

☰ MONTE VISTA JOURNAL (/) (/)



📷 Photos by Rebecca Copley San Luis Valley Amateur Radio Association members who participated in last weekend's field day.

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MONTE VISTA – June 27 and 28, the San Luis Valley Amateur Radio Association (SARA) joined Amateur Radio, also known as HAM radio operators, around the country in a 24 hour Field Day. The operation was set up in the parking lot of Calvary Baptist Church, and the group had to erect a towering antenna and two other shorter ones to connect them with the world. Using a generator and other alternative power sources including solar power the local HAMS were able to contact other HAMS thousands of miles away. Working in shifts they were able to keep going from noon Saturday to midnight Sunday.

HAM radio is a hobby that involves using various kinds of radio communications equipment to connect with other people who have the same interest. HAM radio is the popular term for amateur radio, derived from “ham,” as a nickname for an

amateur radio operator. HAM radio got its start in the 1920s and since then has continue to grow. Today HAM radio operators have a global network and can even reach the International Space Station.

Although HAM is a fun hobby, it can also be used as an important means of communication during emergencies. One of the primary objectives of the San Luis Valley Amateur Radio Association (SARA) is to be able to provide emergency communications capabilities for those living in the Valley, in case the existing infrastructure ever fails. One project they are currently working on is establishing a direct communications link between the Monte Vista PD and the Alamosa EOC. Their intent is also to tie in other departments down the road. Currently there are several people in law enforcement and other agencies around the San Luis Valley that are licensed HAM radio operators. They include Rio Grande Sheriff Don McDonald, Officer Christopher Lavery in Alamosa, and Officer Josh Hill in Monte Vista.

The field day was a great chance for the group to test out their communication capabilities, "Working the bridge to communication is a big part of what we do. This is why we're doing this to show that we can do so. We can set up in a remote operation and there are HAMS all over the country doing this today. They're in State Parks, they're in federal parks, they're in private land," said Adam Lock who serves as SARA's Secretary.

Rio Grande Sheriff Don McDonald also participated in the field day and shared, "With me being Sheriff of Rio Grande County emergency services is really on top of my list. Part of the communications is this group here. Even from my office I've got a radio and it sits in my office so I'm listening to stuff. If anything ever happened with the communications going down I know I can make a couple of calls and we'd be covered."

The group SARA is now almost a year old having started in the Fall of 2019. Already they have one repeater on the air in Monte Vista and they are almost finished with a second repeater installation on a different frequency range. The group is made up of volunteers who all share a passion for HAM radio. According to their website the group exists to "1. To promote Amateur radio within the SLV, U.S., and world. 2. To provide instruction and encouragement to new people interested in Amateur radio.

3 To help provide Emergency Communication to our communities of the San Luis Valley when needed." More information on the group can be found online at their website <https://k0slv.com> (<https://k0slv.com>)