

Local radio club reflects on its history after 80th anniversary

By CALEB HUNTOON Era Reporter eracalebh@gmail.com Sep 14, 2018



Bruce Manning, Don Pistner, Jay Pistner, and Andy Zias of the McKean County Amateur Radio Club, using just 5 watts of power, talk to other radio enthusiasts as far away as France and Hungary using Morse code. The club celebrated their 80th anniversary in August and as part of their celebration, held demonstrations and to activate Allegany State Park in Parks On The Air (POTA) on Saturday at the Stone Tower in Allegany State Park.

Era photo by Wade Aiken

The McKean County Amateur Radio Club has been making waves — literally — since 1938. Aug. 10 marked the club's 80th anniversary.

McKean County Amateur Radio Club Inc., W3VV (the club's call-sign), was founded by Warren A. Somers, on Aug. 10 of 1938 — making the club one of the oldest in the nation.

According to the club's Secretary/Treasurer, Sandee Pistner, the club consists of members from the local community.

"Some names of the [former] amateur radio operators are Del Mills, John Kyser, Les Flickenger, Martha and Henry Milks, George McKnight, Dave Dolaway, Dave Shuey, Warren Summers, Dave Sapko, Chet Kozial, Joe Fedorko, Max Douthit and Herb Brandon."

Pistner explained that when the club first got started, money was put together to obtain a repeater, a combined radio that transmits and receives signals. It was put up so the amateurs could get their signals out farther and help the county in the event of an emergency.

At present, the club has 29 members.

"We are affiliated with the American Radio Relay League, ARRL and it was founded in 1914 by Hiram Percy Maxim," Pistner added.

There are numerous amateur radio operators throughout the country who are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission. They are trained in communications, techniques and basic electronics theory.

During emergencies and other times of need, amateur radio operators have provided a worldwide public service.

"Amateur radio has been recognized by FEMA and The American Red Cross as elements of the critical communication network needed during natural disaster and emergencies," said Pistner.

To become an amateur radio operator, one must pass a written FCC Test. Once one passes the test, there are many things a radio operator can do, such as talk on repeaters locally and around the world. Digital modes are also available.

The club also works with Parks On The Air, a non-profit organization that supports the use of amateur radio in Pennsylvania and in national parks. Through promotion by POTA, people can discover and enjoy the park system, explained Pistner.

POTA provides a website where amateur radio operators, often called "hams," can find nearby parks. Hams then set up temporary portable radio stations and antennas in attempts to contact as many fellow hams as possible. Visiting a park and getting on the air is called an activation, and after each one, the hams will submit a list of their contacts to POTA. The ultimate goal is to talk to as many stations as possible. Certificate awards are then given for a number of categories.

All stations will require a power source for portable operations, such as a battery, solar panel or generator.

Operators use a microphone or a Morse Code key to communicate with other hams.

McKean Amateur Radio Club hold amateur license classes, typically at beginning of each year. The classes are held at the McKean County Department of Emergency Services building in Smethport. The club's monthly meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at the McKean County Department of Emergency Services building at 7 p.m. The meetings are open to anyone with an interest in amateur radio or who wants to learn more about becoming an amateur radio operator.

The club will be holding another event on Sept. 30, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Foster Brook Community Park to celebrate the club's 80th anniversary and to showcase radio demonstrations. The event will be open to the public.

Anyone having questions about amateur radio feel free to contact Sandee Pistner at (814) 368-4026.

http://www.bradfordera.com/news/local-radio-club-reflects-on-its-history-after-th-anniversary/article_346abc78-b7bc-11e8-9466-538b4446370c.html