



The Boardwalk's new Sea Swings ride gives people a thrill Wednesday.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

# Sea swings hit Boardwalk during the spring season

Boardwalk

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SANTA CRUZ — Beach Boardwalk officials aren't too worried about riders on the park's new, giant swings giving into that grade-school instinct to flip their shoes as far away as possible.

As Tom Canfield, vice president of operations, pointed out, anyone who does that could lose a sandal to the sand and walk the rest of the day with a limp.

Nevertheless, the amusement park's new Sea Swings ride is proving popular with spring breakers this week as the Boardwalk opens every day for the first time in 2009, and the under-21 set is let loose in Santa Cruz County in search of sand and sunshine.

"It kind of feels like you're flying, if you hold your arms out," said Abby Bryant, 15, who was on spring break from Aptos High.

Bryant, a sophomore, and her classmate Jenna Kaysen, 15, joined the thousands of students and families expected to pack Santa Cruz County beaches and hotels this week to celebrate a week off from school. Highway 17 into Santa Cruz was backed up past the southbound Highway 1 exit early Wednesday afternoon, a scene normally reserved for a hot Friday in July.

While a specific number of county visitors was not available on Tuesday, Boardwalk officials said they expect



The Boardwalk's newest ride has been a big hit.

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

"thousands" of guests to take their turn on the new swings, as well as the Giant Dipper, Double Shot and other Boardwalk rides. Most guests are coming from the San Francisco Bay Area, spokesman Kris Reyes said, so much so that the Campbell YMCA and other groups are recruiting new local members in Santa Cruz this week.

Christina Glynn with the Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council said the number of guests visiting the council's information

centers is about the same as spring break last year, showing that even during an economic recession people are still looking to get away.

The Sea Swings assumed their new home overlooking Main Beach in November, and are opening for their first full season this year. Fiberglass chairs hang from chains a couple of stories long, which lift up and spin on a rotating center axle, suspending riders out over the Main Beach sand.

The ride is a throwback to

amusement parks of old. It is covered with airbrushed renditions of vintage photos of Main Beach sunbathers, long-board surfers and Neptune's Kingdom arcade.

"We hang onto nostalgia here," Canfield said.

The swings were built in Italy, then pieces were flown to Santa Cruz and assembled by Boardwalk staff, said Carl Henn, director of maintenance and development who has worked at the Boardwalk

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# SWINGS

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for 34 years. It replaces the Typhoon, was built in 1994 but needed a lot of maintenance and was losing popularity, and is much like a similar ride built by the same company in Tennessee's Dollywood, Boardwalk staff said.

Canfield said the Sea Swings ride, which has a more-than 54-foot diam-

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**CARL HENN,**

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk

eter when the chains are extended, has been on the Boardwalk's wish list for years. However, the right space had not been available until the Typhoon left. It cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000, Henn said.

Time will tell, Canfield and Henn said, whether

the swings join the ranks of the Giant Dipper, Fireball and Log Ride as Boardwalk favorites.

But Henn was optimistic.

"I think it has to do with what people like to do," Henn said, "and they like to swing."

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