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Battery Park City
Happy Holidays

News & Comment

Holiday "Train Garden" Up and Running at North Cove

From now through January 1, adults and children alike can enjoy a holiday "train garden" comprising six operating trains, replicas of some of New York City's main attractions, and plaster mountains depicting four seasons of outdoor activities. Housed in The Honorable William Wall floating clubhouse docked in the North Cove Marina, the display was built by volunteers from the Manhattan Sailing Club to help raise funds for Project City Kids, a not-for-profit organization that offers harbor tours to city children.

Visitors will recognize the Polar Express, the Acela and a New York Central train whizzing along the tracks, and the youngest among them will be quick to spot a replica of Thomas the Tank Engine. "It's for children young and old," said Michael Fortenbaugh, who runs both the Sailing Club and the Project City Kids and who came up with the fundraising idea earlier this fall.

Planning started on October 23 when 20 volunteers met at the Gate House restaurant for a brainstorming session. "We wanted to emulate the Baltimore Train Garden," said project manager Steven Norring, referring to a famous Maryland holiday tradition. Construction began the Friday after Thanksgiving, leaving the volunteers with just a short week to complete the layout before the



The members of the Manhattan Sailing Club who volunteered their time to design and build the train garden gathered at the opening. They are from left to right, Nadine Stephens, Cathy Clarke, Marcy Swingly, Michael Fortenbaugh, Patrick Hughes and Linda Kulla and Steve Norring (kneeling).

public opening on December 6. "They did it quickly and very well," said Ralph Israel, owner of Manhattan Train & Hobby and a miniature train enthusiast who sometimes works on layouts that take at least a year to complete. Except for Mr. Norring, all were novices to the world of miniature trains and yet none were deterred by their lack of experience. Marcy Swingle charted out the miniature cityscape with the help of a Google modeling program, while Nadine Stephens, who built the plaster mountains, overcame the negative impact inclement weather had on her miniature ski slopes with six hours of focused blow-drying.

Luckily, everything was finished on time, and despite the long hours, many of the volunteers are already envisioning an even bigger train garden for the future.

For more information, including hours and admission, please visit www.projectcitykids.com

— Isabelle Dupuis

