

## Trains, trains, & MORE trains

November 8, 2009

This summer my family had the pleasure of visiting the [Crossville Model Railroad Club](#) in Crossville, TN.



We were traveling to Nashville and had heard about this incredible train display that was en route and KNEW we had to see it since there are TWO little train fanatics in our house (3 and 4.5 at the time). It is in an outlet mall and is a whole storefront FULL of different size model train layouts. Only problem was that we would be driving through on a THURSDAY afternoon, a time when they are usually not open. I contacted a club member via e-mail about a week ahead of time and inquired about setting up a private train viewing. His response was very kind, and he said normally they do not do private viewings for anyone but groups. He continued on to say that they usually have some folks working on the displays almost every day, and if we wanted to stop by in the hopes that we caught someone there they would be more than glad to show us around.

*\*SIGH\*. After a LOT of careful thinking about what to say, here was my response:  
Thank you for writing me back! Is there any possible way that, without inconveniencing anyone, I can be sure that someone will be there that day? I have 2 sons with special needs and I would hate to set them up for disappointment. The reason we want to come see your exhibit is that a family member of mine who was there recently was VERY impressed and knew that my boys would be enthralled. For some reason children on the autism spectrum*

are overly fascinated by trains... especially Thomas. Our house is full of toy trains. I think it has to do in part with the rhythmic motion of the wheels. It would mean SO much to them to see it, but I can't change our travel plans to come there unless I know we can enter the exhibit. Travel with small children is hard enough, even more so with special needs. If it doesn't work out I understand, but I thought I would check into the possibility. Any help you could give me would be greatly appreciated. Thank you so much for your time- Well, without hesitation he responded that if I called him when I was about an hour away he would meet me there personally & show us around. When we got there my 2 boys acted like they were walking into Disneyland (cue heavenly music)...



Especially when they saw THIS...



IT'S THOMAS!!!

And Percy! And James! And Harold!!!



The 2 children wearing the train shirts are mine. We edited out their faces for security, so unfortunately you miss out on seeing the look of utter & complete JOY on their little faces. Believe me when I say they were THRILLED. Every time a train rolled by they squealed, "HI, PERCY!", or, "HI, JAMES!", or, "HI, THOMAS!!!" They stood at the Thomas table alone for more than 10 minutes~ a LOOONG time for kids with short attention spans.

Turns out our e-mail friend had filled some of the other club members in on our family's situation. There were several other individuals there when we arrived and they were ALL incredibly welcoming & kind & friendly & went out of their way to help us enjoy the exhibit

and to make us feel comfortable. I think they were also excited to have such passionate little train enthusiasts to appreciate their displays. I was so incredibly overwhelmed by the effort they put into talking with us & showing us around. Come to think of it, they are probably that way with everyone who walks in the door, but it still made me feel special. Especially when the female member of the club asked me, "I don't know a lot about Autism. Could you please help explain it to me?" I could have hugged her. For her to take the time to ask and try & become more educated showed a level of compassion that was deeply moving. I LOVE it when people are so open and caring and say, "I don't understand~ can you teach me?" The alternative is far worse- those who are made uncomfortable by that which they don't understand so they say NOTHING & walk away.

My children spent a very long time exploring each and every detail of this glorious train land. They were VERY sad to leave, especially since there was also a Thomas Wooden Railway train table to play with. I think they could have stayed there forever. A FABULOUS time was had by all.

Thank you, THANK YOU, Crossville Model Railway Club, for giving my children such a treat... and for giving their Mom & Dad a special gift with your compassion and generosity. There are good people in this world. Just go to Crossville.

[Check out their website!](#) Their hours are Fridays 12-4, Saturdays 10-5, and on Sundays from noon-3pm~ OR by appointment, if you say "pretty please". They're awesome like that.