

SANDPOINT

MAGAZINE

WINTER 2024

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Carousel

CLOSE TO COMPLETION

On the way to reality

I remember riding on a carousel with my toddler daughter at a mall in Olympia. We raced around the track, circling forever, always coming back to the smile and wave of Bobby, my husband, holding our infant son. Those memories are magical. The Carousel of Smiles, nearing completion, has already brought a ton of that special magic to Sandpoint, generating plenty of positive community spirit and a lot of smiles.

According to Reno and Clay Hutchison, in the golden age of carousels (the late 19th to early 20th century), 4,000 to 6,000 of these majestic rides were created. Today, approximately 160 of these mechanical works of art remain. The Hutchisons, chasing Reno's childhood dream, found and bought one of these vintage works of art, and when Sandpoint came up with a master plan for the city, they knew they had found the carousel a home.

"Sandpoint is a can-do community," Reno said, "and we just knew this was the right home for the carousel." Indeed, since 2016, the greater Sandpoint community has donated approximately 20,000 hours of work to restore the carousel. "Twenty-two of the horses are completely finished, and the mechanical parts are 65 to 70 percent complete," said Clay. Local businesses have stepped up to the plate to offer their support, and area artists and craftsmen have come in to repair, restore, and paint the horses. "Each horse has around 400 hours of donated time," Clay said. Best of all, each horse is a unique work of art and the panels around the carousel will feature interchangeable artwork that will continue to spread the magic throughout Sandpoint each and every year, as families gather during winter, spring, summer, and fall.

The city of Sandpoint held a competition to develop a vision for the design of the area's downtown, and in late summer of 2023 selected the work of GGLO+Bernardo Wills. The concept the team presented—they called it "The Blue Necklace"—proposes placement for the Carousel of Smiles near the parking area on the southeast entrance to City Beach.

The Carousel project is pleased at the continued support from the community for locating the carousel downtown.

In the meantime, the Hutchisons said the National Carousel Association will be holding their yearly event in Spokane in 2025 to honor the work that's been done on the Carousel of Smiles project. "The Carousel will be assembled, up and running for the event in 2025," Reno said.

Several of the carousel horses are located around town, and you can visit the Carousel of Smiles art gallery, located on the corner of Fifth and Cedar, to get in on the magic and the smiles now.

Learn more at www.thecarouselofsmiles.org

—Desi Aguirre

WREN BESSLER GETS A SNEAK PREVIEW OF THE FUN THAT AWAITS CHILDREN ONCE THE CAROUSEL IS FULLY FUNCTIONAL. STAFF PHOTO.