

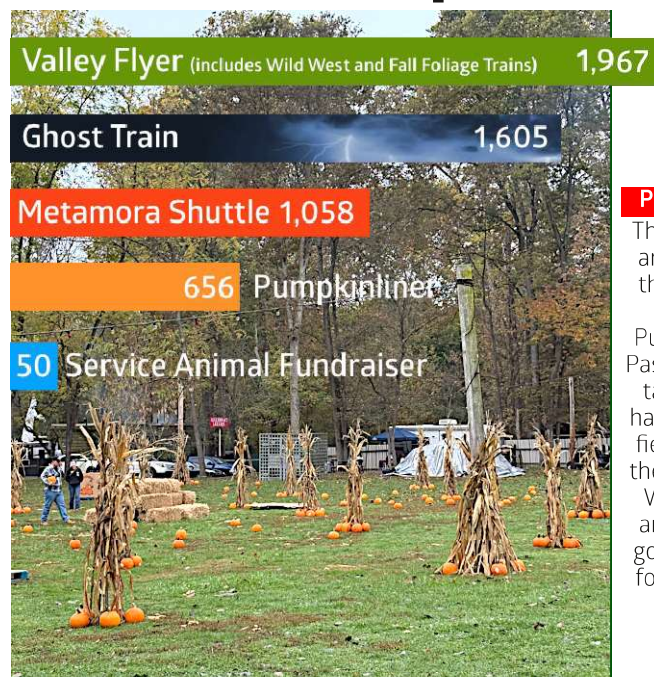
TOWPATH TRACKS

Newsletter of the Whitewater Valley Railroad
Connersville, Indiana USA

November 2025

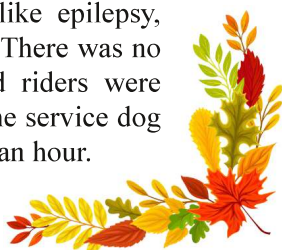


October Ridership



Ridership in October totaled 5,336 passengers as detailed in the chart above. This is a decrease of 830 from last year. Ghost Train ridership was down this year and we did not have any school field trips or a dinner train. Overall though, it is our busiest month outside of November and December when we are running the Polar Express trains.

We ran a special train on Thursday, October 23rd. It was sponsored by the Order of the Eastern Star as a fundraiser to support programs that provide qualified service dogs. They fund financial assistance for training, medical costs, and food for service animals that assist individuals with disabilities like epilepsy, diabetes, mobility issues, or PTSD. There was no ticket needed to ride the train and riders were encouraged to make an offering to the service dog program. The trip lasted a little over an hour.



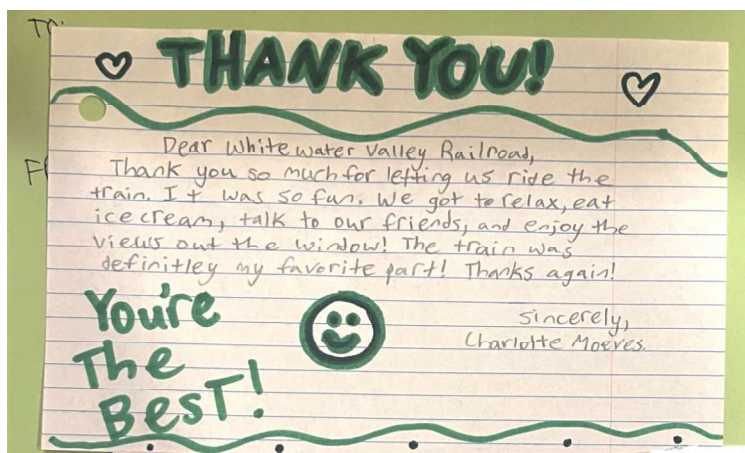
Junior High Visits Metamora

by: Stacy Hillman

In September, 136 Franklin County Junior High students visited Metamora for an exciting day of learning and exploration. The students enjoyed a ride on the Metamora Local, which lasted one half hour. They also toured the historic Metamora Mill, mined for gems at the Gem Mine, and learned about bees at The Sap Bucket.

For many students, it was their very first train ride; a highlight of the trip! The field trip was organized by Metamora resident and science teacher Rachel Schneider. To show their appreciation, the students created thoughtful thank-you notes.

It was a fun and educational day that connected students with local history, science, and community spirit!



Pass It Down the Line

by: Stacy Hillman

The September Pass It Down the Line sale raised \$100 for the Field Trip Fund. This allows local school children to ride the Whitewater Valley Railroad at little to no cost. We would like to thank:

George Ginther of The Train Place for his generous donation of train books and materials

Jim Corbett for his large donation of DVDs

continued on next page

Stacy Hillman for donating plants
Judy Hillman for donating books and puzzles
Paul, Stacy and Merritt Hillman for hosting the sale
Johns Brothers Store for publicizing it

Thank you to all who shopped and donated.
If you would like to donate to the field trip fund, please contact Charlene at the office.
(765-825-2054)

Get Involved

Here's your opportunity to participate in a hands-on training course to become a train crew member at the Whitewater Valley Railroad. The classes are scheduled for six consecutive Saturdays, starting on February 21, 2026, and concluding on March 28, 2026. Each session runs from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Students who successfully complete the course and pass the required safety and rules tests will be eligible to begin train service as a student brakemen. The training includes both classroom instruction and hands-on outdoor activities using full-size railroad equipment.

The classroom portion includes:

- History of the Whitewater Valley Railroad
- Railroad safety
- Train operations, including rules, signaling, and train orders
- Air brakes and the technology behind fail-safe operations
- Steam locomotive basics
- Diesel locomotive basics
- Duties and responsibilities of train crew members
- Volunteer opportunities at the Whitewater Valley Railroad

The outdoor activities will include:

- Railroad safety
- Hand signals and radio communications
- Operation of switches
- Coupling and uncoupling
- Connecting air hoses
- Journal box inspections and maintenance
- Assembling a train and preparing it for departure
- Operating one of the railroad's historic diesel locomotives

The course fee is \$50 per student, which includes all materials and a one-year railroad membership. Participants must be 18 years or older and capable of understanding and following instructions. Classes are conducted at the railroad's South Connersville Shop and Yard, located at 300 S Eastern Ave in Connersville. Please dress appropriately for the weather, as outdoor activities will take place rain or shine.

Tell A Friend

This opportunity is open to anyone who has an interest in historical railroading. Please pass this information along.

For more information, email us at trainingclass@whitewatervalleyrr.org or call us at (765) 825-2054.

Not interested in train service? We will be happy to discuss other volunteer opportunities at the Whitewater Valley Railroad that may suit your interests and skills.

volunteer@whitewatervalleyrr.org
(765) 825-2054

Polar Express Begins

The first Polar Express trips operated the third weekend of November with two trips each day, Friday through Sunday. We reduced ticket prices for the first two weekends to increase



The five p.m. train has just crossed Veterans Memorial Drive on the way to the North Pole.

early ridership. In past years, especially the first weekend, some of the trains operated at 50% capacity. This past weekend we had few open seats. Based on current ticket sales, we expect to match last year's passenger count.

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The weather was mild and sunny and the trains ran on time with no malfunctions. It is important to note the high level of volunteer participation that is required for this event. There are over 50 positions available for each day, and most of them were filled. The on-board positions such as chefs, elves, hobos, Santas and conductors are the cast members who take an active story-telling role during our trip to the North Pole. However, there are many other less visible support positions such as engineer, brakeman, ticket agent, gift shop, parking attendant, van driver, and people to staff the North Pole to make sure the generator is running and the lights are on.

The layover between trips serves as meal time for the crew. The meals are prepared at South Conn. and served aboard the train while it sits at Grand Central. Over the course of three days this amounts to 150 meals.



Chef Travis Weller at the grill preparing hamburgers for a between trains meal.



NORTH POLE
Santa and the elves are at the North Pole waiting for the train. Prior to arrival, they'll go inside the castle and then walk to the train once the children have sung Santa Is Coming to Town.

Broken Rail

Prior to the first Saturday trip, the track crew had to take the high rail truck down to the straight track just north of Alpine. One of the volunteers who was driving to the North Pole noticed a broken rail and notified South Conn. It was a fairly clean break, so the solution was to drill holes on either side of the break and bolt on two joint bars which will keep the rails in alignment. Some tamping was done to push ballast stone under the ties to provide support. This repair will last through the Polar season. At some point the broken rail will be removed and replaced.



Nic McCoy, Steve McCann and Travis Weller responded to the broken rail on the Alpine straight. At this point the railroad is alongside Indiana Route 121. In this photo Nic is drilling holes in the rail prior to bolting on the joint bars. One of the bars is by Nic's left foot.

A Proposal

Santa occasionally gets special requests. This one was to participate in a marriage proposal on Saturday's Polar Express train. Santa and our crew knew what was coming and participated in the event. When Santa got to the couple, brakeman Kevin Reynolds was there and told the couple that Santa wanted something. Kevin then took out his radio and said "I think this is it." Santa's elf Rosie Schwering replied "No, that's not it." Kevin then produced several other items, each time finding out they weren't needed. Finally, Kevin produced a Polar bell with a ring attached and handed it to Santa.

Santa then handed it off to the couple and the proposal was accepted. Santa then pronounced them officially engaged. The newly engaged young man is the nephew of member Jerrilynn Feitch.



Shop cat Rusty is surveying things from the operator's seat of a piece of track maintenance equipment in the shop for repairs. The other cat, Bolt, did not make herself available for a portrait.



We have an endowment fund at the Fayette Community Foundation in Connersville. Each year, based on investment income, a payout is available. In recent years we have reinvested the payout money. A healthy endowment fund provides future financial security.

Contributing to our endowment fund is an excellent way to protect the railroad's financial future. For more information use this contact:

Fayette Community Foundation

765-827-9966

givetofcf.com

Whitewater Valley Railroad Heritage Fund

Meeting Schedule	
Board of Directors <i>(second Friday)</i>	
No meeting in December -- Polar Express	
Friday, January 9th @ 7:00 p.m.	
Member Meetings <i>(fourth Friday)</i>	
No meeting in December -- Polar Express	
Friday, January 23rd @ 7:00 p.m.	
Meetings are held at 300 S. Eastern Ave. (Corner of Eastern Ave. and Route 121)	

SOCIAL MEDIA

 **YouTube**
WhitewaterValleyRailroadOfficial

 **Instagram**
Whitewatervalleyrrofficial

 **Facebook**
Whitewatervalleyrr.org

Submit post ideas to:
whitewatervalleyrailroadsocial@gmail.com



Towpath Tracks is published by the:

Whitewater Valley Railroad

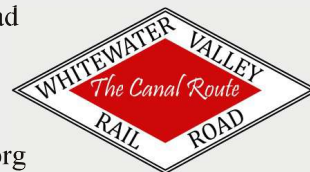
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Membership questions:

membership@whitewatervalleyrr.org

Dues: \$30 annually, or \$200 lifetime

The Whitewater Valley Railroad is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit operating railroad museum dedicated to preserving an historic branch line railroad, the restoration of railroad equipment, and the conduct of educational railroad programs.