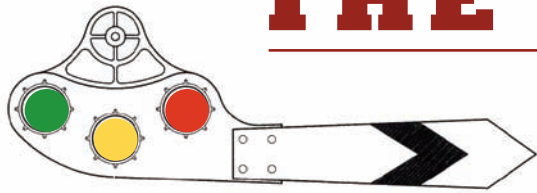


# THE SEMAPHORE



March 2013

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



## Happy Birthday High Wheeler!



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### Semaphore Editor:

Walt Herrick, Jr.  
waltherrickjr@gmail.com  
815-355-2003

### Circulation Editor:

Jim Allen  
jallenad60@comcast.net

### Layout and Design

Ann Allen

### Interview with Jeff Jarr

By Walt Herrick

This March marks High Wheeler's 35th birthday. Back in 1978 the Fox Valley Division ran the first High Wheeler Train Show and it has been going strong ever since. This month the

Semaphore interviews High Wheeler's brand new show manger, Jeff Jarr to discus its most recent history. Next month we'll go back in time and talk to a number of High Wheeler's "old heads" about the early days of the event. (If anyone reading this know anything of those early days, I really want to talk to you as many details of the early High Wheelers are still sketchy. Please call me at 815-355-2003. Thanks! Walt Herrick.) But now let's talk with Jeff Jarr.



Jeff Jarr, the Fox Valley Division's Superintendent and High Wheeler Show Manager.

**WH:** You've been on the job as the Fox Valley Division's Ways and Means Trainmaster for nine months now Jeff. How are things going?

**JJ:** Actually, I have only been the FVD Ways and Means Trainmaster for five months. Walter (Radtke) retired from the position in late September. As Superintendent and with approval of the board I appointed myself Ways & Means Trainmaster so that the HW team wouldn't lose any momentum. Since then the High Wheeler committee has been very busy making sure everything is ready for the upcoming show.

**WH:** What exactly does the Ways and Means Trainmaster do? What are your responsibilities?

**JJ:** According to the FVD by-laws "The Ways and Means Trainmaster shall be the manager of the Division's annual model railroad show, known as High Wheeler, and shall host the Appreciation Dinner for those members who worked at the show". *continued on page 2 and 3*

### Fun Stuff

This photo was taken at the Russian Federal Military Railway Service Training Facility. The Rig is the PB-3M portal track-laying machine. It is designed for the installation and dismantling of single or double track lines. It requires five workers to operate.



## Jeff Jarr *continued*

**WH:** That sounds like a lot of work. Why did you volunteer to do the job when you had just been elected to the demanding division Superintendent's position?

**JJ:** I volunteered to do the job because we were in a bit of a fix. Walter had been in charge of the High Wheeler show for the last ten years, and he knew all the details of running the show. With HW 2013 only a few months away, we didn't have much time to find someone new and bring them up to speed. I figured with the help of the rest of the FVD officers we could pull it off.

**WH:** What have been the most challenging aspects of Ways and Means Trainmaster?

**JJ:** The most challenging aspects of the job was determining what all needed to be done, who all needed to be contacted, and in what order things needed to happen. Walter kept most of that stuff in his head, nothing was written down. He gave us the old show exhibitor records and show floor plans to work from and he would give me some advice when I needed it over the phone. So I have been busy learning and documenting the process of managing the show.



**WH:** What have you enjoyed most about the job?

**JJ:** What I enjoy most is working with the rest of the HW team trying to improve some of the methods we use to prepare for and manage the show. Bert Lattan & Jim Osborn have been instrumental in getting us into some newer technologies. We are trying to reduce costs by using better data bases and using email and Constant Contact as our communication tool with the show exhibitors and vendors.

**WH:** How is this year's High Wheeler Train Show shaping up?

**JJ:** Thanks to all the help from the rest of the HW team, everything is going as planned and we are in good shape for the show.

**WH:** Has vendor and layout space filled at this point?

**JJ:** The deadline for exhibitors and vendors this year was December 31st. We had 95% of the train club layout space accounted for by early November, and the exhibitors and vendors space was full by the 1st week in January.



Many FVD volunteers are responsible for doing all the work necessary to put on a great show.



High Wheeler as seen from the Harper Gym's second floor viewing deck.

## Jeff Jarr *continued*

**WH:** We understand there will be big improvements in logistics for vendors and layouts this year. What are these?

**JJ:** Last year we had some difficulties with the logistics of getting the gym ready and it was sometime after 6:30 PM Friday before we could open the doors for everyone to get in. That didn't give the exhibitors or clubs enough time to set up for the show. So this year we worked with the facilities department at Harper to come up with a better solution. We are marking the gym floor and installing the power drops on Thursday night this year and we will be opening the gym at 1:00 PM on Friday. This should give everyone almost four more hours than we use to have to setup.

**WH:** Have we gotten enough FVD members to cover the many volunteer jobs that are done during High Wheeler?

**JJ:** Thanks to all the volunteers that signed up we currently have just enough help to run the show. We have about 70 positions this year with about 45 volunteers. It takes a lot of people working together as a team to make the show a success. They all did a great job last year and I know they will do a great job again this year. We have a great group of people

helping this year and I look forward to meeting them all at the show and the appreciation diner. We couldn't do it without them.

**WH:** Is there anything new we can expect to see at this year's High Wheeler?

**JJ:** Hopefully a more organized event this year. We have put a lot of effort trying to make the setup for the exhibitors and vendors a better experience. We are trying to improve the staging in the parking lot and make unloading quicker and easier for everyone. The High Wheeler key staff will also have new burgundy colored polo shirts this year to help the exhibitors identify who to ask for help at the show if needed.

**WH:** What does the future hold for High Wheeler?

**JJ:** We are always looking for new ideas to attract more families to the show and hobby. I have gotten some inquiries from new vendors & model train clubs regarding participation in next year's show already, so who knows. Maybe we will see some new displays next year.



### High Wheeler 2013

Make plans to attend this year's High Wheeler Train Show at Harper College in Palatine. The 2013 show promises to be bigger and better than ever with great layouts, vendors and displays. Kids love High Wheeler almost as much as they love Thomas the Tank Engine (who we hear will be attending the show on several different layouts including the FVD's own "Isles of Sodor" layout!). High Wheeler will be held on Saturday and Sunday, March 9th and 10th from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each day. The show is in Building M, the Harper College Sports Center. Come on out and bring the whole family for an enjoyable morning or afternoon of model trains!



# March Layout of the Month:

## FVD's Isle of Sodor

In honor of the High Wheeler Train Show March 9th and 10th, this month's Layout of the Month is the Fox Valley Division's, Isle of Sodor show display layout. The layout made its debut at last year's High Wheeler. You'll see it again at this year's High Wheeler, surrounded no doubt by a

bunch of kids. Take look at this fun layout which was built in less than three months by the FVD's Membership Promotions Trainmaster, Mike Hirvela. And also take a look at this month's Mike's Minute where he'll tell you how he did it. Mike also took the photos for both articles. WH.



Thomas the Tank Engine passes Salty Engine on the FVD's Isle of Sodor display layout.



Builder Mike Hirvela has wonderfully captured the look and feel of the original Thomas series as shown in this over all shot of about half of the 4 x 6 Sodor layout.



Mike's attention to detail has added to the charm and appeal of the Sodor layout.



The pink form board in the background and other areas of the layout were intentionally left unfinished to show viewers how the layout was built.

## Layout of the Month



Young fans of the Thomas series will tell you there are many more characters in the show than just Thomas. Here Salty says hello to Theodore the Tug Boat.



Salty and his "goods" train holds the siding for Thomas and his local passenger train with coaches Annie and Clarabel.

## Basic Layout Information

<b>Layout name:</b>	Isle of Sodor display layout
<b>Layout Builder:</b>	Michael Hirvela
<b>Layout Purpose:</b>	For display at train shows
<b>Layout Size:</b>	4 x 6 feet
<b>Layout scale(s):</b>	HO
<b>Layout style:</b>	Island
<b>Layout theme/locale:</b>	Thomas the Tank Engine's "home town" of the Isle of Sodor
<b>Construction started:</b>	December 18, 2011. Layout finished before High Wheeler 2012.
<b>Bench work:</b>	1 x 2 clear pine, egg-crate grid covered with a 1/8" flat Masonite® top and two layers of 1/2" extruded Styrofoam
<b>Roadbed:</b>	1/2" Homasote® strips, 1-1/4" wide, curf-cut for curves
<b>Track:</b>	Atlas code 100
<b>Turnouts:</b>	Peco code 100 with Insul-frogs
<b>Min. radius:</b>	18"
<b>Max grades:</b>	Level
<b>Scenery:</b>	A base of painted drywall compound over pink Styrofoam with a mix of materials and techniques for ground cover
<b>Structures:</b>	Various plastic kits, plastic built ups, scratch built, resin and some kit bashing
<b>Motive power:</b>	Thomas the Tank Engine, James, Salty, Emily from Bachman
<b>Rolling stock:</b>	Thomas's coaches Annie and Clarabel, Emily's coaches, and assorted freight rolling stock,
<b>Layout control:</b>	DC Analog
<b>Favorite aspect(s) of layout building:</b>	Track laying
<b>Model railroad influences:</b>	Thomas the Tank Engine children's television show, and the original Collected Stories of the Rev. Awdry about Thomas's many adventures



## Mike's Minute

By Mike Hirvela

I thought you might be interested in how this month's "Layout of the Month" was built and why. I built the Isle of Sodor layout a year ago over a three month period just before the 2012 High Wheeler Train Show. The layout was built at the suggestion of the FVD board who wanted to do two things:

- 1) demonstrate how a small layout is built showing various stages of its construction
- 2) have a layout that would draw kids' attention. (Boy, does it do that--Thomas is a kid magnet!)

I named the layout "Isle of Sodor" because I didn't have enough stick-on letters to spell "Island" on the layout's fascia. It turned out to be a great British sounding name and not the name "Island of Sodor" used on the Thomas series. (Thomas and Friends are from somewhere near Great Britain.) The layout is 4 x 6 feet to fit in the back of my truck. The bench work was made to be light weight. A 1 x 2 inch lumber "egg-crate" grid was covered with a flat top of ¼ inch Masonite and two layers of ½ inch extruded Styrofoam insulation board. These were screwed and glued together and then to the bench work. Code 100 Atlas flex track and Peco switches were laid on homosote roadbed. I love to get the "geometry" right in my track work so everything flows and runs smoothly. No special wiring was used since we only run one loco and consist at a time.

In doing the scenery and structures, I basically I tried to capture the feeling of the scenes and structures I'd seen on the Thomas TV show. The scenery base is stacked Styrofoam pieces, rough cut, shaped, and then covered with drywall compound. After the drywall compound was smoothed out, it was painted with a "dirt" color latex paint. (Have fun at the paint store asking for that color!). The painted Styrofoam hills were

then covered with a diluted white glue/water mixture, sprinkled with ground foams and then trees planted. The large viaduct is a sandwich of foam core board and a center section of 2" extruded Styrofoam insulation. Only one side is painted to look like brick and stone. Water is made from several coats of clear, shiny, polyurethane over a painted base. A mix of plastic kits and built-up structures were used, along with a fair amount of kit bashing and scratch building to get the look I wanted. Some basic detailing was done using a number of Atlas three-rail fence kits are on the backside, along with several sets of Atlas telephone pole sets, and lots of figures doing various things. Several areas of the layout were left unfinished to display the construction techniques used. FVD board member, Jim Osborn, provided the station and some other buildings for the display, along with the initial Thomas and James engines and car sets.

This was a fun, quick project, which was completed in 2-1/2 months. The true fun part though, is watching all those smiling faces (young and old) light up when they see Thomas and his buddies rolling around the Isle of Sodor. And don't think the kids don't pay attention to the details in the stories on the TV show, or that the trains are just for boys. I had one little girl, about 6 years old, tell me I had Thomas' coaches incorrectly placed. "Annie always goes first," she said. (Yes, I was nit picked by a six year old girl!) So, I fixed the order of the cars per her instructions and she was pleased. Another little girl was also very pleased that I was running Emily and her coaches. She was elated that Emily, the girl engine, was getting equal billing. Bless her heart. Here's to another fun-filled High Wheeler show!



## February 2013 Monthly Meeting

by Mike Hirvela

The Semaphore's Editor was still in Florida for the FVD's February monthly meeting, so he asked me to pinch hit for him in writing the meeting wrap up. Next year I think I'll go to Florida and he can stay here and write up the meeting! On February 17, we had 35 attendees present. This represents 35/230 or 15% of the membership roster. I was hoping for about 50 attendees again, but a number of folks are out of town on their winter hiatus, and some members were involved in the Madison, Wisconsin, Mad-Town Train Show. (But where were the other members? Since I'm the FVD board member in charge of membership promotions, I'd love to come up with a good idea or two to get them to a meeting. But, let's continue with the February meeting wrap up.)

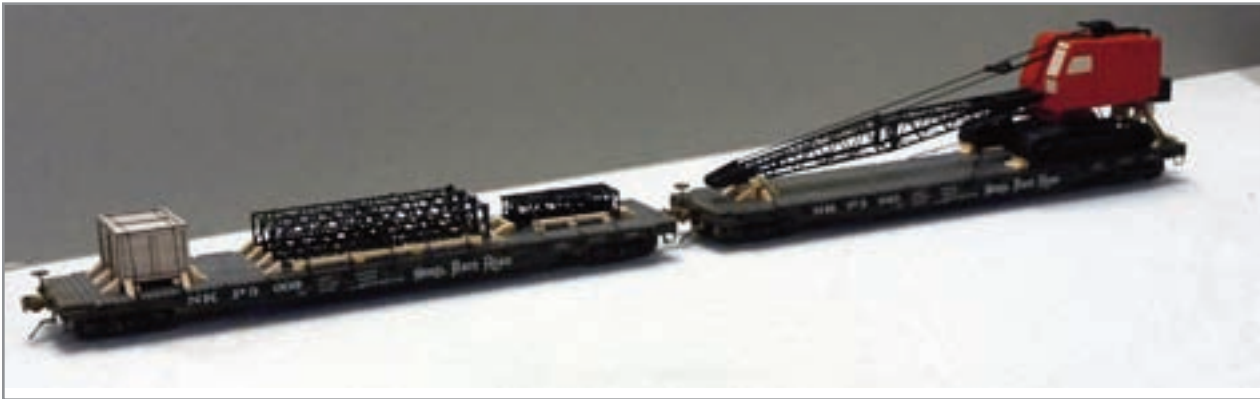
As usual Superintendent Jeff Jarr led off the meeting with a humorous railroad-related story, and then reviewed the agenda for today using a Power Point presentation. He continued with NMRA National, Regional and Divisional news, noting we needed to fill only two volunteer slots for our upcoming High Wheeler Train Show (March 9 & 10 at Harper College in Palatine). Through the actions of some (up til then) unobligated members, we were able to fill both volunteer slots. Jeff also reported on details of the High Wheeler Show preparations, and briefly covered the logistics for show operations. Jeff also asked the Board Members for a brief report of their areas of responsibilities which they then provided to the members.

February's clinic was a presentation on the 2012 Steam Festival held in Rock Island, Illinois. MMR Dave Leider and our resident S scaler, Joel Lebovitz, both attended the Festival and provided commentary and insights for David's fine slides and video of the event. The Festival drew Fort Wayne-based Nickel Plate Road 2-8-4 #765, Iowa Interstate's two Chinese-built 2-10-2's, and two privately-owned 0-4-0 saddle-tank

engines. Also present were the Illinois Railroad Museum's "movie star", Nebraska Zephyr passenger train, and several other diesel engines from the IRM collection. BNSF contributed a new state-of-the-art diesel locomotive for display. Steam Festival attendees were treated to short, several mile excursions down Iowa Interstate's main line in push-pull mode. Perhaps the biggest draw of the show was Kloke Locomotive Works beautiful 1860's era, 4-4-0 reproduction, the #63 Leviathan. For those of you unfamiliar with the Leviathan, builder Dave Kloke spent 10 years scratch building (in 1:1 scale!), this fully operational steam locomotive in his shop in Elgin, Illinois. See the November 2012 Semaphore's Mike's Minute for my account of the November 4th Kloke Open house with photos of the Leviathan. From the slides and video, everyone had a good time at last summer's Rock Island Steam Festival. As an extra bonus to February's clinic, David Leider presented information on the scale time it takes to do various railroad operations. See this month's Modeling Tip for more information on this.

We only had two entries for February's contest which was "an open load on two or more cars". It was won by Jim Allen with his two flat car load model of a Sheepscoot Model Works lattice boom-equipped crawler crane with extra boom parts. I took 2nd place with a load of long bar joists over three flat cars. Dave Crement brought in a nicely done scratch built East Broad Top deck girder bridge diorama for our viewing pleasure. Jeff wrapped up the meeting noting there is no regular March meeting with the High Wheeler show going on March 9th and 10th instead. The next regular member meeting will April 21, when we hold elections for Assistant Superintendent and Treasurer. We'll start at 1:00 p.m. for that meeting. See you then and see you before then at High Wheeler 2013!

## February Contest Winners



1st Place Jim Allen's HO Scale Link Belt Crane



2nd Place Mike Hirvela's HO Scale Truss Load

### Modeling Tip

Now posted on the FVD web site is a chart listing 14 typical switching tasks and the time it takes to complete these tasks in HO scale. (See the home page of the current web site for a direct link to the chart.) Well known model railroad author and professional layout builder, Lance Mindheim, developed the chart and presented it in a clinic he gave at Naperville's Prototype Rails 2013. David Leider attended the clinic and brought the chart back for us with Lance's permission.

It includes such things as how long it takes a loco to travel five feet going five mph, how long it takes to replace one empty car with one loaded car on a siding, and how long it takes to connect air hoses. Lance's chart is for HO scale, but with a little adjusting it could be applied to any scale. These operations can be an easy way to add more realism to how we run our trains, and are just plain interesting. Take a look! W.H.



## April Elections

Our April monthly meeting will be held earlier than usual at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 21st to accommodate this year's board elections. We will be electing an Assistant Superintendent and Treasurer. Candidate bios for Bob Shelmon, Jr., candidate for Assistant Treasurer, and Tim Kleimeyer, candidate for Treasurer, are included below. At this writing these are the only candidates running for these two offices.

### Candidate for Assistant Superintendent, Bob Shlemon, Jr.

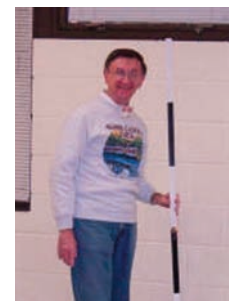
In 2012 Bob was appointed by the FVD board to fill the Assistant Superintendent position when Harry Sorenson resigned due to health reasons. He would like to continue on serving the division as its Assistant Super. The position has involved Bob in many different parts of the FVD and the model railroading hobby which he has enjoyed. Bob started in model railroading when he was given my first train at the age of six with an S Scale American Flyer. As his interest grew he switched to HO Scale, started going to assorted train shows including the 1976 National Train Show held in Rosemont (NMRA National connected). In 1977 Bob joined the NMRA and three years later upgraded to life member. He's been involved with clubs and the NS&W Division in which he served in their early years in various posts including Refreshment Chairmen, Assistant Superintendent, and Editor of the 400 Bulletin. In the last years of the NS&W



Bob and his son Eddy helped in any capacity they could, including the NS&W Modular Group. Since the merger of the NS&W and FVD, Eddy and Bob have been attending FVD meetings and helping out in any way they could, including the refreshment area.

### Candidate for Treasurer, Tim Kleimeyer

Tim Kleimeyer is our current Paymaster and is running for re-election. He has been our Paymaster since being elected in 2004. Prior to that, Tim was our Assistant Superintendent. He models the Chicago area in HO in the mid 1990's. His layout will include Metra, UP (CNW), and the Sleepy Creek Railway, part of the CNW UP did not want. Tim started with American Flyer in the 1950s and still has his original "S" scale trains all of which are in working order.



As Paymaster, Tim pays the division bills and reimburses members for approved expenses made on behalf of the division. Each month, he balances the checkbook and presents a financial statement to the BOD. He also makes the annual report to the membership at the April business meeting. For High Wheeler, Tim is on site both days of the show managing the cash flow from the ticket sellers and the door prize give away. With the new IRS rules for reporting for small non-profit organizations, Tim has been doing the IRS filing each year.



### John Hoker

Fox Valley Division and former North Shore & Western member, John Hoker, passed away on February 24, 2013. John was Superintendent of the NS&W division in the early 1980's and was a frequent participant with the NS&W Modular Club. After John retired, he worked part time at Des Plaines Hobby. He was a regular attendee at FVD monthly meetings and will be missed. Our condolences go to John's wife Judy and his children Richard and Sharon. Jeff Jarr.

## Meeting Dates

Here's our meeting dates for the last four months of the 2012-13 meeting year. Note there is no meeting in March due to High Wheeler, and the April meeting's 1:00 p.m. start time and elections.

Date	Clinic	Contest	Other
March 9,10	FVD's 2013 High Wheeler Train Show Saturday and Sunday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Harper College in Palatine. There'll be lots of layouts, vendors and fun so c'mon out!		
April 21	Modeling Open Loads by "Mr. Open Loads", Charlie Wickhorst	Heavy open load on a single depressed car	1:00 p.m. start! Elections for Ass't. Superintendent and Treasurer
May 19	TBD	Whimsical or humorous open load	Regular 1:30 p.m. start. Last meeting of 2012-2013 meeting year. Have a great summer!

## Fox Valley Division Board

### Superintendent

Jeff Jarr jjarr@comcast.net 773-286-8755

### Assistant Superintendent

Bob Shlemon, Jr. shlemonjr@att.net 773-334-4208

### Chief Clerk

Leif Hansen mudhen454@att.net 847-437-7124

### Paymaster

Tim Kleimeyer kleimeyert@comcast.net  
847-426-4732

### Achievements & Contests

Jim Landwehr JLandwehr901@yahoo.co  
847-577-7984

### Clinics

David Leider MMR sooauthor@netzero.net  
847-253-7484

### Publications Editor

Walt Herrick wherricks@yahoo.co 815-459-1334

### Circulation Editor

Jim Allen jallenad60@comcast.net 847-356-2061

### Membership Promotions

Mike Hirvela mhirvela1@gmail.com 847-360-9579

### Membership Records

Bert Lattan blattan@comcast.net 847-295-7959

### Public Relations & Webmaster

Jim Osborn FVDWebsite@comcast.net 815-578-8315

### Ways & Mean -High Wheeler

Jeff Jarr jjarr@comcast.net 773-286-8755

It's not too soon to start making plans for the Milepost 50 Midwest Division Spring Convention! The convention will be held in Indianapolis May 2 – 5, 2013 and promises to be a good one. See the Winter Waybill newsletter for more details and an application blank to the convention.



Join Us As We Celebrate 50 Years!

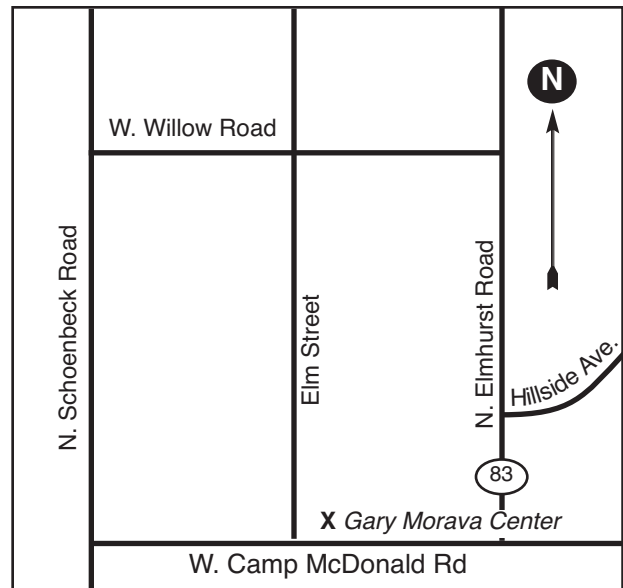
## About the Fox Valley Division

If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane and Lake Counties in Northeast Illinois. About 240 members of varied ages and modeling ability levels belong to the FVD. Almost all modeling scales are represented in our division. Membership in the division is free as are the Semaphore newsletters.

FVD general meetings are held September through May at the Gary Morava Center in Prospect Heights from 1:30 to about 4:30 pm. Each meeting features a clinic, model contest, information of interest to the membership, and a time for socializing. Outings, layout tours, and operating sessions are also held periodically in addition to, or instead of the general meetings. To promote the hobby of model railroading, the FVD sponsors and runs a large train show called "High Wheeler" in early March each year at Harper College in Palatine, Illinois.

We encourage you to take advantage of all the FVD has to offer. We are here to help answer your questions, help improve your modeling, and help you better enjoy the great hobby of model railroading. Join us at a FVD meeting or outing. We'd love to see you. Or, visit us on the web at: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org).

**Questions? Contact FVD Superintendent, Jeff Jarr or any board member listed on the "FVD board section of this newsletter. We are here to help you!**



## Next Meeting

The Fox Valley Division will hold its next regular monthly meeting **Sunday, April 21, 2013** from 1:00 to about 4:30 p.m.

Meetings are held at the Gary Morava Center, 110 W. Camp MacDonal Road in Prospect Heights, IL. We invite you to attend and look forward to seeing you!



**Fox Valley Division**  
**Midwest Region-NMRA**  
P.O. Box 1535  
Arlington Heights, IL 60005-1535