Ocean Lakes Family Campground continues building on its family-friendly tradition by adding new guest amenities like its Sandy Harbor waterpark area.

START SMALL, Think Big!
Located in Myrtle Beach, S.C., Ocean Lakes Family Campground (OLFC), a division of The Jackson Companies, is the largest campground on the East Coast. Open year round, Ocean Lakes has endless amenities including nearly one mile of oceanfront property, but it became clear that they had outgrown what was basically an existing Olympic-sized pool and a small indoor pool. It became apparent that during the summer season, Ocean Lakes needed a lot more water surface for the 30,000 guests staying at 893 campsites and 2,560 annually leased sites. The management team of the 310-acre campground had to expand the existing aquatics facilities and it had to be done with very little space, around a lot of trees (including Live Oaks) and without disturbing the very important founding family’s homestead.

So how large did they need to build the leisure river and what other aquatics amenities should be added? Tough questions for the management team at one of the largest privately-owned campgrounds in the United States.

IT’S A FAMILY BUSINESS HERE

A modest beginning, Ocean Lakes initially had one bathhouse and 30 campsites. Built in 1970 by its founders, Nelson and Mary Emily Jackson, Ocean Lakes opened its gates on July 2, 1971. Nelson was 50 years old at the time and the couple had five eager daughters at their side to help make this a success. The Jacksons have an incredible story that has deep roots in the land that Mary Emily Platt Jackson inherited in the late 1960s.

“My father, V.F. Platt, was a pharmacist with Platt’s pharmacy on Main Street in Conway, SC,” Mary Emily explained often over the years. “Father bought property in Murrells Inlet and found out it was more costly to develop than he had planned. A friend of his had a sawmill and told him about a good piece of property with timber. So in 1930, my father swapped his Murrells Inlet land along with some money for what is now Ocean Lakes Family Campground.”

Nelson Jackson would smile as he told the story of building Ocean Lakes and always declared, “We are in the ‘family’ business.” That is the reason they named it Ocean Lakes Family Campground. In the 1990s, Ocean Lakes adopted Sandy Starfish as its company mascot. The many versions of Sandy Starfish help to illustrate all that there is to experience at the resort style destination.

Today the five Jackson daughters, along with their spouses, remain at the helm as owners of the industry giant that their parents founded 45 years ago. The Jackson Companies is a family-owned enterprise that also includes Prestwick Golf & Country Club, Ocean Lakes Properties,
Crystal Lake Mobile Home Village, Ocean Lakes RV Center, Ocean Lakes Golf Cars and the master-planned development SayeBrook. Ocean Lakes employs 200 year-round teammates and the team swells to nearly 500 during the summer season, and their dedication to customer service has earned the campground numerous regional and national awards for excellence. It is led by the Executive Team: Dennis Wade, CEO; Lance Thompson, VP/GM of Ocean Lakes; David DuRant, VP of Prestwick; and Steve Alger, VP of Development for The Jackson Companies.

PLANNING, DESIGNING & SACRIFICING 34 CAMPSITES

Over the years, Ocean Lakes had updated, renovated and built many new recreation amenities including its pools, mini golf course, shuffle board courts, playgrounds and more. In 1997, a multi-phase master plan was set into motion. That plan included several major upgrades such as the main entrance and unifying the architectural features of the park’s main buildings. Sandy Harbor Family Fun Center was only one phase of that master plan and included the indoor “all seasons” pool, the Olympic-sized outdoor pool, two kiddie
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pools and an interactive kiddie pool named “Splash Zone” and Sandy Harbor Mini Golf, Café and Game Center. All the projects for the 1997 multi-phase master plan were completed by 2013.

In 2014, the management team, led by Steve Alger, began a new multi-phase master plan which laid out a long-term plan to expand and reorganize a 12-acre area at the center of OLFC whereby new recreational amenities would be added, some existing uses would be expanded and some existing buildings might be repurposed to meet the needs of the park’s ever changing business. The pools were the first priority. Ocean Lakes Family Campground retained Kim Davis of Davis & Davis, Inc. Recreation Planning Consultants in Arlington, Texas to help develop the plan.

Davis helped the team assess the current amenities, define the guests’ needs, identify new amenities and refine the layout. The plan to expand Sandy Harbor defined the size of the new leisure river, included waterslides, relocated the interactive children’s play unit and included new restrooms, a lifeguard building and food service. William “Bill” Smoot, P.E. of Wet Engineering in Jacksonville, Fla. was brought in to consult and engineer the pools. The team chose White Water West Industries Ltd. to provide the two large slides and children’s play structure. Additional water play features and elements were supplied by Playtime, Superior Recreational Products and Water Odyssey.

The team worked with local architects, engineers and land planners focusing special consideration on the existing trees. They wanted to preserve the existing healthy trees at the perimeter of the project, which helped define and ultimately shape the leisure river. The decision was made to remove 34 campsites that bordered the north side of the existing pools and Sandy Harbor, opening up two acres of land for the new aquatics amenities. With plans finalized, the construction project was set to commence immediately after Labor Day 2015 and open by Memorial Day Weekend 2016.

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THE NEW SANDY HARBOR

Sandy Harbor celebrated its Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on Friday, May 27, 2016. Three generations of the Jackson family were greeted with loud cheers and applause from eager Ocean Lakes’ guests. The founding family smiled and waved at the huge crowd as they took their places in front of the Grand Opening Ribbon. Once the gates opened, guests shared their delight and surprise at the size of the new pool area, featuring more than 368,000 gallons of water, 62,000 square feet of deck space and 700 chairs for lounging and relaxing. The available water surface of pools for our guests increased from 10,500 sq. ft. to 28,110 sq. ft. Long time guests greeted teammates and family with praise as they actively engaged the new aquatics facility.

The 705-foot long “Adventure River” was a huge hit with guests. The massive leisure river features 17,000 sq. ft. of water surface, and a few curves to add some extra fun. Guests have a choice of a single or double tube. Families with little ones enjoy the river’s shallow, shaded “lounge ledge.”

Thrill seekers were delighted with “The Tube” and the “Drop Zone Mat Racer” slides, featuring a launch platform 40 feet in the air, offering the best oceanfront view along the Grand Strand. The green and white four-lane “Drop Zone Mat Racer” includes the digital timing boards. The bright orange twists and turns of “The Tube” tower over the “Adventure River.” The screams of fun of single and double riders can be heard echoing out of the half covered tube slide.

The new “Splash Zone” for kids creates a place where younger guests will have hours of interactive fun and play. Topped off with a huge Sandy Starfish bucket, the harbor bell “dings” to alert those nearby that 425 gallons of water will soon come spilling down on those below. The shallow pool is large and features fountains, water guns and more. The adjacent semi-covered “Tad Pool” is for the smallest guests providing a location and view for caregivers of both tots and kids of all ages.

The new “Slushy Cabana” is located on the western exterior of the pool pump filtration building. It features eight flavors of the cool refreshment and is proving to be a strong source of drink and food revenue. Guests can purchase the refillable cup and enjoy pizza, hot dogs, pretzels and more. There is a larger menu at the nearby poolside Sandy Harbor Café.

The new restrooms are located adjacent to and partially under

SUPPLIERS
Development/Design: Davis and Davis, Inc.
Consultants: Wet Engineering; Miller Design Services (MDS); DDC/Landart Engineers; Rast Dallery Engineers (PC); Martinez Associates
Construction: Mashburn Construction
Theming: WhiteWater West Industries Ltd.; Ocean Lakes Family Campground; Davis & Davis, Inc.
Waterslides: WhiteWater West Industries Ltd.
Raft/Tubes/Mats: Zebec (tubes); Revel Match, LLC (mats/life jackets)

Children’s interactive play structure:
WhiteWater West Industries Ltd.; Water Odyssey; Playtime

Children’s equipment:
WhiteWater West Industries Ltd.; Water Odyssey; Playtime

Furniture:
Custom Outdoor Furniture; Florida Seating

Lockers:
Scooterbug/Best Lockers

Filtration equipment:
Augusta Aquatics, Inc.
Pumps:
Augusta Aquatics, Inc.

Chemical:
Arnold’s Pools

Chemical controllers:
BECs

Shade system:
Superior Recreational Products

Merchandise:
Printing Quest

Food/Equipment:
Frosty Freeze (Slushy Cabana)

Uniforms:
Original Watermen

Themed Signage 3D:
SignWorks

Themed Signage 2D:
Digital Arts

Security Cameras:
B & R Business Solutions

Facility Sound System:
Sound Systems, Inc.
“The Tube” slide that also features a family restroom. Adjacent lockers are located there and can be rented with credit card or cash. The sound system broadcasts the campground’s own “OLFC Starfish Radio,” which was launched in December 2015.

Guest feedback continues to be overwhelmingly positive and the new waterpark features have increased the Ocean Lakes’ 2016 campsite occupancy, rentals and annual lease site sales. The engagement via social media is tremendous, pushing the campground’s popularity and awareness via social shares and “buzz.”

**STORY BEHIND SOME SPECIAL DETAILS**

The tallest element of the project is the slide tower featuring a traditional standing seam permanent roof versus less costly and durable fabric material. On top of the tower sits a weathervane fashioned in the shape of OLFC mascot, Sandy Starfish, designed and fabricated by West Coast Weathervanes in Santa Cruz, Calif. The starfish body is made of brass, the glass frames are copper and the lenses within the frame is nickel silver, which the team hopes will patina nicely over the years. During the mid-1800s, some Victorian weather vane makers began a tradition of sealing a copper penny from the year the sculpture was crafted inside each of their weathervanes for good luck. In keeping with this tradition a copper penny from the years 1920, 1921, 1943, 1945, 1950, 1954, and 1956 were included within the body of Sandy Starfish weathervane representing the birth years of Nelson and Mary Emily Platt Jackson and their five daughters.

Pool signage locations needed to be determined to meet SCDHEC safety requirements. Long time OLFC Recreation Director, Craig Culbreth, who is in charge of the entire Sandy Harbor complex, was a key team member in its design. Culbreth asked OLFC Marketing Director, Barb Krumm, and theme designer Ron Zwing to assist with sign implementation. The ultimate regulatory signage solution provided for both the consistency of OLFC theming while incorporating the park’s “iCare Program,” which models the slogan “Awareness and Action Count.” The OLFC maintenance team designed large crates and barrels for each sign location by using old picnic tables they recycled off campsites. The end signage product is attractive, mobile, eco-friendly and commands attention to the important pool rules.

Teammate training is a huge focus throughout the company, especially in regard to customer service and safety. Hiring 50+ lifeguards in a market with two large waterparks, 600 hotels and numerous recreation centers was a major challenge. To be competitive in the market, Ocean Lakes offered a $250 signing bonus to lifeguards that were already certified, keeping OLFC from having new guards complete the Red Cross certification training. In addition, Ocean Lakes lifeguards go through regular in service training throughout the season.

**BARB KRUMM HAS BEEN THE DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR OCEAN LAKES FAMILY CAMPGROUND IN MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. SINCE 1998. SHE WORKS CLOSELY WITH 20 MANAGERS TO OVERSEE THE CAMPGROUND’S MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN AND ASSIST WITH MARKETING THE RV CENTER, PROPERTIES AND GOLF CAR OPERATIONS. SHE EARNED A BFA FROM THE COLUMBUS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN IN COLUMBUS, OHIO. HER EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN PRINT MEDIA, GRAPHIC DESIGN, WEB, PHOTOGRAPHY, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA HAS HELPED HER APPROACH HER MARKETING RESPONSIBILITIES CREATIVELY. A HISTORY IN NON-PROFIT AND FUND RAISING KEEPS HER GROUNDED WHEN IT COMES TO BUDGETING.**

**PHOTOS COURTESY OF KEITH JACOBS, RON ZWING, STEFENY WACKERLY, BARB KRUMM AND STEVE ALGER.**