

Working the School Club Roundup on VHF

With the help of the VHF bands, students engage their communities during this HF operating event.

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For any Amateur Radio club at a school or university, the ARRL School Club Roundup (SCR) has become one of the highlights of the academic year. SCR, which is held twice a year, makes these clubs the center of attention for many hams around the world. During this contest, you can hear students from elementary to university working a pileup on just about every HF band. However, while there might be pileups and lots of DX on the HF bands, the VHF bands provide a way for schools to be active in their local communities. While repeater and national calling frequencies are not allowed in the contest, simplex VHF communication and volunteering in local clubs has become an important aspect of SCR for a growing number of clubs.

Locally Promoting Their Club and the Contest

At Bloomington High School South Amateur Radio Club, K9SOU, in Bloomington, Indiana, they make it a point to announce their operating times and frequency ranges on the local ARES net the week before and the week of SCR. During the entire week of the event they leave a VHF radio on a simplex frequency that is commonly used in the area. When they get a call on VHF, they end the HF contact (if they happen to be in the middle of



Figure 1 — The VHF/UHF Yagi at K9SOU.

one) and switch to VHF. They use this to take calls from people in the area, which promotes the school club as well as School Club Roundup, in an effort to encourage others to participate. They also use this radio to communicate with the Indiana University ARC when needed, because they are only 3 miles away. The two stations often cause interference to each other if they use the same band at the same time. This way, they can coordinate with each other.



Figure 2 — The students and faculty of Bloomington High School South Amateur Radio Club, K9SOU.

This year, they operated later into the evening. The local ARES net was at 7:30 PM, while the local simplex net was at 8:00 PM. After their announcement on the ARES net, they switched to simplex and took calls from area hams up until the start of the 8:00 simplex net. Not only did this encourage more people to participate in SCR, but it also piqued interest in the simplex net that followed. Taking calls within a few minutes of the announcement greatly increased participation from previous years. While the number of contacts was not huge, it served its purpose — to generate interest in the school club and the Roundup. For more information on Bloomington High School South Amateur Radio Club, check out <http://k9sou.org>.

Gators Discover the VHF Bands

The Gator Amateur Radio Club (GARC), W4DFU, at the University of Florida has been around since 1934, but it only recently became active in the School Club Roundup. After seeing a large influx of new hams in 2013, they expanded activities for SCR. In the past, W4DFU was strictly on the HF bands. While students worked around the world from the club station, they left the Gainesville community largely ignored. With an antenna farm 12 stories in the air and a suite of radios ranging from a FLEX-5000A to a Yaesu FT-8800, getting on any band is easy.

Many of GARC's new hams wanted to get their calls in the log for SCR. Most of those

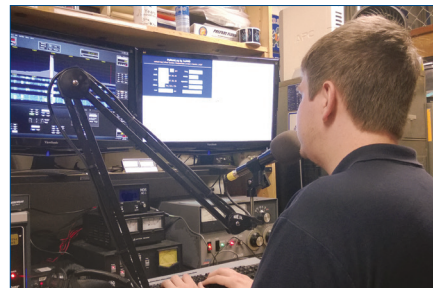


Figure 3 — Martin Wilson, KK4TZV, operates a FLEX-5000A on HF at W4DFU during the October 2013 ARRL School Club Roundup.

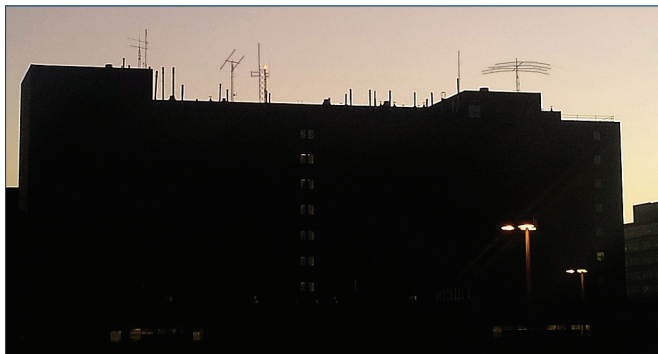


Figure 4 — The antenna farm atop the University of Florida Dental School at W4DFU. VHF is on the left, satellite is in the middle, and HF is on the right.

new hams are Technician class and have loaner HT radios from the club station. While going over the rules for SCR, it was discovered that VHF bands are also permitted. Andy, KK4LWR, club Vice President and GARC SCR Operating Coordinator, sent out an e-mail to all GARC members, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends to spread the word and ask that they give W4DFU a call during a window for a VHF simplex contact. Much to everyone's surprise, W4DFU had a small 2 meter pileup! Everyone in the station was excited and the atmosphere turned to one of celebration. The experiment was a success and GARC is planning to expand for future SCR work! You can find out more about GARC at <http://gatorradio.org>.

Teaming Up With the Local Club

Glenn Raymond School Amateur Radio Club, W9GRS, of Watseka, Illinois, entered their first School Club Roundup in October 2008 after being awarded an ETP Grant from the ARRL. W9GRS got started with a station due to their close relationship with the local Amateur Radio club, the Iroquois County Amateur Radio Club (ICARC) and their encouragement. A component of the grant that the seventh/eighth grade science instructor, Troy, W9KVR, wrote, was to incorporate radio communications into the school's emergency plan, taking into consideration the fact that the school is a possible evacuation center for the community. Part of the grant allowed Glenn Raymond School to get a tri-band VHF/UHF Yagi that is mounted on a rotator above Troy's classroom. ICARC has indefinitely loaned W9GRS a Yaesu FT-8800R dual-band base radio, along with a re-programmed Motorola HT with channels set on local repeater and simplex frequencies. The school station also has a mobile dual-band VHF/UHF vertical. The vertical is used for communications via the local repeater and the Yagi is used for simplex communications.

It was decided early on that during the October and February School Club Roundups, W9GRS would assume net control responsi-

bilities that week for the weekly ICARC Net. It helps that the local club regularly has their monthly meeting at Glenn Raymond School and the W9GRS Station Trustee, Troy, W9KVR, has served as a club officer for the last 4 years. By participating in this, students have an opportunity to experience how a net operates and the purpose of net operations. Troy or one of the licensed students would take over the net and conduct check-ins, traffic handling, and gain experience that is good for the group. It also allows students and local amateurs who have their Technician licenses or lack HF equipment to make a contact with the school station. Typically W9GRS has anywhere from six to 12 stations that check into the net and make subsequent contacts.

To learn more about W9GRS and the Glenn Raymond School Science Club, check out www.watsseka-u9.k12.il.us/index.php/grs-science-club. VHF is becoming an important part of the ARRL School Club Roundup. While HF will always remain the key to a successful week, VHF provides a unique way for students to directly engage their community. For local clubs and schools, VHF communication is an exciting way to give the fun of SCR more local focus. For more information on the ARRL School Club Roundup, check out www.arrl.org/school-club-roundup.

Andy Milluzzi, KK4LWR, is a PhD student in Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Florida and the Vice President of the Gator Amateur Radio Club, W4DFU. Andy, an Eagle Scout, was first introduced to Amateur Radio in the Boy Scouts, but didn't get his license until 2012 when his younger brother Tony, KD8RTT, encouraged him to attend a testing session. He is an Amateur Extra class operator and spends much of his time operating from W4DFU and experimenting with antennas. Andy has a BS degree in Computer Engineering



Figure 5 — Troy, W9KVR, setting up the tri-band Yagi at W9GRS.

and a BS degree in Software Engineering from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, and will complete a MS degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of Florida in December 2013. He can be reached at andy@gatorradio.org.

Troy J. Simpson, W9KVR, teaches seventh and eighth grade science and is the Science Club/ Science Olympiad Team sponsor at Glenn Raymond School, Watseka, IL. He was licensed in 2007 at the urging of his father-in-law, Mike Marcier, KC9HHT, and holds an Amateur Extra class license. He is a Volunteer Examiner and serves on the board of the Iroquois County Amateur Radio Club. Despite a busy school schedule, he enjoys chasing DX, contesting, exploring caves, and helping his seven year old daughter, Sophia, learn about Amateur Radio. He can be reached at w9kvr@arrl.net.

Neil Rapp, WB9VPG, is a chemistry teacher and sponsor of the Amateur Radio club at Bloomington High School South in Bloomington, Indiana. Neil has worked with youth in Amateur Radio since he received his Novice license at age five. Neil also sponsored the Harrison High School ARC in Evansville, Indiana during his previous teaching assignment. Neil is a graduate of the ARRL Teachers Institute. He was awarded the ARRL Professional Educator of the Year in 2004, and serves as an assistant director of the Central Division. The Bloomington High School South ARC is an ARRL Education and Technology Program school. He can be reached at wb9vpg@arrl.net.

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Feedback

On page 31 of "SSTV Video Beacon at 88,000 Feet" by Gary Miller, K7GGG, in the November 2013 issue of *QST*, there is a reference to Jack Belrose, VE2CV, being a Silent Key (SK). We're happy to report that Jack is very much alive and we apologize for our error.