

Dr. James Hesser

Dr. Hesser is well known to the RASC, as a nearly thirty-year member, and as its Honorary President (2009-2013). He is Director of the NRC Dominion Astrophysical Observatory (DAO), where he has been for more than thirty years. Dr. Hesser is past-president of the Canadian Astronomical Society (CASCA) and of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. He is past vice-president of the American Astronomical Society. He is recipient of numerous awards, including, most recently, the Qilak Award for his “outstanding contribution to public appreciation and understanding of Astronomy.” He was one of the first to receive the prestigious Michael Smith award, given by NSERC Canada to recognize those who inspire through the promotion of science to the general public. The list goes on and on.

Dr. Hesser, as Director of the DAO, brought to it the Centre of the Universe, an important and popular site of science outreach in this community. Dr. Hesser was the first recipient of the Newton-Ball Award, Victoria Centre’s own service award (2001). In 2008, due in large part to Dr. Hesser’s wise counsel, Victoria Centre was able to build an observatory on the grounds of the DAO. He has made easy our Centre’s continued participation in public outreach on the hill (coming up on 100 years).

Dr. Hesser worked tirelessly to lead International Year of Astronomy (IYA) efforts within Canada (2005-2009). He guided this highly visible, and highly successful international project by serving as the country’s “single point of contact” and as Chair of the Executive Committee and Advisory Board for IYA within Canada. Under his direction, the IYA provided “Galileo moments” to more than two million Canadians through more than 3600 separate events. Jim was often found at events dressed as Galileo himself, antique telescope in hand.

Dr. Hesser has long served on Victoria Centre Council as liaison with the NRC/DAO. His energy seems endless. Upon recently announcing his upcoming partial-retirement from his post at the DAO, Jim showed up at a meeting of several of the organizational committees working on GA 2014 with a “well, finally I have some time to help with this!”

Your nominators cannot imagine a more worthy recipient of this award. Jim is a true gentleman, and for some thirty years, has proudly and energetically promoted science in general, astronomy in particular, and the RASC and its Victoria Centre, across Canada, and in his community. His contribution to the efforts of the RASC has been profound.

Fellow Award – Dr. James Hesser (Victoria Centre)

In recognition of Dr. Hesser’s decades-long-term contributions to the RASC, his leadership in building partnerships, bringing amateurs and professionals together and leading joint initiatives, the depth and scope of his contributions, and their broad national and international impact regarding the Society’s objectives, mission, and vision, the Awards Committee recommends that Dr. Hesser also be named a Fellow of the RASC.