

Alliance for Astronomy, Inc.
Annual Report
for year ending
31 December 2009

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 54 paid members as of December 31, 2009, which represents a 12.5% 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 two regular 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 2009 the Society sponsored 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 approximately 1,250 people of all ages were served by these programs in 2009. This is in addition to the approximately 300 people who attended our monthly meetings.

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 Holiday Inn, Columbia, Missouri March 7-8, 2009. There were 70 people registered from around the Region.

Our web site at <http://ASEMonline.org> continues to be a vital part of our outreach activities. In 2009 we moved the web site over to Google Apps which provides us with a richer, easier to use environment in which to tell our story. We are able to provide each ASEM member with his/her own web site for personal projects related to astronomy plus other features such as calendars and individual email accounts. Since we started monitoring visitors in June 2009, we have had 1,343 unique visitors. However, some 54% of them immediately left the site but that still leaves some 618 unique visitors who spent an average of 19 minutes on the site indicating we are reaching an audience some 12 times larger than our membership. On the average, there are some 1,000 unique page views 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 2009 we struck a working relationship with the Parks Department wherein we placed a 10-in telescope in the roll off roof shelter already in the park. Subsequently, we installed the 16-in Jones-Bird telescope at the park and we have permission to install the 32-in there as well. We paid for improvements to the roll off roof shelter (added a garage door opener for the roof and other small enhancements) and paid for the roll off shelter for the 16-in. We must raise the money for the 32-in shelter and plans were drawn up at the end of the year. These telescopes add immensely to our capabilities for public outreach and we have instituted weekly open houses staffed by volunteers from ASEM (weather permitting). The weekly open houses will be added to the Parks calendar of events for 2010 and we will continue to host special events, most likely at Klondike Park.

Financial:

The Net Assets and the Income and Expense statements (PDFs) can be downloaded. Our income for the year was some \$10,250 the majority of which was donated by individuals and companies. We received the extraordinary gift of a 14.5-in Starmaster telescope which we valued at \$9,000. Society membership amounted to \$2,650. Expenses attributed to fund raising on the part of the Executive Director amounted to \$300 or 1.4 % of total revenue as such activities in 2009 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, 14.5-inch and 80-cm telescopes and the STL-1001E camera. The solar telescope was received this year, removing the restricted asset allocation for that item.

Respectfully submitted,
James M. Roe, Executive Director