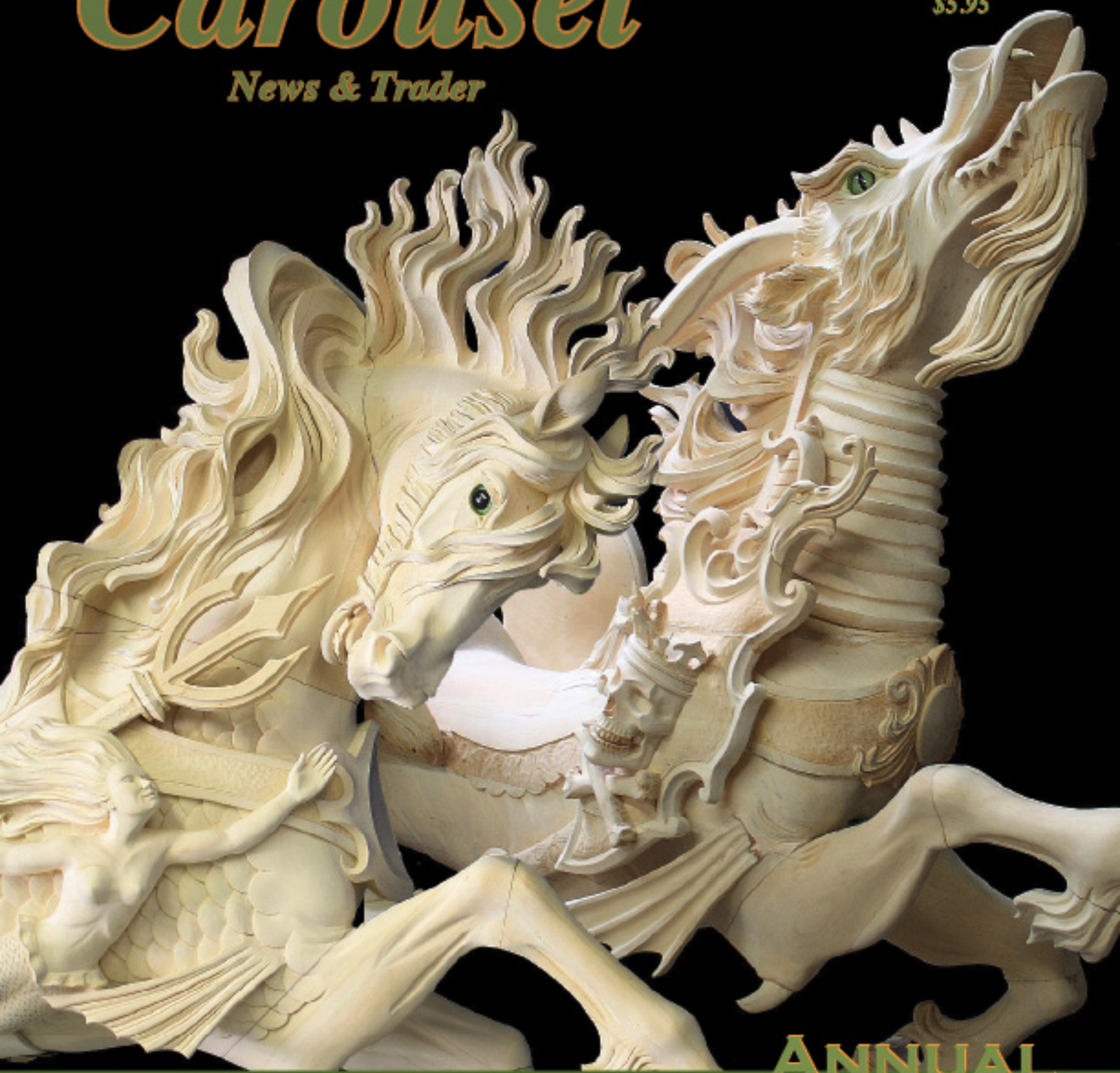


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Volunteers Carving A Carousel For The Community of Kingsport, TN



Four Kingsport carvers with Bud Ellis at Horsin' Around Carving Studio and the horse heads they are working on. From left, Ted Heilig, Milton Nelson, Bud Ellis, Reggie Martin, and George Gibson.

By Reggie Martin

Special to *The Carousel News & Trader*

Kingsport is a city of about 45,000 and is located in northeast Tennessee near the Virginia and North Carolina borders. The City is a principal city of the Tri-Cities region which has a population of around 302,000.

Conversation about bringing a carousel to Kingsport began in October, 2008, and was led by Gale Joh, who grew up in Binghamton, NY, and had fond memories of riding the carousels in Greater Binghamton as a boy.

Gale started the conversation with Bonnie Macdonald, Cultural Arts Administrator for the City of Kingsport. Bonnie was enthused and asked Gale to gather more information. Gale's investigation led him to Bud Ellis of Soddy Daisy, TN. Bud was lead carver, teacher, mover-and-shaker of two carousel projects in Chattanooga, TN, and operates the Horsin' Around Carving School in Soddy Daisy, TN.

Bud's advice was to find a used carousel mechanism and ask volunteers to carve new wooden animals for it, rather than trying to buy a new fully outfitted carousel. This route would save money and provide the community-building nature of the project. This was the route chosen to build the two Chattanooga carousels with great results. Bud shared his experience with Kingsport as a consultant and teacher.



In June, 2009, Gale asked me to lead his small carousel interest group. As a novice wood-carver, I saw the project as a real challenge and a great idea for Kingsport, so I enthusiastically accepted. Since then, much has happened to help bring our dream to reality as we continue to work with Dan Horenberger of Brass Ring Entertainment to find just the right used frame for the project.

Four carvers from Kingsport enrolled in Bud Ellis' Horsin' Around Carving School and last winter they spent a week in Soddy Daisy working on four horses. While in Soddy Daisy, five of Bud's experienced students signed on to carve six animals



Two of the Kingsport Carousel horse heads on view in a storefront display where a carving demonstration was held in downtown Kingsport last spring.

for the Kingsport carousel which made for a total of eleven animals committed by nine carvers.

Kingsport has a wonderful nature preserve, Bays Mountain Park, and the goal is to incorporate on the carousel carvings of many of the animals found in the park, including the river otter, raccoon, white-tail deer, barn owl, black bear and box turtle along with the classic horses.

Unfortunately, Gale passed away in early April, 2010 before his dream was realized, but his spirit continues to encourage us to fulfill the dream.

The Kingsport Carousel is aiming for 32 animals and two chariots, so the process of recruiting additional carvers for the project as well as painters is ongoing.

We now have our first finished animal, the horse "Liberty", carved by Dave Sheppard. Dave has carved several carousel animals including some for the two carousels in Chattanooga. "Liberty" is currently on display at the Kingsport City Hall lobby.

Four horses are being carved at our carving studio in the Lynn View Community Center. Carvers include; Ted Heilig, Milton Nelson, George Gibson and Reggie Martin – the "Four Horsemen". We hope to have two of the horses finished this spring. Another five animals are being carved by Horsin' Around volunteers including a dragon, an armored horse, a hollow log with a raccoon and box turtle, an alpaca, and a giraffe. A lion and a wolf are also planned.

The project is being viewed from several standpoints: as an entertainment venue, a tourist attraction, an arts display opportunity, a community-building project, a way to increase the community's involvement in the arts, a way to attract artists to the city, and an economic development engine for the area of the city where the carousel is located.

A taskforce was formed last fall to guide the Carousel Project and to help move the project forward. Duties of the taskforce will include promotion, publicity and fundraising along with other duties as needed.

Carving Classes

Realizing that not everyone can take time away from work or spare the tuition fees at Horsin' Around in Soddy Daisy, the "Four Horsemen" have started to offer carving classes. Dates and times are yet to be finalized, but we are trying to work out some evening and Saturday hours for those 9 to 5'ers out there. We will have to charge a small fee of \$150 to cover the cost of lumber. Carvers will have to furnish their own carving tools.

Fundraisers Needed

One of our major challenges over the next two years will be raising the funds to support the Carousel Project. The Taskforce has forecast expenditures of about \$122,000 over the two-year period which will come from donations, grants, and animal sponsorships. If you would like to help by chairing a fundraising committee, planning fundraisers or working at fundraisers, please let us know by return email at kingsportcarousel@gmail.com.

Website and Facebook

Mary McNabb has taken on the task of updating the project website. Look for additional features and updated information soon. Bonnie Macdonald and Reggie Martin will continue to manage the Facebook account.

Visit us at www.kingsportcarousel.org and join us on Facebook by signing in and searching Kingsport Carousel.

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