

Qilak Award – Colleen O’Hare (Okanagan Centre)

The following nomination has been reviewed by, and has the endorsement of, the RASC Okanagan Council. Colleen O’Hare became a member of the Okanagan Centre in December of 2004. Only one year later she was our Centre’s recipient of the “Member of the Year” award, for her exceptional motivation and energy in support of public outreach initiatives by our Centre.

As the then newly-elected Outreach Director of the Centre, Colleen began to organize both our membership and our outreach programs to maximize the benefit to both. She actively sought out and developed new avenues to promote astronomical appreciation and education.

Colleen was very rigorous in sending notices of outreach activities to all members of the Okanagan Centre, encouraging participation and involvement by all. Colleen has kept careful and complete records of all outreach activities. These records proved very valuable in the advancement of our observatory project. The Okanagan Observatory <http://www.okanaganobservatory.ca/> is now entering its third season as a dark site facility available to Okanagan Centre members and offering a free public night every Friday. Colleen’s outreach records were a key element in identifying potential sources for the public funding necessary to the development of this worthy public outreach initiative. On public open nights Colleen gives a welcoming and educational presentation from the “Sky Theatre” amphitheatre to guests of the observatory.

Colleen started, and for several years has offered, the Okanagan Centre NOVA and NOVA Junior programs, advancing nascent astronomical interests, nurturing youthful enterprise and promoting educational development.

For many years Colleen has participated in, and been a study group leader for, astronomy classes with the Society for Learning in Retirement. This adult learning group meets for two hours a week, 20 weeks a year. Colleen has offered numerous presentations and her constant enthusiasm.

So far in 2011 (end of October), Colleen has led the Okanagan Centre membership in nearly 100 outreach events that have contacted over 6000 members of our community. This pace of over 100 events a year, communicating astronomy to thousands of people, has been the norm since Colleen engaged her outreach program of excellence, changing the face of astronomy in the Okanagan.