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Bringing Santa to Walmart

By the time you receive this issue of *QST*, the holiday season will be fading rapidly in the rear-view mirror. Even so, it's not too late to make note of an interesting occurrence from last November 26.

Using Amateur Radio to bring the voice of Santa Claus to children is not unusual; hams have been doing this for decades. What is out of the ordinary is a Santa station headquartered at a facility belonging to a retail giant: Walmart.

It all began when Leah Ohse, W3LEO, who is the Mid-Del Amateur Radio Club treasurer and a 10-year Walmart employee, spoke with the manager of the Midwest City, Oklahoma, Walmart and proposed that the club set up a Santa Claus station at the store. The manager was impressed with the idea, and even offered to locate the station near the check-out area.

With an Icom IC-7000 transceiver operating on 2 meters into a magnetic-mount antenna, the club members took to the air as W5MWC and immediately began drawing curious children. ARRL Registered Instructor Donald Ohse, W5DRO, was among the Mid-Del members on hand to assist the children. According to Donald, they typically requested video games, foam projectile shooters, and dolls, although one child asked for a real-life

horse. Of course, there was also small talk about the weather at the North Pole and how the reindeer were faring.

It is noteworthy that the Mid-Del Amateur Radio Club made extensive use of social media during the event by posting photos to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. They even broadcast live video using *Facebook Live*, effectively allowing all their Facebook followers to share the experience.

Photos by Donald Ohse, W5DRO.



The sign posted near the Walmart check-out area inviting children to talk to Santa.



Leah Ohse, W3LEO, the Mid-Del Amateur Radio Club treasurer who suggested the event to the Walmart store manager.



Evan Anderson, K6EMA, ARRL Oklahoma Section Youth Coordinator, puts out a call for Santa.