

Club Station

Teaming Up for Radio Merit Badges

Amateur radio clubs are ideally suited to assist Scouts in earning their Radio Merit Badges. Not only do they have a wealth of knowledge among their members, but clubs can also tap local resources to help make their efforts successful. This month, John O'Brien, K3LO, describes how his club did it, not just once, but 2 years in a row.

The Montgomery Amateur Radio Club (MARC), in Montgomery County, Maryland, is an ARRL Special Service Club that was founded in September 1966. MARC's Education Committee Chairman, David Bern, W2LNX, conducts regularly scheduled licensing classes and licensing examinations for which he is always on the lookout for a venue.

David discovered the Rockville Science Center, a nonprofit organization located in Rockville, Maryland, which provides programs and conducts special events. Howard Lichtman, KC3LUE, the Program Coordinator for the Rockville Science Center, graciously made the interactive space available to David for MARC's licensing classes and examinations.

During his conversations with Howard, David learned that there was a demand for the Scouting America Radio Merit Badge, which has four options: Amateur Radio, Broadcasting, Shortwave Listening, and

Amateur Radio Direction Finding. All options require the Scout to have knowledge of several radio-related subjects. All options also require an on-site visit to an actual radio installation, such as an amateur radio station, a broadcast station, or a public safety communications center. The amateur radio option requires the Scout to make an on-air contact.

David began planning a Radio Merit Badge program to be conducted during MARC's 2023 ARRL Field Day operation. This would allow a Scout to complete all of the requirements for the Radio Merit Badge on the same day at one location.

Joint Field Days

For the past 11 years, MARC has partnered with the Damascus Emergency Communications Team (DECT) to conduct joint ARRL Field Day operations. DECT is operated by the Damascus Volunteer Fire Department and provides emergency communications support for the department. The MARC/DECT Field Day operation takes place at the Damascus Volunteer Fire Department Activities Center in Damascus, Maryland.

David's plan involved covering the knowledge requirements with a PowerPoint presentation prepared by Gary Wilson, K2GW, of the K2BSA Amateur Radio Association. This presentation is available online at

<https://k2bsa.net/radio-merit-badge-2/>. The requirements for visits to a radio installation and on-air contacts would be satisfied by a visit to one of the MARC or DECT Field Day stations.

Howard and the Rockville Science Center were publicizing the Radio Merit Badge program and accepting registrations. Howard also made arrangements for adult leaders from the Seneca District of Scouting America to provide supervision and oversight.



David Bern, W2LNX, supervises Scouts Pierce and Weston Pollard as they make contacts.



David Bern, W2LNX (left), and Howard Lichtman, KC3LUE, set up a Field Day station for Scout contacts.

The inaugural Radio Merit Badge program took place on June 24, 2023, at the MARC/DECT Field Day site. Forty-two Scouts attended. Forty Scouts completed all requirements for the Radio Merit Badge at the 2023 MARC/DECT Field Day. The other Scouts completed all requirements shortly thereafter.

ARRL Field Day 2024 and Beyond

Based upon the success of the 2023 program, and upon learning that there was a continuing demand for the Radio Merit Badge, MARC and DECT decided to repeat the Radio Merit Badge program at the 2024 MARC/DECT Field Day operation.

The Alfred E. Friend, Jr., W4CF, Educational Activities Fund, which is administered by the ARRL Foundation, generously awarded a grant to cover the costs of instructional materials for the Radio Merit Badge program. The grant enabled John to compose a comprehensive handout that covered all the knowledge requirements for the Radio Merit Badge and to have it commercially printed.

The Radio Merit Badge program was held on June 22, 2024, at the MARC/DECT Field Day site at the Damascus Volunteer Fire Department Activities Center. As the Scouts arrived, they were greeted by MARC members and were given a double-pocket folder with the handout and an amateur radio station log sheet inside. Sixty Scouts showed up. Adult leaders from the

Seneca District were there to provide supervision and oversight.

After lunch, the Scouts went to one of the Field Day stations. MARC or DECT members explained how the stations worked and mentored the Scouts as they made their contacts.

MARC and DECT members who were at the Field Day site brought handheld transceivers for the Scouts to use. Members who were not at the Field Day site monitored one VHF-FM and two UHF-FM repeaters for contacts with the Scouts.

Fifty-eight Scouts completed all requirements for the Radio Merit Badge at the 2024 MARC/DECT Field Day. The other two Scouts arranged to complete the remaining requirements at the Rockville Science Center.

MARC and DECT will repeat the Radio Merit Badge program at the 2025 MARC/DECT Field Day on Saturday, June 28, 2025.

All photos provided by the author.

ARRL Special Service Clubs

ARRL offers the Special Service Club (SSC) program for clubs that demonstrate that they're working to improve the amateur radio community by completing special projects, holding license classes, and working with local groups on events, among other activities. Visit www.arrl.org/ssc-application for more information about this program. Below is a list of new and renewing SSCs as of December 30, 2024.



Renewing SSCs

Cuyahoga Falls ARC, W8VPV
Keystone VHF Club, W3HZU

Cuyahoga Falls, OH
York, PA

Sign Up for ARRL Club News

Read the monthly *ARRL Club News* e-newsletter to find out more about what clubs are doing to advance amateur radio in their communities and within the hobby. To opt in to monthly email delivery of *ARRL Club News*, log in to www.arrl.org and select "E-Newsletters and Notifications" on your account web page.