

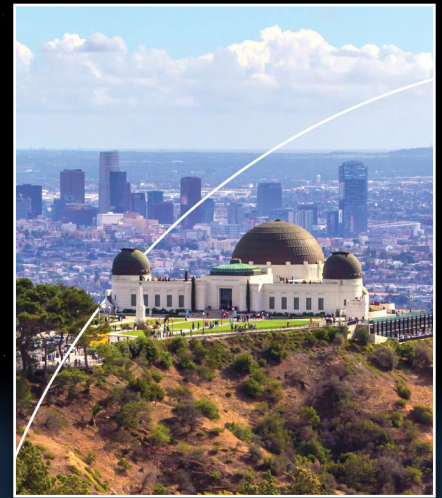
A photograph of the Griffith Observatory Tower in Los Angeles at sunset. The tower is a white, conical structure with a globe on top and four statues at its base. It stands on a wet, reflective plaza. In the background, there are dark, silhouetted hills and a vibrant rainbow arching across the sky. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of the setting sun.

GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY FOUNDATION

# 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW



# DEAR STAKEHOLDERS AND FRIENDS,



It has been an exceptional year at Griffith Observatory Foundation. We made great strides in the first full year of our current strategic plan: We forged new partnerships, expanded our base of supporters and enthusiasts, and delivered impact for our communities, students, and visitors from around the globe.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, I am most proud to report that our School Programs are back to offering a full schedule of S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) programming. It is an absolute delight to see these historic halls teeming again with the energy of hundreds of fifth-graders every day of the program.

We have also been growing our team. With the addition of four new staff members and four new board members, we have significantly increased our capacity to serve. Our new team members represent years of experience in development, cultivation, and service, and they bring with them expansive knowledge gained from their diverse professional and personal backgrounds.

And then there's you. With your generosity and commitment, the sky truly is the limit to what we can accomplish at this fine institution. In the following pages, I hope you find inspiration about ways you might deepen your engagement with us. Please be in touch if you would like to look ahead with me and make for an even more impactful 2024 and beyond.



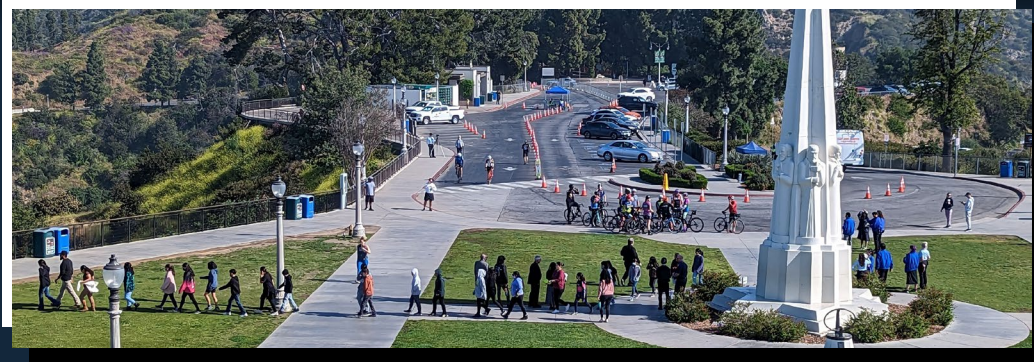
With astronomical appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Marie Bedtke".

Ann Marie Bedtke  
Executive Director  
Griffith Observatory Foundation

2023

# GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY SCHOOL PROGRAMS



The Observatory's beloved In-person School Program resumed in the Spring of 2023, after having been on hiatus due to the pandemic and subsequent staffing shortages. Now running at full force, and in tandem with the Online School Program, the combined impact of the two tracks eclipses anything we have been able to offer in the past. 2023 also saw the return of our bus scholarship program to ensure transportation is not a barrier for schools to access this free programming.

## FROM A STUDENT

My favorite part about the field trip was the planetarium. My other favorite part was when we were in the theater when the lady made a small comet. It was one of my favorite field trips that I've ever been on. I would like to see everything and go back another time to see more things. Thank you for providing this bus scholarship for this experience. I appreciate you and I will always remember.

Sincerely,

*Esmeralda*



Above: School Program students walking to their first tour stop, by Jennifer Wong. Below: Illustration of Griffith Observatory by Online School Program participant Jade.

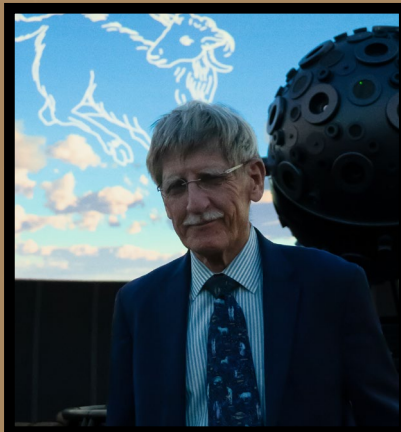
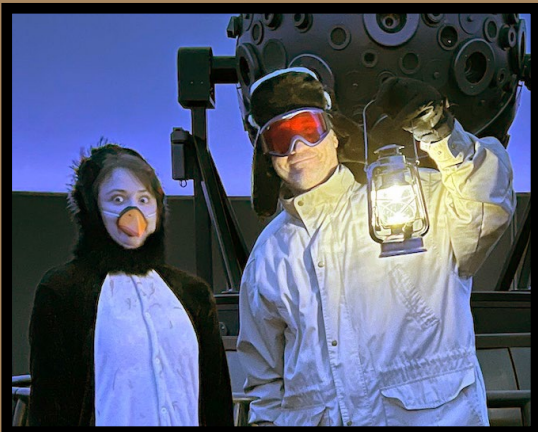


# ABOVE

2023 saw the last full calendar year of ABOVE, the Foundation's eight-part series of seasonal Night Galleries in the Samuel Oschin Planetarium. Each installment of this program featured an original presentation by Griffith Observatory Director Dr. E.C. Krupp.

The goal of this program was two-fold: Bring more people into our orbit and showcase Griffith Observatory's signature technology and storytelling. On both counts, ABOVE was a success. Every show sold out in short order with many attendees being new to Foundation programming. And the Zeiss Universarium Mark IX star projector dazzled with its fiber-optic technology and sophisticated computerization of the Sun, Moon, planets, and the most accurate, awe-inspiring star fields to be projected anywhere in the world.

The final installment of ABOVE was shown on February 26, 2024 with Night Gallery: The Stars of the Zodiac. Stay tuned for more great original programming from Griffith Observatory Foundation in the future.



Left: Foundation Communications Coordinator Ella Ritts and Museum Guide Bill Grueneberg, by Patrick So. Middle: Observatory Director Dr. E.C. Krupp, by Pixie Iwata. Right: Ella Ritts as a Zeiss Mark IV projector, by Matthew Burlando.



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

With support from Griffith Observatory Foundation, the Observatory is reaching people in more ways than ever before—from dual school programs, special programs, and broadcasts to social media, newsletters, and off-the-hill outreach.

**119,200** -plus visitors looked through the historic Zeiss telescope this year, further securing its legacy as the most-looked-through telescope in the world.

**1,517,725** people visited Griffith Observatory in 2023, which is 668,594 more visitors than 2022, propeling visitorship back to pre-pandemic levels.

The Foundation supports technology upgrades and innovation, outreach, and resources that make it possible. Our community engagement this year included partnerships with City of STEM, LA2050, Yuri's Night, LA Conservancy, Lazy Acres, Los Angeles Astronomical Society, Safe Place for Space, UCLA, the Library Foundation of Los Angeles, and others.



Left: Jessica Strand of LFLA, astronomer Dr. Aomawa Shields, Observatory Astronomical Observer Vanessa Alarcon, and Foundation Director of Development Melanie Flavin. Top right: Foundation volunteers Meighan Whittaker, John Kalish, and Karin Wong. Bottom right: Guest and Foundation Services Coordinator Allan Ault, by Pixie Iwata.

# SUSTAINING SUPPORT

Corporate and community contributions keep Griffith Observatory on the cutting edge of innovative programming, technology, and service. Griffith Observatory Foundation was able to reach for the stars this year thanks to support from many organizations including the following.

We are proud to continue our partnership with **The Boeing Company**, a dedicated supporter of Griffith Observatory's School Programs. An expert from Millennium Space Systems, A Boeing Company, was also featured on the April 2023 installment of *All Space Considered*.

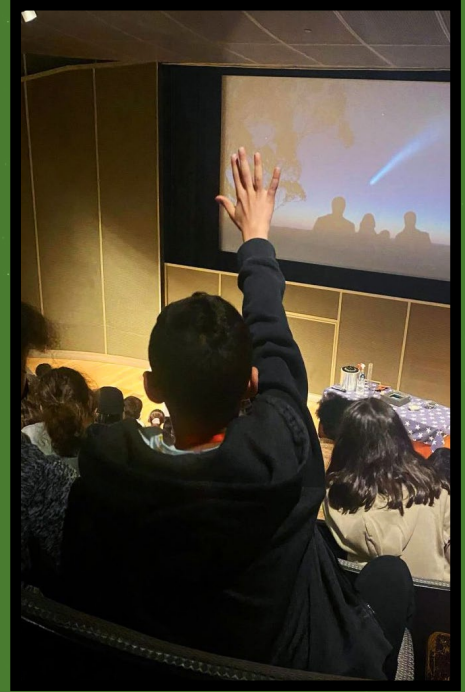
A generous gift from **The Ahmanson Foundation** supported the creation of the forthcoming Celestial Globe exhibit, a permanent installation depicting the constellations in the night sky.

We are excited to name **Lockheed Martin** among the incredible organizations supporting the Griffith Observatory Fifth-grade School Programs. Like the Foundation, Lockheed Martin is passionate about making S.T.E.A.M. education accessible to all.

A gift from **Getty Foundation** has made it possible for Griffith Observatory to create a brand-new digital film, *Pacific Standard Universe*, which will debut in fall 2024 as part of the Getty Foundation's city-wide arts and science initiative, *PST ART: Art & Science Collide*.



Thanks to a generous grant from the **W. M. Keck Foundation**, the Samuel Oschin Planetarium's stellar shows are better than ever: The grant funded a new Digistar 7 projection system that modernized the planetarium's technology and paved the way for future educational programming.



Top: Students enjoying *Clues from Comets*, a live demonstration included as part of Griffith Observatory's In-person School Program. Bottom: Griffith Observatory's Zeiss Universarium Mark IX star projector, by Jarred Donkersley.



# DONOR SPOTLIGHT

## EUGENE LA PIETRA AND THE LA PIETRA FAMILY FOUNDATION

Individual donors are mission-critical. Griffith Observatory reaches over a million visitors each year, tens of thousands more in our school programs, and countless others across our channels. Supporting Griffith Observatory Foundation has a direct and immediate impact on one of the most significant landmarks and valuable public resources in Los Angeles.

Eugene (Gene) La Pietra and the La Pietra Family Foundation made a generous contribution this year, dedicating Griffith Observatory's East Terrace, which overlooks Downtown and the majestic San Gabriel mountains. Gene's contributions in philanthropy and business in this region are substantial and span decades. He and his family attended a dedication ceremony in November and, with his grandchildren in attendance, Gene hoped to inspire the next generation of community sustainers. Thank you Gene and family for inspiring everyone who comes to the Observatory seeking a connection to the vast sky above and the great city below.

Even sweeter, there is now a bond of friendship between some of our plaques at Griffith Observatory. Gene is good friends with Morton La Kretz, whose family has dedicated plaques on the West Terrace and the Astronomers Monument at the center of the lawn.



Left: Eugene La Pietra East Terrace sponsorship plaque, by Pixie Iwata. Right: La Pietra family, by Daniel Wong.

In 2023, Griffith Observatory Foundation welcomed four new board members. Each strengthen the Board with valuable perspectives and work experience essential in steering Griffith Observatory and Griffith Observatory Foundation toward **2023-2028 Strategic Planning** goals.

# THE BOARD EXPANDS



## SHANA BARGHOUTI

Shana is Co-Chief Investment Officer at ReMY Investors & Consultants, a multi-family investment firm based in Los Angeles.

She is eager to support the Observatory's important role in providing science education to children throughout southern California and in offering an iconic place for millions of Angelenos (and visitors from around the world) to appreciate astronomy and Los Angeles' special place in the universe.



## IRFAN FURNITUREWALA

Irfan is a partner and equity portfolio manager at Capital Group, a global investment firm. Prior, Irfan was a senior

design engineer at Motorola, Inc. where he was a co-inventor of two approved patents. A longtime advocate for organizations that foster and improve access to education, Irfan hopes that he can play a part in sparking the curiosity, imagination, and love of science for future generations at Griffith Observatory.



## SAMIRA SOHAIL

Samira, Angeleno and Londoner, is a product maker and investor who blends global technology expertise with cultural understanding. Samira

leads Luxo Beta, a product and venture studio where she makes, breaks, and invests in startups across the media, creative and cultural landscapes. An advocate of S.T.E.A.M. education, a lifelong learner, and a celestial adventurer, Samira is driven by a vision of universal knowledge access, balanced thinking, and fostering creativity at Griffith Observatory.



## JORDAN STERNLIEB

Jordan, native Angeleno, is a senior partner and office leader of West Monroe, Los Angeles, a leading digital services and business consulting

firm named a *Los Angeles Business Journal's* "Best Places to Work in Los Angeles" for the past eight years. He works with local leaders in financial services, healthcare and life sciences, utility, private equity, high tech, and software. Jordan's lifelong interest in astronomy and education drew him to serve his community at Griffith Observatory Foundation.



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

In 2023, [Griffith Observatory Foundation volunteers](#) continued to make our world go round. Volunteer contributions are mission-critical at Griffith Observatory Foundation.

## Victoria DiMella, Volunteer of the Year

Voted Volunteer of the Year by her peers, Victoria DiMella is a dream volunteer—consistent and kind, a wonderful ambassador for the Foundation. For tasks large and small, Victoria delivers with the highest standard of professionalism and poise. She's a stellar team member: Generous, provides constructive feedback and insights, and her enthusiasm is contagious. We are a victorious volunteer program with Victoria in our corner!



*Why did you pursue volunteering with the Foundation?*

Volunteering with Griffith Observatory Foundation combines the pleasure of meeting new people from all over the world, sharing my interest in earth science & discovery, and contributing to the Foundation's goal of nurturing the next generation of science enthusiasts.

*What is most fulfilling about volunteering with the Foundation?*

I'm delighted to participate in events that showcase Griffith Observatory for visitors and I have made friendships that will last a lifetime. There have been many exciting and memorable moments!

*What is your favorite exhibit at Griffith Observatory?*

My personal favorite exhibit is the Zeiss telescope. Looking through its lens, I imagine what it must be like to be an astronaut traveling through time and space.

*What makes your world go round?*

In addition to travel adventures with my family, I enjoy walking on the beach and scavenging for rocks and shells. I find personal satisfaction in giving back through volunteer opportunities such as beach cleanups and Griffith Observatory Foundation events.



## Thank You, Volunteers!

Pictured: A group of stellar volunteers in the Observatory's *Gunther Depths of Space* gallery.

[Apply to become a Foundation volunteer.](#)

# THE FOUNDATION EXPANDS

In 2023, Griffith Observatory Foundation welcomed four new team members. As our universe expands and new stars are born, an existing department expanded and a new department emerged. Meet our newest staff!

## DEVELOPMENT



**MELANIE FLAVIN**  
**DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT**

Melanie joins our team with eight years of experience at Make-A-Wish Foundation, where she most recently

built a Major Gift program, managed Corporate Partnerships, and oversaw Development department operations. At Griffith Observatory Foundation, Melanie cultivates relationships to help Griffith Observatory shine.



**YOSELINE GUTIERREZ**  
**DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR**

Yoseline has made it her mission to give back to the community, volunteering at

grassroots organizations in Los Angeles County. After a few years in the legal field, Yoseline brings abundant passion and professional expertise to advance Griffith Observatory Foundation and its services.

## EVENTS & EXPERIENCES



**SHERINE ANDERSON**  
**SENIOR DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL INITIATIVES**

Sherine has over 20 years of experience developing and managing products,

global brands, and franchises across industries including entertainment, consumer products, technology, and non-profit organizations while working for industry leaders such as Disney, Mattel, Nestlé, DreamWorks, and NBCUniversal. At the Observatory, Sherine will expand our capacity for celestial experiences.



**LEX MCNAUGHTON**  
**EVENT MANAGER**

Lex has a decade of experience in production and operations for film

festivals, television shows, and national tours. She was previously the founding Director of Industry Relations for LMU's School of Film and Television. She now manages a variety of event activities for both the Foundation and the Observatory, connecting communities under the stars.



## Partners & Supporters

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 Foundation  
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 The Boeing Company  
 The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation  
 The Rose Hills Foundation  
 W. M. Keck Foundation  
 Windsong Trust



The **Ben B. and Joyce E. Eisenberg Foundation**, long-time friends of Griffith Observatory Foundation, did something extra special in support of the Foundation's 2023 End of Year Campaign. They generously matched \$100,000 making it possible for so many other donors to double their impact. We are grateful for the matching opportunity and to everyone who gave. Individual contributions exceeded the challenge and increased our collective support of public astronomy and service.

Pictured: Joyce Eisenberg-Keefer and Nicholas Thacker

## Partners & Supporters

### \$10,000 & ABOVE

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### \$5,000 & ABOVE

Shana Barghouti  
 Bristol Farms  
 California Community Foundation  
 Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation  
 Jerry and Lorraine Factor  
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 Eve Haberfeld and David Johnson  
 Kathy A. Henkel  
 Scott and Valerie Milano  
 Dana Noble  
 Lowell and Tyna Orren

### \$5,000 & ABOVE CONT...

David and Joyce Primes  
 Kevin Randolph and Oscar Arroyo  
 Robert Ronus  
 Salter Family Charitable Foundation  
 Barbara Sanborn  
 Rich and Ellyn Semler  
 Grady and Shelley Smith  
 Doug Upshaw  
 Wells Fargo Foundation

### \$1,000 & ABOVE

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 Goldhirsh Foundation  
 Anita Goswami and Tom Wilson  
 Adrienne Grant  
 Jonathan Greenberg  
 Elaine and Alan Greengard



## Partners & Supporters

\$1,000 & ABOVE CONT...

Lois Gunther  
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Christie Hefner  
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Cindy and Tom Keefer  
Kara Knack and Darryl Winseman  
Louis Kwong MD and Charles Kwong MD  
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Scott Liggett  
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Janet E. Marott  
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Carol Muchin  
Thomas Neff and Lyndon Haviland  
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Sidney Stern Memorial Trust  
Gary Stemple  
Keith and Cecilia Terasaki  
The Arthur & Patricia Price Foundation  
Mary Thorpe  
Scott Travos  
Bart Zitnitsky

## Infinity Society

Forward-thinking donors ensure their legacy through estate planning. Griffith Observatory was founded on this type of giving. Los Angeles resident and philanthropist Griffith J. Griffith knew how he wanted to make his mark: by funding a public observatory where everyone would have the opportunity to observe, ponder, and understand the sky. He left a gift in his will for the City of Los Angeles to be used for the construction of Griffith Observatory, which has remained free to the public since it opened in 1935.

Don and Nancy Farra  
Janet Hoult  
Mark L. Hummer  
Kara Knack and Darryl Winseman  
Chris Laib  
Inez Lopez  
John Miller

Charley and Shirley Mims  
Chris Pahl  
Joy and Gerry Picus  
Alaina and Aditya Rajagopal  
Grady and Shelley Smith  
Mike and Paula Verdu  
Donald Weitzman

## Vanguard Society

Vanguard Society is the premier philanthropic group at Griffith Observatory Foundation ensuring Griffith Observatory can weather any storm and sustain this iconic Los Angeles institution for generations to come.

Anonymous  
Barry and Irena Gernstein  
Libby Ghekiere  
Anita Goswami and Tom Wilson  
Lois and Richard Gunther  
Kathy Henkel  
Laura and Les Landau

Hongpyo and Julie Lee  
Scott and Valerie Milano  
Dana Noble  
Kevin Randolph and Oscar Arroyo  
Michael Salter  
Doug Upshaw

To discuss how you can make a meaningful and lasting impact,  
please contact Sarah Vanderwood, Development Manager:  
[Development@GriffithObservatoryFoundation.org](mailto:Development@GriffithObservatoryFoundation.org)



## Tributes

Making a donation to Griffith Observatory Foundation can be an occasion to honor someone stellar. Whether marking an accomplishment, a milestone, or general appreciation, tribute gifts spotlight the people who help us all shine a little brighter.

In honor of **Paula Anderson** – *from Timothy Anderson*

In honor of **Grace Jaramillo & Suzan Wood** (Mother/Daughter teachers who both taught elementary school for over 40 years) – *from Karen Anderson*

In honor of **André Bormanis!** Every time an elementary school child bends towards science instead of superstition an angel gets his wings. Hey, wait a minute...  
– *from John Billingsley*

In honor of **Jerry and Lorraine Factor** – *from Ronnie Dorsey*

In honor of **Jerry Factor's birthday!** – *from Cheryl Factor*

In honor of **Jerry Factor** – *from David and Holly Factor*

In honor of **the anniversary of Lorraine and Jerry Factor**, to provide greater opportunity for youth to experience the wonder of our universe.  
– *from Steve and Anne Factor*

In honor of **the birthday of Gerald Factor**, we wish to share his love of the universe, and the glorious view from our Griffith Observatory. – *from Steve and Anne Factor*

In honor of **Uncle Richard**. We love you Rhoda and Rachel Strother! – *from Joseph Gerth*

In honor of **Brendan Joseph Grady** – *from Sean and Sheila Grady*

In honor of **Shana Barghout!** – *from Alison Hawkins*

In honor of **David Primes** – *from Joyce Primes*

In honor of **Ethan Eller** – *from Florence Ratzsch*

In honor of **Caitie Sawyer-Smith** – *from Carla Smith*

In honor of **Richard K. Strother of Valencia, CA** – *from Ivory and Lorraine Spear*

In honor of **Ethan Eller and Joyce Eisenberg-Keefer** – *from Bart Zitnitsky*

In honor of **Robinson O'Brien-Bours** – *from Stephanie Zuniga and Miguel Salas*

To learn more about giving a gift, please contact Melanie Flavin,  
Director of Development: [MFlavin@GriffithObservatoryFoundation.org](mailto:MFlavin@GriffithObservatoryFoundation.org)

## Memorials

Supporting Griffith Observatory is a unique and meaningful way to honor the memory of a loved one. In memoriam contributions ensure that their passion for public astronomy lives on.

In memory of **Denise Liggett** – *Anonymous*

In memory of **Gerald S. Picus** – *Anonymous*

In memory of **Richard Strother** – *from Patricia Cook*

In memory of **Richard Strother** – *from Cynthia Davis*

In memory of **Rich Strother and surviving family Rhoda and Rachael Strother**  
– *from James Denicholad*

In memory of **Stewart Fliege**, a former employee of Griffith Observatory in the 1950's  
– *from Charlayne Fliege*

In memory of **Dennis Donahue**, a truly wonderful man – *from Susan Franz*

In memory of **Richard K. Strother** – *from James Hooper*

In memory of **Richard Strother** – *from Lorraine Menell*

In memory of **Richard Strother** – *from Charles Parry*

In memory of **Richard Strother**, our beloved brother in Christ – *from Lisa Phillips*

In memory of **Richard Strother** – *from Kara Rea*

In memory of beloved cousin **Kevin Ritschel**, author of *Observing with Small Telescopes*  
– *from Silvar Rys*

In memory of **Richard Strother** – *from Linda Sheets*

In memory of **Richard Strother** – *from Rhoda Strother*

In memory of **Dana Kovaric** – *from Debra Xanthos and Brad Kaytor*

In memory of **Ken Korwin**, the most awesome friend & flight instructor ever!  
– *from Victoria and Robert DiMella*

To learn more about giving a gift, please contact Melanie Flavin,  
Director of Development: [MFlavin@GriffithObservatoryFoundation.org](mailto:MFlavin@GriffithObservatoryFoundation.org)