



Mahoning Valley Amateur Radio Association Voice Coil



November 2025	mvara.w8qly@gmail.com	The Voice Coil - Volume 25-11
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President's Corner

We were contacted by Hilltop Elementary School a few weeks ago about contacting the ISS on ham radio. Of course we jumped at the chance. This is something that not everyone can do. So, the team of volunteers went to work and came up with a solution that is acceptable with the NASA / ARISS team.

Club members have stepped up and we have assembled a few sub teams that are hard at work to provide this contact. But your help is needed to pull this off and besides you could be doing something cool. Please let Dave Brett, Frank Sole or me know that you can help and we will put you to work.

Scott, KE4UHC

Upcoming MVARA Events

Date	Event	Location
November 5, 2025	MVARA VE Testing	Boardman
November 13, 2025	MVARA Meeting (Annual Election)	Boardman

November Club Program

For November, Rob Dunham, KE8OKO, will be joining us to talk about some of the tricks and tips he has picked up on using Winlink. In addition to being a Winlink user, Rob also is the owner of our local VHF Winlink Gateway. If you are anywhere in our area, the odds are you can hit Rob's gateway and send emails via 2M radio, often with as little as an HT. If you are a Tech, this is a great doorway into the digital side of Ham Radio and Rob can help you along the way.



Groups.io

This is a reminder that MVARA has a groups.io page we use to make announcements and discuss upcoming events and such. The page is available to all members of the club and can be found here: <https://groups.io/g/mvara> and there is a subscribe link about midway down the page.

Welcome New Member Roy John

I am semi-retired. I retired from YSU as a software specialist and an adjunct instructor. I'm currently an adjunct instructor at PSU World Campus. I currently live in New Waterford with my wife Irene and my dog Sam on 1.5 acres.

I was a ham 40 years ago (WD8NJH) but when I started college, I sold everything and used the money to pay for school. My wife recently suggested I should get back into amateur radio, and I took to it before she changed her mind :-)

I received my Technician license September 3rd and passed my General license on October 11th. I attended one of the MVARA meetings and decided that this is a great group, and joined.

Roy John, KF8EWQ

From the Shack and Field: A New Amateur's Notes

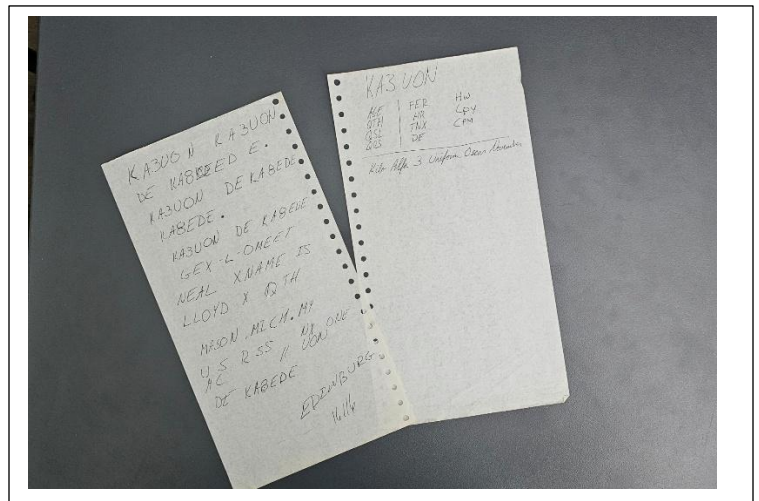
Neal Bayless, KA3UON

Getting Licensed - The Old Days

In the "old days" of the 1980s, the entry-level ticket was the Novice license. The only thing keeping me from getting one of the hot vanity calls with a catchy (or quick CW) string of characters is the uniqueness of my semi-ancient Novice call. I've had a few of us "older" guys comment on it, and I think I'll keep it—for now.

From an early age, I was exposed to old amateurs. My father (WB3DSJ), Walter Hamm, Tom Kryner, and Jim Cleland—"Radio Jim"—were fixtures at our house, hovering over my dad's glowing boat anchors or at our breakfast table on the way to the Breezeshooter's or Warren Hamfest. I always came home with some radio relic: old QST mags, ARRL books, a half-built electronics "thing," or a collection of LEDs and resistors. Listening to the old guys haggle, the sound of 2m chatter, wet shoes, and chewing through secondhand smoke as I looked at the then-new PCs and crazy tech in "the barn" was the best weekend a 10-year-old could ask for.

At one of these hamfests, my dad bought me the ARRL *Tune in the World with Ham Radio* book and cassette tapes. I might still have this somewhere, minus the tapes that were undoubtedly chewed to bits in a clumsy Realistic brand, fake wood-grained, tape recorder. I can still see the purple cosmos on the cover with the latest rigs floating about the stars. This book came with, if I remember right, two or three blue cassette tapes to learn the then-required 5 WPM CW test. I listened over and over on my bedroom floor or tuned into the occasional W1AW practice session on one of the shortwave/HAM receivers. (See picture of old printer paper practice sheet and one of my first QSOs.)



Every Wednesday night for a few months, I sat in a classroom at St. Nick's school in Struthers for my Novice class. Dad would drop me off for that hour or two in the dark with

a handful of people as Lou talked tube theory and operations before giving us our nightly CW practice session. Those are good memories, and although I never remember Lou's name or call sign, he was a big influence in my childhood.

Afterward, we took our test of both theory and the 5 WPM CW. I was now a new Novice at 12 years old. My mom and dad could no longer speak in Morse code about "maybe we should take the kids to get ice cream" around me, and I could finally get on the air with my new callsign. According to my ancient ARRL log, I made a few dozen contacts in dad's shack before boy scouts, R/C airplanes, baseball, school, and every other typical thing took over my pre-teen adolescence.

Those were the "good old days" everyone talks about—when you had to actually leave the house to get anything accomplished, talk to other human beings if you had questions, and make corded telephone calls to communicate (at least until you became a Novice).

The New Days

Fast forward to 2025. A year where bike racing had me sidelined by one injury after the next, I decided to get back into the radio game. Getting started today is as easy as it has ever been. There's no CW requirement for a Technician ticket, and there are minimal questions on tube theory or electronics in general.

Before I sought out a club, I let blind obsession lead the way, as I do with most things. I found the Gordon West series of study books. This is a great resource for the Tech license as it goes into just the right amount of detail to understand the theory behind the question. I found it more difficult to rely solely on this book for the General exam, and I would consider this an introductory course as you begin to study for the General and Extra classes.

I don't know how many people told me as I prepared for the Tech exam, "keep going afterward if you don't take them both at the same time. You are already in study mode." I can't agree more with this. The jump from the Tech exam to the General isn't much harder if you truly want to learn some of the nitty-gritty parts of the hobby. There are quite a few more questions on electronics theory for the General, along with the memorization of the band plan segments. The General opens up so much more band play for the operator it makes getting on the air so much easier. I see the incentive for amateurs here, but I personally think offering up a small part of another band might entice more Techs to move to General after experiencing some of the other bands. Something for further debate at another time.

Ham Radio Prep (HRP) it seems is far and away the app of choice for studying for amateur exams. I was skeptical about it. However, I paid the money for the full access within the app and website, and I'm glad I did. If I need to change your mind, go on YouTube and search for *Ham Radio General Exam Course*. If you make it through 15 minutes of one of those recorded, in-person courses, congratulations. By minute 20, you'll be checking out the Ham Radio Prep app—or anything else—instead of those recorded sessions.

With HRP you can practice anywhere, anytime, 24/7, as long as you have your mobile phone. Believe me, I used it everywhere you can think I could have used it. The app has practice sections, adequate explanations, topical videos, and practice exams for the license

class you're pursuing. It shows your percentage of readiness based on your scores and understanding, and it will keep asking you questions you routinely miss—drilling them delicately into your head until you master them. I can't recommend this enough.

When I thought I had the Technician pool of questions well in hand, I wanted to get that test over and done but didn't find a local in-person test for a couple of weeks. That issue forced me to look at some internet testing options. There's nothing finer than a well-done, in-person class and testing, but I'm not known for my patience. This doesn't contradict my earlier statements about the HRP app; I still think an in-person class is the best method to make real-world friends and learn from other's experiences, and both should be used in the study process.

There are almost as many options for testing as there are amateur radio tangents, as you'll see here: <https://www.arrl.org/online-exam-session>. I settled on PARCS (Parc Radio and Technology at parcradio.org), which gave me an additional week until my exam date to study. PARCS has an intense list of Do's and Don'ts to prep for the exam: Cover any TV, monitor, or nearby devices. There is to be no interruption or anyone walking into the room. On and on it goes. There is an introduction by a member of the team that then sends you over to the appropriate "room" of VE (volunteer examiners). After the introductions and a scan they make of your testing room surroundings, it is game on.

I won't lie; I was as nervous as I could be for the exam. About 20 minutes after being assigned to my virtual test "room," I was a passing Technician and back on the air as KA3UON. Almost immediately, I started in on the General exam test pool of questions. I planned to test only a month or so later, but I was having a bunch of fun getting on the air and playing with antennas, discovering digital modes, field day, some QRP, etc.

I was starting to score almost okay—good enough—on the practice exams I was taking on HRP or ARRL testing links when I saw the open VE testing at the GOP Headquarters in Boardman the following week and decided on a whim that I would go see how I could score. I didn't think I would pass. I figured it would be like the practice exams and I'd miss the cut by about three questions. I knew where I was weak in the exam pool, and when I turned it in, I still felt I would miss by a couple. A thumbs up indicated a miracle had just occurred!

Right and Wrong Ways

I don't think there is any wrong way to prepare for your license exam. Like anything else learned, it's largely a matter of what works best for you. I encourage you to look at all the tools available—and I encourage you old hams, Elmers, and mentors to do the same. If you get the fantastic opportunity to talk to someone thinking about becoming a new amateur, show them this essay and have them reach out to me with any questions. I'd love to help them find their best way to get on the air.

I would like to address the big controversy over "don't just memorize the question pool." To some degree, I disagree with this. For the Technician license, learn what you can, memorize what you can't, and get on the air to learn from experience. You'll learn more by doing than by hypothetical study—it's why universities have labs during coursework and the learning you get from getting on air, setting up your equipment, making an antenna or collection of them, all adds up to real applicable nuts and bolts learning. It helps understand anything else you'll study for on the General and Extra. This is the only way I could learn the band

plan was spending time on the bands. I could look at those questions until my eyes hurt and never remember the General CW portion of the whatever band.

I have a birthday coming up and use it as my own New Year's to look back on the year: What did I accomplish? What was out of the ordinary that I didn't expect? Where did I fail hard, and how can I approach it better this coming year? Getting (re)licensed was definitely one of the highlights of this past year—a difficult year for a number of reasons. If you asked me a year ago if I would be this deep into amateur radio again I would never have believed it. At this point, I can't be more grateful for jumping in again. Thank you all for your help on these new experiences, and if you'll excuse me, I'm going to get back to studying for my Extra class.

About me:

I was licensed at 12 years old in 1988 and off air until 2025 when I tested for my Technician and General. I've jumped feet first into the radio game doing everything from casual contests to exploring the newer digital modes. It is all new to me again. Outside of radio I coach and race triathlons, bike races, and play a little baseball and have written for more than a few of those related organizations. I live with my wife and family in Columbiana County.

Mahoning County ARES Update

ARES Update October 2025

October has already been a busy month for ARES Members and the month isn't over yet. The ARRL Simulated Emergency Test (SET) for 2025 took place Oct. 4th in Mahoning County. This year's SET was different from previous drills. This year members were not given prior notice to the drill. Our Mahoning County SETs have always been announced well in advance and almost "scripted". This year all members received after 10 am that Saturday morning was a text/phone call and email telling them to check into the 146.745 repeater for a drill. No notice, no explanations and the exercise was in motion.



This was done to evaluate our ARES group's real time response to an emergency call up. The 2 plus hours of drill that day showed Mahoning County ARES is up to the task. We had over 30 operators drop what they were doing that day and participate. Three hospitals were "activated". Messages were sent to the Columbus EMA via HF stations in Mahoning County and W8SGT, EMA Columbus. Winlink messages were also sent and our new call up system notified our ARES Members using 3 different methods (text, phone call and email) in less than two minutes. We learned a great deal doing the drill and our after-action reports are still being studied. Thanks to all Mahoning County ARES Members who participated.

ARES was asked to provide communications for the Boardman Cross Country event Saturday, October 25th from 9 am until 4pm. This was an easy assignment as many of our members are seasoned providers of communications for footraces.

The County has delayed siren assessments again due to supplier issues. We hope to have information on that as soon as it's available to schedule our members. Finally, don't forget to get involved as Mahoning County ARES Members get in the spirit of the Season providing

communications for the ever larger Youngstown City Christmas Parade Friday, December 5th from 5 pm until 8 pm. It's always lots of fun.

For those Amateur Radio Operators that are interested in emergency communications and helping our communities in time of need please visit the Mahoning County ARES website at [www. http://mahoning-ares.org/](http://mahoning-ares.org/) for more information and our membership application.

Ham Radio Ops: Feel the Fear

Mark Haverstock, K8MSH

What gives you the heebie-jeebies as a ham radio operator? This Halloween season, we're dedicating this post to some scary things that keep us up at night.

Mic Fright

Yes, there is a fear of microphones, and it's called microphonebia. The symptoms include sweating, a dry mouth, a blank stare, and a squeaky voice. Some people think public speaking is scary, but hand them a microphone and it turns into a phobia. Why does this simple device inspire so much horror in so many?

One reason is simply not knowing what to say—or forgetting what to say. Imagine not being able to remember your call sign while calling CQ. Another is fear of doing something stupid, like saying “breaker, breaker” on a repeater.



(Image: Icom)

Being judged by people is also a cause of mic fright. Perhaps when you forgot to turn off the Roger beep on your Baofeng HT, someone called you a lid (poor or careless operator). Sometimes, it's easier just to refrain from speaking rather than feel like a fool on the air. Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Own your microphonebia—face your fear head on. It's odd how some people who have no problem talking on a telephone suddenly freeze up with a radio microphone in their face.

Wouff-Hong

No other object has struck such terror in the heart of any amateur operator who ever called CQ. Of course, we're talking about the dreaded Wouff-Hong!



(Image/ARRL)

It looks rather innocent, two pieces of wood strapped together with wire. The piece shows no hint of craftsmanship at all. Perhaps it was a joke or a hastily built school project thrown together at the last minute. But in the early days of ham radio, it was known as an instrument of torture and discipline to maintain decency and order in the ham radio community.

Resembling a misshapen paddle (possibly used by a high school assistant principal), it became a symbol for the enforcement of law and order in amateur radio operations. It reminded the amateur radio community to always use best practices when on the air. Legend has it that it was also used as a stake to subdue an angry vampire who tuned up his radio over a popular net. Only after his death was it revealed that the Wouff-Hong was the brainchild of Hiram Percy Maxim, founder and first president of the ARRL. It is said that he took the secret of its origin to his grave.

FOMO

FOMO stands for Fear of Missing Out. It's the feeling of anxiety that you're missing out on something that could improve your radio signal and operating skills or give you bragging rights. Maybe seeing the "box o' boards" at the Icom display during the 2024 Dayton Hamvention® sent your mind racing, imagining what an awesome radio it might be. Or are you convinced your 6400M is now obsolete with the 8400M flexing its new and improved features?

But wait, there's more. You saw the latest Sherwood ratings, and your primary radio slid seven places down the list. You need that Yaesu FTdx-101D, along with a Power Genius XL amplifier upgrade. After all, the PGXL won't be on sale forever.

You must have them, but is it worth the confrontation? Will your XYL blow a gasket when the credit card bill arrives? Will the transceiver be in short supply, complete with an eight-month waiting period (remember the K4D)? It's scary stuff for sure!

DOA

High on the list of fears is a radio suddenly failing during a major contest. The display disappears, and the magic smoke (hidden in the electronic parts) fills the air. No amount of button pressing, nor a jolt from Frankenstein's electrodes, will bring it back to life.

You could try to repair it, but you'll immediately become intimidated by the tiny surface-mount devices crowded together on the circuit boards. You could look into having someone else fix it, but I'd be wary of the guy who'll take his payment in the form of pizza and beer. It's much safer to bite the bullet and send it to an authorized repair center.

But safety can be costly. Shipping and insurance costs alone are enough to make you sit up and take notice, and service fees could be \$90+/hr. plus parts. Hopefully, the problem won't be a major one, and the bill won't be too scary.

Drowning in Noise

We're not talking about screams or bumps in the night. The major challenge faced by urban hams is electrical noise. Cities are noisy places with RF noise from cell phones, electric motors, cars and buses, LED lights, microwave ovens, and switching power supplies. Noise blankers and other circuitry in modern transceivers don't do much to block terrestrial noise.

Switching-mode power supplies, common in consumer electronic devices and battery chargers, often generate RFI at very high levels—especially the poorly engineered ones. But the worst offenders of all are high-power lighting systems, particularly grow lights used for cultivating plants indoors.

Want to be a noise-buster? There are specialized receivers for tracking down power line noise, but a portable AM broadcast radio will also do the job. They're portable and have directional ferrite rod antennas useful for direction finding. Many RFI sources are broadband-like power line noise that can be heard from LF to VHF. Check your house, then the neighborhood. If the receiver noise is about the same operating portable away from the house as in the house, it could be noisy power lines or something in the neighborhood that radiates noise over a large area.

Speaking of noise, there goes the doorbell. A pint-sized goblin is waiting impatiently outside—did you buy enough candy?
Halloween is truly the most wonderful time of the year.
(Originally appeared in *On All Bands*, October 28, 2024)

Amateur License Refresher

It's probably been a while since you took your Amateur License exam. Here are a few sample questions from the current question pools just to keep those synapses firing.

Extra Pool

E4A01

Which of the following limits the highest frequency signal that can be accurately displayed on a digital oscilloscope?

- A. Sampling rate of the analog-to-digital converter
- B. Analog-to-digital converter reference frequency
- C. Q of the circuit
- D. All these choices are correct

E4A02

Which of the following parameters does a spectrum analyzer display on the vertical and horizontal axes?

- A. Signal amplitude and time
- B. Signal amplitude and frequency
- C. SWR and frequency
- D. SWR and time

E4A03

Which of the following test instruments is used to display spurious signals and/or intermodulation distortion products generated by an SSB transmitter?

- A. Differential resolver
- B. Spectrum analyzer

- C. Logic analyzer
- D. Network analyzer

General Pool

G8A01

How is direct binary FSK modulation generated?

- A. By keying an FM transmitter with a sub-audible tone
- B. By changing an oscillator's frequency directly with a digital control signal
- C. By using a transceiver's computer data interface protocol to change frequencies
- D. By reconfiguring the CW keying input to act as a tone generator

G8A02

What is the name of the process that changes the phase angle of an RF signal to convey information?

- A. Phase convolution
- B. Phase modulation
- C. Phase transformation
- D. Phase inversion

G8A03

What is the name of the process that changes the instantaneous frequency of an RF wave to convey information?

- A. Frequency convolution
- B. Frequency transformation
- C. Frequency conversion
- D. Frequency modulation

E4A01 (A)
E4A02 (B)
E4A03 (B)
G8A01 (B)
G8A02 (B)
G8A03 (D)

Upcoming Contests and QSO Parties

Dave Fairbanks N8NB

Source is www.contestcalendar.com

November 2025

+ High Speed Club CW Contest	1400Z-1700Z, Nov 2
+ Classic Exchange, Phone	1400Z, Nov 2 to 0800Z, Nov 3 and 1400Z, Nov 4 to 0800Z, Nov 5
+ RSGB 80m Autumn Series, Data	2000Z-2130Z, Nov 3
+ Worldwide Sideband Activity Contest	0100Z-0159Z, Nov 4

+ CWops Test (CWT)	1300Z-1400Z, Nov 5
+ Mini-Test 40	1700Z-1759Z, Nov 5
+ VHF-UHF FT8 Activity Contest	1700Z-2100Z, Nov 5
+ Mini-Test 80	1800Z-1859Z, Nov 5
+ NCCC FT4 Sprint	0100Z-0130Z, Nov 7
+ Weekly RTTY Test	0145Z-0215Z, Nov 7
+ ARRL EME Contest	0000Z, Nov 8 to 2359Z, Nov 9
+ 10-10 Int. Fall Contest, Digital	0001Z, Nov 8 to 2359Z, Nov 9
+ OK/OM DX Contest, CW	1200Z, Nov 8 to 1200Z, Nov 9
+ AWA Bruce Kelley 1929 QSO Party	2300Z, Nov 8 to 0300Z, Nov 10 and 2300Z, Nov 15 to 0300Z, Nov 17
+ ICWC Medium Speed Test	1900Z-2000Z, Nov 10
+ Worldwide Sideband Activity Contest	0100Z-0159Z, Nov 11
+ ICWC Medium Speed Test	0300Z-0400Z, Nov 11
+ CWops Test (CWT)	0700Z-0800Z, Nov 13
+ NCCC FT4 Sprint	0100Z-0130Z, Nov 14
+ Weekly RTTY Test	0145Z-0215Z, Nov 14
+ ARRL Sweepstakes Contest, SSB	2100Z, Nov 15 to 0300Z, Nov 17
+ FISTS Sunday Sprint	0000Z-2359Z, Nov 16
+ Homebrew and Oldtime Equipment Party	1300-1500Z, Nov 16 (40m) and 1500-1700Z, Nov 16 (80m)
+ Run for the Bacon QRP Contest	2300Z, Nov 16 to 0100Z, Nov 17
+ Worldwide Sideband Activity Contest	0100Z-0159Z, Nov 18
+ North American SSB Sprint Contest	0000Z-0400Z, Nov 23
+ Worldwide Sideband Activity Contest	0100Z-0159Z, Nov 25
+ Weekly RTTY Test	0145Z-0215Z, Nov 28
+ NCCC Sprint	0230Z-0300Z, Nov 28
+ K1USN Slow Speed Test	2000Z-2100Z, Nov 28
+ CQ Worldwide DX Contest, CW	0000Z, Nov 29 to 2400Z, Nov 30

DX Information

Source is www.ng3k.com

November					
2025 Nov01	2025 Nov06	Palau	T88HR	JH1MLO (B/d)	OPDX 20250603
2025 Nov01	2025 Nov22	Falkland Is	VP8THW	LoTW	TDDX 20250919
2025 Nov03	2025 Nov07	Cyprus SBA	ZC4RH	LoTW	TDDX 20250930
2025 Nov03	2025 Nov20	Chatham I	ZL7	Club Log OQRS	OPDX 20250727

2025 Nov03	2025 Nov27	Lesotho	7P8EA	HB9CCS	TDDX 20250930
2025 Nov15	2025 Nov21	Tuvalu	T2JK NEW	LoTW	JK1JXZ 20251013
2025 Nov20	2025 Nov30	San Andres I	5JOEA	LoTW	DXW.Net 20250903
2025 Nov20	2025 Dec03	Bonaire	PJ4KV	DL6KVA	DXW.Net 20250927
2025 Nov20	2025 Dec31	Namibia	V51WH	DK2WH	OPDX 20250903
2025 Nov22	2025 Dec05	Vanuatu	YJ0GC	Club Log OQRS	OPDX 20250727
2025 Nov25	2025 Dec05	Bhutan	A52AA NEW	LoTW	DXW.Net 20251017
2025 Nov30	2025 Dec12	St Martin	T09W	LoTW	DXW.Net 20250324

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Website: The MVARA is on the web at www.mvara.org. It is the place to go for club events, classes, newsletters, VE exams, swap and shop, repeaters, history, documents, and contact information.

24/7 Club Connection: The MVARA is on groups.io at <https://groups.io/g/mvara>. Members are invited to hang out with us there and discuss any ham related topic that interest them such as, Club Activities, Parks on the Air, Solar Cycle 25, EmComm, Special Event Stations, Contesting, Public Service, and Swap and Shop. There is video on our website at <https://mvara.org/videos.html> that shows how to use and join the 24/7 Club Connection.

The **VOICE COIL** is the monthly publication of the Mahoning Valley Amateur Radio Association, Inc. (MVARA) and is intended to present news, issues and opinions of interest to MVARA members and the Amateur Radio Community. We encourage contributions of articles, letters to the editor, etc. and welcome newsletter exchanges with other clubs from around the country and around the world. Permission is granted to reprint material contained herein as long as proper credit is given to this newsletter and the author. Ideas for and contributions to the VOICE COIL should be submitted to: mvara.w8qly@gmail.com

Submissions must be received **no later than the 24th** of the month prior to the month of issue, unless otherwise specified. **Submissions should be in MS Word format or ASCII text—no PDF, please!** Material received after the deadline will be used in the next month's VOICE COIL if it is still current and /or newsworthy.

Swap and Shop Policies

Swap and Shop listings are open to all licensed Mahoning Valley Hams--you don't need to be an MVARA member. You can include a picture for your listing. Please submit your list to mvara.w8qly@gmail.com for placement in both *Voice Coil* and website. MVARA assumes no responsibility for transactions made or inaccuracies in ads. You are responsible for checking your ad and notifying us of any corrections. Ads will run for two consecutive issues unless we are notified otherwise.

The Mahoning Valley Amateur Radio Association, Inc, meets the second Thursday of every month. Location and time are subject to change. Dues are \$20.00 per year, \$10.00 each for additional family members. Contact Nancy, nanceanne34@gmail.com for details.

The club call is **W8QLY**; equipment operated under this call includes a two-meter voice repeater at 146.745 (-600, 110.9 PL).

Club email: mvara.w8qly@gmail.com

MONDAY NIGHT NET operates every Monday at 9:00. PM on 146.745 MHz.

SKYWARN NET - On 146.745 MHz as weather warrants.

ARES NET- First and third Mondays of each month at 8:30 PM on 146.745 MHz; prior to the Monday Night Net.

Disclaimer

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