

Kick off the season with a ride on a dizzying new coaster, a wild art installation, hot dance steps and more

Roll into summer

Writer Lisa Arcella (left) screams her head off during a ride on on El Diablo.

SEVEN STORIES HIGH!

URNS KNUCKLES WHITE!

SIX FULL SPINS!

By LISA ARCELLA

WHEN I was a teenager, I craved the adrenaline rush only a roller coaster can provide. That changed after I became a parent: Now I'm fearful just backing out of my driveway.

Determined to recapture my youth — and show my 10-year-old son Tyler that I'm still cool — we headed to El Diablo at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, NJ. You'd think the name would have tipped me off that this wasn't going to be a great idea.

The giant steel loop-ride stands seven stories tall —

that's 70 feet in the air. It's constantly gaining speed before slowing down for maximum hang time and reversing direction, for six full rotations. The ride lasts about two very long minutes.

As I stood on the platform waiting for the hysterically screaming riders before me to finish their turn, panic showed clearly on my face. Tyler looked on with amusement.

"Who's going to drive me home if you fall out of that thing?" he laughed. How sweet — I only gave birth to you.

Once I boarded, my subconscious was no longer buying the mantra and my left leg twitched uncontrollably. My seatmates,

Ashley Thompson and Amber O'Connor, ages 15 and 16, respectively, looked at me like I was insane as I struggled with the shoulder restraint, certain I had the one seat belt that wasn't working.

The staff assured me that I was very secure — isn't that what they're paid to do? — before giving the all-clear sign.

The wheel quickly pivoted backward, lifting me to about the 3 o'clock position, enough to make me feel like I was about

to fall into Amber's lap. "Oh my God, oh my God!" I cried.

The fall forward took us halfway up the other side — and then the real fun began. "Go ahead and scream!" the ride operator had said. Like she really had to tell me that, as the wheel began to do a series of 360s and I held on for dear life.

And during one of those loops, it completely stopped ... at the top. It was maybe only five seconds, but to me it felt like five hours. My fellow riders were laughing as we actually came out of seats while hanging upside down. (Bless you, shoulder harness!) I was on the verge of tears and holding on to the side-handle so tightly my

knuckles literally went white.

After another few loops of absolute terror, we slowed down and came back to earth. "That was so great!" Ashley said. "We have to do that again!"

"What?!" I blurted out from my now sore throat. "No, never!" They ignored me as they disembarked, but I knew what they were thinking. "Ugh ... old people."

I stumbled off, glad to be back on the ground. And then The Post photographer approached and said, "Great, but can we do it one more time?"

PULSE

MORE SUMMER FUN INSIDE!