

Statement by Vice Director Candidate, Jim Hessler, K8JH of Rockford, MI.

Greetings fellow hams,

I have just returned from 3 weeks out west that combined camping with some grid-expedition work in Nevada and Utah. Conditions were not very good this time, so it is good that we had other things to see and do. VHF grid-expeditions have been significant activities for me the last couple of years. But there are so many aspects of ham radio, that there is something for everyone. I have always held amateur radio in high esteem, along with its operators and the varied interests that the hobby provides for.

My interest in ham radio began in high school, and I owe it all to a couple of elders who decided to offer a ham radio course in their homes, advertising it in the local newspaper. This was long before Volunteer Examiners existed. To this day, I credit my interest in promoting and teaching ham radio to those two generous hams from 50 years ago.

I graduated from college as an engineer, already having obtained my ham radio license in high school. I was extremely active at the college ham radio station at what was then General Motors Institute – K8HPS was the call. Soon after college in 1978, I obtained my Amateur Extra license and my current callsign, K8JH – yes this is an old-fashioned CW Extra. I found myself primarily interested in general operating, DX hunting, nets, contesting, and public service.

I joined the Grand Rapids (MI) Amateur Radio Association early on and became active there in Field Day, club meetings, working with the Red Cross and in other club projects. It was not too long, and I was appointed ARES EC (emergency coordinator) for Kent County. Along the way, I have 330 DXCC countries and over 400 grids confirmed. I have been on two modest DX-peditions: Bermuda and Aruba, so I have been on both ends of pileups.

The federal government does not call amateur radio a hobby, it calls us a service, and thus, service has been my primary interest these last several years. I am still active in the Grand Rapids club, having now served two years as vice-president. Last month our president resigned, so I have stepped into the president role for the time being. In these roles, I have worked to increase our membership, improve our club radio shack, and help our club support our local Red Cross Chapter, and promote the hobby. I am a Volunteer Examiner and have served in many testing sessions and am interested in promoting amateur radio to all who might be interested, but particularly to the youth. I served several years as an OO, as well, and am active in our local Skywarn team.

I am particularly blessed right now by owning a used TV news van that a couple friends and I have repurposed into a roving, em-comm ham station. You can see the van on Facebook by looking up “The Ham Van.” In addition, we have been invited as exhibitors at the Dayton convention the last two years. In any case, The Ham Van is a great tool to attract the general public, and we have taken advantage of this tool to benefit amateur radio. For example, on one occasion last year, we were invited to exhibit at the Grand Rapids Public Library, where we spent a summer weekend on their front lawn downtown GR, showing off ham radio and handing out brochures to moms, dads, and kids. Later in the summer we were invited to a large Boy Scout Jamboree Camp in northern Michigan where we

demonstrated amateur radio and enabled many young scouts (girls and boys) to obtain radio merit badges. We have been invited back already for next month's repeat event.

In addition, the previous two years we have exhibited The Ham Van on the campus of Kettering University in Flint (my alma mater), where we were asked by students there to help them promote the re-creation of the university radio club. It had been inactive for a dozen years or more. We set up the van right out front on the main street and attracted dozens of students and even the university president, who himself was a former ham. Earlier this summer I went on a grid-expedition to Copper Harbor, MI. While set up there in a public park, I came prepared with brochures, as the Ham Van always attracts a crowd. During my five-day stay there, I counted heads and at the end, found that I had spoken with 203 people about ham radio. I would be more than happy to see if The Ham Van could be used in additional ways to promote the hobby and the ARRL.

These interest areas of promotion, volunteer testing, and public service are values and skills that I would like to support and bring to the ARRL as vice-director. My experience has taught me a great deal about reaching young people, (as have my eight-grandchildren). I hope that, if elected, my energy, commitment and knowledge will be of value to ARRL leadership. I am a life member of ARRL, having over 40 years of membership.

I am recently retired (May of 2020) from being executive director of a charitable foundation. Before that I was vice-president of a community college in Arkansas, and then a vice-president of Ferris State University in Big Rapids, MI. I am also an ordained minister and continue in that capacity in many volunteer ministry functions at my local church and beyond.

Having retired and having extra time now, I am especially free to fulfill the duties proper to vice-director. I am a team player and pledge to collaborate with the director and properly cover ham radio events in all three of our Great Lakes Division states. I love to drive and have a small camper, so perhaps these factors will help me be available to clubs and the wider ham radio community.

On another front, I believe it is also necessary these days to be watchful of state, federal, and local legislation that could negatively impact the amateur radio service. I will work to do whatever I can to promote the good and to be alert to resist whatever negative issues that might loom on the horizon.

I would certainly appreciate your consideration at election time. Thank you so much.

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