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Neighbors don't always agree, but build backyard railroad together

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When Jerry Eichhorn bought his first home four years ago at 65 years old and moved to Shavertown, Bob Williams, his neighbor, had already lived in the neighborhood with his wife Gloria Dolbear Williams, for 41 years.

"We checked him out very carefully before we let him come over," said Williams, 79. "I would have liked a nice Jewish family better, but we got a Catholic one instead."

The two, in spite of their differences, have become the best of friends and found a common interest - model trains.

Their yards have become a playground for their passion, originating from their love of Lionel and HO trains as children.

Williams does all the stonework and landscaping with materials from the DAMA landfill and Eichhorn, a former homebuilder and carpenter, builds all the model trains and buildings,

including a replica of the Wilkes-Barre train station, out of scrap wood.

Eichhorn explains that he talks to himself a lot these days "because no one has the answers to my questions," he says.

"We are a couple of old geezers fooling around; this is an old man's railroad," laughs Williams. The pair have had inspiration from Doyle Klinger and Marty Conway, a master electrician. Yes, the railroad is even lighted!

The project has become the delight of friends and neighbors and culminates in a yearly party on July 4 or Labor Day to show off the new work the two chums have finished during the year.

"It keeps us going," says Williams.

Every year, the men dream up something new. Besides the replica of the Wilkes-Barre train station, the backyard train yard is home to a precise replica of each of the men's homes.

And, there is a replica of the Huntsville Methodist Church in the yard.

"He wanted a Catholic



Neighbors Bob Williams and Jerry Eichhorn build model trains and display them in their backyards. This one is a train planter.

CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK photos | FOR THE DALLAS POST

Church and I wanted a Protestant one," Williams said.

"We bickered. I told him he couldn't use Catholic nails on a Protestant Church." So Eichhorn built the Huntsville Methodist Church and put a sign box outside that lists the schedule of masses and says it's a Catholic Church.

His backyard would be nothing but some very sad flowers if not for the train yard, said Williams. Future plans for the backyard include a mini mart, a strip mall and a roller coaster and "my cemetery."

Gloria Williams keeps close watch over the men, saying, "I think they both need close supervision."



Shavertown neighbors Bob Williams and Jerry Eichhorn may quibble about religion but their backyard train exhibit, which includes replicas of each of their houses, the Wilkes-Barre train depot and the Huntsville Methodist Church, is the talk of the neighborhood.



Dallas Elementary School students Michael Cumbo and Elsie McCafferty held magician David Carr with his Officer Phil Safety Program at the school.

Officer Phil and Lucky Duck are welcome guests

Program teaches elementary students to be healthy and safe

Officer Phil and his pal, Lucky Duck, visited students at the Dallas Elementary School recently, bringing with them a program to teach students about being healthy and being safe.

The program, geared to elementary grade students, teaches lessons in a fun, energized way. The program began with an introduction of Dallas Borough police officers in attendance, reminding children to know that officers are friendly and work to keep them safe every day.

A magic trick that opened the program and reinforced valuable safety tips, such as wearing a bike helmet, fastening seat belts in cars and listening and following bus drivers' rules.

An illustration called Strat-O-Spheres presented different safety rules, such as following safety rules when walking,

not going with strangers and not giving out phone numbers, addresses or pictures to anyone unless a grown-up says it's okay to do so.

This year, the Officer Phil Program talked about being healthy on the inside and reminded students to eat healthy and exercise. Children were told of foods they should eat, such as fruits and vegetables and about the need to exercise in order to stay physical fit.

Lucky Duck reminded children that police officers are there to help keep them safe.

The final review of all the safety lessons learned happened when the children participated in a game called "What Would Officer Phil Do?" Children were given different scenarios and asked to think about the answer. They were divided into teams and had fun coming up with the right answers.

The program ended with Lucky Duck singing a song that summed up the lessons that were taught.



Dave Carr, a magician who presents the Officer Phil Program, reads puppets jokes to students at Dallas Elementary School.



Luke Austin helps magician Dave Carr during an Officer Phil Safety Program at Dallas Elementary School.

Foundation for Excellence in education holds two year celebration, raises \$90,000



Members of the Dallas Foundation Board are, from left, Ray Ostroski, president; Dave Simpson, vice president; Donna Farrell, board member; Frank Lombardo, board member; Bonny Mannello, secretary; Kristin Gattuso, treasurer; and AJ Bittner, board member. Absent at the time of the photo were Nicole Farber and Chad Lojewski, board members.

SARAH HITE
Dallas Post Correspondent

The Dallas Foundation for Excellence in Education is celebrating its two-year anniversary, and after funding nearly \$90,000 in projects for the Dallas School District, the organization is still going strong.

From completing a \$34,000, one-and-a-half-year project to replace the district sign on Route 309 with a digital marquee to funding an Apple iPad Learning Center in the middle school, the foundation has grown leaps and bounds since its inception in 2011.

Ray Ostroski, president of the foundation's board of directors, said the group has stayed true to its mission since the very beginning.

"We're here to support the Dallas School District," said Ostroski. "...We've helped with educational and extracurricular projects, so we've been well-rounded in who we contribute to and what projects to fund."

Funding the digital sign project was the organization's first goal, and though it took longer than expected, Ostroski said the end result was well worth the wait.

"Most importantly, we wanted to get sign the up there before school started this year, and we were able to do that this spring," he said. "It was a lot of money to raise. We had to figure

out where the sign would go, and we had to get permission from the people who owned the land - we went through a lot. The school board had to approve the project, and there were zoning approvals (to receive from the township). It was very complicated, but well worth it."

Most of the funds raised for the Dallas Foundation are procured through fundraising events and solicitation, but the group became eligible to raise funds through a different program last year.

The state's Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program allows businesses enrolled in the program to donate to an eligible educational organization and those businesses will receive up to 90 percent of that contribution in tax credits.

"We were able to fund \$15,000 of \$16,500 for the Apple iPad Learning Center in the middle school through that program," said Ostroski. "We hope to get a similar amount from that program this year. It's a win-win for the businesses because they're helping the district and they get a tax credit from the program."

Ostroski said the foundation has received a considerable amount of support from the Back Mountain community, from residents to local businesses and also the teachers and students in the district over the past

MORE INFORMATION

For more information or to donate, visit www.ourdallasfoundation.org.

Some projects funded by the Dallas Foundation since 2011:

New digital sign on Route 309 for announcements, information (approximately \$34,000)

Apple iPad Learning Center for Dallas Middle School (\$16,500)

Digital keyboard for the Dallas Middle School Music Department (\$5,500 in total split between the foundation and the district)

Start-up costs for Mountaineer Bookstore at the high school (approximately \$2,000)

Annual scholarships to graduating seniors (one male and one female) involved in community service (\$500 each/ \$2000 awarded so far)

EReaders for elementary reading department (\$2,500)

Books for elementary reading programs (\$1,000)

Classroom projector for Dallas Elementary School (\$600)

Miscellaneous contributions to events and activities held at all three schools in a total amount of \$1,500 (Senior Lock In, LifeSmarts Program, Poet in the Classroom Project, Anti-Bullying Project, Science Olympiad, etc.)

two years.

"Most of the money we raise is through fundraisers," said Ostroski. "We raise about \$10,000 to \$12,000 from our annual golf tournament. We have an annual campaign, and we also held a fundraiser dance at the middle school. And we raised money for the sign project by going door to door, making sure we contacted everyone we knew, asking them to support the foundation."

Ostroski said requests for funding from teachers and students have increased over the years, and no proj-

ect is too big or too small for the Dallas Foundation to fund.

"We're here for students in the district. We want to know needs of teachers and students," he said. "Tell us what projects and needs, and we will help support funding... We want people to know here to stay. It's only the beginning."

