



**Cub scouts TJ Heck and William Oakeley talk to an operator in Wisconsin during the field day exercises at Armistead Boothe Park.**

PHOTOS BY  
LOUISE KRAFFT/  
GAZETTE PACKET

## Hams Have Field Day in Alexandria

### Amateur radio proves its value at Boothe Park.

BY MEGAN WENGER  
GAZETTE PACKET

**W**ires, antennas, batteries, and a solar panel adorned a section of Armistead Boothe Park this past weekend in an effort to demonstrate what amateur radio is capable of today.

The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) — the national association for amateur radio — held its annual 24-hour Field Day event Saturday, June 23 until Sunday, June 24. The first Field Day was held in 1933, and since then has gathered over 35,000 amateur radio operators, or hams, throughout the U.S. and many other nations, to practice emergency communication procedures and educate the public on the capabilities of amateur radio.

Marshall DeBerry, president of the Alexandria Radio Club, explained that the greatest responsibility of ham radio is to support the health and welfare of its community. In circumstances where other means of communication has failed, DeBerry said, "We get the message through no matter what."

The Alexandria Radio Club consists of hams who

have helped facilitate emergency communication during natural disasters, such as Hurricane Isabel in 2003 and Hurricane Irene in 2011, and are always available to the City of Alexandria to assist in an emergency.

In addition to the unexpected, the club also participates in the Marine Corp Marathon each year. Amateur radio operators are stationed along the course and at an aid station for participants in need of medical attention.

Club members, such as Larry Walker, who was licensed as an amateur radio operator last year, emphasized the benefits of ham radio as a means of

communication when all other forms are blocked, and the ease at which it can be completed. "All you need is a transmitter, antenna, and someone on the other end," said Walker.

Many clubs, including the Alexandria Radio Club, participating in the ARRL Field

Day treat the event as a pseudo-contest among their members. "We don't really consider this a competition in terms of winning or losing," said DeBerry. "We use the aspect of obtaining contacts as a way of being able to demonstrate our ability to communicate under varying conditions and seeing how far a distance we can communicate."

Spread throughout a picnic pavilion in Armistead Boothe Park, members of the Alexandria Radio Club,

**"All you need is a transmitter, antenna, and someone on the other end."**

— Larry Walker, club member

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**Newly licensed operator Ed Bradshaw joins the group at Boothe Park**



**Alexandria Radio Club president Marshall DeBerry.**

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divided into groups of both old and new members, worked to reach contacts by implementing the use of voice, Morse Code, digital, or even solar-powered equipment.

Ed Bradshaw earned his amateur radio operator license just one month ago, and within the first few hours of the event, had made contact with hams in Tennessee, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts on what the club called its "Get on the Air" station. Here, both members of the club and the public could try their hand at tuning in to make contact throughout the U.S., or even the world.

Today, there are more than 700,000 licensed amateur radio operators in the U.S., and more than 2.5 million around the world.

Although the ARRL Field Day is said to be the most anticipated event within the amateur radio community, other activities and awards continuing throughout the year encourage amateur radio operators to extend their own knowledge and capabilities of the technology.

The Summits on the Air award program is designed on a point-basis for hams who can operate their radios from the tops of mountains. Other activities



**Larry Walker and Nicholas Curcuru work out of the club's mobile unit.**

PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFT

could include logging international connections with the International Amateur Radio Union. Operators, such as club president DeBerry have successfully made contacts in countries such as Canada, Greece, Cuba, Japan and France.

By the conclusion of the 24-hour event, the Alexandria Radio Club had made contact with several hundred other operators, including individuals from around the U.S. and other countries, such as Kuwait, Spain, Romania, and Slovenia, resulting in what DeBerry and the Alexandria Radio Club felt was a very successful Field Day for the Alexandria hams.