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# Binghamton's Rec Park carousel revamped -- with a twist

## Rod Serling, 'Twilight Zone' inspire restorers

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Artist Cortlandt Hull works on customizing the rounding boards of the Recreation Park carousel from a workshop in Connecticut. The renovated carousel will be reassembled and set up for its debut on Aug. 29 in Rec Park. / PHOTOS PROVIDED

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Written by Valerie Zehl

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**BINGHAMTON** -- Cortlandt Hull is loving life these days.

He's painting memories of Rod Serling's life and "Twilight Zone" episodes onto rounding boards for the soon-to-be-reopened carousel at Recreation Park.

He and William R. Finkenstein, owner of WRF Designs of Plainville, Conn., wanted to do a Serling theme on the carousel, which Serling had ridden as a boy growing up in Binghamton.

"I'm very pleased that the new regime gave me the green light to do it," said Hull, referring to the current city Parks and Recreation

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While Hull's tiny paintbrush embellishes the rounding boards,



Artist Cortlandt Hull customized the rounding boards of the Recreation Park carousel with his interpretations of scenes from Twilight Zone and its creator, one-time Binghamton resident Rod Serling.

Finkenstein and his crew of a dozen people are renovating the carousel's 60 horses and two chariots for the first time in about two decades.

Restoration and repainting are under way in Connecticut at a site Finkenstein jokingly calls "Santa's Workshop."

"If you could see me, you'd understand just how apt that is," he said, chuckling.

"Hectic" is the word he uses to describe his immediate environment.

"We're gold-leafing the horses and putting the pictures in the little oval frames," he said. "It's a busy little shop."

The carousel's essential components won't return to Binghamton until just before the city officially reopens the carousel at 11 a.m. Aug. 29.

That will be a gala event, said Carol Quinlivan, assistant director of Binghamton Parks and Recreation.

Commemorative T-shirts will be sold for \$10, and refreshments will be served. A clown, Buddy the Bee from the Binghamton Mets and Max from the Senators will be also be there. Music will come from the restored band organ on the carousel itself.

A federal Community Development Block Grant for \$182,900 funded the work done by Finkenstein's company, which did the last renovation of this carousel as well as others in Johnson City and Endicott.

Recreation Park's carousel, installed in 1925, is one of six historic merry-go-rounds in the area donated by shoe manufacturer George F. Johnson.

Its color scheme stayed the same, echoed in the palette used by Hull in his rounding boards.

Hull was given 11 of the 16 panels to use as canvases for his imagination. Nine panels are related to "The Twilight Zone" and Serling; the others give a nod to local history.

"We had to be careful not to mess with copyright, so it's the artist's renditions of the episodes," Quinlivan said.

Among the episodes that most captivated Hull is one named "Walking Distance," which starred Gig Young.

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Hull chose to depict Serling himself standing in front of the Recreation Park pavilion in an early 1900s setting to which Serling returned time and again in the television series.

That gives the carousel a particular charm, Hull said.

"It looks like a big Victorian jewel," he said. "Transported directly through time."

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