Normally at an in person con the Rocketmail newsletter has lots of program updates particularly on Friday due to people missing travel connections and related logistical difficulties. However, with a virtual con travel logistics is less of a problem and the schedule at https://www.balticon.org/wp55/program-schedule/ is kept updated to the minute making program updates in the Rocketmail less critical. So check the link listed above…

**Science Program Updates**

Professor **Diana Roman** of the Carnegie Institute for Science was originally scheduled to present on Saturday 11:30 AM in the Science Track. She has agreed to reschedule and start her Science Track presentation at 2:30 PM Friday, so she can accept a last-minute invitation received on Monday May 24th to join a team that will be working in Iceland on the ongoing Geldingadalir eruption. She will be leaving immediately after her Balticon presentation for Reykjavik and will be in the field starting Saturday morning! We anticipate a report on Dr. Roman's new research will be given at Balticon 56 in 2022.

Science Program Presenter **Dr. Gary J. Eden** (scheduled for 7-8 PM, Friday 5/28/21) has just been inducted into the Innovation Hall of Fame (IHOF) for his trendsetting work with optics, lasers and micro-plasma devices. More info visit go.umd.edu/IHOF20. Congratulations!

The Baltimore Science Fiction Society is proud to congratulate Micaiah Johnson as the winner of the 2021 Compton Crook Award for the novel “The Space Between Worlds” published in August 2020 by Del Rey.

**Robert A. Heinlein Award**

**Balticon News**

BSFS is particularly overjoyed to congratulate science fiction and fantasy author **C J Cherryh** for winning the 2021 Robert A. Heinlein Award. The award is bestowed for outstanding published works in science fiction and technical writings that inspire the human exploration of space. C J Cherryh will be participating in Virtual Balticon 55. She had previously participated in Balticons 17, 19 and 23 and now adds 55. The Award Committee in this instance recognized C J’s body of work, with emphasis on her detailed social science and commercial relationship based stories set in the space station rich Alliance–Union universe.

**BSFS Poetry Contest Winners**

Congratulations to our 2021 Poetry contest the winners:

1st "It is a Father's Tale" by Eric Nicholson
2nd "Memories of a Mermaid" by Natascha Graham
3rd "Cygnus" by Ryan E. Holman

Honorable Mention "Milicent Patrick Speaks of Monsters" by Laura Shovan

Honorable Mention "The Catty Hours" by Adele Gardner

Read their poetry online at http://www.bsfs.org/images/poetry/2021-win.pdf

At press time still waiting on a pdf of winners to be delivered to be posted to that location...soon will be there.

**Virtual Con-Suite News**

It was really hard squeezing food and beverages through the monitor to folks last year, so this year the Con-Suite will serve up refreshing program items like book launches and author readings instead. At Balticon we have for years had program items in our con-suite along with snacks and...
beverages for our members, so this is a natural extension into
the virtual world. Many of the folks who work on the in-person
con-suite are making the virtual one work this year so stop on
by and see some of your old friends.

Maryland State Arts Council
Bestows Grant on BSFS

The pandemic has damaged many art and cultural institutions
in the fair state of Maryland and so the Maryland Legislature
created an emergency grant program to assist them. BSFS
Treasurer Maria Thompson decided to apply for funds to
make up for some of the damage done to BSFS by the
pandemic and after reviewing our tale of woe we were
chosen for “up to a $5,000.00 grant” which we have been
verbally told will actually be $5,000.00 in the end. So, you
will be seeing the Maryland State Arts Council logo and
thank you text of “Balticon is supported in part by the
Maryland State Arts Council” around in a bunch of places for
a while. The fact that they accepted a fan run SF Convention
into the grant program is really a testament to Maria
Thompson’s report writing and accounting and skills (with
help from Allison Brown’s grant writing skills) and a
watershed in the mainstream culture. When I first started in
fandom a SF Con would not stand a chance in Hades of
convincing a government committee to give them a grant no
matter what was happening in the World. How the times have
changed.

Balticon 55

gather.

Balticon 55 is using an online platform known as Gather this
year in which the Baltimore Renaissance Harborsplace Hotel
(which we have recently use for the in-person Balticons) has
been rendered in cyberspace and for free anyone can launch
an avatar and wander around sort of like at an in-person
Balticon. (Thank you to Martin Siemen for programming this
hotel layout into Gather.) You can wander into the dealers
room and see stuff for sale or into the art show and view
items or into the con-suite for a quick meeting with friends. It
is so easy to use that in 5 minutes you are moving along…
you do want a computer with camera, microphone and
speakers because when you get near people/avatars you can
open up a window to them and talk through video chat. If
you are familiar with the 5th and 6th floors of the Baltimore
Renaissance Harborsplace Hotel and the rooms layout they are
all there. The graphics look a lot like an old video arcade
game, but the interface is so very easy to use it is a joy to use.
Go to https://gather.town/app/QqRxv0I4RQIeJYfT/Balticon
and when asked use the password “BookClub“ (without
quotes of course) to get into the Balticon 55 space.

Go-Fund-Me Fundraiser

The go-fund-me program is off to a great start with over
$8,500.00 gross raised as of Friday morning. This is
gross, not net, as the gifts for various donation levels and
shipping cut into net far more than people would expect.
Thank you to all of the generous people who are keeping
us alive as an organization through this horrible time.

The number of names I have had to add to the memorial
plaque at the BSFS Building this last year is equivalent to
5 years of BSFS Members departing this plane of
existence in a normal year.. So, please go and get the
vaccine and encourage others to do so as I want to see you
all at Balticon 56 in person.

Virtual Con this Year,
Hotel or Bust Next Year !

Due to the COVID-19 virus we were forced to hold
Balticon 54, and now Balticon 55, as virtual online
conventions. At this time the CDC rules are being relaxed
and hopefully with vaccine flowing we can get back to in-
person conventions soon. Given Balticon attracts people
of all ages it would be too risky to our membership to
hold a physical con at this time even if government orders
might allow. It has been a difficult time for everyone, yet
the support for BSFS and Balticon from fandom has been
awesome and make it so we can hold Balticon next year at
the Renaissance Baltimore Harborsplace Hotel.

Send News to the
Rocketmail

This newsletter is for all Balticon
news so send your news items to:
rocketmail@balticon.org