



May 2016

Editor -Jack Fritz

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area for decades. Its 291 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 lectures, astronomy lectures, educational outreach sessions and much more.

President's Message

KYLE BRINKMAN

★ An astronomy student had a part time job working in the university's off-campus housing office. One day, a fellow student, upon entering the office in thought about the morning lecture, asked: "What is an astronomical unit?" To which the astronomy student replied, "One heck of a big apartment."



We all love a laugh. There is no shortage of jokes involving our eighth planet to entertain middle schoolers. Some may think of astronomy as a serious hobby for brilliant minds. Let's all agree to let the brilliant minds perception persist. The truth is we are ordinary people who enjoy the natural universe which includes laughter.

The good times we have together make the club a fun organization for all. We had a good time at the Spring picnic last weekend and expect more good times ahead. Be sure to keep up with the club calendar and all the upcoming events. Keep looking up.

New Members

We would like to welcome Kami & Gabriel Malestein, and Edward & Cynthia Nemecek to our family of members.

General Meeting

This month's meeting will take place on Friday, May 27th at 8:00 PM, at the Science Center of Pinellas County, 7701 22nd Ave. N, St. Petersburg, FL.

Bring your telescope and observe the night sky together with your fellow club members. This will be a great time to pick up observing tips from our more experienced members.

Upcoming Programs

June - To be announced.

Club Meeting Hurricane Policy

Hurricane season is upon us. We may cancel the meeting if a hurricane is threatening Pinellas County. If that happens, we will send a cancellation notification via email. Alternatively, you may call Allen Maroney at 727 867-4781 or Jack Fritz at 813 508-5680 to check on the status of the meeting.

Hurricane Preparedness Week is May 15-21, 2016. The guidelines from the National Weather Service in Ruskin can help you be ready. Go to:

<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/ready.php>

Member Appreciation

KYLE BRINKMAN

★ We all enjoy a bit of levity. Craftsmanship is also a skill that we all can admire. We have a member who has the creativity and skill to construct some of the most interesting functional telescopes. There was the cow scope that has been a hit at public viewings. There are the coke bottle binoculars that actually work. The shark scope unveiled at the OBS was a hoot. Then there were the most serious models of Galileo's refractor that gave us an appreciation for how hard it must have been to see anything at all in those days. Tom Spano is that craftsman whose work we all know and enjoy. He also constructed the raffle scope for last year's OBS. It was a replica of Sir Isaac Newton's first reflector telescope.

Thank you, Tom, for your work for the club and sharing your talents.

Thanks also to everyone who posted photos of the Mercury transit and set up for public viewings.

Membership Chair Request

SHIRLEY VUILLE

★ Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about your membership. svuille@aol.com

Please refer to the SPAC Calendar on our website for upcoming events or rain date changes.

June Astronomical Events

STEVE ROBBINS

★ The early morning of June 3rd is the opposition of Saturn. Like all planets at opposition, it will rise at sunset, culminate at midnight and set at sunrise on June 3rd. It will be part of an interesting triangle between Mars, Saturn, and Antares, with Mars the brightest,

then Saturn and then Antares. For a few hours before and after opposition, at 01:23 local time, look for a phenomenon called the Seeliger effect. Because the light illuminating Saturn is coming from directly behind us, none of the ice particles are in shadow. This causes a marked brightening of the rings from our point of view.

Just before dawn of the 3rd, you'll be able to see Mercury .7° N of the Moon.

June 11th Jupiter will be 1.6° N of the moon.

June 20th is the summer solstice with a full Moon to celebrate.

The Moon

- New Moon - June 4, 22:59 EDT
- First Quarter - June 12, 04:09 EDT
- Full Moon - June 20, 07:02 EDT
- Third Quarter - June 27, 14:18 EDT

NASA News

STEVE ROBBINS

★ Do we even need to mention SpaceX finally [nailed a barge landing](#)? "Of course, I still love you" was 300 miles east of shore at the time in sea state four conditions with waves between 4.5 and 8 feet. Winds were 50 mph. It was no easy landing on the robot barge, which [navigated back to Port Canaveral autonomously](#), with no crew aboard. Because of extreme sea conditions the barge took four days to return.

The most successful hunter of exoplanets, the space telescope Kepler, has detected 1,080 confirmed exoplanets so far. But on April 8, [an event still under investigation](#) caused a cascade of error alarms which overheated the systems and put Kepler into a power-gobbling emergency mode. Kepler is 75 million miles or 13 light-minutes away from Earth, so no manned rescue is possible. NASA

was able to reprogram Kepler's crippled computers and [get it back on-line](#) for science by April 22.

In the meantime, the [little telescope that could](#), the 23½" (can you believe we had a bigger scope at OBS?) TRAPPIST (TRANSiting Planets and Planetesimals Small Telescope) scope has hit paydirt in its survey of 60 ultra-cool dwarf stars that astrophysicists assured could not have any planets around them. The first confirmed exoplanet discovered, TRAPPIST-1 (2MASS J23062928 - 0502285) has [three planets orbiting](#) in the zone where liquid water might be possible.

Meanwhile, one of our [five dwarf planets](#), Makemake (pronounced MAH-kee-MAH-kee) has been discovered by the Hubble Space Telescope to be [accompanied by a moon](#). This means that all the dwarf planets discovered beyond Neptune's orbit in the Kuiper Belt have moons and only Ceres, in the asteroid belt, lacks one.

Mirror Lab

★ Devon is polishing his 10" mirror and should be ready to start figuring it soon. Ron finished refiguring his 8". We have had two telescopes donated to the lab. They are both Dobsonian style telescopes, an 8" f/6 and a 10" f/6. They will either be auctioned or raffled off this year.

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 parts, the mirror lab could use them for various projects.

New Moon at Withlacoochee

KELLY ANDERSON



Our Spring Picnic weekend was



marked with clear skies, lots of food, wonderful socializing, and a host of SPAC members taking advantage of all of the above. A few of



us arrived on Thursday and were treated to good seeing until about midnight when everything clouded over. Shortly after, with no fuss, it began to rain. Even though it was a gentle rain, it was not the shower we were hoping for, thinking (silly us) that we would be treated to the Eta Aquarids meteor shower. Oh well, there's always the next night.

The rest of the weekend was clear with fairly good transparency. Imagers were clicking away all Friday and Saturday nights. The Picnic on Saturday afternoon was attended by

a veritable galaxy of astronomers and their support crews. The main event was Shirley's secret recipe gourmet hamburgers (no kidding, they were really good) along with hot dogs, meatballs, desserts, and the usual sus-



pects. The burgers and dogs were expertly cooked by Jack Fritz and, well, me. We hardly burned anything, and no one got hurt.

With full tummies, we all set up for an excellent night of viewing. Even the dew monster showed us some respect. Three Celestron CPCs (8", 9.25" & 11") were set up on "Celestron Hill" and everyone enjoyed moving from one to the other for some spectacular sights. Refractors, Cassegrains, and Reflectors were also well attended. Unfortunately, the Eta Aquarids didn't make a return engagement, and only a few random meteors were spotted.

All in all, a great weekend for astronomy. Mark your calendars for the next DOTM 3-5 June.

Outreach

JIM HUNTER

★ Jack and I helped Dr. McKay with his USF classes on April 12. There were at least 100 students attending. As usual for his classes, they varied from having never looked through a telescope, to having their own. They were very enthusiastic and appreciative. Seeing was good. I got up to 370x on the

Moon, which showed a three part splash mark in a crater near the terminator.

April 30th Steve, Tom, Wally, and I did a short program for the Girl Scouts in Palm Harbor. It was a terrible location, compounded by periodic clouds and no Moon. There were about 60 enthusiastic Scouts and 15 parents/staff. It was a good night except for the no-see-ums that were numerous.

I gave a Solar System slide-show presentation at the Senior Center in Clearwater on May 9th. Approximately 30 seniors were treated to a view of the Mercury transit.

Scott and Diane Walsh set up in Gulfport on May 6th. Scott writes: "Excellent weather



brought out the best in Jupiter. This outreach event, every first Friday, and third Saturday continues to be a popular fixture at Gulfport. When asked why I do it, I say, just trying to give back to the club. Yes, it is in a small way, but work and the constraints of just normal life's events, allow little time for this hobby, well at least for me. Does a round trip of 3 hours drive time to Gulfport, sound crazy? Yes, but this astronomy hobby is just crazy good. Puts my busy life back into a happy place, a celestial realignment of sorts. Gulfport sparks interest in our wonderful hobby and continues to bring in new members. All this continues to bring me back to Gulfport."

Thanks to all who have helped this year.

SPAC Business Meeting 

The Business Meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is Wednesday, June 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

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Vice Pres.:	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
Secretary:	Paul McNabb	727 345-5713
Treasurer:	Jim Hunter	813 909-7013
Dir.-at-Large:	Mike Davis	727 474-6785
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SPACE Editor	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
Public Relations	John O'Neill	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

Click on the name to send email

Recognition of Patrons & Benefactors:

Clifford B. Benham	Benefactor
David & Mina Swan	Benefactor
Jack & Roni Fritz	Benefactor
Antonio & Cherish Paris	Benefactor
Tommy & Amy Ming	Benefactor
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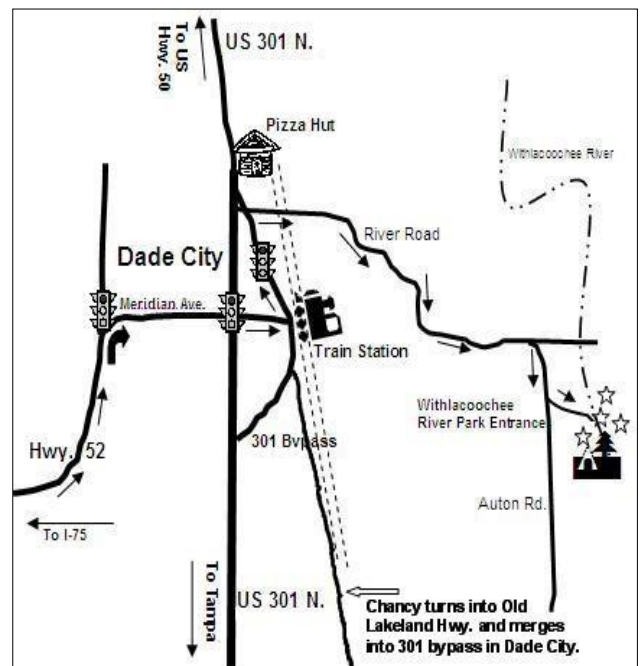
Editor	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
Assistant Editor	Nancy Huff	813 621-3606
Reporter	Kelly Anderson	813 672-2751
In the News	Steve Robbins	386 736-9123
Mirror Lab	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086

Withlacoochee New Moon Weekend

Our next New Moon Weekend falls on June 3rd and 4th.

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 (*Under 18*): _____

Address: _____ City: _____ St. ____ Zip: _____

E-Mail address: _____ Newsletter Preference: Email [] US Mail []

Single: [] \$ 20.00/YR. Includes one adult, minor children, the "SPACE" newsletter, and all the rights and privileges of membership.

Family: [] \$ 25.00/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.

Benefactor: [] \$100.00/YR. A Benefactor member is entitled to the above rights and privileges.