GRACIAS, and DO LOOK UP!

The CCCA wishes to express thanks to 61+ generous folks who reached toward open space protection with BIG GIVE gifts to enhance the Land Conservation Fund! For those wishing they had or who failed to reach out on that day, you can go to the CCCA website and hit DONATE! Thanks for helping!

When last have you looked skyward at night? There's much in the NIGHT SKIES you'll want to see and some you'll wish you could see! Let's chat a bit about this gift that for too many of us is diminishing. Let's thank those seeking to make a difference as well.

My early life opportunities took us as a family out on a pier into a bay along the Gulf Coast. On waning and waxing moonlit nights, the clarity of the array of celestial displays was spectacular. My first sighting of the Milky Way led to an inquiry, "what's up there?" I suspect my heart beat more rapidly as I wondered, "could those be headlights or something?!" Some of those nights' star reflections were on the calm waters as was true when the moon would be full. That clear memory stirred with a rapid heartbeat again when I first came to Comal County in the late 1950s. In those days the Night Skies were glorious at Slumber Falls Camp for youth and the ranch where we share a patch of pasture. Through the long years, the ever developing I-35 corridor and our springs and rivers village brought a fading skies with a crescendo of bright night lights. Now we drive a distance rather than into one of the pastures for clarity of night time skies.

The GOOD NEWS is that across the Hill Country and its communities as well as right here in Comal County and New Braunfels there are folks determined to mitigate the intrusive lights with special measures. Our Comal County Commissioners resolved in 2018 to take our celestial gifts to heart and pursue constructive measures. This had followed a lead from New Braunfels Utilities mid-year to pursue specific measures to enhance our night skies. Might it be time for our Mayor and Councilors to assemble a group to develop a clear policy direction toward allowing our celestial gifts to be a part of the dynamic future exploding all around us? Mr. Mayor, help us take these constructive steps linking us with many colleague communities. Let's begin the conversation! The Comal County Friends of the Night Skies Group is no doubt ready and willing. I know a bunch of youngsters that will be your cheering squad when you step forward!

Night Skies matter! They will be enhanced by the broader efforts to conserve and set aside natural space where commercial and subdividing endeavors will not take place. Kudos go to those developers providing protections for our night skies by avoiding unprotected streetlights and super bright commercial strips. Toward that end our CCCA continues a journey of outreach, education and enablement.

Check CCCA's website for a special night at 6 p.m. 13 October when a Night Skies enthusiast, Cliff Kaplan of the Hill Country Alliance will bring together a number of concerned leadership people to help us envision a future with night skies in view. We shouldn't have to travel to Big Bend or other points distant to receive some of the sparkling gifts of the night skies. These are the same and always evolving skies that have enhanced and guided mariners, planters, shepherds, poets and children on every continent.

The sense of awe I experienced many years ago on that bayside pier contributed to my calling to ordained ministry and an array of life pursuits. Over time that awesomeness regarding an expanding and ever-changing universe has been nurtured by astronomers, NASA, the Hubble images and Space Shuttlers reporting home. Yes, look up! Take note! Shout joy!