

KIRKWOOD STATION



Many railroad stations have been a part of their local communities for generations; today, residents are proud to use these buildings as focal points for highlighting their towns' rich histories. One town where the train station serves as the center of all community activities is Kirkwood, Mo. When the historic depot was threatened with abandonment, locals banded together to preserve a piece of their history and demonstrate pride in their community.

REVITALIZATION EFFORTS AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Built in 1893, the centrally-located depot is a natural gathering place for residents. When Amtrak ticket agents were removed from the station in 2003 as a cost-cutting measure, city leaders purchased the building from Union Pacific Railroad and considered ways to keep it active.

The city soon created a "pioneer management program" made up of local volunteers who would staff and manage the station. Following the city's first call for volunteers, almost 200 people showed up to perform their civic duty, and many agreed to participate in the program. Today, more than 65 active volunteers open the depot every day and act as ambassadors for Amtrak and the city. As part of their duties, they meet and greet

"More than ten years ago Kirkwood residents decided it was important to preserve our train station. It shows the true spirit of Kirkwood that we found a way to keep our station and share our love of the trains that have been so important to our town's history."

– Bill Burckhalter, Kirkwood Volunteer Coordinator

passengers and visitors and gladly tell them about restaurants, shops and local attractions such as the nearby Farmers Market.

Working together, volunteers have also taken the initiative to decorate the depot for seasonal holidays and establish a lending library for travelers so they can grab books on the go.

Over the years, the Kirkwood station volunteers have received awards and special recognition including:

- Amtrak 2004 “Champion of the Rails” award
- Kirkwood-Des Peres Chamber of Commerce 2011 “Citizens of the Year” award
- Union Pacific Railroad 2013 “Train Town USA” city

- U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill celebrated the 10th anniversary of the station program and read a commendation from Vice President Joe Biden

STATION AS A DESTINATION

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the station is a place for the community to come together for important city meetings, festivities and cultural events such as art exhibits, musical jam sessions and poetry and story readings. The depot is so loved by the community that its image serves as the logo for the city.

INSIDE THE STATION

STATION SERVICE (FY14)

- 58,951 Riders
- \$1,710,248 in Revenue
- Served by the *Missouri River Runner*

DEVELOPMENT

- Station provides space for weddings, parties and cultural events.

KEY FEATURES

- A group of approximately 65 local volunteers have donated over 64,500 hours of service since 2004.



Photos courtesy of Bill Burckhalter.



KEYS TO SUCCESS

The Kirkwood train station lives on today because community leaders:

- Connected early with stakeholders to build support for purchasing the depot.
- Maintained relationships with local residents, public officials and railroad representatives.
- Engaged the community by making it a part of the process and therefore invested in the outcome.
- Ensured the depot would stay busy as a venue for activities throughout the year.