

Published July 2nd, 2014

## OIS Student Earns License Early

By Cathy Dausman



Cameron Nielsen, 12, of Orinda is a newly licensed amateur radio operator. Photo Cathy Dausman

Cameron Nielsen, 12, is barely out of seventh grade and already has his license - an amateur radio license, that is, with a personal call sign of K-K-6-M-V-U.

Cameron was by far the youngest student in a Technician's level license class recently taught by Lamorinda Area Radio Interest Group president Keith Riley. All amateur radio operators must pass a test before being licensed by the Federal Communications Commission; the test is heavy on science and math, and there is no child-friendly version.

According to the American Radio Relay League, there are more than 700,000 radio amateurs in the U.S. licensed as Technician, General and Extra class. Cameron first learned of the training opportunity through his Boy Scout troop. He'd already earned his Communications badge and wanted to work on his Radio badge. Of all the members in his troop (Orinda's 237), "nobody signed up [for the radio class] except Cameron," said his father, Ken Nielsen.

The Nielsen family was already acquainted with amateur radio, having been neighbors with Ham Radio Outlet owner and founder Robert Ferrero. Cameron found it fascinating people could talk to someone as far away as Brazil so easily. The license class was a series of six two-hour sessions with optional practice test-taking exams online. A written license exam was administered at the final meeting.

"It took me a little longer to take the test," Cameron said, but he passed it the first time.

The older Nielsen is justifiably proud of his son's math abilities, saying his son easily memorized the household's 26 digit alpha-numeric Internet access code.

Both father and son credit Riley for working with Cameron to learn radio protocols, earn his license and become involved with LARIG itself. "He's invited me to work [communications for] the Moraga Treeline Triathlon and the Orinda Fourth of July Parade," Cameron said.

But Cameron has had little time even to listen in on his Icom multiband radio yet, a gift from Berkeley Yacht Club's Michael Whitfield, because of his other activities: He's just finished playing baseball, and is currently sailing and taking acting classes. That's a full plate for the Orinda Intermediate School student, who's content to "sign off" his radio for now.

To learn more about amateur radio events and activities in Lamorinda, go to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lamorinda-Area-Radio-Interest-Group/252700361590786?fref=nf>.

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[back](#)

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