

East Alton's David Telford flits about atop his 14-foot unicycle

Feature and photo
By Cindy Kyle

You could say 18-year-old David Telford is moving up in the world. Or at least that he's standing out in a crowd when he's riding atop his 14-foot unicycle.

However, the recent East Alton-Wood River High School graduate says he's felt comfortable riding unicycles since he was nine years old.

Last fall Telford needed a project for a machine shop class at EAWRHS and decided to modify his six-foot unicycle. He cut the unicycle in half and added 8-foot alloy tubes for the middle and an angle iron brace to keep the 14-foot cycle from bending. A 24-foot chain completed the towering cycle.

"It was one of those weird projects that come in with high school and go out with high school I guess," Telford said. "I really could do a lot more on my six-foot unicycle."

"On the shorter cycle I could pedal backwards, sideways and carry people on my shoulder," he said. "Next I'd like to try jumping rope on a unicycle. I've seen it done before but I've never tried it."

Telford rode his six-foot unicycle in the Alton Halloween Parade last fall before it was modified in shop class.

"I haven't been on the 14-foot one too much because it is hard to get up on the seat," Telford said. "I did ride it a few times in the school gym."

Telford said the project took some kidding from classmates at the high school while others boasted they could ride it as well.

"There was a bunch of guys who wanted to try it, but when I got right down to climbing into the seat some of them really wailed."

Telford said the last time he rode about a month ago he took a 14-foot spill and injured the arch in his foot. He quickly added the danger of falling doesn't bother him much.

At any rate, on a recent Saturday Telford took the unicycle from his East Alton home to the nearby Eastgate Plaza for a ride.

As his mother Jeannie, father Joe, sisters Debbie, 16, and Gina, 13, and brother Paul, 9, watched, Telford scaled a telephone guide wire to perch on the unicycle seat.

From the ground 14 feet looks a long way up from a concrete parking lot, particularly on a windy day. Telford steadied himself on the seat and took several minutes "to get the feel" of the unicycle.

Then with a deep breath he let go of the guywire and pedaled around the parking lot with ease for about 10 minutes as motorists rolled down their windows for a better look and shoppers stopped to watch.

A couple time around the parking lot and Telford was back at the guywire with a look of satisfaction.

"Hey, that was a great ride son," said Mr. Telford. "That's some kind of kid I've got in't I?"

"It felt good this time," Telford said as he wheeled the unicycle toward home.



DAVID TELFORD climbs utility pole guide wire to perch on 14-foot unicycle; after taking a few minutes to get the feel, he pedals around parking lot with ease

