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P.O. Box 773
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FIRST CLASS MAIL



THE COMMUNICATOR
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March 2019

Upcoming Events

- Mar 9 Sat 8:00 am Breakfast, Denny's
- Mar 9 Sat 8:30 am MTARA Amateur Radio & Electronics Hamfest, Castle of Knights, Chicopee
- Mar 11 Mon 6:00 pm E-Board; 7:15 pm General Meeting, GCC East Building Room 110
- Mar 25 Mon General License Class, GCC, 6 to 9 pm, 1st of six Monday/Wednesday sessions

Upcomming Ham Fests and conventions:

On Saturday, March 9th is the Mt. Tom Amateur Repeater Associations 32nd annual amateur radio and electronics hamfest. It will be held at the Castle Of Knights on 1599 Memorial Dr. in Chicopee MA.

News, Activities & Articles

Monday March 11th 7:15pm

We will be having our general meeting, **Mitch Stern (W1SJ)** from the RANV club in Vermont will be speaking via Skype about ARRL Field Day. The RANV club has ranked first in the 2A class for Field Day, once or twice (IE in: 1986, 1987, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2018). I urge anyone with a question about Field Day to attend.

Greenfield Winter Carnival Sleigh Bell Race

Thanks to everyone who helped out with this year's Greenfield Winter Carnival Sleigh Bell race. Even though it was bitterly cold, which limited the number of participants, it was still a good opportunity to practice our skills and work with other agencies. Despite this being a small race – few runners and short distance - both groups had issues that had to be dealt with “on the fly.” Thanks again to everyone for braving the elements to help out. Chris KB1NEK, Anne N1YL, Keith KU1N, Justin KC1HEG, Cathy KB1SNA, Mark KC1JQD, Dick KC1JQJ, Richard KB1NOX, Erik KC1JQN



Erika KC1IJJ

New Hams from February VE Session posted 3/5/2019

Three candidates came to our February 26th VE License Exam session at GCC and all of them passed the Technician test. One week later we know their callsigns. If you hear these people on the air please say hello:

Nicholas (KC1LCD), Matthew (KC1LCE), Kerry (KC1LCF)

General Class License Course

A General class license course starts March 25, 2019. It will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays 6-9 pm for 3 weeks at the GCC East Building room 110. The East Building is the first building on the right. There is a GCC \$15 fee for this course. To register go to www.gcc.mass.edu/shopcreditfree, enter “general” in the search bar to get directly to the course listing or call 413-775-1661.

On April 10, 2019 after a 1 hour review session, the Pioneer Valley VE Team (PVVET) will be

offering free license exams to students and to the general public per their policy. The PVVET does not allow the use of social security numbers for the FCC test application and requires one to obtain a FRN number.

For more info contact Aaron via email at KC1CXX@arrl.net

MTARA Hamfest is March 9th

AI N1AW

The Mt Tom Amateur Repeater Association annual Amateur Radio and Electronics Hamfest is on March 9th at the Castle of Knights, 1599 Memorial Drive, Chicopee, same location as recent years. Yes, this conflicts with the March FCARC breakfast, but there will still be plenty going on if you come down after the breakfast. The Hampden County Radio Association's 2019 raffle drawing, for an Icom IC-7300 HF Transceiver, will take place after 11:30 a.m.

The FCARC will have a table - we have some surplus items to sell for our club treasury. Club members are welcome to put items they would like to sell on the table. We will charge a 10% commission, which we will waive if you put in some time helping at the table with setup, selling, or cleanup. Contact AI, N1AW.

The Pioneer Valley VE Team will provide free amateur radio license examinations at 10:30. Candidates are asked to obtain and FCC Registration Number (FRN) in advance and pre-register at <http://pvvet.org> prior to the exam.

The MTARA Hamfest flier (pdf) can be found on the FCARC website, at www.fcarc.org/Files/2019%20MTARA%20Flea%20Market%20Flyer.pdf

AI's QRP Dream Comes True

AI, N1AW

One of my favorite ham activities is SOTA - Summits on the Air. I like to take a low powered radio and a temporary antenna to a hilltop to see if I can make a few contacts. I've done this something like 100 times since I was introduced to SOTA. Usually it's a warm weather activity for me, my fingers don't like cold and I can't send Morse Code while wearing gloves. But in early February we had a thaw and I went to do SOTA for the first time since November.

On top of Bald Mountain in Bernardston 20 meters was unusually unproductive, but the 30 meter band was much better. After almost 20 contacts I was ready to quit, when in response to my CQ I heard a reply that I copied as VK4TJ. That is an Australian callsign. I couldn't believe it. It is not unusual for me to be called by a Spanish or English station while doing SOTA - it doesn't happen every time, but I'm no longer surprised to hear an EA or G call. The distance across the Atlantic is about the same as the distance from here to California. But a VK four times as far away, halfway around the world? Hearing my QRP lash-up in the woods? I thought I had heard incorrectly or that the operator on the other end had somehow bungled his sending. So I sent "???" and "VK4TJ?" several times. Finally I convinced myself to write that call in my pocket logbook.

But was it real? It could have been someone visiting a summit in

Europe, or it could have been a "pirate" - spoofing a callsign. So when I got home I checked on QRZ.com - yes, VK4TJ is a valid call, and not only that, the information on the website indicated he was an active SOTA activator and chaser. An exchange of e-mail followed - he had been at home when he heard my CQ, and he wrote back that it was not unusual for him to hear stations from the eastern US on the 30 meter band at that time, close to sunset here and shortly after sunrise in Australia.

This is my ham radio dream, the contact that seems impossible until it happens. Australia has had a special place in my heart ever since I was in 5th grade. My teacher, Mr. Cummings, had been stationed in Australia during World War II, and it was one of our Social Studies subjects. Mr. Cummings showed us pictures of himself and his army buddies with a pet kangaroo, and when I got interested in shortwave radio I often got up early in the morning to hear the call of the kookaburra from Radio Australia. And although I might have made a few VK contacts in sixty years as a ham I never ever expected to have an Australian come back to a CW QRP CQ from my backpack station in the woods.

Antenna Building Workshop Held February 9, 2019

Club President, Aaron Addison, obtained all the materials for club members to fabricate two types of 2 meter antennas. Each participant had a choice of making a tape measure Yagi using PVC for the frame or a J pole antenna using ladder line. Hardware including coaxial cable to attach the antenna to the individual's hand held radio with the appropriate SMA connector was provided. Those making the Yagi had the opportunity to assist with simple soldering and observe crimping for attachments. While a number of club members have used the tape measure Yagi for foxhunting, it was good practice to build them. The J pole antenna building was somewhat more challenging. While several members had made these antennas before and thought they had fool proof designs, they ran into an number of challenges and even after a lot of effort found that their J-pole antennas did not tune to the exact frequency they wanted. This was definitely an excellent teaching and learning opportunity. Chris Myers brought an antenna analyzer allowing the participants to test the antennas and see how well they tuned to the desired frequency. Participants all wish to thank Aaron for his generous donation of materials and time.



Anne N1YL

THE COMMUNICATOR is an informational publication for members of the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Officers: President: Aaron Addison (kc1cxx@arrl.net), Vice President: Joe Henefield, KB1WVO (joehenefield@comcast.net), Treasurer: Howard Field, N1LUP (howfield@comcast.net), Secretary: Chris Myers, KB1NEK (camyers1@verizon.net), Director: Belle Dyer, KB1NOG (bdyer582@juno.com), Director: Ron Niswander, K8HSF (reniswander@gmail.com).

This is your newsletter! Amateur radio information of general interest, club member project descriptions and doings, radio applications to other activities, corrections, or suggestions are all welcome. Individual submissions make for variety! We need more writers! Send submissions to: Jeanne A. Dodge, KC1DCQ (j.anndodge@gmail.com).

Back issues of the Communcicator are online at <http://www.fcarc.org/commun.htm>