

# GUEST SPOTLIGHT



## IT TAKES A COMMUNITY:

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH STUDENTS ENGAGE  
COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN NIGHT SKY  
ADVOCACY IN HELPER, UT

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### INTRODUCTION

As part of the second core course of the University of Utah's Dark Sky Studies minor, 16 students with diverse backgrounds joined Mayor Lenise Peterman for a weekend in Helper, Utah.

Mayor Peterman reached out to the University of Utah to build a partnership and work together to conserve the town's rural night sky. Through this valuable partnership, Helper will receive important resources, knowledge, and technology while students will gain first hand night sky conservation experience, learn about public policy and ordinances, and engage closely with community members.



*“Helper has amazing night skies that need to be preserved. When I stepped out of the car by the cemetery I almost started to cry a little because I have never seen so many beautiful stars.”*

*- Laurin Hoadley*



## A STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE

We started our trip to Helper in the afternoon of Friday February 21st. Once we arrived, we were warmly welcomed by Mayor Lenise Peterman followed by a fun and relaxing group dinner. Afterwards, it was time for us to start working. That night was perfectly clear and still, the ideal conditions to send out a drone that was developed specifically to aid our field work by a group of students from the U's engineering department. The great thing about this drone is that it takes Sky Quality Meter (SQM) measurements, geographic coordinates, and illuminance measurements (light hitting a surface) of the ground and buildings right below. This sort of data collection in a three dimensional way has never been done before but will hopefully be available to Utah communities in the future to help them collect and evaluate lighting data.

With the data collected throughout the weekend, we were able to make the conclusion that Helper has great night skies for a rural but inhabited area. SQM values vary slightly by location, but overall, all values fall within the "Rural/Suburban" category on the Bortle Scale with an average SQM value of 20.67.

Throughout the weekend we took different kinds of measurements and evaluations at various locations in town but also participated in another major part of our field trip: serving as community liaisons to the residents of Helper. We took part in an informative presentation where we explained to residents the importance of conserving our precious night skies and what preservative measures could look like.

Landscape scale night sky conservation is not something that is done solely by an individual or a local government body; it takes a whole community and Helper's example is the right way to accomplish this extraordinary task!

*Helper became Utah's second International Dark Sky Community, after the town of Torrey, on April 1, 2020.*



### Learn more about Helper:

[CPDSC blog June 9, 2017 \*Helper as Heart of Darkness? Could be a good idea\*](#)

[IDA \*Helper, Utah Certified as International Dark Sky Community\*](#)

[Forbes \*When We're Allowed To Travel Again, Here's How To Visit The World's Newest Dark Sky Community\*](#)