

The Newsletter

March-April 2015

The NTRAK Modular Railroading Society, Inc. Incorporated 1996 by Jim FitzGerald.

A non-profit organization with the goal of promoting the hobby of model railroading and in particular, N Scale modular model railroading.

Featured Club: The Lake Erie N-Scale Society.



"Country Lights" shine with "LENS" during the Holidays , by Lou Dreher, photos by Wayne L., Chuck L. & Lou D.

Country Lights is an annual holiday event held at the Lake Metroparks Farmpark (a 235 acre educational site), in Kirtland, Ohio during the nights prior to Christmas. It features farm and storybook themed light displays, horse-drawn wagon rides, a visit with Santa Claus and a toy workshop where children can make, decorate and take home a wooden toy.

Trains are a natural inclusion in the program because of a common association with trains around the Christmas tree, and many adults getting Lionel or American Flyer

sets when they were children. Also available is a "permanent" train room display with operating model trains and a wooden train play area.

Model Railroad groups began participating in 1993, with 16 nights split half and half between the NMRA MCR-Div. 5's "HO" modular layout, and the Lake Erie N Scale Society's (LENS) NTRAK modular layout. The event has now expanded to 25 nights; each group still tries to cover roughly half of the nights.

During the 2014 event, LENS provided a small rectangular display (16' x 22') (shown above), running (continued next page)

for 11 of the 25 days. LENS must provide multiple volunteers to operate trains or to answer questions.

Ideally, at least five LENS members should be present during each time frame (3 operating trains & 2 for outside security). There are 120+ hours of "run time" to cover. It is a large commitment and a difficult task at this busy time of year!

In order to help with planning everyone's available time, LENS uses an electronic "sign up" sheet (shown below) that is available to members in mid November. That gives members a chance to plan their holiday events, while setting aside time to run trains. Monitoring the sheet in the weeks prior to the event, allows LENS to prevent having time slots not covered by a volunteer.

Set up for the 2014 event (our 21st year) was well attended; so from "open doors, to running trains took about 2 hours. As you know from your own experience, sometimes things run well and sometimes there are "rough edges" to work out.

I am happy to report our layout ran very well with only a couple of small problems (quickly solved). On the last day, our tear down was equally smooth, and everyone in attendance, was off to enjoy the holidays.

Country Lights' popularity continues to grow; the "permanent" model train display has been expanded and moved to a larger location where a toy train play area, a Lionel display, an interactive switching layout and a G-scale display are included.

Two years ago, the modular layouts were moved from the main building, to a room in the Equine Arena to provide more space for the elves to help Santa. In Farmpark's Equine Arena there is a holiday themed equine presentation. Santa's visitors can sit with him in an antique one horse open sleigh. Photos can be taken as "selfies", or by having a professional photograph taken for a fee.

Visitors can also participate in some of Farmpark's regular activities such as milking a cow, and visiting farm animals such as pigs and chickens. There are

opportunities to take pony rides, decorate and eat cookies, eat a family meal or have a caricature done for a fee. Teams of horses pull wagons or sleighs around the grounds, with stops at the main building or Equine Arena.

LENS' Lake Metroparks Farmpark liaison is the administrator, Andy Baker who has been involved with developing its program for almost 25 years. Mr. Baker explains setting up and operating the event relies heavily on individual volunteers and groups to carry out the event.

Country Lights has been offered for over 25 years, evolving since its beginning in 1988. Initially, only three nights were involved. Since then, the event has gradually expanded to 25 nights.

Presently, more than 22,000 tickets are sold (this does not include visitors to 26 "Breakfast with Santa" events, and special daytime workshop opportunities). Country Lights is becoming a family tradition. Parents with young families in attendance remember when their parents brought them for a visit. Mr. Baker shares that plans for the future include the potential for added nights, new programs, and refinement of existing demonstrations.

For the last twelve years, Farmpark also hosts an event in May called "Railroads in the Park". Its purpose is two-fold. Mr. Baker said, "First, it allowed the modular groups to setup their layouts in a larger space than was possible during Country Lights, and to introduce their hobby to a youthful public. This allows multiple scales and layouts to be setup simultaneously. Second, it provides an opportunity for visitors to make a connection to the relationship between railroads and agriculture, and the shipping of agricultural products and materials".

For this event, the "permanent" Farmpark train layouts are active, as well as the aforementioned modular layouts. However, now that Santa and the elves are vacationing in a warmer climate, the rooms used for the workshops and other actives are empty, resulting in space for larger layouts.

In addition, local Boy Scouts are given an opportunity to attend a day long "seminar", which provides training, helps to complete the requirements, and culminates in the awarding of a Railroading merit badge (pending approval from their troop counselor). Once the scouts are done with their "seminar", they are invited to run their newly built box car model (one of the requirements) on a modular layout. They are given "hands on" instruction in the proper method of controlling the operation of model trains, using both DC and DCC controllers (and why they are different).

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These two annual events are currently the longest running annual displays LENS provides. We are grateful to folks at Farmpark for providing us with a venue to display our NTRAK modules. Even though we are only a small part of the events at Farmpark, we appreciate the opportunities to reach a large number of visitors with whom to share model railroading. As with any NTRAK club, we have several large and small sets up, but are

always on the lookout for others.

We hope you have enjoyed reading about our activities. Perhaps, we'll "see you at the next station"! For more information, please visit the web at www.lensohio.org or you can visit www.lakemetroparks.com/parks/farmpark.

Pictures of the event are shown below and the next page.



Entrance to the Main building which houses most of the activities and displays



One of the several teams of horses used each night, get a rest between wagon rides.



Grandson gets to "ride" an antique tractor, then off to see the trains



Being observed by the younger generation!



Families wait in line at the "North Pole" to visit Santa; then off to the workshop to make a toy

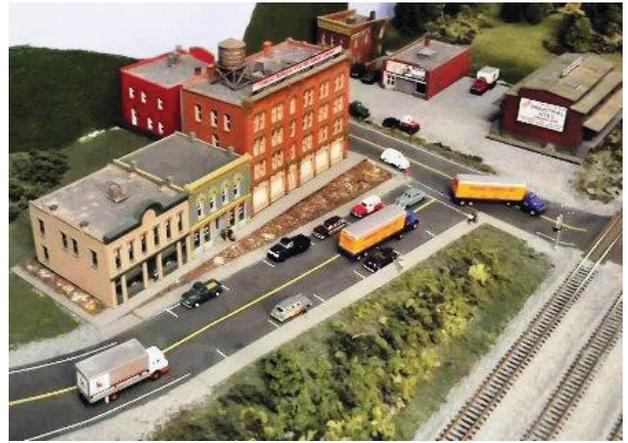


Dad more snow! Can I make a snowball?
("Christmas module" featuring tiny lights)

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Bob G's Operating Lighthouse module.



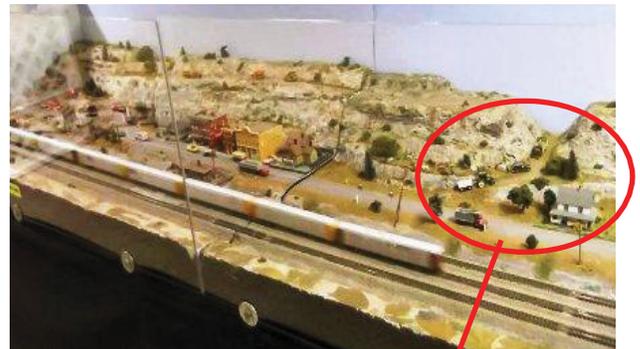
Chuck L's busy intersection module!



Gerry V's county fair setting up module.



Dave N's Coal Mine module



Dan C's small town/farm modules above, with acrylic protection!



Denny S's City with operating trolley module



NTRAK Order Department
 1421 Trowbridge Street
 Garland Texas, 75044

A bigger look at the LENS scheduling document.

Total Slots: 66, Available Slots: 5
 Last Updated 12-30-2014 10:17

LENS 11 Day Event
 Country Lights 2014

Settings Lou Dreher (4 Run times selected)

Click on the timeslot you want to **Take** or **Release**

Time	3 Tracks	Sat 13th	Sun 14th	Mon 15th	Tue 16th	Wed 17th	Thu 18th	Fri 19th	Sat 20th	Sun 21st	Mon 22nd	Tue 23rd
5pm 7pm	Red	Judson E.	Allan Jr.	Randy H.	Dave N.	Charlie T.	Dave N.	Allan Jr.	Judson E.	Chuck L.	Allan Jr.	Bob G.
	Yellow	Lou D.	Dan C.	Lou D.	Denny S.	Randy H.		Matt K.	Bob G.	Jerry V.	Dave N.	
	Blue	Bob G.	Judson E.	Matt K.	Randy H.		Denny S.	Chuck L.		Lou D.	Chuck L.	Judson E.
	Help	Dan C.	Matt K.	Allan Jr.	Allan Jr.	Allan Jr.	Allan Jr.		Allan Jr.	Allan Jr.		Allan Jr.
	Help	Allan Jr.		Charlie T.								
	Help	Denny L.										
	Help											
	Help											
	Help											
	Help											
7pm 9pm	Red	Judson E.	Allan Jr.	Randy H.	Dave N.	Charlie T.	Dave N.	Allan Jr.	Judson E.	Chuck L.	Allan Jr.	Denny S.
	Yellow	Dan C.	Randy H.	Charlie T.	Jerry V.	Chuck L.	Lou D.	Matt K.	Jerry V.	Dave N.	Dave N.	Chuck L.
	Blue	Allan Jr.	Judson E.	Dan C.	Ken S.		Ken S.	Chuck L.	Allan Jr.	Dan C.	Chuck L.	Judson E.
	Help	Matt K.	Matt K.	Allan Jr.	Allan Jr.	Allan Jr.	Allan Jr.	Ken S.		Allan Jr.		Allan Jr.
	Help											
	Help											
	Help											
	Help											
	Help											
	Help											

“Thank You”, to those that submitted items to this newsletter, and enjoy reading.



The End