

QILAK Award

Paul Heath has been a member of the Halifax Centre for 17 years. Many of those years have also included an active role on the Centre executive committee, and full engagement in all Centre activities. But his astronomy outreach has a history that goes back well before he joined the RASC. Starting in the late 1960s Paul was showing friends and family the moon through his small telescope. Then, from 1989 – 2004, came 15 years as a Scout leader, where he developed and regularly presented astronomy programs for the Boy Scout groups in his local area. He joined the RASC in 1999, became actively involved, and by 2009 he was fully involved with a dedicated focus on education and outreach.

Paul's contributions to astronomy communications and educational outreach are truly remarkable. His outreach work is characterized not only by the number of events and people that are reached, but also by the broad range of topics, venues, and audience types with which he interacts. It is both formal and informal, in classrooms, the planetarium, libraries, youth groups, star parties, parks, campgrounds, trade shows, media interviews, and other venues. As a school bus driver, he also used his school bus to engage and educate his daily riders about upcoming astronomical events, to challenge them to investigate relevant topics, and to encourage them to view special astronomical events. He works with children of all ages, as well as adults. Using everyday materials, he has developed many unique, hands-on demonstrations, and numerous engaging presentations to bring the subject alive for his audiences.

Not only does Paul do an enormous amount of outreach himself, but he also coordinates the outreach activities of the Halifax Centre. Phone, web, and email requests come in from all over Nova Scotia.

Paul answers them, searches out, supports and organizes volunteers, and then picks up the slack when volunteer response is a bit thin on the ground. He is the outreach go-to guy in the Halifax Centre.

In just ten months this year (January through October, 2016), Paul has lead and/or participated in 29 outreach events attended by 526 youth and 2251 adults. Scaled up to a full year, that's about 3000 people per year, being introduced to the universe by Paul Heath. And he's been doing outreach at that scale for several years. We do not have complete numbers. Paul is too busy doing outreach to remember to record and track all the events, hours and participants. We can't keep up with him! With only incomplete numbers available, Paul has averaged 1500 people per year for six years running. We know the true numbers are higher than this. Every year the numbers keep getting larger, climbing to three thousand in 2016! Attached is a summary of Paul's outreach for 2016, with brief descriptions of each event, to illustrate the breadth and scope of his outstanding contributions.

In summary, we believe Paul Heath is highly deserving of the Qilak Award for Astronomy Education and Communication. His energy, creativity, and dedication are remarkable. The breadth and scope of his presentations, and his ability to engage people of all ages, is striking. Carried by a passion for the night sky, Paul Heath is an astronomy outreach force unto itself. Every year, thousands of people benefit from his expertise and effort. His extraordinary contributions deserve to be recognized with the 2017 Qilak Award.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Gray, President, Halifax Centre

Judy Black, Secretary

Mary Lou Whitehorne, FRASC, Past President, RASC

Roy Bishop, FRASC, Past President, RASC

Dave Chapman, 1st Vice-President

Ian Anderson, 2nd Vice-President

Jim Millar, Treasurer

Pat Kelly, Councillor, National Council Representative

Quinn Smith, Councillor, Nova East Chair

Tony Schellinck, Councillor, Editor Nova Notes

Tony McGrath, Manager, St. Croix Observatory

Andy Hasler, Councillor, Librarian

Chris Young, Councillor

Sean Dzafovic, Councillor, Observing Chair