

MARA/VARA MONITOR

Published Monthly for Radio Amateurs in the Shenandoah Valley

Telephone AutoPatch Returns to Harrisonburg/Rockingham

Many hams have expressed interest in an autopatch to access telephones in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. An autopatch allows hams to make phone calls via 2-meter ham radio.

As this issue goes to press, a group of local amateurs are putting the finishing touches on an autopatch system to meet this demand.

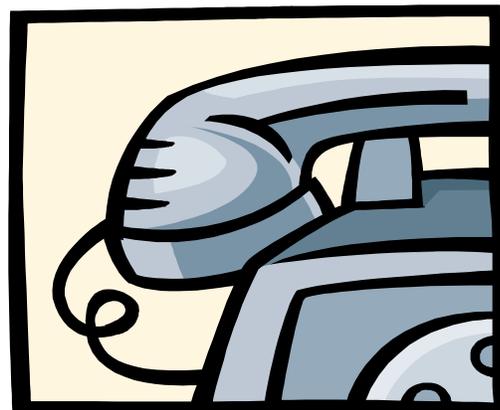
However, the system is not a normal repeater autopatch. It has some special operating characteristics. For example, on this system, the radio amateur cannot override the phone audio by pressing the mike key. The ham can actually "double" with the telephone audio if (s)he is not careful. Also, the ham user must wait until the dial tone drops out (yep, drops out!) before dialing the number.

A complete packet of information is available on the web, in PDF format. This packet outlines the operation of the new patch and gives all the details. Point your browser to:

<http://cob.jmu.edu/fordhadr/MARA/patch.pdf>

and check it out.

The patch requires a dedicated telephone line. This means that someone has to pay a monthly



phone bill. To help offset the cost, users of the patch are asked to subscribe for \$15 per year. For the \$15 per year, you get unlimited calls to the local calling area, which includes all of Rockingham County (from Grottoes to Bergton), as well as small portions of Augusta and Page counties. For families with more than one ham, a family rate of \$25 is available.

For more information, contact David R. Fordham, KD9LA, at 540-568-3024 or 234-0448.

VARA MARCH MEETING

LOCATION & TIME CHANGE:

**Staunton Church of
Christ
333 Churchville Av**

**Meeting starts at
7:30 pm**

**See Page 7 for
More information**

Edwina Willis, KD4IDP, SK — Bo Owen, K4QKH, SK

As last month's Monitor was delivered to the Post Office, we learned of the untimely death of two MARA hams.

Edwina Willis, KD4IDP, was most famous for her reliable attendance at all the MARA Christmas Banquets, and was well known for her sense of humor.

Also Bow Owen, K4QKH, of Charlottesville, passed away the same weekend as Edwina. Active in radio operations on both sides of the Blue Ridge, Bow was well known on the air.

Our condolences are offered to the families of these two radio amateurs.

Young Hams Counting Up DX Contacts

Several new young amateur radio operators in the Shenandoah Valley are on the air, accumulating a nice collection of international HF radio contacts.

Jason Armentrout, N4DSL, is the 15-year-old son of Dale, N4ATF. Jason has been on the air from his QTH in Keezletown, using his new Ten-Tec Jupiter radio. Under the capable guidance of Jay Suter, W4QDC, Jason has put up a nice G5RV and uses a VersaTuner II. Jason is active on all the major HF bands.

Benjamin Vogan, KG4IWI is the 15-year-old son of Chuck Vogan, KD5KA, and Elma Vogan, KG4LRG. Ben recently upgraded to General, and is now on the HF bands, too. Ben enjoys 40 and 20 meters, and is also willing to talk to local hams on the HF bands. If you are looking for

someone to help test your antenna and give you a direct ground-wave signal report, give Ben a call.

Steve Tennyson, KF4ZWK, actually beat his dad in the race to get licensed. Steve is the 17-year-old son of Bob, KG4CHL. Steve is also a General. He has already decided that his favorite band is 10-meter phone. Steve reports that his very first HF contact was with SM5G in Sweden, not bad for a first try!



"Pass the baton to the new generation..."

Vogan Family Spotlight: Five (count 'em) Hams!

*"Mom, dad, and
three sons —
All hams!"*

Chuck Vogan, KD5KA, is a new, but now familiar, voice on the local 2-meter repeaters. Chuck recently completed the ARRL Emergency Communicator's course, and has served as a Net Control Operator for the Rockingham ARES Net.

Next time you hear him on the air, ask Chuck about his family.

15-year-old son Benjamin KG4IWI, just upgraded to General.

17-year-old son Dusty KG4IEL is a technician.

23-year-old son Jeremy, KG4IEK, also recently upgraded to General class.

And at the last VE testing session, Chuck's XYL, Elma Vogan, passed her exam and is now licensed as KG4LRG.

Chuck has put together a great little guidebook introducing ham radio. It tells all about the various aspects of the hobby without getting technical. It is aimed at people investigating the hobby. It cost Chuck \$3 per copy to print, but if you'd like some copies to hand out to your friends, contact Chuck at 234-0081.

ARES Training

When an emergency strikes, all ham radio operators are ready to be emergency communicators, right?

Wrong! If you don't know what you are doing, you are of little value, and get in the way more than you help. For this reason, ARES in Virginia is holding regular training classes to teach hams what they must do in order to help, and not hinder, emergency communication operations.

The February 10th class held in Charlottesville was well-attended by area hams. In fact, Rockingham County Emergency Coordinator Dale

Showalter, KD4DAI, was impressed at how many local hams took the time to attend. The session lasted all day, and also involved a drive over the mountain.

Gayle Shull, KU4XN, a long-time ham and one of the session attendees, expressed surprise at how much he learned. Norman, KA4EEN, called it "helpful to old and new hams alike".

Dale, N4DAI, expresses hope that another session can be held in the Valley within a few months.

Great North Mountain 444.600(+) Repeater Up and Running

Rusty Bowman, N4YET, announces that the Shenandoah Valley Repeater Group now has a 440-Mhz repeater on the air, up at their Great North Mountain site just west of Bayse.

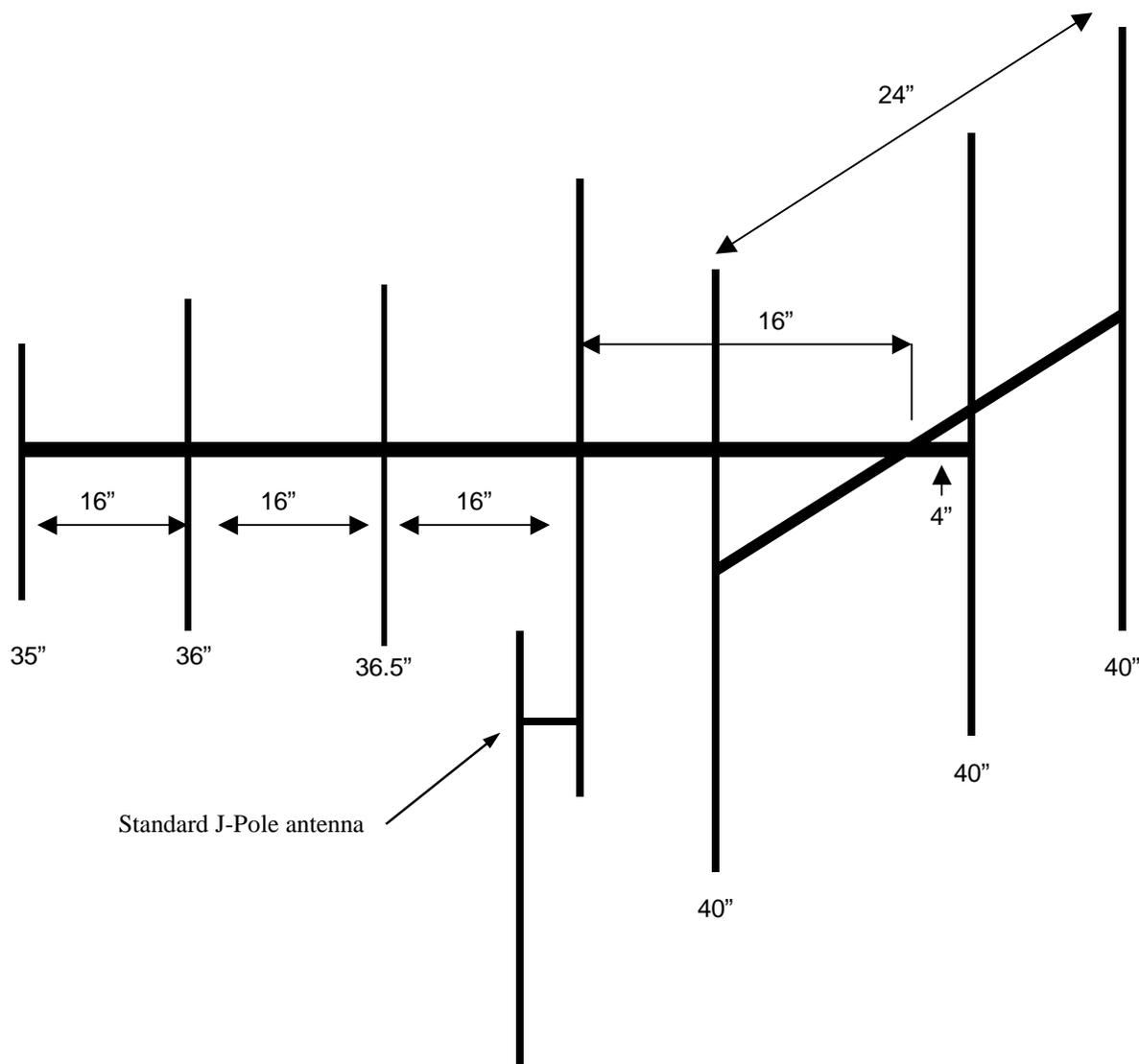
The machine is on 444.600 MHz, with an input frequency up 5 MHz.

At the present time, no CTCSS subaudible tone is required. The machine provides good access from Rockingham and Shenandoah Counties, and can be worked from a handi-talkie from most anywhere west of the Massanutten range. The group would like to receive signal reports from locations in West Virginia.



Homemade J-Pole Yagi for 2-meters

Want to turn your J-Pole antenna into a directional beam? Daryl Cline, KB4YEX, provides the following diagram of a homemade beam antenna, using a traditional J-Pole as the driven element. Daryl admits he didn't come up with the design; it was in an old antenna book he found lying around. But Daryl has actually built one of these, and designed it to come apart easily for portability to the mountaintops. More details on its construction will be forthcoming!



Camp at Flagpole Knob and work RTTY!

Daryl Cline, WB4YEX, is planning a camping trip to the MARA/VARA Field Day site just south of Flagpole Knob, on the weekend of March 11-12.

Daryl will bring his 520, a generator, computer, keyer with Bencher paddles, and a new 40-80 trapped dipole he just constructed, with a 20-meter leg!

If you are interested in working this contest with Daryl, or in any other activity on the mountaintop between now and then, give Daryl an email at : wb4yex@yahoo.com.

Field Day Planning Underway

Each year, on the last full weekend in June, radio amateurs around the world leave their radio shacks. They unplug from the commercial electrical system, and operate completely on emergency power.

Known as "Field Day", the event is a demonstration of the communications capabilities amateurs can provide in case the national power grid is disrupted. (Hey, look at California these last few months!)

Hams in the valley travel up into the mountains west of Dayton for a week of camping, fellowship, and preparations.

Then, on Field Day Saturday, ham radio stations are put together in less than 12 hours, including emergency power sources. The hams operate 24 hours straight, proving that nationwide (or even worldwide) communications can take place without the benefit of commercial electricity.

This year's Field Day Planning Committee is already at work.

The committee members are as follows:

- Clint Campbell, KB4OLM
- David Tanks, AD4TJ
- Benny Cook, N4BCC
- Elsworth Neff, K4LXG
- Bob Steere, N1QEQ.

*Put
July 23-24
on your
calendar now!*

Virginia "Anti-Vehicle-Radio" House Bill 1884 Killed

Ray Colvin, KE4HVR, reports that a Virginia Assembly Bill 1884 was killed before leaving committee. The bill was aimed at prohibiting cell phone calls from distracting drivers on the highways.

However, as it was worded, it also would have interfered with operation of almost all wireless and radio equipment in a vehicle, including police, fire, and amateur radio operations.

Many hams joined forces with other agencies in notifying the state legislators of the flaws in the bill's wording. Thanks to those who wrote.

For Sale: Mustek 1200 ED Flatbed Scanner



Bill Jones, KE4FM, still would like to find a good home for his Mustek 1200 ED image scanner.

This instrument has been used very little since its 1999 purchase, and is in mint condition.

Bill has the software to control the unit from Windows 95/98. The setup includes a computer parallel cable.

The scanner was in last month's Monitor at \$75, but Bill is interested in offers. He is

currently asking \$40, but if you need a flatbed scanner, call him and he is willing to negotiate. Call him: Bill Jones, KE4FM, at 289-9801, or email at wwjones@gte.net.

February 3rd VE Testing Session Results

Another successful testing day in the Valley! February 3rd, in Dayton, thirteen candidates showed up for their shot at upgrading or getting a ham license.

The count of elements successfully passed by candidates is as follows:

Element 1 passed---3
Element 2 passed---4
Element 3 passed---3
Element 4 passed---3

A total of (5) new licenses were issued and (6) upgrades were earned.

Thanks to all the hams who made this test session a success.

GREG CZERNIAK W4GRC
(Session manager)
GERALD NAUMAN KN4FM
RONALD MAY KS4SP
TODD HARRISON K4TMH
DALE SHOWALTER N4DAI
RICHARD HAXTON KC3AN
RAY RITCHIE K4NRA
CHARLES NEFF K4LXG
HOWARD MULLINS K4PZC
And thanks to CHARLES VOGAN
KD5KA for his moral support.

Also, a clarification from last month's Monitor on testing fees:

Each time a candidate pays one test fee, he/she is entitled to take test for Elements 1, 2, 3, and 4 as needed--up to all four under the single test fee. But...

Each time a candidate retakes an exam element, another test fee is charged.

The next test session is scheduled for APRIL 14. Many thanks for giving your time to make this happen.

GAYLE KU4XN 73
Phone 540-828-2132



Oscillating Pre-Amps Generate Rash of RFI Complaints

The FCC reports it's gotten word of a rash of interference problems created by oscillating pre-amplifiers built into Winegard TV antennas. These antennas are used primarily on RVs, campers and motor homes. The oscillations generally appear in the 400-500 MHz range--and sometimes elsewhere--and have caused interference problems to public safety and Amateur Radio operation at dis-

tances of several miles away. The FCC's Gary Hendrickson says Winegard has acknowledged the problem and estimates that there may be as many as 40,000 defective units in the field, which it has agreed to replace at no charge. Owners, RV dealers or repair shops that might have new, but defective, units in stock should contact the factory at Burlington, Iowa, at 319-754-0600. Wine-

gard also has proposed a proactive program in which service technicians will visit the larger campgrounds, rallies and dealers around the country, actively look for defective/radiating units in operation or on the dealer's shelves, and replace them at no charge to the customer, regardless of the age of the unit.

--Gary Hendrickson/FCC

*TV preamps, ...
mainly on RV's,
campers, and motor
homes...*

MARA President's Column

For those of you that were at the last two meetings, you know that Elsworth, K4LXG, presented a very interesting and informative program on lightning protection. I learned several things and I'm sure that those that were there learned a thing or two also. How many of us will be making changes to our antenna systems this spring? Hope everyone gets their installation up to par before thunderstorm season sets in.

Thanks Elsworth, those were programs that anybody with outside antennas could find useful.

At the last meeting Bob Steere (N1QEQ) and Elsworth Neff (K4LXG) volunteered to serve on the Field Day committee. We need one more volunteer to complete the MARA representation on the committee to plan for Field Day along with the VARA club. Who wants to help?

Last fall we talked about holding a new ham training class. Due to conflicts, the classes were postponed until this spring. Dale, N4DAI, has volunteered his time to teach, but he would like some help. We also need to find a location to hold the classes, and to prepare advertisements that can be posted in local businesses. Who wants to help? Classes will run for one night a week for 10 weeks, a starting date has not been chosen.

One final reminder: The April meeting is homebrew night, so get your projects finished! Let's have a good selection to show this year. Hope to see each of you at the meeting on March 1 at Ever's Restaurant.

Gerald, KN4FM

VARA President's Column

Our last club meeting was very productive. The club is still working on a mission statement to incorporate into our new web page (when it is up and running). So let me encourage our club members to bring a brief mission statement to the next club meeting. It should be no longer than one sentence, yet convey key words that define our mission. Key words, like fellowship, community service, public service, advancing the art of Amateur Radio and so on. You get the idea. So write one and share it with us at our next meeting.

The club continues to explore ideas for having a special events station that would bring attention to Amateur Radio and

help the club to grow. Suggestions include having a special events station at the Augusta County Fair, setting up a station at the mall, setting up a station at Natural Chimneys Regional Park during the jousting event. Other suggestions include approaching the Frontier Culture Museum and having a special events station set up during one of their events. Last but not least there has been some discussion about having a station set up in Gypsy Hill Park during the 4th of July festivities. All these suggestions are good. Now all we need to do is narrow them down. Your input is always invited.

Speaking of special events, the MS Walk-A-Thon will be held in

Waynesboro on April 22nd.

They have asked for our help once again. April 22nd falls on a Sunday and the event begins at 2:00 p.m. at Riverview. If you would like to help out (usually for a couple of hours) please let the club know.

The wheels are already turning for Field Day. Clint (KB4OLM), Dave (AD4TJ), and Benny (N4BCC) are already laying the ground work and securing equipment. Please let these men know if you would like to help or are willing to donate any equipment. No doubt, Clint will have a wish list to present to the club shortly.

Just as a warning, it is possible that we will not meet at Gavids

for our next meeting. This is not yet cast in concrete. However, Gavids is going to close for remodeling or may even relocate to another location. In any event, we are going to need a new place to eat and meet. So stand by and if we need to meet somewhere else, we will let you know via e-mail or by other means.

That's it for this month. I look forward to seeing you all in March. Why not ask a friend to come with you? In fact, there are a lot of Amateur Radio Operators in our area who do not belong to the club. Invite them as well.

73, Greg, W4GRC

VARA Secretary's Report: February 6, 2001 Meeting

The Valley Amateur Radio Association club meeting was held at Gavid's Restaurant in Staunton on February 6, 2001. President Greg Czerniak W4GRC opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. There were 21 members present and two guests, Gordon Batey WA4FJC and Jered Weaver KG4EHM.

The 50/50 drawing was a total of \$25.00, \$12.50 went to the Club Treasury and \$12.50 to the winner, Bill Shott W2ZVM. Congratulations Bill.

David AD4TJ Needs HELP with the Augusta County ARES Net. Anyone that is willing to be net control and help David out give him a call. Also David has the forms for the DMV ID cards if you need one.

Richard KF4QZG is our new Program Chairman and asks for anyone that would like to do a program to give him a call and get a date set up to present it.

The 2001 Field Day Committee of three, Clint KB4OLM, David AD4TJ and Benny N4BCC are asking for anyone who has equipment they are willing to bring to field day to give them a call and let them know what you have so they can get their list started. This includes radios, coax, antennas, towers, masts, power sup-

plies, connectors, rope, shelters, mowing, set up help and OPERATORS.

Greg W4GRC is working on a new Web Page for the Club. Pat will help Greg come up with three mission statements for the club from the input of the members and we will vote on them at the March meeting.

We would like to get training classes started for the Technician level then move on to the 5-WPM code class. Anyone interested in helping teach the classes please contact Greg W4GRC, Alby AD4KZ or Richard KF4QZG.

Anyone who has an idea or place to set up a ham radio demonstration to get more people introduced to ham radio and what it is all about contact Richard KF4QZG on the 147.075 repeater or by e-mail at Cayuse97@cfw.com or Greg W4GRC on the 146.850 repeater or by e-mail at grcljc@cfw.com .

We are still open for ideas for a Special Event Station sometime this summer, keep this in mind.

If you have an e-mail address but are not getting the Club Newsletter electronically

please send your e-mail address to David Fordham at fordhadr@jmu.edu so he can put you on the list. This helps the club save money on mailing out the hard copies. We have cut our mailing cost quite a bit for this year already.

The MS Walk is coming up Sunday April 22 at 2:00pm in Waynesboro at Ridgeview Park so check your schedules and make plans to help. We will talk more about this at our March meeting.

A motion to adjourn the V.A.R.A meeting was made by Joan KF4CWR and seconded by Nancy KE4PHP. The motion was accepted and the meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

REMINDER: It's time to pay your dues for 2001 and keep your Newsletter coming.

Submitted by
Ray Colvin
VARA Secretary

MARA Secretary's Report

Massanutten Amateur Radio Association club meeting was held at Ever's Restaurant, Mt Crawford, on February 1, 2001. Meeting was opened by President Gerald Nauman at 7:35 p.m. There were 26 members and 2 guests present. The Secretary's Report was approved as read.

Committee Reports were called for:

FIELD DAY: Volunteers were called for by the president. Those volunteering were: Ellsworth Neff K4LXG, and Robert Steere, N1QWQ.

PUBLIC SERVICE: No report.

TREASURER: Total monies on hand are \$2595.26

ARES NETS: Requests volunteer net controls for February

VOLUNTEER EXAMINERS: VE Test session February 3 at Woodmen of the World building on Route 42 near Dayton.

NEW MEMBERS: None today.

There arose a problem with access to the JMU e-mail for MARA. Motion made by David Fordham: MARA to become associated with the JMU Wireless Association for a one time fee of \$49.00 for registration purposes, thus being able to use the E-Mail facilities at JMU for the club newsletter and other information. The motion was seconded, discussed and voted with a yes vote. David will take care of the registration for the club.

Rusty informed club that the Repeater Phase II in Basye is now on the air. Soon Ph III will be available and will cover Frequencies 145.13 thru 444.600 MHz.

Ray alerted the club that a problem is rising with the introduction of HB1884 which is now being discussed in the Virginia House. It is regarding the use of "handheld wireless" by the driver of a moving vehicle.

Richard Weaver informed group that Bob and Rosalie Echland will provide a QSO opportunity for us as they will be in Syria and the Arab Republic February 3-12 using the call YK9A.

The 50/50 total was \$22.00 with \$11.00 going to Virginia Weaver, xyl of W3HXH.

The club took note of some local Silent Keys. Edwina Willis, KD4IDP and Debowl Owen, K4QKH.

The program was the continuation of the program given last month by Ellsworth Neff on lightening protection for antennas - necessary information for us to be able to protect our equipment. Thank you Ellsworth.

Meeting was closed at 9:05p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Phyllis Haxton, N4VZC
MARA Secretary

VARA March Meeting Location Changed

Due to remodeling, the VARA club will be unable to hold its March meeting at Gavid's Res-

taurant. The meeting will be held at the Staunton Church of Christ, across the street from

Gypsy Hill Park, 333 Churchville Avenue. The meeting will start at 7:30 pm.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

March 1: MARA Club Meeting (Ever's Restaurant)
 March 3-4: ARRL International DX Contest (phone weekend)
 March 4: Page County ARES Net (146.625-)
 March 5: Rockingham County ARES Net (146.550 simplex)
 March 6: VARA Club Meeting (see above)
 March 8: Augusta County ARES Net (147.075+)
 March 11-12: NA RTTY Sprint (see page 4)
 March 11: Page County ARES Net (146.625-)
 March 12: Rockingham County ARES net (145.130-)
 March 15: Digital ARES Net (145.750 packet)
 March 18-20: Virginia QSO Party
 March 18: Page County ARES Net (146.625-)
 March 19: Rockingham County ARES Net (145.130-)
 March 20: April Monitor Submission Deadline
 March 24-25: CQ WW WPX Contest Phone Weekend
 March 25: Page County ARES Net (146.625-)
 March 26: Rockingham County ARES Net 145.130-)
 March 31: Timonium (Baltimore) Hamfest

April 3: VARA Club Meeting (location TBA)
 April 5: MARA Club Meeting & Homebrew Night
 April 14: VE Examinations, Dayton Virginia
 April 21: Chesapeake Hamfest

May 3: MARA Club Meeting
 May 6: Hagerstown (MD) Hamfest
 May 18-20: Dayton Ohio Hamvention

June 3: Manassas Ole Virginia Hams Hamfest
 June 17: Frederick (MD) Hamfest
 June 23-24: ARRL Field Day

MARA/VARA

c/o David Fordham
131 Wayside Drive
Weyers Cave, VA 24486
Phone: 540-568-3024
Email: fordhadr@jmu.edu

Address Service Requested

VARA MEMBERS! Notice the March Meeting Time & Location Change. (p.7)

MASSANUTTEN AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Gerald Nauman, KN4FM
Vice President: Steve Tennyson, KF4ZWK
Secretary: Phyllis Haxton N4VZC
Treasurer: Sandy Mullins, K4PZC
Board (exp 01): David Hughes, KF4SVR
Board (exp. 02): Bob Tennyson KG4CHL

<http://cob.jmu.edu/fordhadr/MARA>

MARA meets the first Thursday of each month at Ever's Restaurant on U.S. 11 south of Harrisonburg. Meal starts at 6:30 pm. Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

Visitors are welcome.

Dues (\$12 per year) should be mailed to:
Sandy Mullins, K4PZC
149 North Street
Elkton, VA 22827

VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

President: Greg Czerniak, W4GRC
Vice President: Richard Huttinger, KF4QZG
Secretary: Ray Colvin, KE4HVR
Treasurer: Joan Pitsenbarger, KF4CWR

<http://www.hamsnet.net/W4MUS>

VARA meets the first Tuesday of each month. This month the meeting is at the Staunton Church of Christ
333 Churchville Avenue
Business meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

Visitors are welcome.

Dues (\$15 per year) should be mailed to:
Joan Pitsenbarger, KF4CWR
352 Campbell Street
Staunton VA 24401