



# SPACE

St. Petersburg Astronomy Club **Examiner**

February 2025

Editor - Guy Earle

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area since 1927. Our 351 adult members are dedicated to promoting and sharing the wonders and science of astronomy. We host a dark-sky star party each New Moon at Withlacoochee River Park, along with local star parties, telescope-making workshops, science lectures, astronomy lectures, educational outreach sessions and much more.

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Sh2-308 **Dolphin Head Nebula** over the Withlacoochee River Park in Dade City. Image captured with an Astro Tech 60mm doublet refractor, the ASI183MC camera and an L-Extreme filter **by Joe Canzoneri**



## March Preview

The March general meeting is being combined with our New Moon weekend on Saturday, March 29th to bring back our annual Spring Picnic at Withlacoochee River Park. We'll be sharing more details via email next month, most likely after our business meeting on the 12th.

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Our February speaker will be representatives from Dwarf Labs themselves. They will be joining us via Zoom from Hong Kong to showcase their amazing Dwarf III smart telescope.



## February General Meeting

This month's general meeting will take place on Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM at **St. Petersburg College, Gibbs Campus**, 6605 5th Avenue North, Natural Science Building, Classroom 236. The meeting will also available virtually. This month, **Aria Huang and Clair Hue from Dwarf Labs** will be virtually joining us from Hong Kong to give a presentation on their new **Dwarf III and the future of smart telescopes.**



Join Zoom Meeting [HERE](#)

Meeting ID: 834 8435 3027

Passcode: 092807

The club's **New Moon observing weekend** is on February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup> at [Withlacoochee River Park](#) east of Dade City.



## New SPAC Members

We would like to welcome Lisa Renshaw & Joe Della-Penna, Steve & Kayleigh Sloman, Jack Bondurant & Brianna Deaubler, Adrian & Malinda Tullo, and Abbey Hall to our family of members.

## Examiner Staff

Editor	<a href="#">Guy Earle</a>
Space News	<a href="#">Steve Robbins</a>
Field Reporter	<a href="#">Kelly Anderson</a>
Mirror Lab	<a href="#">Ralph Craig</a>
Image Gallery	<a href="#">Peter McLean</a>
Mirror Lab	<a href="#">Mike Davis</a>
	<a href="#">Allen Maroney</a>

## *President's Message*

Good evening, and I hope all is well with everyone. Next week would have been our annual Orange Blossom Special but unfortunately, due to the hurricanes and resulting damage, we had to cancel our beloved star party. We are already looking forward to next year and will pick up where we left off this year. I recently visited the park and it is mostly dry with electric and water available on the main observing field. The RV campground remains closed. The club will hold its monthly New Moon weekend Feb 28 – Mar 2<sup>nd</sup>. Be sure to come out and support the park. Our March New Moon weekend will be a combination New Moon weekend and our general meeting, our old Spring Picnic. We will hold a pot luck dinner and meeting at 5:30 PM. We will send a RSVP email later and ask that you bring something along for a side. The club will provide hamburgers and hot dogs.

Last week, Guy and I met with the Withlacoochee Park managers and their county supervisors in order to discuss future plans for the park. They have a disaster request with FEMA to replace numerous structures damaged by the flooding, and we are working with them to explore our options to replace the clubhouse and temporarily store our equipment in a building. One possibility is that we may see the cabins relocated to the north end of the field, which would benefit the club with both power and a place for us to rent on New Moon weekends. If you requested a refund for OBS and have not received one, please reach out to me.

We are working on a number of changes within the club, including how we conduct outreach and our relationship with the park. One of the main pushes we are working on is expanding club membership. We are also looking to adapt our monthly meeting with more content towards learning skills with observing, astro-imaging and processing. We have a wealth of knowledge in this club and it would be a neat idea for us to network amongst ourselves and with other clubs to learn new things. For example, next weekend, a group of us will be traveling to Chiefland for the New Moon weekend to participate in the first Very Small Array of scopes with the Seestar and Dwarf III scopes. We will network them together and collectively image the same targets to see what we can do to create better images. We will be sure to talk about this at the next general meeting in March.

I'd like to challenge everyone for ideas for us as a club. What presentations would you like to see? What technology interests you the most? How can we get more involved with public outreach and recruiting new members? What can we do to grow the club. Feel free to send me your thoughts and comments to [Spacstarparty@gmail.com](mailto:Spacstarparty@gmail.com).



## *SPAC Raffle Telescope*

The Mirror Lab has a 12.5" f/5.3 Dobsonian for this year's raffle scope that was to be won at our annual Orange Blossom Special star party. While OBS was cancelled this year due to hurricane Milton, we are still raffling off this beautiful telescope. This is a Newtonian truss tube telescope that dismantles for easy transport, and is likely the last mirror lab produced telescope for some time. We are still looking for a home for our displaced mirror lab, so if you have an idea of a location that would be able to accommodate the lab, please let us know. You can well imagine the difficulties of refurbishing and producing a great telescope under such conditions, so take advance of this opportunity to own a piece of their beautiful work.

Tickets are \$10 donation/each or 3 for \$25. All donations go to the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club. There is a large link below to get tickets.

The drawing will be conducted on Saturday March 29<sup>th</sup> at the Spring Picnic and the winner will be announced via email to all participants. You do not need to be present to win. However, it will be the winner's responsibility to arrange pick-up.



[Raffle Link](#)



# January General Meeting Recap

Mike started the meeting by giving updates on the state of Withlacoochee River Park, which at the time of composing this article (February 16<sup>th</sup>), the park is back open and has both power and water. We are very thankful for everything that Duane and his park staff have done to get things back up and running. Mike and I are continuing to discuss the future of the clubhouse and SPAC's involvement with the park's cabins with Pasco County leadership.



The January meeting featured Conrad Cornado, who joined us via Zoom and gave a great presentation on solar imaging. His progress in equipment and experience was interesting, as solar viewing and imaging is very different than planetary and deep sky. We are very thankful for his participation and sharing his knowledge with our membership.

If you missed the meeting, you can view it, the presentation, and past meetings by viewing them on our website [HERE](#).



# *SPAC New Moon Weekend*

## *Field Report*

*January 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, 2025*

By Intrepid Field Reporter

Happy New Year!!!

We finally were able to return to our beloved dark site at the Withlacoochee River Park after a three-month hiatus caused by our friends Helene and Milton. While Helene didn't cause a lot of damage, Milton was very, very hard on the park. Trees everywhere were scattered in the 100+ winds and the torrential rains flooded much of the lower elevations. This flooding included much of our observing-field, the RV camping area, and caused extensive damage to the floor and underlayment of our beloved Huff House.

Chief Ranger Duane Mericle and his stalwart crew worked their hearts out restoring the Park to operation and were able to open the field for us this weekend (Huzzah!). The RV camping area and historical buildings were still under water, but at least the water had receded off the field and the Huff House, and electrical power (*miribile dictu!*) was up and working; water service was still unavailable but that wasn't gonna stop our dedicated star gazers!

Jumping the gun a bit on Thursday were Joe Canzoneri (*quelle surprise!*), Bob & Rita Mizell, and Peter MacLean. Alicia Tomaszewski spent the night in her tent, but had to leave Friday morning. Our early-birders reported that it was a bit coolish, but the skies cleared up nicely by midnight to about 4:00 am. So, off to a slow start, but then there was ...

... Friday when we were joined by Mike Reese, Gary Daniels & Debbie Raia, Tim Harris, Christian Ruback, and your Intrepid Field Reporter (who hates cold weather). Fortunately,



temperatures that day were comfortable and skies were mostly clear. Around nightfall it became stunningly clear. The air was slightly humid but seeing was good. Temperatures dropped a bit (actually, a lot!) so the furnaces in our RVs got a good workout. But all that was preamble for



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... Saturday when we welcomed Nancy Schafer, Shawn Wilson, Dave Johnston, Chris Foster, and the Gold Dust twins Doug Sliman and Guy Earle. Also, our esteemed President Mike Partain made a guest appearance. Temperatures climbed into the comfortable zone by mid-morning and kept rising to the “stinky hot” level by afternoon. It was clear all day, and soon after nightfall it got cold and kept plunging down to arctic regions, well into the 20s. Thankfully there was no breeze at all. At least if there was one I was too chilled to feel it.

Seeing that night was the best I’ve seen for Withlachochee. Skies were absolutely awesome! Sorry for all those who missed it, but it was probably way too cold that night for those of us of more delicate constitutions. Fortunately, I still have my thermal underwear from my Alaska days.

During the middle of night, I went out to check my telescope and was mugged by a shivering Florida Skunk Ape who robbed me of my quilt-lined field jacket.

Our next New Moon weekend will be February 28 thru March 2. As usual, President Partain has guaranteed clear skies. See you then!

**BREAKING NEWS!** As I was writing this missive, I was informed the water service has also been restored! We’re back in business, people!

Thanks, Duane. You’re awesome!





Figure 1 PacMan Nebula - Joe Canzoneri



Figure 2 Heart Nebula - Kelly Anderson

## *Examiner changes and a request*

You probably noticed within .24 seconds that the color of the background has changed for the newsletter. I realized the other night, as I was reading something on my Galaxy tablet, that the format of my Kindle book was easier to read than the Examiner. Don't get me wrong, I loved the blue, which, if you've ever been in our house, is really not a far stretch into a foreign color palette. I also changed the font, and I think the combination makes both the text and images pop a bit more. I hope you enjoy the change.



That brings me to my "request" portion of this brief message. I think the Examiner team does a great job submitting articles each month, but I **always welcome input** from our membership at large. If you have something of interest that you want to share, I encourage you to reach out to me for an article submission.

Also, Mike will be bringing this up at the next general meeting, that if there's a topic you'd like to see discussed each month, **we'd love to hear from you**. We try to find speakers or topics that you'd find interesting, but so many of us have specific parts of the hobby we love, I'd be great to share that niche with everyone. It's no small secret that the planets and planetary imaging is a love of mine, as is learning how to use and process the Seestar s50 and the Dwarf III now, but I've primarily been a visual astronomer since I started in this hobby. I still love using my 16" Dob to globular clusters with my binoviewer, but there's always something new to try or learn. That's what makes this hobby great.



# March Lunar Calendar

March 2025						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

March 1, Moon will cross the celestial equator going northward at the Ascending Node

March 1, the Moon will be at Perigee: 361,967 km from Earth

March 5, the Pleiades will be 0.6° south of the Moon

### First Quarter March 6

March 8 Mercury will be at Greatest Elongation, 26.4° west of the Sun

March 8, Mars will be 1.7° south of the Moon

March 9, Pollux will be 2.0° north of the Moon

March 12, Regulus will be 2.2° south of the Moon

### Full Moon, March 14

March 14, [total lunar eclipse](#), magnitude 1.178

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March 14, the Moon will cross the celestial equator going southward at the Descending Node

March 16, Spica will be  $0.3^\circ$  north of the Moon

March 17, the Moon will be at Apogee: 405,754 km from Earth

March 20 is the Vernal equinox

March 20, Antares will be  $.5^\circ$  north of the Moon

### Third Quarter March 22

March 28, Moon will cross the celestial equator going northward at the Ascending Node

March 29, partial solar eclipse but not for us!

### New Moon March 29

March 29, Mars will be  $3.9^\circ$  south of the Pollux

March 30, the Moon will be at Perigee: 358,127 km from Earth

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## *Space Exploration News*

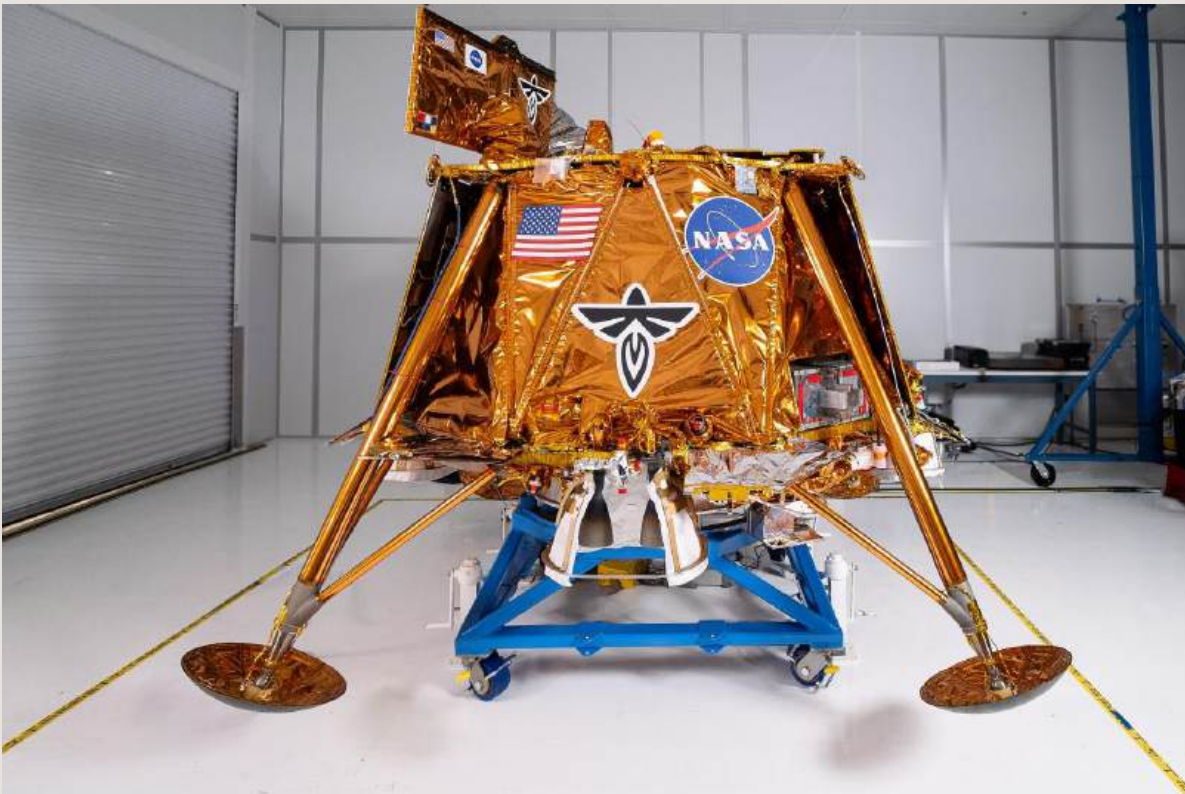


Yet another [massive search for alien technosignatures](#) has come up negative. Previous searches have been done by hand, sifting through hundreds of thousands of radio telescope signal detected and manually evaluating them. Now COSMIC, the Commensal Open-source Multi-mode Interferometric Cluster of both hardware and software is sifting the entire work of the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array, in the desert of New Mexico. Using fast processing and restrictive filters, COSMIC piggybacks on VLA data to analyze all of it for alien technosignatures. So far, the VLA northern sky survey has completely covered 82% of the northern sky. Now the bad news. In spite of analyzing more data than ever before gathered, there are zero candidates for ET civilization so far.

In a blog posted earlier this month, [the European Space Agency](#) has announced an emergency request by ESA's Planetary Defense Office and other entities around the world for "Director's Discretionary Time" has been granted to observe asteroid 2024 YR4, which is presently credited with a 1 in 32 (3.1%) chance of Earth impact on

December 22, 2032. Director's discretionary time is set aside each year for unanticipated important observations that can't be scheduled by normal authorization procedures. 2024 YR4 is a very small asteroid, only visible from ground based observatories for a few weeks before it became too dim to see. Present estimates are that it is between 40 meters (if highly reflective) and 90 meters (if less reflective) in size, and there is a tremendous difference in destructive potential depending on that size range. JWST will be trying to refine size estimate and also to refine the orbital path. Observations are scheduled for a duration of about 4 hours.

Private space contractor, Firefly's, Blue Ghost lunar lander has left the Earth spatial reference frame and now belongs to the Moon, orbiting it in a very elliptical orbit which will be slowly circularized during the next 10 days or so until it lands four NASA research payloads along with two from Blue Origin, a package from the Italian Space Agency and various universities. Scheduled for landing on March 2, and annual landings for the next three years, Blue Ghost shows that private space contractors can work together and with national space agencies.

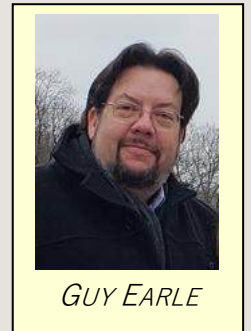


## *Other Astronomy Clubs*

I've stated a few times in past Examiner editions that Mike and I are adamant that this hobby can only thrive by cooperation with other clubs. Too often, astronomy clubs tend to be territorial, not wanting members to participate or even converse with other groups. Even SPAC is not innocent of this thought process in the past. I still see that territorial mentality persist in the community, and I can't honestly understand why. I have found that the amateur astronomy community to be one of the friendliest and most honest groups of people anywhere. I have accidentally left expensive gear, or even my wallet and keys, out all night in plain view and have never had an incident. When something does get stolen at a star party, it becomes all the talk. "Did you hear that Johnny got his Nagler stolen at..." will be repeated over and over with incredulity. It's unheard of and a sign of the great caliber of people in this hobby. So, why, limit that interaction? Because they belong to another club? Ridiculous.

SPAC invited members of FOO to come out to the OBS swap meet a few years ago. Speaking to Mark Jennings of FOO, who is a wonderful guy, we extended the opportunity to invite cooperation. I'm very happy to see that they continue to come out during the swap meet at OBS each year, and it was great to see many FOO members at of our New Moon weekends some time back. I would love to see them come to WRP whenever they wish. I firmly believe the night sky is for everyone.

That said, I'm inviting other clubs to introduce themselves to our membership over the next few issues of the Examiner. This month, we have an article from Chiefland Astronomy Village, and next month the Alachua Astronomy Club.



# Chiefland Astronomy Village

By Richard Henning, Lisa Eager, and Matthew Peters

## Chiefland Astronomy Village: A Premier Destination for Stargazers

The Chiefland Astronomy Village (CAV), established in 1986, is one of the oldest and most vibrant astronomy communities in the United States. Created as a haven for amateur astronomers seeking dark skies and optimal observing conditions, its location near the Gulf of Mexico offers stable atmospheric conditions and excellent seeing, making it an ideal site for stargazing and astrophotography.

Over the years, CAV has flourished into a thriving community of approximately 28 astronomy-focused families and 20 private observatories. The Billy Dodd Memorial Observing Field, a central feature of the village, is equipped with essential amenities such as electricity, restrooms, and showers to accommodate visiting astronomers. This facility ensures a comfortable experience for those who journey to Chiefland to explore the cosmos.

*Preserving the Spirit of Astronomy.* In the fall of 2022, the central property, including the Billy Dodd Memorial Observing Field, was at risk of being sold. A group of dedicated astronomers came together to purchase the property, securing the continuation of the village's astronomical activities. Today, the field operates year-round, welcoming members and visitors to enjoy its pristine dark skies. For more information, see <https://chieflandastro.com>.

Annual events like the Spring Picnic and Chiefland Astrofest have become hallmarks of the community. These gatherings provide opportunities for observing, networking, and learning, with highlights such as engaging presentations, workshops, and the ever-popular door prize raffle. In 2024, the village weathered three hurricanes but emerged stronger, with repairs ensuring that facilities remain operational and inviting.



*Expanding Horizons with the Astronomy Museum.* In 2024, the Chiefland Astronomy



Village launched a new Astronomy Museum, dedicated to preserving the history of amateur astronomy. The museum showcases classic telescopes, rare instruments, and other unique artifacts donated by fellow astronomers. This growing collection offers a glimpse into the evolution of stargazing technology and provides inspiration for future generations. Visitors are encouraged to request a guided tour during their time at the village, or they can explore highlights on the museum's website: <https://chieflandastro.com/museum>.

*Looking Ahead: 2025 and Beyond.* The year 2025 promises to be just as exciting, with a range of activities planned to engage and inspire the astronomy community. The Spring Picnic, scheduled for March 28–30, coincides with the new moon and a potential Messier Marathon, challenging participants to observe all 110 Messier objects in a single night. Astrofest 2025, taking place October 17–23, will feature an exciting lineup of presentations, workshops, and prizes, with registration opening in May 2025.



Thanks to the support of its members, the village continues to maintain affordable membership and donation rates. Details on membership, field rules, and donations can be found at <https://shorturl.at/fvLUV>.

*Community and Collaboration.* The Chiefland Astronomy Village values the creative contributions of its members and visitors. Astrophotographers and sketch artists are encouraged to join the CAV group on Astrobin to share and celebrate their work. Visit the group at <https://www.astrobin.com/groups/7996/chiefland-astronomy-village/> and showcase your images captured at the observing field.

*Legacy.* From its founding in 1986 to its ongoing efforts in education, community building,

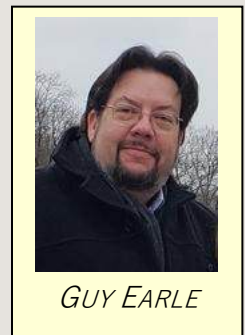


and environmental stewardship, the Chiefland Astronomy Village has remained a premier destination for astronomers. Whether you're a seasoned observer or new to the field, the village offers dark skies, state-of-the-art facilities, and a supportive community to make every visit memorable.

We invite you to join us in celebrating the wonders of the universe at the Chiefland Astronomy Village, where the stars truly shine the brightest.



## *Outreach and New Moon Dates for Alafia River*



*GUY EARLE*

SPAC had a really great outreach event back on January 4th at Alafia River State Park in SE Hillsborough, so much so that they asked us to do another on March 8th. We have five telescope setups already on the list for the 8th, but if anyone else wants to come help us out, please let me know.

Our friendship with the park has also fostered an agreement, just for SPAC members, to allow the use of the park on select New Moon Saturdays during the year. Our primary dark sky site is still Withlacoochee River Park east of Dade City, but we now have Alafia River as an alternate site for select New Moon dates. The setup location is also specific within the park, that being near the horse barn where we do our outreach. This site is not for campers or RV's, and is just for SPAC members to bring out our telescopes. Also, this will not be announced to park attendees, but we need to be open to campers who may walk over to visit and see what's going on. This is not a closed New Moon weekend site like Withlacoochee River Park but is a space for us to use, at no charge, within normal park operating hours. So, please be patient if someone does come over to see your setup. There is only one standard outlet on the NE corner of the barn, so it's best to plan on having your own power for your observing or imaging

session. The site has really great southern and western skies, so if you want to grab something low, such as Omega Centauri, it's a good spot.



This agreement with the park allows SPAC members to go on these select dates only, and the park has requested that they know a week ahead of who is coming. I said that I would be the link, so if anyone plans on going, please let me know so I can relay the attendance list to the ranger. No one should just be showing up to the park without letting me know. You'll need to print out or take a screenshot of your membership card with SPAC, which you can generate [HERE](#):

Here are the dates for 2025:

March 1st

March 29th

April 26th

October 18th

November 22nd

December: 20th

You'll notice that the dates are not for the full year, as they have their own events and pause over the summer due to the mosquitoes which can be quite horrendous. There is a gate code, which I will give out to members who are attending. If you arrive before sunset, there will be someone at the check-in gate. When leaving, the park has an automatic gate, so there's no need to use a code or get out of your car when heading out.

I hope our membership takes advantage of this partnership with Alafia River State Park.

# *SPAC Image Gallery*

★ Here are some excellent astrophotography photos from our fellow SPAC membership, shot from various locations and divided into categories similar to our annual star party imaging competition. If you would like to share your work, I encourage you to [email Peter](#) your image or share them on our SPAC Facebook page.



## Deep Space (Galaxies, Star Clusters, Comets)



*M106 and Friends  
from Chiefland Astro Ranch, FL  
by Jamie Kenas*



*IC 342  
from Apollo Beach, FL  
by Joe Reichle*

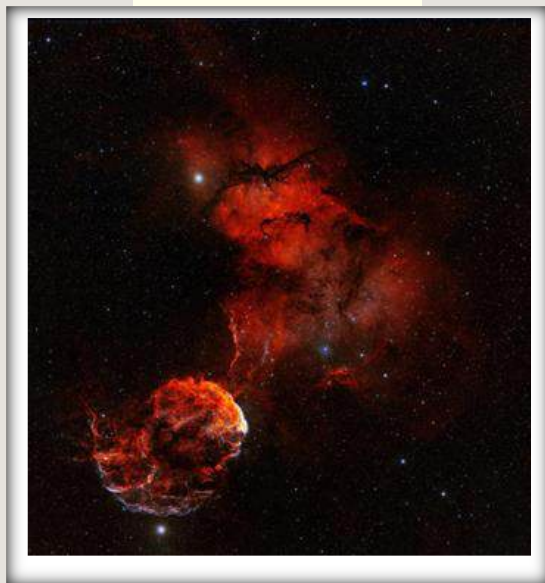
*M81 and M82  
from Withlacoochee River Park, FL  
by Peter McLean*



*M33 Triangulum Galaxy  
from Palm Harbor, FL  
by Janusz Kwasny*

## Nebula

*IC443 Jellyfish Nebula  
from Zephyrhills, FL  
by Johnny White*



*LDN1622 Boogey Man Nebula  
from Lakeland, FL  
by Steve Miller*



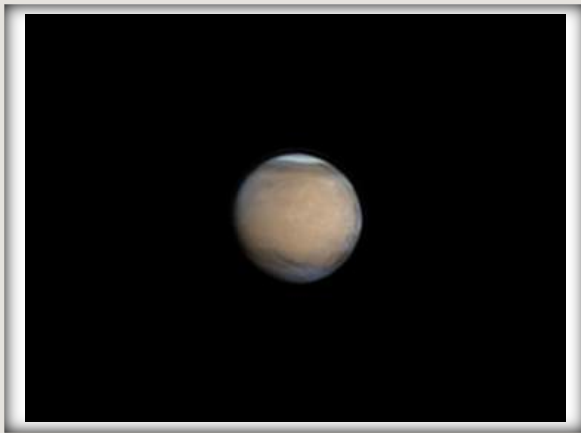
*NGC2359 Thor's Helmet  
from Hudson, FL  
by Yervant Parnagian*



*IC417 Spider Nebula  
from Hoschton, GA  
by Philip Roey*



### Planetary-Lunar-Solar



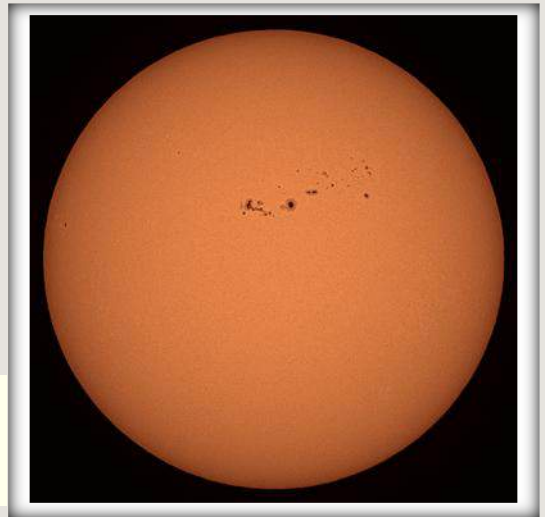
*Mars & Venus  
from Riverview  
by Guy Earle*



*Jupiter  
from Tampa, FL  
by Ron Jones*



*Moon & Venus  
From Tampa, FL  
By Tod Markin*



*Maximum Monthly Sun Spot Activity  
from Indian Rocks Beach, FL  
by Bruce Sobut*

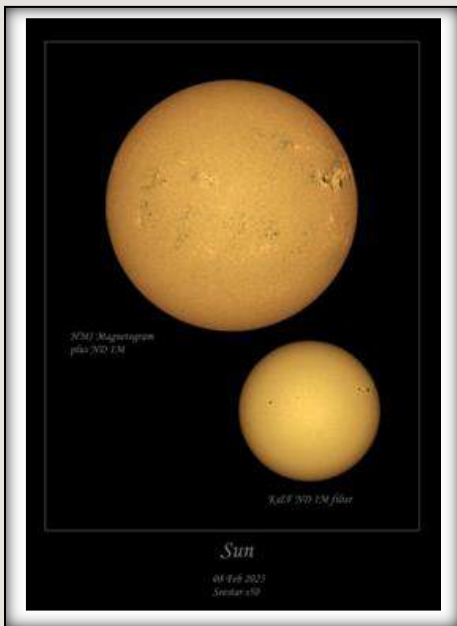
### Smart Telescope



*Rosette Nebula with the Seestar S30  
from Port Richey, FL  
by Bob Stelmock*



*Horsehead Nebula with the S50  
from Tampa, FL  
by Ron Jones*



*Seestar S50 Solar image  
combined with NASA Magnetogram  
from Riverview, FL  
by Guy Earle*



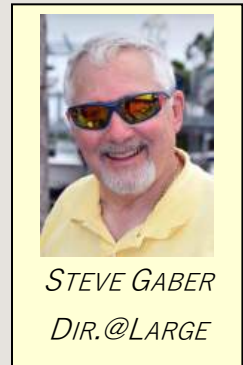
*M42 Orion Nebula with the S50  
from Withlatchoochee River Park,  
by Guy Earle*



*M95 Galaxy in Leo with the S50  
from Withlatchoochee River Park, FL  
by Peter McLean*

## *Outreach Leadership*

SPAC prides itself as the "Home for Family Astronomy in the Tampa Bay area" and for the free educational programs we offer the public. The major part of these efforts is our outreach program. We get requests to give "star parties" for schools and other organizations. A team of dedicated SPAC members take their telescopes to schools, parks and libraries to allow students and members of the public to view the wonders of the night sky, many for the very first time. Many of today's kids are jaded, used to games and videos and are not easy to impress. But when we show them the craters of the Moon, or the rings of Saturn or Jupiter's clouds and four large moons, the excited responses of "WOW" and "OMG" make our efforts worthwhile.



Our outreach events are generally in Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties. They usually take place shortly after sunset. During the school year, they may start at 6 PM and end around 8 pm. Events at parks and other places where there are more adults, could last until around 9:30 or even later. We occasionally get requests for daytime events, where we set up telescopes equipped with solar filters so people can view the sun and see sunspots. Sometimes we get 100 or more people who show up for these events. So we are always eager for more SPAC members to join our outreach team. Some of our members do regular star parties almost every week at places like Boyd Hill Nature Center in St. Petersburg. They may set up their telescopes on the sidewalks in Gulfport. So far this year, in addition to several Saturday nights at Boyd Hill, we have given star parties at two schools, one at Bok Tower Gardens, one at Alderman's Ford Conservation Park in Lithia and did solar observation for hundreds of people at the St. Petersburg Science Festival. The regular outreach program usually stops after April or May, due to the scourge of mosquitoes and summer thunderstorms.

Coming up, We have four outreach events scheduled in March and April for North Pinellas These are:

March 4 at Tarpon Springs Elementary School.

March 8 at Brooker Creek Preserve, Tarpon Springs.

April 4 Inspired Acres, a therapeutic recreation program for people with disabilities in Clearwater.

April 5 for the Arthritis Foundation in Clearwater.

There is also another outreach event, closed for campers within the park, with Alafia River State Park on March 8<sup>th</sup> in southeast Hillsborough County.

We invite SPAC members to join us in these activities. Put your telescope to useful work to educate and inspire people young and old about the sky and the universe around us. If you have a telescope that you need help with, bring it to one of our outreach events. Our experienced and knowledgeable outreach crew will help you learn to use it.

If you are interested in participating in our outreach events, contact Greg Simpson ([FZwicky@aol.com](mailto:FZwicky@aol.com)) or Steve Gaber([sgaber1016@gmail.com](mailto:sgaber1016@gmail.com)) and we will get you set up for gratifying times with your telescope and with the public.

Looking forward to seeing you out there with us.





## Outreach

It's been a busy couple of months for SPAC telescope outreach! Since the first of the year, we've held three "Astronomy Nights" at Boyd Hill Nature Preserve in St. Petersburg, attended a "Science Fair" event at Northwest Elementary School in St. Petersburg, the St. Petersburg Science Festival, and our return to the "Gulfport Night Market" street-vendor event with our telescope!



Boyd Hill's well-attended "Astronomy Nights" are so much fun, with the Preserve's maximum of 100 guests attending each time. Liz and I and Shirley Vuille, Rich Tobin, Andy Watts, Dan Dawson, and Matt Muscovic have shown hundreds of eager guests the Moon, Saturn, Mars (large and bright just after opposition), Jupiter and various star clusters through our scopes. Our last Astronomy Night for this season was on February 15, and despite some moving puffy clouds, we had a wonderful time. We'll start up again at Boyd Hill this November, and will run through March next year. Can hardly wait!

Shirley Vuille, Andy Watts, and Liz and I were at Northwest Elementary on Thursday night, January 30 with our three scopes, to show students and their parents the planets. We had beautifully clear skies and seasonably cool weather—perfect for the kids and their folks to get some great views of Jupiter, Venus, Mars and Saturn. Plus, a thin waxing crescent Moon, very low in the western sky, peeked through some low clouds for us!

Liz and I were in Gulfport on Friday, February 7 doing sidewalk astronomy for the first time since late last year. Gulfport has resumed holding their very popular bimonthly "Gulfport Night Market" (first Friday and third Saturday of the month) after the stress and cleanup from Hurricanes Helene and Milton put them on hold for a few months, and it was so much fun to be back, showing the dozens and dozens of passersby the Moon and Jupiter through our 8-in. Celestron SCT. We look forward to the coming months' Night Markets!

The next day, Saturday, February 8, we joined Shirley Vuille and a lot of other science-themed vendors, showcasing the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, at the St. Petersburg Science Festival, held along the waterfront at St. Petersburg College's Bayboro Campus. Shirley set up her TeleVue refractor on a tracking EQ mount with white-light solar filter, showing hundreds of people (it sure seemed like!) sunspots on the solar surface, while Liz and I manned the table talking with those who stopped by about our club. The free event was well attended to

say the least (they estimated about 10,000 people!) and we were all pretty much exhausted by the time it wrapped up at 4:00 pm!

Finally, Liz and I, Shirley, Dan Dawson, and new club member Tierney (still didn't get her last name! Sorry!) set up our scopes for the final Astronomy Night at Boyd Hill on Saturday, February 15. We had clouds roll in just before sunset, but they thinned out and continued to drift by enough that we could show our guests the bright planets Mars, Jupiter, and Venus. Shirley had her Celestron CPC 800 trained on Jupiter, up near the zenith, the whole night—which was appropriate, since Shirley reminded us that February 15 was the 461st anniversary of the birth of Galileo, the first person to see the four largest moons of Jupiter: the Galilean satellites. Despite the moving clouds, our guests were as enthusiastic as ever, and it was so much fun (as always!) being able to answer their questions about telescopes and the objects we were observing. We look forward to the Fall (starting Saturday, November 8), when we resume Astronomy Nights at the beautiful setting of Boyd Hill Nature Preserve, an oasis of telescope viewing in light-polluted Pinellas County!



Dan Dawson, Tierney, and Steve Gaber getting ready for nightfall at Boyd Hill.



Students and their parents eager to get a look through Shirley Vuille's scope at Northwest Elementary School's (St. Petersburg) "Science Fair" on January 30.



A young astronomer looking at Venus through Greg and Liz Simpson's Celestron CPC 800 SCT at Northwest Elementary in St. Petersburg on January 30.



Greg Simpson and his trusty Celestron CPC 800 (“50th Anniversary Edition”) SCT, at Boyd Hill in St. Petersburg. This scope is simply wonderful! ❤️



Liz Simpson waiting for dark and the arrival of our guests at Boyd Hill, with one of our best accessories: a step ladder for getting a steady view at the eyepiece!



Shirley Vuille and her solar-filtered TeleVue refractor at the St. Petersburg Science Festival



A couple of young visitors to our table at the St. Petersburg Science Festival checking out the Sun with their new pairs of eclipse glasses.

# *Outreach, Part Deux*

## Astronomy Outreach at Alderman’s Ford County Park, for Trail Life Troop FL-1901, February 8, 2025



### An Enriching Evening at Alderman’s Ford County Park

On a clear evening at Alderman’s Ford County Park in Lithia, FL under a waxing gibbous moon, the dark sky cooperated for an exceptional event that brought together the young adventurers of Trail Life Troop FL-1901 and their sister troop. This gathering was reminiscent of traditional Boy Scouts of America activities, yet with a distinctive emphasis on Christian values, providing an enriching experience for all participants.

The primary focus of the evening was stargazing, an activity that seamlessly blends education with the awe-inspiring beauty of the cosmos. Representatives from the



Debbie and Gary Daniels with their Seestar S50, Binocular tripod, and 6" Dobsonian

St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, including Peter Mclean, Kelly Anderson, Gary, and Debbie Daniels, were on hand to guide the troops through the mysteries of the night sky.

Under the guidance of the volunteer astronomy club representatives, the scouts learned about various celestial bodies, the importance of dark skies, and the basics of operating astronomical instruments. The hands-on experience was both informative and



exciting, as the scouts were able to see planets, stars, nebula and galaxies with their own eyes.

Throughout the evening, the emphasis on Christian values was evident. The troop leaders and astronomy club representatives spoke about the wonders of God's creation, encouraging the young scouts to reflect on their place in the universe and the marvels of the world around them. This integration of faith and science provided a holistic approach to learning, one that resonated deeply with the participants.

The astronomy outreach event at Alderman's Ford County Park was a resounding success, leaving the scouts with a greater appreciation for the night sky and the intricate workings of the universe. The voluntary effort of the St. Petersburg Astronomy Club representatives ensured that the evening was both educational and memorable. As the scouts headed back to their campsites, they did so with a sense of wonder and a renewed



Peter Mclean and Kelly Anderson with a curious early observer at the Seestar S50 setup

connection to their faith, eager for the next opportunity to explore the heavens.

Thank you to Trail Life Troop Leader Nick Olson for reaching out to the St Petersburg Astronomy Club and coordinating this opportunity for our club members to share the wonders of the Cosmos to the next generation of astronomers!



Kelly Anderson guiding a young observer with the Explore Scientific refractor

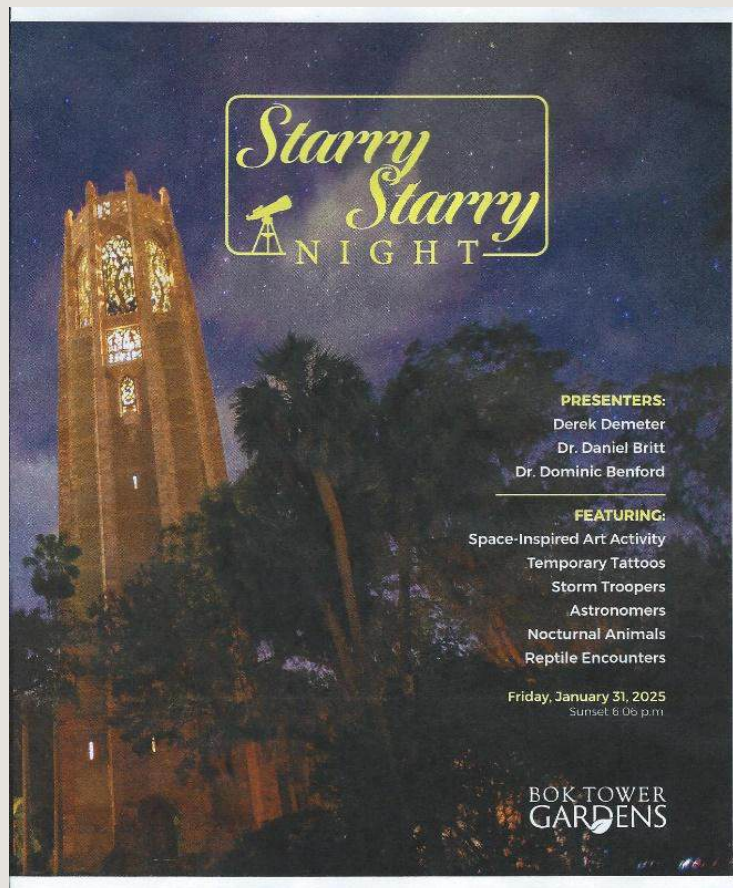


Alderman's Ford County Park, Lithia, FL

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# Sharing the Night Sky at Starry Starry Night

Nestled outside of the bustling streets and modern conveniences of our urban areas are echoes of our community's rich history. One such gem is the beautifully preserved Bok Tower Gardens, a vibrant garden planted within a sprawling citrus grove. This well preserved landmark reminds us of the heritage of our rapidly dwindling agrarian past in Polk county. As you wander through the beautifully maintained gardens, you can almost hear the whispers of the past, telling tales of the families who once called this place home. On January 31<sup>st</sup> we were blessed with beautifully clear skies, warm temperatures, and no mosquitos! The beautiful sunset ushered in the vast tapestry of night sky with the parade of planets and cosmos of our universe overhead. Starry Starry Night was a highly successful event in my opinion that was attended by thousands of people of all ages. The gate count for the event was reported at 2,582 with a line of vehicles still waiting to get in to the event up to an hour before closing! I found the ones who interacted with us to be intellectually hungry and inquisitive to learn more about the universe and galaxy where we exist.



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Guy Earle and myself set up our scopes among astronomers from Imperial Polk Astronomical Society, and Central Florida Astronomical Society on the Astronomy Meadow. I set up the Seestar S50 with my iPad display, and Guy set up his 16" Dob. The guests trickled onto the observing field before it got dark. Curious about the different kinds of scopes and what we would be looking at. After darkness descended on the area the trickle of interested guests quickly turned into a wave of curious guests covering the observing field like a disturbed fire ant nest! Impromptu, orderly lines of people formed at every one of the fifteen total scopes on the field. I was on my feet from that moment onward until we were instructed by the park rangers to pack up our gear so they could disperse the crowd and get the park cleared for closing. All of the guests patiently waited for their view and asked plenty of questions about the craft. It amazed me how excited the observers were to see the objects we were highlighting and with the questions and comments from all age groups. It was a very fulfilling experience to share this hobby and the craft with budding enthusiasts! As an aside for ZWO, there may be another spike in Seestar sales in the central Florida area! The distance between St. Petersburg and Lake Wales is a fair commute. It truly meets the definition of Outreach for those from outside of Polk county. The collaboration of three astronomical societies in central Florida area made this a very successful outreach and positive experience for all in attendance. I am looking forward to the next annual Starry Starry Night in 2026!

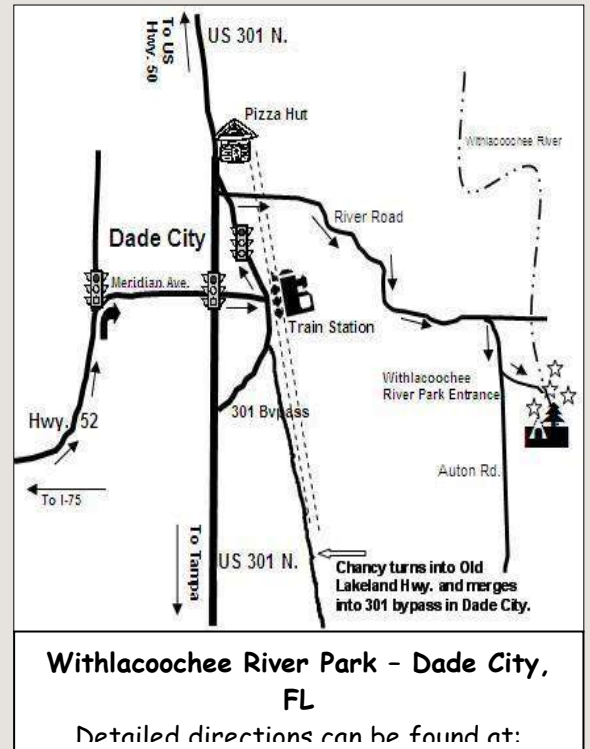
SPAC Business Meeting 🏠

Our next business meeting is **Wed., March 12th, at 8:00 PM** via conference call; details upon request.  
 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	<a href="#">Mike Partain</a>
Vice Pres.	<a href="#">Guy Earle</a>
Secretary	<a href="#">Peter McLean</a>
Treasurer	<a href="#">Christian Rubach</a>
Dir.-at-Large	<a href="#">Allen Maroney</a>
Dir.-at-Large	<a href="#">Steven Gaber</a>
Dir.-at-Large	<a href="#">Jack Fritz</a>
SPACE Editor	<a href="#">Guy Earle</a>
Public Relations	<a href="#">John O'Neill</a>
Membership Chair	<a href="#">Peter McLean</a>
Mirror Lab Chair	<a href="#">Paul McNabb</a>
Outreach Chair	<a href="#">Steven Gaber</a>
Star Party Chair	<a href="#">Mike Partain</a>
Librarian	<a href="#">Ralph Craig</a>
Club Webmaster	<a href="#">Allen Maroney</a>
Dark Sky Chair	OPEN

*Click on the name to send email*



## *Withlacoochee New Moon Weekends*

There's no need for reservations. However, the park closes at sundown, so you will need to arrive before then. The park rangers will give you the gate-code once you're inside the park. Please do not call for the gate code as they are not allowed to give it out over the phone.



Please join us! All astronomy enthusiasts are welcome. You do not need to be a club member to attend. Please refer to our [Club Calendar](#) for details and scheduled dates. There is a small fee to the park for using electricity, reduced even further for club members, which you can pay on our club website [HERE](#).



# St. Petersburg Astronomy Club

## Recognition of Patrons & Benefactors

Walter Brinkman	Benefactor	Michael Callahan	Patron
Dave & Deborah Catalano	Benefactor	Ralph & Christine Craig	Patron
Stephanie Colon &		Glynis Dilaire	Patron
Jack & Roni Fritz	Benefactor	Peter & Jaclynn Dimmit	Patron
Michael Haworth & Melanie Otte	Benefactor	Guy & Kelly Earle	Patron
Matt Hughes & Manuel Ordonez	Benefactor	Joseph & Pamela Faubion	Patron
Valerie Hyman	Benefactor	Darla & Peter Flynn	Patron
Craig & Roberta Jameson	Benefactor	Steve & Cindy Fredlund	Patron
Naseeb Nas Kaleel	Benefactor	Steve Gaber & Karen Sell	Patron
Jamie Kenas	Benefactor	Richard & Mary Garner	Patron
David Knowlton	Benefactor	Timothy & Mary Ann Harris	Patron
Laura & Roy Lanier	Benefactor	Charlie & Linda Hoffman	Patron
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Kelly McGrew	Benefactor	Mark Kepka	Patron
Kevin & Karen Mulford	Benefactor	Matt Labadie & Jennifer Willman	Patron
David & Kathryn Musser	Benefactor	Willy & Beth Lebihan	Patron
Rath, Damon & Jean Futch	Benefactor	Dave & Mary MacKenzie	Patron
Vincent Risalvato &		Steve & Jeri Maiaroto	Patron
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Mike Rozycki	Benefactor	Allen Maroney & Tracee Elliott	Patron
Christian & Wendy Rubach	Benefactor	Ralph & Molly Merritt	Patron
Doug and Teri Sliman	Benefactor	Steven Miller & Lisa Alessi	Patron
Garrison & Ruth Smith	Benefactor	Herb Monroe & Martha Stewart	Patron
Jill & Robin Sumner	Benefactor	Leeann Muszynski	Patron
Andrew & Bonnie Watts	Benefactor	Stephen Oros	Patron
*****		Yervant & Jo-Ann Parnagian	Patron
Bill & Norma Amthor	Patron	Michael & Carli Partain	Patron
Steven Balke	Patron	Brad & Lisa Perryman	Patron
Christopher Bankston	Patron	Alan Polansky	Patron
Jason & Margie Bedell	Patron	Gregory Satchwell	Patron
Kyle Brinkman	Patron	Manny Sosa & Leslie Long	Patron

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Tom Spano	Patron	Alexie Velez & Yanira	
Anthony Staiano	Patron	Hernandez-Velez	Patron
Jonathan Stewart	Patron	Skip & Kim Walker	Patron
Tom & Michelle Sweet	Patron	Shawn Wilson	Patron
Jose & Mary Torres	Patron	Elizabeth Wood	Patron



## St. Petersburg Astronomy Club Membership Form

Membership in St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, Inc. (SPAC) is open to anyone, regardless of age, who is interested in astronomy. Benefits of membership include a monthly subscription to the SPAC Examiner newsletter, reduced camping rates and use of the club’s bunkhouse at our dark sky site at Withlacoochee River Park, the ability to serve on the SPAC board and voting privileges. Dues are considered donations and are non-refundable. Membership options are available as listed below.

You are now able to choose how you wish to renew your membership:

Preferred On-line Website Option: New instructions as our website has been updated.

Go to [https://www.stpeteastronomyclub.org/Sign\\_In.php](https://www.stpeteastronomyclub.org/Sign_In.php) on the SPAC website where you can view and update your membership profile, provide payment, and print your membership card.

Adult 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Adult 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Children under 18: \_\_\_\_\_

### Memberships:

Single: [ ] \$ 30.00/YR. Includes one adult, minor children, the “SPACE” newsletter, and all the rights and privileges of membership.

Family: [ ] \$ 35.00/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.

Student: [ ] FREE. SPAC offers free membership to full time high school and college students.

Expected date of graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Submitted: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Your SPAC Membership Card is required for reduced fees at the campground.