

## Meet the "Hams" at the Upcoming Fair

by Diana J. Cathan

For the third year in a row, local amateur radio operators will be at the Great Geauga County Fair, stationed this time at their communications trailer.

Hams from Geauga Amateur Radio Association (GARA) and Geauga ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service), two groups closely affiliated with each other, will be manning the trailer. They

will be prepared to provide emergency communications at any time during the five days of the fair.

Regular readers may recall that the hams were able to locate a missing child on the fairgrounds during the 2012 fair, but ham radio is about so much more.

There may be many different reasons that people decide to become ham radio operators. For some it is the challenge of the

electronics. Others use the radio to chat with friends, whether close at hand or far away, even across the country or in foreign lands. A large group enjoy traffic handling, where a group meets on the radio to pass personal messages across the country, which is really practice for emergency situations. Many hams enjoy the public service aspects of the hobby and may spend weekends providing communications for special events as a public service.

GARA members recently learned more about another aspect of amateur radio. At their summer picnic, ham Eddie Stevens (KD8FTS) presented a program on "fox hunting" – a colorful term used to describe the process of using a receiver and directional antenna to locate the origin point of a radio signal. He brought a vari-



Two local ham radio operators work a station to make contacts from Geauga County's EOC on Field Day, held annually in June. Photo by Diana J. Cathan

ety of equipment to illustrate and hid a small transmitter nearby, to be found during the program.

Stevens often presents "fox hunting" programs to school-age kids, using a fox puppet with space inside to hold the transmitter. The hunt also makes use of map plotting and orienteering skills. A ham radio license is not necessary for fox hunting, because hunters use a receiver and do not transmit. To transmit requires

an amateur radio license issued by the FCC (Federal Communications Commission).

In June, local hams participated in the annual ARRL (American Radio Relay League) Field Day, setting up two stations in Geauga County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and a field station in Newbury. They made contacts in many states and parts of Canada, which were plotted on an electronic map overhead.

Clubs receive points for various types of contacts and activities related to emergency preparedness during Field Day.

If interested in ham radio, local hams have information on testing for a license. Their communications trailer will be set up by Gate #1 at the north end of the fairgrounds.

For more information, visit the <http://www.geaugacountyares.org> website or the <http://www.geaugara.org> website.



Ham radio operator Eddie Stevens shows kids how to go "fox hunting" by using a directional antenna and orienteering skills. Photo by Diana J. Cathan

