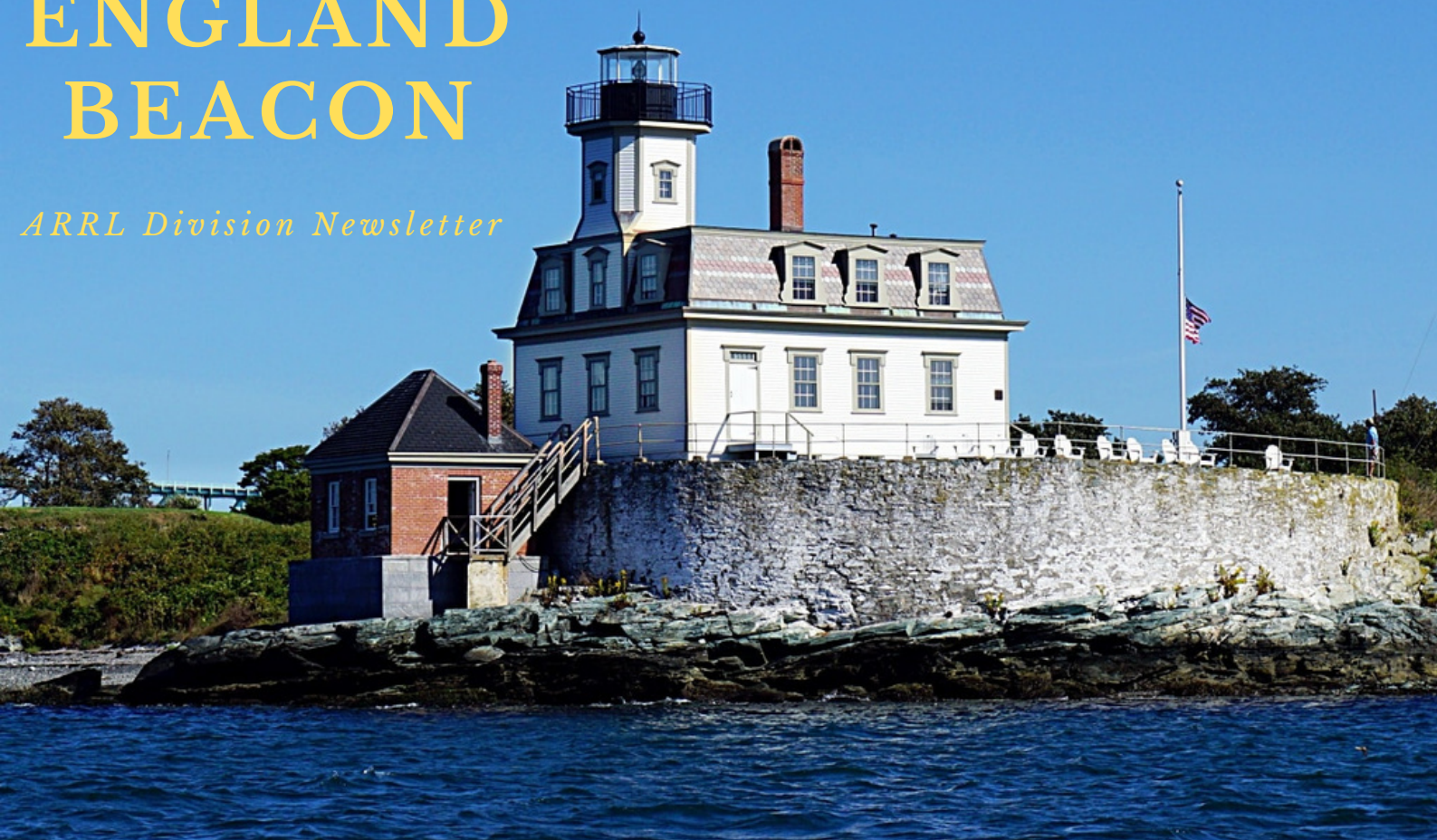


NEW ENGLAND BEACON

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Issue 5

ARRL Division Newsletter



INFORM

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DIRECTOR'S UPDATE FOR 4Q-2023

by Fred Kemmerer, AB1OC, New England Director

Give the Gift of Mentoring



Successful License Class Student

I have been thinking a lot lately about what is most important to care for the future of Amateur Radio. There are many different views on the answer to this question. Some would say it's about increasing participation in emergency communications and public service activities such as ARES, RACES, or the National Traffic System. Others would say it's about protecting our bands. Those who live in HOA or covenant-restricted situations would emphasize the need to enable Hams to install antennas at their homes. Contesters would say that making contesting more accessible to a broader group of people is the most important thing to focus on. And there are many more views as well I am sure.

I have been working with others at the ARRL on a project to update the ARRL's strategic plan for some time now and our working group has put a great deal of effort into answering this question. At this point in time, the average age of a licensed Amateur Radio operator in the US is about 75 years old. Another important piece of information to consider is that only about one in five people who earn their first Amateur Radio license will be active and on the air after a year. When I think about these points, it seems pretty clear to me that the first thing that we all need to focus on to ensure a strong future for Amateur Radio is the development of the next generation of Amateur Radio operators.

This one thing underpins all of the items that are mentioned at the beginning of this article. EmComm and Public Service activities, the future of contesting, and our ability to exert the necessary influence to protect our bands and overcome HOA restrictions all depend on an Amateur Radio service that is vibrant and growing.

How Can We Help?

The simple answer is that we need to license younger people and help everyone who gets a license or upgrade to learn about and participate in Amateur Radio to the fullest extent possible. This is all pretty obvious but the question that you are probably asking is “*How do we do this?*”

In my experience, success here begins with a commitment to Mentoring. We have found through surveys that one of the top reasons that new Hams get licensed and do not participate in Amateur Radio is that they lack mentors who will help them learn and get started.

What sort of help does a new licensee typically need? It’s usually pretty basic things – help to make their first QSO, help to choose an affordable VHF/UHF rig and get it installed and programmed, and help to learn their radio. For a new General, it’s about getting a basic HF antenna up, choosing an HF rig and getting it on the air, understanding how to deal with lightning protection and grounding issues, and learning to operate on the HF bands.

So how do we find ways to engage new Hams and provide mentoring? I have found that VE sessions and club meetings to be excellent opportunities to work with new people. How many times have some of us been part of a VE session where folks are getting licensed and observed that the VEs do not engage the candidates more than to complete the paperwork associated with their exam? This is a huge opportunity lost. Anita and I have been involved in licensing folks for quite awhile now and we helped over 400 people to earn a license or an upgrade. We always take some time with each person that we work with to understand what they hope to do with their license or upgrade and we try to either provide mentoring to help them or to connect them with others that are local to them to do this.

Similar situations sometimes occur at club meetings. A new Ham attends a first club meeting looking for folks who will share their interests and help them to get started. The club members usually don’t know the new person very well and don’t always engage them to understand how they can help. As a result, the new Ham moves on and may or may not pursue steps to use their license. Successful clubs often go out of their way to make new Hams feel welcome and actively try to find ways to mentor. There is one club here in Eastern Massachusetts, for example, that provides loaned

radios and equipment along with mentoring to help new folks get a station together and get on the air. By the way, the clubs that proactively reach out and mentor new folks are usually growing and enjoy some of the largest membership rosters in their area.

Perhaps you are not a VE or involved with a club so what then? Well, let your friends know that you are willing to talk to and work with new folks to assist them. When you are on the air and you encounter a newly licensed or upgraded Ham, spend some time talking with them about what they want to do with Amateur Radio and try to actively help them. You can also engage in Amateur Radio websites and social media groups and answer questions and help new folks there as well.

Where To From Here?

I hope that you'll consider giving the gift of mentoring. In my opinion, there is no single thing that we can do to help ensure a strong future for Amateur Radio. I would respectfully ask and challenge each of you reading this to choose a way to mentor that you would enjoy and give the gift of mentoring to a newly licensed or upgraded Ham. I think that you will find that the gift that you give will be more than returned in the form of appreciation on the part of the new Ham. If we can all make an effort here, I am sure that we will collectively create a much brighter future for the Amateur Radio Service.

Fred, AB1OC

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ARRL New England Division Director

VICE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

by Phil Temples, K9HI, New England Vice Director

Even though it's still 2023, the HamXposition Committee has been hard at work for months planning for the 2024 New England ARRL Convention and Northeast HamXposition, to be held on August 22-25, 2024, in Marlboro, Massachusetts.

Convention goers will notice significant changes for 2024. For starters, the convention will kick off on Thursday evening with a comedy show featuring nationally known comedian Juston McKinney. Juston has starred in numerous Comedy Central shows including his half-hour Comedy Central Presents and his one-hour special "Juston McKinney: A Middle-Class Hole." He has multiple appearances on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno and Conan O'Brien as well as a Showtime Special with Rob Gronkowski. He has also appeared twice at Denis Leary's, Comics Come Home at the TD Garden.

On Friday, the outdoor flea market opens; workshops and training sessions will begin and continue throughout Saturday until midday Sunday culminating with the prize drawings and closing ceremonies.

Considerable effort has gone into renovating the HamXposition website for 2024. The new site features a new color scheme and design, along with lots of photos and comments contributed by 2023 convention goers.

Skip Youngberg, K1NKR, Chair of the Programs Subcommittee, has begun to organize new talks, presentations, training and tracks. You can expect to see many new talks in 2024, in addition to a few excellent presentations from past years.

Youth and Collegiate Activities Chair Bob Phinney, K5TEC, is planning for an expanded youth presence at the convention. Outreach to college amateur radio clubs and other makerspaces is underway.

The Marketing & Promotion (M&P) Subcommittee has been very active. The Committee is keenly aware that the major vendors have drifted away from HamXposition. Under the leadership of Phil Temples, K9HI, M&P has met numerous times to strategize and

begin outreach to bring back the top-tier ham radio equipment manufacturers and distributors. “We’re expecting a significant increase in vendor presence for 2024,” writes Phil, who adds, “It’s too early to talk about, but we have a few tricks up our sleeves that may surprise folks.”

The M&P subcommittee plans to launch a “significant promotional campaign” to reach newly licensed hams throughout New England.

Ticket packages are now available online. Visit <https://hamxposition.org> for the details.

Would you like a committee member to visit your club and speak about HamXposition? Contact us! If you or your club would like to help promote the 2024 Northeast HamXposition in your newsletter or website, download one of our banners or other graphics at: <https://hamxposition.org/flyer-banner-images/>.



A poster describing a hematology experiment conducted in near-space, designed by youths at New England Sci-Tech, at the 2023 Northeast HamXposition. Photo courtesy K5TEC



Larry Krainson, W1AST, telling a "tall tale" at the Open Mic evening festivities at the 2023 Northeast HamXposition.



Anne Manna, WB1ARU, staffing the YLRL table at the 2023 Northeast HamXposition. Photo courtesy KC1KGS



Two youths who are completely enthralled playing Minecraft with the new RadioCraft mod. RadioCraft made its debut at this year's Northeast HamXposition. Photo courtesy K5TEC



Youths participating in kit building sponsored by New England Sci-Tech.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR UPDATES

Rob Leiden, K1UI, Assistant Director for Spectrum Utilization & Protection

Mesh Networking in New England – An Update and Some Questions for the Future

Last October, we noted that the Maine and Rhode Island sections had received grants to expand their mesh networks. Since then, New Hampshire has also received a grant to expand its mesh network including sites that position the network to grow into Massachusetts. In particular, the partnership between the New England Digital Emergency Communications Network (NEDECN) has proven especially productive, providing both high sites for long haul mesh network backbones as an emergency facility but also providing a link between repeater sites independent of the commercial internet. Rhode Island is also making use of mesh networks to link repeaters located on fire towers to enhance their emergency services utility. Mesh networks can provide radio amateurs with our own “intranet,” should the commercial internet become unavailable due to natural or man-made disasters. These networks offer served agencies tools that they already depend on using the commercial internet operated by hams that understand how best to use them.

The New England Division has made the growth of mesh networking a priority, both for these reasons and to make productive use of the frequencies to strengthen amateur radio’s position against encroachment by commercial interests. We note that the progress made thus far is largely due to the efforts of a few dedicated individuals who have obtained grant funding and established partnerships to deploy new network nodes.

As the transition from building these networks to operating and maintaining them occurs, we need to answer some questions:

1. Who will lead the build out in Massachusetts? Vermont?
2. Can the individual networks operate without coordination or should a council be created for that purpose?
3. Can the CT network, formerly operated by the State Police, be part of a New England – wide network? Would any modifications / linkages be needed?
4. What applications will be available and will the network support the required bandwidth, especially for streaming video?
5. What NTS 2.0 role will the network play? We note that NTS already delivers some traffic via email. Mesh networking provides the potential for NTS to deliver more than just text. Routine NTS traffic that includes file-based information like that expected for supporting served agencies in emergencies is the best way to ensure these networks will support our partners when they are needed.

As always, the New England Division of the ARRL will help to bring interested hams together to promote mesh network expansion. The nemesh iogroup (nemesh @ groups.io) meets every other month via zoom and you are invited to join and contribute to the discussion.

73

Rob K1UI

Anita Kemmerer, AB1QB, Assistant Director for Mentoring & New Ham Development

How Clubs Can Help to Mentor New Hams

Our local club, the Nashua Area Radio Society, provides training and mentoring programs for new hams. In the past 3 months, we have held classes and VE sessions for Technician, General, and Extra licenses. Our classes take place in 2-3 full days over a weekend and conclude with an online exam session. It is always a thrill to see new people getting licensed or earning an upgrade at the end of the class. In addition, these newly licensed hams can make a great addition to your club.

But just licensing new hams is not enough. For every ten new Technicians that are licensed, only two of them ever get on the air. The best way we can help our licensees to become active ham radio operators is to continue the mentoring after the class or VE session is over.



The Nashua Area Radio Society holds a program called Ham Bootcamp each spring and fall after our license classes. Ham Bootcamp is a day-long series of training sessions to help new Hams build skills and learn what they need to know to get on the air. The morning sessions are all about putting together a VHF station, programming your radio, and all the activities you can participate in with a Tech license – fox hunting, satellites, and more. The afternoon sessions are all about putting together an HF Station, selecting and putting up antennas, operating voice, CW, digital modes, and more. Our boot camps are held online and we get hams from all over the country attending, and even some DX!



Any club can start a mentoring program. We started by inviting the newly licensed/upgraded hams from our classes to our QTH for a few Saturday afternoons. We gave them a tour of our station, helped them make their first contacts at our station, used HTs and held a mock repeater net, built an antenna, had a fox hunt, and operated satellites.

It is easy to do something similar for your club. Just invite one or more new hams over to your shack and help them to get on the air. Show them your station. Answer their questions about operating or station building or anything else about Ham Radio.

You can make Winter or Summer Field Day a mentoring experience by inviting the new hams to help build stations and put up antennas. Once the event starts, help them to operate. Start at the mic and let the new ham log – then switch places and give them the mic while you log.

You can also invite your newly licensed members to your QTH to operate in a contest. The ARRL has the Rookie Roundup contests 3 times a year – it is a great opportunity for someone to try out contesting.

You will be helping to grow your club as well as the hobby as well as making new friends!

I'd love to hear about how your club is mentoring new hams. Join the Mentoring and Ham Development group ([Groups.io: ne-ham-dev](https://groups.io/join/ne-ham-dev)) and let's share our ideas. Your ideas will help all of us to become better mentors.

73,

Anita Kemmerer, AB1QB

New England Division Assistant Director

Mentoring, Ham Development, and Youth Outreach

ablqb@nediv.arrl.org

*Jack Ciaccia, WM0G, Assistant Director for Emergency
Communications & Public Service*

Once upon a frequency, weary and dreary,
I tuned in with a heart so weary,
Over quaint QSL cards, forgotten, a story to explore —
As I nodded, nearly napping, a gentle tapping,
An enigmatic visitor gently rapping, At my shack's door,
I heard it, but nothing more.
"Tis some DX," I whispered, my heart aflutter,
Tapping at my shack's door, a DX mutter,
Only this, nothing else,
I was sure, and sure.
In the bleak November, I still remember,
Each ember's dance, a dying, cold ember,
Upon my shack's floor, a dance I couldn't ignore.
Amid QST magazines, sorrow I bore,
For the lost Rare Ones, I did implore,
The radiant QSL card, "DX" they swore,
Nameless here for now and evermore.
Silken, sad, the Morse code's song,
Thrilled my soul, sent shivers along,
Fantastic terrors I'd never known before.
To calm my heart's wild roar, I muttered,
"Tis some DX, nothing more,
Late-night DX at my shack's door,
This it is, nothing more."

73,
Jack Ciaccia, WMØG
wm0g@arrl.net

Meriden (CT) ARC's MARCONI Project: Mentoring Radio Clubs

The Meriden Amateur Radio Club (MARC), an ARRL Special Service club in Wallingford, Connecticut, has created an innovative program known as MARCONI, "Motivating Amateur Radio Clubs to Open New Initiatives." The brainchild of MARC President Dr. Ed Snyder, WIYSM, MARCONI seeks to empower radio clubs to mentor other clubs who may be "less robust" or active.

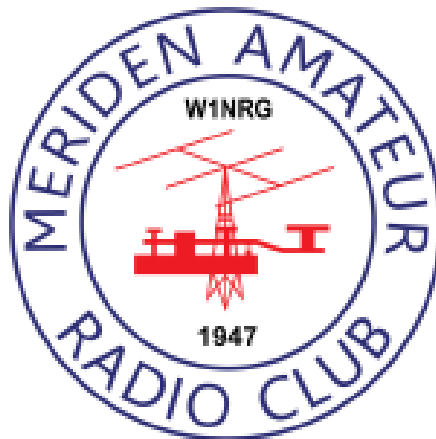
Funded by an ARRL Foundation club grant through ARDC, MARCONI focuses on seven different areas or "activity programs:"

1. POTA
2. Fox Hunting
3. CW Training
4. Satellite Communications
5. VE Sessions
6. Served Agencies
7. NCS Training and Traffic Passing

According to WIYSM, MARC has made good progress in all of the programs. "Since the six-month [progress report] we have added an eighth program to MARCONI: Radio Amateur Balloon Science."

Dr. Snyder presented on the MARCONI project at the 2023 Northeast HamXposition; the talk was well-received.

Kudos to the Meriden Amateur Radio Club for implementing this innovative program to benefit other radio clubs!



BVARC honors Marc Caouette, W1MCX

The Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club (BVARC) held its annual Holiday Party in northern RI, with good cheer all around. BVARC club president Ken Trudel, N1RGK, recounted a few club highlights from the year, including news of BVARC's steadily growing membership to now around 70. Amateur radio is alive and well in Rhode Island!

An Awards plaque was presented to Marc Caouette, W1MCX, for his years of service as BVARC Vice President and ARRL Assistant Section Manager to Bob Beaudet, W1YRC. Marc is a working IT professional looking forward to a new chapter of adventures in amateur radio. Can't wait to see where your journey takes you!



Marc Caouette, W1MCX (center), with his service award from BVARC. Shown with Teri DiIorio, W1PUP – BVARC/RI ARES and John Brewer, N1SXB – ARRL Affiliated Club Coordinator. (2Dec2023)

New England Sci-Tech Hosts Lexington Boy Scout Troop

Seventeen boys and girls from the Lexington BSA scouts participated in a three-hour program at New England Sci-Tech in Natick toward their radio merit badge, electronics merit badge, and amateur radio license.

For two groups over two weekends, Jon Lyna, George Lyna, Rusty Moore, K1FVK, and Bob Phinney, K5TEC, led radio and electronics activities. Scout leader John Aldridge created the curriculum which he and Bob plan to make a regular program for scout activities at New England Sci-Tech.

