Background

- Derrick Pits, Chief Astronomer and Director of the Fels Planetarium at The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, has widely shared how he created his own group eclipse-viewing option during the 2017 TSE.
- By modifying canopies using silver, black polymer solar filter material, he was able to increase accessibility for viewing the partial phases of the eclipse safely.
- Derrick has widely shared his ideas and images, encouraging everyone to create their own solar viewing canopy.

Project Goals

- Trial a number of eclipse canopy prototypes during the October 2023 Annular Solar Eclipse;
- Collect user feedback to improve design and assembly;
- Document the build process;
- Disseminate information across eclipse planning networks;
- If supported, develop a solar-viewing canopy blueprint.

Progress so far

- Initial prototype developed using guidance from previous builds, and Rainbow Symphony;
- Sharing of prototype and build process at this AAS Eclipse Planning Workshop in San Antonio to further guide the process;
- Willing team in Uvalde County awaiting guidance to build 12 canopies in total; documenting the build process;
- Solar Viewing Tents will be used across three major viewing locations in the Solar Eclipse Village in Garner State Park; House Pastures event in Concan; and the private Uvalde School district eclipse event with Sul Ross University;
- Feedback will be obtained from a range of audiences at all sites.

The Problem

Not everyone has the knowledge, skills, experience, practical know-how, and solution-focused attitude of this award-winning Chief Astronomer.

Existing Barriers

- Lack of confidence and skills to modify canopies;
- Lack of experience in safe solar viewing;
- Lack of time to explore, given the two solar eclipse opportunities in quick succession;
- Fear of damaging and compromising the fragile material;
- Limited budgets to test ideas, given the cost of materials.

Information we aim to share

- What canopy options are available, and which ones work best with different groups of people;
- Where to order materials and in what quantity;
- Different methods of assembling the canopy; and what works best for each method; and
- Pricing of materials to include basic and deluxe options.

Acknowledgements

- Derrick Pits for guidance and encouragement;
- Rainbow Symphony for guidance and material;
- Asterion Foundation for providing seed funding to procure materials;
- Volunteers involved in initial prototype development;
- Uvalde County for hosting events and additional volunteers as needed.