

Crew News

For all Adirondack Scenic Railroad Volunteers



July 2018

Remembering Michele Devendorf

1947 - 2018

From the beginning of the ASR in 1992 until her passing on July 2nd, Michele volunteered in many roles for the railroad. Her years of stewardship as Treasurer on the Board of Directors was vital to the success of our organization. It is accurate to say, as a friend remembers, "she made good decisions." Many of us also like to remember Michele's sense of humor as well.



*Michele at left with friends Lois Bormann and Elizabeth Gray (deceased)
Photo undated.*

Random Notes

On Memorial Day weekend, we ran trains out of our Thendara Station featuring complimentary rides for customers with an active military I.D. Staff reports that our trains were close to full, and that they were glad to see ASR Board President Bill Branson riding with us. Bill said, "It was great to see our people and equipment in operation. And it was especially gratifying to see the veterans and active service members enjoying the experience with us."



Rail & Canoe packed! The first trains from Thendara to Otter Lake carrying canoes were packed on Wednesday, July 11. The crew reported that the baggage car was filled to capacity with 19 canoes on each run (12:30 and 3pm) and roughly 120 passengers.

Cheers to our youth volunteers Joe and Brianna. They've been working in the office developing a children's coloring book that focuses on railroad safety!

Another way to volunteer! - As the growing season progresses, the Oneida County Public Market gets busier, and our information table there gets loads of visitors. We need one, preferably two, volunteers each week at that table, and it's an easy job. Answer questions, socialize, hand out schedules, promote the ASR. It runs from 9 am to 1 pm each Saturday at the REA wing of Utica's Union Station. If you'd like to do this, be sure to contact Judy at volunteer@adironackrr.com for more information and to sign up for a Saturday morning.

Volunteer time sheets are important in so many ways, from volunteer benefits to grant applications and more. Be sure to complete the time sheets, easily done at the Volunteer section of the ASR website. (Hint: monthly is easier to remember)

Prospective volunteers - If you have filled out a volunteer application, and have not had a reply, please check in with our Volunteer Coordinator Judy Roberson at volunteer@adironackrr.com

Save the date...Polar Express movie - Mon. Sept 5 or Wed. Sept 10, showings at 3 or 5pm. Watch for more details!

Watch for it... We are aggressively studying rail bikes for Thendara and Saranac Lake.

Meet and Greet

"Wow, look at all the rail folks cleaned up!" commented a long time volunteer about the nearly 50 volunteers and staff at the "Meet & Greet" get together at Union Station on Tuesday June 19th. Marketing Director Mark Piersma served as master of ceremonies and introduced the new employees to the group. Food, socializing, and a silent auction rounded out the evening.



Spotlight on Dave Julian

By Bob Sblendorio

With the ASR trains passing by, Dave Julian couldn't take it anymore - and "decided one day to see what it's all about." The tracks run along the border of his backyard. That was three years ago, and as a trainman with no previous experience, he's enjoying everything about volunteering for the railroad.



Being a trainman requires specialized NORAC training; which means lots of classroom instruction, plus on-the-job training.

There's a lot to it: checking the brakes, assisting the engineer moving the engines around, throwing switches...and anything else needed by the conductor.

Dave also volunteers as the Easter Bunny and on the Polar Express, as Santa. He commented that it's an enjoyable opportunity to interact with the kids and see a lot of smiling faces.

And when Dave is not volunteering with the ASR, he continues to volunteer in the surgery department at St. Elizabeth's hospital. He was the Oneida County Coroner but has since retired. By volunteering at the hospital, he can continue applying his skills and knowledge honed from his many years as the county coroner.

When asked about his free time, with a chuckle, Dave answered, "what free time." He likes to stay busy and is always on the go.

Polar Express student volunteer party

"It was the best experience I've had on a train - EVER!" said one of our youth volunteers describing her work as a steward on the 2017 Polar Express train. Friday, July 22nd, the students who volunteered mostly as Polar Express stewards, had an appreciation party on the 3600 cafe car, parked in the Utica train yard.

While enjoying pizza, other snacks, soft drinks and more, the students described some of their favorite times during the Polar Express runs. "I love seeing the kids get excited to see Santa!" ... "It was so nice to help people needing handicapped access." ... "I got to dance a lot. With kids and their parents." ... "It was fun punching the tickets like in the movie!" ... "One boy said to me, 'I want to be like you when I grow up.'"

In all, the students thoroughly enjoyed their experience and are looking forward to participating again in the 2018 Polar Express experience.





Young Scholars Charter

On Wednesday July 18 over 55 students along with a handful of adult chaperones, all members of the Utica College Young Scholars program, enjoyed a charter train ride from Utica to Remsen Depot and back. During the ride, the students socialized and enjoyed the scenery from the baggage car. During the hour plus layover they had lunch and time to visit and play some games. Car hosts were Diana Winterton and Judy Roberson, crew was Al Heywood, Greg Torres, and Mike Fealy. Thanks to Judy and Diana for photos and information.

Learn more about the Young Scholars program at <https://www.utica.edu/academic/yslpp/>



Back and Forth

By Joe Bonomo

August 12, 2017 was our 25th anniversary celebration at our Thendara Station. Back on July 5, 1992 the Adirondack Scenic Railroad started train services from Thendara to Otter Lake. The short hour and a half trip pleased many people, but everyone wanted more. Shortly, the ASR extended the line from Thendara to Remsen. After a while, the Railroad started thinking about extending the line from Remsen to Utica. Just like today, those tracks are owned by the freight company Mohawk, Adirondack & Northern (M, A & N). With an agreement with M, A & N, the Adirondack Scenic Railroad completed its first Utica to Thendara trip in August 1998.

Now, looking back on August 12, 2017 the Railroad rented a Steam Locomotive Viscose #6. This was a big hit. Making trips to Carter Station every hour, impressed all. The same day, our Utica to Thendara train included a double header, running both EMD F-Units (1502, 1508.) This was also a big hit. We were running a Utica to Thendara train, two Otter Lake Local Trips, and Steam Trips by the hour. That's a lot of trains moving!

The next day, the steam locomotive offered "Be the engineer for the day." This event let someone very interested in trains drive a steam locomotive. It was very impressive. Now the Adirondack Scenic Railroad clacks along the tracks 26 years later with the help of wonderful volunteers, staff, and customers. Let's make year 26 a great one!

The FRA does what?



The FRA is the Federal Railroad Administration. It is a division of the US Dept of Transportation, having a primary mission to develop and enforce safety regulations, from speed limits on the rails to conductor certification requirements and much more.

For the ASR, an FRA audit can examine all aspects of our rail operations. And in that role for all railroads, the FRA is empowered to levy steep fines or even shut down operations for non-compliance. "The ASR will comply with all federal regulations." commented Executive Director Jack Roberson. "All of our people, employees and volunteers alike, will be trained according to their job description or volunteer designation."

Beer & Wine Train returns to Thendara



Volunteers remember frequent Beer & Wine Trains out of Thendara Station, but the last one ran probably in 2011. This July 6, the first Thendara Beer & Wine Train since then ran to Big Moose and back. Tasty beer and wine, plus live music by The Mechanix Trio, all contributed to a fun evening.

Watch for more Thendara Beer & Wine Trains.

Employee Spotlight - Laura Clive

By Bob Sblendorio

Executive Assistant Laura Clive comes to the ASR highly qualified. She has been with us for just over two months, performing the many duties and functions required. "I do a little bit of everything," she said, "That includes answering phone calls, calendar, correspondence, appointments, and anything else that the Executive Director, Jack Roberson, requires."



Previously, Laura worked for Oneida County as the Executive Secretary for the County Attorney, a busy and demanding job. When asked about the difference in the two roles, she said both have many challenges, but without the politics that go along with government work, she is enjoying working for the ASR.

When not at work, she stays busy with her husband and two young children, which brings her much joy. Every now and then, she also enjoys singing, painting, and when time permits, she likes going to the gym to work out. With a laugh she said, "It keeps me a sane person."

Mud, Creeks, and Dust

Early travel in the Adirondacks, part 1

By Bill Wolfe

The first people to travel through the Adirondack region did so in buckskin moccasins and in bark canoes. They also used the travois, a frame made of three poles that was dragged behind a man or a dog. They would come into the area to hunt and fish and gather whatever other food they could and retreated south to their permanent villages in the fall.

The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), Abenaki and Montagnais tribes were the most frequent visitors. They mostly travelled by water to avoid the dense underbrush, rocky ground and steep terrain. The first Europeans were French and Dutch fur trappers, the famous "Voyageurs." Their mode of travel was canoes and on foot. These Europeans utilized existing tracks, also avoiding the Adirondacks in winter.

The trade goods revolutionized the lives of the indigenous people. The Haudenosaunee, an advanced society in many ways, had no metalworking technology, so the iron fishhooks, knives, axes and kettles they traded the furs for increased their hunting and farming capabilities. The Europeans also brought horses, which helped them expand trade routes.

Soon the canoes and footpaths couldn't carry the volumes of trade goods needed. This led to trading posts becoming the nucleus of a town, especially around streams that were suitable for water-powered sawmills and gristmills. Horses and wagons needed improved roads, and road networks connecting settlements soon followed.

They were roads in name only, as the Adirondack road was simply a track where the trees had been cut away about the width of two wagons side by side. There was no pavement, just the bare ground.

In swampy areas, the "corduroy" road was common. Trees were chopped down, cut into 8-foot lengths and fastened together, making a long "mat" of logs that the wagons ran over. They provided tooth-rattling jolts as you rode over them, but they helped avoid the wagon sinking into the mud. The rest of the trail was ruts, rocks and tree roots, giving a ride that was almost as rough. Dry weather led to choking dust, and wet weather led to axle-deep mud. Often, there was no room for traffic to pass.



This was the state of the roads when the first resorts opened in the area around Raquette Lake and Blue Mountain Lake in 1876. In 1881, Fredrick Durant began construction of the largest of those early resorts, the Prospect House at Blue Mountain Lake. It featured electric lights, running cold water, steam heat, luxurious rooms and gourmet meals. It was second to none in luxury. (*To be continued - next issue.*)

Useful links

The Adirondack Experience at Blue Mountain Lake <https://www.theadkx.org/>

Note: The Adirondack Experience is part of our reciprocal agreement for active volunteers

The North Creek Depot Museum <http://www.northcreekdepotmuseum.com>

The Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont <https://shelburnemuseum.org/>

Contributions welcome

ARPS members, volunteers and ASR employees may contribute items to this newsletter. Articles celebrating our history, our work, as well as captioned photographs, especially those which show volunteers at work, are encouraged. Please understand that the newsletter staff has the right to edit submissions.

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