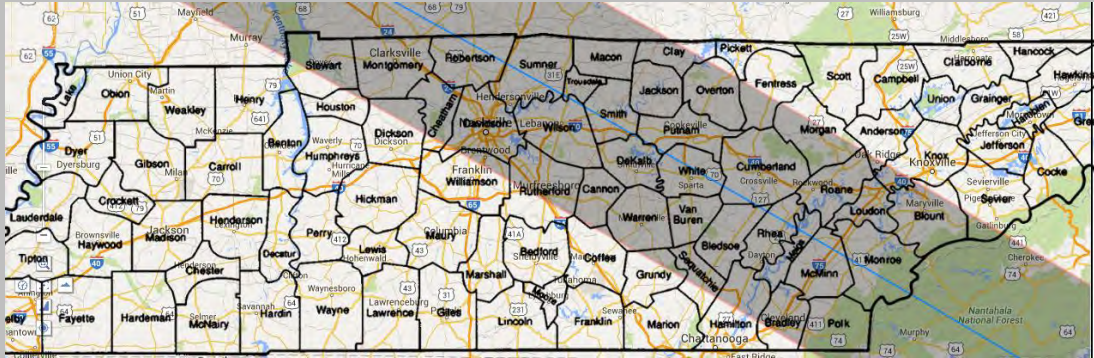




Hello!

## *Tennessee: 35 counties 16 state parks and more*



The year before the eclipse, I joined the Solar System Ambassador program and started to do outreach in Tennessee. I thought I'd be home, 2m30s, had zero intention of being anywhere in Kentucky. What happened?

## *The challenge*



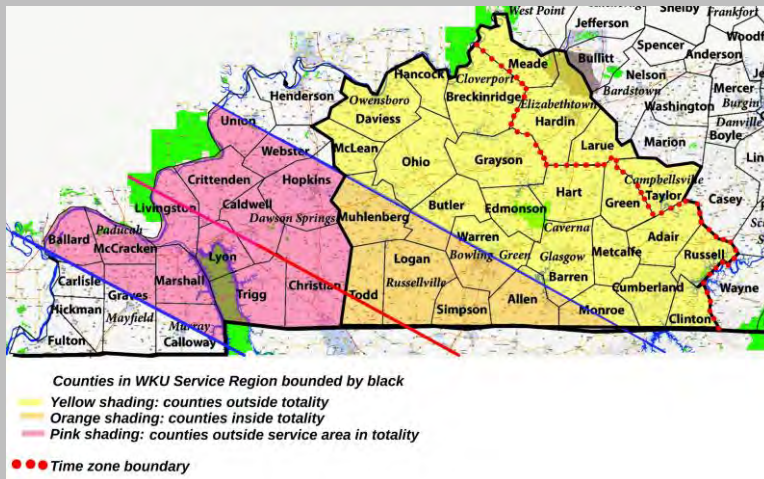
*The Western Kentucky mascot  
"Big Red"*

*No one has a clue what this is.*

Lunch with Richard Gelderman. Having just seen his first total eclipse, he knew firsthand the huge difference between a partial and a total eclipse. Some 80,000 students lived in the partial eclipse within a 90 minute drive of Bowling Green. What if we invited them? The stadium could hold 20,000 students. That was crazy.... That's 600 school buses. Weirdly it seems ok to have thousands of cars show up for a football game, but not hundreds of buses.

Having sent 4 kids through Nashville public schools, I also had some pretty good ideas of what the obstacles and issues might be. But, nothing ventured....and so much to gain. I jumped in.

## School districts vs. the eclipse path



. And so we began to pitch this to schools. That totality was a huge difference worth the admittedly tough traffic ride. Bring everyone, we'll have a great program. Most of our counties are rural and not particularly wealthy. For these kids, once in a lifetime opportunity.

We also visited schools in totality. Kentucky state universities have a defined "service area" where they are to serve K-12 students. WKU's area included 26 counties from Tennessee to the Ohio River. \*Some\* lucky counties were all or partially in the path of totality; for those districts, we hoped to have them make it a day of multidisciplinary instruction culminating with the eclipse.

## *The winter campaign, February 2017*



This is the “War Map” that hung in my office. Each blue post it note is a county we visited. In person. For at least an hour. The small green notes noted counties that planned to be in session, magentas were out. Encouraged all to take advantage of Kentucky’s policy of allowing parents to take students out of school for educational opportunities. Tennessee lacks this. But we strongly encouraged the schools to be both IN session and OUTdoors viewing the eclipse. Many parents cannot get out of work. In Nashville thousands of kids were home alone, not an optimal educational experience. To help, we promised to at a minimum provide solar viewers for every school in session. We did a lot of driving.

## *The Empire strikes back*



From Owensboro: “The Kentucky State Transportation Cabinet did a thorough job of scaring people off the roadway. As a result, our administrators were afraid to let the students come for fear they would be stuck in Bowling Green or somewhere on the highway.”

On the other hand, in Simpson County they planned: kids had a snack and water to take on the bus in case they got stuck.

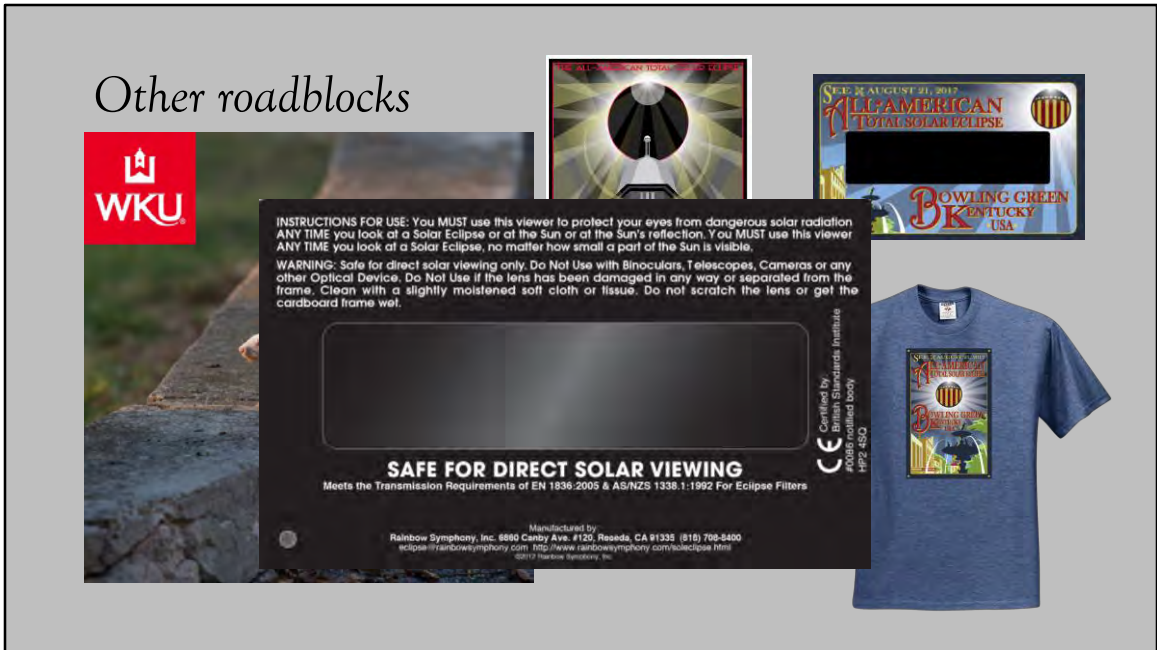
Lawyers. “Our primary concern is student safety.” It should be education.

Otherwise no school ought to have a football team.

GRREC. Regional coops are how the state distributes resources, they do teacher pd and host superintendent meetings. Superintendents sometimes reinforced each other in erroneous views, didn’t talk to us. We got 5 min.utes to pitch at November meeting



## Other roadblocks



If you are doing outreach, let others sell merchandise. Took a lot of our time, even though we had cool stuff. We finally had a deal with a local tshirt shop that sold shirts and glasses. If you have a shop at your institution, convince them to sell glasses at a minimum.

## *The summer campaign, July – August 2017*



Defections from the ranks. Remember the war map? In mid July Warren County (the county Bowling Green is in) made the decision to close. This was a shock wave through the school superintendent world. Warren County is the big boy in the local room. If you bet against their judgement and were wrong, you'd be in trouble. In the weeks after this, many right in the week prior to the eclipse, districts began to close. The war map actually had a hard time keeping up. The jagged black line by the way is the time zone line. We were not going to see folks crossing a time zone to come to the eclipse, schools told us that getting home late gets them in trouble with parents.



*Mid August: the shadow approaches*



8000 → 500 → 2000

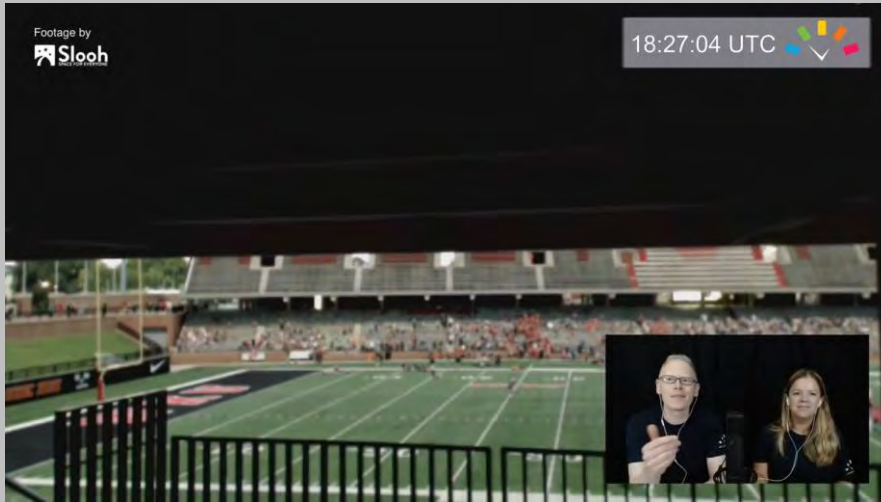


Help I got glasses on Amazon



The panic level ratcheted up. And the squirrels multiplied. We had soooo many phone calls from people desperate for speakers/telescopes/solar filters.....it got crazy. We had trouble focusing on the outreach effort with the phones constantly ringing. But finally, thankfully, the shadow overtook us on what was a bright sunny August day:

*“One of the highlights was the screams of schoolchildren when darkness fell upon Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green.”*



Clips courtesy of Time and Date. I am on the extreme left on the bit up and behind the goalposts. Sorry about the camera work, students. I was shooting handheld borrowed camera and trying not to look when I shouldn't.

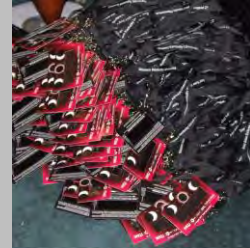
## End of the current campaign

### Local schools using eclipse as real-time learning tool

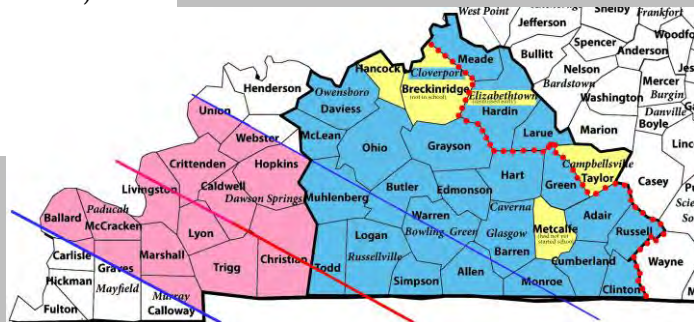
By Bobbie Hayse Messenger-Inquirer



120,000 to schools:

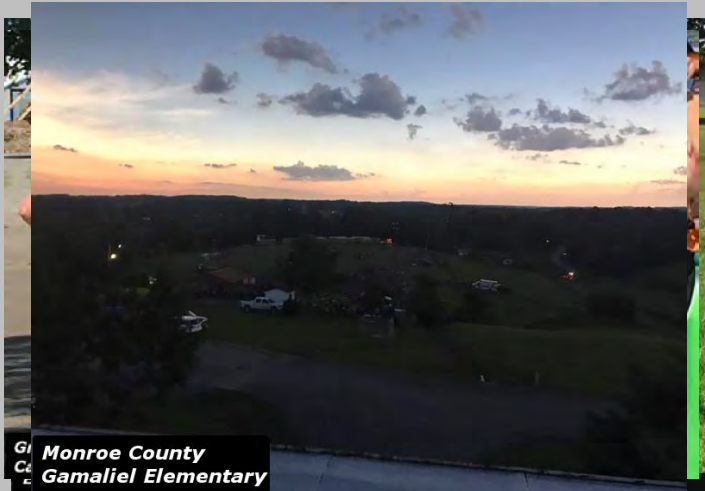


20,000 "Science in your lap" kits



We were able to impact a LOT of students. Through generous sponsorship from the Confucius Institute, we provided solar viewers to over 120,000 school students, teachers and staff. Other sponsors, sales of shirts and Bowling Green viewers payed for lanyards. We distributed another 80,000 Bowling Green viewers at cost or slightly above to private schools and event venues even down into Tennessee. And we stuffed 20,000 "Science in your lap bags" with small activities for schools to do. To do more, we needed clones, I was only  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, to visit schools more frequently to present to teachers and PTA groups to provide support from the ground up as well as the top down. You cannot overestimate how poor communication is between the district officials and the schools and teachers. We were also hampered by the lack of awareness and the subsequent unwillingness to discuss the eclipse until the panic stage. This event changed that, and I do believe that an earlier start will be possible in 2024.

## *After action reports*



Awww...they are all cute. We had wonderful reports from the districts who used the day in a positive way. So while we didn't get the number to come that we'd hoped, we had a huge impact on the way schools used the eclipse. Gamaliel was the only school in Monroe County in totality, the whole county went there that day. Allen county hosted state education officials, had a nice writeup in their magazine, I hope this convinces the state to be more proactive the next time around (as far as I know they did nothing for 2017). All of these districts had great days, but I want to contrast that to what happened at my house. Metro Nashville was out...but the party I wasn't at was in our cul-de-sac, At totality, some middle school kids down the block ran out of their house shouting that it was night outside and ran back in. My husband says it wasn't clear that they had looked at the eclipse at all. These kids were home alone. For schools to turn kids loose is an educational abdication. That's why we encouraged schools to stay open.

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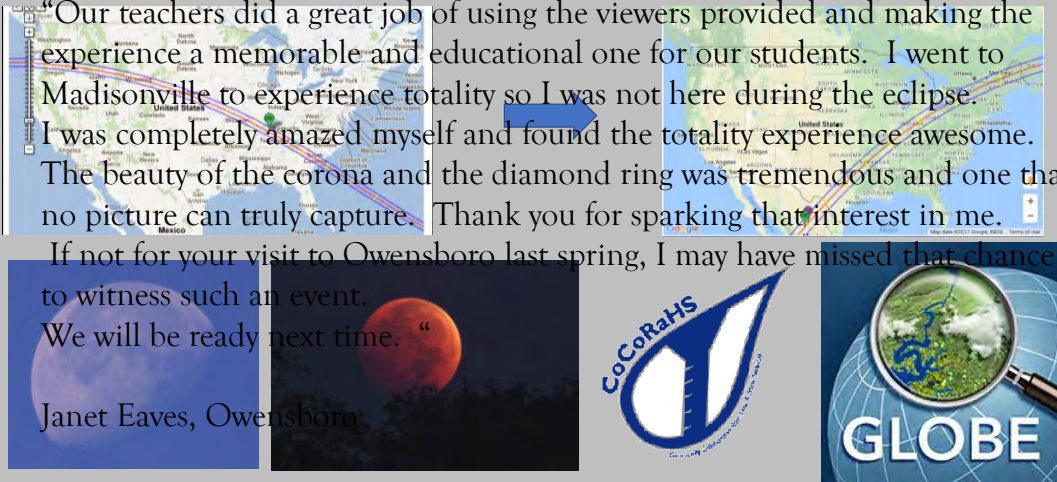
## *The Sun and Moon, not just for eclipses:*

“Our teachers did a great job of using the viewers provided and making the experience a memorable and educational one for our students. I went to Madisonville to experience totality so I was not here during the eclipse. I was completely amazed myself and found the totality experience awesome. The beauty of the corona and the diamond ring was tremendous and one that no picture can truly capture. Thank you for sparking that interest in me.

If not for your visit to Owensboro last spring, I may have missed that chance to witness such an event.

We will be ready next time. “

Janet Eaves, Owensboro



The next eclipse just slices Kentucky. People are asking about 2024, after telling me with some amazement, “this eclipse happened just like you said it would.” There are opportunities to do more solar observing and make teachers more comfortable about doing it.. Lunar observing can happen in the daytime. Lunar eclipse viewing. Real citizen science that takes kids outdoors to explore the natural world. I’ll leave you with a quote from the Owensboro director of curriculum:  
Thank you!