

# Amateur radio club stays connected

by Jason Pafundi

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In the fast advancing technological world of today, the Northeast Wireless Radio Club in Bayside still uses a basic method to communicate with people from around the world — amateur radio.

Phil Monaco's club, known by call sign NW2C, focus their activities around emergency prep aredness, and one of the biggest events they participate in is called field day.

Held in late June, it has approximately 35,000 amateur radio operators from across the country and from Canada participating each year. It is one of the largest emergency exercises in the world.

"It is not only an emergency preparedness exercise and public relations demonstration, but also a contest, a great event for clubs and just a fun way to get on the air," Monaco said.

According to Monaco, amateurs set up their gear away from commercial power and normal installations for 24 hours.

Operators use their own equipment and attempt to make as many contacts as possible and exchange basic information such as call signs and location, which is extremely useful in an emergency.

Monaco's club placed several wire antennas in trees and used generators and solar power to operate the equipment. In 2010, Monaco had to use his truck when they ran out of gas.

Operating in shifts for the 24-hour period, the club, which has eight members including a 13-year-old girl and Monaco's 10-year-old daughter, made close to 1,500 contacts.

"It is great practice for operation in abnormal situations and less than optimal conditions," he said.

During the recovery efforts following the attacks on 9/11, Monaco and some of his fellow club members provided support by bringing their equipment down to Ground Zero to help with communications. They also volunteered with the Red Cross and passed out food and supplies.

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the attacks, the club held a special event at Ft. Totten.

The club made nearly 200 contacts in six hours and will be sending certificates to confirm the contacts to each station they were able to communicate with.

Amateur radio operators must be licensed by the FCC, and Monaco has been operating on his current license since 1994. In that time, he said, he has talked to people from all around the world and from all walks of life.

Monaco said that amateur radio is not only for adults, but it is a great activity for kids because they learn geography from talking to people across the globe and they also learn basic radio operation and weather.

On Oct. 15, the club will participate in a 12-hour event similar to field day, except this one will be for New York

operators only.

Monaco said they'll put wires into the trees at Ft. Totten and try and make as many contacts as possible.

Monaco said amateur or ham radio, has evolved from what is seen on television.

"There are many modes utilized, including voice, Morse Code, digital and satellite," he said.

Monaco said that some amateur operators have even launched their own satellites that make regular orbital passes and open communication around the world for the length of the pass, which usually lasts between six to 12 minutes.

Despite technological advances, namely the Internet, AM/FM and satellite radio, amateur radio still has a place in the world.

Monaco said that it remains the most effective way to communicate during an emergency.

Because amateur radio doesn't use a standard network, it is impossible for it to be affected by overcrowding the line like with cell phone service, or a tower being down.

Monaco said that regular communications rely on central stations, networks and grids, and those can be affected by outages, weather and other factors.

But amateur radio, though it has advanced in sophistication over the years, operates independently of those things and remains useful and relevant in emergency situations. ☐