

MEMBER OF THE YEAR

2016

Everyone in this room – I would venture to say – has been to events and tracks beyond just Blackhawk and Road America.. When asked – what region are we from - the name Blackhawk Valley is synonymous with commitment, an attitude of volunteerism and drivers who will help a fellow competitor. This has been our hallmark for many years and it is not unusual for some member to be thought of as our ambassador while just be willing to share their efforts outside of BVR.

The tradition of our region to honor one individual with Member of the Year goes back to our earliest days: a member named Greg Upstone who as his health deteriorated continued to serve the club to the end as he battled a fatal illness. This goodwill attitude that others see is the ambassadorship that some members show forth and what we on the Board look for when choosing Member of the Year.

A long time ago, some past Board thought it fitting to honor the commitment to our club that Greg Upstone exemplified. It is our chance each year to give thanks and recognition that often goes unnoticed. We looked around and found one person who, for years, has devoted himself to the club, in many ways.

When asked to help in some capacity, Yes will be the answer you get and somehow makes things happen. Our nominee has a personality that gets others enthused and motivated, a very special talent. And how did this person ever wind up here in our club?

He started out in 1990 with sprint cars, traveling thru the Midwest to places like Knoxville Raceway, and other dirt ovals every week. a few years later, he got onto the pavement so to speak – with a oval track midget racer. That lasted only until 2000 when he

acquired a VW Rabbit for GT Lights. While running this class he won three class championships in three years. But throughout, unnoticed by others, was his mentoring of new young drivers, encouraging those young people the chance to live their dream.

When we look for someone - one criteria we look for is the sharing of one's efforts with other as well as the club. This driver has, throughout the years in racing, provided counseling for injured drivers and their families, much of it away from the track. His Methodist Motorsports Ministry offers services at the tracks he is at every weekend, he gives invocations on Sunday before the first race and will stop anywhere to just listen to people.

When we asked if he would take on Regional Administrator of Tech, he accepted right away, in spite of being busy himself.

His giving of his talents and time to our club and to others, is why we award Member of the Year to Reverend Mark Amenda.