

Newcomers and Elmers Net: Partnering Up in Amateur Radio

10-11-15 Robert AK3Q

This might seem like a strange topic, but I think it is an important one. Too often we go it alone, or nearly so, when we don't need to; amateur radio is a hobby all about community and connecting with others.

- we can have friends on the air, hundreds if not thousands of miles away, and we can have radio friends right here where we live
- there are a lot of hams who live in remote areas who would love to be able to get together with other hams in the area, but there aren't any.
- we have hundreds of hams right here in the greater Cincinnati area, with a number of clubs and activities we often take for granted
- and perhaps best of all, all of these hams around here means there is probably not a single aspect of the hobby which someone, somewhere isn't doing; there are lots of opportunities to learn from people with experience
- and listen – we all need elmers no matter how long we have been in the hobby or how much we know – nobody knows it all
- Newbies, don't be afraid to ask for help, and Elmers, be quick to volunteer if you sense a need or even if you don't; just letting people know what you can help others with will make it easier for someone to ask you for help

Advantages of having a radio buddy

- shared interests
- motivation in the form of challenges, competition, or just shared excitement
- someone to brag to
- someone to bounce ideas off of
- someone to compare notes/experiences/goals
- someone to learn from/mutual education
- someone to share experiences with such as road trips, Hamvention trips, local/DXpeditions
- someone to help with antennas, equipment, testing and troubleshooting
- attend meetings together, field day, have lunch/dinner/coffee
- study buddy for upgrades, learning code or digital modes
- face time; over the air is good, but face time is important too; and of course emails and texts and phone calls get thrown into the mix
- find friends who are interested in the same areas of the radio hobby you are interested in, as well as those who may be good at something you want to learn
- finding people who like what you like gives you an instant comradery
- with a radio buddy you get to talk radio/tech/geek with someone who knows or wants to know what you're talking about
- small groups can form between those with common interests

-- while big meetings are great, so are small get-togethers at each other's houses or at a local food trough; e.g. the gang that meets each Thursday at Wendys

-- friends can keep us motivated, help us out of a jam, and just make the hobby more fun

-- Nathan KA3MTT and I share satellite info and digital mode info back and forth; Gary KB8MYC and I talking airplane monitoring; Rod KJ4IAM and I talk scanning and Pirate Radio; Jim WB4CTX and I talk DXing; John KD8VCN and I talk SDR stuff

-- one of the things you can do is plan a radio topic or adventure; bring radios along and chase DX, listen to Shortwave radio; chase AM DX stations and compare radios, antennas, techniques

-- Work a contest together; switch back and forth between logging and contacting; or work a contest or special event at your own locations but keep in touch through the event and spur each other on

-- if you are like me you like to share cool things you learn or hear about with others; radio buddies can keep each other up to date with cool things in the hobby

-- I think the radio hobby suffers if we don't have people to share it with; can you be a loner in the hobby, of course; but why do that when there are other people in the hobby who already have a common denominator with you

-- share equipment; you probably know someone who would like to see your shack and operate on it, or maybe you would like to operate on a band or portion of the band where you either do not have privileges or the right equipment; enter a friend or two who can help

-- and of course you might have the chance to experience new radios or other ham gear, which might in turn inspire you to get some additional gear for your shack

-- a friend of mine and Elmer to me who passed away earlier this year, Mike KB4VKS always encouraged me and others to come over to his house and operate his equipment – he had a really nice station with a HF beam up on a tower as well as a lot of other antennas

-- it was a great opportunity for me since I will never have a tower here!

- I guarantee you will learn more about the hobby in community that you will alone

-- the more friends you can make in the hobby the more you will learn, because nobody has all the answers or all the experience

-- plus, you are able to contribute far more than you know even if you are new to the hobby; new folks bring a breath of fresh air and excitement to the hobby, and both are contagious

-- join some forums or groups and share what is going on for you in the hobby, e.g. the NewcomersElmers group on Yahoo; email lists with clubs you are involved in;

-- frankly I am amazed I don't see more email posts on the club reflectors about interesting experiences;
-- and if you see something like that from someone else, take a moment and congratulate them or acknowledge their contribution -- it only takes a moment or two to drop someone a note over email

Side Benefits

-- Good friends
-- families may get to know one another
-- likely to find other areas of common interest