



Second Century

Year of the Club

As we welcome in a new year, ARRL is introducing a year-long effort to shine the spotlight on radio clubs. Clubs are the critical backbone of our community — of our hobby. Clubs routinely serve as the entry point for newcomers to amateur radio. I could fill pages with wonderful memories I have, from Ramapo High School ARC and Fair Lawn ARC, to Field Days with the Ramapo Mountain ARC, to my participation with the Frankford Radio Club. Activities. Friends. Learning. Accomplishment. Great times.

During 2026, we want you to be inspired by all the things that your club is already good at — and take the time to thank and recognize your volunteer leaders for sustaining a wonderful club experience. There are new activities that your club can take on, including the possibility of merging with another local club to ensure that one combined is stronger than the two apart. You'll see us promoting content in different forms related to the MARCONI (Motivating Amateur Radio Clubs to Open New Initiatives) program created by the Meriden ARC of Wallingford, Connecticut.

We will also be looking to expand on our hugely successful ARRL Affiliated Clubs program. Again, we routinely see clubs at the 75- and 100-year marks of affiliation being recognized by the ARRL Board — and sometimes we've been excited to welcome those clubs to ARRL HQ and have pictures taken with them on the steps of W1AW! Affiliation, to me, shows that club members are committed to the success of ARRL's efforts to promote and protect amateur radio, and to develop the next generation of radio-active members.

Coincidentally, 2026 is also the semiquincentennial of our country. As a part of the America250 celebrations, we too will be participating by adding awards for Worked All States (WAS) and WAS Triple Play. Where do clubs fit into the pursuit of these single-year awards? We are working with the Section Managers and club leaders to offer the opportunity to operate as W1AW/portable to get all 50 states on the air in support of the awards. This was a very exciting part of ARRL's Centennial in 2014! I even worked W1AW/portable stations back then using the Hellschreiber mode just to get my count up with two more contacts!

To inspire the competitive nature of members in your club, we have launched two initiatives to spur innovation and creative thinking. Competitions are under

way for the best club newsletters and the best club websites. The intention is to recognize those clubs that excel in these forms of communicating with their members and the community at large, and to offer best practices to those clubs open to learning and “shamelessly stealing” from others! We've seen some fantastic work done on both fronts with efforts that go far beyond simply leveraging social media for their platform(s). Follow all of the ARRL Year of the Club programming at www.arrl.org/year-of-the-club.

What projects or ideas have you had for your club? A kit night, building club co-sponsored projects while others learn from your experience? A tech night where folks drag in their test equipment and toolboxes to diagnose pesky circuit problems? Hilltopping with microwave dishes or lasers to experience the very high end of our spectrum allocations? Doing an antenna expedition to a beach or mountaintop to see how these enhance HF propagation? Don't feel limited or restricted. Ideas are great — but executing them and seeing the results is where the satisfaction and enjoyment are found for you and your club!

During Year of the Club, be radio active! Earn your ARRL America250 WAS awards. Be a connector! Get together with club members and put some of your collective ideas to work! Have a great year, and see you on the air — maybe from some W1AW activations!

David A. Minster, NA2AA
Chief Executive Officer