



WCF ARES® Communicator

Bridging the Gap – Engaging the Whole Community

June 2026

Fellow ARES® Members,

[This month our guest author is Christine Duex, K4KJN, EC for Polk County.]

Bridging the Gap

[Editor's Note: Every few months we like to include best-practice stories from our local counties. This month, Christine, K4KJN, tells us how Polk ARES® has embraced their local Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS) to bring additional members into the Emergency Communications/Response support to the county.]

Polk ARES mainly serves our Emergency Operations Center (EOC). During emergencies ARES is tasked with providing accurate, up-to-date reports for the Emergency Manager (EM) to use for tactical and logistical decisions. Two major sources of this information are Amateur Radio Emergency Services® (ARES®) and Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) groups. (See [Community Emergency Response Team \(CERT\) | FEMA.gov](#) for more information about CERT) Several years ago, ARES members alerted the Emergency Coordinator (EC) to the value of CERT members reports. Our EC is CERT trained and has recognized the value of getting CERT team reports in the EOC. It would help the EM make more informed decisions and wiser use of resources.

After discussing the advantages and hurdles, we devised a plan to bring the information directly into the EOC. Our first challenge was that CERT teams mostly use GMRS radio systems in their communities. Many of our ARES members are also CERT trained and GMRS licensed. Mike Lunsford, KB4FHP, volunteered to start a GMRS net and familiarize GMRS users with ARES protocols. GMRS users loved formal procedures for checking in and logging calls. The net was/is a resounding success. It is the largest net in Polk County with 30 to 35 check-ins weekly. FHP likened the early days of the net to taming “the wild west.” CERT members were eager to learn and participate; with patience and practice, they sounded just like ham nets.

That was an amazing accomplishment, but it was only the beginning. We met with our EM, explained our success and the added benefit hundreds more on site observers would add. He agreed and bought GRMS equipment for our radio room. He also advised us to bring CERT leadership on board. He led the way by talking with the head of CERT personally. We followed up with the benefits we could provide for their team. As a result, they began including ARES and other ham radio events in their newsletters. They also let us present and train CERT members in both amateur radio and GRMS uses and advantages in their operations.

At this point, I must digress and add a note about two ham clubs in Polk County: the Lake Wales Repeater Association (LWRA) and Lakeland Amateur Radio Club (LARC). Both are active and innovative groups sharing many of the same members. LWRA

Section Cabinet

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Darrell Davis, KT4WX

Assistant Section Manager

Section Emergency

Coordinator

Section Traffic Manager

Dave Rockwell W4PXE

Assistant Section Manager

Technology

Technical Coordinator

Darrell Davis, KT4WX

Assistant Section Managers

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Mike Douglas, W4MDD

Randy Payne K4EZM

Paul Toth NB9X

Russ Delaney N4RTD

Doug Williams N2DW

Mike Lunsford KB4FHP

Chuck Johnston W4CWJ

Dee Turner, N4GD

Christine Duez K4KJN

William Miller N1CDO

Dan Noah WX4DAN

Chris Bloxsom, AA4CB

sponsors a “QRP in the Park” on the last Saturday of each month. Not wanting to ignore newbies, they added a “Tailgate Tech” section and some activities for GMRS users. Inviting CERT members to join us proved very profitable. Several have joined the club and become licensed ham operators.

With support from CERT leadership, we set up a joint exercise with ARES, CERT, GMRS, and the EOC. LWRA hosted the exercise as a QRP/learning event. Kudos to Russ Delaney, N4RTD, for writing a disaster report script. We had both GMRS and ARES NCOs at the EOC. Everyone was excited and eager to give a report. We use Time, Event, Location format and the scripts were a great way to break the ice for giving live reports. After the scripted portion of the exercise, many from both teams called in impromptu reports. Everyone enjoyed and learned much from the day. We all wanted more exercises to hone our skills.

The results of developing this multigroup team were positive for everyone. CERT regained a seat in the EOC during emergencies. The EM gained 700 – 800 more assets. ARES gained more access to information for our served agency, more exposure through CERT communities, several new hams **and** when we asked for new and more user-friendly equipment, new Icom 7300 base and mobile radio units.

Teamwork ROCKED for everyone!

WCF ARES In Action:



DeSoto County Emergency Management and the ARRL® West Central Florida (WCF) Section recognized Duwain Hunt, W8JJV, and Sanford Wyatt, KM4WXX, for their outstanding contributions during the WCF ARES® Simulated Emergency Test DARK START on February 7, 2026. Duwain and Sanford were instrumental in organizing, coordinating, and establishing the Peace River Area Command during the exercise. Peace River Command was hosted by DeSoto County Emergency Management and brought together emergency management professionals from DeSoto County, Charlotte County, Sarasota County, and the City of North Port, who observed ARES procedures and joined in providing some injects to the exercise.

Upcoming ARES Events:

Dates	Event
TBD (August or September)	Third Quarter ARES EC Meeting via Zoom
December 12, 2026	Tampa Bay ARES Forum at the Tampa Bay Hamfest

Call to Action:

Planning is getting underway for our next Simulated Emergency Test (SET) DARK START II. The concept is to build on the DARK START scenario moving into a second and possibly a third operational period. Stay tuned for more information.

As always, we are looking for articles, ARES in Action items, and ARES events to include in the ARES Communicator. If your group has some best practices or you are using some unique technology in your ARES training and operations, consider providing us topics or draft articles.

Sincerely,
Dave Rockwell, W4PXE
Section Emergency Coordinator
ARRL® West Central Florida Section
Email: w4pxe@arrl.net





ARES Field Reports

[Logout](#) David Rockwell, W4PXE, WCF SEC

[ARES Home](#) [Submit Form 2](#) [Submit Form 4](#) [List Reports](#) [Summary Reports](#)

Form 4 - ARES Monthly SEC Report

[Print this page](#)

Success! The following information was submitted by David Rockwell, W4PXE, WCF SEC for **West Central Florida, April, 2026.**

Total number of ARES members:	405
Difference in ARES members from previous month:	N/D
Number of DECs/ECs reporting this month:	8
Total number of DECs/ECs in section:	9
Number of ARES net sessions held:	46
Number of ARES net sessions held with NTS liaison:	17
Number of participants in nets:	850

	Number	Person-Hrs
Exercises this month:	2	7.00
Training events this month:	14	323.00
Public service events this month:	0	0.00
Community service events this month:	0	0.00
Emergency events this month:	1	3.00
SKYWARN events this month:	1	2.00
Meetings this month:	14	221.50
Unclassified events this month:	1	46.00

Call signs of DECs reporting:

W4PXE

Activity Details:

CHARLOTTE COUNTY-----

Winlink county-wide hurricane weather drill on 4-30-26. 25 participants. Each sent 5 winlink messages.

Messages sent on w4dig-11 rms and telnet.

Via computers and W0AD cellphone app.

DESOTO COUNTY-----

Nothing significant to report.

HARDEE COUNTY-----

Conducted four sessions of the Hardee County ARES Net: Monday April 6, 13, 20, and 27. Had a total of 29 check-ins and a total net time of 88 minutes. Total volunteer time for nets was 1.9 hours.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY-----

Nothing significant to report.

MANATEE COUNTY-----

The monthly Membership Meeting of the Manatee County Emergency Support Group, Inc. (ARES/RACES) was held at the Bible Baptist Church of Bradenton on 4/28/2026. Following introduction of new members and visitors, we heard announcements from the EC and all the AECs. The Question of the Month was titled, "What if I don't have a Windows PC for Packet Winlink?" The Feature of the Month was, "The_2024_Storm_Gauntlet." A monthly EmComm Staff (AEC's, Deputies, and Liaisons) Meeting was held via Zoom on 4/1/2026.

The monthly MCESEG, Inc. Board of Directors Meeting was held via Zoom on 4/14/2026.

MCESEG Elections are coming in May with the VP, Secretary, and Member@Large terms open for self-nominations.

This year's Giving Challenge was a success! The response from our members, partners and served agencies was most gracious with donations in excess of \$3500 before the matching funds from the Patterson Foundation are applied. Final accounting and deposit of funds to our account is expected by the end of June.

PINELLAS COUNTY-----

In April, Pinellas ACS conducted five Maintenance and Training Sessions at the County EOC. On April 13, 2 ACS members participated in the Pinellas County Emergency Management Continuity of Operations (COOP) exercise, touring the alternate EOC site and evaluating the facility for communications equipment placement, and submitted a COOP plan to EM officials.

POLK COUNTY-----

One activation during April. Conducted a QRP discussing how Mesh Net works.

SARASOTA COUNTY-----

DMR Repeater up and running
MESH now connecting RED CROSS to Sarasota Memorial Hospital & SMH-Vinice radio rooms
Fusion / Analog Repeater up and running
New 20,17, 15 & 10 meter beam antenna and motor ready to install

Official Emergency Stations-----

Sanford Wyatt, KM4Wxx, sanwyatt@gmail.com, Sarasota County
WCF Eagle Net Manager 1922 minutes
WCF UHF/VHF ARES Net Manager 280 minutes

Tim Gardner, KO4IHP, Sarasota County
4/6 Check into WCF ARES Net, Traffic Rec'd = 1, Time = 35 Mins.
4/13 Check into WCF ARES Net, Traffic Rec'd = 1, Time = 30 Mins.
4/20 Check into WCF ARES Net, Traffic Rec'd = 1, Time = 34 Mins.
4/27 Check into WCF ARES Net, Traffic Rec'd = 1, Time = 39 Mins

William Johnson, N4NOA, moo.bill@verizon.net, Hillsborough County
WCF ARES HF Net NCS for 4 sessions
WCF ARES UHF Net-4 QNI
Hillsborough County ARES Net-4 QNI

Larry Gispert, KR4X, larry.gispert@verizon.net, Hillsborough County
O.E.S. Report from KR4X for April 2026
checked in 4 hours to the CGCWOA CW Net on 14.052 mhz

checked in 4 hours to the WCF ARES EC/OES Net on 3.940 mhz
checked in 4 hours to the SFL ARES Net on 3.940 mhz
total activity 12 hours 0 miles driven

John Snow, W3ATR, w3atrjls2@gmail.com, Manatee County
Net Control for Manatee Co ARES Net
Check into WCF Saturday and Monday Nets
Check-in via Winlink weekly to KM4EC
Check-in to SHARES: both National and Regional Nets

Section ARES 80 Meter Net-----
April 2026, Sessions=4, QNI=105, QND=38 minutes

SEC Remarks-----
We held our first and hopefully our annual ARES Conference (ARESCON) on May 16, 2026, graciously hosted by the Hillsborough ARES/RACES Group at the Hillsborough Public Safety Operations Complex in the Emergency Operations Center. We had 42 registered attendees.

Administrative and Other Comments:

CHARLOTTE COUNTY-----
Submitted by James Nelson, W4AII, AEC, jim3nelson@yahoo.com

DESOTO COUNTY-----
Submitted by Douglas Christ, KN4YT, EC, kn4yt@yahoo.com

HARDEE COUNTY-----
Registered for the Hardee County All Hazards Expo, which is scheduled for Saturday 5/09/26. Ken Evers W9KBE and I will be attending to represent Hardee County ARES. Submitted by Darrell Davis, KT4WX, EC, kt4wx@arrl.net.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY-----
Submitted by Jeff Bronsing, KJ4NEO, EC, kj4neo@gmail.com.

MANATEE COUNTY-----
I attended a meeting of all Emergency Support Function Leads in the EOC on 4/2/2026.
I completed FEMA G-557, "Rapid Needs Assessment" training with a class in the EOC on 4/7/2026.

Our current Membership Metrics are;
52 Active Members
37 Qualified (71%) - 15 at Level 1, 17 at Level 2, 5 at Level 3
Amateur Licensees: 26 Extra, 3 Adv, 11 Gen, 12 Tech

If you are on Facebook, please like and share our page: <https://www.facebook.com/manateeares>

A host of reference documents, training materials and Monthly Membership Proceedings can be found on our website; WWW.MCESG.ORG

For more details, please feel free to contact me anytime by phone or text at (727) 542-4729 or by email at spark003@live.com
Submitted by Stephen Park, W4OEP, EC, spark003@live.com

PINELLAS COUNTY-----
Submitted by Will Scott, W7WMS, AEC, will.w7wms@gmail.com

POLK COUNTY-----
Submitted by Christine Duez, K4KJN, EC, cduetz10@yahoo.com.

SARASOTA COUNTY-----
Submitted by Mike Kearney, KG3KIQ, EC, mbk7@comcast.net

*Send comments or questions about this page to [ARES Support](#).
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