

"Caring about others is very helpful because you can have a lot of friends that way. Ham radio people care about other people. They talk to people around the world and see what they like." - Rachel

"Ham radio is fun because you get to talk to people all around the world and make new friends. I'd like to be a ham radio operator." -Andrew

"Ham radio people live all over the world and they communicate with people all over the world. Sometimes they can be heroes of the world!" - Sarah

"Ham radio is fun to do because you get to talk with people who live everywhere and you can do it anytime you want!" -Patrick

These comments seem too simple ... unless you know they come from first graders. These children and about 40 others in just over a year are the HAMsters of Belmont's Winn Brook School. (http://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/class_pages/laroche/ham_radio/index.htm)

Sarah knows hams who show up in any weather to help with things like the Boston Walk For Hunger. Andrew is studying for his license and plans to have it by the end of the summer. Patrick is waiting to talk to explorers near Antarctica. Sarah was thinking of the hams who saved lives last December during and after the Indian Ocean tsunami. These kids and their classmates needed no newspaper maps for that disaster: they already knew where to find India and Sri Lanka, so they just looked nearby. They learn about the world because ham radio has made it real for them. The example of hams helping people gave the HAMsters international fame when they gathered the largest batch of toys sent to Project Dove for Florida hurricane victims.

About two and a half years ago teacher Donna LaRoche was given a book: "Hello, World: A Life in Ham Radio". This is a collection of hundreds of QSL (contact confirmation) cards covering over 70 years of one ham's activity, with the background to each one. It looked like a way to make geography more interesting. It was that, and much more.

Boston area hams adopted the HAMsters, coming into the classroom to explain the many aspects of ham radio. Now there are 2 years worth of students who know Morse Code, know geography, have a strong interest in math and science, and are learning, in and out of the classroom, about people and cultures all over the world. Their teacher has changed, too: she got her license last summer and intends to upgrade it (with coaching in Morse Code from her students!) this summer so that ham radio can be even more a part of the classroom.

The weekend of June 25-26 is the annual international Ham Radio Field Day, a public demonstration of how hams set up and operate stations during emergencies, how hams use their satellites to talk around the world, and a chance to ask questions and pick up information on ham radio in science, education, and other fields. The HAMsters have been invited as special guest to the Boston Amateur Radio Club Field Day station at Larz Andersen Park in Brookline. Their reaction has shown their opinion of ham radio: they had the school make enough copies of their Field Day invitations to invite every student and teacher at Winn Brook.

The invitation is not meant to be limited. Everyone is welcome.

FIELD DAY LOCATION:

Larz Anderson Park, Newton St., Brookline

TIME:

Station setup will start at 11:00AM on Saturday, June 25. Detailed tours of the operating stations will be from 2 to 8 PM Saturday and from 9AM to 1PM on Sunday. The station will be in continuous operation from 1:30PM Saturday to 1:30 PM Sunday

COST:

FREE. The Museum of Transportation is holding special events June 25 and 26. If they ask for an admission fee, mention that you are heading for the Field Day station and they will just send you up the hill free.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR MEDIA:

My involvement in this is both as an advisor to the HAMsters and as PR chairman and information table manager / tour guide for the Boston Amateur Radio Club Field Day.

The best contact for the HAMsters is Winn Brook School. If you deal with them this week, the last week of school, I'm certain there will be an opportunity to speak to both Donna LaRoche and the students. Donna will not be at the Field Day station in Brookline: she will be with the Framingham Amateur Radio Association Field Day station at Callahan State Park in Framingham. The HAMsters are invited to Brookline mainly because it's convenient to get to and because their ham friend Harold "Doc" Chamberlin (also from Belmont) is likely to visit Larz Andersen Park with the most unusual car in Belmont: a Mercedes sedan with nearly a dozen radios and an "antenna farm" in the trunk.

As for Field Day and any other aspect of ham radio you might need to know about, I can supply most of the information you need, including ham radio and education.

During the next two weeks I will be working overtime in my job with the IRS. I will be available every evening except Thursday, June 16 at (617) 254-5963 from 8PM to midnight.

On Field Day, I will be available through my cell phone, (857) 540-1541, starting at 9:30 AM.

Thank you for putting up with this rather large e-mail. I hope there is something here you can use; the HAMsters and ham radio are both less visible than they deserve to be.

-- Bill McNinch, Jr. KA1MOM / E --

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"We are amateurs just as NCAA star athletes are: we don't get paid for using our skills."