

The Oklahoma Railway Museum *Preserving Oklahoma's Railroad Heritage*

The Oklahoma Railway Museum and its team of dedicated members truly epitomize the famous children's book "The Little Engine That Could."

Armed with an unflappable "we think we can" mentality, the members have established the Oklahoma Railway Museum as an educational and interactive attraction in northeast Oklahoma City. Created in 1972 by a group of railroad enthusiasts, the Oklahoma Railway Museum collects and preserves artifacts that reflect the heritage of railroad and street rail transportation in the 19th and 20th centuries in Oklahoma. The nonprofit organization also promotes safe conduct around and near all railroad operations through its partnership with Oklahoma Operation Lifesaver, a public safety education program.

"We are a very interesting group, a total volunteer effort with no staff that has one common denominator, the love of railroads," explains Drake Rice, who is on the museum's board of directors. "One may not realize but the newest piece of rail equipment we use at the museum was built in the 1950s and requires lots of TLC to keep it rolling."

The museum's location at 3400 N.E. Grand Blvd. is much more than a museum of freight and passenger cars and even a steam engine; kids of all ages can ride a train every first and third Saturday of the month, April through August. The train rides cover a three-mile track and right-of-way maintained by the organization's members. The museum also offers special Halloween and Christmas train rides. In recent years, the museum has hosted the "Day Out With Thomas" event that features rides on a 15-ton replica of Thomas the Tank Engine, star of the popular Thomas & Friends children's series.

In 2004, the organization established its charitable organization endowment fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. Mr. Rice says the organization encourages all of its members to contribute to the endowment whether the gift is small or large. "The endowment is a way for us to continue to provide an opportunity for those visiting the museum and for future members to enjoy our love of railroads," he adds.

Each year between April and August, the Oklahoma Railway Museum offers train rides every first and third Saturday of the month. Above, a group of members pose with one of the museum's working locomotives and passenger trains prior to the last train ride day of 2011. The organization also offers annual Halloween and Christmas train ride days as well as other activities.

Photo by Brandon Snider

