

BUSINESS *quarterly*

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“IN THE BUSINESS OF GROWING BUSINESS”

Holiday season kicks into full swing

26th annual Hands-on Train Display will make its seasonal return Dec. 21

By Deborah Rose

The New Milford area is ringing in the holiday season.

Festivities kicked off last Saturday in New Milford with the Festival of Lights and tree lighting on the Village Green (see page S13), sponsored by the Greater New Milford Chamber of Commerce and Small Business Saturday.

Other holiday activities are planned for coming weeks.

Businesses will be open — some with holiday hours — and organizations, clubs and places of worship will offer holiday bazaars, breakfasts with Santa, holiday concerts and more (see “Home for the Holidays,” pages S21-23).

“The Festival of Lights was a big hit,” said Debbie Bauman, owner of the Barkery Boo’tique on Bank Street. “Everyone said they had a great time and loved the fire-truck light parade.”

Bauman said downtown “businesses are really pulling together to schedule events for everyone to enjoy” this holiday season.

“The town looks so pretty this year and I hope people will come and enjoy the events, walk around, shop and dine,” Bauman said.

One of the popular offerings will be the 26th annual Hands-on Train Display.

The free display, sponsored by the chamber, will be open daily Dec. 21-29 from noon to 4 p.m., except Christmas.

Multiple operating



New Milford resident Adam Weaver looks forward to sharing some of the model trains in his collection, above, in the annual Hands-on Train Display held every holiday season in New Milford.

train layouts, featuring a variety of gauge trains, will be on view and available for patrons to operate at the railroad station along Railroad Street.

The exhibit started 26 years ago at the New Milford Historical Society & Museum when resident Al Burroughs put together a display featuring trains, train documents and more.

“The biggest part was the Marx train around the (Christmas) tree,” Burroughs said of the first exhibit, noting a tradition was born.

The running model train around the tree was such a hit, it was suggested a model train exhibit be set up at the railroad station.

Such a task required the help of other model train enthusiasts, who willingly stepped forward, including Adam Weaver, Fred Marchionna, Jim Hammell, Art O’Connor and others.

“It’s good for the kids in town ... to look at something that interests them,” said Burroughs of the annual exhibit. “It’s for big kids, little kids. There’s no age restric-

tion on kids.”

The layouts are changed every year, each one based up on a particular theme. Past themes have included “Jurassic Park,” industrial settings, logging scenes and more.

One of layouts, put together by Pete Woermann, of New Fairfield, features a disappearing train.

“The object is to put together a bunch of switches” so the patrons can experience as much as they possibly can from the layout, Burroughs said.

Small, medium and large trains run along tracks that wind, climb and loop around miniature trees and buildings that make up imaginative communities.

Cars, trucks, people and even Thomas and Friends trains have made appearances over the years.

The majority of men involved with the train exhibit grew up with model trains and have been collectors since childhood.

As a boy, Burroughs had model trains, including one that ran around the Christmas tree.



DEBORAH ROSE/SPECTRUM

For more than a quarter of a century, a group of local model train enthusiasts have shared their love of the hobby with the community by participating in the annual Hands-on Train Display held every holiday season in New Milford. The display, sponsored by the Greater New Milford Chamber of Commerce, draws crowds who look forward to trying their hand at operating multiple train layouts. This year, the display will be open daily Dec. 21-29 from noon to 4 p.m., except Christmas day. Above, three of the organizers, from left, Al Burroughs, Keith Nold and Adam Weaver, gather at Weaver’s house to see how one of the displays is shaping up for the season.

“I like to show off my trains. I like to share them with the kids,” said Weaver, explaining why he likes to participate in the annual event.

O’Connor joined because “he wanted to play trains, too,” Burroughs said.

Keith Nold, of New Milford, who used to take his now-17-year-old son to the display, got involved with the train display last year.

Like several of the men who participate in the exhibit, Nold met Burroughs online while buying model trains.

“It’s a very interesting hobby,” Nold said. “There’s so much to offer with model trains, so many ways to get involved and getting kids to look.”

Nold’s participation in the exhibit “brings me back” to the fond memories of trains from his

youth.

Over the years, train enthusiasts who have visited the exhibit have even brought some of their working and non-working trains to show the organizers on hand at the exhibit.

Weaver said he has even fixed up some of the ones that haven’t worked.

For information, visit www.newmilford-chamber.com.

A HOLIDAY TRADITION



DEBORAH ROSE/SPECTRUM

Members of the United Methodist Men at the New Milford United Methodist Church have for 47 years organized and put up the Christmas trees on the Village Green. Above, resident Ralph Williams adds final touches to the lights while joining fellow UMC volunteers in putting up the trees. The trees were lighted Nov. 30 as part of the Festival of Lights event sponsored by the Greater New Milford Chamber of Commerce.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S CORNER

Chamber looks ahead as it reflects on busy 2013

As 2013 begins to wind down and 2014 quickly approaches, I’ve begun to look back at what the Greater New Milford Chamber of Commerce did in 2013, as well as look ahead to what we have planned for 2014.

We’ve had a plethora of events this year.

Some old, favorite community events included the Crystal Winter Gala, the Fourth of July fireworks celebration, the Village Fair Days, A Taste of New Milford, the Harvest Festival, the annual chamber breakfast and the Festival of Lights/tree lighting ceremony.

I’m pleased to say we will do them all again next year.

We tried a new community event this year. Spring Fair Days was held in April at the New Milford High School, hosted by the chamber and the students of NMHS’ Future Business Leaders of America club.

At this time, it’s unclear whether this will be a biannual event or annual event and possibly moved to “almost” spring.

A favorite benefit of chamber members is our series of networking events.

In addition to our traditional business events like the monthly Business Scenes, Lunch & Learn seminars, Breakfast Networking Scenes, and speed networking events, we held some joint chamber events with the Brookfield, Newtown and Danbury Chambers.

The joint events included an open house and a multichamber breakfast.

I’m happy to say these multichamber events were well received and successful. We’re looking forward to offering

more opportunities to network with other chambers going forward.

Another new event we offered in 2013 were a series of panel discussions.

We held our first one in May with the focus on how businesses could “take their business to the next level.”

Our second discussion was held in mid-November in partnership with the New Milford Economic Commission, with the focus on “navigating the new health insurance environment.”

Both discussions were open to the public and provided a wealth of information.

We look forward to hosting more of these events and welcome your suggestions on topics you would like to hear discussed.

Suggestions can be emailed to nmcc@newmilford-chamber.com.

OUR MISSION

The chamber’s mission is “To develop, encourage, promote and protect the commercial, industrial, professional and general business interests of the community; and to promote the civic interests and general welfare of the town of New Milford and its trade area.”

Any person or business entity having an interest in the objectives of our organization is eligible to apply for membership and is invited to contact the chamber office at 860-354-6080 or nmcc@newmilford-chamber.com, or visit www.newmilford-chamber.com.

I’ve been with the chamber now for eight and a half years as executive director and for 15 years with the Village Fair Days committee.

See Chamber on S15



DENISE DEL MASTRO