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150 people pack the city's train station

Train buffs chug into Guadalupe

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By Sam Womack / Staff Writer / swomack@lompocrecord.com | Posted: Sunday, May 9, 2010 12:00 am | (0) Comments

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Sabastian Infante waves to his mom from the top of the caboose. Approximately 150 people packed into the train station on Guadalupe Street to tour the recently renovated Santa Maria Valley Railroad (SMVRR) 210 Caboose and to walk through a U.S. Postal Service train car, which had been in use from 1924 to 1995.//Bryan Walton/Staff

Three-year-old train-lover Sebastian Infante couldn't get enough of the retired caboose parked at the Guadalupe Amtrak platform Saturday.

He climbed up and down the steps leading to a small rooftop cupola, where crew members would perch to watch the train.

In between trips to the look-out area, Sebastian took over duties at the steering wheel mounted on the wall.

All the while, he wore his own blue-and-white striped conductor hat and blue-denim overalls.

"He's got trains all over our home," said Sebastian's mother, Kim Infante, of San Luis Obispo. "He's got train books and videos and we can hear the train from our house."

The Infante family, which also included Sebastian's two sisters, his father and his grandfather, all got into the railroad spirit Saturday for Guadalupe's first celebration of National Train Day.

Approximately 150 people packed into the train station on Guadalupe Street (Highway 1) to tour the

recently-renovated Santa Maria Valley Railroad (SMVRR) 210 Caboose and to walk through a U.S. Postal Service train car, which had been in use from 1924 to 1995.

“I like trains!” said 4-year-old Tristen McCallister, who was excitedly awaiting the arrival of the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner.

As part of the celebration, families could purchase tickets on the Surfliner for a coordinated excursion from Guadalupe to San Luis Obispo and back.

Tristen attended the choo-choo hullabaloo with his grandmother, Rosemary Miller, of Santa Maria, who said they encourage Tristen’s love of trains by planning their vacations around rail stops and stations.

“It’s also a reasonable way to travel,” Miller said.

The event was put on in part by the Friends of the SMVRR and the Rancho de Guadalupe Historical Society.

“This is fantastic,” said Friends of the SMVRR President Kevin O’Roark as he looked around at the smiling families and children wearing blue junior conductor hats from Amtrak.

Near the tracks Saturday, the Mud Stickers, a Dixieland jazz band based on the Central Coast, performed some toe-tapping songs, and a model train display was set up by the train ticket machine.

“I hope people learn about the importance of the rail service. For passengers and freight, it’s the most fuel-efficient way to travel, and it brings employment opportunities to the Santa Maria Valley,” O’Roark said.

National Train Day began three years ago to promote ridership and encourage the community to celebrate the railroad.

“This is a wonderful way to get people out to Guadalupe,” said Guadalupe Mayor Lupe Alvarez, who welcomed visitors and read a proclamation honoring the event’s organizers.

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