

# 2017 WFA ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS PROGRAM

## Innovations & Management Excellence

### FORM FOR DIVISIONS 13 – 27

**FAIR NAME:** Sonoma County Fair

**CLASS:** 3 (Example: Small Fair = Class 1) **DIVISION:** 14

**a) What was the goal?** Define the challenge/ problem/target audience and explain what you were trying to accomplish.

The 2017 Sonoma County Fair theme, HOLIDAZE!, was a year's worth of holidays in an 11-day run. Valentine's Day was celebrated on the last Friday of the Fair. Our goal was to develop a Valentine's themed event to maximize media attention during the final days of the Fair.

**b) How did you achieve the goal?** What steps were taken to solve the problem or accomplish the goal? Who was involved in the project? Include any working relationships with other agencies/groups.

We put out the word that "you and your true love are invited to get married (or renew your vows) on the giant ferris wheel!" The 'Ferris Wheel Weddings' were a partnership between Butler Amusements, local radio station KZST and the Fair. This event required Butler to shut down one of their most lucrative rides (the Giant Wheel) on a busy afternoon, but they joined in with enthusiasm.

There were two parts to this event – the weddings, and the renewal of vows. We discovered that any elected official in the state of California can legally perform marriages. Sonoma County's Deputy County Clerk took responsibility for seeing to it that everything was signed, filed and that people were indeed legally married at the end of the day. Local state senator Mike McGuire officiate at the wedding ceremony, and his office really went the extra mile to promote the event and make sure the Fair got as much attention as possible. After a few false starts, six couples ended up boarding the Wheel to marry. (One prospective groom ended up running to the main gate, hailing an Uber and racing home to get his wedding license. He made it back just in time!) After the ceremony, the happy couples disembarked from the Giant Wheel and posed for pictures. Next up, those couples renewing their vows were loaded onto the Giant Wheel. KZST dj Brent Ferris officiated at the wedding renewal for 22 happy couples.

**c) What were the results?** Include tangible and quantifiable benefits such as financial, public or media awareness and attendance. Use percentages when applicable.

Our local daily newspaper sent a photographer, and a reporter who created a video for her blog. All told, the newspaper printed five stories dedicated to this event. As we face a reality that includes a growing lack of coverage for the Fair, this was a big win. The sponsoring radio station gave extensive coverage prior to the big day, and even the stations that were not directly involved included the news that 'you can get married at the fair!' in their Fair news reports.

This was definitely one of those 'nothing but positive' events. It was the talk of the fairgrounds, and we received calls after the event, asking if people could get married at the fair next year. Clearly a winner!



# 2017 SONOMA COUNTY FAIR GET MARRIED OR RENEW YOUR VOWS AT THE FAIR!

## Valentines Day at the Fair ♡ Friday, August 11 at 3PM



As a part of our 'Holidaze!' theme, the Sonoma County Fair is celebrating Valentine's Day on Friday, August 11. As a part of the celebration, local romantics are invited to be married (or renew their wedding vows) that afternoon on Butler Amusement's majestic Giant Wheel. Each wedding couple will be seated in a gondola, offering a view from a height of nearly 100 feet, and will be legally married as they are whisked smoothly over the top and down again. After the ceremony, participants will adjourn to the Blues & Brews Lounge for a reception featuring cake and a champagne toast. Prefair sign up required for all participating couples. Each couple will receive a photograph of the event, complements of the Fair.

Participating couples will ride the Giant Wheel into the sky as the officiant asks the all-important questions and pronounces the, legally wed. Each gondola on the Wheel will seat two couples, with one witness each. Couples must arrive at the fairground on or before 2 p.m. Friday, August 11. Each couple wishing to be married in this ceremony must go to the County Clerk's Office and file for a Marriage Licence sometime before August 4, 2017. A representative from the County Clerk's Office will bring all licenses for participating couples to the Fair. No couples will be allowed to take part in the wedding ceremony without a license. Already married couples wishing to renew their vows do not need a license.

To participate, fill out the entry form and send it to the fairgrounds. You will be notified within 48 hours if you will be one of the lucky couples taking part in the ceremony. There is no fee, (aside from the expense of a license), but contestants will have to pay to get into the Fair. Your application must be at the fairgrounds no later than August 4. There is a limit to the number of couples who will fit on the Wheel, so get your application form in early!

**Remember...** Couples wishing to be married must apply for a marriage license at the County Clerk's Office no later than August 4, 2017. Already married couples wishing to renew their vows do not need a license, but will be asked to provide proof they are already married to each other.



Return the bottom section of this form to the Fairgrounds as soon as possible.

## GET MARRIED OR RENEW YOUR VOWS ON AUGUST 11 APPLICATION FORM

Enter Early! Your application must arrive by AUG 4, but there is a limit on the number of participants.

**Please provide information for both halves of the soon-to-be married couple!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

What is Your Occupation?

What is Your Occupation?

# Want to get married on a Ferris wheel at the Sonoma County Fair?

**CHRIS SMITH**

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT | July 20, 2017



Who'll be married on a giant Ferris wheel next month at the Sonoma County Fair? Good heavens, it might be you.

Only weeks after Santa Rosa Mayor Chris Coursey married three couples before a huge crowd at a Santa Rosa Wednesday Night Market, fairgrounds folks prepare for as many as 40 pairs to take their vows on Aug. 11 while seated in gondolas on a slowly turning, nearly 100-foot-tall wheel.

The local legislative live wire that is State Sen. Mike McGuire will officiate.

If you'd like to be truly, legally married at the fair, and you're quite close with somebody who shares that interest, you'll need to submit an application by Aug. 4.

Applications are available at the fair office or at [sonomacountyfair.com/docs/Marriage%20Application%20Form.pdf](http://sonomacountyfair.com/docs/Marriage%20Application%20Form.pdf).

That same August afternoon, 40 married couples will clamber aboard the Ferris wheel for a ceremony to renew their vows. You can apply to be one of them, too.

Why is this happening?

Because the theme of the 2017 fair, to open Aug. 3, is "Holidaze!" Many of the calendar's most special days will be celebrated, with Valentine's Day in Summer falling on Aug. 11.

Following the mass, vertical, rotating nuptials and recommitals will be a reception in the Blues & Brews Lounge with cake, a champagne toast and goodies.

The whole thing should make for quite the spectacle. As the betrothed take their first marital kiss aboard the moving Ferris wheel, those of us watching from below may dab our eyes and marvel at the towering reminder that marriage is a like a midway ride, one with ups and downs.

Chris Smith is at 707-521-5211 and [chris.smith@pressdemocrat.com](mailto:chris.smith@pressdemocrat.com).

# Couples old and new marry at Sonoma County Fair

**CHRISTI WARREN**

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT | August 11, 2017



Brittany Brown and Logan Heilman decided just a week ago to make their four-year relationship legal. That's when they heard couples could wed Friday on the Sonoma County Fair's largest Ferris wheel.

The two, who live in Santa Rosa and met on a dating website, had been talking about marriage for quite a while, they said, but the opportunity to have a ceremony at the fair seemed too good to pass up.

"It's something we've been putting off for a long time, and we heard about it and decided, 'Why not?'" Heilman said.

With just a week's notice, 42-year-old Heilman got Brown a ring, Brown got herself a dress and together they planned a reception.

"It was just ready, set, go and here we are," Brown, 32, said in the shadow of the 100-foot Ferris wheel.

In all, 28 couples dressed in varying degrees of finery, boarded the Ferris wheel just after 3 p.m. to take their wedding vows — six couples for the first time, the other 22 couples to give their original vows a refresher.

The multitudinous Ferris wheel ceremony is a first for the Sonoma County Fair, the event tied into its "Holidaze" theme, which packs a year's worth of holidays into the fair's 11-day run. The weddings were meant to celebrate "Valentine's Day," with other holidays represented throughout the fair by activities like the "Great Irish Potato Toss" and a "Ho, Ho, Ho!" contest.

Pair by pair they boarded the gondolas, and pair by pair said their I dos and sealed them with a kiss.

At ground level, state Sen. Mike McGuire, D-Healdsburg, conducted the ceremony, broadcast to the brides and grooms above through a small PA system.

"A wedding day is a milestone in anyone's life, and this is going to be — forever more this is going to be in the memories of all of these couples," McGuire said.

Following the ceremony, newlyweds and vow-renewers alike made their way to the fair's Blues and Brews Lounge, where a champagne toast and funnel cake awaited.

Jane Nance, 92, was there to see her son, Mark Currier, marry Sue Russell, his girlfriend of 32 years.

She had originally intended to renew her own vows with her husband of 20 years, Norman Nance, 77, but the event was booked full, she said.

"I think it's cool," she said. "I think it's a fantastic idea. Old and young alike."

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# FERRIS WHEEL WEDDINGS

## SONOMA COUNTY FAIR – 2017



**PDF Entry Information**

**Exhibitor Name:** Heather Borck

**WEN:** C36CD6

**Division:** Section 2 - Innovation & Managemen

**Class:** 14 New Event, Exhibit or Program

**Title:** Ferris Wheel Weddings

**Description:**

**Notes:**

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