



Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club

Promoting Amateur Radio and Public Safety in South Mississippi

PRCARC Hamfest 2008



POPLARVILLE - How do you define success for a hamfest?

How about over twice as many attendees as the previous year? How about over four times as much funds raised? Maybe having four times as many vendors?

By any measure, the 2008 Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club Hamfest was a great success. All of the above factors were achieved.

The fest was held Saturday, December 13 at the Pearl River County Fairgrounds in Poplarville under cold skies and sunshine. Over 600 people came to the fest - about twice as many

Anatomy Of A Hamfest

POPLARVILLE - The Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club Hamfest 2008 actually started in January, 2008 with planning. At the January meeting, Jim Searcy (WA5WRE) was named Hamfest Chairman. The hamfest was tentatively set for December 6 at that meeting.

Jim started his preparations immediately, sending out emails to vendors asking them to participate. The date selection turned out to be a problem - as the club had inadvertently changed the date from the second weekend in December to the first.

The date later had to be changed to December 13 - the second weekend - and the club at its November meeting voted formally to make the Hamfest date the second weekend in December from now on.

Another worry was the climbing price of gasoline - which seemed to be holding travel plans in check.

The later fall in gas prices seems to have fueled an explosion.

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as last year - and judging from comments heard both at the hamfest and afterwards on the radio, attendees enjoyed themselves - which is perhaps the very best measure of the success of a hamfest.

Vendors for the 2008 hamfest included VIS of Alabama, Cedar City Sales of Tennessee, Sign Man of Baton Rouge and Bamcom of Raceland, La.



Tables were set in place before vendors arrived. The wooden shelves on the front table are speaker stands for the public address system.

Members of the PRCARC showed up at the fairgrounds building early Friday morning to set up for the fest. There was a lot of work to be done - including setting up tables, installing a public address system and establishing parking areas.

The new club banners were hung in the building as well.



Anatomy ...

During the year, additional contacts were made - and from the one vendor who signed up to take part last year, first two, then three, then more vendors called to sign up.

Calls also came from folks interested in attending the fest. At first, most of the calls were local, but as time went on, calls came in from around the country.

Eventually, calls were recorded from Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, Michigan, Minnesota and Kentucky.

With each new vendor and call coming in, we had to wonder - was our festival site large enough? Did we have enough room?

We ended up going to the building at the Pearl River County Fairgrounds with a tape measure and figuring out exact dimensions to be sure - but it was clear that more growth would require a larger facility. A computer program allowed us to map out exactly where we planned to put tables and displays and be sure we had enough room.

As Jim Searcy commented several times - "This is growing so fast that it's almost scary." At the same time - it is exciting to be part of a growing festival.

Another thing that became evident is that next year we need to set up committees to plan and prepare for the 2009 Hamfest starting in January.

We look forward to seeing you!

By about 7 a.m. Saturday morning, the building was ready - even boasting strings of Christmas lights strung down the walls to give it a bit of holiday cheer.

At 8 a.m., the doors officially opened and the crowds started coming in. While the cold initially kept crowds small, before long, the sunshine started raising the mercury and the numbers of people streaming in to see the fest.

Before long, the main display building was packed with hams checking out the wares brought by the vendors, as well as the many tables of items brought in by flea-market vendors. One of the larger displays of gear was provided by local ham Jim Searcy (WA5WRE) who is selling a lot of his gear.

A VE testing session was offered during early afternoon for those wanting to get licenses or upgrade existing licenses. According to Examiner Coordinator David Moore (N5ELI), nine people took tests - and five passed. Among the results were two new technician-level licensees, two new general class hams and one new extra class.

The VE's offering the tests were Moore, Ronnie Purvis of Wiggins, Tim Purvis of Wiggins and Tyrone Burns of Springfield, La.

All during the day, drawings were held for door prizes including MFJ Enterprises Cups, a mine-Repeater Directory, an ARRL Antenna Book (21st Edition), an ARRL 2009 Handbook, and a remote-control for audio-video devices donated by Radio Shack of Poplarville.

The Grand Prizes were a Yaesu FT-2800 2-Meter transceiver and a refurbished Hammarlund HQ-110-A Receiver which was beautifully refurbished by Searcy. The FT-2800 was won by Chris Duguisson of Louisiana, while the Hammarlund Receiver was won by Tim Livengood of Carriere, Ms. The deep sea fishing trip was won by Carol Lawson of Picayune, Ms.

Planning for next year's hamfest will begin almost immediately. All members of the club who worked at the fest have been asked to write a list of all the tasks they needed to do for the fest, as well as a list of proposed changes to make things easier. The information will be gathered and discussed at the January meeting of the club.

The vendors at this year's fest were unanimous in their praise of the fest. They noted that while the PRCARC fest is relatively small, it is growing, thriving and is not only profitable, but fun and they all plan to come again next year.

Special thanks:

The Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club wishes to thank everyone who visited the 2008 hamfest, and especially all those who worked to make the fest a success. We especially want to thank the following for their hard work before and during the fest:

Lionel Morales
Janice Wagoner
Larry Wagoner
Diane Beith

Jay Stevens
Jim Searcy
Dan Beavers

Jack Beith
Shirley Searcy
Ron Smith

ARES Meeting Held At Hamfest

Emergency Response Plans Discussed

POPLARVILLE - South Mississippi ARES officials held a special meeting at Saturday's Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club Hamfest to discuss emergency planning for south Mississippi in case of another major emergency.

Among the attendees were Tim Purvis (N5UDK) Stone County Emergency Coordinator, Ray Luke (K5XXV) Harrison County Emergency Coordinator, Harold Stauton (K5GVR) Lamar County Emergency Coordinator, David Moore (N5ELI) Pearl River County Emergency Operations Center representative, Tim Livengood (KC5EAK) Pearl River County Emergency Coordinator, and Tom Hammack (W4WLF) Harrison County District Emergency Coordinator.

The group determined that in case of emergencies, local hams can be too involved with personal issues to respond, and so outside hams may be needed to respond. Part of the answer might be Fast Response Teams with "Go-Kits" - which would include necessary equipment to respond to emergencies.

Registering and operating as RACES units might include too many restrictions on operations, the attendees decided.

Another meeting has been set for the Mississippi State Convention at the Jackson Hamfest on January 30-31, 2009. The request for Ecs statewide will be made through the Section Manager - Malcolm Keown, W5XX.

One of the needs identified is to develop a Mississippi state ARES plan. Additionally, local officials need to inventory existing portable facilities such as showers, cooking supplies and sleeping arrangements.

The Poplarville Emergency Operations Center currently has two CERT Teams (Citizen Emergency Response Teams) set up - one a Pearl River Community College student team and a faith-based team, which are primarily responsible for shelters in the county.

The CERT Teams may be eligible for federal funding, it was learned, and with a little additional training, teams can be qualified to perform damage assessments.

Mississippi currently has nine districts, nine Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) divisions and three regional task forces for emergency response.

The additional planning and development of emergency response abilities was triggered by Hurricane Katrina - which devastated most of south Mississippi in August, 2005.

The group also toured the Pearl River County Emergency Response Communications trailer at the EOC.

January Meeting To Be Busy

POPLARVILLE - The January meeting of the Pearl River County Amateur Radio Club is slated for January 6, 2009, and will be a busy one.

Among the other topics for the first club meeting of 2009 will be preparing for the Ham Fest for 2009.

The club will also set the projected calendar of events for the year.

New club officers will be nominated at the January meeting. Club members are asked to consider who they want to lead the club for 2009, and to consider serving in a leadership post.



PRCARC Vice-President Larry Wagoner (right) presents Carol Lawson with her certificate for a Deep Sea Fishing Trip. Carol said she is looking forward to the trip for one-to-four people on charter vessel Impulsive with Captain Scott Simpson from the Port of Long Beach. (Photo by Phil Soilleau)

FCC Asks Hams To Provide Digital TV Help

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) has received a request from the FCC asking that ARRL members to provide technical educational assistance to their communities concerning the FCC-mandated digital television (DTV) conversion scheduled for February 17, 2009.

According to ARRL Media and Public Relations Manager Allen Pitts, W1AGP, Amateur Radio clubs across the country are being asked to develop and implement plans to provide information throughout January and February about the DTV conversion in their areas. The FCC is leaving it up to the clubs to decide how to do this, as local groups understand the communities in ways that the FCC does not.

Each community is a little different, Pitts said, so plans carried out by the clubs will vary from community to community. Interested groups should contact their ARRL Section Manager for guidance and assistance.