

ARRL Ad-Hoc Committee on Youth in the Second Century Report to the Board – July 19, 2013

Committee Charge: Given that: (a) it is essential to enhance the League's outreach to potential Amateurs among America's youth; (b) the League's centennial in 2014 will highlight not only the accomplishments of the past but also point towards Amateur Radio's future; and (c) meaningful plans to excite young Americans about Amateur Radio today and in the future must take into account the ideas, lifestyles, and experiences of youthful Amateur Radio operators; this committee has been tasked to seek input from youth and also from adult Amateurs working with young people, and to furthermore make recommendations to the Staff and the Board of Directors on such topics.

The ARRL ad hoc Committee on Youth in the Second Century, established in accordance with Minute 31 of the July 2011 Board of Directors meeting, has spent the last six months discussing via email and a number of teleconferences a variety of topics and developing recommendations for board and staff consideration.

The more in depth topics our committee has engaged itself with include:

- Aspects of ham radio that youth find appealing;
- Barriers of entry for youth desiring to become a ham radio operators;
- Causes for what appears to be a large number of individuals, specifically youth in the case of our conversation, who seem not to get involved on the air or integrated within the amateur radio community after putting in the effort to become licensed;
- ARRL's current youth promotion techniques and available resources;
- The merits of an exclusive youth-related position within the Field Organization, guided by a common set of roles and responsibilities; and
- Youth program ideas for the 2014 ARRL Centennial Convention

In the course of discussing several of these topics, both in general and in the context of ARRL program, service, and resource offerings, we have developed and present in this report a variety of recommendations to enable ARRL (and, by extension, the greater amateur radio community) to better attract, involve, and retain ham radio's future stewards, experimenters, innovators, and leaders – *youth*.

Recommendation: Establishment of a Section Youth Coordinator (SYC) position within ARRL's Field Organization

Many Sections have recognized the need for a point person within their Section to coordinate youth-related activities and topics. Because no such position exists officially, despite how important youth involvement is to amateur radio, they have created their own position, typically an Assistant Section Manager for Youth (or similar). By extension they have also developed their own sets of roles and responsibilities, in some cases rather narrowly focused and in many cases quite inconsistent with those of other sections, which makes collaboration difficult.

With the help of Steve Ewald, our committee polled every Section Manager in the United States earlier in the calendar year to determine if they have an Assistant Section Manager for Youth (or similar), who their appointee is, and what their roles and responsibilities are. Of ARRL's 71 Sections, at least 25% have an appointed Assistant Section Manager for Youth (or similar) position. Several SMs who responded in the negative to our inquiry indicated they thought such a position is a great idea and would consider appointing someone to the role. Our committee indicated to the SM community our interest in exploring the merits of an official youth-related Field Organization position, and several SMs responded quite enthusiastic at the notion. None responded negatively.

Given the results of our research and further discussion, our committee developed a proposed set of roles and responsibilities for a position referred to as Section Youth Coordinator (SYC), an exclusive youth-related role for ARRL and the ham community to leverage within each Section. These roles and responsibilities were designed to be relevant yet somewhat general so as to allow the Section to build upon or execute them in ways that fit their unique demographics and situations. Most importantly, a common set of roles and responsibilities across each Section will enable its appointees to collaborate with one another, share ideas, and otherwise help each other contribute towards better attracting, involving, and retaining youth at the local level. Collaboration, we believe, would be easiest done via an email listserve, similar to those that SMs, SECs, and PIOs utilize to collaborate with each other.

SECTION YOUTH COORDINATOR (SYC)

Responsibilities:

- Maintain a current assessment of active youth amateur radio operators in the section, including those involved within clubs, Scouting and other youth organizations, and schools
- Promote youth-related on-air activities including ARRL Kid's Day, Jamboree on the Air (JOTA), Field Day, and School Club Roundup
- Provide youth related ideas and resources to amateur radio clubs and individuals within the section
- Collaborate with the Affiliated Club Coordinator to assess youth activity with ARRL affiliated clubs; provide resources and ideas as needed; encourage youth-related program and activities within clubs
- Collaborate with other Section Youth Coordinators in other ARRL sections to exchange new ideas

Requirements:

- Recommendation of ARRL Section Manager
- Member of ARRL in good standing
- Licensed amateur radio operator for at least two years, and hold a General class license or higher
- The appointee should be a youth or an adult who works with youth on a regular basis

A network of SYCs across the country would serve as a natural conduit for information and ideas between ARRL HQ and the Section where the rubber meets the road.

The ARRL ad hoc Committee on Youth in the Second Century kindly requests that the ARRL Board consider the establishment of this key position.

Club related recommendation to better attract, involve, and retain youth

According to ARRL's website, there are 2,384 ARRL affiliated clubs across the country, each composed of a roster of members, at least half of them ARRL members. Clubs are the activity centers within our amateur radio community. They are typically full of active hams and thus attract active hams. They also have the resources, especially people-wise, to do incredible things within the amateur community.

A number of clubs, such as Boulder Amateur Radio Club Juniors (BARC Juniors) out of Colorado, have phenomenal success attracting, involving, and retaining youth. Others, however, do not or genuinely try but miss the mark because their approach may be insufficient in the eyes of the youth they are targeting.

ARRL has a conduit to every one of its affiliated clubs and thus a golden opportunity to better leverage these local activity centers to attract, involve, and retain youth. The following are specific suggestions towards accomplishing that end:

- 1.1. Periodically funnel youth-related ideas and information of interest to clubs to every ARRL Affiliated Club Coordinator
- 1.2. Periodically funnel youth related ideas and information directly to each affiliated club president. ARRL has contact info for each of these organizations that is ideally update annually.
- 1.3. Develop and distribute training material intended for clubs and their leadership on how to better attract, retain, and involve young amateur radio operators within their organization.
- 1.4. Modify ARRL's club search page such that one sees a Google Maps screen containing pins that show the meeting location of every affiliated club on record (meeting locations are part of the information affiliated clubs are supposed to provide to ARRL annually). This provides a person an at-a-glance ability to zoom in and visually see the location of clubs near him/her, as opposed to having to sift through numerous text listings, as it is now. (As a side note, building similar function into hamfest searches would be just as valuable). Since affiliated clubs are requested to disclose their services offered, based on pre-defined categories, such a mapping function would be even more useful if it allowed a user to filter club locations shown by their services offered. This would enable a young person, for example, to home right in on clubs in his/her area that list "School or Youth Group" among their services, making it easier for that young person to get involved.
- 1.5. Add a meaningful and measureable youth outreach, mentoring, or program related requirement to Special Service Club eligibility criteria. This will encourage clubs to focus a bit of their energy on the future of their organization (youth), and send a strong, positive statement about ARRL's commitment to youth.

- 1.6. Provide participants of Teachers Institutes on Wireless Technology with a list of affiliated clubs, especially those involved with youth by virtue of their "School or Youth Group" service disclosure, so teachers can build relationships with those organizations that could assist the teacher with program, demonstrations, and mentoring back in the classroom.
- 1.7. Provide clubs with details about upcoming Teachers Institutes on Wireless Technology so they can similarly reach out to its participants.
- 1.8. Develop a web resources with useful content that clubs interested in youth could gain knowledge and ideas from. One specific example is a consolidated list of hints, tips, and tricks on attracting, involving, and retaining youth that clubs have found to be successful. For instance, it was news to our committee that Cal Poly Amateur Radio Club has a "rent to own" HT program available for its newly licensed members who may not have funds to wholly purchase a radio right away. Newly licensed members are provided with a brand-new Yaesu FT-60R dual band HT to immediately get on the air with, and pay \$20 per school quarter until they've paid off the cost of the radio. Such an idea would be embraced by many other clubs across the nation, but there is no real avenue for them to come across this successful idea. An ARRL web resource such as this would encourage this sort of idea sharing and cross pollination.
- 1.9. Encourage affiliated clubs to forge relationships with their local VE teams, or establish a team within their club. This relationship would enable a number of things. As with anyone taking their first exam, they are fired up about amateur radio and anxious to get involved, but probably not sure where to go after arriving back at home with their CSCE. This is especially true with youth. Affiliated clubs could work with VE teams to provide each exam candidate with a packet of information about their club or the local amateur radio community. Club representatives could be passed the baton from the VE team and take newly licensed hams, especially youth, under their wings immediately, and in person, thus increasing the chances that the new ham will get involved within amateur radio successfully.

ARRL HQ related recommendation to better attract, involve, and retain youth

The committee also discussed ARRL's information and resource offerings via web, QST, and services provided at HQ and identified these recommendations:

- 2.1. Assign an internal point person to lead and coordinate all youth-related programs and topics at HQ (i.e. coordinate the generation and maintenance of youth related web content, assist Steve Ewald by serving as the staff focal point for the proposed Section Youth Coordinator role, coordinate youth-related communications intended for Affiliated Club Coordinators and affiliated clubs, take youth-related questions from members who email or call, etc.).
- 2.2. Provide a youth@arrl.org email link on ARRL's Youth landing page and general staff contact page.
- 2.3. Establish a quarterly youth column in the pages of QST magazine. This column would ideally be written by young ham, such as ARRL's youth editor Sterling Coffey NOSSC, be separate from staff written features about Kid's Day, Jamboree On the Air, etc., and be *in addition* to the existing periodic web column.

- 2.4. If a regular youth column in QST is not possible, at least integrate a small but effective graphical teaser that regularly appears in the pages of QST and points youth to ARRL's youth landing web page. Given the importance ARRL places on the topic of youth, every issue of ARRL's membership journal should have some form of youth related content, or at least something to point a reader interested in youth to where additional content lies.
- 2.5. Build upon ARRL's youth web landing page to include additional topics such as information that's tailored to various key age groups, school and college/university club information and resources, all major youth related on air activities (Kid's Day, JOTA, etc.), club resources that relate to youth promotion and program ideas, links to ARRL's youth related social media outlets, relevant Youtube videos, etc. While much of this content might exist elsewhere on ARRL's website, it should also be provided on the youth landing page as well so anyone interested in the topic of youth in amateur radio (be they a young person, an adult, or club leadership) will find everything related to the topic on a single page.
- 2.6. Improve the Youth@HamRadio.Fun web column archive. At present only the recent few articles are shown and clicking on the "Read All" link takes the web user to the complete archive of all ARRL news rather than the full archive of youth columns.
- 2.7. Establish ARRL booths at key academic or teachers conferences to promote ARRL, ham radio, and topics areas appropriate for inclusion in curriculum.
- 2.8. Continue to build a relationship with and host a booth at IEEE's International Microwave Symposium, the world's premier RF/microwave engineering conference which contains a rather significant college student program. ARRL's booth at the 2013 IMS was a great success and attracted the interest of students, faculty, and individuals within industry.
- 2.9. Establish an ARRL Youth Facebook sub-page that staff and young volunteers (which could include members of this committee) can contribute to on a regular basis
- 2.10. Establish an annual competition open to young participants of various age groups (and thus skill levels). These competitions would focus on a certain technical area within amateur radio and offer an opportunity for young people to get involved, expand their knowledge, and be recognized for their work
- 2.11. Devote the subject area of ARRL's next video contest to a youth related topic, perhaps on novel or interesting youth promotion or club activities. This would interest both the individual and offer incentives for club to get involved in the contest as well, not to mention provide content that can be used for future youth promotion and web content.

Our committee has enjoyed the opportunity to dive into a variety of topics, identify gaps and opportunities, and derive potential solutions from our discussions. We are in the midst of discussing a few other key topics, such as youth program ideas for the 2014 ARRL Centennial Convention, and will likewise provide recommendations in a future report. It goes without saying that our committee is pleased to assist the ARRL board and staff further investigate, scope out, and implement any of the recommendations that we have offered.

The ad-hoc Committee on Youth in the Second Century is grateful for the opportunity provided by ARRL's Board to work on such a crucial topic as youth and amateur radio, especially as the League prepares to embark on its second successful century.

Respectfully submitted,

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