

Welcome to the 2026 Almost Heaven Star Party!

On behalf of the Northern Virginia Astronomy Club (NOVAC) and Experience Learning (EL), welcome to the AHSP 2026. We'd like to share some information with you that will help you make the most of your time here.

- You will get a badge at registration for each member of your party. Please wear it while you're on-site at AHSP. This helps fellow attendees learn and remember your name, and it makes our staff's job easier.
- You'll also find on this same AHSP Welcome page a site map and program guide. Please take a moment to look them over and print them. Program changes and announcements will be posted and communicated as needed near the deck and main yurts.
- First aid stations are available at several locations around the site. Please look around and find the one closest to your campsite/observing area. Contact a staff member right away if you need help. Additional emergency information should be read and print a copy to have with you in your vehicle.
- If you brought an FRS radio with you, we'll be making any important announcements on channel 1. If your radio has a "privacy code," turn it off so that you'll receive those announcements. If you have a question for AHSP staff, please seek us out at registration and in person versus the radio. If you're talking with others in your group, we recommend selecting another channel so we don't interfere with you and vice-versa.
- Don't forget to wear sunscreen and drink plenty of water. A little prevention now will greatly reduce the chance of trouble later. And remember that we're nearly 4,000 feet above sea level here. This helps keep the skies clear and dark, but it also means that there's less oxygen to breathe. Please take care not to over-exert yourself.
- Thunderstorms are particularly dangerous in a mountain environment. If the weather turns threatening, seek shelter in the yurts (where programs are held and meals served) or in your vehicle. Tents provide no protection from lightning.
- If you purchased a meal plan, your badge will have the letter "M" near the lower-right corner. Meal times are listed on your program guide. Please note that if you are participating in the Greenbank Observatory (GBO) tour, your lunch on Saturday will be provided at your off-site activity.
- We need (and really appreciate) your help in minimizing AHSP's environmental impact. We're particularly concerned about trash. We ask that you take trash and recyclables with you when you leave. We'll handle mealtime trash collection, but we ask that you help us out by using only what you actually need.
- We have many great door prizes this year. See the prize sheet for additional information for tickets and their use.
- AHSP is organized by NOVAC volunteer staff and run by EL. We've been fortunate to have an extraordinary team to put together this year's AHSP. If you happen to have occasion to thank some of the volunteer team (Red lanyards) who have devoted time and energy to AHSP this year, I'd be personally very grateful.
- NOVAC and AHSP are very appreciative of the help we've received from our friends and colleagues at Experience Learning, who are responsible for the land and facilities that we're enjoying—and, for many of us, the great food that we'll be eating. Please thank them too when you have a moment. In addition to event fees paid by organizations like NOVAC, Experience Learning accepts private donations of any amount. We think they make very good use of limited resources, and encourage attendees to consider supporting them. Feel free to talk to staff at Experience Learning (or an AHSP staff member) if you're interested in doing this.
- Finally—and *most importantly*—have a good time! Enjoy the beautiful site. Meet some interesting new friends who share your hobby. Observe some objects you've never seen before, or look at some old favorites in a new setting. And just ask a staff member or volunteer if you have questions; we're here to help. Thanks again for coming!

Enjoy the event!

The Almost Heaven Star Party Organizing Committee
and The Northern Virginia Astronomy Club

AHSP Emergency Information

We hope that your time at the Almost Heaven Star Party is enjoyable. It is important to remember that we're in a remote location, however; a bit of time spent on emergency preparedness is time well-spent!

First aid kits and firefighting equipment are located on the observing fields and at the registration tent. Please familiarize yourself with the location of the kit nearest your campsite. An automated external defibrillator (AED) is available at the registration tent and the main yurt. There is a radio in each first aid kit—use it to summon help from EL staff if needed. Don't be hesitant to ask for help. Time matters in an emergency, and it can take quite a while for help to arrive (or get you to help) from our location. If you require medical attention from a hospital, let us know. We can provide a driver if necessary. A list of nearby hospitals with directions from SKMC appears below.

Grant Memorial Hospital 117 Hospital Dr., (Rte 28/55) Petersburg, WV 26847. Tel: 304-257-1026. Distance 48 miles. 1 ¼ hours driving time. Small, regional hospital with 45 beds. Web page: <http://www.grantmemorial.com>. This is the closest hospital. **GPS: +38.978523, -79.1557829**

Driving Directions: At SKMC entrance, turn left onto Sawmill Road. Proceed approximately 6 miles to WV Route 28. Turn left onto Route 28 North. Go 8.6 miles. Turn left at US 33/WV 28 North. Stay on Route 28 North for 31.8 miles, until you reach Petersburg. You will see the hospital on the right side of Route 28.

Davis Medical Center 812 Gorman Ave, Elkins, WV 26241. Tel: 304-636-3300. Distance 40 miles. Driving time: 1 ½ hours. Ninety bed hospital. - Web page: <http://www.davishealthsystem.org> - **GPS: + 38.8724495, -79.8192905**

Driving Directions: At SKMC entrance, turn left onto Sawmill Road. Proceed approximately 6 miles to WV Route 28. Turn left on Route 28 North. Stay on Route 28 for 8.6 miles. Turn left at US33/WV Route 28. Go 10.9 miles. Turn left at US33/WV Route 55 West. Stay on US33 for 34.7 miles to Elkins. In Elkins, stay on US Route 33. Turn left on Harrison Ave/WV 92. The Emergency entrance will be on your left.

Santara RMH Medical Center 2010 Health Campus Dr., Harrisonburg, VA 22801. Tel: 540-689-1000. Distance: 71 miles. Driving time: 2 hours. Large medical facility with 238 beds. Web page <http://www.rmhonline.com> - **GPS: +38.405097, -78.855426.**

Driving Directions: At SKMC entrance, turn left onto Sawmill Road. Proceed approximately 6 miles to WV Route 28. Turn left onto Route 28 North. Stay on Route 28 for 8.6 miles. Turn right at US33/WV Route 28. Stay on US33 East to Harrisonburg, VA, about 51 miles. Outside Harrisonburg, turn right on Route 726/Erikson Rd immediately before Mountain View Elementary School, go approx. 5 miles. Erikson becomes Stone Spring Rd. The hospital is on the right.

Urgent Care – North Fork Primary Care Clinic. Week days only. Return to Route 28. Turn left – north. Follow Route 28 approx. 10 miles to Riverton/North Fork. Address: 16921 Mountaineer Drive (Rte 28), Riverton, WV 26814. Open 5 days a week. Physician's Assistant and Nurse Practitioner. Mon-Thurs: 8:30am-5pm. Fri: 8:30am-12:30pm. For appointments, call 304-567-2101. Clinic has no lab, x-ray, or pharmacy.

Urgent Care – Green Bank Community Care Clinic. Week days only. Return to Route 28. Turn right – Rte 28 south. Follow Route 28 approx. 27 miles to Green Bank. Address: 4498 Potomac Highland Trail (Route 28), Green Bank. WV 24944. Open: Mon -Wed: 8am – 5pm. Thurs, 8am-7pm. Fri: 8am-4:30pm. MD on staff. For appointments, call 304-456-5115. Clinic has Lab, pharmacy, no x-ray.