

The Chester Foundation www.ChesterRailwayStation.org
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NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2009 - PUBLISHED SPORADICALLY

We have been lax in getting this out. Hopefully, this list of accomplishments can go a way toward constituting an excuse. Supporting members need to know what the organization they are supporting is accomplishing. The memberships are very helpful, not only financially, but give us an idea of the level of community support for what we are trying to achieve. And, we hope they will generate feedback and suggestions.

Over the year of 2008, one many people would like to forget, the *Chester Foundation* completed a record number of projects. The *Foundation* is well known for making progress with little more than good will and a strong desire to maintain and improve the Chester Railroad Station and the quality of area life.

In '08 we began a very rewarding relationship with the Hampden County Court Services Community Service Agency. Workers from the court system visited the station for 4 hours almost every Friday over last summer. In that time, they painted two wooden boxcars, the 0-4-0 locomotive on the lawn, the undercarriage of the tank car, all the platform railings around the building, the interior of the Blue Caboose kitchen, water sealed the entire platform and did some yard work. We hope to expand on this relationship over the coming season, perhaps with some trail work as well.

With small grants from Amherst Railway Society, and Highland Communities Initiative, We printed 20,000 new flyers for both the station and the Arches. We were able to purchase window shades for the 11 windows in the station that still needed them, we purchased a digital projector for use at the station and for on the road presentations.

With Alson Video productions, we began a series of three short videos to promote the station and its activities (the first of these can be viewed at our web site, under 'rentals'.) The web site, by the way, continues to evolve under the guidance of Peter White of Hinsdale. We also secured funding to purchase lumber to replace the roof walks on the antique rolling stock on display at the station and hope to begin this project over the summer of '09. Any volunteer carpenters out there?

We held a record-setting luncheon (120 people) hosting the Chester Alumni, Association, a number of events connected to the Chester Theatre Co. as well as a concert and a successful Chester On Track. The year was filled out with a number of private gatherings and caboose campers. Many of you were among the crowds who greeted Santa & Mrs.

Claus when they arrived at the station in the beautiful white carriage, courtesy of Angel Mist Farm of Chester. The annual Christmas party is presented free to the community by the Foundation as a thank you for the ongoing support of our neighbors.

The '09 season has already begun. We started with Middle School/ Chester Theatre playwrights retreat on Feb 29 and Mar. 1. This is a joint production, where Gateway Middle Schoolers write plays, under the guidance of skilled actors and directors, and later in the year, the plays are produced using professional actors. This is a great opportunity for budding writers, and has been held twice a year at the station since its inception, six years ago.

Foundation President Dave Pierce will be a presenter at the Westfield River Symposium on Sat., March 28, at Westfield State College Scanlon Hall. The topic will be the state of the 12 year effort to secure and protect the beautiful stone railroad bridges known as the *Keystone Arches*, west of Chester.

We need help for Chester On Track. People are needed to watch exhibit tables, work with the food crew in the Blue Caboose, collect money at the 'Train Robbery' along Rte. 20, or just be available to provide a short break for others doing these things. Please call 354-7752, or Email the above, if you would like to help out during this event.

We will soon be starting on a new hiking trail; the *C&B Trail*, for Chester & Becket Railroad, remnants of which, it will highlight. While the *Keystone Arch Trail* can be too challenging for some, the C&B Trail will be within walking distance of the railroad station. It will be a vest pocket trail, about a mile long, meant to showcase a cluster of ruins of the C&B right of way and the Hampden Emery Mill.

Many visitors come to the *Chester Railway Museum* with questions on the Chester & Becket Railroad. While little is left, this segment will give hikers an accurate picture of the infrastructure which supported the road, and the wild terrain it traversed. It will also offer a number of vistas on Walker Brook, often not appreciated as one speeds along Route 20.

Thank you all for your support. Please contact us with comments and suggestions.

Dave Pierce, President
The Chester Foundation, Inc.
Friends of the Keystone Arches, Inc.