

Kampgrounds of America Celebrates 60th Anniversary

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KOA marks 60 years of innovation and leadership within the camping and outdoor industries in 2022

BILLINGS, Mont. (April. 11, 2022) – The world’s largest system of privately-owned campgrounds, Kampgrounds of America, Inc. (KOA), is celebrating its 60th anniversary. Advancing the business of outdoor hospitality since the first KOA opened on the banks of Montana’s Yellowstone River in 1962, the company has grown to include 525 franchised and owned locations across the U.S. and Canada.

“What began as just an idea and one campground has grown exponentially over six decades,” said Toby O’Rourke, president and CEO of Kampgrounds of America. “When KOA was founded, the goal was to provide easy access to camping options for travelers. We’ve taken that spirit of change and modernization and used it as a catalyst to become the leader in camping and outdoor hospitality.”

The first KOA was built near Billings, MT as a stopover for tourists traveling to Seattle’s Century 21 Exposition (World’s Fair). Dave Drum, a local businessman and entrepreneur, set up a modest campground and charged guests \$1.75 a night to pitch tents or park travel trailers. The campground offered private fire rings and picnic tables as well as a store, laundry and hot showers.

“While the beginnings of KOA might seem humble, Dave had an entrepreneurial spirit that still inspires our work,” O’Rourke said. “By keeping a progressive, customer-centric approach to our business, we established ourselves at the forefront of this industry. In 2021, we marked our best year in company history by an astounding 33% over the previous record. For a 60-year-old company, that’s the kind of momentum that will continue to propel KOA forward.”

In 1981, New York City entrepreneur and financier Oscar Tang, who was a significant stockholder of the publicly traded company, purchased KOA in its entirety. Returning the organization to private ownership in the 1980s, Tang’s values of fostering business and connecting people are reflected across KOA.

“KOA provides places where campers can make memories, and small business owners can build their dreams,” said Tang. “Over my four decades of owning KOA, I am proud of our work that has positively affected millions of people across the U.S. and Canada. It’s exciting to look forward and see endless opportunities within the camping, outdoor, and travel industry.”

The KOA brand is the most recognized name in camping and has maintained extremely high unaided brand awareness. Primarily a franchising company, KOA continues to evolve its service structure and value equation for business owners across the U.S. and Canada. Programs and services the company provides include the development of proprietary campground management software, access to industry-leading campground design professionals and best-in-class staff training.

In addition to its franchise locations, the corporation also owns 44 properties. KOA expanded its campground portfolio by 15 locations last year and has a continued interest in aggressively growing this business segment. Further, KOA recently launched a new luxury brand, Terramor Outdoor Resort, which finished its first full season at its flagship property in Bar Harbor, Maine, at 80% occupancy. The company is actively developing more Terramor locations across the country.

To celebrate 60 years, KOA is breaking ground on a new corporate headquarters in Billings. Just a few miles from the home of the original KOA campground, the new building will represent the company’s rich history and bright future in the Montana community and focus on the company’s mission of connecting people to the outdoors.

KOA is also planning several events and marketing campaigns. A commemorative hot air balloon featuring KOA and its signature brand will tour the U.S. throughout the year, making stops at balloon festivals and events. This summer, the brand will kick off “60 Days of Giveaways” to give back to camping enthusiasts. Supporting the company’s core belief that camping is fun and for everyone, KOA will expand partnerships and programs that promote inclusive access to the outdoors.

KOA is continuing to build on its long history of innovation. Beginning implementation this year, a partnership with Jamestown Advanced Products introduces Level 2 EV Chargers to campgrounds across the US and Canada. New main campground building designs also bring modernization and sustainability as campground owners look toward the future. These initiatives build on KOA’s Campground of the Future work that is defining the services, amenities and technology that will shape camping for decades to come.

“The real story of our 60th anniversary is that we are just getting started,” said O’Rourke. “With initiatives like the Campground of the Future, focusing on integrating emerging technologies like solar and electric charging and empowering our franchise owners to innovate, we are eagerly taking on the next 60 years.”

ABOUT KAMPGROUNDS OF AMERICA

[Kampgrounds of America](#), Inc. (KOA) is the world's largest system of open-to-the-public campgrounds with 525 locations across the U.S. and Canada united under the mission of "connecting people to the outdoors and each other." The industry leader in outdoor hospitality, KOA's family of campground brands – KOA Journey, KOA Holiday and KOA Resort – offer sites and amenities designed for every type of camping experience. In addition to unrivaled brand visibility, KOA offers campground owners unparalleled support, marketing, and technology. The company's proprietary reservation software, K2, delivers campgrounds a complete advantage within the market. Founded in 1962 in Billings, Mont. and celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2022, KOA now serves more than a million camping families each year, who rely on the standards of excellence and unique outdoor adventures for which KOA is known. For more information, visit [KOA.com](#).