

80 YEARS OF THRILLS



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

Marquis Cox and Margret McCullum of Hayward are another in the 80-year line of satisfied Giant Dipper customers.

Boardwalk celebrates best-known attraction

By SHANNA McCORD
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — Jenny Jin's stomach dropped when she looked up at the tall wooden structure and pictured herself strapped into the legendary Giant Dipper, which speeds down a couple of steep hills and jerks riders around corners.

It would be Jin's first time riding the famous 80-year-old roller coaster, and she was downright jittery.

"It looks fast and scary," said Jin, an eighth-grader from Hayward.

Weekend events

■ Check the list for what's going on this Memorial Day.

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Junior Middle School were all smiles, and any nervousness had vanished.

"It was so fun," Jin said when the ride came to a stop. "It felt like you were flying off your seat."

"It was scary in the dark, but after that it got really fun."

The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk sent a special invitation to the students at Martin Luther King Junior Middle School in Hayward to visit Friday and help the Boardwalk celebrate the coaster's 80th birthday.

For many of the students, it was their first opportunity to hop on the coaster designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987.

"It was an adrenaline rush," said David Singh, 14, another first-time rider.



See **DIPPER** on **BACK PAGE**

A Dipper-full of students from Martin Luther King Junior Middle School in Hayward enjoy the ride.

Dipper

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"I feel like getting back on."
Appearances in many television commercials and movies such as "Lost Boys," "Sting II," "Dangerous Minds," and Clint Eastwood's "Sudden Impact" have helped the red-and-white coaster reach a level of fame that's made it a Santa Cruz icon.

Built in 1924 by Arthur Loeff, the Giant Dipper is maintained by four full-time mechanics.

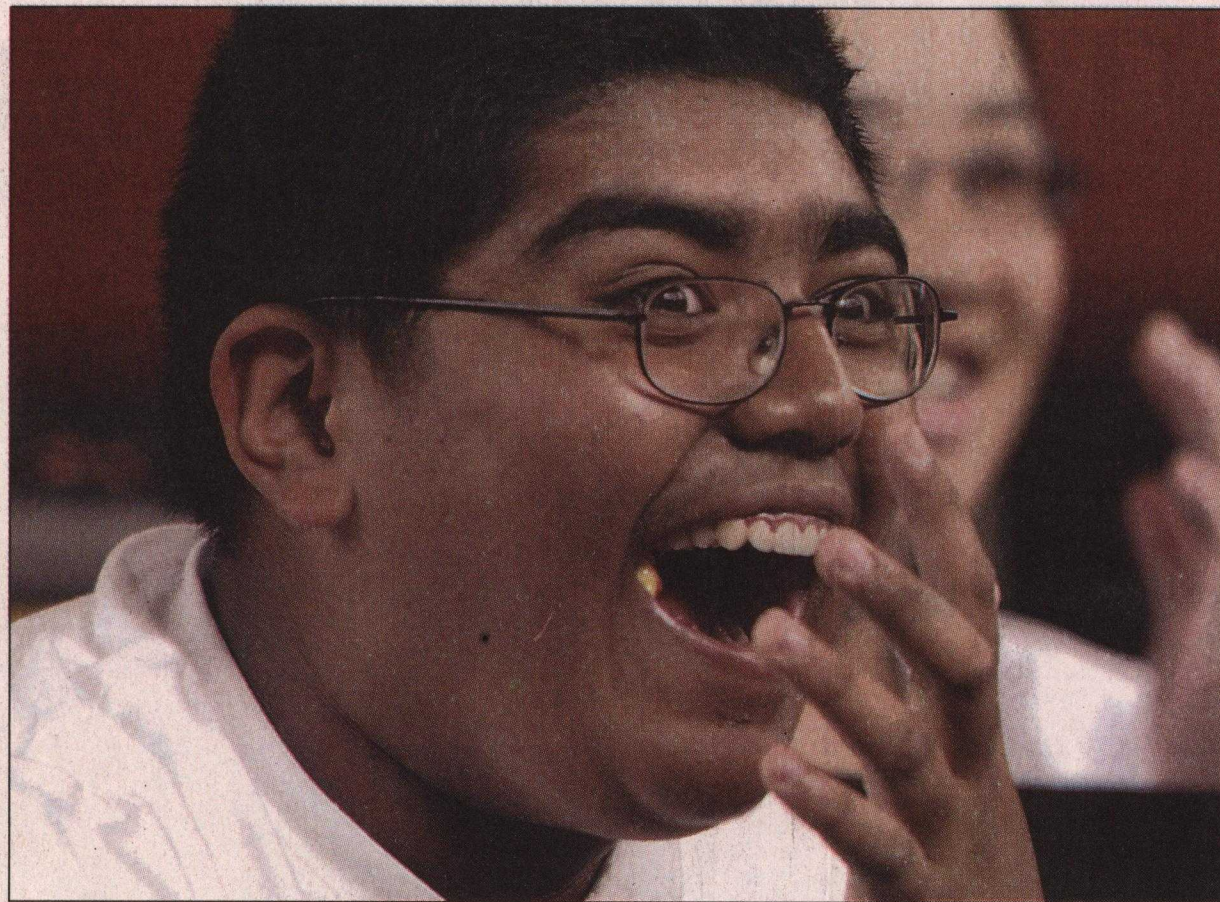
Brian Walters, the Boardwalk's lead coaster mechanic, walks the half-mile track every morning before the boardwalk opens to visitors. During the day, the track is walked every two hours in search of any loose or wobbly screws.

Walters said that since he started working at the Boardwalk in 1972, there's never been a serious injury on the Giant Dipper.

"Its age and that it's a wooden roller coaster means there's more to keeping it going," he said. "We want everybody to have a good time and come back."

The Giant Dipper is the seventh-oldest roller coaster in the United States

This weekend kicks off the Boardwalk's summer season. From now through Labor Day, it will be open seven days a week and feature special promotions such as "1907 Nights" on Mondays and Tuesdays, when rides,



Many of the students from Martin Luther King Junior Middle School in Hayward had never ridden the Giant Dipper before, and the first-time excitement is evident on this rider's face.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

hot dogs, sodas and cotton candy will cost 65 cents.

The free Friday night concerts series begins June 25 with the Greg Kihn Band. This year's schedule — again heavy on acts who were big in the late '70s and early '80s — includes Eddie Money, the Fixx and Jefferson

Starship.

Despite sky-high gas prices, the Boardwalk expects to be busy the next three months.

"Even for those driving here from Sacramento, it's just a few bucks difference," said Marq Lipton, vice president of marketing for the Seaside Co., which

operates the Boardwalk. "We're thinking it (price of gas) shouldn't have too much of an effect."

The Boardwalk has joined the list of tourist attractions in the state that prohibit smoking.

Smoking is not allowed at the park, except on the beach and designated outside areas.

In April, the county Board of Supervisors signed a proclamation recognizing the Boardwalk's efforts to protect children and adults from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Contact Shanna McCord at smccord@santacruzsentinel.com.