

# MERT

Marion County Emergency Radio Team



Marion County Sheriff's Office  
Div. of Emergency Management

## COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

August 2023

MERT's primary role is to support all open Evacuation Shelters throughout Marion County during declared Emergency events. We also support EOC and emergency personnel along with Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) with voice, image and data communications resources. "Call MERT.... When all else fails!"

*Please check the calendar for changes to the meetings scheduled the rest of this year. <https://kg4nxx.com/mert-calendar/>*

Mark your calendars!

### MERT Monthly Meeting

The next Meeting will be on August 19th @ 10:00 am at the MCSO EOC (692 NW 30th Ave, Ocala, FL 34475).

See you there!

### *It's Wonderful being Home!*



Harlan Cook (KN4VRM)  
MERT Coordinator

Over the course of the last two months, my wife and I travelled this great country seeing our extended families, distant friends - including those incredible great granddaughters - we've not visited with since the pandemic. We are blessed to be able to make a trip like this, but it is always wonderful being back home, safe and with friends again.

I would not have had the opportunity to make this trip without the outstanding support and leadership by Bill Gillespie (KW5BG), MERT Assistant Coordinator and Leon Jurcyszyn (K8ZAG), Past Coordinator and Technical Advisor.

My sincerest thanks to them both for stepping up and agreeing to lead MERT allowing me to be away for the extended time. It is another example what MERT Members do often... **stepping up** when others... step back and away from responsibility.

Now, let's celebrate some good news (since we are in Hurricane season) that the tropics have been very quiet so far. Between multiple factors, weather conditions continue

"The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering...

**Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good."** ~Ivan Scheier

being very poor for hurricane development. Like everyone, I'm keeping my fingers crossed this will continue for the rest of the year! (Can you tell I'm an eternal optimist?)

Ok, here's some of our upcoming projects:

- ✓ Finalizing a new and slimmed down version ICS-205 focusing on making it easier and simpler to use.
- ✓ Reprogramming all the SHREK Kit radios (along with a couple of the Radio room radios) so all will be programmed the same.
- ✓ Finishing the testing of the radio facilities on the Mobile Command Center (MCC).
- ✓ Start building an MCC Operations Manual to guide all Members in setting up, operating and supporting MERT activities while operating the MCC during deployments.
- ✓ Complete the school Shelter Audits.
- ✓ See the antenna repairs at Belleview Middle School are completed ASAP.
- ✓ Organize a joint Marion County Exercise for EMCOMM teams (MERT, ARES and HEC).
- ✓ Replacing and moving the OCF HF Antenna tower (telescoping type) to the outer corner of the generator fence to place the antenna long wire element further from the large tree.
- ✓ Join the weekly WINLINK digital communications tests by MERT Members
- ✓ Join other MERT Members and get involved in the FDEM Region 3/5 monthly Exercise on August 30<sup>th</sup> to learn how to conduct the many aspects it requires.

As you can see, we have lots of projects to tackle and we need all MERT Members to support completing them.

MOST OF ALL... I ask for MERT Members who have not been active... to please come and get involved again. MERT needs you to help fulfill our Mission.



HRCK

**MERT NEEDS YOU!**

**Please renew your participation in MERT activities.**

"Whatever you do may seem insignificant, but it is most important that you do it!"

Mahatma Gandhi

## MERT Wednesday Check-In's and Other Activities

"Check-In's" (0900 to 1200 Hrs.)



(L-R) Gray Moffett (KC3DWY), and Heidi Gibson (Marion Co. Public Schools Support Coordinator for EMCOMM)

### June 28th– School Shelter Radio Room Checks

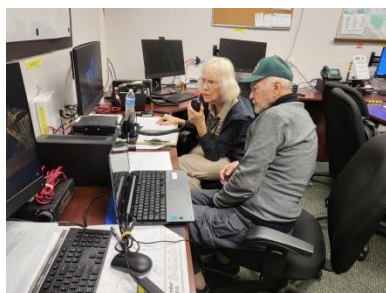
Leon Jurczynszyn (K8ZAG) led members Gary Neron (KS4TSX), Bill Davis (KQ4ILZ), and Gray Moffett (KC3DWY) to three school shelters to check out the readiness of their radio rooms.

All three radios and antenna systems checked out well – Liberty Middle School, Horizon Academy, and Hammett Bowen Elementary.

More school shelter visits are to be scheduled.



(L-R) New MERT Member Bill Davis (KQ4ILZ) and Leon Jurczynszyn (K8ZAG)



(L-R) Sharon Malik (KM4SMM) and Mike Condon (W9MNC) manned the EOC to respond to incoming radio checks.

July 5<sup>th</sup> – No Meeting

July 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting – (8 members)



- ✓ The tower at the EOC had to be lowered in order for the two WeatherSTEM cameras to be replaced with newer (and operating) weather cameras. The tower operated perfectly!  
(Visit [KG4NXO.com](http://KG4NXO.com) and click the "Florida Weather" tab, then click the "Weather Stations in Marion County" button.)

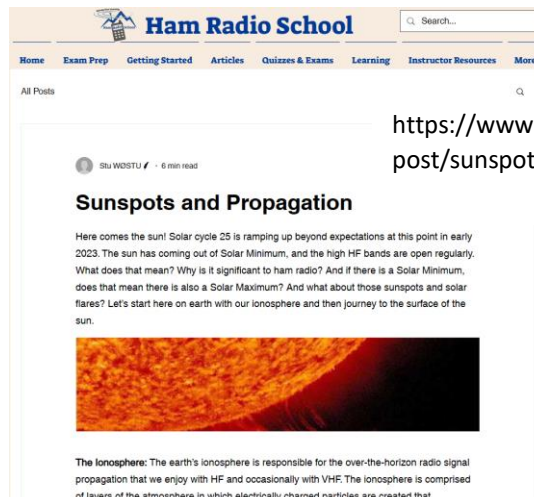
- ✓ Gray showed how to check into the ARES NFL Net.
- ✓ Harlan and Leon would like MERT members to examine the current ICS205 and come back with ideas on how it can be streamlined and made easier to use.
- ✓ Gary and Gray stated more members should participate in the nets and meetings in order to be useful in emergencies.

## July 15<sup>th</sup> MERT ARES HEC CERT Monthly Meeting (17 attendees)

# MERT

**MERT ARES HEC CERT MONTHLY MEETING**  
**AGENDA**  
 July 15, 2023  
 10:00 am

- **Welcome!** Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) MERT Coordinator
- **Pledge of Allegiance**
- **Attendee Introductions** (Name, Call Sign and Organization)
- **Silent Key Acknowledgements**
  - A moment of silence for all our friends who are informed or past
- **MERT Coordinator Update** Harlan Cook (KN4VRM) MERT Coordinator
  - My sincere thanks to Bill Gillespie (KW5BG) and Leon Jurczynyn (K8ZAG) for filling in as acting MERT Coordinator during my time out of state.
  - **MERT 20 Special Event Exercise a HUGE Success!**  
 The first ever Special Event Exercise conducted by MERT Members was an incredible success with 110 Amateur Radio contacts made across 24 states and 7 foreign countries.
  - **MCC Update**
    - Antenna and Screwdriver Control Cable testing update
  - **Solar Flares and CME Basics**
    - According to NASA, a solar flare is an intense burst of radiation that comes from the release of magnetic



<https://www.hamradioschool.com/post/sunspots-and-propagation>

Attendees at the July Monthly Meeting enjoyed several

interesting updates and presentations. MERT thanks Harlan Cook, MERT Coordinator; Hayden Kaufman, Marion County ARES Coordinator; and, Dave Welker, Hospital Emergency Team Coordinator for their presentations.

- **ARES Coordinator Update** - Hayden Kaufman, Marion Co.
  - ARES news and activities. ARES Coordinator
- **HEC Update** – Dave Welker, HEC Coordinator (W2SRP)
  - WINLINK ADV Digipeater Update
  - HEC Plan to shift focus to Voice (Radio Telephony) focus





## July 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting – (10 members)

- ✓ The OCF antenna needs to be moved away from the trees. The plan is to replace the telescoping mast and ropes while adding two guy wires for stability. So MERT has a new project! Harlan is going to gift a new mast.
- ✓ Leon gifted the NVIS antenna he purchased recently to MERT. Thank You Leon! (We also thank Roger Staley (K4ZFW) for reducing the cost of sale.)
- ✓ Still waiting for Heidi Gibson from MCPS to get back to MERT about finishing the shelter checks. Belleview Middle needs a new antenna before school starts. Waiting to hear about our requests for passwords for computers and their internets.
- ✓ Gray Moffett showed new Member Bill Davis how to check into the ARES NFL Net.
- ✓ We talked about how to do HF Winlink.
- ✓ Discussed if we should do away with Winlink at the shelters.



(L-R) Bill Davis and Gray Moffett

## July 20<sup>th</sup> - MCC Testing Update



New MCSO MCC.



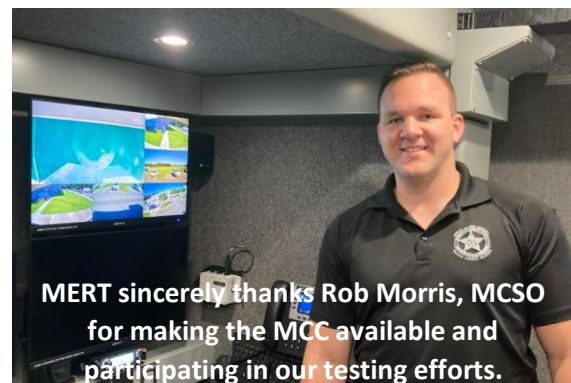
Exterior MERT connector panel.



Testing report to  
Director Preston  
Bowlin, MCSO.



Leon making a 2 Meter radio test.



MERT sincerely thanks Rob Morris, MCSO  
for making the MCC available and  
participating in our testing efforts.

MERT conducted extensive system acceptance testing of the new MCC on July 20<sup>th</sup> in testing our radio/antenna systems. Harlan Cook, MERT Coordinator and Leon Jurcyszyn, Technical Advisor conducted the tests and submitted a report to document the results.

## July 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting – (10 members)

- ✓ The MCC is now fully functional except the HF Tarheel antenna which won't "tune" even with +12 volts available. The VHF/UHF is fully functional with SWR of 1.5.
- ✓ MERT recommends replacing the Tarheel antenna by the manufacturer and then check the connections.
- ✓ MERT will be documenting all the connections and cable jumpers inside and outside the MCC. This will be in an Operations Manual used as a reference/training guide and stored in the MCC for use by any MERT Member supporting the MCC in a deployment.
- ✓ Trainings for MERT personnel on how to man the MCC will be coming soon.
- ✓ The MCC will be getting a front, vertical awning to shade on the outside MERT station protecting Members from sun and inclement weather.
- ✓ The new MCC radios are going to be stored in the EOC and made available for all types of uses from the MCC to Field Deployments for any MCSO activation.
- ✓ KK4AEG is the MERT call sign while the MCC is deployed. KG4NXO is still the callsign for MERT EOC operations.
- ✓ Harlan shared that he spoke to CERT membership at Stone Creek to make them aware of MERT and how to call a report in.
- ✓ Hayden stated that ARRL has recognized ARES who can be embedded into CERT community teams. He also stated that we are in FEMA Region 4 and FL State Region 5.



**"The greatest waste in the world is the difference between what we are... and what we could become!"**

Ben Herbster (American Clergyman)

## *Featured MERT Member – Mike Condon (W9MNC)*

I retired from the Air Force in 1983 having served 6 years in the Army and then 17 years in the Air Force. After my service, I went to school for Computer Programming and was hired by WPS Insurance for 10 years then with American Family Insurance for 10 years. Regrettably, I got cancer in 2005 which took me a couple of years before I recovered and moved forward in life.



While I was in the Air Force, I started with CB radio. I met a lot of people the first couple of years. While I was doing CB in Oklahoma, I started doing storm spotting. There are a lot of tornados in Oklahoma.

When I left there, I spent three tours in the Philippines and one in Illinois. After retiring, I got back into CB. I did that until I got a lightning strike. It seems like lightning likes me. It took out my antenna, so I packed up the CB equipment. After my bout with cancer, I thought about taking out the CB equipment. Then I remembered how bad CB was, so I decided to do what I had thought about doing. I got my Ham license.

While I was in Wisconsin, I was teaching motorcycle safety and officiating different sports. I started giving up the officiating a sport at a time and teaching after the cancer. After getting my Ham license I was doing storm spotting, CERT, and doing different events around the area.

When I moved to Ocala, I wanted to do the same here as I did in Wisconsin. I got involved with MERT and the Silver Springs Radio Club. I enjoy Ham radio. It gives me a chance to talk to people around the world. I was really into working with the EOC in Wisconsin. We worked many events in the summer months including storm spotters.



I like giving back to the local area. Uncle Sam looked after me for 23 so this is a way to give back.

Mike Condon, W9MNC

*Mike, Thank You for your many years of service to the United States military and MERT! It is respected and appreciated!*

## MERT Member Update

### *County Award – 2500 Counties!*

**By Kraig Pritts KA2LHO**

You have read or heard about our "radio road trips" putting counties and parks "on the air" as part of the ham radio hobby. One aspect of this hobby in which I have been involved since the early 1980's is trying to make contacts with other operators in all 3,077 counties of the United States.

CQ Magazine, a national ham radio publication, offers an award certificate for all hams that achieve this goal with *confirmed* contacts.

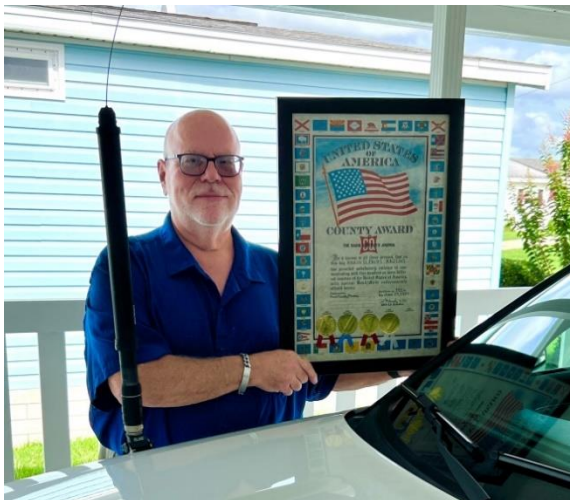
*What is a confirmed contact?* We are required to have *written confirmation* for each of the contacts as we work toward that goal.

Written confirmations are usually done by exchanges of postcard type documents (called QSL cards) verifying the radio communication. I have many such cards from all over the world. I also track those from different counties throughout the United States.

Today I received my ribbon and seal to place on my original 500 county award certificate. This ribbon is for achieving the 2,500 confirmed county contact level.

The next level is 3,000 contacts, then completing all 3,077. I am working on getting them all with cards currently in the mail that, when returned, will put me over the 2,600 confirmed county mark.

Hopefully it won't take me another 40 years to achieve that goal!!!! KA2LHO



***Interested in learning more about MERT? Visit <https://KG4NXO.com>***

MERT Members....if you are also a CERT Member, your reports on helping your local community group are invited.