

Service Award to Andy Blanchard

Andy Blanchard has been an RASC Hamilton Centre member for over 15 years and has made many significant contributions at the local level, to neighbouring Centres, and to the public. He has over 12 years of service at the Hamilton Centre, having numerous executive roles, and he also is the driving force and a founder of the AstroCATS. He has served as a guest speaker at other Centres.

Andy began learning and volunteering almost immediately. In 2006, he took on the position of Treasurer, where he reviewed and reduced many operating costs, renegotiated terms of service and fees with the Centre's bank, and then began his focus on revenue. Andy led the effort to replace the underused Observatory dome with a better roof, some storage, and a classroom space.

A major cultural change happened during Andy's years on the board, with a strong focus on fun. People became more engaged, and enjoyed Centre events. Andy also initiated programs for youth outreach with Scouts Canada.

Andy's two years as President included many innovations and new ideas, but his most remarkable may have been in 2013, with the two major events being AstroCATS and his collaboration with seven other Centres to set up the David Levy Speaking Tour.

AstroCATS originated as Andy's vision of how to generate revenue for Hamilton Centre with an annual fundraising and astronomy event open to the public. In the late 2000's past presidents Roger Hill, Colin Haig, and board members were searching for fundraising ideas to pay the high costs of insuring and operating the Centre Observatory. Colin envisioned an event like a swap-meet with conference talks, but Andy's vision was for a high-calibre event, combining the best ideas from the North East Astronomy Forum, club talks, and a trade show. He put together a team of Hamilton Centre members and volunteers from the surrounding area to create the first AstroCATS event in 2013. This annual event is being held again here at the General Assembly.

Service Award to Chris Teron

Chris has been the Ottawa Centre Secretary for more than 15 years and his wealth of knowledge and professionalism in his position has never let us down.

Chris had a huge involvement in construction of SmartScope (our millennium project) in 2000 and even up to now. He is always seen helping at star parties and Astronomy Day but his main asset is working with the meeting chair to arrange slides and videos shown at our monthly meeting. He then runs the AV equipment during the night of the Centre meetings at the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum, and previously at the Canada Science and Technology Museum.

Any organization runs smoothly with the help of its volunteers. Chris has been a valuable part of our Centre and we would be honoured to present him with the Service Award.

Service Award to Gary Bennett

Gary's nomination is based on his sustained contribution to the Hamilton Centre since 2004. Gary has served eight terms as the Vice-President for Hamilton Centre, and is now the President. As key contributor to our Centre's growth, Gary leads meetings and delivers segments reviewing current astronomical news, a highlighted observing object, and a featured topic for the evening. He also oversees many activities and promotes RASC through social media and on the Centre's website.

Gary has chaired and co-chaired AstroCATS, resulting in substantial funding for Hamilton Centre outreach programs, and the acquisition of many club assets.

He saw the membership of the Hamilton Centre increase from 34 members to its current level of over 120 members. He maintained our website for 10 years and there is no doubt by any member of Hamilton Centre as to his value, contribution, and continued benefit.

Under his leadership the Centre is embarking on a five-year plan to deliver a world-class planetarium to Southern Ontario. Although in the early stages, the plan has received unanimous support from the board members. When completed the Hamilton Centre will launch the best outreach program of the Society in many years.

Gary is the very definition of an RASC member giving many years of service.

Service Award to Hugh Pett

Hugh Pett transferred from Ottawa to the Okanagan Centre with a flourish of active participation in volunteer opportunities in 2006. He served two terms as Vice President of the Centre, which involved organizing and promoting speakers at our monthly meetings, as well as giving several well received talks himself. In 2009 Hugh became editor of the Centre's monthly newsletter, a duty he still holds as of this writing.

In 2009 Hugh became a key volunteer in the committee that advances the progress of the Centre's "Okanagan Observatory." Hugh is involved, and his opinions are highly valued, in all aspects of the observatory development for which he has received two Member of the Year awards from the Centre. He was instrumental in planning and installing all of the electrical power assets of the observatory. Hugh personally designed, and led a team in the installation of the security system that utilizes a wide variety of devices to protect the rurally located Okanagan Observatory.

This is not Hugh's first pass at helping build a Centre observatory. Before coming to the Okanagan Centre Hugh Pett served as one the most dedicated team members on the Ottawa Centre SmartScope project. He designed and built many of the observatory systems including the electrical and UPS systems, lightning protection and grounding systems, webcam systems for overseeing operation of the telescope and dome, and a watchdog computer to monitor critical components and ensure an orderly shutdown during power failures. In recognition of the contributions by Hugh and his father Bradley, the Ottawa Centre named the facility The Pett Observatory.

Service Award to Paul Gray

Paul Gray joined the Halifax Centre of the RASC in 1988 as a teenager. During his early years as a member, he served on the Centre's executive as Observing Chairman and as a Councillor. He was actively involved in most Centre initiatives, and was an enthusiastic observer.

In 1998, Paul moved to the United States for work, interrupting his RASC involvement, but becoming an active member of the Delmarva Stargazers until 2002. In 2003 he returned to Canada and again took up RASC membership in the Halifax Centre in 2003, then in the Moncton Centre in 2004. He has maintained an active role in the Society ever since.

His Moncton, then the New Brunswick Centre contributions include several executive positions. He was instrumental in starting and running the Centre's annual star parties. He led the effort to achieve Dark-Sky Preserve designation for both Mount Carleton Provincial and Kouchibouguac National Parks in 2009, and was involved in the designation process for Fundy National Park in 2011.

At the national level, besides serving on several committees and on the Board Pilot Committee, he is a contributor to the *Observer's Handbook* Dark Nebulae Section—13 editions this year.

Paul returned to the Halifax Centre in 2012 and has been an active member ever since, most recently as treasurer of the 2015 GA, and he is currently in his second term as the Centre President.

His energy, commitment, and enthusiasm contributed enormously to the growth and strength of the New Brunswick Centre (he put it on the map, so to speak). Paul is a natural leader, inspiring others into action.

As chair of the Observing Committee, he raised the profile of the Society's observing program and increased the uptake on the certificate programs. His *Observer's Handbook* Dark Nebulae section has brought a whole new area of observing to many amateur astronomers, not just in Canada, but beyond. His many solar-filter-building workshops conducted at various star parties have contributed to the skills, abilities, and observing success of dozens of RASC members.

Paul Gray has been an active member of the RASC for 22 years, minus a four-year interruption. He has given substantial and significant service of an exemplary nature to the Society in many roles, at his two home Centres and nationally, for twelve consecutive years. That exemplary service continues now.