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ANNUAL MODEL RAILROAD SHOW A HOLIDAY TRADITION

Gibsonia, November 3, 2016 – The Christmas season is just around the corner. In Gibsonia, that means it's time for the Western Pennsylvania Model Railroad Museum's (WPMRM) 29th Annual Holiday Train Show.

This year's show — "A Railroad Journey in Miniature" — will kick off on Saturday, November 12, at the museum, which is located at 5507 Lakeside Drive, Gibsonia, Pa. (15044).

"A lot of the people who come to the holiday show have been coming here since they were kids," says Bill Humphrey, chairman of the Holiday Show committee. "Now they're bringing their own kids to the museum. Its really become a cherished holiday tradition for so many families around Western PA."

The WPMRM's 4,000-square-foot layout is one of the largest in the country and depicts the fictitious Mon-Valley System (M-V). Set in the summer of 1952, the railroad is comprised of sections of the Western Maryland Railroad, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad, from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Md.

"The early '50s were really the heyday of the railroads around the region," says Humphrey. "At that time the mills were booming, and they relied heavily on the railroads to haul the raw materials needed to make steel. Additionally, this was the changeover period between steam and diesel locomotives which allows us to run both."

On Friday nights during the holiday show, the museum also has a special operating session called "Steam at Twilight", where they roll back the clock from 1952 to 1949 and run all steam locomotives.

"Fridays are a popular night at the museum during the holiday show," says Humphrey. "In general, model trains have a way of capturing people's imaginations. But there's just something nostalgic about those old-fashioned steam engines. Everyone loves them."

The WPMRM's computer-controlled HO scale layout features more than 300,000 trees, most of which are hand-made; 350 locomotives; more than 2,000 cars, 6,500 feet of track; and almost 8 miles of electrical wire. It has been featured in articles in *Model Railroader* and *Railroad Model Craftsman* magazines, and it has also appeared in Allen Keller's "Great Model Railroad" video series.

Western PA natives will recognize numerous landmarks throughout the layout, such as the old P&LE train station (Station Square in Pittsburgh), the J&L Steel Mill (Hazelwood), Cox's Department Store (McKeesport), and Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water. Trains pass through miniatures of McKeesport, Dickerson Run, Connellsville, Ohio, Rockwood, Meyersdale, and up over the Allegheny Mountains before ending in Cumberland.

The volunteers have continued to add and refresh scenery around the display as well as adding more lights to buildings.

"This year we've done a number of technical upgrades. We now have more working signals, wider variety of train schedules and we even have the trolleys under computer control." says Humphrey. "Last year we featured named passenger trains, but what most people don't realize is that freight trains had names too. Big railroads had dedicated trains that carried goods from one place to another each and every day, so they got names like 'West Coast Comet', 'Man O' War' or 'The Oiler'".

The museum is a must-see for model railroaders and train enthusiasts in general. However, its biggest fans are children.

"The kids just love it here," says Humphrey. "You can see it on their faces as soon as they walk through the door. It's truly a magical place for them."

The WPMRM's first level features a number of interactive displays for children. There's an HO-scale Thomas the Tank Engine kids can operate with a switch, as well as a wooden train set that allows for some hands-on play. There's also a large O-gauge (Lionel) layout they can operate, featuring popular characters like the Incredible Hulk and Ernie from Sesame Street.

Also on the first level, you'll find the museum's gift shop, which resembles a red caboose, and a large video screen showing looping videos of trains. Since one of the WPMRM's primary goals is to preserve the history of model railroading, and railroading in general, you'll also find dozens of vintage toy trains displayed inside glass cases around the perimeter of the room.

The WPMRM is a volunteer-operated non-profit 501(c)(3). Founded in 1938 as the Pittsburgh HO Railroad Club, it is one of the oldest model railroad organizations in the nation. The organization's early members were actually pioneers in the hobby of model railroading; many of them played a large part in the founding of the National Model Railroad Association back in 1935. Originally located inside the 11th Avenue Freight House Office Building (where the David Lawrence Convention Center is currently located; the club moved three times before building the current two-story, 8,000-square-foot building museum in Gibsonia in 1986.

The Western Pennsylvania Model Railroad Museum's annual holiday show begins on Saturday, November 12, and will run through Sunday, January 15. Admission is \$8 for adults and \$4 for children 12 and under. A complete listing of show hours can be found at the museum's website (show.wpmrm.org) or via automatic reply by emailing show@wpmrm.org.

For more information on the museum in general, visit www.wpmrm.org.

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