



Lake County
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Amateur Radio Emergency Services ®
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For Immediate Release

GMR Scholarship Announced For Emergency Communicators

Madison, Wisconsin, August 10th, 2006 - Today marked the beginning of the new Great Midwest Relay Communication Team Scholarship Fund.

A check for \$1,000 was presented to Jerry Martin representing the GMR Comm Team. Presenting the check was Mark Nelson, President of Great Lakes Sports Productions the organization which operates the Great Midwest Relay. Also present was Mr. Joe Pulizzano, GMR Race Director.



(L to R) Joe Pulizzano GMR Race Director, Jerry Martin - GMR Comm Team Coordinator, Mark Nelson President, Great Lakes Sports Productions

The Great Midwest Relay is a 190 mile team running relay race. "It is unique for a running event" explained Joe Pulizzano, Race Director and veteran runner himself.

"Most running events like marathons are designed for individuals. You race against yourself and the clock. A relay like this is typically made up of a 12 person team. Each member is trying to do their individual best during their 3 to 6 mile segment. At a designated Transfer Area (TA), the runner will pass a flexible wristband to their teammate who'll continue on their segment. It puts the individual in a true team relationship. There are a total of 36 designated transfer areas throughout the entire route, so this event covers a lot of real estate. Eight counties, two states in two days. That is why the hams have proven so valuable. They establish voice and data networks from start to finish so the event staff really knows what is going on. In case of any life threatening weather, the hams will advise us to suspend the race, but only the portion of the race affected by the storm track. This gives us maximum safety for the participants, volunteers and staff, with minimum impact on the event."

This scholarship fund will reimburse the tuition these ham volunteers pay for these emergency communication courses offered by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), the National Association for Amateur Radio. These courses teach the hams how to organize and communicate during a variety of local state and national emergencies. Each county in Wisconsin and Illinois that participated in the GMR is eligible to submit tuition reimbursement applications. The hams will pay for the course up front, and upon successful completion of the course, they can submit a request for tuition reimbursement.

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Amateur radio operators have been thrust into the public spotlight during the terrible 2005 hurricane season beginning with Hurricane Dennis, followed by Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. “Ham radio works when other communications fail” has been the reason for our success” Jerry Martin whose ham radio call sign is KC9BDA explained; “As we work with more public service agencies we have to continue our education. We must learn how to effectively work with our local police, fire, emergency management agencies, the various federal government agencies, and the national relief agencies such as the American Red Cross, and the Salvation Army.”

Martin went on to say, “Few people realize how many hams are staffing severe weather radio networks every time storms threaten your community. These are not the dramatic “Storm Chasers” you see risking their lives photographing tornados. No, these are your neighbors who are trained spotters and are providing first hand, accurate reports of the current conditions. These reports are then passed directly to your local office of the National Weather Service.”

In the case of national disasters, the hams organize to help in any capacity they can. During the Shuttle Columbia disaster over Texas in 2003, the hams provided communication support to the recovery search teams. After Hurricane Katrina had destroyed all the normal communication networks it was a small army of ham radio operators that were passing emergency traffic to the “outside world”.

“We view the Great Midwest Relay as a wonderful opportunity to practice our emergency communication skills during this two day, two state event”, Martin cited. “We find out what equipment and procedures work and what needs to be improved during this long exercise. That holds true for the weather too. It can be great or miserable, but remember; during disasters the weather is usually pretty bad.” Martin reminded us.

Mark Nelson put it this way; “We really appreciate the total communication support the hams provide. This scholarship is just one way we can help support them.”

For more information on the Great Midwest Relay go to: www.greatmidwestrelay.com

To learn more about Amateur Radio, go to www.hello-radio.org

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