

Alliance for Astronomy, Inc.

Annual Report  
for year ending

31 December 2006

*The mission of the corporation shall be to promote public awareness, appreciation and education in astronomy and related sciences.*

Alliance activities in pursuit of our mission took two main forms in 2006: public outreach and development of a public astronomy center.

Outreach:

Sponsorship and support for the Astronomical Society of Eastern Missouri continues to be our main vehicle for public outreach. The Society, founded in February 2005, had 29 paid members as of December 31, 2006. This compares and contrasts to membership in the St. Louis Astronomical Society (founded in 1936) which has about 130 paid members. Family memberships are offered for \$50 per year and benefits include membership in the Astronomical League, discounted prices on magazine subscriptions in addition to the learning and social opportunities.

At the end of the year, the Society was conducting three meetings per month in the meeting room of the Weldon Spring Interpretative Center: a “regular” membership meeting on the second Saturday of the month, a “beginners” session on the first Tuesday of the month and an advanced Digital Imaging Special Interest Group (SIG) on the fourth Saturday of the month.

The “regular” membership meeting starts with a pot luck supper that has proven to be quite popular as it gives the members and guests an informal time to visit, become better acquainted and explore mutual astronomy interests in a relaxed atmosphere. The “formal” part of the meeting consists of announcements of upcoming astronomical events and special gatherings to observe, book and magazine reviews and recommendations for learning, sometimes a guest speaker and observing if the weather permits. During 2006, guest speakers included Gregg Ruppel who is a local expert in digital imaging, Dr. Erika Gibb, Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy at UMSL, who spoke on comets and what we learn from them, and Stacey Thater, Physics and Astronomy Lecturer at St. Charles Community College, who spoke on meteors.

The “beginners” meeting focuses on beginning topics and the meetings are unstructured such that any question or concern expressed by attendees is addressed. Observing after the meeting is part of the session if weather permits.

The Digital Imaging SIG focuses on techniques to acquire and process digital astronomical images. This tends to be for more advanced amateurs but every effort is made to keep all attendees engaged.

The Society offers star programs to the public and in 2006 the Society co-sponsored (with the St. Louis Astronomical Society) six programs in St. Charles County Parks. The Society also provided star programs for school, Scout and church organizations at their sites. These programs consist of two or more members who provide telescopes and short programs to explain and demonstrate the wonders and science of astronomy to the groups who usually consist of K-12 children. These groups number from 25 to as many as 150.

We ask people attending our functions to give us the zip code of their domicile to track the geographic distribution of our clients. The attached Figure 1 is an analysis wherein the area of each colored circle is proportional to the percentage of “visits” or “participations” from each zip code for the two year period 2005-2006 (which is weighted more heavily toward 2006 as our outreach has grown). The majority of our clients came from St. Charles County, but there are nine counties represented, including two from Illinois. There were almost 800 “participations” in the two year period.

One Society member earned recognition from the Astronomical League in the form of a Public Outreach Award and another's award is pending for his outreach activities in 2006. Our Executive Director, James M. Roe, was awarded the “Amateur of the Year” award by the Mid-States Region of the Astronomical League at their convention in June 2006.

Photos and descriptions of most Society events are posted on the Society web page at [ASEMonline.org](http://ASEMonline.org).

#### Astronomy Center:

From its founding, Alliance has had a vision to develop a public astronomy center in St. Charles County to further the mission by providing advanced resources for the promotion of astronomy to the public and, especially, K-12 students. Activities during 2006 include continuing study of the requirements for such a center, searching for a suitable location on which to build it, lobbying County government to support it, and limited fund raising to equip it.

The Parks and Recreation Department of St. Charles County indicated a plan and intention to build a passive astronomy site in Brommelsiek Park in 2007. Some \$350,000 are budgeted to develop the site with a paved entrance and parking lot, a composting toilet and concrete paths and telescope pads. This site would be open and available 24 hours per day (in contrast to the rest of the parks closing at 10:00 pm in summer). It is fair to say that the development of this public facility was greatly influenced by Alliance lobbying efforts.

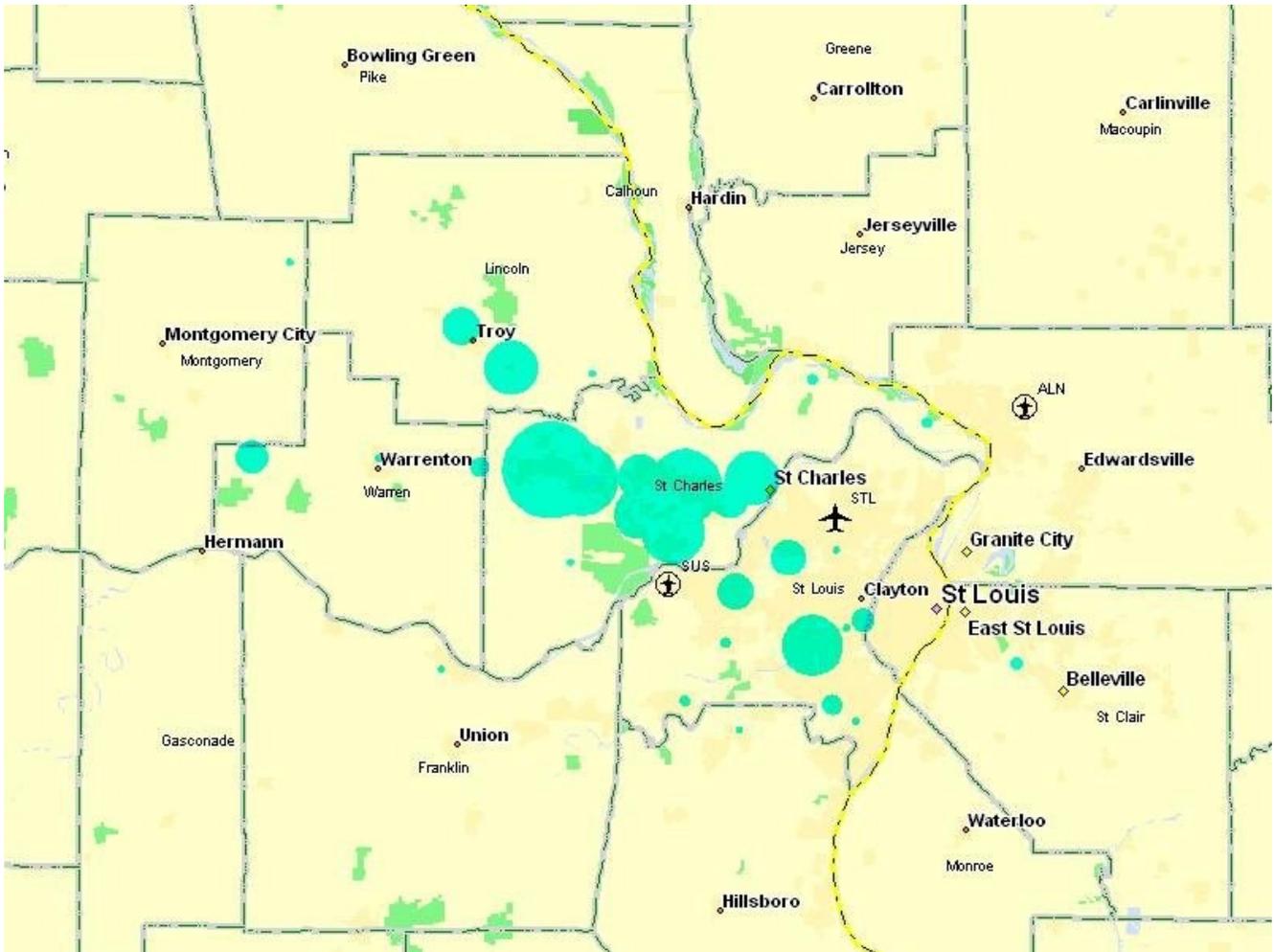
Fund raising to equip the eventual astronomy center with first-rate telescopes was marked by a \$20,000 donation from the Employees Community Fund of Boeing – St. Louis. This money was used to purchase a 32-in telescope that is the largest telescope in the State of Missouri dedicated to public use. Donations in 2005 of an optical tube assembly for a 16-in telescope from private donors and \$2,000 in cash from the Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation were applied in 2006 to have the telescope completed with a computerized mounting system.

#### Financial:

The Statement of Net Assets and the Income and Expense statements are attached. Our income for the year was some \$36,723, the majority of which was the \$20,000 donation for the 32-inch telescope. Some \$15,323 was donated by individuals and companies and Society membership amounted to \$1,400. Expenses attributed to fund raising on the part of the Executive Director amounted to \$600 or 1.6 % of total revenue as such activities in 2006 were for filling out on-line grant applications and matching-fund requests.

By far, the bulk of our assets are in the equipment for the astronomy center with the bulk of that being the 16-inch and 32-inch telescopes. As the total expenditure on the 32-inch telescope was \$296.49 short of the \$20,000 restricted donation, that amount is shown as still restricted. Otherwise, the rest of our assets are classified as unrestricted.

Figure 1:  
Geographic Distribution of 779 “participations” in Alliance programs for 2005-2006.  
The area of each circle is proportional to the percentage of the total “participations” from each zip code



Respectfully submitted,

James M. Roe  
Executive Director