



GO SPLASH

For reservations, rates, packages and more information about Splash Lagoon, visit www.splashlagoon.com on the Web or call 1-800-3 SPLASH.

Splash Lagoon to expand this year

STORY — RYAN SMITH

The kids climb up and barrel down nine twisting and turning water slides while the grown-ups kick back in the hot tub.

Every five or 10 minutes, a massive bucket balanced high atop the four-story Tiki Tree House tips, dumping 1,000 — that's right, 1,000 — gallons of water onto an anxious crowd below.

Despite a downright nasty winter storm blasting its way up and down Peach Street in Erie, it's a balmy 84 degrees inside. And, what's more, the tropical paradise is attached to more than 300 hotel rooms and suites, allowing visitors to come straight from their rooms without ever having to take one step out into the snow.

Splash Lagoon is the kind of place where getting there really is half the fun, and maybe more.

Ranked and profiled as one of the top 10 water parks in North America by Water Park Resorts Today, the one-of-a-kind park was opened in 2003 by Scott Enterprises, adding a jewel to the family-owned company's extensive list of Erie-area hotels, restaurants, banquet and catering services.

Bringing the park to life involved about three years of research and development that took the company's executives and planners to numerous indoor water parks around the country, Vice President Chris Scott said recently.

And it wasn't to push pencils.

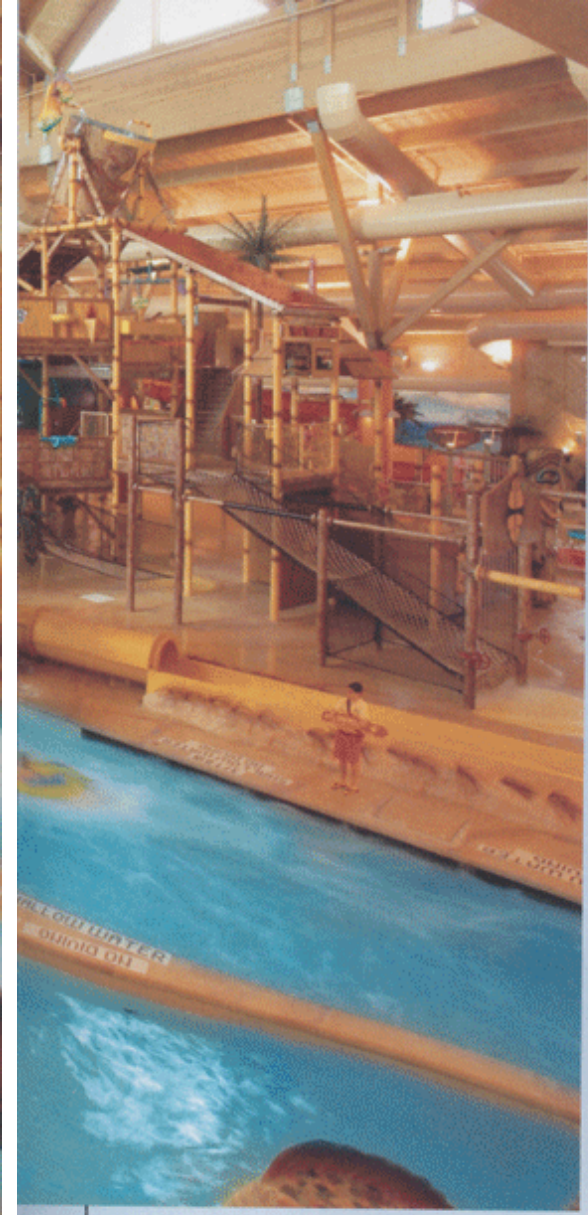
"We spent a couple of years diving in — and I mean diving in," Scott said. "We went down the slides," he added, and spent time talking to customers, lifeguards and management to get the best idea of what works and what doesn't.

Among their findings, Scott said, was that many water park hotels are "purpose-built," carrying the same kid-friendly themes in both the resort area and in the hotel itself: In other words, going to the hotel means you're going to the water park, whether you want to or not.

The problem with that, according to Scott, is that a traveling business-type probably isn't going to want to spend a night in a kids' bunk that has a tropical theme. And that means during the off-peak season at the resort, those attached rooms are going to stay empty. ►►



above left - The Scott Enterprises management team, from left: Vice President Chris Scott; President Nick Scott; and Vice President Nick Scott Jr.

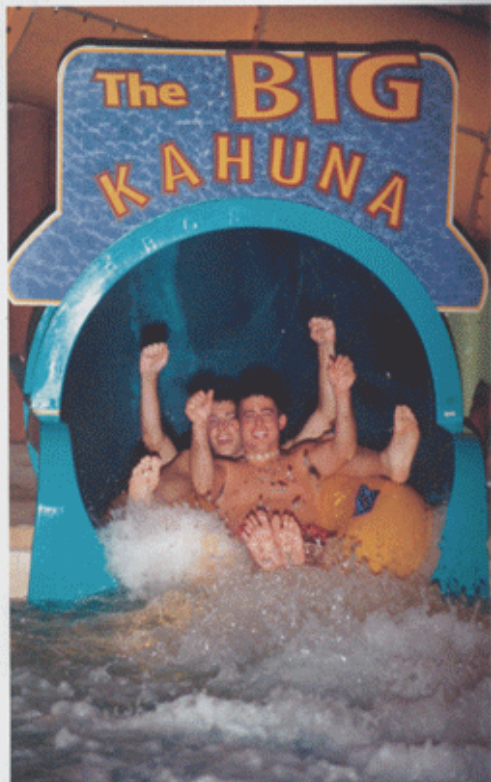


So the Scotts decided to connect Splash Lagoon to its Holiday Inn Express, Comfort Inn, Residence Inn and EconoLodge franchises. Unlike some of the company's national competitors, that means "we're able to fill hotels even when the water park isn't (busy)," said Scott.

But staying busy doesn't appear to be much of a problem. Last year alone, Splash Lagoon saw 400,635 visitors.

Acknowledging the park's role as a regional business leader, the United States Local Business Association awarded Splash Lagoon the 2008 Best of Erie Award for Excellence in Marketing Success. Last summer, it was also chosen as the best in its industry and featured on a segment of television's "World's Greatest," a Crown Point production distributed through national cable channels like A & E and The Travel Channel.

As a member of the Erie-area communi-



ty, Splash Lagoon and Scott Enterprises have donated hundreds of day passes and overnight packages for the resort to local charities through its "We Promise to Care" campaign, benefiting organizations like the Make a Wish Foundation, Highmark Caring Place and the Martin Luther King Center of Erie. The resort also allows schools, nonprofit organizations and churches to raise money for their respective causes through its Splash 4 Cash program.

So, what's missing?

Scott said Splash recently surveyed its customers on that very question. The answer: a wave pool.

Currently in the process of development, the pool — part of the resort's next planned expansion — is expected to be added sometime this year, said Scott. Also part of the roughly 20,000-square-foot expansion project are a new kids' area and a wave-riding machine.

It all goes back to finding out what makes the guests happy — kids and grown-ups alike — and making it a reality, said Scott.

From its Polynesian flair to its tropical air, Splash Lagoon "makes people feel like they're on vacation," said Scott. "Who doesn't like that?" ☺

FUN FACTS: Splash Lagoon by the numbers

- **400,000** — Gallons of water maintained every day at Splash Lagoon, equivalent to 120,000 toilet flushes.
- **10** — Frogs from the Leap Frog Erie Art Project, all painted by local artists (there are also 11 locally-crafted fish from the Go Fish Erie Art Project).
- **70,000** — Square footage of the water park.
- **84** — Degrees, the average temperature of the park's air and pools.