

The Big Train Project Status Report (Part 23)

No more guessing about how much time we have to create a presentable, though not finished layout. The official opening for the general public has been set for Friday, July 18, 2008. This will be the opening for the entire complex: layout, maze, meeting rooms, gift shop, and food concession. It is, however, unlikely that the hobby shop will have a concessionaire by then.

July 18th, of course, is not the date that the layout has to be ready. There are some events scheduled ahead of the opening date. The first is Family and Friends Day on the 15th of July for the volunteers. This will be a by-invitation-only test run of the entire complex. Participants will be given “funny money” to test out the admission process and the flow of visitors through the layout, through the maze, and at the food concession. Unfortunately, the “funny money” will not be good for purchases at the gift shop.

The second event will be on Thursday, July 17th. This will be VIP day, on which local officials and members of the press and media will be invited to tour the facility. Also, a satellite communication truck will be at the facility to send view and interviews across the country, and perhaps beyond.

After opening day, not only will casual visitors come to see the facility, but tour groups and school field trips have already been scheduled. Also, there are already numerous bookings for the party/meeting rooms. One of those is for Don Oeters’ daughter’s graduation party.

The next noteworthy event is Kalmbach’s PBS show “Tracks Ahead” crew coming to film parts of an episode at the facility on July 22nd and 23rd. Altogether, it will be a busy time.

Given that there will still be a lot of work to do on the layout after the opening, what does the opening mean to continued work on the layout? Work can continue. There will be no significant restrictions on volunteers working on the layout (Godzilla-like) while the layout is open to the public (Monday through Fridays 10 AM to 7 PM, 10-6 on Sundays). The only difficulty will be that the plexiglass barriers will be up along the aisles, making access to the layout areas a bit more difficult. The intent is to advertise features which will be added as time goes on so that visitors will have things to look forward to for future visits. It’s likely that the layout will never be completely finished, but will be continuously improved and upgraded.

For additional information, check out the EnterTRAINment Junction website at

<http://www.entertainmentjunction.com/>.

If it hasn’t been done already by the time you read this, it will be significantly upgraded in the near future.

As always, you are welcome to join us any time to volunteer to help create this spectacular work of art.

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MVGRS Big Train Project Coordinator