

By Ignacio Laguarda  
ilaguarda@wickedlocal.com

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## Brookline first-grader youngest in state to get ham radio license

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to get a ham radio license, but it doesn't hurt if your dad is one.

That's the case for Milo Dantowitz, a 7-year-old first grader who attends the Dexter Southfield School in Brookline. Earlier this year, Dantowitz became the youngest person in the state (until proven otherwise) to get a ham radio, or amateur radio, license.

And although he had the encouragement of his father, Ron Dantowitz, the director of the Clay Center Observatory at Dexter, Milo got the license all by himself.

"When he sets his mind to anything, he just gets it done," Milo's mother, Faith Dantowitz, said.

And he's not done yet.

He plans on getting the "general" class license for operating amateur radios next year, and "amateur extra" class, the highest license available, the year after.

Milo was part of the after-school Radio Electronics Club at Dexter.

He was one of 12 students to pass the Federal Communications Commission radio technician exam, which now allows him to transmit on radios. The group included fifth- and sixth-grade children, and Milo.

Milo first became interested in radio when he saw the electronics club huddled over a radio communicating to someone in a foreign country.

"And I just decided to join in," said Milo.

He then went to his father and asked to be a part of the group and work toward getting his license. But his father told him he needed to be at least in the fourth grade to participate.

Eventually, however, Milo's persistence paid off.

"And I was really excited to start something new," said the 7-year-old. "I learned about how to solder, and how to transit on the radio and how to use call signs."

When he transmits on the ham radio, Milo needs to say his call sign every 10 minutes, a regulation all amateur radio technicians need to know.

For the record, his is KC1BZR, which he rattled off without a moment's hesitation.

To get the license, Milo needed to study 400 questions that could be asked on the exam, which only uses 35 of them.

According to him, he stayed up "really late" to study.

"The night before I took the test I stayed up until almost midnight," he said.

In order to pass, you need to answer at least 26 questions correctly. On his second try, Milo got 29 correct.

On Monday at Rifrullo Café on Cypress Street, Ron sat with his wife, Faith, and Milo. As Ron described how ham radio frequencies work, Milo chimed in.

"It's like a channel, like a wire that you transmit through on your telephone," said Milo.

So far, Milo has used his radio to listen to the police scanner and to transmit to the Clay Center at Dexter.

Ron, who wants to encourage all children to experiment in all of the STEM [science, technology, engineering, math] fields, said he learned to not limit Milo at such an early age, even when the age limit to participate was against him.

"Kids are excited about science and technology at all ages," he said. "Milo surprised me in that I did not think he would have the 'stick-to-itiveness' to go through with this as a first grader. I discouraged him for a while because I wanted to make sure he had the responsibility to finish it, but what he reminded me of is that when students are really interested in something, they're highly motivated and can achieve great things."

Milo is excited to attend the Amateur Radio Field Day at the Clay Center later this month, in which he'll be able to transmit to parts all over the world. And since he has license, he'll be able to participate.

Another lesson Milo has learned is the importance of ham radio, since it acts like an emergency backup when cellular signals go down.

Ron said Milo can now identify what's happening in different electronics. He mentions capacitors, resistors and current.

"A resistor is something that slows down the current," adds Milo.

Later he adds, "a capacitor holds electricity and lowers the amount of watts."

Milo's interest in technology and spirit for experimentation was evident from an early age.

His parents tell a story about their power going out at home, and finding a pair of tweezers in an electrical outlet. It didn't take long to realize the tweezers came from Milo, who was only 3 years old.

"We could use a little less experimentation sometimes," said Ron, laughing.

Ultimately, Ron said he was happy he didn't stop his child from getting the license, even if it meant letting him operate a soldering iron at one point. In the end, he found encouragement worked better.

"If a 7-year-old can do this and really stick to it, then there are a lot of things that we can all do, and most importantly, a child interested in something, you should be as encouraging as possible," he said.



Milo Dantowitz, 7, a first grader at Dexter Southfield School, is the youngest known person in the state to get his ham radio license. Photo courtesy of Ron Dantowitz