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News

ELB Wilson High Teen Applies Electronics/HAM Radio Skills To Assist City Disaster Communications

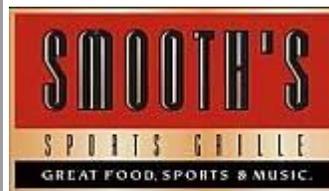
(Feb. 6, 2009) -- Wilson High student/ELB teenager Dean LaBarba taught himself about volts, amperes, watts, transmitters and antennas. He knows the differences between amplitude versus frequency modulation, resistance versus impedance...and more.

After earning a federally-granted Amateur Radio Operator (HAM) license (call sign: KI6CUX) at a time when most teens aspire to a drivers license, Mr. LaBarba (who hopes to become a surgeon) is now applying his love of electronics to help the City of Long Beach (CA's fifth largest city) if/when a disaster strikes.



Mr. LaBarba, hand-held HAM rig in hand, atop Signal Hill

Mr. LaBarba is president (since 2005) of Wilson High School's Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Team (AREC), using the skills he's learned to practice transmitting and receiving radio signals in emergency conditions. The



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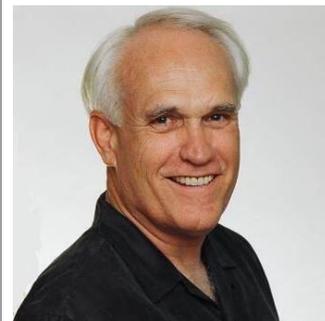


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group raised over \$5,000 in grant money to design and build a mobile radio station...and trains once a week for emergencies and participates in earthquake and fire drills.

After Hurricane Katrina, HAM radio provided the only means of communication during critical early hours when other communications links failed. Long Beach has had its share of disasters: the 1933 earthquake, the 1938 flood.

Wilson High's AREC is one of only a few high school emergency radio teams in CA and the only one in Long Beach. The group has organized with City Hall's disaster manager and other local amateur radio clubs, earning recognitions from the LB school district and City Council members.

"I am fascinated by science and technology and love to help others. This emergency team is a way for me to serve my community that is unique and could be of vital importance. It is wonderful to be able to help others in a way that you enjoy and are continually fascinated by," Mr. LaBarba has written.

Each year, HAM radio operators across the country (in coordination with the national HAM group "American Radio Relay League") conduct "Field Day" ...setting up their electronic equipment under field conditions to simulate emergency situations. Everything: transmitters, receivers, power supplies operates without standard power.



Mr. LaBarba at a HAM radio host set up under field conditions, simulating emergency operating conditions

As AREC president, young Mr. LaBarba brought the group's mobile radio

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station to LBUSD's science fair at WLB's Cabrillo High, showing amateur radio communications in action and emphasizing the importance of emergency radio preparedness.



Mr. LaBarba displays his group's LB AREC set-up

On January 29, Wilson High teacher Devon Day (herself a licensed HAM radio operator) wrote the following letter to the American Radio Relay League Foundation -- which makes scholarship grants -- regarding Mr. LaBarba's accomplishments. He is graduating from Wilson High this year and hopes for a career in medicine.

I am writing today to recommend Dean La Barba, KI6CUX, for an ARRL academic scholarship.

I have known Dean for the past four years. We first met on his test date for his amateur radio license when he was a freshman at Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, California. After Dean passed his Technician's exam, he joined the Amateur Radio Emergency Communications team at Wilson High where I have served as an advisor for the past five years.

For the past three years, Dean has served as the Captain of the team, leading the club members through emergency drills and coordinating training of club members to use both our hand held amateur radios and our mobile radio station. Two years ago, through a number of grants including an ARRL grant, the club designed and then coordinated with our local community Amateur Radio Club (ARALB-W6RO) to build the first

mobile amateur radio station for Long Beach Unified School District. Dean was actively involved with every step of that project.

Working with seasoned amateur radio operators from the community has been critical in Dean's development as a radio operator. He has put in hundreds of hours working with other radio operators to learn about emergency radio communication.

His greatest accomplishment has been as a team leader in the building of the school's mobile radio station. The station can be quickly set up and moved throughout the campus and community by the student amateur radio team. It is designed to be powered off a 100 hour gel cell, AC, or our generator. The station has 2 meter, a dual band 2 meter-440, and a 220 amateur radio. It is able to operate at night. Through the years, the students have continued to improve the station's efficiency.

Dean has also participated in activities to promote amateur radio. One example is his Amateur Radio Association of Long Beach activities including Field Day at El Dorado Park in Long Beach where Dean would assist community members in the proper use of amateur radios. He has taken the lead in presenting the mobile radio station into the community. For example the radio station has been displayed at LBUSD's annual Science Fair at Cabrillo High School in Long Beach. Dean has initiated plans for the station to be part of the Fair again this year.

During the school's past Homecoming Activities Dean and the club members set up the station so the student body could become more familiar with the use of amateur radio in the case of an emergency. Dean was able to recruit new members to the team. His most recent recruit, David Strachan-Olsen, KI6XUJ passed his exam within two months from joining the AREC team.

As Captain, Dean has also led the way to find new and interesting activities for club members. This year the students hope to participate in a j-pole building clinic, a T-hunt, operating W6RO on the Queen Mary with ARALB club members, and taking a course in CW ["continuous wave" or Morse Code].

Dean's dream is to become a surgeon. He understands the necessity of communications in an emergency. He has witnessed the need for amateur radio in disasters (including the recent wild fires in California). He knows that his skills in radio could make a difference in the hospitals he will serve as a physician one day.

If there were any student in America who deserves an academic scholarship because of their service to the community, their efforts in promoting amateur radio in public education, and their over all leadership, I would say without hesitation, Dean La Barba should be at the top.

LBReport.com plans to follow this story.

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Debra,

Thank you for the compliment however, no matter what I do it takes a creative student like Dean to develop a school club into a viable service to the community. I am really proud of him.

Our local radio club, ARALB wanted to reprint the article and so I asked the editor of the LB Report, Bill Pearl, and he wrote back

the following:

I think Bill would be very happy if ARRL wanted to use the story or your local news letter.

Devon Day, KF6KEE

----- Original Message -----

From: lbreport.com

To: [Devon Day](#)

Sent: Saturday, February 07, 2009 10:22 AM

Subject: Re: Allowing ARALB to reprint the article about Dean LaBarba

LBReport.com would be honored if ARALB would reprint and/or link to our story. If it's in print, please credit "Courtesy: LongBeachReport.com." If online, please use same credit and hyperlink if possible.

Best wishes.

s/ Bill Pearl
LBReport.com
mail@lbreport.com