

Swap Meet Primer

What is this Swap Meet thing-a-ma-gig coming up? For those that are new to the Club, this article is an attempt to provide relief from the blank stares I get when I ask if someone wants to sign up and work the event. It describes what the Swap Meet is, its importance to the Club, the level of support required, and the job categories involved.

What is it?

The Mike & Key Swap Meet is a one-day Hamfest held on a Saturday during the first part of March of each year. (For those who care about such things, it's the 10th full weekend of the year not counting weekends that include New Year's Day.) This year, that will be March 8th. It's held at the Pavilion Exhibition Building on the Western Washington Fairgrounds in Puyallup. This is a two-story building with 40,000 sq. feet of exhibition space. The event requires setting up over 300 tables and accommodating 600 sellers and their helpers. We typically draw 1700-2000 people through the door. While this is a one-day event for the public, for the Club, it requires an additional day of set-up on Friday so, for many of us, it's a two-day event. This Swap Meet will be our 43rd event. After so many years, it's a tradition in the Pacific Northwest and arguably the largest Hamfest in the region... certainly in Washington State. We draw vendors from the entire West Coast and buyers from Canada, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

Why do it?

Well, it's a heck of a lot of fun but primarily, it's a fundraiser for the Club's activities. Because of this event, we can keep the dues at a ridiculously low rate of \$20. It's been calculated that if we lost the Swap Meet and had to rely on dues alone that we would need to have dues in the \$60-70 range to maintain current levels. More likely, we would just have to de-fund several activities or charge members extra to participate. We also use the funds to help produce our yearly *Special Events and Information Guide* Booklet given away freely at the event and at the yearly Communications Academy event.

Club Support

Because all our members benefit directly, it's really a responsibility of our members to participate in making this event happen. It takes a minimum of 120 people to run this event smoothly. We accept help from non-members too so if you can talk your spouse into it or have some reliable friends, we would be happy to include them in the worker community. All workers receive a badge that entitles them to be on the premises during setup hours just like the sellers. That gives you a start on finding the best deals (a very nice perk if you've ever fought the crowds). We have several different areas that require workers, and they support all types of physical limitations. No area is any more important than another though some may require some expertise or on-the-job training. Members may signup using an on-line signup tool (<http://mkarc.ivolunteer.com>) , sending email to n7wa@arrl.net, or catching me at a Club meeting. The on-line tool includes worker descriptions. Members are encouraged to work in several areas throughout the event.

Tickets – working the ticket booths does requires some ability at handling money (making change) and the ability to work under pressure. There will usually be two of you in a booth. We sell tickets from 8AM – 2PM Saturday. Because you are handling Club funds, this position is limited to Club members and their spouses. There

are two other ticket related jobs – taking tickets and hand stamping. Those jobs are open to all but are outdoors so be prepared for the weather of the day.

Announcing – a willingness to interface with the public is good here. You'll be answering questions and providing limited announcements. Announcing is also where the talk-in station is located, and the door prizes are drawn. No physical requirements here, you can sit indoors the entire time. Announcing is active from 2PM-7PM Friday and 5:30AM-3PM on Saturday.

Country Store – this is our consignment area. People bring in items here when they don't have enough to fill their own table. (Workers can place items in the Country Store too and sell them commission free.) A working knowledge of equipment is helpful in this area, and you will be dealing with the public. The Country Store runs from 2PM-7PM Friday and 6:00AM-3PM on Saturday. No physical limitations.

Loading Dock – this area requires the greatest number of people. You need to be able to work in a team environment. There is some physical labor required here. We don't load people's equipment, but we do move empty pallets by hand and full pallets using "jacks". You are working mostly under cover outdoors. This job takes a bit of on-the-job training to learn the system but it's not difficult. You will be interfacing with our vendors and a good attitude is important as they can be cranky at times. The loading dock is active from 2PM-7:30PM Friday, 5:30-AM-8:30AM Saturday, and 3PM-6PM Saturday.

Registration/Traffic Control – Registration hands out vendor packets at the Gold Gate (walk-ins) and Orange Gates (drive-ins). All the jobs require being outdoors in the weather and possibly standing for extended periods of time. (These are usually very special people but highly appreciated.) This area is active from 2PM-7:30PM Friday, 5:30-AM-8:30AM Saturday, and 3PM-6PM Saturday (loadout).

Setup – On Friday, from 9AM to 2PM, many workers are needed to help setup the Pavilion. This mostly involves setting up 300+ tables and 400+ chairs. It's physical work but important. We work in pairs (mostly) to reduce the burden. Also, at this time, Announcing, Registration, and Country Store will be getting ready to open at 2PM. We do provide lunch at noon on Friday for our setup workers.

Teardown – often forgotten, we need just as many people to help teardown the tables starting at 3PM on Saturday as we did setup on Friday. If you aren't involved in performing loading duties or traffic control, we need you to stay on and help teardown and cleanup. Yes, we are all tired, but it needs to be done.

VE Examiners, Hospitality – If you have an interest in giving VE Exams, contact Scott ag7t@arrl.net For Hospitality, contact Jeanne, KE7MES.jeanneyearian@yahoo.com.