

Second Century



ARRL Year of the Volunteers

We all learned some form of being a volunteer when we were kids. Your parents may have taught you to hold the door for someone, or to help carry a bag for a stranger at the grocery store. Regardless of the lesson, the message was clear: there will be times you can and should volunteer to help someone, without expectation of reward or recognition. And so it goes. We carry on through life evolving these early life lessons to varying degrees through being a volunteer.

The cliché “It takes a village” has been true for ARRL since its inception. Much of the heavy lifting is done by member-volunteers who spend countless hours helping ARRL to achieve its mission of promoting and protecting amateur radio. Today there are a remarkable number of people who have stepped forward to fill important roles. As just one example, there are nearly 30,000 ARRL Volunteer Examiners who selflessly give of their time to coordinate testing sessions — morning or night, weekday or weekend — in pursuit of helping others fulfill the dream of earning an amateur radio license.

With such a large number of VEs and more than 7,000 other volunteers filling roles within ARRL, why the focus on volunteering? Why now? The bad news is that amateur radio is in a leadership crisis. Many of the leaders in ARRL positions and in other ham radio organizations, including clubs from small to large, are deciding, for whatever reason, that perhaps they’ve done it for too long and it is time for someone else to pick up the baton and run forward. Creating leaders at those levels has become critical, and so with that, I ask you to consider reaching one rung higher.

In 2023, we will be turning our focus to volunteers at all levels. How do we ensure that, for example, there are Field Organization appointees with the skills and experience to step up into a Section Manager leadership position? How do we create and deliver training programs for those who want to explore volunteer opportunities across amateur radio? What tools do we have that clubs can use to become larger and more resilient, bringing in new members with an energy and enthusiasm for running the programs, editing the newsletter, or growing hamfest revenue? And lastly, how do we celebrate our volunteers all year long in a way that is consistent and fun for everyone?

Yes, 2023 will be a busy year! We will be kicking right off with our Volunteers On the Air operating event! Shamelessly stealing from the fun that was had during the 2014 ARRL Centennial, we’ll make chasing volunteers for their various point levels exciting, while giving them the chance to operate and draw a crowd. We’ll also be getting W1AW stations on from all the call areas again. I had a great time helping my friend John Crovelli, W2GD, who needed help with W1AW/2 operators, by spending a weekend on 10-meter CW to help all the chasers with their scores! You’ll need to be using Logbook of The World to play, so make sure your account is ready to go — and if it’s not, we can help you!

Another aspect of volunteerism is getting people active on the air. I have seen a persistent and uniform complaint hanging out there in social media: “Why are only 160,000 hams ARRL members? Where are the other 600,000 licensees?” The truth of the matter is that they either aren’t around any more, have left the hobby, never really were in the hobby, or simply aren’t active. That’s where every one of us can play a role. ARRL is nothing without members who are engaged with the hobby. I’ll do my job, but I need your help to get more licensees active, involved, and on the air.

“If not me, then who?” Ask yourself that question. Look around. Find your space. Bring your talents to life by sharing them with others. Local club? ARES group? Contest club? ARRL Field Organization? There are opportunities literally everywhere. All year we’ll be looking to get more people radio active, and I’ll see more of you on the air in VOTA! Happy New Year.




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