

Alliance for Astronomy, Inc.
Annual Report
for year ending
31 December 2007

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 2007: 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 42 paid members as of December 31, 2007, which represents a 40% growth from the year before. 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.

The Society conducts 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.

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 2007 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. Our Observing Chairperson estimates just over 1,000 people of all ages were served by these programs in 15 different venues with volunteer participation by 27 individuals.

Two ASEM members mentored the Science Olympiad team of St. Charles West High School and prepared and conducted the astronomy test at the regional competition at Hazelwood High School. We anticipate expanding our contributions and services to the Science Olympiad and plan to promote our resources to area high schools for science fair project support.

There are now three Society members who have earned recognition from the Astronomical League in the form of a Public Outreach Award one of whom is at the “Star” level representing 60+ hours of volunteer service at public outreach events.

The Society was selected to host the annual convention of the Mid-States Region of the Astronomical League. A meeting room has been reserved at the St. Charles Community College for Saturday, June 21, 2008. A “Star-B-Q” will kick off the event on Friday, June 20, 2008 at the Society observatory. We are anticipating 100+ attendees from the five states of the Region: Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska.

The Society has arranged to produce an art show featuring the astronomical images of Society Member Gregg Ruppel. We have reserved the St. Peters Community and Cultural Center for June 14 – July 9, 2008 to conduct the event. Our goals are threefold. First to promote the excellent work being done by Gregg, second to promote a general interest in astronomy and third to raise money for Alliance operations. Gregg has signed over copy rights to permit us to sell prints. We will also seek corporate sponsorship for the event.

Our web site at <http://ASEMonline.org> continues to be a vital part of our outreach activities. In 2006 we averaged 4,900 visits per month and served an average of 13,400 pages per month.

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. At year end, the St. Charles County Parks and Recreation Department was near completion of an astronomy-specific addition to Broemmelsiek Park that closely follows concept studies prepared by the Executive Director in 2004-2005. In 2007 we initiated negotiations for two sites on which to erect the astronomy center, one of which appeared to be close to finalizing at year end. Formal announcement must wait until the deal is finalized.

The 80-cm telescope purchased with the cash donation by the Employee Community Fund of Boeing St. Louis in 2006 was erected in a temporary location the use of which is donated by a Society member. This has given us a chance to work with the telescope in preparation for its final resting place in the astronomy center. The telescope is being upgraded to a fully computerized instrument and shows great promise to become a first-class research-grade telescope.

A \$4,000 cash grant from the ECF of Boeing St. Louis was the lead gift in a short fund drive to purchase a research-grade camera for use with the 80-cm telescope. This amount was matched from various donations and a Santa Barbara Instruments Group model STL-1001E camera was purchased along with a few accessories. Early testing shows the camera and telescope work exceedingly well together. We have started a dialog with professors at UMSL, SIU-E, Truman State University and others to generate programs of student research using our resources.

Financial:

The Net Assets and the Income and Expense statements (PDFs) can be downloaded. Our income for the

year was some \$24,963, the majority of which was donated by individuals and companies and Society membership amounted to \$1,950. Expenses attributed to fund raising on the part of the Executive Director amounted to \$600 or 2.4 % of total revenue as such activities in 2007 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 80-cm telescopes and the STL-1001E camera. We have no restricted funds at year end.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Roe
Executive Director