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Radio members ready to ham it up this week

BIG BEND - Thousands of amateur radio operators, often called hams, will be showing off their wireless capabilities June 27-28 with their "Field Day" where they show their emergency communications abilities while having fun talking to friends all over the continent with their radios.

Members of the Big Bend Amateur Radio Club will participate in the event, as they have for the past 36 years. Members of the club, who come from Brewster, Jeff Davis and Terrell counties as well as guest operators from as far away as Houston, will begin setting up stations and antennas at 1 p.m. on June 26 on the Double Diamond Ranch eight miles south of Alpine.

Beginning at 1 p.m. on Saturday, the hams will try to contact as many other stations in the U.S. and Canada as they can.

"This year, for the first time, we'll have a project for kids as part of our Field Day event," said Rob Kinucan, club president. "We're inviting kids to come out to the site at 2 p.m. on Saturday to build a working crystal radio. They'll be able to hear local AM stations on a radio they've built themselves. It might even be possible under the right conditions to hear stations far away."

There is no charge for kids to participate, but they need to bring the following items with them: two aluminum cans, aluminum foil, transparency film or heavy weight paper, tape – clear mailing tape is best, board – 8" X 8" is a good size – thick enough so screw/tacks that do not penetrate to the opposite side for mounting the radio parts on, four paper clips and 10 machine screws.

The kids will learn to build a working radio from common household items, learn to identify electronic components by the schematic diagram symbol and learn to build an electronic device from a schematic diagram.

Last year, about 15 hams contacted over 2,300 stations in the event.