



Remembering Chuck Kaparich, the man who made us all dreamers



Chuck Kaparich with Star Boy, during the building of the Carousel. Photo by Ken James

The staff and volunteers of A Carousel for Missoula were saddened to learn of the death of Chuck Kaparich, on Monday, June 28, 2021. Although Chuck has not been active at the Carousel for many years, we have never forgotten that we would not be here without his inspiration and guidance.

“When we opened, we had over 100,000 hours of volunteer time in the building of the Carousel,” says A Carousel for Missoula Executive Director Theresa Cox. “I can’t tell you how many of those hours were Chuck’s, but I think the number would be very impressive. He had a part in everything that happened here.

The dream, of course, was his, but he contributed so much more than that. He taught others to carve, he found our antique frame and motor and the mechanics to restore it, he helped choose merchandise for the gift shop, and found the company that built our band organ.

In everything you see and hear at the Carousel, you will find a bit of Chuck.”

Kaparich was a cabinet maker in 1988, when he and his wife, Beth, visited the Loeffl Carousel in Spokane. When Chuck learned all those animals had been crafted by hand, he decided he wanted one for his living room. He called Fred Fried, a Carousel historian, to find out where he might get a horse. Fred replied, “It’s vultures like you who caused the demise of the American carousel. If you want a carousel horse, carve it yourself!”

Kaparich soon learned that many carousels had been taken apart during the Great Depression so the animals could be sold at auction. He resolved that rather than having a hand in taking apart a carousel, he would carve his own horse. Using books on carving and tools Beth had given him for his birthday, he made the first animal, which was soon followed by three more. That’s when he approached the City Council about building A Carousel for Missoula.

The City Council quickly agreed they could find a spot in a city park for a Carousel, and a board of directors was formed for the newly minted 501(c)(3). Kaparich taught others to carve through an adult education class and in sessions in his garage. He maintained tight quality control throughout the creation of the Carousel.

Randy Cox, president of the Carousel’s board of directors when the Carousel opened, says, “A project like this needs a leader to keep things moving in the right direction. For this project, Chuck was that leader.”

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becoming a sponsor of
one of our events,
please contact Theresa
at 406-549-8382

Answers to frequently asked questions:

Are you open/When are you open: *We reopened at the end of May after a closure of more than 14 months. Our website, social media and phone message are up to date, but we sometimes miss updating Yelp, Travelocity, etc. Here's the scoop: The Carousel is normally open at least 11am to 5:30pm. On Saturdays we open at 10am to accommodate the Farmers' Market traffic, and on Thursdays (through August) we stay open until 8pm for the Downtown Tonight traffic. These hours may be cut short if we are hosting a Pod Party. Beginning 8/30/21, we will be closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Please check our website or call us for up-to-the-minute answers about the days you plan to visit.*

Do I need/Why do I need to wear a mask to ride the Carousel: *We are requiring masks on the Carousel and within the green fencing surrounding the Carousel for everyone over the age of five. It is impossible to social distance on the ponies and as the Carousel spins, riders are always in someone else's slipstream, so the masks are a way of keeping you safe.*

A majority of our visitors are too young to be vaccinated, so we will keep this measure in place until those whose parents wish them to be vaccinated have been able to complete the process. In the meantime, we appreciate when our visitors bring their own masks, but we do have adult and child-sized masks available for those who forget.

Some visitors tell us they are vaccinated and ask to be excused from masking. It is illegal in the state of Montana for a business to discriminate based on vaccination status, so we cannot tell some people they must wear masks and others that they do not have to do so. Our staff wears masks all day long to keep you safe; please wear yours during your visit to keep them and your fellow riders safe.

Are you allowing people to have parties at the Carousel: *Yes, we have been hosting Pod Parties for the past several months. A Pod Party can be scheduled at 10am or 5:45pm for groups up to 30 people. They are 1.5 hours and the cost is \$200. Please call Theresa or Julie at 406-549-8382 to schedule.*

Kaparich, continued from page 1

“We spent hundreds of hours in Chuck’s garage building Carousel ponies,” remembers John Thompson, an artist who has been with the project since its early days.

“We hauled horses all over town to let the community know we were building a Carousel, and Chuck was everywhere the horses were. I think he talked to every service group in town at least once. Chuck and I worked with all the horse adopters to design the horses. Probably the most fun we had was working with the four classes that designed the penny ponies. As a former teacher, Chuck enjoyed interacting with the kids.”

A plaque on the plaza in front of the Carousel commemorates Kaparich’s vision and hard work. Thirty years after the City Council approved the building of A Carousel for Missoula, and twenty-six since its opening, Kaparich’s influence is acknowledged and celebrated daily.

The Carousel remembered Chuck with free rides on the fourth of July, from 11am to 8pm, beginning with an empty ride in his honor. Our lead horse, Columbia Belle, was draped in black and remained unriden during the tribute to Chuck.

The family suggests donations to the Carousel as a fitting memorial for Chuck.

Thanks to FIBAR for a fabulous fix!

Much too soon after the refurbishment and expansion of Dragon Hollow in 2019, we began to notice problems with the poured-in-place rubber surfacing (PIP) that covers about half of the playground.

FIBAR, the company that provided the material for, and arranged for the installation of, the PIP has been involved with evaluating the problems and finding solutions every step of the way.

Twice FIBAR sent material and laborers to fix problems, but new problems continued to appear.

Finally, this spring, FIBAR sent an inspector to determine the reason behind the repeated problems. On his recommendation, and the urging of our representative at FIBAR, the company chose to refinish all the PIP surfacing in the playground at their expense.

In many areas, a new type of PIP designed for high-wear places was installed. Not only will it extend the time the PIP will last, but the contrasting color adds visual interest to the playground.

We are incredibly grateful to FIBAR and, in particular to Joy Dunn, for working with us to make sure Dragon Hollow is safe and attractive.





Garden Party Dinner and Auction
 Annual Fundraiser for A Carousel for Missoula
 Thursday, September 9, 2021 • 5:30-8 PM
 Online at bidpal.net/acfm



You are invited to our 2021 Garden Party Celebration and Fundraiser on Thursday, September 9, from 5:30-8pm. This will be a virtual event so there's no need to buy new clothes or call a babysitter. You can attend from the comfort of your own home.

If you like to arrive early at events, feel free to arrive at this one anytime you want!
The bidding and giving pages are live now at <https://bidpal.net/acfm>.



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Another crowd favorite is the **Wine Pull**. Randy Cox has chosen 12 bottles from his cellar. Each bottle sells for \$25 and is worth at least that amount. Bidder #1 gets the first bottle, bidder #2 gets the second bottle, and so on until all 12 have been purchased. This is a great chance to try something new.

Auction Items are still arriving. If you have something to donate, please contact Theresa at 406-370-3922 or, better yet, ponykeeper@gmail.com. We will take your information and update the site to reflect your generosity.



One exciting part of our event is a **Pony Race**. Board members and other volunteers hop on their ponies to race around and around to raise money for the Carousel.

Okay, so they don't really hop on - in fact, they don't really even ride the Carousel - but they do call on friends, family and former donors to support the Carousel and Dragon Hollow. You'll find photos of the volunteers and their ponies on our event website at <https://bidpal.net/acfm>. Click on the photo of your favorite volunteer to support him/her by making a donation to the race.



And, of course, none of this happens without incredible support from some amazing sponsors. It takes money to make money and it takes friends to introduce us to new friends. If you would like to join the sponsors on this page, please contact Theresa at 406-370-3922 or, ponykeeper@gmail.com. We can get your logo on the site up until the event starts!



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OF THE MONTH

Each month, the Carousel enjoys the support of that month's sponsor. Sponsors of the Month make a financial or in-kind investment in the Carousel and Dragon Hollow to help us keep the ponies fed and the dragon happy. We are grateful everyday for their generous support.

