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By now, you have probably heard of NCSE's Science Booster Clubs (SBCs), our grassroots effort to bring climate change and evolution activities to public spaces. This past year, NCSE has launched our national expansion of the clubs and we currently have clubs in ten states. As the SBC operations manager, I serve

as the liaison between NCSE and our clubs leaders. I feel very lucky to have so many wonderful people volunteering with us, including Robert Marken Jr. (the bearded gentleman on the left of the photograph).

I always enjoy my phone calls with Marken, who started his club in Orange, Virginia. He is warm and friendly whenever we chat, and happy to take the time to talk even though I know he is incredibly busy as a father of five and fulltime employee of an education company. Despite all these commitments vying for his time and energy, he is one of our most dedicated and active volunteers. I had a chance recently to catch up with Marken and wanted to share some of what I have learned about him, his background, and experiences as an SBC leader.

When he was growing up in western Pennsylvania, Marken says, his parents weren't real "science nerds," but he found a love for science as a kid the way so many children of the '70s and '80s did: by watching *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. He took many science classes in school, and even though he didn't pursue a career in science, he has always been really interested in it, and recent events compelled him to volunteer with us. "The 2016 election made me really want to be an advocate for science," he said. "Being involved with the booster club seemed like a great way for me to do that."

Over the past year and a half, Marken has organized and volunteered at events all around Orange, including at libraries, street festivals, and other outdoor events. He noted that even though he lives in a pretty religious community, the response has been really positive. "I would say that when I exhibit, almost 90% of people come up and ask me some questions." He also notes that even when people seem a little bit skeptical about evolution, they have been very polite and ask him questions about the things they are unsure about.

During the development phases of the Science Booster Club program, NCSE staff wondered how clubs would be greeted and perceived in regions where people are more religious. Marken's club has demonstrated that even in more religious, conservative communities, people are excited to have science included in local events. He told me the story about how an upcoming children's festival is being organized by a person who is very involved with the local church. The organizer, who has seen the Science Booster Club's climate change activities at other events, has reached out to Marken multiple times to ensure that he will be an exhibitor. This kind of collaboration demonstrates that when we work together, in respectful ways, with people in our local communities, we can begin to break down the walls of communication that often exist around topics of climate change and evolution.

When asked about what advice he would give to someone interested in getting involved with the Science Booster Club program, Marken replied, "Go out there and do it! NCSE has done a really great job creating activities and resources for club leaders. You don't need to be a professional scientist to get involved." He then noted that the activities are well designed to catch peoples' interest without being intimidating, noting "It's like we dangle the bait on the hook, but we are careful not to flood the water with worms. I think this really helps people who have found science to be overwhelming or nerve-inducing in other situations."

When he isn't working or volunteering with the Science Booster Club, Marken can be found coaching a myriad of kids' teams, playing video game, reading, and working on his own science fantasy novel. We are so grateful to volunteers like him. Without them, the Science Booster Club program wouldn't have come close to reaching the ~200,000 people it has reached in the last three years. It can be hard to measure the true impact that our clubs have had on local communities, but judging by the stories we hear from our leaders around the country, the difference we have made to individuals has been

profound. I feel so honored to be a part of this program, and to be able to work with people like Robert Marken.

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