



Grand Rapids Amateur Astronomical  
Association & James C. Veen Observatory

# 2025 Activities Guide

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[www.graaa.org](http://www.graaa.org)



616-897-7065



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[graaa.org/discord](https://graaa.org/discord)

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Lowell, MI 49331

# GRAAA's Mission Statement: *“To promote community interest and participation in astronomy through outreach, education, and research”*



The **Grand Rapids Amateur Astronomical Association** is a non-profit (501(c)(3)) group of astronomy enthusiasts of all ages and backgrounds, drawn together by a common interest in the wonders of the universe. Learn how you can become a member at [graaa.org/membership](https://graaa.org/membership).



A variety of events and activities, including featured speakers, learning opportunities, and more, take place throughout the year. Most speakers are scheduled on third Thursdays, but—as of 2025—some activities may take place on other days of the week to help make GRAAA events accessible to as much of our membership as possible. There are also opportunities for student members. Add events to your calendar now, and keep up with updates on social media and at [graaa.org/events](https://graaa.org/events).



**Additional events and “popups”** provide unique opportunities, including noted speakers, special interest discussions, impromptu observing sessions, and more. Look for alerts through GRAAA social media, Discord, and text alerts.



The **James C. Veen Observatory**, named after a co-founder and first president of GRAAA, is the crown jewel of the Association. Learn more about this remarkable facility and procedures to gain access for personal use of its multiple telescopes at [graaa.org/veen](https://graaa.org/veen). Member privileges also include personal use of the McCarthy Family Pavilion, fire pit area, and DeBruyn Pathways that are part of the natural beauty that surrounds the facility.



**Public Observing Nights at Veen** are listed later in this Guide, and you are invited to volunteer at these twice-monthly events which help GRAAA meet our outreach and financial goals. Gain experience with the observatory and make wonderful new friends, all while providing vital volunteer support.



**GRAAA on social media:** We have an active presence on Instagram at [@gr\\_astronomy](https://www.instagram.com/gr_astronomy), Facebook at [facebook.com/GrandRapidsAstronomy](https://facebook.com/GrandRapidsAstronomy), and our “GRAAA Community” Facebook group.



**GRAAA Education and YouTube channel:** View archived presentations and informative guides to amateur astronomy at [graaa.org/education](https://graaa.org/education) and [youtube.com/@gr\\_astronomy](https://youtube.com/@gr_astronomy). Also check out online articles by GRAAA contributors at [graaa.org/blog](https://graaa.org/blog).



**NASA Night Sky Network:** GRAAA is a partner in these periodic online presentations by noted astronomers and space science specialists. Learn more at [nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov](https://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov).



**GRAAA Discord server:** Join our online community to connect with and learn from fellow GRAAA members at [graaa.org/discord](https://graaa.org/discord).



**Email and text alerts:** Members are automatically added to GRAAA's email list, plus you can sign up for text alerts by texting [@gr-astro](https://text.graaa.org) to 81010. Receive text notifications directly to your phone about transient sky events, GRAAA popups, meeting reminders, and other useful information.

# FEATURED SPEAKERS

All 2025 presenters are current or former GRAAA members.

**David DeBruyn: Thurs. March 20, 7:00pm, Public Museum**

## ***70 Years of Astronomical Richness in West Michigan***

From its inception in May of 1955, to a vibrant association of astronomy enthusiasts of today, the evolution of GRAAA is one of many twists, turns, personalities, and complexities. What a story it is, to be unpacked for us with many never-before-seen photos and anecdotes from one who lived most of it.

**Dr. Jacob Bourjaily: Wed. April 30, 7:00pm, Public Museum**

## ***Revolutions in Our Understanding of Fundamental Physics***

One of our most accomplished members returns home to share some of the exciting developments in our understanding of physics and revolutions in our ability to connect theory to experiment. Since the inspirational start of his scientific career at the Veen Observatory, Jake has grown into an internationally recognized leader in theoretical physics. He has held positions at Harvard, the Niels Bohr Institute, and now at Penn State.

**Dr. Thomas Strikwerda: Summer Date/Time TBD, Veen Observatory**

## ***What a Ride: From Mixing Mortar to Guiding Spacecraft***

Join former GRAAA member and now benefactor for a “twilight talk” that will include reminiscence about growing up as part of the Saturday work crews that built Veen Observatory and working at the Chaffee Planetarium. Tom later went on to an amazing career that included a leading role in guidance teams that sent spacecraft to Mercury, an asteroid, and distant Pluto. Tom is a special but humble alumnus of GRAAA from the mid-60’s to early 70’s.

**Andrew Harwood: Thurs. October 16, 7:00pm, Public Museum**

## ***Fitting Amateur Astronomy Into a Busy Life***

Andrew Harwood, a 37-year GRAAA member, has traveled to eclipses, practiced astrophotography, and built telescopes, all while juggling family, career, and other interests. Andy will share memorable experiences and strategies that began on Kissing Rock Hill as a youngster. Andy is the ideal presenter for this year’s James Marron Memorial Event, as he recalls that Jim Marron inspired him and many others to pursue a life enriched by astronomy.

**Andrew Fraser: Thurs. November 20, 7:00pm, via Zoom**

## ***Heber Curtis: The Great Debate and Beyond, An Astronomer’s Quest to Discern the Nature of the Universe***

Andrew was active in the Muskegon and Grand Rapids astronomy clubs while growing up and attending GVSU. Now long active in amateur astronomy in the Minneapolis area, he has taken a deep look into one of the most influential figures of early 20<sup>th</sup> century astronomy, also someone with strong ties to Michigan.

# LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

## ***Winter Challenges: Thurs. January 16, 7:00pm, Public Museum***

This session, in the cozy Chaffee Planetarium, will include tips on how to stay warm on frigid nights at the telescope and to use time and energy effectively. We will highlight charts and phone apps that will help you find the best features to view with least effort under cold conditions. After the main presentation, enjoy *Our Colorful Universe*, the latest show production from our talented planetarium team.

## ***Introduction to Amateur Astronomy Series:***

### **Sat. February 1, March 1, and April 5, 10:30am, Public Museum**

These three Saturday sessions at the Grand Rapids Public Museum are free to GRAAA members and open to the public with paid Museum admission. Recommended for ages 12 and up.

#### ***Exploring the Ever-Changing Sky in 2025: February 1, 10:30am***

The first class will be under the planetarium sky and will include information about sky motions, celestial highlights of various seasons, and what to look for this year with naked eye, binoculars, and small telescopes.

#### ***Getting the Most from a New Hobby: March 1, 10:30am***

This class will explore challenges faced by those new to amateur astronomy. What are the best options for star charts, telescopes and accessories, and online resources? Learn useful tips for effective observing under all conditions.

#### ***Telescope Advice and Tune-up Clinic: April 5, 10:30am***

Participants can bring their personal telescopes for minor repairs and to obtain expert advice for effective use. Included in the session will be a discussion of different telescope options, and how to choose the right one for you.

## ***Digital Imaging: Continuing Series, Veen Observatory***

These astrophotography-focused sessions are open to GRAAA members only.

### ***Basics and Options for Beginners: Sat. May 10, 10:30am (with repeat session on Tues. May 13, 7:30pm)***

Want to take digital images through your telescope but are confused about where to begin? This class is for you. Learn the basics of what it takes to obtain impressive pictures of sky objects using modern technology, even with just a cell phone.

### ***Intermediate & Advanced Imaging for Amateurs: Dates and times TBD***

The intended goal is that the beginner session will lead to the formation of an astro-imaging group that will learn from one another and advance toward skilled imaging with personal and Veen Observatory telescopes. More information to come after the May 13 session.

# ADDITIONAL EVENTS

## ***StarBeQue Family Picnic: Sat. June 21, 6:30pm, Veen Observatory***

The annual StarBeQue event this year will bring us together to welcome summer while enjoying a fine potluck picnic. Following will be a “Twilight Presentation” and observing if the sky cooperates. Don’t miss this highlight social event, especially if you’re a new member!

## ***Holiday Party: Thurs. December 11, 6:30pm, Boulder Creek Golf Club***

Celebrate the coming of Christmas, winter solstice, Hanukkah and other festivals of the season with fellow GRAAA members and families. Make merry while enjoying a buffet dinner and special entertainment. Details, cost and signup link can be found at [graaa.org/events](http://graaa.org/events) beginning in late November.

## ***Summer Nights Around the Campfire with Riverside Raconteurs:***

### **Fri. June 27, July 25, and August 22, 7:00pm, Veen Observatory**

This is a collaborative event with a longtime story telling group that enjoys sharing wonderful tales from long ago and today. Bring a lawn chair and snack/beverage if you wish. Sit back and enjoy a unique experience with friends new and old in the natural beauty of Veen Observatory’s grounds.

## ***Members’ Nights: Sat. July 19 and September 20, Veen Observatory***

These special members-only events will take place cloudy or clear. GRAAA members and their guests have the opportunity for instructional experience and group observing. Increase your confidence using the Veen facilities! Check for details and start times at [graaa.org/events](http://graaa.org/events).

## ***Telescope Tune-up Clinics: Sat. May 3, June 28, August 2, and September 27, prior to Public Nights at Veen Observatory***

Telescope clinics are free to GRAAA members and included with paid Public Night admission for non-members. Arrive with your telescope 1.5 hours before the scheduled start time of the above Public Nights for expert alignment and tips for use. Check on event status at [graaa.org](http://graaa.org), Facebook, Discord, and recorded phone message at 616-897-7065.

## ***Pop-up Events: Announced at [graaa.org](http://graaa.org), Discord, email, and/or text***

- ★ Member Star Parties at Veen, sky conditions permitting
- ★ Overnight Lunar Eclipse Watch, March 13-14, sky conditions permitting
- ★ Zoom presentations by notable astronomers and others
- ★ *GRAAA Memories Over 70 Years*: watch for announcement of this special event
- ★ Veen Observatory telescope orientation sessions
- ★ GRAAA Annual Report to the membership
- ★ Transient sky events such as auroras, comets, and possibly supernova
- ★ Daytime solar observing and social opportunities, August date(s) TBA

# PUBLIC OBSERVING NIGHTS at Veen Observatory

**Public Observing Nights take place only if skies are clear.** Status updates at [graaa.org](http://graaa.org), Facebook, Discord, and recorded phone message (616-897-7065) posted no later than 6:30pm on date of event.

## 2025 Public Observing Night dates, times, and highlights:

May 03 *	9:30 - 12:00	<b>International Astronomy Day</b> ; Moon, Mars
May 17	9:30 - 12:00	Mars, Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
May 31	9:30 - 12:00	Moon, Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
June 14	9:30 - 12:00	Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies, Moon late
June 28 *	9:30 - 12:00	Moon, Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
July 12	9:30 - 12:00	Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies, Moon late
July 26	9:30 - 12:00	Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
Aug. 02 *	9:00 - 11:30	Moon, Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
Aug. 16	9:00 - 11:30	Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
Aug. 30	9:00 - 11:30	Moon, Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
Sept. 13	8:30 - 11:00	Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies, Saturn late
Sept. 27 *	8:30 - 11:00	<b>Autumn Astronomy Day</b> ; Moon, Saturn, etc.
Oct. 04	7:30 - 10:00	Moon, Saturn, Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
Oct. 11	7:30 - 10:00	Saturn, Neptune, Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
Oct. 18	7:30 - 10:00	Saturn, Neptune, Star Clusters, Nebulas, Galaxies
Oct. 25	7:30 - 10:00	Moon, Saturn, Neptune, Star Clusters, Nebulas, etc.

\* **Telescope Clinics** take place 1.5 hours prior to event start time if skies are clear and observatory is open. Free with paid admission. Details under “*Additional Events*” in this Guide.

### ADMISSION

Adults .....	\$5
Under 18 .....	\$3
Under 5 .....	FREE
GRAAA & GRPM members .....	FREE



Cash preferred, also accept credit cards and checks (payable to GRAAA). Visit [graaa.org](http://graaa.org) for location, map, group tour information, galleries, and more.

**RETAIN THIS GUIDE IN A SAFE PLACE  
FOR FUTURE REFERENCE!**

# 2025 LEADERSHIP

## Officers

<b>President:</b> Chris Miller .....	616-481-5933
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<b>Vice President:</b> Tom Good .....	616-617-6964
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<b>Secretary:</b> Emily Hromi .....	330-958-4648
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## Directors

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## Other Services

<b>Admin &amp; Information:</b> Dave DeBruyn .....	616-558-9242
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<b>Member &amp; Public Services:</b> Dave DeBruyn .....	616-558-9242
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GRAND RAPIDS  
PUBLIC MUSEUM

[www.grpm.org](http://www.grpm.org)

*Be curious.*

The GRAAA and Veen Observatory receive annual financial and administrative support from the Grand Rapids Public Museum.

**Note:** Pre-registration for events at GRPM is recommended to help us plan and to ensure a spot for you. Guests and public are welcome. Parking is free for GRAAA members.