

From the Duke City Hamfest Chairman Bill Ripley, KY5Q

The rumors are true. The Duke City Hamfest, Aug. 11-13, has a new location this year, and if it works well, for years to come. During the past year, hotel prices have skyrocketed, with price increases of more than 100 percent. We would have had to add \$10 or more to the price of each admission just to pay the hall rental, and we would have been forced to jack up the price of the banquet meals even more. We were not willing to do that to the hams of New Mexico.

After a long, exhaustive search, we are proud to announce that we have moved from a hotel venue to a large “community center” setting: the Sid Cutter Pilot Pavilion at Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta Park. This facility is located on the south-central side of the park, on the south end of the soccer fields. This is a positive move. The venue will be different, but it will give us more flexibility to add additional events and activities during the coming years. It has ample space to handle our event, with lots of parking and easy access. The facility is brand new, so it’s nice, clean, and bright. It will allow us to have a three-day event, as before, with space for commercial vendors, indoor flea market, outdoor tailgate, and several simultaneous forums, presentations, and outdoor activities.

Program highlights:

This year, we will host a new and improved HF University aimed at getting people active on the “low bands,” i.e. HF, and introducing them to all forms of HF communications. We will also have a new Emergency Management track this year, as well as a track for new hams and those that want to bring new people into the hobby. We will be setting up a satellite ground station and working some of the satellites, as well as providing a program(s) on a new CubeSat development project that we are supporting in conjunction with Albuquerque Public Schools. We are “this close” to having a commitment from a ham in Texas to bring his “Small Form Factor” Moon-bounce rig with him, allowing him to make moon-bounce contacts with a fraction of the antenna system required in the past. We are also working to bring a Digital Signal Processing track to the event, as well as a track on kit-building and equipment construction. This year is all about getting active and presenting different technologies and hands-on activities.

Here is some more good news. Starting this year, we are offering free admission to anyone who prepares and delivers a forum program or volunteers for at least four hours to help with the Hamfest. Please notify us in advance. We will also be granting free admission to educators (with ID) and youth.

Revamped meals:

From a social perspective, we will have a complimentary Friday night mixer, with appetizers and finger foods provided by the Duke City Hamfest Board of Directors. We will have a short address by our celebrity guest(s) as well, to kick off the event. We are close to being able to announce who the special guests will be, but I am still waiting on final confirmation. We will have a continental breakfast as part of Friday's HF University. The Albuquerque DX Association will sponsor the breakfast buffet on Saturday with a Contesting / DX theme. We will have a full-up BBQ dinner on Saturday evening, with 3 meats, 4 vegetables, dessert, drinks, and all the fixings. We'll have a cash bar on Saturday before and during the banquet.

We will host a breakfast banquet on Sunday, with a program aimed at new hams and education, as well as a review of breathtaking images from the Saturday High Altitude Balloon missions. All the meals will be catered by real restaurants — no more disappointing hotel food. Our meal prices will be much lower than last year, because catered meals are a much better deal than hotel food, and we are passing on all the savings to you. We are holding the line on admission fees and will not raise admission prices this year. In addition, we are lowering prices on flea-market tables and commercial booths. The lower cost to sell, along with significantly reduced meal costs and the opportunity to volunteer for admission, will make the cost of attending more attractive than ever before. By the way, we will have “lunch wagons” on site during the lunch periods during the Hamfest.

Additional activities:

We are offering a Tech license class, and will conduct VE testing on site. We will have QSL card checking for WAS and DXCC. We will be providing a complimentary table to any club or related charitable organization, but we ask them to staff the table for the entire event.

Since we are right off of the soccer fields at the park, we will be having 2x High Altitude Balloon launches that will be run and managed by our high school students, the very same students that we got into ham radio over the last few years, and New Mexico Space Studies. We are trying to organize a drone demonstration, as well as some high-altitude rocket launches.

We expect to have several Emergency Management trailers on display at the facility during the event.

We are reserving a block of rooms at a local hotel off of I-25 near the venue. We are working on getting a deal at a local RV park. As of now, we

don't have permission for overnight RV parking in the Balloon Fiesta Park parking lot, so we are trying to figure out the best alternatives.

Since it took us so long to secure a venue this year, we are a little behind schedule getting the website up. We are working to have it up by the end of May. We need everyone to help spread the word. We have started updating our Facebook page for the 2017 event. Just go to Facebook and search on Albuquerque Duke City Hamfest and follow our event. You'll find our Facebook page here:

<https://m.facebook.com/Albuquerque-Duke-City-Hamfest-100376646835676/>.

Registration is now open for commercial vendors. Make your reservations via the Vendor page on our website:

<https://dukecityhamfest.org/vregistration-2/>.

If you have any questions, feel free to send them to Margaret Goga at mgoga@swcp.com.

If you would like to volunteer to present a forum or help with the Hamfest, please contact me at ky5q@arrl.net.