

*A message from the chairman . . . .*

On behalf of the entire Popular Astronomy Club (PAC), welcome to the official NCRAL 2019 Convention website. We thank you for visiting our site and look forward to your joining fellow astronomers for the convention May 3 – 5, 2019 in Moline, Illinois. The convention theme *Astronomical Voyages of Discovery: Past, Present & Future* describes the breadth of topics that will be presented.

The results of the NCRAL Convention Preferences Survey were presented in the Autumn 2018 issue of *Northern Lights*. In addition to the published results, the convention planning committee read and took to heart every individual written comment that was offered. Not surprisingly in a survey, there are often comments that are diametrically opposed to others, but we did the best we could to design a convention that has appeal to everyone.

Our NCRAL Chairman Carl Wenning indicated “PAC will be varying the way we’ve always done things and are trying something new.” So, what did the planning committee come up with?

- Length: NCRAL 2019 has activities planned starting at Noon on Friday May 3<sup>rd</sup> and ending around 11 AM Sunday May 5<sup>th</sup>. We are also encouraging you to arrive Thursday evening so you can take advantage of some of the pre-convention activities arranged for Friday morning.
- The NCRAL Business Meeting moved to Saturday morning
- Presentations: (2) Seminars, (11) presentations, and (1) Panel Discussion
- Something for everyone: Presentations selected to include all four cornerstones of amateur astronomy supported by the Astronomical League: The Art of Observing, The Joy of Outreach, The Coolness of Equipment, and The Science of Astronomy.
- Field Trips: (2) Planetariums and (1) Observatory; weather permitting, daytime and nighttime observing
- Fellowship: Numerous networking opportunities and an Interclub Trivia Competition
- Family friendly destination: If you have family members that like to travel, but may not be into astronomy, there are plenty of activities for everyone. Climb on John Deere equipment, Niabi Zoo, museums, river walks and bike trail, birding, riverboat ride, watch the Interstate bridge being built.

I also suggest that you send an email to [2019NCRALInfo@gmail.com](mailto:2019NCRALInfo@gmail.com) with your name, email address, and club affiliation so you can be added to the “1<sup>st</sup> to Know” distribution list. As new information is added to this website, we’ll let you know. Although all plans are pretty solid now, I wouldn’t mind hearing suggestions for improvement; can’t make any promises, but this is your convention. If it is a no cost improvement, we’ll try to make it happen.

Finally, I encourage you to take a look at our growing list of convention sponsors and thank them by utilizing their services and products. Also if you see some of the individual sponsors at the convention, thank them in person. These generous sponsors are a big part of making the NCRAL 2019 Convention affordable.

See you in May!

Clear skies,

Mike Gacioch  
Chairman, NCRAL 2019

## Registration Information

### Locations

**Convention:** Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center  
101 18<sup>th</sup> St., Moline, IL 61265  
(309) 743-0101  
For convention hotel reservation information, [click here](#)

**Friday evening field trip:** [Augustana College \(map\)](#)

**Sunday morning field trip:** [Bettendorf High School \(map\)](#)

### Program

Click [here](#) to review the activities planned for the NCRAL 2019 Convention. Although plans are pretty solid, if it becomes necessary, presentation times, topics or presenters may change. Although most of the schedule is self-explanatory, a few activities deserve additional explanation. If you'd like to know more about presentations and speakers, [click here](#).

***Presentations:*** Eleven presentations is a pretty aggressive schedule! With a few exceptions, you will notice that presentations are scheduled in one hour time periods. The format will be 30 minute presentation, 15 minute Q&A, 15 minutes for networking while we change over presentations.

***Best Practices for Community Outreach Seminar:*** This is an invitation to all clubs to present how they interact with the public during outreach. Our goal is to encourage new ideas so all clubs can improve their outreach throughout the region. The Popular Astronomy Club will be describing their activities with their Mobile Observatory (PACMO), but we need additional clubs to participate. Depending on the responses to our request, this will either be by individual club presentations or a consolidation of information provided.

***DIY Fair:*** Amateur Astronomy is conducive to Do-it-yourself (DIY) projects. We would like everyone to bring their DIY creations and share knowledge with others. Many may not want to leave their cool stuff unattended, so the intent is to set up tables in "club clusters" so individuals can take turns watching goodies while others investigate other good ideas. Although an actual "thing" is preferred, pictures are a great substitute.

***Trivia Competition:*** Friendly competition between clubs. If you are not affiliated with a club, perhaps we'll form an "independent" team and a "students" team. The grand prize will be bragging rights!

***Panel Discussion:*** We've assembled a panel of students, teachers and the Popular Astronomy Club President to help us understand what we can do to keep our youth interested in Astronomy. After a few planned questions, attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions that help them get younger people involved in their clubs.

## Food

We will be using the Machine Shed for catering Friday Dinner, Saturday Lunch and Saturday Banquet. The Machine Shed has locations in Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin. Always a popular choice for dining!

Friday dinner, Saturday lunch and banquet are included in the Full Convention packages or will be available for those that prefer a-la-carte pricing or have an additional guest that is not registered for the convention.

Friday Dinner will be “The Chef Pampered Cocktail Party” and Cash Bar. The offering includes cold and hot hors d’oeuvres and a couple of theme stations.

Saturday Lunch will be a soup, salad and sandwich buffet that will feature two soups, two salads and two sandwich choices.

Saturday Banquet and Cash Bar will be a buffet featuring three entrees, choice of two salads, vegetable and starch.

For those staying at the Stoney Creek, breakfast is included each day.

## Pricing

Based on survey results, both a-la-carte pricing and discounted Full Convention Packages will be offered. The discounted package includes convention registration and Friday dinner, Saturday lunch and Saturday Banquet. Discounted package do not include hotel room or t-shirt. Because of generous sponsors, we’re also pleased to be able to offer discounted student pricing. For the NCRAL 2019 Convention, discounted student pricing will be available for full time high school and college students under 25 years of age. A copy of your institutions picture ID will be required to take advantage of the student discount.

- Full conference: \$140 – includes conference and 3 meals
- Full conference late (after 15 March 2019\*): \$160 – includes conference and 3 meals
- Full conference Student: \$110 – includes discounted conference and 3 meals
- A-la-carte conference: \$75 – Conference only, no meals
- A-la-carte conference student: \$35 – Discounted conference only, no meals
- A-la-carte Friday Cocktail Party: \$40 – Friday Cocktail Party Only
- A-la-carte Saturday lunch: \$22 – Saturday Lunch Only
- A-la-carte Saturday Banquet: \$40 – Saturday Banquet Only
- Convention T-shirt: Unisex size Small, Medium, Large, Extra Large – \$XX
- Convention T-shirt: Unisex size 2XL, 3XL, 4XL – \$XX

\* Note: the 15 March 2019 late registration date is set on our last day to order products going into the Welcome Bag. Anyone registering after 15 March may not receive some of the items going into the Welcome bag.

## **Lodging**

There is a block of rooms being held until March 31, 2019 at the Stoney Creek Hotel. The convention rate is \$109 per night plus applicable tax. To obtain the convention rate, use Group Code 108730.

## **Other Information**

**Worship:** The question of the ability to worship Sunday morning came up in the NCRAL Survey. The only resource identified that consolidates mass times is for the Catholic Church (masstimes.org). If you enter 61265 as the zip code, you will find numerous opportunities to attend mass outside the 9 AM to 11 AM field trip to Bettendorf High School. Within a few blocks of the high school is a church with masses at 7:30 AM and 11:00 AM. Not to leave all other denominations out, for a list of churches in the Quad Cities, see [www.quadcities.com/local/worship](http://www.quadcities.com/local/worship). To stick close to the hotel and high school, search in Moline, Bettendorf, Davenport and Rock Island.

**Family activities:** Watch this website for additional information. We are trying to get discounts for convention attendees and their families.

**Additional questions:** We'll be building a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page as questions come in. If you need something clarified or something is missing that you need to know, please email us at [2019NCRALInfo@gmail.com](mailto:2019NCRALInfo@gmail.com).

**Convention Website:** <https://ncral2019.org/>