



GULF COAST AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Newsletter

MAY 2026



www.gulfcoastarc.com

Club News!

On Saturday April 18th the club held a POTA event at Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park in conjunction with the Florida State Parks On The Air weekend! It was a tremendously successful event in terms of turn out. Club members who had never activated before came to learn what POTA was all about .

Thanks to the expertise of Jim McDevitt K4YZI and Michael Sparks W0MES, who have almost 300 activations between them just at this park, people left with a whole lot more knowledge than when they came

Karl WA2KBZ stopped by and activated the park on CW. There are pictures posted below but there are also some videos from the event on the club's facebook page. Go there and check them out!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/wa4gdn>



more pics!



At the April membership meeting Earl Brannon K4EEB gave a presentation on “MESHTASTIC”. What is “MESHTASTIC”? Meshtastic is an open-source, decentralized, off-grid communication platform that uses inexpensive LoRa (Long Range) radios to send text messages and GPS data without cell service, internet, or satellite connectivity. It operates as a mesh network, where radios (nodes) automatically relay messages for each other, making it ideal for outdoor activities, emergencies, and remote areas. It is also one of the fastest growing segments of HAM radio. You do not need to be a licensed ham to use “MESHTASTIC”.

Earl showed the numerous devices available, some in kit form that you can build yourself, that operate on the Meshtastic network and solar powered nodes that extend the range. Southern Hernando and East Pasco are building out a Meshtastic Network. The more nodes added increases the connectivity of the network. This is another tool in the tool box that can be used in grid down and emergency situations.

Thanks Earl for a great presentation!



Meshtastic: From Personal Gadget to Network Infrastructure

The 'Gadget' Mindset

Focus on Personal Interaction
The device is treated like a phone accessory for sending and receiving messages.

Intermittent Network Presence

The node connects briefly, sleeps often, and contributes little to the overall mesh.

Results in a Quiet Network

The local mesh feels sparse, with fluctuating nodes and unreliable traffic.

The 'Infrastructure' Mindset

Focus on Stable Presence
The device is set to 'Router' mode, staying awake to forward messages for others.

Optimized for Placement & Uptime

Elevation and a clear line-of-sight are prioritized over all other settings.

Builds a Robust, 'Boring' Network

A stable router requires no attention and helps create consistent network traffic.

© NoobBookLM

We will be adding a couple of nets!

On the second Wednesday of the month we will be having a POTA Net to discuss all things POTA. Activating, hunting, logging, any topic related to or adjacent to Parks On The Air. On the fourth Wednesday of the month we will hold a “tech net” where anyone with questions related to the technical aspects of amateur radio can seek answers and advice. Both net will take place at 7:30 pm on the 146.670 WA4GDN club repeater. We will make notification to the membership when these nets will be implemented.

Stay tuned!

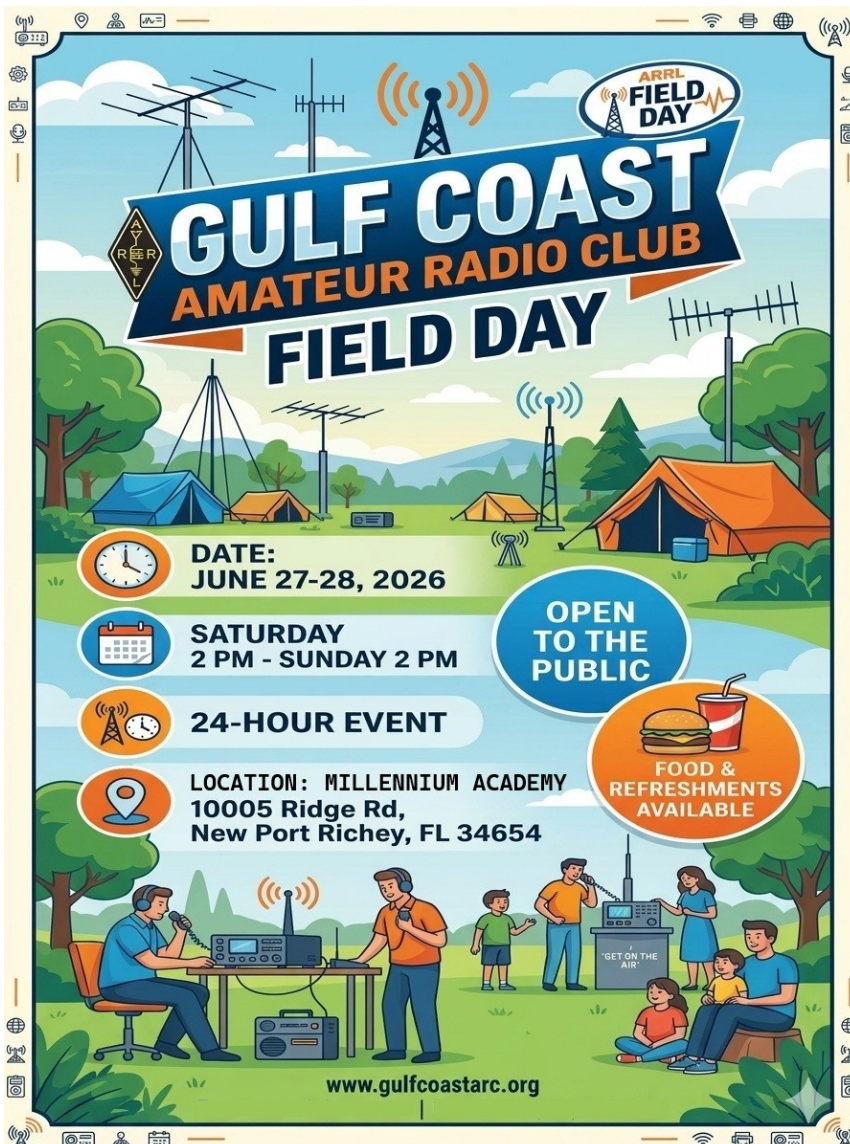
June 13th we will be handling communications for the “RAP RIVER RUN”, an event we have been participating in since it’s inception. If you would like to volunteer please contact Barry N2NVP at N2NVP@ARRL.NET.

May 30th we will be holding a FOX HUNT! Participants will meet at Millennium Academy 10005 Ridge rd. 10am. Following the Fox Hunt we will have a club luncheon at 11:30. **PLEASE RSVP** to Chris KC3CJU if you are planning to attend. kc3cju@gmail.com (see flyer below)

Finally, Field Day is approaching! As always we need people to help set up and break down! Also we need operators, especially the off hours. This is a great time to develop your HF and logging skills!

NO MEMBERSHIP MEETING IN MAY!

73s



HAMFESTING in the 21st CENTURY

Guide to Amateur Radio Hamfests

In the world of Amateur Radio (Ham Radio), few events carry as much cultural and practical significance as the **Hamfest**. Often described as a cross between a high-tech convention, a community reunion, and a massive flea market, a hamfest is a specialized event organized by amateur radio enthusiasts for the purpose of fostering the hobby's growth, facilitate the trade of equipment, and strengthening social bonds.



For the uninitiated, a hamfest might look like a chaotic collection of electronic components and antennas. However, to a licensed operator, it is a vital ecosystem that supports technical education, emergency preparedness, and the preservation of radio history.

A successful hamfest is typically divided into several distinct zones, each serving a specific need of the amateur community.

The boneyard is often the biggest draw for "bargain hunters." Here, individual operators set up tables (or sell directly from the tailgates of their trucks) to offload

gear they no longer use. You can find everything from:

- **Vintage Gear:** Vacuum tube receivers from the 1950s.
- **Modern Transceivers:** Used HF, VHF, and UHF radios.
- **Parts and Pieces:** Capacitors, resistors, power supplies, and lengths of coaxial cable.
- **"Projects":** Non-working radios sold for parts or for those who enjoy the challenge of repair.



Commercial Exhibitors are at larger events like **Dayton Hamvention** or **Orlando HamCation**, major manufacturers (Icom, Yaesu, Kenwood, FlexRadio) set up elaborate booths. This allows operators to get hands-on time with the latest touchscreen transceivers and software-defined radios (SDRs) before they hit the market.

Education is a pillar of amateur radio. Forums and Seminars at a Hamfest provide a venue for experts to lead sessions on:



- **Digital Modes:** Learning how to use FT8, DMR, or Winlink.
- **Antenna Theory:** Designing efficient wire antennas for small backyards.
- **Emergency Communications:** Training for ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service).
- **POTA/SOTA:** Tips for "Parks on the Air" and "Summits on the Air" portable operations.

Ham radio can be a solitary hobby—many operators spend hours alone in their "shacks" communicating with people thousands of miles away. The hamfest provides the critical "human element."

"Eye-Ball QSOs": In radio terminology, a "QSO" is a contact. An "eye-ball QSO" is when two people who have spoken over the air for years finally meet in person.

Mentorship (Elmering): Newcomers (Technicians) often attend hamfests to find an "Elmer"—an experienced ham who can guide them through their first station build.

Club Strengthening: Most hamfests are fundraisers for local clubs. The proceeds often pay for repeater maintenance, club insurance, and community outreach programs.

One of the most important functions of a hamfest is the **VE (Volunteer Examiner) Session**. For many, the hamfest is the finish line of their study journey. Amateur radio licenses in the U.S. are administered by fellow hams who have earned the VE credential. Holding these sessions at hamfests ensures a steady stream of new "hams" entering the hobby. It is common to see a round of applause break out when a candidate passes their Technician, General, or Extra class exam.



While small local hamfests happen every weekend in parking lots across the country, several "mega-events" define the annual calendar:

- **Dayton Hamvention (Ohio, USA):** The "Granddaddy of them all." It attracts over 30,000 people annually and is where most major industry announcements are made.
- **Ham Radio Friedrichshafen (Germany):** The largest event in Europe, emphasizing international cooperation and technical innovation.
- **Orlando HamCation (Florida, USA):** A massive event that serves as the unofficial kickoff to the spring hamfest season, known for its incredible weather and massive tailgate area.

You can also go to online Hamfest. With the rise of online marketplaces like eBay and specialized ham radio classifieds (QRZ.com), some wondered if the hamfest would become obsolete. However, the opposite has proven true.

The physical inspection of gear is irreplaceable. Seeing the "glow" of a vintage tube or testing the weight of a portable battery provides a level of certainty an online listing cannot. Furthermore, as digital modes like **Meshtastic** and **DMR** grow, the need for face-to-face technical workshops has only increased.

A hamfest is the physical manifestation of the "Ham Spirit." It is a place where the past (vintage Morse code keys) meets the future (satellite communications), and where the core mission of amateur radio—service, science, and skill—is celebrated by thousands. Whether you are looking for a rare screw for a 1970s radio or seeking to pass your first license exam, the hamfest remains the essential town square of the amateur radio world. I have been to many hamfests from New Hampshire all the way to Miami. The best thing I like about attending the fests are all the people that you meet. I have been to Dayton and like many others, you keep looking at everyone's name tag to see who they are. I have been picked out of a line and people have greeted me just by recognition of the callsign. Some I have never spoken to but worked them multiple time on FT8 on various bands. 73 see you at the next club hamfest!



AA4CB Chris Bloxsom

ARRL Affiliated Club Coordinator WCF Section
 ARRL Public Information Coordinator WCF Section
 AmateurWire VoIP #1706
 HamsOverIP VoIP #102941
 X - @aa4cb_Chris FB- @aa4cb YT- @aa4cb
 aa4cb@arrl.net ARRL Life member

East Pasco Amateur Radio Society	Orlando Amateur Radio Club
Zephyrhills Area Amateur Radio Club	Gulf Coast Amateur Radio Club
Spring Hill Amateur Radio Club	American Radio Relay League
Dayton Amateur Radio Association	Tampa Bay Hamfest FGCARC
Traveler's Rest Amateur Radio Club	Hog County Amateur Radio

Support your local Ham Clubs



SpringHill Amateur Radio Club

"Connecting Radio Operators of Hernando and Pasco County"

East Pasco Amateur Radio Society, INC.



K4EX

146.880 - 145.290 FM PL 146.2
443.600 - 443.575 FM and C4FM

Dade City, Florida



<http://eparsonline.org>



W4PLB

The largest & oldest amateur radio club in Central Florida

Zephyrhills Area Amateur Radio Club

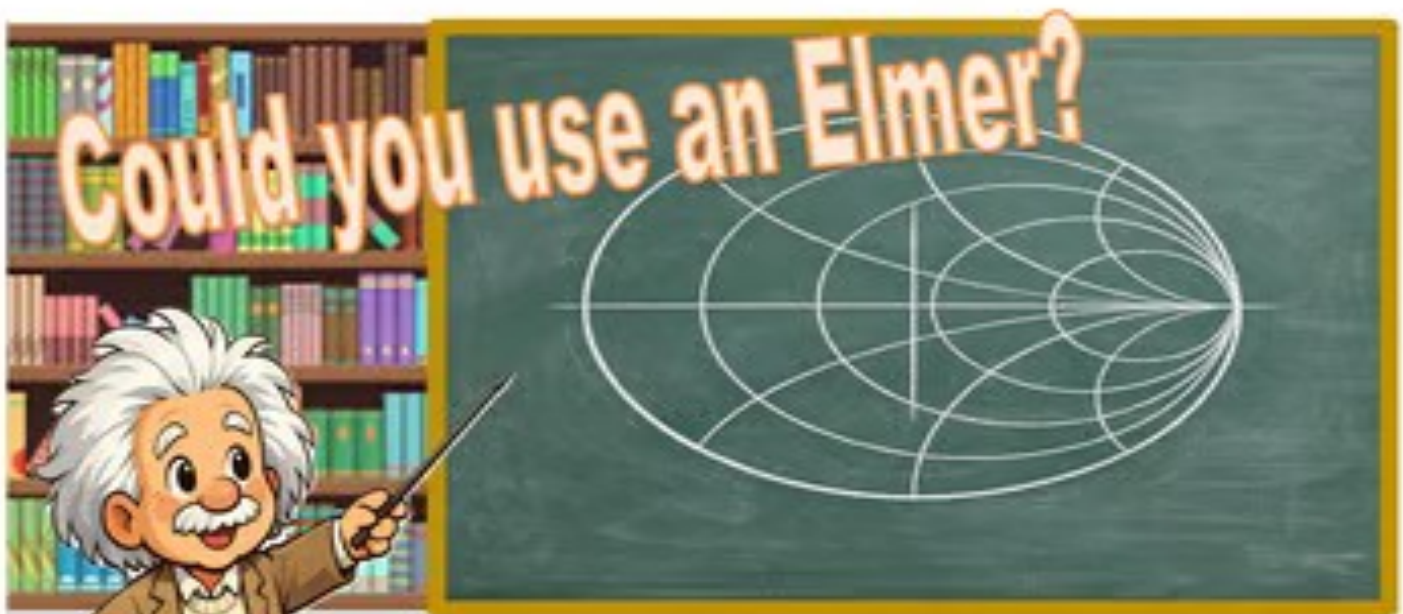
W1PB VHF Repeater: 146.910- Tone: 146.2/146.2 (Analog/FUSION Ready)
UHF Repeater: 441.425+ Tone: 146.2/146.2 (Analog/FUSION Ready)
2m Net Mondays @ 7:00 pm (except 3rd Monday)

American Radio Relay League <http://arrl.org>

Tampa Bay Hamfest FGCARC <http://tampabayhamfest.com>

Dayton Amateur Radio Association <http://w8bi.org>

Hog County Amateur Radio Association <http://k4hog.us>



The Gulf Coast Amateur Radio Club has knowledgeable Ham operators waiting and willing to answer your questions. Just click on the link below and fill out the form and we will put you intouch with someone who can answer your question or find you the answer.



**Scan or click on the QR code
and
fill in the Elmer request form!**

2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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DIRECTOR	BARRY KEAVENY	N2NVP	N2NVP@ARRL.NET

FOX HUNT!

Saturday, May 30th

10:00 am!

Start from Millenneun Academy



FOLLOWED BY

Club Luncheon

11:30



BEEF 'O' BRADY'S
GOOD FOOD. GOOD SPORTS


14851 State Road 52,

Hudson, FL

MAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNSDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Fusion Net 7:30 145.350MHz	GCARC INFORMATION NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz	SKYWARN NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz	10M HF NET 7:30 PM 28.430Mhz USB		 TEST SESSION-10:00AM
10	11	12	13	14	14	16
	Fusion Net 7:30 145.350MHz	GCARC INFORMATION NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz		10M HF NET 7:30 PM 28.430Mhz USB		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Fusion Net 7:30 145.350MHz	GCARC INFORMATION NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz	SKYWARN NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz	10M HF NET 7:30 PM 28.430Mhz USB		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	NO MONTHLY MEETING	GCARC INFORMATION NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz		10M HF NET 7:30 PM 28.430Mhz USB		FOX HUNT LUNCHEON

JUNE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNSDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<i>Fusion Net</i> 7:30 145.350MHz	GCARC INFORMATTION NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz	SKYWARN NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz	10M HF NET 7:30 PM 28.430Mhz USB		POTA WERNER- BOYCE
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	<i>Fusion Net</i> 7:30 145.350MHz	GCARC INFORMATTION NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz		10M HF NET 7:30 PM 28.430Mhz USB		Rap River Run
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	<i>Fusion Net</i> 7:30 145.350MHz	GCARC INFORMATTION NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz	SKYWARN NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz	10M HF NET 7:30 PM 28.430Mhz USB		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
		GCARC INFORMATTION NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz		10M HF NET 7:30 PM 28.430Mhz USB		
28	29	30				
	<i>Fusion Net</i> 7:30 145.350MHz	GCARC INFORMATTION NET 7:30 PM 146.670Mhz				

NEXT TEST SESSION!

Scheduled for Saturday, June 20th

10:00 AM

Millenium Academy

10005 Ridge Rd, New Port Richey

Contact Al at AJ4JA@ICLOUD.COM



NET CONTROL OPERATORS!

MAY 5

AL

AJ4JA

MAY 12

WAYNE

KD2UDU

MAY 19

NICK

KN4IKR

MAY 26

CHUCK

K5KAZ

The club is looking for members to be Net Controllers. The Tuesday Night Net is an important function of the GCARC, and the Nets must have a controller to keep the flow of information orderly. Right now we need more Net Controllers, so the same few people aren't holding the Nets week after week. Being a Net Controller is fun, you get to practice your on-the-air skills, and you get to use your radio equipment in a live exercise. And you are helping the club by donating about 30 minutes of your time for maybe one night a month. You will even be furnished scripted dialogue, so you don't have to ad lib. If you are a member in good standing, and you have a radio rig that can reach the club repeater clearly and reliably, you can let us know if you'd like to be a Net controller by several means: you can post a message on our Facebook site, or send us a message through the "contact us" link on the web site, or just say so during a Net. Please give it some thought. We'd love to have you join us as a Net Controller.

Nick KN4IKR stewartnick@erols.com