

Holiday Express Train Show

Scott Gargan

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Some people assemble train sets beneath their Christmas trees.

But when it comes to the holiday hobby, Bill Dressler goes full steam ahead.

Dressler, a member of the Connecticut G-Scalers Club, is one of the many model train enthusiasts who is laying down the tracks for the Holiday Express Train Show at the Fairfield Museum and History Center, on Friday, Nov. 30, through Sunday, Dec. 30.

"This isn't your typical set up," said Dressler, of Shelton. "We have a multi-level layout with five trains operating simultaneously. We have diesel and steam locomotives. We have a train that plays Christmas music."

Now in its fifth year, the annual exhibition features numerous g-scale sets -- "The kind most people run outside in their gardens," Dressler said -- that roll through quaint village scenes with miniature buildings, lights, cars and people.

Models of Thomas the Tank Engine and other cartoon characters (Snoopy on a surfboard and Charlie Brown on a motorcycle) will chug along the criss-crossing network of tracks.

"Some of the younger generations missed out on trains, but Thomas has created a resurgence of interest, and we're trying to capitalize on that and keep the hobby going," Dressler said.

In addition, the Housatonic Model Railroaders Club will feature several HO scale train sets, the most ubiquitous model.

The opening of the Holiday Express Train Show coincides with the Fairfield tree lighting on Friday, Nov. 30.

Visitors are encouraged to stop by the Fairfield Museum and History center after the ceremony, said Lee Crouch, external affairs manager at the Fairfield Museum and History Center.

Crouch said the Holiday Express Train Show continues to be a big draw every year as it "appeals to people of all generations.

"It's a different kind of holiday approach that children and their parents can come and enjoy," she added.

Dressler, 66, spent his childhood playing with model trains. Even though he's not a kid anymore, his interest in miniature choo-choos has chugged on into adulthood.

"I had trains when I was growing up. I maintained an interest through high school and graduate school and now I'm into outside garden trains," he said. "I've been doing that for the last 10 years."

Scott.gargan@scni.com; 203-964-2238; <http://twitter.com/scottgarg>

Fairfield Museum and History Center, 370 Beach Road, Fairfield. Friday, Nov. 30, 7 p.m. \$3 opening night; free ages 5, younger. 203-255-1598, info@fmhc.org, www.fairfieldhs.org.