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[Home](#) / [news](#) /

Model train showcase to launch this weekend

By Carl Orth



For the first time in about half a century, trains will come chugging down the iron rails in West Pasco.

These trains, however, will clickety-clack down the tracks of elaborate model railroad displays the Sundance Central group has created at the new Suncoast Center for Fine Scale Modeling.

Details are so lifelike some visitors might be ready to buy a ticket to ride. The public is invited to the opening this weekend, Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the center, 2645 Success Drive, Odessa, north of S.R. 54.

The indoor displays are free, although donations are welcome, according to Frank Palmer, president of Sundance Central.

Alongside the operating model railroad layouts, the center will feature other meticulously crafted figurines, action figures, dioramas, dollhouse miniatures and military models.

"This has been years in the making and we are excited to share it with other modelers and the public," Dave Revelia commented in a promotional brochure. He owns the 7,800-square-foot building that houses the Suncoast Center.

Revelia envisions the center as a showcase for the art of fine scale modeling by builders and artisans from around the world. Enthusiasts can share ideas and techniques to help advance the hobby, as well.

"It's by all means not finished," Palmer said about the displays during a Friday phone interview.

The group will rotate model railroad layouts and miniature scenes so visitors always see something different, he explained. Regular exhibits for the public are planned, probably on a monthly basis.

Sundance Central formed in June 2004. The group, now eight members strong, found a home when the Suncoast Center formed last year.

The group concentrates on larger scale model railroads, much bigger than the O-scale Lionel models or S-scale American Flyer models many children found under Christmas trees in past decades.

The F scale favored by Sundance Central measures about 1/20th the size of real trains. For comparison, Lionel's O scale models are about 1/48th the size of trains. The tiniest, Z-scale, shrinks model railroads to about 1/220th the size of the real thing. F scale is even slightly larger than the G scale typical of many outdoor, garden model railroad displays.

So the Sundance Central displays can render many more fine details, its members explain.

Besides the Sundance Central layout, the center also will feature the Muskrat Ramble, Dolly Varden and the Silverton Central miniature railroads.

Hours for the opening weekend show will be: from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. Friday; from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Saturday; and from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. Sunday.

For more information, visit www.sundancecentral.org or www.finescalemodeling.org, or send an email to SundanceTeam@SundanceCentral.org.

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