

2009 Jack Horkheimer Service and Journalism Awards

By Carroll Iorg,
Vice President,
Astronomical League

2009 marks the 12th year for the League's Jack Horkheimer Award for Exceptional Service. This program recognizes exceptional service by League astronomers under age 19. Once again this year, Barry Beaman and Jim Fox, both former presidents of the Astronomical League, served as judges. They were joined this year by the immediate past president of the League, Robert Gent. Thanks to these outstanding people for their continuing service.

This award program is generously sponsored by Mr. Jack Horkheimer, the Star Gazer. This year, Mr. Horkheimer has greatly expanded the program to include the Horkheimer/Smith, Horkheimer/Parker, and Horkheimer/D'Auria Service Awards and the Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism Award.

Horkheimer/Smith Award

The Horkheimer/Smith Award is named in honor of **Arthur P. Smith, Jr.** Art Smith was president of the Astronomical League from 1964-66, and he inspired Mr.

Horkheimer to become active in astronomy. The Horkheimer/Smith first-place winner each year is given an all-expenses paid trip to ALCon, the League's national convention. This year's convention is being held in Long Island, New York, August 7-8, 2009. The first-place winner will receive a plaque and \$1,000 check at the conven-

tion. All finalists receive complimentary memberships in the International Dark-Sky Association.

Horkheimer/Smith Award winner—First place

The top finisher in the Horkheimer/Smith competition is Ryan Loomis from Waynesboro, Virginia. He and his family are members of the Shenandoah Valley Stargazers astronomy club. He has earned three astronomy certificates from the League since becoming a club member and is home-schooled.

Ryan further extended his involvement with astronomy when he decided to take astronomy into the local elementary schools.

He began working with his father to develop an astronomy program called "Fun with Astronomy." This has been a successful program, and is now being used in many schools in the area. Ryan and his father have presented the program to over 1600 children at many different schools. "Fun with Astronomy" has also

been extended to other groups, such as the Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, AARP and various church groups.

Ryan also serves as a junior member of the Board of Directors of the Shenandoah Valley Stargazers. He persuaded his club to buy a Dobsonian telescope and donate it to the Boys Scouts of America to replace their old telescope. The telescope is used at Camp Shenandoah Boy Scout Camp, where Ryan, an Eagle Scout, helps other scouts with their quest to earn their merit badges.

Last summer, Ryan helped organize a successful "learn to use your telescope" program for the club's open house event. This event not only helped members learn more about their telescopes during the day, but featured practical experiences using their telescopes during an observing session that night.

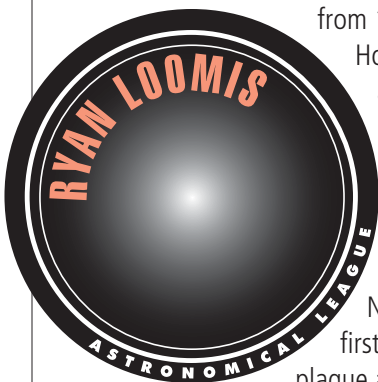
Horkheimer/Parker Award

The Horkheimer/Parker Award is named for **Don Parker.** Dr.

Parker, a retired physician from Coral Gables, Florida, has had a lifelong interest in astronomy. He is a past director of the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (A.L.P.O.) and currently serves on the board of that organization.

Horkheimer/Parker Award winner—First place

Alicia Tristan is the top finisher for the 2009 Horkheimer/Parker Award. Alicia is a home-schooled





senior and lives in Sugar Land, Texas. She is a member of the Fort Bend Astronomy Club. She actively participates in the club's public outreach program, "Astronomy on Wheels." This program provides free star parties for schools and community groups.

Alicia supports the club by serving as its secretary.

In addition, she has been an active volunteer at the Houston Museum of Natural Science/George Observatory since 2004, while working on a number of League observing programs and sharing her strong knowledge of astronomy with the public. Although most of her astronomy education is self taught, she started studying astronomy at age 6. To quote Barbara Wilson, director of the George Observatory, "Her vast repertoire of star names and their history is one of the most complete I have ever encountered." Her other interests include photography, geology, meteorology and biology.

Alicia has compiled a comprehensive list of carbon stars magnitude 8.5 to 14 visible from North America. Recently, Alicia developed two observing programs for her astronomy club: "Open Clusters" and "Carbon Stars." She is currently completing a proposal for a new Carbon Star Observing Program for consideration by the League.

She has worked in the TORRE (Texas Observatory for Remote Research and Education) research assistant fellowship program offered by Houston Community College, collaborating with a team of professors and students. This is a partnership project with Rice University, the University of Texas and McDonald Observatory.

Horkheimer/D'Auria Award

This award is named in honor of Matthew (Tippy) D'Auria. Tippy is an electronics engineer, and has degrees in Electronic Engineering Technology and Computer Integrated Manufacturing. He has been an active astronomer since 1980. He is the

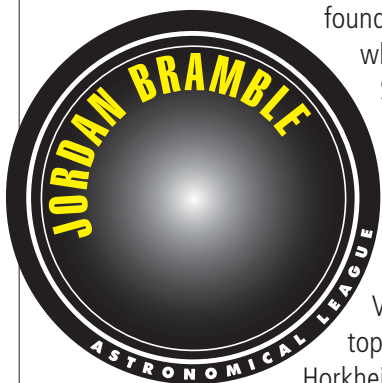
founder of the Winter Star Party, which is sponsored by the Southern Cross Astronomical Society.

Horkheimer/D'Auria Award—First place

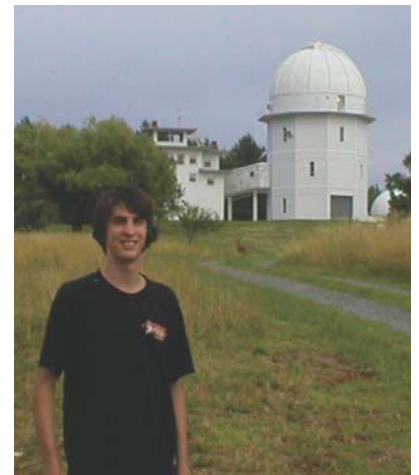
Jordan Bramble, a senior at Kempsville High School in Virginia Beach, Virginia, is the top finisher for the 2009

Horkheimer/D'Auria Award. He is also

the second- place finisher in the 2009 League's National Young Astronomer Award program.



Since joining the Back Bay Amateur Astronomers, he has become one of the club's most active members, whether being a fixture at club outreach events or energizing the club's e-group with his frequent postings. Jordan's dedication to the club's outreach was evident at last summer's "Boardwalk Astronomy" event at the Virginia Beach resort strip, where he handled the hundreds of people who passed by his telescope with enthusiasm, remarkable knowledge of astronomy, and tireless energy.



Jordan was instrumental in organizing a student astronomy club at his high school. He also volunteers at a local museum, Nauticus and infuses the nautical theme there with his astronomical interest, giving talks on the importance of Polaris to navigation.

Jordan is an active participant in the club's collaborative research efforts with the Rapid Response Robotic Telescope at the Fan Mountain Observatory near Charlottesville, Virginia. He was invited to address the first conference of this group at Norfolk State University. His presentation focused on how to attract high school-age students to astronomy and how best to employ the observatory in that effort.

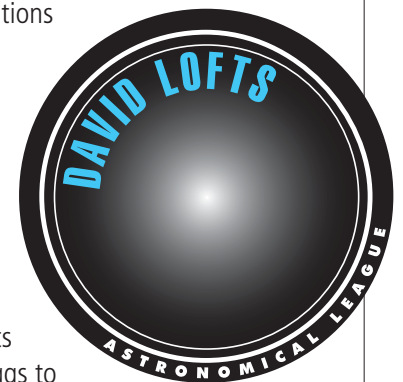
In the fall, Jordan will attend George Mason University, where he will study astronomy and physics. His goal is to seek a career in astrophysics.

Also, we would like to extend our special thanks to Celestron, Inc. for its support of the Horkheimer Service Award for the past several years.

Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism Award

The Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism Award is dedicated to **Donna and Steve O'Meara**, who have both dedicated their lives to education, science including astronomy, and journalism. Both are the authors of several publications and books.

This competition for the Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism Award is open to young writers ages 8-14. The submissions should be 300 to 500 words and are not limited to astronomy-related topics. Any science-related topic that interests the contestant — from robin's eggs to quasars, is acceptable. What we are looking for is someone who can take a factual scientific event or discovery and write an accurate story that is so exciting and informative that readers will not want to put it down, they are learning so much. Aside from





Award is David C. Lofts. He is an eighth grader at Covenant Christian Academy in Huntsville, Alabama.

accuracy, entries will be judged on three criteria: creativity, conciseness, and clarity.

The winner will receive a plaque and a \$1,000 cash prize.

Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism Award—First place

The top finisher for the 2009 Horkheimer/O'Meara Youth Journalism

Listed below is the essay that David submitted for his first-place finish.

David will receive a \$1,000 cash prize and plaque for his first-place finish.

Entries for 2010 should be sent either in writing to the O'Mearas, P. O. Box 218, Volcano, HI 96785, or via email: donna@post.harvard.edu.

Please publicize the Horkheimer award program!

There are thousands of talented young astronomers across the country who are eligible to apply for these awards. For an application or general information about next year's competition, please contact Vice President Mr. Carroll Iorg: carrolliorg@kc.rr.com; (816) 444-4878 or refer to the League's Web page: www.astroleague.org. The deadline for entries is March 31, 2010. *

Space Junk: A Growing Problem

By David Lofts

How many times have you heard your mom say, "Go clean your room"? If big heaping piles of junk clogged your room, your mom might have a fit about it and the health department might condemn the house. Because of all of the stuff we have launched into space, the sky around Earth is littered with satellites that don't work, spent rocket stages, and a wide variety of debris. This junk can range from the size of a car to tiny flecks of paint as small as a grain of sand. Maybe somebody (probably somebody's mom) will have a fit about it and find someone to clean it all up in a timely manner.

In space, a fleck of paint the size of a few grains of sand can punch a hole in a piece of glass one inch thick. The most recent collision on February 19, 2009 of an Iridium commercial satellite and an inactive Russian satellite flung thousands of particles streaming over thousands of cubic miles. A week later, the International Space Station came threateningly close to colliding with a piece of space junk. Had the debris hit the space station, it would have caused a fatal loss of air pressure. If most of this space debris is not cleaned up, the risk of satellites being hit with space junk will become increasingly higher and space travel will become more hazardous.

Some ideas for removing the space junk include spraying it with old, water-loaded rockets so that the debris will be nudged towards the earth and burn up in the atmosphere, or using the space shuttle to haul it back down. Adding thrusters to satellites to push them toward the earth near the end of their lifespan would be helpful because then nobody would have to retrieve them. Some unrealistic ideas include using low power lasers to blast space junk to smithereens, which creates smaller and more hazardous particles of space junk. Because satellites have very little iron in them, using a magnet to collect space junk is also unrealistic. Spreading large nets to trap debris probably wouldn't work because the nets would have to extend for miles to catch anything.

Perhaps we need to treat space more like a national park by taking down most of the junk that we launch up. In any case, the orbital space around the earth could use some cleaning. If you clean your room, you're mom will be happier, and if space is cleaned, everybody will be happier.