

2026 Frank Schenck Astrophotography Contest



Do you love starry nights? Creating stellar images of beautiful deep sky objects? Then, this contest is for you!

Eligibility: Participants must be members of the Von Braun Astronomical Society (VBAS.)

Four categories are available:

1. **Deep Sky:** this category includes objects outside our solar system such as galaxies, star clusters and nebula. Use of one-shot color cameras using multi-bandpass filters are allowed.
2. **Solar Systems Objects:** this includes Sun, Moon, Planets, Comets and Asteroids.

Filters such as IR cut may be used to enhance details in this category.

3. **Nightsapes:** Images in which the night or twilight sky forms a prominent compositional element alongside a terrestrial landscape, structure, or human subject. The sky must constitute a meaningful portion of the frame. Milky Way panoramas, star trail images, and aurora photographs with foreground are eligible.

4. **Smart Scopes:** Smart telescopes with integrated stacking engines are permitted in this category. Competitors must identify the device model and describe any additional post-processing. Where a device offers a setting that applies generative synthesis beyond live stacking, that feature should be disabled. If it cannot be disabled, entrants must disclose its use; the judges may consider this in their evaluation.

Youth: Members ages 18 and under will compete separately. Youth participants may submit an image in any of the four categories. Note: submission must be accompanied by the written consent of a parent or legal guardian to participate.

How to enter:

Adults (age 19 and over) and youth (age 18 and under) may submit in any or all four of the categories. Only one image from each competitor for each category is permitted.

Participants will email their entry form to donreed@vbas.org

Submissions will be accepted until 11:59 pm CDT on September 19. Late submissions will not be judged.

Images must be in the one of the following formats: JPEG, PNG or Tiff format not to exceed 10MB
(see back of this sheet for more information)

Along with your image, please provide the following:

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Category in which the image will be considered (Deep Sky, Solar System, Nightscape, Smart Scope)

A brief description of your equipment and software to include:

- 1. Type: refractor, reflector, etc.**
- 2. Optical tube focal length**
- 3. Camera Used: for example, ZWO ASI 2600, etc.**
- 4. Software used to process the data file(s)**
- 5. A brief description of your image, including number of subframes, exposure time, number of subframes and camera bin setting if camera was binned.**

Rules:

- 1. Data must have been collected in the previous 12 months. Data collected prior to September 19, 2025 will not be accepted.**
- 2. Only one image per category per participant is allowed**
- 3. Participants may submit in more than one category**
- 4. Participants may use borrowed or rented hardware to collect data. Data purchased from commercial or other public sources IS NOT ALLOWED.**
- 5. The use of AI generated images IS NOT ALLOWED**

Image Requirements:

Images submitted remain the property of the competitor. Competitors agree to give VBAS limited rights for the purposes of marketing and internal usage.

Images that have won in other competitions may NOT be submitted.

Images submitted may not have any embedded identifiers, watermarks, copyright notices, logos, names or contact information.

Judging:

Images will be judged by a panel of 3 judges

Judges will evaluate images on but not limited to these factors: technical difficulty, artistic and creative impact, scientific interest of the object and creativity in planning the image

All decisions of the judges are final.

Judges may, at their discretion, decline to award a prize in any category if, in their collective judgment, entries in that category do not meet the requirement of that category.

Questions: Please contact Don Reed at donreed@vbas.org