

SONOMA COUNTY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

2016 STRIKING SPARKS TELESCOPE AWARDS PROGRAM



2015 Striking Sparks telescope winners, sponsors, mentors and teachers. Photo by Len Nelson.

This is the 31th year of the Sonoma County Astronomical Society's (SCAS) annual "Striking Sparks" telescope program. The purpose of the program is to promote science education and interest in astronomy. Our goal is to *strike sparks* of interest with students in Sonoma County. This year we will again be awarding the contest winners easy to use, new 6-inch reflecting Dobsonian mount telescopes to students that have been nominated by their teachers or by SCAS members. Applicants must be Sonoma County students in first to eighth grade to be eligible. Attendance of one or more Robert Ferguson Observatory events or SCAS meetings between now and February 10, 2016 is required. Lastly, the candidate must write an essay about their interest in astronomy

CONTEST RULES

- 1. Teachers:** Select and nominate up to 2 students who have demonstrated genuine interest in science and astronomy. Consider whether or not the student will have parent/ guardian support to participate in astronomy events. Please photocopy and send home with each nominated student a copy of pages 4 and 5 (Parents' Information Sheet and meeting attendance) so parents will know about the contest and the program. You will also need to photocopy one nomination form for each student you nominate. Please read the Parent Information Sheet as it contains more detailed student information.

2. **Students:** (1) Attend one or more public nights at the Robert Ferguson Observatory or SCAS meetings between now and February 10, 2016. (2) Write an essay, up to 150 words, that describes their interest in astronomy and how having their own telescope would support that interest. Here are some questions for students to consider when writing their essay. When did you become interested in astronomy? What have you done to learn about astronomy? Where would you use a telescope if you win one? Are other members of your family interested in astronomy? Have you ever looked through a telescope? What after school activities are you involved in and what are your other hobbies? Describe any astronomy projects you have completed. Describe what you learned or experienced at the Robert Ferguson Observatory or SCAS meeting. The essay is to be in your own words. It may be handwritten or typed. See page 4 for schedules, dates, times and places.
3. **Teachers:** For each nominated student, a maximum of 2 per class, complete the Nomination Form on page 3. Make a separate copy of Pages 4 and 5 for each nominated student. Carefully read each student's essay and then compose a required supporting statement and attach it to the Nomination Form (Page 3). Try to be specific as to how a telescope might 'Spark' the student's interest in astronomy. 'Spark' nominations without a teacher's supporting statement will not be judged.
4. **Teacher:** For each nominated student send:
 - a. SCAS Striking Sparks Nomination Form (Page 3).
 - b. Student's signed entry essay.
 - c. Student's attendance verification (Page 5).
 - d. Teacher's supporting statement.

**Send To: SCAS, Striking Sparks Telescope Contest
P.O. Box 183
Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0183**

All contest entries must be postmarked no later than Saturday, February 20, 2016.

We will contact the winning students and teachers at home on or after **Saturday, February 27, 2016**. The telescopes will be presented to the contest winners at the Sonoma County Astronomical Society meeting on **Wednesday, March 9, 2016**.

Questions? Call the Striking Sparks Coordinator:

Larry McCune (415) 492-1426, Email: lmccune@comcast.net

Len Nelson, Young Astronomer Advisor (707) 763-8007, Email: lennelsn@comcast.net

Sincerely,

Larry McCune
Striking Sparks Program Coordinator

Striking Sparks Telescope Contest Nomination Form 2016

Teachers, please complete:

Student's Name _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Telephone _____ Email Address (**required**) _____

Grade _____ Age _____

School _____

Parents/Guardians first and last names: _____

Teacher _____ Principal _____

Teacher's Telephone(s): _____ Email: _____

Teacher's Signature _____ **Date** _____

Please staple all parts together securely in this order for each student:

1. Nomination Form (Page 3)
2. Student's Signed Essay
3. Student's Attendance Verification Form (Page 5)
4. Teacher's Supporting Statement

MAIL TO: SCAS, Striking Sparks Telescope Contest
P.O. Box 183
Santa Rosa CA 95402-0183

Entries must be postmarked no later than February 20, 2016.

Judging will be held on **February 27, 2016**. Winning students and their teachers will be notified on or shortly after that date. The telescopes will be awarded on **Wednesday, March 9, 2016** at Proctor Terrace Elementary School, Santa Rosa, California.

If you have questions, call Striking Sparks Coordinator Larry McCune at (415) 492-1426 or Len Nelson, Young Astronomer Advisor at (707) 763-8007.

Sonoma County Astronomical Society Striking Sparks Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

Dear Parent or Guardian,

This is the 31th year of the Sonoma County Astronomical Society's (SCAS) annual "**Striking Sparks**" Telescope Awards Program. The purpose of the program is to promote science education and interest in astronomy. The program's name comes from an occurrence related by one of our members: A man and his son built a telescope and this struck a "spark" of interest that contributed to the son's ultimately graduating with a Ph.D. in Astrophysics. Our program's goal is to strike other sparks of interest in Sonoma County students.

We purchase new 6-inch Newtonian Reflecting Telescopes and present them to Sonoma County students who are the winners in our Striking Sparks Telescope Contest. These are quality entry level telescopes. The optical tube is 6.5" in diameter and 46" long and mounts on an easy to use Dobsonian mount. The telescopes are financially sponsored by interested individuals or businesses. Along with the telescope, each winning student receives a one-year family membership in SCAS. Students should participate in the Robert Ferguson Observatory programs or other special events where they will receive telescope instructions and learn more about astronomy.

Contest Rules

1. Teachers or SCAS members will nominate students. (No more than 2 students per class).
2. Students who enter the contest must attend the Robert Ferguson Observatory on one or more public nights or SCAS meetings between now and February 20, 2016.
3. Nominated students write an essay, up to 150 words, that describes their interest in astronomy and how having a telescope supports that interest. Here are some questions for students to consider when writing their essay. When did you become interested in astronomy? Where would you use a telescope if you win one? Are other members of your family interested in astronomy? What did you learn or experience by attending the Robert Ferguson Observatory or a SCAS meeting? What interests you most about astronomy? What after school activities are you involved in and what are your other hobbies? What have you done to learn about astronomy? Some suggested topics are galaxies, planets, comets, constellations, moon phases, light years and meteors. The essay may be hand written or typed and must be in the student's own words. See attached Observatory and SCAS meeting schedule and location. Applications must be postmarked no later than **Saturday, February 20, 2016**. The students must deliver their essay to their teachers for mailing well in advance of February 20, 2016.
4. Teachers must complete a Nomination Form for each student and add their supporting statement. The teacher's supporting statement is considered as well as the student's essay. Entries without a teacher's supporting statement will not be judged.
5. Teachers must send the (1.) Nomination Form-Page 3, (2) the student's signed essay, (3) the teacher's supporting statement and (4) the signed Attendance Verification Form (page 5) to:

**SCAS, Striking Sparks Telescope Contest
P.O. Box 183
Santa Rosa, CA 95402-0183.**

Sonoma County students from the first through eighth grade are eligible. We judge the entries on the student's enthusiasm and interest in astronomy as well as attending one or more Robert Ferguson Observatory public nights or SCAS meetings. The winners will be notified at home on or shortly after **Saturday, February 27, 2016**. This year's telescopes will be presented to the contest winners at the **Wednesday, March 9, 2016** SCAS meeting, 7:30 pm, located at the Proctor Terrace Elementary School 1711 Bryden Lane, (near Fourth Street) Santa Rosa, CA 95404. There is additional information at the www.sonomaskies.org web page. If you have any questions, call the Striking Sparks Coordinator Larry McCune at (415) 492-1426, Email: llmccune@comcast.net or Len Nelson, Young Astronomer Advisor (707) 763-8007, Email: lennelsn@comcast.net

Robert Ferguson Observatory and SCAS Meeting

Attendance Information

The Robert Ferguson Observatory (RFO) is located in Sugarloaf Ridge State Park North of Kenwood, California. The observatory is staffed by volunteers and is dedicated to promoting education in astronomy. It is located east of Santa Rosa on Highway 12 at the end of Adobe Canyon Road. After entering the State Park parking is available to access the observatory.

The Robert Ferguson Observatory is open to the public on the following dates, weather permitting:
August 8, 2015 – Solar observing 11am to 4pm, Night observing after 9 pm.
September 19, 2015 – Solar observing 11am to 4pm, Night observing after 8pm
October 10, 2015 - Solar observing 11am to 4pm, Night observing after 8pm
November 7, 2015 - Solar observing 11am to 3pm, Night observing after 6pm
See www.rfo.org for 2016 observatory schedule and additional information

Sonoma County Astronomical Society (SCAS) Meeting Schedule

Monthly meetings are held 7:30 pm on the second Wednesday of each month at the Proctor Terrace Elementary School located at 1711 Bryden Lane (near Fourth Street), Santa Rosa, CA 95404. See www.sonomaskies.org for additional information.

The scheduled meetings are August 12, September 9, October 14, November 11, December 9, 2015 and January 13, February 10, 2016.

Attendance Verification Form (must submit with application)

Students who enter the contest must attend a Robert Ferguson Observatory public night or a SCAS meeting between now and February 10, 2016. The Attendance Verification Form is to be signed by an SCAS Board Member or Robert Ferguson Observatory Docent while attending the event. Enclose the signed Attendance Form with the Striking Sparks application.

SCAS Board Member or RFO Docent Signature

Date

SCAS Board Member or RFO Docent Signature

Date