

Engaging communities in statewide astronomy outreach

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Coordinator for NC Statewide Star Party &
Carolinas Solar Eclipse Party (NC portion)

Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, UNC-Chapel Hill



Origin: NC Science Festival



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The April 2022 Festival features hundreds of amazing in-person and virtual events.

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Annual NC Science Festival (now in 12th year) →
Annual NC Statewide Star Party (now in 10th year)
www.ncsciencefestival.org/starparty



Star Party event at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area
Photo credit: Joe Pedit

Biggest Statewide Star Party for the public in the universe (we think)



On the same weekend in April,
35 to 55 Star Party events
(exact # depends on year; above map from 2017)



Statewide Star Party elements

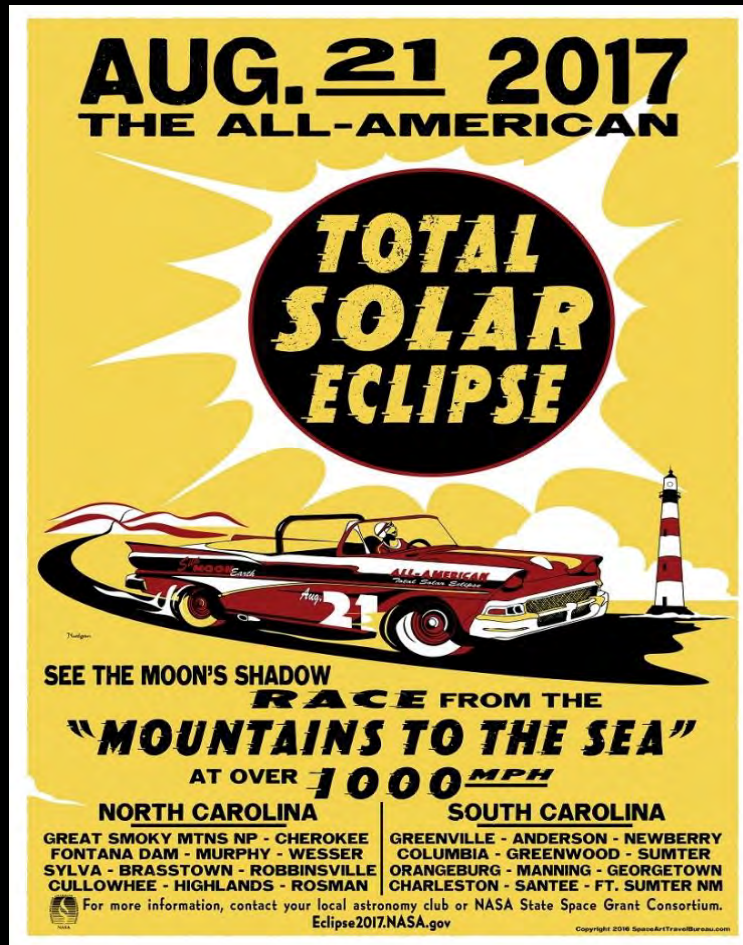
- Event hosts must apply
- Different theme each year
- Star Party kits provided
- Training
- Matchmaking with astronomers



Star Party poster designed
by
Tyler Nordgren

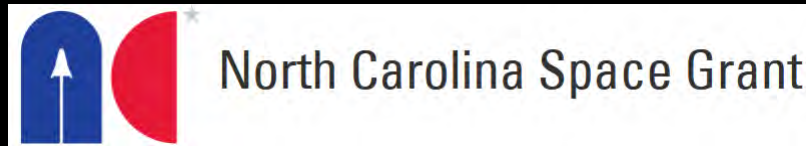


Some sites in path of totality, most not. Total attendance 90,000+



Eclipse poster designed by Tyler Nordgren

Carolinas Solar Eclipse Party: Partners



South Carolina



SPACE GRANT

+ Eclipse Party hosts & their partners

How to coordinate
successful skywatching events
that reach communities
across your state (or region)

A few tips and lessons learned . . .

1. Find good event hosts

Consider networks you already have

- NC Science Festival

Consider those who know astronomy

- Planetariums, observatories, science centers
- Universities with physics/astronomy departments
- Astronomy clubs active in public outreach

Consider those who know how to put on programs & who can reach audiences you want to serve

- Science teachers
- Environmental education centers (NC-EE listserv: >2000 subscribers!)
- State parks
- Public libraries

2. Help make matches

- New event hosts who need to partner with experienced hosts?
- Astronomy clubs that need venues?
- Hosts/venues that need astronomers?
- Groups that want to attend an event, or volunteer at one?



3. Successful events have partners



U.S. Congressman David Price demonstrates “a new frontier in constituent service.”

4. Expect to have astronomers only if you're in totality



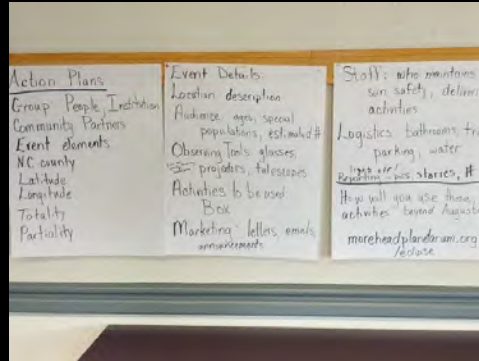
Partial only? The organization may also lose its astronomy staff.

5. Offer training to event hosts

- In-person, if possible
- Consider requiring 2+/site to participate



Leading fellow hosts in the Pocket Solar System activity



Each site prepared an event action plan



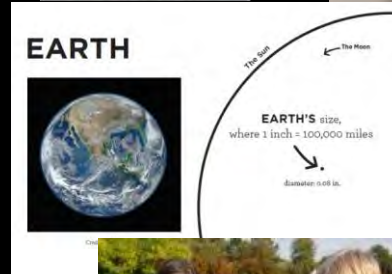
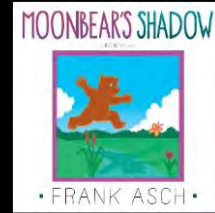
6. Offer a variety of activities (test them 1st!) (indoor and outdoor, different ages, etc.)



Carolinas Solar Eclipse Party: Kits with 13 astronomy activities



A partially packed kit
We also trained 100 educators
on “mini-kits” at workshops
and conferences



CAROLINAS SOLAR ECLIPSE PARTY

MOON PHASES AND ECLIPSES

Activity Instructions

OBJECTIVES

- Understand how Earth's motions create the day and year, what causes moon phases, and what causes solar and lunar eclipses

ACTIVITY DURATION

- 10 minutes for Earth's motions
- 10 minutes for moon phases
- 10 minutes for eclipses

(Note: Understanding Earth's motions requires a longer activity.)

PREPARATION

1. Insert a craft stick into each "moon ball" to make the balls easy to hold and observe. Recommended: Add a little household glue to help the stick stay in the moon ball.

some of the activities and materials

7. Expect lots of eclipse enthusiasm— even for partial-only events

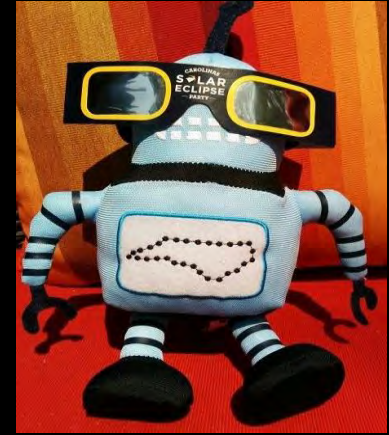


Some of the 5000 people who came to
Morehead Planetarium and Science Center (max. eclipse 93%)

Final tip:

You probably can't buy too many
eclipse glasses.

To learn more . . .
NC Statewide Star Party:
ncsciencefestival.org/starparty



NC Science Festival
spokesbot Kelvin
can't wait for
the next solar eclipse

Credit: UNC Development
Marketing