

Outreach Club Chair:

Dr. Mike Reynolds
604 11th Avenue North
Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
E-mail: astrogator90@comcast.net

Introduction

The Astronomical League has been highly successful motivating League club/society members to not only get out and observe, but to also record and submit their observations for appropriate recognition. The stated goal for the Observing Clubs is that they *offer encouragement and certificates of accomplishment for demonstrating observing skills with a variety of instruments and objects*. The success of the Astronomical League's various Observing Club programs and awards is but just one of the League's many benefits to its member club/societies.

The new League Outreach Award will afford individual Astronomy Outreach recognition. Many club/society members already do outreach, but no one organization recognizes the outreach efforts of the many, many individuals.

The *AstronomyOutreach* listserv started by Scott Roberts of Meade Instruments has been an excellent vehicle to share ideas, promote outreach, and encourage those involved in outreach. Currently *AstronomyOutreach* recognizes groups and occasionally individuals for their contributions to outreach on an annual basis; the *AstronomyOutreach Outreach Awards*, also known as the *AstroOscars*, are given on an annual basis at the Winter Star Party. Past recipients include the Astronomy Picture of the Day team, *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazine for their promotions of outreach events, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, the Southern Cross Astronomical Society and the Eastbay Astronomical Society, and the League's own Jen and Vic Winter for their various work and efforts.

The Astronomical Society of the Pacific has become a major focus for outreach. Its many outstanding programs and recognition offer vehicles for the amateur, either through their local club/society or individually, to become involved in outreach. Project ASTRO™, now approaching its 12th year, improves the teaching of astronomy and physical science in grades 4 through 9, and in youth groups, by linking professional and amateur astronomers with local educators. Each astronomer is matched with an educator in a one-on-one partnership and commits to visiting the educator's students at least four times during the school year. Over 500 active educator-astronomer partnerships currently bring the excitement of scientific discovery through astronomy to roughly 20,000 students annually.

Newly administered by the ASP is the Night Sky Network, which is a nationwide coalition of astronomy clubs and societies bringing the science, technology and

inspiration of NASA's missions to the general public. The Night Sky Network is sponsored by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

So with all of these already-excellent programs in place, why an Outreach Award, and the Astronomical League as the appropriate vehicle?

Outreach is simply **paramount** to the **survival of our hobby!** You know and have seen the Sky & Telescope statistics. And look around you: our meetings are "graying."

The highly-successful League Observing Clubs are popular and inviting. By making Astronomy Outreach **on the same level** as other League Observing Clubs, it promotes the importance of outreach among our many members. It would also encourage clubs/societies to become more involved.

The Astronomical League is the organization that has historically tied together amateur clubs and societies. The League is, therefore, the best vehicle by far to recognize and reward individual outreach efforts. The League already recognizes efforts by clubs/societies for Astronomy Day. Yet we need to practice outreach on more than one day per year - and many of us do just that. It is often the individual who makes this happen.

You cannot have too much outreach nor recognize outreach efforts often enough!

Rules and Regulations

The initial concept is to award outreach just as the Astronomical League currently recognizes Observing Club (each Club offers a certificate based upon achieving certain observing goals): based on a number of outreach events and hours. There are three levels of recognition:

Outreach Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of five-2 hour (minimum each outreach) outreach events • Document each event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Date, time (started and ended), location ○ What you did for the outreach ○ Estimate of the number of people attending
Stellar Outreach Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the (basic) Outreach Award, the Stellar Outreach recipients will need an additional fifty hours (minimum) in outreach events • Again, document each event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Date, time (started and ended), location ○ What you did for the outreach ○ Estimate of the number of people attending • The recipient will "report" on one of his/her outreach events; these reports can be used in <i>The Reflector</i> and elsewhere to overview what amateurs are doing in Outreach and share ideas.
Master Outreach Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the Outreach and Stellar Outreach Awards, the Master Outreach recipients will need an additional one hundred hours (minimum) in outreach events • As with the first two levels, document each event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Date, time (started and ended), location ○ What you did for the outreach ○ Estimate of the number of people attending • The Master Outreach Award nominee will report on what seems to work best for their outreach efforts; this can be specific activities, locations, etc. Like with the Stellar Outreach Award, these reports can be used in <i>The Reflector</i>.

This structure of tiered recognition encourages the initial recipient to continue with his/her outreach efforts. As with all League Observing Clubs, the Astronomical League's Outreach Awards will be numbered. And as with other League Observing Clubs, all Outreach proposed awards would need to be certified by the local club/society president.

Each successful individual would receive a certificate and pin after review by the League Outreach Club Chair.

Outreach documentation for the Astronomical League's Outreach Awards begins with events starting on 1 January 2006.

A possible extension of the Outreach Observing Club and recognition will be an annual recognition of an individual or individuals for outstanding outreach at each year's National ALCon.

The Astronomical League's Outreach Awards chair will be Dr. Mike Reynolds. Mike's background includes 15 years in astronomy-science museums, ten years as a successful high school physics teacher, and five years as a college astronomy professor. He has just been appointed the Dean of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at Florida Community College (a 60,000 student state institution). He has written several astronomy books and articles, served two terms as the League's National Vice President, chaired two national Astronomical League conventions (including the highly-successful AstroCon 2004 in Berkeley, California), is on the Board of Directors of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers, a full member of the American Astronomical Society, and is already heavily involved in outreach through *AstronomyOutreach*

To receive your Outreach, Stellar or Master Certificate and Award Pin, send a copy of your documented events, along with your name, address, email address, and society affiliation, to:

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Upon verification of your observations, your certificate and award pin will be sent to you or your society's Awards Co-ordinator, whomever you choose.