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Jim Wades and Steve Bonser, Farmington Radio Club members, begin a 24-hour stint behind the mike, broadcasting to other parts

of the country in a demonstration of emergency techniques. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Ham radio devotees cram night airwaves

By LYNN ORR

If you happened to wander by the North Farmington High football field during the wee hours of the morning last weekend, a rather odd sight greeted your eyes.

About 20 members of the Farmington Radio Club set up tents and equipment for 24 hour national broadcasting in competition with other ham radio operators around the country.

The objective behind the all-night adventure was to demonstrate emergency preparedness of amateur radio operators, says Jim Wades, chairman of the field day committee.

"We're demonstrating use of emergency power and emergency awareness," says the 17-year-old Quaker Valley resident, a Brother Rice student. "We can use our own equipment with the use of emergency generators if we need to."

The national contest is sponsored by the American Radio Relay League each year, Wades says, and participants contact other amateur radio operators throughout the U.S.

"We talked to the West Indies, but they don't really count for the contest," he adds.

Although the members said had a great time, sleep was a commodity for some of the members. Wades and Steve Bonser managed about two hours each as they manned the station Sunday evening and ran two transmitters simultaneously.

The Farmington club used the call letters of member Leonard Nathanson, one of the members with the highest class rating operating with the most frequency.

"There are five different classes of amateur licenses," Wades explains. "You have to pass a test to get a license demonstrating radio theory, operators' procedures and Morse code knowledge."

The curious who stopped by to chat with the radio operators soon discovered the difference between amateur radio and citizens' band radios.

"Amateur radio is more of a technical hobby," Wades explains. "In addition to getting your license and call letters, you talk around the world on different frequencies." Citizens band frequencies are limited in area, he adds.

This year's event was the fifth consecutive year the Farmington Club has participated in the national contest. With some expertise under their belts, the operators had little trouble in realizing their goals, although they failed to help one motorist in trouble.

"This guy came by and asked if we had jumper cable in the middle of the night," Wades explains, although he thinks the man was more curious about the radio setup than receiving help with his car.

The Farmington Radio Club is open to anyone with an interest in radio, and members hold classes in radio technique each winter. Although the club foregoes meetings in the summer, next fall will find them at 7:30 p.m. the second Wednesday of each month in the Farmington High School electronics room.

"Everyone is welcome to come," Wades says, and there are no age restrictions.



Free wheeling

A little effort and a lot of entry blanks paid off for Linda Milbizer who won a new 10-speed bike in the "Free Wheeling Sweepstakes," sponsored by The Place for Young Juniors, at Richards Boys' and Girls' Wear on Grand River and Halstead. Linda just graduated from the sixth grade at Longacre Elementary School. She was given her prize from Jim Harper, program director at WDRQ, which co-sponsored the sweepstakes.

Library announces summer schedule

The Farmington and Farmington Hills Branch Libraries will be closed on Saturdays during the summer months.

Summer hours for the libraries will be 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays.

Farmington Observer

Published every Monday and Tuesday by the Observer & Excelsior News, 48150 Secor Road, Farmington, Michigan 48163. Address all mail subscriptions, change of address, Form 3579, to P.O. Box 2428, Livonia, Michigan 48150. Telephone 261-3800.

HOME DELIVERY SERVICE: \$1.00 per copy, 20 copies \$20.00.

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