

ARRL Ad-hoc Committee on Scouting Report to the Board – July 21, 2006

ARRL ad-hoc Committee on Scouting charge: To study the interface between ARRL and scouting organizations and make recommendations for improvement, and survey ARRL and scouting literature for effectiveness and adequacy.

Members: Brian Milesosky N5ZGT, Bill Edgar N3LLR, Jim Fenstermaker K9JF, Larry Wolfgang WR1B

Ham radio and scouting form a near perfect marriage, per se. As the general ham population continues to age, there is a need to involve younger, enthusiastic people to its ranks to secure a healthy future. Likewise, as the scouting community remains active in such activities as backpacking, camping, and public service, ham radio is available to provide not only a measure of safety, but an additional element of excitement. Simply put, the scouting community can benefit the ham community, and vice-versa. Members of the scouting community are active in their communities and the field, generally excited to try new activities thanks in part to merit badges and rank advancement, and enthusiastic. As such, scouts (youth) and scouters (adult volunteers) are a prime audience to target when promoting our wonderful hobby.

The ad-hoc Committee on Scouting has been engaged with reviewing various topics per our charge including ARRL and scouting literature as well as the interface between ARRL and scouting organizations. This review was conducted through email communication as well as a teleconference, and though much work remains, our initial findings are as follows:

Review of BSA publications: One of the ongoing actions has been to review several BSA publications and determine how effective they are in speaking of ham radio, recognizing that these publications belong to the Boy Scouts of America and ARRL can only make recommendations. Publications of interest were the radio, emergency preparedness and electronics merit badge booklets.

The committee's general feeling is that the radio and emergency preparedness merit badge booklets could benefit from the inclusion of additional ham radio content. The radio merit badge booklet already contains a wealth of general ham radio information, however there doesn't seem to be much information that would motivate a young person to get involved in ham radio. It may be beneficial to include a section that describes the latest modes of communication that youth may find exciting (PSK-31, talking with the ISS, etc.), information about Jamboree On The Air (JOTA), where a young person can learn of Ham clubs in their area, etc. Some of the photos (old radios) and diagrams (packet radio diagram) could be updated to reflect a more modern look to the hobby as well. The emergency preparedness merit badge booklet could benefit from additional information about ham radio's role in emergencies. As it is written now, a few sentences mentions RACES, where it may be more appropriate to mention and expand upon ARES, perhaps citing how effective ham radio was during hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The committee also recommends that certain ARRL publications (i.e. ARRL Handbook, Emergency Communication Handbook, Understanding Basic Electronics, etc.) be

included in these merit badge booklets' respective resource sections, should the reader desire additional information.

An important starting point is to create dialogue with personnel at the national level in Irving so ARRL's ideas can be conveyed. Such dialogue may also help create a formal relationship with BSA, leading to the attainment of other goals.

Review of Scouts on the Air brochure: Another ongoing action has been to review ARRL's "Scouts on the Air" brochure. The committee's general feeling is that this brochure needs to be redesigned with a more modern look and feel, and include improved content to capture the interest of scouts and scouters. Bill Edgar recommended that youth involved in scouting play a role in the redesign since they are much more connected to our targeted audience (scouts, primarily youth) than adults. ARRL personnel experienced in brochure design and production would be needed as well. Specific recommendations for improvement will be identified by the committee in the coming months.

Review of ARRL webpage containing scouting information: In keeping with the committee's task to review ARRL literature, the committee reviewed ARRL's web content intended for the scouting community. The main source of such information exists at <http://www.arrl.org/FandES/ead/>. Our general feeling is that information contained on this webpage speaks more to adult, specifically those who are already ham radio operators. As it exists today, there are doubts that youth – both curious about Ham Radio, or already involved – will get much value from the information found on this page. First, the scouting content is buried at the bottom, and even the page's title "Educational Activities: Recruitment and Education" doesn't acknowledge the presence of scout-related material, much less pique a scout's interest. Second, the information contained on this page is mainly in the form of web links to other resources. ARRL-originated content intended for the scouting community really doesn't exist. It was suggested that a dedicated scouting page on the ARRL website be created.

It was also suggested that a section intended to target scouts and scouters be created as part of the "Hello!" campaign website (www.helloradio.org), perhaps even as a sidebar item.

Other suggested web content includes:

- Resources for teaching Radio merit badge – Something created by the League and offered to the scouting community.
- Material that can be used for Venture crews since their activities emphasize high adventure, much of which is conducive to ham operations.
- A kit of information intended for the Ham or scout who wants to, for example, set up a station at an upcoming Camporee. It would contain general information such as who to contact to make arrangements, what to bring, activities to offer for curious scouts, etc. This downloadable kit could also be offered in printed form.

Brainstorm to determine future actions of committee: After having set the framework for specific activity with respect to ARRL literature, the committee has also identified actions to pursue in the coming months, now focusing on improving the interface between the scouting community and ARRL. Briefly:

- Larry Wolfgang suggested that the committee and ARRL focus somewhat heavily on existing scouts and scouters who are Hams. They are obviously connected with their respective scouting community, and are also familiar with ham radio. As such these individuals can be engaged to take Ham radio to their local scouting program, promote the hobby to their peers, etc.
- Brian Mileschosky recommended the creation of an Assistant Section Manager for Scouting – either one per entire section, or one designated for each council that exists within a section – who could coordinate and help implement activities within the section. Some sections (i.e. Georgia) have already appointed such positions with success.
- Jim Fenstermaker recommended that the League’s promotion to scouting groups encourage specific activities that scouts would find exciting – i.e. hidden transmitter hunting, contesting (competition), etc.
- To date the committee has focused on the Boy Scouts of America. Efforts will also need to be put forth working with the Girl Scout community.
- The committee as a whole believes that a logical next step would be to involve other individuals who are involved in both the scouting and Ham communities. Their knowledge needs to be tapped and utilized. Their involvement in the committee may either be informal or they may actually sit on the committee. A list of potential candidates will be drawn up in the coming month and invitations will be extended as appropriate.

Achieving the goals of improving the interface between ARRL and scouting organizations as well as making ARRL’s scouting literature more effective and adequate will no doubt benefit the ham radio and scouting communities alike. The coming months will serve as an opportunity for the committee to focus on our initial findings, involve others who have valuable ideas, and formulate specific recommendations for the ARRL board for potential implementation.

Respectfully submitted,

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