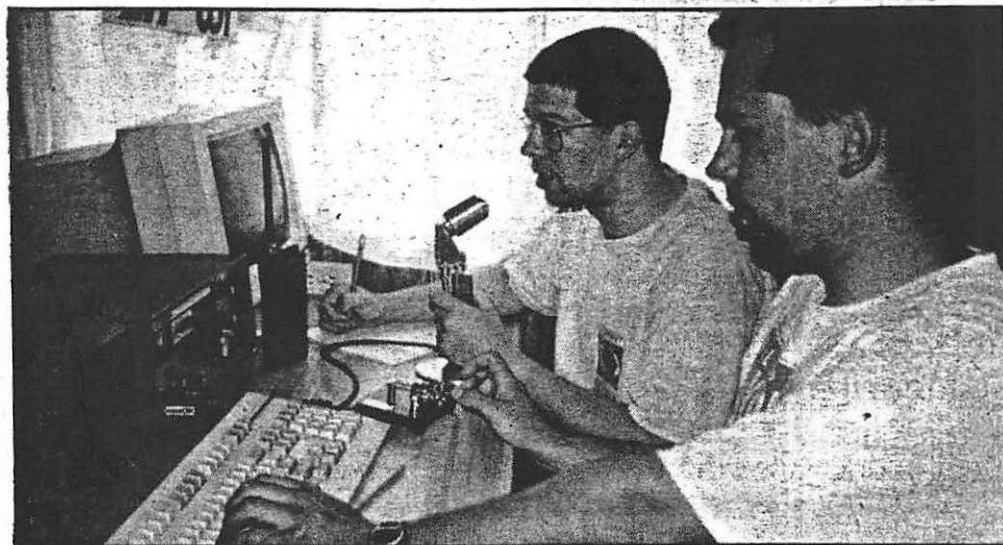


## LOCAL/STATE



Chad Stiles, left, and Joe Tenor, members of the Green Bay Mike and Key Club, participate Sunday in the annual Field Day to practice emergency communication skills.

N-C photo—Nick Wood

# They ham it up

## Local amateur radio junkies reach out

■ Local amateur radio operators participated in a North American emergency preparedness event at the Brown County Fairgrounds

By Nick Wood  
News-Chronicle Reporter

If a natural disaster such as a tornado or a fire were ever to knock out power and telephone lines in the area, the responsibility for communicating with rescue workers or government officials would fall on the shoulders of the area's licensed amateur radio operators.

Armed with self-contained communications equipment that includes portable antennas, power generators and a variety of different radios, the amateurs, or hams, make up a loosely organized communications network that spans the entire globe.

Over the weekend, thousands of

hams throughout North America powered up their radios to participate in the American Radio Relay League's annual Field Day.

In addition to being a competition to see which group can make the most contacts in a 24-hour period, Field Day is also a trial run to hone emergency communication skills.

Participating in this year's event were about 35 hams from the Green Bay Mike and Key Club.

Operating from a makeshift base at the Brown County Fairgrounds, the Green Bay club made contact with nearly 700 other hams from as far away as Alaska, Mexico and Hawaii.

Keith Summers, secretary of the Green Bay club, said the goal of the event is to contact as many different operators as possible.

Although it's impossible to predict exactly where a signal sent from the fairgrounds would land, a pair of directional antennas allowed club members to roughly aim their signal in order to keep finding fresh

contacts.

"You can aim (the antenna) at a section of the country and kind of predict where your (signal) is going to land. If you run into people you contacted before, you just turn the antenna and you'll run into a whole new set of people," Summers said.

Had there been an actual emergency over the weekend, the local hams would have been all business.

As is was, however, the focus of Field Day was split between practicing and socializing.

While Patty Naimon and Pat Schwartz sat in a camper translating electronic beeps from Arkansas into the call letters of yet another contact, other members of the club sat on lawn chairs in the shade of a large oak tree waiting for steaks to thaw and charcoal to burn white.

Joe Tenor, who along with Bob Duescher organized the event, said ham radio is one of the few hobbies that can be applied to real-world situations in times of need.