

Ham radio operators show their stuff at Frances Slocum State Park - Times Leader

By Eileen Godin Times Leader Correspondent • timesleader.com

SHAVERTOWN — Showing off their technical savvy while informing the public about amateur radio, the Murgas Amateur Radio Club, set up a temporary transmitting site Saturday and Sunday at Frances Slocum State Park.

Looking a bit like an emergency headquarters, the Murgas Amateur Radio Club operated off generators, three transmitters and long spidery [antennas](#), allowing them to reach out and locate other amateur radio operators around the nation and into Canada.

The weekend event, called Field Day, is part of Amateur Radio Week.

[Ham radio](#) operators use “very low frequencies compared to FM and AM signals, said Rob Rygen, member of Murgas Amateur Radio Club.

Since amateur radio does not require internet, cellphone towers or any other [infrastructure](#), they can play a critical role in relaying information during an emergency crisis. Using Morse code, voice or digital code, operators can transmit a variety of information, including pictures, said Rygen.

Murgas Amateur Radio Club member Don Curtis, of Dallas, recalled using his amateur radio skills to aide during the 1972 Agnes flood.

Curtis said he and his wife, Jan, were in from Quakertown visiting her mother who lived on East Center Hill Road in Shavertown at the time.

“We operated for two weeks,” Curtis said. “We went to the high school and got the names and health information on survivors and transmitted it out.”

Holding up his cellphone, Marty O’Maila, a club member from Plains Township, said on 9/11 cellphone

signals were jammed and several cellphone towers went down with the World [Trade Center](#). Ham radio stepped in to fill a communication need, he said.

Nestled along the tree line behind Pavilion 2 at Francis Slocum State Park, five stations in tents, trailers and campers housed the radio [operations](#). Beeping of Morse code, raised curiosity of passersby. Rick Rinehimer, a club member from Glen Lyon, said about four people stopped in “to see what was going on” on Saturday.

The field of amateur radio is growing. Ian Kellman, of Shavertown, has been involved in amateur radio for 60 years. He has heard of a teacher in New York using the medium to teach with.

“You can learn a lot about world culture through it,” Rinehimer said.

Kellman noted he once helped relay information from a man in California to his family in San Salvador. Kellman said he stays in touch with many of the people he has spoken with and even had them stay with him.

Rinehimer said, depending on the [frequency](#), you can talk with people in different countries. Rinehimer, in his 27 years experience, has conversed with people in the South Pacific and Antarctica.

The family of amateur radio operators is quite expansive. Rinehimer said about 35,000 amateur radio operators nationwide participated in last year’s Field Day event.

The Murgas Amateur Radio Club will be available to talk with people again about Ham radio during their annual fundraiser, the 35th annual Hamfest and Computerfest starting at 8 a.m. on Sunday at the Luzerne County Fair Grounds. Visit <http://www.murgasarc.org/> for more information.