

KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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Editor: Jim Gibson

First ASMR Open House in new 'home' turns out very well.



A total of about 250 visitors showed up on Dec. 9/10 for ASMR's first Annual Open House in the club's new location in the Westwood Professional Building at 598 Westwood. Members worked hard to get a layout up and running after the June, 2017 move-in, and although it was still a work in progress in many areas, trains were operating and visitors seemed to enjoy themselves. Especially popular again this year was the "treasure hunt", which consisted of a list of scenic detail items scattered all around the layout that Ken Riediger prepared for visitors to try and locate. The photos above capture some of what went on.

Upper left: *These excited ladies barely got inside the layout room before they had their cell phone cams out and were taking layout photos.* Upper middle: *Pres. Scott Fritz poses with Cecil Walston and his railroad "speeder" that he brought on a trailer to display in front of the club's new home as an Open House attention-getter.* Upper Right: *Looking at and taking photos of the layout were equally popular activities with visitors, as this photo shows.* Lower Left: *A new attraction this year was two large boxes of Brio-type wooden trains and accessories provided by Cecil Walston. Younger visitors (and in this case their dads, too) could play with them in the carpeted atrium area outside the layout room, and many did.* Lower Middle: *Two young visitors watch the ever-popular 'Thomas' make a few laps after they pushed the red activator button.* Lower Right: *The lad in a blue shirt with a color coordinated tablet cam avidly video recorded the train Chris Bisset (left) was driving around the layout.* Photos by Jim Gibson

The Word From the Prez

2017 was a busy, amazing year;
2018 offers growth, fun in future

I hope that everyone had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. As we say "good-bye" to 2017, and move into a brand new year, we should look back and be grateful for all the positive things

Size of the old one, and have it running in time to host a successful Open House in December. These accomplishments are a testament to the dedication and hard work of our members.

I am very grateful to everyone who helped make this year's Open House a very special event. For me, the best part of this occasion is observing the joy younger visitors demonstrate as they see and experience our layout.

I am looking forward to what 2018 may bring, and all the things we can accomplish when we work together. During the coming year, I'm especially excited about continuing with the completion of our layout, the addition of new members, and lots of fun running trains on this great new layout of ours.

Your President, Scott Fritz

The Editor Speaks

City leaders show apparent lack of interest in ASMR's civic values

Prior to this year's Open House, personal letters were sent to over a dozen "movers and shakers" in Abilene, inviting them to attend and see our new "home". Included among the invitees were the current mayor, the former mayor who dreamed up Abilene's first "Railfest" back in 1990, all the city council members, and several other Abilene dignitaries. As far as I can ascertain, out of all those who were invited, only two bothered to show up: city council member Bruce Kreitler and Larry Gill, the Dodge Jones Foundation grants administrator.



Above: City council member Bruce Kreitler (right) chats with some ASMR members and visitors during the club's 2017 Open House. It's worth noting that Mr. Kreitler also came to last year's Open House, and kindly responded with a written apology in 2015, when he had a conflict and couldn't attend that year. Photo by Jim Gibson

Perhaps I have an over-inflated notion of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders' importance to our community, and shouldn't be bothered that our special Open House invitations were ignored to the extent they were – or maybe I have really valid reasons for feeling the way I do: I'm proud of the fact that our club has been around over 25 years, after being founded by several model railroaders who responded to a call from (then) Mayor Gary McCaleb to participate in Abilene's first "Railfest". (Note: This was a big community event McCaleb started in conjunction with the Abilene Preservation League [APL] to mark the city's origin as a railroad town and celebrate it's impressive railroad heritage.) I'm proud that for several years our club's layout was a major attraction during that annual event, until the city and the APL quit supporting it and let it die. I'm proud that we have continued to promote Abilene's railroad heritage ever since, on our own,

through various public displays, programs, and activities. Considering all these things, I have a hard time understanding why our city leadership seems to have so little interest in what we do and how much potential we have as a civic attraction. Hopefully, councilman Kreitler has been impressed with what he has seen and learned at our Open Houses, and will bring the merits of ASMR to the attention of his city government colleagues. **JG**

ASMR Meeting Highlights

Here are some key items from the Dec. 2 business meeting starting at 10 a.m. and led by Pres. Scott Fritz. Treas. Ken England reported a club assets balance of \$3,226.93. Pres. Fritz reminded members about upcoming Open House and issues were discussed like setting up Thomas train, putting a skirt on the layout, cleaning up, etc. Members decided not to have an N-gauge layout display this year, and Ken E. said ads are already running in the newspaper. Ken R. said vests are in, and that he won't have a home layout Ops Session this month. Cody H. said the plastic modelers are supposed to put on a display during Open House.

Ken E. said a break-in was attempted on the club's back room during Thanksgiving weekend. Chris B. said he will donate security cams and install them. Ken E. said he had two flags made to put out front on poles during Open House. Ideas like showing DVDs, having a ribbon cutting, and a reception for Open House were discussed and tabled. The meeting closed at 10:26. Next meeting will be Jan. 6, 2018. **JG**



Crime Scene? Accident Scene?

Gene Danielski (L) and Charles Chinn (R) look at what appears to be some kind of a tragedy that left the victim's legs sticking out from under the layout. But, fear not, it was only Chris Bisset under there, stapling the skirt on from behind in time for the 2017 Open House. Photo by Tim Gibson