

ENVIRONMENT

Dark sky monitor placed at city park

Equipment donated to help retain starry nights

By Ken Esten Cooke

Standard-Radio Post editor

As the Hill Country region grows in population, star gazers are doing all they can to prevent light from blocking their views of the Milky Way.

Ken Kattner, a partner at Haynes and Boone Law Firm and astronomy enthusiast, on Monday donated the equipment and expertise to help monitor Fredericksburg's night sky light.

Members from the Hill Country Astronomers group also were on hand to assist with the installation at the Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Golf Course club house.

"I believe this is the first community in Texas to have a monitoring device," Kattner said. "The city will eventually host this information on a feed on its website."

For Kattner, who built his own observatory at his home in northwest Gillespie County, it marked his fourth donation of equipment to monitor light.

He also has helped install monitors at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, Lost Maples State Natural Area and the South Llano River State Park.

The equipment contains a photo lens that measures readings about every 5 minutes and sends information back to monitoring stations. One such station will be installed in the office of City of Fredericksburg executive assistant Marion Wiggins. Kattner also donated the computer for that station.

Eventually, that monitoring information will be posted on the city website.

The equipment was installed on the roof of the kitchen area at the club house.

Assisting were HCA members John Peterson, Bruce Barton, Mark Ward, Jack Peterson, Wiggins and Russell Immel, City of Fredericksburg director of information technology.



Ken Kattner, center, and Hill Country Astronomers members Bruce Barton, of Ingram, and Mark Ward, of Fredericksburg, install a sky quality measuring station on the roof of the clubhouse at Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Golf Course. — Standard-Radio Post/Ken Esten Cooke

Kattner said the next step for the city, after it has collected information for a time, will be to apply for "Dark Sky Community" status from the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA).

"This is one step in the process," Kattner said. "It's important to measure this as the Hill Country grows."

Only Dripping Springs and Horseshoe Bay have

been designated Dark-Sky Communities by the IDA.

Kattner also is working on revisions to the city lighting ordinance in hopes of more participation. The ordinance spells out voluntary steps, and some mandatory lighting procedures with new developments. It is all done to lessen lights shining into the sky or reflective light from large businesses.

ONLINE
RESOURCES

- **Putman Mountain Observatory**
www.putmanmountainobservatory.com
- **International Dark-Sky Association**
www.darksky.org