Each year since 1987, Carole Perry, WB2MGP, has used the platform of her youth forum at the Dayton Hamvention to highlight the accomplishments and potential of ham radio's future leaders. This year, she hosted a very special Youth Forum Number 30.

Dayton Youth Forum: Three Decades of Showcasing Young Hams

BY CAROLE PERRY, *WB2MGP

I have waited a long time to say “Welcome to the 30th Hamvention Youth Forum.” In fact, I have waited for three decades. This May’s Hamvention Instructors’ and Youth Forums were especially important and memorable for me. From my very first visit to the Dayton Hamvention® in 1987, receiving the Ham of the Year Award, the Dayton Amateur Radio Association made it clear it was supportive of my efforts in showcasing young hams.

* 28 Keune Ct., Staten Island, NY 10304
email: wb2mgp@gmail.com

These forums, especially the Youth Forum, have evolved over the years to the networking, informative, sharing experiences they are today. There were many undercurrents that formed a positive confluence to make this a very special 30th Forum. The new venue at Xenia was a dream come true for many of us who moderate forums at Hamvention. My forum rooms were large, air conditioned, and provided for a very comfortable and receptive environment for our young speakers (Photo A) and our “love audience.” I have come to count on the enormous help I receive every year at Hamvention from my fellow Radio Club of America

Photo A. Participants in WB2MGP's 30th annual Youth Forum at this year's Dayton Hamvention. (All photos courtesy of WB2MGP)
(RCA) members and other hams who volunteer to be a “Carole’s Monitor.” Ralph Irish from L’Anse Creuse ARC has been my prize manager for 27 years. He is the one who organizes, stands guard, and helps with the distribution of all the wonderful prizes the young presenters are awarded, as well as the door prizes for the audience. His wonderful fellow club members are responsible for the beautifully printed prize tickets that are given out every year. Al Eckman, WW6WW, from Lowell High School in Lowell, Michigan, has been my AV specialist and has brought talented young presenters to the Youth Forum for the past 25 years. I was happy to honor both Al and Ralph at the forum.

Starting with Memories
We opened this year’s Youth Forum with a tribute to my dear friend Ellie Van Winkle, NOQCX, who became a Silent Key last year. For 27 years, she trained and coached young hams, along with her husband Howard (Rip), in their home in Boulder, Colorado as part of their devotion to BARC Jr., the youth group of the Boulder Amateur Radio Club. Through the years, Ellie was responsible for sending me some of the most wonderful young presenters for the Youth Forum. Both Jerome Dinaker, K6BBQ, age 16, a former student of hers, and Steve Meier, K6SCC, a friend of the Van Winkles, gave the introductory tribute for the video “Where are They Now?”

The video features an introduction by John Amodeo, N6SJ, executive producer of the Tim Allen-starring “Last Man Standing” television show (unfortunately, now cancelled — ed.) who spoke about the importance of supporting the young and talented hams at the Youth Forum. Six former students of Ellie’s and I then gave brief interviews on the video about how their appearances at the Youth Forum when they were very young influenced their school and/or career choices. We wanted this to be an inspirational message for all the youngsters in the audience about the fun and value of being actively involved in ham radio.

Next up at the podium was Tamitha Skov. She is known as the “Space Weather Lady.” She directed her talk to the young people and stressed the importance of knowing about weather in space for our GPS, cell phones and other devices in the future. She is a terrific speaker and we were delighted to have her as part of our 30th celebration.

2017’s Young Presenters
I was so proud to introduce each of our next young presenters. They work hard all year, preparing their talks and rehearsing their presentations. I offer my gratitude to all the parents for their support and encouragement of our young hams.

Lucas Schroeder, W6LDS, age 15, spoke about “The SharkRF openSPOT.” Lucas was the first youngster to request a spot at this year’s Youth Forum by approaching me at the 2016 Youth Forum. I admire his initiative. Dhruv Rebba, KC9ZJX, age 13, spoke about “Community Services
Photo E. Evan Markowitz, KD2IZW, gave a great presentation on “Balloon Based Repeater for Emergency Applications.”

with Ham Radio Communications.” He is the youngest ham radio operator of Indian origin, and the winner of many service awards.

Carissa Ferguson, KJ4EZA, age 17 (Photo B), gave a wonderful talk about “Robotics and Ham Radio.” She generated many responses from the audience to learn more about her topic. Dakota Krzyzich, KE8CVK, also 17, showcased the works and contributions of the Lowell High School Youth Club. Young hams from this club in Michigan (Photo C), under the direction of Al Ecker, WW8WW, have given many excellent presentations during the years at the Hamvention Youth Forum.

Ruth Wille, KM4LCO, age 18, gave a very informative talk about “Plugging Into Your Valuable Club Resources.” Ruth was also the banquet speaker the night before at the DX dinner. The third young lady to speak was 9-year-old Grace Lea, KM4TXT, who spoke about “Solar Power Mania.” Chris Braut, KD8YVJ, age 14, (Photo D) spoke about “Getting Started with SDR.” This dynamic young man recently presented at my Hamvention Youth Forum in Orlando as well.

Evan Markowitz, KD2IZW, age 18 (Photo E), made a wonderful presentation on his project of a “Balloon-Based Repeater for Emergency Applications.” He is lucky enough to be under the tutelage of Rob Roscheski, KA2PBT, and Kevin Murray, K2FL, who have coached and trained many of my previous young Hamvention presenters.

Thanks to Sponsors and Supporters
The sponsors of the Youth Forum are totally appreciated by all of us who know the importance of showcasing our best and brightest young hams. RCA, ICOM, Kenwood, MFJ, Kirmuss Associates, QWA, L’Anse Creuse ARC, Delaware Lehigh ARC, DX Engineering, AMSAT, ARRL, KA4AMG ARC, DARA,
and Heil Sound were all responsible for adding to the excitement of the forum through their generous donations.

I was also unabashedly surprised by fellow RCA Director and member of my Youth Activities Committee, Charles Kirmuss, W0CBK, when he presented me with a duplication of the compact code practice oscillator product I used in my classroom for many years. It is being offered for free to anyone who makes a $25 donation to RCA Youth Activities, as a commemorative gift for our 30th Youth Forum. All proceeds go directly to RCA Youth Activities. For further information, you can contact me at <wb2mgp@gmail.com>.

This year, we made a donation as well, sending 10 telegraph keys to the National Institute of Amateur Radio (NIAR) in India to help with its ongoing programs to support and educate young hams there (Photo F).

Start Scouting for 2018

Let’s all be on the lookout for articulate, talented young hams with an interesting story to share. Feel free to give them my contact info and have them start contacting me this fall for a chance to present at the 2018 Hamvention Youth Forum, number 31 and counting!