The American Association of Variable Star Observers

The fourteenth **AAVSO William Tyler Olcott Distinguished Service Award** is presented to

Mario E. Motta

> "for his tireless work at the local through national level to protect our precious night skies from the ravages of light pollution, thereby guaranteeing the future of variable star observing; his decades of service to amateur telescope making, public outreach, and education through his work with the Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston, the Springfield Telescope Makers, the International Dark-Sky Association, and the AAVSO; and his leadership within the AAVSO."

It is an honor and privilege to present the Olcott Award to our colleague and friend, Dr. Mario Motta. As a practicing cardiologist, Mario is dedicated to fixing, and preventing future damage to, the hearts of the citizens of the Greater Boston Area. But equally important to Mario is fixing, and preventing future damage to, our night skies. Through his tireless work on the adoption of local lighting ordinances and best practices in his Gloucester community, his home state of Massachusetts, and the nation at large, as well as his service to the New England Light Pollution Advisory Group (NELPAG) and the International Dark-sky Association (IDA), Mario has made a significant contribution to variable star observing by protecting our most important resource, our night skies. It is fitting that the Northeast Region of the Astronomical League (which presented Mario with their highest honor, the Walter Scott Houston Award) refers to him as a "light pollution warrior." In a masterful synergy between his vocation and avocation, Mario's has been an indefatigable voice bringing the health effects of light pollution to the forefront of scientific discussions at the august American Medical Association (AMA). The unanimous passage of AMA Resolution 516 in 2009, which supports efforts to control light pollution, and the acceptance of the 2016 Report of the AMA Council on Science and Public Health that sounded the alarm on the harmful human and environmental effects of LED lighting are both largely due to Mario's tireless efforts.

But Mario's contributions to variable star astronomy go well beyond preserving our night skies. Mario is also dedicated to introducing new generations to the rewards of amateur astronomy. Through his work with the Amateur Telescope Makers of Boston (ATMoB), the Springfield Telescope Makers, and the AAVSO, as well as countless hours as an individual, Mario has shared the joys of observing and astrophotography with myriad community and school groups, members of the media, and budding backyard observers of all ages. In recognition of this work, he was the very deserving recipient in 2003 of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific's Las Cumbres Amateur Outreach Award.

While Mario has served the AAVSO in more traditional ways, for example as a council member from 1996-2000 and President from 2011-2013, it is his quiet, unassuming work behind the scenes that is perhaps less widely known but no less important. He was recruited into the AAVSO by Janet Mattei in 1985, not long after completing his medical residency, and was always one of Janet's go-to people. He was a driving force behind the AAVSO's "Partnership in Astronomy" program in the early 1990's that brought variable star astronomy into Boston area schools, and built 6-inch telescopes (including grinding the mirrors) with fifth grade students, a task only slightly less difficult but arguably as significant as the construction of his 32-inch telescope and observatory (complete with built-in house).

Mario Motta has an infectious enthusiasm for observing the night sky, an unequaled passion for preserving its natural beauty, and an unequaled dedication for sharing his experiences with others in the hopes that they, too, will come to love the stars as much as he does. It is thus fitting that we honor him this evening and present him with the AAVSO William Tyler Olcott Distinguished Service Award.

Dr. Kristine M. Larsen	Dr. Stella Kafka
President	Director

Presented at the AAVSO 106th Annual Meeting, Nashville, Tennessee, November 4, 2017