



MARS News

Inside this issue:

The "Granddaddy of them All" Gives us a Scare	2
D-Star Gateway Upgrade	2
An ARES Update	3
CCTA Track Marshalls	4
VE Test Session May 17th	5
Mars Provides Communication Teams for MS Walk	6
Board Minutes	7
UNCC Weather Balloon Flight	8
Field Day 2008 Coming Soon!	10
March and April Meetings	11

A Letter from the President

Wow, the new year is really moving fast. Here it is, April already. We are beginning to see some of those really beautiful spring days. And now we get to do all of those fun springtime things, like planting flowers and gardens and doing yard work and mowing the lawn.... Oh gosh, did I say enjoy? But, we must remember that all the effort we put in during the spring allows us to really enjoy the fruit of our labor during the rest of the year. I hope you get the opportunity to take some time to enjoy some fun times with your family and friends this spring.



When you think about it, MARS is a lot like those gardens to which many of us devote so much time and effort. We all need to invest some personal time and effort in working on club activities so that we can all enjoy and share in the fruits of that labor. Just paying your annual dues and then showing up for a single event each year is not enough. Nor is only participating in one type of activity.

Growing a club is indeed very much like growing a garden. The work that you put into planting, feeding, weeding and watering roses makes you appreciate their fragrance that much more when they blossom. If you put a good effort into insuring that our club grows, you will find your participation in the club becomes much more rewarding. We have the power to make our MARS garden grow and blossom if we all pitch-in to make it happen.

Coming up in the public service arena this month is the MS Challenge Walk, April 24-27th to be held down in Richland S.C. If you can go and help, I know that it will be greatly appreciated. You can volunteer via Elena's RideMaps website at: http://walkmaps.com/challenge/hams/ham_volunteer.shtml Please contact Mary Hunt- mhuntn4mh@gmail.com if you have any questions about this event.

I would like to announce that this year we will be holding Field Day at the Wilgrove-Mint Hill Park in Mint Hill, NC on June 28 and 29th. I also want to personally thank Kevin Keys- K4YYD for stepping up to become our MARS 2008 Field Day Chairman. Kevin asks for everyone's help in this effort. This will be his first time serving as Chairman for the event. I encourage all our W4BFB members to come out and support him and our club in this. Be part of a fun filled Field Day. If you would like to help him out please contact him at club meetings, on the 9PM net or direct via email Kevin Keyes- k4yyd@w4bfb.org.

I want to thank each and every one of our club members who are helping out the Carolina Cycling Time Trails Association in marshaling at the time trials at Lowe's Motor Speedway this year. There are eight more Events to assist in, so please help out if you can. Any Questions, or want to volunteer, contact Earl Fortner- efortner@vnet.net.

Letter from the President (cont.)

On April 12th, a group of us travelled to Raleigh and enjoyed a day at the Raleigh Hamfest. We all had a great time and enjoyed seeing and talking to our ham friends. This year it seemed like the attendance had doubled from last year and everyone seemed to be having a great time. Once again, I got to build a J-Pole Antenna. It is so much fun building them. I brought it home and I am looking forward to trying it out.

If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, about anything you would like to see happening in the Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society now, or in the future, feel free to contact me KI4CXO@W4BFB.org or the Board Board@W4BFB.org.

And with that, I want to say a heartfelt THANKS to each of you for your help and support.

73, Jodie KI4CXO

The 'Granddaddy of them All' Gives Us a Scare



I imagine most of you have heard about all of the deliberations over the location of the Shelby hamfest. The organization that manages the Cleveland County fairgrounds and the Shelby ARC could not agree on contract terms for the fairground property this year.

For a brief period, many thought Shelby would just not happen this year. But, the club got busy looking for an alternate location and fortunately, they have found one. Many details are still being worked out. But, we do know that the event will be held at Biggerstaff Park (aka Gaston County Park) in Dallas, NC. The SARC web site has constantly been updated as events have transpired. So, go there first if you have questions.

It is a shame that the town of Shelby will lose out on the revenue that came to town with the hamfest. I'm sure Dallas is happy to see the event coming their way. The Shelby ARC should definitely be commended for making the event happen despite the obstacles put in their way. It is nice to know that the 'Granddaddy of them All' will live to see another day.

73, Richard—K4KRW

D-Star Gateway Upgrade



The KI4WXS D-Star repeater has been updated. It is now running on new gateway software. A completely new gateway infrastructure was put in place in the last couple of weeks. This new version is incompatible with the older gateway services. So, all of the D-Star repeaters with a gateway are making the transition.

The transition was a little rocky. There were some initial problems with the database at the central D-Star server. But, now that things are in place, it all seems to be working.

73, Richard—K4kRW

An ARES Update

Recently I attended a quarterly meeting of a relatively new organization, "Greater Carolinas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster" (VOAD). I was representing Mecklenburg ARES (they think of us as ARRL). The meeting was held at the Mecklenburg EOC, and was attended by our 'served agencies' as well as other volunteer agencies that contribute to a disaster recovery such as Crisis Assistance Ministries, United Way, Council on Aging, ARRL, etc.

Conducting the meeting was Salvation Army Major Todd Smith. Wayne Broome, the Mecklenburg Emergency Manager, described the role of Emergency Management and the Emergency Operation Center in planning for and responding to a disaster. Rick Schou, the Red Cross Disaster Services manager, presented the importance for each family to have a disaster plan. VOAD and Mr. Broome are seeking a larger set of resources and expertise useful in a disaster response (like the Katrina response at the Charlotte Coliseum, but with more preparation).

Mr. Broome encouraged all involved to complete the overview classes of the Incident Command System, IS-100, IS-700, and IS-800B. Our Area-13 ARES is also encouraging IS-200. These describe the organization and control basis for all operations at our EOC, starting at the local level. Some of us have already completed these and may remember one part of IS-800B which describes 15 Emergency Support Functions (ESF). So far in Mecklenburg County we also have ESF 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20, which include other specific disaster response functions.

A new task for the Mecklenburg ARES EC (me) is to track completion of these on-line classes by our ARES members. More served agencies and now also the VOAD agencies are getting interested in what we do. We gain more credibility if we already know 'the drill' described by the classes before we get into 'the drill' conducted from the EOC. So far about 20 percent of our ARES roster has completed some of the on-line classes. If you have, and I don't know about it yet, send me an email or check my list at a meeting. If you haven't, please let me know when you finish one so I can put a star next to your callsign in the Meck ARES roster. By the way, I'm getting graded on how many stars I can put into our roster.

73,

John

WB2NHQ@arrl.net





CCTTA Track Marshalls

This past year I have been looking for ways to raise funds for the MARS club outside of the hamfest. We need resources to upgrade our repeater infrastructure. I have discussed this with a number of folks in the recent past. We have looked into many things including even applying for grants.

Bill Heybruck (WA2EDN) is involved with the Carolina Cycling Time Trial Association and does the official timing at their races. Bill suggested we volunteer to help with the time trials.

It sounded good to me and Bill presented a proposal to the CCTTA. They liked the idea and worked out an agreement that we provide four track marshals and one coordinator to communicate between the field marshals and the CCTTA group for each event. If all goes well, at the end of the October event race the CCTTA has agreed to donate \$800 to MARS in appreciation of our effort.

Bill asked for volunteers on the club web site and came up with four folks plus myself for the first event. The volunteers were Auford Neal KU4PF, David Faircloth N4DFW, David Stewart AF4ZK, Jeff Blythe KA4WYC and me, Earl Fortner K4KAY. The first race was on Wednesday, April 9, 2008. We had a meeting with track officials at six PM. They gave us official shirts and explained our duties and suggested where position ourselves to best observe the race. They also provided a written copy of our instructions.

The four marshals were assigned positions on the front and back stretch near the turns. As coordinator, they gave me a radio to communicate with the track officials to report riders violating rules such as the drafting prohibition, passing on the inside or just doing dumb things. I also had a radio to call medic in the case of an accident.

The race was seven laps around the track which is 10 miles. There were different categories with the slower racers starting first and faster racers riding toward the end of the event. The beginning of the race has the racers lined up and ready to go one at a time. The first bike goes through the timing traps run by WA2EDN starting the computer timing. Each rider wears a wrist band that has a chip that triggers the timer when he goes through the traps. When he goes through the traps on the last lap the computer records his time.

There were a lot of different type bikes. The faster ones were made of carbon fiber. Some of them were valued at around \$7,000. A lot of spectators watched and cheered as their favorite rider went by.

Feedback from CCTTA the day after the event was very positive. They said that the presence of the field marshals kept the rule violations at a



Looking Official—Jeff (KA4WYC), Earl (K4KWY), David (N4DFW), David (AF4ZK), Bill (WA2EDN) and Auford (KU4PF)



Feedback from CCTTA the day after the event was very positive. They said that the presence of the field marshals kept the rule violations at a minimum.

CCTTA Track Marshalls (cont)

minimum. The next race is scheduled for Wednesday, April 30. The volunteers for the first race had so much fun that they volunteered for the April 30th event. We have eight more events on the schedule with the last one being on October 1, 2008.

If you would like to volunteer or just come out watch the activities, you are welcome to do so. You get into the event by going to the road behind the track and driving to the Tunnel entrance. A guard will get your signature on a release form and then will let you enter the infield. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Bill WA2EDN or Earl K4KAY. I have enough volunteers for the April 30 race but will need folks for the other races and backups in case anyone cannot make a race that they volunteered for.

I must say it is a very enjoyable experience.

73,

Earl Fortner, K4KAY

VE Test Session-May 17th

The Mecklenburg ARRL VE Team will be conducting an Exam Session for all classes of FCC Amateur Radio License on Saturday, May 17th beginning at 9AM at the East Baptist church 3850 Monroe Road Charlotte, NC (East Baptist Church is located next to East Mecklenburg HS, near the intersection of Monroe Rd and Conference Drive)

Applicants are requested to arrive by 8:30AM, to complete the registration process before testing begins. They should bring a photo ID (drivers license OK), the original and a copy of any current amateur license, the original and copies of any current CSCEs, plus the 2008 testing fee of \$14.00.

Walk-ins are welcome. But, we would appreciate it if you register by sending an email to mhuntn4mh@gmail.com or you may call 704-948-7373 if you need additional information.

Note: This will be the last testing session where the Mecklenburg ARRL VE Team will use the current element 4 (Amateur Extra) question pool. Starting July 1st, 2008, the 'new' element 4 question pool will be used.

73 – WB2RHM

***If you would like to
volunteer or just come
out watch the activities,
you are welcome to do
so.***



MARS Provides Communication Teams for MS Walk



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society
Mid Atlantic
Chapter

Well, it's started! Yet another year of coordinating communications for our MANY Public Service events is under way. The MS Walk is a good one to start with. Slow paced, not a lot of activity and you can visit after the event is over and have lunch together. This year was no exception. Joe AF1E was our Net Control and as best as I can remember it was his first time doing this for the 'BFB crowd. Mary N4MH and Tom KA3VVJ handled our shadowing of the directors for the event. Dan KG4ENP had double duty covering the Rest

Stops 1 & 3. Ok, Ok – it was not **THAT** hard of a job since they were at the same place. They were at the beginning / end point. Oh BTW Joe also had to shadow one of the directors at the start point. Some of them are pretty quick. Next event, just see if you can keep up! Whew! We had some newbies too. Bill W4GRW came out and watched Dave AE4AT at Rest Stop 2, which was at Myers Park High School, and our turn-around point. Kristy KI4YDL handed out drinks and refreshments at rest stop 2.



Bike Mobile Volunteer - Kevin (K4YYD)

There were two routes for our Walkers, a 5-mile route and a 2-1/2 mile route. And it seemed like the walkers had wings on their feet! With the threat of rain and even some slight sprinkles we finished in record time. The Sags did a great job looking after the crowd. Andy G4GKK didn't have many saggars, but did fix a wheel on a stroller. Such the Man! I know of only one request to pick up a pooped walker and Steve N4OUT beat me by seconds in racing to them. Let's see who else did we have? Oh yeah! Mark KI4CYG, another 'BFB Member from the Gaston club, was there. Mark and I have a lot in common. We are both fire fighters and EMT's. It was good having another jump bag on the course, even though we didn't need one. I am hoping he can join us for the MS 150 in September. Well, I have waited to the last to tell you of another volunteer group helping with the event: our bike mobiles, Frank N4WIK and Kevin K4YYD. OOOoohhhh the legs on those guys! You have to witness that in person! Yes, we have pictures....! Jodie and I helped SAG. But, as I said before, we didn't do much. I almost forgot Ben WB2RHM who showed up to make sure we were running a smooth operation, which we were...!

I don't have the total figures yet. But, Alan with the Multiple Sclerosis Society stated we had about 1000 Walkers. For a rainy Saturday morning, that was pretty good! Thanks everyone for being the 'Professional' amateurs that you are.

Thanks for everyone being flexible and I hope I didn't leave anyone off the list. The big event coming up is September 27th & 28th 2008 is the MS-150, which will be several rides from Rock Hill to Greenville and around the Upstate of South Carolina. So get ready!!

73, Jeff KA4WYC

The Multiple Sclerosis Society stated we had about 1000 Walkers

Board Minutes

Jodie started the meeting at 7:00. Present were Jodie, Ben, Jeff, Tom, Andy, Kevin, Dave, Perry and Bill.

Jodie stated we had a Hamfest meeting on March 31st. We are already starting the planning for 2009. It was noted we would be the Roanoke Division Hamfest for 2009.

Bill stated the next Club Meeting program will be Wilton and Pete who will have a program on a VHF contest from Kitty Hawk while trying to make a Transatlantic 2 way contact.

Bill said the guy who wanted the Nye Viking tuner didn't come to the Hamfest and so we will sell it on Ebay or offer it to the Membership. (Editor's Note we carried it to the Raleigh and sold the tuner to Ed.)

Kevin said we had 42 people signed up for the Food Lion Share the Wealth program. There was a discussion on adding the Application form to the website and Newsletter. Kevin will have some at the next meeting.

Bill showed our award for 3rd place for the W4 region in the 2007 CQWW WPX SSB contest.

Kevin has volunteered to head up Field Day Chairman. There was a discussion on several items for Mint Hill Park. We have been there several years. So check your emails and this Newsletter for more information. There was mention of Field Day shirts, more to come.

Under old business – Perry stated we have had confirmation for the use of a Repeater (K4USC) in Union, SC for the MSS 150 Bike Tour. The MSS still doesn't have the Rest Stops yet, but a general route has been scheduled.

There was a discussion on RV's and the general shape of our RV. John had an email about ours needing repairs. Jeff is to deliver it to Andy's and Tom volunteered to help with the repairs.

Tom said the phone bill is still wrong. We have a contact with Bell South and Jeff will try to straighten this out.

New business - Andy asked about the accident at the Hamfest. Tom gave a report on this incident. Andy was a witness to this incident. Although we have a liability policy, we were presented with a bill for over \$400.00, for Medical Treatment he received once he got home. This was turned over to our Insurance Company and let them handle it. There was a discussion on who was liable or was he liable. Jeff asked Kevin if he could assist us with our Liability Policy. Kevin volunteered to look over our Policy. It was noted in a later discussion that the ARRL has a Liability Policy for Clubs. Again Kevin will look into this and report back to the Board.

Jodie asked when was a good time for a Family Picnic. Dave said something about having it on a club meeting on a Saturday. Bill thought about having it on Field Day. Jodie said she would head up the Family style picnic. If any one else wanted to help her, to give her a call. A date of Oct. 11th was decided. The Club Christmas Party is Dec. 6th 2008 as long as the Church we had last year was available.

Jodie asked if there was any other business, having none, Jodie adjourned @ 8:45.

Respectfully submitted By Jeff Blythe KA4WYC Secretary Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society.



UNCC Weather Balloon Flight



Fill 'er up!

It has been a busy month in the high altitude weather balloon hobby. The University of Tennessee Amateur Radio Club sent a weather balloon almost to Ireland. They set time aloft and distance travelled records.

UNCC was busy too. Dave (K8ZK) and I (Richard -K4KRW) assisted UNCC with their second weather balloon flight. Dr. Chadwick is giving a class on remote sensing for the Geography and Earth Sciences department. In the class, students build payload experiments to be sent to high altitudes in the payload of a weather balloon. Dave and I assisted them with the communications aspect of the project.

Dave and I visited the class early in the semester to explain APRS and other technologies related to balloon tracking. We paid a second visit on April 16th to see their payloads and to let them experience a simple fox hunt. I hid their payload transmitter in the woods next to the university. Dave helped the students find the transmitter using his APRS capable HT.

The flight was originally scheduled for Saturday, April 19th. The weather was not cooperating. So, the event was moved to the next day. Sunday was a nice day for the launch. The sky was a little bit cloudy but not to the extent that it was a problem. The winds at ground level were good (very light). The students showed up at the airport at 10:00. The launch was scheduled for noon.

A few W4BFB members showed up for the event. Bill W4WNT was there in time to see the balloon inflated and launched. Everything went as planned in preparation for the launch. The balloon was ready to go at 12:00 and actually launched at 12:06 PM. Bill W4GRW and Randy AA4ZR showed up right after the launch. They decided to tag along during the chase.

Dave left the launch site an hour early so he could be in position at the projected landing location. The rest of us packed up our gear and hit the road about 20 minutes after the launch. Bill W4WNT went home and watched the balloon via www.findu.com. He kept in contact with Bill W4GRW and Randy as our caravan of vehicles drove to catch up with the balloon. Bill, Randy and I were communicating with each other on simplex (146.520). The balloon ended up flying to Rockingham.

As we got to the landing site, W4WNT directed Bill and Randy to the very street where the balloon had landed. Dave and his crew were closing in using Dave's HT. Nobody saw it right away. But, it was there. It turned out that the balloon landed in a tall tree in someone's front yard.

The street was a quiet rural cul-de-sac. I'm sure that the 16 college students and 8 other assorted tagalongs were an unusual sight for this street. A wonderfully nice family lived in the house where the balloon had landed. The father was a pastor at a local church. All of the neighbors got a real kick out of the entire hubbub. One of them called the local fire department to see if they could help us recover the payload. In the end, firefighters from three different jurisdictions (Rockingham, Cordova and Hamlet) showed up to help.

Fortunately, all of the neighbors were home at the time help showed up. I can only imagine what they would have thought if they arrived at their street to see a pumper, two ladder trucks, a rescue equipment vehicle and three fire department sedans parked on their street.



Monkeynaut - Before flight

Balloon Flight (cont)

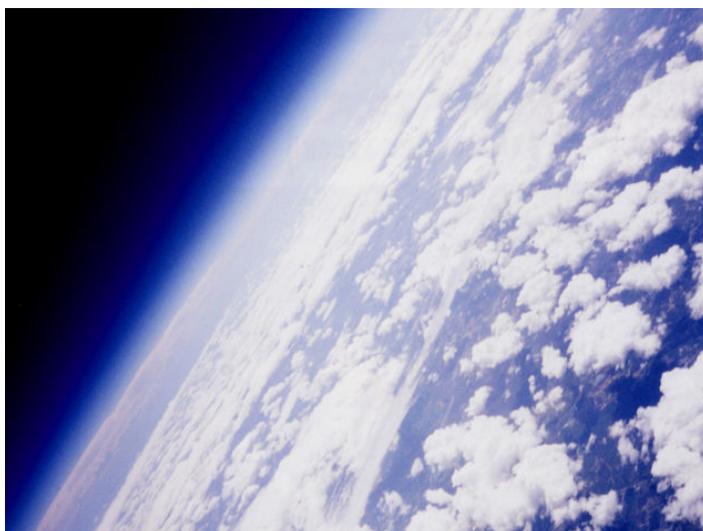
It was pretty funny when the first ladder truck showed up. We were expecting the usual spotless glossy red and chrome 'art piece' of a truck. What came driving up the street looked like it came from an episode of the Andy Griffith show. It might not have been glamorous, but it got the job done. Everyone was very thankful for the help.

So finally, two hours after landing in a tree, the payload was safely recovered. Dr. Chadwick and his students thanked everyone for their help. The students got their pictures taken with the crews that recovered the payload. The residents commented that this was the most exciting thing to ever happen on their street. In the end, everyone involved had a wonderful time.

The students have developed their pictures and are compiling their data. They will have some more analysis to do before they get their final grade. I know they've learned quite a bit this semester while taking this class. It is always very rewarding to see people learning and having a great time at the same time. All of us who helped had a great time too. We can't wait for the next one. Thanks Dr. Chadwick!

73,

Richard (K4KRW)



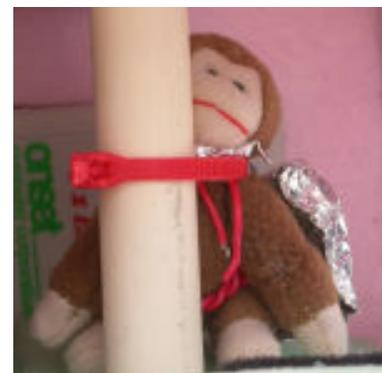
Wow! What a beautiful view! The colors are amazing. This was taken with a film camera.



Here is the whole gang. As you can see, lots of smiling faces. What a blast!



The Ladder Truck



Monkeynaut - After flight

I've called PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Stuffed Animals) and filed a complaint :-)

Field Day 2008 - Coming Soon!

Hey everyone!

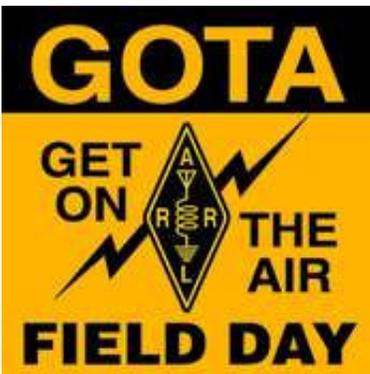


Field Day is June 28 – 29 so clear your calendars! This year's Field Day will be held at Mint Hill's Wilgrove Park, just off-of the Wilgrove-Mint Hill Road. The address is 7750 Jim Harper Lane in Mint Hill. The event begins at 2PM on Saturday, June 28th and wraps up 24 hours later. We will once again operate as a Class A station using generated power.



As everyone knows, it takes a lot of people to put on a fun and successful Field Day. The following are positions that need to be filled:

- Set up coordinator to direct the set up and placement of stations and equipment
- Media contact person. Having a member of the media visit the Field Day site not only gets the word out to the community about ham radio but it also earns us 100 bonus points.
- Get On The Air (GOTA) Coach. Supervises the operation of the GOTA station which may operate on any Field Day Band. The GOTA station may be operated by any person licensed since the previous year's Field Day regardless of license class as well as non-licensed persons under the direct supervision of the GOTA coach. Having a GOTA coach earns the club bonus points.
- Takedown assistance
- Most of all we need OPERATORS! As in the past, we'll have an HF phone an HF digital/CW station and a 6 meter station. Come to this month's club meeting and reserve an operating time and station. As we'll be on the air continuously for 24 hours, there will be plenty of opportunities for everyone to participate.



I hope to see everyone out at Mint Hill Park on June 28 and 29 for a fun and successful Field Day!

73,

Kevin Keyes, K4YYD

Field Day Chairman

March and April Club Meetings

For the March meeting, MARS was fortunate to have Pat Patterson (N4BH) speak on the subject of Earth Moon Earth (EME) and Meteor Scatter communications using WSJT. WSJT was created by Joe Taylor (K1JT). WSJT actually stands for Weak Signal Joe Taylor. Joe Taylor is a Nobel Prize winning physicist.

WSJT is a sound card mode that allows decoding of signals that in some cases are so weak that they are not even distinguishable from the background noise by the human ear. Pat has been using this mode with great success. His enthusiasm for the mode is very contagious. He described how his 2 meter grid count skyrocketed after he discovered this mode. Then he went on to talk about how well it works operating EME.

EME is not usually within the capabilities of a typical ham station. But, with this new mode, some are able to make EME contacts with a 100 watt transmitter and a single high gain yagi (13 elements or so). Others with very modest stations are having a blast using meteor scatter.

Pat talked quite a bit about the stations using WSJT. While a fairly modest station can have a lot of fun with this mode, there are many out there running large antenna arrays and hefty amplifiers. Some of the antenna structures being used are so large they are actually visible on satellite images. It is amazing the amount of money some are putting into their stations. Pat said some stations using EME were so strong that they could actually be heard before the moon came over the horizon. Wow!

Thanks Pat for a wonderful presentation. I'm sure that a few of our members will catch the WSJT bug.

The April presentation will be about attempting transatlantic contacts on the two meter band. The Brendan Trophies have been waiting for 40 years for someone to accomplish this. Pete (N4JAZ) will talk about attempts in the past. Dave (N7BHC) will talk about plans for future attempts. This should be another fascinating presentation. We hope to see everyone there.

73,

Bill (W4GRW)

Jeff (KA4WYC)

Richard (K4KRW)



Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society— <http://www.w4bfb.org>

Club Meetings

The Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society meets on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM

We meet at:

East Baptist Church
6850 Monroe Rd
Charlotte, NC 28212

(Next to East Mecklenburg High School, near Conference Drive)

Club-room

Red Cross Building
2425 Park Rd, Room 023
Charlotte, NC 28203
(704) 334-3900

Club Repeaters

146.34/146.94 (w/autopatch)
144.63/145.23 (no autopatch)
144.69/145.29 (no autopatch)
222.80/224.40 (no autopatch)
449.600/444.600 (no autopatch) PL 100.00

Mecklenburg 2m Emergency Net
9:00 PM local time, daily on 146.34/146.94 featuring the ARRL
Audio News feed on Sunday night.
Alternate frequencies announced

Club Officers and Board of Directors

President

Jodie Rowland, KI4CXO, ki4cxo@w4bfb.org

Vice President

Bill Fisher, W4GRW, w4grw@w4bfb.org

Secretary

Jeff Blythe, KA4WYC, ka4wyc@w4bfb.org

Treasurer

Tom Hunt, KA3VVJ, ka3vvj@w4bfb.org

Directors

Ben Antanaitis, WB2RHM, wb2rhm@w4bfb.org

Perry Garris, KF4UVL, kf4uvl@w4bfb.org

Andy Hawkins, G4GKK, g4gkk@w4bfb.org

David Holbrook, KC4YPB, kc4ypb@w4bfb.org

Kevin Keyes, K4YYD, k4yyd@w4bfb.org



**Mecklenburg Amateur
Radio Society, Inc**

Richard Y. Dodd, K4KRW, Editor
7000 Heatherford Dr.
Charlotte, NC 28226

E-mail: k4krw@w4bfb.org