

# Hamming it up to improve emergency skills



photos by BOB BURLAK/staff photographer

Today's computers interface with the international amateur radio network. As part of an International Field Day, Ted Hartson of Farmington attempts to make radio contact via a computer in the North Farmington High School football field press box.

A 24-hour marathon test of amateur radio communications — including voice, Morse Code and computer — was held locally on the North Farmington High School football field Saturday.

The Farmington Amateur Radio Club participated in its annual Field Day for fun and learning.

An estimated 25,000 amateur operators at 1,800 sites throughout the United States and Canada participated in this year's Field Day, which became an annual event shortly after the close of World War I. The event is sponsored by the American Radio Relay League and is held during the last weekend of June each year.

Local FARRC member and Farmington Hills resident Chuck Tanton termed the 1988 event a success. "We had good weather, and I think we did very well."

An estimated 25 members of the 50-member local organization participated in Saturday's event.

The local group began setting up at the North Farmington field at 10 a.m., and were in operation by 2 p.m., according to Tanton. The oper-

ation was run on strictly auxiliary power — a gas generator — and the group set up its own towers and antennas.

THE ANNUAL Field Day is more than a competitive event for the operators. According to Tanton, it "is a drill in emergency preparedness" to help ready operators for conditions existing during the aftermath of an earthquake, hurricane or tornado.

During the drill, members try to talk with as many fellow amateurs as possible during the 24-hour period.

The Farmington area group kept a log, which must be submitted following the Field Day to the ARRL to determine which group throughout the U.S. and Canada generated the most communications, Tanton said.

The tally is made and the winner determined on a point system, he added, with voice communications generating one point each and Morse communications generating two points.

Other items adding to the score include using lesser power to communication, and the addition of a novice station, allowing entry-level ama-

teur operators to participate in the event.

Two novice-level operators who took a winter class from the Farmington club set up and operated the novice station.

ALTHOUGH FINAL numbers are not tallied, the group maintains numerous contacts throughout the United States and Canada, reaching Hawaii at one point, Tanton added.

Farmington Public Schools allows the group to use the North Farmington facility each year for their Field Day event.

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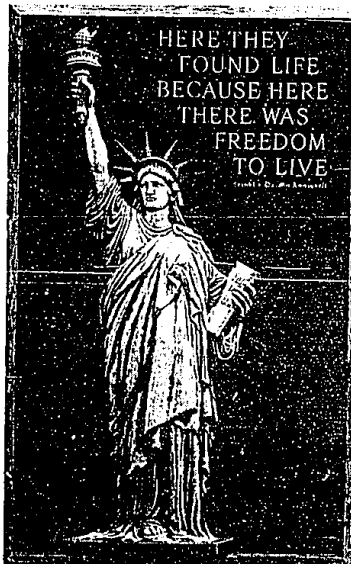
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