

Local amateur radio operator is anything but that

Trinidad State student says hobby lets him visit people all over the world over the airwaves

By Johnny Hart
The Chronicle-News

Like many college students, Trinidad State Junior College sophomore Dustin Cox is one busy guy.

Somewhere between announcing at volleyball and basketball games, working as an officer for the student government, and involving himself in study groups and student activities, Cox fits in a premed course load.

"It's definitely like a musical, with a direction. I just kind of look at my schedule every day and take it as it comes," Cox said.

But it's what he does in his few spare minutes that sets Cox apart from many of his peers: amateur radio.

Cox works as the public information officer for the American Radio Relay League, an organization that connects amateur radio, also known as ham radio, operators across the county.

"I don't every day get to do ham radio or PIO work. I get to just do what I have time for in that day," Cox said.

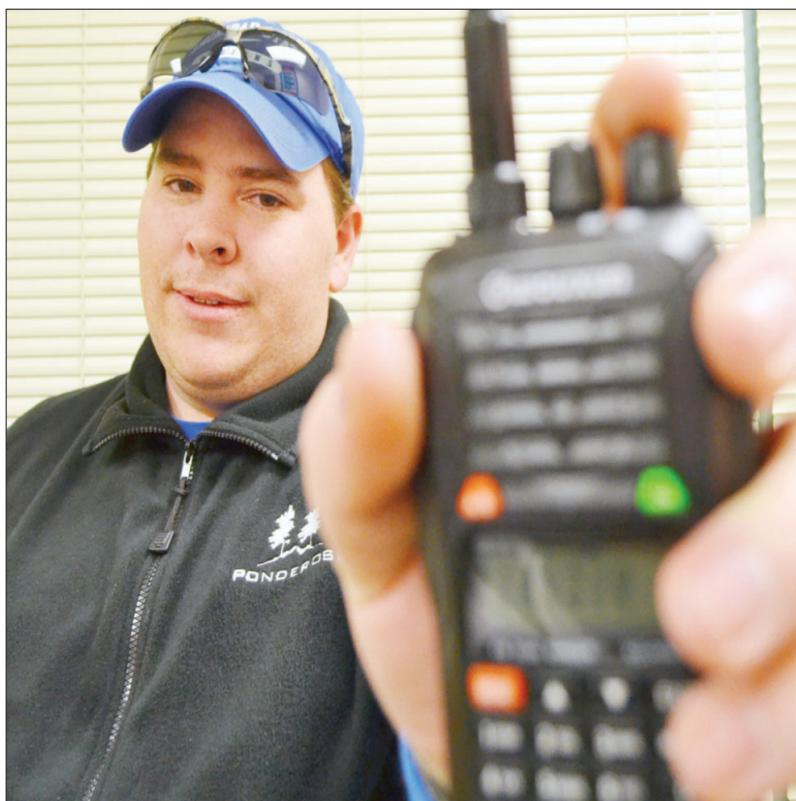
He's been a member of ARRL since 2008, but has been a fan of radio his whole life.

"Growing up right across from the fire department, you see them using two-way radio all the time," Cox said, adding he used radios while hunting as a child.

Of the more than 150,000 members of ARRL, Cox is the only ham radio PIO at large in Colorado.

And through his communication hobby, he's visited people from around the world — at least over the radio waves.

He's talked with people in the Czech Republic,



Johnny Hart/The Chronicle-News

Between classes and his work with student government, Trinidad State Junior College sophomore Dustin Cox works as the public information officer in Colorado for the American Radio Relay League.

Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, just to name a few.

"You can learn a lot of history just by getting on a ham radio and talking to people," Cox said. "It's another form of social media in a way. And you're actually socializing. It's not through a computer or anything like that. You're actually talking voice to voice."

According to the ARRL, amateur radio is "the most fun you can have with a radio. It's a way to talk with

people around the world, or even orbiting the world."

Ham radio, according to Cox, is basically two-way communication over a radio wave.

Operators can use single-sideband mode to communicate by voice, or digital, which sends information via the Internet to anywhere in the world where it's decoded using a translator unit.

Those who use amateur radio need a Federal Communications

Commission license to operate, and can only use certain bandwidths to communicate.

According to Cox, it's the most reliable form of communication in the world.

"It's been around since the mid-1800s. No communications has been around that long," Cox said, adding that "even the government's communications go down."

He said that in an emergency he can build an antenna, powered through

solar panels or even a car battery.

"I can take a coat hanger and an antenna connection part, and I can create an antenna within 30 minutes that I can go on the air with," Cox said.

The ARRL says, "When cell phones, regular phones, the Internet and other systems are down or overloaded, Amateur Radio still gets the message through," which is the reason it's called the Amateur Radio Service.

According to the ham radio organization, amateur radio kept New York City agencies in touch with each other on Sept. 11, 2001.

And when hurricanes Katrina, Wilma and Rita hit the U.S., it provided "vital life-and-death capabilities until systems could be rebuilt."

Cox himself is the assistant director for the Voice over Internet Protocol Net Operations, which he said helps communication needs during hurricanes.

He hopes to become a medical doctor involved with emergency services.

"I talked about emergencies and ham radio, but that's definitely a passion of mine in the medical field," Cox said.

His job as a public information officer is to spread the word of ham radio and how it can affect daily life.

Cox said he tells "people what it is and how amateur radio is definitely something they should get involved with because an emergency can happen at any time."

And amateur radio recently has gone mainstream, appearing on ABC's television show "Last Man Standing" starring Tim Allen.

Allen's character Mike Baxter owns an outdoors retail store, much like Bass Pro Shops and Cabelas, and the radio set up is a part of the show's set.

The show's Jan. 17 episode featured Baxter, with his fake call sign KA0XTT, using the radio.

All the radio equipment, pamphlets, magazines and QSO cards (essentially a calling card for operators), is all real and working. The only fictional aspect is Baxter's call sign.

"John (Amodeo), the producer, actually contacted us because he wanted to have a real sounding radio call sign for the show, but that didn't belong to anyone else and wasn't a valid call," Cox said.

According to Cox, Amodeo is a licensed ham radio operator, and so is much of the crew.

"There is a strong self-sufficiency overtone to Mike's approach to live. Ham radio fits in the story as a means of emergency communication," said Amodeo, in a release, of Allen's character.

The show fits in nicely with Cox's mission of alerting people about ham radio, and how it's a part of daily life.

"We want to get people to know what ham radio is all about, so that they can get involved with it," Cox said.

According to a release by Cox, there is a ham radio exam session Saturday in Pueblo for anyone interested in becoming a licensed amateur radio operator.

For more information, contact Cox at 720-422-3722 or at n0drc@arrl.net.

Contact Johnny Hart at jhart@trinidadchronicle-news.com or 719-846-3311 ext. 206.

Chocolate Factory returns for holiday

By Tim Keller
Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — Last month, a Newsweek cover story on intelligence reported that eating dark chocolate can improve memory. If true, Valentine's Day may raise our region's collective IQ with the return of the all-you-can-eat Chocolate Factory.

Last year's inaugural event, sponsored as a fundraiser by Raton High School's Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America chapter, drew 256 paying customers to the school's media center, which was decorated in red and chocolate with low lighting for romance — the romance of chocolate.

Tickets are now available from the school, or they can be purchased at the door, for Tuesday's 2nd annual Valentine's Day Chocolate Factory from 4 to 8 p.m. in the Raton High School media center. At \$6 for adults and seniors, \$5

for students, patrons will get more than their money's worth.

Not tampering with success, club members will repeat last year's winning formula when each of the 26 chapter members of FCCLA prepared from scratch five batches of a chocolate recipe, so there were 26 different chocolates to choose from, totaling 130 platters of chocolates altogether.

Brownies, fudge, truffles, cream puffs, cookies, nut bars, mousse, cakes, and chocolate-coated nuts and pretzels were among the offerings arrayed around seven long tables under romantic lighting perfect for Valentine's Day. Red table covers and helium-filled balloons added to the festive atmosphere. Two fountains provided continual flows of rich chocolate for dipping strawberries, grapes, graham crackers, marshmallows, bananas, pretzels, and other foods.



Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

Valentine's Day will again bring the all-you-can-eat Chocolate Factory to Raton. Last year, 256 people ignored their diets and succumbed to the chocolate for the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America's annual fundraiser.

Guided by sponsor Myra Baird and assisted by her Culinary Arts group and professional kitchen, Raton's FCCLA chapter is using the Chocolate Factory to raise money for the group's trip next month to the New Mexico FCCLA leadership conference in Albuquerque. Leaders of the state conference will include two of Raton's own members — state president Makayla Mondragon and state vice-president for public relations Tucker Berry.

Mondragon and Berry

will participate in the organization's national conference in Orlando, FL, in July, joined by the Raton chapter's officers — president Megan Holland, vice president Cheyann Duran, and treasurer Arianna Krulyac.

Now, think back to the list of treats available at Tuesday's Chocolate Factory. Can you name seven without looking? If not, try it again a couple days after enjoying this year's event. If Newsweek is right, your score should go up.

DAR to honor six area high school students

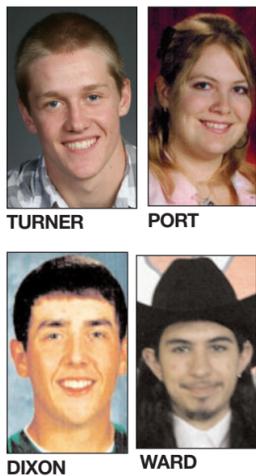
The Chronicle-News

The Santa Fe Trail Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution will honor six high school seniors who have been selected by their schools as this year's recipients for the DAR Good Citizen Award.

The students are being recognized for their dependability, service to their community, leadership and patriotism.

The six seniors will be honored at a brunch on Saturday.

Honorees are: Marcus Turner, son of Mark A. Turner and Candace A. Ferguson, Hoehne High School; Brett Dixon, son of Mike and Julie Dixon, Trinidad High; Caitlyn Reyes-Schoor, daughter of



Lynette Reyes, Holy Trinity Academy; Michelle Port, daughter of Paul and Charlene Port, Primero; Zachary Ward, son of Jamie and Jearldean Ward, Branson; and (not pictured), Maria Galindo, daughter of Zenaida and Jose Luis Galindo, Aguilar.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: AMY ZINK

Amy Zink and her family moved to the Trinidad area when she was 10.

Her mother and father are Dane and Hope Zink and she has an older sister, Renee.

Amy has been enrolled in Primero since fifth grade.

She participated in track, cheerleading, and volleyball her freshman year and track her sophomore year.

During her sophomore year Amy was inducted into the National Honor

Society.

Amy is also in the art club and debate this year. On Nov. 22, Amy enlisted in the Army National Guard. She will start basic combat training in May at Fort Sill in Oklahoma.

After completing her basic training, Amy will return to school for her senior year.

After finishing high school Amy will begin training for her military job as an imagery analyst. Once she is done with her job training, she will be



attending college and will be in an ROTC program.

Once she completes these classes Amy will have been promoted to a second lieutenant.

Primero schools to host book fair Feb. 14-22

The Chronicle-News

The Primero School District will host a Scholastic Book Fair Feb. 14-22.

The funds raised will help purchase books for the library and media center.

Families, faculty, and the community are invited to attend the event, which helps inspire children to become lifelong readers.

The book fair will feature special contests, read-alouds, booktalks, and door prizes throughout the week.

The book fair will be open daily in the school

library.

The book fair will offer specially priced books and educational products, including popular series, award-winning titles, new releases, adult bestsellers, and other great reads from more than 100 publishers.

Customers may help the school build classroom libraries by purchasing books through the Classroom Wish List program.

In addition, the book fair will feature the One for Books® program, where kids can share the thrill of

reading by donating loose change to purchase books from the book fair for the school library.

Scholastic will match monetary donations with a donation of up to 1 million books, which go to national non-profit organizations dedicated to helping families in need, such as the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, Kids in Distressed Situations Inc., and Kids In Need Foundation.

For more information contact Brittany Hammel at 719-868-2715 ext. 100.