

# Local Ham Radio Heroes

by Diana J. Cathan

What with the Great Geauga County Fair drawing huge crowds to the fairgrounds and all the exciting fun and activities to be found there, it's little wonder that a few children become separated from their families. In fact, at the 2012 fair, some thirty-six children were lost, at least for a time; fair board secretary Paul Harris proudly declared that all were located!

Once a missing child is reported to the sheriff department, a description is sent out to deputies on patrol duty on the grounds. The description may also be announced by the fair's official announcer and/or at various activities on the grounds, so that everyone can be on alert for a wandering child.

One of the "lost child" incidents in 2012 was resolved by local amateur radio operators manning a booth on the fairgrounds. On Labor Day, Marc was acting as net control when he heard the sheriff department's broadcast; he

quickly repeated the lost girl's name and description by radio to all of the hams (amateur radio operators) scattered at various locations on the grounds.

As it so happened, amateur radio operator Valerie was just arriving on the grounds when she heard the alert. After signing in at the booth and confirming the girl's name and description, she headed out to help search, finding the girl in the crowd within a few minutes. Valerie escorted the girl to the nearest sheriff's post to be reunited with her family.

I talked to Marc and Valerie together soon after the incident. They don't consider themselves as heroes; they just think they did the right thing at the time. As a mother herself, Valerie said her "mother's instincts" took over and helped her spot the girl in the crowd. A major focus of ham radio is community service and their actions at the 2012 fair fit into that mission.

Once again in 2013, from 12:00 noon to

8:00 p.m. daily, local hams will be manning the radios from a cubicle inside the fire station near the racetrack. Most are members of Geauga Amateur Radio Association (GARA), which meets at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Monday monthly, except for July and December when they have informal gatherings that include spouses and families. The meetings are held at the Geauga County Emergency Operations Center, 12518 Merritt Road in Chardon.

GARA welcomes local amateur radio operators to join them. You do not have to be a resident of Geauga County – many hams have multiple local affiliations in contiguous counties.

If you have an interest in learning more about amateur radio and maybe becoming an amateur radio operator, stop by to see the hams at the fair. They'll be on duty, ready to assist in any way they're needed, whether it's providing emergency communications or searching for lost children.

Used by permission © Diana J. Cathan  
published by *Good News* publications, August 2013