

ABØPC Park County Radio Club COLORADO

Park County Radio Club Helps Kids Learn About Ham Radio

FROM the desk of Laurita Summerton (KEØKOO) and Mike Borrego (ABØRR)

The Park County Radio Club (PCRC) is supporting a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) project in Park County, Colorado, by teaching Amateur (Ham) Radio skills to students, in anticipation of radio communication with the International Space Station (ISS) in 2019.



Initiated by Pat Shepard, Park County Library Manager KEØTQT (newly licensed), this project will allow students to make direct radio contact with an astronaut in the ISS sometime in April 2019, using what they have learned about the science of sound and the operation of amateur radio equipment.



Pat Shepard and Dan Kern

Under the guidance of Ms. Shepard, six PCRC members are conducting lessons at three libraries and three schools in this rural county in the mountains above the Denver Metro area. Lessons include both theory and practice, allowing students to make direct contacts with Ham operators in remote parts of the county using a solar-powered portable radio station and with Hams world-wide using Digital Mobile Radio (DMR).



Students must also learn about the ISS itself, as well as the procedures that guide radio communications during the very brief time allowed to make direct contact with the station as it passes over the county.



Of the numerous applications that NASA received in 2018 from schools across the United States, only seven applications for contact were accepted, and Park County's was one of them. Using a lengthy 4-step process, PCRC President Dan Kern was able to secure approval for the contact and for the required equipment.



The communication window will be only 10-15 minutes under ideal conditions, so not all students will be able to actually talk to an astronaut, but all Park County residents are invited to attend and observe this rare event, which will take place at the school complex in Fairplay, Colorado.



Some 200 children in Park County are attending monthly classes, including those from public, charter, and home-school facilities. The club has developed lesson material that is appropriate for kids from kindergarten through high school. Lessons also include composing questions to ask an astronaut. Submitted questions are first considered by Ms. Shepard and a review committee who will judge their relevance and appropriateness. The accepted questions are then submitted to NASA for final review and inclusion.



Ms. Shepard has also announced an Art Design Contest for the best T-Shirt design commemorating the event and hopes to qualify for a grant so that all participants and attendees will receive a T-Shirt. NASA will also mail a commemorative postcard to those who talk to an astronaut or submit a question.

These PCRC members have contributed significantly to the project.



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