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Pool and Spa News

ASCENDING 2025

page 29



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COVER: ADOBESTOCK
ABOVE LEFT: POST BROTHERS
ABOVE RIGHT: AVREE CUSTOM POOLS

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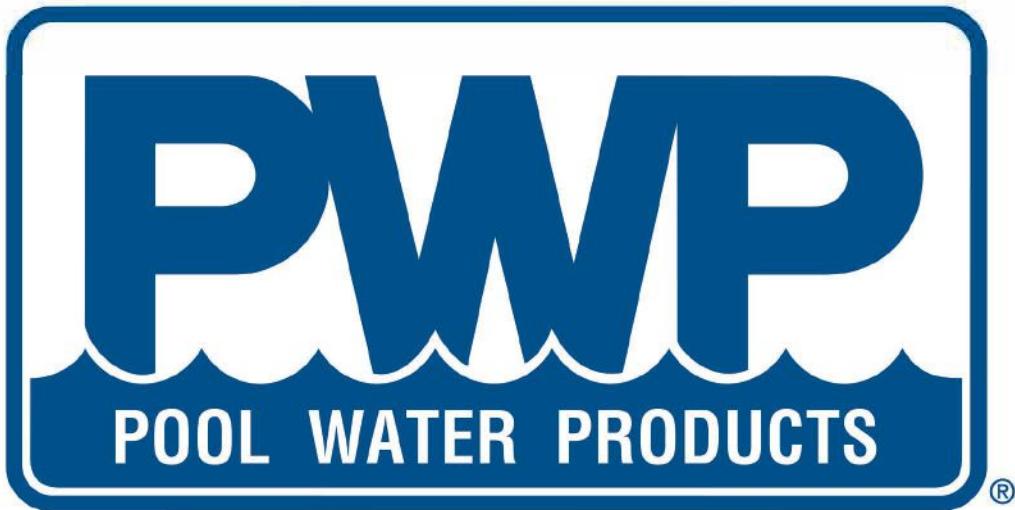
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Editorial

Joanne McClain Editor-in-Chief
jmccain@zondahome.com
Rebecca Robledo Deputy Editor
rrobledo@zondahome.com

Sales

Gary Carr Director, Strategic Accounts
gcarr@zondahome.com
Lisa Heitner Director, Strategic Accounts
lheitner@zondahome.com

Art

Carolyn Sewell Design Director, Media
Melissa Krochmal Graphic Designer

Published by Zonda Media

Jeff Meyers Chief Executive Officer
Melissa Billiter Chief Financial Officer
Andrew Reid Chief Operating Officer
Mia Vallo Executive Vice President/General Manager
Steve Ladurantaye Senior Vice President, Content
Amy Dudley Chief Sales Officer
Rich Tomko Senior Vice President
Tim Sullivan Chief Advisory Officer
Kurt Nelson Group Vice President, Talent Strategy

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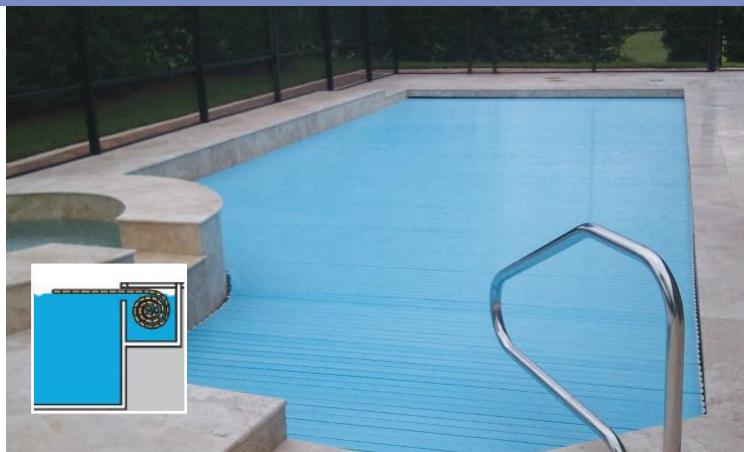
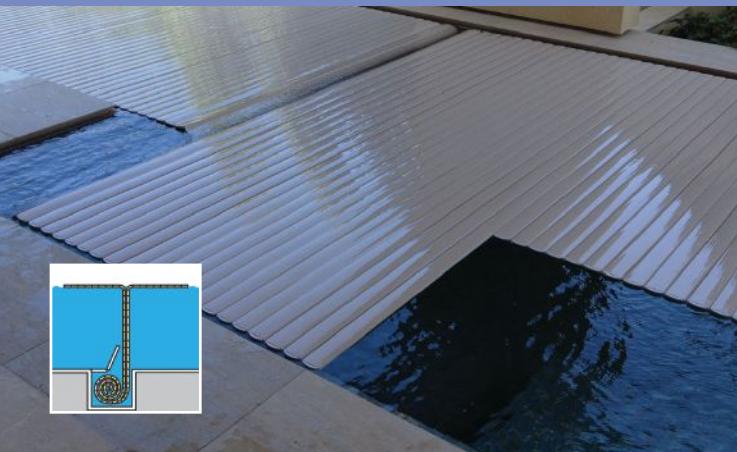


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Navigating the New Economy



Joanne McClain
Editor-in-Chief, PSN

THE POOL AND SPA INDUSTRY ENTERED 2025 grappling with some significant economic challenges. Rising inflation, fluctuating interest rates, an increasing skilled labor shortage, shifts in consumer priorities ... These factors all contributed to adding many a grey hair and wrinkle to the brows of company leaders. As homeowners took a hard, realistic look at their financial situations in the wake of the pandemic, the demand for pools and spas saw both upticks and downturns, depending on the region and specific market conditions.

One of the most pressing issues was inflation, which affected not only the cost of materials but also labor expenses. Builders and service companies faced increasing prices for essential components, which forced many owners to reassess their pricing structures, often leading to difficult conversations with homeowners regarding price adjustments. Pool and spa companies could no longer afford to absorb these costs without risking their profitability, particularly in markets that saw a surge of new competitors willing to undercut established businesses.

Simultaneously, interest rates remained a big concern. For many consumers, rising rates prompts caution when considering large “unnecessary” investments such as swimming pools. Pool builders saw a push-pull dynamic in new pool sales, as potential buyers became hesitant to commit to long-term financial obligations, fearing that economic instability might adversely affect their financial future.

Additionally, post-COVID labor shortages persisted as many skilled workers left the industry during the peak of the pandemic, and recruitment became an uphill battle. It’s an ongoing problem with the potential to be greatly exacerbated by the immigration issues

the country continues to face. The logical impact is an escalation in wages, greatly affecting a company’s bottom line. Businesses needing to mitigate these costs often look to streamline operations, but that frequently requires investments in technology, further stretching already tight resources.

It’s quite a pickle.

Despite these challenges, several companies exemplified resilience and ingenuity in navigating the twists and turns of this new economic landscape. In “Ascending 2025,” our Deputy Editor Rebecca Robledo presents four diverse companies from all across the country — Avree Custom Pools in League City, Texas; Swimming Pool Services in Waukesha, Wis.; Ike’s Carter Pool Companies in Oakland Park, Fla.; and The Amenity Collective in Owings Mills, Md. — that quickly and successfully pivoted to address key concerns and adopted strategies for growth. These solutions include everything from the creation of new in-house positions, the introduction of palatable and profitable changes to customer billing, and radical employee-focused improvements to company culture.

As we move toward 2026, these innovative approaches remind us that within adversity lies opportunity. Companies that adapt quickly and thoughtfully to these unique challenges can thrive, even in an uncertain economic landscape. It’s a lesson for the entire industry: resilience, creativity, and a focus on core values remain essential for navigating the currents of change successfully.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joanne McClain'.

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Dance with Gas Bans Continues

by REBECCA ROBLEDO

AS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SEEKS TO OUTLAW GAS BANS, NEW YORK becomes the first to impose one statewide.

It has added the All-Electric Buildings Act to its state code, as mandated by 2023 legislation. The new language requires that new buildings be constructed for all-electrical appliances, thus prohibiting the installation of fossil-fuel lines in most residential buildings that stand seven stories or shorter, or larger commercial buildings with 100,000 square feet or more of conditioned floor area. Gas will be allowed if a building permit has already been issued, or “a substantially complete building permit application has been submitted to the local code authority.” Taller residential buildings and smaller commercial buildings will have to comply beginning in 2029. The code only applies to new buildings. Renovations and additions to existing buildings can include gas lines, and existing gas lines can be replaced. Certain industries will be exempt.

While the law was challenged, it has been upheld in court. Industries that oppose it have vowed to continue fighting it. The Northeast Spa and Pool Association is reaching out to officials for clarification or a delay.

Meanwhile, bills have been introduced in both houses of U.S. Congress seeking to prevent states and local jurisdictions from imposing fossil-fuel bans. The bills are in the early stages. The House version, HR 3699, has had its first subcommittee hearing. Officials at the Pool & Hot Tub Council hope this spurs momentum for the legislation.

Federal Cuts Impact MAHC

AS THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION continues implementing cuts as part of its Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) initiative, some of its impacts on the industry have become apparent.

For instance, deep cuts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention mean that the agency has stopped providing funds for the Model Aquatic Health Code. Additionally, some staff who worked on the MAHC have been let go.

The Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code, which coordinates the updates and research for the MAHC, was told that the administration prefers a lighter approach to regulation. Because of that, the CDC isn’t expected to support or make changes to the MAHC within the next few years, said Kevin Post, who serves on the CMAHC as president of the Board of Directors. The agency had been the biggest sponsor, so the funding loss amounts to a substantial financial hit for the MAHC.

But the change shouldn’t prove too disruptive, Post said. The MAHC was very recently updated, and the CMAHC had already planned to extend the time between updates from three to five years. So it isn’t due for a new version for a few years.

In addition, the organization had begun to consider transitioning to a self-sustaining model at some point, knowing that the CDC sometimes stops funding on projects once they’ve found their footing.

“All this did was accelerate the need for it,” Post said.

In the meantime, the industry is working to fill funding gaps and stay on track. “We are bringing in sponsorship dollars so we can keep staff paid [and] keep the committees and research going,” Post said. — *Rebecca Robledo*

Poolwerx Marks 100th Territory

by REBECCA ROBLEDO

POOLOWERX, THE RETAIL/SERVICE franchiser originating in Australia, surpassed 100 territories as it marks its 10th anniversary in the U.S.

The company entered the U.S. market in 2015 with the acquisition of a Phoenix-area retailer and its 16 locations. It began selling franchises at the end of the same year and, in 2017, opened its Dallas headquarters, which includes a training facility for franchisees and their employees.

Today, Poolwerx does business in 17 states through 47 franchisees. Its corporate staff of 22 is scattered across the U.S. for exposure to different markets.

In the last couple years, the company has been on a growth jag, with 20 territories sold in 2024 and this year on track to surpass that number.

Where the company began its U.S. business by setting roots in the Sunbelt, it has branched out into cold-weather states such as Indiana and Ohio.

“And we still have plenty of opportunity,” said Andrew Kidd, CEO of Poolwerx’s U.S. business. “We’ve got more than 600 territories [targeted] in the U.S. Our medium-range target is 300 by the end of 2027.”

Future expansion plans include increasing its foothold in states along the

East Coast and Midwest, as well as expanding its presence in Texas.

“I think [the Northeast/Midwest] has been one of the best-kept secrets of the pool business,” he said. “We operate in those markets slightly differently but the opportunity is great in those spaces.”

Poolwerx’s global operation saw a major change earlier this year, when Steve Greenbaum became global executive director for the company. He brings an intensive background in franchising, as the founder of PostNet International Franchise Corporation, which grew to nearly 700 locations across 14 countries under his leadership. He has served as CEO of Best Life Brands and now also leads Full Contact Franchising. He is a former chairman of the International Franchise Association.

Poolwerx Founder and former CEO John O’Brien now serves as a non-executive director.

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PHTA OFFERS IMMIGRATION RESOURCE

The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance now offers a resource page on its website to help members understand and navigate workplace and worksite immigration enforcement. The curated hub links to guidance, legal explanations, and practical checklists from trade associations and advocacy organizations to help employers and employees prepare for and respond to Immigration and Customs Enforcement actions.

H-2 VISA INTERVIEW WAIVERS SUSPENDED

As of Sept. 2, the U.S. Department of State has rescinded its interview waiver option for H-2 visa applicants and now requires all interviews to be conducted in person.

All H-2 applicants, including those with prior visas, must appear at a consular section worldwide. The policy change applies to those who began their application process on or after Aug. 28.

In response, the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance plans to send a letter to the State Department requesting the reinstatement of interview waivers for H-2B workers, citing concerns that the change could cause backlogs and delays.

LEISURE CONCEPTS NAMES NEW VP

Spa accessory manufacturer Leisure Concepts has appointed former retailer Jeff Brooks as vice president. Previously vice president of Seattle-based Aqua Quip, he brings more than 20 years of experience in the hot tub and pool industry.

In the role, Brooks develops dealer relationships, drives sales growth, and helps advance product design and innovation.

"Jeff's extensive experience on the retail side gives him a unique ability to understand and relate to our customers," said Mike Genova, president and CEO of Leisure Concepts.



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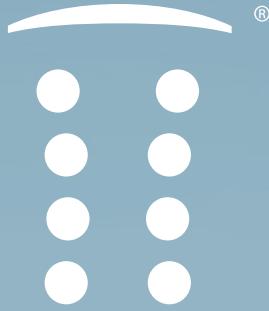
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Int'l Pool | Spa | Patio/Deck Expo Conference Schedule October 19-24, 2025

* Room locations are accurate at presstime but are subject to change. Please go to poolspapatio.com for the latest information.

October 19-20

8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Certified Pool & Spa Operator - CPO (2 Day Course)
Room N254

October 19-21

8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Certified Maintenance Specialist - CMS (3 Day Course)
Room N257

GENESIS C201: CONSTRUCTION SCHOOL: Concrete Pools (3 Day Course)
Room N253

October 20-21

8 a.m.-5 p.m.

GENESIS C393: Construction Superintendent: Connecting the Field with the Home Office (2 Day Course)
Room N252

GENESIS D211: Elements of Design (2 Day Course)
Room N259

GENESIS Masterclass C344: Mastering the Art of Precision and Efficiency in Pool Tile Installation (2 Day Course)
Room N260

Certified Pool & Spa Operator - CPO (2 Day Course)
Room N254

Tuesday, October 21

8 a.m.-12 p.m.

Certified Pool & Spa Inspector - CPI
Room N254

8 a.m.-5 p.m.

National Plasterers Council Start-Up Technician Certification Course
Room N241

8 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Quality Shotcrete for Pools - Know It Demand It Presented by the American Shotcrete Association
Room N239

5:30 p.m.-7 p.m.

PHTA Awards of Excellence Reception
Room N245-N250

Wednesday, October 22

8 a.m.-9 a.m.

Turn Your Team Into A Championship Team: Hiring, Training, Management, Motivation and Retention
Room N253

GENESIS B209: Masterful Mediums: Elevating Presentations in Design and Construction
Room N254

GENESIS C282: Polish or Demolish? When to Remodel or Rebuild a Pool
Room N252

Ultimate Marketing Workshop: Create Your Strategy For Explosive Growth in 2026
Room N258

Hot Tub Service 101 for Pool Technicians
Room N257

8 a.m.-10 a.m.

NADRA The Deck Business Blueprint: Day 1 - PLAN: The Deck Business Blueprint
Room N260

9:15 a.m.-10:20 a.m.

Day One Keynote - Data-Driven, Builder-Proven: Strategies for the New Economy presented by PHTA
Room N250

11 a.m.-11:45 a.m.

Rules Of Engagement: A Guide To Better Communication - And Better Relationships! - With Everyone Who Is Important To Your Business
Outdoor Living Stage - Booth 3454

Wellness in Water and the Impact on Daily Life Presented by PHTA
Expo Stage - Booth 339

11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Swimming Pool Leak Detection: Comprehensive Strategies for Identification and Repair
Room N257

Fun For Friends and Family
Room N253

Stop Chasing Leads: Create a Marketing System That Brings Clients to You
Room N258

GENESIS C310: Beauty of the Edge: The Definitive, Internationally Acclaimed Vanishing Edge and Water in Transit Design Program (Session 1 of 2)
GENESIS Solution Center - Booth 1415

Building a Thriving Aquatics Workforce: Strategies for Recruitment, Retention, and Growth
Room N254

12:15 p.m.-1:15 p.m.

GENESIS 310: Beauty of the Edge: The Definitive, Internationally Acclaimed Vanishing Edge and Water in Transit Design Program (Session 2 of 2)
GENESIS Solution Center - Booth 1415

1 p.m.-1:45 p.m.

Stop Getting Ghosted: How to Hit a 90% Close Ratio Without Chasing Clients
Outdoor Living Stage - Booth 3454

Breaking Barriers: Strategies for Women Advancing in Male-Dominated Industries
Expo Stage - Booth 339

1 p.m.-2 p.m.

SOP - Standard Operating Procedures
Room N253

Basic Water Chemistry: The 3 P's to Pool Care
Room N257

There are No Second Chances at First Impressions: Making the Most Out of Your Google Profile
Room N258

Taking Sauna to the Next Level
Room N252

Modern Challenges for the Pool Industry - 2025 and Beyond
Room N259

GENESIS D263: Wellness and Design - How Design Decisions Impacts Outdoor Living From Concept, To Detail, and Eventually Through Execution
Room N254

1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

GENESIS C322: Construction Management: An Insight into a Functional Team
GENESIS Solution Center - Booth 1415

2:15 p.m.-3:15 p.m.

Swimming Pool Waterproofing: A Hands-On Class
Room N253

Everything You Didn't Know You Needed to Know About Algae
Room N257

Exit Like a Boss: How to Build a Deck Business You Can Sell for Maximum Value
Room N258

From Concept to Swimming: Customizable Plunge Pools for Smaller Backyards
Room N254

Shotcrete - The Good, the Bad, and Ugly
Room N259

Retail Panel: Strategies to Improve Your Retail Performance
Room N252

2 p.m.-2:45 p.m.

Winning High-End Clients: The Art of Selling Luxury Outdoor Living
Outdoor Living Stage - Booth 3454

Meet The Experts

Expo Stage - Booth #339

2:45 p.m.-3:45 p.m.

GENESIS E106: Hiring an Engineer Without Remorse
GENESIS Solution Center - Booth 1415

3 p.m.-3:45 p.m.

Smarter Deck Building with AI: Tools That Work as Hard as You Do
Outdoor Living Stage - Booth 3454

Leading Where You Are: Mentorship, Influence and Growth in the Pool & Spa Industry
Expo Stage - Booth 339

4 p.m.-5 p.m.

GENESIS D112: Small Space Design
GENESIS Solution Center - Booth 1415

PHTA WAVE Young Professionals Happy Hour
PHTA Booth 1419

6 p.m.-8 p.m.

Welcome Party
AYU Dayclub at Resorts World

Thursday, October 23

8 a.m.-9 a.m.

Bob Lowry's Pool Chemistry for Service Pros
Room N257

Bridging the Gap Between Contractor and Manufacturer
Room N258

Marketing Automation & Funnels That Convert More Leads
Room N253

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NADRA The Deck Business Blueprint: Day 2 - PERFORMANCE: The Profit & Performance Blueprint
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GENESIS Solution Center - Booth 1415

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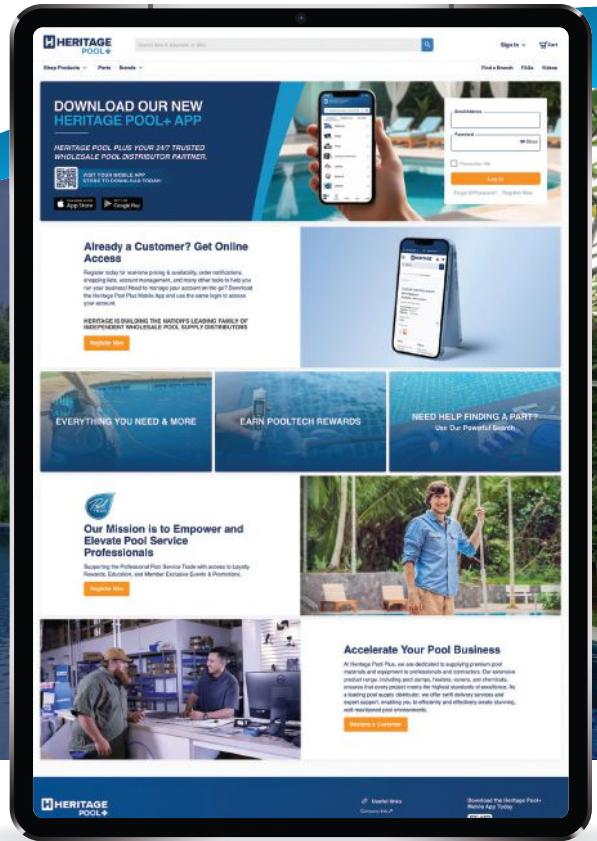
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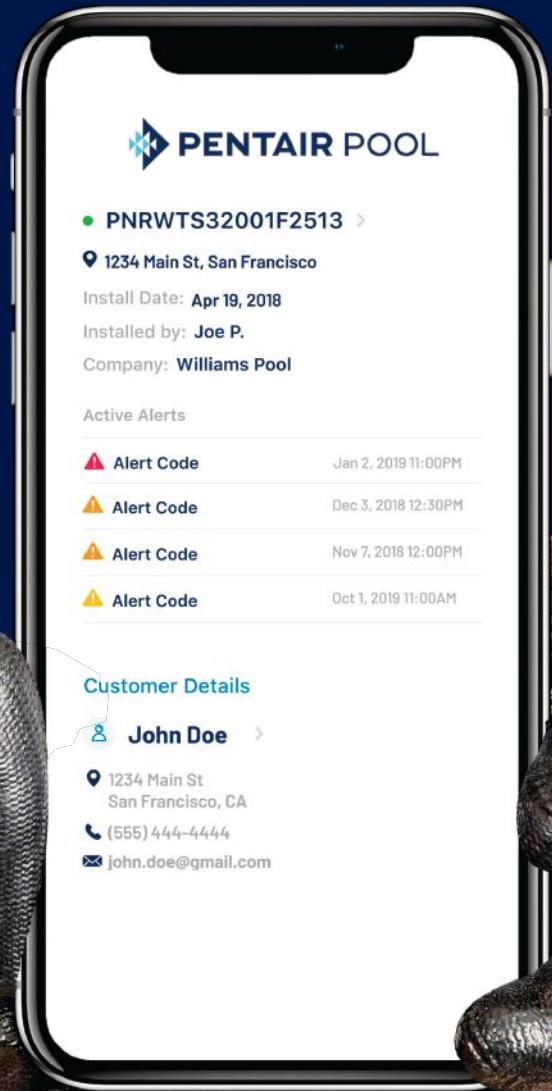


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ASCENDING 2025

The climb may not be as fast or easy, but for these four companies it remains steady. Here's what they did to position themselves for the next summit.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO



THE IN-HOUSE SOLUTION

In just a couple years, social media has taken a dominant hand in fueling sales for this PSN Top 50 company. So it decided to invest in kind.



This has proven to be a successful year for Avree Custom Pools, based in the Houston suburb of League City, Texas. By spring, the PSN Top 50 Builder was enjoying a substantial year-over-year increase in number of projects sold, with similar growth in revenue. Lead flow, in general, was more brisk than last year, say Managing Partners Sam Pizzo and Bill Zupon.

The team, who founded the company in 2019, credits this growth in part to the normalization of certain post-COVID conditions. “We think people have gained a little equity over the past year or two, and they see that interest rates are staying and probably not going down anytime soon,” Pizzo says. “[They’re thinking], ‘Let’s go ahead and put the pool in, because we have a little bit of equity, we like where we’re at, and we’re not going to find anything more cost-effective. So we won’t be moving anytime soon.’”

But the duo also credits a major change it made to the company’s marketing strategy in 2024: It created and filled the position of full-time marketing and communications manager, whose job includes creating the content for the company, while reducing the work it sends to marketing agencies.

TAKING CONTROL

Pizzo and Zupon decided to make the move after seeing social media play an increasing role in attracting clients. Where only two years ago social media drove 5% to 10% of Avree’s sales, that figure has well surpassed 30%.

They believe bringing the work in-house has given them the ultimate control of their brand within the community. “And we’re able to create so much more content because we have a guy who shows up at the office everyday at 9 a.m.,” Pizzo says. If we have a project going on, he can jump in a truck with our salesperson ... He can see a project during

construction and say, “We have some interesting things going on, so let me take some pictures and share that content.”

The position also makes the company more nimble in its marketing strategy, Zupon says. Marketing and Communications Manager Brandon Grace can track and respond to trends more quickly with new ideas. And if something isn’t working, he can shift gears almost immediately.

“It’s interesting to see from a month-to-month standpoint what our clients engage with,” Pizzo says. “Some months they really want to see finished projects, others they want to see the tile crews grouting the tile. It changes constantly. So we have shot content of everything there is to do in building a swimming pool, from digging, to tying rebar, to tile work.”

Grace also can work local events where the company wants a presence. “If there’s something going on on a Tuesday afternoon, for instance, he can attend those events, where before it would take salesperson resources or Sam or myself to do that,” Zupon says.

The company uses an outside agency to perform some of the analytics and ad placement.

In seeking to fill the position, Zupon and Pizzo sought somebody with a background in marketing, along with well-developed photography and videography skills, since content creation would play such an important role in the job.

“And find somebody who’s not afraid to go on the job site, talk to people — and just try things,” Pizzo suggests.

They made sure to outfit Grace with the right equipment, including high-end cameras, a high-quality drone, professional-quality laptop and software for video editing.

The team has been happy with their change so far. “The return on that investment ... was a lot greater than we had anticipated, just because the brand awareness is better, and the communication with the client is better,” Zupon says.



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To better prepare for growth and unpredictable conditions, this Top 50 company changed its billing and culture.



After a frustrating 2024, Michael Panella came into 2025 ready to get back on track. His company, Swimming Pool Services, of Waukesha, Wis., had been managing the economy just fine. But the weather seemed determined to frustrate workflow, with rain and its aftermath hindering approximately 15 weeks in a row of construction.

“Our production teams did not string together a Monday-through-Friday work week until after the Fourth of July,” says Panella, CEO of the PSN Top 50 company. “We were basically two months behind all year.”

But that was last year. With recent changes, the company has solidified its ability to adapt to whatever conditions come.

PROACTIVE BILLING

One recent move by the company secures a significant portion of the year’s service revenue before the season even starts.

The company had already incentivized clients to order and pay for pool openings early in the year, but waited until mid-summer to do the same with closings. Recently, it moved to ordering and scheduling both in January or February.

Regular clients receive agreements for the year’s opening and closing, prepopulated with details and price based on services they received the year before. The client need only approve the payment if they want the same services as last year, or let the company know of any changes. “We used to be content sending out blank forms and waiting for people to fill them out,” Panella says. “Now we play offense.”

Clients also receive a discount for early openings. “We tell them, ‘Why don’t you let us open your pool before everybody else? Not that you’re going to be swimming in April, but let us open the pool and [you’ll] get a smoking good deal,’” he says.

With the change, the company collected close to half its opening/closing fees in the first couple months of 2025.

CULTURE REFINED

Changes like this can take adjustment, but after reshaping

the company’s culture, the team can adapt more quickly.

It’s been a process of evolution. The firm began by articulating its mission, then drafted its “Seven Points of Culture,” or core values: customer satisfaction, integrity, communication, excellence, teamwork, balance and fun. “Everyone on our team is subject to live by those seven core values,” Panella says. “That culture also applies to our clients and vendors.”

These set the culture’s foundation, and seep into everything the firm does. Values are referenced in job interviews, performance reviews, disciplinary action, and reward systems. For instance, when staffers nominate each other for Employee of the Quarter, they state which values that person exemplifies. The idea is to weave these principles into the company fabric. “As filtered our decisions through the core values, everybody got on board or found a different place to work,” Panella says.

To convey appreciation, Swimming Pool Services gives a monthly Member Appreciation Gift to each employee — items such as company logo jackets or gift cards. Employees also receive an annual bonus in spring.

Panella takes particular pride in one component of his company’s culture. “We’ve made the biggest strides in regards to work-life balance,” he says. “We used to be like everybody else, where we worked 80 hours per week, then got burned out. And it stunk.”

Even Panella transitioned away from his 80-hour work week. To promote work-life balance, employees receive two paid weeks off for the holidays. If a staffer continues to work more than they should, it may come out of their bonus. “We’re willing to pay more to work less,” Panella explains.

He credits these changes for its reduced turnover. “This was the first time in the last number of years where we weren’t going into the season thinking, ‘Okay, we need to hire four people or we’re in trouble,’” he says.



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THE COVID LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

After seeing how his company performed under extreme conditions, this builder is fine-tuning operations.



The COVID bubble represented a lot of things. For PSN Top 50 Builder Erik Eikevik, it served as a magnifying glass, showing where his company could improve.

“When you have that much business, there are more things that can get overlooked,” says the vice president and owner of Ike’s Carter Pool Companies in Oakland Park, Fla. “Especially when dealing with a shortage of products and labor, it just makes things hard, and more mistakes happen.”

With the chaos having dissipated, he can shift his attention to the big picture. “We’ve been working on the business more, because I don’t ever want to go through what I went through with COVID,” he says.

To prepare for whatever the future brings, he and his team have focused on improving processes and procedures, as well as bringing in a new revenue stream to compensate for slowed-down construction.

THE BIG PICTURE

When his crews had to work at pandemic pace, certain patterns of worker error or oversight became apparent. With crews overwhelmed, they sometimes would skip steps or make small mistakes. “We were seeing similar mistakes happen, whether something was missed when they were checking the gunite or shotcrete phase, or maybe an elevation was off.”

The company had already provided crews with detailed checklists to prevent oversights, but in the rush they sometimes still occurred. So, to eliminate these patterns, Eikevik is digitizing processes as much as possible. Now, for instance, he uses a software that walks crews step by step through the process of checking a phase before moving on to the next one.

“Work orders come through the tablet or phone, and it has more of an automated process,” he explains. “[It will tell them], ‘Check the measurement here,’ and they check that off. Then it sequentially opens the next thing they’re supposed to check. When everything is checked off, that would

alert our construction coordinator that it’s been approved.”

RISING ABOVE THE LOWBALLERS

Business has been steady enough for Ike’s Carter Pool Companies. However, in addition to the general slowdown experienced by many the last couple years, his market has been faced with a challenge left over from the historic rise in demand for new pools in the early part of this decade.

“There are more pool builders than I’ve ever seen,” he says. “So some of those contractors are ... having to be a lot more aggressive on their pricing. A lot of people don’t understand how to calculate their prices correctly. I see ads for \$40,000 pools. I don’t know how they can build it for that much.”

To help compete and add to his backlog, Eikevik has initiated more collaborative work with custom-home builders.

“We probably added 20% to our revenue stream through that,” he says. “In 2019, we did 120 or 130 pools and the revenue was \$7.4 million. In 2023 it was \$7.8 million and we did 60 pools.”

Part of that resulted from the sizable cost increases that reflected in contracts, he says. “But that also happened from the amount of high-end projects we do. It stabilized us.”

This kind of work isn’t for everyone. These alliances bring their own set of challenges. “Some people like working with home builders, because you don’t have to work with the homeowner,” Eikevik says. “But some don’t, because ... you’re under their terms, and they pay when they want.”

When looking for these types of partnerships, he advises, pool builders must be very selective and go into the relationships with eyes open. “You want to work with good established home builders who have some dignity,” he says. “You have to really have your ducks in order and be versed in your state’s laws and work with a lawyer to make sure you have your rights, [in case] somebody tried to not pay you or went out of business. You want to make sure you have good relationships.”

PHOTO: IKE’S CARTER POOL COMPANIES

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RISING ABOVE THE LABOR SHORTAGE

To attract and retain staff and prepare for the growth that comes with consolidation, this PSN Top 50 Service firm fine-tuned its management and benefits.



For The Amenity Collective's commercial aquatics division, 2024 was a record-breaking year, and 2025 promised more of the same.

Formed by the consolidation of three pool management companies — American Pool, Continental Pools, and Swim Club Management Group — this division of the Amenity Collective largely focuses on the commercial sector. But it has stepped solidly past the pandemic days, which took a harsher toll on the commercial market.

"I would say 2024 was as close to pre-COVID as possible," says Brian Bergeski, president of commercial aquatics for The Amenity Collective, an Owings Mills, Md.-based PSN Top 50 Service firm.

One highlight: The continual rise in renovations.

He expects the success to continue. With some fine-tuning in its staff management, the company positioned itself not only to thrive in 2025, but also sidestep the labor-shortage issue for years to come.

THE UNQUANTIFIABLE THINGS

In addition to the struggle finding good help to maintain and renovate the pools the company manages, The Amenity Collective must deal with a labor shortage that's nationally renowned — that of lifeguards. But Bergeski believes the firm has landed on the magic formula for filling all the positions.

It began by investigating what people seek in an employer. The company surveys all staffers. It employs thousands of individuals between its five brands and 17 locations, so it received plenty of input to assess. In quick order, something became very clear: Pay did not rank as the top motivation for permanent employees to stay, seasonal labor to return, or for all to recommend the company to friends looking for work.

So it began focusing on the less quantifiable aspects of employment. It recently hired a director of leadership and executive development, who provides personal, professional and leadership training opportunities for employees.

"His role is to work with everyone from our executive teams all the way to our full-time employees," Bergeski says. "He provides or oversees group coaching of staff as well as one-on-one mentoring."

He also oversees education and training at the company's in-house conferences. "We have roughly 100 full-time employees from five markets, and we're having a full day just on personal and professional development," Bergeski says.

STRUCTURED FOR GROWTH

To further the company's growth, it also has strengthened the organizational structure to better support local operations. Between the top corporate management and staff sits a middle layer to check in and guide the staff at each location.

"Our Support Services [team] really helps keep all our frontline people doing what they need to do," Bergeski explains. "We have centralized the best of the best to constantly meet with them, support any needs they have, and share best practices, using some of the technology we have invested in. When needed, we can really lean in, mitigate the situation and pivot really quickly."

He says the efforts have paid off, and he expects them to position his company for another great year.

"We've continuously grown, both topline and bottom line — and it's all organic," he says. "We haven't had an acquisition in a couple years ... but we've doubled our EBITDA over the past two years with the same operations and footprint, and that's just a testament to the people."

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The Future of Retail is Digital—Are You Ready?

It's time for pool and spa retailers to embrace modern retail tech to thrive in 2026. Here are some expert tips.

In an industry where trust, expertise, and personalized service are essential, pool and spa retailers have a unique edge over big-box competitors. However, in today's digital-first world, there is a growing demand to provide customers with a seamless experience – whether browsing a website for pool chemicals, walking into a store for water testing, scheduling service or searching for products to pick up immediately. This is where today's modern retail technology can ensure your business retains its edge over the competition.

The rapid evolution in retail expectations and technology has made it essential for pool and spa retailers to “meet” customers wherever they are. The good news is that there are technology tools that empower pool and spa retailers to stay ahead of competitors and thrive. From Mobile POS, anytime access to inventory, customer data, instant communication tools and seamless payments—these digital tools will allow pool and spa businesses to adapt, gain efficiency, loyalty, and profitability.

The rise of mobile POS and mobile service

Mobile POS is a game-changing technology tool for pool and spa retailers. It allows your team to process sales from anywhere within or outside of the store, eliminating lines and providing incredible convenience to customers. Your staff can help the customer answer questions, select products, check inventory, ring up the sale and email the receipt without leaving the customer's side. Additionally, your staff has real-time-access to customer data that allows them to make other product recommendations and more.

Mobile Service helps techs in the field and is a big time-saver back at the office. Service techs can easily view Scheduled Jobs along with the Customer's Information including equipment profiles, job notes, directions and pictures on record. With RB Mobile Live Service techs have immediate access to all updates done at the office and the office is instantly updated with a tech's work in the field. Mobile Live eliminates service forms, allows techs to record pool or spa water test results, take payments at the job site, look up inventory and do physical inventory on their truck, all on a phone or tablet. Mobile Live Service also gives techs the ability to leave an electronic “door hanger” for clients with before and after pictures of their services and water test results. Best of all, the integrated software keeps track of all service and customer information that can be accessed anytime from anywhere.

Communication tools that meet modern expectations

Outdated communication is quickly being replaced by new digital tools. These messaging tools should be integrated into your business software. Look for a solution that offers:



- **Text Messaging:** provides real-time updates and reminders to customers and staff
- **DocuSign integration:** provides digital contracts and waivers to clients
- **Email receipts and contracts:** provides paperless, efficient, and professional communication documents

These features enhance the professionalism of your business and help build customer trust. By using the latest digital communication tools integrated within your business software, you can track all communication by all staff, all in one place.

Seamless payments: ACH, cards on file, and more.

Like all other digital tools, seamless payment expectations for fast, secure, and repeat-friendly payments are required in today's business environment. Ideally, payment features should:

- Store ACH and credit card info securely
- Automate recurring billing for services
- Process payments in the field via mobile devices

These digital payment tools help you streamline billing, improve cash flow, reduced admin time and overdue balances while reducing your workload.

Are you ready?

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2025 DREAM DESIGNS



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS YEAR'S
AQUATICS INTERNATIONAL AWARDS
CELEBRATING COMMERCIAL DESIGN

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

MONTGOMERY WHITEWATER



ARCHITECT: Liquid Design + Architecture; **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Goodwyn Mills Cawood; **AQUATIC DESIGNER:** S2O Design & Engineering; **AQUATIC CONSULTANT:** Cloward H2O; **POOL/SPA/WATERFEATURE CONTRACTOR/GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** JESCO Construction; **AQUATIC STRUCTURAL:** AE Urbia

SPECIALTY ATTRACTION

MONTGOMERY WHITEWATER

MONTGOMERY, ALA.

One of three whitewater parks in the U.S., this feature brings the thrill of rafting to the city.

At a time when surf parks have become a popular topic of conversation in the aquatics and waterpark world, it only makes sense that a not-so-distant cousin would emerge — man-made whitewater venues. Montgomery Whitewater shows why.

With this 120-acre outdoor recreation and entertainment complex, near downtown Montgomery, Ala., the city and designers sought to create man-made whitewater that would not only engage veteran rafters but also serve as a training ground for newbies.

The space also would need to attract a wide audience through a range of activities such as competitions, festivals, and swift-water rescue training for first responders and other events and activities.

Designer Scott Shipley, president of S₂O Design and Engineering, brought expertise as a three-time Olympian with four world titles in canoe slalom.

TURBULENT COURSE

The team delivered with a network of recirculating whitewater courses that accommodates users of all skill levels.

For a relaxed Class II whitewater experience, the 1,900-foot-long Adventure Channel mimics a natural river. A greater challenge comes from the 1,600-foot-long Competition Channel, designed to Olympic standards and offering Class II-IV rapids suitable for competitive slalom events. The channels intersect in a lower pond, with a standing wave surf feature.

To keep the water clean, engineering firm Cloward H₂O had the area graded to keep runoff from the pond, minimizing dirt and pollutants in the water. Civil engineers created a drainage system to carry away runoff.

Cloward designed the recirculation system to clean dirty water before reintroducing it, with 24 high-rate horizontal media filters. Activated Filter Media,

instead of sand, can capture particulate as small as 1 micron. The system can maintain the desired water quality when running at only 50% capacity, to be throttled up for extra filtration.

RapidBloc Technology allows operators to adjust the rapids into infinite configurations. They can resculpt a course by moving the large steel and rotomolded polyethylene blocks so water can rush and reflect against surfaces in different ways.

With 12 million gallons of water constantly on the move, the potential loss from backwashing is huge. To minimize this risk, the horizontal media filters backwash into a large holding tank, which includes its own filtration and ozone system. Designers estimate this reduces potential lost water from approximately 14.6 million gallons to about 480,000 gallons per year. The tank also provides makeup water for gallonage lost to evaporation, etc.

PHOTO: MONTGOMERY WHITEWATER



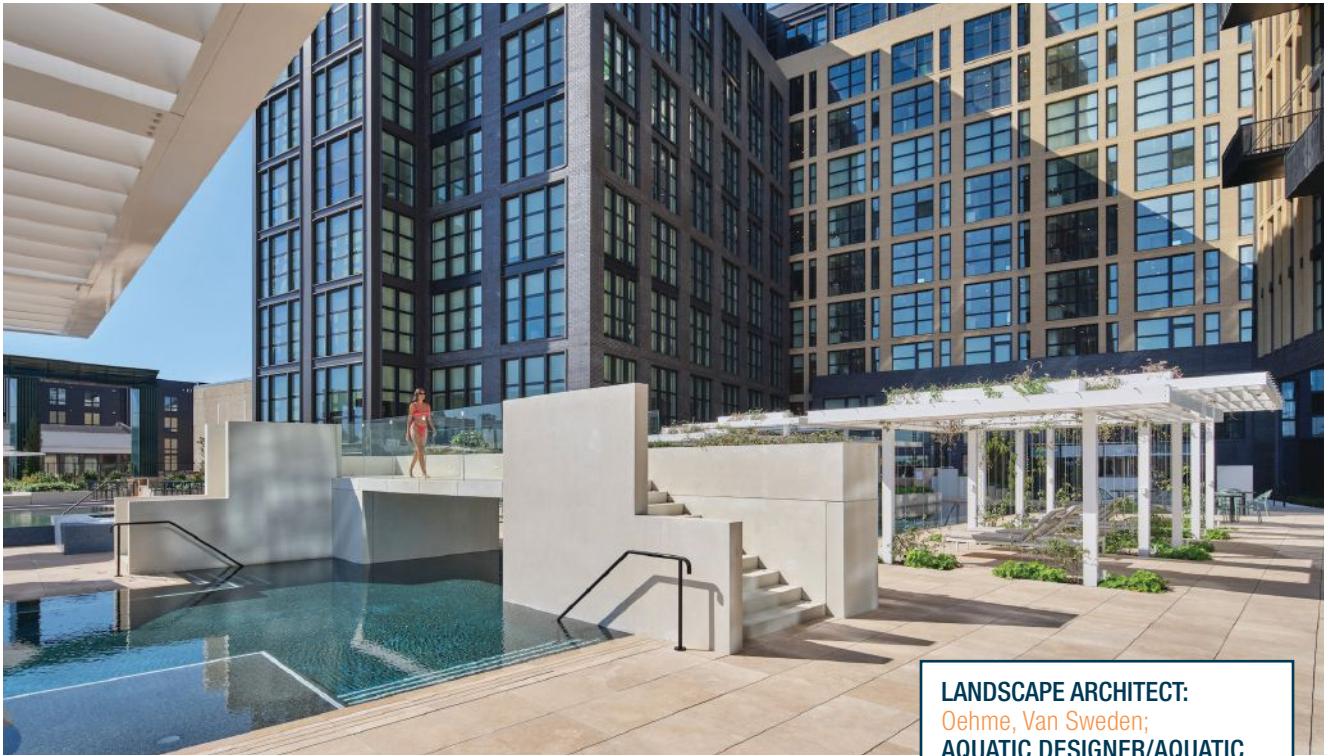
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 CONSULTANT:** Martin Aquatic;
**OUTDOOR DESIGN AMENITY
 ARCHITECT:** DIGSAU; **POOL/SPA/
 WATERFEATURE CONTRACTOR:**
 Main Line Commercial Pools;
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Post
 Brothers; **STRUCTURAL/MEP
 ENGINEER:** BKV Group

HOTEL/RESORT

CANOPY CLUB AT ONE THOUSAND ONE

PHILADELPHIA

A modern rooftop playground sits atop the biggest residential development in the City of Brotherly Love.

The developers were building the largest residential property in the city — and they wanted a rooftop poolscape to match.

“It was the client’s intent to create an abovegrade amenity that didn’t exist in their region,” says Jonathan “JT” Toavs, a studio director at Orlando-based Martin Aquatic. “They intentionally dedicated a vast amount of roof deck for the overall feature.”

The pool had to span an immense area by rooftop standards, and present that mass in an impressive way — all while making the residents feel at home.

In a waterscape large enough to fill the unusually expansive rooftop space,

the team found ways to create a number of intimate areas that unify into a cohesive whole.

THE ONE AND THE MANY

To create a sense of cohesion and highlight the rooftop’s vastness, the designers stretched a common thread across the length, in the form of a 169-foot-long central pool.

This highlighted the visual path from the main entrance on the rooftop to the other side of the building. (And the square footage will expand further in the future with the addition of another tower.)

Then the team mapped out smaller destination spots to create patches of

intimacy in the sprawling space. They packed the area with features to boost livability: fire pits, dry seating, dining seating arrangements, multiple outdoor kitchens with grills, refrigerators, ice makers, and sinks.

The sprawling pool is brought to more human scale with a zero-depth entry area for people to settle. The entry descends to a 1-foot depth until it reaches a sunshelf that stretches 25 feet, for plenty of wet lounging. Two unique conversation coves allow entrance into the pool, with one including a center table and bench.

A smaller cove pool, measuring 48-by-26 feet, offers a quieter water setting. A hot tub seats 13 people.

PHOTOS: POST BROTHERS

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Ivy covers the pergolas, and planters surround the spas, seating areas, bridges and the rooftop perimeter to soften the hard materials and clean edges.

The rooftop and main pool are divided by a bridge, fashioned with clean, straight lines to mimic the overall development's modern luxury. While substantial, the bridge was designed to avoid visual obtrusion.

"The bridge was designed in a way to allow for the function of a bridge while disguising the functionality," Toavs explains. "So we aren't just starting up a flight of stairs on either side of the pool."

Walls were used to conceal the steps from the view of the pool so it looked less bridge-like. Glass railings at the top of the bridge add the code-required height without the visual block that opaque walls would impose.

LINEAR COMPOSITION

The rectilinear forms of the pools mesh with the building's modern aesthetic and partner with the "infinity-edge" style pool gutter for a seamless feel.

A dark pool finish contrasts with the stark white of the bridge, umbrellas, and pergolas to reinforce the feel. Custom porcelain tile on the deck not only matches the clean lines and smooth finish, but also helped to minimize the opening on the gutter surrounding the pool and remove the institutional look of old-fashioned gutters. "It allows for that interface to be seamless," Toavs says.

This narrow slot around the gutter, along with the lines of the trellis frames, echoed the long, horizontal lines used on the building.

"It's the visual pull of the eye," Toavs says. "Your eye is focused on those lines, which all echo the same design

language, that same linear pattern that makes the space seem even longer."

Rooftop pools always bring technical challenges, with one being how to prevent leakage that could potentially damage the building. Complicating the situation even more, the pool was built across multiple towers. "It all reads as the same building, but structurally [they're different]," Toavs explains.

But, over time, these buildings will move in different ways. So the plumbing had to span the transition between the two and accommodate differing movement between the structures. Otherwise, owners faced the risk of plumbing cracks that could result in harmful leaks. This required careful placement of the pipe so its joints worked with the joints of the building. To help, the team used 3D modeling to locate every pipe and even every joint.



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ARCHITECT/LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT/INTERIORS: LPA Design Studios; **AQUATIC DESIGNER/AQUATIC CONSULTANT:** Aquatic Design Group; **POOL/SPA/WATERFEATURE CONTRACTOR:** Myrtha Contracting; **GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** Sinanian Development; **CIVIL/STRUCTURAL/MEP ENGINEER:** LPA Design Studios

A pair of rooftop pools make up the crowning jewel in this multipurpose facility set in one of the most arty and diverse cities in the County of Angels.

This recreation and aquatics facility had to take up a relatively small footprint in the dense city of West Hollywood, Calif. A set of rooftop pools provided the answer, offering fun and sun in a minimal footprint, while leveraging iconic city views. Eclectic artwork and bold colors fit into the vibe of the neighborhood, which includes the Pacific Design Center.

VIEW FROM THE TOP

The competition and recreation pools are meant to enable programming suitable for people of all ages, interests and abilities. Multipurpose spaces, a gymnasium, event terraces, and flexible rooms are included so the facility

can adapt to users' needs over time.

Blocks of color and bold textures, such as a white honeycomb pattern, give the facility's interior a contemporary flair. Outside, touches such as nostalgic neon art of a woman diving, along with materials like precast concrete on the outdoor surfaces add to the mid-century modern influence. Off-white and tan colors help integrate the pool with the neighborhood.

"These colors blend well with what we were aiming for — something that fits into the landscape rather than standing out as a sort of homage to itself," says John Courtney, managing director of sports and recreation for LPA Design Studios in Irvine, Calif.

"It's more conducive to blending in with the fabric of the neighborhood."

To support the pools, engineers employed a two-way trussed steel space frame system spanning 100 by 160 feet, supported by exterior concrete bearing and shear walls. This removed the need for structural columns. A 15-foot-deep box truss, placed between the pools, supports the 400,000 gallons of water and associated live loads. The system provides support while maintaining clearances for the gym below and tennis court adjacent. The gridlike system is exposed to the gym below, making for an interesting ceiling.

Natural ventilation, daylighting and solar panels add to sustainability.

PHOTO: CRIS COSTEA

PSP/Deck Expo Exhibitors Marketplace

Details on products of exhibitors at the 2025 PSP/Deck Expo are based on materials provided by the manufacturers.

BY PSN STAFF



Aiper Intelligent LLC Booth 737

Product: Scuba N1 Ultra Robotic Pool Cleaner
Features: dual-layer filtration system; capable of horizontal wall cleaning; infrared sensor system
Contact: aiper.com



Anderson Mfg. Booth 1739

Product: Light Leak Tester
Features: user covers the light and squirts dye to see if it gets drawn into the dome, indicating a leak
Contact: leaktools.com



APC/Cover Care Booth 1326

Product: THREE-SIXTY-FIVE
Features: automatic safety cover and coping system for vinyl liner pools; durable 3/4 HP motor, proprietary undercoated vinyl, exclusive Invis-A-Rope, and PowerTouch controller
Contact: automaticpoolcovers.com



Aqua Comb/Mi-Way Booth 2020

Product: Aqua Comb
Features: comes in two styles to clean pool and spa cartridges; attaches to a garden hose, blasting away debris while opening filter pleats for a deep, thorough clean; 100% made in the USA
Contact: aquacomb.com



Aquabella Tile Booth 1837

Product: Chateau - New Porcelain Series
Features: new Chateau series evoke playful and stress-free tones of the French countryside
Contact: aquabellatile.com



Aquamatic Cover Systems Booth 2547

Product: Hydramatic Covers
Features: the motors of Hydramatic covers run on hydraulic pressure rather than electricity; its patented cable compensator automatically aligns both sides of the cover as it extends and retracts; choose from 11 standard colors and six designer colors
Contact: aquamatic.com



AquaStar Pool Products Booth 1147

Product: FlowStar Actuator
Features: universal compatibility; retrofitting effortlessly to third party valves; plug-and-play connectivity
Contact: AquaStarPoolProducts.com



B Squared Pools Booth 1926

Product: B Squared Pool Interlocking Pool Walls
Features: patented interlocking pool walls are lightweight two-inch-thick structural polypropylene sandwich panels; eco-friendly, recyclable, energy efficient, corrosion resistant, salt-ready; quick and easy installation
Contact: bsquaredpools.com

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**Be Well Canada Spa
Booth 2015**

Product: Be Well and Maple Hot Tubs
Features: the Maple Collection now features new designs and enhanced hot tubs
Contact: spasbewell.com



**Blue Square Mfg.
Booth 1447**

Product: HydroFusion Drain
Features: with 210 GPM flow rating, unblockable design enhances safety and reliability, while the seamless finish blends cleanly into any pool surface; designed with builders and service professionals in mind for effortless installation
Contact: bluesquaremfg.com



**Bullfrog Spas
Booth 1426**

Product: A Series
Features: headrests are better aligned to the neck and spine and offer an improved fit and look; JetPaks now offer under-lighted headrests; all layouts, seats, and jet placements have been carefully re-evaluated to provide optimal therapy experiences
Contact: bullfrogspas.com



**BWT Pool Products
Booth 2521**

Product: NOVA Commercial Pool Robot Cleaner
Features: engineered for all types of pools, including beach-entry designs; equipped with smart technology, vortex suction, ultra-fine 4D filtration, gyroscopic navigation; full and efficient pool coverage even on steep slopes
Contact: bwt.com



**Carvin
Booth 2147**

Product: Pompeii Aboveground Pool
Features: engineered with full-resin components for maximum durability and weather resistance; built for easy, efficient installation
Contact: carvinpool.com



**Chemtrol
Booth 2054**

Product: PC1500 Chemical Controller
Features: ORP, pH, temperature, automatic data logging, remote access (wired or wireless)
Contact: sbcontrol.com



**The Cover Co.
Booth 1717**

Product: Coverlon Safety Cover
Features: offered in mesh or solid materials, and in a variety of colors; solid covers come in natural, gray, tan, blue and green; Super-mesh comes in green, blue and tan; regular mesh is available in those colors, plus black
Contact: coverlon.com



**Cover Valet
Booth 1715**

Product: Injection-molded Spa Side Style Step
Features: advanced injection molding manufactured step features a reversible anti-slip comfort tread; with a weight rating of over 700 pounds, it's built to stand strong against everyday use
Contact: covervalet.com



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**Deckorators
Booth 2937**

Product: Summit Decking
Features: lightweight, low-maintenance boards with stability and slip resistance; available in three natural, low-gloss colors; easy to install
Contact: deckorators.com



**Explore Industries
Booth 1927**

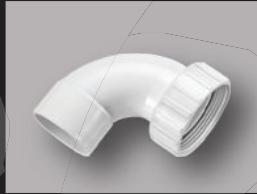
Product: The Wave from Leisure Pools
Features: fiberglass pool with a generous splash deck; spacious swim corridor
Contact: exploreindustries.com



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**Haviland Pool & Spa
Booth 863**

Product: Bagged Balancers
Features: select sizes of water corrective and chlorine complimentary chemistries in colorful, resealable retail friendly packaging; uses a gusseted base that allows the bag to stand independently on retail store shelves; products are available in both 5- and 10-pound sizes; made in USA
Contact: havilandpool.com



**HFS Financial
Booth 1727**

Product: Swimming Pool Loans
Features: loan amounts up to \$300,000; terms up to 20 years; up-front funding; no impact on credit to inquire
Contact: hfsfinancial.net

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**King Technology
Booth 1547**

Product: Pool FROG
Features: Pool FROG combines a low level of chlorine with FROG Minerals to create fresh mineral water; cartridges are prefilled to make maintenance easy
Contact: frogproducts.com



**LaMotte
Booth 947**

Product: WaterLink Spin Touch Photometer
Features: SpinDisk reagent cartridges contains the exact amount of reagent needed to deliver up to 10 vital test results—in just 60 seconds, with less than 3 mL of water
Contact: lamotte.com

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**Lyon Financial
Booth 837**

Product: Financing
Features: helps builders sell more pools and make projects smoother with the industry's longest terms (up to 30 years), fast approvals, and cash to customer AND staged funding options; offers military programs
Contact: lyonfinancial.net



**Magen eco-Energy US
Booth 1668**

Product: Heliocol, Solar Pool Heating
Features: patented individual-tube and over-molding construction maximizes pool heating efficiency; robust build and roof-top friendly installation
Contact: mageneco.com



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**Magic Plastics
Booth 2140**

Product: CR2 Corrosion-Resistant Check Valve
Features: reliable backflow prevention; clear, serviceable lid; 100% silicone gasket; can be installed vertically, horizontally and even upside-down
Contact: magicplastics.com



**Merlin Industries
Booth 1558**

Product: Merlin Drone Magix
Features: easily measure pools for new or replacement safety covers; takes 15 minutes to complete; can be done with the cover on or off
Contact: merlinindustries.com

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**Moasure
Booth 2859**

Product: Moasure 2 PRO
Features: motion-based measuring tool built to quickly and accurately measure complex pool shapes, patios, decks, and more; captures area, perimeter, elevation, volume, and grade data in seconds — no GPS, Wi-Fi, or cell signal required
Contact: moasure.com/pools



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Product: Enjoy
Features: provides all the chemicals needed for one month in a convenient box; available in four sizes
Contact: njonas.com

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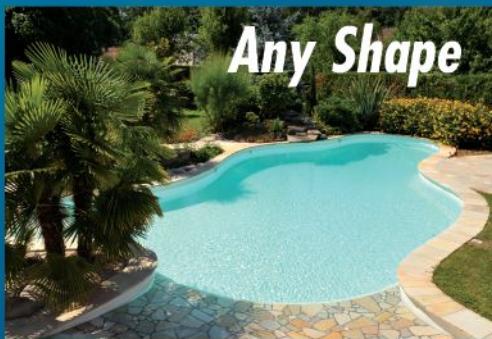
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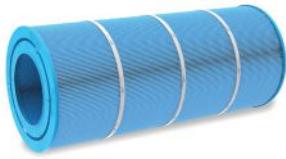
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**On Core Filtration
Booth 1633**

Product: EverFlow+ Replacement Cartridge Filter

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Contact: oncorefiltration.com



**Pegasus Products
Booth 1717**

Product: Inground and Aboveground Vinyl Liners
Features: made using virgin-grade vinyl that contains ultraviolet inhibitors as well as fungicide and biocide protectors

Contact: pegasus-products.com



**Plunge Pool Concepts
Booth 1557**

Product: Plunge Plus
Features: space-saving plunge pools engineered for efficiency, durability, and style; installs quickly with customizable finishes and innovative features

Contact: plungepools.com

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Product: Floating Wireless Bluetooth Speaker with Multi-Light Display

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Contact: poolmaster.com



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**Raypak
Booth 1039**

Product: Crosswind V
Features: vertical discharge heat pump pool heater designed with a smaller footprint and lighter weight
Contact: raypak.com



**RB Retail & Service
Solutions
Booth 1876**

Product: Integrated, Pool & Spa Business Software
Features: collect all business data in one system that can be accessed at any time, allowing pool and spa businesses to effectively compete against online retailers and big box stores
Contact: rbretailandservicesolutions.com



**RENOLIT
Booth 2515**

Product: Reinforced PVC Membranes
Features: textured, slip-resistant membranes can be installed on-site with no special equipment and no loud noise; installation takes days not weeks; suitable for any pool type; ideal for both renovation and new construction
Contact: renolit-alkorplan.com



**Rico Rock
Booth 2155**

Product: Jump Rock series offers attractive and safe pre-cast lightweight concrete rocks; roughly 22-inches high, made of a high-tech concrete mix and provide a simple, easy spot for kids to jump off the pool edge into the water; weighs roughly 200 pounds
Contact: ricorock.com

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**River Pools
Booth 1834**

Product: Flat-Bottom A36 pool
Features: the first in a new series of flat bottom pools, designed for games, gatherings, and lounging; with space to play and room to relax, this pool is sized at 16feet-wide-by-36-feet-long and 4-feet-6-inches deep with two sets of stairs connected by a long side bench; auto-cover ready
Contact:
riverpoolsandspas.com



**Softub
Booth 535**

Product: PoseidonX
Features: this spa is lightweight, durable, and easy to install — just plug into an isolated 1.5 amp/11.5 volt outlet, no special wiring, no costly upgrades; patented Hydromate Heat Pump system with Hybrid Horsepower, designed to deliver energy efficiency and reliable performance
Contact: softub.com

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**Spazazz
Booth 1723**

Product: Spazazz Aroma Spa Shock and Spazazz Cold Plunge Collection
Features: Top 50 Product Award recipient; Cold Plunge Collection and Aroma Spa Shock are designed to deliver premium wellness experiences that blend science and scent
Contact: spazazz.com

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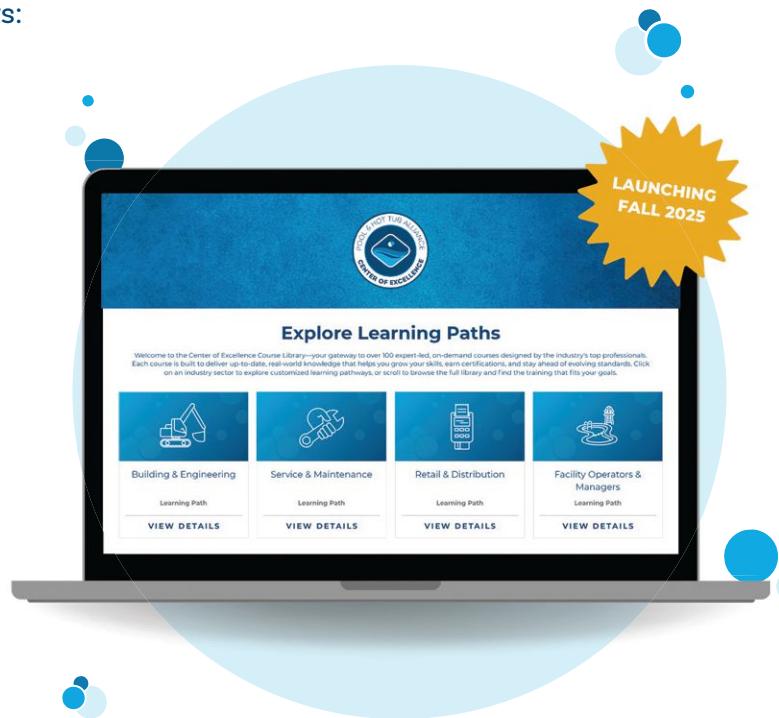
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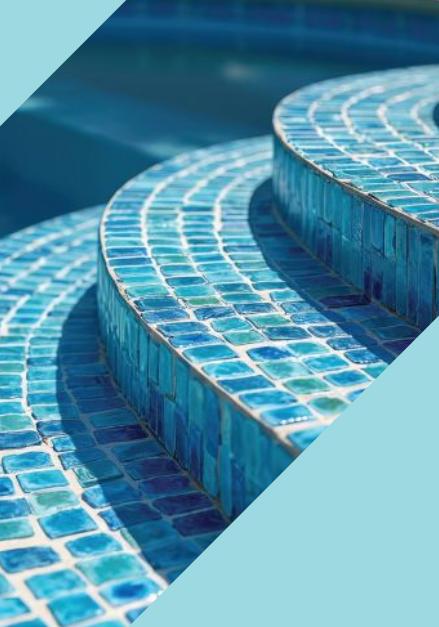
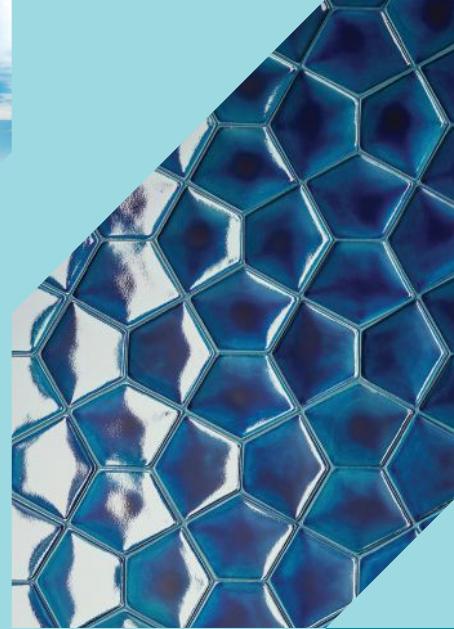
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Speck Pumps — Pool Products, Booth 1537

Product: BaduJet Turbo Pro System

Features: designed to provide a smooth and strong swim lane

Contact: usa.speck-pumps.com



VacDaddy Booth 2958

Product: The VacDaddy 2.0.

Features: variable speed power supply; shallow water adapter; vac to waste kit; Vac-Caddy carry bag; more

Contact: thevacdaddy.com



Thursday Pools Booth 1735

Product: NOOK Plunge Pool

Features: compact, wellness-inspired pool is 8-feet-4-inches-wide-by-16-feet-long with a 4-feet-8-inch depth; wide entry steps and a built-in-bench; ideal for small backyards and spaces

Contact: thursdaypools.com



Water Tech Corp. Booth 1154

Product: Precision V10

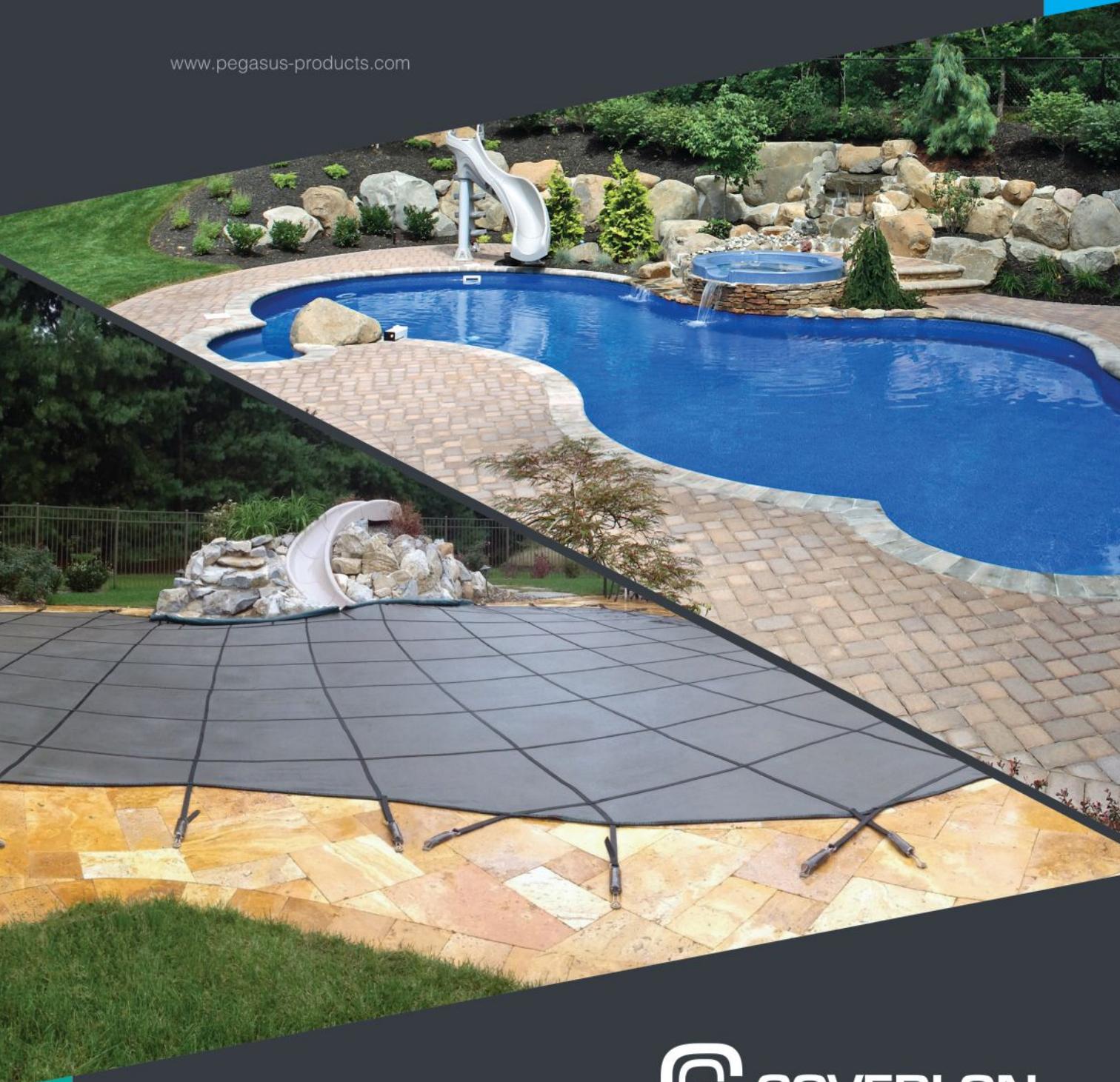
Features: pool cleaner is cordless and hose-free with enhanced features to improve the speed and quality of pool cleaning; Shallow Water Adapter to better clean areas like steps; powered by a rechargeable completely sealed and watertight lithium ion battery; weighs 12 pounds

Contact: watertechcorp.com



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