

CTU Presents

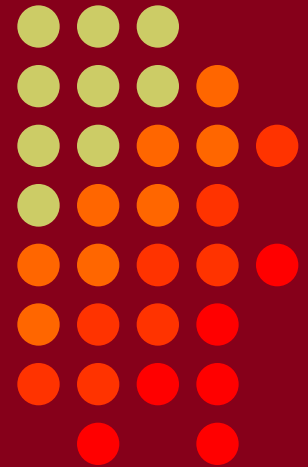
Engaging Youth in Contesting

Strategies for Recruiting, Mentoring, and
Retaining Young Ops

Violetta KN2P

• CTU •
CONTEST
UNIVERSITY

ICOM®



August 1948 CQ Editorial



- “Amateur radio today is attracting older men ...equipment prices have been forced higher along with everything else in our daily lives ... A second, and perhaps even more compelling reason for this lack of enthusiasm for our hobby by the younger, or youngest generation, is they have had little encouragement. Amateur radio needs new blood and too many youngsters have never even heard of ham radio”

Retention is the real issue



-
- **Recruiting is only the first step**
- **Newly licensed ham \neq active operator**

Why we lose young operators



- **Intimidation**
- **Lack of access**
- **No clear next steps**

Lower the barrier



- **Portable contests**
- **Remote access**
 - **RHR Youth Program**
 - **YCP Youth Contesting Program**

J62K youth operator model



- Two spots each year reserved for youth
- Application + essay submission
- Youth are trained in every step of the operation

Youth at J62K - 2024

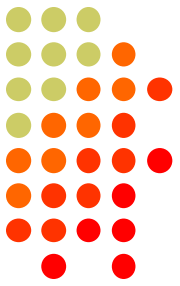


Grace - K8LG



Youth at J62K - 2025

DL3ON KN2P



Youth at J62K - 2026

NU1D

KE0WPA



Youth Contest Program (YCP)



- **Goal – Pairing youth operators with established contest stations or “host” stations**
- **You provide the mentorship and training**
- **Reality – contest skills are best learned in a hands-on environment**
- **Pass on your experiences and knowledge to the youth**

You can shape the future of contesting!



youth contest program

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Youth on the Air

<https://youthontheair.org> › ycp

Youth Contesting Program

The Youth Contesting Program (YCP) is a weekend program for **groups of young amateur radio contesters** throughout the US and Canada to meet up at a nearby-as- ... [Read more](#)



Youngsters On The Air

<https://www.ham-yota.com> › youth-contest-program

Youth Contest Program (YCP)

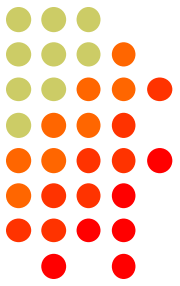
These **young HAM's will learn how to operate the contest station**, improve their contest skills and will aim for the best results together as a team. [Read more](#)

From invitation to involvement



- **Listen first, then S&P**
- **Set realistic goals**
- **Give them a run frequency during prime hours, not graveyard shift**
- **Make it safe to make mistakes**

Ownership builds commitment



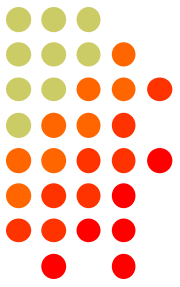
- **Teach decision making**
- **Plan strategies for band changes**
- **Discuss results and review logs**
- **Ask for their feedback to improve**

Youth – where we fit in



- **We are not just ‘the future of contesting’**
- **We are a part of it now**

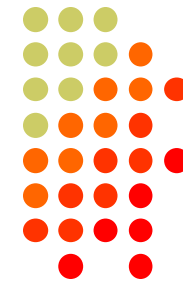
Opportunities start with asking



- Take the initiative – don't be afraid to ask

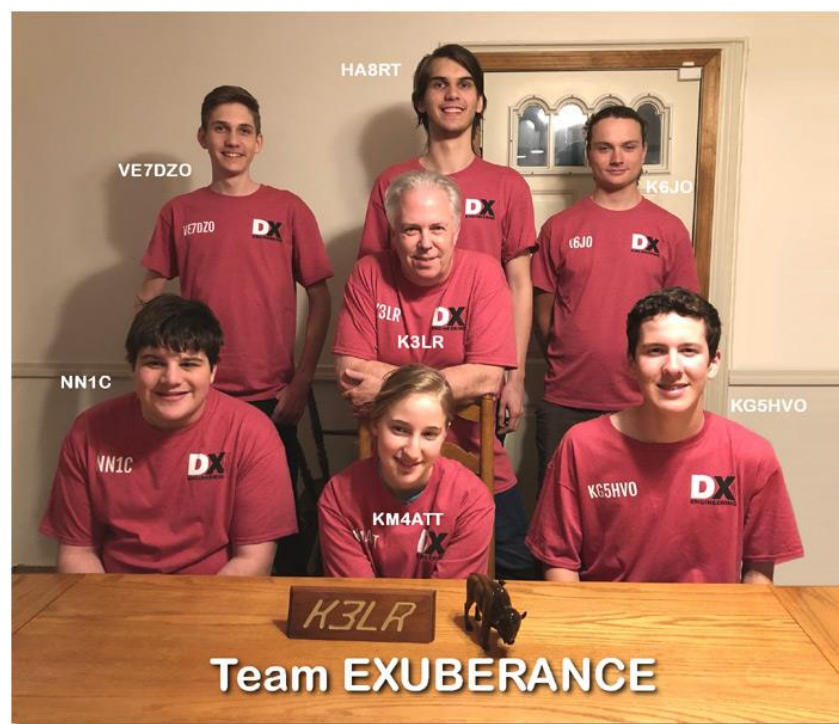


CQ WW SSB 2018 – W3LPL



Opportunities start with asking

- Take the initiative – don't be afraid to ask



CQ WPX SSB 2019 – W3LPL

Progress over perfection



- **Perfectionism delays growth**
- **Start before you feel ready**
- **Say yes to invitations**

What keeps them coming back



- **Youth stay where they feel needed, known, and recognized**
- **Celebrate their successes**
- **Train them to mentor other youth**

Before CTU 2027...



- **Intentionally train and mentor a new tester**
- **Invite a youth to operate at your station**
- **Multi-op teams – reserve a seat for youth**