



Ad Astra Kansas Newsletter

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AAKF offers scholarships



TWO--one grad, one undergrad

We are thrilled about our new scholarship opportunity for students attending Kansas colleges!

This scholarship is to recognize students attending Kansas colleges who are passionate about space exploration. We are eager to learn more about what students are currently doing to advance their careers and their aspirations for the future in the field of space exploration.

We believe Kansas is home to remarkable, often undiscovered talent, and we want to help nurture that potential. Please share with students who you know are interested in space exploration and will be attending a Kansas college this Fall. Questions? Contact Sarah Lamm, Scholarship Committee Head, at contact@adastra-ks.org

Application:

<https://forms.gle/2rgt2GaSQfWm75ng7>

More information on this scholarship can be found on our pinned post or on our website <https://www.adastra-ks.org/>!



The **Ad Astra Kansas Foundation** will be at the Kansas State Capitol on February 5th to raise awareness for a bill proposing the designation of April 24th as the annual "Ad Astra STEM Day."



*Show your support
by visiting us:*

Kansas Capitol Building
Wednesday February 5th
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



Official STEM Day proposed

A legislative adoption of a proposed bill designating an annual Ad Astra STEM Day each April 24 would celebrate the impact of science in our lives. It could be a way for schools, communities, industries, or individuals to cohesively mark Kansas' prowess, potential and achievements in the sciences. And hopefully, to inspire citizens, especially young ones.



AAKF newsletter available to sight-impaired

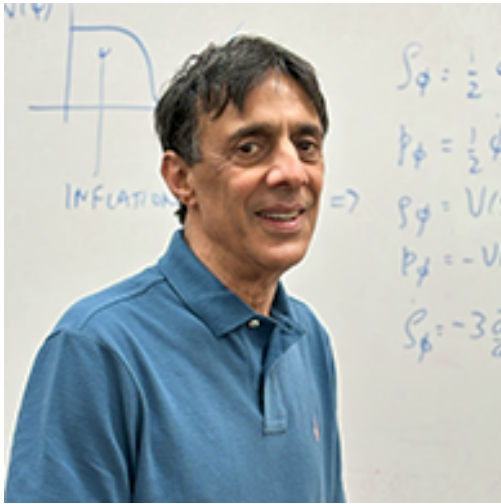
As of the Fall 2024 issue, the Ad Astra Kansas News is now available to those struggling with vision/reading difficulties through the "Kansas Local Channels" portion of the NFB-NEWSLINE (National Foundation for the Blind) service. This segment is administered through the state's Kansas Talking Books (KTB) program.

KTB is a free service available to any resident with difficulty reading or handling traditional print materials as a result of a permanent or temporary visual impairment, physical impairment or reading disability.

All materials are free, including easy-to-use equipment. Thousands of audiobooks, including fiction, nonfiction, biographies and more can be accessed through multiple formats: phones, websites, mobile apps, smart speakers. For info, applications go to <https://library.ks.gov/talking-books>

Qualifying for one program qualifies for both.

Local news and information, such as the AAKF Newsletter is available through the NFB-NEWSLINE Kansas channel's phone-based and online services. [NFB-NEWSLINE® | National Federation of the Blind](#)



APS prize honors KSU professor's research and public outreach

MANHATTAN--For 40 years Bharat Ratra has plumbed the deepest mysteries of space and shared knowledge gained with students of all ages.

For his excellence in these endeavors, the KSU distinguished professor of physics is being awarded the American Physical Society's 2025 Julius Edgar Lilienfeld Prize. This prestigious honor lauds his pioneering research in cosmology and particle astrophysics and his dedication to science education and public outreach.

He receives his Lilienfeld Prize and \$20,000 on January 30, 2025, in Washington, D.C., and will deliver an invited talk at the APS Global Physics Summit in March.

Known for his work on the quantum mechanics of inflation and dark energy dynamics, Ratra's work has appeared in 151 scholarly publications, which have



FREE QuarkNet program Q and A

FOR? All Kansas High

Schools including small rural and big urban ones. For science, especially physics, teachers and students.

WHAT IS IT?—The K-State QuarkNet program. Funded by the National Science Foundation, it is a collaboration of teachers, students and physicists involved in inquiry-based particle physics explorations.

WHEN?—Opportunities throughout the year, including summer.

WHERE?—Locations vary--.

Includes science projects in their schools with equipment on loan from Fermilab or trips to K-State to analyze real particle physics data and visit K-State labs.

HOW?—In-person and virtual workshops, masterclasses, hands-on learning projects and field trips for students and teachers

COST?—No cost to teachers.

Teacher stipends and travel reimbursements provided from the QuarkNet grant.

CONTACT?—Dr. Bharat Ratra at ratra@phys.ksu.edu

READ MORE [about QuarkNet](#) in section captioned "Outreach to all

been cited more than 21,000 times. In the last five years he has given more than 100 invited presentations at academic and public venues globally.

In 1988, Ratra, along with Jim Peebles (future 2019 Nobel winner), proposed the first dynamical dark energy model. Dark energy is thought to be the catalyst causing the expansion of the universe to speed up. The discovery that universe expansion is speeding up is one of the most significant discoveries of the last quarter of a century.

[READ MORE](#)

ages".

Quick notes

Thanks to long-time AAKF board member



Kay Neill stepped down this Fall after more than 20 years as a wonderful supporter of the AAKF mission (12 of them on the board).

In September, she stepped down because, as she said, "I've got to cut back somewhere."

We can certainly relate to that and want to heartily thank her for her commitment and friendship over these many years.

Two engineering firsts for WSU

WICHITA--For the first time, Wichita State University has entered the top 10 in the country in engineering research and development (R&D) expenditures, according to data announced in November by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Higher Education Research and Development Survey.



Wichita State is also ranked No. 1 for aerospace engineering R&D expenditures for the first time in its history.

For fiscal year 2023, total Wichita State funding sources for aerospace (\$327 million) ranks ahead of Georgia Institute of Technology, Utah State University, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Colorado.

Photo credit: WSU press release

[Read More Here](#)

NU professor attends NASA bio meeting



WICHITA---In early 2024, Tomoko Bell, Newman University assistant professor of biology, was picked by NASA to join a group of 30 professors and scientists to attend a NASA Biosignature Ideation Lab in Colorado to discuss possibilities of alien life and how to search for it.

Photo credit: Newman University News press release

[Read More Here](#)



KU engineer named as Ntl Academy of Inventors Fellow

LAWRENCE — In December, The National Academy of Inventors added Ron Barrett-Gonzalez, KU professor of aerospace engineering, to its 2024 Class of NAI Fellows. Election as an academy fellow is the highest professional distinction awarded solely to academic inventors.

Barrett-Gonzalez directs KU's Adaptive Aerostructures and Aircraft Design Laboratories, which support the design, research, development and flight testing of a

variety of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) ranging in speed from hover through hypersonic. The lab has pioneered the world's fastest micro quad-copters, known as QuadRockets, which can reach up to 130 mph.

Photo credit: KU press release

[Read more](#)

Mission of the Ad Astra Kansas Foundation

Our mission is to advance the Kansas State Motto, “Ad Astra Per Aspera” (to the stars through difficulties), by promoting space science and education in Kansas.

Vision: We envision a Kansas known in the 21st century as the Ad Astra State and as a leader in space science research, development and education. Our goal is to: Interest, Inform, Inspire.

Ad Astra Kansas Foundation

<https://www.adastra-ks.org>

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You received this email because you signed up on our website, attended one of our events, or expressed interest in our mission.

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