QSP

News, Projects and Signals from WØCY

The Newsletter of the Central Kansas Amateur Radio Club

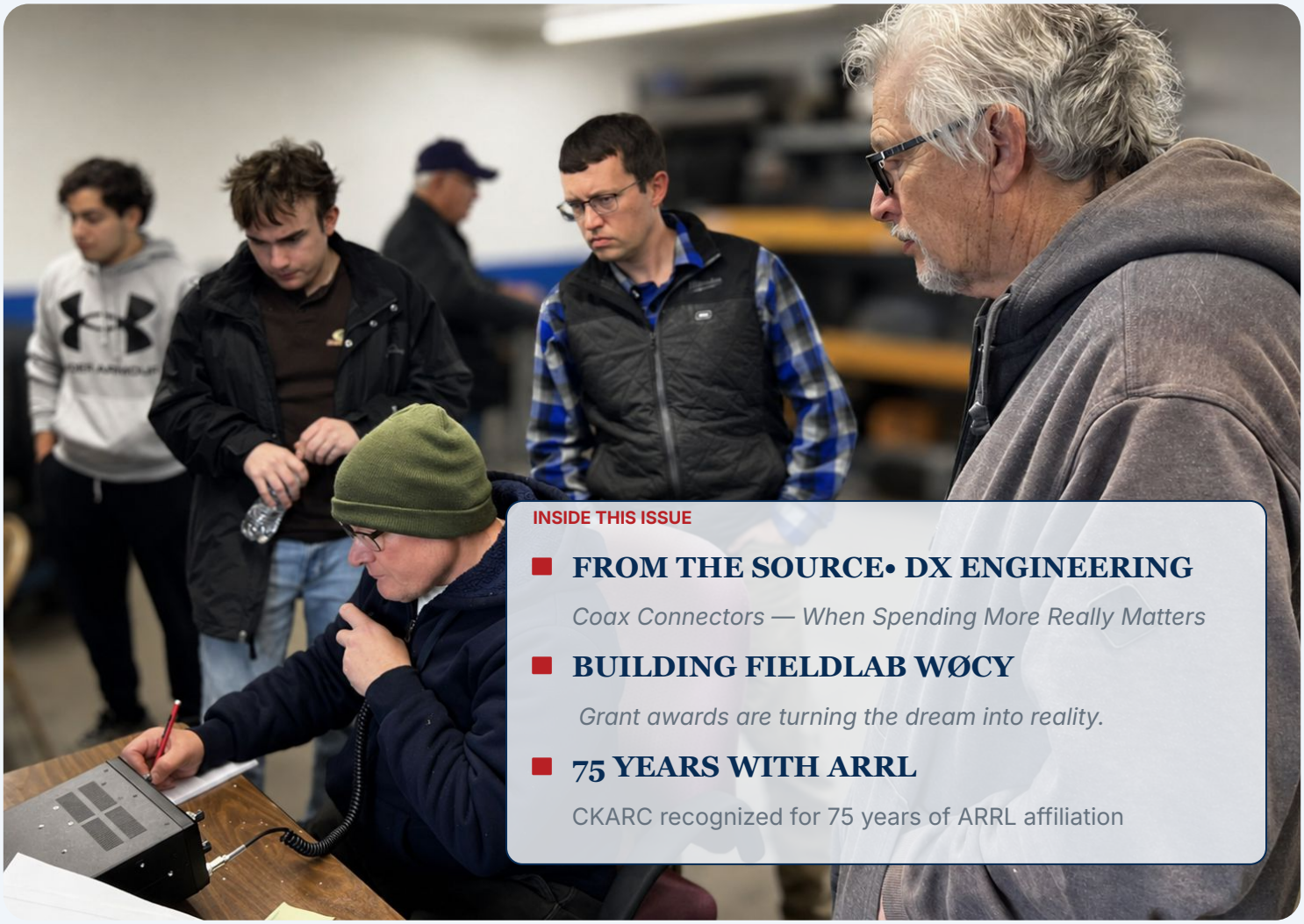
ARRL AFFILIATED SINCE 1949

OCTOBER 2026

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

BACK IN THE FIELD

After years away, WØCY is rebuilding a Field Day tradition that has long been part of the club's history



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **FROM THE SOURCE• DX ENGINEERING**
  Coax Connectors — When Spending More Really Matters
- **BUILDING FIELDLAB WØCY**
  Grant awards are turning the dream into reality.
- **75 YEARS WITH ARRL**
  CKARC recognized for 75 years of ARRL affiliation

CENTRAL KANSAS AMATEUR RADIO CLUB WØCY

Editor
Fred Fanning, KI5WVN

MEETINGS
Last Friday of each month
7:00 PM Eyeball QSO
7:30 PM Formal Meeting
Peters Science Hall 211

WEEKLY NET
147.030 MHz
+0.600 MHz • PL 118.8 Hz
Wednesdays @ 8:00 PM

ONLINE
www.w0cy.com

qsp@w0cy.com

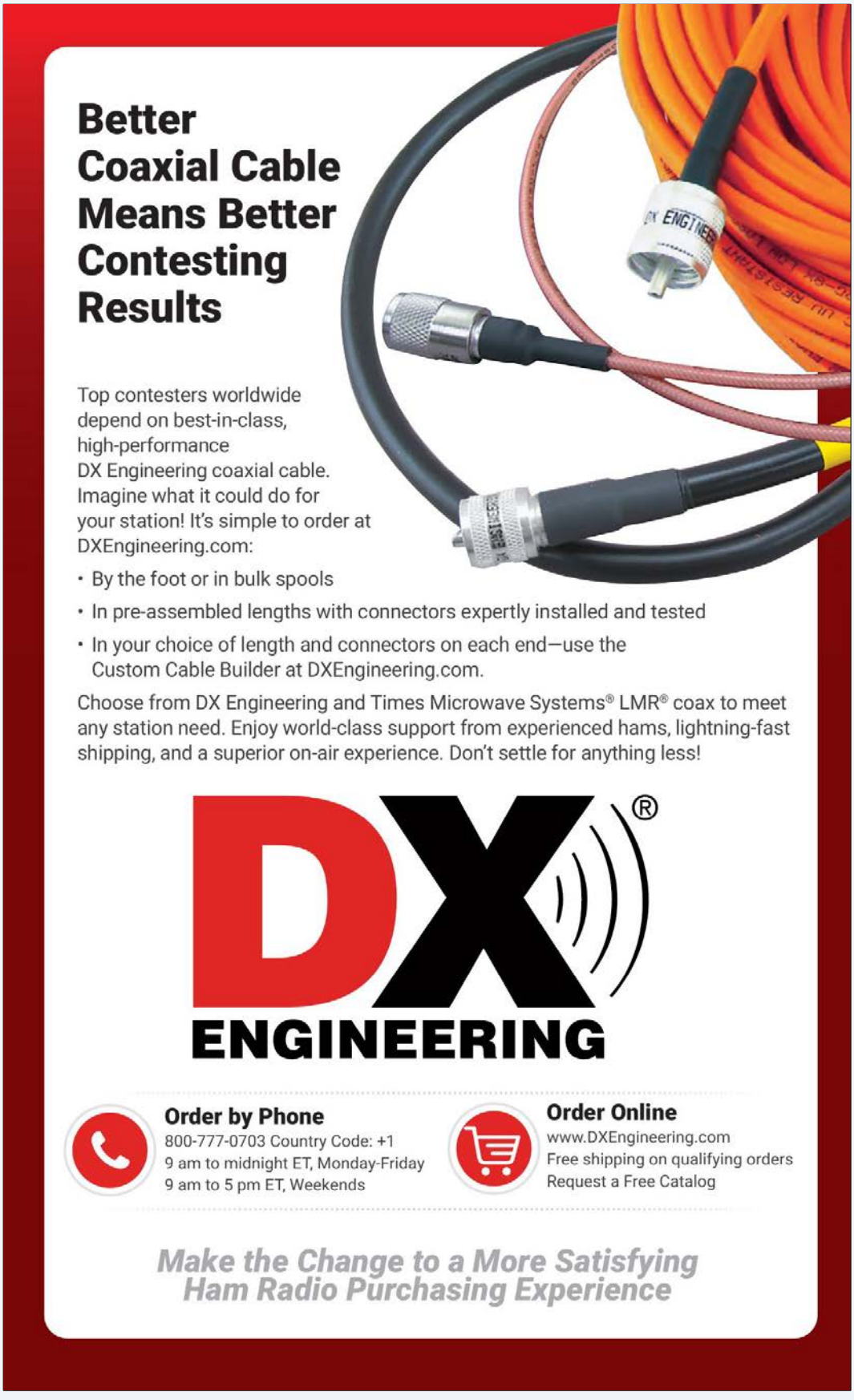
OFFICERS

President
Brian Krenzin, K9KSU

Vice President
Lucas Broberg, KE0ZLR

Secretary
Jim O'Connor, W0JPO

Treasurer
Pat Giron, KE0DZK





From the President's QTH

It is my honor to serve as President of the Central Kansas Amateur Radio Club, and I am especially proud to welcome back QSP after a long absence. Our club has a rich history, and this newsletter gives us another way to strengthen the friendships, knowledge, and shared interests that make WØCY special.

QSP has long been part of the story of our club. Through the years, it has recorded the people, projects, events, and milestones that shaped CKARC. As QSP begins a new chapter, it gives us a place to share what is happening in CKARC today. It preserves the work, people, and events of this era, adding today's story to the enduring legacy of CKARC.

QSP belongs to the membership. Your photos, projects, stories, accomplishments, and ideas are what will give it life. With your participation, QSP can strengthen the way we share, connect, and grow as a club.

Special recognition goes to Fred, KI5WVN, for stepping up and taking on the challenge of guiding QSP into this new chapter. His leadership, along with the support of our members, will keep QSP an important part of CKARC's story.

73 Brian

BACK IN THE FIELD

Reviving a Field Day tradition at WØCY

A Tradition Returns

For many amateur radio clubs, Field Day is one of the events that helps define the year, bringing operators together outside the shack to work temporary stations on the air. Field Day has long been part of CKARC's history, but for a number of years the club was no longer participating. That changed in 2025. After years away, WØCY returned to Field Day, and in 2026, we did it again. That second year mattered. Anyone can bring something back once; doing it again begins to turn an event back into a tradition.



Dirk Speed, NØKSC • Andrew Kester, KFØTZX • Jim O'Connor, WØJPO

The Part That Matters Most

Field Day is easy to describe in terms of radios, antennas, generators, contacts and points. Those things are important, but the real value is the time members spend together. It is putting up antennas, figuring out why something is not working, helping someone make a contact, sharing a meal, telling stories and spending time with people who share the same interest.

Field Day gives experienced operators a chance to help newer members, and people who often operate alone an opportunity to work as part of a team. Some of the best moments never make it into the log. They happen around the antenna mast, at the operating table, over a meal or during a conversation between contacts.

Reviving the Traditions That Connect Us

Field Day is one of the activities that gives members a reason to do more than simply attend a meeting. Along with Winter Field Day, operating events, technical projects and community outreach, it creates opportunities to work together and enjoy amateur radio together. For a club with more than 75 years of history, reviving these traditions is simply carrying forward what has always made amateur radio enjoyable.

Keeping It Going

The challenge now is not to bring Field Day back. It is to keep it here.

Prominently pictured on the cover are Pete Sias, NØOY; Mike Bieberle, KSØFD; and Ryan Benteman, ADØTZ

From The Source

Tom Parkinson, KB8UUZ, of DX Engineering joins us for this issue's From the Source.

"There can be a big price difference between coax connectors that look almost identical. Can you help us understand what accounts for those differences, and when spending more really matters?"

A coax connector is a key item in your Amateur Radio system that is very important. There is nothing worse than finding you have a problem and eventually realize it is a bad coax connector. It can be very frustrating.

There are price differences for the same type of connectors, but the old saying "you get what you pay for" can come back and cause problems with some of those inexpensive coax connectors. Buying inexpensive, unbranded coaxial connectors for amateur radio setups introduces risks related to poor material quality, difficult installation, and signal degradation.

Bargain prices can be found at any hamfest, but buyer beware.

Always go to a dealer that offers quality connectors. DX Engineering has quality connectors, and our salespeople also have the knowledge to assist you with any questions.

Poor Materials Can Lead to Thermal Failure:

Cheap connectors often use low-grade plastic or Bakelite-like dielectric material instead of high-temperature Teflon (PTFE). When you apply heat with a soldering iron to install a PL-259 plug, the cheap dielectric melts or deforms easily. This shifts the center pin out of alignment or causes internal shorts.

Plating and Corrosion:

Budget connectors use thin nickel plating over who knows what base metals rather than silver or gold. Nickel can oxidize quickly when exposed to weather, leading to high-resistance connections, intermittent contact, and increased noise floor or intermodulation.

Dimension Inaccuracies and Poor Fit

Loose or Tight Threads: Poor manufacturing tolerances can result in threads that are rough, tight, or poorly formed. When mating a PL-259 with an SO-239, the threaded collar should turn smoothly without dragging or binding. A dull or tarnished finish can also be a sign of lower-quality materials or plating. Inspect the body of the PL-259 as well; the teeth should be well defined and engage the SO-239 securely without allowing the connector body to turn as the collar is tightened.

RF Performance Degradation and Impedance Bumps:

PL-259 connectors already possess a non-constant impedance (~35 ohms). Poorly machined, inexpensive variants can worsen that mismatch. This creates a sharper SWR spike and unnecessary insertion loss, which becomes increasingly significant at VHF/UHF frequencies.

Mismatched Braid Sizing:

The internal diameter or twist pitch of cheap plug bodies often fails to match standard coaxial cable dimensions (like RG-8, RG-58, or RG-8X). This can require poorly fitting adapter reducers, resulting in a loose shield connection that relies on solder alone to maintain a reliable ground.

PL-259 connectors have been around for decades, and most hams are familiar with them. Over the years, there have been slight changes. Many widely available connectors can present problems such as difficulty soldering, poor fit, or slipping when mated with another connector.



PL-259 connectors

There are two types of PL-259 connectors: solder/solder and solder/crimp. These terms refer to the methods used when installing a PL-259. Solder/solder is the traditional method, with both the center pin and shield soldered. Solder/crimp uses a soldered center pin and a crimped shield.



Solder/crimp PL-259 components

Some coax cables must use a solder/crimp connector. Coax such as DXE-400MAX and LMR®-400 use aluminum foil shielding, which does not solder very well, if at all. Manufacturers recommend crimp-style connectors for these types of coax. RG-213 and other non-aluminum-foil cables can use either solder/solder or solder/crimp connectors.

Crimp/Crimp Connectors

I have found that crimp/crimp connectors are not the type I would recommend. The crimped center pin can be slightly smaller toward the end, which may cause an intermittent connection in some SO-239 connectors, especially older ones that have seen a lot of use.

To avoid that problem, I recommend a good-quality PL-259 with a **soldered center pin**. Too much solder can cause trouble too, so remove any solder blob from the outside of the pin before use.

How We Do It at DX Engineering

At DX Engineering, we use solder/crimp-style connectors on our cable assemblies. They are assembled in-house and 100% hi-pot tested to help ensure a reliable connection for years to come. The K3LR Contest Super Station also uses DX Engineering coaxial cable assemblies and parts.

Use the Right Tools

Even the best connector can give you trouble if the coax is not prepared correctly. I gave up using a box cutter or knife years ago — and yes, I have the permanent slits in my thumb to prove it.

DX Engineering prep tools make connector installation much easier. In the past 16 years, I've probably installed more than a thousand PL-259 connectors using them with no problems at all. Our local club, K8BF, has also used the tools during project days to teach members how to make coax jumpers.

Final Thoughts

What started as a simple question about why coax connectors vary so much in price really comes down to materials, manufacturing tolerances, proper installation, and using the right connector for the cable.

A good connector is inexpensive compared with the time it can take to troubleshoot a bad one. Buy quality components, prepare the coax correctly, and take the time to make the connection right the first time.

Take care & 73,
Tom Parkinson, KB8UUZ

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom "Parky" Parkinson, KB8UUZ, is a Technical Writer at DX Engineering, where he develops product manuals and instruction sheets. He is an Amateur Extra, ARRL Life Member, A-1 Operator and Volunteer Examiner, and enjoys HF and 6-meter contesting.

FieldLab WØCY
From Vision to Reality

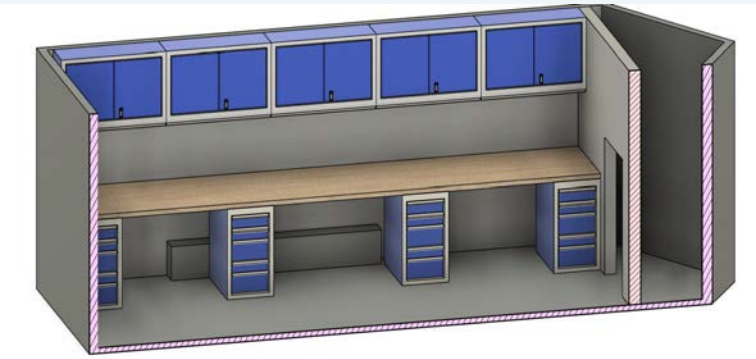
A little more than a year ago, FieldLab WØCY was still mostly an idea. Today, the Central Kansas Amateur Radio Club is nearing completion of a mobile STEM classroom built to take hands-on technology directly into schools, libraries, homeschool groups, community events and other places where access to specialized technical equipment may be limited.

The idea was simple: instead of asking people to come to amateur radio, take amateur radio — and the larger world of science and technology around it — to them.

FieldLab was never meant to serve only school-age students. Its audience includes students, adults, families, teachers, veterans, homeschool groups and lifelong learners. What began as an outreach concept has become one of the most ambitious projects CKARC has undertaken.

"If we want to get people interested in electronics, radio, science and engineering, we have to take those opportunities out into the community."

— Brian Krenzin, K9KSU



Early CAD concept. The original layout included a front wall and door that were later eliminated because of space limitations.



From concept to classroom: FieldLab evolved through design, fabrication and hands-on problem solving into a purpose-built mobile STEM laboratory

Funding the Idea

Turning that vision into a working classroom required resources far beyond normal club dues and fundraising. FieldLab needed electrical infrastructure, HVAC, cabinetry, networking, computers, antennas, test equipment, workstations, tools and storage — all designed to function together.

Major funding from Amateur Radio Digital Communications allowed CKARC to move the project from concept into construction. Additional support from the ARRL Foundation, the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, other community organizations, donors and individuals helped expand the project and improve its capabilities.

That support allowed CKARC to build around reliability, educational value and long-term use instead of simply piecing together whatever equipment happened to be available. It also created a responsibility: FieldLab had to become more than an interesting trailer. It had to become a real educational resource.

Building FieldLab has meant solving hundreds of small problems — and making every system work together on the road.



Mike Bieberle, KSØFD

The Build

Building FieldLab has meant solving problems that rarely appear in a conventional classroom or permanent amateur radio station.

Everything has to travel.

Cabinets must survive highway vibration. Radios and computers have to remain secure. Tools and supplies need positive storage. Wiring has to be protected but still accessible for service. Heating and cooling must handle Kansas weather, several occupants and a trailer full of electronics, while the network has to support radios, computers and other systems without relying entirely on infrastructure at the destination.

Antennas create another set of challenges. A permanent station can install a mast and leave it in place for years. FieldLab has to transport its antenna systems, deploy them efficiently, operate safely and pack them away again.

That reality has forced the team to think in complete systems rather than individual components. A radio affects the network; the network affects the computer layout; and the computer layout affects cabinetry, seating, storage and weight distribution.

The First Outing

FieldLab's first public outing was to the Valley Center Amateur Radio Club's hamfest in Wichita, where CKARC introduced the project to the greater amateur radio community.

The response was immediate. Hams stopped to tour the trailer, ask about the design, examine the equipment and talk about what a project like FieldLab could mean for their own clubs and communities.

That interest was an accomplishment in itself.

FieldLab was never intended to be something only CKARC could build. One of the long-term goals is to make the project repeatable — almost an open-source model for amateur radio outreach.

A single FieldLab can only be in one place at a time. A shared model, curriculum and set of proven ideas can reach much farther.

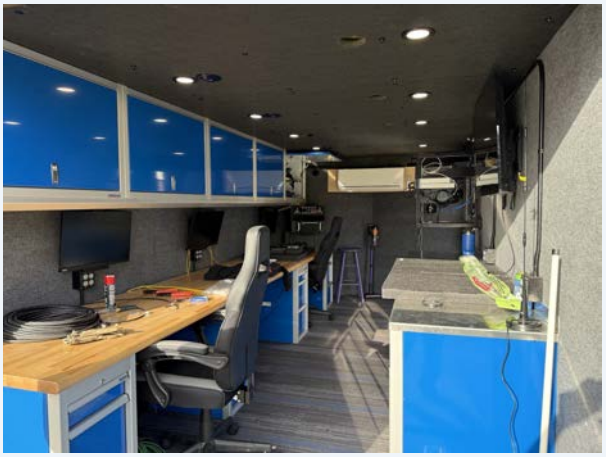


The exact trailer, equipment and programs may differ from one club to another, but the concept is transferable: build a mobile platform, take technical experiences into the community and give people the opportunity to learn by doing.

The educational side is intended to be just as shareable.

As programs, demonstrations, lesson plans and curriculum are developed and refined, CKARC wants those resources available for other amateur radio clubs, schools, libraries and community organizations to use and adapt. A club should not have to build its own FieldLab trailer to benefit from what is learned here.

That means FieldLab can ultimately produce two things: a working mobile classroom in Central Kansas and a growing library of proven educational material that can be reused elsewhere.



The Wichita outing offered the first evidence that the idea itself could travel farther than the trailer.

Visitors were interested not only in what CKARC had built, but in how it was built, how it was funded, what problems had to be solved and whether something similar could work in their own area.

The Next Chapter

As construction nears completion, the focus is shifting from building FieldLab to putting it to work.

CKARC's long-term goal is for FieldLab to become a regional resource, with repeatable outreach to schools, libraries, homeschool programs, community events and partner organizations.

The resources created around FieldLab are also intended to reach beyond Central Kansas. Curriculum, project plans, demonstrations and lessons can be documented, shared and improved by others. In that sense, FieldLab can become more than a physical trailer; it can become a framework other organizations adapt to their own needs and communities.



FieldLab is more than a trailer. Its real value is in what people can learn, build and discover inside it.

That is also where industry partners can make an impact well beyond one project.

Manufacturers, technical companies, universities and other organizations can provide equipment and expertise that expose visitors to technology a small volunteer club could never provide on its own. In FieldLab, that support is not simply displayed — it becomes part of the learning.

A radio may become someone's first experience on the air. A piece of test equipment may be the first instrument someone uses to see a waveform. An antenna or feed line may become part of a lesson later shared with another club hundreds of miles away.

The project will continue to evolve as new equipment is added, new lessons are developed and experience shows better ways to use the space.

The radios, computers, test equipment, antennas and tools are important, but they are only the means. The real goal is the person sitting in front of them.

A little more than a year ago, FieldLab was an idea. Today, it is becoming a platform for learning, experimentation and outreach.

What happens next will depend on the educators, volunteers, community organizations and industry partners who see the same opportunity and decide to help put it to work.



Central Kansas Amateur Radio Club has reached a milestone few organizations achieve:

75 years as an ARRL affiliated club.

ARRL recently recognized the occasion with a commemorative plaque honoring CKARC's long-standing affiliation and service to amateur radio.

The award represents far more than a date on a certificate. It reflects generations of members who have kept the club active through operating events, licensing, technical projects, public service, education and fellowship.

Over 75 years, the technology has changed dramatically, but the foundation of amateur radio has not: curiosity, experimentation, communication and people helping one another learn.

CKARC continues that tradition today through Field Day, Winter Field Day, VE testing, technical projects and community outreach.

75 Years of Affiliation.
75 Years of Amateur Radio.
Still Moving Forward.

NEXT QUARTER

Exam sessions, club meetings and where to find us

Recurring Monthly

Second Wed — VE / EXAM SESSIONS

If you wish to test, you must register for an exam session. For registration and instructions, use HamStudy.org and select "Find an Exam Session."

HamStudy.org → Find an Exam Session

LAST FRI — MONTHLY CLUB MEETING

Kansas Wesleyan University

Peters Science Hall • Room 211

7:00 PM Eyeball QSO 7:30 PM Formal Meeting

CKARC VE ACTIVITY

David Zarkin, KF0SVT
New General

Remington Derksen, KF0ZQG
New Technician

KEY DATES

November 20, 2026 — Club Meeting & CKARC Officer Election
Election of 2027 club officers at the November meeting, moved one week earlier because of Thanksgiving.

December 10, 2026 — Q1 QSP Submission Deadline
Articles, photos and club news due for the January issue.

December 18, 2026 — CKARC Christmas Party
Installation of 2027 club officers. Location and time to be confirmed.

January 23–24, 2027 — Winter Field Day
Planning and volunteers needed.

JOIN US ONLINE

Facebook • wocy.com • qsp@wocy.com


AssociatedRadio
800.497.1457
YOUR KANSAS AMATEUR RADIO SOURCE
ICOM | YAESU | KENWOOD
800.497.1457 | www.associatedradio.com | Overland Park, Kansas