

Awards Citations – 2014

Service Award

Greg Lisk, Belleville
Dave Gamble, Okanagan
Chris Stevenson, St. John's
Susan Gagnon, Kingston
James Hesser, Victoria
Jay Anderson, Winnipeg
Mary Lou Whitehorne, Halifax

Fellow Award

James Hesser, Victoria

Chilton Prize

Nathan Gray, Halifax
Kathryn Gray, Halifax

Qilak Award

Dr. Howard Trottier, Vancouver

Service Award Nomination – Greg Lisk (Belleville Center)

The Service Award recognizes the contributions of members who, at either the National or Centre levels, have made a significant contribution to the life and vitality of the Society. It is given in recognition of outstanding service, rendered over an extended period of time, where such service has had a major impact on the work of the Society and/or of a Centre of the Society.

Greg's nomination is based on his sustained contribution to the Belleville Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. In 1994, Greg joined the Belleville Astronomy Club, which was founded in 1990. The club transitioned into the Belleville Centre of the RASC on June 27, 2003.

Greg has served the last 8 consecutive terms as the President for Belleville Centre. As Centre President and key contributor, Greg leads the local Centre meetings and personally delivers segments reviewing current astronomical news, a highlighted observing object, and a featured topic for the evening. Also serving as the Centre's Observing Chair, he organizes the monthly observing sessions and advertises them on the Centre's website.

Greg organizes the Astronomy Day booth at the local mall, setting up and manning the public information exhibit and displaying his own meteorite collection and telescopes. In addition to staffing the daylong event, he also coordinates the Public Observing Session that follows in the evening.

Greg receives requests for speaking engagements and viewing sessions from local schools and groups and personally fulfills these Public Outreach commitments. Acting on a recent request from the Air Force Museum in Trenton, Greg prepared a space related indoor static display, created a permanent outdoor scale model of our solar system, and coordinated public observing sessions.

Greg arranges the Centre's late summer picnic and southern sky public observing session – Star-B-Q - at Presqu'île Provincial Park. Greg participates in and helps coordinate in the autumn weekend dark sky observing session – Fall'n'Stars – held jointly with the Kingston RASC Center. He has organized numerous centre field trips, such as visits to the Hayden Planetarium, NEAF, AstroCATS, etc., for the benefit of the Belleville Centre members.

Greg designed a series of accomplishment pins and forwarded the idea to RASC National that became the wearable awards for the RASC Observing Certificate programs (e.g. Finest NGC, Messier).

Greg also promotes Astronomy in our local schools by supporting the local Science Fair. Greg judges the astronomy related entries at the regional Science Fair and awards a series of prizes to students, including the Arlyne Gillespie Memorial Prize. Greg will either donate a commercial telescope or one that he personally refurbishes as the first prize in the local competition. He also donates meteorites from his own collection for some of the lesser prize winners.

Greg Lisk is the driving force for the Belleville Centre and truly deserves recognition for his significant, long lasting and tireless contributions to not only The Belleville Centre, but also to the local community.

Service Award – Dave Gamble, Okanagan Centre

The Okanagan Centre nominates Dave Gamble for a national RASC Service Award. Mr. Gamble has contributed in a great many ways, but his most noteworthy accomplishments were in the design and building of the Okanagan Observatory's primary telescope, a 25-inch tracking Newtonian.

Mr. Gamble has served on the Okanagan Centre executive, including a recent term as centre president. He updated and maintains the centre's website, and added image galleries to showcase member's work. Dave is one of the centre's leading astrophotographers and observers, and has encouraged and coached those activities. He has provided observing sessions for Summerland schools for many years

Dave designed a 25-inch folded Dobsonian telescope with a three-mirror system that does not require most viewers to climb a ladder. He built much of the telescope himself and donated some components. He regularly makes the long trek from Summerland to Okanagan Observatory to maintain the instrument. The Gamble 25-inch is used for very popular public observing sessions every clear Friday evening between early May and late October. Observations made with this telescope have been published in Sky&Telescope magazine.

Additional info provided Dec. 17, 2013:

- Chair of the Okanagan Observatory telescope committee since August 2006
 - This includes the design and most of the building of the 25" telescope, driving to Edmonton to retrieve the 24" Zerodur mirror, obtaining the 25" replacement mirror, equatorial platform and push-to system, laying the Okanagan Shortline (the shortest railroad in BC, all 8 m of it!).
- President Nov 2010 - Nov 2011
- Past President Nov 2011 – present
- Centre webmaster
- Director (Kelowna section) - 2008

Service Award, Chris Stevenson (St. John's Centre)

Chris Stevenson has been a member of the RASC for more than 30 years and has been an Executive Committee member of the St. John's Centre for more than 11 years, including six years as President. Our Executive is challenged by limited access to speakers and other resources that larger centres have ready access to. The President's position in our centre is especially challenged by our remoteness. The constant efforts to attract and retain members has always been important to Chris. His dedication to the Centre is noteworthy.

In a small centre and especially a remote centre such as St. John's, recruiting and keeping Executive members is perhaps more difficult than for most centres. In an era of volunteer burnout, recognition for long-term dedication is sometimes lacking but sorely needed.

As an employee of Memorial University, Chris is an enthusiastic liaison for the St. John's Centre allowing us to keep University-supplied benefits such as parking, meeting space, speakers, and equipment storage space at no cost. These benefits help to allow our small Centre to continue to exist and serve its members and the general public. Given the infamous St. John's weather, our public monthly meetings serve a role that our sky-challenged activities fall short of.

Chris is a frequent expert speaker, writer, media contact and liaison with other groups. With a young family, job responsibilities, choir and orchestra interests, Chris has been very generous to our Centre with his limited free time and leadership.

He is a valued member of the St. John's Centre Executive and frequently called upon to perform a variety of tasks. Our Centre's efforts to establish an observatory are being helped tremendously by Chris's expertise and experience. This observatory will be a major part of our public outreach activities, essential to our Centre's future.

Chris has given freely of his time and energy for the advancement of astronomy at the local and provincial level. He is a deserving candidate for the RASC Service Award.

Service Award – Susan Gagnon, Kingston Centre

We, the Board of the RASC- Kingston Centre, nominate Susan Gagnon for the RASC Service Award.

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada presents a Service Award, which is given to members in recognition of outstanding service, rendered over an extended period of time, where such service has had a major impact on the work of the Society and/or of a Centre of the Society.

Susan is a good example of what flying under the radar can accomplish. What she has done is committed herself over two decades to the RASC- Kingston Centre fulfilling many roles. If we look at the last 20 years without her service, it is an eye opening view. Below is the historical aspect of what Susan has done to enhance the RASC-Kingston Centre.

Susan joined the RASC-Kingston Centre on January 1st, 1993. Since that time, she slowly eased her way into learning astronomy and introducing herself to helping the Centre grow.

1995-1997 RASC Kingston Centre GA Committee
1998-2000 National Council Rep
2000-2002 RASC Kingston-Secretary
2008-2009 RASC Kingston -Vice President
2010-2013 RASC Kingston- President

Though stepping down as President after two consecutive terms, she is still carrying on with Coordinating the Kingston Astronomical Outreach Network (KAON). This is a monthly open house and public observing sessions in conjunction with the Queen's University Observatory. She has been dependable regular volunteer at least as far back as 2003 bring "Baby" and binoculars and a Coordinator since 2007.

In Public Outreach over the years along with other volunteers, she has always been present. Sky is the Limit Festivals, Astronomy Day's in the parks, libraries and various shopping malls.

She has also helped out at the Charleston Lake Observing Sessions helping Terrance Dickinson on his August Astronomy Nights. Susan has also made presentations at the Cataraqui Conservation Area (2011 Feb) (<http://crca.ca/>), Kingston Field Naturalists Bio Blitz (2012 June) (<http://kingstonfieldnaturalists.org/>)

She has presented countless sessions to schools, Girl Guide's and Girl, Boy scouts as well. She has also presented Astronomy to the elderly who in retirement homes. She also arranged a couple of overnight observing sessions at Elbow Lake Environmental Education Centre (<http://elbowlakecentre.ca/>) Susan is also a regular member on the Fall'N'Stars (<http://rascbelleville.ca/fallnstars/>) Star party Organizing committee for the last 12 years.

She helps out where ever she can, when we are short volunteers, and has an infectious smile and laugh that welcomes all who come into her presence. To us she is Super Woman, but she is terribly modest and self-effacing. Best of all she is our friend and well deserving of this award.

Service Award – James Hesser

We of RASC Victoria Centre nominate James Hesser for the RASC Service Award, to be given at GA 2014 in Victoria. The nominators are Bill Almond and Chris Gainor, Past Presidents, and Nelson Walker, current President.

Dr. Hesser is well known to the RASC, as a nearly thirty-year member, and as its Honorary President (2009-2013). He is Director of the NRC Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (DAO), where he has been for more than thirty years. Dr. Hesser is past-president of the Canadian Astronomical Society (CASCA) and of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. He is past vice-president of the American Astronomical Society. He is recipient of numerous awards, including, most recently, the Qilak Award for his "outstanding contribution to public appreciation and understanding of Astronomy." He was one of the first to receive the prestigious Michael Smith award, given by through NSERC Canada to recognize those who inspire through the promotion of science to the general public. The list goes on and on.

Dr. Hesser, as Director of the DAO, brought to it the Centre of the Universe, an important and popular site of science outreach in this community. Dr. Hesser was the first recipient of the Newton-Ball Award, Victoria Centre's own service award (2001). In 2008, due in large part to Dr. Hesser's wise counsel, Victoria Centre was able to build an observatory on the grounds of the DAO. He has made easy our Centre's continued participation in public outreach on the hill (coming up on 100 years).

Dr. Hesser worked tirelessly to lead International Year of Astronomy (IYA) efforts within Canada (2005-2009). He guided this highly visible, and highly successful international project by serving as the country's "single point of contact" and as Chair of the Executive Committee and Advisory Board for IYA within Canada. Under his direction, the IYA provided "Galileo moments" to more than two million Canadians through more than 3600 separate events. Jim was often found at events dressed as Galileo himself, antique telescope in hand.

Dr. Hesser has long served on Victoria Centre Council as liaison with the NRC/DAO. His energy seems endless. Upon recently announcing his upcoming partial-retirement from his post at the DAO, Jim showed up at a meeting of several of the organizational committees working on GA 2014 with a “well, finally I have some time to help with this!”

Your nominators cannot imagine a more worthy recipient of this award. Jim is a true gentleman, and for some thirty years, has proudly and energetically promoted science in general, astronomy in particular, and the RASC and its Victoria Centre, across Canada, and in his community. His contribution to the efforts of the RASC has been profound.

Service Award – Jay Anderson

The Council of the Winnipeg Centre has unanimously voted to nominate Gordon “Jay” Anderson for the 2013 Service Award.

Jay has contributed to all facets of the Winnipeg Centre, and at the National level for a very long time. Originally joining the RASC in the early 1970s, his latest membership term began in 1990. During this period of time, he has served as Winnipeg Centre President, Councilor, Secretary, National Representative and he is currently the club Treasurer. Jay is also serving his second five-year term as Editor of the Journal, a monumental task.

Jay’s role with the Winnipeg Centre may best be described as a stalwart builder, both physically and mentally. He was a key participant in the initial construction of our observatory at Glenlea, and the subsequent rebuilds, which followed the incapacitating floods to the site. Plus he is a key member of the maintenance of, and annual upgrades to, the building. He’s often dropping by to cut grass or shovel snow before any of our Centre sponsored events at the site.

Plus, he is constantly trying to improve the Winnipeg Centre. As President, he made wholesale changes to our meeting format; setting stage for a friendlier and more inviting meeting for new members. Jay participates by regular presentations at the meetings, plus monthly updates on the upcoming astronomical events worth enjoying. He is regularly supporting the club’s Public Observing sessions; bring out his expertise and his various telescopes. He also encourages others to travel to view events such as occultations, transits and eclipses.

Being one who enjoys bringing people together, he regularly lends out his house to our Centres Council meetings, Annual Winter Potluck dinner and as a backup site in case of rain, for our annual June Barbeque.

Jay enjoys helping others to improve their observing skills. He is generous in lending out equipment, and helping others develop their imaging skills.

Jay’s contributions extend well beyond the Winnipeg Centre. He is an expert on Solar Eclipses, participating in the past with the former NASA Eclipse guides. Plus he is still sought out for his opinion on where to go to view them, utilizing his long-term experience as a former Meteorologist.

Jay also significantly contributes with his writing and editorial skills. He is the author of many articles seen in our Journal and Sky and Telescope magazine. Jay also achieved a long sought goal, in tailoring the Journal into a more membership friendly publication. He has solicited others to contribute with numerous monthly columns on amateur based interests.

He has been involved as Chairman of the organizing committee for the last three of our Centre General Assembly meetings in Winnipeg.

Jay does all this with a large smile on his face. His presence offers warmth, patience and expertise to help others become the best astronomers they can be. Winnipeg Centre is lucky to have him in our fold, and we are proud of his achievements.

Service Award – Mary Lou Whitehorne

Mary Lou Whitehorne has had, for more than 25 years, a major positive impact on The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, both at the Halifax Centre level and at the National level.

As a Medical Laboratory Technologist and mother of two young girls, Mary Lou once read in an astronomy column by Terence Dickinson that one could see the Galilean moons of Jupiter with a pair of binoculars. She looked, and became hooked on astronomy!

She joined the Halifax Centre in 1985 and has since become a Life Member. Her sparkling personality and growing interest in the heavens inevitably led her into many executive positions within the Centre over a 14-year period, including as Councilor, Secretary, Observing Chair, and three years as Centre President (1990, 1991 and 2002), plus chair of the committee that hosted the 1993 RASC General Assembly in Halifax. Over the years, she has also given numerous presentations to the Centre on a wide variety of astronomical topics.

Mary Lou advanced her knowledge of astronomy with courses at Saint Mary's University. Her observations of B-e stars with the telescope at the Burke-Gaffney Observatory resulted in two papers in the *RASC Journal*, and the Chant Medal.

As a mother and amateur astronomer, Mary Lou became keenly interested in science education. Among her many endeavours in that regard, including being chair of the national Education Committee from 2004-2006, she, with other Centre members, established the Nova Scotia Planetarium Advisory Committee (which later became the Atlantic Space Sciences Foundation). She led this organization for several years, while it developed and ran a successful *Starlab* mobile planetarium program in Nova Scotia. The planetarium was later donated to Halifax's Discovery Centre, resulting in a legacy of astronomy being added to their continuing programs.

She has been continuously active in public outreach activities in the name of the RASC, with many other organizations. These include the Girl Guides of Canada, the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, Halifax's Discovery Centre, the Halifax Planetarium, and the Nova Scotia Department of Education.

A highlight of her work in promoting formal astronomy education is her book *Skyways, Astronomy Handbook for Teachers*. First published in 2003 by the RASC, the book is now in its second edition, with both English and French versions. She also authored the new *Moon Gazers' Guide* and edited the sixth edition of *The Beginner's Observing Guide* after the death of its author Leo Enright. Over many years, she was also a contributor to the *Observer's Handbook* and the *Observer's Calendar*.

Mary Lou's major national service began in 2006, when she offered to run as a candidate for the position of RASC 2nd Vice-President. Upon her election, she began an 8-year

sequence of service to the national Society as 2nd Vice-President, 1st Vice-President, President (2010-2012), and most recently Past President and Chair of the Awards Committee.

A rare moment in Mary Lou's life occurred during those years. At the 2007 General Assembly in Calgary, she was rendered speechless by the announcement that asteroid 144907 had been named "Whitehorne" in her honour.

Mary Lou was our 1st Vice-President during 2009, the International Year of Astronomy, when the RASC partnered with CASCA and the FAAQ to coordinate activities and produce several bilingual outreach publications. In addition to being the inspiration for the *Mary Lou's New Telescope* children's book, Mary Lou continued the legacy of IYA by joining the Beyond IYA Committee, which continued the outreach partnership between the three organizations.

The years Mary Lou has spent in the presidential and vice-presidential positions were unusually busy ones for the Society, and at times turbulent. She took the executive lead to respond quickly to the Canada Revenue Agency crisis in 2008, when the Society had to seek the guidance and advice of corporate counsel. Mary Lou acted as the Society's liaison and spearheaded meetings between the Executive, National Council, and the lawyer.

Among other issues facing the Society during those years were government-legislated changes in the governance structure of the Society; changes in staffing at the Society Office; and the transition of the national office from its own building (with landlord responsibilities) into rental accommodations. These issues and others demanded much of Mary Lou's time and talents. The successful outcomes were in no small way the result of her initiative, good judgment, and tenacity.

One of Mary Lou's lasting legacies is the creation of the professional Executive Director position. Mary Lou had a vision that the Society needed such a person to move the Society forward. Working in concert with the Executive Director and others, Mary Lou was also instrumental in creating the first Strategic Plan the Society has seen in many years.

Over the years, the RASC has been fortunate to have several distinguished ladies as presidents, including Allie Vibert Douglas, Ruth Northcott, Helen Hogg, and Mary Grey. In the early years of the 21st century, our Society has again benefited from a lady's perspective, determination, and grace. It is with deep thanks and appreciation that we recommend Mary Lou Whitehorne for the RASC Service Award.

Fellow Award – Dr. James Hesser, Victoria Centre

In recognition of DR. Hesser's decades-long term contributions to the RASC, his leadership in building partnerships, bringing amateurs and professionals together and leading joint initiatives, the depth and scope of his contributions, and their broad national and international impact regarding the Society's objectives, mission and vision, the awards committee recommends that Dr. Hesser also be named a Fellow of the RASC.

Ken Chilton Prize – Kathryn & Nathan Gray

It is with great pleasure and pride that, on behalf of the Halifax Centre Council, we submit

the following nomination to the RASC National Awards Committee.

The Chilton Prize is awarded to an amateur astronomer, resident in Canada, in recognition of a significant piece of astronomical work carried out or published during the year. The Halifax Centre has two members, sister and brother, whom we believe qualify admirably for the award. In 2011, Kathryn became the youngest person, at age 10, to discover a supernova, when she found SN 2010lt in galaxy UGC 3378 in the constellation of Camelopardalis. In November 2013, Nathan has now become the youngest by 33 days (he is now 10 years old) with his discovery of SN 2013hc in galaxy PGC 61330 in the constellation of Draco. Both young astronomers received galaxy images taken by astronomer Dave Lane at his Abbey Ridge Observatory.

With their father's help, both Kathryn and Nathan learned to identify supernovae in photos using special computer software. With images taken at Dave Lane's Abbey Ridge Observatory, Kathryn searched through 7,761 photos taken over 81 nights in 2011 and 2012. Nathan joined the hunt this year and since then Nathan and Kathryn have searched through an additional 5,936 images taken over 40 nights. With amazing dedication to their search Kathryn and Nathan have searched 13,697 images and found one new supernova each.

As a result of her discovery, Kathryn was asked in May 2011, to be Honorary Parade Marshal for the Grand Street Parade of the Apple Blossom Festival. She was asked in June 2011, to take part in the opening of the Starmus Festival in Tenerife, Spain (in the Canary Islands), a unique scientific, artistic, and musical event where she met Neil Armstrong and many other astronauts and leading astronomers. In August 2011, Kathryn won the Bring Home the Bacon Award, which was presented at Starfest, the largest star party in Canada. In November 2011, Kathryn was named one of *Glamour* magazine's 21 Amazing Young Women of 2011. Kathryn has fielded many interviews from the world press and done numerous talks about her discovery. Nathan's recent find has led to many press interviews and a few presentations as well.

Despite the achievements of these two young astronomers, we feel that their greatest contribution to astronomy has been in how they have inspired so many young people to look at science as something that they too could be able to do. Many RASC members have done outreach events in school classrooms and libraries, and have been both amazed and gratified to see Kathryn's picture up in the class room as well as the large number of both young and old, who have heard of Kathryn's and Nathan's discoveries. The poise, enthusiasm, and obvious understanding of their accomplishment that Kathryn and Nathan have shown during their many interviews and presentations, make us proud to have these two young astronomers as members of our Halifax Centre.

Both Kathryn and Nathan are continuing their supernova hunt with images that Dave Lane continues to take for them from his Abbey Ridge Observatory whenever the nights are clear. Their dedication to this often tedious task shows us what can be accomplished by today's youth. With the inspiration that these two young astronomers have given to both young and old, we of the Halifax Centre are pleased to nominate both Kathryn and Nathan Gray as worthy recipients of the Ken Chilton Prize.

Qilak Award

The Vancouver Centre nominates Dr. Howard Trottier for the Qilak Award for Astronomy Outreach and Communication. Howard is our departing president of RASC-Vancouver as well as a physics professor at Simon Fraser University. Although not a professional astronomer and working at a university that does not have an astronomy program as of yet, Howard managed to bring his passion for astronomy both to the faculty and students of SFU, and also a very great number of school age children, their parents and teachers as well as the general public.

Howard started a program 5 years ago called Starry Nights @ SFU. Starry Nights consists of two programs in one. First Howard hosts evening star parties at the university campus with the help of a dedicated group of volunteers from RASC-Vancouver and SFU's Student Astronomy Club who bring along with them their telescopes, equipment and knowledge. These star parties are free to the public at large and have become hugely popular around the Metro Vancouver area. Howard's mailing list of people wanting to be kept informed of their schedule now numbers in the thousands.

During the day he has and continues to host astronomy workshops for school age children at SFU's campus. With his volunteers from the faculty and student body of SFU along with RASC members, whole classrooms of children learn the history of astronomy, basics of the night sky, how telescopes work and depending on the age of the group, possibly some astro-physics added in. This is all done on his own time while still fulfilling his teaching duties. He was able to get his astronomy program included within SFU's Science in Action program. This increased the number of schools interested in taking part in this free program.

Howard's hard work at seeking sponsorship for the Starry Night's program has also paid off in participation of two telescope stores as well as private donors and the support of RASC-Vancouver members. This has allowed Howard to offer free telescopes to every school that participates as well as free telescopes for families that show enough interest to also attend at least 5 Starry Nights star parties or other qualifying event.

Somehow Howard has also made time to host the Starry Nights webpage. On the website parents and kids can check out the events they and their classmates have been to. They can also keep an eye out for upcoming Starry Nights events. Sponsors and volunteers are also recognized on the site. Howard also writes a blog of the events and includes a photo gallery of the "Astro Grads" and events.

We feel he has been responsible in starting and maintaining the most successful astronomy outreach programs ever in Metro Vancouver. Howard's efforts have resulted in bringing the night sky to thousands of students, their families, their teachers, the faculty and student body of SFU as well as a very large number of the general public.

We invite the committee to check out the Starry Nights web page at:

<http://www.sfu.ca/starrynights/index.html>