

WORLD WATERPARK™

The Official Magazine of the World Waterpark Association

A Fantasy Realized!

At Aquafantasy in Turkey

Oasis in the Palms

New York's Palm Island Indoor Waterpark

29 and fine!

Adventure World reveals exciting attractions

How-To: Maintenance

How to address cloudy pool water



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THE COVER

Aquafantasy Waterpark, Izmir, Turkey, opened in 2000 and has since gone through several expansions. It boasts a number of waterslides and hosts a gaggle of birthday parties, concerts and other exciting programs. Since its opening, the park has proven to be the No. 1 destination spot in the area.

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It's Not Just about Pool Lifts

By Dr. Lynn Anderson, CTRS, CPRP

Did you know that people with disabilities are the fastest growing minority? According to the 2010 U.S. Census, one in four to five people has a disability in the U.S. The United Nations reports that at least 10 percent of the world's population has a disability. Given that each person with a disability is usually accompanied by three or more family members or friends, you can see how important it is for you to make sure you are providing inclusion at your waterpark. Many of you may think that inclusion is about pool lifts or ramped entrances. Yet inclusion is much, much more. Inclusion is not just about changes in the physical environment—it is also about the programs and services you offer, the way you communicate and the administrative practices you use that truly welcome all people. Here are some ways to make your waterpark inclusive and accessible for all guests.

Promote program and activity inclusion.

Many of the suggestions I provide for programs and activities are easily implemented. They do not require much in the way of resources, but more a willingness and positive attitude toward inclusion of all guests at your waterpark.

Staff: First, be sure that all your staff, from permanent to seasonal, understand what inclusion is and how it can be facilitated. Provide routine staff training on disability awareness and inclusion strategies, such as activity and equipment adaptations and positive behavioral supports. Hire staff that are comfortable with people with differences, and are positive about inclusion. Make sure all your aquatic staff knows how to operate any pool lifts or pool entry methods you have available.

Registration: Include a statement on all your promotional materials (advertisements, flyers, brochures, websites) that states something like this: "We welcome all people to our waterpark. If you have specific needs to participate, please call ahead to let us know how we can help you." For any programs where pre-registration is required, have a section on the registration form where people can identify any specific needs they may have to participate in the program. Follow up with a phone call or interview to find out as much as you can to help accommodate the person in your program.

Adapted equipment: There is a wealth of adapted equipment available to assist people with disabilities in the water. Equipment ranges from pool chairs to specialized personal floatation devices to balance aids. A good source to research adapted equipment is www.abledata.com.

Activity adaptation and partial participation allow waterpark guests with a significant disability to participate in the parts of the activity they can do, or in a different way. For example, allowing a child with a significant disability to use a personal floatation device will allow the child to participate with his or her peers.

Quiet area: Have a designated quiet area near the waterpark features. The waterpark environment is noisy and

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Adapting an activity or attraction area allows for greater inclusivity.

INCLUSION at Magic Waters Waterpark

Rockford Park District, Illinois, U.S.A.

Understanding the broad range of needs of Magic Waters Waterpark guests has helped the park become more inclusive. Over the past several years, the park has changed its philosophy of inclusion, provided more advanced disability awareness staff training, reevaluated and changed some park rules and policies, provided water wheelchairs, water bean bags, speed passes for people with disabilities, season pass caregiver options and added family changing rooms.

"We try not to just think about physical disabilities and people who are in wheelchairs. How about Grandma who needs the assistance of a cane to come watch her grandchild splash down the waterslide? How about the teenage boy who is deaf and can't hear the whistles of the lifeguard? How about the family that has a child with autism who just can't wait in line?" said Jessica Steinberg, Director at the Magic Waters Waterpark.

"We have discovered new ways to look at our waterpark and found small changes to be more inclusive," said Steinberg.

These changes in philosophy have led to the community viewing the waterpark as the 'place to go' for families with children and adults who have disabilities. For 2012, Magic Waters will introduce a new mascot, Sunny the Shark. Sunny will have a disability and use a wheel chair. Steinberg hopes the mascot will promote all the waterpark's accessible features and help make people with disabilities feel even more comfortable and welcome. Visit the website at www.magicwaterswaterpark.com.



IT'S PEOPLE who Welcome People

Sandcastle Waterpark in Blackpool, U.K.

Sandcastle Waterpark, in Blackpool, United Kingdom, has implemented many policies and practices that facilitate inclusion. Most of the welcoming practices are provided on the waterpark's website, and in alternative forms of communication (both written and audio formats.)

For example, the waterpark has posted a clear statement of inclusion, called "Access for All," and has a detailed list of FAQs that many people with disabilities and their families can use to help them plan their adventure.

Though Sandcastle has made many changes for physical accessibility, it is the numerous administrative and program practices that truly make it a welcoming waterpark. It is, after all, people who welcome people! Visit the website at www.sandcastle-waterpark.co.uk.



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distracting, and someone who has difficulty integrating stimuli in such an environment may need a quiet place to regroup or relax for a short period. The quiet space doesn't need to be special—it can be an unused room or even a small shade structure set up outside the mainstream of activity. Just be sure that families know about the availability and location of the quiet space. Consider the examples shown in the first sidebar being undertaken at Magic Waters Waterpark in Rockford, Ill.

Create administrative inclusion.

It is often said that inclusion happens one person at a time, and from the top down as well as the bottom up. Administrative practices that focus on inclusion can change the culture of your waterpark. Here are some suggestions you can readily implement.

Marketing and communication: Who do you invite to your waterpark? Take a critical look at your marketing materials. They should include images of people with disabilities playing alongside other guests at your park. The materials should let people with disabilities and their families know what you have available to help them participate. On your website, have an easily found page that provides detailed information about physical access, safety guidelines, available adaptive equipment, availability of quiet spaces, policies you have that facilitate participation, an invitation to call ahead for individual consultation and other information you feel will help people enjoy your waterpark to the fullest. Take a look at what Sandcastle Waterpark, in Blackpool, U.K., is doing to accomplish this in the second sidebar.

Communication needs can be met in a wide variety of ways, from providing alternative forms of communication to assistive listening devices to apps on a smart phone that facilitate interaction. The key is to let the public know what forms of communication you have available, how it can be accessed or arranged and an openness to explore new ways to communicate.

Policies and procedures: Clear and well-communicated policies and procedures are critical for facilitating inclusion. Make sure you have policies and procedures in place for emergency evacuation of people with disabilities from the aquatic environment. Determine what your agency policy will be on personal care attendants. Many agencies allow personal care attendants to attend free with the person with a disability, as the attendant is solely there to assist. Decide how you will accommodate service dogs/animals in the aquatics environment as well as mobility devices and have clear written policies that are shared with the public. Make sure all your staff knows the policies, from custodial to ticket staff.

Planning: When doing any new construction or renovations, include people with disabilities in the planning, to make sure things are accessible from the initial phases of the aquatics project. People who experience a disability on a daily basis will have great insights that can help your project truly meet needs.

Last but not least, physical accessibility!

Of course, physical accessibility is important for fostering inclusion. Here are some additional suggestions beyond pool lifts that will help all people approach, enter and use your waterpark.

Make sure there is a level, firm and barrier-free route of travel throughout the waterpark, from the parking area to the entrances to the various features in the park. Have at least one ticket counter at a lower level with alternative forms of communication available. Make sure the locker rooms or changing areas have clear signage, ample lighting, showers with a benches or chairs, grab bars, handheld shower units and some lockers that can be accessed from a wheelchair. Ideally, have family or unisex changing areas. If you have a sandy beach area in your waterpark, a sidewalk, wooden boardwalk or portable roll-out surface like "Mobi-mat" or plastic snow fencing can provide access, along with a beach wheelchair with large balloon tires. Having aquatic chairs available for loan that can be taken right into the water can facilitate use of other waterpark features. Clearly publicize that you have the chairs and how they can be accessed.

These how-to tips touch on just a few of the *many* things you can do to make waterparks accessible and inclusive. The work you do to welcome all people will not only increase your visitation, it will feel right to you and your staff! **WWA**



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