

Tri-City AMBUCS; The First 20+ Years

Chartered on April Fools Day in 1986, the Tri-City Chapter became part of **National AMBUCS**, at that time called **American Business Clubs**, est. 1922, an organization of about 6,000 members focusing on Scholarships for Therapists. Later other national projects were added including the AmTryke for disabled children and Tri-City's own Before-The-Fall Grab-Bars for the elderly.

Tri-City's first major project was the establishment of a local food pantry that fifteen years later was up to about 60,000 pounds of food per year distributed to those in need.

Before The Fall, the Grab-Bar project, originated with charter member, Pat Bounes, who realized that a great many of the new residents came to his adult congregate living facilities after experiencing a fall in their own bathrooms. Families meeting with Pat would sometimes use the phrase "Before the fall..." in describing the resident's history. When presented at the AMBUCS National Convention it was noted that a single grab-bar could have an astounding economic impact of over \$500,000 in medical and nursing home costs avoided by fall prevention.

A few years later, a local television station aired a story about the program and the need for corporate sponsors. The result was 120 calls for grab-bars and no calls from potential sponsors. About 200 bars were installed during that year. In 2006, the Chapter celebrated its 20th anniversary and the installation of its 500th Grab-Bar.

Almost every year, **scholarships for 3rd or 4th year therapy students** are sponsored by the Chapter through the national organization. A portion of the Chapter's AmTryke purchases and donations fund the national "Living Endowment" fund that provides the scholarships.

Very early in Tri-City AMBUCS history, lives started being saved all over the world through the Chapter's creative involvement with medical missions. After a presentation from a group of missionaries to Uganda, the Chapter created and supplied about five thousand give-away items to motivate children and parents to come to the temporary clinics for immunizations, treatment, and health education. It's great success was reported on a return visit from the missionaries. The Chapter has continued its involvement with other programs around the world. Drawn to life saving immunizations and hygiene advice by the Tri-City AMBUCS give-away products, thousands of people have been saved over the years.

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." The Bible verse represents the principles behind the

modern humor therapy movement. The Chapter installed the first "humor cart" for The Hospice at its house in Pinellas Park. Through an association with the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor(AATH), the Chapter developed the cart which contained a big television, a VCR, and many classic and comedy videos. Chapter members Barb and Jim Greiner exhibit at the annual AATH convention. Member, Bill Dahlquist and Jim Greiner presented comedy and magic programs for the Chapter. The Chapter supplies the clown noses for the Shrine Circus clowns, noses for hospital and Hospice clowns, training or entertainment programs for caregivers. Jean "Daffodil" McNabb was the Chapter's own actual clown and trainer of new clowns in the area. The Chapter responded with a shipment of hundreds of noses and comedy supplies to a Baton Rouge therapist who professionally deployed them with hurricane refugees at a shelter. Comedy supplies and give-away items were also sent via medical missionaries into tsunami affected areas.

The acronym **AMAZE**, Applied Magic the Arts and Zany Entertainment represents the Chapters efforts in these areas. Magicians, clowns, singers, and other entertainers have been deployed in a number of settings in addition to the give-aways and noses to make the world a better place.

Tri-City AMBUCS has opened its seventh Demonstration Site for **AmTrykes**. The special tricycles can be operated by a combination of feet and hands and come in sizes for all ages of children. Seven area elementary schools have a set of AmTrykes that can be used by school therapists with the disabled children. The Demo-Site program allows local therapists to make appointments to prescribe and test AmTrykes for their patients. Special donations have allowed the presentation of AmTrykes to Demo Sites and to certain individual children.

Tri-City AMBUCS has been involved in various other projects and community service. Each year, the local Health Fair has a Tri-City AMBUCS presence supplying all the give-away items for the children coming for school physicals and immunizations.

Members assemble regularly in a fun, relaxed atmosphere for a meal, updates, brainstorming, and project management.

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AMBUCS - The Fun Way To Serve.

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