



**1954-2024 — 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**



# ARC-SHORTS

**The Newsletter of the Alexandria Radio Club  
July 2024**

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**Ian, N8IK, was one of several operators who braved the heat for our 2024 Field Day. Thanks to all who took part.**

## **President's Corner**

**Sean (K4KBK)**

I hope this newsletter finds you returned safely from your Fourth of July festivities, relaxed and ready to reengage. Since last month, we've successfully and safely accomplished Field Day 2024. Thank you to all that participated and supported the effort. Perhaps we can garner a little additional support in 2025!! Given our most recent trends towards more frequent and more intense heat waves, perhaps we could suggest to ARRL that we move field day dates from

the Jan/June cycle to more moderate weather months of May/November. I'm guessing that the mere mention of such a suggestion is heresy in some circles but I don't think it's very wise to continue subjecting our members to extreme heat on top of the extended hours associated with Field Day. If we continue on the current path, we are just asking for trouble and the rest of the clubs nationwide are in the same position. I would like to get some feedback on this from the members before trying to figure out options. Thanks!

Judging from the traffic I've observed on Discord and the completion of other activities, I guess that some of you never did take a break. Meshtastic continues to be wrung out by **KVrW, Ian, Alex, Jason, Joe P, and Joe K!** Well Done!! Congratulations to **Jason, WA6MPR**, for capturing his Extra license! Bravo! For others that have been tempted to step up to Extra and have been studying up, remember, the questions may have changed but the material the questions are based on didn't. Thus the questions can only change so much. So, let's get going and let us know if you need help.

Our monthly membership meeting is only days away and this month we are fortunate enough to have a special presentation on Alexandria's Public Safety / Service Radio Systems delivered by one of our own members, **Mr. Eric Parker**, who is also Alexandria City's Radio Manager. This presentation will offer an insight into how the City plans and operates all of the City radios. Please make a special effort to join us in person for this presentation.

Lastly, as I've just completed six months as your President, I thought it would be useful to provide my observations on where I believe we are as an organization and some of the changes we need to accomplish going forward. Pending a cursory Board review, I will provide this summary to the membership for comment and the prioritization of the changes moving forward.

Hope to see you on Friday night. The temps will have cooled off and it will be safe to once again come outside!!

**73, Sean, K4KBK - comms@gallagher.us.com**

## Member News

### Congratulations to . . .

**Jason**, WA6MPR, and **Sean**, K4KBK, who passed the exam for Amateur Extra, just under the wire before the June 30 question pool changeover. Anyone else? Let us know.

## ARES

**Joe Kalfa (KD2HZG)**



Hey ARC ARES Team!

With Field Day behind us I'm looking to ramp up some ARES activity. Coming up we have a couple exercises planned, one of which will be focused around providing proof of coverage testing for our repeater(s) in the Alexandria proper area. I'll send out an email when I get the details finalized but keep your radios charged and stay hydrated. It's very hot out there.

For those who didn't see it, [hwn.org](http://hwn.org) (Hurricane Watch Net) had active nets for Hurricane Beryl. You can find their frequencies in my previous email or on [hwn.org](http://hwn.org). Hurricane nets are a great way to get exposed to ARES type HF nets, they certainly have some nuances compared to what you may have seen on weather nets on repeaters.

Speaking of ARES nets, I am now running a trial run of a 40m digital HF net every Saturday from 1900 til Sunday 1900 (local), on both JS8Call and Vara Terminal. Feel free to check our Discord channel or email me for more details.

For those of you new to ARES or considering getting interested, we will be having a training and information session very soon on what ARES is and what you can offer the program! However, to set expectations, we will be tailoring the program for hams with 1-2 years of active experience at least at the Technician level, so to say you need to have a wealth of knowledge to help out is quite far from the truth. Some skills you should be comfortable with are:

- Programming your own HT, both using software and FPP.
- Operating on repeaters.
- Basic RF theory.
- Have an HT, a couple batteries, water bottle, and be ready to learn!

**Joe, KD2HZG**

## **Special Comment**

**Ken van Wyk (K0RVW)**

### **The Case for Hotspots**

(This ARC-SHORTS article is a follow-up to my previous one about communities.)

I discussed finding communities of like-minded friends to connect with within our radio hobbies. They can be a major component to having fun with radio, if you ask me. Whatever your hobbies (other than amateur radio), there are almost certainly communities out there where people are discussing them. It's "merely" a matter of finding them, right?

Where to begin?

In my previous piece, I talked about DMR talkgroups, D-STAR reflectors, as well as the somewhat more recent cross-mode reflectors in the XLX community. These are all great, and chances are there's a group out there—probably more than one—where you'll fit in great. But, how?

Well, like most amateur radio clubs, our Alexandria club offers a wide selection of repeaters. Those are great resources and they serve a valuable purpose for us. The down side is that most of them are very limited in their electronic footprint. Our 2-meter FM repeater, for example, is a great resource for talking with other ARC members, but that's the extent of its reach.

We also operate a DMR and a D-STAR repeater. Those have the ability to connect to some of those DMR talkgroups and D-STAR reflectors I mentioned. That's a great starting point. However, being shared resources, we are a bit restricted in explorations.

There are literally thousands of such groups out there. If we link our club repeaters to those groups arbitrarily, we'll be tying up resources and preventing others from using them. That, and/or we'll be connecting with groups other people may well have no interest in hearing on the air.

Well, that's where personal hotspots can come in. Think of them as personal repeaters where we are the masters of our own domains. Want to go explore a talkgroup where people discuss RC cars? Camping? Kayaking? You name it. There are special interest groups out there for just about every taste. And, if you

don't find the one you want, there are methods of creating our own and inviting like-minded friends to come join us.

Hotspots are privately owned and operated. They also only transmit a very weak signal, so they don't reach much beyond your own house. (More on that below.) But, the good part of that is that we can connect them to any community we care to. Want to take every Brandmeister (DMR) talkgroup for a test drive? No problem. Point your hotspot there and go explore—without fear of hogging anyone else's resources.

This article is not intended to be a product review, but here are a few of the major hotspot players out there:

- **Pi-Star.** These are ubiquitous little boxes about the size of a deck of cards (mostly). You can find them on Amazon, eBay, Ham Radio Outlet, etc. They mostly run on Raspberry Pi Zero single board computers running the Linux operating system. They have an RF “hat” that performs the (very low power) RF communications. They run the Pi-Star software on Linux for administrating your hotspot via a web browser interface that's fairly intuitive. Most can be configured to do DMR, D-STAR, P25, or other digital modes. Get a Pi-Star hotspot and a cheap DMR radio and you're on your way. Pi-Star hotspots can be built using readily available components or you can buy them assembled for about \$100-150, generally. They connect to your home internet service via either WiFi or ethernet cable. (I prefer the latter when possible.)
- **OpenSpot.** These are proprietary hotspots similar in some ways to Pi-Star systems. They cost a bit more, but you get some coolness for the extra cost. For one thing, they offer numerous means of cross-modding. For example, if you have a DMR HT and want to play around in some System Fusion groups, the OpenSpot will allow you to do that. They also have small lithium ion batteries internally and can run on battery for several hours, which can be convenient in various situations.
- **ClearNode.** This is a peculiar little hotspot, but it's become one of my favorites, personally. It is built on Raspberry Pi, just like a Pi-Star, but that's the end of the similarities. It uses a Pi 4 computer, which is substantially faster than the Zero, for one thing. But, a major difference is in the RF “hat”. The ClearNode uses an analog FM-based hat. That means you can use it with any FM amateur radio -- even a cheap Baofeng works just fine with a ClearNode. Another thing that separates the ClearNode from the others is that it can serve as a node on EchoLink

and/or the AllStarNet networks. These are considered by many to be “old school” analog FM networks, but they’re still heavily in use. On my own ClearNode, I operate my own EchoLink server, for example (K0RVW-R). I almost always have an HT nearby that’s monitoring my ClearNode. Any amateur operator seeking me can use EchoLink to get to K0RVW-R and we’re connected. EchoLink clients are available for free and inexpensively -- there’s even a web browser interface. You just have to register with EchoLink, which is free (but donations are welcome).

But these only work at our homes, right? Well, sort of. It’s 2024, and many (if not most) cars these days have WiFi hotspots built in. My 2021 GMC Sierra pickup truck does, for sure. And guess what? I keep a Pi-Star hotspot in my truck for long drives. When I head out on such trips, I grab the hotspot in my center console and plug it into a USB outlet for power. It connects to my truck’s WiFi and out to the world. I have it set up to use D-STAR usually (although I’ve also used DMR just fine). On the radio side, I use my Kenwood TH-D75A HT with one of its VFOs tuned to the hotspot. That allows me to use D-STAR (et al) when I’m mobile just fine. Of course, that uses WiFi data, which in my case goes out over AT&T’s LTE network, but I’ve found it to work pretty well most of the time. My truck’s LTE antenna is on its roof and it performs respectably well.

In conclusion, our club repeaters are fabulous systems that serve their purposes well. I love the fact we have such a wide selection of repeaters on different bands, modes, etc. BUT, if you really want to explore the radio on-line world, a hotspot offers up an unrestricted universe of options. You can go anywhere you care to, and you won’t be hogging a shared resource or annoying other people. You’ll be connecting with the communities you want to.

**Ken, K0RVW**

## Activities and Events

### *Contests:*

- **July 13-14, IARU HF World Championship.** <https://www.arrl.org/iaru-hf-world-championship>
- **July 20, YOTA Contest.** <https://www.ham-yota.com/contest/>
- **July 20-21, North American QSO Party.** <https://ncjweb.com/NAQP-Rules.pdf>
- **July 20-28, Maidenhead Mayhem.** <https://w9et.com/rules.html>
- **July 27-28, Alabama QSO Party.** <https://alabamacontestgroup.org/aqp/>  
(Selected from ARRL Contest Calendar [www.arrl.org/contest-calendar](http://www.arrl.org/contest-calendar))

## **Alexandria Radio Club Date Book**

### *Coming Events*

**October 27: Marine Corps Marathon**

### Next Meeting

Will be held at 7 p.m., Friday, July 12, at the Alexandria Police Department Emergency Operations Center Community Room, 3600 Wheeler Avenue.

### Last Meeting

**Date: June 14, 2024**

**Time: 1900 hours**

**Location: Alexandria Police Department Emergency Operations Center Community Room, 3600 Wheeler Avenue.**

Highlights of the meeting included:

- **Jack York, KE7VOU**, was elected as Secretary, to fill the term of **Carol Myers, KN4LLL**, who had resigned.

- **Bob Crumley, KO4ZOK**, displayed the final configuration for Field Day, to be held June 22-23, at Chinquapin Park.

### Attendance (20)

Name	Call Sign	Name	Call Sign	Name	Call Sign
Sean	K4KBK	Pete	N2KFA	Sven	KC3ZDM
Bob	KO4ZIK	Joe	KD2HZG	Corey	KN4YZY
Erik	KI4BXU	Gary	KC5QCN		
Ted	W9TCE	Bryan	WD4ADF		
Louis	KO4QVB	Clair	KQ4SCJ		
Wilson	KM4KLLK	Mason	KO4ROV		
Jay	KV3W	Richard	KW4UJ		
Ian	N8IK	Ed	K4ESC		
Jan	KB2LRX	Ryan	KO4EBY		

### PLEASE USE OUR REPEATERS

**Club Repeaters: 147.315+ (PL 107.2), 444.6+ (PL107.2), 224.82- (PL107.2), 53.130- (PL107.2) 927.600 (-25Mhz, PL107.2), and 1282.600- (PL 107.2), DSTAR 145.380Mhz, 442.060+, and 1284.600-; DMR IS UP AND RUNNING 442.4125 +5Mhz Color Code 1.**

Alexandria Radio Club mailing list

Home: <http://mailman.qth.net/mailman/listinfo/alexandriaradioclub>

Help: <http://mailman.qth.net/mmfaq.htm>

Post: mailto: AlexandriaRadioClub@[mailman.qth.net](mailto:AlexandriaRadioClub@mailman.qth.net)

This list hosted by: <http://www.qsl.net>. Please help support this email list:

<http://www.qsl.net/donate.html>

## Club Leadership

### Elected Officers for 2024 \* †

Sean Gallagher, K4KBK—President

Bob Crumley, KO4ZIK

—Vice President

Jack York, KE7VOU—Secretary ††

Erik Misavage, KI4BXU—Treasurer

### Elected Board of Directors, At Large\* †

Sandy Kenyon, KQ4DNE

Joseph A. Porcelli, KT3I

Paul Cataldo, KQ4LJS

\* Voting members of the leadership group are the elected officers and elected directors.

† Don Lewis, KI4D, was elected President in November, 2023, but resigned for health reasons on Jan. 12, 2024, at which time Sean Gallagher assumed the Presidency. The office of Vice



President and a Director's position were filled by a special election at the February 9, 2024 meeting. †† Carol Myers, KN4LLL, resigned as Secretary in May, 2024. Jack York, KE7VOU, was elected at the June 14 meeting.

**Committee Chairmen**

Jan Maas, KB2LRX—Public Information Officer (PIO)

Gary Sessums, KC5QCN—Club Metro Area Liaison

Club Leadership Group members may be contacted using the following email addresses:

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