

*Summer/Fall 2024*

## **RBAC Hosts Dobfest**



*Image Taken by Jeff Menz, 9/14/24*

This year's Dobfest was a nailbiter to the end. Early forecasts called for significant rain during the day which led to serious decision-making regarding whether to go ahead with our plans. Faith in Mother Nature paid off and instead of the many borrowed tents keeping us all dry, they were great for shade during the daytime. Unfortunately, the clouds moved in, and despite the gorgeous sunset, they limited our night viewing.

As good astronomers, this did not dampen our spirit to carry on our desire to share our hobby with the public. The many stations provided exhibits of telescopes, how they work, and troubleshooting. Several stations provided education on planispheres, the Moon, our Solar System, meteorites, light pollution, library telescopes,

astrophotography, and the electromagnetic spectrum.

While attendance was lower than last year at 105 attendees and volunteers, good comments were received and many left with a smile and a sense of wonder at the complexities in astronomy.

The torch has been passed to the next host, St. Louis Astronomical Society. Contact Mark Jones for more information or to volunteer.

## **The River's Edge**

### **Sky Puppies Program:**

While we only have one participant, we have our hands full as this youngster is younger than our target ages, he is very advanced in his knowledge of all things astronomy. The challenge is finding out what he does not know and providing goals for him to reach! The lessons are flying by! As we get into more complex topics, we are confident he will be up for the challenge!

### **Youth Astronomer Program:**

"Now that we completed the Sky Puppy program, what's next?" Suppressing a feeling of panic, I check the Astronomical League programs for something that would be appropriate and interesting for our graduated Sky

Puppies. And there it was – the Youth Astronomer Observing Program. Intended for those between the ages of 10 and 18, this program is heavy on observing and sketching what's observed. The program has well-defined goals (25 objects, 5 each from 5 different adult programs for the Silver level, an additional 75 objects selected from the rest of the adult observing programs for the Gold level) but no direction as to instructing 10- and 11-year olds how to observe and sketch. I decided I needed to prep the material.

Drawing heavily from YouTube and my personal experiences I laid out a 6-session course to prepare the students for this program.

Session 1: Overview of the Youth Astronomer Observing Program and an introduction to objects in the sky, including the Moon, the Sun, the planets and deep sky faint fuzzies.

Session 2: The basics of sketching, emphasis on subtle details. We practiced sketching from several astro photos.

Session 3: Practice sketching. Introduction to the celestial sphere and coordinate systems (RA/Dec and Alt/Az).

Session 4: Practice sketching. Telescopes and binoculars. What optics are better for what types of objects.

Session 5: Practice sketching. Discuss different types of finder scopes and the basics of star hopping.

Session 6: Practice sketching. How to plan, set up, and perform an observing session.

I'm very excited to spend time under the stars with these highly intelligent and motivated youth astronomers!

## Around town

### Generous Neighbors

Highland Woman's Club member Cyndi Huelsman very enthusiastically volunteered to help with our Dobfest 2024 event at Carlyle Lake. At this

event, we gave away some attendance prizes. The two biggest prizes were brand new telescopes.

To understand the situation, we also had an 11-year-old boy in attendance who was one of our Sky Puppy graduates last year and is now in training to be a youth astronomer. He is challenged to find night sky objects through a telescope. As a consequence of this, he REALLY wanted to win one of the 2 scopes.

During the last drawing for the Explore Scientific 10-inch Hybrid Truss Tube Dobsonian Telescope, this youngster tagged along with Jeff Menz who was announcing the winners on a portable loud speaker. The winner of this last drawing was volunteer Cyndi Huelsman! Cyndi realized she 1. did not know the first thing about using the telescope, and 2. it was too much for her 6-year-old grandson also. She asked Donna Plocher if she could donate it to the library. Donna declined as the library had 2 already that were modified for public use. Our Young Astronomer piped up and said "I'll take it!" Cyndi said yes!



Image Taken by Jeff Menz, 9/14/24



*Explore Scientific 10-inch Hybrid Truss Tube Dobsonian Telescope - DOB1045C (Donated by Explore Scientific and Lookin' Up Optics)*

### **First Quarter Moon Days**

We had a chance to watch our Youth Astronomer who won the 10-in Dobsonian telescope in action at a recent First Quarter Moon Night. He is quickly learning how to direct his 'scope to targets in the night sky. Now for Jeff to teach him to skillfully sketch what he sees!

### **Library Telescope Program:**

#### ***High Point Scientific supplies telescopes for Library Checkout Program***

The Library Telescope Program (LTP), a Missouri-based nonprofit currently applying for 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, is thrilled to announce an exclusive agreement with High Point Scientific (HPS), a company headquartered in New Jersey. HPS will be the sole supplier of customized optical astronomy equipment across the continental USA for LTP's popular library telescope checkout program. As part of the agreement, HPS will create a customized, easy-to-use tabletop telescope specifically designed for libraries to purchase and use in their respective checkout programs. Additionally, HPS will produce and host promotional videos and educational content on their website and support the program with targeted

marketing campaigns. The tailored telescope will take several months to design and produce, with the new model expected to be available for purchase on the HPS website starting in March 2025. A limited supply of an interim model will be available for purchase on the HPS website within the next 30 days.

"We are excited that libraries will now have the opportunity to purchase a tabletop telescope with features that have proven more durable and patron-friendly than traditional models," said Don Ficken, LTP Board President. "Having a ready-to-deploy telescope will make it significantly easier for libraries to adopt and expand the telescope checkout program." "Our company is proud to partner with the Library Telescope Program to develop a customized, easy-to-use telescope for library checkout," said Robert Dugan, President of High Point Scientific. "This initiative aligns perfectly with our mission, and we're thrilled to be playing a part in making the wonders of the night sky accessible to all."

Organizational Contact Information:  
High Point Scientific: Robert Dugan, President, (800) 266-9590, robert@highpointscientific.com  
Library Telescope Program: Donald Ficken, President, (636) 861-9630, dficken@librarytelescope.org

About High Point Scientific: Founded with the mission to offer high-quality telescopes and astrophotography equipment at low prices without compromising on customer service, HPS is dedicated

to serving the astronomy community with exceptional products, support and educational resources.

Website: <https://www.highpointscientific.com>

About the Library Telescope Program: The Library Telescope Program fosters scientific literacy, stimulates interest in astronomy, and offers the awe and excitement of exploring the night sky to those who may have never looked

through a telescope. Website:  
<https://www.librarytelescope.org/>.

### Guest Speaker: Byron Barker

Former RBAC member Byron Barker visited the launch site of the Starship Rocket during the summer. He reported on his trip and what he learned during the November meeting. His photos revealed some surprising details about the site and the launches of this spaceship.

## By the Way

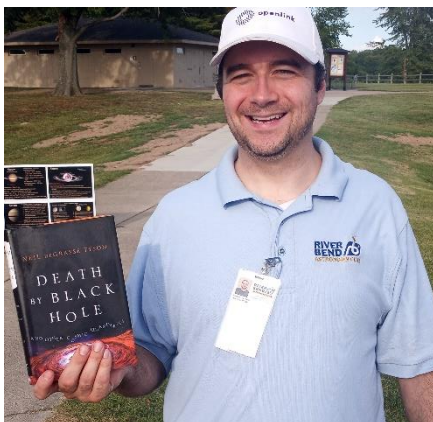
**New Brochures:** New brochures have been printed with more recent photos as well as current dues rates. Thanks to the RBAC members who distributed these to participating libraries.

## Gallery

### Dobfest



Winners of the Moon Mission Game.  
(Photo by Terry Menz)



Brandon Runyon won the book, *Death by Black Hole*. (Photo by Terry Menz)



Lucky Winners of the Family Membership to the Science Center (Photo by Terry Menz)



Moon Activities compliments of Mary Barteau  
(Photo by Terry Menz)



Winner of the StarSense Explorer 8"  
Smartphone App-Enabled Dobsonian Telescope  
donated by Celestron (Photo by Terry Menz).



*John Dobson's birthday cupcakes compliments of Boni and Randy Harrison (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Amy White and friend with Library Telescope Display (Photo by Terry Menz)*



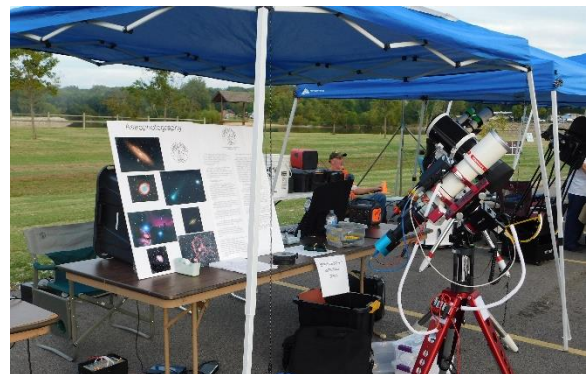
*Meet and Greet table expertly staffed by Spencer Chapman (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Jim Small from St. Louis Astronomical Society staffs the table for General Information on Telescopes. (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*NASA lithographs (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Astrophotography table (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Don Ficken at the Dark Sky display (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Boni and Randy Harrison at Lookin'Up Optics booth. (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*More of Randy Harrison's equipment (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Dave Kirsch with his telescope (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Dan Brandon's Radio Telescope (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Deb Kirsch-RBAC, and Harry Treece-ASSI (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Friends Cyndi Huelsman and Donna Plocher making Planispheres (Photo by Terry Menz)*



*Friend Dennis Plocher explains use of filters and the electromagnetic spectrum (Photo by Terry Menz)*



Anthony Parrot of ASEM discusses meteorites  
(Photo by Terry Menz)



Linda and John Follis demonstrate our Solar System.  
(Photo by Terry Menz)



Our intermission before night viewing begins  
(Photo by Don Flicken)

**New Members:** None

### Upcoming Events

- First Quarter Moon Night, Feb 10, 7-9 pm, Northtown
- RBAC Meeting, Salem UCC, Alhambra, Mar 1

- First Quarter Moon Night, Mar 10, 7-9 pm, Northtown
- Light Pollution/Perseid Meteor Shower, Mar 12, 6:30-7:30 pm, Watershed Nature Center
- Trenton Education Center, Mar 24, 6 – 8 pm, (Kaskaskia College)
- RBAC Meeting, Mar 29, 7-8 pm Salem UCC, Alhambra



### First Quarter Moon Days

Join the River Bend Astronomy Club for our monthly telescope viewing. Enjoy close views of the craters on our Moon and other night sky objects. Amateur astronomers will have a variety of telescopes, and welcome questions about astronomy!

**Where?** Glik's Northtown parking lot to the south of Mazzio's in Highland

**When?** (All dates are Mondays.)

8/12/24	Watershed, Edwardsville 6:30-8:30 Light Pollution	5/5/25	7-10 PM
9/9/24	7-10 PM IOMN	6/2/25	7-10 PM
10/14/24	7-10 PM	7/7/25	7-10 PM
11/11/24	7-9 PM	8/4/25	7-10 PM
12/9/24	7-9 PM	9/1/25	7-10 PM
1/6/25	7-9 PM	9/29/25	7-10 PM
2/10/25	7-9 PM	10/27/25	7-9 PM
3/10/25	7-9 PM	11/24/25	7-9 PM
4/7/25	7-10 PM	12/29/25	7-9 PM

**What if?** Cancelled when cloudy or weather prohibits

