

# AMATEUR RADIO IN SCOUTING & OTHER YOUNG PEOPLES GROUPS

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*I will relate some of my experiences and how I promote amateur radio in Scouting. These examples can easily translate to most youth groups. I will show ways you can get help from your local radio club and emergency disaster groups (AREA, RACES & Red Cross). How you can promote amateur radio as an Eagle Project. Also how I use the Internet to multiply my efforts with the grass roots ScoutElmer award. And successful ways the pros teach amateur radio to young people. Finally, why you must get involved now in promoting ham radio to young people and feeling great about it.*

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## TEACH BY EXAMPLE

The best way to interest a young person is to show them. Don't tell them benefits; let them experience the benefits. It will require more of your effort, but in a time when kids have cellphones and can talk over the Internet, you must prove the value.

**Case Example:** Our Troop was on top of Half Dome on the 6th day of a 7 day backpack trip in the Yosemite Park. It was Sunday and we were having our "Scout's Own" (non-denominational religious service). Some of the boys said they wished they could share this experience with their parents' back at home 350 miles away. I reached for my HT and said we could. Using a combination of repeaters, hams and a phone as the link to the boys' non-ham parents, we had a communication link set up within 5 minutes. Passing traffic for 15 minutes about our backpack over the last 6 days in the wilderness.

Be creative how you demonstrate and make it fun. Don't hinge everything on using ham radio as a way to get emergency help on the trail. Most of the time you won't have an opportunity to use your radio for emergency communication. Our Half Dome demonstration snagged 6 new hams.

## USE ALL OF YOUR RESOURCES

Consider Radio Clubs, your local ARES, RACES & Red Cross group are your partner in promoting ham radio.

**Case Example:** Two years ago a fellow adult Scout leaders and myself thought it would be fun to put on a Jamboree on the Air as a field event. Using local repeater nets we asked local radio clubs and emergency communication volunteers to provide radio demonstration for Scouts. We contacted the local Scout Council to pass the word about the event and the result was 2 HF stations; APRS; Packet; T-hunting; ATV; Satellite; VHF/UHF. Six separate ham groups supported the event including Gordo West WB6NOA his Gordomobile and answered question about ham radio.

Thanks to the support of our local ham groups over 450 Scouts had a hands on demonstration. We attracted boys from over 4 Councils, 28 districts and 187 units. Some traveled 150 miles to attend. And QST did a full page photo essay on the event.

## **INTEREST NON-HAMS IS VITAL**

Usually Troops have fewer than 10% boys & leaders interested in ham radio. It's important to develop ways that the non-ham can participate in ham activities.

**Case Example:** Our local Orange County Scout Councils which has approximately 10,000 Scouts, was planning a 75th Anniversary Jubilee. Our Troop needed to create a Scout skills demonstration. I ask our Senior Patrol leader if the Troop was interested in a demonstration that included: engineering; pioneering; mapping; computers; drafting, electricity, electronic, emergency preparedness, orienteering, photography, radio and safety.... And would be the most visible display in the entire camp. (See attached tower photo)

The idea was to build a hand lashed 35' wooden antenna tower for a special event station that commemorated the event and Scouting in general. Weighed over 600 lb., made from 150 lodge poles topped with a 3-element beam and an American flag, using the official call sign of Boy Scouts of America.

This project was a story by it self and has so many wonderful memories. The highlights included: Over 2,300 Scout visited our station. Over 1800 contacts in 16 countries. A tearful 87 year old ham and Eagle Scout on HF, that describe what Scouting was like 75 years ago and what ham radio meant to him. After this gentleman from Tennessee was finished we open the microphone up to over 60 Scouts surrounding the station in unison repeated the Scout oath in his honor. He said this was the best radio experience he had since he became a ham in 1932.

By including non-hams in your projects you will add importance to what the ham are doing and will surely interest more young people into getting licensed.

## **EAGLE SCOUT AMATEUR RADIO PROJECTS**

Encourage your Eagle Scout Candidates to work on ham relate Eagle projects. There are many very important projects that need to be done.

**Case Example:** I was asked by an Eagle Scout candidate from my Troop that he wanted his Eagle project to be related to his interest in ham radio emergency communication. I was especially please because I was the one to get him into ham radio with my Yosemite Half Dome demonstration mentioned earlier in this article.

It wasn't difficult to find at least a dozen projects that could be done for the local Chapter of Red Cross Communication or City RACES group. But his decision was clear when he was told his project could have an effect on all 35,000 student in the city he lived in.

He would plan, build and install j-pole antennas on 5 separate School District EOCs. This is a primary radio path between all school and the City EOC. Should phone lines go down in this City that has 8 earthquake faults these antenna permit Huntington Beach RACES to communicate within the School EOCs.

This project involved over 150 hrs of antenna building and other activities that introduced non-ham to ham radio. The 3 regional newspapers wrote full page articles and ham radio benefited from this project.

Contact your local RACES, ARES, Red Cross or other emergency communication group for a work assignment.

## **USING THE INTERNET TO MULTIPLE YOUR EFFORTS**

I realized I had a limited amount of volunteer time. I knew other Scouts or Scouters wanted to promote ham radio, so I decided 3 years ago to launch the website ScoutRadio. Initially it was intended to distribute scout related ham information. I received hundreds of emails from Scouts asking if they're where any hams in their area that could teach or Elmer their troop. Also receive hundred of emails from hams who were currently adult leaders that wanted to help Troops. That was how the grass roots ScoutElmer award was started. (<http://www.qsl.net/scoutradio>).

ScoutRadio has just hit its 3,000,000th visit. There are over 185 ScoutElmers all over the world. At last count those 185 have introduced over 2500 Scouts into ham radio. Consider multiplying your efforts by telling your Troops ham radio success stories on your website.

## **HAM RADIO CLASS FOR SCOUTS**

Once you have peaked a young person's interest in ham radio you need a way to teach them the material for licensing. This can be particularly difficult with a child's attention span.

**Case Example:** A local radio club announced a young peoples ham class. I had 3 Scouts that wanted to attend and I decided to watch. The class enrollment was

around 45 young people. It was to go for 5 weeks with 2hrs session. After 2 weeks the class was down to 10 extremely high achieving young people and fell apart after the third week. What went wrong with these 45 motivated kids that wanted to become hams? The answer is simple....boring! You can't teach kids the same way you do adults. You must make it fun. Not watered down...fun!

We are extremely fortunate to have Ham Guru and friend of Scouting Gordon West WB6NOA living here in Orange County. He donates himself to teach a Scout Class. The 16 hr class conducted in 2 days has almost 95% passing rate with retesting for those who just can absorb all of the material. Many even take the code portion to become Tech +.

The success starts with pre-study home material. The class time is fun, full of demonstrations. Gordo demonstrates conductivity by electrifying a pickle. He has memory short cuts for every complex section. Finally the Volunteer Examiners, while they test the letter of the FCC rules, are sensitive to the fact these are kids. Gordo a ScoutElmer awarded ham has introduced over 500 Scout into ham radio in the last 4 years.

## **AWARD YOUR HAM SCOUTS**

Make sure your adult leadership recognizes the value your Scout hams provide. These Scouts are providing valuable health & welfare to your group. This will also interest others in becoming hams. If you do not have your own award, you can download a ScoutRadio "Scout Award Certificate" suitable for framing from (<http://www.qsl.net/scoutradio>).

## **CONCLUSION**

You don't need to do it alone to promote ham radio in your group. There are ham and groups of hams in your area that are there if you ask. Whether you become an official ScoutElmer (<http://www.qsl.net/scoutradio>) or help a single Scout, I guarantee the reward far exceeds the efforts.

When you introduce a young person to ham radio, the result is not always immediately known. That person might be the one who saves a life on the trail or 35,000 students in an earthquake. In my view, you also participated in that good deed