

Contact:

Bob Bastone

radiofreebob@gmail.com

(724) 448-5774

<http://www.kdka100.org>

Contact:

Bob Mente

alleggheny@wpa-arrrl.org

(412) 736-7385

<http://www.kdka100.org>

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“HAMS” TAKE TO THE AIR FOR 100 YEAR MILESTONE CELEBRATION

Pittsburgh area ham radio (also called amateur radio) operators will take to the airwaves commemorating the 100th anniversary of an experimental amateur radio station that would eventually become KDKA Radio. On November 2, 1920 experimental amateur radio station 8ZZ broadcast the Harding-Cox presidential election returns. To celebrate this milestone, amateur radio operators throughout the area will take to the airwaves during the entire month of November to commemorate this historic event using amateur radio call signs K3K, K3D, K3A, and W8XK, the latter being the call sign of KDKA's shortwave sister station in the 1930's.

The North Hills Amateur Radio Club is planning a field operation from II-VI Incorporated near Saxonburg, PA which was the former KDKA transmitter site from 1931 to 1939. One of the original tower piers still stands on the property to this day. Another field operation is being planned at the Westinghouse Lodge in Forest Hills, which was the former KDKA transmitter site from 1923 to 1930. Steel City Amateur Radio Club in Collier Township will have operations from their clubhouse in addition to the Skyview Radio Society in New Kensington. Other amateur radio clubs planning operations are the Wireless Association of South Hills and the Panther Amateur Radio Club in Allegheny County, the Butler County Amateur Radio Public Service Group in Butler County, and the Washington Amateur Communications Radio Club in Washington County. In addition, individual operators will commence operations from their private residences. The goal of these combined operations is to contact other amateur radio operators across the country and around the globe. Commemorative post cards, called QSL cards, with artwork designed by the graphic arts department at KDKA Radio, will be sent to operators confirming the contact.

“More than one hundred years ago, many experimenters started delving into a new technology known as wireless, or radio. Many of those early experimenters were amateurs. One hundred plus years later, many amateur radio operators are celebrating their achievements as we continue today to enhance the technology and international goodwill that our hobby offers”, said Bob Bastone, Radio Officer for the Skyview Radio Society in New Kensington, PA. Bastone adds, “Throughout November, there will be many amateur radio operators, or hams, taking to the airwaves to celebrate one hundred years of a radio station that started out as an experimental amateur radio station in Frank Conrad's garage. Congratulations to KDKA Radio, also known in the early years as 8XK, 8ZZ, and W8XK. KDKA Radio, a longtime mainstay of the Pittsburgh area, is also known around the world as the first commercial radio station. During November, we amateur radio operators look forward to contacting thousands of other hams around the world to celebrate this huge milestone in the commercial broadcasting industry.”

One of the purposes of the amateur radio service under Federal law is recognition and enhancement of the value of the amateur service to the public as a voluntary noncommercial communication service, particularly with respect to providing emergency communications. "The fastest way to turn a crisis into a total disaster is to lose communications," said Robert Mente, Emergency Coordinator for the Allegheny County Amateur Radio Emergency Service. “With the recent onslaught of hurricanes in the coastal states,

Amateur Radio operators provide the most reliable communication networks in the first critical hours of these events. Because amateur radio is not dependent on the Internet, cell towers or other infrastructure, they still work when nothing else is available. We need nothing between us but air.” Mente adds, “Doing these commemorative special event stations helps to keep our operating skills sharp by giving us an opportunity to practice our on-air operating skills and setting up portable stations running off the grid in less than ideal conditions.” Allegheny County Amateur Radio Emergency Service volunteers log many hours each year providing communication services for The Pittsburgh Marathon, Race for the Cure, the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, the Great Race, and the American Diabetes Tour de Cure in addition to providing communication support for the American Red Cross and the Pittsburgh National Weather Service office. Other purposes of the amateur radio service include continuation and extension of the amateur's proven ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art, advancing skills in both the communication and technical phases of the art, expansion of the existing reservoir within the amateur radio service of trained operators, technicians, and electronics experts, and continuation and extension of the amateur's unique ability to enhance international goodwill.

The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) Teacher's Institute on Wireless Technology in Newington, CT supports the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) initiative in the nation's schools. The goal of this program is to equip each teacher with the necessary knowledge, and through hands-on learning, give teachers the ability to learn wireless technology and integrate content into their classroom instruction. This training serves as preparation for classroom learning about radio communications and wireless technology as part of student preparation for participation in the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) program. Mente continues, “The purpose of the ARISS program is to organize scheduled contacts via amateur radio between crew members aboard the International Space Station (ISS) and our nation's classrooms. With the help of amateur radio volunteers and coordination from the ARISS team, the ISS crew members speak directly to students regarding Amateur Radio and future STEM based career paths as a result of being introduced to this wonderful hobby that started over one hundred years ago. Being involved with amateur radio at a local leadership level has opened many doors for me in my career as well.”

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