

The Big Project

by Gary L. Johnston, KI4LA
Great Lakes Division Director

The ARRL Education and Technology Initiative, better known as "The Big Project," has been getting big donations - and big results.

This initiative, with the objective of spreading Amateur Radio into the nation's schools, is designed so many middle school aged students will have a positive attitude toward Amateur Radio. Just over a year old, the fund has already reached \$198,000 in donations from approximately 3,400 individual ARRL members. The average donation is about \$50.

"The Big Project" is the vision of ARRL President Jim Haynie, W5JBP, and was crafted into being by college professor and ARRL Vice President Kay Cragie, WT3P. Gerry Hill, KH6HU, administers the program.

The goal of the Amateur Radio Education & Technology Program is to improve the quality of education by providing an educationally-sound curriculum focused on wireless communications. The project emphasizes integration of technology, math, science, geography, writing, speaking and social responsibility within a global society.

This differs a bit from the traditional (and also very worthy) inducements to young people like the On-the-Air Jamboree for Scouts, classes held by clubs, and of course, one-on-one Elmers. With the Big Project, the key is the trained, enthusiastic classroom teacher using Amateur Radio as a resource. Rather than teaching youths to pass FCC examinations, the teachers use units in Amateur Radio as stimuli to help their students learn math, geography, history, physics,

The benefit to Amateur Radio is long term. Yes, some students become instant converts and get their ham tickets, but others come away with a positive feeling about the Amateur Radio service and a seed which might germinate into a license 20 years later, or a young person might end up as your town's next zoning administrator when you need that tower permit!

Folks, the fun and mystique of Ham Radio have NOT been overshadowed by cell phones and the web. The kids who have gone through the pilot programs have been absolutely on fire about Ham Radio. A group in Dallas was so far into it that they all got their Extra tickets and flooded the local repeaters so much that they put up their OWN repeater!

When this began, President Haynie determined that no membership dues monies would be a part of this; it was to be funded strictly by private donations and foundation grants. And I am extremely happy to report that all three Section Managers in the Great Lakes Division have contributed to the fund. By the size of the donations, it appears that many Ham Radio operators agree that this is a very worthy project.

For those interested in joining the 3,400 of us who have already helped, please check into the Web Site <<https://www.arrl.org/forms/development/donations/basic/>> and click on "Education and Technology Program Fund." For more information on The Big Project, see <<http://www.arrl.org/FandES/tbp/>>.

Everyone agrees that the future of Ham Radio depends on young people getting licensed. And the future of our frequencies depends on an educated general public which understands our value to the nation. [August 2002]