

Rosenberry: Canal in Fairport a great way to spend the day

Missy Rosenberry, East Extra columnist 6:45 p.m. EDT August 5, 2014

Fairport ducks have got to be the best-fed ducks in the entire county.

I realized this a few weeks ago when I spent a Friday afternoon at the Erie Canal in Fairport. For three enjoyable hours, I watched the trains go by and the lift bridge go up, got some ice cream and rode my bike along the canal. I met some really nice folks, and saw a lot of people feeding a lot of ducks.

For example, there was little Jack Carson, who had traveled to the canal on the back of his Grandpa Chuck's bike. As he threw carefully chosen bits of bread into the water, Jack (who told me he was "free and free-quarters" years old) said that his favorite thing about being at the canal was feeding the ducks.

Allison Picciano and her three children — Christian, Sophia and Grace — had come to the canal for a picnic lunch and ice cream.

They were feeding the ducks blueberries and cherries.

Day trips to the canal are regular summertime excursions for them.

"We love Fairport. It's a great community," Allison said. "There's lots of things to do in the village," but "this is the thing in the summer they'll remember the most."

Not far away, Lillian Ewald and Carol Zimmer were tooling along the bike path in their motorized wheelchairs. They were headed back to Lillian's canalside home after grabbing some lunch and doing some shopping in Fairport village. The 2.5-mile round trip would normally take about 45 minutes. But they'd stopped for a while along the way to — you guessed it — feed the ducks.

I also met Bill Carlsen, a Penn State professor. He was working on his canal boat, which he'd retrofitted as a solar hybrid vessel. His was a particularly interesting story.

Just a few years ago, he and his wife, Cynthia, took their boat, the *Dragonfly*, on a yearlong circumnavigation of eastern North America waterways, a 6,000-mile voyage called the "Great Loop." It was the first time the Great Loop had ever been completed by a solar-powered canal boat.

Finally, I visited with Dre Elmore, who was parked in a lawn chair under a shade tree, reading a book.

His hand-crafted 18-foot sloop, the *Sweet Jane*, was docked nearby. Dre's a Fairport resident and a canal regular who's gotten to know most of the other boat owners, who comprise what he called "a community that coalesces every summer."

Dre added that back when he was building his boat, he dreamed of cruising up and down the canal, visiting all the quaint little towns along the way. "But then all the other boaters told me, (Fairport) is the best place on the canal."

I don't know about that, but it is a great place to spend a few hours on a sunny summer Friday afternoon.

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AND DON'T MISS...

On your next trip to Fairport, make a point to check out the Thomas Creek Wetlands Walk. This beautiful 13-acre recreational and historical site is just steps from the canal off Lift Bridge Lane East, a hidden gem in the middle of the village. The Wetlands Walk features a separate quarter-mile-long trail along the creek, elevated boardwalk, observation platform and interpretive signage. There's plenty of parking at the trailhead.