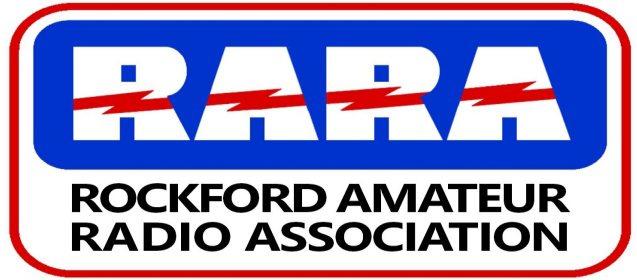


HAMRAG

Visit our website for more club and area ham information at <http://w9axd.org>



RARA Mission Statement

A member association with common interest of public service to the community through the use of amateur radio.

RARA is a volunteer run organization of individuals donating their time each month to develop activities, maintain repeaters, nets, and education. There are associated expenses and when you become a club member, your dues are providing a service to your community and furthering the hobby of amateur radio.

Welcome to New RARA Members:

Bill Stepanek N9WLS

Thanks to this month's contributors to the Ham Rag

Greg KE9EOT, Kerry KD9MAP, Larry AC9GO & Paul WB9HGZ

Editor's Note

If you would like to have something published, please call me at 815-505-8170, or email me at w9yum.vs@gmail.com

Articles are welcome and encouraged from all!

Due Date for the April Ham Rag is Wed March 25, 2026

73, Verna—W9YUM, Editor

NEXT MEETING

FRIDAY— March 13, 2026 - 7:00pm

**Program: Radio Programming
Karin Thompson, KD4DXX from RT Systems**

This will be a Virtual Meeting on Google Meet
A link will be emailed to members on Friday morning of the meeting and posted to the Facebook Group

March 2026

**Calling CQ for
over 70 years**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Cover Page - page 1

President's Message
Page 2

RARA Board & Local Nets
Page 3

Key Dates to Save
Page 4

Behind the Mic
Meeting Your Net Control Ops
Pages 5-6

Blast from the Past!
Rockford Monday Night Nets
Paul WB9HGZ
Pages 7-8

Winnebago Co Skywarn
Spring in Northern Illinois
Greg KE9OET
Pages 9-10

From the Workbench
Larry AC9GO
Page 11

Hacking a Generic Hotspot
Kerry DK9MAp
Pages 12-14

Starved Rock Marathon
Page 15

Hamfests, Contests, DX Links
Page 16

Breakfast Socializing
Page 17

RARA Store
Page 18

Dekalb Ham Fest
Pages 19

RARA Membership Form
Page 20

President's Message— Larry McFall, KD9HKX

Greetings, members and friends of RARA.

We've made it through February to the 1st of March. Even though the weather doesn't seem much improved there's still something psychologically satisfying about ending February. March has that promise of mild weather moderating temperatures and the first signs of growth. Grasses will start showing signs of greening at the ground, buds will begin swelling on the tree branches, soon we will notice, when we listen carefully, the insects are starting to hum in the background and the birds we haven't seen all winter are returning. Each of these things grasses and other plants, trees, insects, and birds depend on each other for growth.

As a club RARA is also growing. We've gained many new members over the last few years and made a lot of new friends. Our club, just like our hobby, needs to grow in other ways to have a long life. As in nature, individual members, need to cooperate and assist other members to thrive in order for the club as a whole to thrive. Each of us has many talents but none of us have the exact same talents. It's important to share skills and knowledge with those who need assistance with a particular skill or knowledge. You can do this member to member, at our meetings where you can share experience and knowledge with a large number of people, or even through conversation on one of the repeaters.

We have had very good attendance at our last several meetings but I would always encourage everyone in the club to attend as many meetings as they can to gain and share knowledge and grow in our shared hobby.

I hope all of you have a great month and here's to seeing you at our various functions.

73's to all,

Larry KD9HKX

RARA Board and Local Nets

Tuesday, March 10, 2026 RARA Board Meeting 7:00pm on Google Meet
Friday, March 13, 2026 RARA Membership Meeting 7:00pm Google Meet

2026 RARA Officers and Directors

Officers:

President - Larry McFall, KD9HKX, 815-900-1820, lpmcfall@charter.net
Vice President - Jamie Cook, W9JTC, 779-423-9054, W9JTC@yahoo.com
Secretary - Guy Adams, KE9CZZ, 815-985-8554, ke9czz@gmail.com
Treasurer – Verna Schubert, W9YUM, 815-505-8170, w9yum.vs@gmail.com

Directors:

Jimmy Curtis, KC9GOL, 779-537-2233, jimhcurtis7818@yahoo.com
Dan Larson, KD9SAZ, 312-292-1989, kd9saz@gmail.com
Doug Passmore, KE9CNS, 815-979-9229, dgpasmore@att.net
Mike Richardson, KB9SSV, 815-616-0200, kb9ssv@msn.com
HamRag Editor - Verna Schubert, W9YUM, 815-505-8170, w9yum.vs@gmail.com
Webmaster - Verna Schubert, W9YUM, 815-505-8170, w9yum.vs@gmail.com
Repeater License Trustee - Doug Passmore, KE9CNS, 815-979-9229, dgpasmore@att.net
Repeater Chairman - Matt Marshall, W3MBX, 815-222-5959, matthew.marshall@gmail.com

Local Net Information

Mon - 7:00pm - RARA Info. Net & CW Lesson, 146.610 (-0.6) offset, pl 114.8
- 8:00pm - McHenry County RACES Net, 146.835 (-0.6) offset, pl 91.5

Tues - 7:00pm - RARA Tuesday Night Net & CW Lesson , 146.610 (-0.6) offset, pl 114.8
- 7:30pm - Rock County Public Service Net, 145.450 (-0.6) offset, pl 123.0

Wed - 7:00pm - Wed Night Chat Net, 146.610 (-0.6) offset, pl 114.8
- 7:00pm - Stephenson County ARES Net, 147.390(+0.6) offset, pl 114.8
- 7:30pm - Greater Beloit Radio Net, 147.120 (+0.6) offset, pl 123.0

Thu - 7:00pm - Winnebago Co. Skywarn Net, 147.195 (+0.6) offset, pl 114.8

Fri - 8:00pm - Friday Night Fun Net, KC9GCR, 146.610 (-0.6) offset, pl 114.8

Sat - 8:00pm - RARA Ragchew Net, 146.610 (-0.6) offset, pl 114.8
- 8:00pm - Pink Hamsters YL Net, Milwaukee 146.910 (-0.6) offset, pl 127.3
- 9:00pm - Saturday Night Fun Net Milwaukee 146.910 (-0.6) offset, pl 127.3

Mon. thru Friday - 8:00am to 9:00am - Senile Net, WD9BB, 14.287 (HF USB)

Save the Date!

Monday, March 16, 2026 (7:30pm)

Monthly Skywarn Meeting

This is a virtual meeting via google meet. If you are interested and did not receive an invite, please contact Joe, K9JPP at K9jppham@gmail.com

Sunday, March 15, 2026(8am-noon)

Tri-County (Jefferson) Hamfest RARA will have a table for our members to use. Members wishing to sell items at the RARA table should be at the event no later than 7:30am and plan to work at the table. RARA receives 15% on sales less than \$100 and 10% on items selling for greater than \$100. You will need a ticket \$8 advance / \$10 door to enter the event. Guy, KE9CZZ is coordinator and can be reached at ke9czz@gmail.com. See more information further in the Ham Rag.

Sunday, May 3, 2026 (7am –1pm)

Dekalb Hamfest

Sponsored by our friends at the Kishwaukee Amateur Radio Club
Flyer with more information is included in the Ham Rag

Sunday, May 17, 2026 (9am—noon)

Spring Swap Meet

Hononegah Forest Preserve (Indian Rest Shelter)

Coordinated by Larry Lisle K9KZT

No sponsor, No admission, No vendors, No VE testing!
Just a bunch of hams getting together to swap stuff and socialize.

Sunday, May 17, 2026 (12:30pm—?)

Hononegah Forest Preserve (Indian Rest Shelter)

RARA / GBARC Build Project—49:1 Un-Un for End-Fed HalfWave Antenna
Cost will be approximately \$20 to cover supplies—more details to come.

Sat June 27 - Sun June 28, 2026

ARRL Summer Field Day—YMCA Camp Winnebago

This annual event is always held on the **fourth Full weekend in June**. Please get it on your calendar as a lot of help is needed for a successful and fun event!

RARA members—please be sure the email address you provide is one you check regularly to make sure you receive club updates and the monthly Ham Rag.

Don't forget to let us know if there are changes to your email or phone number, ARRL membership status, or call sign.

Please email updates to Verna W9YUM at w9yum.vs@gmail.com & add me to your contacts.

Behind the Mic—Meet Your Net Control Operators

This new monthly feature will spotlight one or two of the net control voices you hear weekly or multiple times a week on both RARA and other local nets. Although they each bring their own style and the new formats are varied, they all show up week after week to make sure nets run smoothly, newcomers feel welcome, and old friends stay connected. This Month features two Net Control Operators (NCO).



This month's NCO is heard each week on the Tuesday night RARA Net providing an easy going style letting the conversation go where check-ins take it — you know him by Larry, AC9GO. Let's get started!

How long have you been a ham radio operator and what got you interested in the hobby?
I received my initial license (KN9MXF) in 1958, but started over in 1974 (WN8PKS) and then (WB8PKS) as a general class in 1976. In 2012 I became an extra class (AC9GO), so continuously over 50 years.

What do you enjoy most about serving as a net control operator?

I enjoy talking with area hams and, with the help of a number of smart people, we have been able to help a number of people with technical challenges.

What type of net do you provide NCO services for?

The RARA Tuesday Night Social and Tech net.

What's the most memorable or challenging experience you've had while running the net?

My most memorable experience was a ham who checked in during the Covid lockdown period. He told us he had been blind for a long period of his life and there was no hope for regaining his sight. Several weeks later he reported a possible cure for his blindness had been found. Some time later he shared he had found a way to afford the operation and the procedure was successful. He had a lot of people in the area praying for him and we were all glad to get his miraculous update!

Behind the Mic—Meet Your Net Control Operators

What advice would you give to someone who's thinking about becoming a net control operator for the first time?

Don't over think it. If it is a regular social net, just run it like any of the guys you hear on the local repeaters. Easy going regular conversation is a great way to start out. Once you are comfortable there, you can go on to a big net or an emergency services net that is fast paced and requires accurate copy and transmission of important information.

Beyond the nets, what are your favorite ham radio activities or modes?

I like it all! I've used and enjoyed 20meters and 440 Mhz. I've worked CW, SSB, PSK31 and FT8. Additionally, I enjoy chasing DX, working special events, hunting POTA, and rag chewing with hams here and around the world.

What piece of equipment is in your station that you couldn't live without, and why?

I really love everything we have, but the thing I love the best is our A3S three-band beam and tower that would not be there if not for the work and help of Jim KC9GOL, Dan KD9SAZ, and many others. I have a 1000 watt linear amp that I haven't used since the tower went up. One day I got a 5-9 report from Australia and gave him a 5-9 as well. I was running 100 watts and he was running 200 watts. The antennas made the difference. As the sun spot cycle changes I may have to go back to the amp, but for now it isn't needed.

Is there anything else about yourself you would like to share?

Amateur radio led me to my 10-year career in commercial radio. I programmed three stations successfully and was the number one DJ in Southwest Michigan (Kalamazoo to Benton Harbor down to Indiana). I moved here in 1980 leaving a small station in Dowagiac, Michigan to work at WRWC where, even though I was rated number two in the Rockford area, I was let go after six months because they didn't like my style. I then went to work for Barber-Colman and went back to school to graduate with honors with an A.A.S. degree in electronics from Rock Valley College. While at Barber-Colman and then Instrucon, I worked at the circuit board level in repair of plastic making machines and provided support for many of our customers worldwide. That experience has proven very helpful in my longtime hobby of ham radio.

Editor's Note:

Larry was published in the July/August 2024 edition of ARRL's "On the Air" magazine. A reprint of the article can be found in the April 2025 Ham Rag.

Rockford Monday Night Nets—Paul WB9HGZ

Blast from the Past

Monday nights in the early 70s saw a gathering of a few dedicated RARA members at the Red Cross building on Main Street. Located in the basement was W9RGU. It was a well-equipped station dedicated to service area citizens in case of disaster. A.B. Brand, W9HOA was instrumental in building the station in the early 50s and it served as a memorial to him for the many hours he put into the station.

The station consisted of a pair of Drake Twins, R4B and T4XB for HF operation, a Heath VHF-1 “Seneca” transmitter and a Drake R4 receiver with Ameco converter for six meters, a GE commercial VHF base station donated by the Rockford Police Department, converted to two meters, and a commercial Motorola VHF-Low transceiver on the Winnebago County Civil Defense frequency of 47.5 MHz. Jay Hart, K9QYY, RARA/Winnebago County CD liaison also housed his Collins station, complete with floor standing 30S1 linear amplifier at W9RGU.

The antenna farm consisted of beams for two and six meters on a forty-foot tower. Also mounted with its apex at the top of the tower was a multi band inverted vee for HF. The following nets were operated from W9RGU every Monday night:

The Rockford Ten Meter Emergency Net. Operating on 28.7 MHz each Monday, the net’s purpose was emergency preparedness, sharing club and other pertinent information and the occasional rag chew after the net’s completion. Ernie Storer, W9MAP, was the net control for all of the time that I can remember, from the early 70s into the 80s. I would occasionally run the net in Ernie’s absence, which was very infrequent.



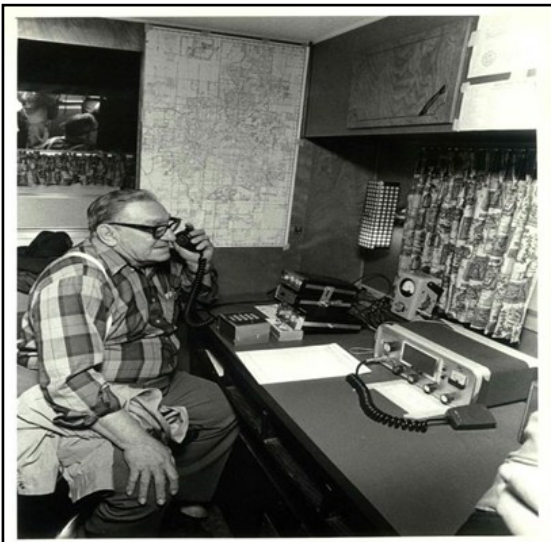
Ernie, W9MAP (left) operating the Rockford Ten Meter Emergency Net with Jay, K9QYY (center) and Dale Veline, WA9BWK (right) observing. Dale, by the way, was RARA’s Novice class instructor when I attended the class in 1971.

Rockford Monday Night Nets—Paul WB9HGZ

Winnebago County Civil Defense Post Check-In. I would generally run the Winnebago County Civil Defense Post Check-In. It was operated on 47.5 mHz FM and was a simple rundown of the various CD Posts in the county, most of them located at fire stations. Its purpose was to validate the operation of the posts' equipment and the personnel's readiness to respond. As this was not an Amateur Radio net, public service procedures and "lingo" were used. Operation was quick, with each exchange going like this, "Rockford Fire, Red Cross." The response was, "Red Cross, Rockford Fire, 10-2". "Rockford Fire, 10-2, 10-4".

Rockford Six Meter Net. Rockford had a very active nightly six meter AM net on 50.4 in the 60s, 70s and 80s. A more detailed discussion of this net will be in an upcoming issue. I operated net control from W9RGU on Mondays and from home on various other nights of the week. Most of the participants were RARA members with occasional non-member visitors, many from Beloit and Belvidere and one frequent visitor from Sharon, Wi.

Winnebago County Civil Defense Two Meter Net. Dale, WA9BWK, and occasionally Jay, K9QYY, operated the Winnebago County Civil Defense Two Meter Net from W9RGU. It was run on the county CD repeater. Before the 146.61 repeater came into existence, the Civil Defense organization had a repeater on the River Bluff Nursing Home property off of Main Street north of town. It shared a small building and tower space with the county Sheriff's Department. Civil Defense organizations were assigned various frequencies for use throughout the state. This was before repeater coordination was a "thing" and the repeater used the frequency pair of 146.82/147.30.



Ernie, W9MAP, was the central figure and the driving force holding the Monday night net operations together at W9RGU. He was also very active in the county Civil Defense organization and RARA. As the only photo that I could find of him operating the Ten Meter Net was with his back to the camera, I felt it appropriate to include this picture of Ernie operating from the County Civil Defense communication trailer during an emergency operation.

73,
Paul, WB9HGZ

Spring in Northern Illinois—Greg KE9OET



Spring in Northern Illinois brings warmer temperatures, longer days, and the welcome return of green landscapes.

However, across the Midwest, especially here in the Rockford area, spring also means rapidly changing weather. From strong thunderstorms and hail to tornadoes and flash flooding, being prepared is part of Midwest living.

Know the Seasonal Risks

In Northern Illinois, spring weather can shift quickly as warm, moist air from the south collides with lingering cold air. This setup can produce:

- ⇒ Severe thunderstorms
- ⇒ Large hail
- ⇒ Damaging straight-line winds
- ⇒ Tornadoes
- ⇒ Heavy rainfall and flooding

Communities in and around Rockford often see fast-moving storm systems that develop with little warning.

Have Multiple Ways to Receive Warnings

Outdoor sirens are designed to warn people who are outside — not inside your home. Every household should have:

- ⇒ A NOAA Weather Radio
- ⇒ Wireless Emergency Alerts enabled on smartphones
- ⇒ Local weather apps with notifications turned on

For official forecasts and warnings, monitor the National Weather Service, particularly the National Weather Service Chicago office, which serves Northern Illinois.

Identify Your Safe Place

Before storm season peaks, determine the safest location in your home:

- ⇒ Basement (best option)
- ⇒ Interior room on the lowest floor
- ⇒ Away from windows and exterior walls
- ⇒ If you live in a mobile home, plan ahead for a sturdier shelter location nearby.

Spring in Northern Illinois—Greg KE9OET

Prepare an Emergency Kit

- ⇒ Keep a simple storm-ready kit that includes:
- ⇒ Flashlights and extra batteries
- ⇒ Phone chargers or power banks
- ⇒ Bottled water
- ⇒ Basic first aid supplies
- ⇒ Sturdy shoes and gloves

After storms pass, hazards like downed power lines, debris, and flooded roadways can pose serious risks.

Practice Smart Midwest Habits

- ⇒ Never drive through flooded roads — “Turn Around, Don’t Drown.”
- ⇒ Secure outdoor furniture and loose items.
- ⇒ Review family communication plans.
- ⇒ Check sump pumps and clear storm drains.
- ⇒ Stay Weather Aware

Spring storms can develop quickly in Northern Illinois. Paying attention to forecasts, understanding warning terminology (Watch vs. Warning), and acting quickly when alerts are issued can make all the difference.

Midwest spring is beautiful — but it demands respect. A little preparation now ensures you and your family can safely enjoy everything the season has to offer.

SKYWARN
WINNEBAGO CO

Winnebago County SKYWARN Monthly Meeting

Be Ready. Be Informed. Help Protect Our Community.

Join the Winnebago County SKYWARN team for our monthly meeting focused on severe weather awareness, storm spotting, and community preparedness.

Every 3rd Monday
7:30 PM

March 16th, 2026 via Google Meet

Must be on E-MAIL list to receive invite - Join below...

For more information, please email: WinnebagoCoSKYWARN@gmail.com

From the Workbench by Larry AC9GO



Spring is almost here, and with it comes outside projects like antennas which sometimes requires putting a wire up in a tree high enough to put out a good signal. There are some very ingenious ways to get the cord up and to fall back down so that you can pull a wire antenna up to a reasonable height. Among the ideas have been things like a “bow and arrow”, a “sling shot”, and a “potato cannon” which turns out to be really dangerous when the propellant in the plastic tube is too much for the plastic, and produces a shall we say, BIG BOOM that will possible create bodily harm or at the very least scare the whatever out of all involved, and make the neighbors wonder if they are in the wrong neighborhood. For years I wanted to get a potato cannon but decided it was just too risky although I must admit it sounded exciting.

A couple of years ago, I found a solution that is relatively safe and doesn't make noise which is a good thing in most neighborhoods - an arborist's rope and throw-weight. The weight is designed with a shape that is easy to throw and it falls through the tree limbs after it goes over a branch. At that point all you have to do is tie your line to the antenna and pull it up to the height you want. You then take the weight off and hook it to a spring and the tree in such a way that it is secure but not tied to a branch that will stretch it or break it in the wind. Proceed with the other end and do the same thing all over and you will have a Dipole, or end fed or whatever up and at a good height. To understand this better, watch the way trees whip back and forth when the wind is fast and gusting. Basically, if you hook directly to the tree limb when it starts whipping back and forth it will either break or stretch your antenna. If it breaks, it's useless. If it stretches, it is no longer in tune.

A couple of other things to think about. First, put a long door spring on one or both ends to keep the trees from stretching or breaking the wire and be sure to put a drip loop on the coax or wires before going into the house. If you fail to put a drip loop in, the coax will run water into your transceiver or amplifier which is never a great idea, especially in a storm. Be sure to use good coax or try twin lead and an antenna tuner. Yes, I said twin lead. It turns out that twin lead is better than most coax. I'm not talking about the twin lead that goes to a TV antenna. This is wider and heavier duty, and less expensive than coax however you must have a tuner to match the transceiver.

In closing, the Wisconsin QSO party is Sunday March 15, the same day as the Jefferson Ham Fest, March 15, 2026. The Hamfest runs from 8am to noon, and the QSO party is from 1 pm to 8 pm and you can work CW, Phone and Digital (RTTY, PSK, Olivia, Feld-Hell) modes. Wisconsin stations exchange their county. Non-Wisconsin stations exchange their state, province, or country. Verna W9YUM and I are looking forward to working the QSO party with the Greater Beloit Amateur Radio Club (GBARC) as a group after we return from the Jefferson Hamfest.

Hacking a Generic MMDVM DM Hotspot by KD9MAP

A while back, I obtained a Pi-Star MMDVM duplex hotspot for a very good price. Even though I'm not interested in DMR operation or in obtaining a DMR HT, the RPi 3B and MMDVM hat combo were valuable to me for other experimentation. This week, I hacked the hat's 132X64 OLED display so that I could repurpose it for other custom tasks, the first being a space weather status display.

The generic MMDVM hat contains a STM32 MCU, two ADF7021 RF xcvr chips, and an SH1106 OLED. I set up the RPi 3B with the current Raspberry Pi OS Trixie distribution. I used free Grok and Gemini AI chatbots to learn how to access the OLED, and how to download current space weather condition XML data from the internet. My code displays the space weather measurements I find most useful for HF DXing (SFI, Kp, A, SWS, SN, and Bz,) and updates the display once per hour.

If anybody wants a copy of my Python code for doing that, email me; I'm good on qrz.com! It's too long to post in this article.

For my next hack, I think I'm going to try to access the onboard RF xcvrs and see if I can do some short-haul FSK data radio comms with them. Maybe I'll try to do loopback RF comms with this single hat, and/or perhaps I'll get another MMDVM hat (they sell for around \$30) and try to get them to talk to each other. This is a big challenge, but I can make good use of the open source MMDVM software found online, and the AI chatbots, to learn how to do it.



Hacking a Generic MMDVM DM Hotspot by KD9MAP

GLOSSARY:

MMDVM hotspot: Digital voice modem that bridges RF phone comms from DMR HTs to the internet.

Hat: A PCB peripheral designed to sit on top of a Raspberry Pi computer.

RPi: Raspberry Pi, a line of inexpensive compact single-board computers with powerful hardware interfacing capabilities. The 3B is an old model, with 1GB RAM and WiFi.

OLED: An inexpensive chip that provides a small screen display for little computers.

Trixie: The Debian-derived Linux operating system currently recommended for the RPi.

HFP: My acronym for HF Propagation Conditions. HF comms are challenged by varying ionospheric phenomena, which are driven in part by space weather. 'Good' HFP means you get a lot of successful skip contacts at greater distances with less busted QSOs and less need for repeat sending. 'Bad' HFP means nobody hears each other well enough to make many successful skip contacts, with many contacts busted by QRN, QSB, and weak or non-existent skip.

SFI: Solar Flux Index, an (hourly?) measure of the sun's rage, represented by its RF signal strength at 10.7cm. Higher is usually better for HFP.

SN: Sunspot number, cooked up by geeks who stare at the sun all day long, updated hourly(?) Higher is usually better for HFP, and I find that when *both* SFI and SN are high *together*, that usually augurs *very well* for HFP.

Kp: A single number mashed up from several magnetometer station observations around the world, updated every three hours, to represent the Earth's current overall magnetospheric dyspepsia. Lower is usually better for HFP.

A: Like Kp, but finer-grained, and calculated only once daily. Lower is usually better for HFP.

SWS: Solar wind speed. The sun pummels us with megatons of highly energized plasma at scary speeds. Lower is usually better for HFP.

Bz: The net magnetic field strength of the sun's plasma onslaught as measured on the Z axis, i.e., our polar axis. Negative is usually bad for HFP, positive better.

Hacking a Generic MMDVM DM Hotspot by KD9MAP

ADF7021: An inexpensive chip containing a low power VHF FSK xcvr. It appears to me to have very interesting and powerful short-haul RF comms functionality for RF experimenters to tinker with.

STM32 MCU: A line of computer (microcontroller) chips that get used in lots of projects these days. The MCU on the MMDVM hat acts as a semi-independent coprocessor for operating the ADF7021 chips, so that the RPi CPU is not burdened by the busy-dizzy tasks in those lower layers of comms function.

XML: A language standard for communicating data and its description (its so-called metadata) among computers. It's so simple, even human beings can usually read it!

REFERENCE LINKS

MMDVM: <https://mmdvm.com/>

ADF7021: <https://www.analog.com/media/en/technical-documentation/data-sheets/ADF7021.pdf>

RPi: <https://www.raspberrypi.com/>

STM32: https://www.st.com/content/st_com/en.html

73 de KD9MAP

From Freeport Illinois:

The Friday Night Fun Net with Jimmy Dorsey, KC9GCR

Every Friday at 8PM Central Time
W9AXD Repeater 146.610 Rockford Illinois

Live Streamed on the
Kerry Tatlow YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@ktatlow>

Starved Rock Country Marathon—May 9, 2026

We are looking for RARA members and friends interested in working this event. If you are interested, please reach out to Scott (815-790-9690) or at kb9vrw@gmail.com. Matt W3MBX and Verna W9YUM worked the marathon last year and have signed up for this year—why not join them?

In anticipation of providing amateur radio communications at the Starved Rock Country Marathon on Saturday May 9, 2026, we have come up with what we think is a novel idea. We'd like to introduce Public Service Event communications to those that may have never participated in something of this nature previously. What we'd like to do is get groups or clubs to cover an assigned rest/aid station with members from their own area. This is a low stress event, as few as two amateurs could cover an assignment but why not bring a carload and get those new people involved? The race generally starts at about 07:00 a.m. and is wrapped up around 15:00 (though early stations may close before noon). The start/finish line is in Ottawa, IL and the course follows the Illinois River into and through Starved Rock State Park. HT's can handle some of the communications, but a mobile rig and an external antenna is recommended but 30' masts certainly are not needed. Please consider signing up as a club to cover one of the aid stations. (Depending upon response, an amateur that has worked this event in the past will be assigned at your station with you).

Registration [Link](#)

Hope to see you on the registration list. There will be communications and training taking place in advance, but don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. Parking will not be an issue at the assignments and Ottawa offers many restaurants and coffee shops for your "After Event" refreshments. The map below is the historical route used but subject to fine tuning. Full marathon starts/ends in Ottawa while the 1/2 starts in Starved Rock State Park and finishes in Ottawa. Please talk this up at your breakfasts and meetings. Spring will be in the air!

Map below is from previous years, but route will be similar or the same.



Hamfest, Contest and DX Links

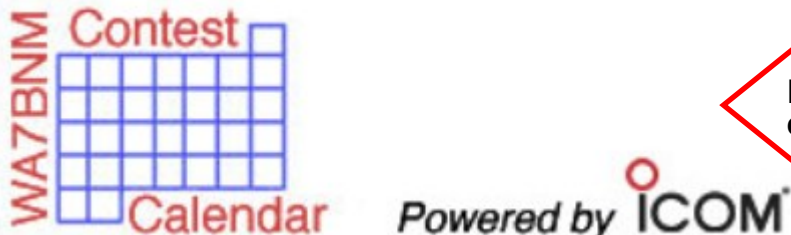
hamfests and Swapfests in Northern IL, Northwest IN, and Southern WI **Click the link**



Thanks to K9MSG, Kirk Musselman— www.amateurradioevents.com or use link above

No more struggling to find local foxhunts, Hamfests, public service/volunteer events and more. **Over 50 events** are all in one place including maps, descriptions, contact links, costs, and more. And, we just added a *Guide for Amateur Radio Volunteers* and a list of worldwide *Amateur Radio History Events* which you can join remotely.

The site will keep updating and expanding to carry more types of events (training, POTA, etc.) so bookmark the site and join us as we bring event organizers and amateur radio operators together to grow the amateur radio community. Please use the contact page to share suggestions, updates, additions, or comments.

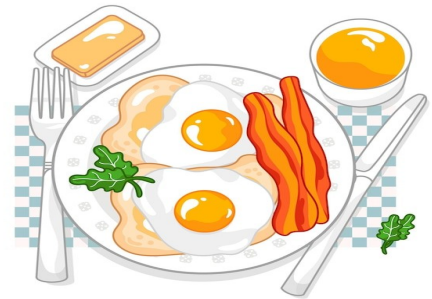


Link to the **WA7BNM Contest Calendar** or go to www.contestcalendar.com

Want to see what's new in the world of DX? Select the link below and make sure you check out the weekly bulletins or go to www.dxworld.net



Local Ham Breakfasts



WEEKLY FRIDAY MORNING BREAKFAST

Meets every Friday morning from 7:30 am until about 9:00 am.

We order breakfast at 8:00 am.

An informal gathering of ham folks, no affiliations necessary, good food and good company.

Everyone is welcome to attend.

“The Spring Garden Family Restaurant”

4820 N. 2nd Street

Loves Park, IL 61111

MONTHLY SATURDAY MORNING BREAKFAST

The Greater Beloit Amateur Radio Club (GBARC) meets monthly on the 2nd Saturday of the month at 8:00 a.m.

Denny’s Restaurant


Flying J Truck Stop (IL 75 & 190/39)

All are welcome to join the group for food and lot’s of “ham” talk.



The RARA Store—Time for Spring Items!

The RARA Store has been very well received. Thanks to all of you purchasing shirts, hats, mugs, and more. RARA receives a commission on each purchase made, what better way to promote RARA and your enthusiasm for amateur radio, all while supporting your club and local business!

To access the store, scan the QR-code below or select this link  [SHOP RARA STORE](https://stores.inksoft.com/rara)

[HTTPS://STORES.INKSOFT.COM/RARA](https://stores.inksoft.com/rara)



**ORDER YOUR
ROCKFORD
AMATEUR RADIO
ASSOCIATION
GEAR TODAY!**



**SCAN
HERE
TO SHOP
NOW**

VIEW MORE PRODUCTS ONLINE

DeKalb Hamfest



The DeKalb Hamfest



Sponsored by the Kishwaukee Amateur Radio Club
 Sunday...May 3, 2026... Front Gate 7 am to 1:00 pm
 Vendor/Tailgate Setup—Saturday 1 PM to 9 PM
 and Sunday 6 AM to 8 AM via Back Gate
 \$8.00 Advance Ticket (Double-Stub—See Below)
 \$10.00 Adm at the gate -No Large Bills (Single Stub).

Overnight Camping on Fairgrounds \$25 per night—
 Includes Electric and Sewer

Rain or Shine
 2 Lg Unheated Bldgs
 3 Cash Prizes
 Prize Drawings Every
 Half Hour

Free Outside Tailgating
 No VE Testing
Chairs not provided
No Valet Parking
You Unload/Re-Load
Carts not Provided

Food Vendor: Hyvee
Fairground Regulations
Prohibit Vehicles in
buildings

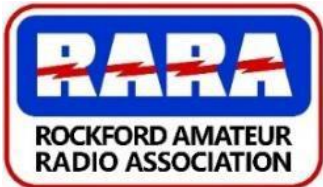


Always the First Sunday in May. May 3, 2026
Sandwich Fairgrounds, Sandwich, IL
(Just North of RT. 34 Intersection of SUYDAM and GLETTY Roads)
TALK-IN: KARC Repeater 146.730 pl=100 (-) or 146.52 Simplex
****** ATTENDEES USE MAIN GATE ONLY ******

????????????? Questions ??????????????
Phone: Bob Yurs—W9ICU—Hamfest Chairman at 815-757-3219
Or e-mail bob@w9icu.us
KARC Hamfest Webpage / Hotel Info: www.karc-club.org

Return to: KARC, PO Box 371, DeKalb, IL 60115
Deadline: April 20, 2026 MUST INCLUDE SASE FOR ADVANCE TICKET SALES

Advance Tickets will not be for sale on site
 _____ **ADVANCE TICKETS @ \$8 each (Dual Stubs)**
 _____ **INSIDE TABLES @ \$10 each (FREE TAILGATING)**
 _____ **Total...Please make checks payable to KARC**
 _____ **Telephone Number** _____ **e-mail address**
 _____ **Call Sign**



website: w9axd.org
email: w9axdrara@gmail.com

RARA Membership* Form

Dues are \$25.00

*This is an editable PDF Form. Fill in the information with your keyboard,
then save the PDF, and then attach it to an email to: w9axdrara@gmail.com*

For Internet payment: To use PayPal, click on the link below. After clicking "Send" and then logging in, enter \$25.00 in the "Dollar Amount", and click "Send" to complete your payment to RARA.

Click here for the PayPal link 

Mail in information: Fill out all the information on the form and mail it with \$25.00 to the following address:

Rockford Amateur Radio Association
P.O. Box 8465
Rockford, IL 61126

Make your check payable to: Rockford Amateur Radio Association

Thank you for your support!

Date: _____ (mm/dd/yyyy) New Membership Renewal
Name: _____ Callsign: _____ License Class: _____
Street Address: _____ City: _____
State: _____ ZIP: _____ E-mail Address: _____
Phone - Main: _____ Alternate: _____

Can we release your e-mail and phone number to members only? Yes No

Are you a member of the ARRL (American Radio Relay League)? Yes No

(check all boxes that apply to the following questions)

What type of equipment do you own? Base Mobile Handheld

What band capabilities do you have? HF VHF UHF

What are your favorite operating modes? Voice CW PSK31 FT4/FT8 SSTV

What club activities can you help with? Field Day Hamfest Special Event

Can you operate under emergency power? Yes No

How did you hear about RARA? Other Member Internet Friend Listening on air

I would like to learn more about: Weather Spotting & Skywarn POTA Other (list below)

Other Comments:

***Membership is based on approval of the RARA Board. The membership fee will be returned if you are not approved.**