



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Cherie Robideaux is celebrating 35 years in business at her Woodworm Party Store in Capitola.

WOODWORM PARTY STORE CELEBRATES 35 YEARS

By JONDI GUMZ
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The name has changed, the location has changed and the merchandise has changed.

But the family that runs Woodworm Party Store remains committed as ever to the community.

That's why store owners Cherie and David Robideaux will host a carnival 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday to celebrate 35 years in business. The Mid-County Senior Center, their neighbors, will pitch in, and local nonprofits will benefit. Admission is \$5 per family and proceeds will go to Jacob's Heart, 4-H of Santa Cruz County, the local Boys and Girls Club, and the Soquel High School Sports Foundation.

"I enjoy the customers and the community," Cherie Robideaux said. "The people who have stayed with us are quite wonderful. They make my job really easy."

The family business got its start in 1973 in Capitola Village. Cherie's parents, Donna and John Manning, opened Bookworm and Woodworm with Dianne and Ron Graves.

"They made the most beautiful handmade doll houses," said Ron Graves, recalling John's talent as a woodworker when he wasn't on the job for the phone company.

After a year, the two couples had outgrown the space.

By 1983, Woodworm had

Benefit bash at Woodworm Party Store

WHAT: 35th birthday carnival bash to benefit local nonprofits.

WHEN: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

WHERE: 827 Bay Ave., Capitola.

COST: \$5 per family.

INFORMATION: 462-0455.

moved to Bay Avenue, a location with plenty of parking, where it became the party store it is today. At the time, the area didn't have a store specializing in party supplies.

It was the perfect niche for Donna Manning, who won the Capitola Chamber of Commerce's Community Spirit award in 1994. The family was recognized again in 2001 when the chamber selected Donna and her daughter Cherie, then partners in the store, for Woman of the Year honors. They stood out for their donations of party balloons and decorations for school and community events.

When Donna retired, Cherie "expanded everything" from party to wedding supplies, said Toni Castro of the chamber, calling her balloon selection "the best" and complimenting her decorations for the Capitola Art and Wine Festival, the Halloween parade, and the Easter egg hunt on the beach.

The Robideaux children, Abbie Stevens, 31, Beth Paiva, 27, and Jason Robideaux, 24, pitch in to help for those special events.

"Cherie and her family are

always there to not only help at special events but to give suggestions on how and where to use party supplies," Castro said. "I think the key to Woodworm's success is the personal service and how Cherie is so involved in everything that goes on in the community."

A few recent examples:

■ The store raised \$400 in honor of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month and matched it, giving \$800 to WomenCare of Santa Cruz.

■ At Christmas, store employees adopted three families from Jacob's Heart providing them with gifts and \$500 worth of gas and grocery gift certificates.

■ Each year the store adopts a local school. This year, it is Ohlone Elementary School in Watsonville.

The store will offer a 25 percent discount through Saturday to thank customers for their business.

There's more competition for party supplies today, but Dianne Graves said she still turns to Woodworm. She ordered balloons from Woodworm when one of her co-workers celebrated a birthday at Peachwoods.

"They are so accommodating," Graves said, explaining Woodworm's longevity. "They have a long-standing reputation — 35 years — I can hardly believe it myself."

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