

# Train-O-Rama!

By Lee Borrowman



Diane Wolfe and Holden Wolfe-Brown

Photo Andy Scheck

There's just something about trains. Whether it's *The Polar Express*, or the miniature toy circling under the Christmas tree, this season conjures images of trains. The *Hogwarts Express*, in all of its crimson glory, currently circles at the Orinda Hardware Store along with many other model trains and a veritable Toyland of buttons to push and whirligigs to watch twirl.

"It has to work, it's designed for kids," says Ed Levinson of Orinda Model Railroad Consultants. "Let the kids play with it – and let the parents play with it, too!" Levinson, a retired attorney, designed and maintains the attraction at Orinda Hardware, which is an authorized dealer of Lionel trains. Most of the items in the interactive display, including the *Hogwarts Express*, are available for order/purchase at the store.

Diane Wolfe has been bringing her grandson, four year old Holden Wolfe-Brown, to visit 'the train store' for a couple of years. "We once spent about two hours here. He plays, and tells me what buttons to push and when to push them." Wolfe says that her other grandchildren also enjoy the trains, but they are very special to Holden. "I think the train store is really responsible for his continuing

love of trains," says Wolfe. "And there's always something I can pick up while I'm here."

Levinson says that both original owner Gary Hopper and current owner Bob Smith are train enthusiasts as well. The displays in the store began with Hopper, and Smith has continued the tradition. The layout has been changed three times since 2005, and pieces are interchanged regularly. Right now, there is a fun-filled amusement park spinning amidst a number of trains.

If you'd like to see even more model trains and don't mind a bit of driving, pack up those bored, "when does school start again?" kids and visit the World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, Jan. 5th and 6th in Sacramento, <http://www.wghshow.com/>.

Levinson offers a Saturday morning model train seminar at Orinda Hardware. Train enthusiasts are welcome to come in with questions; sessions usually begin around 10:00am. Reach Levinson at [OrindaModelRR@aol.com](mailto:OrindaModelRR@aol.com), or 376-8425.