

EDITORIAL: Together we can reopen Playland and Storyland



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JOHN WALKER — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

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That amount of money, while significant, is not insurmountable. And while large contributions from well-heeled donors will be important, donations as small as \$1, \$5 and \$10 can go a long way toward reopening the two children's attractions at Roeding Park.

Indeed, if every adult in Fresno who rode Playland's carousel as a child contributes \$5 to the restoration effort the goal will be met.

Playland is an amusement park. Storyland is a series of exhibits promoting literacy. Both are integral to Fresno's history — and future.

With a little sprucing up, both can reopen and continue to entertain and educate children at bargain prices. Providing low-cost fun for families is not a civic responsibility, but it should be a civic priority.

You might not know that Playland opened in May 1955, six weeks before the gates at Disneyland swung open. Local

Rotary Clubs — acting upon a proposal by Dr. Joe Logan, then-president of the North Fresno Rotary — teamed up to raise money and build the park. That first day, 14,000 ride tickets were sold, at 10 cents each, and the construction debt was repaid within three years.

Seven years later, Storyland sprouted next door, backed by City Hall and community groups. The first year saw more than 250,000 visitors take in the Alice in Wonderland maze, Mr. MacGregor's Cabbage Path and other attractions.

Profits from the amusement park were planted back into the community by the Rotary Playland board of directors. It was Playland money that, in 1964, bought 50 acres of extra land to help form Woodward Park. More cash went toward the zoo's reptile house, a new home for Nosey the elephant, land for Logan Park, and the Shinzen Friendship Garden.

Expanded entertainment options and the advent of state inspection of amusement rides took a toll on Playland. In 2000, it was down to two rides, but a fundraising campaign and a state grant brought some of the magic back.

The reality is, Playland and Storyland need regular tender loving care. They will require community support beyond this fundraising drive. And to boost attendance, industry experts say Playland should change one ride every year.

That's OK. Fresno is up the challenge.

Families need affordable entertainment and places to bond. We look forward to the grand reopening of Playland and Storyland and good times there for many years to come.