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## All aboard for the Festival of Trains at Science Central

The family event is in its 14th year.

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel  
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If you don't want to fight the Black Friday crowds and you're looking for something fun to do with the kids the day after Thanksgiving, Science Central will be hosting its annual Festival of Trains from Friday through Sunday.

"Science Central's Festival of Trains has been a Thanksgiving weekend tradition in Fort Wayne for 14 years," Jen Motycka, Science Central school and public programs coordinator, said via email. "For some, Festival of Trains is as much a part of Fort Wayne's Holiday experience as the tradition of attending the lighting of Santa and his reindeer and eating at Coney Island.

"The Fort Wayne Rail Road Historical Society will be available to provide local train history and Operation Lifesaver will discuss the importance of rail road safety," Motycka added.

In addition to having access to Science Central's exhibits, traveling gallery and demonstrations, visitors who attend The Festival of Trains will also be able to speak with railroad historians and enthusiasts, Motycka said.

The idea for the festival originated with a man named Todd Happer who was Science Central's Director of Marketing and Communications from 1995-1997. Happer previously had worked at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, and he modeled the Festival of Trains after work he had done there.

"He wanted to have an annual event that would build family memories so that children that experienced it would bring their own children when they became parents," Motycka said.

Rick Anderson and fellow model train enthusiast Lon Hawkins have participated in the Festival of Trains for several years.

"We enjoy the crowd and, if any one has questions, we'll talk to them," Anderson said in a telephone interview. "The kids are smart enough to know that that's our stuff. Very, very seldom do we say, 'Please don't touch.' They know it's not Science Central property."

Anderson says there's a lot of colorful trains to see at the festival. He and Hawkins each bring trains that have a special appeal to children, but there are also plenty of trains that appeal to all ages.

"Lon runs a lot of the modern MTH brand trains, MTH stands for Mike's Train House," Anderson said. "He's got some nice engines and passenger cars and the McDonald's set, kids like the McDonald's.

"I usually bring animated cars," Anderson continued, "where it's like a giraffe will bow its head up and down, a cop will be chasing a hobo on a hopper car, Bad Pete and Mickey Mouse are bobbing up and down, odds and ends like a gunfight and an aquarium car where it looks like there's fish swimming as it goes by.

"Normally there's an N scale, and there's probably half a dozen guys in that, and the HO scale, there's probably six-10 guys in that."

"And then there's one guy, he's a trooper," Anderson added. "He's probably 64 years old, just a skinny, wiry guy. He's the one that gets down on the floor with all these battery-operated Thomas the Train (items) and plays with the kids. He's a one-of-a kind."

Last year was Motycka's first Festival of Trains, and she hopes Fort Wayne continues to embrace it.

"I love watching groups of people come through Science Central's front entrance during the Festival of Trains," Motycka said. "Their excitement is extremely contagious.

"I can't decide which age group benefits more from the Festival of Trains experience," she added. "Young children's eyes light up just as much as their parents' and grandparents' when they hear the train whistle and see the engine rolling around the track.

"If you have yet to experience Festival of trains, make this year the year for a new holiday tradition."



### More Information

#### All aboard!

**What:** Science Central's Festival of Trains

**When:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and noon- 5 p.m. Sunday

**Where:** Science Central, 1950 N. Clinton St.

**Cost:** Free with admission. Regular admission is \$8 per person; ages 2 and under are admitted free.

Information: 424-2400 or visit [www.sciencecentral.org](http://www.sciencecentral.org)