

## Nebraska BLAST! Fall 2013

### Nebraska Association of Teachers of Science (NATS) Star Party

On Friday, September 27, 2013, Nebraska science teachers from across the state attended the first annual Nebraska Association of Teachers of Science (NATS) Star Party. Approximately 85 science teachers who attended the 3-day conference at Camp Calvin Crest near Fremont, NE, participated in the Star Party. The sponsors of the event were the Strategic Air & Space Museum, the Omaha Astronomical Society, NASA Nebraska Space Grant, and the Nebraska 21st Century Community Learning Centers Nebraska BLAST! program.

Michael Sibbersen, Strategic Air and Space Museum-Science and Technology Coordinator, NASA Solar System Ambassador, and Nebraska BLAST! workshop leader organized and led the event along with Nebraska BLAST! science teachers Lowell Brown from O'Neill Public Schools and Shauna Roberson from Garden County Public Schools in Oshkosh, NE. Both Lowell and Shauna lead local NASA Summer of Innovation summer programs in their communities using telescopes to teach NASA content to students, families, and community members.



Members of the Omaha Astronomical Society, who are committed to supporting Nebraska teachers, also brought their personal telescopes and interacted with teachers about the night sky. Because of this chance to meet with representatives from the Strategic Air & Space Museum, the Omaha Astronomical Society, and Nebraska BLAST!, teachers learned how they might help bring the wonders of the night (and day!) sky into their classrooms, afterschool, and summer programs.





Astronomers from the Omaha area and Nebraska BLAST! teachers were tour guides, giving science teachers the chance to explore the night sky through a variety of telescopes.

The Star Party began at 8:00PM with a view of Venus and Saturn set below the horizon within the sun's afterglow. Dark sky observing began around 8:30PM.





Among the dozens of deep space objects viewed were the amazing Andromeda Galaxy, the incredible Hercules Globular Cluster, and the beautiful Ring Nebula.

Sibbersen, Brown, and Roberson explained to Nebraska science teachers that the telescopes are available for check out through the Strategic Air and Space Museum, the NASA Nebraska Space Grant office, and Nebraska BLAST! so teachers can host their own community star parties. Star Party hosts explained they are available to provide leadership and support for these local events.

Also in attendance at the Star Party was the Director of Science Education at the Nebraska Department of Education who is seeking ways to get better connected to the Nebraska BLAST! initiative and Nebraska BLAST! teachers. There are already plans to incorporate a star party as a regular event each year at the annual fall NATS conference at Camp Calvin Crest.



