

SPARKS

Monthly Newsletter of the Tri-State Amateur Radio Society

Serving the Tri-State over 75 years

January 2026 – Vol. LXXIX, No. 1



The SPARKS Newsletter is published monthly by the Tri-State Amateur Radio Society as a source of information about Club activities, and general news items of interest to the Amateur Radio community.

Material in this newsletter may be reproduced provided that TARS and the article author is properly credited. Complimentary issues of the SPARKS Newsletter are available to amateur radio clubs on a newsletter exchange by e-mailing your request to sparks.w9og@gmail.com.

E-mail subscriptions are provided to all regular TARS members. News contributions and letters/emails to the editor are always welcome.

TARS regular membership is open to all licensed Amateur Radio operators for \$25.00 a year. An Associate membership is also available to those who are interested in Amateur Radio but do not currently hold a license. Associate membership is \$25.00 a year. Student memberships are also available for \$12.50 a year.

Membership information is available at www.w9og.net

The Tri-State Amateur Radio Society meets the second Thursday of each month at the Red Cross, 29 Stockwell Rd, Evansville IN, at 7:00 p.m.

Family and visitors are always welcome to attend.

For more information, please contact one of the TARS officers listed in this newsletter or email info@w9og.net.

Presidents Corner

January 2026

In my very first President's Corner article I said the following:

"I've seen what happens if no one shares knowledge, time, or treasure. There will be nothing to offer any new or existing members. Our sharing with each other is the value of our club. So offer to share... not just once... always offer to share. Because sometimes, a good QSO is a matter of repeating a CQ. You are going to hear me repeat this throughout my presidency. "Ask NOT, what this club can do for you... but what you can do for the club." Trust me, you will enjoy TARS way more – way more by giving yourself first." Jan 2023

Here it is in January 2026 and I haven't wavered from asking the members to share their time, talent, and treasure to make this hobby more enjoyable through the use of our club.

It is easy to see the amount of effort, the work, the grind, the problems and differences – the focus on the lack of talent, or the lack of time, or the lack of treasure, and think it's just not worth having to deal with so and so. So easy to think it best to start over or get out. What if, laziness is the habit of thinking about the cost and effort instead of the payoff or benefits? Harvard professors seem to think so. (Rogers, T., & Bazerman, M. H. (2008)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0749597807000805?via%3Dihub>)

My favorite Catholic apologist, G.K. Chesterton said "If it is worth doing, it's worth doing badly." (What's Wrong with the World, 1910) This is so true. We have all been surprised at how well a poorly installed antenna can reach so far. How our compromised equipment seems beyond science and seems nearly magical. Any activity by the club has some benefits.

I propose for the new year; we focus on the benefits. The solutions. The rewards of having a successful club. What steps are necessary to get this done? I'm positive it is going to take some of OUR time, some OUR treasure, and some of OUR talent. It simply can't be done if "I'm just a member." **So**, make a commitment now to think of your part to make the club the best thing since the Spark Gap Tesla Coil invented in 1891. Please volunteer your ideas and your expertise for the club. We need presentations and activities. Please reach out to the leadership today. This is OUR club, so make it so.

Scott Hibbs KD4SIR

President TARS 2023-26

REMINDER: your 2026 Dues are now due!

It's time to renew your dues!

A 2026 membership form is included with this mailing of SPARKS. You may mail the form with your due's payment to the address on the form, or bring it to the meeting.

Please fill out the form as it lets us update our records and make sure your information is correct.

Once again, we would like to list a membership roster in the March issue of SPARKS, so get your dues in A.S.A.P. THANKS!

Desk of Jerry - WB9ONU

I hope all that came to TARS Christmas party had fun. There were some great presents for the Dirty Santa along with some great eats. If you didn't come you missed out on a great time.

Well, it's a new year with new programs. First off, the TARS meeting for January has changed from the normal auction month to a actually program. The program for January will be a POTA/SOTA talk along bring in your POTA setup to show new members. Hopefully this program will get more members interested in doing POTA/SOTA. Its a great way to practice for Field Day.

Now here is something new that I want to present to the members. TARS is starting a **WORK ALL TARS OFFICERS AWARD**. That is right all you have to do is work one of TARS officers then record the Date, Frequency, and Mode. TARS officers can't be worked during any net. You can work them before a net or after a net. Also remember if you don't work all officers in a year you may have to start over. Since new officers are elected every year. So let have fun with WATO Awards. The Rules and a copy of the AWARD is included with this month SPARKS.

If you have any question, feel free to ask or send me an email. wb9onu@hotmail.com

Hope to see you at the meeting or hear you on the band.

73's & 88's
Jerry WB9ONU

Eat'n Before the Meet'n

We will have a meetup before the regular TARS meeting for anyone that would like to join us. We meet at **5:30**, for you to grab a bite to eat, swap stories and whatever else you like, giving us time to make it to the Red Cross for the meeting.

Come join us at Mission BBQ, 1530 N Green River Rd, Evansville.
<https://mission-bbq.com/>

TARS Calendar

January

- 1 **TARS Board meeting 6:30 ZOOM**
- 7 8pm Tri-State Emergency Net (Mark, KC9TYA)
8:30pm Ten-meter RAG CHEW net 28.355 +-
- 8 **Eat'n Before the Meet'n 5:30 Mission BBQ**
TARS Club Meeting 7:00pm Red Cross
Program: **POTA show and tell**
- 14 8pm Tri-State Emergency Net (Chris, KE9YK)
8:30pm Ten-meter RAG CHEW net 28.355 +-
- 21 8pm Tri-State Emergency Net (Jerry, WB9ONU)
8:30pm Ten-meter RAG CHEW net 28.355 +-
- 24 **Winter Field Day at the Red Cross**
- 28 8pm Tri-State Emergency Net (Dave, KC9UVG)
8:30pm Ten-meter RAG CHEW net 28.355 +-
- 31 **VE Testing 9am Red Cross**

February

- 4 8pm Tri-State Emergency Net (Terry, WB9KQF)
8:30pm Ten-meter RAG CHEW net 28.355 +-
- 5 **TARS Board meeting 6:30 ZOOM**
- 11 8pm Tri-State Emergency Net (Walt, WB4ZUT)
8:30pm Ten-meter RAG CHEW net 28.355 +-
- 12 **TARS Banquet 5:30 Golden Corral**
- 18 8pm Tri-State Emergency Net (Mark, KC9TYA)
8:30pm Ten-meter RAG CHEW net 28.355 +-
- 25 8pm Tri-State Emergency Net (Chris, KE9YK)
8:30pm Ten-meter RAG CHEW net 28.355 +-
- 28 **VE Testing 9am Red Cross**

[Connect to the TARS Google Calendar](#)



Winter Field Day January 24

Winter Field Day will be held January 24th. TARS will operate from the Red Cross. Set-up will be from 8:00-10:00am, and operating will be from 10:00am-????.

We will operate two stations: one for SSB and another for CW.

Chris KE9YK will have his almost world-famous bean soup with cornbread and we will have birthday cake for Charlie WB8LDV celebrating 88 years young. Please feel free to bring anything to share, soup, finger foods, snacks or desserts.



Net Control Operators WANTED

TARS is in need of volunteers for net control operators. While we could use a couple more for the regular Wed night nets, we also need volunteers for SKYWARN/Weather nets.

Weather nets are not only good for local hams to find out what is coming their way but the National Weather Service depends on Hams via SKYWARN to be their eyes and ears to confirm what the radar data is telling them and find out what they may be missing. If you are interested in being a control operator, either for a few times or joining as a regular on the rotating roster, contact:

Chris KE9YK at SPARKS.w9og@gmail.com.

Next time there is a weather event check in on the TARS 146.79 repeater and see what is going on.



New QRZ Award: USA250

(The 250th Anniversary of the United States of America)

In 2026, the United States of America will commemorate a historic milestone — the **250th anniversary of its founding**. To honor this once-in-a-lifetime event, QRZ is proud to introduce a special commemorative operating award: **USA 250**.

The **USA 250 Award** is available to amateur radio operators **worldwide** and is granted upon the successful confirmation of **250 two-way contacts with US-based amateur radio stations** made during the 2026 calendar year.

Award Requirements

To earn the USA 250 Award, operators must:

- Make **250 confirmed QSOs** with **US-based amateur radio stations** (operating from DXCC entities 291, 6, 110, 9, 103, 202 or 285)
- Contacts may be made on **any band** and **any mode**, Transmission may not make use of a relay, repeater or internet linking.
- Licensed operators in **any country** are eligible
- QSOs must take place **during the 2026 calendar year only**
- The operating window opens at **00:00 UTC on January 1, 2026**
- All contacts must be **confirmed on QRZ Logbook** (imported LoTW confirmations accepted)
- The official rules can be found [here](#)

Operating Period

January 1, 2026 00:00:00 – December 31, 2026 23:59:59 (UTC)

A Once-in-a-Lifetime Celebration

From coast to coast and across all bands, the USA 250 Award celebrates the spirit of amateur radio, international friendship, and the shared history of the United States. Whether you're chasing states, filling your log, or just enjoying special-year activity, 2026 will be the perfect time to get on the air.

Get ready to log, confirm, and celebrate **USA 250!**



Bits of interest

Why Use a Balun?

Brian Esche via groups.io

Tue, Dec 16, 2025, 6:18 PM

The article linked below is a good resource for learning why it's a good idea to use a 1:1 balun at the feedpoint of a coax-fed balanced antenna such as a half-wave dipole. The latter part of the article touches on the use of transforming (e.g. 4:1, 9:1, etc.) baluns. Kurt Sterba (SK) wrote a number of very good articles on antenna design so a Google search of his name will turn up some very good information if you'd like to do some additional research on that topic.

<https://palomar-engineers.com/tech-support/rfi-emi-troubleshooting-tutorials-learn-from-palomar-engineers/why-a-balun-by-kurt-n-sterba>

VHF 103 Mile Contact

Josh Gibson - KE9BAH via groups.io

Dec 16, 2025, 5:09 PM

With VHF a good antenna and elevation is your friend. Yesterday on top of Black Mountain in TN (2,828ft), I made a 103.7 mile contact. This was using my FT-70d HT and a 1/2 wave telescoping antenna. The contact was also about 2000ft on a mountain as well in GA.

Earlier in the day from Mount Roosevelt in TN (2036ft), I made a 79.5 mile contact to a couple in GA.

On Sunday from Hinch Mountain in TN (3048ft), I made a 89.7 mile summit to summit contact to a guy on a summit in GA.

VHF is fun and I love the 1/2 wave telescoping antenna. This was the antenna I brought to the white elephant gift exchange at the party.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

January Birthday's

KC9HOT	David Anderson	6
KE9CCA	Jay Zimmer	12
KC9EP	Eric Plikuhn	24
KC9VDA	Betty Lantaff	27
WB8LDV	Charlie Martin	28

Desecheo DXpedition 2026

The Desecheo 2026 team is happy to report that we are making progress. We should be QRV in two weeks.

Today the KP4ES test station went QRT around mid day local time. The station was removed from the practice site and was taken to KP4AA to begin the cleaning process. This cleaning is required as part of the Bio Security Protocol prior to going to Desecheo.

Operators will still be practicing using the KP4ES callsign but operating through the KP3H Super Station. Your contacts with KP4ES have helped our team to practice and prepare for the upcoming pileups while providing you with an opportunity to practice prior to our main event. We appreciate the help of the Dx Community.

Our website has been uploaded with Propagation forecasts from VOACAP. You can use this information to help you take advantage of propagation opportunities. Thanks to Jari OPH6BG for his contribution.

The deployment team will meet again on January 9th for final preparations prior to our deployment window of January 12-14. Lets pray for some good weather.

Stay tuned to more updates.

73,

Steve N2AJ

Media Officer & Pilot

Desecheo DXpedition 2026 <https://desecheo2026.com/kp5/>

Photo Credit: WP4TZ



HOIP

Since the end of Hamshack Hotline, most of us have switched over to Hams Over IP. Some also have Amateur Wire numbers too.

Here is a list of the local op's HOIP phone numbers in Cisco phone format.

If you haven't switched over to HOIP it is pretty easy, and someone would be happy to help you.

- n=N9oL John;p=101940
- n=WB4ZUT Walt;p=102072
- n=KE9YK Chris;p=102334
- n=WB9YIG Dave;p=103450
- n=KC9TYA Mark;p=101697
- n=K9KDJ Ken;p=102099
- n=NE9S Dean;p=102120
- n=K9SRC Steve;p=102008
- n=KC9EP Eric;p=101946
- n=N9ISU Jim;p=101404
- n=N9WJ Danny;p=102056
- n=W9BKY Danny;p=102679
- n=KD4SIR Scott;p=103801
- n=KF6XA Dave;p=103916
- n=K9JAJ Jeff;p=102661

TARS 2025 Fox Hunt Summary

December wrapped up with a fantastic day for our monthly **fox hunt!** We held one each month starting in February, totaling 11 successful hunts for 2025. The consistent turnout has been great, and I'm hopeful we can keep the tradition going monthly in 2026—as long as we continue attracting enthusiastic hunters.



If anyone is interested in joining for a ride-along or getting some tips on radio direction finding, just let me know. I'm always happy to help newcomers get started.

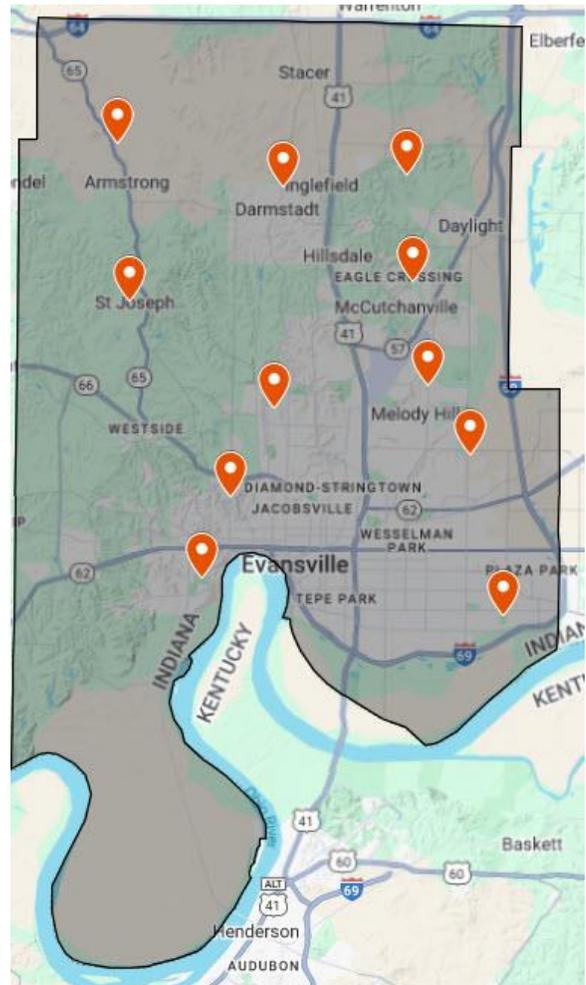
We've explored plenty of spots across Vanderburgh County this year, but I have some fresh ideas for future hiding locations. I'm also open to creative ways to ramp up the challenge if the group wants more difficulty. Additionally, I'd love to coordinate a joint hunt with the Warrick County Aux Comm group to expand into Warrick County (an area I'm less familiar with). A net-controlled group hunt could be fun too, as it better simulates real-world emergency scenarios.

Hoping to welcome more new faces and crown some fresh winners in the new year. Here's to an exciting 2026 of fox hunting!
Josh – KE9BAH

Month	Location	Fox	Winner
February	St. Joe Inn	Scott - KD4SIR	John - N9OL
March	Salem Church Darmstadt	John - N9OL	Josh - KE9BAH
April	McCuchanville School	Josh - KE9BAH	Jeff - AA9WJ
May	Howell Park	Jeff - AA9WJ	Scott - KD4SIR
June	Scott Township Park	Scott - KD4SIR	Josh - KE9BAH
July	James Price Park	Josh - KE9BAH	John - N9OL
August	Armstrong Recreational Center	John - N9OL	Josh - KE9BAH
September	Central High School	Josh - KE9BAH	Scott - KD4SIR
October	Penn Station - learning	Scott - KD4SIR	Dean - NE9S
November	Mesker Zoo	Dean - NE9S	Walt - WB4ZUT
December	Bethlehem Church	Walt - WB4ZUT	Eddie - KE9DWN

Winner Rankings:

Josh - KE9BAH	3
John - N9OL	2
Scott - KD4SIR	2
Jeff - AA9WJ	1
Dean - NE9S	1
Walt - WB4ZUT	1
Eddie - KE9DWN	1



2026 WORK ALL TARS OFFICERS

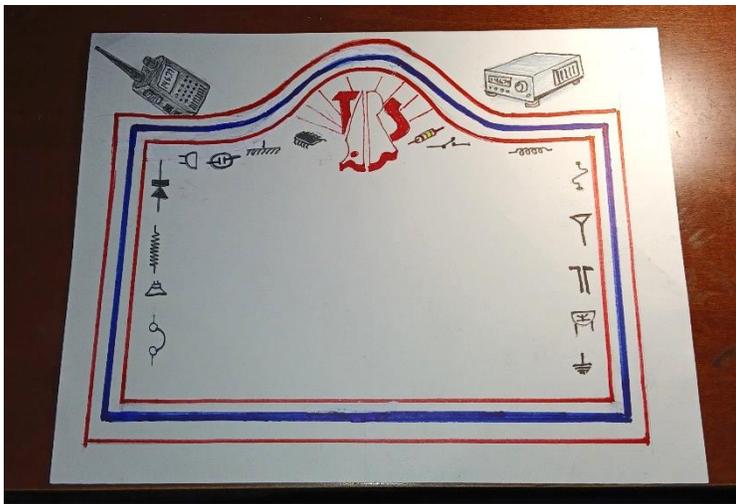
Jerry WB9ONU has created a contest to encourage TARS members to get on the air!

A sheet to track your progress is attached to this issue of SPARKS.

The WORK ALL TARS OFFICERS award.

Rules:

- **No Net Contacts.** All contacts are to be made anytime other than a net. **You may work an officer before or after a net, but not during.**
- WATO award starts over each January 1st, since there may be new officers.
- A sheet is provided to make it easy for you to keep track of which officers you have worked during the year.
- Once your sheet is filled, turn it in at a club meeting.



VE Testing 2026

January 31 2026 - 9AM Central time

You will need to know your FRN number. If you have a license currently you have an FRN number. If you do not yet have a license you can register with the FCC and obtain an FRN number.

Go to www.fcc.gov/register.

If you need help or have questions, please let me know at n9ol@arrl.net.

Examinations will start promptly at 9:00 AM Central time.

We have no pre-registration, and examinations are administered on a walk-in basis. Details can be found at:

<http://w9og.net/ve-testing>

For more info contact: [John VanVorst N9OL](mailto:John.VanVorst@N9OL) c: 812.305.4100



Vanderburgh Co. AUXCOMM

The next meeting will be Jan 15th, 6:30 pm at the Vanderburgh Co. EMA west side training facility, [1440 Harmony Way](#).

Anyone interested in emergency communication in Vanderburgh County is invited!

Contact us for more details.

Vanderburgh County Auxcomm

Chris KE9YK IN82RACES@gmail.com

Vanderburgh Co RACES Officer

c: 812.453.1972 HOIP: 102334 WinLink: KE9YK



Warrick Co AUXCOMM

The Warrick County Auxcomm group meets on the third Tuesday of each month. The meeting begins at 6:30pm and generally is completed by 9:00pm

The meetings are held on the third floor of the Court House in the EMA Conference room. Anyone needing additional information concerning meetings or location contact: Chris L. Owen at KC9CLO@gmail.com

TARS @ Groups.IO



Have you heard about the TARS Groups.io email list?

You can subscribe at <https://groups.io/g/TARS> or by sending an email to TARS+subscribe@groups.io directly.

The mail list is an area where you can ask questions or get the latest information on club happenings.

For HELP on the Groups.IO site, send an email to:

TARS+help@groups.io

Your input is important

Sparks is **YOUR** information source for club activities and local Amateur radio information.

In each issue we ask for submissions from club members. Tell us about your station, projects you have made or are making, anything interesting the TARS membership might be interested in.

Submission deadline is the 25th of the month.

Most any document format is acceptable.

Photos or graphics of your subject are encouraged and welcome.

Send your article to: sparks.w9og@gmail.com

Treasurer Report

Tri-state Amateur Radio Society Financial Report for November 2025			
Amateur Radio Society Primary Account			
Opening Balance:			\$11,208.99
TARS sub-accounts			
General Fund sub-account			
Opening Bal		\$4,952.43	
Receipts:			
Membership	\$25.00		
Total Receipts ---->>		\$25.00	
Expenditures:			
None			
Total Expenditures--->>		\$0.00	
Ending Balance General Fund			\$4,977.43
Repeater Maint & investment - Restricted acct			
Opening Balance		\$4,804.57	
Receipts:			
Expenditures:			
Ending Balance of Repeater Restircted sub-account			\$4,804.57
Red Cross Fund - Restricted Acct			
Opening Balance		\$1,451.99	
Receipts:			
For November VE Room	\$35.00		
Total Receipts ---->>		\$35.00	
Expenditures:			
None			
Total Expenditures--->>		\$0.00	
Ending Balance of Red Cross Restircted sub-account			\$1,486.99
Ending Balance - TARS primary Checiking Account			\$11,268.99
TARS IGC (IN Gaming Commission) restricted checking account:			
Opening Balance		\$1,516.12	
Receipts:			
None			
Total Receipts ---->>		\$0.00	
Expenditures:			
None			
Total Expenditures--->>		\$0.00	
Ending Balance of IGC Restircted checking account			\$1,516.12

Tom KD9PFH TARS Treasurer

Looking Ahead

2026

Winter Field Day January at Red Cross **Jan 24**

TARS Banquet February 12th 2026

INQP May 2026: May 2-3

Lewis and Clark Trail On The Air

MUSEUM SHIPS WEEKEND June

ARRL Kids Day June Third Saturday

Field Day June

13 Colonies Special Event July

TARS PICNIC ???

International Lighthouse and Lightship Weekend (ILLW) third full weekend of August

Route 66 Special Event September

TARS 8th annual HAMTOBER FEST October, 2026

Jamboree-on-the-Air third full weekend in October

SKYWARN Recognition Day, First Saturday, December

Straight Key Night January 1 from 0000 UTC through 2359 UTC

ARRL Kids Day Jan First Saturday

TARS is an [ARRL](#) affiliated club

ARRL [Indiana Section](#)

Section Manager: Bob Burns [AK9R](#)

ARRL [Central Division](#)

Division Director: Brent Walls [N9BA](#)



TARS mailing address:

TARS

P.O. Box 4521

Evansville, IN 47724

Don't forget to check out our web page www.w9og.net

Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TARSw9og>

TARS Groups.io email list: TARS@Groups.IO

TARS E-mail: info@w9og.net

2026 Club Officers - Board members

President [Scott Hibbs KD4SIR](#)

Vice President [Jerry McIntosh WB9ONU](#)

Treasurer [Tom Hilgeman KD9PFH](#)

Secretary [John VanVorst N9QL](#)

Board of Directors

[Mark Holland KDOEE](#) (2026-2027)

[Josh Gibson KE9BAH](#) (2026-2027)

[Steve Brewster KO9O](#) (2026-2027)

[Charlie Martin WB8LDV](#) (2025-2026)

[Bruce Hatfield W9GFS](#) (2025-2026)

[Herb Alvey KB9MZH](#) (2025-2026)

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Chris Lantaff KE9YK

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