

2024 AAVSO Board Candidate Questionnaire

Molly Wakeling

How many years have you been a member of the AAVSO?

5.

Why do you want to serve on the AAVSO Board of Directors?

I want to take the next step in my involvement in astronomy, increasing my scope from observing to more professional involvement. I am also passionate about sharing this hobby with others, especially from the scientific side.

What are your current and past contributions to AAVSO?

Besides the 3,000+ CCD photometry observations I have submitted, I was on the Leadership Team for the AAVSO Ambassador Program. I have also done a presentation on photometry at an AAVSO online event, and I co-hosted one of the conference days for the online AAVSO conference in November 2020.

In your opinion, what are the greatest strengths of AAVSO?

The AAVSO brings an incredible opportunity for amateur and professional astronomers to work together in a way no other area of science can or does. It provides a great deal of instruction and connection for amateur astronomers, educators, and students to contribute real data to professional research.

If elected to the Board, how would you help AAVSO translate those strengths into opportunities?

I am passionate about sharing the wonder of science with as many people as possible, from science-interested members of the public to students, educators, and other astronomers. With a strong education in physics and background in research, I am in a unique position of being both a professional and amateur scientist, and one of my strengths is translating scientific concepts and methods to common understanding. Being in the military, I also have training and experience in leadership and management, particularly as an acquisitions officer.

In your opinion, what are the greatest weaknesses of AAVSO?

I think the bar of entry for people looking to contribute observations can feel high to amateur astronomers, even very experienced ones. I also think the AAVSO could be more visible, especially at events like star parties and conventions (I don't remember seeing AAVSO at the Advanced Imaging Conference, although those are no longer happening, and I'm not sure if there's a presence at NEAF/NEAIC or not), as well as on social media.

If elected to the Board, how would you help the AAVSO effectively meet those challenges?

I would be interested in working on efforts for promotion and greater visibility, both in the amateur astronomy community and in the academic/professional communities, as well as on social media.

Strategic Planning [Development of vision and mission statements]

Basic Experience

Strategic Planning [Creation of a strategic plan]

Basic Experience

Strategic Planning [Identification and ranking of priorities]

Moderate Experience

Strategic Planning [Development of plans to achieve objectives]

Advanced Experience

Please describe one of your greatest accomplishments in strategic planning.

While I don't have specific experience in strategic planning for a large nonprofit, I have done other kinds of planning in places such as Girl Scouts (having been a Girl Scout troop leader and having earned my Gold Award), and planning of tests and experiments in my research work over the last 12 years. For example, I planned and executed two weeklong tests of a laser imaging device at the Air Force Research Laboratory with both the government and three defense contractors where we collected and processed data. I managed testing aspects such as safety, data management, and equipment management, as well as the overall plan and utilization of personnel.

Governance and Oversight [Policy development]

Basic Experience

Governance and Oversight [Financial oversight]

Moderate Experience

Governance and Oversight [Resource development]

Basic Experience

Governance and Oversight [Program Evaluation]

Basic Experience

Please describe one of your greatest accomplishments in governance and oversight.

As Vice President of the Miami Valley Astronomical Society, I oversaw how we managed and spent our money, where we dedicated our outreach efforts, and how we governed the Society in general. During this time, our membership grew in size, and we continued to support our multitude of outreach efforts.

Advocacy and Public Relations [Community engagement]

Advanced Experience

Advocacy and Public Relations [Campaigns and initiatives]

Moderate Experience

Advocacy and Public Relations [Spokesperson Role]

Basic Experience

Advocacy and Public Relations [Event Promotion]

Moderate Experience

Advocacy and Public Relations [Social Media]

Advanced Experience

Advocacy and Public Relations [Storytelling]

Moderate Experience

Advocacy and Public Relations [Media Relations]

Basic Experience

Advocacy and Public Relations [Brand Ambassadorship]

Advanced Experience

Please describe one of your greatest successes in advocacy or public relations.

I co-host a weekly YouTube livestream called The Astro Imaging Channel, where we invite presenters to speak on astrophotography topics. Since I joined the show in 2018, we grew from 6,000 subscribers to the 18,000 we have now in part due to my efforts to increase our production quality and awareness of our show.

Fundraising [Managing fundraising efforts]

Moderate Experience

Fundraising [Annual fundraising campaigns]

Moderate Experience

Fundraising [Special capital campaigns]

Basic Experience

Fundraising [Soliciting sponsors for events, programs, or activities]

Basic Experience

Fundraising [Cultivating donors]

Basic Experience

Fundraising [Securing grants]

Basic Experience

Fundraising [Building partnerships]

Moderate Experience

Please describe one of your greatest fundraising accomplishments.

I have extensive involvement in the annual Girl Scout cookie fundraiser, both as a young Girl Scout in selling cookies and as an adult troop leader in managing my troop's cookie sales.