

Lions, Rotarians and carousel horses ... oh my!

The two service organizations have a joint meeting decades apart, this time for a new cause

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PHOTO BY CINDY WEELDREYER

CAROUSEL—Russ McGuire (left) shows Rotarians and Lions pieces of the carousel during a joint meeting held May 24.

In 1990, the University of Oregon was playing the University of Colorado at Autzen Stadium when a player sustained a spine injury that landed him at Sacred Heart Medical Center for weeks.

A year later, his father Ed Rhinehart walked into a Springfield Rotary.

“Ed mentioned that his son was recuperating and walking with crutches,” said Don Williams, a longtime Rotarian in Cottage Grove. “They were thinking about a speaking tour to communicate the long struggle of rehabilitation after the spinal injury.”

Williams, a member of the local rotary meeting, offered the venue — in conjunction with the local Lions’ club — as a test site for the speaking tour.

“I went out on a limb at that time because the club’s had never met in a joint meeting before,” Williams said.

On Thursday, May 24, nearly 30 years later, they did it again.

While the clubs have met jointly once or twice a year around special occasions and holidays, the meeting on Thursday was to tour the carousel project at the WOE fairgrounds. The project, which has been on-and-off for the last two decades, has been making steady progress under its latest rebirth and is hoping to garner community interest to continue raising funds to bring the attraction to Main Street.

The carousel was brought to Cottage Grove by Judy Cash who, upon moving to the city, ventured down Main Street and imagined a carousel in the

middle of it. After inheriting money from a family friend, Cash traveled across the country to purchase the vintage carousel and bring it home to Cottage Grove.

Cash passed away in 2016, but just prior to her passing she told *The Sentinel* it was still her wish to see the carousel on Main Street, adding, “Where else can you take your family now where you can leave your worries at the doorstep and just be in a happy place? It’s a happy place.”

Cash left the carousel to the Friends of the Cottage Grove Carousel, who were tasked with raising funds and drawing enough interest to make Cash’s dream a reality.

Williams heads the board and invited the Lions club to join his Rotary club for a tour of the carousel last Wednesday.

“There were many positive comments. Several had heard of the project and commented they had no idea, until they saw the carousel being refurbished,

the magnitude of the project,” Williams said.

The Friends of the Cottage Grove Carousel have been working actively to raise awareness of the carousel over the last year with booths at local festivals and by hosting fundraisers, like a no-show banquet that asked people to donate to the cause without having to add another event to the busy banquet season.

The carousel is currently being stored at the WOE fairgrounds while it undergoes restoration. The advanced art class at Cottage Grove High School has assisted in sanding and repainting the animals while local businesses have donated to refurbish the floorboards and other aspects of the attraction. The group also recently acquired a musical element for the carousel — a self playing piano.

For more information or to donate, contact the Friends of the Cottage Grove Carousel by visiting www.cgcarousel.com.

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