

# Meeting highlights, cont.

observing program, and to solicit funds for construction of observatory buildings. A recent public event—one of the first given poor weather conditions—had a very small turnout, but plans were underway for an event focusing on Mars in late August.

★ **Astronomical League Coordinator John Avellone** reported that two long-awaited awards finally arrived for presentation at the General Meeting. One was a Deep-Sky Binocular Club Certificate and the other a Messier Club Certificate.

★ **Librarian John Deriso** reported the purchase of the latest edition of *Dickinson and Dyer's Backyard Astronomer's Guide*.

★ **Alan Figgatt** reported that most all of the recently donated eyepieces had been distributed among the various loaner telescopes.

★ It was noted that some of the trees at **Savage** were growing into the southern horizon and that the club should see if they could be cut back.

★ **Monthly Observing Sessions**  
**Coordinator Bob Parks** reviewed times and locations for the remaining MOS events for this year, including clarification that the August 23 and December 13 events are at **Franklin Park** and that all four remaining MOS's for 2003 are open to the public. Concern was expressed over the ability to cover public observing obligations at Crockett Park on the August and December dates, when most of the club will likely be at Franklin Park or perhaps at **Sky Meadows Park** during August. Only **Crockett** is advertised for public observing on the club's website. Additionally, questions were raised regarding the wisdom of having events at Franklin Park, which is always open to the public. It was noted the Board had expressed support for events at Franklin earlier in the year based on its benefits as a site for large crowds and year-round availability.

★ The Board then began a review of the **MOS** program so that **Bob Parks** could begin plans for next year. There was universal agreement that the MOS program is a definite success, bringing out new members in addition to the public. Still, being a new program, the club had learned from the experience. Noting that the MOS schedule approved for this year attempted to cover public observing obligations, for example, some strongly expressed a desire next year to separate public observing sessions from Monthly Observing Sessions. The interests of club members is the priority, except for the annual **Astronomy Day** and **Star Gaze** events. At the same time, this separation likely means a greater commitment by more club members to cover all events. While some felt that non-public MOS's could mean less volunteer work in preparation, others pointed out that it is the organized programs of these events that attracted so many club members. Publicity was also considered a problem, as monthly public nights at Crockett Park are at present the only public viewing sessions listed on the website (by agreement with park authorities they must be posted) and need to be covered. The Board concluded that plans for next year's MOS schedule should begin by looking at the Saturdays before General Meetings and diverging from that schedule only when necessary.

★ **Outreach Committee members Bob Traube, Donna Blosser, and Rob McKinney** reported that the **Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship** and **Congressional School** events canceled due to weather were in the process of being rescheduled. A program in Washington, Virginia, is without club assistance. Other groups contacting the committee are being directed to ongoing public observing events.

★ **Bob Parks** reported that he and **Mike Mills** had discussed how to proceed with the **Powers Mirror**, and plan to cast a base from dental plaster.

★ **Craig Tupper** reported that work contin-

ues on the **Robotic Telescope**, including steady progress on the structure, but that it will probably not all come together and be ready this year. He would like to get more people to test the system and intends soon to open it to use by interested club members. He expressed a willingness to have it demonstrated at the Star Gaze if the weather makes all the preparation worthwhile.

★ **Bob Parks** said 4 or 5 people continue to attend **ATM meetings**.

★ **Membership Director Gene LaTour** indicated his own computer handled the membership records and that, at least for now, the club did not need to pursue this further.

★ It was agreed that **MOS Coordinator Bob Parks** should proceed with the order of 12 **T-Shirts** for those volunteers organizing MOS events. About half would be distributed this year, and the other kept for future volunteers. Bob estimated the cost to be about \$300. This year, Bob Parks will also choose one volunteer among the MOS organizers to receive an award from the club for his or her service, which would include a \$50 gift certificate. It was decided, for several reasons, not to offer a free annual club membership as originally suggested. There was general agreement that the club should establish a policy and process for granting a volunteer award each year to a person making an extraordinary contribution to club activities. **Bob Traube** agreed to draw up such a policy and process for the Board to review and approve.

