



The Fun Times

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CoasterBash! celebrates 25 years of Fun

By Brett Weissbart

On the heels of an unrelenting winter that introduced the term "polar vortex" to much of the country, 165 ACE members and guests congregated at Salvatore's Events and Catering for the 25th anniversary of CoasterBash! on March 8, 2014. After weeks of snowstorms and bitter cold, attendees were greeted by an unseasonably warm Saturday afternoon that was fitting for a day spent anticipating the coming season for the region's amusement parks.

As is tradition with CoasterBash!, guests were treated to a schedule that was bustling with industry speakers, multimedia presentations, door prizes and Q&As. The large banquet hall started to fill immediately after the doors opened as attendees arrived early to catch up with friends and browse the vendor tables, door prizes and auction displays.

After two quick hours of social time and access to the cash bar – a new feature for this year's event – the lights dimmed and two videos kicked off the festivities. First, Summer Flashback 2013 created by Joel Brewton followed by Ken Simmons' annual roundup of new coasters. The evening's emcee, Regional Representative Bill Linkenheimer III, then proceeded to introduce the staff of ACE Western Pennsylvania as well as ACE dignitaries who were in the audience.

With the formalities completed, the first presenters of the afternoon were brought to the stage. Carl Crider and Amy Mearkle of DelGrosso's Amusement Park outlined the schedule of events and future plans for the lesser-known gem of western Pennsylvania amusement parks. DelGrosso's is one of the few regional parks introducing a new ride in 2014, a novel flat ride named Music Express. (The park has posted a preview of this attraction on YouTube; it is a Trabant-

style ride with free swinging cars such as on Matterhorn flat rides.) The park is also proud of its newly redesigned website that offers easier navigation and integration with social media. During the Q&A there was as much interest in the company's famous sauces as for the amusement park.

At the conclusion of the first presentation, Bill again took the stage to introduce this year's contest. To celebrate



Photo by Joel Brewton

Idlewild's Jeff Croushore doing his Mister Rogers impersonation.

CoasterBash!'s 25th anniversary, the trivia questions were geared towards the history of the event itself. Longtime members of ACE had the advantage in the contest which featured questions that occasionally elicited lighthearted groans from the audience for their difficulty (sample question: How many different people from Kennywood have presented at CoasterBash!?). When the answers were revealed later in the evening, the submissions

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Welcome new Fun Team Members

Stephen Gray Assistant Regional Representative

Stephen is pleased to enhance his role with the ACE Western Pennsylvania Fun Team. He has been the primary administrator of the ACE Western Pennsylvania Facebook for three years now. Stephen was a former assistant regional representative for ACE Mid-Atlantic before moving to Pittsburgh in 2009. He enjoys riding roller coasters when his job as a senior production designer with WWE allows it. When he is not busy with work or riding roller coasters he can usually be found at Penguins games or cheering on the Pirates. His favorite roller coaster in our region is *The Exterminator*. His most sought after roller coaster is anything in Europe! Stephen looks forward to continuing to make our region one of the best in the nation.

Brett Weissbart Managing Editor, *The Fun Times*

A relatively new member to ACE but lifelong theme park enthusiast, Brett is excited to join the ACE Western Pennsylvania team as the managing editor of *The Fun Times*. While Brett is a software engineer and team manager by training, his true interests lie in amusement park technology, theater and travel. His first event as an ACE member was Coaster Con at Dollywood and Carowinds in 2012. In addition to his work with *The Fun Times*, Brett has also served as assistant CoasterBash! A/V coordinator for the previous two years.



Condolences to **John Tuite**, whose wife, **Kathly Tuite**, passed away in November. Many ACE members paid their respects with a visit to the funeral home on the day of the ACE Holiday Magic event at Kennywood . . . **Tony Colega** wrote an article that was published in a recent edition of the *Unione* (the official publication of the Order Italian Sons and Daughters of America) . . . congratulations to **Bill and Elaine Linkenheimer Jr** who recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, with a dinner at Oakmont Country Club . . . congratulations to **Aaron Lesko** who just graduated from St. Vincent College . . . condolences to **Erik Frankenstein**, on the loss of his dog, Skippy . . . congratulations to **Evan Smith**, who is graduating from high school . . . after many years of dedicated service, **Ed Adler** has retired as coordinator of the region's Preservation Fund Sales Table, that sells collectibles to benefit said fund; and thanks to **Sarah Windisch** for stepping up to fill his shoes . . . a member of the North Hills High School Marching Band, in April, **David Hahner III** got to perform on Main Street in the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World . . . **Veronica Brocato**, age 10, was accepted into the summer C-Mifes program (for elementary students), Amusement Park Physics Class held at Carnegie Mellon University . . . congratulations to **Christian Bruggeman**, who completed graduate studies at Carnegie Mellon University and is moving to California where he accepted a position at Ready At Dawn, a video game studio . . . congratulations to **Steve Marziale** who completed a graduate program at the University of Dayton . . .

Have some Chatter for us? Did you or an ACE member you know retire, get a promotion, lose a pet, hit the lottery, take the trip of a lifetime, appear on television, or get arrested for running across the field during a Steelers game? SHARE IT WITH US! Email us at Chatter@ACEWesternPA.org

25 years of CoasterBash!

By Bill Linkenheimer III

Now held in a modern banquet facility, using a high-definition video projector and large screen, and offering multiple presenters, an array of door prizes and an endless buffet, CoasterBash!'s humble beginnings are easy to forget.

The roots of the event date back even further than 25 years. In February 1983, ACE Western Pennsylvania's first regional rep, Jack York, organized a midwinter event at the Penn Hebron Garden Club, where his mother was a member. This first get-together preceded the first regional event at Kennywood, which would occur later that year. The event was a very informal and simple one, with some chips, two-liter bottles of Coke, a slide projector and some photo albums to share.

In January 1990, with the help of Jack York and under the leadership of Harry Sykes, who took the reigns as regional rep in 1986, the midwinter event was resurrected at the Penn Hebron Garden Club and had no formal name. A year later it was branded Mid-Winter No Coaster KennyKon, which was inspired by a cross between ACE's national annual No Coaster Con event in the Chicago area and our region's KennyKon, which had its first iteration in 1989. Seventy-seven persons attended the event, which included video and slide presentations but no park representatives.

In February 1992, the name was shortened to No Coaster KennyKon and was moved to Berkeley Hills Fire Hall in Pittsburgh's North Hills. The facility was reasonably priced, thanks to Bill Linkenheimer Jr's involvement with that volunteer fire department. Guest speakers appeared for the first time at the event. They included Andy Quinn, who was one of 20 Kennywood representatives to speak at the event to date, and Jim Futrell, who would go on to present at another 14 CoasterBash! gatherings. It was also the first time that dinner was included – pizza from Monte Cello's, then located just down the hill.

The event remained at the Berkeley Hills facility for six more years, making the venue the one that, to this day, hosted the event more times than any other. In 1993, the name was changed to CoasterBash! to reflect the diversity of parks that were represented. The following year the Roman numbering was added, and since organizers deemed it practical to count back to 1989, the 1994 event was CoasterBash! V. Use of a big screen (not projection) television was introduced that year as well.

In 1997, The Golden Kenny, an award created to salute the enthusiasm of one regional member each year, was introduced and Vic Kleman was its first recipient. The tradition of the award, which is issued by Kennywood, continues to this day.

In March 1999, for the event's tenth anniversary, CoasterBash! moved to a larger facility – Davoli's in East Pittsburgh. It remained there for one more year, and during that event, Kennywood's Mary Lou Rosemeyer broke the shocking news that 2000 would be the last year for *Steel Phantom*. In 2001, CoasterBash! remained in East Pittsburgh but moved next door to Olympia Hall before shifting to Garden City Hall in Monroeville, where it would stay for three years.

By 2005, Kennywood Entertainment owned The Bradley House in Pittsburgh's South Hills, and management felt it appropriate that ACE Western Pennsylvania's annual event be held there, and so it was. They provided amazing hospitality for five years, including two with themes. In 2008, it was a Hawaiian luau, which was inspired by a luau buffet that the facility offered. March of 2009 brought the 20th anniversary of CoasterBash!, and organizers turned back the clock and gave it a 1980s theme.

With Kennywood Entertainment sold, The Bradley House was closed, and in 2010, CoasterBash! moved to nearby Salvatore's, where the event continues to be held right up to and including this year, the event's 25th anniversary. How time flies!

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revealed Joel Brewton and Jim Futrell had tied with the most correct answers, each winning a souvenir Kennywood arrow.

After a quick break for door prizes, which were plentiful enough to offer everyone in attendance a gift to take home, it was time for Jack Moyers and Leonard Adams from Conneaut Lake Park. Given the recent developments regarding the park's future, the audience appeared to be hanging on their every word. While being honest about their own uncertainty regarding the park's tax debt and legal action from the State Attorney General, Jack and Leonard nevertheless announced that Conneaut Lake Park will be open for the 2014 season. The pair first introduced a number of new events for the summer to build on 2013's successful year. Leonard then described the ongoing maintenance at the park, including retracking several hundred feet of the Blue Streak. With the negative news about the park over the long winter, it was a refreshing sight

to see Jack and Leonard exude confidence regarding the future of the beloved lakeside amusement park.

Immediately following Conneaut's presentation was Tom Rebbie, CEO of Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc. and a longtime friend of ACE. With his irreverent humor in tow he gave attendees a photo tour of his shop and told a number of humorous stories

from his interactions with clients. A bit that was particularly well-received was a gallery of hilarious sights that he has seen on the road while touring the world for his business. In addition to another standout year for his company, Tom also had two personal milestones of great importance in the past year, as he married Penny Kospiah and his daughter, Janine, got engaged to Mike Matscherz.

Next was Idlewild's Jeff Croushore's turn to present. Never one to have a dull presentation, Jeff walked onto the stage accompanied by the theme to Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, much to the delight of the audience. Replete with clothing and props that alluded to the iconic kids show and doing his best Fred Rogers impression, Jeff described the changes coming to Idlewild in the coming year. Keeping with the park's family orientation, a number of games will be introduced that offer prizes for all players. Idlewild will also be offering a number of new food stands in 2014, including pizza and ice cream. At the end of the presentation, the reasoning behind the costume was made clear: Jeff announced that the park is retheming its Mister Rogers' Neighborhood ride to that of "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood" for 2015. Returning to his

own persona, he described how the ride had run its course given that its namesake program is no longer on the air. While families will have to wait a year to try out the new attraction, they'll be able to see Daniel Tiger this year with a new meet-and-greet.

The next break brought even more opportunities for door prizes, followed by dinner. No CoasterBash! would be complete without a generous buffet. This year, attendees were enticed by chicken romano, roast beef, and pasta in addition to the usual spread of salad, rolls, side dishes and dessert. While enjoying the food and conversation, videos created by Pam Kanai, Jason Ballard and Scott Schaeffer were among those displayed on the big screen.

During the breaks, guests were eager to explore the vendors lining the sides of the room, including a sales table from the ACE Preservation Fund. As is tradition at CoasterBash!, both a Chinese and silent auction were held, as well as a raffle, offering experiences

such as being a Kennywood intern for a day and memorabilia that included banners and coaster parts.

Once everyone in the room was suitably full from the buffet it was time to resume the presentations. Kennywood's Jeff Filicko was called to the stage and he started his segment with a video detailing his and Marie Ruby's experience traveling in northern California for the Golden Ticket Awards, at which



Jeff Filicko with the Kanai family (Brian, April and Pam), 2014 winners of The Golden Kenny.

Noah's Ark again won the award for Best Walkthrough Attraction. No trip to Nor-Cal would be complete without a visit to one of the state's famous redwood forests, in which Jeff and Marie had an encounter with a mysterious being, possibly the elusive bigfoot, but more likely Idlewild's Jeff Croushore. Filicko then took time to present the transformation of Kennywood's former carousel pavilion to become a Johnny Rockets, the park's only table service restaurant. Other improvements for the 116-year-old park are a new control system for the Auto Race, the return of the headlights on *Thunderbolt's* trains, and a joint season pass with Sandcastle waterpark.

Jeff's time concluded Kennywood's presentation as it has for 17 years -- this was another trivia question, by the way -- with the presentation of the Golden Kenny Awards. With Kenny Kangaroo at stage left, it was announced that Brian, Pam, and April Kanai had won the award for their involvement with ACE Western Pennsylvania and the region's amusement parks.

While CoasterBash! serves as a celebration of the region's amusement parks, it's always a treat to hear from parks outside of

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the area, whether to announce an upcoming event (as Six Flags New England did in 2013 in anticipation of CoasterCon), or a new headline attraction. The latter brought Katy Enrique and Brandon Bruce to Pittsburgh to promote Six Flags Great America and its new-for-2015 wooden hybrid *Goliath*. Katy and Brendon showed off the newest renderings of the ride and updated the audience on its progress. Audible gasps could be heard as images were shown that illustrated the true size of this behemoth, which will set records for height and speed as well as introduce elements never before seen on any roller coaster, wood or steel. It is safe to say that a number of enthusiasts will find an excuse to make the seven-hour drive to the Chicago area this summer.

A final break allowed attendees to top off their beverages as well as get in their final bids for the auctions. The remainder of the trivia answers were then announced. A highlight was the answer to one of the questions -- What well-known PBS producer has presented at CoasterBash! twice? -- being read as a voiceover by Rick Sebak himself.

The last presenter of the evening was Brian Gorman of Erie's Waldameer & Water World. Even the fastest-growing amusement parks need a year off every so often, and Waldameer is no different. While the park has no new attractions to show off this year, Brian walked through a number of improvements that are being made to the 117-year-old lakeside resort. In addition to new restrooms, the park is also installing a new LED lighting package on the X-Scream drop tower, repainting several of the water slides, and revamping its entrances. Waldameer's massive waterpark expansion is still set to open in stages starting in 2015. Brian updated attendees with the latest plans that include a Holiday World-inspired wave pool, children's areas, and new slides. It's evident that the Gorman family is still hard at work transforming their park from a regional jewel to a major destination.

The evening's schedule ended on a humorous note with Joel Brewton's entertaining video summary of the 2013 ACE international trip to Central Europe. Joel's commentary solicited a number of laughs while also providing an honest narrative of the group's experience with the parks and coasters that they visited.

ACE president and western Pennsylvania assistant regional representative Dave Altman was called upon to wrap up the evening. He thanked the attendees and volunteers who always make CoasterBash! a success. In addition, Dave also teased the ACE events coming up later this year, including a quick video promoting what promises to be the most jam-packed Spring Conference in the event's history.

Bill Linkenheimer then returned to the stage a final time to announce the winners of the auctions and raffle. Thanks to the participation of the audience, more than \$1,100 was raised for the ACE Preservation and Archives funds. With that final piece of business, the audience was bid a good night accompanied to "Closing Time" by Semisonic.

As attendees left Salvatore's, they were greeted by an all-too familiar sight, a dusting of snow that glistened in the lights of the parking lot. It was a reminder that winter wasn't quite over, but after a pleasurable evening with good friends, delectable food, and great presentations, it was possible look forward to another summer of fun just around the corner.

CoasterBash! by the numbers

One is the first facility to host the event was the Penn-Hebron Garden Club in Penn Hills, where it was held in 1990 and 1991.

Two is the number of times that the event was promoted under its original name -- No Coaster KennyKon.

Two is the number of years that CoasterBash! had themes -- a Hawaiian Luau theme in 2008 and a 1980s theme in 2009

Three different months on the calendar have had CoasterBash! on their schedule -- January, February and March. The dates have ranged from January 18 to March 13.

Seven different venues have hosted CoasterBash! Penn-Hebron Garden Club, Berkley Hills Fire Hall, Davoli's Banquet Hall, Olympia Hall, Garden City Hall, The Bradley House and Salvatore's

Five is the number of different authors of the "Images of America" series of books that have presented at CoasterBash! -- Joe Comm, Mike Costello, Jeff Croushore, Jim Futrell and Dave Hahner.

Seven years is the most any single venue hosted CoasterBash! -- Berkley Hills Fire Hall in North Hills hosted the event from 1992-1998

Eight representatives from Conneaut Lake Park have presented at CoasterBash!, which is the most of any parks besides Kennywood. Their first appearance was in 1992, when they were the first park from outside of the original ACE "Southwestern" Pennsylvania region to speak at the event -- at the time the park was part of ACE's separate Northwestern Pennsylvania region.

Eleven parks outside of ACE Western Pennsylvania have been represented by presenters at CoasterBash! -- Cedar Point, Darien Lake, Dollywood Dorney Park, Geauga Lake, Knoebels, Martin's Fantasy Island, Midway Park, Morey's Piers, Six Flags New England and Six Flags Great America.

Twelve is the most times that any one person has presented at CoasterBash! -- Mary Lou Rosemeyer of Kennywood graced the stage from 1998-2009.

Fifteen is how many times Jim Futrell presented at CoasterBash! events. The first was in 1992.

Eighteen annual presentations of The Golden Kenny have been awarded since 1997.

Twenty different people from Kennywood have presented at CoasterBash! over its 25 year history.

1998 is the first of two years that Rick Sebak, the unusual producer of Public Television spoke at CoasterBash! The other was 2000 and a recorded message from him was played to the audience in two other years.

2002 is the year that George Zambelli, patriarch of first family of fireworks, Zambelli International Fireworks, presented at CoasterBash!

2005 is the year that both Idlewild's Jeff Croushore and Waldameer's Steve Gorman both made their CoasterBash! debut. Jeff has continued to speak annually to date and Steve spoke every year until 2014, when his son, Brian, took the stage.

First Annual CoasterBash! Photo Contest Winners

Jason Ballard suggested that a photo contest be held for the 25th anniversary of CoasterBash! and volunteered to coordinate it. Thanks to Jason's efforts, the First Annual CoasterBash! Photo Contest was held and proved to be a rousing success with a total of 31 entries. Here are the winning photos:

First Place - Sarah Windisch



Second Place Elaine Linkenheimer



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Third Place Ken Simmons



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CALENDAR OF REGIONAL EVENTS

Visit ACEwesternPA.org for updated information on all regional events.

Saturday, July 26, 2014

Allegheny Mtn Madness

Lakemont Park

Delgrossos Amusement Park

Sunday, July 27, 2014

KennyKon XXIV

Kennywood

Saturday-Sunday, August 23-24, 2014

Flying High with a Blue Streak

Conneaut Lake Park

Waldameer



A full-color version of *The Fun Times* is available online for download on the region's website.



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