

A Brief History of the Cumberland Astronomical Society

Compiled with input from Allen Ball, Frank Coley, Tom Golden, Randall Smart, and Scott Smith.

Last Updated January 1, 2006

1996-1999

The Cumberland Astronomical Society (CAS) was formed in 1996 from the remnants of the Bledsoe Creek Telescope and Astronomy Club of which Frank Coley was the group leader. Richard Pryor was instrumental in getting a conference room at Gallatin Electric Company for meetings of what was temporarily being called the Sumner County Astronomical Society and later officially named the Cumberland Astronomical Society.

Tom Golden had copies of bylaws from the astronomy club he belonged to in Kansas, which became for the most part, CAS's bylaws.

Tom was first elected President of CAS and served from 1996 till 1999 with Allen Ball-Vice President, Jackie Hardiman-Secretary, Richard Pryor-Treasurer, Randall Smart-Sgt. At Arms.

CAS formally became a Member Society of the Astronomical League in 1997.

The CAS logo was created by Richard Pryor and remains in place as the club's banner.



In 1997 the monthly club meetings moved from the Gallatin Electric Company to Volunteer State Community College as one of the members (Nathan) was a student/instructor and was able to secure a room in the T building which was used for approximately one and a half years until Nathan moved to California. So, with the club's contact gone CAS was faced with the dilemma of where to meet. Fortunately, Tom Golden knew the head of the Math and Science Department and was able to secure permission to continue meeting at Vol State in the W building, where CAS continues to meet to date.


The first CAS Messier Marathon was held in the spring of 1998 at Frank Coley's farm off Station Camp Creek Road in Cottontown. The following year (1999), the marathon was also held at Frank's farm but it was clouded out. The make up was held at the Carly House off Cairo Road in Gallatin. The following year in 2000, the marathon was held again at Frank's farm.

In 1999 Allen Ball and Richard Pryor picked the Lock 4 Park Gallatin for monthly public star parties and Richard was able to secure permission from David Brown, head of the Parks and Recreation for the City of Gallatin.

In 1999 CAS member's Richard Pryor and Randall Smart pursued and received a "Goals 2000" grant from the Federal Government in partnership with the Sumner County School System. The grant provided funds for the purchase of a 12" Meade LX200 Schmidt Cassegrain Telescope and Astrovid imaging camera. The grant allowed implementation of an outreach program called "First Contact" designed specifically for Student participants of the Shafer Middle School Astronomy Club. CAS began holding educational events and nighttime observing sessions with student

members of the Shafer School Astronomy Club.

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Richard and Randal Smart and Richard Peyer, members of the Cumberland Astronomical Society, engaged in obtaining the telescope for Shafer Middle School, and students from Lake Oswego and Lillian High's classrooms at the middle school.

Stars light up day and night at Shafer

A Great 2000 gift for Shafer Middle School students is being given.

Richard Peyer, a member of the Cumberland Astronomical Society, was visiting the Shafer middle school to help with the telescope project. He was giving the telescope to the school for the students to use.

The telescope project has been a long time in the making. It was started in 1999 and is now a reality. The telescope is a 12-inch diameter and 12-foot long. It is a very powerful telescope and will be used for many years to come.

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Annual public outreach star parties began at libraries in Portland, Westmoreland, Hendersonville, White House, and Gallatin began and continues being held through present day.

1999-2003

Elected Officers were Allen Ball- President, Jim Opalek-Vice President, JD Powell-Secretary and Randall Smart-Treasurer.

CAS continued holding Shafer School, Library and Public Star Parties at Lock 4 Park Gallatin.

Are the stars out tonight?



Dozens of children and adults were able to get up close and personal with Saturn, Venus, Jupiter and other celestial bodies when members of the Cumberland Astronomical Society hosted a Star Party at the Hendersonville Public Library Monday night. If you missed the event, you'll have another chance Saturday evening, March 3 at Lock 4 Park in Gallatin. Viewing will begin at sunset, weather permitting. For information call Allen Ball at 451-4469 or Jim Opalek at 452-3268.

Staff photo by Suzie Perkins

JD Powell began publication of the official CAS newsletter called the "INSIGHT SCOPE."

A decision was made to find a darker location for Messier Marathons. Jim Opalek was able to secure a remote pasture site in Oak Grove, TN. The 2001 and 2002 marathons were held at the Oak Grove location.

In 2003, the decision was made to find a closer location for the marathons as well as monthly private club star parties and the suggestion was made to use the Bledsoe's Fort location in Castilian Springs. Danny Meyers and his father Lee were able to gain permission from the president of the Bledsoe Lick Historical Society for CAS (aka "Stargazers") to use the property for our events.

In 2003 and 2004, Astronomy Day events were held at the Gallatin Civic center and Lock 4 Park.

A CAS internet website was built by Allen Ball and Jim Opalek and hosted on tripod.

Dr. Tim Farris, Professor at Vol State was presented Honorary Membership Status in CAS due his ongoing sponsorship of the club's use of Vol State as a monthly meeting location. Also, because of his dedication in advancing science and astronomy to his students.

2003-2006

Elected Officers are Scott Smith-President, Mike Dickens-Vice President, Karma Gardner-Secretary, and David Cotten-Treasurer.

Monthly Public Star Parties continue to be held at Lock 4 Park in Gallatin and Private Parties at Bledsoe's Fort.

The annual public outreach continues to be held at libraries in Portland, Westmoreland, Hendersonville, White House, and Gallatin. Also, a story night under the stars was held at Rock Castle in Hendersonville in 2004 and will hopefully continue.

Lois Finney, Shafer Middle School Teacher, was presented Honorary CAS Membership due her enthusiasm, dedication, and advancement of the sciences and astronomy to her student body.



A Star Party was held at the Greenbrier Middle School in March of 2004. The first event had 100+ students and parents in attendance. Mr. Jones, the principal of the school, commented that the event was the most productive out of hours happening in the school's history and requested that we hold the event on an annual basis. Subsequently, the second Star Party for Greenbrier Middle School sixth grade classes was held in April of 2005 with an estimated attendance of 120 students and parents.

The newsletter, INSIGHT SCOPE continues strong with a consistent monthly publication.



A CAS Membership Handbook was published.

CAS joined the JPL NightSky Network which provides educational kits for public outreach at no cost to the club.

CAS purchased two internet domain names (www.CumberlandAstronomicalSociety.org and www.MidTNCAS.org) and a redesigned website was placed online using donated "advertisement free" space from Scott Smith and Mike Felkins. A member's only section was included in the website which contains an archive of past newsletters, manuals, schedules, observing aids, etc.

In 2004, a Coronado Personal Solar Telescope (PST) was purchased with club funds for public outreach.

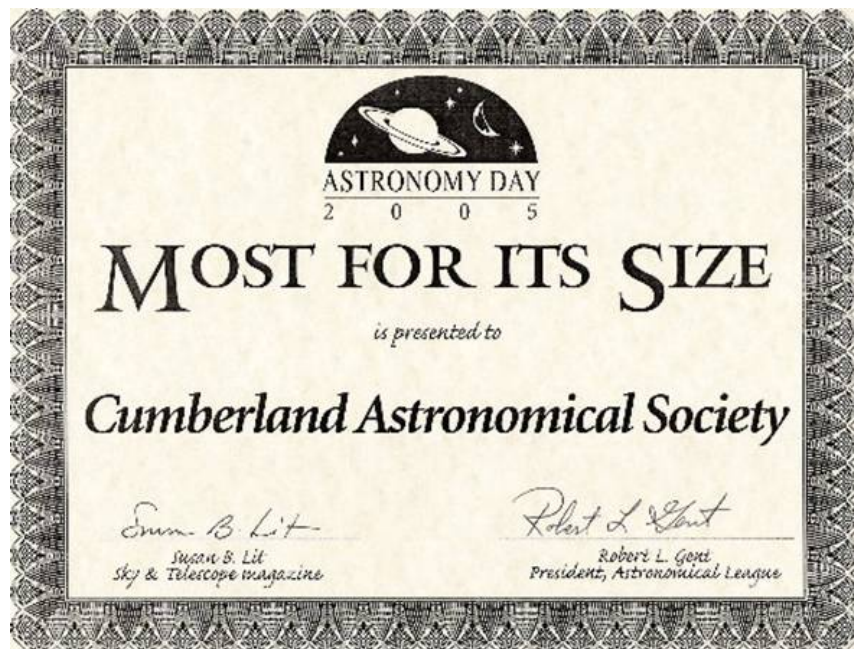
In 2005, an Orion Color Electronic Eyepiece was purchased with club funds for public outreach.

In 2005, the Astronomy Day event was moved to Moss Wright Park in Gallatin and an estimated 250 were in attendance.

Misty Ball created an excellent sign for our Astronomy Day and future Public Star Party events.



CAS was presented the “Most Activities for It’s Size” award from Sky and Telescope and the Astronomical League for the very successful Astronomy Day/Month activities!





ASTRONOMICAL LEAGUE

A FEDERATION OF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETIES
A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

To promote the science of astronomy:

- By fostering astronomical education;
- By providing incentives for astronomical observation and research;
- By assisting communication among amateur astronomical societies.

Astronomical League
9201 Ward Parkway
Suite 100
Kansas City, MO 64114

September 6, 2005

Cumberland Astronomical Society
Scott Smith
402 Maplewood Drive
Greenbrier, TN 37073

Dear Scott,

Your Society was awarded the 2005 Astronomy Day Award "Most for it Size" from the Astronomical League and Sky and Telescope Magazine. Congratulations on this achievement!

We're sorry we were unable to present a member of your society with the award at the Alcon Expo 2005 awards ceremony. Enclosed you will find your award certificate. Please be sure to present this to your members so they may share in the recognition.

Well done!

We appreciate your membership in the League!

Clear skies,

Mitch Glaze
Astronomical League
National Office Manager
aloffice@earthlink.net
816-333-7759

*Congratulations!
Bob Glaze
President, AC*

CAS sponsored the newly formed Gallatin High School (GHS) Space and Astronomy Club spearheaded by Allen Robnett – CAS Member and Science Teacher at GHS. The Meade 12" LX200 was incorporated as tool for this new club.

Allen Robnett constructed a secure storage case for the 12" LX200.

An EQ-1 tripod/mount with motor drives was purchased for the Coronado PST Scope.

At the December 2005 club meeting, David Cotten-Treasurer reported that membership was at it's highest since the formation of CAS.

2006-present

Elected Officers are Allen Ball-President, Mike Dickens-Vice President, Jim Opalek-Secretary, and David Cotten-Treasurer.

Monthly Public Star Parties continue to be held at Lock 4 Park in Gallatin and Private Parties at Bledsoe's Fort.

CAS prepares to sponsor it's first formal Star Party in partnership with Astronomy in the Parks Society and Dyer Observatory. CAS members Lloyd Watkins (The Chief) and Scott Smith serve on the planning committee.

CAS will celebrate it's 10th anniversary in 2006!