

# The Telegraph Key

An NMRA Sunshine Region Monthly Publication

January 2024



**Sunshine Region - NMRA**

Where modelers come to share, develop, and learn new skills.

Welcome to the best region under the sun!

2023 Sunshine Region Convention  
Convention Registration

[WWW.NMRA SunshineRegion.org](http://WWW.NMRA SunshineRegion.org)



**Here's to a Great 2024!**



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## Editor's Message



Preparing for the second edition of the Telegraph Key, I was finding myself wondering what words I could pass along to you, the SSR membership, that would show you what wisdom and charisma I possess so that you would find me worthy of your time.

Thing is, I'm not really all that special – I'm probably quite mundane compared to many others in our hobby. There are multiple NMRA members far and wide who produce so much more than I do in relation to modeling, volunteering, and promoting Model Railroading.

You know what I'm good at though? Helping to continue my hobby.

A little while ago, I was talking to a friend in the hobby and we were discussing our mutual lack of producing "output", as it were. We talked about all the great things we had witnessed others doing and then thought of us. Yes, "us" just weren't doing much over the past few years. Or so we thought.

During our discussion, we came to the conclusion that we HAD been productive – just not in the usual way of thinking.

We recognized that our years of armchair modeling had indeed produced results or "output". That output comes in the form of ideas, plans, and progress towards a solid model railroading future. We had both served the railroading community with our volunteer time, with our efforts to benefit the SSR membership, and with our insight and daring to try to make things better in our region.

With that in mind, neither of us had that same lack of output feeling. Our hobby needs people to DO things. Doing things doesn't just mean that you make an award winning model, or that you complete a wonderful layout. It means much more than that – it can mean giving your time to help your Division Superintendent, it can mean volunteering to sweep the floor for the next open house at your club, it can mean so many things. Don't deny your ability in our hobby, we all have the possibility of doing much more than we think will make a difference. The New Year is as good a time to think about the things that YOU can do to "continue your hobby". I look forward to seeing what all of you can do.


**Mark Lewalski**

**Editor, Telegraph Key**

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## The Mail Car



Photo courtesy of Smithsonian National Postal Museum

Last month, I received a nice email from Jim Kellow, MMR. In his email, Jim stated that he thought my initial Telegraph Key was “*Great, no it is better, it is fantastic*” and that he was going to share my thoughts about getting back into the hobby in a couple articles in online magazines . **Jim, thanks for the positive comments.**

If **you** have any comments, questions, or suggestions to pass on, positive or critical, please email me at [vwtrainsailor@gmail.com](mailto:vwtrainsailor@gmail.com) with them. I look forward to hearing from you.

**Mark Lewalski**

**Editor, Telegraph Key**

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- T-TRAK-Z Z-Scale Modular Railroading
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- Notity Me!!

## President's Message



Happy New Year! I hope Santa brought good gifts and that your 2023 ended on a grand note, with 2024 starting on a better one!! This past year so much has happened within the region that it is enough to make one's head spin. This will be a long but informative read, so please bear with me!

First, before I get into the year in review for the SSR, where we were and where we are going, I want to address the elephant in the room.

We restructured the board at the Regional Convention last October, and I was asked to step into the VP position. I gladly accepted and hoped that from the second Chair, I could help progress move forward and help create a new and improved SSR. Much needed to change, and with my background in Leadership, Advanced electronics, and Information Technology, and my strong relationship with the National Executive team, I could bring a lot to the table and help move the region forward. As I set upon planning and executing with the rest of the SSR team, our President, Gene Jameson, was handed some disconcerting news about his health. While I will not share what that was, it was severe enough that Gene came to me and asked if I would mind Leading and managing the SSR as he needed to step down. Part of being the Executive officer is knowing that one day, you may be handed the chair and asked to ride it. I didn't like the circumstances, but I stepped up and accepted the role. Gene resigned on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and the board will vote this month to accept his resignation and appoint a new President. Until then, I will be your President Pro Tem.

With that said, let's talk about the Region. Out of all of the Model railroaders in the United States, it is estimated that 90% (315,000 or so) are not members of the NMRA; why is that? The membership was higher in prior decades. What happened? Besides the information superhighway, YouTube, social media, etc., all contributed to the issue.

In my opinion, it was a regional and divisional experience. I am sure many of you have had a bad experience with an NMRA Member or within the organization or heard another member's horror story (I had one) and said, "That's not for me"

### Welcome to my world!

Back in 2010, I had a bad experience. I was a new member, and I could not wait to see what being an NMRA member in the SSR would look like and where I might fit in. Little did I know that with a couple of exceptions, I was basically treated like some freshman who was anxious and eager but needed to sit at the kid's table while the adults were speaking. I tried to volunteer, locally and regionally, and barely got lip service. I was marginalized like so many others. I became disenchanted; there were no invites to meetings, clinics, ops sessions, general meet-ups, swap meets... NOTHING, not even a "hello, welcome to the Sunshine region." Even when I managed to wrangle something, as soon as I said I was an N-scaler, I may have yelled Plague. Doors and windows shut, general disinterest set in and the fight was all uphill.

**Well, all of that has changed;** I jumped in to help despite the uphill push and the negative sentiment. I knew the mission that the National team was on, and I wanted to see the SSR as part of that positive change. After all, ALL NMRA experiences start at the local and divisional levels, so we needed to create a better experience for our members. **Well, here is the good news for everyone!**

O scale, HO Scale, N-scale, Z-scale, and every other Scale in the spectrum of Model Railroading are welcome and asked to join their voices with ours. Today's NMRA looks nothing like it did 5 years or more ago. Under the new President Gordy Robinson and the new NMRA leadership, we have begun to grow; for the first time since 1992, our membership grew faster than the attrition rate. We are rebounding because the messaging is getting out. The NMRA is about **Mentorship, Fellowship and Community – being kind, inviting, and inclusive**. Attitudes have changed; no longer is the NMRA HO centric with a HO centric message. The NMRA realized that what we have always done was not getting it done. They (We) became more inclusive and worked at nurturing relationships with authors with other than HO centric interests to produce other scale articles within the Magazine. N-Scale articles went from 2% to 28% over the last two years, and as we develop more authors, so will the other scales. More people are participating and sending articles for review because they see the value and the positive cultural change. No longer are we on an HO mainline, we now have main lines for all scales.

Now that the NMRA National leadership team has set the pace and the expectations, it is up to the regions to pick up the torch and carry it! Will some of the old guard be there? Will some of the residual thinking still exist? Certainly, but guess what? It is their turn at the kid's table unless they want to participate with the adults in the room with the new proactive messaging, being inclusive, and developing a community through fellowship and mentorship. *Being negative, sour, and exclusionary will not be tolerated; that is not what our members and new members want to be a part of, and frankly, it has no business in our organization.* Why do I say ours? Well, a lot has changed in the last 2 years. I went from the little kid's table to being the President of the SSR. Along with me, I have an outstanding team with great attitudes. This past year has had its trials and tribulations, but we came out of it with a whole new focus. Since I first began on the SSR board, we have pressed on to new and innovative ideas, and we are getting the message out there. Despite the 3% loss of members last January and additional 3% predicted for 2023... **WE GREW by 3.5%**! Our message is getting out. I do not know the total number of Model Railroaders in Florida, but I do know that 502 of you already belong. I want to invite past and previous members to rejoin and take part. In the SSR and the NMRA experience! Come and see what we are doing and be a part! Virtual Clinics with MMRs, Subject matter experts, Manufacturers, NMRA Clinicians, etc. In-person meets and re-rails events to bring previous members back into the fold. Of Course, there will be NMRAX and Regional conventions to participate with fellow Modelers and the Model railroading community. Lastly, you can't miss the awesome National conventions. If appointed as the New SSR President, this region will continue to build on **Mentorship, Fellowship, and Community for a positive experience**. We have already made some changes that have dropped the membership price by 12 dollars while giving everyone access to the newsletter and increasing revenue through advertising. What else have we accomplished? This new Leadership team continues to produce positive results. I cannot say thank you enough for all the hard work and effort that has gone into restructuring and realigning the SSR mission focus. Here are some of our accomplishments since last year.

- Membership increased by 3.5% this past year despite continued attrition due to an aging demographic and a 3% loss the previous year (2022)
- Increase in treasury funds by 10.5% over the report one year ago (Jan 2023) despite numerous expenditures due to equipment losses, Website upgrades, the addition of D&O insurance for the board, etc. The new Treasurer is doing a remarkable job for the region.

- Increased financial transparency with a new accounting and reporting system. Members know where their money goes with each public meeting of the board.
- Despite the fear, doubt, and uncertainty among the general membership. 72 NMRA members attended our SSR convention at the John Trinkle Center in Plant City, Florida. The lower-than-expected attendance is attributed mainly to the difficulties we had to overcome earlier in the year with Website issues, board turnover, and lingering COVID concerns. Due mainly to the efforts of the restructured board, particularly our new Treasurer/Convention Coordinator, the convention was an overall success, holding 35 Clinics on a broad range of subjects and a well-attended banquet. The regional convention was attended by NMRA President Gordy Robinson and NMRA VP Rick Coble, who addressed the membership, provided a state of the NMRA, and hosted questions.
- Increased accountability and responsibility with respect to asset management. Aging laptops were problematic and would not perform well at regional and divisional events due to age and insufficient computing power. This led to frustrations by the presenters and the members alike. 3 of 5 assets have been replaced by far superior equipment at a low cost.
- I moved the entire board to online meetings in Zoom. Board members hesitated to move away from older conference calling (Audio only); however, they have adapted quickly and see the benefit of video conferencing and love its features.
- Evaluated and assessed board talent skills and abilities and have redistributed regional responsibilities accordingly (ongoing effort)
- Established new expectations for superintendents. Each superintendent reviews their respective EOM and contacts the membership with incomplete data to update and correct inconsistencies.
- Superintendents proactively contact new members, transfers, and overdue members to build better divisional relationships and increase fellowship opportunities during meets.
- Demonetized the [regional newsletter](#), thus decreasing membership dues by 12 dollars annually. A new regional newsletter has been digitized and provided to all 502 members versus the previous 180 subscribers. This created a more inclusive environment for the region, saved copy and postal expenses, and decreased costs to the members while increasing revenue through advertising (to more members).

We are going places. Please consider contacting fellow (non or previous) Model Railroaders and asking them to join the NMRA.

Andy J. Zimmerman President Pro Tem

**(Editor's Note: If any of our readership are interested in volunteering for any aspect of the Region or their Division, please contact Andy at [seniorchiefz@outlook.com](mailto:seniorchiefz@outlook.com) and he will reply to you.)**

**Andy Zimmerman**

**President**





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## Treasurer's Message



For the first time I am aware of we conducted a survey at our convention banquet to find out three basic items; 1) how did you like various aspects of the convention, 2) what would you like to see at a convention, 3) what barriers would prevent you from attending the convention.

Now, before I get into the questions asked and the responses, I would like everyone that did not attend the convention to email [NMRA\\_SunshineRegionMail@Yahoo.com](mailto:NMRA_SunshineRegionMail@Yahoo.com) your responses to items 2 and 3 above. I'd really like to understand what would prevent you from attending and taking part in the fun. Please feel free to add your own comments as well. We would really appreciate it!!

Now on with the questions.

While I am not going to go into every question here, I will share the responses from all 37 surveys (yes, only 37 from the 70 plus people in attendance – even a captive audience didn't help with responses. 😊)

### **A) Please rate from 1-5 (5 being the best) the clinics offered.**

**1:** 2.7%    **2:** 0%    **3:** 10.8%    **4:** 45.9%    **5:** 35.1%    **No Answer:** 5.4%

I think that 81% is a pretty good satisfaction number.



**B) Please Rate the variety of clinics from 1-5 (5 being the best).**

**1:** 2.7%    **2:** 2.7%    **3:** 10.8%    **4:** 48.6%    **5:** 29.7%    **No Answer:** 5.4%

Still a strong satisfaction of 78% but more variety needed.

**C) Did you learn something valuable, yes or no? YES: 97.3% NO: 0% No Answer: 2.7%**

Everyone took away something that enhanced their knowledge.

**D) Do you like the convention location? YES: 89.2% NO: 8.1% No Answer: 2.7%**

Clearly, the attendees of this years' convention enjoyed the location but that does not account for folks that didn't attend -- maybe its too far, let us know.

**E) How far are you willing to travel to the convention?**

**Up to 50 miles:** 8.1%    **Up to 100 miles:** 13.5%    **Up to 150 miles:** 10.8%    **Up to 200 miles:** 16.2%

**Up to 250 miles:** 8.1%    **more than 250 miles:** 10.8%    **No Answer:** 32.4%

Wow, a wide range of travel limits for a State as large as ours. If distance is an issue for you to attend, we need to know this for sure.

**F) Was the cost of the convention fair? YES: 97.3% NO: 0% No Answer: 2.7%**

While this was acceptable to the people attending (they did attend) but -- is this cost prohibitive to you?

**G) Would you prefer a one-, or two-day convention at a lesser cost?**

**YES:** 16.2%    **NO:** 43.2%    **Not Sure:** 37.8%    **No Answer:** 2.7%

Here we are seeing a mixed message -- and this is coming from attendees!

**H) Do you attend Division Meetings? YES: 54.1% NO: 32.4% No Answer: 13.5%**

This is an area we need to improve upon ... the division meet is your local group of folks that meet a few times per year – If you are not attending, please share why you are not ... Lets see if we can improve this.

I) **Is this convention your 1<sup>st</sup> Convention?** YES: 16.2% NO: 83.8% No Answer: 0%

It's great to see new folks checking out the fun at the convention but we need everyone to come out!

J) **If next years' convention costs over \$100, would you attend?**

YES: 75.7% NO: 21.6% No Answer: 2.7%

While its great a good percent of folks are not put off by an increase. We are reaching a point where costs may be exceeding members budget. We have to keep this in mind and at the same time our costs are going up. The Trinkle center rental for the weekend is now nearing \$6000. So, we are all feeling it and changes may have to be made.

K) **Are you more inclined to attend the convention if we have a train show?**

MORE: 27.0% LESS: 0% No Difference: 70.3% No Answer: 0%

This is another interesting response as it says the train show is not a meaningful aspect of your convention experience. Especially with the amount space needed to house a train show and the costs that go with that.

L) **Will you attend the 2024 convention?** YES: 75.7% NO: 21.6% No Answer: 2.7%

M) **What Scale do you model in?**

Z: 2.1% N: 25% HO: 54.2% O: 4.2% G: 2.1% 1/4: 2.1% 1 1/2: 4.2% On30: 6.3%

N) **Are you a modular railroader?** YES: 24.3% NO: 75.7%

Lastly, we also asked some open-end questions asking for specific clinics they liked as well as clinics they would like to see. Finding Clinicians for any topic can be difficult so please, if you feel knowledgeable on a topic and want to share with others, please let us know. WE NEED YOU!!!

Favorite Clinics this year were:

**Judging, 3D Printing, Pretzel Trees, JMRI**

**Arduino, JMRR, and Chicago Stock Yards**

Clinics Requested:

**More hands on, Prototype modeling, Scratch building, Weathering, JMRI,**

**Railroad history, Operations/Signaling, Soldering construction, DCC, and Air Brushing**

So, there you have it. A lot of information to consider but we need to hear from you. Make your voice heard! PLEASE, PLEASE, email us your responses to the questions above and please email any additional comments you have. We want to make this a great and fun region to be a part of.

Email: [NMRA\\_SunshineRegionMail@Yahoo.com](mailto:NMRA_SunshineRegionMail@Yahoo.com)

**Glenn Kopriva**

**Treasurer**

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## Achievement Program



We had one Achievement Program Award and one Golden Spike Award for the Month of December.

The AP award for Chief Dispatcher went to **Chip Pecere**. Chip is from Vero Beach in our Eastern Division. The Golden Spike went to **James Cameron**. He is from Cape Coral in our Western Division.

The Sunshine Region came in 2nd this year in the NMRA Achievement Program for the number of Certificates awarded. There were 57 Achievement and Golden Spike Awards earned. The Region that came in 1st with 71 Awards was the Pacific Northwest Region which covers an area encompassing Washington, Montana, Western Canada and Alaska. I think that was really good for the Sunshine Region because we are one of the smaller Regions in the NMRA.

The Scale Rails Club in Fort Myers has promised me that we will have more Golden Spike Awards in the near future and that will be great. They are also conducting workshops for a Club project constructing craftsman box cars over the next three to four months. This work is directed towards the NMRA "Cars" merit award program. So, in the near future we will probably have some Merit Judging of some freight cars. This was brought about by the Clubs AP person Bruce Lauerman. Good job BRUCE!

**Ken Hoot**

**Achievement Program Chair**

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## Northern Division



This is new for everyone – I am making it easy for you to find Northern Division clubs by their websites.

- Big Bend Model Railroad Association <https://bbmra.club/>
- First Coast Model Railroad Society <http://www.fcMrs.club/>
- Flager Model Railroad Club <http://www.fmrrc.com/>
- The North Central Florida Model Railroad Club <https://ncfmrc.org/>

As mentioned last month, Robert Feuerstein, Superintendent, and Richard Paul, Assistant Superintendent, will do virtual and in-person clinics every quarter. Keep an eye out for the Northern Division emails. Send your email address to [photobob321@gmail.com](mailto:photobob321@gmail.com), and I will add you to the distribution list so you will get notified as we schedule them. If there is a specific area you would like us to focus on, please email me that information also.

Golden Spike Enterprises, Deland Train Show, Volusia County Fairgrounds. For more information, go to this quick link: <https://www.nmra.org/events/golden-spike-enterprises-deland-train-show>.

The Sunshine Region Board Meeting is being held via Zoom; time and date are unknown at this time, but it will be in January 2024!

**Robert Feuerstein**

**Northern Division Superintendent**

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## Eastern Division



No update for January.

**Benita Jameson**

**Eastern Division Superintendent**



## Western Division



The next upcoming event is an NMRA Workshop in Davenport, FL on April 20 hosted by the Ridge Model Railroad Club. Watch for more details.

The Western Division should host some additional one day workshops in 2024. These will be held in conjunction with local model railroad clubs and rotate around the division. A typical workshop includes 4 clinics and a tour or operating session at the host club.

Modelers are encouraged to bring modeling projects to display and AP judging is available on request. Admission is usually around \$20 and includes lunch. Watch this space for dates and locations. If your club is interested in hosting a workshop, please contact me directly.

If you or your club have any news or events to share, please let me know so I can share it with the Western Division members.

**Don Wetmore**

**Western Division Superintendent**

## Southern Division



'Twas the season!

As I said last month, another year is on its way out, it certainly was a hell of a year, but we got through it. It has passed, a new page in more ways than one. Get ready for "24". So, it's time to take the plastic decorations down, put them back in the box, or tie them back up, box up all the ornaments and put everything back in the garage. Un pin, un tape all the Hallmark cards and holiday driven emails and pack them away too, or just throw them out. Be honest, do the same as you did last year!

It's time to plan for a New Year, a new project, a new goal, something to look forward to. In the Southern Div., the plan is to have three workshops during the year, hopefully hosted by three different groups with new clinic subjects! The ECHOES group as well as the SFRM have been active providing subjects, it would be entertaining to have another group such as the Palm Beach organization this coming year.

I did contact the president of the Palm Beach Model Railroaders, Paul Mathis, and he is aware of what it takes to host a workshop, we shall see. But in the interim they are sprucing up the layout and getting ready for the South Florida Fair to open in January. The fair runs from January 12th to the 28<sup>th</sup> – visit them if you are in the area around Southern Blvd.

The Florida Citrus group remains exhibiting at the Southwest Regional Library at 16835 Sheridan St, Pembroke Pines, they are still at the library till January 13<sup>th</sup>. Again, the operating hours of the library are from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM Monday through Thursday and on Saturday.

Into Dade County, the ECHOES are still set up and running their annual holiday train exhibit at Pinecrest Gardens (the old Parrot Jungle) located at 11000 Red Road (57<sup>th</sup> Ave) Pinecrest (Miami), FL 33156. Their operating hours are from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM on the nights of the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> in January. The display will be in the Hibiscus Room (1<sup>st</sup> room on the left as you enter the main entrance).

The South Florida Railway Museum in Deerfield Beach is the one group that had nothing scheduled for the holidays, but they are getting ready for the New Year. Most importantly, they are changing the hours when they will open to the public. Beginning in January they will be open only on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month, but they will be open one hour longer, from 11 AM to 4 PM. Check out their web page [sfrm.org](http://sfrm.org) and their Facebook page, for the announcement.

Other division news, I have contacted some of our division members about their views of the division and region. I must admit I have had other things come up and I am not as far along as I had hoped. But I will talk to you.

One other thing, the Journal Box, which is now digital, is in need of, just as it was in print form, in need of content. Since I am the new editor of the JB, I am looking for that content, my contact information is noted on the second page of this publication. I hope to hear from some of our past contributors and am looking for new contributors to share their stories, ideas, and methods of modeling with the rest of us.

Hopefully you got what you wanted for Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanza, or whatever floats your boat and you don't need to return it. The year should be fair sailing as far as the region is concerned, I hope everyone's year is the same!

Until next month, Model 60!

**Robert Leonard**

**Southern Division Superintendent**



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# South Florida Railway Museum

**Beginning January 2024**

**New Hours**

**The museum will be open from 11 AM to 4 PM on the  
2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month**

**Dates**

**01-13, 02-10, 03-09, 04-13, 05-10, 06-08, 07-13,  
08-10, 09-14, 10-12, 11-09, 12-14**

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Facebook page

1300 W. Hillsboro Blvd. Deerfield Beach, FL  
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# E C H O E S

EAST COAST H O EXHIBITORS SOCIETY  
MIAMI, FL

**E.C.H.O.E.S** is a modular model railroad club located in Miami-Dade, Florida, dedicated to building and displaying our HO scale model railroad layout. Our purpose is to enjoy and promote the hobby of model railroading and preserve the history of railroading in South Florida. The club was started in the summer of 1985, with the goal of presenting a HO scale modular model railroad layout for display at “The Harvest Festival”. Throughout the years, the layout has been displayed at regional conventions, four NMRA National Train Shows (Atlanta twice, Ft. Lauderdale, FL and Orlando), and other events in Miami Dade and Broward counties. We do running/operating sessions several times a year and welcome guests to join us. Membership is open and we welcome anyone who shares an interest and passion for Model railroading.

For more information, please contact:

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<b>Herb Ford</b>	ehf640@gmail.com	786 375 1424



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