

## Field Day - June 27-28, 2009

The Sarasota County Auxiliary Communications Service, ACS, hosted it's first "major" Field Day effort on June 27 and 28, 2009, with additional support coming from a couple members of the Florida Contest Group.

Last year, we did a 5 or 6 person Field Day from the Emergency Operations Center. I missed the fun of spending the weekend out in the field and giving more people the chance to participate in Field Day. With that in mind, planning for FD '09 began!

Thanks to Anne Miller at Emergency Management, we were able to get the site at Twin Lakes Park reserved, and Bill Quigley, K4QHN, at Emergency Services, for the use of one 100' portable tower. I also met with a representative of the Sheriff's Office, to see if we could use their Command Bus as our operation location, but that didn't work out. So, we were going to "rough it" outdoors this year under the Pavilion at Twin Lakes Park.

Over the next several months, we worked on recruiting help and getting equipment lined up for the effort.

A couple weeks ago, I went out to the site to do a site survey, to figure out where we'd put the antennas and equipment. That worked out well, since everything ended up pretty much exactly as planned.

At 2PM on Friday afternoon, Ed, K8DSS (who made the trip down from Michigan to participate), and I met at Twin Lakes Park to begin setting up what we could. Shortly after 2PM, Bill, K4QHN, and Bill Stevens, KI4LAJ, delivered the 100' tower.

Ed and I got the tower set up and ready to go. We then proceeded to work on getting the Carolina Windom stretched between a couple trees. After my many lame attempts to get a rope up in a tree, we finally succeeded in getting it over a good branch ... then repeated the process on another tree for the other end of the antenna. Mic, W4ZPP, showed up and helped us with the final installation of the antenna. (We have already lined up a "get a rope up in a tree launching device" for next year!)

The switch needed to raise and lower the tower, needed a little repair work, so we took care of that, and decided to try it out by raising the tower a couple inches. We did all we could do, so decided to call it a day. Before we left, we made plans to meet for breakfast on Saturday, and we'd invite anyone else who wanted to join us, before finishing set up on Saturday.

At 8PM Friday night, I copied the W1AW Field Day message, and got our first 100 bonus points!

Ed and I met for breakfast, and were joined by Bob, KF4JRO, and his son Chris, KB3CXN. We then headed over to the Field Day site.

Upon arriving at the site, I saw Jeff, WC4E, carrying antenna parts across the road! Ken,

KI4PYH, Jeff, Ed, and I, stood around and chatted at the gate for a few minutes ... waiting for the caretaker to come by. We flagged him down, and he opened the gate so we could drive up to the Pavilion and start unloading and setting up equipment. Bob and Chris arrived shortly after.

Frank, K4EJ, let us borrow a tribander, and the guys had that together in no time. We mounted it to the mast, got the tower vertical, and raised it up to about 40'.

Paul, KF4LQQ, arrived, and started putting his all band vertical together, while Jeff put up his "stealth" 40 Meter vertical (which on Sunday, was converted into antennas for 20 and 15!).

Once all the antennas were up, we started setting up the stations. The phone and CW stations were at one end of the Pavilion, and we set up the GOTA station in another area of the Pavilion.

After the radios were set up, we started working on getting the logging computers connected to the radios and networked together. Here is where we ran into some minor difficulties. One of the computers wasn't communicating properly with the others. Ken spotted the problem in one of the network messages, as a firewall issue. Once we shut off the Windows firewall, things worked as they should! We were also short a USB/Comm port adapter. Bob and Chris picked one up, but we couldn't get it working. We didn't have rig control on the phone station, but it had no effect on the operation.

By noon, we had everything up and running and ready to go. Some folks headed out to get some lunch, while others stayed around.

At 2 PM, we were off and running! We hit the phone and CW stations hard for the first couple hours to get off to a good start, before starting to rotate operators.

Throughout Saturday afternoon, we had a pretty steady stream of folks stopping by to visit. They got a tour of the site and an explanation of what we were doing. We got the new CERT hams and a few unlicensed folks, on the air to make contacts on the GOTA station, while the more experienced operators took their turn at the main stations.

Joel, KB9OZE, had e-mailed me a few weeks before, saying he was going to be in Sarasota during Field Day, and asked if he could come out and join us! He did make it out, and put in some time in front of the radio.

I occasionally "twittered" updates and our QSO totals to our ACS twitter page, <http://twitter.saracs.org> - 164 QSO's @ 3:45 PM, 500 QSO's @ 8:45 PM, etc.

Late Saturday night/early Sunday morning, everyone had gone home, except for Jeff and I. Lucky for us though, because the bands stayed open and we felt we had some of our best rates during the night time hours (800 QSO's @ 2:42 AM, 1000 QSO's @ 4:02 AM). When we hit 1000 contacts, we said we were ready to quit and let the next shift take over - but we looked around, and there was no one else there! The great conditions and steady run of contacts, made the night seem to pass quickly and helped keep us awake. When things slowed down, Jeff took a break, and grabbed some much needed rest ... while I stayed on the radio and watched the sun

come up (I did hit the wall a couple hours later, but was able to get my second wind!). Folks eventually started returning, and by 8:52 AM we had 1350 contacts in the log.

Sunday morning we kept an ear on 10 and 15 meters, waiting on those bands to open up, since we didn't do much on those bands on Saturday. Sure enough, 15 opened up followed by 10 later ... and we took advantage of the openings ... approaching the activity levels that we had early Sunday morning! Bob, KF4JRO, was having a GREAT time running stations on CW at a nice comfortable clip while getting accustomed to the logging software. (We may have found a new contester.)

When 2 PM finally rolled around ... we put the wraps on a very successful Field Day!!

One of the disappointments, was that the GOTA station wasn't as successful as I had hoped. It sat empty most of the time, and generated no bonus points for us. As a result, we're thinking about dropping GOTA next year, in favor of a 3rd station that anyone can use for making contacts. We will have some antenna and filtering issues that will need to be addressed though. Also, we probably won't dedicate one CW and SSB station ... but make them capable of working either mode. This should give more folks a chance to operate.

The final numbers look like this:

	CW QSO's	Phone QSO's
80m		1
40m	256	332
20m	245	564
15m	301	149
10m	67	
GOTA		28
TOTAL	869	1074

#### Bonus Points

100% Emergency power	200
Set-up in Public Place	100
NTS message to ARRL SM/SEC	100
W1AW Field Day Message	100
Site Visit by invited served agency official	100
Youth participation	20
Youth operators = 1	
Youth participants = 1	
Submitted via the Web	50
Total Bonus Points	670

Claimed Score = 6,294 points

Helpers, operators, and support:

Ed, K8DSS  
Jeff, WC4E  
Bob, KF4JRO  
Chris, KB3CXN  
Paul, KF4LQQ  
Ken, KI4PYH  
Cynthia, KF6WIU  
Joel, KB9OZE  
Mic, W4ZPP  
Kirsten Strouble  
Paul Hersey  
Vic, K1CGI  
Manuel, KJ4BNL  
Rachel, KJ4HUT  
Mary, KI4VKY  
Harry, KJ4HUP  
Buz, KJ4MMF  
Inaki, KJ4BNY  
Megan Thornton  
Pat, KE4LFE  
Bob, K9SRQ  
Lisa, KI4PYG  
Jill, KI4PJB  
Frank, K4EJ  
Anne Miller  
Bill, K4QHN  
Ron, WD4AHZ

Thanks to everyone for their help and support. Already looking forward to doing it again next year!

Ron, WD4AHZ