

“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 Report

Greeting from your volunteers of the Stewartstown Railroad!

Autumn is here and winter is coming, to paraphrase a TV show...

There’s been a lot of work going on around the railroad. Track work, as always. We’ve been replacing ties at the west end of the class I track, and we’re just past Five Forks Road. We recently had trains finally make it out of the woods and run parallel to 851 and make it to the crossing at Five Forks Road.

Locomotive number 10 has been running strong for us, but we’ve had a few maintenance issues – we had to repair some wiring that decided it had worked long enough, and now we’re having some issues maintaining coolant levels, and it looks like the fuel tank has some crud in it as it

has been clogging its fuel filters a lot. We’re also having troubles with some engine parts, and finding replacement parts for an engine as old as this one is can be...challenging.

Locomotive 12 is getting closer to getting blue carded and will be a welcome relief when it’s ready, either to be the Railroad’s prime mover, or as a backup to give locomotive number 10 some much needed time off. Right now, when locomotive 10 goes out of service, we have to limit the number of cars on a train – that won’t be the case when number 12 comes online.

Dave Watson and his crew have made fantastic progress on Coach 1158. The remaining windows are being installed, final painting is done, and the brake valves and system are being upgraded and tested. Some of the air brake piping had to be replaced, and the seats need immediate cleaning and eventual reupholstering, but we were ready to go...until a wheel inspection stopped us dead in our tracks. Literally. It seems that the last time 1158 was being used, they ran her so much that some of her wheels and flanges were out of spec,

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Upcoming Trains:

- The Grinch Storybook Limited
 - Dec. 7: 10am, Noon, 2:15pm, 6pm
 - Dec. 15: 10am, Noon, 2:15pm
 - Dec. 21: 10am, Noon, 2:15pm, 6pm
- Santa Claus Express
 - Nov. 30: 10am, Noon, 2:15pm
 - Dec. 1, 8, 14, 22: 10am, Noon, 2:15pm
- Evening with Santa Claus
 - Dec. 14, 22: 6pm

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

and we'll need to replace them. We plan to have the car in service by the Easter trains.

I don't mean to sound like a 'Donnie Downer' just because we've run into some troubles. We'll do our best and continue on keeping the Railroad going.

Thanks again for your support and encouragement, and your help in all the ways that you do. The railroad is getting ready for our Christmas trains. So if you would like to come out to the railroad and help with these trains, or at the gift shop, or man the Toy Train layout or if you'd just like to come out and ride, please do! Hope to see you soon!

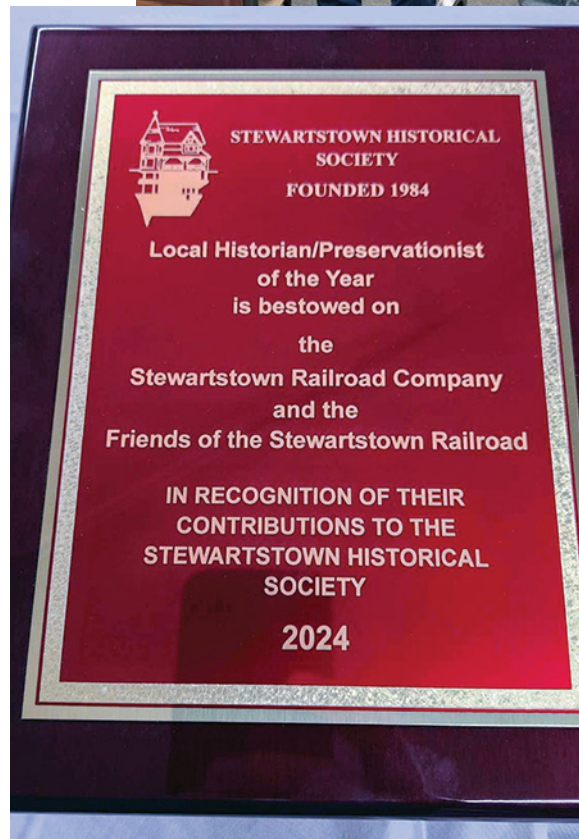
Mike Ruane

President, Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad

140th Anniversary!

On Saturday, September 14, 2024 the Stewartstown Historical Society presented the Stewartstown Railroad Company and the Friends of Stewartstown Railroad the Local Historian/Preservationist of the Year Award. The Stewartstown Historical Society presented the award to David Williamson, President of the Stewartstown Railroad Company and Mike Ruane, President of the Friends of Stewartstown Railroad. The Stewartstown Railroad Company and the Friends of Stewartstown Rail-

road would like to thank the Stewartstown Historical Society for this award!



Out of the woods - Part 1

Thanks to the efforts of a dedicated track crew, Class 1 trackage has now left the woods and reached Five Forks Rd.! For the first time since 2005, trains are now able to travel past the picnic grove.



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East Tolna crossing paved



Dee Bush interview - by Bill Histed



Question: Dee, please tell "7.4" about your early beginnings....your early family, your early life, where you were born, your first impressions of growing up.

Reply:
I was born in Salisbury, MD in 1962 on the day of the Cuban Missile crisis.

My parents had 3 kids, I'm the oldest, I have 2 brothers. I had a very normal childhood, maybe a bit privileged as my dad was making a good living. I met my best friend in 4th grade, and she introduced me to horses, and I have loved horses ever since. My father owned a school photo business, and in the mid 1970's he had an opportunity to advance his business, so we moved from Salisbury to Annapolis, MD. I was in 6th grade and the new school was one of the first to have the open classroom concept. It was not the best environment for my squirrel brain, so I struggled with school and socializing. Believe it or not I was painfully shy then. At the beginning of 9th grade, my mother had the first of several strokes. As the oldest I had to help with cooking, cleaning, and taking care of my mom and my



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brothers, so I had to grow up fast. My parents gifted me with my own horse that Christmas, so on top of taking care of my family I was also taking care of my horse, Dan. By the time I was in 10th grade my mother had recovered enough that I had extra time to spend riding my horse. I graduated from high school in 1980 and all I wanted to do was work with horses, so I enrolled in a small college in Salem, West Virginia because they offered a degree in Equestrian Studies. I had the option to take my horse with me, but I opted not to, so I had to sell my horse. Being away from my family was hard on me so I only attended that college for a year. I went home and started attending our local community college. I got a job with the Fotomat Corporation. Remember those small booths in the middle of parking lots? Yep, I worked in one of those. I was usually in a store front on Main Street in downtown Annapolis which is a big tourist town. One day when I got to work, there was this tall guy there who was talking to my coworker. He looked me up and down and announced he was going to marry me. I can't print here what I said to him. But he was right, and we did get married in 1983. We were both 20, way too young to get married, but we have been married for 41 years.

Question: What are your hobbies, special interests, memberships, your present family and work experience.

Reply:

One of the first jobs I can remember as a kid was working for my dad. I would open order envelopes so he could count the money. As I got older, he would take me to homecoming and proms he had to photograph, and I was his assistant. I worked with my father most of my life, even when I had other jobs. My mother passed away in March of 1996 and my dad remarried. When he decided to retire, he asked me if my husband

*Thank you,
Volunteers & Supporters!*

and I were interested in taking over the business. Sadly, I knew it was not the right step for my family and he sold his business...and opened another business! He started photographing Military reunions and I worked for him doing that. I give my father all the credit in the world for the reason I can think on my feet and get things done. He taught me if there is a problem, work the problem and fix it.

My husband and I have 1 son, he was born in 1991. I was a stay-at-home mother then. We lived in Annapolis, but in 1996 my husband was promoted, and we moved to Utah for a year. We came back to MD but decided to move to PA in 2000. I was working for a company who produced educational content for NPR, and they let me work from home for the first year we lived in PA. I took a break from work for a while. Then when my son started high school, I decided to go back to work full time. I worked for almost 3 years at a construction company that put in water and sewer systems for municipalities. I had decided to retire from working a full-time paying job when my health started to affect my job performance. When the railroad elected me secretary, I thought it would give me something to do that I could do on my time.

My hobbies, hum, I love to travel. My husband and I decided that once my son was on his own, we would travel. We went to some interesting places. Reading is another hobby. I do spend a lot of my time just hanging out with family and friends. I play bar trivia almost every Wednesday night, not that I'm any good. I will be a grandmom in a few months so that will keep me busy.

Question: You are very important to the progress of the Stewartstown Railroad. When did you first hear of our railroad? When was the first time that you saw the railroad? What were your first impressions?

Reply:

Thank you for saying that.

The first time I heard Stewartstown railroad was in 2015 when I read a story in the York Daily

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Record about Mike Ruane bringing #12 to the railroad. A few months after that story ran, I attended a party for a Facebook group for car enthusiasts. Mike happened to be at the same party, and I recognized him from the news article. I didn't know anything about trains, so I asked him about the locomotive. Mike invited me to come to the railroad to see what was going on there. I showed up a few months later and I happened to be there when John VonBreisen was there. He asked Mike if they had found a secretary for the board yet. Mike said no, and I asked what the position entailed. He said it was only 2 hours a month of work (I should have known something was up). I told Mike I might be interested. He called me one day in November 2016 and asked if I was still interested and if I was free that night to attend a meeting. I still can't believe no one questioned me about my work experience or anything when I showed up for that first meeting.

My first impression of the railroad was that it was a lot of work for volunteers. It was hard to imagine that the railroad could actually run trains on all volunteer time and effort. I was impressed at the level of railroad knowledge that everyone had. The first time I was in the station when trains were running, I was not very impressed with the level of customer service. The ticket agents were not very friendly to the customers.

Question: Dee, there have been many improvements on the railroad with limited financial resources. What do you feel have been some of our most important accomplishments since you have been with the railroad?

Reply:

One of the first things that was done after I joined the railroad was to get the ticket counter and waiting room cleaned up and organized. The first time I went behind the cage, there were boxes of papers and general junk piled up as tall as I was. I took a lot of heat for cleaning up and throwing away things we didn't need. But it was a vast improvement in the look of the station. It no longer

looked like a hoarder's den.

When I started as Stationmaster we implemented a higher level of customer service at the railroad. My one rule is never lie to the customer. If we had an engine problem or derailment, we would tell the customers what the issue was without going into full detail. Some other railroads have been caught in a lie by customers and I never wanted that for STRT. When I started with the railroad, our reputation was a bit tarnished so one of my main goals was to improve the customer experience.

One of the biggest accomplishments that the railroad has achieved was getting the class one track extended. When I started the class one track didn't even go to the iron bridge. The ride was 20 minutes at most. Now we have almost too much track for most of our rides. I want to acknowledge the hard work the track crews have put in to get the track extended. I was on the train when we first drove over the iron bridge with Mighty Mo, it had been years and years since Mo had been over that bridge. I was so proud of all the hard-working volunteers that made that happen. Replacing the roof on the station was a big job. The old slate roof was leaking and endangering the whole station.

The Friends Open-Air Excursion car was a big improvement, it gives us a better piece of equipment for summer train rides.

Acquiring the former bank building gave us a much needed addition. We didn't have enough parking or storage space at the station and getting that property has made a big difference for the railroad.

Question: You have worn many hats on the Stewartstown Railroad, Dee. What are some of the many diverse things you have done with our team to keep the railroad operating? Tell us about the issues with making out train schedules a long time in advance.

Reply:

I have worn many hats, just like most of our volunteers do. I have been the board secretary, a director, and stationmaster. I had to cut back on my hours due to health concerns, so now I handle

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the schedule, ticketing, ordering give-aways and social media things I can do from home and on my schedule. I think one of the most important changes to keep the railroad operating is how we treat our customers, from the ticket agents to the train crews. We are friendlier with our passengers now than in the past and the change has been noticed by our customers. If our passengers don't feel welcome, they will stop riding the train and the railroad will not survive. Putting our tickets online was significant improvement. I was not a fan at first, but it has helped the railroad grow. I have done some crazy things to help the railroad. I always have the railroad's best interest at heart no matter what I do. I once ran out of the station to Rutters across the street because there was a large group of motorcycles. I gave each one of them a flyer for our steam train event, they thought I was nuts! I have taken our rack cards grocery shopping and handed them out to women with kids while shopping. Mothers buy our tickets. I got kicked out of Weis market for that one.

Not everyone understands how our operating schedule is put together. The first thing that is plotted on the schedule is our work weekends. The event committee discusses what events we want to do for the upcoming year and what time of year to do them. Some of the actors we use need to be booked almost a year out, so right now, October, I'm already working on next year's schedule. For things like Easter, Halloween, and Christmas where we hand out give-a-way items, those must be ordered well before the event, 2 months ahead of the event at least. We must make sure we have actors for our big events like Easter and Christmas. We start in January looking for someone to play our Easter Bunny, we have been lucky that our volunteer Amber Weaver has taken on that task. But to make sure we have a Santa; we start looking for someone in June. Jeff Palmar has played our Santa for a few years, but we still need to ask well ahead of time to make sure he will be available.

The tickets also need to be put on our website well in advance. I'm almost always working 4 months ahead of our train rides. For example, our Christmas trains, those tickets were built

(the term we use to get the tickets on our online system) in August. One of the hardest tasks I have while working 4 months out is that I have to decide what type of equipment we will run for every train ride. The tickets are sold by what equipment the passengers will ride it. So, I must figure that out 4 months before the event. Any changes to the equipment consist is hard to change once the tickets are built.

Question: If somehow the railroad was given \$1 million to spend by a generous benefactor, what do you think would be the most vital areas to spend the money?

Reply:

Wow, that would be a nice gift! I would spend it on infrastructure. The station needs to be painted inside and out. There are some maintenance items that need to be done to the station that are not getting done because of lack of volunteers and money. The sidewalks need to be redone (plans are in the works). The platform on the Rt. 851 side needs to be repaired. We need a walkway from the former bank building to the station. The bank building needs the floors replaced or repaired and it needs to be repainted inside. We also need to figure out a way to make our trains handicap accessible. None of these suggestions are a knock on the small group of volunteers who show up all the time and do most of the work. The main focus has been on track maintenance, and rightly so, but if we had 1 million dollars dropped in our lap, our infrastructure really needs a boost.

Question: Your late father helped out the railroad. Please tell 7.4 some of the things he did to help the railroad. 7.4 remembers some display cases and more that he built. Have other family members also donated time to the cause? We thank you and yours for all that you do.

Reply:

My father, Ray, did a lot of things for the railroad. He once told me he wished I had gotten involved much sooner than I did because he would have
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loved to rent an RV, park it at the station every summer and just putter around doing things for the railroad. I'm not sure what my stepmother would have thought of that!

My father loved woodworking and had a well-stocked woodworking shop at his house in Annapolis. One of the first "projects" I asked my dad to help with was building new wood train steps. The one we were using was falling apart. He repaired the step and made 3 more just like the original. He also built our rack card display that sits on the display case in the station. He built 2 new wood letter slat boxes to hold our paperwork in the station, we had 1 but needed 2. He rebuilt the wood drawer under the ticket counter. When John Nolan brought the old ticket cabinet to the headquarters building it was in rough shape. My father cleaned and repaired it, and it is on display in the HQ building. Ray built the hand tools display, the railroad lock display and a ticket display. He worked on the old bench seats that are on the outside of the station and the HQ building. Ray also built things for Mike Ruane's caboose. He created new doors for the locker area and built bunk seats for the caboose. Ray also designed the flyers we used after 2016. He designed the traveling sign we use at train shows and other events. Ray also designed the rack card that we still use today.

My husband gets volunteered for the railroad, I tell him what we need, and he helps. He mostly keeps our computers running at the station and my computer at home. He had the idea for the Grinch trains. He was on the train the first year reading the book and leading the sing-a-long. He does other things in the background to support the railroad like picking up 500 cupcakes and driving them to the station!

Question: What are some of the things you find most unique about the Stewartstown Railroad? What are some of the challenges that you see for the railroad?

Reply:

What I find most unique about the railroad is that it's run with all volunteers, from the board down. And that it's a very small group of volunteers who do the most work. That these people have the passion for keeping the railroad operating is amazing to me.

What are the challenges I see at the railroad? The volunteers. We need more volunteers to keep this piece of history alive. I understand that not everyone can do hard work like the track crew, I can't do that either, but there are plenty of other jobs that need to be done that are less taxing. We need flaggers for our big events, so the train doesn't have to stop at every crossing. It's not taxing, bring a chair and enjoy the day outside. We need volunteers in the station as ticket agents or to help decorate the station and the coaches. During Christmas we need someone to man the refreshment table and talk with our customers. This is just a small listing of what we need. We do on-the-job training so if anyone wants to volunteer, call the station at 717-746-4998 and I will call you back.

Question: What are some of the most moving things you have seen with some of our passengers, children who visit the railroad?

Reply:

Ugh, now you are going to make me cry! One Easter, I was working in the station and this young teen boy came in and asked if the train was handicapped accessible. I have mobility issues myself, so I asked him what he needed. He told me that his mother was in a wheelchair, and she wanted to see him and his sister with the Easter Bunny. I told him we were not handicapped accessible. His face fell for a moment, then he said he could carry his mom on the train if we could help. I think Thomas and John Stahl were there and they helped him, and his mom got on the train. It hit me that here is this teenager who had the weight of the world on his shoulders and all he wanted was to get his mom on the train. The Christmas trains hit me hard. Families making memories and the railroad helped make that

happen. I hear over and over again that someone had been on the train when they were a kid and now, they were bringing their kids for a ride.

Question: Dee, where would you like to see the Stewartstown Railroad in ten years? 20 years?

Reply:

In ten years, I would like to see us running big trains to New Freedom. I would like to see a new generation of volunteers take over the railroad from the current volunteers. In 20 years, it would be nice if the railroad could buy more land surrounding the station and really build up to having our own equipment repair shop and a building dedicated just for a museum.

Question: How long have you volunteered for the railroad? You also serve on the Board of Directors of the railroad, right?

Reply:

I started with the railroad in late 2016 as the board secretary. I have served as a director on the Board of Directors since 2018.

Question: A huge help to the railroad is the independent "Friends Of The Stewartstown Railroad." You are a member. Could you tell us of some of the things "The Friends" does to support keeping this historic railroad going?

Reply:

The Friends of Stewartstown has been instrumental in buying equipment and materials. They have also received grants to do restoration work on the coaches.

Question: What advice would you give to future volunteers based on your experiences?

Reply:

Advice for future volunteers would be to jump in and find a task that you would like to do that needs to be done and offer to take ownership of that task. Make a plan and work out how to execute that plan. Even if you think it's a small task,

to us who are already volunteers it's a big help. If you don't know where to start, just ask someone. And know that the railroad is very grateful for everything our volunteers do to keep the railroad running.

Question: Dee, thank you for your time for this interview. Are there any questions 7.4 has not covered or final comments you would like to make for this interview? Thanks again. And thank you for all of your hard work, time and dedication to the railroad.

Reply:

When I started with the railroad, I knew nothing about trains or railroading. Volunteering at the railroad has given me the opportunity to work with some very interesting and knowledgeable people and I have learned a lot from everyone. Thank you and it was an honor to be asked to do this interview.

Petting Zoo



Villian Express with the Sanderson Sisters



Songs and stories of the American hobo



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Tie crane work



Out of the woods - Part 2



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The Grinch Storybook Express



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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:
 Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc.
 P.O. Box 456
 Stewartstown, Pa. 17363-0456

Membership Classifications & Dues (Full year, Jan.-Dec.)

- Individual Membership** \$20.00
 Show your membership card and receive a \$2.00 discount on one regular Stewartstown Railroad train ticket, courtesy of the Stewartstown Railroad Company.
- Family Membership (all members at same address)**..... \$100.00
 Show your membership card and receive a \$2.00 discount on up to four (4) Stewartstown Railroad train tickets, courtesy of the Stewartstown Railroad Company.
- Corporate Membership (business/organizational)** \$300.00
 Corporate members receive five (5) complimentary Stewartstown Railroad ticket coupons from the Friends organization.
- Optional: General Fund donation** \$ _____
- Optional: Endowment Fund donation**..... \$ _____
- Optional: Equipment Fund donation** \$ _____
- Optional: Right of Way/Track Fund donation** \$ _____
- Optional: Other donation, please specify** \$ _____

(You may specify a specific project on the line above for your optional donation, if you wish.)

- Optional: Check here to receive only electronic copy of "7.4" newsletter**
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