



Mathew A. Quimet
President and Chief Executive Officer
Cedar Fair Entertainment Company
One Cedar Point Drive
Sandusky, Ohio 44870-5259

Jon Storbeck
Vice President and General Manager
Knott's Berry Farm
8039 Beach Boulevard
Buena Park, CA 90620

Subject: Concern Over Knott's Berry Farm Planned "Fear VR:5150" Attraction

Dear Mr. Quimet and Mr. Storbeck,
The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Orange County (NAMI-OC) has high regard for Knott's Berry Farm (Knott's) as a long-standing, family oriented entertainment park. We view Knott's as a responsible member of the Orange County community. From this positive perspective, NAMI-OC believes that Knott's plan to open the attraction "Fear VR:5150" this Halloween season adds to the hurtful, dehumanizing, discriminatory, prejudicial, insensitive, offensive and stigmatizing of mental illness.

NAMI-OC recently learned of the Knott's "Fear VR:5150" attraction that is planned to be part of its annual Halloween Haunt. As reported by the LA Times, this attraction ". . . admits visitors to a mental hospital where a psychiatric patient with demonic powers is on the loose." We were stunned to learn of this proposed "event." There is a sense of outrage tempered by a hope that with a little education and awareness, Knott's will act to stop this unintentionally negative affront to the Orange County community and its' residents.

NAMI-OC has reached out to Knott's by email and by phone to discuss our deep concerns and to find a path to remedy this problem. Unfortunately we have not received any substantive response.

1810 E. 17th Street, Santa Ana, CA 92705 (714) 544-8488 Fax (714)544-0791
Email: info@namioc.org Web site: www.namioc.org
NAMI Orange County is a charitable, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation
(Tax ID # 95-3726369) affiliated with NAMI National and NAMI California

Mr. Mathew A. Quimet
Mr. Jon Storbeck
September 21, 2016
Page 2

NAMI-OC wants to share with Knott's and their corporate owner, Cedar Fair Entertainment Company (Cedar Fair) in Sandusky, Ohio that mental health conditions are not matters to be taken lightly and are not at all appropriate for stigmatizing entertainment. We want to educate and explain that this year in every community, one in four persons are living with a mental health condition and one in ten persons will experience a serious mental illness. Please understand that there is hope for living in recovery with a mental health condition, and that insensitive stigma is a real barrier to treatment and wellness.

Knott's and Cedar Fair should appreciate that in accordance with current scientific evidence, people who are receiving appropriate treatment and services for a mental illness are no more violent than the population at large. NAMI-OC abhors the portrayal in literature, films, and television of individuals with mental illness as being prone to violence. Even the title of your attraction is highly insensitive and salacious. These frequent depictions are degrading stereotypes and reinforce societal prejudices that serve as impediments to recovery. The truth is that individuals with serious mental illnesses are more often the victims of violence than perpetrators. Mental illness is essentially biological in nature sometimes triggered by environmental factors such as trauma, countering the myth that these conditions are failures of character and will. NAMI-OC believes it is in the poorest of taste that mental illness stereotypes are being used by entertainment sources for commercial gain.

Mental health conditions affect persons of all ages. Mental health conditions affect professionals, veterans, parents, siblings and spouses. Families, loved ones and co-workers are impacted by mental health conditions. NAMI-OC is confident that Knott's and Cedar Fair will reevaluate their position and share our indignation over the planned "Fear VR:5150" attraction.

NAMI-OC and others across the country are counting on Knott's and Cedar Fair to change their planned "Fear VR:5150" attraction to eliminate the unacceptable negative harm for persons living with a mental health condition as well as our entire community.

Sincerely,



John S. Leyerle
President
National Alliance On Mental Illness, Orange County