

SPARC NEWSLETTER

May 2025

A publication of the Southern PA Amateur Radio Club

Harry Bauder, N3FMO President

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Dave Payne, N3LOM, Repeater Trustee

Larry Laughman. K3LWL – Member at Large

Jason Bachman N8WXZ – Member at Large

Jim Dunbar, W3JGD – Membership Chairman

Your New Editor



I am your new editor. This guy. Me.

Harry has too much on his plate. In my expert opinion, he suffers from burnout onset. Like saving homeless puppies, I want to try to save him from a breakdown.

So, if you have anything you want to share with the club, contact me, Sam, W3IHM. My e-mail is wb8zdf@comcast.net. Drop me a message. Tell me of your newsletter worthy information. Well, yes, I do vet whatever. That is what editors do. Sheesh. So no un-paid ad space, please.

You can also catch me on my 33 cm. 927.9875 MHz repeater, Allstar 46958. I always leave a 33 cm. radio on in the kitchen, and eat food often, so odds are high you will catch me there. Yes, the RX is a bit low in frequency, but the huge 900 MHz user base has not complained to me, so it is a low priority fix.

No... I don't have a cell phone. (....that works.)

Meeting Night

The SPARC monthly general membership meeting is the fourth Tuesday of the month, May the 27nd at 7:00 PM. The meeting is being held at the Clubhouse. Bring your snacks.

The program will be on satellite communications by Rick, WB3CSY. There is a lot of ham radio hardware up in space, most all of it in low earth orbit, waiting for us terrestrials to utilize. People around the world have labored long and hard to get it there. Don't miss the opportunity of using it before it burns up!

For instance, launched in 1974, OSCAR 7 is STILL working. (...when in the sunshine.) Where were you in 1974? Does your 8-track player still work? Well, OSCAR 7 still does. I heard AO-7 back then, on my trusty HRO-7 and a 40 meter sloper. I also heard it a few days ago, too. Cool, huh? Don't miss this!

Peach Trees

by Harry N3FMO

On Saturday, April 5th, several of us were at the SPARC club site and received a knock at the door and a visit from one of the farmers that take care of the peach orchard adjacent to our property. She had noticed our weather station and had a few questions about what we use it for. Interestingly, she was interested in any historical data we might have and asked if she could connect to it somehow.

We got her connected to the weather station on her phone via Weather Underground and while someone was doing that, a few gave her a quick tour of the club house and explained what we do there (other than drink coffee and tell stories).

What we learned from her was that farmers use historical weather data to optimize various agricultural operations, enhance crop management, and mitigate risks associated with weather events. In particular, she was interested in the historical data to make informed decisions about pest control. This helps them decide on when to apply the pest control and how much to apply, helping reduce costs.

It was an interesting discussion and shows how the ham community can provide service beyond just radios. It was a great example of how we can help bring a positive impact to the community at large.

Plate Tectonics

by Sam W3IHM

Things are changing. Those of us who grew up building with (or just admiring) IF transformers, mechanical and ceramic/crystal filters, and wiring up specialized analog signal demodulator integrated circuits are in for a shock. This kind of RF analog hardware is fast disappearing.



Digital signal processing is coming/here. DDS chips, I/Q, array processors, and swell waterfall interfaces have replaced tuning knobs and Allen Bradley pots quite awhile ago.

SO.. Such things as FM demodulator chips as well as many types of specialized analog processing chips, are becoming hard to find. Just check Digikey, Jameco, Mouser, for your favorite part numbers and see what I mean.

Also gone are the 455 kHz ceramic and 9 MHz crystal filters. Gone are Collins mechanical filters also. Prices on old filters pulled from radios are also skyrocketing, often exceeding the value of the radio they go in. Legitimate replacements are also becoming hard to find, and fakes are flooding the market.

Why? Tweaking and tuning is now primarily done in the DSP algorithms and machine firmware. What?! No more “Magic Golden Screwdrivers?!” Yes. Sorry. Peel open a new CB and look inside. No tweakies.

More on this later.

PA QSO Party by T.O.M.

We got a certificate! It was fun! That is what this hobby is about. Cool wallpaper, huh? Thank you to all who participated and made this a successful club event. Congratulations to you all! Full results are here: <https://paqso.org/party-results.html>



900 MHz Coming

Sam's presentation at the February meeting sparked a lot of interest. Ryan, K3RDE is working on installing a 900 MHz repeater at SPARC. Stay tuned!

Sam also got his 900 MHz Retevis RT-10 to program on his old Linux (Andy's Ham Radio) junk laptop, using the "Wine" windows emulator. Maybe I can show you how to do this if enough folks express interest.

So swoop up a Retevis and don't miss the fun. Be one of the first on the up and coming 900 MHz repeater, and be the envy of your fellow radio nerds.

Emergency Communication (EMCOMM)

EMCOMM is an integral part of amateur radio and part of our mission as a club. This can be a vital service during emergencies. When all else fails, there is ham radio.

Several avenues are available for participation including Lancaster County Emergency Management and Lancaster Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). These two agencies provide training, meetings and exercises. Participants are a link between them and our club and can provide reports at our meetings.

ARES holds nets on the first and third Tuesdays of the month on the N3FYI repeater, 145.310, PL 118.8 at 2030. Meetings are the third Thursday of the month at Lancaster Public Safety Training Center and by ZOOM at 1900.

Anyone interested in joining either group can contact Peg Hamm, KB3SCA at peghamm@gmail.com or Doug Rice W3COB drice1972@gmail.com. Doug will be presenting a program on ARES at the July meeting.

License Test Sessions

Testing is conducted at the SPARC site on the first Tuesday of every month. Fee to take the exam is \$14.00 payable on the K3IR website or in person, cash or check only.

You can pre-register to take the technician test, or upgrade, at Hamstudy.org. There is also a link on the K3IR web site. If you do not already have one, go to fcc.gov and register for a FRN (Federal Registration Number).

Upcoming Hamfests

Fri. Sat. Sun, May 16,17,18

Hamvention 2025

Green County Fairgrounds

120 Fairground Rd. Xenia, OH 45385

<https://hamvention.org/>

Sunday June 8

Breeze Shooters Hamfest

Butler Farm Show Grounds

Butler PA

<https://breezeshooters.org/ns/hamfest/>

Saturday July 6

Harrisburg Firecracker Hamfest

Harrisburg Postal Workers Picnic Grounds
1500 Roberts Valley Road
Harrisburg, PA

Saturday October 1

Red Rose Hamfest
339 East Main Street
New Holland, PA

Looking For Volunteers

SPARC currently has 131 “active” members on the roster. We have a lot to offer to our members. At this time we have a dedicated group of hardworking volunteers who keep the site running. Some say this is typical with most organizations. I don't think SPARC should be “typical” We need more real active members. Jobs range from the highly technical to the mundane but ALL are important. Please look at the list below and see if there is a place for you.

IT Team

Tower climbers and ground help

Operating building maintenance and cleaning

Operating building equipment maintenance and improvement

Porta Potty cleaning (not Pumping!)

Adopt a Highway crew

Elmers

Hamfest help

Meeting programs

Vic Jenks, W3VIC has offered to take on the Adopt a Highway program but I would like to see at least 2 helpers to step up.