

Hamming it up on amateur radio Field Day in Gearhart

By D.B. LEWIS
The Columbia Press

Cub Scouts, leashed dogs, curious neighbors and passers-by, vendors and dozens of amateur radio enthusiasts shared a family fun annual Field Day at Gearhart City Park on Saturday.

Dana Gandy, president of Sunset Empire Amateur Radio Club, wowed onlookers by demonstrating how he'd strung antenna wires between two tree tops without his climbing boots. He used a drone and a sport-fishing electronic gizmo.

The gizmo has a wireless switch often used by anglers to control a fishing line hung below a drone. The drone takes the baited fishing line out beyond the surf and the wireless switch makes it let go. Perfect placement.

"Why not use that for ham radio?" Gandy said.

So he attached one end of a thin weighted rope to his own drone, flew it 30 feet up a tree and dropped it. Bullseye.



Left: Frank Van Winkle communicates with AuxComm headquarters from a tiny tent at Gearhart City Park.

Above: Visitors decide what message they'll send using a telegraphic toilet.

Right: Emergency Management Coordinator Vince Aarts staffs the county's info booth.

Photos by D.B. Lewis/The Columbia Press

After repeating the process on another tree, the two ropes were used to raise a 132-foot horizontal wire antenna high overhead.

Several operating antennas adorned the all-day event, but Gandy's may have been the most effective as Eric Polson, from Portland's Ham Radio Outlet, sought to contact as

many other hams around the country as possible in the shortest amount of time.

The feat was not unusual for Field Day, but rather impressive because Polson ran his transceiver all day on just a battery and solar panels.

Frank Van Winkle of Astoria erected a tiny tent for himself, his gear and his antenna on a tripod, all powered by a portable generator.

With Clatsop County's emergency amateur radio station, aka AuxComm, at other end, Van Winkle traded

email with AuxComm leaders Don and Terri Hilgaertner in Camp Rilea.

All this without being connected to anything more than amateur radios at both ends.

Vince Aarts of the Clatsop County Emergency Division and his assistants gave away disaster preparation booklets while advising the crowd with practical questions.

Rita Rader, one of the event organizers, and a crew of women hams ran a gift and information booth while raffling off everything

from logo'd shirts to hand-held radios.

Unfortunately, one of the raffled kites got mangled. Rumor had it the dirty deed was carried out by an overly enthusiastic dog. End of transmission for the kite.

For the kids and families, the biggest hit by far was -- get ready for this -- a telegraphic toilet.

Custom manufactured in just over an hour by Gandy and event organizer Ernie Rader, it delighted kids (of all ages) as they bounced up and down on the seat while reading a giant sign with Morse code.

Piped through a loudspeaker, Morse code dits and dahs sounded as the bouncing toilet seat sent out the ham radio Field Day fun message to all.

For more information about learning how to communicate during a disaster, contact Gandy at 971-601-0283.

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This weekend

Portland Gay Men's Chorus performs in Astoria

Portland Gay Men's Chorus will perform at 3 p.m. Saturday, June 30, in the auditorium at Astoria High School.

The chorus will be singing selections from their "United State of Broadway" Pride concert, which should be popular with those who like show tunes.

The PGMC was established in April 1980 with a mission "to expand, rede-

fine and perfect the choral art through eclectic performances that honor and uplift the gay community and affirm the worth of all people."

Proceeds will benefit Astoria's Performing Arts Center.

Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at the



door. Children younger than 12 are free.