

City of Dripping Springs, Texas

Report to the International Dark Sky Association

Oct 2016 - Oct 2017

Educational Outreach

The second Texas Night Sky Festival®, sponsored by the City of Dripping Springs along with the Texas Section of IDA and the Hays County Chapter Texas Master Naturalist was just as successful as the first drawing over 2,800 participants!

It was an incredible event which built on the success and experience gained by a strong dedicated team of volunteers. The event focuses on fun and educational activities to expand participants appreciation of the natural nighttime.

This year, with two portable planetariums, and three stages, participants were provided with an array of scheduled choices in addition to the continuously running activities and exhibits.

Planetarium shows ranged from live shows hosted by an astronomer to viewings of *Losing the Dark*, a solar eclipse educational video, and a selection of 6 other educational planetarium shows. Our Mars Stage hosted the presentations “Stars, Orbits and Spaceships” by Bob Mahoney, “Life on Earth Depends on Natural Darkness” by Cindy Luongo Cassidy, “The End of Night in Words and Images” by Paul Bogard, and “Protecting the Night Sky for McDonald Observatory and All of Us” by Bill Wren. The Jupiter Stage hosted delightful music from the Hot Texas Swing Band, Tommy Mojica and the Dripping Strings, and The Kinscheriff’s – all with celestial themes. The Teepee Storytelling Stage was home to Tejas Winds where Lasaro “Chief” Arriola, flute player and storyteller, along with Julie Lani, native percussionist wove their magic; Jamie Kinscheriff entranced us with “Tales of Constellations” and author, Amy Jackson engaged youngsters with her book, “Cassandra and the Night Sky”.



All day activities included viewing the sun with solar telescopes run by members of Austin Astronomical Society, having your picture made with a star-filled background, building a hands-on eclipse model, learning how to join the Globe at Night citizen science project, designing a light shield, learning how to earn the Be A Star Award, experiencing a simulated walk through the solar system, delighting in the wonderful food trucks, learning how bats, birds, plants, pollinators, mammals, and almost every living thing on this planet needs natural darkness at night, testing out “good” and “bad” lighting, finding out what the Texas State Parks and National Parks systems are doing to protect the night sky and experiencing activities to help folks understand why our parks are doing that.



Fun Patches

Youngsters, and the young at heart, had fun at the Texas Night Sky Festival® educational exhibits, activities, and talks to earn the Dark Sky Patch™ or the Midnight Defender Patch™. They were required to experience and write about a number of activities. That number depended on their age. The Midnight Defender Patch™, required a higher level of engagement and critical thinking than the Dark Sky Patch™ as well as a follow-up action plan for after the Festival.

Those specific activities and exhibits required for both the Dark Sky Patch™ and the Midnight Defender Patch™ explored each facet of light pollution, helped them learn about what is happening in their parks and communities to protect the night sky, exposed them to the beauty of and need for natural darkness, encouraged them to think about how what they were learning applies to their everyday lives, and gave them ways to get involved,



Hundreds of young people earned these two patches while expanding their knowledge of light pollution, understanding why it needs to be eliminated, and what they can do to reduce it.

Art, Literature, and Photography

A poetry and essay contest, adjudicated by the internationally famous author Naomi Shihab Nye, was added to the Festival for 2017. Winning entries were on display at the Festival and will be published in *Nightwatch*. The Festival Photography and Student Art Contests drew a large number of entries. Winners of both of these contests have been on public display in the area since the Festival to keep reminders of the beauty of the night sky in view of the public.

All three contests encourage the extended community to think about the connection between the night sky and our culture.



Sharing the Stars

After the sun set, Festival goers moved outside to enjoy a beautiful dusk and night sky. They participated in Yoga Under the Stars, learned how to take photographs of the night sky or heard stories of the constellations as the storyteller pointed out the object of his tale with a laser pointer. Then, of course, the observing field was open with a wide selection of telescopes and astronomers to guide them.

Night Sky Advocates Breakfast

On Sunday March 19th, the City of Dripping Springs was one of the hosts as night sky enthusiasts had the opportunity to network and take part in a discussion focused on night sky preservation efforts happening around the state of Texas.

Topics and guest speakers included:

The fight to keep West Texas skies dark despite the oil boom--Bill Wren, McDonald Observatory

Night sky protection around the new Palo Pinto State Park—Gary Carter, Texas Astronomical Society

The Texas Night Sky Coalition—Cliff Kaplan

Hill Country Dark Sky Reserve—Vance Naumann

Highlights and contacts for dark sky efforts in the Wimberley Valley, San Antonio, and Tri-Canyon area of the western hill country were shared.

Current Outreach Project

The Texas Night Sky Festival® team is planning a wonderful star party with some educational activities for the spring of 2018. The Festival team is also working to determine how often to run the full Festival.

Community Growth

The City continues to grow by leaps and bounds. Building permits and sign applications come in a continuous stream. Belterra Village, largest of the new commercial developments in the area is not within the City limits and therefore may not be forced to comply with the City's Outdoor

Lighting Ordinance. This development is in the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction of the City and must follow some guidelines but is not subject to the majority of the City ordinances.

However, the City, as is their habit, requested they comply with the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and they agreed.



All of the lighting has been meticulously reviewed. The parking lot lights will have extra shielding added like the sample in the photo to the right.

Sky Quality Meter readings continue to be in the 19.2 to 20.76 range on nights or times when the local sports lights are not illuminated.

