

Alliance for Astronomy, Inc.
Annual Report
for year ending
31 December 2008

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 2008: 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 48 paid members as of December 31, 2008, which represents a 14% 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 and a “beginners” session on the first Tuesday of the month. The advanced Digital Imaging Special Interest Group (SIG) on the fourth Saturday of the month is suspended, although we did conduct a day-long imaging workshop in February.

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 Society offers star programs to the public and in 2008 the Society sponsored six programs in St. Charles County Parks including the Lunar Eclipse on February 20.. 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 approximately 2,200 people of all ages were served by these programs in 25 different venues.

Two ASEM members continue to support the Science Olympiad by preparing, administering and scoring the astronomy section of the test..

The Society hosted the annual convention of the Mid-States Region of the Astronomical League at the St. Charles Community College on Saturday, June 21, 2008. A “Star-B-Q” kicked off the event on Friday, June 20, 2008 at Quail Ridge Park. There were 50 family registrations and 75 individuals at the banquet.

The Society was elected again to sponsor the 2009 convention. This time we have arranged to conduct the convention at the Holiday Inn in Columbia, Missouri starting at Noon on Saturday, March 7 and running through Noon on Sunday, March 8, 2009. This date was selected to avoid competition with the many star parties in the summer time, the location was chosen to be more convenient to MSRAL members in Nebraska, Kansas, Arkansas and Oklahoma, and the agenda was selected to allow folks to stay only one night thereby saving costs and accommodating school schedules.

The Society produced an art show featuring the astronomical images of Society Member Gregg Ruppel which ran at the St. Peters Community and Cultural Center June 14 – July 9, 2008. We prepared some 104 framed prints in three different sizes (8x10, 12x18 and 20x30) of some 54 astronomical subjects for the show. By all accounts it was a critical success as many members of the public were exposed to the beauty of the heavens through Gregg's work. Many of the pieces were sold to help defray the expense. As a direct result of the show and its publicity, we have exchanged memberships with the Arts Council of St. Charles County and look forward to doing mutual events with them.

Our web site at <http://ASEMonline.org> continues to be a vital part of our outreach activities. In 2008 we averaged 6,565 visits per month (some 209 per day) and served an average of 17,588 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. In 2008, the St. Charles County Parks and Recreation Department completed an astronomy-specific addition to Broemmelsiek Park that closely follows concept studies prepared by the Executive Director in 2004-2005.

In 2008 we put a lot of effort into a proposed donation of ground in New Melle, Missouri including architect studies of a site plan and building. In the end, the negotiations fell through when the restrictions on the donation were judged to be too onerous. At the end of the year we were looking to locate the 80-cm telescope in a joint astronomy park with the St. Charles Community College and the City of St. Peters.

The 80-cm telescope purchased with the cash donation by the Employee Community Fund of Boeing St. Louis is in a temporary location the use of which is donated by a Society member. The telescope and camera purchased in part with a \$4,000 cash grant from the ECF of Boeing St. Louis has been used in support of research projects for the American Association of Variable Star Observers, the measurement of transits by extra solar planets across the face of their star, student projects at UMSL and SCCC and Truman State University. Data on extra solar planet transits has been cited in one professional paper to date.

As a result of another cash grant of \$4,000 from the Boeing ECF, we have purchased a specialized H-alpha telescope with bino viewer, matching eyepieces and a tracking mount. Also in this package, we plan to purchase a 125 mm telescope with tracking mount and white light filter. These devices will be used to set up and conduct solar programs for area schools..

Financial:

The Net Assets and the Income and Expense statements (PDFs) can be downloaded. Our income for the year was some \$8,013 the majority of which was donated by individuals and companies and Society membership amounted to \$2,150. Expenses attributed to fund raising on the part of the Executive Director amounted to \$300 or 1.6 % of total revenue as such activities in 2008 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 some \$2,247 in restricted funds at year end to complete the purchases of the two solar telescopes.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Roe
Executive Director