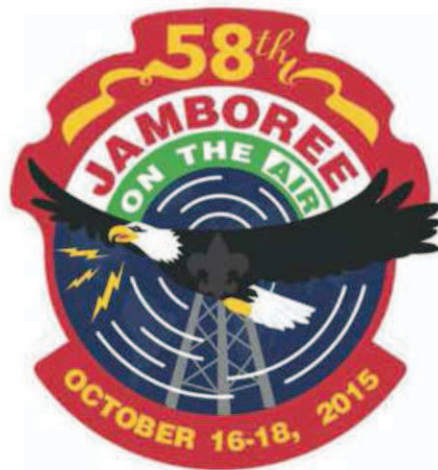


Interested in helping introduce young people to amateur radio ... while being part of a worldwide operating event? Set aside some time on the third weekend in October to take part in JOTA — the Jamboree on the Air!

Jamboree on the Air (and Internet)



Amateur Radio Delivers the Largest Scouting Event in the World

BY JIM WILSON, K5ND*

Jamboree on the Air and Jamboree on the Internet (JOTA-JOTI) happen every year on the third weekend in October. This year's activity is October 16, 17, and 18 local time.

So How Big Is It?

The 2014 JOTA-JOTI weekend saw over 1.3 million Scouts and Girl Guides get on the air from 157 countries — over 11,000 stations were active, supported by nearly 20,000 amateur radio operators. So JOTA-JOTI is a huge event, bringing together scouts and introducing them to other cultures as well as the technology and fun of amateur radio.

What Is It?

Jamboree on the Air was first organized for the World Order of the Scout Movement in 1958 by Les Mitchell, G3BHK (SK). Jamboree on the Internet was added in 1996 using Internet chat, social media, and even YouTube. JOTA-JOTI is essentially an on the air and online conversation between Scouts to help make the world a smaller place.

It's a full weekend of activation from dedicated sites around the world or it involves hams setting up stations at local campouts, ranging from supporting a troop of a dozen Scouts or a full blown council camporee with literally hundreds or even thousands of Scouts present.

Does It Have an Impact?

It is often a Scout's first exposure to amateur radio and getting on the air. One parent commented:

"My thanks for hosting JOTA. It was so much fun for my son that he spent most of dinner talking about it. In fact, he now wants to become a licensed operator ... This is exactly the sort of thing I want him to learn through Scouting."

Additional reports on the impact of JOTA-JOTI participation are in the sidebar stories. As you can see, JOTA-JOTI



Scouts get on the air from K2BSA/9, operating from Camp Decorah in Holmen, WI. Assisted by five ham radio operators, over 20 Scouts got on the air and had a great time learning the technology and talking with other Scouts. (All photos used with permission)

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Engaging with JOTA-JOTI is as simple as getting on the air during the weekend and helping carry the conversation load with the Scout stations that are on the air.....If you hear CQ JOTA, consider giving the station a call and engaging several of the Scouts in a conversation.

serves as a superb introduction to amateur radio. While some Scouts, like the one above, catch on fire and want to learn more and get licensed, others gain knowledge that might be useful later.

For example, they might be future members of the local zoning board or homeowners association that is considering your application to put up a tower. It's good to take any opportunity to influence youth to consider the hobby, explore a technology vocation, or just to let them know how valuable amateur radio is to their community.

How You Can Support JOTA-JOTI

Engaging with JOTA-JOTI is as simple as getting on the air during the weekend and helping carry the conversation load with the Scout stations that are on the air. While there are more than 11,000 Scout stations on the air, it's often tough to line up time zones and propagation when the Scouts are actually in the station.

If you hear CQ JOTA, consider giving the station a call and engaging several of the Scouts in a conversation. Many, many current amateur radio operators got their start in the hobby through an encounter with JOTA or the Radio Merit Badge. Tell your stories and let them tell you about their early impressions.

I've been delighted to tune across the bands during JOTA-JOTI weekend, hearing lots of fantastic conversations. In

W4UOO and Troop 686

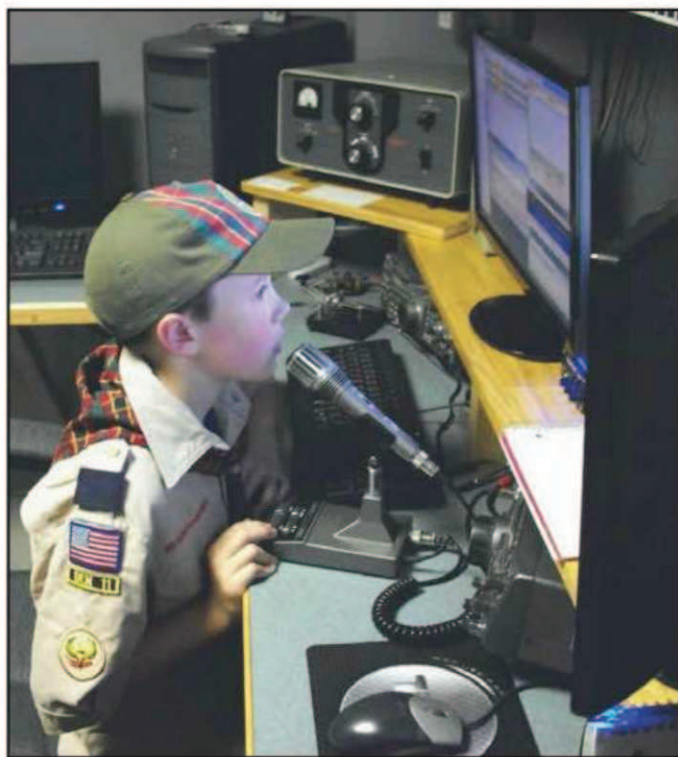
JOTA 2014 was the most exciting for Troop 686 in Brandon, Florida. We started off just after lunchtime with a few satellite contacts on SO-50 and AO-73. Then we got the entire group together for a contact on 17 meters with KT8BSA in Northeast Ohio. Several of our Scouts had a great conversation with Dale at the Buckeye Council in Northeast Ohio after at first being noticeably shy of the microphone. All of the Scouts that did actually get on the air ended up having a nice QSO with Dale, KT8BSA.

It was when we signed after some great QSOs that things really got interesting. While we thought we were going to wrap up Jamboree on the Air for the year, suddenly we heard PA2LO calling us with a huge signal, and everyone was looking around the room at each other wondering who this was calling W4UOO, and with a very intriguing accent.

PA2LO, Gert, located in the Netherlands, took the time to call us and compliment each of our scouts on their great on-the-air presence and their ability to use what they learned on the air about amateur radio. It was then that we had everyone on the edge of their seats, eyes wide open and smiles from ear to ear, not to mention a few fist bumps and high fives, when learning how radio can bring folks 4,500 miles away to be heard loud and clear as if they are in the room with us.

Scouts and adults then departed, all enamored with a great experience on the air.

— Mike Sprenger, W4UOO



Scout James Coelho watching a PSK-31 conversation from WX1S in Strafford, NH. Here, five Scouts got on the air, supported by one amateur radio operator.

K6M and Pack 693

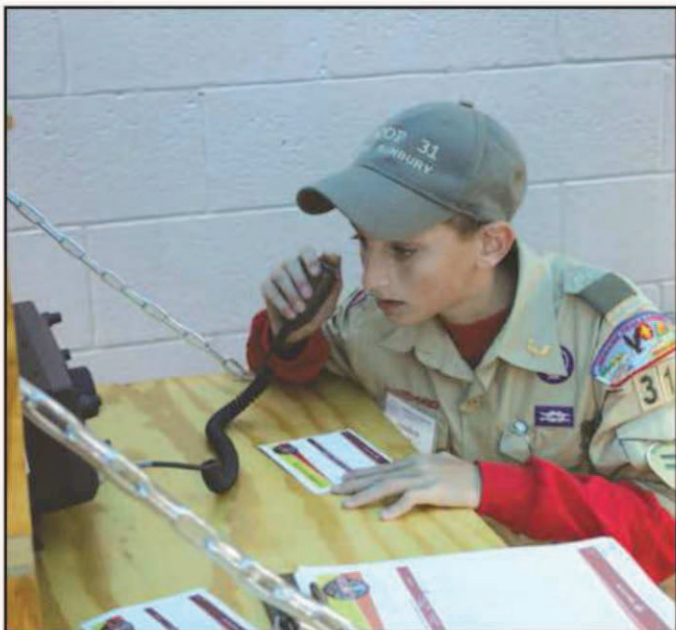
The Webelo IIs from Pack 693 (St. Mary's in Palmdale, CA), Connor Lee, and Ramdrick had a fun weekend getting into radio for the first time. They used newer radios and technology but also an older FT-101ZD with vacuum tubes (in the transmitter) and learned a bit about electronics and how things have changed over the years.

The boys had a great time starting off Friday night on a UHF repeater via the IRLP Western Area Reflector communicating with Reno, Nevada; Utah; Colorado; and Michigan as well as their home state in California. They were a bit timid about making mistakes as they were first-timers on the air, but managed to overcome their worries and did a fine job. The stations reported that they were doing great and were clear to understand.

Saturday afternoon moved on to SSTV on 20 meters where they had numerous receipts all over the country sending their pictures out. They even had confirmation from Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, Canada. The best receipt was a funny QSL card from an operator in Arizona, which sported an E.T. style alien as the graphic — maybe the aliens received it, too, but we will never know! (*they don't QSL — ed.*)

Later in the day, they worked USB on 20 meters with stations including a Coast Guard Reservist in Arizona who was working many JOTA stations with his strong signal. The operator, Paul, asked what the best part of the weekend was so far. To Paul's surprise, one of the boys responded, "video games." The other boy quickly recanted with, "HAM radio?" which amused Paul and the rest of us since we all know it's hard to top video games. But I think we did it this weekend with JOTA!

— Christopher Cordell, AA6FF



Scout Justice Rozic logs another contact at K3MJW at Upper Barrell, PA, where 10 amateur radio operators put in play four stations, making 75 contacts during the weekend, involving 22 Scouts in the action.



Scout Amitay Tadmor involved in a Scout-to-Scout conversation during Jamboree on the Air over station K4B in Naples, Florida. Six hams set up and operated the station for 15 Scouts and 10 visitors.

N9S Calumet Council Thunderbird District Fall Camporee

This year's JOTA fell on the same weekend as the Calumet Council Thunderbird District Fall Camporee. This was a great opportunity to showcase radio to a large number of scouts and adults.

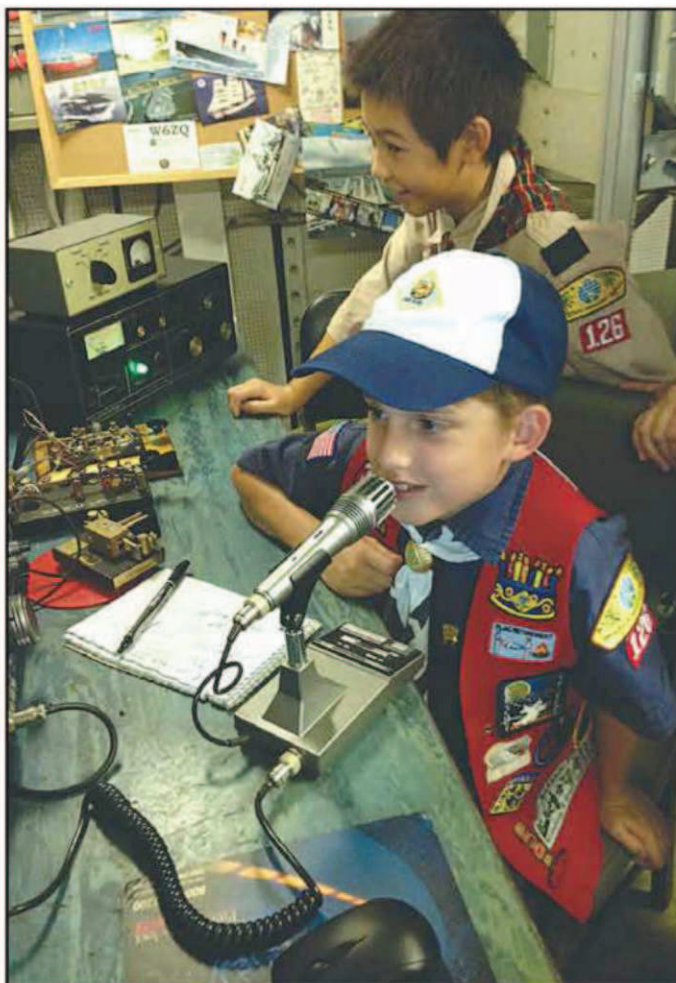
The boys started out slowly with one-word conversations, but quickly discovered that detailed discussions were a lot of fun. Eventually, the scouts were so comfortable in front of the mic that a line of participants developed.

A very simple antenna, 20/40 inverted Vee at 20 feet, and a vintage TR7 running 100 watts produced a total of 45 contacts, 13 states and 9 countries. Best DX was a 20-meter contact with the Scout station in Namibia, V55JOTA, just a taste under 8,000 miles. Too bad that the contact occurred at 2 a.m. his time, with all his Scouts already fast asleep.

The scouts also liked the ability to call up each station on QRZ.com. That way they combined the radio activity with the added information, maps, and photos on the contacted station's web page. I think next time we will blend JOTA with JOTI at the same time.

Most heard comment: "This is way cool!"

— John Sikora, WB9IWN



Cub Scout Pack 126 got on the air from the radio room on the battleship U.S.S. Missouri in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This 2013 operation was a pack highlight with one Scout asking to work on his ham license and another starting work on Morse Code.

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2014, V55JOTA from Namibia was loud and strong in North America and K2BSA/4 engaged in a long list of conversations from Atlanta.

Surprising for me has also been hearing net control operators stop everything and engage in conversations with Scouts who happen to encounter their frequency near to the JOTA frequencies, which can be found at <http://www.scouting.org/jota/operators_guides.aspx>.

Another way to support JOTA-JOTI is to activate your club to work with your local Scouting organization to run a station at that weekend's Scouting event (if there is one; but October is prime time for weekend Scouting events). It's also possible to set up a station and invite the Scouts. However, if your location isn't a big draw, such as the KH6BB operation on the U.S.S. Missouri in Pearl Harbor, it's very tough to get Scouts, their troops, or their families to find time on the weekend. It's far better to go where the Scouts are.

More Information

You can find more information about USA JOTA-JOTI at <<http://www.scouting.org/jota.aspx>>. World Scouting information is at <<http://www.world-jotajoti.info>>.

Another excellent source of information is <<http://www.k2bsa.net>>. The K2BSA Amateur Radio Association is dedicated to extending the reach of amateur radio in the Scouting movement. As such, it has an impressive array of resources to support your efforts, from talking points (meant to translate ham speak to Scouting speak) to slide decks, brochures to posters, and lots of operating tips.

You can also contact me, Jim Wilson, K5ND, World JOTA-JOTI Team Member and USA National JOTA Coordinator, at <jim.wilson@k2bsa.net>.

K4MN and Occoneechee Council

This was our third JOTA event in our district and once again all participants had the opportunity to contact Scouts from other areas and have a lot of fun. The weather was perfect and Scouts (Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venturing Crew) were able to do the Radio Merit Badge, Belt Loops, assemble solar panels, and chat on the radio and via Internet.

An important note that I would like to share is that, during the event, I noticed that a Cub Scout and his mother were talking against a wall in the hallway and you could see frustration from both of them. I decided to approach them to ask if everything was okay. Mom was very apologetic and said to me that her son has a disability and didn't take his medicine, and that most likely they would be going home. I asked Mom for five more minutes and I went down to my knees and asked the Cub Scout that if he doesn't mind, I would like to show him something really cool for a minute.

I took him to one of the radio stations and asked the operator to show the Cub Scout and his mom why ham radio is so cool for him, then I left. I came back later and it was hard to hold back my tears when I saw that the Cub Scout was talking on the radio, and Mom was smiling and thanking me so much for this JOTA event. The best medicine her son could have that day was talking on the radio with other Scouts and listening to his new Scout friends. That was a priceless moment that I will never forget. Indeed, he stayed and completed all his Belt Loops as well!

— Aixa Downing, Scout Leader