

Frank N. Bash Visitor Center

Volunteer Telescope Operator Shift Schedule

Updated Sep 22, 2023



Volunteer telescope operators (TOs) assist with star party programs by providing visitors with views of a target in the night sky. Volunteers are responsible for instructing visitors how to use the telescope safely and providing information about the object they are viewing. Volunteers must stay with the telescope for the entire star party program (call a staff member if you need a short break).

Visitors Center staff will set up the telescope and help with aiming and focusing as needed. Staff will assign a target and provide notes about it. Our staff are also available to assist with questions. Staff will put away the telescope and other equipment at the end of the night.

30 Minutes Before Start of the Star Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrive at the Visitors Center. Check in with the Lead Telescope Operator.• Get a radio, test it, and identify staff to call for help during the program.• Put on a nametag and armband. Ensure you have a red light.• Familiarize yourself with the equipment you'll be using for the night.• Point the telescope at assigned target. Ask staff for assistance as needed.• Adjust focus. Cross check your focus with one of our staff members.• Prepare for visitors. Let staff know if there's anything you need at the telescope.
Star Party Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be at your assigned telescope ready to accept visitors. Guests may arrive at your station any time after the introduction.
During the Star Party Total time is about 2 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remain at the eyepiece for the duration of the program to assist visitors. It is important not to leave the telescope unattended.• Assist visitors in finding the eyepiece and acquiring the view. Ensure the safe operation of the telescope. Prevent visitors from grabbing, pushing, pulling, or leaning on the telescope.• Tell visitors what they are looking at and share interesting information about the target. Answer visitor questions about the target, telescopes, astronomy, etc.• Monitor the position of the telescope. Adjust as necessary to keep the target centered.• Monitor the position of the dome slit, if operating in a dome. Adjust as necessary to keep the telescope pointed at the opening.• Report any problems to one of the staff floaters.
End of Star Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitors Center staff will shut down and pack up the telescope.• Clear your telescope space of personal belongings.• Return your radio and armband to the Manager on Duty.• Accept our thanks! Drive home safely!

Notes:

- You will remain on one assigned target for the duration of the program.
- It's a good idea to know what targets are on the other telescopes. Guests will often ask where they can see a specific object or what a nearby telescope is looking at.
- Don't hesitate to call a staff member for help using the radio.
- If asked a question that you can't answer, don't worry! Just say, "I don't know," and refer them to a nearby staff member who may have the answer they need.
- Have fun!