



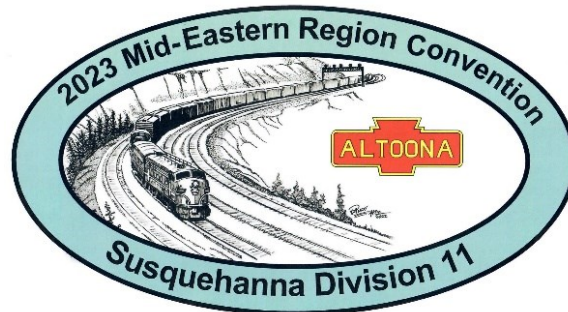
The Local

Newsletter of the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA
The Local, 78, Number 1, Jan-Feb 2023

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Round the Curve to Altoona

October 19-22, 2023

By Jerry Lauchle, MMR and Chairman of the 2023 LCC

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The Mid-Eastern Region's annual conventions rotate throughout the MER so that each geographic area will have a nearby convention on a regular basis. Susquehanna Division 11 volunteered to host in 2023 locating this year's convention in Pennsylvania. Jerry Lauchle, MMR was appointed Chairman of the Local Convention Committee (LCC) in February 2022. The previous two conventions held in Pennsylvania were in King of Prussia and in Harrisburg. We wanted to find a host city that was farther to the west, and it was not difficult to identify Altoona as an ideal place to hold this convention. A very successful MER convention was held there in 2000. In 2000, the host hotel was the Altoona Sheraton which is now called the Altoona Grand Hotel under its new management. It was again selected as the host hotel for our 2023 MER Convention.













(Continued on page 15)

Mid-Eastern Region Board of Directors & Administrative Staff

	<p>President: Scott Unger</p> <p>610-462-0756 president@mer-nmra.com</p>		<p>Vice President: Gary Brown</p> <p>757-641-7671 vp@mer-nmra.com</p>		<p>Treasurer: Brian Kampschroer</p> <p>717-991-7560 treasurer16@mer-nmra.com</p>
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	<p>Director-at-Large: Bob Charles, MMR</p> <p>717-763-1848 rcharles@aol.com</p>		<p>Business Manager: Howard Oakes</p> <p>717-632-5990 business@mer-nmra.com</p>		<p>Assistant Business Manager: John Hoyt</p> <p>410-340-1776 jhoyt@mer-nmra.com</p>
	<p>Achievement Program Manager: Kurt Thompson, MMR</p> <p>410-507-3671 apchair@mer-nmra.org</p>		<p>Editor: Greg Warth</p> <p>757-816-8399 Local-editor@mer-nmra.com</p>		<p>Nominating Committee Chair: Bob Charles, MMR</p> <p>717-763-1848 rcharles@aol.com</p>
	<p>Ballot Committee Chair: Bob Minnis, MMR</p> <p>(434) 589-3011 kahlualab@aol.com</p>		<p>Executive Convention Chair: Sam Rogers</p> <p>443-610-8452 ecc@mer-nmra.com</p>		<p>Contest Chair: Alan Mende</p> <p>717-469-1047 training@susquehannanmra.org</p>
	<p>Registrar: Kirk Bateman</p> <p>410-442-0446 MER-Registrar@mer-nmra.com</p>		<p>Assist Registrar: Jim Fisher</p> <p>443-504-3919 jfisher@mer-nmra.com</p>		<p>Archivist: Kevin O'Connor</p> <p>919-593-2537 kioconnor2@yahoo.com</p>
	<p>Assistant Treasurer: William Wurtzell</p> <p>wwurtzell@msn.com</p>		<p>Publisher: Rick Stoneking</p> <p>(856) 296-9291 rstoneking@mer-nmra.com</p>		<p>Web Master: Jeff Burch</p> <p>443-574-6859 webmaster@mer-nmra.com</p>
	<p>MER Photographer: Jerry Lauchle, MMR</p> <p>814-404-6955 photos@mer-nmra.com</p>				

Mid-Eastern Region Division Superintendents

	<p>New Jersey Division 1 John V Gallagher (856) 228-2239 njdiv.super@gmail.com Division web page: njdivnmra.org</p>		<p>Potomac Division 2 Martin Brechbiel, MMR superintendent@potomac-nmra.org Division web page: potomac-nmra.org/</p>		<p>Philadelphia Division 3 Joe Walters, MMR (302) 521-5884 josephwalters@yahoo.com Division web page: www.phillynmra.org</p>
	<p>Tidewater Division 4 John Robey (571) 217-0599 jrobey2019@gmail.com Division web page: nmra-mer-tidewater.org</p>		<p>James River Division 5 Phillip R. Taylor (434) 589-6006 drphilster@gmail.com Division web page: irdnmra.blogspot.com/</p>		<p>South Mountain Division 10 Bob Johnson southmountaindiv@gmail.com Division web page: http://www.smdnmra.org/</p>
	<p>Susquehanna Division 11 Vacant Division web page: www.susquehannanmra.org</p>		<p>Carolina Southern Division 12 Andrew Stitt (919) 637-1282 superintendent@carolinasouthern.org Division web page: www.carolinasouthern.org</p>		<p>Carolina Piedmont Division 13 Charlie Rausch, MMR crausch@mer-nmra.com Division web page: www.cpd13.org/</p>
	<p>Chesapeake Division 14 Tom Casey (410) 426-8947 super@chesdiv-nmra.org Division web page: www.chesdiv-nmra.org</p>				

[This is a new column by the immediate Past President of the Mid-Eastern Region written from the vantage point of experience, and broader perspective. This one is a notification about a new NMRA policy. -Ed.]

Past President Perspectives...

An In-depth Look at the At-Risk Persons Policy

By Kurt Thompson, MMR



When I was 15, my parents were going to let me take the train from Lafayette up to Chicago for the NMRA National (summer of 76) to attend by myself. At not quite 16. Times have changed.

I hate to talk about matters involving abuse in this newsletter, as much as I would prefer it not have to be mentioned at all, including in the NMRA Magazine. That’s not the case.

Some members have asked why NMRA has put in place the At-Risk Persons Policy. The bottom line is just that “times have changed” and protection of minors and other at-risk persons must be addressed, and policies put in place.

The requirements are that when an adult person attends an NMRA function with (1) a child under age 18 or (2) with an adult under disability (an At-Risk Person) for whom the adult is the legal guardian, the adult must be near the at-risk person at all times. Protection of the at-risk person is the responsibility of the aforementioned adult solely.

A child under age 18 may attend ONLY with an adult attendee. A legal guardian for a minor child for this purpose is (1) A parent (by parentage or adoption or (2) an adult who has been appointed by court order as guardian. The following are not automatically a legal guardian for a minor child: (1) a minor child’s brother or sister (even if that person is an adult) (2) a grandparent, or (3) an aunt or uncle.

(Continued on page 12)

Building My Very Own Critter

by Alex Belida, MMR

In a free-for-all at the end of our Nov. 5th Joint Meet with James River Division, those who attended could go to a table at the front of the assembly hall and take a model or other railroad-related gift that had been donated for door prizes. As one of the last to go, I was delighted to see that no one had snatched up an old Model Power "Porter Hustler" I had spotted earlier. Since I was working on Motive Power AP projects, I immediately saw I could strip away the body and use the power chassis to create my own freelance version of a well-beaten backwoods shortline critter.

First things first, though. I gave it a test run when I got home to see if it worked. The Hustler ran fine on simple DC and its headlight shone brightly. After figuring out how to pop the body off, I had to cut the wires that led to a red taillight glued into the back of the cab. As I only wanted the headlight for my project, I snipped those wires, then retested the chassis on the track to make sure the headlight still worked. It did (**Photo 1**).

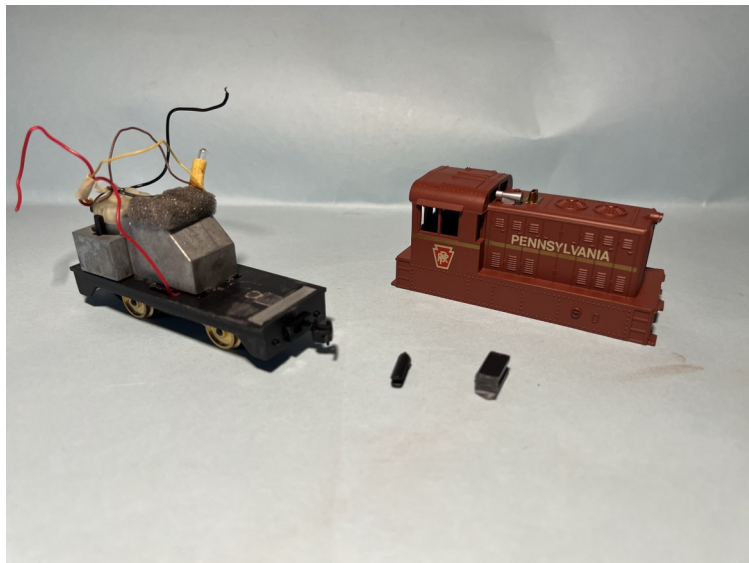


Photo 1: Porter Hustler Disassembled



Photo 2: Critter Body and Chest

So, I ended up spending unplanned time trimming the covers off the short remaining wire stubs, cutting new connecting wires to join the feeds from the motor to the wheel contacts, then covering these with shrink insulation and checking that things again worked (**Photo 2**). Whew! The chassis ran.

With that out of the way, I started cutting and fitting wood to surround the hump behind the motor that looked like a chest so it would appear to be an actual tool and supply chest. I cut styrene scraps to make hinges and a lock. Then I attached 6"x12" boards along the sides, the front and rear, and I cut 2"x6" floorboards for the flatbed. I used a mixture of Aleen's Tacky Glue and superglue (CA).

In the next work session, I decided to apply some gray wood weathering stain to the stripwood I had glued in place. I then took a hobby knife and cut away some bits and used my scratching tool to give the wood a roughed-up look.

I then turned my attention to making a new cab for the critter. I used scribed stripwood siding, cutting out a piece of the front cab

wall to insert a window and a portion of one side to insert a door. I also cut a hole above the front window to poke the headlight through, using a scrap piece of styrene on the front as a kind of frame for the lamp. I put the two sides and the front together after adding some stiffening boards on the inside and a brace between the top ends of the two side walls. I added glazing to the door and window (both Tichy) along with curtains from a used coffee filter. I painted the window and door flat black. To prevent anyone looking through the window from seeing the gray hulk of the model's engine, I cut out a piece of black craft paper and glued the image of locomotive controls on it and pasted it to the motor.

Then I glued the cab onto the chassis permanently and finished framing the back wall above the chest. I also took a 3D printed roof scrap to cover the cab and extend over the chest with posts supporting that end of the roof. Two smoke jacks (Grandt Line) were glued to the roof.

I also took more 6"x12" pieces to place on the front of the engine and removed the front coupler. For a cowcatcher/plow, I took a piece of metal from an empty hand cream tube, formed it into a plow shape that could attach to the sides of the critter, then inserted a piece of angle styrene on the back of the plow in the crease along with a piece of styrene I-beam so it could be attached to the front of the chassis (**Photo 3**).



Photo 3: Finished Front

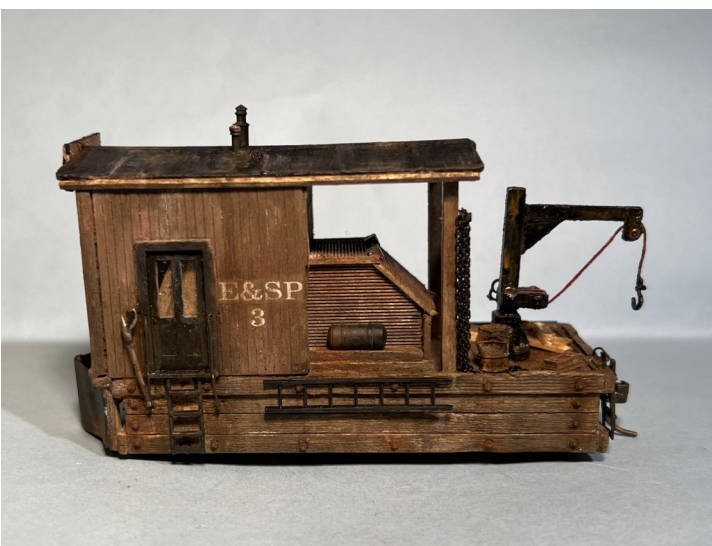


Photo 4: Finished Door Side of Critter

I marked, then drilled tiny holes and inserted a total of 42 hex-bolt-washers (Tichy) around the stripwood cladding attached to the chassis. Several will be behind the cowcatcher and barely visible, but I will know they are there. I also inserted a Kadee coupler in the rear (**Photo 4**).

Next, I added steps (MDC Roundhouse leftovers) to the cab door along with handrails (Tichy .015 wire), plus steps on the rear end along with a hand grab. I also placed two tanks (MDC Roundhouse) on the sides of the chest. I plunged on with the detailing, adding ladders on both sides of the critter. I scratch-built a tool holding shelf, attached it to the non-door side of the cab, and then inserted a couple shovels, other long-handled tools and a maul (GC Laser). I attached two saws on that side as well. A rusty barrel (origin unknown), some scrap wood and a small handtool box (origin unknown) were placed in the flatbed along with a rusty wheel (**Photo 5**).

Another detail was to add a small hoist on the flatbed. I removed it from a short, single-truck flat car from E.J. Brannan's Cache Creek series of wooden, old-time rolling stock I had purchased years ago (before he stopped making them). Its



Photo 5: Finished Tool Side

small size made it a perfect fit -- better than a larger Tichy hoist I had thought of using (Photo 6).

I took Micro Engineering small spikes and placed one in a hole I drilled in one of the two rear roof supports, then hung blackened chain (from Prescott Hobbies) from it. Two more spikes were inserted into holes in the front of the roof, over the engineer's window, to support a signboard giving the critter a name -- "The Emmett" -- in honor of my fourth grandson born in August 2022. A long-handled prod was attached to a spike next to the cab door.

Using Micro Set and Micro Sol, I also applied decals (K-4 1/8" Railroad Roman White) for my Eureka and South Pass Railroad (E&SP) and numbered this critter "3."

Although the initial gray weathering stains and board roughening gave the critter a credibly weathered look, I took AK streaking grime and rust streaks and applied these over most of the model, using thinner to "drag" stains and streaks from the roof down the sides of the cab and along the chassis.

I finished by daubing Pan Pastels at various places to enhance the dusty, dirty appearance of the critter (Photo 7).

Though there are no actual prototypes that I could find for my critter, I have seen several models of a similar freelance design. It seems there are other modelers who, like me, enjoy exercising their creativity. In this case, I was able to take a very commonplace switcher and convert it into a backwoods, shortline workhorse that will now enjoy new life on my layout.



Photo 6: Finished Backside



Photo 7: Critter on my Layout



President's Column

President Scott Unger

Where to Begin?

Model railroading is a very broad hobby, which is both a positive and a negative. On the positive side, the breadth of the hobby (see the extensive list in this edition's Editor's Column) offers countless opportunities to expand your knowledge and skills, and to keep your interest and energy elevated. The drawback, however, can be a lack of focus that leads to a loss of momentum, much like a heavy freight stalled on a grade.

One solution to being figuratively stalled comes directly from the hobby itself. I don't know when it was discontinued, but one of the major model railroad publications had a monthly switching puzzle, the goal of which was to sort the cars in as few moves as possible. Completing this successfully required the careful study of all the cars that needed to be moved and the proper sequence required to keep the moves to the minimum number. I rarely solved the puzzle in the fewest steps but always enjoyed the mental exercise. You could replicate this by creating your own switching puzzles. If you are more of a builder than an operator, sequence is still critical to avoid leftover parts of a kit at the end of the project.

When we get stalled by an overwhelming number of potential projects in our minds and/or on our workbenches, it can be useful to write as many of them down as you can think of. The items on the list don't need to be in any particular order. Just get them all down on the paper (or screen) in front of you. Once you have a comprehensive list, review it to see which of those tasks might be related in some way, require similar resources, or are sequence dependent. Then arrange them into groups. For instance, your list might include cutting a piece of Homasote, priming a large structure with a spray can, or mixing a large amount of messy scenery materials. Each is likely best performed outside (or like one modeler says, "in your neighbor's garage"). So, these are weather dependent tasks even though the tasks themselves might not be directly related. Or, you may need to validate a curve radius or turnout size before you install track in a particular location. Other tasks might require research of the prototype using fire insurance maps or historical aerial photography before establishing the approximate size or location of a structure.

Whatever grouping methodology you use, your long list of seemingly random tasks typically will end up as several shorter lists with interrelated subtasks. Now take each shorter list of subtasks and put each item into a logical sequence or add smaller tasks that are required to complete the job that you didn't include initially. You should end up with a group of pro-

jects each with a list of subtasks listed in sequence. For example, if your project is to complete the scenery in a recently added town, a sample project and list of subtasks in a logical sequence might be:

Project: Scenery in Altoona

Verify track reliability; use a locomotive to shove long cuts of cars in every direction.

Verify that the track arrangement works for your intended operating scheme.

Establish the basic landforms including areas of cut and fill and location of drainage.

Make a quick sketch showing areas of pavement, vegetation, or structures.

Install the base landforms starting from the backdrop and work towards the aisle.

Layout and install roads, parking areas and building foundations.

Cover landforms with base color and first layer of scenery materials including ballast.

Working back to front, install buildings and increase vertical layers of vegetation.

Add final figures and details to the scene.

You can make each project's list as detailed or as simple as needed to help you avoid skipping a step. Finally, review your list of projects and commit to get started on just one, performing each subtask in sequence as your time, energy or wallet permits. Taking even a small, but productive step will provide a sense of accomplishment and reinvigorate your interest. Incremental progress is okay; just get your train restarted to build some forward momentum. As you make progress, take time to share your project with someone. Sharing our work and ideas with others could mean presenting it at a Division meet, seeking input and feedback from another modeler, posting your progress on YouTube, or writing a progress article for *The Local*. The hobby is better when done together and we often get useful feedback from others that make our projects easier or better in the end.

At the Regional level, the MER (Mid-Eastern Region) also has a rather lengthy list of projects. Some are established and some are based on recent suggestions by members to improve how and what we do. I encourage each of you to engage with your Division and communicate your ideas. As we start 2023 with some new Board members and officers, we ask for your support as we try to "switch the cars" in the correct sequence!



From the Editor's Desk

Greg Warth, Editor

What Is a Model Railroader?

This seems like a rather trite question. Of course, we all know what a model railroader is, or do we?

If you came from Mars and wanted to know what a model railroader is, it might not be as easy as you think to find out!

Google says it is a magazine. Webster doesn't define the phrase, only the two separate words. Wikipedia also says it is a magazine. If you Google "model railroading," you get "rail transport modeling." Deeply embedded in the body of a Wikipedia article entitled "Rail Transport Modeling," you can find the words "model railroader." Here we find a loose definition of a model railroader as a hobbyist involved in either owning a train set all the way up to "spending hours and large sums of money on a large and exacting model of a railroad and the scenery through which it passes."

In other words, a model railroader is someone who plays with toy trains. Most of us would regard this as rather demeaning, but the tee-shirt business has made a lot of money on that definition, and model railroaders just look the other way, thinking, "Call it what you want, I'm doing it anyway."

Regardless of formal and informal definitions, or lack thereof, a model railroader is so much more than those descriptions portray. Being a model railroader means different things to different people, which is why it is so difficult to define. There are many aspects to this hobby. If you are involved in any of them, the term model railroader would apply.

So, a model railroader is anyone who is engaged in or enjoys any aspect of model railroading. Well then, what is model railroading? Here is my attempt at defining this diverse, multifaceted hobby, which may or may not comply with every model railroader's view, but hopefully it is close:

Model railroading is the artistic and scientific craftsmanship engaged in the production of scaled, compressed landscapes, or the structures contained therein, or the equipment, tracks, bridges, and tunnels required for the transport of certain products, goods, or passengers from one place to another by rail, using trains that may or may not be scratchbuilt, and are sometimes prototypical in appearance and operation.

The various aspects of model railroading often require certain skills that the model railroader must learn either before or during the process. This usually requires instruction from other modelers who have already developed these skills, either through one-on-one training, reading about them, watching videos or through educational clinics at meetings or conventions. The creation of the larger landscapes often requires

teamwork. Therefore, groups of model railroaders are formed to accomplish what no one person could achieve working alone.

Here are the qualities, skills, education, values, and disciplines often sought by model railroaders to be successful and to have the most enjoyment of the hobby:

Volunteerism	Willingness to learn
Perseverance	Willingness to teach and help
Sharing of information/ Authorship	Communication / Social skills
Problem solving	Creativity and imagination
Basic carpentry	Science
Physics	Mathematics
Photography	Layout Design
Trackwork	Wiring
Soldering	Artistry
Railroad history	Learning types of locomotives and
Scratchbuilding	Kitbashing
Prototypical Operations	Engineering – civil, electrical, mechanical
Leadership	Pioneering

Of course, the model railroader does not have to know all of these in the beginning, but they are the skills and knowledge that might be worthwhile to achieve. Even the experts don't know everything.

The best way to start learning these skills is through the [NMRA Achievement Program](#), earning certificates in each of the required disciplines therein by demonstrating competence in them one at a time, and ultimately obtaining the Master Model Railroader (MMR) designation. This is not unlike obtaining a PhD degree at a university. Even after that, MMRs are still busy learning new things, gaining more experience and teaching others what they have learned – often in the form of educational clinics and [articles](#) (hint!) written for the Division or Regional newsletters.

So, in summary, again, what is a model railroader? Anyone who loves the study of trains and railroads and who also enjoys the craftsmanship related to creation of scaled models or landscapes and/or life-like operations of them. The model railroader also embodies or strives to achieve any

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one or more of the goals listed above... In other words, anyone who plays with trains! The tee-shirts were right after all J.

This New Year's edition of *The Local* will inspire you to renew yourself in the hobby with excellent articles by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on how to build a lineside shed with leftovers, by Fred Miller, MMR on animated billboard signs, and another all about the Potomac and James River Mini-con. Alex Belida, MMR demonstrates how he made a critter for his rural layout out of an old loco he picked up for free at the Mini-con. We also have more layout tours and even more photos from the 2022 MER Convention. Moving forward, of course, we will have a preview of the 2023 Annual MER Convention in Altoona, PA. And that's just for starters.

Thank you again for reading *The Local*. We hope you enjoy this issue. Don't forget to send us your tips, photos, and articles. Or just send us a comment now and then. We'd love to hear from you.

Best wishes to all for a new and exciting year ahead in model railroading!

Editorial Staff, Publisher, and Proofreaders:

- Bob Charles MMR, MER Director
- Martin Brechbiel, MMR
- Alex Belida, MMR
- Jack Dziadul
- Rick Stoneking, Publisher



Greg Warth, Editor



NMRA Achievement Program Update

Kurt Thompson, MMR
MER AP Manager

Since the last report in *The Local*, the following Achievement Program certificates were earned and awarded in the Mid-Eastern Region (MER):

- Division 1 – New Jersey
 - Chris Conoway - Civil
- Division 2 – Potomac
 - Richard Steinmann - Author
 - Bill Mosteller - Electrical
 - John Griffith - Civil
 - John Griffith - Electrical
 - Mat Thompson - Association Volunteer
- Division 3 - Philly
 - Steve Salotti - Scenery
 - Steve Salotti - Electrical
 - Mark Wallace - Dispatcher
 - Steve Salotti - Structures
 - Steve Salotti - Civil
- Division 12 - Carolina Southern
 - Henry Reeves - Dispatcher
 - Ed Smith - Electrical
- Division 14 – Chesapeake
 - Jeff Burch - Association Volunteer
 - Jim Fisher - Author
 - Jim Fisher - Association Volunteer

MER's Newest MMRs:

Chris Conaway, MMR #724, of the New Jersey Division, and John Griffith, MMR #723 of the Potomac Division, are MER's newest MMRs. So, be sure to offer your Congratulations the next time you see Chris and John!

In a perfect world, this information would appear soon in the *NMRA Magazine*. This should not deter you from giving recognition locally. Normally you will be able to recognize AP accomplishments long before the names appear in the *NMRA magazine*.

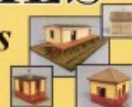
PLEASE NOTE: National does NOT accept R&V forms. I am getting too many of them, only to have to return to the sender and get the proper form. **NO R&V FORMS.**

IPSWICH HOBBIES

H

Craftsman Structure Kits

Jack Dziadul



IpswichHobbies.com
919-721-8757

Past President Perspectives (Continued from page 3)

If the visiting child or other at-risk person is attending with an adult attendee who is not the legal guardian, the NMRA requires that the legal guardian execute and have notarized the At-Risk Persons Affidavit:

(https://www.nmra.org/sites/default/files/nmraorg/bod/EHB/legal_guardian_designation_affidavit_june_2022.pdf).

This affidavit MUST be received by the event officials no later than when the supervising adult attendee and minor child (or other at-risk person) come to the registration desk to check in. The adult who has been designated by the legal guardian MUST also show a valid photo ID card to verify that he or she is the person whose name is on the affidavit. The supervising adult may now bring the child or other at-risk person to the NMRA event. And then the NMRA adult attendee acts in the same manner as in the prior paragraph starting with “The requirements are...”.

If the adult attendee does not have the signed and notarized affidavit, or it has not been received previously by the NMRA hosting group, and/or if the adult is not able to show a valid photo ID card verifying that he or she is the supervising adult mentioned on the affidavit, the NMRA hosting group is *required* to refuse entry to the at-risk person. This may result in the adult also not entering the event.

I know that sounds very draconian. It is.

Here is some background. In the last two years the Boy Scouts of America found themselves in deep legal troubles over lawsuits about sexual and physical abuse of scouts at the hands of adults within the BSA organization. So large are the lawsuit awards that BSA had to mortgage the Philmont Ranch facility, and BSA had to go into Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The Bankruptcy Court recently confirmed the reorganization plan requiring the payment of \$2.4 Billion to claimants by BSA, local Councils, the Methodist Church, and various insurers. Numerous other similar organizations have or are facing similar liability.

The NMRA does not have the financial depth of pockets that the BSA has (or had). Therefore, the solution is to place and keep responsibility for minors and other at-risk persons with the legal guardian or the designated temporary guardian.

This is very black and white without room for equivocations. Sadly, it has to be this way for the foreseeable future.

I don't like it any more than most of the rest of the NMRA. I have to accept that this is where we are today. The times have indeed changed.

UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

2023 – Susquehanna Division - “Round the Curve to Altoona” October 19-22, 2023, Altoona, PA

2024 – Carolina Piedmont Division—“Piedmont Junction” Sep 26 - 29, 2024, Durham, NC

2025 – New Jersey Division Dates and location TBD

MER Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

Board of Directors Budget Meeting – 7 pm Jan ??, 2023 – TBA

Board of Directors Meeting – Apr 15, 2023 – Altoona, PA

Board of Directors Meeting – 7 pm Oct 19, 2023 – Altoona, PA

Elections 2023

THE MER NEEDS YOU!

**Now accepting nominations for
Directors-at-Large**

Yes, you! If you are a member in good standing and want to support your region with good ideas and real involvement, we need you to volunteer to serve as one of the three Directors-at-Large for the Mid-Eastern Region (MER). The deadline for nomination entry is May 30, 2023. The term of office is two years, with a limit of two terms. Any qualified MER member in good standing can be nominated, either by him or herself or by another member with the candidate's permission. The process is very simple:

Prepare:

A 200-word (max) statement outlining the nominee's interest and qualifications for the position, **and** a photo of the candidate. Send the nominations package – by **May 30, 2023** – to all of the following nominations process officials:

Nominations Committee:

Chair: Robert Charles, MMR	rcharles@aol.com
Jack Dziadul	jackdziadul@gmail.com
Kenneth Montero	va661midlo@comcast.net
Scott Unger	president@mer-nmra.com

Option – also by May 30, candidates may supply a 500-word statement suitable for placement on the MER website.

You can make a difference by giving something back to the hobby you thoroughly enjoy. This is your chance. Successful completion of three years in office fulfills most of the requirements for the Achievement Program “Association Official” certificate. Please respond in one email to all three committee members plus President Unger to insure receipt of your nomination!

Deadlines and Schedules for 2023 Nominations and Balloting:

Our Bylaws require the publication of deadlines and schedules for nominations and balloting in the first issue of *The Local* of each year. The dates and schedule for nominations, ballot and election results are in the Executive Handbook, Section 5, Policies, Article VI.

May 30, 2023 -- Deadline for receipt of self-nominations sent to the Nominations Committee. Date for Nominations Committee to notify Board of Directors of slate of nominees validated by the Business Manager.

July 5, 2023 -- You must be a member in good standing (paid up NMRA dues) based on the membership report supplied to the MER Business Manager from NMRA National as of 07/05 (the 5th of July) of every election year to be eligible to vote. If an individual is not a member or if membership has expired as indicated by the record supplied to the MER, and MER officials have not been informed by NMRA National of a valid renewal of membership by 07/05 (the 5th of July), that individual will not receive a ballot, nor be permitted to vote in that year's election.

August 1, 2023 -- Deadline for mailing paper ballots to members and for commencing electronic votin.

September 5, 2023 -- Deadline for electronic voting, also last day as shown by postmark for mailing paper ballots.

September 9, 2023 -- Deadline for receipt by Balloting Committee of paper ballots sent by mail.

September 16, 2023 -- Deadline for Ballot Committee to transmit results to President, the Director overseeing this committee, and the Business Manager.

September 23, 2023 -- Deadline for The President to communicate the election results to candidates. The Business Manager also notifies the MER Web Master and the NMRA of the election results.

October 8, 2023 -- Deadline for publishing election results on MER's website.

Don't wait! This is a great opportunity to get involved in a leadership role for the MER. Your ideas are vital to the life and growth of our organization. Send in your nomination right now.

Establishing *The Local* Index

By Greg Warth, Ed.

Many of our members have suggested that an index be created for *The Local* that would facilitate searching for articles of interest. This is a very practical and useful consideration, and the suggestion is a very reasonable one. Even more than that, it would help further develop our documented legacy for the Mid-Eastern Region (MER). That legacy is, of course, *The Local*, which contains the history of the MER, including its important events, contributing members, their creations, layouts, photographs, and many imaginative, educational, and original articles spanning over a period of 76 years. We truly should have an easy way to access all that information.

So, we have started the process. The index shown here is only the beginning. It consists of all the articles appearing in *The Local* during 2022. I know this is only the tip of the pyramid, but it will be gradually expanded over time. Ultimately it will include all the issues since 1996. It is entirely searchable by clicking on the magnifying glass icon in the top right corner of the index and entering the author or the topic of interest.

[The Local Index for 2022](#)

Notice...

South Mountain Division Mini-Con

By Don Florwick

Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania
Saturday, April 8, 2023,
from 9 AM to 3PM

The South Mountain Division and Mainline [Hobby Supply](#) will be hosting its 9th annual Mini Con at the Blue Ridge Fire Hall, 13063 Monterey Ln., Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214.


Come and enjoy this one-day free event, one block north of Mainline Hobby Supply, consisting of prototype and modeling presentations, formal and informal clinics, modular displays, and interaction with your fellow hobbyists and beginners. Plus get a 10% discount at Mainline Hobby Supply.

Everything is wheelchair accessible.

This educational event is open to the public for promotion of the hobby of Model Railroading.





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A Line Side Supply Shed, or Getting Rid of More Leftovers

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR

I'm going to pick up where I left off several issues ago with this theme of consuming leftovers to make something useful for the layout. While my leftovers boxes of scribed siding and milled clapboard have been somewhat diminished and the leftovers from small kits I had developed have departed for new homes, there's still too much underfoot. Let's build something.

Rooting through the box of clapboard yielded some useful clapboard (1/8" Northeastern) that I promptly cut up for four walls for making yet another shed, in this case what I'm calling a supply shed (Photo 1).

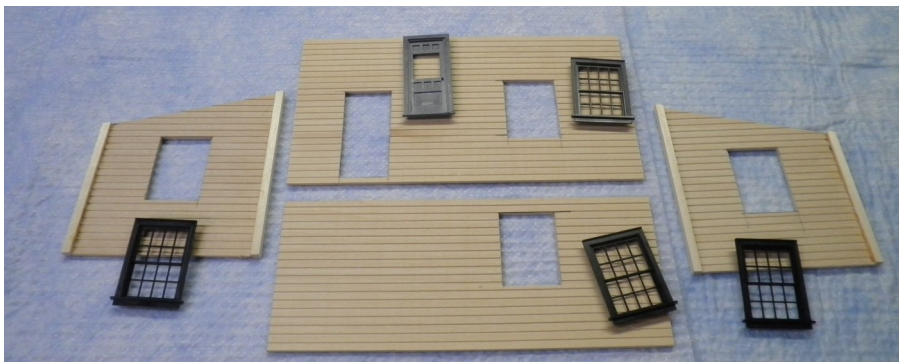


Photo 1

The ends of the side walls were capped off with some 3/32" square basswood. I made an opening for a door (Grandt Line 3601) and then scattered about for some 8/8 windows (Grandt Line W-7). The packages described these as Durango Coal Chute windows, but they are going to be supply shed windows now. It pays to measure carefully when cutting openings for windows to get them all aligned. The opening should also be not overly tight giving them room to swell a bit when paint is applied. Test fitting everything now is also better than having to take a scalpel to open up a painted section later (Photo 2).

Assembling the four walls was done with a film of Goo on the end grain and some CA on the corners that were formed from the 3/32" square basswood. The roof was made from individual boards (HO 3" x 12" & 3" x 18") (Photos 3, 4). Faux rafter tails were made from 1/16" x 5/32" basswood and glued into place. HO 4" x 8" trim was applied under the roof at the top of each side wall. I added bracing to the interior corners and then two large cleats (O 10" x 16") to the sides flush with the base for mounting this structure. While I had this open and upside down I added a brass lighting fixture over the doorway (Photo 5). It was just a matter of drilling a hole, threading the wire and then brass tubing through the hole, and securing with a little Goo and CA from the inside.



Photo 2



Photos 3



Photos 4



Photos 5

In the interest of clearing out the leftovers, I had an open pack of the asphalt shingles from Portland Locomotive Works. These are



Photos 6

The door and windows were painted Pacemaker Gray, glazing was added, and then they were put into place with a bit of Goo. I painted the exposed base wood with a film of carpenter's glue and added some turf from Woodland Scenics. Then it was time to clear out a few more leftovers. This included a couple of resin crates, some pallets, a coal box (Berkshire Valley), some milk cans (Keil-line), a chair (Walthers), 55 gallon drums (Keil-line), a heating oil tank (Berkshire Valley), and a figure for a caretaker, tentatively named "Wally" (Arttista). All of these (except Wally) were painted and some weathering added as needed for effect prior to their being "planted" into place around the shed. I added a supply line for the oil tank through the back wall (Photos 8-11).

rather nice being laser-cut from some sort of sand paper material so they have a bit of the thickness and texture. I glued these down with carpenter's glue. I added a smokestack casting (Train Craft) after drilling out the top and secured that with Goo and CA (Photo 6).

The shed was painted using Polly Scale paints. The walls were painted B&M Yellow and the roof trim and underside got a coat of Pacemaker Gray. The smokestack received Engine Black while the light was treated to Sea Green and Flat Aluminum. The building was then glued down onto a base of 1/16" basswood (Photo 7).



Photos 7

More could be done here but this now concludes another simple, easy build that I used to consume more of my leftovers with the aim of putting this structure into someone else's basement.



Photos 8



Photos 10



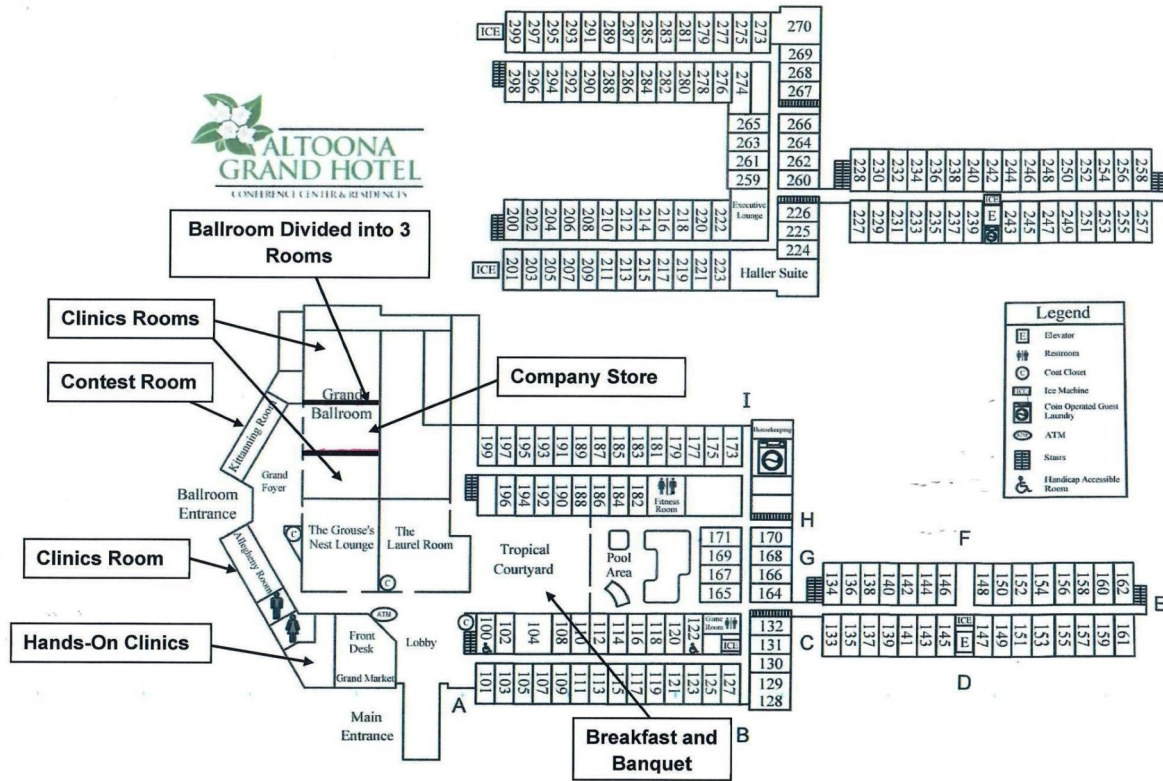
Photos 9



Photos 11

Round the Curve to Altoona (Continued from page 1)

The hotel floorplan is shown here with convention rooms identified. Vendor tables will likely be set up in the hallways. The location for in-house layouts and modules has not yet been decided.



The Grand Ballroom has dividers allowing it to be split into three rooms. The two outside rooms will be for clinics and the middle

room will be for the company store. Tables will be set around the perimeter of the company store for raffle items.



The Tropical Courtyard is the breakfast area. There will be the opportunity for conferees to sign up and pre-pay for hotel-made breakfasts in the registration process.



The Saturday evening banquet will also take place in the Tropical Courtyard. Our banquet speaker will be Joe DeFrancesco, CEO of the Railroaders Memorial Museum. Joe is also an NMRA member who lives in Division 11.



Joe DeFrancesco



The Contest Room



Clinic Room

Altoona is loaded with rail-related activities including the world-famous Horseshoe Curve, the Juniata Shops (presently occupied by Norfolk Southern), and the Railroaders Memorial Museum including the Harry Bennett Memorial Roundhouse where the heralded PRR K4 Pacific no. 1361 is being restored. Joe DeFrancesco will organize a private tour of this roundhouse.

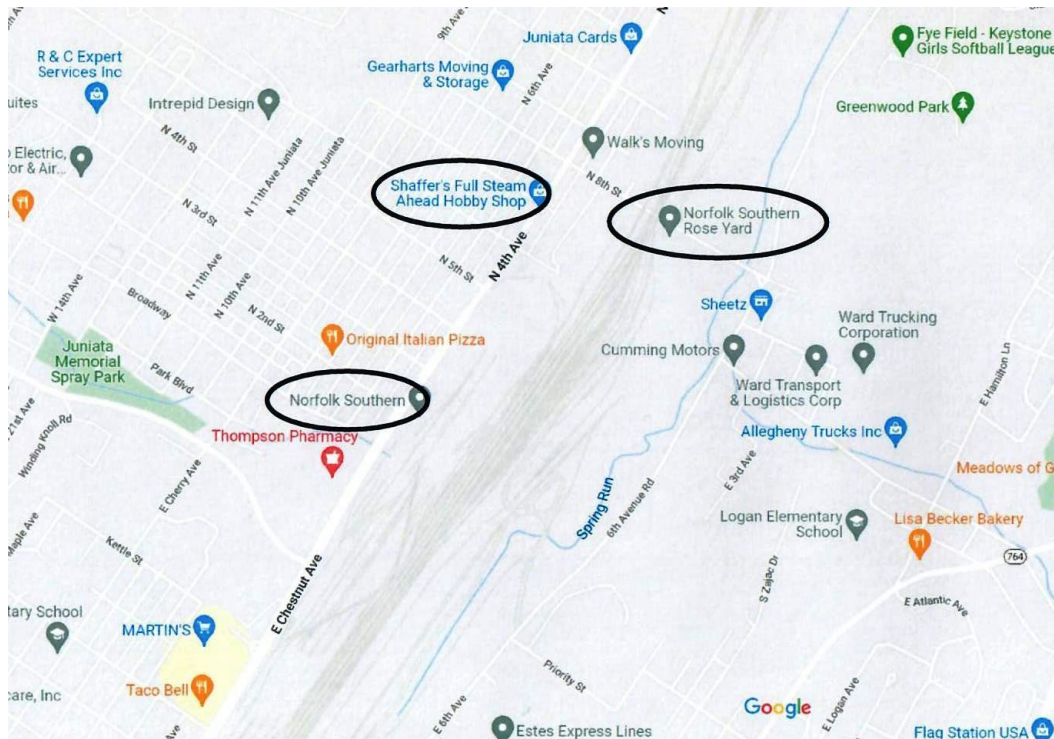




Rail fanning is popular in and around Altoona. For example, the rail walkway over the tracks in Altoona is shown here.



About a half-hour drive away there is the Gallitzen Park in Gallitzen.



Another popular spot in Altoona is the N 8th St. bridge that goes over the Norfolk Southern Rose yard.

We have some layout owners within an hour's drive of the hotel who will open up their railroads for operating sessions. Dave Baker's Cumberland and Lake Erie Railroad is in Johnstown, while John Bennett's B&O, WM, and P&WV Railroad layout is in nearby Windber (see below photos).



Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad located in Windber, will also be open for an operating session (see two photos below).





A really magnificent model railroad club that will be open for visits is located in Altoona – The [Altoona Association of Model Railroaders](#). This club's layouts (N scale, HO scale, and O scale) are housed in a two-story dedicated building.

There will be layouts open for visits too. Included will be the railroad being built by residents living at the Foxdale Village retirement center in State College.

And, our layout tours coordinator, Gary Nastase, will show his railroad located in Woodbury.



John Kocet of State College will have his layout open too.

In summary, we believe that the 2023 MER convention in Altoona will offer attendees first class accommodations, many informative clinics, rail attractions in and outside the city, operating sessions with experienced layout owners, a well-stocked company store, a raffle, and of course meticulously

crafted models in the contest room. In future newsletters, LCC team leaders will discuss some of these activities in detail.

[Don't wait. Make your hotel reservations now at the Altoona Grand Hotel! – Ed.]

Why Attend a Model Railroad Convention?

By Jerry Lauchle, MMR,

Chairman of the Altoona 2023 Local Convention Committee

The NMRA Regions hold 15 conventions around the US and Canada annually. There are other annual NMRA conventions in the British Isles and Australasia. These gatherings of hobbyists are meant to promote and encourage participation in model railroading, and they can give a real boost to your personal hobby.

Average Attendance

Notably, the Mid-Eastern Region (MER) has almost 1800 members, but only 120-175 on average ever go to the annual conventions. That's less than 10%. That means 90% of the MER members are missing out on major model railroad opportunities every year – opportunities like:

Fellowship

If you've never been to a regional convention, I strongly encourage you to attend one. You will make new friends, learn new things, and be inspired by the work of others. You will be with scores of people who share your interests. If you spend a day or a weekend around that many fellow model railroaders, you're bound to make some new friends. Some of these friendships last forever.

Layout Tours

Open Houses and Operating Sessions: Among the most fun and exciting attractions of these get-togethers are the open houses hosted by local layout owners. You can always learn something by visiting layouts, and you never know when you'll walk into someone's train room and see just the idea you've been seeking for your own layout. Make no mistake, these home layouts are amazing. Some of these layout owners hold operating sessions with crews made up from convention registrants who signed up to participate in the registration process. You will meet new people whether touring the layouts or participating in an operating session. Although bus tours are common at NMRA National conventions, most regional convention tours are drive yourself tours. Layout addresses are given to convention registered modelers only. With GPS it's easy to get to the locations.

On-Site Layouts: Most Regional conventions have modular layouts on-site at the hotels where the meetings are being held. The Altoona Convention will be no exception to this. These are almost always very well done and quite inspirational.

Clinics and Workshops

Regional conventions feature a variety of very educational clinics. These are workshops and seminars given by individual modelers on modeling and prototype subjects. Some of the speakers may be well known, but the clinic can be just as interesting, though, when presented by the people who aren't famous yet. Choose which clinics you'll attend by topic, rather than by presenter's name. And do consider presenting a clinic yourself in a future regional convention!

Contests

The model contest is another popular convention feature. Modelers compete in a variety of categories. These include both scratch-built and kitbuilt cars, locomotives, structures, and dioramas. If you've built something you're proud of, you can enter it in the model contest and see how it stacks up. Models are judged and scored using the NMRA Achievement Program (AP) standards. If your model receives a score of 87.5 (70% of the maximum score of 125), or higher, you will receive a Merit Award which counts towards Master Builder Awards in the NMRA AP. You can visit the model contest room anytime during the convention (except during judging) to see and marvel at the construction, attention to detail, realism, and ingenuity demonstrated by your fellow modelers in these contest models.

Other Rail and Non-Rail Activities

Make it a family event – a vacation. There are usually attractions locally that every family member can enjoy. Often there are prototype rail activities and tours at these meetings too. Convention organizers may arrange group or drive yourself visits to rail-related sights, museums, and landmarks, not to mention railfanning locations. Such up-close, in-person contact with the real thing is always inspiring for model railroaders.

Details

Details of all these events for the 2023 Altoona Convention are forthcoming and will be announced in other convention updates separately within this issue and the next several issues of *The Local*.

Don't Miss Out!

Make your plans now to attend the next MER Annual Convention in Altoona, Pennsylvania. The Altoona Works was for many years the largest railroad shop complex in the world, The Railroaders Memorial Museum is right next to it. Of course, the world famous Horseshoe Curve is located nearby.

And don't limit yourself to this convention. Make plans to go every year, not only to our Annual MER Conventions but to as many of our sister regional conventions as you can. This is model railroading. You need to see what's out there, and we need your support! Go mark your calendar right now for October 19-22 for Altoona 2023!

<https://mer2023.org/index.html>



Memories...

Shempp Model Train Collection

By Jerry Lauchle, MMR

The Thomas T. Taber Museum in Williamsport has added a permanent display of the Shempp model train collection which includes over 2,000 pieces with 500 locomotives. A well-done video presentation of the collection is on YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Rp4X5VDrkk&t=11s>

The narrator is John Hunsinger, my senior year high school teacher of U.S. History. He still comes to our Montoursville High School class reunions. The photo shows John in 1963 standing far left.



Seated: Mrs. Wright, Penna. History, U. S. History; Mrs. Lewis, World Cultures, American History, Reading; Miss Null, Geography. Standing: Mr. Hunsinger, U. S. History, Problems of Democracy; Mr. Kissell, World Cultures, Geography; Mr. Heisler, World History; Mr. Felix, American History, Penna. History.

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Potomac Division Hobby Barn and Virtual Clinics

Contact Jerry Stanley to attend: 703-595-8081



*Jerry Stanley's Hobby Barn
11552 Hereford Ct. in Hume, Virginia 22639*

The Potomac Division sponsors a number of clinics to which all MER members are invited when space is available. Most of the in-person clinics are held at Jerry Stanley's Hobby Barn in Hume, Virginia unless otherwise stated. If you are interested in attending any of these clinics, either in-person or virtually, please contact Jerry at 703-595-8081.

Date/Time	Event	Location
Sunday, 1/15/23 3 PM	Virtual- Making Trees - Rivard & Hurly	Zoom
Saturday, 1/21/23 10 AM	Resin Casting – I – Martin Brechbiel, MMR	Fairfax, VA
Sunday, 2/19/23 3 PM	Tips and Tricks – Brian Sheron, MMR	Zoom
Saturday, 2/25/23 10 AM	Resin Casting – II – Martin Brechbiel, MMR	Fairfax, VA
Saturday, 3/11/23 10 AM	Kadee Whisker Couplers – Bob Mosteller	Hume, VA
Sunday, 3/19/23 3 PM	Tools – Paul Bastek	Zoom
Sunday, 4/8/23 10 AM	Tool Operations – Paul Bastek	Hume, VA
Sunday, 4/16/23 3 PM	Details – Brian Sheron, MMR	Zoom
Sunday, 5/21/23 3 PM	TBD	Zoom
Saturday, 5/27/23 10 AM	Lathe, Milling, Soldering, 3D Printing – Paul Bastek	Hume, VA

- Events listed to be held in Hume, VA are at the Hobby Barn.
- Events listed to be held in Fairfax, VA are at the Knights of Columbus at 3700 Old Lee Hwy in Fairfax.
- The complete updated schedule can be found on the Potomac Division Website at <https://potomac-nmra.org/PDnewsite/Calendar/Calendar.php>

Advertising in The Local:

If you have a model railroading business and would like to place an ad in *The Local*, please contact the [Editor](#). The new rates per year are as follows:

Division and Clubs - Free
Full Page – color \$100.00
½ Page – color 60.00
¼ Page – color 35.00
Business Card 10.00
Text Only 7.00

Your ad may appear as text, photo, art, or any combination thereof. Art must be of high quality and camera-ready. Formats must be in txt, doc/docx, pdf, jpeg, bmp or tiff only. The content must be related to model trains or railroads or provide a benefit specifically to model railroaders. If you need help with your ad, please don't hesitate to ask the Editor.

Send in Your Articles

We are always looking for new articles, tips, ideas, photos, and comments from our readers. If you have been awarded an AP (Achievement Program) Certificate or an MMR (Master Model Railroader) award, please consider writing an article about it so others can learn how you did it. We always enjoy looking at new layouts, dioramas, and models that our members have created. If you would like to contribute to *The Local*, please send an email containing your article and photos to [The Local Editor](#).

The Local welcomes and encourages articles, photographs, and model railroad related material as contributions to members' education and enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. The Editor will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send paper/photo originals without retaining back-up copies. Editors, by definition, reserve the right and have the responsibility to make corrections, deletions, and changes to accommodate space. If your item is time-sensitive in any way, please advise the Editor. Otherwise, stories and photos that are accepted are published in approximately the order in which they were received.

Deadlines:

Publication Schedule Submission Deadline:	
Issue.....	Deadline
Jan/Feb.....	Dec 1 st of previous year
Mar/Apr.....	Feb 1 st
May/Jun	Apr 1 st
Jul/Aug	Jun 1 st
Sept/Oct	Aug 1 st
Nov/Dec	Oct 1 st

How to Submit an Article for The Local

Please observe the following steps to submit your contribution.

1. Please read the article written by Martin Brechbiel, MMR on "[How to Prepare a Manuscript for *The Local*.](#)"
2. Compose and submit your text in one of the following formats: TXT, DOC, or DOCX.
3. Consider what photos, illustrations, or other graphics can go with the text. These are essential. But DO NOT include/insert them into your text. DO put notations in the text such as "Insert Photo #1 here." Your photos should be high resolution and very clear. We cannot accept photos that are fuzzy or out of focus. JPG, GIF, TIFF, or PNG formats are acceptable. Please rename your photo files in the order you want them to appear, e.g., Photo-1.jpg, Photo-2.jpg, etc.
4. If you have captions for your photos, etc., create a separate text file for the captions, each of which should be numbered to match a numbered photo or figure.
5. Send your article or photos by email to [The Local Editor](#). There may be a limit on the number of megabytes you can send depending on your email program. If necessary, either send the photos three at a time, or compress the photos with a "Zip" program to send more at one time.

Special Notes:

Please only send us *your own* creative work or that for which you have written permission to use so we can give that source proper credit. We need to avoid any copyright infringement situations.

If you have previously published your article or photo in any other magazine or newsletter, including a division newsletter or your own website blog, it cannot be reproduced in *The Local* without written permission from the magazine publisher, editor, and author / photographer.

If this is your first submission to *The Local*, please fill out and return this [Media Agreement](#) form to the Editor, which gives us permission to use your material and verifies that the work is yours, or that you have obtained written permission to use it.

Once your article is approved for publication, and you have qualified for 42 or more points in the [Author Category](#) of the Achievement Program (AP), you may submit a [Statement of Qualifications Form](#) to your Division AP Manager to receive your Author AP Certificate.



Winter Scene by Mark Nieting on his HO Milwaukee Road layout.

My Journey to MMR

By Pete LaGuardia, MMR

The journey of my love for model railroading began as a kid growing up in The Bronx, NY. I was about five-years-old when I received my first Lionel train set for Christmas. I was very intrigued, and it became the only gift that I played with for days. After that Christmas I always asked Santa for Lionel Trains.

As my life progressed, other interests put my hobby on hold. It was not until I lived in Tacoma, Washington with my wife, Marie, and three children that my interest started again. I bought my first HO train set to share with my children, and for the next five years I continued to add to the layout. Unfortunately, professional life had me moving every few years which prevented me from building a permanent layout.

It was not until I retired in 1999 and was living in Woodbridge, Virginia that my dream of having a home layout finally became a reality. I joined the local model railroad club and was introduced to the world of DCC. Joining the club increased my passion for model railroading. One of the club members, Bob Rodriguez, introduced me to operations and I saw the potential of what can be accomplished in model railroading. Bob kept track of my hours which allowed me to receive my first certificate as Chief Dispatcher on April 1, 2009. This introduced me to the [NMRA Achievement Program](#).

In 2008 my wife and I moved into our retirement home which had a 1,500 square foot unfinished basement. I started designing my home layout to fill this space. After receiving my first certificate, I decided to document each phase of my layout construction. This allowed me to receive the other six certificates enabling me to become a Master Model Railroader (MMR).

Details on my current layout are listed below.

THEME: New York Central Western Illinois Division (WID) is an HO scale model railroad set in the summer of 1954 operating from points West - Kansas City, Omaha, and Des Moines and operating from points East - Moberly, Hannibal, Danville, and Indianapolis. Modeled activities include a large yard and an engine facility with an 18-stall roundhouse indexing turntable. This facility has the ability to service both steam and diesel. Industries throughout the layout include a meatpacking plant, pulp mill, coal tipple, city scenery, and a port with car float.



Photo 1 – Peabody Coal Company



Photo 2 – Butcher Shop, Luncheonette, and Meat Packing Plant



Photo 3 – Fascia Controls for Easy Operation



Photo 4 – Any Questions about the Era of this Layout?

LAYOUT STYLE: Walk-around filling a 36' x 34' room. Track configuration is point-to-point for operations to include a staging yard and an equipment transfer yard. Bench and track work are 99% completed. Scenery is 85% completed.

PROTOTYPE: New York Central passenger trains, through and local freights, extras, and industry switching.

CONTROL SYSTEM: Radio NCE DCC Sound, Steam and Diesel.

COMMUNICATION: Telephone.

TRAFFIC CONTROL: TT/TO (Timetable/ Train Orders) with Car Cards and Waybills developed by Steve King*. Crew size: 3 Yardmaster (YM), 3 Asst. YM, 1 Engine Facility YM, 1 Dispatcher, 1 Operator and 5 Crews of 1 or 2 people each – total 10-14.

<https://petelaguardia.wixsite.com/mysite>

My seventh certificate, Master Builder – Cars, was awarded on September 21, 2022. This incredible journey took thirteen years to complete.

The following is a list of the certificates I earned:

Chief Dispatcher	Model Railroader Engineer
Association Volunteer	Master Builder Author
Master Builder Scenery	Model Railroader Engineer Civil
Master Builder Cars	

*Steve King, "Car Cards and Waybills," *Railroad Model Craftsman*, February 1968, p.68



Photo 6 – Pete LaGuardia, Master Model Railroader

Featured Layout

An Electronic Wonderland

Layouts by Fred Miller, MMR
Text and Photos by Greg Warth

Most of us aspire to develop huge sprawling basement layouts with tons of scenery, industry, electronics, large railyards with multiple switching opportunities, interesting scenes, animations, automated train control and lots of details.

The layout that I most wanted to visit at the recent 2022 MER Convention in Charlotte, NC was the smallest one on the self-driving tour. It was the one with all the above features incorporated into not one, but rather four layouts mounted on shelves, one on top of each other, all in a corner room about half the size of an average bedroom. This is the train room (**Photo 1**) of Fred Miller, MMR, who is a frequent writer for “The Electronics Corner” of *The Local*. I was always impressed by his electronics wizardry. I was even more impressed with his layouts, which clearly demonstrate the animations, lighting and automations presented in his articles.

A G scale trolley sits on top. Below that is a highly detailed O scale layout, then an even more detailed HO traction-trolley layout and finally on the bottom is an automated N scale display.

Inside his train room, on the opposite side of the shelf layouts is his workroom, which is actually a highly organized closet (**Photo 2**) with a comfortable chair in front of it. Everything he needs is right in this closet, including a band saw, drill press, table saw, rotary tool, vice and a multitude of other things which would usually require a huge workbench for most of us.



Photo 1: Fred Miller, MMR with his multiple shelf layouts in different scales

To the right of where Fred is standing in Photo 1 is the corner of the room with a spectacular view of the city as shown in **Photo 3**. From here, he is able to see the Norfolk Southern and the CSX traveling several times a day on their different mainlines right below this vantage point.

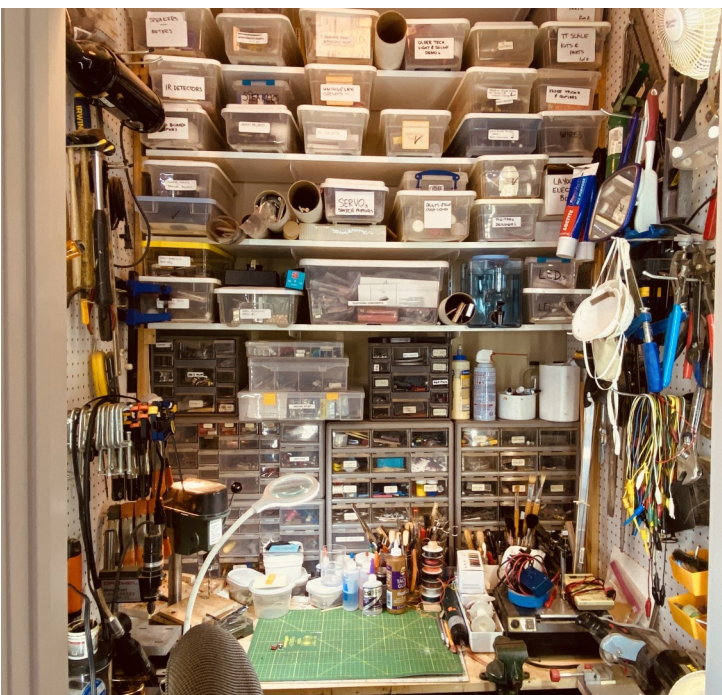


Photo 2: Fred's workroom



Photo 3: View of Charlotte, NC from the train room.

All of these bottom three layouts are automated with multiple lights, animated signs, detailed building interiors, and sound effects. I took many photos, but you can only imagine the lighting and the sound emanating from the scenes. Here are a few of the best.

O Scale Trolley Layout:



Photo 4: O scale trolley layout with automated lights and sounds



Photo 5: Busy city, lights and sounds everywhere

HO Traction Layout:



Photo 6: HO Traction Layout with men working on overhead street bridge



Photo 7: Another busy city with tremendous amount of detail and activity



Photo 8: Homes, school, background, and a hot air balloon

N Scale Layout:



Photo 9: N scale industrial switching layout. Flip the switch and it runs by itself



Photo 10: Freight cars are moved from one industry to another automatically

I like to showcase these small layouts because they demonstrate the vast amount of model railroading one can do in a small space. In fact, even time and money do not need to be limiting factors either. Frugal model railroaders who make things out of leftover scraps and work full time jobs, can still create impressive model railroads, models, and dioramas. “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.”

Fred has written a number of articles for *The Local* and for other more mainstream publications regarding how to add animation, signals, and lighting effects to our model railroads. Don’t miss his articles in the “Electronics Corner” of *The Local*.

Also, find his website here: <https://mrrwa.org/>

Branch Lines

From the Divisions...

As *The Local* Editor, I have the distinct pleasure of receiving a copy of all the Division newsletters, which are all very informative and creative to say the least. Here are links to those publications so you can stay up to date on what the other Divisions are doing:

Newsletters	Divisions	Most Recent Editions
<u>Wheel Report</u>	<u>South Mountain Division</u>	December 2022
<u>The Potomac Flyer</u>	<u>Potomac Division</u>	Dec. '22 / Jan. '23
<u>Train Orders</u>	<u>New Jersey Division</u>	November 2022
<u>Sidetracks</u>	<u>Susquehanna Division</u>	November 2022
<u>The Dispatcher</u>	<u>Philadelphia Division</u>	October 2022
<u>The Callboard</u>	<u>Tidewater Division</u>	September 2022
<u>Crossties - Index</u>	<u>James River Division</u>	August 2022
<u>The Brass Pounder</u>	<u>Carolina Southern Division</u>	December 2022
<u>The Herald</u>	<u>Carolina Piedmont Division</u>	December 2022
<u>The Relay</u>	<u>Chesapeake Division</u>	June 2022

And don't forget the new digital NMRA Magazine

Reminder: Here's how to access the [Digital NMRA Magazine](#):

1. Go to <https://www.nmra.org/user/register>
2. Answer a few questions
3. Click on Create a New Account
4. You will receive an email on how to set your password.

Electronics Corner

Animated Billboard Signs in N Scale

By Fred Miller, MMR

Inexpensive small electronic devices make it possible to build animated displays suitable for various model railroad projects. The SSD1306 0.96" by 0.48" OLED display is just the right size for either an HO scale store front sign or a N scale billboard sign (Photo 1). The displays are available with either white or light blue text or images, and can be controlled with micro-controllers such as the Arduino series. Pre-coded software libraries to control the display are readily available minimizing any other programming. Although the software could be developed to run on a small micro-controller such as the ATTINY series, the available memory on those chips is not sufficient for more than a few screen displays. The Arduino NANO or UNO do meet the memory requirements for many screens and graphic displays. The author chose to use the inexpensive NANO for the billboard project (Photo 2).



Photo 1: Animated N Scale Billboard Sign.
Display Changes Automatically!

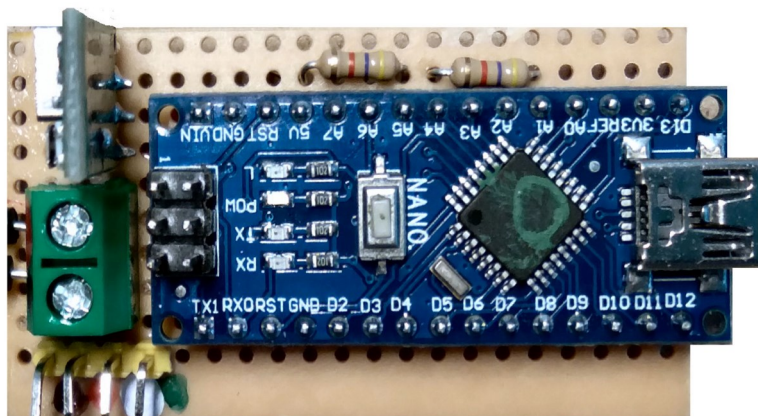


Photo 2: Arduino NANO

These small displays (Photo 3) can handle up to a 128 x 64 pixel two-color image (white or light blue on black). Microsoft's Paint program or one of the various graphics programs such as PaintShop Pro can be used to create the image. The black pixels from the drawing are transcribed into white pixels on the display. A free program called LCD Assistant can be used to convert the image into a data bitmap required by the software.

These small displays (Photo 3) can handle up to a 128 x 64 pixel two-color image (white or light blue on black).

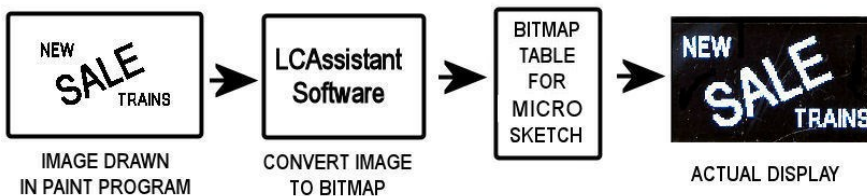


Photo 4: Process

Several software libraries are available for use on an Arduino UNO or NANO. The library the author used can display three font sizes directly, as well as displaying bitmap image data. It can also draw various graphics designs. The program (or sketch as it is called in the Arduino world.) can display any one of the images.

The author's billboard project displays a random selection of eight images each for a random number of seconds, and draws graphic patterns between those screens.

A video of this project can be viewed at the authors YouTube Channel at:

<https://tinyurl.com/sf9btvaz>



Photo 3: Sample Billboard Signs

Building the Circuit Board and Billboard

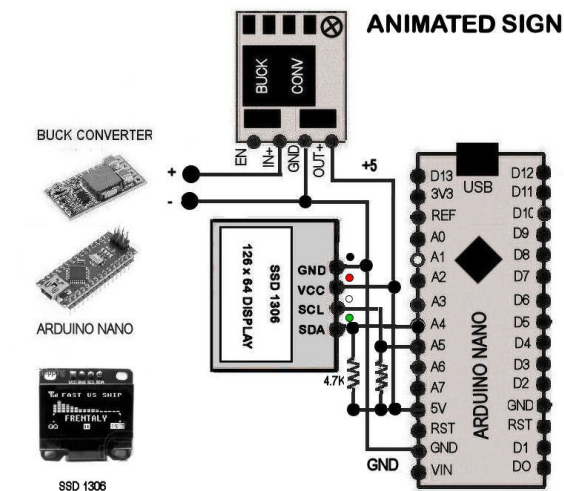


Photo 5: Display Control Circuit

The display control circuit (Photo 5) consists of three components (Arduino NANO, the SSD1306 display module and a DC buck converter which develops 5VDC for the other board components).

The display control board (Photo 6) is built on a small piece of 'perf board' cut to match the NANO and buck converter. The author's favored construction technique is to draw out the component layout (using graphic software such as PaintShop Pro) and graphically connect the components on the top (component) side of the board. He then graphically flips the drawing to show the connections to be soldered on the wiring side of the board.

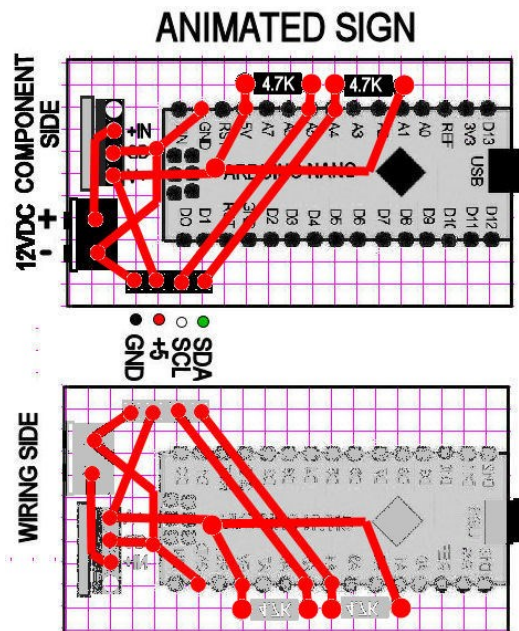


Photo 6: Display Control Board

The billboard was constructed from styrene and some components from a Bar Mills N scale billboard kit. The illustration (Photo 7) shows how the SSD1306 display module is mounted behind the face of the billboard with wires running down to the circuit board below the layout.

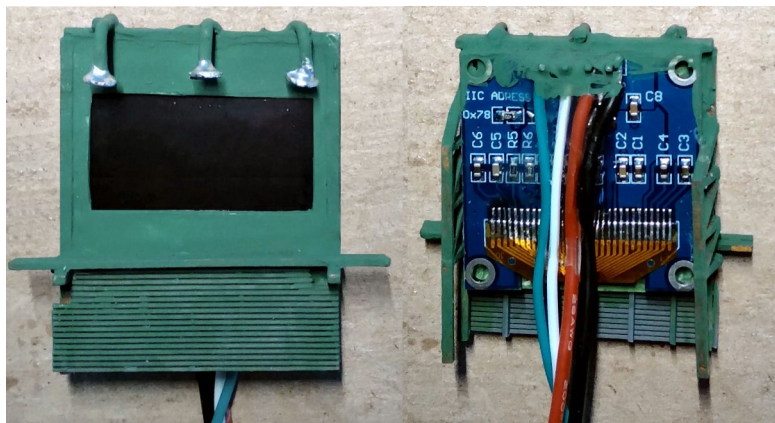


Photo 7: Billboard Display Module – Left Picture Is the Front. Right Picture Is the Back Showing the Wiring.

Preparing the Images for the SSD1306 Display

A graphics program is needed to create the screen images (Photo 8). Most of the available graphics programs such as PaintShop Pro or Photoshop will do the job. However, the Microsoft Paint program as provided with Windows is capable of doing this. Remember to create a black and white (2-color) image sized at 128 x 64 pixels and save in monochrome BMP format appropriate for loading into the LCD Assistant program (Photo 9). Also, remember that what is black on the bit-map image will be seen as white on the display.

After testing the constructed board to ensure proper operation with the display temporarily connected, it is useful to coat the wiring side of the board with 5-min epoxy to secure, insulate and protect the wiring. The display module can then be mounted on the layout with the wires passed through and soldered to the control board.



Photo 8: Screen Image

Modeler's Haven—Tips & Tricks

By Greg Warth

This section of The Local is for all members to share any tips, techniques, tools, books, fixes, new products, or any other information that might be of interest to others. One of the many benefits of being an NMRA member is spreading knowledge about the hobby and learning things from other modelers. Please submit your tips to the [Editor](#) for consideration on publishing them here.

Put decals on your O scale figures – Create plaid shirts, Hawaiian shirts, striped pants, custom tee-shirts, neckties, suspenders for pants, and shoulder straps for swimsuits. Create newspapers and magazines held by figures. How? Use ready-made decals by Microscale, including stripes and various prints and geometric patterns. Or you can print your own pattern on blank decal paper. Take pictures of shirts on hangers and scale them down in your printer to 1:48 of their real size, then cut them out and put them on your figures like you would with any other decal. Use Micro Sol to help the decals conform to irregularities. For newspapers or magazines, take pictures of the real newspaper, scale it down to 1:48, and print it out on regular paper. Use a Preiser figure that has the hands raised out in front and glue the newspaper on. Ref: "Enhance Figures with Decals," by V.S. Roseman in *Model Railroader*, July 2020, p.46.

Add details for more realism – Add signs to fences, buildings, roadways and along tracksides. Add whistle-posts, mile markers, yard limit signs. Take pictures of real signs and print them to your scale on blank decal paper or cardstock or cut them out of magazines. Use prototypical signs from the railroad you are modeling when appropriate. Some railroad historical societies sell reference sheets containing standard prototypical signs. Add figures to your train stations, railroad workers in the train yard, trucks alongside buildings, cars on roads and in parking lots. Use streetlights and traffic lights in your urban scenes. Add trashcans, mailboxes, fire hydrants. Make cracks in the sidewalk and in the streets. Add some litter on the sides of streets and at the bottom of fences. I can't discuss this subject without mentioning George Sellios as one of the greatest masters of detail in model railroading. His [Franklin and South Manchester Railroad](#) should be listed as one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Super strong super glue – When building plastic structures, a trick that seasoned modelers use is to add baking soda to the joints before dripping on the super glue (cyanoacrylate). It is rather amazing to see how much stronger the bond is than with super glue alone. Other materials have been tried along with super glue, like ashes and graphite. Which holds the bond better? See for yourself: https://youtu.be/ImLAmfM_AgA.

Soldering tips for rail joints – I used a combination of Atlas flextrack and sectional track on my N scale layout. To securely align the rails properly to one another, I felt it was necessary to solder the rail joints for both the flextrack-to-flextrack joints and for the sectional track to flextrack joints. I used the following method that might be helpful to you if you don't have a lot of experience in soldering, which I didn't at the time.

1. Safety first – Don't breathe in solder fumes. Be careful not to get your fingers too close to the hot iron or to the things that are being soldered. Use a soldering stand to hold your iron when you are not using it. Soldering irons tend to roll off the work bench and land on your leg.
2. Electric soldering irons that use 25 watts are adequate for light wiring applications. Use 40-60 watts on a 14 gauge power bus or on rail joints. I prefer irons that heat up quickly. The one that I liked the best was a cordless butane-powered iron.
3. Have a damp sponge nearby to wipe off the tip of the iron occasionally.
4. Use lead-free rosin core solder. Don't use acid-core solder. It does not work that well for electrical applications and may cause metal corrosion.
5. Use liquid or paste flux if your solder does not already contain it. It helps the solder flow better. Use liquid if working on a flat surface; use paste if the surface is vertical or on an angle.
6. Line up the rail joints carefully so the tops and the insides of the adjoining rails are flush. Apply liquid flux to the outside of the rail joint.
7. Heat up the soldering iron and "tin" the tip by coating it with solder.
8. Then hold the tip to the outside of the rail joint for several seconds to allow it to heat up the rail, but not long enough to melt the plastic rail ties.
9. Touch the solder to both the tip of the iron and the rail joint at the same time. It should flow quickly into the joint. Just a small amount of solder is all you need. A big glob of solder on the outside of a rail joint is not very attractive (I can show you a few of

those on my layout!). You can use the tip of the iron to either remove the excess solder or flatten it out against the outer rail. Try not to get any solder on the top or inside of the rail. Learn more about soldering here...

<https://www.building-your-model-railroad.com/soldering-tips.html>

Here's a video that may be helpful as well: <https://youtu.be/8QdzJZmgVfw>

Use Legos® for modeling – If you have children or grandchildren in your home, chances are you also have Legos. If not, you can always go to any toy store and buy a few. There are a lot of ways to use Legos® for regular model railroading (in addition to all their commercial train and track assembly products). Create buildings of all shapes and sizes and cover the walls with plastic “brick” sheets or decals. Make foundations for your buildings with them. Use them for mockups for structure locations to be replaced by craftsman structures later. Make your own square or rectangular jig with Legos® and add some small clamps and rubber bands. They can even be used for casting concrete, Hydrocal, silicone or resin. Ref: Gill, Bill, “Thinking Outside the Blocks”, *Railroad Model Craftsman*, September 2011, p.56. Also see the website [Brick Model Railroader](#).

Make foundations for your buildings – Your layout structures should be incorporated into your surface and scenery as if they were built there years ago. Don't spend hours creating a great structure and then just plop it down somewhere. Consider adding foundations to your buildings. You could use basswood or balsa distressed with a wired brush and stained with a dark wood stain for older buildings. Or make a foundation with Styrofoam and cover the outer surface with “brick” plastic sheets. Make sure there are no gaps between the foundation and the surface of the layout. Add scenery so that it appears to have been there for many years. Add a driveway or parking lot connected to a road. Don't forget to add accessories and details, like figures, fences, signs, trucks, cars, fuel tanks, or other items that would be appropriate for the structure.

Operations software – If you're looking for a decent software program to help you with operation of your railroad, you may want to check out *Ship It!* by [Albion Software](#). This is a Windows program that tells you where your cars should be shipped. You just enter your products and industries, and the software tells you which cars to use and where they should go, from producers to receivers and back. It helps to maintain a proper balance to train movement so there is not too much movement to one industry and not enough to another. One section of the program called *Car Cards* can create car cards, waybills, and Form 19s/31s. It also includes an inventory section called *Railbase* where you can keep track of all your equipment including information and photos. The *Scheduler* section allows you to see your train schedules in graph form.

Flatcar load chains – Use jewelry chains from arts and craft stores to secure loads for flat cars. They come in spools of different shades of metal in varying sizes.

Chain link fence - A fabric called *tulle* is a lightweight netting often used for wedding veils and gift wrapping. It has a hexagonal pattern that mimics that of a chain link fence. The material is easy to cut into sections sized to your scale and then glued onto headless nails that can be inserted into your layout surface.

Cleaning your layout scenery – First, you must be sure that your ground cover and ballast has been adequately glued to the layout surface. Then you can use a vacuum over the scenery without having to worry about picking it all up. For structures, use a very soft brush, like a makeup brush, to dust them off while you are holding the vacuum over them. Here is a [short video](#) by George Sellios that shows how to do it.

Send in YOUR tips to local-editor@mer-nmra.com.

NEW PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENT

12/18/2022

Jack Dziadul

Ipswich Hobbies

919-721-8757

Ipswich Hobbies now has available on its website Boston and Maine RR smokejacks. The 3-D printed products are based on B&M standard plans and are available in N, HO, and O scales. These are the perfect details for crossing shanties, yard offices, and section houses. The N and HO smokejacks come on packages of five for \$5.00. The O scale smokejacks are three for \$5.00.



Search *The Local*

By Greg Warth, Ed.

Did you know that you could search through every page of *The Local* from 1996 to the present?

Not only that, but did you know the search would also include every page of the MER website?

A lot of folks apparently did not realize this was available. See the arrow in **Photo 1** that shows where the link “hides” on the front of every issue.



Photo 1: Arrow points to the Search link for The Local and the MER website.

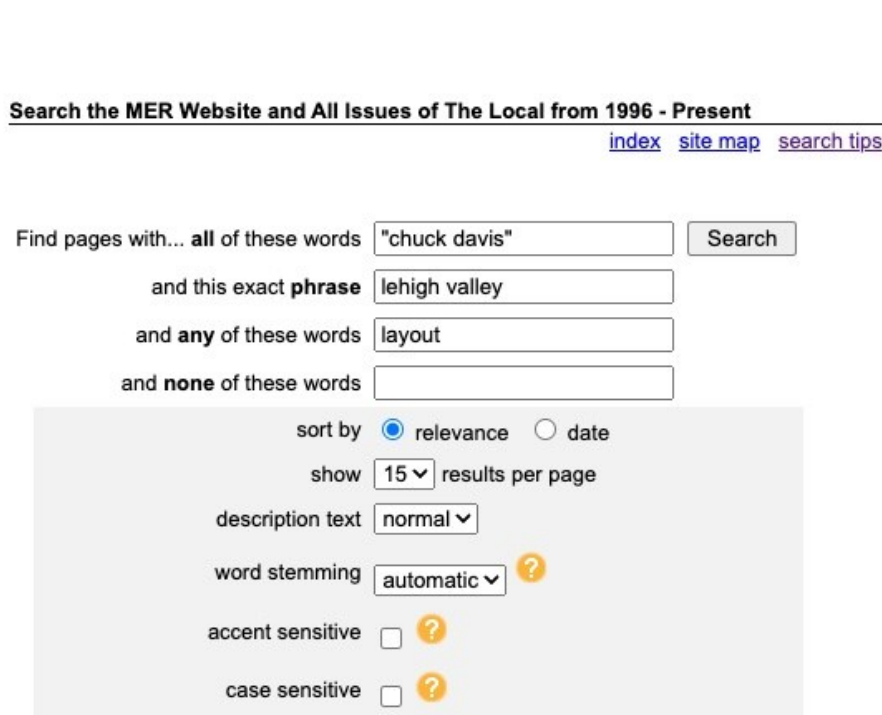
When you click on that link, it will take you to this next page with a search box (**Photo 2**) where you can enter the text for whichever topic you want to search. If it is just one word, type it in and hit *Find*. If it is a phrase with two or more words, use quotes around it, like this: “Electronics Corner”.

Photo 2: Search Box

If you are looking for a page that contains certain words that do not necessarily occur together, you can type those words in separately but without quotes, for example *turnouts* and *installation*. Or you can use the Boolean phrasing as follows: *turnouts AND installation*. If you want an either-or search, again use the Boolean phrasing, e.g., *atlas OR athearn*.

You can also choose whether you want to see an [index](#), a [site map](#), or look for [tips](#) on how to do a more effective search. An [advanced search](#) (**Photo 3**) will allow you to type in several separate words or phrases and find the pages that will contain all of them

(Photo 4). For example, if you are looking for an article or a clinic done by Chuck Davis regarding his Lehigh Valley layout, you might enter it as follows:



Search

Search the MER Website and All Issues of The Local from 1996 - Present
[index](#) [site map](#) [search tips](#)

Find pages with... **all of these words** "chuck davis"

and this exact **phrase** lehigh valley

and **any** of these words layout

and **none** of these words

sort by relevance date

show 15 results per page

description text normal

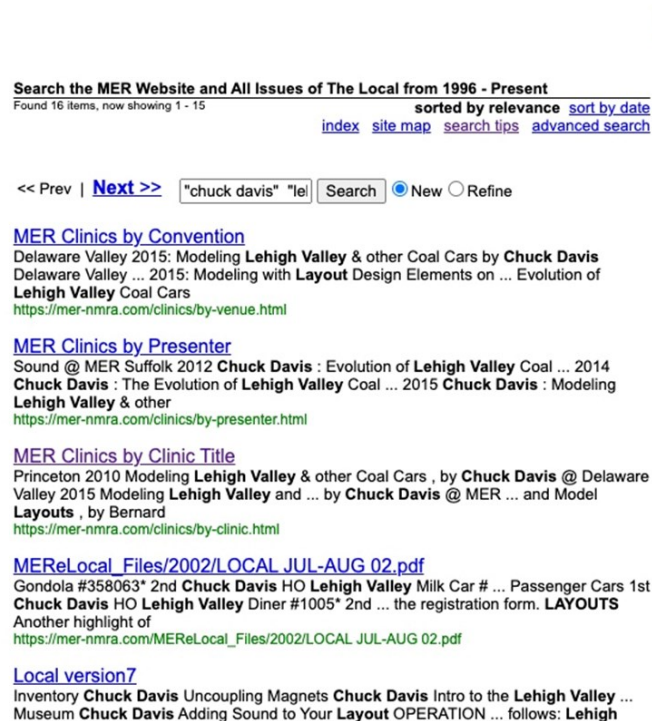
word stemming automatic ?

accent sensitive ?

case sensitive ?

Photo 3: Advanced Search

And the results would look something like this:



Search

Search the MER Website and All Issues of The Local from 1996 - Present
 Found 16 items, now showing 1 - 15
 sorted by **relevance** [sort by date](#)
[index](#) [site map](#) [search tips](#) [advanced search](#)

<< Prev | [Next >>](#) "chuck davis" "le" New Refine

[MER Clinics by Convention](#)
 Delaware Valley 2015: Modeling **Lehigh Valley** & other Coal Cars by **Chuck Davis**
 Delaware Valley ... 2015: Modeling with **Layout** Design Elements on ... Evolution of
Lehigh Valley Coal Cars
<https://mer-nmra.com/clinics/by-venue.html>

[MER Clinics by Presenter](#)
 Sound @ MER Suffolk 2012 **Chuck Davis** : Evolution of **Lehigh Valley** Coal ... 2014
Chuck Davis : The Evolution of **Lehigh Valley** Coal ... 2015 **Chuck Davis** : Modeling
Lehigh Valley & other
<https://mer-nmra.com/clinics/by-presenter.html>

[MER Clinics by Clinic Title](#)
 Princeton 2010 Modeling **Lehigh Valley** & other Coal Cars , by **Chuck Davis** @ Delaware
 Valley 2015 Modeling **Lehigh Valley** and ... by **Chuck Davis** @ MER ... and Model
Layouts , by Bernard
<https://mer-nmra.com/clinics/by-clinic.html>

[MERelocal Files/2002/LOCAL JUL-AUG 02.pdf](#)
 Gondola #358063* 2nd **Chuck Davis** HO **Lehigh Valley** Milk Car # ... Passenger Cars 1st
Chuck Davis HO **Lehigh Valley** Diner #1005* 2nd ... the registration form. **LAYOUTS**
 Another highlight of
https://mer-nmra.com/MERelocal_Files/2002/LOCAL JUL-AUG 02.pdf

[Local version?](#)
 Inventory **Chuck Davis** Uncoupling Magnets **Chuck Davis** Intro to the **Lehigh Valley** ...
 Museum **Chuck Davis** Adding Sound to Your **Layout** OPERATION ... follows: **Lehigh**

Photo 4: Advanced Search Results

As you can see, this search resulted in a display of both clinics and *Local* articles in which Chuck Davis is mentioned. If you did not want to see the clinics, you could have typed in *clinic* in the bottom box where it says, "none of these words." Then the display would just show *The Local* articles.

The results are currently set by default to *sort by date*, but you can choose to *sort by relevance* instead. You may have noticed that the search terms are *not* case sensitive. They do not need to be capitalized.

Search Tips

These are the tips (edited by the author) provided by the folks at Freefind.com from which this search engine was obtained:

Search Tips

The Freefind search engine first locates pages which have exact matches for *all* the words entered in the search box. If no exact matches are found, then it looks for pages that contain *any* of the words you entered.

Search words are not case sensitive.

There are several ways you can modify your search:

Phrase search (two words or more)

Three Types:

To match an exact phrase, use quotes "around the words"

For a close match, use square brackets [around the words]

For a not-so-close match, use braces {around the words}

+ and - qualifiers

If you use a plus sign (+) before the word, then that word *must* be on the page.

If you use a minus sign (-) before the word, then that word *must not* be on the page.

* wildcard

If you type a word and end it with an Asterix (*), the program will find all pages where that word appears as the beginning of any other word.

? wildcard

If you type a word that has a missing character and then enter a question mark in place of that missing character, the program will find all words where any character will match that position.

For example, type b?g and you will get all pages that have the words big, bog, bug, beg, or bag.

Boolean search

You can use Boolean operators such as AND, OR, or NOT. These operators **MUST** be in capital letters.

Example: (john AND smith) OR (david AND smith)

Combinations - All these techniques can be combined: e.g.: +always*

Less Helpful Features

The *Index* is a listing of every word mentioned in The Local and on the MER site, which is not all that helpful. I was hoping this could provide a listing of all the authors and the titles of the articles and clinics they have done. You can find what individual authors have done, but there is no way to find a listing of all the authors and all the articles that I can see here. This will require a second index to be presented later this year.

If you click on *Site Map*, then *List*, you can find a list of pages of the MER and *The Local*, but they are not defined or detailed enough to tell what they are, and the accuracy is somewhat lacking, so this was not all that helpful either.

Despite the shortcomings, I am hopeful that you will find these additions useful. I have used it successfully on multiple occasions to look for previous articles and authors. I will ask our archivist, Kevin O'Connor, and our webmaster, Jeff Burch, if this would be useful to them. It may be helpful for Division webmasters and newsletter editors as well.

Local Layouts

By Greg Warth, Ed.

One of my favorite things to do on a Saturday afternoon is to visit one of our local Tidewater Division layouts. Our members have decided to have our usual business/educational meetings every two months. During the months in between the meetings, we arrange to visit a local layout built by one of our Division members who is willing to welcome us into their home. It does not have to be a completed layout since most railroad layouts are a work-in-progress. Some are further along than others. Nevertheless, they are always inspirational and educational. Doing these tours provides another opportunity to meet with our fellow modelers and friends. Plus, they give each of us new ideas about what to do with our own layouts. And if you are the host, it stimulates you to fix up your layout as much as you can with a goal to have it presentable to others by the tour date. Here are two layouts that I visited recently.

Fred Humphrey's HO Scale Display of Decatur, Illinois:

Fred grew up in Decatur, so it was easy for him to decide what he wanted to model when it came time for him to create his own railroad. His display is located inside a large, heated, and air-conditioned shed which also incorporates a nicely organized, adjoining workshop. This is a multilevel layout featuring excellent trackwork (**Photo 3, 6, and 7**), a helix, and Digitrax DCC for power. Included is a somewhat complicated interchange, requiring nine signals all working in conjunction, such that when one signal is green for an approaching train, all others are red. All the wires and switches are labeled, and the turnouts are numbered (**Photo 1**) so it is easy to see which toggle switch goes with each turnout. He is planning to incorporate the [new touch toggle system](#) as demonstrated by Berrett Hill at the 2021 Mid-Eastern Region Convention in Baltimore. He is hoping to start operating sessions next year. (**Photos 1-7**)



Photo 1—Very organized. Numbered turnouts.



Photo 2 -Engine turntable and servicing area



Photo 3—Rail yard. Great switching possibilities



Photo 4—Inspiring layout design



Photo 5—Building huge industries



Photo 6—Portion of Decatur train yard



Photo 7— Larger view of Decatur rail yard. This will keep a yardmaster busy

The Virginian Railway in HO Scale as Depicted by Bob Cook, MMR:

Bob is the most recent member of the Tidewater Division to receive his well-deserved Master Model Railroader designation. I remember how hard he worked for it over the past few years. We visited his layout recently and were blown away by his excellent modeling skills, impeccable trackwork and beautiful scenery. His Digitrax-powered multilevel construction within a 30' by 14' room in the upper level of his home offers plenty of real estate for great operating sessions. The layout features multiple bridges, one of which is quite impressive (Photo 10), realistic water displays (Photos 10, 13), rocky cliffs (Photo 14), scratchbuilt structures (Photo 12), detailed industries and residential areas, and many trees made of real sedum branches with accompanying green foliage (Photos 8-14).



Photo 8 - Operating sessions here are fun and very engaging



Photo 8—Over and under.



Photo 10—There are multiple bridges on this layout. This one was especially impressive.



Photo 11 - Great landscaping. The trees are made from natural sedum branches



Photo 12—Excellent trackwork. No derailments. Scratchbuilt structures.



Photo 13—The scenery is superbly done. The water effects are very realistic.



Photo 14—Trees and rock formations. Nice views for the engineer

Having local layout visits in your Division might be a welcome consideration for your members. You may even want to bring it up at your next Division meeting. There are a lot of advantages. It adds an extra activity for your division, and it may be a stimulus for non-members to consider joining, particularly if you open the tour to friends and neighbors. Plus, it demonstrates the incredible amount of talent in your Division of which many of your members may not even be aware.

On the downside, having guests come in your home to visit your layout creates a lot of work for the host of an open house and is sometimes inconvenient to the rest of the family. If a person goes to all that trouble to prepare for it, you will want to make sure that enough of the members show up so that it becomes worthwhile. Also, if you decide to open it up to nonmembers, there is a slight risk that someone may sustain an injury while visiting. But this is a risk that is present anytime we invite guests into our homes. For most of us, this wouldn't prevent us from inviting people in. And what good is having a model railroad, aside from the enjoyment of building it, if you can't show it to anyone.

Overall, the benefits are definitely greater than the downsides, at least from the perspective of the model railroaders who continue to have open houses all over the world. I hope you will consider having one of your own soon.

Mini Con – A New Concept in Conventions

By Greg Warth

On November 5, 2022, not long after the October MER (Mid-Eastern Region) Convention in Charlotte, NC, the James River Division and the Potomac Division came together to offer a smaller one-day convention, not only for its own members, but for all members of the MER. So, three of us from the Tidewater Division, wondering what our neighboring Divisions were up to, car-pooled the three-and-a-half-hour journey up to Warrenton, VA. The location of the conference, the Battlefield Baptist Church, in the heart of Civil War historical territory as the name implies, was a large modern facility with lots of rooms for meetings and clinics. They all contained state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment, and comfortable seating (**Photo 1**).



Photo 1: The general assembly room for the MiniCon (Photo by Alex Belida)



Photo 2: White Elephant Tables (Photo by Alex Belida)

As we entered the MiniCon, the first room we saw, a full gymnasium, was quite large. After registering there, we had to first partake of the hospitality including donuts and coffee, of course, which were a real treat after so many hours on the road. We then walked along a large set of White Elephant tables (**Photo 2**) with a great variety of items. There was also a contest table (**Photo 3**) where multiple excellent highly detailed “Maintenance of Way” models were displayed. We appreciated the expertise and craftsmanship that went into their creations. While in that room, we enjoyed fellowship with some old friends and met some new ones. We gave a donation to the church for hosting the convention, and then went into the general assembly room as seen above in Photo 1.

After a brief introduction, we were given a choice to go to one of three different clinic rooms. Two clinics were held in each room over a two-hour period with a short break in between (total of six clinics available). I went to two clinics, one on photography by Norm Reid, the co-author with Jeff Fleisher of the book on photographing your model railroad, *Shooting Iron Horses*. This was an excellent presentation and very informative. I highly suggest that you read this book if you like to photograph model railroads, which I suspect most of us do.

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Photo 3: Contest Table (Photo by Alex Belida)

The second clinic that I attended, presented by Ernie Little, MMR was all about how to use JMRI's Decoder Pro. JMRI has always been a somewhat intimidating subject for me, but Ernie's easy way of discussing it made it sound less complicated, so I'm going to try it again after having given up on it a couple of years ago.

Other superb clinics were presented by George Gaige, MMR (Photo 4) on "Building an Operating Water Tank", Phil Taylor on "Soundtraxx Blunami", Brian Sheron, MMR (Photo 5) on "Making an Operational Grade Crossing Signal" (Photo 6), and Ken Wilson, on "Rolling Stock Brake Systems."



Photo 4: Photo 4 (Photo by Alex Belida)



Photo 5: Photo 5 (Photo by Alex Belida)



Photo 6: Photo 6 (Photo by Alex Belida)

Before we broke up at noon, we each received a door prize, and since we had traveled the farthest, the three Tidewater guys got to choose first. The conference was attended by 78 model railroaders. Most of them as expected were from the Potomac and James River Divisions. I am glad we were able to be there from Tidewater to support the effort.

There were three open house layouts available in the afternoon. Due to our long drive, we were time-limited to selecting one tour. Marty McGuirk's layout was just four miles from the venue, so after lunch at the Mission BBQ, we were off to Gainesville.

Marty's layout (Photos 7-10), the Richford Branch that once ran across the far north of Vermont between St. Albans and an interchange with the Canadian Pacific at Richford, was very interesting and inspiring to me, not only because it was so well done, but his use of space was a learning experience. Of course, he has a basement sized 15'x32' layout, but even so, many modelers will pack in almost every inch of space with something. I am guilty of this as well. But on Marty's layout, the space itself was something to behold. There were large fields that looked like fields. The static grass applications were expertly done. The rolling hills were broken intermittently by a grove of trees or by a scratchbuilt prototypical structure. It wasn't overdone. That is what impressed me about it. And I loved the fall scenery.



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9

So, I would say this MiniCon was a great success. The trip there and back was enjoyable, the fall scenery and the beautiful weather were complementary. The facility was very accommodating, the clinics were excellent, and the layout tour was very inspiring. We made more friends, enjoyed the comradery, and we left with more stuff than we came in with. What more could you ask for?



Photo 10

We are grateful to Jerry Stanley, the coordinator of the event, the incomparable “Super”-star co-hosts, Martin Brechbiel, MMR from the Potomac Division and Phil Taylor from the James River Division (**Photo 11**), all the clinic presenters, the layout tour hosts, who were gracious to let us into their homes to view their masterpieces, all the volunteers who helped, those who created contest models, all who donated door prizes, and of course, the Battlefield Baptist Church for allowing us to use their beautiful facility.



Photo 11: Co-hosts of the MiniCon: Left: Martin Brechbiel, MMR; Right: Phil Taylor

Back on Track...

The Best New Year Ever!

By Greg Warth, Ed.

Life is what we make of it. If we put a lot into it, we get a lot out of it, or so we're told. I believe that's true for the most part. But then there is fate, or luck, that creates havoc and often thwarts our best-laid plans, or resolutions. To get around those interferences, we need things like faith, resolve, perseverance, and maybe even a little obsessiveness. It's not always easy, but usually doable.

So, here we are, heading into a New Year. Will this one be like all the others? We make resolutions to get the railroad done or get another three Achievement Program Certificates completed. Things get in the way. We end up at the end of the year not making nearly as much progress as we would have liked.

Last year, I resolved to "finish" my layout by the end of the year. The problem is that I had no idea how fast the year would fly by. I miscalculated the time available and the work to be done. I've done that before. I should have remembered. That's okay though. I got a lot of other things done. And, I actually did make some progress on my layout. So, putting everything in perspective, I can't complain.

This year though will be different. I will take our President's advice in his column and organize my layout work into smaller projects, write them down, and proceed with one thing at a time. Another article written in *The Local* previously by Dr. John Pursell ("Just Do Something!", May-June 2017, p.20) dealt with the subject of just doing one little thing at a time even if it only takes a few minutes. Armed with this literature, I have renewed my resolve to organize my projects into very small ones and continue the process to completion. I am reminded of the paraphrased words of Desmond Tutu on how to eat an elephant: First, get a small elephant and then take small bites...and invite friends who have forks!

There is one more thing to keep in mind. Model railroading is a *journey*, as Pete LaGuardia, MMR reminds us in his article, "My Journey to MMR" in this issue. The joy of gradually putting together a model railroad, or a diorama, or a scale model of anything supersedes the "work" involved. Actually completing a layout should not be the goal; however, it is a good challenge! Enjoying the process and having fun with it along the way is the real accomplishment. When I think of it that way, I have really had a great year! And each year to follow will be even better. I am truly looking forward to another one – the best New Year ever.

As we finish up with 2022, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude, once again, to all those involved in putting this newsletter together. It is definitely a team effort, and I am honored to work with such a dedicated crew.

Thanks to all the members who read *The Local*. My hope is that it is interesting, entertaining, and informative. Please let us know if you have any ideas or suggestions for improvement.

We wish you all a very Happy, Prosperous, Productive, and Healthy New Year!

The Best Ever!



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