



# The SLO 4-Wheeler



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## Helping Your Fellow Driver on the Trail

Written by George W, Editor

I've been wheeling for about two and a half years now (not very long by most standards) and have seen a wide range of responses to a broken down rig along the side of the trail. Everything from "You should have left that piece of S\*\*\* at home" to someone who pulls off to the side of the trail themselves, climbs out of their rig, walks over and asks "Is there anything I can do?" or "Can I lend you a hand?"

And this wide range is not just limited to a large run like the Jeeper's Jamboree, I've also see the complete gambit on some of our local trails. I'm amazed how people will treat other people poorly while the subject of their scorn is helping to maintain the very trail that they are using (or abusing in some cases).

This last year on the Jeeper's Jamboree, because of the much rougher conditions on the trail, we saw a much

greater amount of problems along the way. Not only in our own group which had its share of problems, but also with others that we encountered along the way.

One of my friends, and a fellow club member, has become my role model for what I see as the target ideal for what the average Four Wheeler's attitude toward others should be. Whenever we've come across someone on the trail with a problem, he's always the first to pull over and see if there's something he can do to help them. This year he was able to provide not only spare parts to another member of our group, but also lend some tools to others we came upon and even hiked with me down to the repair station with my bent tie-rod. He actually first suggested that he hike it down and back, he was worried about me making the hike in the heat. But I felt: a) He's my friend and I don't want him to go alone; b) it was my breakage and I felt responsible, c) I wanted the full experience of watching

the gang at the Buck Island Repair Station fix my very bent tie-rod.

The Buck Island Repair Station and the main camp repair station are manned by volunteers who only quote their prices based on the materials used. They do not charge for their services, but do accept donations toward supplies and refreshments. When I offered the monster of a man, who bent my tie-rod straight, a drink back in camp when I paid the fee and tip; he said there was no need, its just what they do. The gang then made sure that my friend and I had a bottle of water each for our hike back up the mountain to where my Jeep awaited the repaired part.

Occasionally, what goes around comes around, and what you do for others will return to you. My friend's frame took a beating this year, cracks and tears forward of the motor mounts on both inside rails. We were

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## 2008 SLO 4-Wheelers Officers

### Officers:

President:..... Randy P  
 Vice President:..... Mark B  
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### Board of Directors (includes officers):

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 Newsletter Editor: ..... George W

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 Virtual Club Scrapbook:..... Mark B  
 Virtual Committee: ..... Mark B

### Adopted Trails and Campgrounds:

Garcia Ridge Trail:..... Jim T  
 Pine Mountain Trail:..... Mark B  
 La Panza Camp Ground:..... Mark B  
 Carrizo Plains Land Use..... Randy P

### Newsletter submittals

by the weekend after the meeting to George at g???????@charter.net

# Trip Report: Fun Times in the Dark....



by Suellen and Cristi  
AKA - Giggly Women

**NOTE:** All photos of 's rig are from the authors.

My friend, Cristi and I were invited to go 4 wheeling in Pozo on Saturday night, October 24th.. Wow -- what a night it ended up being.. This was my first time out rock crawling and 4 wheeling.

We left Albertson's parking lot at 5:15 p.m. and headed out to Creston thru Atascadero. We met up with several other Jeeps and one Toyota truck (The reason for mentioning the truck will be brought up shortly!) We met the rest of the group on Red Hill Road and proceeded to enter into the National Forest.... our destination: Las Chiches. It was a beautiful ride into and up the mountains towards the top with the sun setting in the West.

We met Game Warden Alfonzo during our entry into the National Park. Eric, Our Fearless Leader, told him what group we were with and how the SLO 4 Wheelers have some adopted trails and campgrounds in his park. He wished us well and off we went to have

some fun in the dark! Eric, Our Fearless Leader, was in the lead and we led the group up to the top, where the sun was dropping and it was getting darker and darker... Still very beautiful and the weather was very nice.

There was lots of laughter in Eric's vehicle and that's why we have a new title -- Giggly Women.. We were un-

aware that Eric would turn the CB mike on and everyone could hear us laughing. We were having a great time! We all stopped at the top of Las Chiches and took some pictures and climbed the rocks up there. From then on -- it was down the other side where one of the Jeeps had to leave for home... This is where the night got fun and interesting!!!

We decided to head over to Garcia Ridge! Yep --more 4 wheeling!!! This trail is a lot more up and down and twisty turney! Now male machismo is coming into play... "THE PLAYGROUND" This was our first destination and where the vehicles were put to a test.. Now guess what happened?? Eric, Our Fearless Leader, got STUCK on top of the playground -- going UP it!!!! Dug himself a pretty deep hole we are now calling it the Big Dipper!!! Derek and Mark, in the one and only Toyota went around and got the tow rope... ended up that Eric's Jeep reversed and he gunned it up the Playground, making it to the top! Our "Cadillac" ride -- Fearless Leader -- always in control -- GOT STUCK!!!! What fun that was!! What a great sight to see everyone gather around and give opinions and directions and the laughing that went on --- it was awesome!!!



From there it was more fun and onto the SLO 4 wheeler's adopted trail leading to the rest of the trail -- as far as we could go to Needle Point. OKAY --- Lots of overgrown shrubs on this trail and I had twigs in my hair from them coming into the Jeep! Time for some maintenance on this trail!!!!

We stopped at a point overlooking Pozo Saloon, which we had passed earlier.. It was about 1/4" tall!!!! Spectacular sight with all the stars in the sky glinting! A bit windy up there but nobody seemed to be bothered by the air!! Good times!!

Off and running for the trip down Garcia Ridge... where the TOYOTA - had some tire problems and had to stop every once and a while they filled up the tire with air. Still laughing all the time -- Nobody had a care and all the problems of the day just melted away with the laughter! And even though some were in shorts and one of the Jeeps was open with no protection --- Nothing seemed to bother anyone!

We left the Toyota and one of the Jeeps and headed for home.. Got home at 1:30 a.m.!!!! WOW --- how's that for an exciting time with the SLO Wheelers! I can only hope to be invited back for some more fun times!!!

Thanks for a great time!!!



*(Continued from page 1)*

trying to figure out what to do about it so he could drive out from the camp when we remembered a driver who offered to help along the trail when one of our guys had broken down, this guy said he had a welder and stock on board. A little hiking around the camp of 600 people and we found him and asked to take him up on his offer. He drove his rig over to our camp site, then proceeded to lay underneath the stricken rig for almost two hours prepping and welding on the frame rails to make sure that our guy could drive out.

After all of his work and time, when offered money for his effort, his response was "No, I love doing this stuff". This left my friend speechless as the new friend drove off after which my friend was able to get out a short "That's what this is all about."

I am not a mechanic and don't pretend to be. I understand how many things work out of curiosity and an engineering background. I do not even want to attempt a repair that I have not at least watched being done before. But I can hold things, make a run for things, assist with handing tools, or whatever it takes to help. Sometimes, I get so

busy watching what is being done and trying to learn that I forget to grab a tool back or provide another. Sometimes I am amazed at the ingenuity involved in making a trail repair. Ask my friend, I can sit and watch him do things to his Jeep for hours, ask silly questions, get in the way and got get him whatever he needs.

So the next time you're out on the trail and come across someone less fortunate than yourself, see if you can give them a hand, even if its just handing them tools. You never know when that someone needing help may be yourself.

# Rocker Panel Protection

Article and photos by Dan G

One of the least talked about areas on our weekend adventure vehicles are the rocker panels – that is until we crush one on that rock we couldn't quite see; usually on the passenger's side. The rocker panel is the area between the two tires directly under the doors. Take a closer look at the sheet metal there someday. It's just beggin' to be smacked by a rock, tree, or ledge. And the sound it makes will send shivers up you spine. The unmistakable sound of granite against sheet metal will definitely get your attention. And after getting out to survey the damage (if the door still opens), what you see may very well bring a tear to your eye.

Fortunately, the future of your rocker panels are a lot brighter than the fate of applying pounds of Bondo or spending endless hours with a welder and additional time in a paint booth. Not to worry, the rocker panels can be protected from harm. It's not exactly a high visibility show the world sort of accessory for your rig. But like a

rear locker and power steering, you'll soon forget about the initial cost and instead wonder why you didn't do it sooner.

Depending on your 4x4, you might be fortunate enough to buy something off the shelf. If not, you'll have to pay someone to make what you want for you or, in your spare time, put something together yourself. I went with the last option seven years ago and consider it a long term investment for my truck. Something similar available for a different truck at the time would have cost me \$900 delivered. I did see some earlier attempts of the final product that could have best been described as R&D project failures but they still made it out for final sale. I believe those customers are referred to as Beta Testers. I spent almost \$100 and 25 hours of time. It was a slow process but the results are very effective. More on that later.

If you consider the weight of your rig empty or packed with gear for your week long journey, either way that translates into lots of weight

pressing down on the rocker panel in the event of a granite rock encounter. The relatively thin sheet metal doesn't stand a chance. Try shooting a 45 caliber bullet at an aluminum can and you can picture what I mean. Alternatively, if you don't like guns, use a bow or wrist rocket. What I had in mind was something that attaches to the frame without welding, uses existing holes, and won't bend considering the long run past the rocker panel. The internet brought me to this link:

<http://www.george4wd.taskled.com/sliderd.html>

The author gets all the credit for the design. He figured out the best steel thickness regarding strength to weight. Kind of like that old car commercial and the five cylinder engine with the engineer exclaiming – “four is too small, six is too bulky”. Or in this case – 1/8” is too thin, 3/8” is too bulky. He also describes an innovative method for connecting the base of the runners to the frame using 1/2” diameter square shaped U-bolts as well as some useful fabrication techniques.

My plasma cutter never made it off the showroom floor so I used a 4 1/2” angle grinder with 1/8” thick cutting wheels and a larger cutting wheel on my skill saw. Progress was slower than a plasma cutter but it got the job done AND showered my driveway with sparks. Cool. A drill press would have been nice. The correctly sized square U-bolts were unavailable so I made some from 9/16” round stock. They bowed a little after tightening them down, but they haven't

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budged since I installed them. Maybe 5/8" round stock would work better. The brake lines were moved with some fabricated brackets to avoid crushing them with the U-bolts.

Installation took 2 ½ hours per side. I took advantage of every available stock hole which made for some interesting wrenching including producing some custom bend wrenches to get the job done. I went with aircraft nuts and lock washers for that extra measure of security and used stainless steel carriage bolts wherever possible. My only regret is not using 2x6 square tubing which would have allowed me to install the stock side steps. During my next window of spare time I'd like to weld on some extensions and then finally re-attach the side steps. I miss them.

The metal against granite hits are less frequent these days because I'm more familiar with how to drive my truck. You know what they say: Experience is a good teacher but the tuition is high. Even so, I do get an occasional BAM! which always gets my atten-

tion. The first few hits really got the neurons in my spine firing. As it turned out, I had nothing to worry about. The guards haven't budged. Now I have one less thing on the truck to destroy off road and instead can concentrate on dragging the differentials and leaf spring U-bolt plates over rocks instead.

My pictures show what I created. The whole thing looks a bit off kilter and even a bit cattywhompus but that was to make sure the 2x4 sliders ended up where they

needed to be. The steel plate and boxed in section fits around the stock sidestep mount eliminating the need for a U-bolt around that part of the frame. Be sure to study the pictures from the link for guidance. The author really did put together a great design.



# Rules for Great Spotters & Great Drivers

By Dan Strà, President,  
JonFund 4X4 Club

There are a lot of fine points to the art of spotting. Great spotting -- truly refined expertise in this area -- is something that takes a lot of time and experience to learn. This experience comes only from watching others and trying to apply what you have learned.

I would like to suggest a few things that all spotters should know that pave the way for a safer and more enjoyable trail experience for you and the driver.

Drivers, too, should be as knowledgeable about the basic rules of spotting as the spotters are. Drivers have a different set of spotting rules to follow but the rules for drivers are just as important as the rules for spotters. When both sides follow the rules, the trail becomes a much smoother place.

(Note to the would-be spotter: Reading this article does not make you a spotter. It is designed to help you understand the dynamics of spotting more fully. You will have a better experience when you are on the trails if you acknowledge the hierarchy and organization of a run and blend in with their procedures.)

## Suggested Rules for Spotters

### RULE NUMBER ONE

The first rule of ALL GREAT SPOTTERS is this...

*A good spotter will always look for another person who is already spotting the driver and will then do nothing but wait to be asked for help.*

Virtually EVERYONE on a club run can, and should when needed, be a spotter; but only if they are all reminded of that rule. Following the Spotting Rule #1 will keep things a lot more organized than those unruly times when EVERYONE is yelling directions and confusing the poor driver.

### RULE NUMBER TWO

This could be rule #1, it is a toss-up. It is the only rule I see broken more than rule #1. It seems like we frequently forget or don't bother to ask the driver if he/she would LIKE to have a spot. There are many drivers who will know their rig well enough to be able to just know where the difficulties are. Then there are folks who just don't want to have a spotter. Rule #2 is...

*A good spotter will always ask the driver if he/she would like to have a spot before he starts issuing signals.*

This is a golden rule. Never break it.

### RULE NUMBER THREE

A good spotter knows that there will always be others yelling directions from the trail side and he knows that there will always be a newer driver who finds that confusing. This being the case, rule #3 of great spotting is...

*Create a bond with the driver. Make sure the driver is locked on to you and only you.*

This is done by taking the time to walk up to the driver and have a short driver chat.... "Hey, I am going to spot you through this. I want you to focus on me and tune everyone else out, OK?"

It is funny but scuba dive instructors do something very similar to this when bringing a student down under water for the first time. They use two fingers in the shape of a V and move them from their eyes toward yours while locking in your gaze to theirs. They have learned that doing so actually helps a new diver get through the initial anxiety of being under water and helps them to not reflexively hyperventilate.

Creating a bond with the driver goes a long way to help him get through those times when there are a lot of people trying to spot. It helps him block out distractions and it places you as the point person.

### RULE NUMBER FOUR

When we are four-wheeling there is a lot going on. There is engine noise, other vehicles moving around, and people talking. Additionally, the distance between the spotter and the driver in the middle of an obstacle make verbal signals not always the most effective way to communicate.

With that in mind, rule #4 of great spotting is...

*A great spotter will make sure that the driver understands and agrees to the hand signals.*

Here are a few examples of frequently used hand signals...

**STOP:** Use a closed fist for a stop.

**TURN RIGHT OR LEFT:** Point with the index finger (or thumb) to the left or the right when you want the driver to turn the wheel and, if he is not turning far enough we point and push the

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finger in that direction at the same time.

**ADVANCE:** Extend an open hand so that the palm is facing AWAY from the driver, we then fold the thumb in so that it is not confused as a directional signal, and, keeping the fingers together, we wave the fingers inward a repeating manner.

**REVERSE:** Using one or both open palms, FACING the driver, we make a pushing motion in a repeating manner. When doing reverse we may go to the back of the vehicle to help the driver back up safely.

**COMBINATIONS:** Use one hand for a directional signal and the other for motion. To get the driver to turn the wheels without moving simply hold up one closed fist and use the other hand to point. To signal movement keep the directional finger pointing but open the closed fist to signal the direction you want.

## Suggested Spotter Rules for Drivers

Drivers can have a HUGE part in how organized or disorganized spotting is done around his vehicle. Oddly enough, drivers can do a lot to encourage great spotting. In fact, when a driver knows great spotting he can do certain things that can force a spotter to follow the rules without ever saying a word.

### DRIVER RULE NUMBER ONE

Whether or not he will be spotted is up to the driver and the driver should be the one who decides if he wants a spot or not. The means that drivers rule #1 is...

*Ask for a spot or specify that you do not want a spot.*

If you do NOT want a spot it is sometimes helpful to say it loud enough to be heard over all of the noise of the run (or, really, to make sure everyone hears you).

Rule #1 is subject to your acknowledging the hierarchy of the group. This means that there may be times when you don't want a spot but someone in leadership in the group feels the need to keep things moving for the sake of time or other reasons. When that happens it is usually best to just go with the flow.

### DRIVER RULE NUMBER TWO

The spotter may not instinctively know that if he stops moving you should stop moving. In fact, he may even ask you why you stopped moving. Here rule #2 comes in...

*If spotter is not moving or directing you in some way then don't move. It should always be like this...if the spotter directs you, you move, if the spotter stops directing, you stop moving.*

### DRIVER RULE NUMBER THREE

In the event that your spotter does not practice Spotter Rule #3 – the rule about creating a bond -- then the driver can make it happen all by himself. Driver rule #3 is...

*Lock on to your spotter and tune everyone else out.*

This accomplishes another effect. With the driver and the spotter visually locked together, observers (would be spotters) quickly learn that you are not listening to them; you are listening to the spotter. Once they catch on to this they will start yelling at the spotter and not at you.

## In Summary

A lot of these spotting issues would not need to be brought up if more folks just focused on watching the spotter and learning from his or her techniques. Some times it would also help if we had less heckling and helpful onlookers. But part of our sport is the group enjoyment of the adventures of others. So we have to overcome that in order to prevent vehicle damage and unnecessary trail delays. Observing these rules is the first step.

Fortunately, it is a lot easier to teach drivers how to pay attention to spotters and to teach spotters how to get drivers to focus on them than it is to teach every person on every trail-run to not try to help with spotting. It is just human nature to help out. Non-spotters, are you getting a message here?

This being the case, our expectations of spotters and drivers needs to be set correctly. When both the driver AND the spotter are on the same page all the yelling in the world won't make a darn bit of difference.

Dan Strà is the President and founder of The JonFund 4X4 Club and Membership Chairperson of the Northeast Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs. He has been into off-roading in one form or another for over 7 years. Comments should be addressed to [j???????@jonfund.com](mailto:j???????@jonfund.com)

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# How Much Armor is Enough?



control arms. A last minute addition that worked so well that I left it on was to take a 2" drop hitch, remove the ball, and invert it in the receiver as a slider for the spare tire (originally mounted on the tail gate which I didn't want to tweak).

I looked through catalogs and found that there is armor available for almost every part of a vehicles underbelly. From body mount "clams" to piped edged fenders to steel body corners, let along upgrades and complete replacements to the roll bars. Having a TJ had a lot of advantages, there were a lot of parts available for it, that was also a disadvantage, there were a heck of a lot of parts available for it.

After the first trip to the legendary Rubicon Trail in 2007 on the Jeepers Jamboree, I knew I had to

*Article and photos by  
George W, Editor*

"How much armor is enough?" That's a question I asked myself after looking at the bottom of my rig while it was on a lift a couple of weeks after doing the Jeepers Jamboree this year. I could not believe how many parts of the under carriage took single or multiple hits this time. Of course the trail was much more difficult this year after 20 feet of snow pack melting and removing most of the dirt that usually held the rocks still and the fact that it was late in the season and a couple of months of crawlers and four wheel drive vehicles had already passed through the trail, some tearing it up a little more than others.

How do you plan for a trail that changes almost every year to the point where you don't recognize

parts that you were over before? Being pretty much a beginner still, I rely on my friends, other club members, vendors that I trust (or at least trust them at least as much as I know them) and what I see afterwards that I don't want to see again.

The initial armor ideas came from friends: Rocker sliders, a front differential skid plate, steering box skid plate, radiator skid plate (that was my idea with plastic tank ends) and good bumpers. It did well the first time on the Jeepers Jamboree two years ago, but I put significant dents in the factory skid plates (transfer case and fuel tank) and scratched up the axle mounts for the front lower







with plates welded across the lower opening between the brackets.

I also wasn't really thrilled with the rear Warn bumper as it only had a receiver and was tough to mount. I also wanted a tire carrier, cargo rack and fuel/water can mounts, so I added a Hanson rear bumper with all of the items I wanted. Made it look cool as well.

This year, before the Jamboree, I also replaced the front four control arms and rear lower control arms with Rubicon express short arm arms. They are adjustable, resemble the long arm arms in strength and looks and are much heavier than the stock or ProComp arms that were already on it. The ProComp arms were bent oval tubes that

replace the factory transfer case and fuel tank skid plates. There wasn't much available for the transfer case that didn't involve a "tummy tucker" or close to the frame skid plate for the transfer case. That resulted in having to get an engine and body lift (1") on top of the existing 3.5" chassis lift to provide clearance for the now elevated transfer case. That then resulted in a new drive line with three huge U-joints (one lower and two upper that form a constant velocity joint).

Well now the oil pan was more exposed than before, so that meant an oil pan skid plate. One saving grace was the vendor had a used fuel tank skid plate which looked fine after a fresh coat of black paint. The front axle lower control arm mounts were also stiffened

mounted the same way the stock arms did, the stock arms were just formed heavy sheet metal. The new arms have articulation joints on the bottom, for greater flexibility, and re-enforced joints at the frame end.

So we hit the Jamboree this year and I was expecting the same run as two years ago, WRONG! If two years ago was a "10 out of 10", then this year the trail was a "30!". This taught me never to rely on previous trail experience to know what's coming up. The resulting damage also told me that I needed to do more

to prevent damage. Bending the tie-rod to the point where it resembled a bow (as in bow and arrow) resulted in replacing the stock steering with an ORO U-steer system. I also saw that I have to do something to protect the lower driveshaft U-joints which had each taken several hits.

Within the next few weeks, I'll be adding front and rear AEV differential sliders, moving the warn differential skid plate from the front to the back and replacing the front cover with a Solid steel differential cover that is built to take much more than the Warn. The sliders protect the bottom of the differential as well as provide protection for the lower driveshaft U-joints. Moving the Warn differential skid plate to the rear will provide that differential cover some protection while backing. The sliders are also modular with other AEV armor and suspension products in case I want to replace two of the four rear arms with the stinger which will convert the rear suspension from a five link to four link suspension.

Will it be enough? Only future trails will tell.



# Club Meeting Minutes:

*Meeting Minutes by Kenn B,  
Club Secretary*

## October 2009

V.P. Mark B started meeting @ 7:15 with the usual intros

**V.P.:** Has nothing to report

**Secretary Kenn B:** Last months minutes were passed out for any to read and or make changes if needed.

**Treasurer:** was not in attendance

**Membership Director George W:** 1 new member Jeremy Raivo and around 50 paid members

**Newsletter Editor George W.:** As always He is looking for so input help form the club (trail reports, rig review, product review ect.) Next issue will have a coupon for next year's dues.

**Events:** Eric F.

10/10/09—Garcia Ridge lunch run for after the meeting run at ranger station @ 10:00 AM if interested

10/24/09 — Night run to Las Chiches meet at rite aid in A-town at 4:45

11/7-8/09 — Rock Front

11/6-8/09 — TLCA Surf-n-Turf / Pismo dunes

11/25-29/09 — Thanksgiving @ Calico with Eric F

12/2/09 — Christmas party meeting

12/5 or 6 after the meeting run?

**Land Use:** Jim T

Planning on measuring the path down the hill to the bench for a potential retaining wall.

**Safety:** Dave F.

Check you tires! Tread depth, age, weight rating for the load you have.

**50/50 raffle:** I did not hear who won or how much we raised



*SLO 4-Wheelers contributes to and/or is a member club in these organizations. Visit and support, -they are working for US!*

<http://www.sharetrails.org/>



The United Four Wheel Drive Associations also acts as your voice to keep 4x4 roads and trails open so that we can continue enjoying four wheeling in the great outdoors.

<http://www.ufwda.org/>



A varied group of outdoor recreationists who are extremely active in promoting the positive aspects of vehicular access on public lands and protecting that right.

<http://www.corva.org/>



SLO 4-Wheelers is also a member club in the California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs (CA4WDC) If your not a member, check it out,

<http://www.cal4wheel.com> or ask Suzy

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# SLO 4 WHEELERS

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We're on the web:

<http://www.slo4wheelers.org/>

## Upcoming Events / Runs

In addition to this list, keep your eye on the club email list and web site:

<http://www.slo4wheelers.org/>

for last minute events or spur of the moment runs.

### December 2nd

SLO4Wheelers General Meeting and Christmas Party and new Board of Directors nominations.  
7:00 PM at Players

### December 4th

San Luis Obispo Christmas Parade. More info to come in emails and at Dec. 2nd meeting.

### December 5th or 6th

Local run TBD at meeting.

### January 6th

SLO4Wheelers General Meeting

and Board of Directors elections.  
7:00 PM at Players.

### January 8th

Pack 4x4 meeting see  
e??????@aol.com for more info.

### January 9th or 10th

Local run TBD at meeting.

If you have any questions or events, local runs, not so local runs you would like to do, coordinate and/or participate in, please contact Eric Faley, SLO-4-Wheelers Events Director (f??????@sbcglobal.net) or cell/voice mail 805-???-????

