Contribution ID: **41** Type: **Oral Presentation**

O10 - Democratizing Access to the Cosmos: The Role of Local Astronomy Organizations in Promoting Science Literacy

Monday, 23 November 2026 16:30 (15 minutes)

Astronomy and space science remain among the fields that receive limited exposure in formal education, creating a need for accessible and community-driven science engagement initiatives. The Valenzuela City League of Astronomy Enthusiasts (V-CLUE) was established to address this gap by promoting astronomy and space science in Valenzuela City and the wider CAMANAVA (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, and Valenzuela) area through public lectures, astronomy workshops, telescope viewing sessions, and school-based outreach programs. Utilizing public spaces such as libraries and parks, V-CLUE has created opportunities for communities to engage with astronomy beyond traditional classroom settings.

One of the organization's major milestones was the implementation of Project TALA (Teaching Astronomy to Local Audience), the first astronomy summer school camp in Valenzuela City and the pioneering youth-focused astronomy project in the Philippines. The program catered to high school students and first-year undergraduate students aged 15–18, providing lessons and hands-on activities in astronomy and space science topics rarely encountered in formal education, including telescope operations and observational astronomy.

Despite its achievements, sustaining a volunteer-driven science organization presents challenges, including maintaining member engagement, ensuring organizational continuity, developing innovative public programs, establishing institutional partnerships, and addressing financial limitations. To overcome these barriers, V-CLUE has focused on strengthening volunteer motivation, continuously developing new activities, collaborating with government and private institutions, and seeking external support for program expansion.

Through partnerships with local libraries, youth development offices, the Philippine Space Agency, DepEd Valenzuela, and other organizations, V-CLUE demonstrates the importance of collaboration in advancing science literacy. The organization's experience highlights that grassroots astronomy initiatives can effectively promote public interest in space science while empowering volunteers and youth. Sustaining such efforts requires continuous community involvement, institutional support, and recognition of science communication as an essential component of national development.

Keywords: astronomy outreach, science communication, volunteerism, youth empowerment, community engagement, space science education

Primary author: Mr AGUILANDO, Mark Anthony (Valenzuela City League of Astronomy Enthusiasts (V--CLUE))

Presenter: Mr AGUILANDO, Mark Anthony (Valenzuela City League of Astronomy Enthusiasts (V-CLUE))

Session Classification: Contributor Session

Track Classification: Communicating Astronomy with the Public