

Executive Board Award

Awarded to an individual or organization for special accomplishments in the water leisure industry that have contributed to industry knowledge and expertise for the benefit of the WWA membership.



Franceen Gonzales

WHITEWATER WEST INDUSTRIES LTD.

RICHMOND, BC, CANADA

**“I AM VERY
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Franceen Gonzales, who is the Vice President Waterpark Business Development for WhiteWater West Industries, has become one of the industry's most trusted safety and risk management resources, serving on various committees and task groups to create better standards and regulations that help create safer water environments. In 2012 & 2013, Gonzales served as chair of the Ventilation & Air Quality technical committee for the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC). Then, she worked with CDC staff and the technical committee to revise the Lifeguarding & Bather Supervision module. In 2014, when the MAHC Steering Committee asked for industry comments on the final “knitted” document, waterparks from all over the U.S. submitted hundreds of comments to the WWA and IAAPA.

Members from both organizations formed a MAHC Task Group, which Gonzales led. Once all the comments were gathered, Gonzales, working in partnership with both organizations, helped review, consolidate and clarify these comments to ensure that the industry submitted the most effective response possible. The final Model Aquatic Health Code has since been released and reflects many of those changes submitted by industry members.

“I recognize that not everyone has the time, let alone the interest, to review a technical standard or code, even though they are critical to our future building of the industry. So I am very thankful that the companies I have worked for have given me the time to give to the industry in that way. I have learned from incredibly intelligent people who are giants in our industry. I have really enjoyed the work and plan to continue to work on it to hopefully represent the interests of our industry and most importantly, to address safety in waterparks and the greater amusement and entertainment industry around the world.”

With more than 25 years of industry experience, Gonzales joined WhiteWater in 2013. Prior to that, she was Vice President, Risk Management and Waterparks, for Great Wolf Resorts where she was responsible for safety and risk management, as well as waterpark operations and maintenance for the company's 12 waterpark resorts in North America. Before that in 2006, Gonzales was park director for Hurricane Harbor at Six Flags Great Adventure. She has also held top management positions at Golland Entertainment Centers Inc., Waterworld Safari in Phoenix, Arizona and Wet-N-Wild Waterworld in El Paso, Texas.

Gonzales served as board Chair and board member for WWA. She is active with and has served on numerous ASTM International committees. Gonzales currently serves on the board of directors of AIMS (Amusement Industry Manufacturers and Suppliers) and NSPF (National Swimming Pool Foundation).

A regular speaker at industry events, Gonzales has also written several industry articles, was named to the “Power 25” in 2011 and 2012 by “Aquatics International” Magazine and has received many industry honors and awards including WWA's Kelly Ogle Memorial Safety Award twice.

Billy Hamilton

WET 'N WILD ORLANDO
ORLANDO, FLORIDA, U.S.A.



If a waterpark operator is looking for some help in the maintenance area of their facility, you can bet that one resource they might go to first is Billy Hamilton. Hamilton is perhaps the industry's original maintenance tech and thanks to his willingness to mentor people, he has managed to share what he has learned with those who work in his park and hundreds of others who work throughout the industry. Not only is Hamilton extremely knowledgeable, but he is genuinely excited to pass on what he has learned.

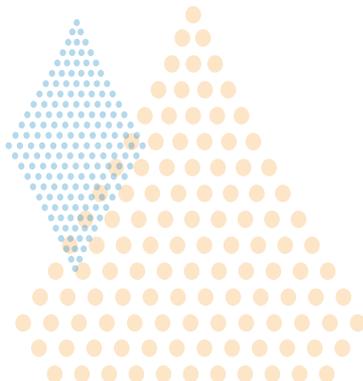
"It was, and still is a great feeling helping to shorten the learning curve for anyone who needs it. It truly brings me great pleasure knowing I have helped someone with the many challenges you can face in this wonderful industry."

Hamilton's knowledge comes from having more than 37 years of experience in the swimming pool industry with 30 of those years spent as Water Quality Manager at Wet 'n Wild in Orlando, Fla. As Water Quality Manager, he is responsible for all pools and water, including a lake and plays a major role in the development and design of new rides. He is a CPO instructor and enthusiastically teaches and shares his knowledge with others. Hamilton lives his passion for water quality, safety and excellence in the industry on a daily basis.

"One of the things that always comes to mind is that over the years at Wet n Wild, I have been blessed to have worked with so many great individuals, who have gone on and accomplished so much within this industry. I have been very fortunate to have been put into this breeding ground of pioneers."

When he is not focused on his maintenance tasks, Hamilton is an avid off-shore fisherman and enjoys scuba diving. He has been married for 31 years to Cerinda, has one grown daughter and resides in central Florida.

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HART'S ABILITY
TO LEAD
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PUT VENTURE
CAPITAL AT STAKE
AND DEVELOP
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TEAMS HAS LED
TO THREE
SUCCESSFUL
TURNAROUNDS.

Kentucky Kingdom AND Hurricane Bay

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, U.S.A.

The original Kentucky Kingdom, a small kiddie park developed by a Texas-based company, opened in 1987 and lasted only a few months before filing for bankruptcy. A lender to the failed business contacted Ed Hart to inquire whether he was interested in reviving it. And the rest, as they say, is history!

In just eight operating seasons (1990 through 1997), Hart's team transformed Kentucky Kingdom from a bankrupt kiddie park into the number one paid tourist attraction in the state and the fastest growing theme park in the industry, with attendance increasing from under 150,000 to almost 1.4 million by 1998. Before its sale to Six Flags in late 1997, Kentucky Kingdom had the highest attendance of all owner-operated parks in the U.S., a manifestation of Hart's

entrepreneurial spirit, best encapsulated by the notion of "If you build it, they will come!"

A vital element in this success story was the development of the Hurricane Bay waterpark, which was first introduced to the public in 1992, with further expansions in 1993 and 1994. Hart was among the first in the industry to adopt the now common practice of including the waterpark in the theme park's pay-one-price admission, rather than having a separate gate charge.

After operating Kentucky Kingdom from 1998 through 2009, Six Flags, having fallen into financial difficulties, closed the park. This past May, after sitting idle for almost five years, Kentucky Kingdom and Hurricane Bay reopened, thanks again to Hart and a dedicated team of professionals. The park has been completely refurbished, new rides have been added and lush landscaping has replaced the weeds of neglect. But the focal point of the park's second rebirth has been the amazing transformation of Hurricane Bay, which was doubled in size, with many new attractions added, including the world's tallest skybox-launch speed slide. In fact, the Travel Channel's popular "Xtreme Water Parks" show recently filmed a segment at Hurricane Bay, to be aired next spring or summer. The film crew was thrilled with Hurricane Bay, calling it the best waterpark they'd visited this season.

Hart's ability to lead successful public/private partnerships, put venture capital at stake and develop talented management teams has led to three successful turnarounds—two in Louisville and one in Hot Springs—all driven by outstanding, award-winning waterparks.

Schlitterbahn Galveston Island

FOR TWO STORY CABANAS
SCHLITTERBAHN WATERPARKS
 GALVESTON ISLAND, TEXAS, U.S.A.



How do you build onto a successful cabana program when you are pressed for space?
 Think vertically.

That is exactly what the team at Schlitterbahn Galveston Island did during the 2014 off-season. They took the little space that they had available for cabana expansion and created unique two-story cabanas.

These beautiful structures are made of cedar and pine with thatch roofs that are made of leaves from Mexico. Besides being visually impactful, two-story cabanas more than double the potential for income within the same footprint as a standard single-level cabana.

All cabanas at the park feature a reserved 12' X 12' shaded palapa, a dining table with four chairs, two chaise loungers, a souvenir ice bucket filled with bottled water, a locker located inside the cabana, a hammock and full wait service. In addition to exclusive cabana menu options, the cabana wait staff are also able to serve any food and beverage item from anywhere inside the park. The ground level of the two-story cabanas provide the same features and service, but the upper levels provide an opportunity to supply amenities that are "steps above" the rest.

The upper floors of these first-of-a-kind cabanas are designated as "Penthouse Cabanas." The Penthouse Cabanas demand a premium price because they are furnished with higher end furniture and other accoutrements.

In addition to all of the standard cabana amenities, Penthouse Cabanas provide a larger 13' X 16' floor plan with a carpeted floor. They are furnished with metal frame tables, four chaise loungers (two for sunning on ground level) and comfortable swivel rocking chairs. Penthouse Cabanas provide enhanced privacy and exclusive elevated views of the park, and guests who rent these special cabanas also receive a reserved parking space near the park entrance and two souvenir Schlitterbahn logoed beach towels.

Best of all, cabana rental revenue is up 80 percent over prior year and the current Schlitterbahn two-story design allows for expansion. A third two-story unit which utilizes the same stairway as the original two units is in the plan for the 2015 season, and additional "river front" options are also being explored.

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Schlitterbahn Kansas City

FOR “VERRÜCKT” WATERSLIDE AND MEDIA CAMPAIGN

SCHLITTERBAHN WATERPARKS

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS, U.S.A.

Building the World’s Tallest Waterslide in Kansas City started as a simple challenge—Schlitterbahn’s rides were great successes, but didn’t quite fit the category of “Xtreme.” Innovator Jeff Henry decided it was time to not just do something more thrilling but to truly push the envelope of uphill water coasters. He decided he wanted to go for the record, reclaiming it both for the U.S. and, in a way, for a Texan.

Built in the smallest of Schlitterbahn’s four waterparks, “Verrückt” required a year of R&D and construction in Kansas City took another year with significant challenges along the way. Those challenges were well documented in the Travel Channel’s one hour premier of “Xtreme Waterparks.”

The ride opening marketing of “Verrückt” showcased how the power of social media has changed the industry’s opportunities for ride openings. The Kansas City Schlitterbahn Waterpark, which is the smallest of all the Schlitterbahn parks and operates the shortest season (Memorial Day to Labor Day), has a very limited marketing budget to work with. The team determined that earned and social media would have to do the heavy lifting for the ride opening. Campaign materials were created to take advantage of the name, and the neon green logo and gritty feel of artwork were designed to speak to a very specific demographic—thrill seekers. Even more critical is that the marketing team decided early on to refrain from speaking of the height of the ride in feet but use reference points instead like “taller than Niagara Falls.”

In November a photo leaked out of the view from the top of “Verrückt” and by chance the park happened to have a video prepared for upcoming enthusiast events. Instead of holding back on that in-house video, the park released it and promoted it heavily on social media. In two weeks that single video went viral with over 3 million hits and media interest from around the world.

From that point forward, the park’s marketing focused on three communications channels: owned channels like YouTube and Schlitterbahn’s blog; social channels like Facebook and Twitter; and traditional earned media. The park developed a plan to ensure some elements (specific height and speed) were secret, and designed a media plan to reveal them a month before the date the ride was slated to open.

Repeated delays, while uncomfortable for all involved, only seemed to increase the spotlight on the ride and news media journalists remained committed to ride when we opened. Videos released during the delays went viral immediately.

In the end, earned and social media value for “Verrückt” was over \$40 million in 9 months, with over 10 million hits on their videos and coverage from around the world.

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