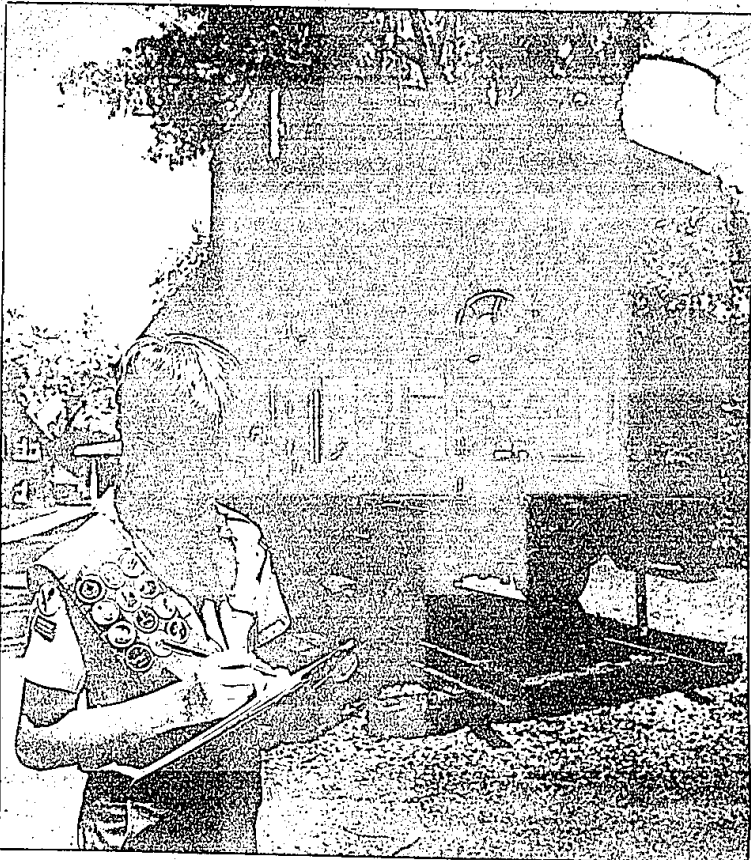




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(F11)



Designing and building a platform for easy access into the old caboose is the job at hand for 14-year-old Richard Barston, working his way toward the Eagle rank in Boy Scout Troop 263, which meets in Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Farmington Hills.

## Old caboose fixed in time for fair

By Lorraine McClish  
staff writer

An 1894 caboose on the grounds of St. Vincent-Sarah Fisher Center is in the final stages of restoration to be ready for visitors who attend the center's Country Fair in mid-September.

Bringing the antique back to the way it might have looked when it rode the rails at the turn of the century has been this summer's job for Rich Barston, James Stephens and Eddie Richter, all working their way toward Boy Scouting's highest award, the rank of Eagle.

The old caboose has been standing, and deteriorating, on the grounds for several years, after it came to the complex on Inkster and 12 Mile roads as a gift to the children through the efforts of Channel's Jerry Glanick.

"Restoring the caboose was never the number-one priority here. These children have to be fed first, and some of the fun and games things just have to wait," said Mary Luzod, a Sarah Fisher staff member.

The Boy Scout who made the restoration his number-one priority was Stephens, a 16-year-old member of Troop 389 which meets in Nardin Park United Methodist Church in Farmington Hills.

STEPHENS WAS no stranger to the Sarah Fisher home. All members of his family have been volunteers there in one capacity or another, and an older brother completed his Eagle Scout requirements with a project for the home.

Always fascinated by the ancient vehicle that was never used as a playhouse, for birthday parties, for overnight stays, or for any of the fun things that it was intended, Stephens chose to tackle the interior for his Eagle Scout community service project.

Richter learned about the caboose through the Southfield Optimists, one of the local service clubs that will be helping the Sarah Fisher staff with Country Fair this fall. The Optimists were looking for a scout nearing his Eagle Rank and Richter was looking for a project. Richter, a member of Troop 1677 which meets in United Presbyterian Church in Southfield, responded by agreeing to take on the job of re-doing the caboose's exterior.

It was a job that Barston hoped to get but was beaten by Richter in the request line. So Barston, a member of Troop 263 which meets in Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Farmington Hills, is in charge of building a necessary platform for visitors to approach the caboose, and later on, a flower box.

Fourteen-year-old Barston has helped four other fellow scouts attain their Eagle Rank by volunteering as a crew member, but he can't call on them for help now to return the favor because all of those projects were completed in Ohio.

As with Stephens and Richter they all are responsible for rounding up their own work crews, all drawn from scout troops, mapping out detailed plans, overseeing the work and scheduling.

RICHTER ALONE has estimated and scheduled about 200 man hours for the completion of the caboose exterior; that he found through scraping was once bright orange, but more recently a dark red. He says he will stick to the dark red and black.

The hardest job he had, he said, was locating the tongue and groove boards that had to be found to replace the original wood, which he ultimately did get from a lumber yard in northern Michigan. Red and black paint was donated, he said, "from a friend of a friend," and primer was donated from Durst Lumber in Berkeley.

Stephens' crew has worked steadily on the interior of the caboose from the time school was out, and that is completed. He used a bright light blue paint to cover "an undecidable drab color," he said; by contrast with the dark wood, and Early American wallpaper. Kerosene railroad lanterns serve as wall light fixtures. Every window frame was either refitted or replaced, salvaging as much of the original as possible.

"We really can't help. We're not allowed to," Stephens' father said of the scout's parents, as he pointed out the loft, the woodwork, the window screens and panes in their sparkling newness. "About the only thing we could do was watch and bring in the Kool Aid and the sandwiches."

FIRST DUTY for the newly refurbished caboose will be to house the craft and gift shop during Country Fair which runs from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 15-16. For fair days only, the caboose will be accompanied by an antique fire truck which did duty in the 1950s, and like the caboose, will be available for climbing.

The Southfield Optimists will be in charge of children's games. Monahan Knights of Columbus will man the Bingo tent. The Elitza, a service organization made up of General Electric management personnel, will serve the barbeques.

Games for adults, a variety of food, a white elephant sale and hourly drawings for merchandise and services worth at least \$25, round out the planned Country Fair activities.

"The fair is sponsored by the center's staff to raise funds to benefit several programs which seek to prevent child abuse," Luzod said.

"As an active participant in these programs the center not only attempts to prevent child abuse, but we furnish the victims of these crimes with temporary shelter and counseling."

Admission to the grounds is free.



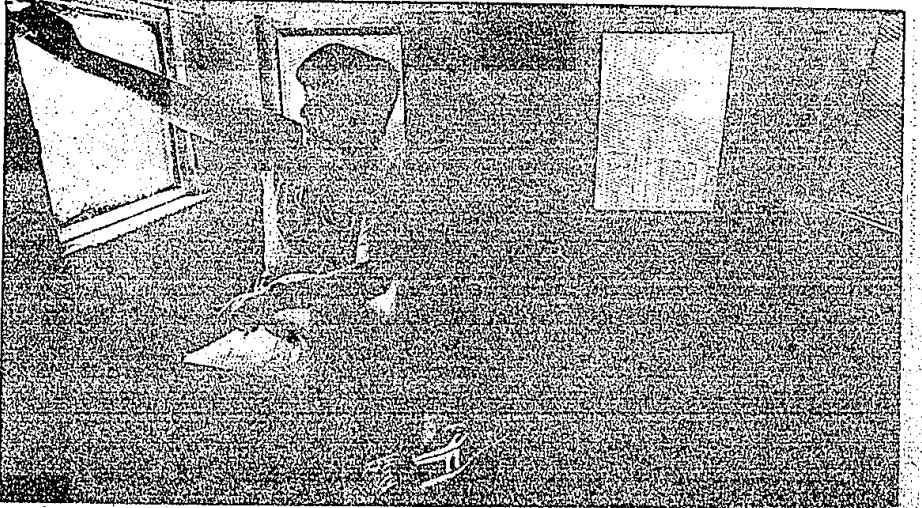
Eddie Richter oversees a crew of scouts that will give about 200 man hours to refurbishing the caboose exterior working toward the Sept. 15 deadline. Richter belongs to Troop 1677, which meets in United Presbyterian Church of Southfield.

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— Mary Luzod  
St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center staff member



Boy Scout Jay Kinchular (left) confers with Dave Birge about a problem on the caboose roof. Kinchular belongs to Troop 1677 and is a crew member on the project. Birge is assistant scoutmaster for his troop, which is sponsored by United Presbyterian Church of Southfield.



James Stephens, who got the caboose-restoration ball rolling, makes the final clean-up in the railroad car's loft, while the window curtains were being ironed in readiness to hang. Stephens is earning his Eagle Scout rank in Troop 342, which meets in Nardin Park United Methodist Church, Farmington Hills.

Staff photos by Randy Borst