

Raging Rivers Waterpark Opens For 2020 Season, Guests And Staff Enjoy Successful Opening

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
June 29 2020 10:38 AM







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GRAFTON - The longtime advertising jingle for Raging Rivers Water Park says it all: It's Cool When It's Hot.

The park certainly was one of the coolest spots in the area on Saturday when it opened for its 2020 season a month late after being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guests who came into the park for opening day enjoyed many of the park's features, including the endless river rides, water slides and various pools for children and adults.

"Today is our grand opening for the year," said park Director of Operations Julie Pohlman. "We have been allowed now, on June 26, the governor allowed us to open up, we're thrilled to open up, we've had a huge crowd all day, everybody was ready to get into the park, get wet, have fun. Our season pass holders were allowed in the park at 10, and the line went all the way around the parking lot trying to get them in this morning. But we got them in, and then, we were able to get our regular guests at 10:30, and everybody's just so happy to be here."

This was the second consecutive year the park's season opening was delayed, first by flooding in 2019, and the pandemic this year.

"I'm just like, we lost a month of our time," Pohlman said, "because we normally would open Memorial Day weekend; we're about a month behind. Last year, we had the flood

that held us up until July 3, I guess it was. And so, to lose two years in a row, a month of our season, is hard. We are only open until Labor Day weekend, and so, that's a big chunk of our season. However, when you are here, you're so excited to be here. The kids are excited, because then, of course, they have a summer job, and they have somewhere to go. The families are excited, because they've been cooped up together for a long time, too."

As per the current pandemic, the necessary steps have been taken to ensure people's safety and comfort.

"I think most people are appreciative," Pohlman said. "We have the 30 hand sanitizing stations throughout the park. We have the social distancing with all of our tables. Our menus have been culled down, trying to make it a smaller, simpler process. So we've done a lot of things, about 30 procedures in place, trying to get ready for today."

That the park was opened on Saturday after much uncertainty was a very important thing for both guests and employees alike.

"There was a lot of up in the air, with everything going on in our society," said house and grounds employee Payton Knapp. "So, it's really nice that we were able to come back and make our guests happy, and see everyone having a good time today. Lots of busyness."

Knapp was also happy that she and her fellow employees were able to help guests around the park, making their time that much more pleasant and enjoyable.

"It's really great to see all of our staff helping out and working together as a team," Knapp said, "to make sure that we're able to provide for the community and guests who come here."

Opening day attendees were just as excited to be there as well, after a spring of being kept indoors due to the pandemic.

"Everybody here seems to be really excited to be outdoors," said opening day attendee Dodie Taylor. "I know I am, because I cannot stand to be inside. So this has been one of the first places that I have been since March. This is my family's 22nd year here, and we are glad that they were able to open, and it was fantastic. We did have a little bit of a wait, but the staff got us through, and have been phenomenal taking care of everything here. Donna (Morgan, the park's General Manager) is wonderful."

The families who attended opening day were very pleased with how things went along as well.

"We're season pass holders, and we've been looking forward to opening day all summer," said Jennifer Eilerman, who came out with her son Blake and daughter Brynlyn, "and it's been beautiful weather. The kids love Itty Bitty Surf City, and the wave pool the best. So we've had a fun day."

When Blake was asked if he had a good time, he had a simple answer.

"I had fun today," Blake said to the delight of his mom. When asked to what his favorite thing to do was, he pointed to the Endless River, where guests floated down a river on tubes.

"He loves the tubes on the Endless River," Jennifer said.

It was a very successful first day of what Pohlman and the rest of the staff hopes to be a successful 2020 season.

"I've had nothing but guests saying how happy they are to be here," Pohlman said. "They think that we should be so excited to be open," she said with a laugh. "I had one family come up and say they were here on Labor Day last year, they bought their season passes, and they were waiting for us to open. They're so excited about us being open, and they came from St. Louis. So we were pretty excited that they were going to join us today."

Pohlman expressed her love for the park and their philosophy about making guests happy.

"We love Raging Rivers Water Park," Pohlman said. "I always say that it is my happy place. I think that everyone who comes here is here for a good time, and what we tell the kids, our motto is 'Let's make someone's day.' Every single day, we tell them let's make someone's day."

The park is open daily from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily through Aug. 23, then on Saturdays and Sundays through Labor Day, which this year will be on Sept. 7. Season pass holders will be admitted starting at 10 a.m. all throughout the season. For more information on the park at its hours and features, please call (618) 786-2345, or log on to the park's website, www.ragingrivers.com.





[Charles Thomas also contributed to this story.](#)