



Second Century

Building a Future for Amateur Radio

The future lies in engaging younger people with radio communications and amateur radio, and ultimately leading them to become active hams and ARRL members. Significant things have been happening to advance the future of ARRL and amateur radio more broadly. I know these things would have escaped my purview during the decades that I was “just a member,” so let’s put the pieces together.

We started to see movement in this area from the ARRL Board voting in 2021 to create the Youth Licensing Grant Program, which assists young people under the age of 18 by reimbursing their one-time \$35 FCC application fee for new license candidates, and reducing the cost of an ARRL VEC exam session to \$5. Southeastern Division Director Mickey Baker, N4MB, championed this motion in the hope that large groups, like Scouts, will have an easier entry into the world of amateur radio.

Next, in 2024 the ARRL Board created a free associate membership for students aged 21 and younger. The success of our Collegiate Amateur Radio Program (CARP) has shown that students have tremendous enthusiasm for amateur radio. Providing free access to ARRL resources, like QST and all our magazines and archives, can encourage them to go further with their ham careers.

Another initiative launching this year is a coding competition for young people to apply their programming skills to a challenge that will inspire creativity and a deeper understanding of amateur radio. First Vice President Kristen McIntyre, K6WX, is leading a team to launch this program for the 2024-25 school year. The competition provides up to \$25,000 in awards that students can use for college.

On NBC’s *Today* show earlier this year, you might have seen students from Harbor Creek High School in Pennsylvania making a live contact with the International Space Station as part of the ARISS program. The students, through generous donations of money and supplies from ARDC and Tim Duffy, K3LR, of DX Engineering, constructed their own satellite station. The event was made possible by the students’ Assistant Principal Drew Mortensen, AC3DS, a graduate of the ARRL Teachers Institute on Wireless Technology. ARRL Education and Learning Manager Steve Goodgame, K5ATA, was on hand to cheer on the students and had advice on next steps for the school to pursue EME contacts.

Steve isn’t stopping there. Last December he worked with Mike Dahlhofer, K8MRD, who runs the popular YouTube channel Ham Radio Tube, to create a multi-hour telethon that raised more than \$20,000 toward an additional Teachers Institute session. We have limited means to conduct these game-changing sessions, which are mostly funded by donations, so Steve has taken to fundraising to bring more teachers, and many more students, into amateur radio. Look for Steve this December with another telethon, this time hosted by Josh Nass, KI6NAZ, on his YouTube channel Ham Radio Crash Course.

The ARRL Board is going through its own renaissance. There has been an influx of people in their 30s and 40s taking on Director and Vice Director seats. Andy Milluzzi, KK4LWR, is the youngest member, hailing from the Southeastern Division and a product of our collegiate program where he is co-advisor with his brother Tony, KD8RTT. The Central Division now boasts two younger members — Brent Walls, N9BA, and Josh Long, W9HT, who is a graduate of the ARRL Teachers Institute. You, as a member, can encourage younger ARRL members to run for office, and make sure you vote in each election!

Of course there is more, from the more than 100 scholarships we award each year through the ARRL Foundation, to our new corporate strategy where inspiring and educating youth has become our third advocacy, alongside our ongoing work to promote and protect amateur radio. There will be more to follow! So please, be radio active. Work with younger hams in your club to get them active. Be a connector. Perhaps you know someone who might volunteer for ARRL in these pursuits. And keep Steve Goodgame’s December telethon on your radar!

David A. Minster, NA2AA
Chief Executive Officer