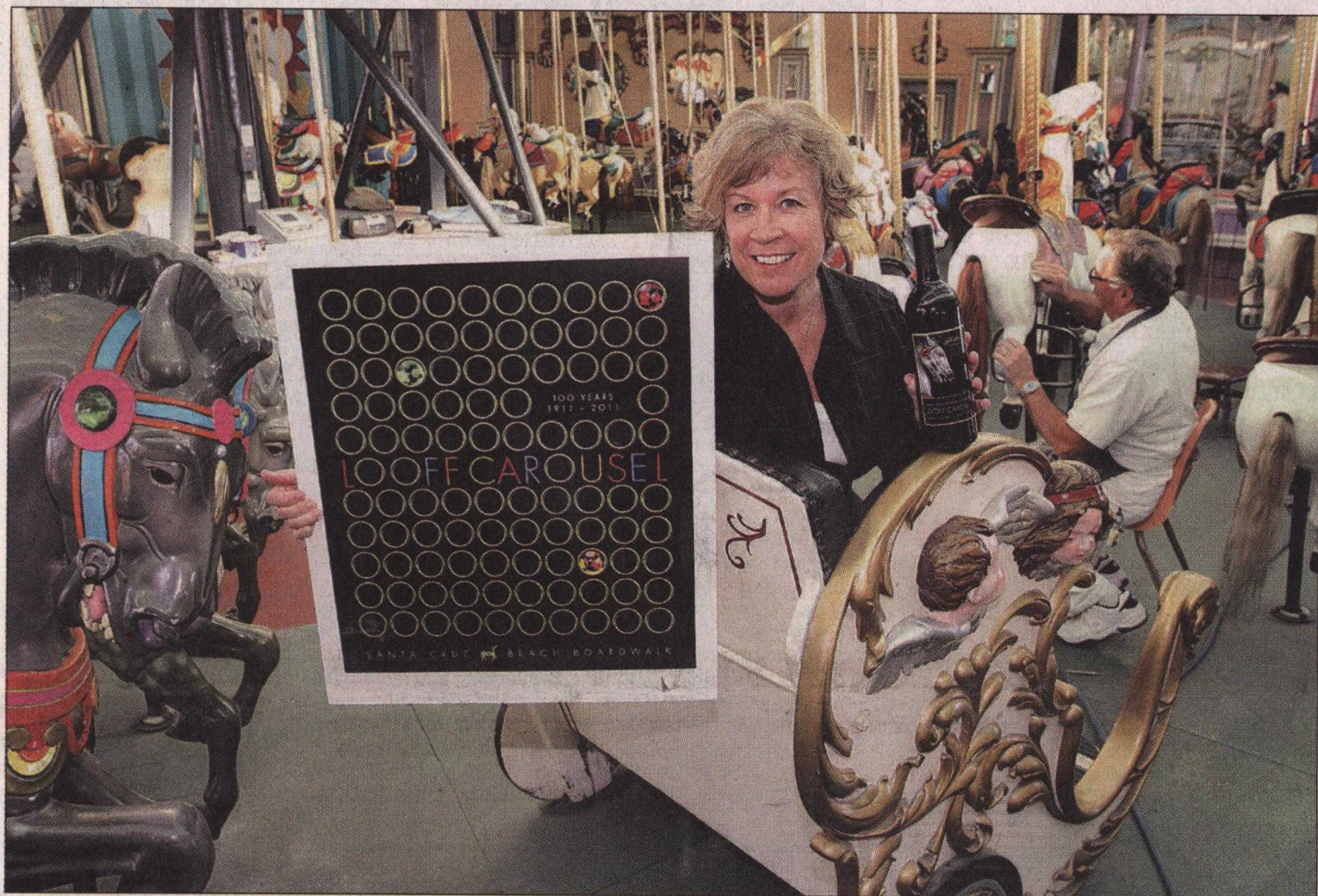


CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

100 years of the Looft



SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

ABOVE: Jill James holds the commemorative poster and wine label she designed for the upcoming 100-year anniversary of the Boardwalk's Looft Carousel. TOP: The Boardwalk's Looft Carousel, pictured here in 1912, will turn 100 on Aug. 3. BELOW: Families stroll outside at the Boardwalk, circa 1930.

BOARDWALK CELEBRATES ITS HISTORIC CAROUSEL

By JORY JOHN

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SANTA CRUZ — For nearly 100 years, the Looft Carousel, more commonly known as the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk's merry-go-round, has been traveling in circles.

Generations of theme park visitors, from toddlers to great-grandparents, have ridden horseback, attempting to throw their accumulated brass rings into a giant clown's mouth, lighting it up.

The carousel will commemorate its 100th anniversary on Aug. 3 but the Boardwalk began celebrating the milestone earlier this month. On Dec. 1, a commemorative poster designed by

Boardwalk art director Jill James was released, featuring rows of brass rings on a black background. Three of the 100 rings are encrusted by jewels, while larger text reads "Looft Carousel," the "O's" also represented by rings.

James, who frequented the ride when she was a child, worked on the poster for about three months.

"I used to come here with my older brothers, and throwing the rings into the mouth was a really competitive thing for us," she said.

She said she wanted to do something modern, but also felt the pressure to properly honor the Boardwalk's centerpiece.



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'It really doesn't matter if you're 10 years old or if you're 80 years old. Everybody loves the carousel. It is certainly a ride worth celebrating.'

KRIS REYES, Boardwalk community relations director

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CAROUSEL

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After being given free rein to experiment with different mock-ups, James produced designs that were more traditional, she said, including one with imagery of the wooden horses. It was the rings that she kept returning to, though.

"We all gravitated toward this design," she said. "I grew up with the carousel, so that was on my mind, but I also wanted to be contemporary, be about today. The design we decided to go with is very different. It's not your typical amusement park poster."

A limited edition of 1,500 posters were produced on quality museum paper stock, using light-fast ink. The posters are being sold for \$10 in the Boardwalk's gift shop, guest services office and website.

The Looft Carousel is the oldest ride at the Boardwalk and has been recognized as a National Historic Landmark. The horses were originally hand-carved by Danish woodcarver Charles Looft, who manufactured more than 50 carousels in

his lifetime, and the ride was delivered to the amusement park in 1911. It has never changed locations, while various attractions have sprouted up around it over the years. The next oldest ride at the Boardwalk is the Giant Dipper, the world-famous wooden roller coaster, which opened in 1924.

The carousel goes through about 40,000 rings each year, according to Boardwalk spokeswoman Brigid Fuller, who said sometimes the rings are returned to the Boardwalk's administrative offices by mail. Meanwhile, the horses are retouched annually by an artist who spends most of December on the project.

Although it's quiet now due to the Boardwalk's off-season, music for the carousel is typically provided by two antique band organs, one built in 1894, the other constructed in 1912. They have both been restored in the interim.

Fuller said the carousel would be in operation starting Dec. 26 and will run through Jan. 2. She added that the ride is a vital part of the Boardwalk's history.

"It's very beloved here," she said. "We spend a lot of time and effort taking great care of it. Those horses take quite a beat-

ing during the year, so there's quite a bit of maintenance that goes into keeping them looking really good."

Kris Reyes, the Boardwalk's community relations director, said the Boardwalk wanted to kick off the carousel centennial with a "nice showpiece, something we could share with our guests, fans and the community."

"It really doesn't matter if you're 10 years old, or if you're 80 years old," Reyes said. "Everybody loves the carousel. It is certainly a ride worth celebrating."

James has also contributed a design, commemorating the carousel's anniversary, to Felton's Hallcrest Vineyards, featuring a close-up of a wooden horse, placed on a black background. The label denotes that the carousel was recently ranked the No. 2 carousel in the world by monthly trade newspaper Amusement Today.

In coming months, the carousel will continue to be celebrated through a variety of Boardwalk promotions, Fuller said.

"It's a very important occasion in West Coast amusement park history," she said. "We'll have more announcements about our plans for the carousel soon."