

KAUAI GARDEN ISLAND NEWS

MONDAY * JUNE 26, 2006

Providing communication when all else fails

by Dennis Fujimoto - the garden island

WAILUA — While organizers expected quite a turnout for the Kaua'i Amateur Radio Club Field Day at Lydgate Park this weekend, they hardly expected Ed and Barbara Scholes of Liverpool, England.

Ed, a ham radio operator in England, said that prior to visiting Kaua'i, he checked the Internet and was surprised to find the event posted.

He sent an e-mail to KH6AS, the Kaua'i call letters, and met up with event coordinator Jerry Hill, who welcomed the couple to visit the festivities.

"This is a good site," Hill said of Lydgate Park. On Saturday, Hill said if they set up prior to 8 a.m., they would be operating until 8 a.m., Sunday. However, if they started setting up after 8 a.m., they would be able to operate until 11 a.m.

During that time, Hill said the object is to make contact with other operators and sites around the country.

For the Saturday event, two of the park's smaller pavilions closest to the heiau were utilized with a generator providing the power to operate various computers and radios. A bigger beam antenna sat in the parking lot and a smaller antenna was roped to the pillar of a pavilion.

Hill explained that activity is quiet during the morning hours because all the antennas are pointed away from the signals beamed from Hawai'i. During the afternoon, when the East Coast starts shutting down, the antennae are repositioned and Hawai'i callers have a better chance of being heard.

To help with this situation, one operator, Tom Ellis, worked with Ed Pagaduan to install an antenna signal booster. Hill said with the booster, hopefully, it gets the signal strong enough to be able to be heard.

"We have three people who have signed up for the evening and night shift," Hill said. He pointed out that a benefit of the Lydgate site is the visibility it provides the radio club to the public.

Two operators who were involved, but not on the site were Bob Anderson and Alfred Darling. As members of the American Red Cross, Kaua'i Chapter, the pair were engaged in training Department of Education school representatives in emergency shelter management under a Red Cross Table Top Scenario program.

"When people pass by, they can see the equipment and come in to see what we're doing," Hill said. "Additionally, if ham operators pass by, they'll recognize the event and are welcome to stop in as well."

In addition to the Kaua'i Amateur Radio Club, Hill said there was a possibility that two other groups could be participating as well.

"We're organized, but individual," Hill said.

One group consisting of Mitch Oishi and Allan Branco was believed to be working at Hanama'ulu Beach Park out of Oishi's converted ambulance.

(See next page)

Providing communication when all else fails

The other group headed by Gami Pascua, Clarence Gardner and other “old-time” radio operators was believed to be operating at the Salt Pond Park.

Hill, a retired teacher who taught radio at Waimea High School, said there are about 200 ham operators licensed, but of that total, only about 60 are active on Kaua‘i.

“During times of emergency when all the power goes out, ham radios can still operate,” Hill said.

Following Hurricane Iniki, Hill said he had his vertical antenna up and established communication with the Mainland within a day of the storm’s passing.

“We were passing welfare and health messages,” Hill said. “The signals were beamed to the United Nations Readiness Group and included names and phone numbers of people who needed to let Mainland relatives know they were all right.”

Hill said he continued to send messages for three days until he heard other operators come on line.

“It’s a small world with ham radio,” Scholes said.

- Dennis Fujimoto, photographer and staff writer, can be reached at 245-3681 (ext. 253) or dfujimoto@kauaipubco.com.

Article is from The Garden Island newspaper website; www.kauaiworld.com