

It's the "End of an Era" in La Mirada

Written by Brooklynn Ackerman and Tony Aiello
Wednesday, 14 March 2018 10:49

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La Mirada~April has a different feel in town this year as it appears that the "4 La Mirada Kids Carnival" at Benton Middle School will not take place after a 23-year run.

The three-day event has been held since 1994, when it was started by a core group consisting of Howard Haas (La Mirada High School Principal), Pete Dames (La Mirada City Council), Gary Sloan (La Mirada City Manager) and visionary Ray Haugh (Kiwanis Club of La Mirada).

Haugh originally pitched the idea about hosting a carnival in 1983, but it was shelved until 1994 when Haas approached the group saying that La Mirada High School was falling short by \$10,000 for extracurricular activities. These funds were jeopardized by education budget cuts at the time.

So, the group started the event to help raise funds for local educational programs and activities such as field trips, sports and band equipment. In 1996, the carnival raised \$33,500 for this purpose.

The carnival would go on to raise over \$30,000 annually and consistently, for many years, with 100% of the proceeds going back into the community.

The Kiwanis Club was the major underwriter of the event until the La Mirada Community Foundation took over about 15 years ago. The Foundation has stated they would not be the signing authority (insurance) in 2018, putting the carnival in jeopardy.

Foundation member and former City Councilman Hal Malkin, an early-year organizer and contributor for many seasons said, "There have been some disasters over the past few years. Rain two years ago and last year the county shut down the rides," he said in a phone interview, "It's just dwindled over the years and it's the end of an era, it's seen its life."

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Also in question this year is where the carnival would be hosted as Benton is currently undergoing major athletic field renovations.

Current organizers are hopeful and said the event could possibly be held at an alternate location this year and perhaps return to Benton next year if a new sponsor could be found.

Although the carnival has struggled financially in recent years, money was still going back to the community annually in the form of partial proceeds schools received for selling ride tickets before the event.

However, in what may be a final blow, financial records obtained by us from the City of La Mirada indicate that pre-sale ride ticket revenue in 2017 fell almost 40% from the previous year.

Bonnie Murphy was a familiar face and volunteer at the carnival during its heyday, "It's too bad. It was a source of community pride. A revenue source for groups, that could help sustain their activities for the year and it was a way to bring the community together."