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Amateur Radio

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Antenna Phasing Systems**

Club Station

Essential Pillars for a Thriving Ham Community

The Southwest Columbus Ham Radio Club (SWCHRC), WB8MMR, in Columbus, Ohio, has spent more than 30 years developing what they refer to as the club's greatest success — a welcoming community for its members. In this month's column, SWCHRC member Calvin Long, N8RFY, lets readers in on how they've built and sustained their community over the years.

There are a variety of elements that provide the necessary support for creating a successful ham radio club community and ensuring that you're keeping members active and involved. Here are three pillars that SWCHRC has established over time to maintain a welcoming club community.

Pillar One: Provide Consistent Communication

A community can't exist without communication. We always keep our members in the know about upcoming club events by regularly holding meetings, conducting radio nets, posting on our club website, and sending group texts and emails. We try to communicate information to members about 2 weeks in advance of an event so those who want to attend can plan ahead, but the methods of communication can vary depending on the event. If an event requires extensive planning and numerous volunteers, we'll discuss it at a club meeting, where event organizers can ask for volunteers. If it's needed, a request for volunteers will be sent using all of the communication methods listed above. After an event is finalized, it gets published on our website, announced on our weekly net the week before, and sent in an email with the organizers' names and contact information so they can be reached regarding any questions.

We don't put limitations on who can host an event — any member can host any event they feel qualified for. While we don't keep a log of event attendees, we always take a group photo and post it on our website with the names and call signs of participants. On average, attendees of the various events held throughout the year are usually comprised of four to eight longtime members who've been with the club more than 5 years, mixed with some newer members and visitors.



Randall Abram, KD8NKY, teaching Calvin Long, N8RFY, and David Doerschuk, KE8TZF, the finer points of making contacts during Winter Field Day 2023. [Calvin Long, N8RFY, photo]

Pillar Two: Diversify Your Events

Clubs are made up of unique members who have varying ham interests. If you're a general interest club, limiting your events to only one aspect of the hobby (e.g., contests) may hinder your club's ability to build a welcoming community for all of its members. SWCHRC tries to include a variety of events throughout the year that allow members, no matter which aspect of the hobby they enjoy most, to join the community.

Antenna builds are a popular event for SWCHRC. They're usually held at a member's home and draw an

average of 12 participants. Mentors within the club are often the hosts of these build events and find that the antennas our members are most interested in building are 2-meter J-poles and 20- and 40-meter dipoles. We post a list of materials on our website, and participants are encouraged to bring everything they need to build their antenna of choice. Even if a club member isn't interested in this aspect of amateur radio, we still encourage them to attend because they can learn valuable ham radio skills, such as how to properly solder, use an antenna analyzer, and trim an antenna to get the lowest standing wave ratio possible.

Members who enjoy operating events like to participate with the club during ARRL Field Day and Winter Field Day. After setting up for these events, members have the opportunity to socialize while waiting for the event to start. This allows members to share their latest equipment purchases, catch up with friends, and answer questions. We are always eager to share our knowledge with each other and to discuss amateur radio with visitors and fellow hams.

In addition to hosting club-specific events, consider setting up a booth for your club at a local hamfest and allowing members to volunteer at the booth. SWCHRC does this every year at the Columbus Hamfest, and members are always willing to help. Not only does this let them enjoy each other's company outside of operating, it also generates new members. I usually volunteer at the booth and always enjoy talking to curious hams who stop by.

Every Thursday, SWCHRC hosts a 10-meter net at 8:00 PM, immediately followed by a 2-meter net at 8:30 PM. The club opens these nets to all licensed amateurs, not just members. On average, about 10 hams (members and non-members) join each net weekly. These nets are a great way to raise awareness about ham events in the area, to learn how to polish operating techniques, and to learn more about the hobby in general.

Pillar Three: Offer Opportunities for Camaraderie

SWCHRC has formed a community that allows members to help each other more fully participate in the amateur radio hobby. Some examples include assisting with station setups and equipment maintenance, mentoring new members and hams, and aiding disabled club members. When one of our members became a Silent Key, several others offered to help his family sell his radio equipment at the Columbus Hamfest. We also

make sure our members know about opportunities for volunteering at marathons and triathlons through the Franklin County Ohio Amateur Radio Emergency Service®.

SWCHRC's most popular event happens to be non-ham-related — a breakfast we call "Hams and Eggs" on the first Saturday of every month. Members and non-members are all welcome to join; there's an open invitation posted on our website, and it's announced on the weekly nets. Attendees get to enjoy a delicious breakfast, as well as establish and renew ties with each other. New members and prospective new hams also get to learn about the club and amateur radio in an open, friendly environment. A lot of our club events begin as a discussion topic at this breakfast.

In Summary

Implementing these pillars has allowed SWCHRC to sustain a welcoming community for its members and maintain a steady membership growth. This foundation allows members to reconnect with friends and make new ones, all while enjoying amateur radio. The SWCHRC is a fellowship, and amateur radio is the tie that binds us together.

Write for "Club Station"

QST's "Club Station" column is a designated space for clubs to share specific and practical ideas about what has contributed to their success, in the hope that the information will help other clubs grow and thrive. Visit www.arrl.org/qst-club-station-guidelines-and-profile-form for more information, including author guidelines and a Club Profile Form (this form is required in order for "Club Station" submissions to be considered complete).

ARRL Special Service Clubs

ARRL offers the Special Service Club (SSC) program for clubs that demonstrate that they're working to improve the amateur radio community by completing special projects, holding license classes, and working with local groups on events, among other activities. Visit www.arrl.org/ssc-application for more information about this program. Below is a list of new and renewing SSCs as of February 23, 2024.

New SSCs

Charlotte ARS, Inc., WX4E Punta Gorda, FL

Renewing SSCs

Chesapeake Amateur Radio Service, Inc., W4CAR Chesapeake, VA
Kershaw County ARC, KC4RC Camden, SC
Yavapai ARC, W7YRC Prescott, AZ

