

# Zero Beat



Hampden County Radio Association

May 2013

## Friday's meeting to feature CT ARES

This Friday's speaker will be Bill Covey, W1GTT, of the Connecticut ARES. Bill will be towing the CT ARES Region 4 MCU (Mobile Communications Unit) to the meeting and will be accompanied by the CT SEC Wayne Gronlund, N1CLV. Wayne will have a Power Point presentation for the meeting covering the MCU and EMCOMM.

From CT ARES: *ARES (pronounced air'-ees) stands for the Amateur Radio Emergency Service. A program of the ARRL (American Amateur Relay League), ARES works with FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) and provides emergency communications services for agencies such as The American Red Cross, Salvation Army as well as the State Offices of Emergency Management. Many of our volunteers work in their local communities to help with emergency planning and communications assistance in time of need.*

*In a crisis, our first priority is to provide needed communications to the State Office of Emergency Management. This is usually done through their main HQ in Hartford and the five regional emergency operations centers. We go where they need us. The next priority is providing communications for the Red Cross chapters within Connecticut.*

This promises to be a most interesting program. Even if you are not interested in ARES, you've got to come admire their well-equipped trailer complete with operating positions and all kinds of antennas and gear.



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**Dan Vierno/KB1VWQ will be taking orders for HCRA name badges at the next HCRA meeting. Orders must be prepaid: \$13 for pickup at next meeting, \$15 for delivery by mail.**



# FROM THE SHACK

## Next Meeting May 3rd

Bill Covey/W1GT has assembled a complete mobile communications center in a trailer and will be hauling it to our meeting for a little bit of 'Show & Tell' in the parking lot as well as an inside presentation. The extended weather forecast is good for May 3rd but bring your umbrella just in case! More info elsewhere in May's Zero Beat.



*Jim, KK1W, happily cranking up his 40-meter beam*

## Coffee & Donuts return to the meetings

Thanks to the volunteering spirit of Bruce/KB1TLX we will have coffee & donuts at our May and June meetings. If we continue to provide refreshments later in the year it will depend on a few things:

- It has to be self-supporting. Bruce will suggest donations for coffee, donuts or both and will be nearby to ensure we comply ☺ My personal suggestion is \$1 each – we actually have to pay for this stuff, you know!
- It is imperative we pick up after ourselves and of course don't make a mess that someone else will have to clean up. I shouldn't have to mention this but past experience says 'some' of our members are not very tidy!
- If you expect to go back for a 2nd cup, don't throw away your first cup - DD only supplies a limited amount of cups with their 'Box of Joe'.

Be sure to thank Bruce for volunteering to feed us for the next few months. At the same time why not think about what YOU can do to benefit your club and make everyone's enjoyment of HCRA even better.

## HCRA Field Day 2013

June 22nd – 23rd, setup June 21st

We are less than two months away from Field Day. Between now and June 21st there is a lot of work/fun to be done. We're looking for volunteers to help out with

all aspects, can you help? We are planning an 'equipment inventory' get together in the near future. This will be our chance to checkout all the equipment and make sure everything is ready to go come June 21st. It will be on a weekend day and should include pizza and refreshments for all attending. The Field day committee is looking for anyone and everyone that would like to participate in the actual event. Operators, setup, teardown, cooking, publicity, photography – it's all on the table, folks. Just because we have some of these positions covered doesn't mean we couldn't use more help. So don't hide behind the person in front of you when we call for volunteers at the next meeting! We're moving to an exciting new location this year, here's your chance to be in on the ground floor of planning and executing another fantastic event. Please be sure to see Ed/KB1NWH's Field Day article elsewhere in this issue.

## West Brookfield Technician Class a Great Success!

Today's Technician class was what you would call an "unbridled success". HCRA's instructor group consisting of John/Kx1x, Nick/K1MAZ, Frandy/N1FJ, and myself along with VE help from Al/N1AW and Rich/N1KXR managed a 100% pass rate. At the end of the day seven new Technicians have joined our ranks. Adding to the success was Rob/N1NTE upgrading to Extra while waiting for his family to successfully take their Technician exams.

Without doubt much of the class success can be attributed to great preparation. All the students had read and reviewed the texts, taken practice exams and came prepared with questions about the more difficult parts. It was truly a pleasure working with them and we hope they enjoy their new hobby.

My thanks goes out to all our HCRA members that helped put smiles on faces today – that's truly what this club is all about!

## Spots from the cluster

**Foxhunting** – Rich/N1KXR volunteered to be the point person organizing foxhunting this year. Many of you signed up at the February and March meetings and have received at least one group email so far. Rich will be in touch soon with the goal to get all of us up and running by the time the weather gets better (it WILL get better, right?). Please see Rich after the May meeting and let him know what you would like to do to help out.

**New England QSO Party May 4th and 5th** Many of our members received certificates over the past few weeks and the beautiful HCRA Plaque went to Dave/WN1E for having the highest single operator score in Hampden County. Of note also is Dave had the sixth highest score in Massachusetts and sixteenth in New England. Way to  
*(Continued on page 3)*

(Continued from page 2)

go, Dave! Are you going to let Dave win again this year without a fight? Wouldn't that plaque look good in YOUR shack? The only way to get it is get on the air and make some QSO's. See more info about NEQP by clicking the link.

**NEAR-fest May 3rd and 4th** The largest hamfest/ fleamarket in New England is just a few hours away at the beautiful Deerfield, NH fairgrounds. Join hundreds of like minded hams and browse acres of 'stuff' both Friday and Saturday. From boat anchors to computers, QRP to QRO and lots of good (but probably not healthy) food this is the place to be. Besides private sellers you'll find a bunch of commercial dealers too. The grand raffle prize this year is an Elecraft K3; wouldn't that be a nice reward for attending? The weather is forecast to be perfect, if you're going why not drop a post on HCRA's Facebook or Twitter accounts? It could help with carpooling and/or meetups at the fair. More info about NEAR-fest at this link.

'73 and see you at the meeting,  
Jim/KK1W

## RBN: Reverse Beacon Network is always listening!

If you ever call CQ in CW, chances are that the Reverse Beacon Network has logged you. RBN includes skimmers (which pick up cw signals) throughout the world. Go to <http://www.reversebeacon.net/> --dx spots -- enter call sign, and recent spots of that call sign will appear with skimmer location time, frequency, relative signal strength, and time/date. Of course, there's a lot more to it than that, but play around with it...there are has possibilities for antenna comparisons, finding DX from a particular country, and (best of all?) your SOTA activation will be spotted on the SOTA Spots page, as long as you have posted an alert. Sorry, it's CW only -- just another reason to learn!

-Frandy, N1FJ

The screenshot shows the Reverse Beacon Network website interface. At the top, there's a navigation menu with links: welcome, main, dx spots, skimmers, downloads, about, contact us. Below the menu, there's a search bar with the text "showing spots for DX call: NE1SJ" and a "search spot by call sign" button. A table displays the search results with columns: dx, freq, cq/dx, snr, speed, and time. The table lists several spots for NE1SJ.

| dx    | freq    | cq/dx | snr   | speed  | time         |
|-------|---------|-------|-------|--------|--------------|
| KM3T  | 7031.0  | CW CQ | 14 dB | 20 wpm | 1552z 21 Apr |
| KQ8M  | 7031.0  | CW CQ | 2 dB  | 19 wpm | 1551z 21 Apr |
| K2NNY | 7031.0  | CW CQ | 9 dB  | 19 wpm | 1551z 21 Apr |
| K3DB  | 7031.0  | CW CQ | 9 dB  | 19 wpm | 1551z 21 Apr |
| WA4X  | 14061.5 | CW CQ | 10 dB | 19 wpm | 1520z 21 Apr |
| K7EG  | 14061.5 | CW CQ | 3 dB  | 19 wpm | 1520z 21 Apr |
| N7TR  | 14061.5 | CW CQ | 7 dB  | 19 wpm | 1519z 21 Apr |

# Nominations now being accepted for June elections

The 2014 Election will be held at our June 7th meeting. As in years past many board members have once again raised their hands to help guide HCRA through another year of fun and excitement. For many of them this will be another year of many serving HCRA. Wouldn't it be great if YOU stepped forward and offered a little bit of time every month to ensure our club is the best it can be? Not only would it provide some 'down time' for a present board member – more importantly it is an opportunity to bring new views, different ideas and more exciting activities to our club. Are you ready to give it a try?

Listed below is the slate as it stands right now. There's only one position shown open but we are VERY open to nominations for all positions. As a team we are flexible, supportive and willing to move our present positions around to accommodate a new member. If it turns out we have more than one candidate for a position even better. We can hold a run off election in June, how cool is that?

It says a lot about our present board and their effectiveness that there aren't a lot of 'willing volunteers' for nominations. Unfortunately that's a double edged sword. Although things are going well, if we don't encourage new board members we'll eventually stagnate and then comes the 'upheaval'. HCRA has been through these in the past and we should attempt to avoid it in the future. Enough rambling on, here's the slate as it stands on March 16th.

## HCRA Proposed Slate of Officers/ Directors for 2014

### Directors:

At large: John/Kx1x  
Membership: Rich/N1KXR

### Technical: OPEN

Program: Matt/W1MSW  
Zero Beat Editor: Frandy/N1FJ

### Officers:

Secretary: Dave/N1MFL  
Treasurer: Dave/AA1YW  
Vice President: Ed/KB1NWH  
President: Jim/KK1W

Trust me, if you're interested in making HCRA a better, stronger organization there is a place for you on the board. Contact [Jim/KK1W](#) and let's talk.



# Local happenings

(All times are local time)

**Sundays:** 0845: Western Mass Emergency Net 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R

**First Monday:** Southwick Regional RACES Drill, 1845, 146.49 Simplex

**Mondays:** 1930: HCRA 10m Net 28.375

**Tuesdays:** 1930-2000: 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R - Hampshire County Emergency Net

**Wednesdays:** 1930: MTARA Info net 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R - includes NTS Net

2000: MTARA Swap net: 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R

2000: MTARA Simplex Net - starts on 146.94 - PL 127.3, then goes to 146.42 direct (simplex) Usually starts immediately following the swap net.

**Thursdays:** 2100: Weather Net (Roger, K1PAI Net Control), 1st Thursday of every month: 147.090 MHz, All other Thursdays: 147.000, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R

**Fridays:** 1200: BB's (Brown Baggers Luncheon)

Munich House

13 Center Street

Chicopee, MA 01013

Expect between 6 and 12 attendees every Friday. Good food, great company!

## Club meetings & VE sessions

**1st Friday of the month** 7:30 PM, HCRA Club Meeting, Holyoke Hospital Auxiliary Conference Center, 575 Beech St. Holyoke MA 01040 (no meetings held in July or August) <http://www.hcra.org/meeting-location/>

**3rd Friday of the month** 7:30 PM, MTARA Club meeting, Red Cross building 506 Cottage St, Springfield, Mass. (no meetings held in July or August)

**4th Friday of the month** 6:00 PM, Technician, General, and Extra Class License Exams, Holyoke Hospital Auxiliary Conference Center, 575 Beech Street, Holyoke, Mass. Hosted by the Western Mass VE Team (WMVET). Contact: David Cote, w1fab@arrl.net

**Third Monday of the month** 7:00 PM, Franklin County Amateur Radio Club meeting, Greenfield High School (no meetings held in July or August) <http://www.fcarc.org/>

**4th Monday of February, May, August, November** 7:00 PM, FCARC VE Exams, Unitarian Church, Main Street, Northfield <http://www.fcarc.org/>

**Next YCCC Meeting** is Saturday, April 6th, 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm, Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge, Mass. <http://www.yccc.org/>

## Flea markets coming up

3,4 May Deerfield NH NEARFest XIII @FG  
Mike K1TWF 978-250-1235 T

11 May Dartmouth MA SEMARA @Clubhouse \$2@9  
S\$10@8 Eric N1WCO 508-295-2468 W

11 May E Greenbush NY EGARA @FireCo \$6@8  
S\$6/T@6 Thomas KC2FCP 518-272-1494 W

19 May Cambridge MA FLEA at MIT Nick 617-253-3776  
F

1 June Hermon ME PSARA @HS \$5@8 Jerry K1GUP  
207-848-3400

1 June Windsor CT VR+C Mus 115 Pierson LN @8AM  
Outdoor John 860-673-0518

1 June Goshen CT So.BARC @FG \$5@8 Doc K1CTT  
860-672-2659 W+

2 June Bethpage NY LIMARC Richard K2KNB 516-694-  
4937 A+

15 June Newington CT NARL @StMarySch \$5@8 \$15/T  
Vinnie W1VJA 203-987-2108

Visit our website at  
<http://www.hcra.org>

## HCRA contact list

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Membership, Rich Wheeler N1KXR (413) 584-3372  
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Skywarn Liaison, Eric Tuller N1QKO (413) 967-3869  
et-n1qko@juno.com

VE Session Liaison, Dave Cote W1FAB (413) 575-2950  
w1fab@arrl.net

# Field Day 2013

-Ed, KB1NWH

Hey, guess what?

It's time for Field Day operation again. But the fun part is it's not the same old the same old. It's going to be located at School Street Park, Agawam, conveniently located right off routes 91, 57 And 5. This is a park that you see when you're heading to Six Flags. When you head down River Road, it's on the right-hand side--the big ball field. School Street is just down the road on the right—that's where the park's entrance is.

## Some of the pros and cons to this year's field day

### Pro:

- New facility, less than five years old
- Plenty of ample parking
- Just off the highway
- Will be plenty of all the people around such as little kids playing baseball
- The town and the mayor are working with us graciously and they really want us to be there

### Con:

- Limited lighting
- No AC power
- No high trees

As you can see, the pros outweigh the cons. It is a new chance for testing our emergency capabilities--running fully on generator power and using the towers that we have and the antennas that we have.

With this event just around the corner, we are going to be looking for people to help set up and also operate the stations.

If you are interested in helping in any way, please contact any of following:

Jim Mullen KK1W [KK1W@arrl.net](mailto:KK1W@arrl.net)

Ed LaCombe KB1NWH [KB1NWH@arrl.net](mailto:KB1NWH@arrl.net)

Matt Wilhelm W1MSW [westcoastbayou@gmail.com](mailto:westcoastbayou@gmail.com)

Here is a link to the park from Google: <https://maps.google.com/maps?q=42.073316,-72.595346&hl=en&num=1&t=h&z=15>

(Note: Pictures from 2008 FD are on page 8)

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Facebook Groups to visit:  
*Hampden County Radio Association* and *SOTAJerks*.

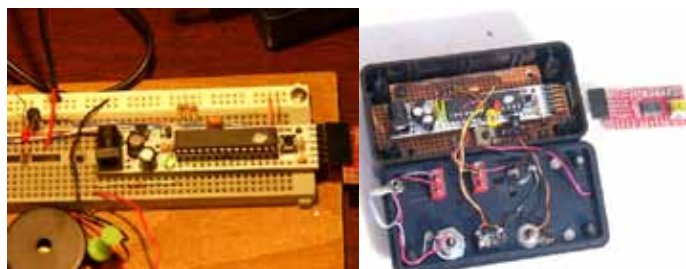
# N1AW Arduino Keyer

-Al Woodhull, N1AW

I showed a breadboard version of my Arduino keyer at the HCRA DIY Show-and-Tell meeting in March (Photo 1).

The advantage of the compact RBBB Freeduino board comes when it is time to migrate from the breadboard to a permanent build suitable for portable use. The perfboard to mount pullup resistors and other components fits into a 1"x2"x4" box from Radio Shack. The USB interface can be detached to use for another project, but can be reattached if I want to upgrade the software (Photo 2).

The final (but always upgradeable) unit is shown in Photo 3. The left hand switch turns the unit on and off. The middle switch detaches the keying line output if I just want to practice high speed sending without keying the transmitter. The push button switch, if pressed and released immediately toggles between iambic and semi-automatic keying; in bug mode the dah key can be used alone as a sideways straight key for slow sending. Two dahs signal iambic mode, a double-length dah indicates bug mode. A longer press of the push button results in a report of the current wpm speed (in Morse) when the button is released. While the push button is held down pressing the dit and dah paddles reduces or increases speed in one wpm units. The connectors on the back are for 6 to 12 VDC, a 1/8" stereo plug for the paddle, and a phono plug for the key line to the transmitter.





# CONTEST CORNER

-Matt Wilhelm, W1MSW

## New England QSO Party (NEQP)

**Date:** First full weekend of May (May 4-5, 2013)

Have you seen all of last year's NEQP certificates that club members have been posting on Facebook? You too could pickup some new "wallpaper" for the shack and the fun begins this weekend!

As in years past, both HCRA club calls will be activated. Several of us will be operating under the WB1Z call, making the annual pilgrimage up to one of the more "rare" counties of Vermont. W1NY is staying put in Hampden County and will be run out of Ed-KB1NWH's shack. Ed has graciously opened up his shack to other club members to come operate. It's a great opportunity to try contesting for the first time.

The object of this contest is to contact as many New England stations (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont) in as many New England counties as possible on 80-40-20-15-10m. (New England stations work anyone). That means WE'RE the DX! Another great thing about this contest is that you actually can work the entire contest AND sleep. It starts at 4pm Saturday EDT and pauses at 1am Sunday morning and resumes Sunday morning at 9am and ends at 8pm Sunday evening. Certificates are awarded to the top scorers (25 QSO minimum) in each New England county and there are a number of plaques that are awarded to top scorers. Every year HCRA sponsors the plaque for the highest score for single operator in Hampden County and many times it ends up going to a club member. Last year's plaque went to WN1E.

This is a very casual contest and QSO parties tend to be extra friendly. So, take some time this weekend to score some points and make sure to call CQ because stations all over the country are going to be looking to work you. Why, you ask? Because the top prize for highest single operator score outside of New England is a lobster dinner for two! For more information about NEQP please see <http://www.neqp.org/>

## Aw, Shucks...



## Jeff/NT1K's portable setup...



Jeff/NT1K's newly minted Worked All States Award. ARRL #57,252 Congratulations, Jeff! DXCC Honor Roll next?

# PROFILE

**Name:** James Saccento

**Town:** Chesterfield, Mass.

**Callsign:** WD1S

**Previous Callsigns:** AB1RN, KB2TUD

**License Class:** Extra

**Main station equipment:** Kenwood TS-590 to a G5RV and 10M Dipole, FT-2800 for 2M.

**Mobile station equipment:** Yaesu FT-60

**What year were you first licensed and what license class?** Technician in 1995.

**Favorite Band(s) and Favorite Mode(s):** I am sort of trying everything right now, and it is changing every few weeks. Right now I am really trying to become proficient in CW so I am focusing on that for now. Oh – and also JT65 – It’s sort of a strange mode but with a remote connection you can make a contact on your phone or tablet while making dinner for the kids at the same time.

**How did you become interested in amateur radio?**

The HTX-202 looked cool in the radio shack catalog and I liked the idea of having to pass a test to use it.

**What are some of your favorite aspects of the hobby (ex. field day, swap meets, contesting, rag-chewing, EComm, etc)?**

The intersection of computers, technology, and radio have brought many of my interests together and I really enjoy the new flexibility that it brings. I can spend some time talking to friends, work a contest, make digital contacts, work on achieving an award, and spend way too much time trying to configure software that doesn’t work.

**What is your most memorable experience in the hobby?**

Even though I have had my Technician license since 1995 I am fairly new to the hobby. I spent a few months on a local New Jersey repeater and then I ended up moving to New York City. I stayed interested in radio but just couldn’t find the time or space to do much but use my HT from time to time. In 2005 I bought a house in Worthington and thought time and space would not be barriers any longer. I purchased some equipment, passed my General test and then.... I had two children.

*7 years later:*

In May of 2012 (now living in Chesterfield) I opened a large bin with radio, power, tuner and a G5RV.



I drilled a hole through a golf ball and hung the antenna in the back yard (my arm hurt for a week) and ran coax into the house through the bottom of the basement door. I turned on the radio that night and heard OM2VL from the Slovak Republic working a pileup. I Hit the key, and gave my call sign (KB2TUD)--and he called The “Tango Uniform Delta” on the first try. I don’t remember what happened after that but it’s a QSL in LOTW so it must have happened.

I ended up making a bunch of 20M DX contacts that week and have been hooked ever since.



Join the ARRL or renew your membership!

ARRL members enjoy:

- QST Magazine
- Members-Only Web Services
- Technical Information Service
- Member Discounts
- Outgoing QSL Service
- Continuing Education
- ARRL as an Advocate
- Regulatory Information Branch
- Public Relations for Amateur Radio
- ARRL Field Organization
- ARRL-sponsored contests
- Operating Awards
- Local Clubs
- Amateur Radio Emergency Service
- Hamfests and Conventions
- Volunteer Examiner Coordinator Program





# From the archives...Field Day 2008...



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## Meeting Location

*Our meetings are being held at the Auxiliary Conference Center at the Holyoke Medical Center. Many of you have been here before, it's where the Western Mass VE Team has given examinations for close to a decade. We have all the details of the hall and how to get there on our website. <http://www.hcra.org/meeting-location/>*

*Our new location is newly renovated with state of the art heating and cooling, comfortable chairs, a complete A/V setup including screen, projector, sound system and wi-fi. Handicap access, convenient rest room, vending machines and 24/7 security round out the list. Join us!*

