

Always the Heart of the A&TC's Operations: VOLUNTEERS!

If there's anything which sets the Austin & Texas Central Railroad apart from ordinary excursion operations, it's that every train which departs is staffed by a crew of volunteers, railroading for the love of it.

And more than just a few volunteers are required. The A&TC operates year-round, running more than a hundred trains every year, and has been doing so for nearly 24 years. And a fully staffed train may require the services of as many as 15 fully trained and qualified volunteers.

For all those years, ASTA volunteers have always stepped up to the job and continue to do so today. Their efforts have made it possible for the association and railroad to succeed, thrive and grow.

To continue with that successful model, of course, new volunteers are always needed, and ASTA always welcomes anyone who'd like to join in the fun and satisfaction of doing real

railroad work for the benefit of the traveling public.

Michael Warburton, who's been ASTA's volunteer coordinator since February, reports that last year 204 volunteers worked for the railroad, putting in nearly 14,000 hours of service.

"Volunteers are the backbone of the organization," he said, "and we are constantly in need of new volunteers to make the excursion-train experience memorable for our passengers."

ASTA's volunteer jobs fall into several broad categories:

- **Onboard passenger service.** This is the largest group of volunteers, consisting of car attendants who staff the cars to see to the comfort and information of the passengers, and of concession-car attendants in charge of beverage, snack and merchandise sales.

Onboard service has always been considered the public face of the railroad and as such the



Car attendant Brian Blades chats with a passenger on board the train. Onboard-service volunteers seat the passengers, see to their comfort and safety, answer questions and most importantly, make them feel welcome on the railroad.

volunteer group most critical to ASTA's public image and the satisfaction of the customers.

For new onboard-service recruits, says Michael, "it is the quickest way for new volunteers to become familiar with our operation and to meet a large number of other volunteers. It's ideally suited for those who like to meet and work with people, and for those who just like trains."

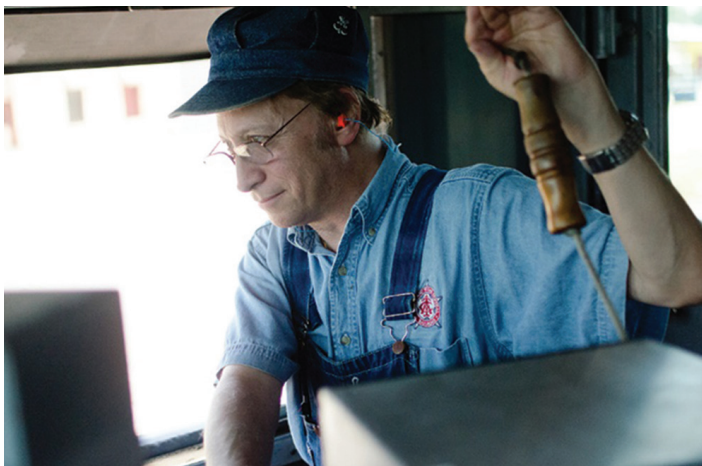
- **Train crews.** These are the essential volunteers who do the hands-on work of getting the trains over the railroad – engineers, conductors and brakemen. The railroad over which our trains run is a busy place we share with commuter and freight traffic, and our operating volunteers are required to go through all the rigorous training, testing, licensing and qualification that any mainline paid railroader would have to do.

ASTA's operating crews are

proud of the professional work they do, and probably most of them never imagined they'd ever have the chance to be doing real railroad work.

- **Administrative support.** For those who prefer weekday opportunities, office specialist volunteers work in ASTA's Cedar Park office, helping customers with telephone and in-person sales. Our current office-volunteer staff includes interns from Rouse High School.

- **Maintenance and restoration.** Any railroad, especially one using historic equipment, always has a long to-do list of projects for those with mechanical, electrical, plumbing, painting, carpentry or general handyman skills. Opportunities on both weekends and weekdays include steam-engine restoration, diesel-engine maintenance, (Turn to "Volunteers," Page 3)



Steve Barry, a veteran operating-crew volunteer, at the throttle of ATCX 442. Conductors, engineers and brakemen on the A&TC undergo the same rigorous training and testing as railroaders would on any mainline operation.

Thanks to our generous friends!

(Donations from January through March 2016. If we have left anyone off, please accept our apologies and contact us at director@austinsteamin.org so we can make sure we recognize you in our next edition.)

- ☛ Thanks to the Dr. Henry Renfert Jr. Fund of Austin Community Foundation, **\$25,000** toward the *City of Chicago* restoration!
- ☛ Thanks to Lanelle Montgomery for a gift of railroad uniform tags and pins, a UP calendar, switch keys and railroad matchboxes for our museum!
- ☛ Thanks to 42 under-\$20 donors who pitched in \$398 during this period!

CONTRIBUTORS TO OUR NEW CONCESSION CAR!

\$1,000 to \$2,499:

Dennis Kearns
William Osborn
Ben Sargent

\$500 to \$999:

Two anonymous gifts
David and Renate Hughart
Joe Pinnelli
LuEllen Schoen (*in honor of Doc Schoen*)
Robert W. Schoen Jr., M.D.
Clinton Waggoner

\$250 to \$499:

Anonymous
David and Laura Gracy
Virginia and Brian Urban

\$100 to \$249:

William Bingham
John Fischer
Ann and James Hopkins
(*in memory of John Pound*)

Scott Lewis
Linda McDonough
Crystal McFadden
Larry Springer
Gregory Squires
Zena and Chris Vaughn

\$40 to \$99:

Three anonymous gifts
Matt Arnold (*in honor of Luke Baker*)
Yolanda Baker
Olivia Buffalo
Jimmie and Kathy Burleyson
Paul Calmes
Eric Cole
Diane Ducote
Ron and Donna Ducote
Barry Hughey
IBM Matching Grants Program
Clifton Jones
Annette and Jay Juba
(*in honor of David Gracy*)
Larry and Lindy McGinnis

Dustin McKee
Louise Millikan
Art Serafine
Lil and Pat Serafine
Barbara Turley
Michael S. Warburton

\$20 to \$39:

Anonymous
Vicki Baughman
Ana Breest
J. R. Cantu
Melvin Clark
Kalima Drga
David Gunn
Sara Hamsa
Barry Hutcheson
Dales Kent (*in memory of Elaine Kent*)
Inga and Mark McFadden
Vincent Polisenio

OUR FAITHFUL MEMBER-DONORS!

\$1,000 to \$2,499:

M.H. Crockett Jr.

\$500 to \$999:

David and Laura Gracy

\$250 to \$499:

Randal Leo

\$100 to \$249:

AT&T Matching Gift Program
Robert Bucher
Jerry and Mary Elder

ExxonMobil Foundation Matching
Gifts Program
Margaret Frihart
Susie Grizzard
Lanelle Montgomery
William Nance
Wayne and Darlene Schild

\$40 to \$99:

David Ball
Tim Bauerkemper
John C. Burks
Douglas Boyd
Melvin Clark

Andrew Diefenthaler
Brian D. Euwer
John and Barbara Fibiger
Genie Hurta
William Jefferys
Harvey Jones
John K. Meadows
James D. Spates
Skip Waters

\$20 to \$39:

Gloria Harrison
Anderson Jeffrey
Dawn McIntyre

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE SP 786 REBUILD!

\$50 to \$99:

Gary Bonine
Dawn McIntyre
Edward K. Mellon Jr.
Doug and Debbie Smith

\$20 to \$49:

David Ball
Anderson Jeffrey
Richard Lewis
George Rodriguez

Lewis F.H. Smith
(*in honor of Brian J. Smith's birthday*)
Bradly Truitt
Donald Wilson

Volunteers....(from Page 1)

restoration and maintenance of passenger equipment, upkeep of the Bertram and Burnet depots and various improvement and upkeep jobs around the Cedar Park Yard.

• Special-event volunteers.

Extra help is always required for the railroad's regular special events, including December's North Pole Flyer trains and the Day Out With Thomas™ weekend in Burnet (this year in October).

Since coming aboard as volunteer coordinator, Michael has been revising and improving ASTA's system of recruiting and training volunteers with the aim of adding a steady flow of fresh new faces to the volunteer corps.

"We match an individual's interests and abilities with volunteer roles," he said, "and we have a whole spectrum of volunteer experiences. We can find a home for just about anybody who wants to volunteer."

Michael has revised ASTA's application and training materials to make the process as smooth as possible. People interested in volunteering (who come from community-outreach efforts, from online contact and very often, from their experience as an A&TC passenger) receive an information and application packet. Once he or she returns the completed application, the

new prospect is scheduled for a volunteer-orientation session on board the train on one of its Cedar-Park-to-Bertram runs.

The orientation run, a new feature of the process, is "so they can see volunteers in action," said Michael. "I think it gives people a real feel for whether this is something they'd like to do."

Currently, 21 people are at some stage of volunteer training.

If a prospect is still interested after that run, he or she is assigned to a regular volunteer for further training.

For those interested in an operating-crew position, of course, the process involves more intensive training that starts with approval by ASTA's executive committee and assignment to a number of runs as an observer.

To become a student brakeman, a candidate must pass a pre-employment physical, vision and hearing test, drug and alcohol test and an introductory test on the General Code of Operating Rules. (Don't worry, there's a class first!)

Promotion to a full brakeman position (first step toward being a conductor or engineer, as well) involves demonstrating competence on regular runs and on passing tests on the GCOR, air brakes and train handling, and signals.

In recognition of their service, volunteers receive for every 20 hours of work a ticket voucher good for a coach train



Concession-car attendant Ilene Watts rings up a sale. Volunteers keep the passengers supplied with snacks, beverages and souvenirs, a welcome amenity for the public and an important source of revenue for the railroad.

ticket on most of the railroad's regular runs.

In addition, volunteers receive a uniform shirt to wear while on

duty, and everyone is invited to a gala annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner and other social events.



ASTA is proud of its long tradition of operating its railroad with a dedicated force of hard-working volunteers!

**Join us for the fun and for the satisfaction
of a worthwhile job well-done!**

*If you love railroading, love history, or just love
helping people have a good time, give us a call.
We have a place for you!*

It's simple....call our volunteer coordinator, Michael Warburton, at 512-477-8468 ext. 1, e-mail volunteers@austinteamtrain.org or come by the ASTA office, 401 E. Whitestone, Suite C-100, Cedar Park.



Mechanical volunteer Joe Shreve ponders adjustments to the air-brake equipment on the 442. Even a small excursion operation requires constant upkeep and maintenance, much of it performed on the A&TC by volunteer craftsmen.

Some Vital Steps Completed in the Steam-Engine Restoration

Work on restoring ASTA's signature steam locomotive, Southern Pacific 786, for operation has moved a step ahead with completion of some subtle but necessary steps toward final re-assembly.

The engine's driving boxes – the vital assemblies in which the driving wheels ride in the frame – have been completed by the shops of the Strasburg Railroad in Pennsylvania and delivered to Cedar Park. And, said 786 Volunteer Leader Greg Duepner, "It is noteworthy that the driving boxes were completed for approximately \$40,000 less than the budget estimate."

New oil cellars for the boxes are being fabricated locally, and once the bearing assemblies are complete, the engine's frame can at last be put back on her driving wheels.

The other major current effort on the reassembly is readying the engine's cylinders and valve chests for hydro-testing, that is, pumping them full of hot water to be sure they will with-

stand the high pressures of operation under steam.

The cylinder heads have been machined at the Babeco machine shop in Taylor for correction of a dimensional error made in earlier work, and special tapered studs to attach the heads are being manufactured at Austin CNC.

Completion of that work and of blanking plates and other fixtures will ready the cylinder assembly for hydro-testing.

Periodic work sessions are still being organized at ASTA's Cedar Park Yard to make progress with other aspects of the project. Interested volunteers should contact Volunteer Coordinator Michael Warburton at the ASTA office: 512-477-8468 ext. 1, or volunteers@austin-steamtrain.org.

Tickets on Sale for Day Out With Thomas™

Thomas the Tank Engine™, famed in children's stories and videos, will make his 13th visit to the Hill Country for a three-day weekend Sept. 30-Oct. 2, and tickets are now on sale!

This year's Day Out With Thomas™ event will once again be at the Burnet Community Center and depot, and will include 25-minute train rides behind the full-scale version of Thomas himself, photo opportunities with the "really useful little engine" and his boss Sir Topham Hatt, creative opportunities at the Imagination Station and family-friendly food, shopping, music and magic shows.

Tickets are available online at www.austinsteamtrain.org/day-out-with-thomas, or by calling 1-866-468-3399.

A Special Thanks to Our Friends and Supporters,
the City of Cedar Park and Cedar Park Tourism Services!



Your Spring CALL BOARD!

Austin Steam Train Association Inc.
401 E. Whitestone Blvd., Suite C-100
Cedar Park, Texas 78613

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Austin, Texas
Permit No. 3134