School Star-Party Training for All Members

The school star-party program is the most effective TAAS outreach program. Have you always wanted to participate in a TAAS school star party but did not know what you would do when you got there? Well, fear no longer. The TAAS October general membership meeting on Saturday, October 11, will be a training session for school star-party participants.

Bob Hufnagel, the TAAS education coordinator, is preparing an evening of fun, education, and training for current and future participants. He will give a short presentation about the school star parties followed by training sessions on “How to Make a Comet,” “Rainbows in the Night Sky,” “Ask the Astronomer,” and “What Do I Do with My Telescope and All Those Eager Little Eyeballs?”

Please plan to attend and become a part of what many consider the most exciting program in the TAAS inventory. The general meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. at UNM’s Regener Hall (see map, last page).

Science Fair Winners. Winners of the 2008 TAAS Accent Windows Science Fair will be recognized at the October 11 TAAS general meeting. Winners will accept awards and can speak about their projects. This will be a part of the meeting’s special Education program.

TAAS’s New Astronomy 101 Will Teach Fundamentals

John Kaltenbach

TAAS is pleased to announce Astronomy 101. Are you a TAAS member who doesn’t know your way around the night sky? Don’t know a globular cluster from a nebula? Maybe you are hesitant to buy a telescope or you already have one and have been frustrated by not being able to find things. Then Astronomy 101 is for you!

On October 10, Astronomy 101 will meet for the first time at the UNM Campus Observatory at 800 Yale Blvd., two blocks north of Lomas, at 6:30 p.m. We will start with a classroom session followed by a night sky orientation. We will also provide beginner challenges for you to find during the month. We plan to meet monthly. An Astronomy 101 page for the TAAS Web site is in the works.

If you have questions about the program, or you are a more advanced TAAS member with ideas or resources, feel free to e-mail john@jkhomes.com.
Celebrating the Big Dipper

I DO NOT REMEMBER learning about the Big Dipper, but it seems like I have always known it. It is like an old friend, always there. When I go outside and I am unfamiliar with my surroundings, I look for the Big Dipper. As soon as I find it, low or high in the sky, I immediately become oriented.

I have many fond memories of the Big Dipper. The best was with my 92-year-old mother returning home at night from a dinner. She asked me to show her the Big Dipper. We drove west onto a Kansas country road and stopped. There she could view the dipper high in the sky through the open car window. She told me she learned about the Big Dipper as a child on the very same farm where I grew up.

I recall the Big Dipper appearing above the North Star during our summer months when flying north to Texas from South America. During our winter months, the Big Dipper would appear below the North Star. Often I would fly a night trip from Texas to the west coast and back in one night. On one flight, I plotted the position of the Big Dipper to verify that it indeed did move 15 degrees per hour.

The Big Dipper is the best known asterism in the northern hemisphere. I found it interesting to hear my friends in New Zealand brag about their Big Dipper experiences just as we brag about our Southern Cross and Magellanic Cloud experiences. Enjoy the Big Dipper and share it with others at our school and public star parties. It is our best and oldest friend in the night sky.

Observe – Educate – Have Fun

UNM Observatory Report

Tom Davies

Friday, September 26, we had 3 telescopes and about 35 people at the UNM Observatory, with an even mix of students and families.

The observatory was closed. Brock, Chuck, a new member, another member (sorry, I do not recall his name, but everybody’s support was appreciated) and I were there. Melissa dropped by later in the evening. We had a good time in spite of the clouds and did lots of Jupiter observing. We passed out many TAAS cards to those interested in the October Oak Flat star party.

The University of New Mexico (UNM) Campus Observatory is open to the public many Friday evenings during the Fall 2008 Semester. The observatory will be closed on October 17 and November 28 and may be closed on December 12. The public hours are 7–9 p.m. during Standard Time and 8–10 p.m. during Daylight-Saving Time. The observatory is on the Albuquerque Campus northwest of the Physics and Astronomy Building and the University Hospital. For information and a map, visit [http://panda.unm.edu/observatory/](http://panda.unm.edu/observatory/). Recorded information is available at 505-277-1446. Staff members decide when to close the observatory due to inclement weather. The decision is posted to their Web page above by 3 p.m. every Friday. Robert Williams is the UNM Observatory Coordinator for TAAS.

Messier SIG Potluck Dinner

THE MESSIER SIG will have its annual potluck dinner on Sunday, October 19, 2008, beginning at 4:00 p.m. The event will be held at Dee Friesen’s house. Details are on the TAAS Web site under Unofficial Events, which is found on the home page. All TAAS members and their guests are welcome. An RSVP is requested. For RSVPs and questions contact SIG leader Will Ferrell at 903-4415.
GNTO News & Views

Peter Eschman

OUR AUGUST 30 “New Moon” observing opportunity was canceled due to cloudy weather. We followed our cancellation procedure by sending e-mail notices and recording a message on our TAAS phone hotline under Option 2. We also placed a cancellation note on our Web site in the top center information box.

Last month I said we had applied for a grant from PNM. We learned from Barry Spletzer (TAAS Grants Coordinator) that we did not receive funding from PNM for renewable energy resources. We hope to get information from PNM regarding any problems with our request.

We had a very successful event on September 30, starting with our GNTO Open House, followed by our Fall Equinox Picnic, Training, Sky Tours and observing. By the time I arrived, the facility was already open, so I was off the hook for this duty. In the early afternoon, we held a refresher/update session for GNTO key holders to review new hardware and operating procedures. The potluck picnic was well attended, and we had a good variety of tasty offerings. Thanks go to Becky Ramotowski who used our TAAS-L listserv to coordinate dishes for the potluck. Larry Cash cooked hotdogs and hamburgers on the propane barbeque until all were well satisfied. Thanks Larry, and thanks to all who contributed to this picnic!

After the potluck wrapped up, we got to work on a number of tasks: Dee Friesen, Will Ferrell, and Bruce Levin hung a window blind in the Robert Ortega Building; Steve Welch and Ariel Boston soldered a broken cable connection on the hand pad for the Isengard Astrometric System; and Dale Murray worked on collimating the Masera Bino scope. As the skies grew darker, Melissa Kirk conducted a training session on our “Introduction to GNTO and the Isengard Telescope,” and Robert Williams hosted a green-laser-guided sky tour of constellations and asterisms. Later, Larry and Melissa used the Isengard to show selected objects to interested observers.

Well over 40 people attended this event, and we had 19 telescopes in operation along with some observers using binoculars. We were treated to a few bright meteors and one or two bolides. We also spotted a bright pass of the Jules Verne Automated Transfer Vehicle, recently undocked from the International Space Station. Sky conditions were good in the early evening, with clouds moving in around 10:30 p.m. About an hour later, the clouds began to clear only to reveal the moon now hanging above the Eastern horizon. I closed up the facility around midnight, and Gordon Pegue closed the gate shortly after I left.

Our final September event is a “New Moon” observing opportunity on September 27. Our “New Moon” observing event for October is October 25, and our next Training event for GNTO equipment takes place November 22. Steve Welch plans to have our CCD imaging equipment in our 10-foot dome, ready for you to use when sky conditions permit. We will have the comfortable Robert Ortega Building open and our Guest Trailer available for coffee, hot chocolate, and any snacks you might want to share. We’ve got a bunch of great equipment waiting for you at GNTO, so plan your trip to GNTO soon. Why wait?

GNTO committee meetings are open to any interested TAAS members, and they provide a great way to get more involved with your observatory. We meet every other month at 6:30 p.m. at JB’s Restaurant on Eubank just north of I-40. Our next committee meetings are October 16 and December 18. If you have questions about GNTO, please contact me (Peter Eschman, gnto@taas.org, phone 873-1517).

I hope to see you soon at your observatory.

Keynote Speaker for Perihelion Banquet

DR. DAVE WESTPFALH will present the keynote address at the TAAS Perihelion Banquet on Saturday, January 10, 2009. The event will be held in the MCM Elegante Hotel in Albuquerque. More details will be announced in the near future.

Dr. Westpfahl is a friend of TAAS and has given many interesting presentations to the organization. He is the chairman of the Physics Department at New Mexico Tech, conducts research at the Very Large Array Telescope (VLA), and is involved with the development of the Interferometer Telescope at the Magdalena Ridge Observatory.

Dr. Westpfahl is well known for his ability to communicate science to the general public. He will present a nontechnical talk on the value of astronomy to society.
The Magdalena Ridge Observatory (MRO) visit is an annual event, and in addition to excellent viewing, the scenic drive up the mountain is a showcase of the many variations of the environment in the Land of Enchantment. As part of the recent Enchanted Skies Star Party, TAAS members Will Ferrell and Dee Friesen spent the night on top of South Baldy Ridge at an elevation of 10,600 feet. The trip included a visit to the 2.4-Meter Telescope and the Interferometer Telescope under construction. The visitors set up their telescopes on a flat meadow area adjacent to the Interferometer building. Observers were able to use the restroom, lounge, and kitchen facilities of the building during the night.

The observing was absolutely terrific, with seventh-magnitude stars visible to the unaided eye. Observers were able to see M33 in Triangulum with the naked eye. The 18-inch Dobsonian telescope that Will brought to the site was the largest and most popular. Visitors from eight other states attended. For more information on the MRO, visit http://www.mro.nmt.edu/Home/index.htm.

—Dee Friesen
Welcome to New and Returning TAAS Members

KENNETH RUHL

Note from Treasurer

Clarification of New Member and Renewal Policy
Renewal notices will be mailed out one 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.

Donations to TAAS

General
RICK HUDSON

Education
RICK HUDSON
OÑATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

GNTO
RICK HUDSON
ALAN SCOTT

Dark Sky
RICK HUDSON

Monthly Membership Report

September 2008

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Editor's Note

Please note that the deadline for the next issue of the Sidereal Times is Friday, October 24. Please e-mail text as an attachment, preferably in Microsoft Word or OpenOffice.org Writer. Please do not embed photos in text. Attach photos and illustrations separately. 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.

Memberships Services

for:
- Membership Inquiries
- Events Information
- Volunteer Opportunities

Contact Bill Firth at membership@taas.org

Contact Dan Clark at treasurer@taas.org

P.O. Box 50581 Albuquerque, NM
### October 2008

**Sunday** | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** | **Saturday**
---|---|---|---|---|---|---
 | | | 1 ATM SIG Meeting | 2 | 3 UNM | 4 Oak Flat Star Party/Messier SIG Meeting |
 | | | 5 | 6 | 7 El Dorado High School Star Party | 8 | 9 Board of Directors Meeting |
 | 10 | 11 General Meeting | | | | 12 | 13 |
 | | | | | | 14 | 15 ATM SIG Meeting |
 | | | | | | 16 GNTO Committee Meeting | 17 |
 | 18 | | | | | | 19 Messier SIG Potluck Dinner |
 | | | | | | 20 | 21 Messier SIG Meeting |
 | | | | | | 22 | 23 |
 | | | | | | 24 UNM, Sidereal Times Deadline | 25 GNTO NM Observing |
 | | | | | | 26 | 27 |
 | | | | | | 28 | 29 |
 | | | | | | 30 | 31 UNM |

### Annual Placitas Star Party November 1

On Saturday, November 1, TAAS and Las Placitas Association will co-host the annual star party to promote dark skies in the Placitas community. The party will begin around sunset, which occurs this year at 6:11 p.m. Please plan to arrive closer to 5:30 for setup. The event will again be held at the Homestead Village Shopping Center (Merc) with telescopes set up along the dirt road leading toward the Homesteads subdivision (see map). Come out with your telescopes and binoculars ready to answer lots of great questions from the public! The Moon (a waxing crescent) will set early at 8:45 p.m., so it shouldn’t interfere with the relatively dark skies for long. Be sure to arrive early to catch Venus and then Jupiter setting in the west and stay late to see the ghostly Helix Nebula rising in Aquarius. For additional information, call Shannon Mann, 771-0126.

Map courtesy of Barry Gordon
### Notes

Hotline 254-TAAS (8227).

GNTO = General Nathan Twining Observatory
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 Building, Corner of Lomas and Yale
SIG = Special Interest Group
TBA = to be announced
Blue Italics = Non-TAAS events

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### TAAS General Meeting

**Saturday, October 8, 2008**
7:00 P.M.
Regener Hall
University of New Mexico
(See map, back page)

**School Star-Party Training**
Bob Hufnagel, TAAS Education Coordinator

Winners of the TAAS Accent Windows Science Fair will be presented.

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<th>November 2008</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>2 Daylight Saving Time Ends</td>
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TAAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
September 11, 2008  
University of New Mexico Physics and Astronomy Building  

MEETING MINUTES

Directors present: Melissa Kirk (Secretary), Bob Havlen, Charlie Mullen, Dee Friesen, Gordon Pegue, Tom Davies, Larry Cash.

Directors absent: Steve Welch, Pete Eschman, Dan Clark, Dick Fate (excused), Bob Hufnagel (excused)

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m.

There are no corrections to the August Board meeting minutes.

Executive Report

1. Dee talked to a TAAS member about lack of handicapped access at Regener Hall. UNM security should provide handicapped access to facilities for the general meetings.

2. Jim Palmer told Dee the New Mexico Solar Fiesta will take place on September 20 and 21 at Highland High School. TAAS members will be there on September 21 for an observing event.

3. TAAS is considering having a different theme each month for the International Year of Astronomy (IYA).

4. The New Mexico Museum of Natural History (NMMNH) still wants volunteers for their Starry Nights programs. Volunteers pay $8 to become members of the museum volunteer organization. Membership entitles volunteers free admission to numerous museum events.

5. The TAAS attorney said it is legally correct to have the TAAS Store accessible online via a link from our Web site.

6. Hilton Stout has reviewed our insurance policy. Dee will meet with him next Friday.

7. Solar System Ambassador Len Duda will make a presentation at 1 p.m. on November 15 at the National Atomic Museum.

8. TAAS has been invited to participate in the ZOOM engineering career program at the National Atomic Museum on February 7, 2009.

9. The New Mexico statewide planning meeting for IYA2009 will be held on September 28.

10. The Friends of Tijeras Pueblo contacted Dee. They would like TAAS to help them host a star party some time in the future.

11. Twenty-five percent of the stock of TAAS screensavers will go to general meeting speakers. Seventy-five percent of the screensavers will go to GNTO to be sold.

Program Report

TAAS will continue to have observing reports during the general meetings.

Treasurer’s Report

Account balances as of the end of August
- General Fund: $18074.14
- GNTO Fund: $ 5216.08
- Education Fund: $ 5733.96
- Dark Sky S.I.G. Fund: $ 1161.91
- Special Projects Fund: $ 5457.23
- Science Fair Fund: $ 400.00
- Cosmic Carnival Fund: $ 34.35
- Astronomical League Reserve: $ 81.56
- Total Funds on Deposit: $36077.67
- Total Expenses for August 2008: $ 184.52
- Total Income for August 2008: $ 1025.76

TAAS Store

The TAAS store will be introduced at the next general meeting. Dan Clark will take license plates. Pete Eschman will take screensavers. TAAS doesn’t have to pay gross receipts tax on the sales of items in the TAAS store.

Web Site

The Astronomical League recognizes webmasters of astronomy clubs. The Oak Flat events should have a description instead of just a map. Bob Hufnagel is concerned that the Web site does not mention that a $100 donation is suggested for school star parties. The Web action committee needs to define a protocol to decide what gets posted to the calendar. The Board should authorize the personnel who will be responsible for posting events. Key events need to be on the calendar, per Dee’s presidential authority.

Fundamentals of Astronomy Special Interest Group (SIG)

A Fundamentals of Astronomy SIG has been formed. The leader is John Kaltenback. Other members are Bob Havlen, Charlie Mullen and Robert Williams. The SIG is developing a program of events and will announce some activities in the near future. Plans include some activities at the UNM Observatory on Friday nights.

Committee Reports

Education

At the October general meeting, there will be an emphasis on education, and TAAS will recognize the winners of the
Meeting Minutes continued from page 8

University of New Mexico Science Fair that was held on March 21, 2008.

The Board voted unanimously to give each science fair winner one copy of the Smithsonian book *Stargazing* by Peter Grego.

Action teams should convey to the Board each November the committee budgets. Dee is examining budgeting procedures.

Bob Havlen will discuss the Supernovae Toolkit during the September 13 general meeting.

Membership
The Membership Action Team consists of Dee, Bill Firth, and Jim Palmer. Bill will send membership packets to new members. The action team is investigating the options for name tags for general meetings.

Events Retrospect
The last Oak Flat star party was great. There were 28 telescopes, and public turnout was light. The GNTO Video Outreach equipment was used at the star party.

TAAS hosted a fine star party last Tuesday at Queen of Heaven School. Bob Hufnagel demonstrated comet making. A portable planetarium system was set up.

New Business
Dee suggested having the Winter Banquet at the Elegante Hotel. The hotel has been renovated and will have 3600 square feet available for our banquet. The Board unanimously voted to have the banquet at the Elegante Hotel. It was suggested that we have a keynote speaker.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Dark Sky SIG
David Penasa

Fall NPO Newsletter Posts Las Cruces Lighting Documents

John Gilkison, Director of the National Public Observatory (NPO) publishes a regular newsletter that should be of interest to the membership. The Fall 2008 Field of View newsletter is now available for viewing. (No password required.)


John has been busy working on outdoor lighting issues this summer. He and the NPO have worked with the City of Las Cruces in the past to develop ordinances regarding outdoor lighting. He includes links to the documents submitted to the City regarding proposed changes to city ordinances on lighting.

School Star Party Report: Queen of Heaven, West Mesa

Bob Hufnagel

We had two school star parties in September, both of which were well attended and enjoyed by the students, their parents, and TAAS volunteers. Queen of Heaven School is a small school and had their first TAAS star party on September 9. About 40 students and their parents turned out for the event. TAAS volunteers made comets and pocket solar systems in the gym, while several others set up their telescopes to view the night's offerings. While the scopes were being set up, it started to rain, but the ever-optimistic TAAS members didn't let that stop them. After a short time, the heavens cleared, and everyone was treated to fine views of Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, and Mars, as well as deep-sky wonders.

The second school star party was at West Mesa High School on September 24 hosted by the West Mesa chapter of SACNAS, an organization based on promoting higher education in math and science for minorities all around the United States. With 150 students signed up for the event, all of the TAAS volunteers were kept busy showing off Jupiter, Venus, M13, M31, and many other objects through a very clear, stable atmosphere. At the beginning, the TAAS solar scope was used to view a very quiet sun for less than 30 minutes before it set and the scopes were turned to Jupiter and Venus while the sky was still bright. West Mesa High School had their own first star party in August, and we were invited to help out with this one, which attracted almost twice as many viewers.

While the students and parents enjoy these star parties, the TAAS volunteers enjoy a great personal satisfaction in introducing the sky to young people. If you would like to take part in future school star parties, please contact me at education_coord@taas.org, and we will include you in this very worthwhile endeavor.
TAAS Help Wanted, October

TAAS needs people to assist with the following areas. If you are interested, contact Dee Friesen or any other TAAS BOD member. Contact information for all BOD members is on page 11 of this newsletter.

General Meeting Planning – Identify speakers, activities and events for the monthly TAAS meetings.
   Contact Dick Fate.

Education — Participate in the TAAS Educational Outreach Program by attending school star parties.
   Contact Bob Hufnagel.

GNTO Committee — Join the committee and receive training to become a GNTO Key Holder.
   Contact Pete Eschman.

Membership — Assist with the conduct of the TAAS membership program. This includes procedures to track membership, identify reasons for nonrenewal of membership, and promote TAAS membership.
   Contact Bill Firth.

Observing — Identify significant observing events for TAAS members and events to present to the public. Creation of observing contests and observing lists for members to complete to receive TAAS awards.
   Contact Steve Welch.

TAAS Membership Survey — Create a survey of the entire membership to identify the interests, desires, critiques, and thoughts of the membership concerning the activities and events of the organization.
   Contact Dee Friesen.

TAAS Social Events — Assist with the planning and conduct of TAAS social events.
   Contact Diane Murray.

TAAS Web Site — Assist with the the new TAAS Web site including e-mail procedures and other electronic communications.
   Contact Dee Friesen.

International Year of Astronomy planning — Assist with the planning of TAAS events for the IYA.
   Contact Dee Friesen.

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—online. 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. Online reading also allows you to enlarge for eye comfort and click to most Web addresses instantly.

The catch is that the full-color version is only available at our Web site: www.taas.org. If you prefer to download and read your newsletter on your computer—or print it yourself—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 and save TAAS money.

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.
## 2008 TAAS Board of Directors/Staff

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
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<td>Web Master</td>
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