M - 65 and M -66

Messier 2006

The tradition continues in 2006. The TAAS Messier SIG (Special Interest Group) is meeting twice a month to observe all 110 of the Messier objects during the 2006 calendar year. We invite anyone interested to join us as together we learn the night sky. As we observe the Messier Objects, we also learn about the constellations, many prominent stars and of course each other.

The Messier SIG now has a web site (www.Messier2006.org) with the very latest information on all of the SIG’s activities including observing sessions times, dates and locations.

We have changed our procedures to make it easier for everyone to observe all of the Messier Objects. Because the viewing conditions at Dee’s house are best in the east half of the sky, we schedule our observing to “catch” the Messiers as they appear there. During the long summer days, we will meet on weekends at both the Oak Flat Picnic Grounds and GNTO for better viewing conditions. Finally, we plan to make more use of the GNTO facilities including the 16-inch Dob loaner scope and the Isengard telescope.

It is not necessary to own a telescope to participate in the SIG. At least one TAAS loaner telescope is always available for use. We also plan to make more use of binoculars. Finally, there will also be friendly and experienced TAAS observers present to assist us with our observing. It will be fun.

Every other month, we have a special session before the viewing called Astronomy Basics. In the session, experienced TAAS members present a basic lesson specially designed for beginners. The February session was titled “Telescope Basics”. The April session we be “Sky Basics” and will include such topics as star magnitudes, sky coordinates and the various types of Messier Objects.

The SIG web site has a list of the Messier Objects for each month and star charts that can be downloaded and studied in advance to prepare the observer for the SIG viewing night.

This is a terrific program for beginners or for people who have not observed in a while. No prior experience is required, only a desire to learn and to have fun. If you miss one month’s sessions, it is totally possible to “catch up” the next month. You can also do the observing from your home or any other location. You need not attend the SIG sessions to participate and receive the free information and star charts. In 2005 there were several TAAS members living on the east side of the mountains who participated by observing in their locations, but kept us informed of their progress by email and telephone.

So, make 2006 the year that you observe all 110 Messier Objects, learn the night sky and have a lot of fun. If you have any questions or suggestions call or email Dee Friesen at 856-1593 or friesend@comcast.net.

Clear skies!
Dear TAAS Membership!

The end of March and first week in April I will be in Australia! I am attending the South Pacific Star Party in Wiruna about 230km northwest of Sydney. Certainly the trip of a lifetime! I will share my experience with you in next month’s newsletter. Speaking of attending star parties, we have three amazing events being held the same week in September 16th - 24th (check the websites for specific dates for each event so you can start making your plans now!)

1. The Enchanted Skies Star Party hosted by The New Mexico Tech Astronomy Club, the city of Socorro, the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, and the Bureau of Land Management is held in our own backyard, beautiful Socorro! Jon Spargo and Dave Finley are seeking astronomers to be “the dark site hosts”. They are also seeking breakout session speakers. This is a great event with amazing DARK SKIES and tons of exciting astronomy stuff to do during the day such as trips to the VLA! The Enchanted Skies Star Party has been described as the one of the top five star parties in this country! If you are interested in being the dark sky site host or presenting a breakout session or just want more information please contact Dave Finley at <1.dfinley@nrao.edu>.

2. The White Sands Star Party is held at White Sands National Monument New Mexico. This event is sponsored by the Alamogordo Space Hall of Fame and the Alamogordo Astronomy Club. I will be the keynote speaker this year! Astronomers are allowed to camp out on the White Sands! The proceeds from the White Sands Star Party go to support Project Astro. This is a fun family event. Bring your “plastic, flying saucer sledding pan” and slide down the sands dunes during the day, or visit the Space Hall. The nights of observing on the sand dunes are magical. Their website is not up, however I will keep you posted in next month’s newsletter.

3. Okie-Tex Star Party. Google this site as it COMPLETE with all the details for this great event! Many TAAS members attend every year coming back with stars in their eyes! Just ask anyone who has been, this is an amazing event.

I am organizing a trip to The Very Large Array (the VLA ) for May or June. The date has not been set as I am waiting to hear from YOU! Contact me at <president@taas.org> AFTER April 6, to express your interest and suggest a date.

That’s it for this month from your humble president. “Good-day Mates”-- Keep looking up!

**ASTEROID HUNTER LECTURES**

The Albuquerque Astronomical Society (TAAS) will present a free lecture entitled “The Present and Future of Near-Earth Asteroid Searches” by Lowell Observatory researcher Brian Skiff, at UNM’s Regener Hall on Saturday, April 8, at 7:00 p.m. Skiff has discovered dozens of asteroids and comets during his 25 years at Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona, where he also operates research telescopes and catalogs stars. These discoveries include Hermes, a large near-Earth asteroid that was discovered in 1937 but had eluded astronomers for 66 years until Skiff recovered it in October 2003. He also found an object which orbits closer to the Sun than any other asteroid; these small bodies that travel in an orbit between the Earth and the Sun are very difficult to discover because their proximity to the Sun makes them nearly undetectable. Skiff has contributed observing lists to the popular Bright Star Atlas, which is used by astronomers around the world. Regener Hall is located on UNM’s Main Campus, west of Popejoy Hall. For information and a map, visit www.taas.org or call 254-TAAS.

**State Parks Programs Seek Night Sky Volunteers**

New Mexico State Parks are seeking volunteers to help conduct night sky programs in the parks. Both resident and occasional volunteers are needed. Visitors and astronomers have long known that the New Mexico State Parks harbor some of the most enchanted night skies. With an increasing awareness among park managers and rising interest among park visitors, the state parks are now establishing a fast growing and diverse astronomy program to share the beauty and splendor of the night.

I invite you all to consider becoming a volunteer for the parks. Duties will include preparing and giving stargazing programs, assisting park staff with telescope use and logistics, and educating the public on light pollution. Applicants should be comfortable working with a diverse public, have a solid knowledge of the night sky and telescopes, and should have good speaking skills. Other attributes include enthusiasm, self-motivation, flexibility, willingness to learn new methods and ability to adapt to a public program that is somewhat unlike a traditional star party.

I would be happy to come to your next club meeting to discuss this opportunity with you and hand out state park information and volunteer applications. Please contact me if you are interested. Angela Richman, 505-264-1389, angie4stars@hotmail.com For more information visit the NM State Parks volunteer webpage at www.emnrd.state.nm.us/emnrd/parks/VolunteerJobDescriptions.htm
Our new moon observing opportunity on February 25 was a huge success. We had over thirty-five people attending and twenty telescopes in operation. It looked like a mini-Messier marathon crowd! Everyone seemed to have a great time, and some of us did not leave until early morning. Once again, our thanks go to Bob Hufnagel for his Twining Lane maintenance.

Larry Cash, Ray Collins, Eric Edwards, Pete Eschman, Dee Friesen, Dale Murray, Gordon Pegue, Shane Ramotowski, Bill Walace and Steve Welch attended the GNTO committee meeting March 2. Bill Wallace is implementing a procedure for reporting problems and issues needing attention that are related to the GNTO buildings and grounds. A clipboard and log sheets will be placed in the Ortega Building, and folks are encouraged to use the new reporting system.

Dale said he and Barry Spletzer plan to implement a summer observing list in June. The list will contain a variety of interesting objects, not limited to those from the Messier catalog.

Steve and Pete reported that the Oregon Scientific WMR 968 wireless GNTO weather station has been delivered and is undergoing a shakedown at Pete’s house. We also have received the GNTO control computer, which is based on a power efficient mini-ITX motherboard. The final item received is an IOGEAR 320GB USB/FireWire external hard drive, which we will send off to have the USNO-A and USNO-B star catalogs installed. Mark Keitel, of Brandon, Florida has offered to waive his usual $75 charge to install these catalogs for us. Thanks Mark!

Dale, Steve and Pete met at GNTO on March 10 for a work session dedicated to revised 12-Volt wiring and lighting. We installed more efficient LED lights in the corners of the upper level of the main dome and at the chart table area. We also installed two new 12-Volt power outlets for equipment and repaired the dimmer circuit for the new corner LEDs. A few other tasks were accomplished as well, including drilling and tapping 1/4-20 holes in the mounting plate that caps the Isengard rotating rings. This allows additional equipment to be mounted on the plate. We returned the GNTO imaging computer, now that I finished reloading it with XP-Pro, Office 2003, and the basic astronomy and imaging software. As I reported last month, Bob Hufnagel donated the hard drive for this computer. We installed and tested a wireless access point and found good coverage over the entire observing field, in the 10-foot dome and in Ortega Building.

Thanks to Steve for purchasing WiFi equipment for us at very good prices while he was in California. He did a thorough job of picking through the sale offerings at Frys. Larry has donated a router to implement a connection by WiFi to GNTO. Thanks Larry!

GNTO events for April include observing opportunities on April 22 followed by a New Moon chance one week later on April 29. These dates coincide with the Texas Star Party, which runs from April 23 to April 30, so GNTO will be a great option for those who do not want to make the long trip to Fort Davis, TX.

You really should plan a trip to GNTO soon. The comfortable Ortega Building is available for socializing and our Guest Trailer is available for coffee, hot chocolate, and any snacks you might want to share. We will have the heater running in the Ortega Building, so there will be a place to warm up. With all the great equipment and facilities at GNTO, what are you waiting for?

GNTO committee meetings are open to any interested TAAS members, and this is a great way to get more involved with your observatory. We need your help. Our next scheduled meetings are March 30 and May 4. We meet at 6:30 p.m. at JB’s Restaurant on Eubank just north of I-40. If you have questions about access and availability of GNTO, please contact me (Peter Eschman, gnto@taas.org, phone 873-1517). I hope to see you soon at your observatory.
UNM Report
UNM Campus Observatory Coordinator
unm_coord@taas.org

02 December 05: The clouds, the clouds...

09 December 05: This was the last scheduled night at UNM for the fall semester. It was a clear, cold, night, slightly hampered by an inversion layer. Not many UNM students showed up, but we did have an astronomy class of 25 or so from The Albuquerque Academy. UNM will reopen on the 20th of January '06. Docents: Dale and I.

20 January 06: The first session of the term was clear, but very cold. The evening introduced a new batch of undergrads who will operate the dome telescope this semester. There were no visitors, so I called it an early night around 8:30. Docents: Doc, Dale and I.

27 January 06: The break between systems did not materialize, so it was an overcast night for us. In spite of the clouds, however, two teachers and several students from Marie Hughes elementary school showed up. Jeff stopped by for a few minutes, and as there were no further visitors, I left about 8:15. Docents: Jeff and I.

03 February 06: A fairly clear night with just a hint of high cloudiness. Tons of second and third graders showed up, along with about 20 UNM students. Our total for the evening was about 50. Docents: Dale, Jeff, and I.

10 February 06: The evening was clear, with only a light breeze. I didn’t go down, and therefore have no information.

17 February 06: Clouds and wind associated with a large winter storm did the damage tonight.

27 February 06: A beautiful afternoon sky was overcast by the time I arrived at UNM. We had several students in spite of the clouds and a new TAAS member took possession of a loaner scope. We gave up about 8:00. Docents: Dale and I.

03 March 06: The high cloud layer thinned a bit towards dusk, so I took a chance and went down. We were rewarded with about ten students and six other visitors, including two enthusiastic ladies from Alexandria, Virginia. Of note, the dome telescope has been removed from its polar mount and placed on a tripod in Alt-Az mode. If the pointing accuracy can be improved, the telescope will be so mounted on the pier. Docents: Dale and I.

10 March 06: The clouds were bad enough, but it was high winds that prevented me from going down.

17 March 06: The winds were back, although the clouds did clear at sundown. I decided to go, forgetting that UNM was on spring break. Two brave souls showed up, but the wind was too much for my telescope. We left about 7:30.

24 March 06: The perfectly clear afternoon gave way to high clouds at sundown. I went down anyway. UNM is having major problems with its 14” and so the grad students set up two 10” LX200s in the court. A good thing, as we were deluged with students and a sprinkling of the general public. Altogether, there were about 60 visitors. Docents: Just me.

Brock Parker

Road Dragger Gets Upgrade

The Albuquerque Astronomical Society has been using a road dragger to smooth the last part of the road to GNTO for many years. The dragger has gone through several iterations, and it is undergoing another upgrade to improve its effectiveness and usability. The dirt road that forms the last 6 miles to GNTO is not maintained regularly by anyone, and TAAS members have done most of the maintenance since GNTO was built in the early 90’s.

TAAS has been using a home built dragger to smooth out the washboards and fill in some of the holes that form after rainstorms. The dragger is made from wood beams about 4” X 6”, held together by 2” X 4” crossmembers. Two tractor wheel weights, contributed by a friend, Bert Tate, add about 200 pounds to the dragger. The front surfaces have steel blades from a road grader, which have been discarded by the county road department. The whole thing is pulled by means of steel cables and a hefty truck. The wooden parts have to be replaced regularly because of weather and vibration while dragging. Lacking wheels, we end up dragging our parking lot gravel out onto the road.

A TAAS member, Elaine Kroska, was kind enough to donate a smaller, light weight dragger and a heavy duty roller. The roller was made by welding a trailer hitch to a water tank, with bearings on the ends to allow the tank to rotate. While we didn’t have a need for the roller, I saw a use for the trailer hitch and rotating mechanism. Don Gibson, who builds trailers at Accutrat in Los Lunas, agreed to weld together a new dragger based on 5” steel channel, and to weld the trailer hitch and rotating mechanism onto the new dragger. He then donated all the steel and labor to TAAS. The new steel channel box will replace the wooden parts in the current dragger, and the trailer hitch will replace the cables. Added wheels allow us to move the dragger without dragging away our parking lot gravel. This should allow us to drag the road for years while doing minimal maintenance on the dragger.

Upgraded Road Dragger smoothes the way to GNTO.
**Monthly Membership Report (February 2006)**

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<td>Total Members</td>
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**Donations to TAAS**

**General:** Patrick Fry, Ryan Luetkemeyer

**GNTO:** George Pellegrino

![Thank You]

**Welcome to New TAAS Members**

Aidan, Rachel, and Tauri Darling
David and Janet Downs
Michael Holliday

**Dark Sky (SIG)**

David Penasa

Lazlo Lazowska, Director of Night Sky Program, will present a session on New Mexico State Parks’ initiative “Reaching for the Stars” Tuesday, April 25, at 9 a.m. at the REDTT Annual Conference on Tourism at the Best Western Rio Rancho Inn and Conference Center. During fiscal year 2006 NM State Parks has augmented the initiative with a host of activities involving additional park programs, nationwide marketing, staff education, light pollution abatement programs, and best practices in outdoor lighting for wilderness recreation areas. For information on the conference, visit www.redtt.org. “New Mexico’s Night Sky - A Most Endangered Asset” will be the topic at the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance 2006 conference Thursday, May 25, at 9:10 a.m. in Gallup. The Participants will learn what light pollution is and how to avoid it. A conference session on “Enhancing New Mexico’s Communities through Quality Outdoor Lighting” will be held at 1:45 p.m. This session, facilitated by Lazlo Lazowska, will address the current status of lighting ordinances, explain challenges communities face in passing ordinances, and the issue of code enforcement. On Friday, May 26, Steve Cary, New Mexico State Parks, will present “Reach for the Stars,” a session summarizing recent night sky protection efforts in state parks and training community volunteers and staff to be better night sky interpreters. For information on the conference and registration information, visit www.nmheritage.org.

**Note from Treasurer**

Clarification of new member and renewal policy. Renewal notices will be mailed out 1 month before expiration date. Renewals and new members will be dated on the first of next month no matter when during the month they arrive. This will help with the database reports and queries. There will also be no grace period for renewals. Please make sure that you send in renewal information and your check before the expiration date. Renewal of magazines and new subscriptions will be sent in twice a month. All checks are to be made out to “TAAS”. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. If you have any questions or special needs pertaining to membership and/or magazine subscriptions, contact the Treasurer, Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org.

**Editor’s Note**

Please note that the deadline for the May 2006 issue of the Sidereal Times will be Friday, April 21. The e-mail address for the newsletter editor is editor@taas.org.

**Location, Location, Location**

- **Chaco Canyon**
  - 6185’ elevation
  - Latitude 36˚ 01’ 50”N
  - Longitude 107˚ 54’ 36”W
  - 36.03˚ -107.91˚
  - 36˚ 1.83’ -107˚ 54.60’

- **Oak Flat**
  - 7680’ elevation
  - Latitude 34˚ 59’ 48”N
  - Longitude 106˚ 19’ 17”W
  - 34.99˚ -106.32˚
  - 34˚ 59.80’ -106˚ 19.28’

- **UNM Campus Observatory**
  - 5180’ elevation
  - Latitude 35˚ 5’ 29”N
  - Longitude 106˚ 37’ 17”W
  - 35.09˚ -106.62˚
  - 35˚ 5.48’ -106˚ 37.29’

To convert from Degrees, Minutes, Seconds: Divide seconds by 60, then add minutes, then divide by 60 again.

For security reasons, GNTO location is available by request only, so please contact Pete Eschman for GNTO information.

**Membership Services**

- Membership Inquiries
- Events Information
- Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Dee Friesen at membership@taas.org

**Donation Request**

- General: Patrick Fry, Ryan Luetkemeyer
- GNTO: George Pellegrino

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**Contact Dan Clark at**

treasurer@taas.org

P.O. Box 50581 Albuquerque, NM

The Official Newsletter of The Albuquerque Astronomical Society
## April 2006

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<td>ATM Workshop Valley HS 7 P.M.</td>
<td>Board Meeting 7 P.M. (P&amp;A Bldg.)</td>
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### Educational Outreach

**Shannon Mann**

**Tuesday, April 4th Wilson Middle School Star Party**

1138 Cardenas Drive SE, Albuquerque

We have a fast approaching star party. This one is the old faithful – Wilson Middle School. We have done this one a few times and seem to get a great response from all who attend. Again, we will be needing the full gamut of assistance – so bring your volunteering spirit and either a scope, binoculars, demo, whatever. Heck, just come by yourself if you want to. The two map links below will take you to the location of the school. The first link provides a more regional view, while the second is quite detailed.

I am the “owner” of this event, so email me at mann.shanno@comcast.net if you have further questions. Thanks and see you there.

Maps

http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&q=1138+Cardenas+Drive+SE,+Albuquerque,+NM+87108&ll=35.061723,-106.579657&spn=0.007974,0.021029&t=h

http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&q=1138+Cardenas+Drive+SE,+Albuquerque,+NM+87108&ll=35.061723,-106.579657&spn=0.003987,0.010514&t=h

**Tuesday, March 7th Kit Carson Elementary School Star Party**

The Tuesday, March 7th Kit Carson School Star Party started off a little cloudy but conditions improved as the night wore on. As usual, we had great help from our TAAS legions. Those in attendance were: John Sefick (astro slides), Bob Havlen (ask-the-pro), Judy Stanley (technical and moral assistance), Ray Collins (groovy starlight), Pete Eschman (scope), John Laning (scope), David Frizzell (scope) and Shannon Mann (running about). In all, we probably had around 200 students and parents show with all partaking in demos and astro-light through the eyepiece. Kit Carson volunteers were also busy helping students cut out planispheres. It was a very successful event – THANK YOU.
### May 2006

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### ATM Workshop

Ray Collins/Mike Pendley  
atm@taas.org

The Amateur Telescope Making Workshop meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month at Valley High School, 1505 Candelaria—the north side of Candelaria, just west of 12th street. The meetings begin at 7 P.M. and are in Building E, Room #3.

### TAAS General Meeting

**Saturday, April 8, 2006**  
7:00 P.M.  
Regener Hall  
University of New Mexico  
(See map, back page)

Brian Skiff,  
Lowell Observatory  
The Present and Future of Near-Earth Asteroid Searches

### Notes


GNTO = General Nathan Twining Obs.  
GNTO Training = GNTO Observing and Training.  
GNTO NM=New Moon Premium Observing Night

UNM = University of New Mexico Observatory. Call the TAAS hotline @254-8227, or the UNM hotline @ 277-1446 to confirm, or unm_coordinator@taas.org.

ATM = Amateur Telescope Making. Call Michael Pendley for information @ 296-0549, or atm@taas.org.

P & A = UNM Physics and Astronomy. Corner of Lomas and Yale.

School Star Party.
Minutes of the Board of Directors

March 9th 2006
UNM Physics and Astronomy Building Conference Room

Directors present: Judy Stanley (President), Dan Clark (Treasurer), Gordon Pegue (Secretary), Larry Cash, Ray Collins, Pete Eschman, Dick Fate, Dee Friesen, Tom Graham, Shannon Mann, Shane Ramotowski, Sy Santos and Steve Welch. Barry Gordon was attendance as an observer. Dave Finley and John Spargo were in attendance as special guests.

Directors absent: Becky Ramotowski (Vice President).

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm.

Special Presentation
Dave Finley and John Spargo, co-founders and principal organizers of the Enchanted Skies Star Party (ESSP), held in Socorro each fall, provided the assembled Board with a presentation on the history, organization, format and activities of the ESSP. Their presentation concluded with a request for a more active volunteer participation of TAAS members, especially in the areas of talks aimed at beginners and in providing Pound Ranch volunteers in order to allow dark-sky observing throughout the course of the event.

Corrections to the February Minutes
None to report.

Correspondence
a. Judy reported on a communication she received from John Sefick and Neil Goldberg concerning the Chaco Culture National Historic Park road paving project. She noted that John and Neil were seeking TAAS support in opposing the project. After a discussion on the previous Board decision and the lack of complete information, the consensus of the Board was that John and Neil should make a formal, in-person presentation to the Board, after which the Board could then make a more informed decision.

Treasurers Report
Account balances (as of the end of February):

- General Fund: $ 6,342.69
- GNTO Fund: $ 7,732.28
- Education Fund: $ 3,845.48
- Dark Sky Fund: $ 635.21
- Special Projects Fund: $ 3,310.18
- Science Fair Fund: $ 0.00
- Total Funds on Deposit: $21,865.84

Total membership count (all categories): 354

Event Retrospect
a. The Saturday, February 11th General Meeting at Regener Hall featured a presentation by UNM Assistant Professor Dinesh Loomba about his gravitational lensing studies.
b. The school star party scheduled for Tuesday, February 21st at Chaparral Elementary School was a rousing success according to Shannon with over 225 children and parents treated to views of selected astronomical objects, shows in the Starlab portable planetarium and other activities.
c. The Saturday, February 25th GNTO observing session included great viewing conditions with 20 telescopes in operation and 35 people in attendance.
d. The school star party held on Tuesday, March 7th at Kit Carson Elementary School also had a fantastic performance by our docents with over 200 children and parents in attendance.

Calendar & Event Prospect
a. Pete moved to accept the current revision of the official TAAS calendar for 2006-2007. Dee seconded and the motion carried unanimously.
b. Other calendar business included Barry Gordon’s query as to the availability of Saturday, October 14th, 2006 on our official calendar for the Placitas Star Party. The Las Placitas Association has set this date and Barry received the availability confirmation he required. Barry noted that he would so advise the Association and that we were looking forward to another great event. An owner for the event has not yet been chosen.
c. Other scheduled events include:
   1. The Saturday, March 11th General Meeting at Regener Hall will feature a round-robin presentation on the “State of TAAS” by various TAAS members, focusing on activities and membership involvement possibilities.
   2. The Saturday, March 25th GNTO observing session will feature additional member activities including an open house, Equinox picnic, training sessions and constellation tours.
   3. The regularly scheduled meeting of the GNTO Committee will take place on Thursday, March 30th.
   4. The Saturday, April 1st GNTO observing session will feature our annual Messier Marathon.
   5. A school star party is scheduled for Tuesday, April 4th at Wilson Middle School.
   6. The regularly scheduled meeting of the TAAS Board of Directors will take place on Thursday, April 6th at the Physics and Astronomy Building on the UNM campus.
   7. The Saturday, April 8th General Meeting at Regener Hall will feature a presentation by Lowell Observatory astronomer Brian Skiff.
   8. The Saturday, April 22nd GNTO observing session will feature observing with the Rhode Island astronomy group.
   9. The Saturday, April 29th GNTO observing session will be a “new moon” event.
   10. The final school star party for this term is scheduled for Tuesday, May 2nd at the Montessori of the Rio Grande.
   11. The regularly scheduled meeting of the GNTO Committee will take place on Thursday, May 4th.
   12. Astronomy Day activities will take place at a location to-be-
determined on Saturday, May 6th.
13. The regularly scheduled meeting of the TAAS Board of Directors will take place on Thursday, May 11th at the Physics and Astronomy Building on the campus of UNM.
14. The Saturday, May 13th General Meeting at Regener Hall will feature a presentation by an as yet undetermined speaker.
15. Our first Oak Flat Public Star Party of the season is scheduled for Saturday, May 20th. A coordinating contact for this event is needed.
16. A TAAS Observing Event at Chaco Canyon is scheduled for Saturday, May 27th. Observing opportunities at GNTO are also available.

Committee Reports
a. Membership: As part of the Treasurers Report provided by Dan: 224 full, 81 family, 9 educator, 7 honorary and 33 complementary members comprise the total membership of TAAS. Tom reported that a number of meetings of the newly populated Membership Committee have taken place and that the membership of the committee has been fleshed out. Committee Coordinator is Beverly Firth with other members being her husband Bill, Ed Kist, Neil Goldberg and Tom. Tom noted that progress is being made on the tasks assigned to the group and that 1) he was agreeable to being the Board-Committee liaison and 2) he would present a formal Committee report at the next Board meeting.
b. GNTO: Refer to the full GNTO report by Pete Eschman elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.
c. Education: See the Education Outreach report elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter for details on outreach activities.
1. Shannon noted that the Education Committee met to discuss and formulate a policy and procedure guidelines for what he termed as a “Star Team”. A Star Team would consist of a teacher and interested parents who wish to participate as docents presenting Starlab portable planetarium shows at a given school star party. He indicated that work on the policy is continuing.
2. Shannon noted that a telescope donation was offered to him recently and that he needed help in determining whether or not to accept the donation. Shannon was directed to contact Dale Murray, Telescope Curator, for more assistance.
d. Grants and Other Income: No report.
e. Special Projects: No report.
f. Special Interest Groups (SIG’s):
1. Messier 2005: Dee reported that the SIG now has its own “official” website at www.Messier2006.org and that a link on the TAAS website would be added soon.
2. ATM: Scheduled meeting dates are the usual 1st and 3rd Wednesday evening of each month.

Old Business
a. Dee reported that planning for the TAAS Astronomy Day activities, scheduled for Saturday, May 6th, has been temporarily interrupted with the upper management decision by the owners of Cottonwood Mall to not allow the event to take place. Dee noted that he is 1) attempting to rectify the situation with Cottonwood, 2) seeking permission from the management of Coronado Mall to hold the event there and 3) that we may have to postpone the event until such time as the determination of the hosting site is made.
b. Larry reported that his efforts to procure a new LCD projector for General Meeting use have been hampered somewhat by the cost limitation set at last months Board meeting. After a discussion on the results of his search and the costs of the various units he has looked at, Pete motioned to increase the not-to-exceed amount for the purchase from $700 to $1000. Sy seconded the motion and after a very brief discussion, the motion carried unanimously.
c. Larry reported that he inadvertently neglected to email the text of George Pellegrino’s new award resolution request text and the history of TAAS awards to the Board as discussed at last months Board meeting. Action on this item was tabled until the next Board meeting.
d. Judy suggested that the Awards Committee be formed early and that Board members should actively seek member participation in this committee. Action on this item was tabled until the next Board meeting.
e. Judy led a brief discussion of the earlier ESSP TAAS support request made by Dave Finley and John Spargo. The consensus of the Board was that Judy would pass on some ideas, seek to understand more fully the details of the request and report back to the Board.
f. A general discussion of the current situation involving our new Newsletter Editor (Gary Cooper) and the difficulties he is having with the newsletter composition software installation on his personal PC led to the following Board consensus: Judy will seek to determine, with the assistance of some subject-matter experts, the status of the software – hardware compatibility with respect to Mr. Cooper’s PC and if it is determined to be a lost cause, that she will advise the Board that a TAAS purchase of a Newsletter Editor desktop PC, capable of supporting the computational complexity of the software, be made. To that end, Shannon motioned that an amount not-to-exceed $800, funded from the TAAS General Fund, be made available for the discretionary purchase of the PC. Dick seconded and after a brief discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

New Business
a. Judy reported that she had recently been notified that the Astro Images of New Mexico photography contest, coming up in August and held at the Lodestar Planetarium, no longer has a primary organizer. Judy suggested that Board members seek out interested volunteers. She also noted that she would make an impassioned plea for volunteers through the Board of Directors Email List (BODEL) and with an announcement at our General Meeting.
b. Judy suggested that the Nomination Committee be formed early and Gordon volunteered to serve on the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 9:24pm.
Free Telescope Offer

What’s that? Did you say Free? That’s right FREE!

Any TAAS member can use this coupon to borrow a TAAS telescope.
Contact Dale Murray at telescope_loans@taas.org or 296-2479 and receive a loaner telescope absolutely free. You can choose from scopes with apertures ranging from 6” to 13”.

Some restrictions apply. Offer valid for current TAAS members. Offer is first come first served. Late comers will be put on a waiting list. Neither TAAS nor the telescope curators will be held liable for any lost sleep or other problems arising from the use of TAAS scopes.

Borrowers are required to enjoy the telescopes.

Car-Pooling to GNTO

Have you ever decided to not attend a TAAS function at GNTO because you did not want to make the drive to the observatory? If your answer to this question is yes, you may be interested in the idea of car-pooling to GNTO. The GNTO committee is investigating the interest in and options for a car-pool program to the observatory.

The purpose of the program would be to make GNTO more accessible to TAAS members who otherwise are unable to attend functions at the observatory. GNTO is a wonderful asset that all TAAS members should be able to utilize and enjoy. We all need to decide if a car-pool program would help accomplish this goal.

Your assistance is needed in determining if there is a sufficient interest in this effort to continue with the idea. We would also like to get your ideas on how a car-pooling program should be conducted.

There are several general options that can be considered. First would be to car-pool from an Albuquerque location. Second, we could arrange for a meeting spot off the interstate, (a large store parking lot for example), from which we would car-pool the final distance to GNTO.

Some of the things that need to be considered when car-pooling are (1) equipment of attendees (2) arrival and departure times and (3) willingness of TAAS members to be the car-pool drivers.

If you are interested in this idea and have comments or suggestions, please forward them to Dee Friesen or any other member of the GNTO committee. Dee can be reached at 856-1593 or friesend@comcast.net. The GNTO email address is GNTO@TAAS.org.

Registration is now open. Caballo Loco RV Ranch gives us a special camping rate for this group event. There is no star party fee this year but we will sell door prize tickets. The residents of Caballo Loco will also be serving breakfast ($3) and dinner ($5) on Saturday. We are located between Kitt Peak Observatory and Whipple Observatory, both excellent day trips.

Pat and Arleen Heimann
Chart Markers and More
http://www.chartmarker.com

Full Color Sidereal Times Now Available

In a sweeping move to provide top quality communiques to our members while conserving our precious resources, TAAS is pleased to re-announce the availability of this newsletter the Sidereal Times in full color. That’s right, catch the blush of the monthly speaker, the blue eyes and red hair of that cute 6-year-old at the School Star Party, the depth and vibrance of all the full-color illustrations.

The catch is that the full-color version is only available at our website: www.taas.org. If you prefer to download and read your newsletter on your computer rather than receive a paper copy by mail, please notify the TAAS treasurer, Dan Clark, at treasurer@taas.org to have your name removed from the Sidereal Times mailing list. This will provide you with the newsletter of your choice, save TAAS money, and earn you the undying (okay, maybe slowly dying) gratitude of our Sid Times printer – me.

Now that many of our members are taking advantage of this offer, our mailing list is less than required to get a bulk-rate postage discount. The newsletter is now mailed at first-class rates. So, it is more important than ever for you to get your newsletter online. Thanks for your consideration.
## 2006 TAAS Board of Directors/Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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MEMBERSHIP: You may request a membership application by sending e-mail to membership@taas.org or calling (505) 254-TAAS (8227). Applications may also be downloaded from the Web site. Annual dues to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society are $30/year for a full membership and $15/year for a teacher or student (grades K-12). Additional family members may join for $5/each (teacher, student, and family memberships are not eligible to vote on society matters). New member information packets can be downloaded from the website or requested from the TAAS Membership Services Director at membership@taas.org. You may send your dues by mail to our newsletter return address with your check written out to The Albuquerque Astronomical Society or give your check to the Treasurer at the next meeting.

MAGAZINES: Discount magazine subscriptions to Sky and Telescope and Astronomy as well as discounts on books from Sky Publishing Corporation are available when purchased by TAAS members through our society. Include any of the above magazine renewal mailers and subscription payments as part of your renewal check. Make checks out to TAAS (we will combine and send one check to the publisher). Warning: publishers take several months to process magazine subscriptions.

ARTICLES/ADVERTISEMENTS: Articles, personal astronomical classified advertisements and business card size advertisements for businesses related to astronomy must be submitted by the deadline shown on the Society calendar (generally the Saturday near the new Moon). Rates for commercial ads (per issue) are $120 per page, $60 per half page, $30 per quarter page, $7 for business card size. The newsletter editor reserves the right to include and/or edit any article or advertisement. E-mail attachments in Microsoft Word, 11 point Palatino, justified, no indent at paragraph beginning, one space between paragraphs is preferred. ASCII and RTF are acceptable. One column is approximately 350 words. Contact the Newsletter Editor at editor@taas.org for more information.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Note that the Sidereal Times is mailed at a first class mail rate. As a result, the newsletter may be forwarded to your new address should you move, or it may not!! Please provide the Treasurer (treasurer@taas.org) with your new mailing address or e-mail address to ensure that you receive your newsletter.

TAAS LIBRARY: Please contact the Librarian at librarian@taas.org or 890-8122 to check out a book or make a contribution.