
Depot to celebrate National Train Day

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Amtrak will celebrate the nation's love for trains at its fourth annual National Train Day Saturday with celebrations at stations across the country, including the one in Niles.

National Train Day commemorates the day the first transcontinental railroad was created and looks toward the future of rail travel. It also celebrates Amtrak's 40th anniversary.

The celebration in Niles goes from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Michigan Central Railroad Station and is put on by Amtrak, the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, the Four Flags Garden Club, the Southwest Michigan Garden Railroad Club and Niles DDA Main Street.

The Niles train station was constructed in 1892 to impress passengers making the last stop in Michigan on their way to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

The Four Flags Garden Club will be on hand Saturday distributing carnations in honor of John Gipner, the late Master Gardener of the Niles train depot. Gipner would give flowers to all women who boarded the trains. He also created elaborate garden displays at the station at the turn of the 20th century, earning Niles the nickname of "Garden City."

The event will also feature interactive, educational train exhibits and a model railroad layout.

"National Train Day is a great way for the family to explore the world of trains," said J.R. Valderas, editor of the Michigan Passenger, a passenger rail newspaper published quarterly. "With rail taking a lead role in improving the future of travel in America, there's a lot to celebrate."

Other communities celebrating National Train Day at their respective Amtrak stations include Dowagiac, Bangor, Kalamazoo, Holland, Jackson, Flint, Ann Arbor and Detroit.

The City of Dowagiac will celebrate the day with an open house at the historic Michigan Central Railroad station on Depot Drive from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve of Niles will also be celebrating at its facility from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For more information about National Train Day events, promotions and information, visit www.nationaltrainday.com.