

Qilak Award Nomination — Robert Duff, London Centre

The RASC London Centre Executive nominates London Centre member Robert Duff for the 2011/2012 Qilak Award. Bob is no stranger to the Awards Committee, having won a Service Award in 2009 for his contributions up to the end of 2008. One component of Bob's service to the London Centre was his meticulous work as coordinator of all outreach events, beginning in 2006. This activity has not only continued since the citation was written for Bob's Service Award, but has reached such proportions that the London Centre Executive feels no Society member can have accomplished more than Bob did in 2011-2012.

Bob's work begins with encouraging groups such as boy scouts or school classes to contact London Centre. Bob keeps in touch with science coordinators for the school boards, with the public library, and most importantly with the University of Western Ontario. Whether Bob personally makes the arrangements for an event or not, he attends almost every one of them. His personal role at outreach events usually involves direct contact with the public or group members, whether at his own telescope or assisting others. Bob's patience and thoroughness in answering questions and encouraging visitors on an individual basis is legendary. Bob is also completely reliable when it comes to set-up and upkeep of the many telescopes used. Finally, Bob writes detailed, accurate reports summarizing each activity. Thanks to these reports, London Centre members have a concrete sense of the club's involvement in public outreach. These reports are then shared with the University, and this is important because the University programs do not have the resources or the continuity to demonstrate their own long-term outreach impact. Because of Bob's work, London Centre fills this role for the University. Grant proposals and internal evaluations done by the University utilize Bob's statistics.

Here are the facts, broken down into five meaningful categories and summed over the two calendar years 2011 and 2012. First, London Centre's own events consisted of 44 star nights and school presentations, which reached a total of 2428 audience members. Bob helped coordinate the participation of 37 London Centre members to operate these events. Second is the "Exploring the Stars" (ETS) program at the University of Western Ontario, which is arranged by paid staff, primarily graduate students. Of 106 ETS events reaching a total of 2832 persons, London Centre members, again coordinated by Bob, participated in 99. Third are the open house events at the Cronyn Observatory on Saturday nights, held monthly during school semesters and weekly during the 4 summer months, as well as a few special open houses on weeknights. Bob coordinated London Centre members' participation in 55 of 56 events, where 2182 visitors were welcomed in total. Fourth, the University asked for London Centre to assist with student projects in the fall semester 2011, and again Bob answered the call, helping out with 9 events that involved 403 students. Last but certainly not least, the Transit of Venus event on 2012-06-05 deserves to be mentioned separately. Bob helped lead the team of 27 Centre members and about 15 University of Western Ontario personnel who organized events at 5 separate locations, and 2309 visitors saw the transit because of this effort.

Bob was personally committed to 191 events in 2011-2012, and thus made it possible for a total of 10154 members of the public to be introduced to astronomy in a close and personal way. All of this was done purely on a volunteer basis, in precisely the spirit recognized by the Qilak Award.

Peter Jedicke, London Centre