



THE DIGEST

VOLUNTEER RAILROADERS ASSOCIATION

"So close, only the paycheck is missing!"

Volume XVII, Issue I

Toys for Tots Success

by Carolyn Hoffman



Local citizens in Pompton Lakes help move the donations to the boxcar with remarkable efficiency. "No one gave a second thought about pitching in - absolutely wonderful!" - Photo & caption by Ralph Bonanno

I am very happy to report that 2011 was the third very successful year for Operation Toy Train. The Military Transport Association of New Jersey along with the VRA, Norfolk Southern, NYS&W, and M&E ran two days of trains on December 10th & 11th, 2011. On Saturday December 10th, the train ran from Ridgefield Park to Butler with stops at Maywood, Hawthorne, Wortendyke, Wyckoff and Pompton Lakes. The weather cooperated and the overall turnout for the day was quite good and over 5000 toys were collected by the end of the day. UPS and Ikea both made huge contributions with a \$3200 donation and over 250 toys respectively. The Hot Dog Caboose in Wortendyke was open and offered food to our Marines and volunteers at no charge. The Wyckoff Fire Department brought out a number of

trucks at the Wyckoff station stop and loaded a large number of toys onto the boxcar. Several Girl Scout troops from the area were at various stops throughout the day as well. As in previous years, Pompton Lakes made this a huge event for their town. The local radio station was there along with Mayor Kathleen Cole, and various community groups. The North Jersey Jeep Club was in attendance with quite a few Jeeps stuffed with toys, as well as a few utility trailers. On the way back east that night a special stop was made at Hawthorne Station for the Hawthorne Fire Department who was unable to make the train stop that morning. Suddenly NS #3010 shut down and could not be

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NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, February 16th, 2012
St. Clement's Church,
271 Lafayette Ave., Hawthorne
Meeting starts at 7:00 PM

*"Restricted speed, restricted speed,
restricted speed!" -- Steve Weiss*

Order your Hawthorne Station paver today! These bricks will make up part of the landscaping of the new grounds of the station. You can find the order form at the end of this newsletter.

restarted. Luckily, NYS&W #3018 was also in the consist, so we were able to make it back to Little Ferry Yard. There was some concern as to how the cars would make it to Morristown for day two, but luckily Morristown & Erie came to the rescue! John Sobotka, our Operation Toy Train organizer and NS engineer, and an M&E crew were able to get to Morristown to pick up M&E #19 for Sunday.

Sunday dawned clear as well and went extremely smoothly. The train left Morristown under the power of M&E #19 and made its way to Dover to pick up more volunteers. From there we headed to the Flanders Fire Station for our first stop. The Flanders FD has opened their station to Operation Toy Train all three years and provided the volunteers and community with coffee & hot chocolate as well as donuts & cookies and a generous donation of toys. From there the train proceeded to Route 10 in Ledgewood next to Sleepy's. Once

again the public turnout was very good. Giancarlo's Bakery brought Santa in and took numerous pictures and then gifted a full sheet cake to the

as we left the boxcar on a siding in Rockaway and the crew and volunteers headed back to Morristown.



Special thanks go out to our VRA Train and Ground Crew who worked very long days loading toys, managing crowd control, and making our visitors comfortable and happy! All volunteers had full access to the train for the entire day including hot drinks and food and a place to sit down. Everyone worked extremely hard to make this

Marines to thank them for their service. A small stop was made in Kenvil for a local Girl Scout troop who gathered over 750 toys alone from local businesses. The train continued on to Dover and stopped next to the Municipal Building, and then continued on to a small stop at Lakeland Bus just to pick up. We finished out the day in Rockaway at Pot Belly's Cafe to a great turnout. At the end of the day the Marines met us

train a huge success! After two collection trains and various pickups by Military Transport Association of New Jersey members over the next week, the final count came to roughly 11,500 toys!! Thanks to everyone who was involved and keep an eye out for Operation Toy Train 2012 information this summer. ☘

United Railroad Historical Society Highlights

by Joe Mele

The Boonton Yard shop building construction has begun; hopefully the building will be completed in the next couple of months.

Star Trak is continuing to work on our equipment at Boonton yard.

The URHS is still negotiating with Robert Franzen, the owner of the twin NYC Dining cars currently located in South Carolina. The URHS is offering to swap Robert four of their green coaches for his

two diner cars. The URHS and Robert are working out the details; more information will follow as it becomes available.

URHS signed a lease agreement with the Black River Historical Trust for the Erie SW-9 #436. The BRHT will be using this locomotive for the 2012 operating season for their passenger trains on the Black River & Western Railroad.

Below are a couple of upcoming URHS member group's model train / railroad shows that I would like to

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President's Report

by KC Smith

Nineteen years ago this month Steve Weiss, Bob Blumenstock, Joe Weber and myself got together and came up with a crazy idea to start a new group to staff the NYS&W's 142 steam program and we called it the Susquehanna Volunteer Association. Well here we are nineteen years later, the SVA is now the VRA, and the last of the original four (that would be me) is about to leave office ending nineteen years of serving our members.

I am very proud of what the four of us did and even more proud of what you, the members of the VRA, made happen. Because, while every group needs leaders, there would be nothing to lead if it were not for its members. I am also proud of those people who have volunteered their time to step up and help lead the VRA from when we created the 501c3 until today. These people helped take the vision started by the original four and turn it into more than any of us could have imagined.

As Old Blue Eyes sang, "regrets... I have a few." The first is that Joe Weber never got to see the station completed; he would have loved what we have done. The second is that I wish select executive board members (including myself) could have kept more of the pure enjoyment of what we do in mind, and kept the politics and personality conflicts out of the picture. That is not to say that the four benevolent dictators (as we became affectionately known) did not have our difficulties, but we never let any of those problems effect the membership. These last four or five years I am sorry to say have not been that way and for that I am truly sorry.

As leaders we should have all done a better job for you and while we cannot change the past we can certainly learn from it. So I ask the

incoming board, and all future ones, to remember the lessons of the past, to not repeat the bad ones and to use the good ones to help grow the organization. Over the years the VRA has become one of the most respected groups in the New Jersey rail preservation community because of all we have done. Let's all work to keep that reputation and to make it even stronger.

Enough with the bad stuff. I have a few people I need to thank for helping me through these last nineteen years. The first is my wife, Carol. She has sacrificed so much to allow me to do what I have done. The days and nights that I was not home count in the hundreds. She saw the passion I had for the VRA and (almost) never asked me to curtail my activities. She is a wonderful human being and I am lucky to have her on my side.

My son, Kenny, was five years old when we started this group and he too did not have me around on those many days and nights. He too never complained and on the many occasions he got to take part in one of our activities he proudly stood by me, helping when he could or just enjoying what we were doing. My favorite memories are when he would put on the Snoopy or Scooby Doo costumes to entertain our passengers. I was then the proud one as he made so many kids (and kids at heart) smile.

There are a few more people who deserve an extra big thank you for all they have done for the VRA and me:

Steve Weiss, Bob Blumenstock and Joe Weber for working together to create, grow and make our little group great. Chris Vitz for his calm and thoughtful leadership and for all his work to get our 501c3 status. He is a great example of how we should all act. Charles Smith, for always being there and for always being a good sport. Most of you probably don't know this, but Charles stepped in and filled the void left when Joe Weber got sick and stayed doing all he could after Joe died. I am very proud to call Charles my friend. To all of you, our members, I want to thank you for giving me the chance to help lead our group. I hope I did a good job for you and that you enjoyed the time you have been part of the VRA. I look forward to being part of the VRA long into the future and hope you will join me. It will be great to watch our future leaders decide the projects and direction we will take and then join in to make the vision a reality.

I have made a lot of great friends in the VRA, friendships I will cherish long into the future. To those people (you know who you are) words cannot express how much I appreciate the laughs, good times, hugs, handshakes, support and guidance. You have made my life better and for that I truly thank you.

Your Very Humble Ex-Benevolent Dictator,

KC ☒

URHS Highlights cont'd

share with VRA members:

- The ELHS Spring meeting will be held on April 15, 2012 at the Parsippany Holiday Inn. The ELHS is looking for presenters for any DL&W, E-L or Erie RR theme shows.
- Jersey Central Rwy. HS: Mother Seton HS, Clark, NJ- March 4, 2012 - Railroadiana Show & Sale ☒

Boonton Yard Update

by Steve Gerritsen

2011 was a very productive year for the URHS in the Boonton restoration yard. PRR GG-1 #4877 received its as-delivered, Brunswick Green, five-stripe paint scheme. NJ DOT E8 #4253 has a fresh coat of blue and silver, and the former CNW/NJT F7 #424, has been painted to represent a Reading F7 with the number 284. Two of the hospital cars used by Star Trak as an office and shop were prepped to get army colors.

A GE 45-ton locomotive was delivered to the yard as well. Owned by Liberty Historic Railway, it will be repaired and repainted by Star Trak.

At the end of 2011, work began on constructing a shop building that will cover two tracks and will make the restoration process much easier and faster since there will be no weather constraints. When the shop is completed in 2012, PRR GG-1 4879 and NJT E8 4326 will be worked on and restored.

I look forward to setting up an Open House for this year so look for a date in the future. ☒

Holiday Trains

by Matt Phalon

2011 Santa Train: The train was a resounding success. All together, we put 2,174 people on three trains from Wayne-Route 23 to Dover and back. We had a full train crew and parking lot crew. Thanks to Joe Phalon for picking up the lunch that day. Special thanks to Bob Lozanski, Senior Road Foreman with NJ Transit for his help, and to the NJ Transit train crew that day. Without their assistance and cooperation, we would not have had the success we did.

2012 Easter Bunny Train: This year's Easter train is going to co-chaired by Carolyn Hoffman and myself. The March 31st date is confirmed by NJ Transit for Wayne-



Santa Claus, M&E employee Matt Phalon, and CSX Engineer Ralph Bonanno ride the observation end of the "Ohio River" on the M&E's High Bridge Line.

2012 VRA Elections

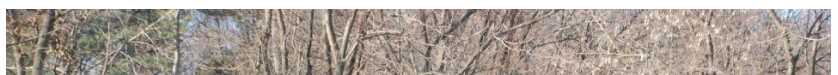
by KC Smith, Election Chairman

By now you should have all received your ballots for the 2012 election, made your selections and mailed them back. But if you still have not either mailed them back or gotten one in the mail you still have time to vote. We will be accepting ballots up until the start of the business at our next membership meeting on Thursday February 16th. If you did not get a ballot and are a current member please let me know. I can

be reached at 201-787-4770.

We have uncontested races for President, VP, Secretary and Treasurer, but the one open Directors spot has three people running for it, so your vote is very important. If you have not already done so, please take a few minutes to read the candidates bios and then fill out your ballot and either mail it back in the SASE or bring it to the meeting. ☒

Route 23 to Dover and back at 9:30am, 12 noon, and 2:30pm. NJ Transit denied our request to run a trip over Metro-North's Southern Tier line from Middletown, NY due to single-track territory and scheduling issues. Instead, we are waiting to hear back from NJ Transit about running east to West End or Hoboken from Glen Rock-Boro Hall. This would be an alternative to running west to Suffern in an attempt to lengthen the trip duration. For this train, we are going to need more help than ever, and the more hands the better. We need help with ticketing, putting up signs and banners, and posting the paper signs. Any and all help is greatly welcomed, and here's to another successful VRA excursion! ☒





Volunteer Railroaders Association

Hawthorne Station Restoration Project

80 Royal Ave, Hawthorne NJ 07506

Personalized Paver Bricks

Order Form

4" x 8" Engraved Brick – Grey \$75.00 (1 – 3 Lines, 18 Characters and Spaces)

8" x 8" Engraved Brick – Red \$150.00 (1 – 5 Lines, 18 Characters and Spaces)

Add a logo for \$25.00: Please Circle One

***Hawthorne Fire Dept. / *Hawthorne Ambulance Corps. / *Hawthorne Bears**

***Hawthorne Police / VRA Logo / Cross / Train / Heart**

*\$5.00 will be donated to the corresponding organization if you chose their logo for your brick!

Name

Address

Phone

E-mail

Visit www.VRATrips.org for more information and on-line ordering options.