



For Immediate Release

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## **Huck Finn's Playland Celebrates Opening and Reveals Planned Initiatives to Give Back to Community This Inaugural Summer**

*Playland Bricks Support Youth Development Organizations and Summer Youth Employment Opportunities Announced*

ALBANY – On Wed. members of the community, Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, State and community leaders joined President and CEO Jeff Sperber and Executive Vice President and CFO Reid Sperber to celebrate the formal grand opening of Huck Finn's Playland. Kicking off the new amusement park's inaugural summer, the Sperbers thanked the community for its support and outlined planned initiatives being implemented at the park to give back to the community and benefit the area's youth.

“These rides and this amusement park are here today because of the people that came together,” said Jeffrey Sperber, President and CEO of Huck Finn's Warehouse and More. “We couldn't let the park disappear. Beyond creating some of our childhood's greatest summer memories it has done so much for this community and especially our area's youth, we want to see that impact continue for generations.”

The new location not only provides local children with an unprecedented opportunity to enjoy the park, it will also provide new economic opportunities for the area's youth through targeted employment and youth development programs supported by charitable giving.

In partnership with the City of Albany, announced today, Huck Finn's Playland will serve as a site to provide employment opportunities and support the City of Albany's LIGHT (Learning, Initiative and Gaining Headway Together) Summer Youth Employment Program. In total Huck Finn's Playland will provide more than 130 jobs, more than 50 and counting of these jobs are being provided to those participating in the City's Summer Youth Employment Program this summer.

“This is a wonderful initiative to help find employment for Albany youths. My first job was at an amusement park and I'm excited for those taking advantage of this opportunity,” said Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan. “Huck Finn's Playland gives Albany children and families a fun destination, provides more than 130 seasonal jobs, and serves as a catalyst that will attract thousands of people from the entire region helping to further connect downtown Albany to its neighboring warehouse district.”

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The program runs five days per week for five weeks from July 7 through Aug. 7. The program is designed to provide any young City of Albany resident, age 14-18, with a summer work experience. The goals of the program are to introduce and prepare youth for the world of work by helping youth identify career interests, attain skills and good work habits and provide income to youth, which may also supplement family income.

A second initiative supporting the area's youth was also announced today. The bricks (already available for purchase near the park's entrance with the option of a personal or family message engraved) will be utilized to support local youth development oriented organizations. Furthering Huck Finn's Playland's summer youth initiatives, proceeds from the sale of these bricks will be donated to the City of Albany Police Athletic League (PAL) and the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Capital Region.

"We are so very grateful for the Sperber Family and the team at Huck Finn's for their support of Ronald McDonald House and our community," said Jeff Yule, Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Capital Region's Executive Director. "Hoffman's Playland was a huge part of our summers at Ronald McDonald House. We made trips every week with excited kids in need of a fun escape. We are so thrilled that kids will still have a special place to go for some good old fashion family fun. Those who rallied to keep this gem in our community have no idea of the good they have done."

"I have fond memories of countless hours spent at the Hoffman's Playland site, both as a child and as a father of two grown daughters," said Albany PAL Executive Director Lenny Ricchiuti. "The commitment of the Sperbers and entire Huck Finn's Family to ensure that this institution lives on in the hearts and memories of past and future generations is to be commended. The Albany Police Athletic League is proud to partner on such an endeavor to benefit our youth and community and we are thankful to have such a strong partnership with this great family. Everyone who worked to see this project succeed has much to be proud of."

For more than six decades, the Iron Horse Train, the Tilt-a-Whirl and 16 other rides made up Hoffman's Playland. Following the retirement of the park's owners, brothers Jeff Sperber (President and CEO) and Reid Sperber (Executive Vice President and CFO) of Huck Finn's Warehouse and More took the step of buying and saving the amusement park by moving its attractions to Albany's warehouse district. The rides were reassembled next to Huck Finn's Warehouse and More their furniture store, located at 25 Erie Blvd. in Albany, which they have operated since 1985. The new Huck Finn's Warehouse launched with a soft opening on June 18 with today marking its official grand opening and 2015 summer season kick-off.

The Sperbers invested more than \$2 million to save and support the relocation of the amusement park's attractions. In addition, several organizations and officials working to support the area's economic development were involved by providing financial support or general assistance which included Empire State Development, the Albany County Industrial Development Agency,

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National Grid, Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan, Albany County Executive Dan McCoy and Capitalize Albany Corporation.

"Huck Finn's investment contributes to revitalization efforts in downtown Albany, provides employment opportunities, and saves a beloved tourist destination. National Grid, through an economic development grant, helped close the gap and enable this exciting project," said Bill Flaherty, Director, Customer and Community for National Grid.

"This amusement park came to be because of the hard work and perseverance of people who worked to see Huck Finn's Playland become a reality," said Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy. "I am pleased that the County was able to work with the Sperber family to make this day possible. This will be a place for kids of all ages to enjoy a summer day and it will be place where young people can gain valuable work experience at Huck Finn's Playland."

Huck Finn's Playland will provide more than 130 jobs and will build on the mix of new restaurants and retail opening, along with residential units being developed in Albany as the City continues to encourage investment in its warehouse district.

"The relocation of the original amusement park rides and attractions is another monumental step forward in growing the community and connecting downtown Albany to the neighboring warehouse district," said Sarah Reginelli, President of Capitalize Albany Corporation. "It's wonderful to see the park's rides moving again at the new Huck Finn's Playland. Thank you and congratulations to the Sperbers."

The new park has 13 kiddie rides that are each one ticket and four thrill rides such as the Scrambler, Tilt a Whirl, Paratrooper, and the big ferris wheel which are each two tickets. Tickets are \$1.75, 8 for \$12.25 or a book of 25 for \$29.95. The park is open Mon. through Sun. from noon to 9 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at <http://www.hucksplayland.com>.

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