

THE MORNING CALL

LIFE: FAMILY



HARRY FISHER/MORNING CALL FILE PHOTO

Kazuma Ban, 8, of Kutztown watches the Kutztown Area Historical Society model railroad display. Their 500-square-foot exhibit will be open through Jan. 25.

'You think trains, you think Christmas'

Miniature railroad displays are major attractions during the holidays. A guide to where you can find them.

BY KATHY LAUER-WILLIAMS
Of The Morning Call

The image generates cozy and nostalgic thoughts: a miniature train chugging among snow-covered houses underneath a Christmas tree.

Perhaps you don't have a model train layout as part of your holiday decorations. But there are plenty of places in the Lehigh Valley region where families can enjoy elaborate train displays.

"You think trains, you think Christmas," says Raymond Viohl, a member of Bethlehem's Black Diamond Society of Model Engineers, which will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2015.

The Black Diamond Society has two floors of trains totaling more than 1,300 square feet. The display is in the former Liberty Grange Hall building on Macada Road.

One floor features smoking steam trains



APRIL BARTHOLOMEW/MORNING CALL FILE PHOTO

Trains run on tracks going through detailed landscapes capturing notable areas of the Lehigh Valley at Lehigh and Keystone Valley Model Railroad Museum in Bethlehem.

and realistic bells and horns of the traditional Lionel and American Flyer trains. The other has a detailed layout of newer HO scale trains.

The society has been around longer than its 50 years, Viohl says.

The society started as a club in the 1940s when area model railroad enthusiasts started meeting at each other's houses. The group grew until members decided to incorporate as the Black Diamond Society in 1965. Shortly after, the society opened its doors to the public during the holidays. This year's display is the 48th.

For years the society had a layout in Easton above a Laundromat, but when the building was destroyed by fire in 1978, members lost their layouts and memorabilia.

"The only things we were able to salvage were a headlight and a trolley meter," Viohl

Please see TRAINS LIFE 2

SHOPPING SCOUT

LOOKING FOR

Someone to fix a rocking chair: Richard of Neffs is looking for someone who can fix an old high-back rocking chair. "It needs lathe work and more," he said.

"Put Me Down" duck: Robert "Bobbie" of Allentown is looking for a "Put Me Down" stuffed duck. "My granddaughter's was lost in moving," he explains.

Someone interested in The L Game: Martha is looking for someone who would be interested in the L Game. She has one to give.



Someone who can use mink coats: Bev of Bath is looking for someone who can make keepsake Teddy Bears out of old mink coats.

DVD/VCR combo: Diane of Bethlehem is looking for a DVD/VCR combination in good condition.

Looking for a hard-to-find item? Or have an item listed above? Write to Shopping Scout, Features Department, The Morning Call, Box 1260, Allentown 18105; shoppingscout@mc.com. Provide a first name and town, as well as contact info.

How to be our next Workout Achiever

Do you ever miss a day at the gym? Have you lost significant weight through exercise? Or do you practice an innovative fitness style regularly? Do you rely on physical activity to keep healthy?

The Morning Call is looking for **Workout Achievers** to profile each Tuesday in its weekly Health section. You could be the next one.

Tell us about your strategies to keep moving, your favorite exercises and any tips that have proven useful for you to remain fit. Where do you draw your in-



spiration? What kinds of food help you stay lean? Who are your role models? What are some of the milestones that you are most proud of? How do you control the urge to loaf? How long have you been working out? What is your next goal?

Share your success by filling out an online questionnaire at themorningcall.com/workout. We will publish your picture along with your most helpful tips. For more information call 610-820-6111 or email us at goguide@mc.com.

Suffering from unresolved **Lower Back Pain?**

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Hip Pain?
Groin Pain?
Leg Pain?

If yes, then you might be suffering from

Sacroiliac Joint Pain.
The SI joint can be responsible for up to 25% of all low back pain, yet is rarely evaluated.

Do any of the following apply to you?

- > History of a fall, accident or repetitive injury
- > Trouble sleeping on one side
- > Difficulty sitting for long periods of time
- > Difficulty riding in the car

If you're tired of the pain, join us for a **FREE SEMINAR:**

Date: Wednesday, December 10 – 6pm to 7pm
Location: St. Luke's Hospital - Allentown Campus
Dimmig Education Center
1736 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18104
Host: Steven Puccio, DO
RSVP: 1-866-ST-LUKES 866-785-8537

St. Luke's UNIVERSITY HEALTH NETWORK

Light refreshments will be served. Seating is limited. Please RSVP today!

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FAMILY

HELP FOR FAMILIES

Should I get my child electronics for Christmas?

Q: My children are making Christmas wish lists and most of what they want is electronic — tablets and games. I have concerns about how and when they are going to use them, but I think they serve a purpose. Should I buy them, and if I do, how can I control how they use them?

A: Whether you like electronics or not, it is possible in today's world to keep kids totally electronics-free, the Help for Families panel says. Electronics have become an inescapable part of our culture.



Kathy Lauer-Williams

vantage socially.

So if you get your children electronics, it is your responsibility as a parent to monitor their usage.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says children spend an average of seven hours a day on entertainment media, including televisions, computers, phones and other electronic devices, which the group says is way too much. The AAP recommends children have no more than one or two hours per day.

Stefanyak recommends you do research to learn how to use parental controls on all devices through which you can restrict access to certain games, songs and movies. He says some devices also have controls that can limit time.

Online resources such as Commonsensemedia.org can help parents know what things might have objectionable content.

Set ground rules for usage, says panelist Pam Wallace. Don't allow them in the bedroom and at the dinner table. Have them use electronics where you can see them. Disable at night — screen time right before bed can disrupt sleep.

"This is a tool your children will be using so they need to learn to use it correctly," she says.

Use it to interact with your children by showing interest in what they're watching and games they're playing, says panelist Denise Continenza.

TIPS FOR MONITORING ELECTRONICS FOR KIDS

■ **Children should** get no more than one or two hours of screen time per day, says the American Academy of Pediatrics.

■ **Research** how to use parental controls on all devices.

■ **Don't allow** it in the bedroom and at the dinner table.

■ **Have them** use it in a location where you can see them.

■ **Model responsible use** of technology.

THE TOPIC TEAM

Parenting experts and guest panelists who helped this week:

Pam Wallace, program coordinator for Project Child, a program of Valley Youth House.

Chad Stefanyak, school psychologist, Lehigh County.

Denise Continenza, family living specialist for Penn State's Lehigh County Cooperative Extension, South Whitehall Township.

Help for Families is a collaboration between The Morning Call and parenting professionals brought together by Valley Youth House's Project Child

"Technology is a part of our lives," Continenza says. "But make sure they are well-rounded."

Model responsible use of technology, Wallace says. Are you on your laptop or texting all the time?

"You need to teach them boundaries," she says.

She suggest you periodically go through their devices and make sure there is nothing password protected that you can't access.

Also talk to them about online safety. They should never give out their names or addresses and go to an adult if there is any cyber bullying or someone trying to get information from them

Also they need to be aware that once they put something on the Internet, it's there forever, says Stefanyak.

If all else fails, take it away.

"You're still the parent," says Continenza.

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HELP FOR PET OWNERS

Recent books explore how dogs think

Q: I've read your column for many years, and I'm wondering if you've written anything else, say a book, that might help me understand how my three dogs think? If so, where can I buy it?

— P.F., Winchester, Ky.

A: For starters, you've given me a reason to promote my two current books, both

focused on how dogs think. I co-edited "Decoding Your Dog," authored by members of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and co-edited by Dr. Debra Horwitz and Dr. John Ciribasi (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014, \$27). This marks the first time veterinary behaviorists have

combined their efforts to explain dog behavior based on science, in the process dispelling myths. While a pack of scientific-types wrote the text, it's a fun and enlightening read.

In my ebook "Good Dog!" I answer dog behavior questions from readers. Along the way, you can't help but better understand how canines think. "Good Dog!" is published by Tribune Media Services. One version includes videos so you can see exactly what I'm referring to, for \$6.99 (or half that price without the videos). Also contributing some content were dog trainer Victoria Stilwell of Animal Planet's "It's Me or the Dog"; Dr. Sheldon Rubin, renowned veterinarian; and legendary actress and pet lover Betty White.

If you'd like a shortcut to learning how dogs think, here goes: They think in the moment, and respond based on reinforcement, and do what they need to feel safe. Dogs' emotions are always honest and pure.

Q: When dogs are barking at one another, are they really "saying" anything? I know they're not literally commenting on President Obama's performance or proclaiming, "I wish my owner would go away so I can play steal the pizza off the counter," but what might they be communicating? And how much do they understand each other?

— C.D. Las Vegas, Nev.

A: We do know that rather than discuss politics or connive to trick their owners, dogs express emotions. If a dog is in distress or extremely excited, other dogs can under-

stand that their pal is upset, in pain, or "something fun is happening, so I better join in." Their vocalizations have meaning to other dogs, but equally as important, people understand them. After all, as social as dogs may be with one another, it's far more important that they are social with their owners.

At least one study has confirmed that people know what dogs are generally communicating (if they're in distress or happy, for example). In another study, people were able to identify their own individual dogs' barks.

Dogs offer a wide variety of vocalizations. Some meanings are more obvious than others, but generally dogs are adept at communicating with people. Even little children know to stay away when they hear a dog growl, and can understand that a dog's screaming means pain. Howling is a dog's way of expressing extreme sadness (such as when a person leaves the house) or pleasure ("I have chased the squirrel up the tree!"). In both cases, the dog is simply saying, "Here I am."

Some individual dogs mutter a wide variety of sounds, as if talking under their breath. Breeds with a greater tendency to do this include Siberian huskies, border collies and Australian shepherds. Dogs can do this to attract human attention, when they're anxious, or at times for reasons we don't understand.

Q: Can cats really become addicted to catnip? Mine certainly seem to be.

— B.H., Chicago, Ill.

A: Thus far, I've never heard of a cat visiting the Betty Ford Center to overcome catnip addiction. In fact, many cats offered catnip daily seem to build up a resistance to its effects. You're better off offering catnip every other day or irregularly.

Nepeta cataria, or catnip, is a perennial herb in the mint family. Catnip plants can grow to be 3 feet high. The chemical compound that attracts and affects cats is called nepetalactone. Researchers aren't sure of the neurological explanation, but it's thought that catnip mimics feline "happy" pheromones and stimulates receptors in the brain that respond to those pheromones. When eaten, however, catnip may have the opposite effect: The cat may become very mellow.

Steve Dale is a pet expert and certified dog and cat behavior consultant. Send questions/comments to petworld@stevedale.tv.

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TRAINS

Continued from LIFE 1

says.

After that disaster, the society moved to the current location in 1980. The layouts are up and running year round but only open to the public during the holidays.

The first floor features a 650-square-foot layout of Lionel O gauge trains, On30 narrow gauge trains and American Flyer S scale steam trains.

The second floor's 800-square-foot display features HO scale trains, which are the most popular in the country. Viohl says HO trains are designed to re-create actual railroads. The displays feature a loaded coal train stretching to more than 100 cars powered by multiple diesel locomotives winding through mountain scenery. A miniature trolley travels between a village and an amusement park, with both an operating ski lift and rides. Visitors can operate accessories, as well as the amusement park train.

The 70 members work together doing electric work, making scenery and building layouts to keep the display interesting. "We enjoy doing it," he says. "It's in your blood."

To celebrate 50 years, the society has unveiled a new patch designed to resemble the number plate on front of a locomotive, with the red and yellow colors reminiscent of the historic Lehigh Valley Railroad paint scheme.

The organization's Railroad Days run 2-5 p.m. Dec. 13, 14, Jan. 3, 4, 10, 11 and Feb. 7 and 8. It's at 902 E. Macada Road, Bethlehem. Admission is \$4; free, for 12 and under. Info: www.bdsme.org.

Other model train displays:

Lehigh & Keystone Valley Model Railroad Christmas 2014 Open House has a 4,000-square-foot layout that features the Lehigh Valley Railroad stations in Easton and Bethlehem and the Bethlehem Steel and Allentown freight yards, 705 Linden St., Bethlehem. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Dec. 13, 14, 20, 21, 27, 28, 31, Jan. 1, 2, 3, 4; 5-9 p.m. Dec. 26, 29 and 30. Thomas the Tank Engine open house is Dec. 20-21. Admission is \$7; free, for ages 12 and under. Info: www.lkvmmr.com.

The Holiday Train Exhibit, which benefits Toys for Tots, runs at America on Wheels museum in Allentown. The train exhibit features model trains stationed throughout the museum's galleries. Trains run Thursdays to Sundays, to Jan. 4. Admission is \$10; \$7, seniors; \$6, ages 12 to 16; free, for children 11 and under. Info: 610-432-4200, www.americaonwheels.org.

Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum in Allentown combines its holiday exhibit of model trains with antique toys. The exhibits, running through Jan. 11, include model trains; a Thomas Fun Room featuring Thomas the Tank Engine and Percy; antique games, marionettes and other toys;

and a new exhibit featuring plates, silverware and relics from a dining car of Lehigh Valley Railroad's Black Diamond train. Admission is \$8; \$3, children. Info: 610-435-1074, lehighvalleyheritagemuseum.org.

The Kutztown Area Historical Society hosts an open house featuring its 500-square-foot model train exhibit at the 1892 Public School Building, Normal Avenue and Whiteoak Street, Kutztown. Check out the rooms of exhibits of local memorabilia and the train layout with an amusement park, rural countryside, bridges, mountains, lakes and streams in the basement 1-4 p.m. every Sunday through Jan. 25. Admission is free. Info: kutztownhistory.org, 610-683-7697.

Nazareth Area Society of Model Engineers is in the old fire station at 212 Main St., Stockertown. The club has four operating layouts in O gauge; American Flyer (S gauge), HO and N scale. The O gauge and S gauge layouts re-create Nazareth scenes, and displays feature a mine, steel mill, animated signs, animated accessories and modern additions like a wind turbine and cell towers. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Dec. 13, 14, 27 and 28; 7-9 p.m. Dec. 30, 1-4 p.m. Jan. 3 and 4. Donations accepted for admission. Info: NASME.Tripod.com.

Carbon County Railroad Society Holiday Open House has two floors of HO operating displays in various stages of completion at 529 Ore St., Bowmans town. The displays are open 7-9 p.m. Dec. 11 and 1-5 p.m. Dec. 13-14 and Jan. 3-4. No admission charge but donations are accepted. Info: www.cmrs.info.

Sixth Annual Model Train Display and Open House features American Flyer, Lionel, LGB, HO and Thomas the Tank engine at Freight Station, 105 S. Walnut St., Fleetwood. No admission charge. Hours are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday and Sundays through Dec. 21. Closed Dec. 14. Info: 610-944-8609.

Hellertown Historical Society Toy Train Display features vintage operating toy trains and accessories featuring replicas of Hellertown buildings. The display is at Heller-Wagner Grist Mill, 150 W. Walnut St., Hellertown. No admission charge. Hours are 1-4 p.m. Dec. 14 and 21. Info: 610-838-1770.

The Delaware, Lehigh & Susquehanna Railroad operates two modular layouts constructed by members of Model Railroad Explorer Post 101 in Coplay Borough Hall, Fourth and Center streets. No admission charge. Hours are noon-4 p.m. Dec. 13-14, 20-21, 27-28, Jan. 3-4. Info: 610-965-2598.

Model Train Exhibit at Merchants Square Antique Mall, 1901 S. 12th St., Allentown features 40 trains; 18,000 feet of track; more than 1,000 structures; 30,000 lights; thunder, lightning and rainstorm;



HARRY FISHER/MORNING CALL FILE PHOTO

A model of the borough of Nazareth is featured at the Holiday Train Show organized by members of the Nazareth Area Society of Model Engineers in Stockertown.



MORNING CALL FILE PHOTO

The train display at Merchants Square Antique Mall in Allentown features a thunderstorm with rain, a carnival, an amusement park, a ski slope and much more.

60-piece operating amusement park and operating drive-in movie theater; large ski area featuring 20 operating ski rides and skating ponds. Tickets are \$7; \$5, seniors; \$2, ages 5-12. Hours are 12:30-7:30 p.m. Fridays; 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Saturdays;

10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Sundays, year-round. Info: www.modeltrainexhibit.com.

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