

On the right track

By Anna Dembowski For Greene County Newspapers

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CEDARVILLE — The Dayton N-Track club was once again on display at CedarFest.

Some may say it's a hidden gem of the annual event in Cedarville and it's not hard to figure out why.

This year's exhibit included scenes of an amusement park with automated rides; a July 4 parade moving through the center of town; a drive-in theater showing cartoon videos; a construction site with trucks moving from one place to another; a building-fire scene; and a few little towns.

Jim Madsen, a Dayton N-Track member since the club's start in 1990, said he aims for activity within his scenes, also called modules, when building each of them. The calamity module he built more than 20 years ago has smoke billowing out of a building, incessantly flashing lights, and the sound of sirens playing repeatedly. Though an already complex scene, Madsen said he continues to add to it. He calls it "an evolving hobby."

Young first-time CedarFest attendees Morgan Ankenman of Orrville, Ohio, and Jannette Hommel of Carmel, Ind., said Dayton N-Track's exhibit has been their favorite part of the Labor Day weekend celebrations. Having visited the exhibit two days in a row, Ankenman and Hommel said "the candy train," a model train with each train car representing a different kind of candy, was the most interesting.

"It's really cool to see how they put this together and stuff," Ankenman said, as she watched Bill Mowery place the train cars onto the track.

Mowery, a Dayton N-Track member for about three years, said, "It's something (the community hasn't) seen in a while. It's something new for them, I guess."

This year, Dayton N-Track set up its exhibit in the activity center at Grace Baptist Church. Last year the exhibit was in Cedarville High School's gym, and the year before, the collection was displayed at Main Street Station, a restaurant in Cedarville.

Jim Marks, a Dayton N-Track member since 1993, said the layout of each year's exhibit is always different, since it has to fit the space its in.

"We had to move tables out and chairs at the restaurant to get it all in the first time we were here," Marks said.

Marks said Dayton N-Track's quickest set-up time for their exhibit has been three to four hours. Set up requires choosing how many modules to use, which order to arrange them in and what type of corner pieces fit best, not to mention the actual placement of each rail car onto the tracks. Taking down the tracks is a much quicker job.

Although the attendance Saturday and Sunday was sparse at this year's CedarFest exhibit, Marks said their exhibits at fairgrounds in the area attract a much larger number of people. Dayton N-Track brings pieces of their model train collection to the Clark and Montgomery county fairgrounds, in addition to Dayton Children's Hospital, train shows across the nation, and the Miami Valley Center Mall, where they've come every December for more than 15 years.

Marks said Dayton N-Track's collection filled up two rooms of the Kentucky International Convention Center in 2008 with what became the world's largest layout. More than 700 modules had been put together, making multiple loops around the room, as part of a national convention held in Louisville, Ky.

Madsen built three of the modules exhibited at this year's CedarFest, but he said most of what is built is a collaborative work by Dayton N-Track's 25 members. If you're willing to work and pay nominal dues, Marks said it is "almost as easy as pie" to join the club.

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