



**Q4 2023 & Q1 2024**  
 "Seven point four" is the newsletter of the Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc.. A Pennsylvania non-stock, not for profit organization, tax exempt under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

**President’s Message**

Happy 2024 from the Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad!

We had a very busy end of 2023 with Pumpkin Patch trains, Halloween Rides, Santa Trains, Grinch Trains, and more – people loved the rides and can’t wait to come back again.

This is the time of year when we are doing maintenance of the equipment – replacing worn parts, tune ups, annual maintenance – while the ground is frozen, or snow covered, and we can’t do track work.

Projects keep rolling along on the railroad – here are a few quick updates:

Dave Watson and his crew have been making great progress on Coach 1158. The floors are in good shape, wiring has been run for lights, fans, and audio systems. We hope to have this coach

in service by Easter. Dave can use any and all volunteer help – if you can paint, or sand, or sweep, or weld, or do electrical work, we would love to have you. The interior painting is the next big project on the inside of the coach, I believe, and we will be upgrading the brakes as well.

Our open-air car needs some TLC: a few pieces the siding on it looks worse for wear and needs to be replaced. This is just simple carpentry and painting, so if you can swing a hammer, use a saw or a paintbrush, we’d love your help. We will post some specific days to work on this car. And, as always, we have track work. We plan to extend the Class 1 track up to Five Forks Road this year, which will take plenty of new ties and ballast, and we still have to replace ties in the existing Class 1 track. This is harder work – it takes a crew of four people at minimum, some specialized equipment, and tools – but tracks in good condition are pretty critical for a railroad to run, so we do our work.

Thanks again for your support and encouragement. The railroad wakes up soon from its Winter slumber. If you would like to come out to the railroad and help with these trains, or if you’d just like to come out and ride, we’d love to see you!

Mike Ruane

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**Upcoming Trains:**

- Superhero Express  
Apr. 13, 10:00, 11:45, 2:00
- Western Train Robbery  
Apr. 20, Sept. 28 10:00, 11:45, 2:30
- Tales From The Rails Picnic Special  
May 4, 11:00, 1:00
- Princess Express  
June 15, 10:00, 11:45, 2:00

## 2023-2024 Friends Officers

**President - Mike Ruane**

**Vice President - Dave Watson**

**Treasurer - Donna Kuhlman**

**Secretary - open**

**Assistant Secretary - open**

**Director-At-Large - Larry Morgan**

**Director-At-Large - Jim Kuhlman**

**Director-At-Large - Miles Weaver**

**Director-At-Large - Jim Whipple**

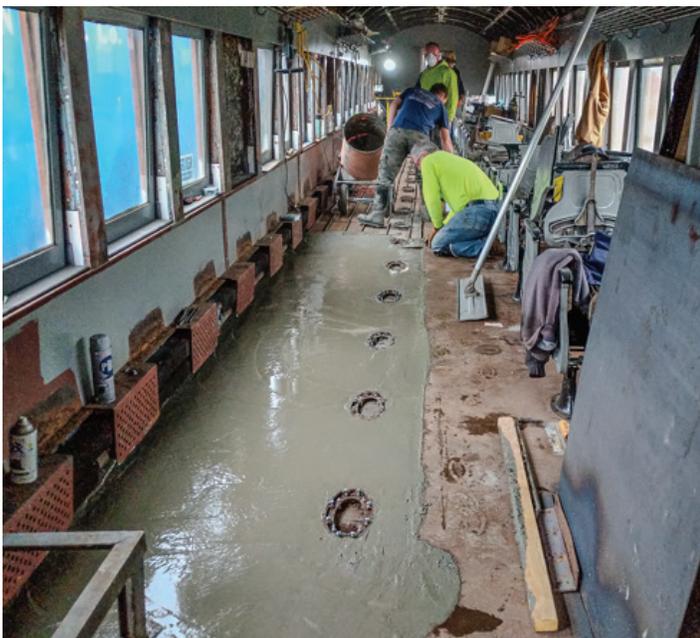
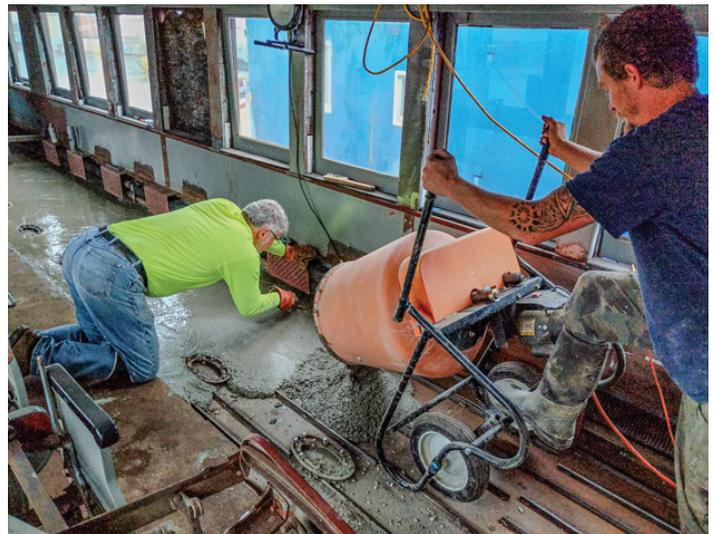
**Director-At-Large - Ken Bitten**

**Newsletter Editor - Joe Krepps**

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### Passenger Coach Updates

Despite a busy fall season, we were able to get major work done. Coach 1158 has been re-wired for electricity. The new concrete floor has been finished along with the seats installed. The Imron paint has finally come in, so we'll be painting first thing in the spring. We are also working on finishing the walls, ceiling painting, and securing the windows. The car will be finished soon. For 1341, Miles Weaver bent the remaining roof edge replacement strips. John Pope is welding them in and should be finished soon.



*(Photos continued on page 7)*

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## Hi-Rail Truck

The railroad has recently purchased this GMC Hi-Rail dump truck. It can travel in road or rail and has a rotary dump bed, so it can dump to the right, left or rear. It has a capacity of about seven tons of ballast stone. It will be very useful for transporting bulk materials along the length of the railroad. It can haul ballast stone for track improvements, rip rap for slope stabilization, and excavated materials when we are cleaning out ditches, culverts and cuts. A welcome addition to our expanding fleet of much needed maintenance equipment!!



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## ex-PRR Flatcar arrives

Stewartstown Railroad received this Ex-PRR steel flatcar on Tuesday, October 10 th. It is a one-piece solid steel casting and is in excellent condition. It does need a cleaning and a paint job!! Wheels, axles and bearings look to be in good condition as does the brake system.

This car will be converted to a second open-air excursion car for our passengers to ride in. This work will start this fall and we would like to get it in service in 3/24!!



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## ex-Monongahela caboose arrives

On Sept. 27, 2023, Monongahela Railway caboose #67 arrived at Stewartstown Railroad, where it will be restored and operated. The caboose was donated to the Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad by the Smithsonian Institution by way of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Strasburg. The caboose was trucked over from Strasburg and unloaded with a crane from Dickinson Crane of Reading, PA. This makes four cabooses at Stewartstown Railroad. Look forward to a caboose riding weekend next Spring! Monongahela 67 will be placed in service after mechanical inspection and brake testing. The caboose was restored by the Mon in 1988 and is believed to be in sound mechanical condition. The inside features are intact and there is still coal in the bunker!!



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## Tribute to John E. Watson, by Dave Watson

My father, John E. Watson, was a regular weekly volunteer with the railroad for the last several years during his retirement. He passed away unexpectedly on December 25, 2023. Some of the many painting projects he worked on included station windows, station benches, sections of the Stewartstown Station, the engine house windows, and many of the coach windows. His weekly contributions helped to generate much needed progress during the week in-between work sessions held on the weekends. He is greatly missed by his loving family and friends. Thank you, Dad, for your many hours of service.



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## Galactic Express



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*Thank you,  
Volunteers & Supporters!*

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## Villian's Express



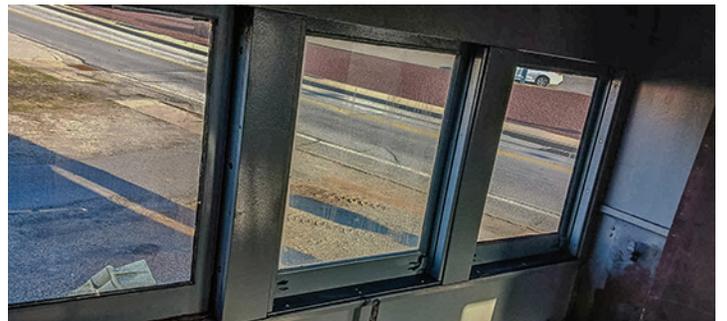
## Ice Princess Special



## Santa Claus Express



(Passenger Coach Update cont. from page 2)



*Join the Friends today!  
See form on last page*

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## Update on Loco #10

On Sunday, February 18, Mark, JimT, Mike R and Dave W installed the new custom-manufactured oil cooler on #10 locomotive #2 engine, plus the newly recovered fireman's seat and arm rest.

The engineer arm rest needs a new hinge and the seat is out for a new cover.

The loco was also started and moved around a bit to get it loosened up for Easter Bunny trains, the first it has been started since December.

Mark also has worked on the instrument label gauges, and we have the air flow louvers in both ends working again, first that I ever remember them being hooked up.

Locomotive is essentially ready for Bunny trains, just needs the engineer's seat and some contact cleaning.

The new oil cooler should reduce oil leaking and mess in that end of the locomotive.

The radiator on engine #1 is still leaking and will need removed and repaired sometime after #12 is placed in service. At that time we will also tackle the smokey problem on #2 engine which is probably a couple of work rings/valves.

Due to the several inches of snow on Friday night into Saturday morning, we did not go out in the line.



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## The interesting life of Stewartstown railroad's John Nolan

by Bill Histed, Friends member. NOTE: John Nolan wears many hats for The Stewartstown Railroad and is active in The Friends Of The Stewartstown Railroad. He is a vice-president,

a board of directors member and is highly experienced with heavy equipment. Suffice it to say that John helps with just about anything that needs done.

### Early Life

-John, please tell us where you were born and about your parents and siblings?

JOHN: "I was born in Orange, New Jersey and grew up in Maplewood, Essex County, New Jersey, a suburb of Newark. In those days Maplewood was a suburban bedroom community with little industrial activity. We lived on the other side of the "tracks" and our neighborhood consisted of single and multiple family homes."

"We lived in a third walk-up apartment. There was a nearby section of town that had some commercial activity such as small machine shops and supply houses. Some of the bigger industries were Boker & Company, manufacturers of hand tools and knives, Kroydon Golf Clubs; Lock Joint Pipe Company and Menner Packing Company that made rice pudding in cans. Yum!!"

--John, Do you remember the first time that you paid attention to trains and railroads?

JOHN: "My father worked for Universal Chain Company. This company manufactured jewelry type gold and silver chain. He used to walk to work along the Rahway Valley Railroad. When I was about seven years old, my sister would take me for a short walk to see the steam engine of the Rahway Valley Railroad shoving cars of coal to the last customer on the line, Wooley Coal. Those early days of watching the engine huff and puff got me hooked on trains. The Rahway Valley was a short line of 13 miles in length. It had three branches. The one next to where I lived was referred to as the "Newark Heights Branch," being just a few miles Newark. There were ten coal yards within 1/2 mile of end of track, plus the industries I previously mentioned had sidetracks except Universal Chain. I remember seeing train crews riding the tops of the cars at night passing signals by swinging their lanterns as the engine shoved cars

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to their destinations. With the railroad and coal yards nearby there was always some place to play and have adventures.”

### *Schooling, Toy train*

--John, Please tell us about early school. Did you have a toy train as a kid?

JOHN: “My elementary school was a block away, an easy walk. The school was named after Seth Boyden, whom at an early age invented patent leather along with the process of making malleable iron. He also built railroad locomotives. He was a friend of Thomas Edison and invented the first daguerreotype (this was the first publicly available photo process in the U.S.”

“I remember when I was about eight years old my father would set up a flat table and we would have a loop of track with an American Flyer 2-8-0 that made smoke from a liquid in a strange little vial. It smelled something like chemicals, but in those days, who knew? Upon completion of grammar school, I went (walked 1.4 miles each way) to what was then junior high school, now it's Middle school. That school backed up to Delaware, Lackawanna & Western mainline for commuters and passenger trains. Electric commuter trains carried riders from Dover and Gladstone, New Jersey, to Newark and Hoboken where passengers could transfer to railroad owned ferries and go into New York City. I often sat in the classrooms where I could see the trains and being on one. The railroad ran milk and mail trains. The mail trains would stop at the station and my friends and I would be on the platform awaiting for their arrival. Often, the power was a Fairbanks Morse Trainmaster. We would beg for a cab ride and more than often it was the same crew and they would take us up to the next station, South Orange.”

“We would scamper off the engine, say our thanks and walk about 1/4 mile to the South Orange tower. We knew the towerman and he would let us up into the tower so we could watch all of the train action and all the lights on the signal towers blinking brightly in the night. Often

we would see the Phoebe Snow, the Hoboken to Buffalo passenger train come flying by. While in high school, I belonged to the Railroad Club, run by the school librarian, Marian Hanson. She was an avid railroad fan and took us on the Phoebe Snow to Scranton and we toured the big station and the shops of the D.L. & W. In 1957, riding that train was quite an experience for kids who never traveled far. As I got older (12 years old) my father got me a job in a “candy store” cleaning and sorting return soda bottles. After that, I worked in a small print shop cleaning the shop, burning the trash and helping pick up the lead used lead from the Linotype machine. Both jobs were in locations next to the Rahway Valley RR.”

### *John had a strong work ethic*

“My next job was unloading veneer from railroad box cars. It was all hand work and I'd get a friend to help. We got \$1 a ton to unload and stack the 20 to 50 pound stones. Needless to say, I ran out of friends to do this, but I enjoyed working around the railroad. While in high school, we would go on the D.L. & W. to Hoboken and ride the railroad ferry back and forth for 25 cents. Many Saturdays I'd walk a mile to catch a bus that took me to the Roselle, New Jersey railroad station of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The station agent, Charlie Kapp, would let me hang around the station and watch the LV trains like the Black Diamond passenger train. Every Saturday, the LV local would come from Newark on its way to various industries along the line. When the local stopped to get their drill orders, I'd climb on the caboose. The crew let me ride in the caboose so I would sweep the floor and clean the windows. When I was done with my work I would ride on the seat up in the cupola and watch the crew switch cars at lumber yards, U Gypsum and a GM plant. When the local brought me back to Newark, I'd catch a bus for a ride back to the station. What a great day, for maybe \$1.50.”

*(Cont. on page 10)*

(Cont. from page 9)

“After high school I went to work in a new car dealership for \$60 per week. The dealership backed up to the D.L. & W., now the Erie-Lackawanna. The tide of change was coming to the railroad world. That job lasted around two years. I left to go to work in construction and during the winter I worked for a small company that moved industrial factory machines. Being in my own business was great, but it was hard work. I was 23 and got married. We lived in an apartment for the first year and I bought our first house in two years for \$21,000. Wow, that was a lot of money!”

### *His business acumen grows*

“As years went by my little business worked on a number of projects like the first exclusive opposing bus lane from the New Jersey Turnpike into the Lincoln Tunnel, stand-by power system for NJ Transit passenger trains in Hoboken, N.J., installation of the antenna grounding system for radio stations like CBS and WABC in New Jersey.”

“In the early 80s, I did work for the Morristown & Erie Railroad on the tracks and ROW. I converted a bridge into a loading dock for their transloading operation.”

“In the mid-1980s, I owned a bar and restaurant, a garden center, Purina Feed dealership and I was partners in a real estate franchise. Missing the railroad environment, I again did some work for the M & E. During that time, I helped M & E gain the operation of the N.H. & I. Railroad which I eventually bought with a partner and operated for about a year. Moving on, I bought the Lackawanna Valley Railroad, a short line company operating over leased tracks from Scranton to Carbondale. Many long days and nights were spent dealing with the operation and equipment issues.”

“Shortly after taking over the train of 15 cars derailed, six loaded cars; what a mess! Hulcher Services was called to the scene to clear up the wreck. This was my first experience with this type of a mess. With the lease of the tracks ending another operator took over the line from me.”

“The night of the day after the operation was transferred to a new operator, a huge mess. The operator asked if i could use my bulldozer to clear a landslide from the track. I agreed to help him out. During the course of the clearing by me, my bulldozer and myself dropped into a subsidence (slow caving in or sinking of an area of land) of about 12 feet deep. I fractured my frontal sinus, had a major operation to repair the sinus and was out of action for six months. Upon my return to work, I, with help from a former employee of the Lackawanna days, started in 1994 the Bristol Industrial Terminal Railway. BITY, one mile long and one customer, how exciting it was when the first car arrived.”

“By 1996, I applied for, and was award the operations of four PennDot owned lines formerly operated by Blue Mountain and Northern, now Reading and Northern. The lines I took over are the Perkiomen, Colebrookdale, Kutztown and Manheim. Our business expanded. Shortly thereafter, Conrail sold me the Chester Valley Branch and the Lancasater Northern line. These operations were successful and many improvements were made to lines that were going to be abandoned. I was approached by Emmons Transportation in the late part of the 90s and sold the entire company to Emmons. I was retained as VP of Penn Eastern Road Lines to operate the lines I sold. After about two years, Emmons York Rail was purchased by G & W. I bought back what i sold to Emmons as G & W did not want PRL. I resumed the operation and consolidated operation under the East Penn Railroad.”

“To expand the operation, I pursued the purchase of the Octorara Line, a former PRR line from Philadelphia to Washington, owned by SEPTA. Bid requests were made and I won the bid. The line connection to CSX was over the last section of track owned by the Reading Company Estate. The Reading Company decided it wanted to sell.”

“Then at the same time the lines connection owned by a steel mill and to NS, and the lines largest customer, the steel mill, decided they wanted to sell. I had to raise \$2 million in three months. Got it together, bought the lines and the

week before the Octorara was mine a flash flood washed out segments of the track.”

“I hauled in my Hi-Rail truck over 1,000 tons of rock to restore the ROW. Within a year the operations were going well, there were some new customers and good employees. I was on the road all the time, running trains, fixing track, and dealing with customers”.

“With the 2007 pending financial crash, I sold the entire operation to the current East Penn owned by Regional Rail. After selling the business, I went into railroad track construction. We did projects for private industry and our last big job was rebuilding the Maryland and Pennsylvania Preservation Society’s track that had been washed out by a flood. This included putting in a 65-foot bridge back on its foundation after it was washed 100 feet downstream.”

### *First time John saw the Stewartstown Railroad*

--John, when was the first time you learned about The Stewartstown Railroad?

JOHN: “The first time I saw The Stewartstown Railroad was when I went to New Freedom to see what Ken Bitten was doing with his dinner train operation. The next time I looked at it was when I thought about buying it to lift the rails and sell the rail to a dealer that would resell them to the coal mines in Appalachia”

“My lawyer found their was a lien against the property, so I dropped that idea. The blight of the STRT was of interest to me, so one day I went to Stewartstown to see what I could do to help.”

“I met Dave Williamson whom I previously met years ago on a motorcar trip. We talked and I thought it would be rewarding to see this railroad saved and operated.”

### *Biggest challenges now*

--John, what are some of the challenges you see for The Stewartstown Railroad?

JOHN: “The biggest challenge the STRT has is getting more younger people involved to carry on the operation in years to come. Without that,

in another ten years, the old guys will be gone; the middle-aged memers will be old and the equipment older.”

“The people that make up “the group” are great; everyone tries hard at their respective level. There are some very giving and talented members without which this operation would fail. Without The Friends, raising money would be difficult. I know I have been involved in raising funds to remove two trees by the station, the roof on the station and buying some items for the operation.:

### *Changes you have witnessed in railroading*

--What are some of the largest changes you have seen in railroading?

JOHN: “The railroad business today is more streamlined. I recall going to a Conrail meeting in Philadelphia when Conrail was going to an all computer system for the interchange of cars. One old-timer, Pete Rasmussen from the Middletown & New Jersey stood up and said with a pencil in his hand, “We moved cars with pencils for years and don’t need these computers.” Everyone said, “Sit down, Pete.”

“The big railroads merged, short lines took over branches and segments of mainlines but the biggest loss change to the railroad industry is the loss of industry in the U.S. There used to be hundreds of siding for factories and warehouses that got several cars a week. Today, that scenario is gone from much of the system. So many products are made offshore and come in containers via ship. As with everything today, it’s all about making as much money as possible”

“The old railroad infrastructures and equipment are going, going fast. Regulations get tougher on railroads as a result of wrecks and equipment is so pricey.”

*“What if someone gave the Stewartstown RR \$1 million?”*

*(Cont. on page 12)*

(Cont. from page 11)

--John, if someone suddenly gave the Stewartstown Railroad \$1 million, where should it be spent?

JOHN: "I would do these tasks. Clean up the rolling stock, paint, etc. Fix up areas, walks around station, brush cut and clear the entire line to reestablish our presence, build a single stall engine house, pay down the debt and see what's left."

*What are other interests, other things you're involved with?*

JOHN: "In conjunction with the STRT Board, I am on the MA & PA Board, and on my HOA board where we live. I am a member of the D & R Canal Society, Tri State Historical Society and the Heritage Conservancy. My wife Joan and I are retired and are 80ish, a polite way of saying, "Old."

Thank you John, for taking the time in granting this interview. Your dedication and hard work on the Stewartstown Railroad and your support of The Friends are all very much appreciated.

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### **Engineer Training, a Stewartstown Railroad Reawakening** by Miles Weaver

*We have a problem Stewartstown . . .*

In 2022 Stewartstown Railroad faced a problem. A problem that forced the railroad to cancel several train dates. No, it wasn't a problem with the equipment. Nor was there a problem with the track. Trains had to be canceled due to a lack of trained qualified engineers.

You see, Stewartstown Railroad is almost a century and a half old. As a result of its age, Stewartstown Railroad has outlived all its founders, its founding employees, and many of its former employees and volunteers. Unless there are some 140 plus year olds out there that I am unaware of. The very nature of the Railroad's age, and its continued perpetuation, ensures that everyone who works or otherwise volunteers for the

Stewartstown Railroad, will at some point age out. And isn't that what we're all really about? Perpetuating Stewartstown's railroad history for posterity into perpetuity? We are all really just "Stewards" of this unique gem; privileged to be part of its ongoing history.

And yet herein lies the problem. For many years the prior generation of Stewartstown Engineers carried the railroad. But with the never-ending march of time, and the onset of COVID, many volunteers were lost, including engineers. Case in point, Stewartstown Railroad's one time employee, longtime volunteer, and highly revered former STRT Road Foreman Don Matthews, was himself aging out; and in doing so left a huge hole in Stewartstown Railroad's dwindling engineer roster. Of course, Stewartstown Railroad did at one time train locomotive engineers. But since the Railroad's reawakening roughly a decade ago now, there has been a lot to do for a relatively small group of volunteers. And the railroad needed money. That meant getting the track, equipment, and facilities all back in shape to attract rides and generate revenue. Meanwhile, the railroad had an adequate batch of engineers. Until it didn't. In 2022, the year the nation emerged from the COVID pandemic, things were looking up! People seemed eager to break out of their isolation bubbles and get back out and about. As a result, ridership in 2022 was quite good. But a hidden problem was brewing.

As the 2022 operating season progressed, concern about not having enough Engineers to run scheduled trains was growing. It became increasingly apparent that engineer availability and train schedules were not lining up. Looking ahead, the problem that had been hiding in plain sight was becoming clear. It would be increasingly difficult to schedule trains with the diminished pool of available engineers. And then it happened. "No engineers available, train date CANCELED!" As Stewartstown moved into the latter part of 2022, looking forward to the busy holiday season, it became clear that some emergency stop gap measure would be necessary or the railroad would be facing more costly train date cancellations.

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Stewartstown Railroad's "Guest Engineer Program" . . .

In an effort to avoid canceling trains, a call went out asking for help from everyone who had friends and acquaintances with experience as locomotive engineers. And the call was answered. Several experienced locomotive engineers heeded the appeal and Stewartstown Railroad avoided further cancellations. What is more, the experience turned out to be beneficial in other ways. It helped to get the word out about Stewartstown Railroad, it forged relationships that would otherwise have never occurred, and it facilitated the transfer of knowledge. Knowledge what would turn out to be valuable to those who would eventually follow as student engineers. But this solution was, at best only temporary; it had become clear; Stewartstown Railroad would need to develop or redevelop its own Locomotive Engineer Training Program.

Great minds think alike - Jim and Miles had a plan . . .

With the 2022 operating season drawing to a close, Stewartstown Railroad Volunteer Miles Weaver had an idea. Why couldn't we do engineer training in the winter during the off season? Miles proposed the idea to crew, engineers, and potential engineer trainees in informal discussions during the holiday train runs. "What would all think about having engineer training sessions in the winter during the off season? The qualified engineers would do the training, and the engineer trainees would take turns in training as well as serve as train crew for their fellow trainees when not in the seat being trained. Moreover, because novice trainees would not be pulling trains with passengers, potential rough rides and passenger safety concerns would not pose issues, nor present as concerns to trainees while running trains as inexperienced trainees." The idea was well received.

Miles then approached Stewartstown Railroad Volunteer Jim Tapley. When hearing Miles's idea, Jim noted that he had proposed a plan much like the one Miles was describing to the railroad's board, but what was needed was someone or group of individuals to spearhead the plan. And

so, it began. Jim and Miles rallied the participants, Jim put together a schedule and presented the engineer training plan to the board. With the board's blessing, and the participants willing, engineer training began.

Let the training begin . . .

In January of 2023 Stewartstown Railroad's Locomotive Engineer Training Program began in earnest. Jim Hogan, STRT Road Forman, along with Engineer Trainers David Collison, and Dough Plasterer began training with the first group of Engineer Trainee candidates (listed alphabetically), Nathan Filak, Andrew Mayer, Bryan Piedramartel, Gordon Skinner, Thomas Stahl, Jim Tapley, and Miles Weaver. As training progressed, Joe Kane also helped train trainees during regular revenue service runs.

Typically, Engineer Candidates for any railroad are required to come up through the ranks, having both learned and mastered many railroad jobs prior to being considered for the coveted position of locomotive engineer. This is because a locomotive engineer ideally should be familiar with every aspect of the train, locomotive, its operation, and the railroad. A former volunteer for Stewartstown railroad got it right one day when I heard him exclaim, "Touch it your WRONG! Don't touch it your WRONG!" The key is knowing When to touch it, when to leave it alone, and what exactly to do with it when you do touch it. And this group of candidates all possessed those prior qualifications.

In the hot seat! It's all fun and games until you're sitting in the seat . . .

Sitting in the operator's seat of a locomotive is nothing like getting in your car and taking off for a leisurely drive. In fact, I submit, it's unlike any other vehicle you have ever, or will ever operate. But you might think, well what about a plane or a ship? And I would agree that these vehicles are to a greater or lesser degree similar in size and complexity to operate. But they are in and of themselves unique and different. As such, operating a railroad locomotive involves a unique set of

*(Cont. on page 14)*

*(Cont. from page 13)*

challenges, and requires a unique set of learned skills that cannot be derived from anywhere else except from sitting in the operator's seat of a locomotive.

To operate a locomotive and pull a train safely, the Engineer needs to be familiar with the road. He literally needs to know the ups, downs, curves, and quirks of the railroad. Not only that, he needs to be familiar with the locomotive. Its unique vibrations, sounds, movements, and peculiarities.

Compare for example No. 9 Mighty Mo with No. 10. These two locomotives differ in many ways. In their controls and operation, and in their vibrations, sounds, movements, and feel. They differ considerably.

And then there are the Train Brakes! I am not aware of anything else that compares? Train brakes are unique unto themselves. And for a novice they are intimidating and challenging to master. It's not like a car where you just press your foot on the brake or the accelerator pedals. In fact, there are no foot pedals at all! Well . . . with the exception of No. 9 Mighty Mo, where Mighty Mo has a clutch foot pedal. Otherwise, everything is done with your hands. And there is a lot to do and a lot to think about. Not only are there the brakes; two different kinds! There is the throttle, the bell, the horn, the sanders. . . Often several of these controls need to be operated at, or nearly at the same time! You need to look and listen for direction from the crew, be situationally aware of where you are on the road, listen to and feel your locomotive, all as you think about and anticipate when to brake and throttle.

In short, the Engineer needs to know the road and the machine. A good Engineer is one who is able to extend their senses beyond their own body, into the floor, into the metal, into the wheels. The locomotive and you become one. Can You Hear That Training A Comin . . .

Training proceeded through the winter months January and February into March. Just as planned, the engineer trainers alternated training days, and the engineer trainees alternated

between training and serving as train crew for their fellow trainees. This resulted in a variety of practical benefits. It prevented any one trainer from being burdened with all of the training, it gave the trainees a variety of perspectives and operating techniques, and it allowed for more training dates to be scheduled. This in turn helped accommodate the busy schedules of the trainers and trainees alike, resulting in a better training experience for all.

As training progressed, one of Stewartstown Railroad's "Guest Engineers" Roy Hunt, an experienced railroader, railroad trainer, and locomotive engineer himself, also got involved. Roy, an active railroad trainer for CSX visited Stewartstown Railroad several times to help train Stewartstown's up and coming group of Locomotive Engineers. During his visits to Stewartstown Railroad, Roy provided trainees with valuable insights into locomotive operation, including instruction on the function of the automatic train brakes.

By the end of February 2023, over a period of just two months, Stewartstown Railroad's Locomotive Engineer Trainees had collectively chalked up some 40 hours of seat time, and nearly 60 hours of total training. That may at first not sound like much, but keep in mind that training sessions had to be conducted primarily on weekends. Meanwhile, Dave Watson and other members of Stewartstown Railroad's Training Committee were hard at work reviving and revising the classroom training materials; another important part of Stewartstown Railroad's Locomotive Engineer Training Program.

Season Opening Around the Bend. . .

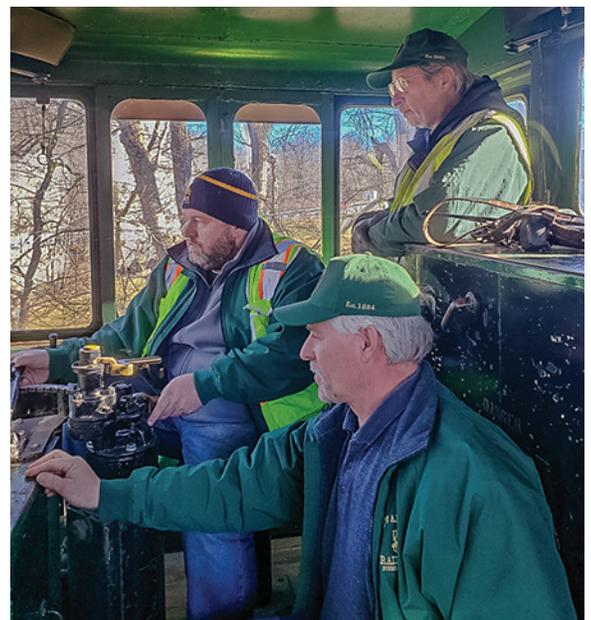
As Easter Trains neared, it was time for volunteer Jim Tapley to begin putting together crew schedules. But there was again a problem. None of the veteran engineers were available on March 25, 2023, the first day of scheduled Easter trains. In 2022, prior to the implementation of Stewartstown Railroad's Locomotive Engineer Training Program, this would have been a real problem. But now, with the intensive engineer training that took place over the winter months, several trainees were showing promise with at least one

nearing qualification. With just two weeks left to go, training was scheduled to get at least one trainee ready. Then on March 25, 2023, the first scheduled train day of the 2023 season, smiling kids were able to get on the train, ride out to the Picnic Grove, collect Easter eggs, and meet the Easter Bunny. All because Stewartstown Railroad's first newly qualified engineer was able to run those trains.

And the training continues. . .

As it turned out over the 2023 operating season, having just that one additional engineer made the difference between running versus cancelling trains. As a result, no cancellations occurred in 2023. As the 2023 operating season drew to a close, Stewartstown Railroad's Locomotive Engineer Trainees had collectively chalked up some 108 hours of seat time and 159 hours of total training. And best of all, another Engineer Trainee became qualified.

As a result of the efforts of a number of dedicated Stewartstown Railroad volunteers whose names have been mentioned throughout this article, Stewartstown Railroad's Locomotive Engineer Training Program produced a total of two newly Qualified Engineers in 2023, Jim Tapley and Miles Weaver; with several other Engineer Trainees not far behind. So, as Engineer Training continues in 2024, expect to see more Qualified Engineers emerge, thereby helping to ensure that Stewartstown Railroad will not have to cancel trains, at least not due to a lack of qualified engineers anytime in the foreseeable future.





Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc.  
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 Stewartstown, Pa. 17363-0456

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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_



The Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc. invites all who are interested in preserving the Stewartstown Railroad to join the Friends organization. The railroad was founded in 1884 and opened in 1885.

One of the goals of the organization is to support our members as they perform their volunteer work on the railroad upgrading and maintaining the railroad's properties. Our volunteer's efforts help the railroad continue its operations over its 7.4 miles of track between Stewartstown and New Freedom, Pa., via the Deer Creek Valley. The Friends organization is a Pennsylvania non-stock, not-for-profit organization. The Friends organization is tax-exempt under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. The Friends organization owns a minority equity interest in the Stewartstown Railroad Company.

Please send completed form and check to:  
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- Optional: Endowment Fund donation.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_**
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- Optional: Right of Way/Track Fund donation .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_**
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(You may specify a specific project on the line above for your optional donation, if you wish.)

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