



Northeast News

Proudly Supporting the Business of Fun in the Northeast since 1913

2023 Education Conference & Annual Meeting Edition

NEAAPA Newsletter

Ron Gustafson and Gary Slade To Be Inducted into NEAAPA Hall of Fame

NASHUA, N.H. — Two industry greats, Ron Gustafson and Gary Slade, will be inducted into the NEAAPA Hall of Fame on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 during the organization's 110th Anniversary Education Conference and Annual Meeting at the Sheraton Nashua Hotel.

Gustafson, most recently at Quassy Amusement and Waterpark, announced his retirement in October 2022 as the park's director of marketing and public relations.

Slade is the owner and publisher of Amusement Today, the amusement industry's news leader for over 25 years.



Ron Gustafson



Gary Slade

Always Interested in the Industry

From a young age, Ron developed an interest in the attractions industry. Growing up in Western New York, he would visit Midway Amusement Park with his family.

"Then I would go home and build rides out of Tinker Toys and other things that I could use", said Gustafson.

While an intern at the Jamestown Post-Journal, he would write articles about the industry. He went on to be a sports writer and did feature articles. He got his first writing award from the Associated Press for a feature about skydiving.

Ron volunteered for the Chautauqua County Volunteer Fireman's Gala Days, promoting what at the

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Hall of Fame

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time was one of the largest volunteer fireman's carnivals in the country. This is when he met many people from the outdoor amusement industry.

In 1980, Ron became the marketing manager for the newly-formed Amusements of Rochester, now Powers Great American Midways, while still working in journalism as the full-time editor of the Dunkirk Evening Observer. By 1990, he became the full-time marketing director for Midway Amusement Park, as well as the ride superintendent. It was then he started freelance writing for IAAPA's FUNWORLD magazine. Ron was named Outstanding Tourism Employee of the Year in 1997 by the New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association for getting attraction signage on major highways throughout the state.

In Labor Day 2002, Ron began working for Quassy Amusement Park to help as the marketing and public relations director. During his 20-year tenure, he created a number of educational programs to bolster school outings. Ron then became involved with NEAAPA, serving as editor of the hard-copy newsletter for more than a decade. Ron has also published three books about the industry's history.

Bitten by the Attractions Bug

At a young age, Gary Slade realized he wanted to work in the amusement industry. After family trips to Six Flags Over Texas and Pontchartrain Beach Amusement Park, he was hooked. When the family was planning a trip, he would talk his parents into stopping at more parks.

Going down a photo/journalism path, he began capturing images of Friday night high school football games. This would get him to Arlington Texas, where he got a job as a ride operator at Six Flags Over Texas. His skills as a photographer would lead him to creating bonds with suppliers and manufacturers, visually documenting newly-opened rides that would be used in catalogs and at industry trade shows. His photos won many awards, appearing in countless daily newspapers, and have been distributed by both *The Associated Press* and Texas Press Association.

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NEAAPA Hall Of Fame

Since 1998, NEAAPA has inducted 45 people into the Hall of Fame. The past inductees are:

- **Roger Shaheen**, Shaheen Enterprises
- **Anthony Pero**, Ocean Beach Park
- **Edward J. Carroll, Jr.**, Riverside Park
- **Henry Bowen**, Whalom Park
- **Edward J. Carroll, Sr.**, Riverside Park
- **Lawrence Stone**, Paragon Park
- **Alton Lipkin**, NANCO / Nancy Sales Co.
- **George Frantzis**, Quassy Amusement Park
- **Anthony Sr. and Laura Berni**, Canobie Lake Park
- **Claude and Stella Captell**, Canobie Lake Park
- **Kasmir and Rita Ulaky**, Canobie Lake Park
- **Kenneth and Violet Cormier**, Funtown Splashtown USA
- **Ed Connor**, Riverside Park
- **John Frantzis**, Quassy Amusement Park
- **Tom Morrow**, Canobie Lake Park
- **Robert & Ruth Morrell**, Story Land
- **James & Eleanor Brady**, Six Gun City
- **Wayne McCary**, Eastern States Exposition
- **John F. Naughton**, Naughton Insurance
- **Conrad Ferla**, Rocky Point Park
- **Suzanne McHugh Piscitello**, Canobie Gifts
- **Fred L. Markey**, Dodgem Corp.
- **Kate (Horner) Wall**, Riverside Park
- **Anthony Berni, Jr.**, Canobie Lake Park
- **Carl Berni**, Canobie Lake Park
- **Raymond Captell**, Canobie Lake Park
- **Christine Ulaky**, Canobie Lake Park
- **Alan Ramsay**, CLM Entertainment
- **John & Elizabeth Bowen**, Whalom Park & NEAAPA
- **Robert Harkins**, Riverside Park & Six Flags New England
- **Normand & Cecile Dubois**, Santa's Village
- **Myron Klayman**, Paragon Park
- **Justine Brewer**, Southwick's Zoo
- **George Frantzis II**, Quassy Amusement & Waterpark
- **Gene Dean**, Fiesta Shows/Dean & Flynn Enterprises
- **Haig Gulezian**, Funworld
- **James Patten III**, Shaheen Enterprises

Hall of Fame

(Continued From Page 2)

Spin Up The Presses

Heeding the advice of three Texan friends in the industry, Bruce Neal, Sherrie Brammall, and Paul Roads, Gary worked to launch a new trade newspaper for the amusement industry, and thus Amusement Today was born in April 1997. During that year's IAAPA Attractions Expo, Amusement Today was presented with the Impact Award. This was the first time that the highly-coveted award did not go to a ride or attractions supplier.

In 1998, Amusement Today launched the Golden Ticket Awards which has become an international networking event that honors the "Best of the Best" in the attractions industry. Amusement Today also moved its SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS section out of BUSINESS section, providing more editorial coverage that many readers were looking for.

Gary is a past board member of AIMS International and immediate past board chair for the National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives, and is on the board spearheading the construction of a 30,000-square foot building for the museum. Gary has also helped parks relocate five roller coasters, four of which are still in operation today.

Welcome to Your Annual Meeting



Dave Oberlander

Welcome to Nashua, New Hampshire, home of NEAAPA's 110th Education Conference and Annual Meeting. Nashua is a quaint city on the banks for the Nashua & Merrimack Rivers, which has been twice named, "Best Place to Live in America!"

Moreover if you have the opportunity, check out Mine Fall Park, spread out over 325 acres of forests, fields and wetlands in the heart of downtown Nashua. Spoiler alert: there's even a waterfall within the park.

This year, we have the privilege of inducting two exceptionally deserving individuals into the NEAAPA Hall of Fame. They are Ron Gustafson and Gary Slade. What a fabulous achievement. Congratulations to both of you and to your families!

As customary, our agenda for the next few days will include roundtable presentations, educational programs, and workshops designed to offer specific tools to enhance Security, Safety, Guest Services, and fun for all. Additionally, as the NEAAPA Academy continues to grow, it also adds value for each of our member properties, businesses, and staff members alike.

Look at who we are and where we are. The Northeast has so much to offer in terms of entertainment and fun! It has the greatest concentration of attractions, venues, and events for family fun in the country. I will go out on a limb and say, as a region we have just as much to offer than any single venue in the country, and possibly, North America!

Although my term as President ends, I will certainly continue to participate and support NEAAPA in any way I can. As you know, I love the industry and certainly love FUN. Please accept my thanks to all members, owners, staff members, manufacturers and suppliers and their families for their continued support for the organization, what it is today and what it will become tomorrow.

Additionally, my sincere gratitude to all Committee Chairs and members, members of the Presidents council, Board of Directors and Officers for their dedication to NEAAPA.

Thanks again and enjoy your time in New Hampshire.

Yours in NEAAPA,
Dave Oberlander, President

To be successful you must be unique, you must be so different that if people want what you have, they must come to you to get it. - Walt Disney

Quassy's PR Manager, Ron Gustafson Bids Farewell as He Heads into Retirement

MIDDLEBURY, Conn — Ron Gustafson knows the ins and outs of Quassy Amusement and Waterpark better than anyone and he has the career to prove it. Since 2002, Ron has witnessed the incredible expansion of the park and after two decades of serving as Quassy's Marketing and Public Relations Director, Ron departs with an impressive legacy while leaving an indelible mark on this beloved Connecticut amusement park.

Over the years, Ron has worn many hats at Quassy. Aside from being the go-to guy for all things marketing and public relations, Ron was an educational programs coordinator, photographer, and even developed some major special events like the Quassy laser lightshow and the Ripley's Believe It or Not Summer Sideshow.

Out of all the Quassy activities, additions, and events that he has been involved in, when asked what his greatest memory is Ron says, "Watching the park transition into what it is today: an amusement park and a waterpark. When I arrived, there was no waterpark. The family ownership brought me in to promote their new attraction: Saturation Station – the first phase of the waterpark development that opened in 2003. It was great seeing new rides and attractions over the years, including Wooden Warrior roller coaster in 2011, which put Quassy on the international map!"

Ron's biggest contribution involved bringing recognition to the park. No addition was too small for the limelight. When Quassy debuted the Wooden Warrior rollercoaster, Ron and his team developed a wildly involved advertising campaign. "We still talk about the TV ad, the 'Name the Coaster contest' among regional schools, the international tour groups that came to ride this unique coaster, and photographing it from top to bottom," Ron reflects. The Wooden Warrior was the first to incorporate the Timberliner coaster train in North America. These trains are the most technologically advanced wooden roller coaster trains on the market and facilitate a smoother ride for passengers. The park also got recognized with numerous IAAPA (International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions) Brass Ring Awards for marketing. Throughout his career, Ron sat on the IAAPA marketing, small parks & attractions, and Hall of Fame committees. He also chaired the IAAPA Hall of Fame for 3 years, spoke at numerous IAAPA Expo workshops and other industry meetings and award ceremonies.

Having worked at Quassy for two decades and within the outdoor amusement industry for five, Ron has deftly adapted to the ever-evolving marketing landscape. "From weekly newspaper ads and radio commercials to online advertising and social media... a whirlwind of changes we adopted to extremely well," Ron recalls. "Going to online and digital media as the park grew in leaps and bounds, our marketing campaigns proved successful. Also critical were some very beneficial long-term media relations from being on the other side of the fence as a newspaper editor." Ron was also the editor of "New England News," the official newsletter of NEAAPA – the Northeast's Entertainment Association for over a decade. "Having media friends was important on so many occasions. To getting free coverage from announcing a new attraction to having live TV coverage at the waterpark when summer temperatures soared - stuff you can't pay for."

As for retirement, Ron isn't looking to slow down much. He still plans to do some writing about the amusement park industry, a subject on which he has written three books and countless articles over the years. Ron also plans to continue consulting for friends in the business on rides, events, and educational programs. Of course, Ron still plans to enjoy his retirement, taking ample time to travel with his lovely wife, Nancy and spending quality time with his children and grandchildren.



Ron Gustafson

IAAPA Names Jakob Wahl President and CEO



Jakob Wahl

ORLANDO, Florida — IAAPA, the global association for the attractions industry, today announced Jakob Wahl has been selected as the association's new president and CEO effective January 1, 2023. Wahl will succeed the

association's current president and CEO, Hal McEvoy who will retire on April 1, 2023.

As president and CEO, Wahl will lead the association's 94-member team in Orlando, Brussels, Hong Kong, Mexico City, and Shanghai. He will be responsible for the executive management and day-to-day operations of the association and will be the primary strategic advisor to the IAAPA Board of Directors on all matters related to association's mission, events, products, and services.

Wahl's career in leadership roles at IAAPA spans 10 years. He joined IAAPA as program manager for IAAPA Europe in 2009. In 2013, he worked for Europa-Park in Rust, Germany as director of communications and manager of special projects. Wahl returned to IAAPA in 2017 to lead the association's Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) team as vice president and executive director of IAAPA EMEA. He was promoted to executive vice president and chief operating officer of the association in November 2021 and moved with his family to Orlando.

McEvoy will continue to lead the association through the end of the year as president and CEO. He will remain in a special advisory capacity to support Wahl from January 1 through his retirement on April 1.

Martin & Vleminckx Acquires Patent Portfolio of Industry Innovator



Martin & Vleminckx
The Rides Companies

HAINES CITY, Florida — Martin & Vleminckx is thrilled to announce the acquisition of the patent portfolio of Bill Kitchen. Mr. Kitchen's historic contributions to the industry have included the invention and formation of iFly (originally Skyventure), the inventor of Skycoaster, and most recently, a series of game-changing attractions as Founder/CEO of US Thrill Rides.

"This acquisition represents Martin & Vleminckx's commitment to providing our customers with the most diverse and family-friendly portfolio of wood and steel rides in the industry. Bill's contributions of iconic attractions are unparalleled in their appeal and success, and the addition of his patent portfolio is a response to the market's needs for thrilling, interactive attractions.", states Nathan Jones, President of Martin & Vleminckx.

The portfolio includes SkyBlazer®, Unicoaster®, Unicoaster 2.0®, Skyspire®, and G-Storm are among the attractions that are now immediately part of Martin & Vleminckx's product offering and will be on display at this year's IAAPA Convention in Orlando.

"I recognized early on that Martin & Vleminckx would be a great steward of these products and provide a global presence with their sales and marketing teams with a reputation for quality products and delivering attractions around the world.", says, Kitchen.

The transaction marks a key milestone in the growth and success plan for Martin & Vleminckx that focuses on innovation and operational excellence. "We continue to build our company and team to focus on the future of attraction development that offers our clients new ways to attract and thrill their guests.", states Pierre Cloutier, CEO of Martin & Vleminckx.

Submit your news for the Summer Meeting edition to secretary@neaapa.com

Outdoor Factory Partners with Creative Studio L3DFX



L3DFX

BOLINGBROOK, Illinois — Outdoor Factory is thrilled to announce its exclusive partnership with creative studio L3DFX, an internationally recognized design and fabrication firm headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. The partnership brings cohesive turnkey solutions to both

companies' global clientele of theme parks, attractions, museums, water parks, hotels, airports, sports teams, shopping malls, and municipalities.

This business relationship will allow Outdoor Factory to continue its expansion into new markets while better serving current and prospective clients in North America and beyond. In addition, L3DFX's professional services and solutions will enhance Outdoor Factory's service to existing clients and productions around the world. The result means additional expertise and insight, smoother service, and better client and guest experience than ever before.

"This partnership enables both companies to provide the best minds in the business to clients around the world. The synergy between us will truly enhance our global capabilities so that we can continue to create exceptional experiences that engage and inspire visitors," says Paul Ciesiun, President of L3DFX.

Headquartered in Istanbul, Turkey, Outdoor Factory is a renowned design and fabrication firm that has been in operation since 2010. Founded in 2013, L3DFX has delivered comprehensive projects for clients including The Disney Company, Universal Parks and Resorts, Jurassic World, Coney Island, Palace Entertainment, Six Flags, Inc., the NFL, the MLB, and more.

To ensure a smooth transition internally and externally, Emily Popovich, Chief of Sales and Business Development for L3DFX & Outdoor Factory, will expand her responsibilities to serve and represent both companies. aquariums, zoos, and more.

Outdoor Venture Group Launches Nautilus Tower Attraction

FAIRFIELD, Conn. — Bahman Azarm, founder of Outdoor Venture Group (OV), designer, builder and operator of adventure parks and ropes courses, announces the launch of the Nautilus Tower, an accessible outdoor recreation attraction.

"The Nautilus Tower offers a unique opportunity for people of all ages across the spectrum of mobility to reach new heights," said Mr. Azarm.

The Nautilus Tower complements existing attractions, as well as new developments, with an accessible way for any visitor to climb to a height of up to 115 feet (35 meters) and enjoy views in every direction. The Tower features an ADA accessible ramp plus two staircases that can be used for access and fitness.

Shared Mr. Azarm, "Whether situated among the trees, by the seaside or in an urban area, the Nautilus Tower offers an inclusive experience for recreation, education and observation."

The Tower is an ideal attraction for municipalities, zoos, aquariums, museums, science centers and botanical gardens. It can also provide an accessible amenity to waterparks, amusement parks and ski resorts.



Nautilus Tower Rendering

Sally Dark Rides Reveals Details about “Haunted Hotel” attraction to Debut at Funtown Splashtown USA in 2023

ORLANDO, Florida — During the IAAPA Expo, Sally Dark Rides proudly shared details about the all-new Haunted Hotel – and the clever conjuring – it is creating exclusively for Funtown Splashtown USA in Saco, Maine.

Set to open in 2023, the water and amusement park partnered with Sally to add the Whispering Pines Hotel to their property, which guests will quickly learn is really the park’s Haunted Hotel dark ride attraction. The star of the attraction, an incredibly mesmerizing animatronic witch, has cast a spell on the hotel. It will be up to the riders to help eradicate her and declare the place safe from her wicked ways and evil charms.

“We have wanted to bring Sally’s ride magic to our park for quite some time,” said William Cormier, Senior VP of Funtown Splashtown USA. “We have heard from our guests that they would love a haunted ride for many years, so the idea of working with Sally to create our very own Haunted Hotel excited us right away.”

Four-passenger ride cars will mystically move guests through 14 scenes – the rooms of the hotel – concluding with a final visit through an otherworldly dimension. Guests of the Haunted Hotel will play a key role in the story. The Hotel’s proprietor needs their help to save it from the witch’s curse, and rescue three hapless hotel patrons. The attraction’s final scene will challenge the riders to work together to rescue the lost hotel guests from the witch’s diabolical Dimension X. One question remains – will the riders survive, or will they soon join the spooky otherworld?



Lake Compounce Introduces Live Music At The Lake



Rendering of Floating Stage

BRISTOL, Conn. — A music venue like no other will make waves on the namesake lake of America’s First Amusement Park next spring. Lake Compounce will construct a floating stage on the iconic lake that’s been a central gathering place for Connecticut residents in search of fun since 1846.

Slated to open Memorial Day weekend 2023, the floating stage will host Lake Compounce’s most robust lineup of live entertainment in years next season. Guests can expect a variety of acts to come to life, including live music, interactive entertainment, and more. Located directly on the lake, the stage will include a sound and lighting setup for guests to enjoy shows from several angles throughout the park.

“This new stage takes advantage of Lake Compounce’s beautiful setting and will bring the lake to life like never before,” says General Manager Jeffrey Davis. “We can’t wait to see our guests enjoying an enhanced entertainment lineup in 2023, giving them reasons to visit all year long beyond our popular rides and seasonal events like Holiday Lights.”

Submit your news for the Summer Meeting edition to secretary@neaapa.com

NEAAPA - The Northeast’s Entertainment Association

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Betson Builds Two-Story Arcade Game Room for Supercharged Entertainment



CARLSTADT, N.J. — The Betson team recently finished a large game room installation for the new Edison, NJ location of Supercharged Entertainment. The two-story gaming arcade opened in December with over 140 games, multiple VR experiences, and a massive prize center.

Betson's Amusement Sales Representative, Joe Kirby, provided Supercharged Entertainment with game and layout recommendations to optimize space utilization, maximize the customer experience, and generate the most revenue. The new slate of games installed by the Betson installation team included King Kong of Skull Island VR from Raw Thrills, Hungry Hungry Hippos from Adrenaline, Jurassic World Fallen Kingdom from Andamiro, Mario Kart DX from Bandai Namco, Storm from Triotech and more.

"We are so thrilled to be working with Betson. Everyone has been exceptional at every step of the way in helping us build one of the most amazing gaming arcades in the United States," said Cody Browning, Chief Operations Officer, Supercharged Entertainment.

"To work on this historic installation is one of the best experiences of my career," said Joe Kirby of Betson Enterprises. "Supercharged Entertainment NJ will be the ultimate family entertainment experience with an amazing game room."

TEA Selects RWS Entertainment Group to Produce 2023 & 2024 Thea Awards Gala



NEW YORK, N.Y. — The Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), the international non-profit association representing the world's leading creators, developers, designers and producers of compelling places and experiences, has selected global Emmy Award-winning experience company RWS Entertainment Group to provide full creative and production services for its 2023 and 2024 Thea Awards Gala.

TEA's Thea Awards have become internationally recognized as a symbol of excellence, bringing recognition to achievement, talent and personal excellence within the themed entertainment industry. As Producer of the Thea Awards Gala and a TEA Premier Global Partner, RWS' services will include scripting; stage design; media, graphic and video elements; entertainment; technical, production and stage management and oversight of AV, lighting, sound, construction, rigging and engineering.

"We are honored to be entrusted with such a high-profile, globally recognized event as TEA's Thea Awards Gala," said RWS Founder and CEO Ryan Stana. "For the next two years, not only will we have the opportunity to inspire gala attendees as part of TEA's new INSPIRE Week, but we will also have the great privilege of producing an event that celebrates the immense talents of our clients, colleagues and friends."

"TEA is thrilled to be embarking on this multi-year partnership with RWS Entertainment Group," said Lindsey Nelson, TEA Executive Director. "As both a long-time member and dedicated global partner of the TEA, RWS understands the TEA membership and what the Thea Awards Gala represents to the global themed entertainment industry."