

March 2015 Editor - Jack Fritz

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area for decades. Its 272 adult members are dedicated to promoting and sharing the wonders and science of astronomy. We host dark-sky and local star parties, telescope-making workshops, science / astronomy lectures, educational outreach sessions and much more.

President's Message

KYLE BRINKMAN

Humanity is inspired by many things such as art, literature, and music. The natural world inspires all of these. Consider the landscape photographs of Ansel Adams, the vivid descriptions of the sea by Hemmingway, or the



old John Denver songs Rocky Mountain High. The study of Astronomy has made its contribution to the humanities since antiquity. Love and money may have inspired more humanities but, Astronomy inspired mathematics, harmonics, optics and a host of other creations. Astronomy inspired the pyramids, Stonehenge, and even the Sundial in downtown Saint Petersburg. We, as astronomers, get to enjoy the wonders of the universe in ways others are completely unaware.

Sometimes we wonder if what we are doing matters or does it make a difference. This is a thought that had to come to mind for early astronomers such as Galileo. The original Star Trek show was short lived. Perhaps Leonard Nimoy thought his acting career was to be short and meaningless. That show inspired a generation of young people to become scientists, myself included. It is people like

these who, by making an effort, inspire others to do more

A healthy organization has to ask itself if what it is doing is making a difference. For that matter, what does it really want to do? This is why the board decided to have a long range planning meeting. The meeting will be open to all club members. We need to know what the membership of the club wants to do with our Astronomy club. Please stay informed by reading the newsletter, attending meetings, checking the website and Facebook for the announced time and place. What inspires you about astronomy? What do you like about the club? What could we do better?

Does it make a difference? Tonight I received a thank you letter and certificate on behalf of the club from the Bauder Elementary School.

"We, at Bauder Elementary School, commend you and the St. Pete Astronomy Club for your contribution to our event. We appreciate the time and energy you put forth to assist us. We look forward to continuing this partnership next year and for many years to come."

New Members

We would like to welcome John & Esther Glickman, Luis & Margret Saravia and Lisa Bradberry to our family of members.

General Meeting

This month's meeting will take place on Friday, March 27, 2015 at $8:00\,PM$, at the Science Center of Pinellas County, 7701 22^{nd} Ave. N, St. Petersburg, FL.

<u>Beginning Program</u> - Kyle Brinkman will welcome guests and make pertinent announcements followed by Jeff Donaldson's presentation on wide field astrophotography.

<u>Break & Sidewalk Astronomy</u> - Snack Time & Sidewalk Astronomy. Paul McNabb, our provider of all good eats, will lead a walk outside to observe and discuss the night sky.

<u>Main Program</u> - Dr. Thomas Robertson of Ball State University will present, *Red Dwarf* Stars and Galactic Structure, with a live feed from Kitt Peak National Observatory via Skype.

Coming Programs

<u>April</u> - Dr. Chris Kelso, University of North Florida, will discuss Dark Matter Surrounding Black Holes.

<u>May</u> - Spring Picnic at the Science Center. Bring your telescopes.

Editor's Note

JACK FRITZ

Our Club Outreach program is winding down with the change to Daylight Saving Time, and the coming of summer. I would like to thank all of our participating members. They are: Jim & Penny Hunter, Chris Curran, Wally Vazquez, Greg & Liz Simpson, Kelly Anderson, Sam & Shirley Vuille, Scott & Diane Walsh, John O'Neill, David Pearson and myself. I have probably forgotten someone, so I apologize in advance.

Please consider joining in. We all find enjoyment in sharing the night sky with folks who have never looked through a telescope. Drop me an email if I have left you off the list

or you would like to join. Don't worry about not knowing how; you'll get the hang of it by participating in just one event.

March Astronomical Events

STEVE ROBBINS

On April 1st Venus is at greatest elongation from the Sun, 36.6° east.

Yes, there is a total lunar eclipse on April 4th but you will have a medium sized planet eclipsing the eclipse. This is a Pacific Ocean eclipse and we have to wait until September to see one here. For this one we only get to see part of the partial phase beginning at 06:16.

On April 8^{th} you can see Saturn 2.3° south of the Moon in the morning sky.

April 11^{th} brings Venus to 2.6° from the Pleiades.

The evening of April 22nd is the Lyrid meteor shower, rated at about 20 ZHR. It's not a spectacular shower but this year the waxing crescent moon sets in the evening leaving the early morning prime time dark for the show.

April 30th we get to observe Mercury at 1.7° south of the Pleiades.

April's full Moon is the Full Pink Moon, for the fields of pink flowers rampant in that month.

Lunar Phases

- Full Moon April 4, 08:06 EDT
- Third Quarter April 11, 23:44 EDT
- New Moon April 18, 02:57 EDT
- First Quarter April 25, 07:55 EDT

NASA News

STEVE ROBBINS

Since the discovery of Sagittarius A*, the massive 4.5 million solar mass black hole at the center of the Milky Way, scientists have measured radiation indicating mass being eaten by the black hole. NASA announced January 5 that they had detected the largest

flare since discovery, with an X-ray flare 400 times as intense as Sgr A*'s normal quiet state.

SpaceX kicks off a very busy 2015 as the only private launch contractor active after last year's Antares disaster. They are scheduled to launch between 12 and 15 trips to the ISS, along with tests of the Falcon Heavy, the most powerful rocket since the Saturn V. NASA has been working very closely with SpaceX as they are counting on keeping American supply lines to ISS open.

Astronomers at Leiden Observatory and the University of Rochester have discovered the first planetary ring system outside our own solar system. This ring system is enormous, dwarfing Saturn's by two hundred times. If this ring system were around Saturn it would be several times as large as the full moon and visible during the day. The planet and ring system orbit the very young Sun type star, J1407.

Outreach

JIM HUNTER

It has been a poor period for outreach. The weather just has not cooperated. Stewart Middle School was postponed from 2/17 to 2/19 due to clouds. On 2/19 Jack, Wally and I shivered for about an hour with low temperature and strong wind for a very small crowd.

Greg Simpson, and Scott & Diane Walsh had an extra special outreach event at Gulfport on 2/21. Scott writes, "About 150 passersby viewed the conjunction of Venus and Mars along with the crescent moon, in the western sky. The highlight of the night was the Eclipse of Jupiter's moons Europa and Io. High clouds almost ruined this much anticipated event. Open skies won over, Europa and Io became one, then separated.

M42 was also viewed that night. Telescopes used were a Celestron 8 inch SCT and

an Explore Scientific AR 127mm refractor. Our homemade Club sign was replaced with a new Official Club sign, thanks to Jim Hunter."



Any other club members interested can set up their telescopes on the northwest corner of 31st Avenue South and Beach Boulevard. The arts and crafts showing is the first Friday and third Saturday of each month. Those are the days we set up for sidewalk astronomy. This event has been going on for many years and is dedicated to the ultimate sidewalk astronomer, John Dobson.

It was again cloudy on 2/24 so I did an adlib inside show for about 40 Girl Scouts & parents. Our Jimmie Keel Library event was also clouded out so I did solar system show inside for about 40 attendees.

On 3/5 Tom Spano, Wally and I had a busy but short evening at Eisenhower Elementary, "Reading Under the Stars" program in Clearwater. The skies were clear and we had Venus, Jupiter, and the Orion Nebula as great targets.

Coming Outreach Events

Please contact the event coordinator if you can help with these events:

- 3/21 Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy -Greg Simpson
- 4/3 Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy -Greg Simpson
- 4/18 Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy -Greg Simpson

- 4/25 Booker Creek Elementary in Tarpon Springs - Jim Hunter.
- 5/1 Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy Greg Simpson
- 5/16 Gulfport Sidewalk Astronomy -Greg Simpson
- 9/19 International Observe the Moon Night - TBD

Event Coordinators

*GS Greg Simpson 727 896-9410
 *JH Jim Hunter 813 507-8415

*JO John O'Neill 727 637-5945

Please send a brief description of any events you are planning to Jim Hunter for inclusion in the newsletter.

Mirror Lab

RALPH CRAIG

We have one new mirror-maker this month, Peter from Ottawa, grinding an 8" mirror.





We have also had several people stop by the lab recently to get their mirrors tested before sending them in for recoating. Brent and Joey are in final figuring of their 10" mirror. Dimitri has to decide if his 6" is good enough to be called done after

looking at the Figure XP results. We have a few others working on mirrors in various stages of completion. More pictures on the mirror lab web page at: http://www.telescopelab.com/ and also on Mike Davis's web page at: http://www.mdpub.com/

The award winning Mirror Lab welcomes interested visitors to their facility at the Science Center's rear annex. The lab is open on Saturdays between noon and 4:00 pm. Several experienced and skilled tutors are there to give you support, help & instruction. For more information call Ralph Craig (727) 384-2086; Paul McNabb (727) 345-5713; or Allen Maroney (727) 867-4781

If you have any surplus telescope, the mirror lab could use them for various projects.

Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend

JACK FRITZ

★ I look forward to seeing you at the March New Moon Weekend.

From Teeter Telescopes

Good afternoon from snowy New Jersey! I just wanted to send you a thank you note for having me at this year's OBS Star Party as a speaker on that Friday afternoon. I was pleased with the turnout and your club members seemed genuinely interested in our products and my presentation.

As another thank you, I will gladly make one of our current specials available to your members.

\$250 off telescope or telescope structure price, \$200 off upgrades and \$150 credit toward shipping/packing. Also, a 3.5% rebate on the telescope or telescope structure price if paid by check or money order (no credit cards). That's over \$600 in savings.

Rob Teeter, Teeter's Telescopes, LLC. The Convergence of Cutting Edge Technology & Master Craftsmanship Since 2002 www.TeetersTelescopes.com

SPAC Business Meeting



The Business Meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is Wednesday, April 8th, at 8:00 PM at the Science Center. All interested members are invited to attend. All club business decisions are made at the business meeting so as not to encumber the general meeting.

Officers & Directors

President:	<u>Kyle Brinkman</u>	727 455-6931
Vice Pres.:	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
Secretary:	Paul McNabb	727 345-5713
Treasurer:	<u>Jim Hunter</u>	813 909-7013
Dirat-Large:	Mike Davis	727 474-6785
Dirat-Large:	<u>David Pearson</u>	727 791-4241
Dirat-Large:	<u>Allen Maroney</u>	727 867-4781
SPACE Editor	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
Public Relations	<u>John O'Neill</u>	727 637-5945
Membership Chair	Shirley Vuille	727 864-2624
Outreach Chair:	Jim Hunter	813 909-7013
Librarian:	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086
Club Webmaster:	Chris Curran	813 653-2604

Recognition of Patrons & Benefactors:

Click on the name to send email

HOUSE HERE	G
Sean Bates	Benefactor
Clifford B. Benham	Benefactor
Jack & Roni Fritz	Benefactor
David & Tara Pearson	Benefactor
David & Mina Swan	Benefactor
Joe Ortiz-Bradley	Patron
Matt Labadie	Patron
Andre' & Joan Medvedeff	Patron
Robert Myers	Patron
John O'Neill	Patron
Robert & Debora Csere	Patron
Thomas Tobin	Patron
Alexie & Yanira Velez	Patron
Gustav J. Waffen	Patron

Examiner Staff

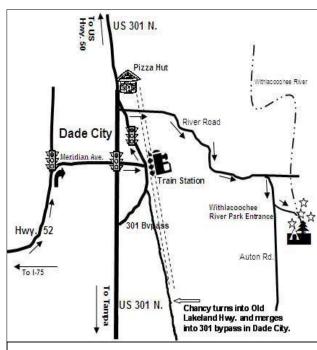
Editor	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
In the News	Steve Robbins	386 736-9123
Assistant Editor	Nancy Huff	813 621-3606
Mirror Lab	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086

Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend (Cont.)

Our next New Moon Weekend falls on April 17th and 18th. I hope to see you all there.

The park gate is locked at Sundown, so you will need to arrive before then. The year-round camping fee with electrical use is \$10/night for club members, and \$20 for non-members. Tent camping without electric is \$5/night.

Be reminded that if you are not camping, you must pay the \$2/vehicle fee. Vehicles displaying the handicap parking tag are exempt. For further information, contact Bill or Nancy Huff. starhopr3@msn.com or 813 621-3606.



Withlacoochee River Park - Dade City, FL
Detailed directions can be found at:
www.StPeteAstronomyClub.org



15406 Stonecreek Lane Tampa, FL 33613

SPAC, INC. MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Membership in St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, Inc. is open to anyone, regardless of age, who is interested in astronomy. Dues are considered donations and are non-refundable. Membership options are available as listed below:

To join or renew your membership:

Complete the following form and return it with your payment to: Jim Hunter - Treasurer, 17316 Oak Ledge Dr., Lutz, FL 33549-7626 - Telephone number (813) 909-7013 (checks should be made payable to SPAC, Inc.)

Name:	Telephone Number:						
Spouse: _		Children (<i>Under 18</i>):					
Address:			City:		St	Zip:	
E-Mail ad	dress	:	Newsletter	Preference:	Email []	US Mail []	
Single:	[]	\$ 20.00/YR.	Includes one adult, minor children, the "SPACE" ne leges of membership.	ewsletter, and	d all the rig	ghts and privi-	
Family:	[]	\$ 25.00/YR.	/YR. Includes two adults, minor children and the above rights and privileges.				
Patron:	[] \$ 50.00/YR. A Patron member is entitled to the above rights and privileges.						
Benefacto	r: []	\$100.00/YR	A Benefactor member is entitled to the above rights	and privileg	es.		
		OPTION	AL DISCOUNTED MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS AS A BENEFI	T OF MEMBER	SHIP:		
Sky & Tel	esco	pe Magazine:	[] \$32.95/Yr.	Astronomy	Magazine	e: [] \$34.00/Yı	