

# CARPE NOCTEM SEIZE THE NIGHT



## **Mission...**

These key objectives will be accomplished by GVO as they maintain an observatory facility and telescopes capable of providing the following services:

- Public telescope viewing programs geared toward establishing a new form of science-oriented recreation that appeals to both the resident and tourist community.
- Outreach programs to improve the effectiveness of teaching astronomy to K-12 and college level students, particularly those students that are traditionally underserved.
- Facilities that can support and enrich the amateur astronomical community.
- Facilities that support basic research in astronomy.

## **Our Summer Public Viewing Season...**

For this summer, we will be open every Friday & Saturday evening from the second week in June through the second week in September. On viewing nights, the observatory will open to public near sunset (please consult the detailed Season Dates & Times handout) and we will be asking for a donation from all in attendance (\$5.00 for adults & \$3.00 for children).

The Gunnison Valley Observatory is located at 2804 County Road 38. To get to the observatory proceed west on Hwy 50 out of town, turn left on the Gold Basin Road, CR 38 (the road to Hartman Rocks), continue around the airport, then south approx. 1-1/2 miles, the observatory parking lot will be on your left.

The observatory phone number is 642-1111. We have an answering machine that will be checked weekly, and the nights that we have events. If you need to contact a person quickly try the following individuals Volunteer Coordinator Mike Brooks, 970-596-0927, Board President & operations manager Chris Madison, 970-642-3040, Board Vice President Dr. Suzanne Taylor, 970-964-7796

## **Volunteers Assignments...**

**Observatory Host/Greeter** –This position is usually the first assignment given to new volunteers. This is because it allows even those with strong astronomy background to better understand GVO's public viewing approach and the important details that need to occur each evening. These volunteers serve as the interface between the observatory and the public. They perform tasks such as handling admission and concessions, and in doing so fill out attendance, income and related documents: they also handout and collect guest surveys. One of the important duties of these volunteers is to oversee the traffic flow into and out of the observatory building, and to keep a headcount of attendance. They also prepare the facility for guests, cleaning, arranging seating and setting up basic AV equipment. Additionally, these individuals assist those individuals with handicap needs (requiring drop-off access to the building), and due to dark sky conditions, will guide those requiring assistance between the parking area and the observatory. While these individuals, do not make formal astronomical presentations they are often called upon to give an overview of GVO to guests.

**Observatory Public Relations Assistant-** These volunteers take an active role in creating content for our weekly press-releases, our Facebook and Web sites and other related advertising publications. Additionally, they seek to take photos, and gather other materials that can help the observatory record its history. They generally work off-site and apart from our public viewing nights. However, to do their job effectively, they need attend many of our events, gain a basic awareness of public astronomy, and attend board meetings when possible.

**Outside Small-Scope Operator -** These volunteers must undergo specific training in the operation of the various small telescopes used outside the observatory building. They need to be operationally aware of the use of viewfinders, eyepieces, focuser, filters, mounts and the process of public viewing. They must be alert to issues of public safety, be able to locate standard viewing targets, have a technical mindset, and be patient with GVO guests. These individuals are part of the observatory's "public face" and therefore, being dependable, having good presentational skills and a keen social awareness are important traits for this assignment.

**Dome Scope Operator -** These volunteers must undergo specific training in the operation of the large 30" telescope, its software and the dome itself. These individuals need to have good computer awareness, a technical mindset, and be detailed oriented and patient. They are responsible for the safe operation of the scope and the dome during all presentations, private viewing session, and research operations. Without their authority and presence, the scope is not to be used! As such, these individuals need to exhibit sound judgment, and to be active problem solver within the context of a public event. Anytime the scope is to be used these individuals must ready the scope for operation, well ahead of the event.

**Evening Sky Interpreters: Dome Interpreter & Small-Scope Interpreter-** At a minimum, these volunteers need to have some amateur astronomy background and have engaged in public outreach for at least one year. Further, they need to have completed some training in the principles and practices of the NPS (National Park Service) Interpretation process. Additionally, they benefit from having some formal astronomy/physics coursework. These volunteers must have a basic knowledge of astronomy and the night sky, (constellations, Messier objects and the solar system.) These individuals are the observatory's "public face" and therefore, good public speaking, presentational and social skills are important for this assignment. These volunteers need to be able to setup and run the observatory's scopes, AV equipment, and may be asked to create basic PowerPoint presentations. Additionally, they maybe called upon to provide educational outreach for the observatory, and assist with amateur rental sessions.

**Guest Lecturer/Interpreter -** These volunteers need to have some formal astronomy/physics training, or be a well-seasoned amateur astronomer. These individuals create and deliver formal lectures, prepare the related viewing sessions that complement the lectures and develop the necessary supplemental or AV material for those presentations. They maybe called upon to provide educational outreach for the observatory, help evaluate research requests, and assist with amateur research and imaging sessions. Their programs must be crafted with an awareness of the principles of the NPS (National Park Service) interpretation process.

#### **Maintenance**

**Building & Site -** These volunteers assist the observatory staff with a variety of tasks related to the building, furnishings and site maintenance including trash remove and future landscaping needs.

**Dome & Scope -** These volunteers assist the observatory engineering committee with the optical and physical adjustment of the scope and its software. Under the supervision and authority of the Observatory Engineer, they help maintain the observatory's key technology, computers, AV equipment, eyepieces and imaging hardware and software.

#### **Interns**

**Business Management and Organization Communication -** These volunteers operate under an academic course relationship and perform a range of potential duties in the area of public relations, program management and business operations.

**Astronomy and Science Education** - These volunteers operate under an academic course relationship and perform a range of potential duties in the area of astronomy outreach, education, and scientific study.

### A few reminders...

- If you can't make your assigned volunteer slot, please let the Volunteer Coordinator (Mike Brooks 970-596-0927) or Operation's Manager (Chris Madison 970-642-3040) know as soon as possible... Also if the conflict arises the evening of the event you can leave a message on GVO phone 642-1111.
- All volunteers should report to the observatory 30 minutes prior the public opening of the observatory. For the Summer Season, consult your copies of *GVO's Volunteer Schedules*, as they become available. (I email them out on a monthly basis during the summer.)
- Only trained and board approved individuals are allowed to operate the dome and its telescope.
- Most visitors don't know what to expect at a stargazing event. Talk to them about what the night's activities will entail, it will help them get more out of the experience. Remember as volunteers, we seek to use Tilden's Principles of Interpretation as endorsed by the National Park Service, and these are included in this document.
- Remember as a volunteer, your focus needs to be on our guest needs. Socializing with other volunteers is part of GVO, but not our primary purpose during public viewing nights.
- Encourage the visitors to ask questions about GVO, our purpose, the equipment, the night sky, and most importantly, how they can help us continue our mission.
- If visitors wear glasses, have them try to first look through the telescope eyepiece with their glasses. If that doesn't work then suggest that they try viewing without their glasses, remember you'll need to help them adjust the telescope focuser.
- Help our visitors appreciate the importance of *dark skies*, and the need to have good dark adaption, for their viewing pleasure. Remember, it takes 20-30 minutes to become fully dark adapted, and one poorly directed flashlight can ruin adapted eyes. Also, where possible help educate them about light pollution and how it can ruin observational astronomy.
- Bring a small flashlight, (red filtered is preferred) as the path between the parking lot and the observatory is not well lit.
- No aerosol sprays (Bug repellents) are to be used near any of the telescopes. Such sprays have caustic chemicals that can damage eyepieces and mirrors. Please actively enforce this rule.
- We want all of our guests to enjoy their experience, so please remind parents that children are welcome, but should be well supervised. No climbing on the berm.
- Alcohol is prohibited at the facility, except by special arrangement of the GVO board (generally for private party events). In addition, the observatory is a smoke free zone, so please don't bring tobacco products.
- Remember to park in the outer parking area, only those with special needs are to park within the berm area.
- Don't bring animals or pets to the observatory, except service dogs.
- In case of an emergency, accident or serious weather situation please immediately contact the GVO on-site representative. They are responsible for GVO's formal response. Other than minor issues, which might be handled by volunteers, GVO will seek to use the resources available through a 911 call.

## **Tilden's Principles of Interpretation**

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or being described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

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## VOLUNTEER DATA SHEET

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone #'s:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What previous astronomy background do you have?** (check all that apply)

- I like to look at the night sky
- I have my own personal telescope
- I have taken a course in astronomy
- I've been an amateur astronomer for a number of years
- I have significant educational background in the field
- I have professional astronomical experience

Do you have any specialized skills that you believe would benefit the observatory?  
(Please use the back of this sheet for your comments)

**In general, when are you available for volunteer work?**

**What volunteer activities/positions would you like to help with at the observatory?**

**I have read the Volunteer Information:** \_\_\_\_\_