My Summer With The One Wheelers

By Michelle Keezer
Coach, Andover One Wheelers

My first observation of the Andover One Wheelers was this past school year, when Shannon Gray coached the traveling team. I would pop into their practices just to watch them. I was fascinated by their skills on a unicycle and their ability to work together.

I soon found out, near the end of the year, that Ms. Gray was not going to be returning as the traveling team coach, so I saw this as a rare opportunity to try something different. And with that, I became the new traveling team coach.

My first trip with the team was to Washington, DC. This would be Ms. Gray's final parade, and my time to observe her in a parade. I would then see what it was like to be in front of the team giving them instruction as the parade went on. The team gave me goosebumps, they were so good.

My first parade was in Claremont and I was very nervous. The team assured me that it would all be fine and, with the help of everyone, I made it, even if the rain poured down in buckets!

As the summer went on, we performed at the Enfield Family Fair on June 24 with a routine that Diane Adams taught the team – Head in the Game – and did a fantastic job. This was the first time the new members performed with the whole team.

Following Enfield was Andover's Fourth of July celebration, which I was unable to attend. Diane Adams coached the team and did a fabulous job on top of organizing fundraising activities for the day!

On July 15 we traveled to the Weare Independence Day parade where we used our red, white, and blue ribbons and had the opportunity to all pile into an army vehicle to get our picture taken by Mrs. Hanscom. Come to find out, that same Army Humvee was with us in most of the parades to come.

The Pittsfield Old Home Day Parade was July 22 and had a pirate theme. The unicyclists all dressed up like pirates, had pirate gear, and rode to pirate music. We had so much fun that we also dressed up like pirates for the Andover Historical Society's Old Time Fair at Potter Place on August 6. We also traveled to Canaan, Belmont, and Chichester for parades and performances.

I have learned so much from many people, especially the riders themselves. They have taught me many things such as hand motions, what the locomotion and pinwheel look like, how to ride by twos, fours, and even eights. These riders are dedicated, motivated, and they all have a great attitude and know how to have fun! They have made my summer a fantastic one, and I look forward to a great year with many more performances and parades to come.

I want to thank Diane Adams, who is the assistant coach. She gives a lot of insight to the program and routines and music, and she also coaches the Learn to Ride program at AE/MS. I want to thank Armand Boivert for his time and his truck during all the parades. I want to thank Terri Lee, our bus driver.

Last but not least, I want to thank Alan and Lisa Hanscom for their countless hours on the phone trying to book our parades and doing all the behind-the-scenes stuff. Without them, I don't know what I would have done.

All in all, I have really enjoyed my first round of many parades and performances to come. I want to thank all of you who support the team and keep our program alive.

AOW tries out a cool Humvee at the Weare parade. Front seat, Olivia Blodgett, Cameron Wood. Back seat, Coach Michelle Keezer. Roof: Erin Hanscom. Photo: Lisa Hanscom

Andover One Wheelers: Big Benefits For The Kids

By Lisa Hanscom
Andover One Wheelers

Recently I have had two opportunities to reflect on what my daughters and their teammates gain from being members of the Andover One Wheelers Unicycle Team. The first opportunity was during an annual visit to the pediatrician, who, upon hearing their summer parade schedule, remarked, "You really must like parades."

The second came while putting together an AOW photo display poster for the Old Time Fair in Potter Place. In four short years with the Traveling Team, Megan (my oldest) has performed in more than 75 One Wheeler events, including four major trips. During that time, these are some of the benefits I have observed:

• From their earliest days in Learn to Ride and on through the Traveling Team, students increase their strength, coordination, and endurance while having fun. As their skills progress and they begin riding and performing, students develop self-confidence in their own abilities and a sense of pride and community as representatives of their community away from home.

• They develop close friendships and a sense of "Team" as they work together for desired outcomes, help each other attain goals, and learn to function as a group for the good of the group. All of this while meeting the academic guidelines of the school's varsity teams.

• Team members learn about long-term commitment and goal setting by participating in paid performances year-round and other fundraising activities such as ride-a-thons and car washes to help fund their annual trip. They learn about priorities and making hard choices when they need to choose between their commitment to the team and other activities, such as camp or birthday parties.

• The traveling unicyclists develop flexibility, patience, and understanding while traveling as part of a large group. They gain experience with schedules and deadlines, bus and plane travel routines, hotel and restaurant etiquette, and travel safety. They encounter cultural and social differences and learn to appreciate, and sometimes adapt to, those differences.

• In addition to developing interpersonal skills, students learn about the world outside New Hampshire. Past trips have taken students to large American cities including Phoenix, Miami, New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington DC; international destinations such as Ontario, Canada, and Nassau, The Bahamas; and historical and regional sites including Florida's Everglades, the Grand Canyon, national monuments, historical forts and Pennsylvania's Amish Country.

For all those reasons, I am glad that my daughters participate in the One Wheelers program. The skills they are developing are important life skills. I am grateful that the team has the support of the school and the School Board; for the countless parents, businesses, and individuals who donate to the program, and to the Hill's, the Roy's, Miss Gray, and now Mrs. Keezer, who have kept this program running for Andover children, past, present, and future.

One Wheelin' Through The Fall

By Lisa Hanscom
Andover One Wheelers

The Andover One Wheelers Traveling Team completed their summer parade schedule with a parade and performance in Chichester on August 19. The group returned to regular weekly practices on Wednesday, August 30, to get prepared for their annual appearance in the Northern Berkshires Fall Foliage Festival Parade in North Adams, Massachusetts, on Sunday, October 1.

In addition to North Adams, the team will appear in the Pelham Old Home Day parade on September 9 and anticipates Christmas Parade appearances in Concord and in Merrimac, Massachusetts, in November and December.

The Learn to Ride group, lead by Diane Adams, will resume after-school practices in early October. Mrs. Adams looks forward to seeing her Learn to Ride students and welcomes new riders to join this exciting and energetic after-school activity. Information will be sent home in September regarding a sign up night for all students participating in Learn to Ride this year or can be obtained by contacting Mrs. Adams at the Andover Elementary/Middle School at 735-5494.

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