

Rail Fest Rumbling Success

Posted On Mon. Sep 29th, 2014

By : Brian Bohnert

By BRIAN BOHNERT

STAFF WRITER

Fostoria's 13th Annual Rail Festival was a runaway success.

The yearly celebration of all trains drew a large crowd Saturday, welcoming people from as far away as the Big Apple to Fostoria Junior/Senior High School.

Entitled "Planes, Trains and Automobiles," the 2014 instalment of the rail festival was hosted in conjunction with the 12th Annual Chamber Classic & Vintage Car, Truck & Motorcycle Show, which was set up in the south parking lot of the school.

The fest was moved to the Park Avenue school in order to better accommodate the large crowd it attracts, said Ellen Gatrell, secretary-treasurer of Fostoria Rail Preservation Society.

"The numbers are growing," Gatrell said. "It's always a good show. What let us know it's so good is when the vendors are happy and when the people who attend are happy. Happy people who love Fostoria, they spread the word about the good things we're doing here." Nearly 1,000 people attended the festival this year, with rail fans coming from places such as New York and Canada. "They understand and believe that Fostoria is a train city," she said. "It makes us feel good. We're warm and fuzzy inside because, with all the work FRPS does, people need to believe in us now."

On display this year were various train models of all shapes and sizes, including four stationary railroad motorcars provided by NARCOA (North American Railcar Operators Association). Also known as speeders, the motorcars were open for spectators to walk through and sit in during the event. A children's station was also set up for all the youngsters to play with toy trains, color and participate in arts and crafts.

Gov. Charles Foster came alive once again through a portrayal by Fostoria Area Historical Society President Leonard Skonecki, who escorted visitors throughout Fostoria via bus tours in which they were treated to a history of the city's railroads.

This year's festival boasted the largest train show in its 13-year history, Gatrell said. In addition to all of the various train models on display, FRPS also sold a total of 142 vendor tables, up from last year's 126.

Several visitors enjoyed repeat wins in both the photo and soup contests this year. Winners were chosen in two categories: People's Choice and Judge's Choice. The judges consisted of members from Fostoria Community Arts Council.

Twenty-six individuals submitted color photos while 13 showed off black-and-white pictures for the photography contest.

Of the 26 color entries, Brandon Townley earned first-place honors for both color and black and white in the people's choice category. Ed Schopperth took home the judge's choice category for one of his color photos while Townley was awarded judge's choice in black and white. All photos from this year's competition can be viewed by visiting the FRPS.

Website, www.fostoriairontriangle.com.

As for the soup contest, Gatrell's own sausage chilli took the judge's choice award while people's choice honors were split between Kay Rochotte's zesty Santa Fe and Marilyn Beers' German tomato.

The Fostoria Iron Triangle Visitor Center and Viewing Area was also a popular stop for guests throughout the weekend.

With this year's rail fest serving as the first since the rail park was established, Gatrell said she credits the local attraction for being a big draw.

"I knew the Rail Park was great, and boy did it bring the people to town," she said. "What that Rail Park has done for Fostoria is it has created a fabulous viewing area for rail fans to come, bring their families, see the trains, and enjoy it. We couldn't be more pleased."