



Specialized learning for the FEC market.

FEU 2007 Schedule

Feb. 6-8	Houston, Texas
April 21-26	Chicago, Ill.
July 17-19	Kansas City, Mo.

Foundations University

So you want to open a family entertainment center (FEC)? You've looked around and don't see enough kid- and family-friendly facilities in your area.

You've gone into an FEC in another city on a weekend and think this is a great business: just look at the crowd! How hard could it be to open one of these places? Profits must be huge!

REALITY CHECK

Then reality kicks in and you know you must do your homework because nothing is as easy as it looks, especially when you will be the one doing it. Experience in one type of business does not necessarily transfer to a different type of business. While some basic guidelines apply across the board, every industry has its own requirements, practices, and culture.

Where do you start? Trade shows are a good jumping off point because you not only see the range of products you need to open your facility, but you can also take advantage of the education programs and network with other attendees.

The recent Fun Expo, the official trade show of the International Association for the Leisure Entertainment Industry (IALEI), offered an extensive lineup of seminars geared to the FEC market.

Topics included everything from marketing to safety, from redemption games to food service, and lots more. The Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) International Expo, co-located with Fun Expo, featured seminars that covered every-

thing from the technical (monitor repair) to disaster preparedness and from building a complete salesperson to shared stories of industry survival.

The recently concluded International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo 2006 also offered exhibits and a strong seminar program that made it possible for attendees to gain valuable information and start out on the right path.

After taking advantage of these educational opportunities, then it's time for a more focused, specialized program, which is where Foundations Entertainment University (FEU) comes in. Established in 2003 by industry professionals with combined industry experience of over 100 years, FEU consists of a comprehensive three-day educational workshop and seminar program that covers planning, designing, developing, and operating a location-based entertainment business for long term success.

PROS AT THE HELM

Principal presenters include Frank Seninsky, Randy White, Jerry Merola, Alan Fluke, and Peter Olesen.

Seninsky is President and CEO of Alpha-Omega Amusements and former President of the IALEI and the AMOA; he has logged 33 years in the amusement industry. White is the CEO of the White Hutchinson Leisure & Learning Group and is one of the foremost authorities on the feasibility, design, and production of family and children's leisure venues.

Merola is a Managing Partner of



Frank Seninsky



Jerry Merola



Randy White



Peter Olesen



Alan Fluke



Presenters and attendees on a field trip to Paradise Park in Kansas City, Mo.



Jerry Merola gets into the spirit of birthday parties.



Frank Seninsky encourages audience participation.

Amusement Entertainment Management (AEM) who has developed marketing plans, operations manuals, and funding programs. Fluke is the President of All Entertainment & Associates, a 29-year veteran of the FEC industry with a background in operations, management, and design; Olesen is the President of Peter F. Olesen and Associates Inc. and has directed the development of over 150 FEC-oriented projects.

CONTENT

Over 22 hours of instruction are included. Workshop content addresses market feasibility, site selection, permits and entitlements, sourcing equipment, cost estimates and budgeting, business plans and financing, layout and design, and developing the mix for both indoor and outdoor FECs and family fun centers and attractions.

Also covered: cash and inventory management, insurance, business plans, theming, developing your brand, marketing and promotions that work, operations and management, group business, birthday parties, and guest loyalty programs.

In addition to the highly concen-

trated sessions, the agenda also allows time for evening behind-the-scenes tours of local fun centers and breakout sessions with individual speakers.

Shared information is the goal, not only going from the presenters to the attendees but also among the attendees as they gain knowledge and apply it to their particular circumstances.

Attendees don't go home with just a head full of information: they have it in hard copy. Along with a diploma, every attendee receives a three-inch thick resource manual that recaps workshop content.

FEU is ideal for all kinds of facilities: amusement parks, FECs (indoors and outdoors), family restaurants, go-kart tracks, laser tag centers, roller-skating venues, miniature golf centers, resorts, sports complexes, summer camps and campgrounds, parks and recreation departments, water parks, and many others.

Start-up entrepreneurs will find it informative, as well as individuals and companies already in the planning, designing, and building stages, and

new operators and businesses looking to grow and expand.

ATTENDEE COMMENTS

Graduates of FEU are generous with their praise. Ron Loveless of the XPO Mall and Integrity marketing said, "The frank and open dialogue, sharing of printed information, and diversity of presenters all resulted in an unusually valuable experience for me."

Manual Soltero of Magic Productions agreed, "It was an experience that helps you understand the serious business of entertainment."

Sibhan Farr of Kidzmuze commented, "The program was very well titled. I feel like I've really received a great foundation and I'm energized and motivated to proceed."



An attendee gets a kick out of go-karts.

David Cleveland of Silos Fun Park went even further: "Foundations is one of the few educational seminars I have attended over the years where I felt I got more value and useful information than the price I paid."

Jill Renz of Bear Essentials put it simply: "Foundations provided great networking opportunities and a fun experience."

Dan Brown of Perky's Food Concepts characterized FEU as "a most noteworthy seminar," adding, "When you need to know, go to the pros. Every presenter is well versed in their field. I would recommend this to anyone starting out."

SPONSORS

A number of companies are FEU sponsors: Art Attack, Alpha-BET Entertainment, Bowling Proprietors' Association of America, Chestnut Identity Apparel, Coin Tech S.A., Deltronic Labs, Family Fun Companies, Firestone Financial Corp., GateMaster Systems, Harris Miniature Golf Courses, Imonex, Ninja Jump, Master Pitching Machine, MaxFlight Corp., Multi-Unit Bowling Information Group, Muncie Novelty, Naythons Display Fixture Co., Qubica, Rides-4-U, Smart Industries, Sterling & Sterling, SureShot Redemption/Party Supplies, Tourist Attractions & Parks Magazine, U.S. Bowling Corp., The Ultimate Water Balloon Game, and Zone Systems.

Each sponsor has an opportunity to make a short presentation during the specialized sessions. For more information, call (732)254-3773; Web ([www.FOUNDATIONSUNIVERSITY.com](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSUNIVERSITY.com)). ▲

Foundations Education University (FEU) has grown and matured over 10 sessions (three are conducted each year). One of the principal presenters, Frank Seninsky, spoke about the evolution of the program.

Seninsky said, "When we started in 2003 the goal was to produce a quality education program for individuals and entrepreneurs who really wanted to learn soup to nuts about getting into this industry, and to create more business for anyone who wanted to be a sponsor or a speaker."

He had noted a "lack of motivation" in the industry. "Everyone thinks about education but they educate the choir," said Seninsky. "We were talking about bringing in new people who had never been in the industry before. Single anchor facilities such as mini golf facilities, driving ranges, and bowling centers know they can't survive without expanding their facilities and getting into birthday parties, games/redemption, and other potential family attractions."

Seninsky said that once the goals had been determined the search was on for leaders in each topic category, the best companies that would complement any project. "This was the first glimmer of doing something like this, a model. And now you see it starting to happen: different manufacturers are teaming up to support a project."

The addition of sponsors helped further educate attendees. "It was phenomenal how they came to the sessions, worked with the groups, went over to the side to discuss issues, and even started doing business together," he said.

Sponsors get to know each other as well as the attendees. Seninsky said, "If someone is doing a new project they will need the expertise of several sponsors. So far that model has generated over \$20 million in new business for the sponsors." Sponsors are available to consult with attendees; a good sponsor is there for two to three days and meets everyone.

Seninsky said there are times when people wait for the next class because a class is full. FEU's reputation has grown over time and classes are limited to 40 attendees (75 to 80 percent newcomers).

He explained, "To provide the highest quality and best program available in the industry we continually tweak it and add new sessions. There are always new twists and turns for each session, which are great bonding occasions."

He likened the bonding to that achieved during the Amusement and Music Operators (AMOA) Association Notre Dame Management Program. Seninsky said attendees "remain lifelong friends, like my class at Notre Dame. I know them better than anyone. We stay in touch because we lived together."

On a side note, Seninsky said, "We are also proud of the fact that the five main speakers do not always agree and we will debate the pros and cons so attendees get a balanced approach. They get to learn and choose which fork in the road they want to pursue. It's a little different than the traditional program."

Speakers are independent and sponsors have an opportunity to give a short presentation on their area of expertise. In addition, a cooperative effort exists between FEU and Birthday University conducted by Frank Price.

In conclusion, Seninsky said, "We tell everyone the truth: If you are in the FEC business then joining IALEI is a must and you should go to the Fun Expo and the IAAPA Attractions Expo. To learn about coin-op, go to the AMOA International Expo and the Amusement Showcase International (ASI).

"Our goal is to capture new people entering the industry early on and guide them so they don't make mistakes and become a casualty. We're always working to raise the bar and keep fees low. Attendees all say it is the most value for what they spent on a program. That makes us smile; it's gratification that we're doing a good job." ▲