

Note: when you finish reading this newsletter, please pass it on to someone who doesn't know about AMBUCS.

Scarecrow Festival

On October 21st we hosted the 30th Annual Scarecrow Festival. The objective of this festival is to showcase AMBUCS Park in East Urbana. It's a wonderful resource for members of our community.



For 30 years we've been hosting the festival which includes things for adults and children alike. We have barrel train rides, left, hay rack rides, over 15 kids games, food, live music by the **Discount Rhythm Dukes**, vendors, and even a bake sale.

Over the year since the last festival, Billy Bob, our giant scarecrow got married! He was joined this year by Millie Jo and both posed for pictures with the attendees. Millie Jo's wardrobe was created by GCC member **MaryLou Younger**, who must have the world's biggest sewing machine! (at right, checking out the skirt with her husband, Wayne) Who knows, what, or who, might join Billy Bob and Millie Jo next year! Many children got their picture taken with Billy Bob and Millie Jo. Thanks to all who helped make this photo op possible.



The event would not be as much fun for the kids without the help from the U of I Alpha Phi Omega (APO) students, left, who gave up going to Homecoming to staff the 15+ games! They interacted with the kids, took tickets, and gave prizes to the winners. They also helped us sell some fresh pumpkins to the attendees. They seem to enjoy the day as well since the same students return each year and more join the list of volunteers. Thanks, APO!

A big Thank You to all the members, family, and friends who worked the day and all those who made things for the bake sale. A special thank you to member **Dana Daugherty** who baked a box full of delicious goods for us to sell.

Another big Thank You goes out to our supporters: **World of Powersports** (Mule & 4Wheeler), **Tony & Pam Irvin** (hayrack), **IL Portable Toilets** (porta-pottys), **Corteva Hybrids** (straw), **Mitch & Emily Rolson** (cooked pork butts), and **Crowley Pumpkin Patch** (pumpkins). We couldn't have this great event without them!

Hope to see everyone next year!

Calendar

2024

March 16—Cash Bash

April 5-6—Regional Conference, Champaign

April 20—BarStool Golf

May 18—Amtryke Road Rally



Amtryke Success Story

This month we have a guest writer, **Cynthia Heren**, mother of **Calab**, recipient of an Amtryke in the Fall of 2019. (lightly edited for space by Sally Denhart)

HOW AMBUCS GAVE MY AUTISTIC CHILD CONFIDENCE TO RIDE A BIKE

Riding a bike is one area where autism has made our family think outside the box. We have been on a long journey to get everyone a set of wheels they feel confident riding. People often take for granted all the skills involved in riding a bike. Our local AMBUCS chapter played a big role in getting our last child into some wheels he could enjoy.

My autistic child started out great riding a bike with training wheels like his sister. But as Caleb grew taller and became top heavy, the training wheels didn't do their job and he still fell over, leading to anxiety and frustration. A person must have a good sense of balance, coordination, and good muscle tone to ride a bike. It is not uncommon for autistic people to also have weaker skills in at least one of these areas. My child has amazing balance but does not have strong coordination or good muscle tone. Add some anxiety about falling, perfectionism to get it right the first time, and you can see how this is a challenging skill to teach.

On July 4th 2019, while I was venting to another special needs parent about our latest failed attempt at a family bike ride, they told us about free adaptive bikes available from our local AMBUCS Chapter. They call them Amtrykes. Each trike is custom built to meet the needs and ability of the rider. Sign me up!



That fall we got fitted for our Amtryke. Caleb was so excited to get to ride something that wouldn't tip over, he made the assistant chase after him as he rode the test bike around the park. He later came to a lunch meeting where he received his very own Amtryke! It had a rear basket with a personalized name plate and the build-team added a bell just for him because he mentioned on his application that he wanted a red bike with a bell.

For four years we have ridden bikes as a family thanks to AMBUCS. This year Caleb joined a local homeschool meet-up group that meets a bikeable distance away. With several neighborhood kids going, they meet together and bike each week, including him on his Amtryke. The only problem was the other teens have bikes with multiple speeds and that leaves him struggling to keep up. It was the motivation we needed to try again to ride two wheels.

This time we tried a different approach where he was always in control. We were just focused on trying something new. Three weeks into practicing, he did it! Caleb surprised even himself when he was successful. We made some adjustments to the seat and brakes to fit him better and he has not looked back. Best of all he can keep up with the group each week!



If there is one thing we have learned as a neurodivergent family is that "not now" doesn't mean "never". Our kids are amazing and when they put their minds to it, they can do great things. After building confidence and motor skills with a trike from AMBUCS and the motivation to be part of a group, Calab rode a two-wheeled bike!

Thank you AMBUCS for the chance to build confidence and independence!

—Cynthia Heren

Amtrykes

Our October Amtryke giveaways started with Daryl on October 3rd, (right). Daryl is 4 years old and has a 6yo and 8yo brother and sister that he loves. Despite a rough start to his life, Daryl is a typical happy kid who loves to sing and dance. His favorite singer is Bruno Mars. When he came in the door of our lunch room and saw the Amtryke, he jumped right on and started to ride. Mom and dad tried to get him off the trike but he would not let go. Finally, they bribed him with a french fry and Daryl released his grip on the Amtryke and was lifted off. As pictured at the right, Daryl is all smiles when he's on his Amtryke.



Our next giveaway was to Shy Camilla, left. She was fine sitting at the table with mom and dad but she did not want to be in the spotlight and clung tightly to her mom. We understand, little one. A bunch of strangers all looking at you can be scary. Happy riding, Camilla!

We hoped to have Aria, right, come see us at lunch to get her second trike but it just didn't work out for her to come in. We wanted her to have the Amtryke while the weather was still good for riding, so Scott Price delivered it to her home. He had to make very few adjustments as the trike was almost perfect for her. The warm Illinois weather has allowed Aria extra Fall time for riding. When you outgrow this one, Aria, we'll give you another!



Splinters from the Board

The Board of Directors met on October 25 at Denny's and addressed the following items:

==> voted to give \$600 to the DSO Christmas Party

==> discussed buying new tents to replace the ones broken at the Scarecrow Festival

Note: Board meetings will move back to Wednesdays, noon, at Denny's

disAbility Resource Expo



Market Place Mall was the location for the **disAbility Resource Expo** for 2023. The expo is the chance for people with disabilities to learn about the groups and agencies in the local area that provide help and support. GCC AMBUCS was there at station #26 of the 67 exhibitors at the event. Exhibitors included: **Urbana Early Childhood School & CU Early, The Autism Program at UIUC, Epilepsy Advocacy Network, Human Rights Authority, Urbana Police Department** and even the **Urbana Free Library**. Since it was so close to Halloween, the 28th, almost all of the booths had candy for the visitors. Our booth had lots of visitors but Harvey, Jr., (shown on the Amtryke at left), was the hit of the show. Lots of parents stopped to take a picture of their children with Harvey. It was a

great day for outreach! (Photo courtesy Diane Ducey, radio personality)

And Speaking of Outreach...

On October 18th, Scott Price and Sally Denhart gave a talk about AMBUCS to the **Champaign County Home and Community Education (HCE)** group. There were about 37 members in attendance. Scott brought one of our medium-sized Amtrykes with some extras and he brought an extra seat and back to demonstrate how each trike can be customized to the needs of the child or adult. The ladies of the group were attentive and asked good questions during the presentation. GCC member, **MaryLou Younger**, is the incoming president of the **HCE** and asked Sally and Scott to speak, adding more information about AMBUCS to what she had already been saying to her members. The talk might have helped as HCE member, **Richey Vanderstool**, decided to join AMBUCS! Welcome aboard Richey and thanks MaryLou for promoting AMBUCS! (Photo courtesy of Bobbi McIntire, HCE)



Tidbits

Member Pat Webb traveled down to St. Louis to meet with family and friends.

We had some special guests at the October 31st meeting. They didn't talk much but there was a lot of scratching.

Member Will Wade will be going on his first cruise ever with his sister. They will be heading to the warm Caribbean next month.



Winning Chances

10/03/23—50/50: \$7 to MaryLou Younger; Attendance: \$54 could have been won Cris Vowels but she was not present.

10/10/23—50/50: \$6 to Scott Price; Attendance: \$74 was won by Andy D'Urso.

10/17/23—50/50: \$9 to Daniel, Amtryke recipient; Attendance: \$14 was won by Keith Jamieson.

10/24/23—50/50: \$6 to Camilla, Amtryke recipient; Attendance: \$9 could have been won by Mike Foley but he was not present.

10/31/23—50/50: \$5 to Dana Daughtery; Attendance: \$18 could have been won by Deb Griest but she was not present.