

Andover One Wheelers

By Alan Hanscom
 Director, AOW Parent Boosters

Americans love a parade. Tossed candy, fire truck sirens, and Shriners on mini-bikes. Whether holiday, ancient explorer, or our brave veterans, if we really want to celebrate something, we have a parade. Many Andover students have a unique opportunity to experience more than a dozen parades up close and personal each year.

For Andover One Wheelers team members, their experience is from the inside of a parade. Parade day typically begins several hours before the floats actually start moving. For the 1 PM holiday parade in Merrimac, Massachusetts, the team meets at AE/MS at 8:30 AM. Uniforms and hair braids are set, unicycle tires are pumped up before the unicycles are loaded into the pickup, and heads are counted for our 9 AM departure. The 75-mile bus ride takes well over an hour, but proper planning adds comfort stops for happy riders.

We plan to arrive at our starting point at least an hour before parade time. That gets us into town before streets are blocked off and helps make sure our bus driver, Teri Lee, will be waiting for us at the other end. After the unicycles are unloaded and polished up and the sound system, flags, and banner

are ready to go, the waiting begins.

The kids can find lots of ways to kill an hour or more. Sometimes it is jumping rope on the side of the road. Or hula hoops. Or riding unicycles in a parking lot or along highway rumble strips. Even though they will ride non-stop for an hour in the parade, they still want to ride while they wait.

Occasionally we are lucky enough to have other interesting parade participants nearby to watch or interact with. Kindly Shriners have let the kids sit in their little go-cart tractor trailers. There are old cars and tractors, animals of all types, bands and flag-bearers, and lots of kids and clowns. Pets from a nearby home are always a great distraction.

The kids sometimes get a chance to try odd contraptions like a six-seat tricycle where the peddlers sit in a circle facing inward. In Weare, we discovered that the entire travel team fits inside one National Guard Hummer.

We had a great time in North Adams last year watching the meticulous process of hitching the Budweiser Clydesdales. Now *that* is a parade unit!

Through it all, the athletes are real troupers. We seldom hear a complaint about the waiting. And once the music starts, there's no stopping the Andover One Wheelers. They are worth the wait.



Last June, AOW team members practiced their singing skills to the song Lean on Me while waiting for the Stevens High School Alumni Parade in Claremont to start. (L-r) Lauren Boisvert, Diane Adams, Michelle Keezer, Megan Hanscom, Michaela Trefethen, Maddy Pfeifer, Danielle Adams, Robyn Boisvert, Rhianna Newton, Rebekah Stearns, Erin Hanscom, Maddie Trefethen, and Haley Adams. Photo: Lisa Hanscom

AE/MS SOCCER



Tournament action as the Andover 7th grade team (dark) plays the Andover 8th grade team (white). Kassie Lamper and Caleb Frantz are in pursuit of the ball followed by teammates Patrick Allen, Kyle Wiley, JJ Santiago, Emily Bentley, and Will Henriques. Photo: Bob Bussey

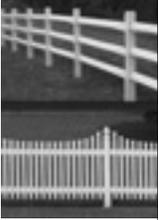


Tournament Champions! Back (l-r): Alec Walker, Henry Bendel, JJ Santiago, Becca Lance, Shawna Barton, Canon Brownell, Haley Peters. Middle: Meredith Cline, Sophie Viandier, Elizabeth Daneault, Emily Laro, Emily Bentley, Michael Donovan, and Norbu Dickinson. Front: Jessica George, Kassie Lamper. Out of the frame: Will Henriques. Photo: Bob Bussey

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