

OPERATION LIFESAVER OF VERMONT, INC.

Operation Lifesaver, Inc. is a nonprofit public safety education and awareness organization dedicated to reducing collisions, fatalities and injuries at highway-rail grade crossings and trespassing on or near railroad tracks.

Operation Lifesaver started in 1972 when the Idaho's Governor's Office, Idaho Peace Officers and the Union Pacific Railroad launched a six-week public awareness educational campaign called Operation Lifesaver to promote highway-rail grade crossing safety. After Idaho's crossing fatalities dropped 43% that year, Nebraska, Kansas and Georgia adopted the program shortly thereafter. Now, there are chapters in all 50 states and in 1986, a nonprofit national Operation Lifesaver office was created to support the efforts of the state programs and raise national awareness on highway-rail grade crossing issues.

Today the focus is also on trespassing prevention. In 1997, trespassing deaths surpassed crossing deaths and that trend has continued. Operation Lifesaver has a proprietary system of training volunteers to make presentations to school groups, driver's education classes, community organizations and the like. The presentation materials vary depending on the audience or age group to age group. Operation Lifesaver also encourages participation in community events and fairs. Operation Lifesaver has licensed giveaways such as pens, pencils, key chains. They also have coloring and activity books and stickers for the really young ones.

Operation Lifesaver of Vermont Inc. was formed in 2016 to succeed a program that had lost its corporate status. A new nonprofit corporation, the most common structure for state programs, was formed and received 501(c)(3) status. The Board of Directors are:

Charles Hunter, President, New England Central Railroad

Dan Delabruere, Secretary, VTrans Rail & Aviation Director

David Allaire, Treasurer, Rutland Mayor

Chad Mowery, Central Maine and Quebec Railway

Rob Hanson, Amtrak Police

SGT Mark Perkins, Vermont State Police

Tom Winn, Pan Am Railways

Perry Martel, Vermont Rail System

Norma Jean Griffiths, Non-Voting Member, Federal Railroad Administration

Alan Franklin, VTrans, State Coordinator/Executive Director, *ex officio*

The board generally meets quarterly with the next meeting scheduled for January 24. Their two-year terms are ending and all have indicated they wish to renew their places on the Board.

In 2016 Operation Lifesaver of Vermont, it's first year of operation, through presentations at schools and community groups and special events, reached 3000 people. This past year we reached just under 6000.

School presentations took place in Essex Junction, Brattleboro, Rutland, Barre, Hartford, Newport, Castleton, Proctor. These included both elementary and high schools, driver's ed and general high school students.

Special events included exhibits at the Champlain Valley Fair, the Vermont State Fair, The Northwest Model Train spring and fall shows, the Vermont Driver and Traffic Safety Association, St. Michael's College Safety Day, Glory Days of the Railroad in White River Junction Rutland Downtown Friday Night Live, Neighborworks Community Outreach in Rutland Burlington Kids' Day, and the Hartford Alumni Parade

Operation Lifesaver teamed up with the Vermont Highway Safety Alliance for exhibits at the Hartford Community Coalition Block Party and the Vermont Municipal Highway Association's Equipment Show and Field Day.

Other activities included participation in Operation Lifesaver's inaugural Rail Safety Week, the highlight being Operation Clear track, a nationwide 3-hour simultaneous law enforcement exercise that placed law enforcement personnel at selected rail crossings handing out safety cards and interacting with the public spreading the Operation Lifesaver Safety message. Operation Lifesaver teamed up with Amtrak to coordinate this event. Police Departments in St. Albans, Essex Junction, Windsor and the Windham County Sherriff's Department participated. Essex Junction Police distributed all 1000 of the safety cards they were allotted. I appeared on the Fox 44 morning show promoting this event. Operation Lifesaver National provided and paid for public safety announcements aired statewide. Some PSAs are currently eing run as a public service by

Another major activity was Operation Lifesaver of Vermont's sponsorship in kind of the Jingle Bell Express, an exhibition train ride event that is a major fundraiser for the Ronald McDonald House in Burlington. Operation Lifesaver of Vermont provided Operation Lifesaver coloring and activity books and ruler/bookmarks with Operation rail safety massages and information for 1000 gift bags given out to children on the train. An Operation Volunteer was on hand to answer any questions.

Operation Lifesaver of Vermont is operating on budget of \$25,000.00 annually. Contributions have come from the State of Vermont, Genesee & Wyoming , the parent company of the New England Central Railroad, Vermont Rail System and the Central Maine and Quebec Railway. Other funding has been provided form Operation Lifesaver National. Much of the funding is used to purchase licensed Operation Lifesaver merchandise used to give away at presentations and special events. I attended various trainings during this past year and am now qualified to fully train and sanction volunteers.

In 2018, Operation Lifesaver of Vermont aims to continue to increase outreach, both through the internet and traditional media, increase our presence in Vermont schools, and recruit and train more volunteers.

In 2015, 4 persons died and 1 each in 2016 and 2017. The need for education and awareness is obvious and important.

