

**Public Relations Committee
Report to ARRL Board of Directors
July 2008**

2008 committee members are:

Chairman: Bill Morine*, N2COP – Wilmington, NC

Don Carlson, KQ6FM – Sparks, NV

Bob Josuweit*, WA3PZO – Philadelphia, PA

Jim McDonald*, KB9LEI – Muncie, IN

Dan McMonigle*, N3IXQ – Newtown Square, PA

Kevin O'Dell, N0IRW – Ardmore, OK

Ron Stafford, W6ROD – San Jose, CA

Gordon West, WB6NOA – Costa Mesa, CA

Board of Directors Liaison is Vice Director – Roanoke Div., Patricia Hensley, N4ROS
ARRL Media & PR Manager – Allen Pitts, W1AGP

* - indicates past winners of ARRL's Philip McGan Award

The PR Committee meets monthly via telephone conference and in person during the Dayton Hamvention® weekend. In addition, the Committee has a private reflector which is used to discuss and shape public relations ideas and policies, and to support the Media & PR Manager, as well as providing him with guidance and feedback.

The highlight of the first half of 2008 was the unveiling of the third element of the PR trilogy, "Technology...We Do That!", at Dayton Hamvention®. Since 2006, the PR Committee developed three distinctly separate public relations themes which capture the essence of amateur radio. The first theme in 2006 called "Hello!" celebrates the fellowship and fun of the hobby. 2007 introduced the second annual PR campaign, "Emergency Radio", which emphasizes public service. "We Do That!" documents the many technological contributions that amateur radio has made to electronic communications. The three PR themes support ARRL's organizational pillars: public service, advocacy, education, membership and technology. The PR Committee believes that the three PR themes integrate the five pillars for easier understanding by the general public. In 2009, the PR Committee will return to the first theme – "Hello!" and update it, with the intent that each of the three themes will be updated in annual cycles going forward.

Over the past six months, Media & PR Manager Allen Pitts, W1AGP, has been working closely with web designers in developing websites which accompany the three PR themes above. Allen has developed a website for the "We Do That!" campaign which highlights ham technology and will serve as a prototype for the other two PR themes. It also may have application for ARRL's main website as it goes through its scheduled updating. Each of the three PR theme websites has its own URL addresses designed to attract anyone curious about amateur radio through search engines, then offers a hyperlink into the main ARRL page.

Joining the committee on many of its monthly teleconference calls has been ARRL Membership Manager Katie Breen, W1KRB. The PR Committee feels that many of its issues overlap with objectives of the Membership Dept., and both organizations have been exploring areas of common interest and synergy.

The Committee recently voted to select Walter Palmer, W4ALT, as the 2008 Philip J. McGan award recipient for exemplary work in promoting amateur radio. Walt, who is the Delaware Section PIC, was instrumental in having Gov. Ruth Ann Minner come out for Field Day, and has been a tireless advocate for amateur radio across the “First” state.

Preliminary indications show it was a banner year for Field Day coverage around the nation, with a major surge in television coverage.

Dayton Hamvention® Activities

In addition to the introduction of the “We Do That!” campaign, the PR Committee had a marked increase in attendance at its annual forum at Hamvention®, possibly due to the change of time from Sunday to Friday. Recognitions were made to former committee chairman Sherri Brower, W4STB, and member Rich Moseson, W2VU, for their many years of service in the development of public relations on behalf of ARRL. Committee members attending Hamvention and volunteering at the PR booth were Jim McDonald, KB9LEI, Kevin O’Dell, N0IRW, Gordon West, WB6NOA, and Board liaison Patricia Hensley, N4ROS. Numerous copies of the CD-ROMs “Talk on a Disk” and the “Swiss Army Knife” were distributed to PIOs. These CD-ROMs were developed several years ago and are updated annually. They contain files in multiple formats that are designed to help PICs and PIOs to be more effective in dealing with media. As a way to further coverage of Hamvention®, the committee is recommending that next year a pre-packaged news release and a digital camera be available at the PR booth to send release instantaneously from Hamvention® to an attendee’s hometown media.

Planning for the future:

In her July, 2007 Board Report, then PRC Chairman Sherri Brower stated that PIOs need to work more closely with local ARES™ groups, and that changes need to be made to foster this relationship. In the past year, the 2007 EmCOMM PR theme helped substantially in raising awareness about the contributions of amateur radio in widespread disasters. Particularly noteworthy was amateur radio coverage during severe storms in Oregon in January, thanks to alert PIO promotion. However, virtually no coverage emerged from the virulent outburst of tornadoes which ravaged the South in February, despite extensive ARES activation. Subsequent smaller disasters which had ARES activations also revealed negligible or no coverage. The PR Committee has had constructive discussions with Dennis Dura, K2DCD, ARRL EmCOMM Manager, on ways to improve EmCOMM coverage. Meanwhile, the PR committee will continue to work with the PSC to encourage SMs to promote strong PIO organization in their sections.

Finally, the PR committee is keenly aware that there are exponentially more media outlets today, and that Americans are increasingly accessing information through sources which only recently have become mainstream, such as websites and blogs. To reflect this change, the committee is revamping its PIO and PIC job descriptions, and will update the PIO Handbook, the primary document on media relations.

From all of us on the PR Committee, we consider it an honor to serve the ARRL and to convey all beneficial facets of amateur radio to the public.

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Morine, N2COP
Chairman – Public Relations Committee