

Maine Operation Lifesaver Quarterly Newsletter July 2006

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While the new railroad trading cards are well into circulation and emitting comments like "cool" and "awesome" from youngsters (and some adults), Maine Operation Lifesaver recognized major contributors towards the project.



Maine O/L Chair Norma Griffiths (left) and NNEPRA Director Patricia Douglas

Patricia Douglas, executive director of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, was presented with a framed collection of all 12 cards.

The Maine Department of Transportation will also be presented a similar frame as a token of thanks. News releases to newspapers, radio, and TV statewide trumpeting the new cards will be mailed shortly.

A tragic incident in Warren earlier this year ironically became an opportunity for Maine Operation Lifesaver to remind the public of the dangers of trespassing on railroad tracks. Following the death of an 11-year old and critical injury to an adult, numerous media responded with follow-up stories featuring Maine O/L spokespeople. An Associated Press article on railroad trespassing written by a Portland correspondent reached papers not only in Maine, but others nationwide as far west as the *Arizona Republic* in Phoenix. Also making news statewide of late was a story charging two other adults who survived the incident being charged with trespassing. As District Attorney Geoffrey Rushlau was quoted as saying, "Our law against trespass on railroad tracks has to be enforced."

Our 19-foot caboose education unit this year celebrates ten years and continues to wow young and old wherever it goes. Still, maintenance work is performed annually before going out



on the road. Volunteers in April were hard at work touching up spots here and there and giving the caboose a general cleaning. The unit, a real labor of love, is modeled after an 1890 Maine Central caboose and built a decade ago by O/L volunteers. While many youngsters don't know what a caboose is, they still eagerly hop aboard to watch safety videos and explore the interior while mom and dad try to explain how a caboose used to be as much a part of railroading as a locomotive.

A half dozen volunteers fanned out through downtown Old Orchard Beach distributing posters warning the public against trespassing on the tracks and trying to beat the train at crossings. Up to 18 trains daily operate through the city's downtown which swells in population during the summer drawn by a beautiful beach and busy night life. With the heavy influx of Canadians, posters are in French and English. Hotels, motels and campgrounds were also covered during the June blitz which was carried out in conjunction with the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission and Old Orchard Beach Chamber of Commerce.



Journal Tribune article covering the recent Old Orchard Beach blitz

Safety

From Page A1
Increase in such crashes from 23 collisions killing three and injuring nine others in 1990 to 40 collisions in 2004 resulting in one injury and one fatality, in Maine and elsewhere, however, trespassing incidents are on the rise and into a new phase of Operation Lifesaver efforts.

Around the country, there were more than 1,000 crashes in 2004, killing 169 and injuring 1,618 others. Altogether 480 people were killed last year in related trespassing incidents caused by such things as walking and bicycling along tracks and railroad bridges, throwing objects or items onto the tracks, and hitchhiking on trains.

"Trains are fast," he said. "At an average speed of 25 mph, it takes a mile for a train to stop."
"Trains don't have steering wheels," he added.
People also have to remember about the three-foot overhang on a train. He cited a family three weeks ago in Warren where a man was fishing from a railroad bridge when a passing train brushed him off the bridge.
The group met at 10 a.m. and turned out to stores, hotels and public places to receive and distribute the flyers and posters, which were written in French and English.
"Steve Nagel, owner of Peace Driving School in Portland, says he sees the safety program as his adult education class."
"Kerrie Latta of Kennebec Falls" said one poster in French, "say OFF! say AWAY!"

"Say Aways!" said the English counterpart.
Tom Munnister of the SMMRPC found volunteers receptive to having the posters in their windows and stores.
SMMRPC is helping out with the Downeast Care Safety Prevention program aims to talk with every school within a mile of the tracks.
At Old Orchard Beach, the measure accepts a sign and puts it up.
Christina, manager at J.J.'s Eatery on New Street Avenue, says "See," when asked to put up the poster.
Some storekeepers express concern about their store's opening indications prohibiting the posters to show windows.
The town's zoning ordinance from the Town Hall allows window posters and this one meets local sign requirements.
Maine Operation Lifesaver



offers free safety presentations on approaching and crossing railroad tracks safely and on railroad trespass prevention. Anyone interested may e-mail: info@maineol.org or call 827-7302, or visit the Web at www.maineol.org
© Contact George Chappell by calling 287-1515, ext. 322, or e-mail gc3app@prod.net.

Briefly...

- Operation Lifesaver Canada recently released a DVD promoting all-terrain vehicle safety around railroads. In Maine, the program comes as a very much welcomed tool as ATVs continue to be a source of problems for Maine's railroads.

- As predicted, our railroad trading cards are a hit. Besides being distributed at school presentations and aboard Amtrak's Downeaster, they are being given away at community events. We also display them on our website (www.maineol.org) and offer the full set of 12 cards for a small donation.

- Welcome Richard Towle of Foxboro, Massachusetts to the Federal Railroad Administration helping in the area of railroad safety. Dick, a former police officer and professional photographer whose roots are in Maine, is a fan of the old Bangor & Aroostook Railroad, and has already attended two of Maine Operation Lifesaver's most recent meetings.

Here's where we've been recently.

We stand ready to deliver the railroad safety message statewide.

E-mail: info@maineol.org
or call 207-827-7367

- Nequasset Snowmobile Club, Wiscasset
- Sanford Train Show
- Milo area school bus drivers
- Oxford Co. Vocational School, S. Paris
- Enfield Station School
- Fruit St. School Fair, Bangor
- Veazie Fire Department safety day
- Lions/Rotary meeting, Damariscotta
- Southern Maine EMS Day, Portland
- Inland Fisheries and Wildlife safety instructors, Lewiston and Bangor

- USM Safety Fair, Gorham
- Rockland Lions Club
- Madison area law enforcement
- Old Orchard Beach Police
- Asa Adams School, Orono
- Mitchell School, Waterville
- American Public Works Assn., Waterville
- Great Falls Model Rail Club Show, Topsham
- Dirigo Pines Retirement Community, Orono

- Scarborough Middle School
- Hermon Elementary
- Driving Forces, Portland
- Hall Elementary, Waterville
- Auburn Mall
- So. Portland Driving School