Volume 26 Issue 6 August 2026

The New Desert Dispatch

Timetable

ARHS
Tempe Museum
Work Sessions
Monday & Wednesday
9:00am to 3:00pm
Tempe Museum
2530 S. Rural Rd.
Tempe, AZ

Elections

NMRA PSR Region

Online Deadline
11am (PT) Aug. 2

https://secure.electionbuddy.com/ballot/r1/277Y-CPFX-WMR3-9MXH

ARHS Board

at General Meeting Wed. Sept. 9 @ 10:30am Please submit your proxy to David Brown if you will not be attending the meeting.

2026 Events

The Hobbyist
Model Train Show
1st Sat. of the Month, 7am
1764 W. Broadway Rd.
Mesa, AZ

ARHS Swap Meet
November 14, 9am
Tempe Nazarene Church
3929 Rural Rd.
Glendale, AZ

From the Business Car

Craig Faris, President ARHS

This issue of the New Desert Dispatch is going to go into some detail about what running the business end of our society is like, our relationship with the NMRA, why that's important, and why you may want to become more involved by becoming an officer.

When I was first elected, we were a club, with the only business responsibilities being building an exhibit at the Capitol. My, how we have grown. Now we have to monitor all of the expenses related to the physical building (Thanks, Dan), an LLC for the rental business (We are blessed that Jesse handles the lion's share of that responsibility), our income streams, donations, oh, and the finances related to building a world-class model railroad exhibit. (Thanks again, Jesse).

In the near future, maybe a year or so, we will have to segue into a museum that is open to the public. We will need to have different work days and cover the necessary shifts to be manned for the public. I believe we will want to have more of an active role in the community, with workshops and other educational events. I do see additional "committee" assignments to help manage the additional responsibilities. The president can't possibly handle every department of the operation. I rely on the officers, board members, and committee members to execute their roles. Which, by the way, they do a fantastic job! Our members' involvement will be just as important then as it is now during construction.

Our relationship with the NMRA will become even more important, not just for the insurance, but for making our organization more relevant to the local hobby. There are divisional roles that our membership could fill to help in the NMRA. AZ Division. I admit that I have not been very active with the division. We can start the involvement by attending the quarterly meetings. I would encourage everyone in the group to start attending these meetings, myself included. Also, anyone in our group can take models they have made to the meeting for evaluation. Keep in mind that our hobby probably would not exist without the NMRA and the standards they have maintained across all manufacturers. They continue to play a critical role in the hobby. (Continued on Page 2)

NMRA Events

2026 National Convention

Chattanooga, TN

July 27- August 2,

Chattanooga Convention Center
One Carter Plaza,
Chattanooga, TN
37402

2026 PSR Regional Convention

San Diego

Sept. 9 - 13,

Doubletree Hilton
Mission Valley
7450 Hazard
Center Dr
San Diego, CA
92108

PSR AZ-Division Meet

Scottsdale

Sat. Oct. 17,
8 am - 5 pm

Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ
4425 N Granite Reef Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ
85251

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The divisional convention will be held in Scottsdale next year, and I want to encourage all of our members to attend. You will have a great time and will learn a lot that will further our own layout. Attendance is the only way that the division can make the convention pay for itself.

In closing, this group does not shy away from responsibility. The roles may change as we transition from construction to operating a museum (I know, in the future), but feel free to talk to me about areas you may want to take a greater role in, as a board member, an officer, or even a committee role.

Always a Great Day at the ARHS! Craig

Huff Without Puff Finds a New Home



From left to right, members Richard Lee, Matt Davis, Al Schultz and Craig Faris say good bye to ole' #3.

Society members said goodbye to ole #3, our lobby locomotive, on Monday, July 13. The locomotive was a gift from the Tempe History Museum. ARHS had high hopes of finding a practical use for the golf cart disguised as an engine. Unfortunately, the piece took up too much space and was difficult to move.

"Huff Without Puff" has now found a new home at the Museum of Casa Grande, 110 Florence Blvd., Casa Grande, Arizona. The museum intends to add some cars, and the train will be used to shuttle kids around during special museum occasions.

Casa Grande has also agreed to loan ARHS some of their extensive collection of railroad memorabilia, for display in our museum, once we are up and running.

So, while we are sorry to see Huff Without Puff leave, we're glad it has found a new home where it can once again be put to good use.

ARHS Officers 2023-2025
President - Craig Faris
Vice President – Ken Nelson
Secretary - Dave Brown
Treasurer - Dan Kubarych
Director – Dennis Ranke
Director – Dewayne Koltin
Past Presidents – Don Stewart, Jesse Poole

The New Desert Dispatch is a publication of the Arizona Railroad Historical Society. Views expressed by guest authors are their own and do not reflect the opinions or positions of the ARHS.
Editor - Dennis Ranke
Dranke@aol.com

Mission Statement

The Arizona Railroad Historical Society strives to create a world class railroad experience which includes history, education and railroad operations centered around the state of Arizona.

Arizona Railroad Historical Society

ARHS Eastside Swap Meet and Open House a Huge Success



ARHS added a new summertime Eastside Swap Meet, held on Saturday, July 11 in Tempe. The event opened early at 8:30 a.m., and by the end of the day, 213 eager shoppers had passed through the doors to shop at 74 vendor tables.

The meet was a huge success and broke all previous sales records. Most of our Society members were on deck to help out and keep things running smoothly throughout the day.

Meanwhile, the ARHS Tempe Museum held our first open house. Between 80 and 100 visitors stopped by and were excited to see the progress we have made since we began building at this location. The public was unanimously appreciative of our collective efforts, and we received many compliments along with $100. in the donation jar. We received requests for four membership applications.

Thanks to all our Society members who showed up and worked hard to make this double-headed event possible. It was a great day for ARHS and a successful day on both tracks!

NMRA Az Div. to go Dormant Soon

Offices go unfilled , Out of money by 2028

By Paul Burke, NMRA Arizona Division Superintendent

The second year of my term as Superintendent is ending. It is time to seriously reflect on what still must be done for the Arizona Division. The best way to consider this is as a State of the Division address. So here is the state of the Arizona Division.

The Arizona Division of the NMRA is in trouble. This is a blunt statement, but it is the truth. As you read this and if you feel that your toes are being stepped on, consider why you feel this way. If you ignore this message then you are to blame and part of the problem. I am calling it as it is, not as you want to see it.

1) As it stands we have only a few individuals working to keep the wheels turning. I, as Superintendent, give those few working a huge tip of my hat for assisting me. We have several unfilled positions for Division Leadership that have gone unfilled for almost two years. Seeing as how the Division has been split into three Sub-Divisions, one person will not be overwhelmed with the duties of any Position(s). And since each Sub-Division handles their own needs and wants, each operates as an independent unit in the Division. So again, the question begs why are there open Positions?

2) Division meets have a poor turnout. Two meets have seen a deficit after all things are accounted for. Twenty five to thirty five members attending Local Meets is not going to make it viable for a Meet. What is missing from the meets? This has been an outstanding issue and there have been no real concrete responses. These are your meetings and what is lacking? Why don't you attend these meets? Along with this the Celebration Room has had abysmal participation as well. The Celebration Room is not just for judging or evaluating your work. Models are encouraged to be presented for showing off your work to the Division.

3) Ideas are floated by members now and then, but the expectation is that someone else will do them. Come on now that is way too easy of an excuse to complain but not do anything. I have stated that members need to do something without being asked, what have you done?

4) The Regional Convention is next year. There is an excellent cadre of volunteers shepherding the groundwork for and addressing the functions of the Convention. We as a Division need to fully support this Convention by attending. This will make or break this Division. You think I am kidding? If we take a loss on the Convention, we are out of money. I cannot state to it any plainer.

So now it's time to get some serious discussions going as to how the Division can survive the coming year. I want to ask what can be done for you to make the Division and NMRA more meaningful? I will take a page from Burger Kings new CEO, here is my phone number: 518-860-4590. Call me if you have meaningful conversation. But remember you are expected to help cure those issues. I shall also direct any comments to the appropriate Leadership Chairperson. Also, you may contact any of the Leadership personnel on the Division web page.--

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If we as a Division do not heed this message, the Arizona Division will be going down the tracks without passengers. The Convention will be the deciding factor in this process. I have a question for you. If you, as a member of the NMRA, attend National Conventions and National Functions; then why can't you do the same for your Division? I realize that this is a hobby but it remains on the members to make or break the Organization. Being quiet, uninvolved, and complaining is dooming us. This is one of the last chances to try turning things around.

Elections are coming up at the Annual Meeting. As Superintendent this will be the immediate goal of the Leadership Members for the next two years: How do we get ourselves off our couches and out of the house to share our insight and experience with others? If you do not contribute anything to the Division then you will not get anything back. If no one contributes then the Arizona Division will go dormant, period.

Thank you.--

Paul Buhrke, MMR #721,
AZ Div. Supt. PSR-NMRA
518-860-4590



ARHS Elections Coming in September

Three seats are up for grabs

The ARHS will have its annual election on September 9th. 3 seats will be voted on. Vice-President, Treasurer and the Board seat held by Dennis Ranke. Ken Nelson is stepping down as vice president. Dan Kubarych is re-running for Treasurer.

Per the Constitution, Article III, page 4 item 4. No person shall become an Officer of the Society until that person has been a regular member for at least one (1) year; or a director, until that person has been a regular member for at least six (6) months. All qualified regular members will be on the nomination list unless you notify the Secretary, David Brown, that you will not accept a nomination for a specific office.

If you plan to run please submit a short bio and the reason you're running by August 30, 2026, for publication in the New Desert Dispatch.

Here are the duties of each office as described in the ARHS By laws:

Vice-President: The Vice President (VP) shall be responsible for public relations, notifying applicants of acceptance, or denial of membership and shall assume the duties of the President in case the office of president shall become vacant or in case of the inability of the President to discharge the duties of that office.

The VP shall serve as the Membership Chair and shall advise prospective members as to society policy.

The VP shall procure and distribute statements of intent and rules of conduct to prospective members.

The VP shall be responsible for maintaining and updating the Constitution and By-Laws either by the VP or a committee headed by the VP.

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall have custody and keep accounts of all moneys, funds and property of the Society, unless otherwise determined by the BOD, and shall render such accounts and present such statements to the BOD or President as may be required of the the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall deposit all funds of the Society which may come into the Treasurers hands in such banks as the BOD may designate. The Treasurer shall collect all donations and fees.

The Treasurer shall keep a posted rooster of all donation payments.

The Treasurer shall give monthly financial reports to the BOD, specifying collections, disbursements and balance on hand.

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The Treasurer will file all yearly Federal and State forms required to maintain non-profit status and 100% NMRA status.

The Treasurer shall accomplish any other normal duties performed by Treasurers of other organizations.

Upon expiration of the Treasurers term in office, the Treasurer shall turn over all records and monies belonging to the Society.

The treasurer shall instruct the incoming Treasurer as to the methods used in accounting and bookkeeping used.

Directors: The Directors shall, along with the other members of the Board, pass on all matters of Society business and finance.

The members of the BOD shall entertain suggestions from the membership as to needed actions to be taken by the BOD or members and shall act on such suggestions at the Board meetings.



Left: Reading & Northern # 2102, is a **4-8-4 T-1 steam loco,** operating alongside **UP's Big Boy No. 4014.** Below: NS 1776, named **"The Bell,"** is an **EMD SD70ACe** specially painted for America's 250th anniversary with striking graphics of the **Liberty Bell.**



Southern Pacific No. 2562 is a historic **2-8-0 "Consolidation" steam locomotive** preserved at the Arizona Railway Museum in Chandler, AZ.



Chattanooga Hosts 90th NMRA National Convention

By Dennis Ranke

The 90th Annual National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) Convention was held July 27 through August 2 at the Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Nearly 600 model railroaders attended the six-day event, from across the United States and several foreign countries.

Arizona was well represented at the convention. Attending from our Society were Bob Bridges, John Clark, Bob Gibbs, Jim Paulsen, Ray Rumble, and myself. Others from Arizona included MMR Frank Baker, Arizona Division Asst. Superintendent Michael Guinn and Arizona Division Director Chris Thompson.

There was no shortage of things to do. Clinics ran every day from 8:30 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. A total of 197 clinics and "Modeling with the Masters" classes were offered. Topics covered every aspect of the hobby, from scenery and structures to operations, electronics, photography and prototype research. No one could attend them all.

Another popular part of the convention was the layout tours. Thirty-four home layouts were open for viewing, including Willie Clont's **Soddy Daisy Southern**, David Houser's **Nonaville**, and Roy Masterson's **Southern Railway Cherokee Division**. Eleven of the layouts also hosted operating sessions, giving attendees the opportunity to run trains on some of the country's finest model railroads. For those new to operations, **Operations Road Show**, a regular feature at NMRA National Conventions, offered hands-on instruction in a friendly, low-pressure environment, helping modelers learn the basics before stepping onto a full-size operating layout.

A Celebration of Models, Photos and Crafts took place in the contest room. It's much less about who wins, but more about sharing our accomplishments and techniques, teaching and learning, and perhaps most important encouraging and inspiring each other. It was a busy place throughout the week as models and photographs were evaluated on the national level for awards and Achievement Program recognition. A special addition this year was the **Rock City Barn Contest**, where modelers built their own version of the famous southern landmark.

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From left to right: John Clark, Dennis Ranke, Jim Paulsen, Ray Rumble, Bob Bridges and Bob Gibbs.

Photo By: Michael Maurer

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One of the convention features was the exclusive **Summerville Steam Special** behind Southern Railway 2-8-2 No. **4501**. The excursion, sponsored by **ScaleTrains**, took passengers from Chattanooga to Summerville, Georgia, This one time only excursion, was offered only for the convention. Tickets sold out quickly. For 2026, the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum returned No. 4501 to its familiar **Southern Railway green and gold** passenger paint scheme, the first time the locomotive has worn those colors in more than 30 years. The repaint commemorates the 60th anniversary of Southern Railway's steam excursion program. Following recent restoration work and an a earlier mechanical overhaul, No. 4501 looked and ran beautifully. For many rail fans, seeing the famous Mikado back in green was one of the highlights of the convention.



(Photo by Bob Bridges)

NMRA President Gordy Robinson addressed members during Thursday evening's National Membership Meeting. He announced a new Achievement Program Certificate for members who build modular layouts. Future convention sites were also announced: Tacoma, Washington, in 2027; Rochester, New York, in 2028; and Indianapolis, Indiana, in 2029.

Robinson also spoke about the challenges facing the organization. NMRA membership reached a high of 32,000 members in 1992. Today, membership stands at about 15,000. The organization has lost about 1,000 members over the past few years. If that trend continues, membership could fall to around 10,000 by 2030.

The association also took a financial hit this year. Medicare Plus insurance providers have discontinued programs that paid NMRA dues for retirees, resulting in an estimated $18,000 loss to members.

One of the biggest attractions was the National Train Show, held Saturday and Sunday. What is believed to be the world's largest T-TRAK layout was displayed. The N scale modular railroad measured approximately 100 by 100 feet and contained an amazing 93 scale miles of track. It attracted large crowds throughout the weekend as trains continuously circled the layout.

As always, the NMRA National Convention was a chance to learn new modeling skills, renew old friendships, make new ones, and come home with plenty of ideas for the layout.



Above:Southern Locomotive #4501, during a special night shoot. Photo By: Bob Bridges



Chattanooga Choo Choo



Above the National Train Show





Moon Pie a Chattanooga favorite since 1917.

ARHS Member Brings Home Top Honors from NMRA National Convention

By Asher Baldwin

The Arizona Railway Historical Society has another reason to celebrate.

ARHS member and photographer Dennis Ranke returned from the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) National Convention in Chattanooga, Tennessee, with some of the highest honors awarded in the convention's judged photography contest.

Ranke's color photograph, **"Grease,"** was selected **Best of Show** from 46 entries. His photo **"The Conductor"** earned **First Place** in the **Color Prototype** category. Receiving Best of Show is the contest's highest recognition and reflects the judges' choice for the finest photograph entered this year.

His success didn't end there. Ranke also received two Second Place ribbons and one Third Place ribbon in the **Black & White Prototype** category, giving him five national awards in this year's competition.

The annual NMRA photography contest attracts talented railroad photographers from across the United States, with entries judged on composition, lighting, technical quality, and their ability to tell the story of railroading.

Congratulations to Dennis on an outstanding showing at the NMRA National Convention. His achievements not only reflect his dedication to railroad photography but also bring national recognition to the Arizona Railway Historical Society and Arizona's railroading community.

First Place. "The Conductor"



Best of Show. "Grease"



(Editors Note: Special Thanks to writers Paul Burke, Asher Baldwin, and Photographers, Bob Bridges and Michael Maurer for their contributions to this issue)