

# Bella Vista Radio Club holds field day

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The Bella Vista Radio Club held field day on Saturday at Metfield Skills Park. The club was also celebrating its 30th anniversary.

President Jan Hagan said field day is an annual event by the American Radio Relay League to practice communication in the field so that operators will be able to assist in case of emergency. He said ham radio operators do not require cell phones, cell towers or infrastructure, including power, as they use batteries or generators. He said amateur radio operators provided communications during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"It's a wonderful hobby. We all enjoy communicating with people," he said.

Bella Vista Mayor John D. Flynn read a proclamation making June 18-24 Amateur Radio Week in Bella Vista. The proclamation noted that the Bella Vista Radio Club is the largest club of ham radio operators in Arkansas.

Robert and Dana Hill were among the operators present at the event. He has been enjoying the hobby for two years, and she has been a part of it for a year and a half.

She said, "He started doing it, and it seemed like fun. We do all kinds of things. They have contests."

She said what she enjoys about being part of the club is "the camaraderie of the club. It's a lot of smart people, and we get to, from our little antenna, talk to people all over the world."

Hagan said the club has 200 members and extends

beyond Bella Vista throughout northwest Arkansas, as far south as Fort Smith.

"We hope what makes it special is we try to support new amateurs. We bring them into the fold ... as they learn all aspects of amateur radio," he said.

Some of the members are really advanced in their skills, he said. Some communicate with the International Space Station when it passes over northwest Arkansas, and others communicate with others around the world by bouncing radio signals off the moon rather than off the ionosphere, he said.

"It's more than the technology, it's the people," he said. "We have a need to communicate. In amateur radio, there's a kind of code of conduct. Whether you're talking to a ham radio operator in Fort Smith, Hawaii

or Spain ... everyone enjoys the conversation. The technology is just to build those connections."

He added, "We are committed to bringing together people of all backgrounds, ages and ethnicities."

Events planned for the day included a "fox hunt," in which small radio receivers were used to find hidden transmitters around Metfield Park; a "get on the air" channel operated by the Hills for the public to talk to ham radio operators at other locations; and a 24-hour emergency preparedness exercise from 1 p.m. Saturday to 1 p.m. Sunday.



Rachel Dickerson/The Weekly Vista

Bella Vista Mayor John D. Flynn (center) speaks to an amateur radio operator on a "get on the air" station at the Bella Vista Radio Club's field day and 30th anniversary celebration on Saturday, June 24, at Metfield Skills Park. Club members Robert Hill (left) and Dana Hill (right) were operating the station.

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