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## **Huggins' hobby is right on track**



Kevin Huggins, of Albany, is getting ready to host his annual garden railroad open house from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 10, at his home. Samantha Pidde/Clinton Herald

**(<http://clintonherald.com/features/x803542137/Huggins-hobby-is-right-on-track>)**

**By Samantha Pidde**  
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ALBANY, Ill. — Kevin Huggins, 47, of Albany, likes trains.

Kevin grew up in Albany in the same house he lives in now at 102 Lime St. As a child he was always fascinated by trains. He said it was just the size of them that drew him. Kevin's father would take him around the area to watch the trains.

Now Huggins' own home is surrounded by miniature trains. Kevin first started his garden railroad in 1998. He began with a starter set and visited local hobby shops to find more pieces. It was at one hobby shop that he came across Garden Rail magazine. After that, he purchased a lot of pieces through mail order. Now he also purchases items from the Internet.

More than 1,000 feet of track now circles Kevin's home and backyard. His railroad features trains in the style of the late 1960s and early '70s. He said this is before every train car was covered in graffiti. He also runs cabooses on his trains.

Kevin currently has more than 200 train pieces and approximately 30 buildings. Kevin does some painting and detail work on some of his trains. Three of his train cars feature graffiti painted by a friend who is an artist.

Since last year, Kevin has added to his collection. Some new buildings and accessories can be seen at his railroad. He also added an American passenger train, run by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, called a Capitol Limited train. This train is pulled by a steam engine. On Saturday, Sept. 10, people will get a chance to see Kevin's garden railroad. For more than 10 years, he has hosted an open house on the Saturday after Labor Day. Some of Kevin's friends will work as a crew to run the trains, allowing Kevin to talk to people attending the open house.

People are invited to attend the event from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Door prizes and free items will be available. Kevin said he has coloring books and safety packets from the railroad that he will hand out. He tries to take this opportunity to promote safety. He said people often don't know that railroads are not playgrounds.

Kevin said he continues to host the open house because of the people who attend each year. He said he is always asked about the event. Last year, more than 200 people attended.

Kevin likes seeing people of all ages enjoy his railroad. People can bring lawn chairs and stay a while to watch the train. He said one person stayed for three hours. Kevin said he kept saying he would leave in a little bit, but he did not seem to want to go. Typically children also want to stay all day long. He said children often leave in tears because they don't want to leave.

Kevin said the event is also great for anyone interested in the hobby. He will sometimes encourage new hobbyists to attend the open house to receive pointers and see how it is operated. After all these years, Kevin still enjoys his garden railroad and believes it is a great hobby. He said it can be expensive, but it's well worth it.



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