

Amateur Radio Awareness Day...

Ham fans gather at Bonita Lakes Mall

Special to the Star

Amateur radio operators in Meridian are gathering today at Bonita Lakes Mall to share their enthusiasm for "ham radio," a personal communications technology that continues to hold its own in the Internet age.

Today is Amateur Radio Awareness Day.

The Meridian Amateur Radio Club will set up a station at the mall, hold live demonstrations and participate in other activities to raise public awareness of amateur radio. The annual event is sponsored by the American Radio Relay League, the national organization for amateur radio.

"Amateur radio is very much alive and well in the 21st century," said Gary Galloway, president of the Meridian Amateur Radio Club.

"We are experimenting with cutting-edge digital communications, serving our communities in times of need and having fun making friends with people all over the world."

The challenge of making radio contact with someone halfway around the world, and the lure of the human voice, are what many ham radio enthusiasts find most appealing.

"When people ask me if the Internet has replaced what we do, I explain what many of us refer to as the 'magic of radio,'" said Mel Oubre, the American Radio Relay League's assistant section manager for Mississippi.

"Just let a youngster make a ham radio contact, and they know instantly what keeps us all coming back for more."

Enthusiasts say amateur radio is about having fun, but it can also be an important communications resource during emergencies. When disaster strikes, amateur radio operators often

volunteer for back-up communications duty to help local officials, the National Weather Service and service agencies such as the Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

This year, ham radio operators responded when tornadoes hit Tennessee and Wisconsin and also during the wildfires in Los Alamos, N.M. Although it has been

relatively quiet so far, this year's hurricane season may bring additional demands for ham radio involvement. The club also has an active storm-spotting program in the Meridian area with training provided by the National Weather Service.

Today, there are more than 650,000 hams in the United States and more than 2.5 million worldwide.

For information:

For information on how to get involved in amateur radio, call Gary Galloway at (601) 986-2823. You can also contact the American Radio Relay League at (800) 32-NEW-HAM.

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Sent to me by WB5OCD

Thanks a bunch Jim