



# SAINT LOUIS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

**ATTN: CALENDAR, NEWSROOM, OR PSA EDITOR**

April 3, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **NEW PROGRAM MAKES SOLAR TELESCOPES AVAILABLE TO LOCAL TEACHERS**

The Saint Louis Astronomical Society, in partnership with local libraries, announces a new program that makes solar telescopes available to local pre-college teachers. Teachers can borrow a “Sunspotter” solar telescope from participating library branches for use in the classroom. An information package provided with each telescope contains directions about the operation of the instrument as well as instructions for several activities related to the Sun and solar eclipses. The telescopes were funded by a grant from the American Astronomical Society’s National Science Foundation award to promote eclipse awareness. A total solar eclipse will occur on August 21, 2017. The eclipse path sweeps through portions of Missouri and Illinois.

Twelve solar telescopes will be placed in library branches in Saint Louis City, Saint Louis County, and Jefferson County. An additional telescope will be donated by the Astronomical Society of Eastern Missouri for circulation in the Saint Charles area. Each of the thirteen instruments will be available for loan to currently active pre-collegiate teachers for a period of one week, beginning April 18, 2017. The participating libraries will be De Soto Public Library, Ferguson Municipal Public Library, Jefferson County Library, St. Charles City-County Library, St. Louis County Library, St. Louis Public Library and University City Public Library. For loan periods prior to August 21, information about the upcoming total solar eclipse will be included. The loan program is planned to be continued after the solar eclipse.

“Sunspotter” telescopes are instruments used exclusively for viewing the Sun. They employ a small refracting telescope and a set of mirrors to project an image of the Sun safely, onto a white screen within the telescope. Several persons can view the image at a time. The telescopes display solar surface features such as sunspots on any clear day. They will also show the progress of the Moon’s shadow on the Sun during the partial eclipse phases on August 21.

Funding for the Saint Louis area telescopes was provided by the Julena Steinheider Duncombe Mini-Grants Program of the American Astronomical Society Solar Eclipse Task Force, with support from the National Science Foundation. Only thirty-one proposals were funded nationwide. The Duncombe Mini-Grants are intended to inform and engage the public with the solar eclipse of August 21, 2017. The eclipse path enters the United States in Oregon, continues through several states including Missouri and Illinois, and exits the country in South Carolina before ending over the Atlantic Ocean.

This solar telescope project is the first phase in an expansion of the library telescope program to local educators. Over 130 telescopes are being circulated by participating libraries in eastern Missouri and southwestern Illinois. They are designed for night sky viewing by the general public. Library patrons may borrow a telescope for a one-week loan period. This expansion is intended to make a solar telescope available to local educators now, and night-sky telescopes available in the near future. The library telescope program for the general public will continue, offering the night-sky viewing instruments to library patrons. For more information about the solar telescope program and participating library branches, please visit the “Library Telescope” link available on [www.slasonline.org](http://www.slasonline.org). For information about the August 21 total solar eclipse, including maps of the eclipse path, safe viewing techniques, and the area’s eclipse-based programs and activities, please go to [www.stlouiseclipse2017.org](http://www.stlouiseclipse2017.org) .

The St. Louis Astronomical Society is an organization for individuals interested in astronomy and telescopes. The public is invited to attend its meetings, telescope observing sessions, and special events. For more information about St. Louis Astronomical Society events, please visit the website, [www.slasonline.org](http://www.slasonline.org) , or call 314- 962-9231.

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