

Have you heard? (ex-President's Message) **By Ron Adcock/KK4YCW**

"TVARC Needs to Become More Proactive to Get New Hams On-the-Air BEFORE They Lose Interest"

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In my last column, way back in October, I confessed that though I have had a General amateur radio license for a couple of years, I still haven't really been a full participant in the hobby. Our club's weekly Rag Chew Net and EchoLink® are virtually my only activities. I admire people like our esteemed President Earle Hancock, KM4ISN. He is also relatively new to ham radio. But he jumped in with both feet, and is HF active. Many of us have not venture that far.

Since that last column I have gotten a couple of calls from other license holders who's experience is similar to mine. They were hoping for some help in becoming a "real" ham.

I got another call from one of our members who is very active, knowledgeable, and experienced in working the HF bands. He has volunteered to help me choose and set up an HF station. Others have also been identified who may be willing to help me with a rig and antenna that will get me beyond The Villages. I hope that after the New Year I can take them up on their kind offers.

Perhaps one down, but how many more to go?

In my opinion, The Villages Amateur Radio Club (TVARC) needs to be more proactive in getting new hams on the air before they lose interest. Here are some possibilities, and I'm sure there are others.

First, I believe that a club station would attract newbies. Here they could sit down with the "old heads" and begin to learn how to make contacts with others hams in distant locations. They could learn how to use HF equipment and begin to identify what equipment they would need if they were to set up a station in a home shack. They would also get to know more experienced hams who could help them with choosing an antenna that would not pose a major problem in The Villages. Plus, and I think this is important, they would begin to make new friends in the club.

Next, I think there would be value in putting together a list of experienced members who would be willing to be an "Elmer" (mentor) to a newly licensed club member. A volunteer could keep the list up to date and assign an Elmer to the newly licensed member. Let's not wait for someone to ask for help. If we already have a list of willing Elmers the assignment can be made as soon as the license is issued.

Another possibility for helping new hams might be the organization of small groups to deal with the issues newly licensed persons will be facing. Not a new club. Just a small group within TVARC. A person might be a member of that group only so long as they felt the need for it. More experienced hams could be invited to help with specific issues.

The more that the club can do to help the newly licensed to get on the air, the stronger the club will be. Take a look at those who are currently providing TVARC with leadership – the elected officers, the special events chairpersons, others who are chairing committees. Virtually all are active on the HF bands, and have been for some time. Helping the newly licensed to become active hams is the best way to build a pool of leadership.

It is also important to remember that the stronger our leadership and the more active our membership, the more valuable we will be to our community.

And maybe most important, those who are really active on the HF bands seem to be having the most fun!

(When I write of the “newly licensed” I am also referring to those of us who have hardly used the license we may have had for some years.)

That’s it for this month.

73,

Ron KK4YCW

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