



News Release

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Model Train Hobby Tracks Universal Appeal

CINCINNATI, OH -- What do Tom Brokaw, Rod Stewart, Tom Hanks, Bruce Springsteen, Michael Jordan and Donald Sutherland have in common?

Model trains. They're all train hobby enthusiasts, according to the National Model Railroad Association, which is dedicated to the pursuit of the hobby. So were such historical figures as Sir Winston Churchill, Joe DiMaggio, Walt Disney and Frank Sinatra.

The hobby of model railroading can be as compelling as the lure of a train whistle floating on the night air, promising adventure. At least 500,000 model railroaders and train hobbyists in the United States and Canada have responded to the call, reports the World's Greatest Hobby, a Model Railroad Industry Association Website, which also lists England, Germany, Australia and Japan as model railroading strongholds.

In Greater Cincinnati, the Greater Cincinnati Garden Railway Society, which focuses on the large G-scale, or "garden railway" trains, the largest modeling scale, boasts about 125 members. Organized in 1990, it has hosted the National Garden Railway Convention three times and is involved in the development of EnterTRAINment Junction.

Model railroading is a pursuit that crosses generations and every walk

of life, and also brings families together for creative fun on various levels. From the charming simplicity of a child's toy train set to the intricate detailing of a painstakingly scaled layout, model trains speak to the timeless American dream of moving forward and exploring new territory.

While hobbyists get involved for various reasons, imagination and history are two important sparks, says Larry Koehl, EnterTRAINment Junction's train master. "I find it hard to define, but there is something about trains that is fascinating." Just looking down a railroad track sparks the imagination, he explains, raising all sorts of questions, such as "Where does it come from and where does it go?"

Model railroading, which offers an alphabet range of scales and gauges from small to large, combines a variety of skills and interests. They can include history, with various railroads set in different time frames and geographical settings; engineering, with the mechanics of the track layout; crafting, from the buildings and scenery to human figures; math, for determining the accurate scaling for each element; and geography, for creating the appropriate topographical stage.

"Most people get a thrill or good feeling from creating something," Koehl says. "You have your own little empire that you have total control over. For just about any artistic or creative skill, any subject that you want to get involved with, in some way model railroading incorporates them all," Koehl adds. "Sculpture, carpentry, electricity, architecture, civil and structural engineering, artistic talent...history, anthropology, even political situations."

The hobby encourages individuality, with layouts becoming expressions of the imagination and vision of their creators. On the other hand, model railroading is also extremely social, with an amazing array of clubs, publications and organizations to support its pursuit.

Those elements intersect perfectly in EnterTRAINment Junction's 25,000-square-foot layout, an immersive world which features 90 G-scale engines and approximately 1,200 train cars traversing three historical time periods. EnterTRAINment Junction is the only themed family entertainment center on the planet, with not only the world's largest indoor, interactive train display, but also an American railroading history museum, a large train expo center, an innovative children's play area, hand-cranked locomotives for kids, and imaginative walk-through mazes whose themes change with the

seasons.

About 130 volunteers -- some from the Greater Cincinnati Garden Railway Society, other enthusiasts from throughout the region and even beyond -- created handcrafted, original scenes that together constitute the world's largest indoor, interactive G-scale display.

Koehl adds: "EnterTRAINment Junction is a first-class destination for all ages...and will no doubt inspire a new generation of model train enthusiasts."