

## Winterfest Report



### Jim Whitehead receiving a plaque from Mike Ferricane.

Jim was given a plaque for his ten years of hard work heading up Winterfest for Northeast Ntrak. I know I speak for everyone when I say without his hard work over the pass ten years we have all enjoyed the Springfield show as the highlight of the year. It has been a time to get together and meet Ntrak members and friends from around the Northeast and Canada. It all started ten years ago just getting together and sharing slides pizza and a little train talk. Jim turned it into a great convention with door prizes, model contests, photo contests and best module in show competition. On Saturday a Parade of Trains to determine the best train displayed. Many great clinic have been given to help us all become better modelers. The highlight of Winterfest is always the Saturday night banquet and awards ceremony, with a guest speaker. Thanks again Jim from everyone in Northeast Ntrak and everyone else that has attended Winterfest over the past ten years for all your work in making it the great Convention it has become.



*Ed Smith (seated) accepting models from Austin Plyem for the contest. Austin has won more contests than anyone else at the show over the past ten years.*



### Bob Pawlak receiving the "THE BEST IN SHOW" award at Winterfest 2004 from Jim Whitehead.



*Bob's prize winning module at Winterfest 2004*



### WINTERFEST LAYOUT REPORT by Ernie Poole

The layout for this years Winterfest show in Springfield was about 70 x 30 feet as has been our recent history at this show. John Dunne did the hard work of coordinating the modules and designing the layout. We did as much as we could to set up on Friday afternoon, but had to finish up on Saturday morning as usual when all the modules were in place.

We powered up and tested with DC throttles, but went right to DCC on the red line because we lacked a separate seventh throttle for the end loop segment. We had some of the usual problems on Saturday with connector tracks and the like, but also suffered some unnecessary grief with a module or two that were not up to spec. One module had a foot long section of track that was powered, or more accurately NOT powered, only through the points of a very old Atlas

### Getting things layed out on Friday



manual turnout. We also suffered through a problem caused mainly by jumbles of poorly marked cables under a module whose owner could not be located to sort it out.

Sunday was even more exciting for the default (we were there) trouble shooting crew of Bob Pawlak, Ernie Poole, and Art P. from Long Island NTRAK. DCC issues showed up right off the bat, and proved difficult to solve. The problems turned out to be with the wireless aspect of the throttles. In the end, interference from other sources in the building was a concern. I also discovered that the Digitrax throttles seem to 'forget' what they were doing unless you turn (use) the throttle knob fairly often. Throttle response time also varied greatly, but I suspect that interference may have been the culprit here as well. All in all, we should have run a lot better.

So, how do we do it better next year? We need to consider a way to conveniently plug our DCC throttles into the system as we move around the layout.

We should identify ahead of time, a 'trained' crew to handle problems at the show. You would be amazed how many people wanted to tell me about the simplest problems. If you can fix it, just fix it. NTRAK is a community undertaking. We all need to do our parts.

Look under your module. Are there loose, jumbled, non standard, or unmarked wires? It sure would help if that got sorted out before the next show.

We need to maintain our modules to NTRAK specifications. It just ain't magic folks; you have to do the work. An NTRAK layout is only as good as the weakest link. Just a little work up front, and you won't be the weak link!