

BAY VILLAGE

Astronomy Club essay contest winners focus on space studies, astronomy

By SAMANTHA ANN ILLIUS

Three members of Lake Erie Nature & Science Center's Astronomy Club recently won an essay contest facilitated by Planetarium Specialist Bill Reed. The topic was, "What does astronomy mean to me?" Members of all ages submitted essays that demonstrated the impact of Astronomy Club.

Winning essays were submitted by Retired Mechanical Engineer Mark Foster, 71, 10th-grade student William Marshall, 16 and Amateur Astronomer and Astrophotographer Kate Mason, 21.

This is the first essay contest the Club has held. Reed said it stemmed from a desire to, "to hear how our members view astronomy and what impact, if any, it has on their lives and perspectives."

Reed hopes the community will read these essays and gain a better understanding of Astronomy Club.

"[The Club] isn't about hard science, dark matter and physics — although we do discuss these things," Reed said. "It is about a local community with all levels of interest. From folks that just think the night sky is pretty and would like to know more, to those who really wonder and are curious about what is up there and what it is all about."

Continue reading for the winning essays. Some essays have been shortened for length.



Foster

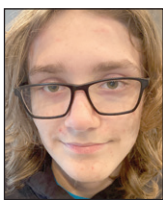
Mark Foster

I would summarize my experience as a member of Astronomy Club in one word: inspiring.

I have always been interested in astronomy and space missions ever since my dad talked to me about galaxies colliding together when I was a boy. I have been around long enough to witness the Mercury and Gemini space flights and the Apollo moon landings. I took an astronomy course in college and later bought a telescope that I hardly used.

I first attended an Astronomy Club meeting at Lake Erie Nature & Science Center in June of 2021. Bill Reed, the club commandant, had a contagious enthusiasm for the material he presented.

Since retiring in 2022 and participating in Astronomy Club and Telescope Nights at the Center, I am inspired to look through my telescope again. I observed Jupiter and its moons 150 times last year. Many nights have been cold, but I go out to observe anyway. As Bill says after his planetarium presentations: "Now that you know some astronomy, be an ambassador and tell your friends." I am inspired to do just that.

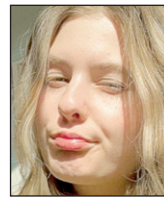


Marshall

William Marshall

What space means to me is what space means to the rest of humanity: hope. Space, and our exploration of it, represents hope for a peaceful world without borders, as seen from above. It represents hope for humanity to transcend its mental limits and understand the Universe in which we reside, from the smallest quark to the cosmic web. It represents humanity's nature to persevere and explore,

even if seemingly impossible. Space is a place for us to cooperate and grow, to learn, and to explore. As Yuri Gagarin said, "Orbiting Earth in the spaceship, I saw how beautiful our planet is. People, let us preserve and increase this beauty, not destroy it!" That is why the cosmos represent hope and the uniqueness each of us holds.



Mason

Kate Mason

I am no scientist by any means. I cannot memorize numbers or statistics. The best part about astronomy is that you do not need to be a genius to enjoy it. You can simply enjoy looking at the night sky.

With space science, there is a never-ending cycle of information coming out each day. There is always something new to learn. One of my favorite things about Astronomy Club is there is no such thing as a stupid question. The first question I asked Bill Reed was "How do Northern Lights appear?" To some, it may be common knowledge that Auroras occur when charged particles collide with gasses in the atmosphere. But I did not know that. I just thought it looked pretty. Bill responded with a presentation where I learned all about the Northern Lights and more.

We all come together with a shared love for space and to help each other better understand the mysteries of our universe. I look at our Astronomy Club and see people of all ages, including younger kids who impress me each month. I see future doctors, scientists, engineers, and even astronauts. Astronomy teaches us to question everything, to be a critical thinker, and to never stop learning.

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WESTLAKE

ODOT begins work on Columbia Road bridge over Interstate 90

By EVAN GALLAGHER

The Ohio Department of Transportation is starting work on the Columbia Road bridge going over Interstate 90.

Around 7 p.m. on March 19, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) started maintenance of the median wall at the Columbia Road bridge over I-90. This is part of the \$4.69 million bridge deck replacement project.

Isaac Hunt, public information officer for ODOT, said the project happened overnight, and lanes of traffic were shifted to one lane from 7 p.m. on March 19 to 6 a.m. today, March 20.

This project is happening due to ODOT's pavement rating system, and in 2017 it was assessed the road surface needed to be replaced. The organization does regular checkups on county and state roads throughout the year.

According to Jim Smolik, city engineer, the project is managed by ODOT District 12 alone. The city will not install any detours or do road work.

This is the start of the project, and the expected completion is July.

Contact this reporter at egallagher@westlifefews.com.

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