surf park, the **Riyue Bay Surf Resort**, in Wanning on Hainan Island.

The development, which is the first of its kind in China comes via an international partnership between **American Wave Machines** and **China Tourism Group**. The wave-making capabilities will be provided by American Wave Machines' exclusive PerfectSwell technology.

The multi-use development will feature the PerfectSwell surf pool, a skatepark, a 132-room surf-themed hotel, a shopping center, bar, restaurants and a surf retail shop.

"With the launch of PerfectSwell, China solidifies its commitment to developing world-class athletes across all Olympic sports, surfing included," said **Kuan Zhao**, surf park director of the resort, in a press release. "Riyue Bay Surf Resort delivers unparalleled training opportunities allowing us to cultivate homegrown talent. At the same time, the venue will deliver a world-class resort experience for all levels of surf tourists. We will expand the surfing community throughout the country while welcoming the diverse and broad spectrum of surf enthusiasts from around the world."

•

A California developer is hoping to revive plans to build an Atlantis Resort in Hawaii. **Atlantis Ko'Olina** would be built on the island of Oahu on 26 acres of land located next to **Disney's Aulani Resort**. The project was first pitched 20 years ago but failed to come to fruition. **China Oceanwide Holdings Group** purchased the land about 10 years ago but never developed it. Oceanwide declared bankruptcy in 2023 and began liquidating its properties in 2024.

In January of this year, **Newage Ko Olina**, a subsidiary of California-based developer **Kam Sang Company,** purchased two parcels of land from Oceanwide and has submitted updated plans for the two properties. The proposal calls for an Atlantis resort to be developed on the 26.3-acre site with 500 hotel rooms and 500 vacation-stay or condominium units.

The other 17.3-acre land parcel will potentially house an upscale hotel brand such as **Regent, Mandarin Oriental**, **St. Regis** or **Waldorf Astoria** with 250 rooms and 250 vacation-stay units. Kam Song currently operates the Waldorf Astoria in Las Vegas.

When completed this will be the first Atlantis hotel/water park resort in the United States.

•

A new inflatable adventure park is planned for the city of Angus, Scotland. The **Monikie Country Park** aqua park will be the first of its kind in Angus when it opens at the beginning of May. To be installed at a cost of £135,000 (US$170,000) it will be located on the park's north reservoir.

The city has asked students at the primary schools of Monikie and Newbigging to name the project. Once complete, the pupils will be among the first visitors to try out the water park.

Kellie Smith, head teacher at Monikie and Newbigging primaries, said: "Given that the country park is just a stone's throw from our school, this is a very fitting project for our children and comes at an excellent time.

"It's rewarding to know our pupils will form their own legacy, naming something that we hope will be really popular in the community and will be something they will always remember."

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Inflatable Barriers
Family Rafts
Sidewinder Tubes & Rafts
Lillypad Walks & Floats
Climb & Play Netting

BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

Women of the attractions industry gather — page 42 / Pa. Showmen/Fair convention a success — page 46

IISF Super Extravaganza and Trade Show lives up to its name

AT: *Ron Gustafson*
Special to Amusement Today

RIVERVIEW, Fla. — **The 57th Annual International Independent Showmen's Foundation** (IISF) Super Trade Show & Extravaganza lived up to its name during the Feb. 11 to 14 run.

"It was absolutely the biggest show post-COVID — even six years before the pandemic," an ecstatic **Teresa Rimes**, show secretary, told *Amusement Today.*

The four-day event, staged at the **International Independent Showmen's Association** (IISA) property, featured 175 exhibitors with 19 of them first-timers. The weather cooperated with sunny skies and temperatures reaching into the low 80s.

According to Rimes, "Qualified buyers attended because of the product. We haven't seen stuff like this in years at the show.

"Attendance was roughly the same as last year at around 5,500," she noted. "Our available indoor space was sold out with 100 vendors, and there were 75 outdoors. Eighteen international companies exhibited."



Patrons at the IISF Super Trade Show & Extravaganza take in the outdoor exhibits). AT/RON GUSTAFSON

While some vendors offered mixed reviews, others were happy with the show's outcome.

"**Russell Dean Foods** raved and raved about the show," Rimes said of the Ohio company's debut as an exhibitor. "They never anticipated the results they got here at their outdoor booth."

She emphasized that the trade show is not only a time to see what's new in the industry but also like an "old home week" for many. IISF is the fundraising arm of IISA.

Of the 23 rides displayed outside, most were spoken for when the event closed. A handful of other rides slated for the show didn't appear due to transportation delays.

"We're selling everything we make," said **Jim Frederiksen, Frederiksen Industries,** Tampa, Fla., maker of the popular Fun Slide. **Powers & Thomas Midway Entertainment**, Wilmington, N.C., purchased the 65-foot slide on display, and before closing Friday, the adjacent 90-footer had been sold to **Fun Time Shows**, Fairdealing, Mo.

"We've sold four slides already in the first part of the year!" Frederiksen added.

Rides 4 U, Somerville, N.J., was busy showing the new portable version of the **SBF/Visa Group's** 32-seat Pirate ship. **Poor Jack Amusements,** Milton, Ind., had purchased the display unit prior to it arriving in Florida, while Connecticut showman **Robert Stewart,** owner of **Stewart Amusement,** attended to see the ride as he currently has one being built by the Italian supplier.



A portable Pirate 32 from SBF/Visa Group drew a lot of attention at the Rides 4 U display. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

Rides 4 U's **Len Soled** said his company sold six rides during the four days. **Morris Vivona Jr., Amusements of America**, Plainsboro, N.J., bought the SBF/Visa Groovy Bus on display, while the manufacturer's trailer-mounted spinning coaster was sold to **TDK Entertainment**, Punxsutawney, Pa. TDK also ordered an SFB/Visa Mini Tagada, and another was sold to **Beauce Carnival** of Canada.

"We're seeing a number of parks coming back to the show," Soled noted. **COTALand,** under construction in Austin, Texas, has an SBF/Visa Safari Jeep on order.

Soled said another sale was made to **Gillette Shows,** Pittsfield, Mass., with a Street Fighter under contract with Italian manufacturer **Technical Park.**

Amusement Devices & Mfg. (ADM), Schaller, Iowa, had an impressive six-ride layout with the highlight being the new Sugar Slide swing. Instead of traditional

See IISF, page 41

Helm & Sons adds attractions from Fun Light



COURTESY FUN LIGHT AMUSEMENTS

LIVINGSTON, Texas — **Alan Ferguson**, U.S. representative for **Fun Light Amusements** of the Czech Republic, was enthusiastic while talking to *Amusement Today* during the **IISF** Trade Show, highlighting two sales going to **Helm and Sons Amusements**, Riverside, Calif.

"**Davey Helm** has recently taken delivery of a two-story Ghost Train dark ride themed as 'The Conjuring,'" Ferguson noted. "He also has a three-story funhouse scheduled for delivery next year."

Ferguson has represented Fun Light since 2011 and has been a staple at the IISF event for years. Fun Light touts itself as the largest supplier of amusement equipment in Eastern Europe with a diverse catalog of rides, and in recent years the company has delivered a number attractions to U.S. customers.

"It doesn't feel like a vendor, it feels like a partnership."
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IISF

Continued from page 40

seats, riders lie on platforms for a unique ride experience. ADM also showcased its new clamshell basketball game.

"We're sold out a year in advance," the company's **Chandler Woodke** said. "We are building up to three rides a week and using some of our same framework designs that go back 30 years."

Woodke noted that ADM equipment is affordable and easy to move with steady sales to parks, carnivals, family entertainment centers and rental companies.

Three gondola Ferris wheels were displayed at the show, with **Luna-Park Rides**, Czech Republic, the first in line as you entered the show grounds. That ride had been sold prior to the expo.

Kevin Exum, Rides USA, Montgomery, Texas, presented an 18-meter wheel from Brazilian supplier **Fabripark**, which was also sold prior to being exhibited. Exum said he expects to conclude five or six additional ride sales from the show.

A **Wadkins Expo Wheel** anchored the far end of the show grounds with **Roger Wadkins Jr.** saying the display wheel and two in production at the White Marsh, Md., plant are all sold.

Kolmax Plus, Czech Republic, presented two Spinners (Break Dance) and two teacup rides during the show, all of which were sold.

"We were busy," Sales Manager **Irena Zvarova** told *AT*. She reported that by Friday three Spinners, four teacups and a flying elephant were under contract.

Joel Golder and son, **Paul**, owners of **Palace Playland**, Old Orchard Beach, Maine, stopped by to examine the Spinners. The park takes delivery of the spectacular ride this year. According to Zvarova, another Spinner was sold to Canada's **West Coast Amusements.**

Fun Crew USA of Orlando, Fla., purchased one of the displayed teacups, while the other unit went to **Rainbow Amusements** in Connecticut.

"We're having a good year," said **Bob Cassata**, founder of **Bob's Space Racers**, Holly Hill, Fla. "I've been here every year but one."





A Luna-Park Rides wheel (above left) welcomed attendees as they entered the expo. Rides USA also brought in a wheel from supplier Fabripark (above right). AT/RON GUSTAFSON

The company displayed a 10-person water race game outdoors.

Battech Enterprises' Albert Frieden reported numerous projects on the books for his Salem, Ore., company, including a Zero Gravity going to **Belmont Park**, San Diego, Calif., and a **Cliff Hanger** to Palace Playland.

A.R.M. USA President **Mike Gill** said the Winterville, Ohio, company will be busy into most of 2026 with five different projects in the shop now. He noted that a Steam Punk, a 360-degree full rotation Ali Baba thrill ride, is going to **Skinners' Amusements,** Marengo, Ill.

"It will be an upgrade for them," Gill said. "It (Ali Baba line) remains our top seller as youngsters and grandparents alike will ride it. Vertigo, our drop towers and Screamer remain popular as well."

Gina Guglielmi with the **Fabbri Group** reported two 40-meter Boosters will be delivered stateside this year from the Italian manufacturer. One is going to **Oasis Lake of the Ozarks**, an amusement park slated to open this summer in Osage Beach, Mo. The other is going to **Reithoffer Shows**, Gibsonton, Fla.

Michele Bertazzon, CEO of Italy's **Bertazzon 3B SRL**, said the company's production schedule is five years out.

"Bumper cars do very well," he said of business. "Showmen are also looking to replace existing large equipment with new rides that are not as heavy."

He said popular mobile pieces include Wave Swingers and Himalayas.

Massimo Sartori, president of **Sartori Amusement Rides**, reported that his company is busy with the Techno Jump series and worldwide sales are strong. The Italian supplier is also building its first (two-arm) Twin Twister for the U.S. market with the attraction going to **Powers Great American Midways**, Corfu, N.Y.

FunTagg, a digital ticketing company in Cary, N.C., reported a strong response to its product, which was launched in 2019.

"We now support 26 of the top 50 events in the nation," noted **Harry Riegel**, director of business development.

Numerous carnivals as well as **Family Kingdom Amusement Park**, Myrtle Beach, S.C., are current FunTagg clients.

Kathy Skelton, owner of **Hi Striker Carnival Corp.**, Rolla, Mo., reported selling all four units on display at her booth.

AT talked to numerous vendors in the exhibit hall and got mixed reactions. Some reported brisk business, while others thought foot traffic was sluggish. Some voiced concerns that afternoons became too hot and humid in the hallways when outdoor temperatures peaked.

The heat didn't cool activities for some vendors, though.

"We were writing orders all week," said **Hutch Costello**, sales manager for **Rhode Island Novelty**, Fall River, Mass. "We had our busiest Friday at the show in a long time."

Sue Nichols of **5centride**, Williamsport, Pa., echoed Costello's remarks.

"I was busy the last two hours of the show, and that was hard to believe," she said of her custom art merchandise sales.



At the Bob's Space Racers outdoor exhibit were (l to r): Jack Cook, Bob Cassata and Jack Mendes. Cassata is the founder of the company. AT/RON GUSTAFSON



Companies producing colorful signage and tents were among more than 150 vendors at this year's trade show. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

Lorinda Miller, owner of **Central Florida Canvas**, Riverview, said it was a "good week" for her at the show and that her company is extremely busy with orders.

Stefano Moser of Italy's Moser Rides announced that **City of Fun Carnival**, Pleasant Grove, Utah, will take delivery of the first Speed Flip in the U.S. this year.

"We have been very busy with towers — our most popular attraction," he said. "Wave Swingers are also a strong line."

Francesco Ferrari, president of **Preston & Barbieri**, another Italian manufacturer of major attractions, said a Music Express is currently in production and a portable Hyperjump was delivered to Palace Playland last year. **North American Midway Entertainment** and **Deggeller Attractions** both received new Wave Swingers from the firm in 2024.

Patty Sullivan, president and CEO of **Eli Bridge Co.**, Jacksonville, Ill., along with General Manager **Tim Noland**, were on hand at their booth to meet current and new clients.

"It's really a good networking opportunity for us and to keep communication open with those in the industry," Noland said. "We are staying busy at the plant."

Peter Theunisz, North American sales for Italy's **Gosetto**, said the maker of dark rides and funhouses is sold out through 2029.

"**Kissell Entertainment** (Okeana, Ohio) is getting a new dark ride next year, and **Butler Amusements** (Fairfield, Calif.) is getting a double-deck funhouse this year," he reported.

A number of seminars and workshops were presented during the expo as well as a hall of fame ceremony and cocktail party presented by the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association** (OABA). (*See the April 2025 edition of AT for a report on OABA activities.*)

Dale Hersberger was thrown a surprise party Wednesday evening in honor of his company — Audio Innovators, Inc., of Riverview — marking 50 years in business. The event took place at the Carousel Pavilion on the show grounds and was coordinated by family with many industry friends attending.

•gibtownshowmensclub.com

Attractions industry gathering draws 200 women, inspires future

AT: *Susan Storey*
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — Women are an integral part of the attractions industry, and last November more than 200 women from all over the world came together for a casual evening of networking and connection. The one-of-a-kind event was dubbed "Amazing Women of the Attractions Industry."

The idea to bring women together outside of traditional programmed events originated several years ago with **Una de Boer**, chief marketing officer, **WhiteWater**.

"When I joined the attractions industry a decade ago, I noticed there were few women working in the manufacturer and supplier sector," de Boer shared. "Then, I started recognizing the same women at industry events. We would greet each other but usually that was all. Trade shows and conferences are busy experiences, and it is hard to have time for meaningful conversations."

De Boer wanted to strengthen those casual connections, and during IAAPA Expo Asia several years ago she took a chance.

"I invited the women I recognized to come together for a 'temperature check' — a chance to pause, connect, share excitement and even talk about stress related to the Expo. With that, we began to build a supportive network and base of recognition," she said.

Emily Popovich, head of business development, **L3DFX,** attended that first gathering. "We saw we are all part of an underrepresented group," she shared. "We recognized that many of us yearned for opportunities to come together and support one another. Titles and experience levels did not matter. We felt a connection and embraced the opportunity to openly be together in a welcoming space. The conversations veered back and forth from questions about the tradeshow to discussions about our industry and our roles, even to our personal lives. It was free-flowing and open."



More than 170 women came together at Sports & Social for the Amazing Women of the Attractions Industry mixer preceding IAAPA Expo 2024. AT/SUSAN STOREY

"We next held a similar event during IAAPA in Paris," de Boer continued. "More women came. We reached out by word of mouth, and almost 30 women took part, representing suppliers, operators and IAAPA staff — a mix of women who truly reflected our diverse industry."

Momentum and enthusiasm for future events continued. **Marah Rodriguez**, regional vice president of sales North America, **Mobaro** partnered with Popovich and de Boer to coordinate the November 2024 event.

"Women often navigate similar challenges in the workplace, whether it's balancing career growth with personal responsibilities, overcoming biases or finding their voice in male-dominated spaces," Rodriguez said. "Having a network of other women who understand these shared experiences creates a sense of solidarity and support that goes beyond traditional networking. I was honored to help plan something for women in our industry."

"It was an experiment, too," Popovich added. "As we lined our schedules together, we almost questioned if we should go forward. We didn't want to create something that would be a burden or stress for people to get to."

The group opted for Monday night and chose nearby restaurant **Sports & Social Orlando** as the location, due to its proximity to the convention center.

"We were hoping for 50 people," said Popovich. "We invited women we knew and created a simple evite that could be easily shared and encouraged others to share it. It did not matter who invitees worked for or what position they had. Our goal was to host an event where all women in our industry felt — and were — welcome."

Enthusiasm spread quickly. "We kept telling the restaurant, 'We need more space, we probably need another server,'" said Popovich. "The support we received was exciting. Women enthusiastically responded and thanked us for putting the event together."

"We didn't have an agenda and there was no cost to come," de Boer added. "We provided the time and the location. Almost 200 women came. Events like this are critical, and the women in our industry are hungry for them."

The cross-section of women representing all facets of the industry including **Hersheypark, TEA, Universal Creative, Palace Entertainment, Sally Dark Rides, Museum of Illusions, The Disney Company, Extreme Engineering, Merlin Entertainments**, and many more.

"It is easy to have tunnel vision and solely focus on your day-to-day role, especially during big events like IAAPA Expo," de Boer furthered. "And it is hard to ask others to add one more thing to their calendar. That doesn't make it any less important that we make time to invest in our networks, our careers and our community."

"I'm proud to be a woman in the attractions industry," shared Rodriguez. "It's an industry built on creativity and innovation and having diverse perspectives — especially from women — helps push it forward in meaningful ways. As more women step into leadership roles, they are mentoring others and shaping the future of the industry. They also seek ways to connect with other women. Creating and planning events like the one we had in November helps us build a network of strong, talented women who are breaking barriers and making space for the next generation."

"I've been asked if we're being exclusionary and why 'women only' events are necessary," de Boer said. "We must have these events because women are still underrepresented. We need to encourage more inclusive leadership within our industry. Businesses thrive when leadership tables have more diverse perspectives around them, working together.

"To achieve that it is necessary to create spaces that welcome and support women in the industry, as well as providing opportunities that help strengthen our networks. Who you know helps you access information," she continued. "Knowing who to turn to if you have a question goes a long way. And asking a friend is better than contacting a stranger. That's why networking works and events like this one are so important. More than 200 women attended our self-organized mixer. This shows what we can achieve together."

Rodriguez, Popovich and de Boer have continued to build on the momentum from the November gathering. They created a group on LinkedIn, Female Leaders of Amusement Parks and Attractions, to keep the conversation and connections thriving. In January, Rodgriguez invited women attending the **AIMS International** Safety Seminar together for quick connection and check-in. Plans are also underway for similar networking events at industry conferences throughout the rest of the year.

"Supporting and helping empower women is important," de Boer concluded. I'm proud to continue to keep this ball rolling and don't plan to stop. In the words of **Mahatma Gandhi**, I believe we can all 'be the change [we] want to see in the world.'"

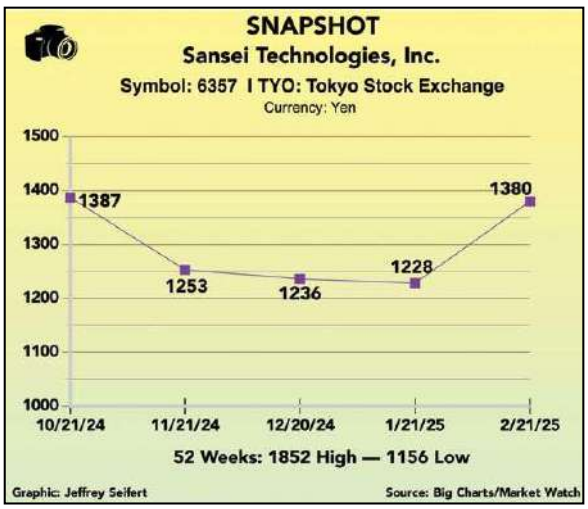
MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 2/19/25	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	166.85	200.96	115.82
Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	36.48	45.31	32.50
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	25.20	69.82	22.83
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	49.19	50.26	39.655
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	6.86	13.25	3.62
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	2373.00	4090.00	2083.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.54	1.04	0.39
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	18.00	22.45	16.30
Lucky Strike Entertainment Corp	LUCK	NYSE	10.99	14.92	9.61
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	38.34	48.25	31.61
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTC	0.3965	0.61	0.32
Royal Carribean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	264.01	277.08	119.48
Six Flags Entertainment Corp.	FUN	NYSE	47.31	58.70	35.93
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	610.00	760.00	604.00
United Parks & Resorts Inc.	PRKS	NYSE	54.59	60.83	44.72
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	111.35	123.74	83.91
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	10.89	12.70	6.64
SUPPLIERS/OTHERS					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	125.50	205.50	111.00
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	1417.00	1852.00	1156.00
Topgolf Callaway Brands	MODG	NYSE	7.35	16.89	7.13

Details and information available at *amusementtoday.com/stocks*

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

—SOURCES: Bigcharts.com



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 2/17/25	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	$3.791	($0.449)
Midwest	$3.602	($0.408)
Gulf Coast	$3.382	($0.462)
Mountain	$3.510	($0.447)
West Coast	$3.863	($0.391)
California	$4.839	($0.419)

CURRENCY

On 2/20/25 $1 USD =	
0.9583	EURO
0.7937	GBP (British Pound)
151.69	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9038	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.5740	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.4206	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Maurer Rides becomes B Corp certified

MUNICH, Germany — **Maurer Rides** has become the first roller coaster manufacturer worldwide to receive the prestigious B Corp certification. This recognition highlights the company's commitment to social responsibility, environmental consciousness and sustainable business practices.

"We pursued B Corp certification to better structure our diverse sustainability efforts and identify further areas for improvement," stated Maurer Rides CEO **Jörg Beutler**. "Sustainability is a personal priority for me, and I firmly believe that everyone benefits from it — our company and employees, our customers and society as a whole."

The B Corp certification is awarded by the nonprofit organization **B Lab** and certifies that companies meet the highest standards in social responsibility, environmental sustainability, transparency and corporate governance. Maurer Rides has undergone this rigorous certification process, demonstrating that economic success and responsible action can go hand in hand. Currently, there are over 9,000 B Corp companies worldwide, with just more than 100 located in Germany.

SimEx-Iwerks updates logo, brand identity

BALTIMORE, Md. — **SimEx-Iwerks** announced the release of its new brand identity. This marks the first time the company's logo and visual identity have been updated since its founding in 1981 by **Michael Needham** and **Shiori Sudo**. The rebranding is part of a larger restructuring initiative following the company's transition to being management-owned in June 2024. The company will also launch a refreshed website and will increase its social engagement.

"This is an exciting time for us, and our rebrand is just the beginning," said **Kate Magnusson**, vice president, marketing and partnerships. "It's a reflection of our unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality, out-of-home experiences that inspire, entertain and educate."

SimEx-Iwerks has built its legacy on groundbreaking work in the entertainment industry, specializing in immersive attractions and experiences that combine storytelling, special effects and close collaborations with leading studios.

Disney releases first quarter financials

BURBANK, Calif. — **The Walt Disney Company** reported earnings for its first fiscal quarter which ended December 28, 2024. Revenues increased 5% for the first quarter to $24.7 billion from $23.5 billion in 2024's first quarter.

"Our results this quarter demonstrate Disney's creative and financial strength as we advanced the strategic initiatives set in motion over the past two years," said **Robert A. Iger**, chief executive officer of The Walt Disney Company. "In fiscal Q1 we saw outstanding box office performance from our studios, which had the top three movies of 2024; we further improved the profitability of our Entertainment DTC streaming businesses; we took an important step to advance **ESPN**'s digital strategy by adding an ESPN tile on **Disney+**; and our experiences segment demonstrated its enduring appeal as we continue investing strategically across the globe."

Domestic parks and experiences' operating results for the current quarter were unfavorably impacted by Hurricane Milton and, to a lesser extent, Hurricane Helene. As a result of Hurricane Milton, Walt Disney World Resort was closed for a day and the company canceled a cruise itinerary. Operating results at Disney's domestic parks and experiences decreased compared to the prior-year quarter due to higher costs primarily due to the fleet expansion at **Disney Cruise Line** and inflation, lower volumes attributable to declines in attendance which reflect the impact of the hurricanes as well as increased guest spending.

Focus on the HORIZON

A career in fun hits the 'spot'

Frank Hamedl
Fun Spot America
Orlando, Florida



ORLANDO — "It was a family trip to Hersheypark that ignited my passion for roller coasters, and this industry," shared Frank Hamedl, Corporate Human Resources Manager for Fun Spot America Theme Parks. "As a young child, I was afraid of big rides, but when I finally rode sooperdooperLooper, everything changed. It was like a light switch turned on to what became my favorite pastime."

Originally from Fishkill, New York, Hamedl became an avid "Roller Coaster Tycoon" player and member of American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE). He also began to envision a career designing roller coasters. "I thought that would be the perfect role for me and I headed in that direction when I started college as an engineering student," he said. However, like many college freshmen, Hamedl soon realized his chosen major was not really his passion. "As I began to rethink my career goals, I also spoke with a friend who was enrolled in the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida," he said. "I began to see new pathways and opportunities that would lead to a career within the industry."

Hamedl transferred to Florida, and a natural people person, connected with students who also wanted to work in the attractions industry. "I joined the Future Theme Park Leaders Association (FTLA) and got a student membership to IAAPA so I could attend the tradeshow. I began to network and meet industry leaders," he said. "It was during the IAAPA Expo that I ran into George Frantzis from Quassy Amusement Park. He remembered me as an ACE event attendee and as a seasonal summer employee. That connection and conversation led to his offering me my first management role as a rides operations manager."

Hamedl worked at the park the following summer between semesters before returning to Florida again for school. Soon after, Hamedl first heard of the IAAPA Foundation.

"I was paying out-of-state tuition at Rosen," he explained. "And in 2017 I learned about its scholarship program. It felt like an opportunity designed just for me." Hamedl applied and earned a scholarship from the Foundation. "It was an incredible steppingstone," he remembered. "It led to me getting involved with IAAPA's Young Professionals Task Force and expanding my personal and professional network."

Hamedl also earned an internship with Universal Orlando Resort and upon graduation, began his career in Event Operations.

"It was everything I had hoped it would be, and all I had worked toward," he said, "But as they say, 'COVID happened' and like many others, I had to find something new when our department closed. I wanted to stay in the industry and willing to do whatever it took."

An opportunity at Fun Spot America Theme Parks also reminded Hamedl of one of his earliest lessons. "I applied for a managerial role at the park. It was a great opportunity but also unusual because Fun Spot is known for promoting from within. It was going to be tough to get the role coming from the outside. I had several interviews, including one with Fun Spot CEO, John Arie Jr. The first thing he said was he had called George at Quassy to ask about me. It was an example of the power of relationships and a reminder to always leave a company on good terms. That one call, asking about a role I'd had five years earlier, led to the job which is now my amazing career."

Hamedl is passionate about his position with Fun Spot and its space in the diverse attractions industry.

"Fun Spot is a unique company," he said, "We have similarities with family entertainment centers and with our incredible rides, we're similar to seasonal amusement parks. However, we are open year-round, so we identify with destination parks, too. We are everything in between."

An operations professional at heart, Hamedl was surprised when in 2023 the park approached him with an opportunity to shift his focus behind the scenes. "Our corporate team offered me the chance to move into Human Resources," he said. "I was surprised at first and then my operations experiences gave me perspective and insight into the roles we have at Fun Spot and the tasks our team members need to do. This was a chance to have a role that would help build the future of Fun Spot's parks."

Hamedl believes the heart of the attractions industry is with its people. "While at Quassy, I remember an instance when the park needed a certain part to open a ride. Jerry Brick from Lake Compounce told us they had that part and drove it to Quassy so we could open our ride. Even though the parks are competitors, they are united in this industry. They taught me when one park does well, we all do well," he said.

"We have that same culture at Fun Spot," he furthered. "We support each other and others parks like ours. It is something special."

"Fun Spot encourages us to be involved with the industry, too, and I am so proud to give back," Hamedl added. "I have spoken at IAAPA Expo for the last four years, attended the *Amusement Today* Golden Ticket Awards and remain connected with Rosen College. I love to share my story and encourage others as they build their careers in this industry."

In 2024, he was honored as the recipient of the IAAPA Young Professional of the Year - North America. "The connections I have made through this industry are incredible. I even met my wife during IAAPA Expo. Never underestimate the power of networking," Hamedl laughed.

When asked what advice he has for others, Hamedl's applies to everyone, regardless of where they are in their career. "Don't compare yourself to others," he said. "There is no one singular path to success. Stay true to yourself. This industry is filled opportunity if you're willing to look and work for it."

—Susan Storey

ON THE MOVE

Merlin Entertainments announced the appointment of **Fiona Eastwood** as chief executive officer with immediate effect. This follows her initial appointment to the role on an interim basis at the end of November 2024. She will be responsible for leading the implementation of the business's transformational strategy and to ensure it is well placed to grow at scale and deliver a sustainable, thriving future.


Eastwood

"Fiona has a deep understanding of the business, the strategies required for sustainable growth and the vision to spearhead our ongoing transformation," stated **Roland Hernandez**, chair of Merlin Entertainments. "As Merlin's former chief operating officer, she recognizes the significant role each location plays in our ongoing success, and she will be instrumental in bringing our global attractions together into one united business. The Board looks forward to continuing working with Fiona."

Eastwood's appointment has been made following a robust search process by Merlin's Board, with consideration of external and internal candidates. She has nearly a decade of experience at the business, including most recently as chief perating officer with responsibility for gateway attractions, including **Madame Tussauds**, the **Eye Brand** and **Sea Life** along with Merlin's resort theme parks. She joined the business in 2015 as global marketing director for gateway attractions, responsible for driving strategy and marketing across an expanding portfolio of brands.

Prior to Merlin, Eastwood worked as managing director of consumer products at **BBC Studios**, leading the successful turnaround of the division through organisational restructuring, digital transformation and international growth.

Morey's Piers and Beachfront Waterparks announced the creation of a new director of games operations position and the promotion of long-time Games Manager **Mike Weimar** to this key role.


Weimar

Weimar, a seasoned amusement industry veteran with more than 20 years of dedicated service to Morey's Piers, will now oversee the overall management, including budgets, expenses and revenue of the park's expansive games program, which boasts more than 30 games across three piers.

"Mike's unwavering dedication and proven success within our Games department make him the ideal candidate for this leadership role," said **Will Morey**, president and CEO. "We are confident that under his expert guidance, the Games department will continue to flourish and provide our guests with unparalleled levels of entertainment."

The **Elaut Group** has officially promoted **Laurens De Smedt** as the company's new CEO of Elaut Group Europe. Laurens carries on the legacy of his grandfather **Achiel Verstraeten** — who founded Elaut 65 years ago — bringing top quality to the entertainment industry.


De Smedt

"Taking over the responsibility of the European entities, has got me very excited," said De Smedt. "We've got a world of opportunities ahead of us, so I'm looking forward to working closely with our team, customers and players to make the world's best games."

Laurens graduated as a mechanical engineer from **KU Leuven Belgium**, and started his career at **ABInBev** where he moved through different roles in sales, production and finance among others in the **Stella Artois Brewery**. He made the jump to the ELAUT Group, the Verstraeten family business, back in 2019 where he worked in many departments, getting to know the games, the industry and players inside and out.

Industry veteran **Jim Wyatt** has been named president of VR attraction manufacturer **Rilix**. He officially assumed his role on February 10 and will be responsible for all external activities involving Rilix's VR product lineup, including sales, distributor relations, public relations and promotions.


Wyatt

"We are thrilled to welcome Jim to our team. We know our product better than anyone, and we know how to support our customers,"offered **Franco Gonçalves**, COO and founder of Rilix. "But Jim has a deep understanding of what our customers need — he can advise them not only on how to operate our VR attractions, but also whether they are the right fit for their businesses."

Busch Gardens Tampa Bay has appointed **Jeff Davis** as its new park president. He moves into this role after serving as park president at **SeaWorld San Antonio**.

Davis has a distinguished and extensive career in the theme park industry. He has served in executive roles at several well-known venues such as **Sesame Place Philadelphia**, **Playland Park**, **Lake Compounce Amusement Park**, **Nickelodeon Universe at American Dream** and **Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom**. In addition, he has played a significant role in the amusement sector as a board member and former president of the **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks & Attractions**.


Davis

"We're excited to have Jeff in the leadership role as one of our most seasoned executives," stated **Kyle Miller**, chief parks operations officer at **United Parks & Resorts**, parent company to Busch Gardens Tampa Bay. "I'm confident he will help guide the team to success as we continue to make investments to further solidify the park's status as a premier destination for thrill-seekers and families alike."

French President **Emmanuel Macron** named **Europa-Park** Founder **Roland Mack** "Officer de la Légion d'Honneur" and **Michael Mack**, managing partner of Europa-Park and CEO of **MACK One**, "Knight de la Légion d'Honneur." Only very few Germans have achieved this honour as yet. The Legion of Honor is the highest French honor.


Roland Mack


Michael Mack

The titles are the French president's way of honoring the exceptional commitment of Roland and Michael Mack to Franco-German friendship. In his statement, he said that Roland and Michael Mack are "great friends to France" and that for decades the Mack family have made a very successful effort in mutual understanding between both peoples.

"We understand the honors we've been conferred as both a responsibility and a motivation to speak up with all our might for the preservation and development of this fundamentally important partnership," said Roland Mack.

"The Franco-German friendship is fundamental to stability and trust," added Michael Mack. "Europe needs a clear vision for tomorrow, and our border region offers numerous opportunities to that end."

OBITUARY

Showman Richard "Little Richard" Thomas passes

PENNSBURG, Pa. — Richard James Thomas — affectionately known as "Little Richard" — who passed away peacefully on Monday, December 23, 2024, at the age of 92.

Thomas was a lifelong resident of Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, and originally hails from Emmaus, Pennsylvania. He was the beloved husband of Dolly (Ott) Thomas for an enduring 71 years. Born to the late Earl and Flossie (Keyser) Thomas, he lived a full and vibrant life, touching the hearts of many in the community.


Thomas

Thomas's entrepreneurial spirit and love for food and family led him to build a successful legacy. He began his career as a food vendor at the Qmart and Zerns markets, where he spent over 50 years providing delicious meals to locals and visitors alike. His passion for this work eventually blossomed into a family-run business, with himself, Dolly, and their children actively participating in fairs and festivals.

A true icon in the area, Richard was also the former manager, primary food vendor and owner of the Kutztown Folk Festival, a beloved cultural event that drew visitors from near and far.

In addition to his food business, Thomas was involved in numerous other ventures, including the Pennsburg Diner, a local carwash and several other businesses throughout the Upper Perk Valley.

He was known for his kindness, generosity and unwavering dedication to those he loved. Thomas is survived by his loving wife, Dolly; his sister, Faith Sideris; his children: Robin and Donald Laudenslager, Sandra and David Higman, and I.V. and Christine Thomas; his 19 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren.

More than 1,600 attend Pennsylvania Showmen/Fair convention

AT: *B. Derek Shaw*
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

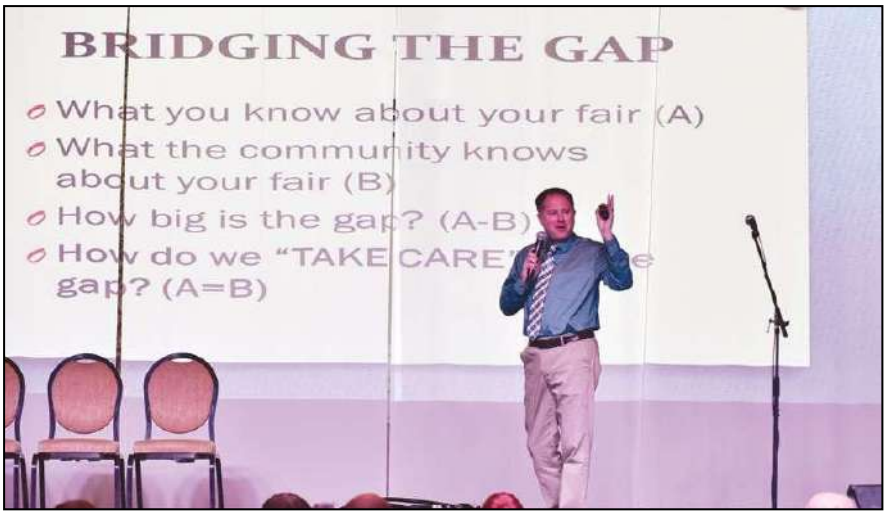
HERSHEY, Pa. — The **Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association** (PSSA) and the **Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs** (PSACF) 112th annual convention took place January 22 – 25 with the theme "Cultivating the Future Generations." Of the 107 fairs in the state, 94 sent representatives. There were more than 1,600 attendees.

The 32,000-square-foot Great American Hall at **Hershey Lodge and Convention Center**, Hershey, Pennsylvania, was the site of the two-and-a-half-day trade show, with 165 vendors, which was considerably higher.

"Attendance has been really good. It's like a hill of ants coming in here. We offer vendors to the fairs, anything the fair would use in entertainment, ticketing, publicity, marketing — whatever they need, it's here," said **Dick Horstman**, coordinator of the trade show.

Six carnival operators had booths: **C&L Shows**, **Houghton Enterprises**, **Main Event Amusements**, **Penn Valley Shows, TDK Entertainment** and **Tons of Fun Shows**.

Keynote Speaker was **Jeremy Parsons**, CEO of the **Iowa State Fair**, who spoke about taking care of fairs. "We in the fair industry don't always tell our story well of all the things that we do for our communities. None of us are owners of our fairs." Parsons feels it is important that fairs focus on what makes their fair special and make sure that the community knows that, along with doing things that make their fair relevant.



Jeremy Parsons, CEO of the Iowa State Fair, was the keynote speaker during opening ceremonies of the 2025 convention. He encouraged fairs to do a better job of telling the community all they provide to the area they serve (above). The 112th annual convention featured numerous seminars throughout the event. Topics included Changes in the Fair Industry, Fairs 101, Safety and Security Considerations at Your Fair and Looking Back to Move Your Fair Forward. COURTESY TIM MCGOWAN STUDIO



The annual convention featured seminars and table topics comprising the educational component. Some topics included Changes in the Fair Industry; Fairs 101; Serv-Safe; Junior Fair Boards — The Reasons Your Fair Needs Them; Safety and Security Considerations at Your Fair and Looking Back to Move Your Fair Forward.

Wednesday evening centered around a talent showcase, consisting of 19 acts providing all types of music and other entertainment. Many of these same acts had a presence on the trade show floor with a booth or strolling the aisles. Over half were self-booking.

Thursday evening's banquet, held by PSACF, began with introductions of all 61 Fair Queens who were vying for the 2025 Pennsylvania Fair Queen title. **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture** Secretary **Russell Redding** talked about the results of an economic impact study ordered by the department that Pennsylvania's 107 county and local fairs contribute $1.14 billion to the state's economy annually. A seasonal backbone of the state's $76 billion tourism industry, Pennsylvania fairs support more than 10,700 full-time jobs, and four million annual fair visitors spend $673 million in the largely rural communities where fairs are held.

"Fairs offer unique opportunities to experience local culture and traditions and make lasting family memories," said Secretary Redding. "Fairs fill hotels and inns with visitors who spend in stores and restaurants and inject tourism dollars into hometown economies. Pennsylvania fairs present opportunities for our farmers to sell directly to visitors and compete for prizes that demonstrate the quality of their products and give their small businesses credibility and trust in the marketplace year-round,"

Craig Lash with the **Westmoreland Fair**, Greensburg, is the 2025 president. **Ben Haagen** with the **Centre County Grange Encampment & Fair**, Centre Hall is the new vice president. **Dr. Sally Nolt** with the **Elizabethtown Fair** was the Fair Person of the Year

▸ **See SHOWMEN, page 47**



There were six carnival operators that had booths on the trade show floor. Pictured are the principals from Houghton Enterprises: (l to r) Jimmy, Gladys, Jim Sr. and Jason Houghton. All told there were 165 exhibitors. AT/B. DEREK SHAW



Harry Reffner (left) and Mary Ott are the executive secretaries of their respective organizations: the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs and the Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

SHOWMEN

Continued from page 46

honoree. Four zone awards were presented: Zone 1 **Cameron County Fair**; Zone 2 **Centre County Fair**, Zone 3 **Claysburg Farm Show** and Zone 4 **Plainfield Farmers Fair**. There were four scholarships awarded to deserving students. Country artist **Alex Miller** provided the entertainment. He was a competitor on *American Idol* season 19 and was brought in by **Variety Attractions**.

Friday evening's banquet, held by the showmen, was a black-tie affair this year. **Steve Swika III**, owner of **SwikaS Amusements** was named Showman of the Year. A check was presented to the **Pennsylvania Farm Show Foundation** for $24,875 — half the proceeds from the Showmen's **Herschel** carousel and **Hampton** mini tractor rides that operated during the eight-day **Pennsylvania Farm Show** earlier in January. Nine deserving students were presented with scholarships. Three individuals received presidential awards: **Jeff** and **Judd Good**, **Goodtime Amusements** and **Mary Ott**, executive secretary of PSSA. The banquet also included the installation of the 2025 PSSA President, **Judd Good** with **Goodtime Amusements**. Entertainment was provided by **The Uptown Band**.

The 39th annual Pennsylvania State Fair Queen Coronation took place Saturday evening. **Ava Immel** representing the **West Lampeter Fair** was named the 2025 queen. She is currently a senior in high school and, following graduation, plans to pursue a degree in animal science. **Brooke Beamesderfer**, who represented the **Lebanon Area Fair**, was selected as the alternate. Currently, she is pursuing an interdisciplinary degree in agricultural business at the **University of Alabama**. Both the queen and alternate will travel the commonwealth this year representing Pennsylvania's rich agricultural heritage and serving as an ambassador for the fair association.



Saturday evening was the state fair queen coronation (l to r): Ava Immel, 2025 queen, Russell Redding, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture secretary and Brooke Beamesderfer, 2025 queen alternate. There were 61 people vying for the title at this year's event.
COURTESY
TIM MCGOWAN STUDIO

"This program not only empowers young women in Pennsylvania but also highlights the vital role of agriculture in our state. It's an honor to be part of this initiative that educates and uplifts future advocates for the ag industry," said Redding.

Also, that evening, **Lily Ansell**, nominated by the **Butler Farm Show,** was named the Junior Fair Person of the Year. The 18-year-old has volunteered with the fair for the past five years, handling public relations matters before and during the show.

Reflecting on the convention and the upcoming year, Ott said, "It looks like we have a little bit bigger crowd this year." As for this season, "I'm very optimistic. I'm hoping we have a good year out."

"This year went very well," said Reffner. "We're coming back to our pre-COVID numbers. Some fairs in 2024 did very well [while] other ones had rain five days out of the seven. It's really hard to predict. We're expecting a good year if Mother Nature works with us."

The 2026 edition is scheduled for January 21 through 24 at Hershey Lodge.

- **pashowmen.com**
- **pafairs.org**



SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

IROC Camp sees significant growth — page 52 / NAARSO concludes 2025 safety event — page 56

E&A's International Aquatic Safety School excites and educates

AT: *Susan Storey*
Special to Amusement Today



The 2025 Ellis and Associates International Aquatic Safety School welcomed more than 275 attendees to Arizona. The annual conference is the world's longest running and largest aquatic risk management training program. The faculty members (below) all volunteer their time, talent and expertise and lead attendees through every aspect of their week. COURTESY ELLIS & ASSOCIATES

MAITLAND, Fla. — "There is something special about Safety School," shared **Denise Beckson,** vice president and chief administrative and external affairs officer, **Morey's Piers & Resorts**. "It's immersive, it's intensive, it's an esprit de corps event. There is no other experience like this one."


Beckson

Beckson is referring to **Ellis & Associates'** Annual International Aquatic Safety School (IASS). The weeklong program, which brings together Ellis & Associates clients for continued training, education, networking, certification and camaraderie, took place last month in Phoenix, Arizona. Since 1983, Ellis & Associates (E&A) has been the leader in aquatic safety and risk management, serving clients around the world. Along with excellence in guest service and "first and only" moments related to advancing and supporting safety in and around water, IASS is a core product — and value — for the entire Ellis community.

"My relationship with this school has been the longest in my life," shared **Richard "RAC" Carroll**, senior vice president and chief operating officer, Ellis & Associates. "IASS is something we are incredibly proud of. The attractions industry is filled with leaders who began their careers in aquatics. Even if they have moved into an area beyond aquatics, such as human resources or finance, if you ask a former IASS student, 'Do you have a favorite safety school memory?' the answer is always yes. Safety school is a core memory and experience."


Carroll

"Our mission at Ellis & Associates is zero drownings. This unites us," Carroll continued. "Everyone in attendance at IASS is hyperfocused on reducing the loss of life due to drowning. Our students are trainers in their aquatic facilities, and this week reminds them of the critical behaviors they should expect from their lifeguards — and each other."

At its core, IASS is a "Train the Trainer" conference, but Carroll is quick to stress it's much more than that. "We believe that everyone is a lifelong learner. IASS reinforces Ellis's core training and values and builds upon them. IASS is the re-energization of creativity and passion. Safety school sets attendees up for the season ahead by focusing on the techniques needed to help convey the responsibility and professionalism of being a lifeguard. It helps excite them about being aquatics leaders."

The magic of IASS is in the details. It comes from Ellis's leadership team and the dedicated faculty who spent months preparing the immersive program.

"The IASS faculty is 100% volunteer," Carroll continued. "They are here because they are passionate about aquatics and supporting the next generation of lifeguards and leaders in the aquatics industry. IASS is an intensive week. It requires everyone's focus. The days are dedicated to presenting and teaching, and for our faculty, the work continues deep into the night preparing for the next day."



This year, 24 client faculty members led the daily sessions which included classroom sessions, hands-on lesson training such as advanced water rescue, interactive teach-back scenarios and more. Long before attendees arrived in Arizona, the IASS Directors were putting together the faculty curriculum and attendee schedule.

"We improve each year, and IASS grows upon itself. The dedication and focus of our IASS Directors and faculty team is unmatched," Carroll said.

"It's in the Ellis DNA that we are passionate about safety, and that passion is extended through the IASS faculty," he added. "This program is only possible because of the volunteer faculty who carve out the time to be here, and the incredible volunteer IASS Directors who

See AQUATIC, page 50

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AQUATIC

Continued from page 48

put the program together. This year's IASS Directors, Denise Beckson and **Trish Lyon** from Morey's Piers & Resorts, **Mike Bengston** with **Splish Splash Waterpark** and **Liz Caywood** from Fort **Wayne Community Schools** built an outstanding week. It is because of their personal commitment and their companies' support for their involvement, that IASS continues to get better each year."

Along with classes focused on core competencies and lessons required to earn or renew instructor and instructor trainer licenses, attendees are immersed in a breadth and depth of topics that matter in the water — and beyond. **Pamela Landwirth**, who led the nonprofit organization **Give Kids The World** for more than 20 years, opened IASS as the guest keynote speaker. Landwirth inspired attendees as she shared examples of how leaders can unite teams when they find their personal "why" and purpose within their roles and organizations. Later in the week, guest presenter **Matt Heller**, founder of **Performance Optimist Consulting**, spoke to IASS attendees about "life in the middle."



Guest speakers and special sessions round out the IASS experience. Pamela Landwirth — pictured above with Jeff Ellis, CEO, Ellis & Associates (far left) and RAC Carroll, Senior Vice President and COO, Ellis & Associates (far right) — kicked off the week with the opening keynote address. COURTESY ELLIS & ASSOCIATES

"IASS attendees have a shared focus on the same mission of zero drownings," Heller said. "Keeping guests safe in the water in front of them is their main task. However, that is not their entire responsibility. Their days are spent in the middle of guests, peers and colleagues, and management. This year we discussed how building better relationships can lead to more efficiency and productivity. Relationship building is a skill that can be applied at any stage of someone's career — and life."


Heller

Jerica Cyr, chief operating officer, **Jeff Ellis Management**, wants IASS attendees to return home with a better understanding of the big and small ways they make a difference every day. "It is a privilege to work closely with Jeff Ellis," she said. "He has instilled in all of us at Ellis the core values of integrity and caring for others. We carry that message forward throughout IASS and encourage attendees to look for ways they can implement caring in the water park setting, with guests and with each other. Soft skills are just as important as the techniques we practice and teach."

The IASS experience extends beyond the classroom setting. Attendees visited the nearby **Kiwanis Wave Pool** for in-service lessons and water-based rescue refreshers and took part in a fun-filled networking event and team trivia competition at **Great Wolf Lodge Scottsdale.**

"Taking part in IASS is an investment for our attendees and their companies," Beckson continued. "Attendees give a lot to be at IASS and it requires their full focus and attention. You could call it a "boot camp" that fully ingrains its attendees in all aspects of maintaining water safety."

"Everyone who takes part in IASS comes ready to learn, share and work. They leave feeling motivated and valued," she finished. "They learned from and with each other how to engage and motivate their lifeguard teams while keeping safety at the forefront of all they do. It is an incredible program I plan to be a part of for a very long time."

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Applying what has been learned

It's already March 2025! In preparation for the new season, many have attended training and education sessions to enhance their knowledge and skillsets. The next step is to strive to make that training meaningful, not just remembering facts, but embedding them into decisions and mindsets, turning theoretical concepts into real-world actions. It is time to "live what has been learned" in the classroom and apply that knowledge to daily work. Below are tips on just how to do that:

Practice consistently

Repetition: just like with any skill, practice is key. Whether it's safety protocols, communication skills or problem-solving strategies, practicing these concepts in real-world settings helps solidify them.

Reflect on what you've learned

Self-Assessment: regularly take time to reflect on what's been learned and how it's being applied. Ask "Am I living out the principles I learned in class?" For example, learning about incident response means ensuring that the team knows the process.

Adapt to the real-world context

Problem-solving in action: sometimes, the classroom lessons aren't directly transferable without some adjustment. For example, a safety protocol that works in a controlled environment may need tweaking when applied to a chaotic, fast-moving setting. Flexibility is key.

Learn from experience

Trial and error: it's okay to not get everything right immediately. Living what has been learned often involves trial and error. Every time a mistake is made or a challenge is faced; it's an opportunity to learn from it and adopt the knowledge. Seek feedback from others, whether that's a mentor, peer or even self-reflection. Feedback helps us understand where we're excelling and where we might need more work.

Stay open to growth

Continual Learning: just because a lesson has been learned doesn't mean we know everything about it. Stay open to further learning and refining the approach. Acknowledge that work teaches lessons outside the classroom too. Believe that abilities and understanding will grow with effort and experience. This mindset encourages us to keep applying what has been learned while being open to new insights.

Teach others

Sharing Knowledge: teaching others what has been learned is one of the best ways to solidify our understanding. Whether it's guiding a peer, mentoring someone or sharing knowledge informally, teaching helps reinforce what we've learned and holds us accountable to live it out.

Set goals and act on them

Goal-oriented action: break down what has been learned into actionable steps that can be pursued. If improving communication skills is the goal, for instance, make it a point to practice in daily conversations, whether that's active listening, clear articulation or nonverbal cues.

Applying it by living it

Living what has been learned is about seeking growth, being intentional in applying knowledge and reflecting on it. It is not one-and-done. It is an ongoing process of integration into our daily lives with the overall goal of keeping us, our teams and our guests safe.

Putting new lessons into action helps us continually learn and improve.

—Amy Lowenstein,
AIMS International

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



International Ride Training IROC Camp sees significant growth

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
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Speaker Heather Barnes engaged attendees, the largest gathering at Ride Camp to date (above left). A social event at Kemah Boardwalk allowed for networking in a fun environment (above right). AT/TIM BALDWIN

GALVESTON, Texas — Now in its 15th year under the **International Ride Training** brand, Ride Camp saw a major attendance spike in 2025. The event took place from February 10 – 14 at the **San Luis Resort**.

"Last year, we had 134 and this year we have 191," said **Cindee Huddy**, owner, IRT. "We have about 18 new properties that have come onboard. A couple more are looking at it, so we might have more by the end of the week."

In addition to park representatives from all over the country, Denmark, Canada and Mexico also had parks in attendance.

Ride Camp had a 2025 theme of "Game On For Safety." The video game theme served as inspiration for each team. Attendees are grouped into "cabins" for the week of Ride Camp, each with its own counselor from within the industry. Once gathered with their assigned colleagues, the activities and sessions were diverse.

"We used to just have teams or tables with our 'faculty,'" Huddy explained. "**Erik Beard** and **Matt Heller** were having a conversation and went, 'Oh wow. This is like camp for ride operators.' So, tables became 'cabins,' and the faculty became camp counselors, and we ran with that theme."

"There are three levels of Ride Camp from beginners to those with a lot of experience," added **Shaun McKeogh**, auditor, IRT and CEO of **Attractions Academy**. "We [assign attendees] with those with like seniority. The focus on networking and having colleagues across the industry is really there. We hope by the end of Ride Camp they leave with solid connections."

Heather Barnes, owner, **Improv at Work**, was a keynote speaker. With her **Second City** background, she helped attendees go beyond their comfort zone, and in turn, helped supervisors become more effective at their job. Barnes had everyone laughing while learning to become better in their field.

During her first session, she noted from the *Harvard Business Review*: "The overall success of a company is strongly tied to the CEO's mood, energy and demeanor." Barnes continued by noting this follows through to individual leaders.

In addition to the main sessions, there are multiple days of breakout sessions, classes and cabin activities. Topics ranged from ADA, normalization of deviance, operational efficiency and ride control systems to workplace recognition, spiels and leadership presence.



Each table represented a "cabin," which were themed to a video game. AT/TIM BALDWIN



Erik Beard conducts a breakout session on ADA accessibility. AT/TIM BALDWIN

"I just took a great class on visual confirmation," said first-time attendee **John Sutton**, director of operations, **Story Land**. "I'll definitely take that back with us."

Marie Ruby, director of operations at **Kennywood**, was a return attendee. "I was nervous the first time, but I was looking forward to getting back to these classes. My favorite part is the speakers. They're really good. My biggest takeaways come from networking. It's nice to see old friends but also make new ones," she said.

"Considering the role I'm in, this may be stuff I know but it has been beneficial because they provide real-life examples," said **Allye Banks**, operations manager, **Six Flags Over Texas**. "The group activities are not typical and ordinary. They make them interactive and fun. It's nice to share experiences within the group."

IRT prides itself on making Ride Camp distinct.

"It's completely focused on ride operations," Huddy told *Amusement Today*. "It's a certification that is specific to our clients. It is for certification and recertification of our IROC program and the 10 critical components of safety that every operator has on each ride."

There are many levels of courses, but classes focus on training the trainer. The certifications build confidence, give credibility, provide consistency and adhere to manufacturers' and ASTM standards.

"Our standards are three levels up above minimal standards," noted Huddy. "So, if you slip — and we're all human — there are variables, so you never slip below minimal levels."

In addition to classroom instruction and main session speakers, Ride Camp offers lighter moments — war chants, videos and the socks and sunglasses parade.

"Our awards show is fun every year," said Huddy. "We give camp awards for Best Student, Spirit of Ride Camp, Heart of Ride Camp, and Audit Awards."

A social event took place at **Kemah Boardwalk** one evening, which allowed attendees to see another property. Owing to inclement weather, the at-the-ride sessions planned for **Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier** were moved to the San Luis.

"We all have similar situations," Sutton told *AT*. "It's neat to see and hear what the approaches and styles are from different parks. We're all here to satisfy our guests and make sure they have the most enjoyable experience possible at our parks. The tactics and strategies might be different, so it's nice to pick people's brains. It's nice to bring nuggets back to our parks."

•ridetraining.com

Worldwide Safety Group purchases Ridebooks.com, preserves resource

PLANT CITY, Fla. — **Ridebooks.com** has been purchased by **Avery Wheelock**, president of **Worldwide Safety Group**.

"I bought the company to make sure that the tool that I have used since it was created was preserved and expanded upon," Wheelock told *Amusement Today*. "I have always believed in promoting safety through communication and that is why I have gotten involved and lowered the cost of the (online) subscription so anyone can have access to the quick search function for the information."

Ridebooks.com contains what it calls Rideopedia: a comprehensive database of more than 400 manufacturers, more than 5,000 bulletins, NDTs, manuals and other ride documentation.

Subscribers are also invited to post valuable comments and photos related to specific rides.

"We are not selling the content," Wheelock emphasized. "We are selling the ease of finding the information with a few clicks instead of digging through boxes of paperwork."

Worldwide Safety Group specializes in state ride certifications, third party safety inspections, operator training, risk and loss surveys and other services.

—Ron Gustafson



Avery Wheelock of Worldwide Safety Group has purchased Ridebooks.com, an online database for the amusement ride industry.
AT/GARY SLADE

Ralph S. Alberts Co. introduces new paint system

MONTOURSVILLE, Pa. — **Ralph S. Alberts Co.** has a legacy of solving tough problems and seizing opportunities for improvement in the amusement industry and beyond. It's no secret that Foam/PUR ride safety pads do not last forever. The typical life of ride padding is anywhere from one to five years depending on the combination of ride cycles and the environmental conditions specific to the attraction. To reduce premature wear and extend the useful life of ride safety padding everywhere, Ralph S. Alberts Co. has created a solution to improve the first line of defense on its foam pads: the outer paint layer.

The company announced the full production rollout of Ride Armor 63: Innovation Coated in Legacy.

Ride Armor 63 is an aliphatic paint system formulated to deliver the highest durability in coating for I-skin flexible foam padding. It possesses UV and chemical resistant properties which aid in withstanding the elements exposed to the attraction. The gloss and matte finishes provide consistent performance in a wide range of colors which are specifically matched to both the color and gloss of OEM standards and can be custom formulated upon request.

•rsalberts.com



NWSC Safety Seminar concludes with good results, compliments

AT: *Pam Sherborne*
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

PORTLAND, Ore. — The 2025 **Northwestern Showmen's Club** (NWSC) Safety Seminar is now in the books, and organizers, year after year, continue to be pleased with the turnout as well as responses from attendees.

There were 112 attending this year during the event, which was held February 17-21, on the campus of **Funtastic Shows** in Portland, Oregon.



Drawing 112 attendees, the 2025 Northwestern Showmen's Club Safety Seminar was held, on the campus of Funtastic Shows. It featured various courses such as this one led Avery Wheelock of Worldwide Safety Group. COURTESY TOM JONES/MCGOWAN ALLIED SPECIALTY INSURANCE

There were many highlights this year according to NWSC **Tracy Munroz**, not the least of which were the compliments she received from attendees. Munroz said they had a couple from Oklahoma services that came for the first time this year.

"They said they had been to two different seminars other than ours and said, by far, they felt that ours was the best one that they had gone to," Munroz said. "They said that they felt so welcomed and it was more of an intimate-feeling program where they really got to interact with the instructors. And sitting down and having breakfast, lunch and dinner with the participants was a great networking time for them. They got a lot of phone numbers and information to take home with them in case they need help along the way.

"Now that's a great compliment," she said.

The NWSC safety seminar was established over 40 years ago to promote continuing education by amusement industry professionals. The interactive classes and settings deliver a great venue for raising the level of safety awareness within the carnival Industry.

Each year classes change, according to the needs of the industry.

The seminar is aligned with **Portland Community College** for accreditation in their Continuing Education Program providing two CEUs for participation and completion of the seminar.

Munroz said seminar organizers have been continuing efforts to increase attendance. She said they have made it a purpose to keep their costs low for attendees. The seminar is $200 for four full days of classes and that also includes breakfast, lunch and dinner every day.

"Sometimes I think because we keep our costs down, people think it must be a rinky-dink school when in reality we have industry leaders as instructors," Munroz said. "Our seminar is not just for the managers; it's for the guy pushing the button on the ride."

The NWSC offers **AIMS**, **NAARSO** or CPR and First Aid testing on the final day for attendees. These tests are an additional cost.

Among the highlights this year was a new session called Lessons Learned Not in the Manual, presented by **Tom Jones** of **McGown Allied Insurance.**

"**Craig Hamelund, OSHA**, always brings the latest of new standards

See NWSC, page 55



NWSC

Continued from page 54

regarding creating safe and healthy working conditions," Munroz said. "And then, of course, there is **Avery Wheelock**'s ride evacuation classes that are life savers."

Munroz said there were so many classes this year, there were just too many to list.

"There are classes designed for everyone that makes the seminar work for everyone," she said.

Another highlight had to do with Wheeler as well.

"Avery got a big happy birthday song from all that attended," she said.

One of Munroz's favorite sessions she highlighted is the basic fire extinguisher class.

"You get to really use the extinguisher, so you know what to do in case it's needed. After attending this class, you know your staff knows how and when to use the extinguisher."

The other aspect of the seminar that the students like but has nothing to do with the educational part comes at the end of the session. When students turn in their check-in sheets, they get a ticket. On the last day at the banquet meal, Munroz pulls numbers out of a jar and attendees win prizes that are donated by seminar sponsors.

"They love being treated to gifts after a hard four days of classes," she said.

Munroz gives thanks to all of the safety seminar sponsors. They not only donate the gifts, but they also donate to make the free breakfasts, lunches and dinners during the seminar possible.

Sponsors this year included: *Amusement Today*, **McGowan Allied Insurance, Showfolks of America, Davis Shows Northwest, Funtastic Shows, Gallagher, Chestnut Identity Apparel, Prime Pacific Amusements, MCM, Outdoor Business Association, Battech Enterprises** and **Haas Wilkerson.**

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NAARSO concludes successful 2025 safety event in Charlotte

AT: *Ron Gustafson*
Special to Amusement Today

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — More than 300 persons took part in the 38th Annual Safety Seminar presented by the **National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials** (NAARSO) at the **Hilton Charlotte Airport** January 26 through 31, 2025.

NAARSO Education Chairman **John Hartman** noted that 215 were on hand for in-person classes, while another 150 participated online. In addition, one classroom was dedicated to a 16-hour Spanish language ride inspection track, sponsored by the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association**.

"We had a lot of people who took the test for the first time — around 150," NAARSO President **David Bertozzi** told *Amusement Today* after the seminar closed. "Overall, it was a good week with a lot of newer, younger people, which is always good. We had lower in-person attendance, which we anticipated, but virtual participation was stronger. It's good to see new blood coming into the industry."

Following an opening reception on Sunday, January 26, course instruction kicked off Monday morning in numerous meeting rooms in the hotel's conference center. Certifications were offered in the following categories: inspector levels one to three, operations levels one to three, aquatic operations, qualified crane signal/rigging person, fall protections and forklift training.

The Primary Track was aligned for individuals with five years or less in the amusement industry and centered on multiple disciplines associated with most amusement rides and devices. Classes focused on electrical, hydraulics, introduction to industry standards, basic ride inspection techniques and more.

Those seeking certification in the operational side of amusement rides and devices — park and traveling equipment — registered for the Operations Track. Workshop topics ranged from employee relations, inspection checklists, rider screening, preventative maintenance, ASTM standards for various materials, products, systems and services, as well as additional classes.





Above left, Avery Wheelock (far left) and Wesley Tart (far right) had an extensive class on welding techniques as well as non-destructive testing. Above right, Carowinds' Daryl McNeill (far left) goes over components from a roller coaster train, explaining where to look for wear. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

The Aquatic Operations Track seminars are related to those working at water parks or with water-related attractions. Among the courses were those on water quality, fiberglass maintenance and repair, liquid chemical feed and flow measurement, mechanical and pump room inspections, filtration and sanitation and pumps and motors. The track offered instruction at basic and advanced levels.

A Specials Track was offered for those operating inflatable devices and trampolines.

NAARSO's education committee selects class instructors from all aspects of the amusement industry with expertise in selected fields. The organization's objective is to provide quality education in the areas of inspection, maintenance and operations.

Membership is a diverse group from all areas of the amusement industry, including parks, carnivals, regulatory agencies and independent inspectors.

Case studies played an important role during a number of presentations at the dozens of classes on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.

Bob Renner, **Valleyfair**, Shakopee, Minn., spoke intently during his sessions on "everything welding." During a Tuesday class, he outlined the step-by-step procedure taken after a crack was discovered on a steel support on a major attraction.

His case study went from the visual inspection that revealed the issue to the conclusion, which was a resolution offered by an engineering firm.

He also explained some misconceptions between an industry standard and a code.

"A standard is an accepted guideline in an industry, whereas a code is mandatory," he noted.

Bill Hamilton, **All Aquatics/Bill Hamilton & Associates**, Titusville, Fla., covered various topics before the aquatics track on Monday and Tuesday. His Tuesday session focused on plumbing maintenance in the water attractions industry, honing in on rusty flanges and bolts, PVC welding, color coding, directional arrows and valve labeling.

Tony Perry, **Safe Slide Restoration**, Fredericktown, Mo., noted in his aquatics presentation that 75 percent of premature coating failure on water attractions is due to improper preparation of a corrosion site. He explained proper procedures to ward off coating breakdowns.

Another case study session concentrated on the lack of proper inspection of water rides and roller coaster supports. In highlighted photos, support footings were buried by debris for prolonged periods of time, resulting in rust on footer bolts and — in some instances — rot on support columns and beams. Other photos showed supports undermined in locations subject to rain runoff.

Avery Wheelock, president of **Worldwide Safety Group**, Plant City, Fla., and **Wesley Tart**, supervisor with the North Carolina Department of Labor, presented an extensive class on welding and welding procedures as part of the Primary Track.

Wheelock emphasized the importance of getting the repair procedures from the ride's manufacturer before going through the welding process.

The NAARSO event shifted gears for hands-on training Wednesday at **Carowinds** amusement park, only minutes from the hotel.

Charter buses shuttled seminar participants to the park for an 8 a.m. start with the registrants split into 12 groups. Training sessions, headed up by Carowinds staff as well as other industry experts, were staged at selected rides and attractions and each group transitioned to a new location about every 20 minutes.

One of the most engaging exercises involved a mock incident on a ride, moderated by NAARSO Membership Chairman **Dean Corl**. Team members were charged with collecting witness information, interviewing ride staff and maintenance, filing reports and confronting upset guests.

Carowinds maintenance technician **Daryl McNeill** provided a close-up look at various components on the **Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc.** trains which operate on the Hurler, the park's large wooden roller coaster. He emphasized how critical daily inspections are to identify any worn parts which might need to be changed out as well as other things which might be overlooked in the process.

A demonstration in drone inspections on the mammoth Fury 325 steel coaster (**Bolliger & Mabillard**) was conducted near the ride's entrance by the park's **Drew Green.**

Operating the drone from a utility trailer equipped with a large-screen monitor, he explained how the camera-equipped "eye in the sky" is used to inspect the 325-foot ride.

"We actually use it on four steel coasters here," he said of the process. "Basically, anything we can't reach with a crane — 80 feet and above — we can use the drone."

During the procedure, he showed how the camera zooms in to provide a clear view of bolt heads and nuts high above the ground with the results readily accepted by state ride inspectors.

"It's our second year doing it," Green added. "We do three quarterly and one yearly inspection on the steel coasters and can do a spur-of-the-moment if necessary."

Other rides with hands-on training during the day-long event included a **Huss** Troika themed as Do-Si-Do, Scrambler (**Eli Bridge**), and **Zierer** Wave Swinger named Zephyr. Those in the aquatic track trained at Carowinds' adjacent **Carolina Harbor Waterpark.**

Certification testing was held Friday to conclude the safety seminar. Besides the annual safety seminar in January, NAARSO also presents outreach programs throughout the year as well as customized training.

•naarso.com

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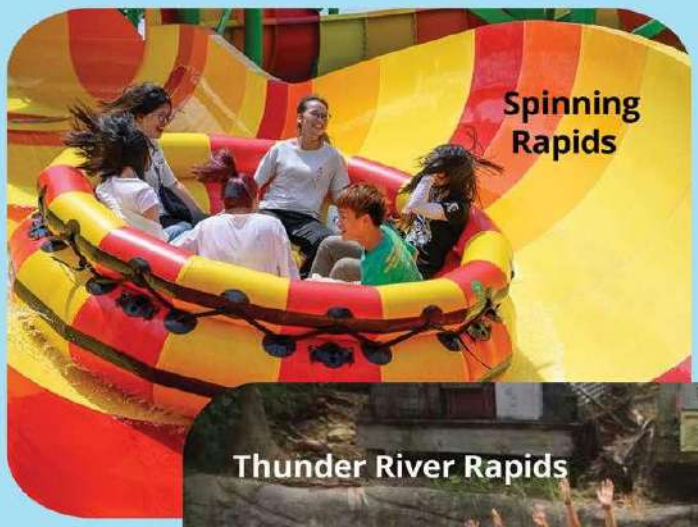
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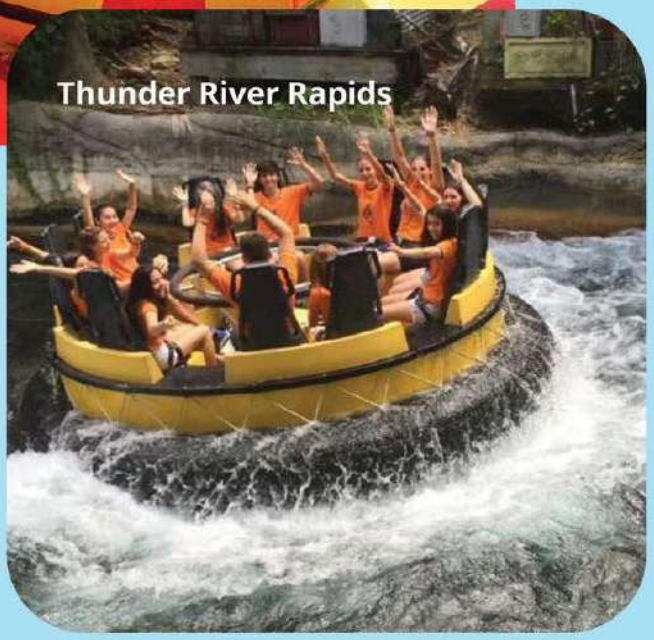
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Former Sky Zone Franchisee Takes Indoor Parks to New Heights with Slick City Action Park Expansion Plans

Thursday 4th April, 2024

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- Former Sky Zone franchisee Bron Launsby launched Slick City, a franchise focused on providing an exhilarating slide experience to families across the country.
- Slick City has quickly gained traction and is now looking to expand through franchising after proving its concept with initial success in Denver, St. Louis, and Houston.
- Prospective franchisees can expect an initial investment ranging between $1.5 million and $3.1 million, with the first Slick City location achieving $4.1 million in sales, demonstrating promising returns on investment.



Bron Launsby's Slick City Action Park Slides into the Indoor Park Industry Spotlight

Former Sky Zone franchisee Bron Launsby has made waves in the indoor park industry with the launch of Slick City, a franchise focused on bringing an exhilarating slide experience to families across the country. Slick City Action Park, born from Launsby's vision, has quickly gained traction and is now poised for expansive growth.

Initially starting with just three units, Slick City has proven its concept and is now looking to expand through franchising. Inspired by the success of

Dallas, Milwaukee, and Chicago. The square footage of these action-packed parks varies, with an average size of 25,000 square feet. Prospective franchisees can expect an initial investment ranging between $1.5 million and $3.1 million.

The franchise model offers promising returns on investment, as evidenced by the first Slick City location achieving an impressive $4.1 million in sales. To maintain the brand's integrity and ensure franchisee success, Launsby emphasizes a rigorous vetting process and stringent financial requirements.

In a post-pandemic landscape, indoor family entertainment franchises like Sky Zone, Altitude Trampoline Park, and Launch Trampoline Park have demonstrated robust performance, fueling increased interest in franchise development. Slick City's innovative approach and focus on quality are key factors driving its success in a competitive market. As the brand continues to expand, it is poised to make a significant impact on the indoor park industry, offering families a thrilling and memorable experience at every location.

Key Facts:

Founder of Slick City	Bron Launsby
Franchise Name	Slick City
Focus of Franchise	Exhilarating slide experience for families
Current Locations	Denver, St. Louis, Houston

Initial Franchise Investment Range	$1.5 million - $3.1 million
First Location Sales	$4.1 million
Franchise Model	Promising returns on investment, with rigorous vetting process
Industry Trends	Increased interest in indoor family entertainment franchises post-pandemic

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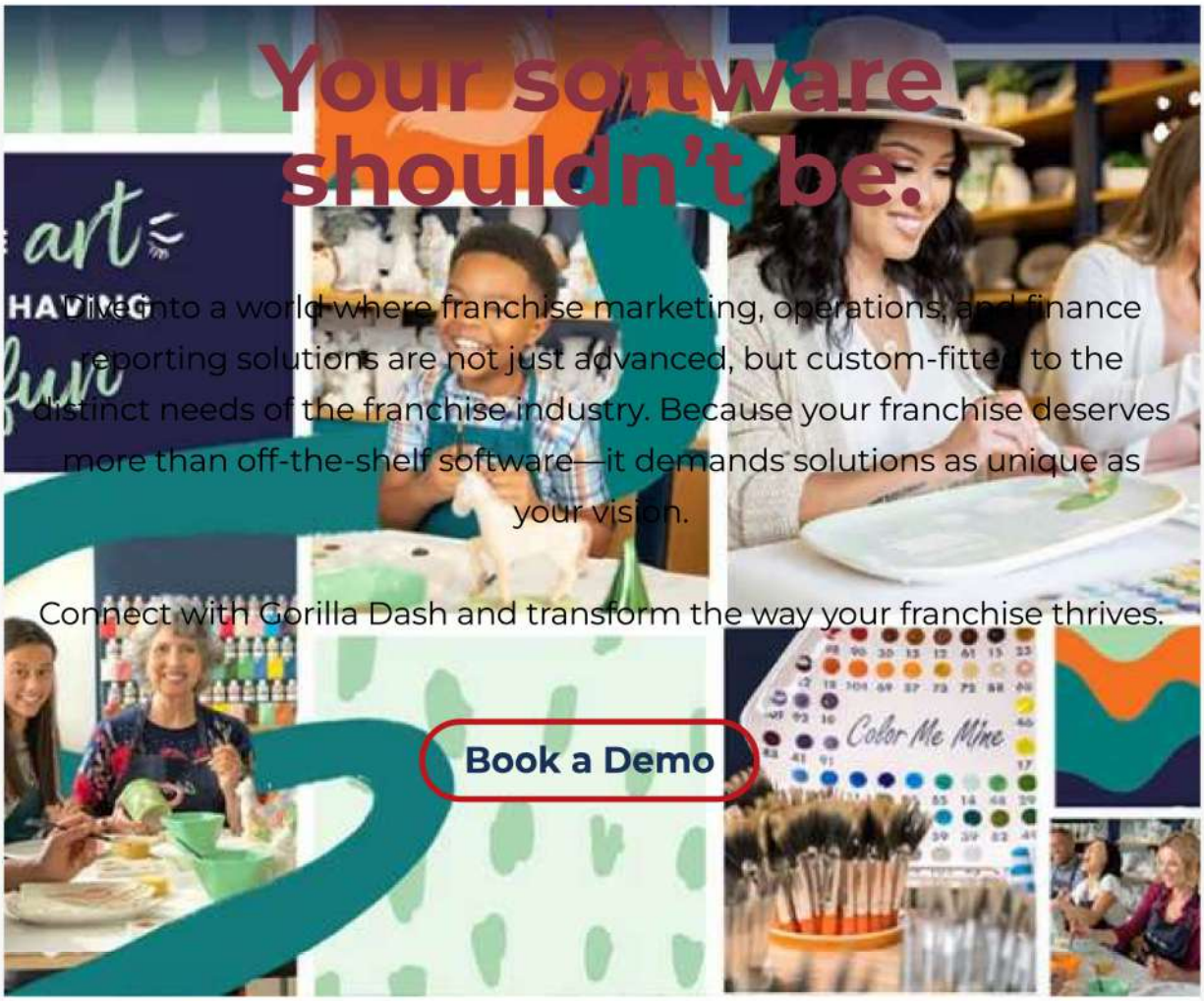
Altitude Trampoline Park Bounces into Schaumburg Like a Pro

Altitude Trampoline Park is expanding its footprint with a new location in Schaumburg, Illinois. Led by Shai Jiwani—an award-winning franchisee—and partner Shaz Salim, the park is set to open on August 1. Located on Golf Road, it will feature wall-to-wall trampolines, dodgeball, and more, offering a dynamic venue for families seeking active fun.



Meet Robert Pina: The Franchisee Extraordinaire Behind Marco's Pizza's Terrific Triumph

Robert Pina, the mastermind behind Marco's Pizza, crowned Franchisee of the Year at Las Vegas convention. Business brilliance shines in his community-focused empire, setting a new standard.



Color Me Mine: The Vibrant Expansion Across the Lone Star State

Color Me Mine's vibrant expansion in Texas brings a splash of creativity under Twist Brands LLC and CEO Teresa Johnson. Franchisees aim to spread "The Art of Having Fun" across the Lone Star State's key markets.

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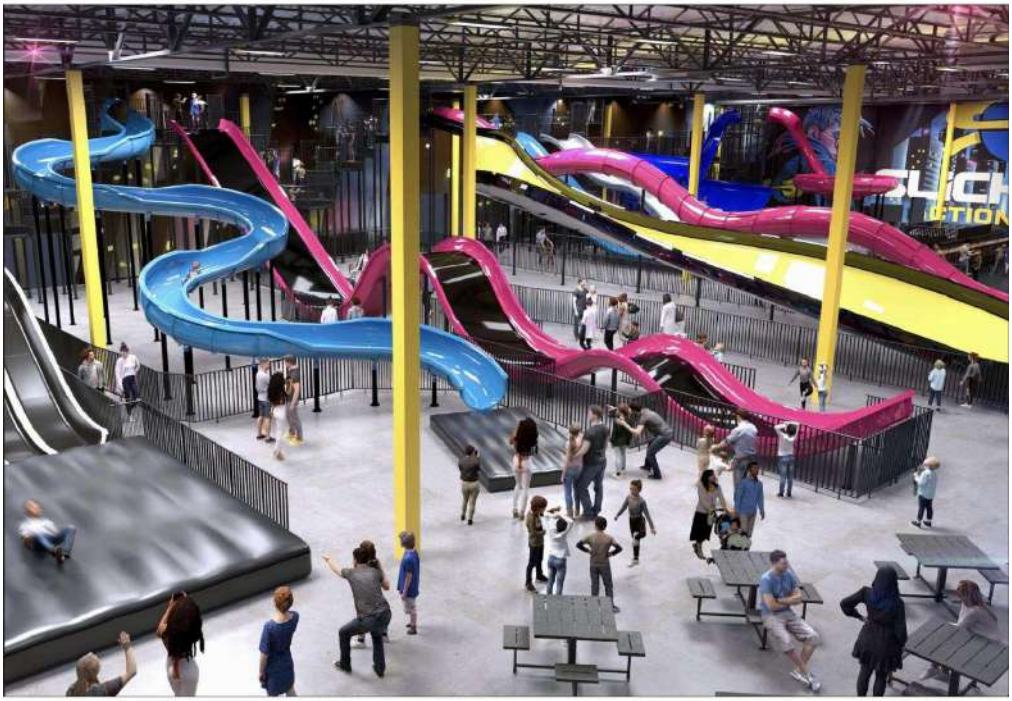
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Contributed / Slick City

A rendering of a Slick City Action Park, which gives an idea of the Slick City which will be built in south Fargo.

SLICK-SLIDIN' INTO FARGO

The local Slick City owners plan to build an elaborate indoor slide park in an area of town that's already synonymous with family entertainment

BY TAMMY SWIFT
The Forum

FARGO

A center for sweeping, swooping, swirling slides — minus the splash factor — will slip-slide into south Fargo next fall.

After local franchise partners for a Slick City Action Park searched for the right building throughout Fargo-Moorhead to housetheir slide park, they have decided the best building for their waterless slide park is one they build themselves.

The new Slick City building will be located directly south ofKing-Pinzand west of the new Springhill Suites hotel, which are both located in the Timber Creek LIVE commercial development north of 52nd Avenue South and east of the I-29 on-ramp.



The Slick City Action Park will be located near other amusement centers, including Kingpinz and Suite Shots.

"It's becoming a bit of an entertainment center there," said franchise partner Dan Bryant.

The neighborhood is also home to the Suite Shots golf and entertainment venue, Plaza Azteca Mexican restaurant and multiple fast-food eateries.

Groundbreaking will take place this spring. If all goes as planned, Slick City could be open for families looking to burn off all that pumpkin pie and dressing by next Thanksgiving, Bryant said.

The indoor family entertainment center will boast a footprint of about 30,000 square feet and feature 30-foot-high ceilings — a necessary requirement to accommodate some of the park's tallest slides. The partners had considered locations such as the former Gordman's department store in Fargo, Bryant said, but these existing buildings didn't have the clearance needed for the park's loftier slides.

The all-ages venue will feature a series of elaborate slides, bearing names like the Big Wave, Mega Launch and Fast Lane, which are manufactured to produce "a nearly frictionless slide experience equivalent to a water slide, but without any water," according to Slick City press materials.

The park also will include inflatable air courts for basketball, dodgeball and other sports, a zipline, a junior jungle play area with down-sized slides, tubes and play equipment, a giant crocheted "spider web" for climbing, and a cafe area.

An 'all thrill, no skill' activity

This Slick City will be the only one in North Dakota, although Bryant and ownership group Ryan Goodman, Brady Goodman, Brady Nash and Derek Brandenburg also plan to open locations in Omaha, Neb., and Sioux Falls, S.D.

It's not Bryant's first foray into a family entertainment center. He used to own the Sky Zone trampoline park in Fargo but sold it several years ago.

Bryant said he didn't intend to get back into family entertainment until he learned about Slick City. One of the major advantages is Slick City's broader appeal across different age ranges and fitness types.

"This is more of an 'all

SLICK on C4

Service project proposals and student applications sought for building trades camps

BY ANGIE WIECK, DANIELLE TEIGEN, HELMUT SCHMIDT, TAMMY SWIFT, AND DAVID OLSON
The Forum

The Business BUZZ



Wieck



Schmidt



Swift



Olson



Teigen

MOORHEAD — Home Builders Care Foundation is now accepting service project proposals and student applications for its Herdina Construction Trades Camp this summer.

Herdina campers will work side-by-side with industry and education professionals, learning about occupations, tools, safety requirements, and skills required for satisfying and well-paying careers. Students will participate in classroom and hands-on learning, with the opportunity to experience first-hand how residential and commercial buildings are constructed

The cost for students to attend is $200. Upon completion of the camp, students may earn high school credit and/or M State will transcribe three college credits (BLDG 1110 Basic Principles of Residential and Commercial Construction) to the student's academic record. Scholarships will be available to graduates pursuing construction-related fields.

The camp will be held from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. June 2-6 and 9-13 at the M State campus, 1900 28th Ave. S.

Proposals for service projects will be accepted until Jan. 24. Historically, campers have built small garage-like structures or sheds. The partnering organization has provided the materials while the campers and industry professionals provide the labor. The camp expects 15-24 students to participate.

For more information, contact Krista Mund at krista@buildrrv.org, 701-232-5846, visit https://www.buildrrv.org.

FMWF Chamber news

FARGO — The Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber is now accepting nominations for its 2025 ChamberChoice Awards, which celebrate the outstanding achievements of businesses and organizations in the region. Nominations are being accepted from now through Friday, Jan. 24.



Contributed / Herdina Construction Trades Camp

Volunteers and students worked together to build a bathroom/washroom facility and produce stands for Farm in the Dell in Moorhead.

Nominated businesses will be contacted by The Chamber and invited to apply for an award. Award applications will then be open from Monday, Jan. 27 – Friday, Feb. 21.

Award categories include:

- Business of the Year

BUZZ on C4

SLICK

CONTINUED from C1

thrill, no skill' thing," he said. "It's not a trampoline park where it serves a very small segment of kids. This serves a wider demographic of age, which is a positive. Trampoline parks are also very prone to accidents and injuries. We don't have that with this either."

Slick City's "waterless slide park" concept offers the thrills of elaborately swirling slides without the need to change into a bathing suit first. "Water parks are almost always loss leaders because they're so expensive to operate," he said. "This is a concept where parents don't have to worry about kids getting wet."

Bryant has also seen first-hand how fun it can be. While recently visiting a Slick City in St. Louis to meet with the owner there, he brought along his daughter and a few of her friends. After three hours there, he figured the kids would have tried out everything and would be more than ready to leave. "I thought my kids would have wanted to go and they didn't," he said. "They begged me to stay."

Slick City slides are known for their clever configurations. One example is the mega-launch, in which the slider races down a tall slide which then swoops upward at the end, propelling them high into the air before they land on air bags.

Another popular option is the fast-lane racetrack, in which sliders race, side by side, down identical, hill-filled slides to see who gets to the bottom first.

Among the many other options are the python — a twisting, turning berm slide — and the twister, a long tube slide, where speed sends people spiraling around a mid-slide twist.



Contributed / Slick City Action Park

The Slick City Action Park, slated to open in November 2025, will feature elaborate slides engineered to create a "waterless slide experience," a junior slide and play area, air courts for basketball and other sports, and a cafe and party area.



Contributed / Slick City

The aptly named Python is one of the slides typically featured at Slick City Action Park.



Contributed / Slick City

The Mega Launch slide propels a young man into the air at one of Slick City's locations.

A fun option for adults too

Another key component to Slick City success is its dry-slide technology, which was developed by inventor Gary Schmit after eight years of research and consultation with a professor of tribology (the study of friction and wear) who worked on NASA space stations.

"He's just been working and working and working on perfecting these slides and making them as fun, quick and fast as possible," Bryant said in an earlier interview.

It was Schmit who approached Bron Launsby, a St. Louis-born entrepreneur who owned multiple SkyZones, about installing his patented Slick Slides in Launsby's trampoline parks.

The slides were such a successful addition at Launsby's SkyZones that the men formed a partnership. Eventually, Launsby began selling off his Sky Zones and focused solely on slide parks, Bryant said.

Since Slick City's franchise launch in February 2024, Fargo has become the 15th franchise location. Nine parks across the country are currently open, but 39 franchises have been awarded and more than 40 are in development, according to the Slick City franchise website.

Because of the size and equipment requirements, the initial investment to open a park is between $1.5 million and $4.2 million, according to Slick city's franchise website. While the upfront cost is high, Launsby told the Franchise Times there's a good return on investment, with the brand's first location doing $4.1 million in sales.

Ticket prices typically start at $13.99 for age 3 and under and $25.99 for for a 90-minute stint for sliders age 4 and older.

However, Bryant hopes to enhance profitability with special programs like family days, adults-only evenings and after-hours events, in which the park is transformed into a glow-in-the-dark playland.

He also hopes Slick City's reputation for high-quality concessions like hand-made pizza will make it a natural choice for kids' parties. "It's not just a microwave type of concession stand," Bryant said.

In short, he hopes Slick City will become a magnet for everyone from families traveling to Fargo for tournaments to adults who want to embrace their inner child — if only for a few trips down a slippery, sloping, swirling slide.

Tammy Swift is a business reporter at The Forum. She can be reached at tswift@forumcomm.com.

BUZZ

CONTINUED from C1

- Small Business of the Year
- Emerging Business of the Year
- Young Professionals Best Place to Work
- Inclusion Champion of the Year
- Nonprofit of the Year
- People's Choice (*This award will be voted on by the public after all official applications have been received*)

The ChamberChoice Awards will be presented Thursday, May 15, at the Delta by Marriott in Fargo.

Inclusion Insights

The Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber will soon launch Inclusion Insights, a free, three-part training series designed to help businesses and organizations create more inclusive, diverse and equitable workplaces.

The sessions will provide attendees with actionable insights and practical strategies for creating more inclusive workplaces. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of inclusion principles, specific tools for fostering diversity and tangible strategies for integrating inclusive practices into their day-to-day operations.

All sessions will be held at the Amory Event Center, 904 Center Ave., Moorhead. Topics, dates and times are as follows:

- What is Inclusion? 3:30 to 5 p.m. Jan. 22
- Why is Inclusion Important? 3:30 to 5 p.m. Feb. 12
- How to Operationalize Inclusion Solutions, 3:30 to 5 p.m. March 12

Whitney Harvey, senior director of workforce diversity and inclusion at the Minnesota Chamber Foundation, will facilitate the series, offering expert guidance on implementing inclusion strategies.

For more information, visit www.fmwfchamber.com.

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THRILLS, PROFITS, AND PROPRIETARY TECH: MEET SLICK CITY

SLICK CITY ACTION PARK: REDEFINING ALL-AGES ENTERTAINMENT WITH THRILLS, PROFITS, AND INNOVATION

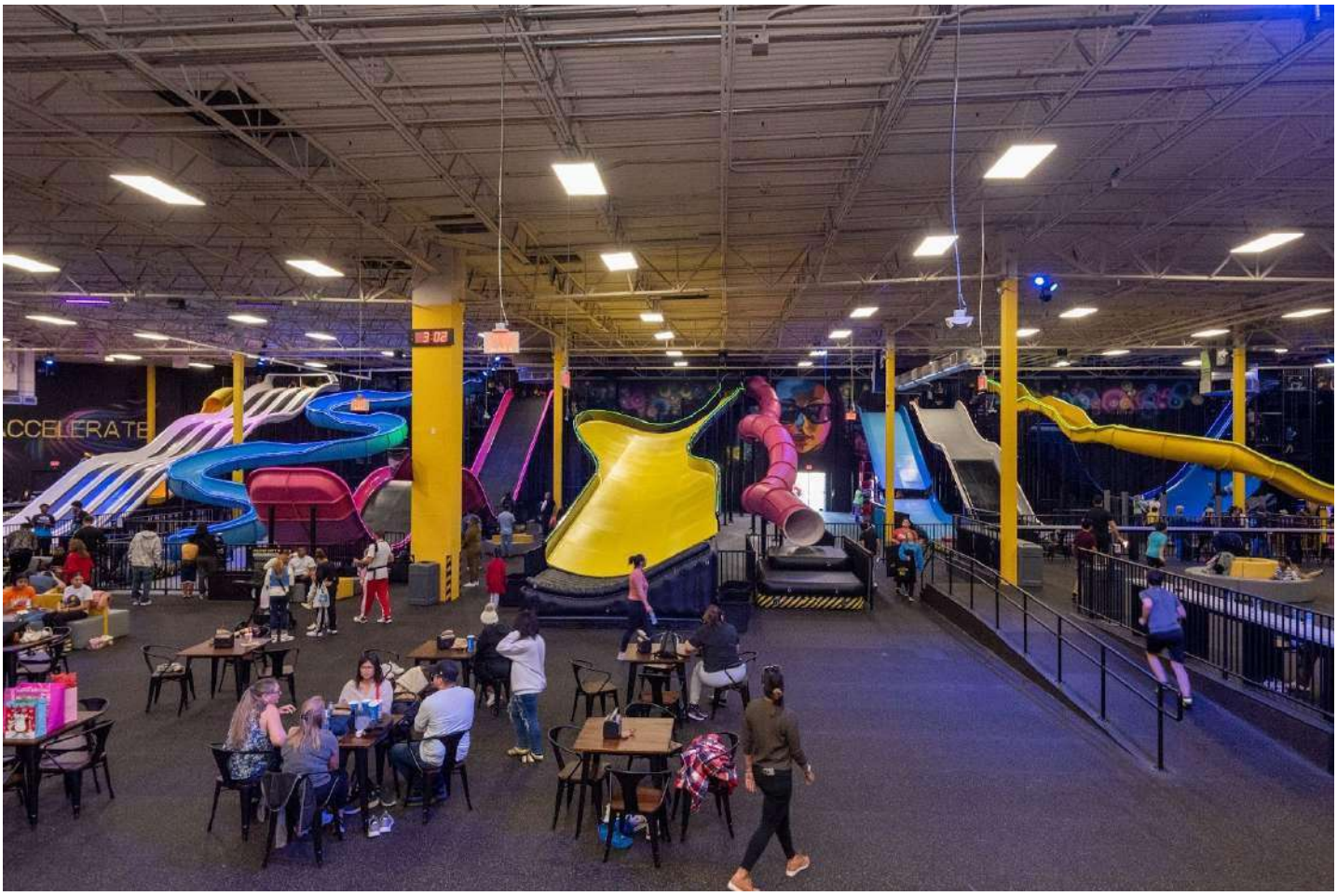
When you think of family entertainment centers...

What comes to mind?

Maybe something like trampoline parks, arcades, or laser tag arenas.

But what if there was a completely new concept built on proprietary technology, that combined the adrenaline of theme park rides, the modularity of a playground, *and* the profitability of a high-volume retail business?

Slick City Action Park (https://slickcity.com/franchise/?utm_source=Wolf&utm_medium=DeepDive&utm_campaign=March2025), the world's first indoor slide and action sports park, redefines what it means to have family fun, regardless of your age.



Since its inception, Slick City has been on a mission to create unforgettable experiences for thrill-seekers of all ages while offering franchise owners a lucrative, scalable business model at the same time.

With 12 locations already open, 26 in construction, and over 40 franchises awarded in just its first year, Slick City is proving that it's not just keeping up with the industry...

It's establishing an entirely new frontier.

Since Slick City began with the knowledge of previous ventures and lessons, it comes to the table with experience that far exceeds the formative years of its competitors.

It's safe to say the trial and error has paid off, but what makes Slick City stand out in a crowded market?

Why are experienced multi-unit franchise owners, family entertainment center veterans, and corporate refugees flocking to this young brand?

Let's examine, shall we?

THE SLICK CITY DIFFERENCE: A THRILLING CONCEPT WITH A PROVEN TRACK RECORD

At its core, Slick City is all about delivering "we've gotta do that" moments.

Imagine an indoor park filled with up to 20 different slide designs, each offering a unique adrenaline rush.

From high-speed drops to twisting tunnels, Slick City's attractions are designed to keep guests coming back for more.

Forget about the hot metal sticky playground slides of yesteryear baking in the sun.

Slick City's smooth-as-ice indoor proprietary dry slides bend the laws of physics, with nearly frictionless surfaces that are faster than water slides twice their size!

But what's the secret behind their waterless super acceleration?

A patented pairing of a proprietary coating heat-sealed to every slide during the manufacturing process and a custom-designed riding mat layered with a specific blend of woven polymers.

This precise ecosystem was carefully designed by a cross-functional team of water slide engineers and a retired space station tribologist (a scientist who specializes in friction and wear), and took *years* of trial and error to arrive at the perfect mix of materials.

And the team behind this relentless R&D isn't messing around; They already have 55 patents granted or filed globally covering the utility AND designs of the slides.

This is true space-age technology, brought to the masses for adrenaline-stoking entertainment.

And that's not all:

These attractions are highly modular, meaning they can be swapped out with ease to keep the experience fresh and exciting.

This modularity is truly a game-changer.

Unlike traditional family entertainment centers that require *massive* overhauls to introduce new attractions, Slick City's in-house design team ensures that parks can evolve without breaking the bank.

With 55 patents already filed or granted (and counting) for their proprietary slides and tech, they're not just playing around; they're able to consistently produce those fresh "we've gotta do that" moments of fun that customers have grown to expect...

Especially in a market where people are constantly searching for something new, different, and entertaining.

It's like a theme park where new "rides" are just a slide installation away.



But Slick City isn't just for kids.

The "all thrill, no skill" appeal of the slides, and their comparative safety relative to other active entertainment and sports, gives them high appeal to parents. In 2024, Slick City generated over 24% of its revenue from parents and adults!

And while kids and parents are a core demographic, the park also caters to adults with monthly **adults-only nights**, creating a unique niche in the market.

This all-ages appeal has helped Slick City achieve an impressive average unit volume (AUV) of **$4.9 million in 2024**, with profit margins hovering around a healthy **41%**.

And according to Allied Market Research (https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/familyindoor-entertainment-centers-market-to-reach-108-4-billion-globally-by-2033-at-12-1-cagr-allied-market-research-302231186.html), the family and indoor entertainment centers market was $30.8 billion in 2022 and is on track to reach $108.4 billion globally by 2033,

Translation? This industry is booming thanks to its broad appeal, immersive experiences, and technological advancements. There's never been a better time to get in on the action.

WHY FRANCHISE OWNERS ARE FLOCKING TO SLICK CITY

For experienced multi-unit franchise owners, Slick City represents a rare opportunity: a young, innovative brand with the backing of industry veterans who gained hard-earned wisdom from other family entertainment ventures.

The leadership team, including CEO Bron Launsby, brings decades of experience from some of the largest names in family entertainment.

Launsby himself is a former multi-unit franchisee, giving him a unique perspective on what franchisees need to succeed in this space.

This franchise-first focus is evident in every aspect of Slick City's operations.

From streamlined processes to a commitment to ongoing support, the brand is meticulously designed to help franchise owners thrive.

And with **15% of revenue coming from on-site cafes**, there's ample opportunity to boost profits even further.

For food and beverage franchise owners, Slick City is an especially refreshing change of pace.

For starters, it offers the familiarity of restaurant operations (like managing a cafe) but with the added excitement and volume of family entertainment to bring more guests in the door, more often.

The profit margins are significantly healthier than traditional QSR (quick-service restaurant) models, which typically hover around 10-20%.

Plus, let's be real: operating a slide park is a *lot* more fun for young employees than flipping burgers.

THE NUMBERS DON'T LIE: A SCALABLE, PROFITABLE BUSINESS MODEL

Let's talk numbers. Slick City's financials are impressive, to say the least.

The estimated initial investment for a franchise ranges from **$1.9 million to $4.9 million,** depending on location and size.

But with an AUV of nearly $5 million and profit margins of 41% in 2024, the return on investment is compelling.

Here's a breakdown of what makes Slick City so profitable:

High Foot Traffic

With attractions designed to thrill everyone from toddlers to adults, Slick City parks have drawn in crowds.

Whether it's a rainy weekend, a school holiday, or a Friday night out, families and thrill-seekers alike flock to Slick City for its unique blend of fun and adventure.

Out of all locations open for the entire fiscal year, the median location received over 115,000 paying guests in 2024!

This consistent foot traffic has translated into steady revenue, making it an attractive investment for franchise owners.

Repeat visits

One of Slick City's biggest standout features is its modular attractions.

Unlike traditional entertainment centers that require costly overhauls with a multitude of third-party vendors to keep things fresh, Slick City's attractions are all designed, produced, shipped, and installed by a vertically integrated "in-house" affiliate.

This means they can be easily swapped or updated with their proprietary tech.

This means guests always have something new to try, whether it's a high-speed slide, a challenging obstacle course, or a brand-new interactive game.

The result? Relatively low cost, impactful opportunities to bring guests back to the park.

Families and groups can come back again and again, with the potential to drive a steady stream of revenue and a loyal customer base.

Diverse Revenue Streams

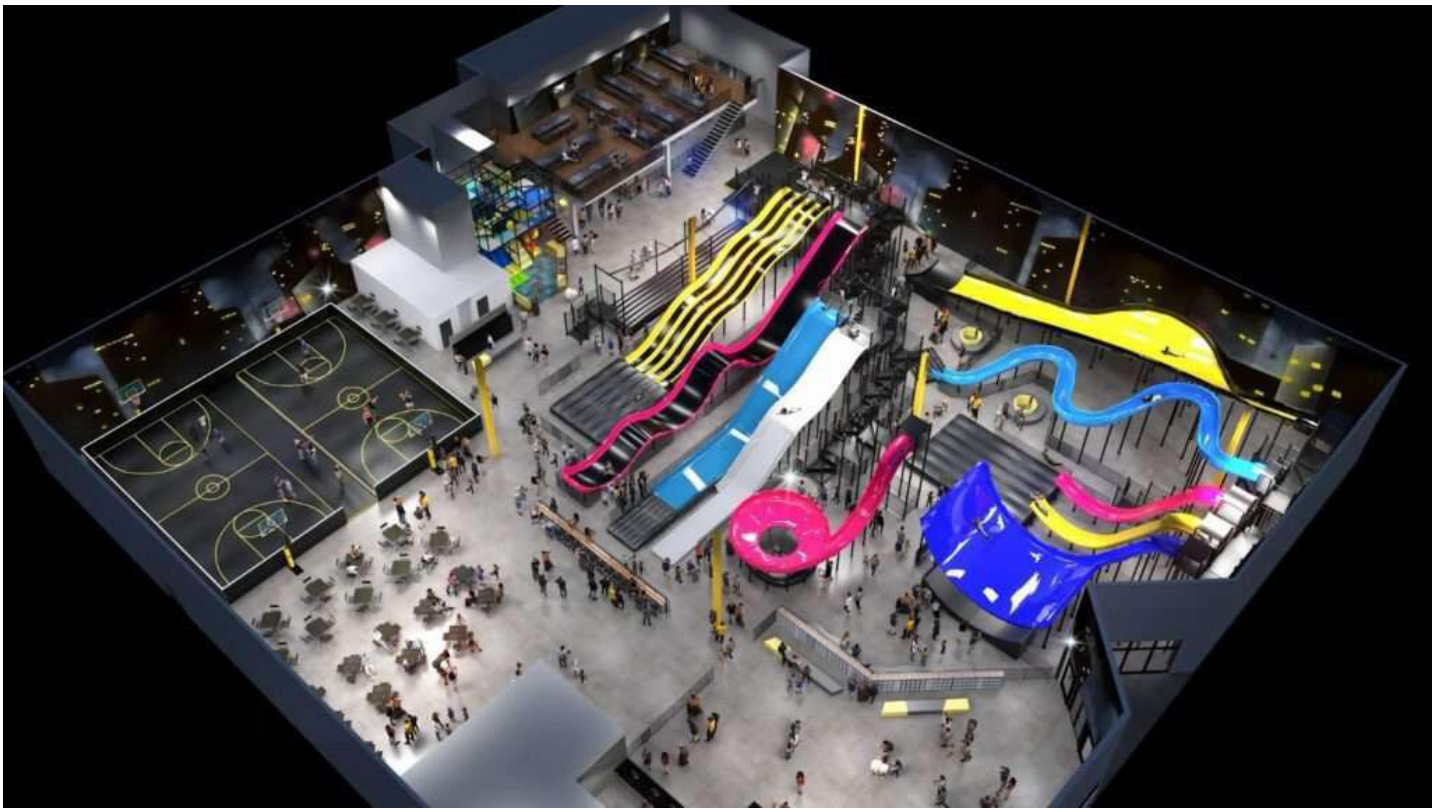
Slick City isn't just about admission fees—it's a multi-revenue powerhouse.

In addition to ticket sales, parks generate income from on-site cafes, private parties, special events, and required Slick City Socks for all guests.

Imagine hosting anything from birthday parties to corporate team-building events or adults-only nights.

These diverse revenue streams not only boost profitability but also create opportunities to connect with the community in many meaningful ways.

With so many ways to monetize, Slick City offers franchise owners a business model that's as dynamic as its attractions, and the growth potential is staggering.



Slick City has already signed leases for over 1 million square feet of space, with plans to open 20 more locations in 2025.

For franchise owners looking to scale, this is a golden opportunity.

A BRAND BUILT FOR THE FUTURE

What sets Slick City apart isn't just its innovative attractions or impressive financials...

It's the team behind the brand.

With a leadership team that includes veterans from Sky Zone and other major players in family entertainment, Slick City combines the energy of a startup with the expertise of a seasoned operator.

The C-suite, senior leaders, and directors in the company bring over 100 years of combined experience in the FEC franchise space to the table.

In other words, this is far from their first rodeo.

Slick City has a mature management team with a steady hand at the helm of a new brand, with proprietary technology built from years of R&D to back it up.

This blend of innovation and experience is what makes Slick City a standout in the franchise world.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT: MEET SLICK CITY AT MUFC 2025

The thrill is waiting. Are you ready to slide into success?

If you're an experienced multi-unit franchise owner or a corporate refugee with a passion for location-based retail, Slick City wants to meet you.

The brand will be showcasing their presence tomorrow at the **Multi-Unit Franchising Conference (MUFC),** running from **March 25th to 28th** in Las Vegas.

Stop by booth **#2440** to learn more about this exciting opportunity and see why Slick City is redefining the future of family entertainment.

You can also visit slickcity.com/franchise (https://slickcity.com/franchise/?utm_source=Wolf&utm_medium=DeepDive&utm_campaign=March2025) to learn more and get the full financial details.

The Wolf

The Wolf of Franchises is an industry insider who's sharing the secret sauce of how lucrative the franchising industry can be. He offers expert insight to help both new and existing franchise owners reach success.

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Wisconsin's first indoor slide park, Slick City Action Park, is now open in Wauwatosa

Claudia Levens, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Fri, December 27, 2024 at 5:22 PM EST
3 min read



The Long Jump slide is an "exhilarating airborne adventure with a soft landing," according to Slick City's website.

Wauwatosa is now home to Wisconsin's first indoor slide park, called Slick City Action Park.

The park opened on the evening of Thursday, Dec. 26, in a warehouse at 1435 N. 113th St. in Wauwatosa. Friday, Dec. 27, is the park's first full day open to the

Here's what to know:

What's inside Slick City Action Park in Wauwatosa?

According to the release, Slick City Action Park is the "world's only waterless slide park," for both kids and adults.

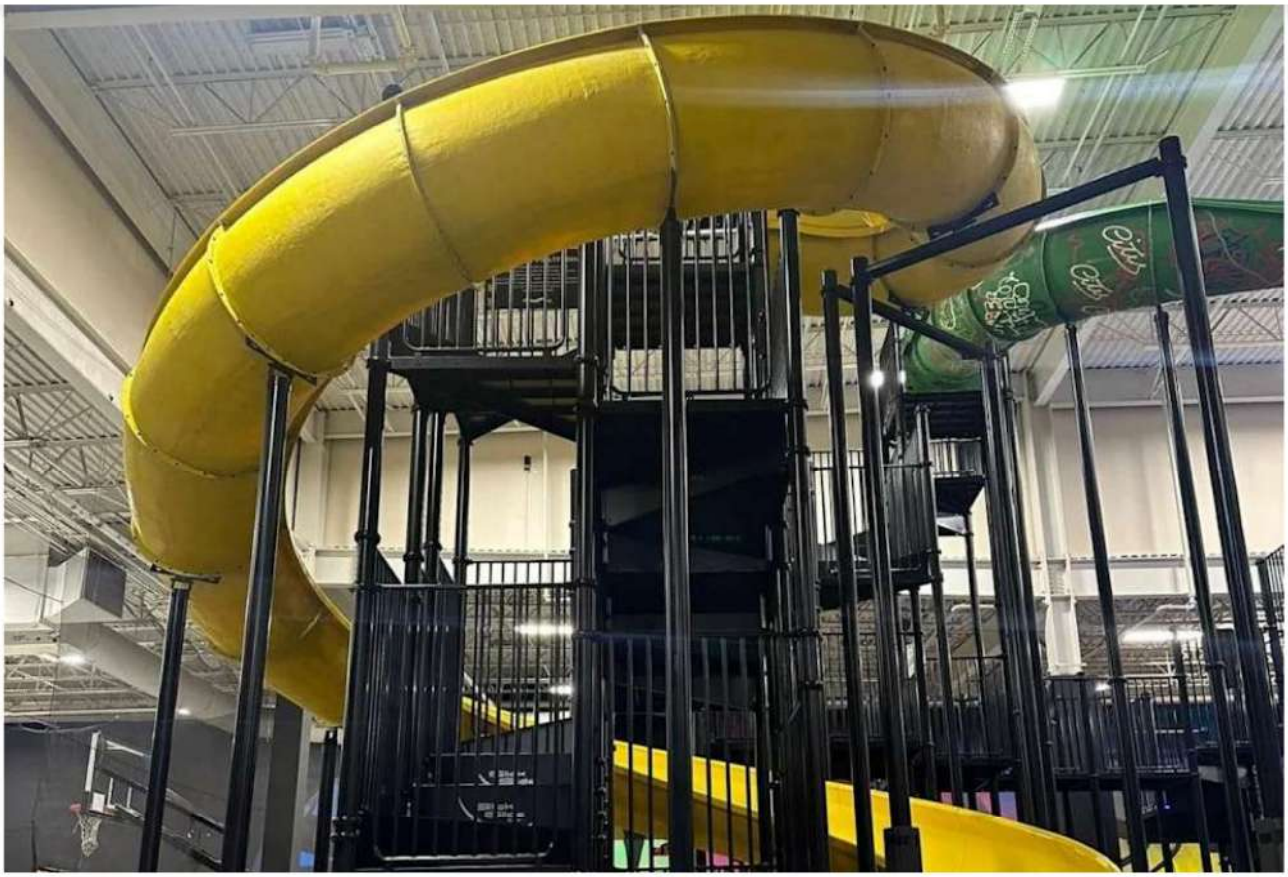
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The 60,000-square-foot park in Wauwatosa features 11 giant slides, including the Big Wave, the Off Ramp and the Mega Launch. The park also includes other attractions such as a mini cart track, zip line, swing, a basketball court, trapeze and multi-level playground.

There are age limits for certain attractions. To use the slides, you must be at least 4 years old. The park also has a "soft play area" for those too young for the slides.

Need a break? Hungry? Visitors can also enjoy hot food, snacks, candy and beverages available for purchase at the park.







The Tail Spin slide allows riders to whip around in a spiral "like a stunt pilot taunting gravity," according to Slick City's website.

What is a 'waterless slide park?'

Slick City's website says the park allows visitors to experience the thrill of a waterslide while staying completely dry.

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According to information sent by Slick City's public relations firm Lola Red, each slide is equipped with proprietary coating. Users ride on blended polymer mats, achieving "a low 0.07 coefficient of friction and quick acceleration."

So far, Slick City has 48 patents filed or granted related to these proprietary slides, the communications spokesperson said.



The Big Wave slide has a steep drop into a giant half-pipe.

Is Slick City Action Park safe?

As with many adventure parks, there is always some risk for injury, and Slick City requires all guests, participating or not, to sign a waiver.

The company website includes a safety page with advice on how to minimize risk of injury while at the park, including following all park rules, emptying pockets beforehand and only sliding down one person at a time.

How much does it cost?

Visitors can buy single passes for 120 minutes (currently priced at $30.99) and

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Enthusiasts can also purchase 30-day passes ($64.99) that offer one 90-minute session per day, as well as annual passes ($399.99) that provide 90-minute sessions every day for a full year.

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If You Need To Kill Time On Your Computer, This Popular Strategy Game Is A Must

Ad Forge Of Empires

"CitySocks" before entering, though they are reusable for future visits. Slick City will not allow other kinds of grippy socks.



In addition to slides, Slick City Action Park includes includes attractions such as a mini cart track, zip line, swing, a basketball court, trapeze and multi-level playground.

What are the hours for Slick City Action Park in Wauwatosa?

Slick City is typically open from 1 to 8:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays; and from 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Sundays.

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During the week of Dec. 30, however, Slick City will open earlier, at 10 a.m., from Monday through Thursday.

A more complete and updated list of the hours can be found on the company's website.



Enthusiasts of Slick City can book parties through the company's website.

Where else is Slick City Action Park?

The company opened its first locations in 2021 in Colorado and Missouri. Since then, it has opened six other locations, including in Arizona and Texas.

The company is eager to continue expanding across the U.S., according to the release, and has awarded over 32 franchise locations across 18 states.

Who has been in charge of bringing Slick City to Wauwatosa?

Slick City Founder and CEO Bron Launsby has led the Tosa location's beginnings.

A franchise partner in Sky Zone, an indoor trampoline park, Launsby owns several Sky Zone locations in Missouri and Tennessee, as well as Wisconsin locations in Madison and Pewaukee.

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Bridget Fogarty contributed to this report.

Contact Claudia Levens at clevens@gannett.com. Follow her on X at @levensc13.

indoor slide park, Slick City, opens in Wauwatosa

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