

The OBSERVER

The Newsletter of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc.



August 2004 Volume 29, Number 8

GPS Main Event August 21st

On Saturday, August 21st, the TCAA will host a public forum at Sugar Grove Nature Center dealing with the US Global Positioning System (GPS). Starting at 7:00 p.m. in the SGNC picnic shelter, Carl Wenning will lead off the evening's presentation with a "geocaching" activity where participants will attempt to solve a "Lord of the Ring" mystery. So, if you have a GPS receiver, install the following waypoint, and bring along your unit: latitude = 40 degrees 21'07"North, longitude = 89degrees 08' 17" West.

Even if you don't have a GPS unit, bring yourself as well as a sturdy set of hiking shoes. The geocaching "adventure" will involve a 30-minute, half-mile round trip trek over gently sloping terrain. It is expected that the geocache mystery will be solved shortly after sunset that occurs at 7:44 p.m. that evening. The geocache activity has an interesting astronomical twist. The solution of the mystery will come as quite a surprise to most of those in attendance. You'll not want to miss this event.

After this adventure, University High



Tom Holbrook to speak about GPS workings.

School physics teacher Thomas Holbrook will present a 45-minute PowerPoint talk explaining how GPS actually works. The talk will begin at approximately 8:15 p.m. in the SGNC picnic shelter. In the event of rain, the geocache adventure will be cancelled, but the GPS PowerPoint talk will be presented as planned at 8:15 p.m.

Starting at about 9:15 p.m. Rebecca Wenning will present the evening's Public Observing Session talk dealing with the current night sky and focusing on open cluster M11 in the constellation Scutum, the Shield. Even if the sky is overcast, this talk will be presented. If the sky is tolerably clear, a brief sky lecture will be conducted followed by observing with available telescopes. Mark your calendar now so that you don't miss these exciting and informative events.

President's Corner

I am honored to have been selected President of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers. I first joined the club in the early 1960's and am proud to be a member

In This Issue:

- GPS Main Event August 21st.....1
- President's Corner.....1
- Note from the Editor.....2
- Minutes of Meeting with SGNC Reps.....2
- July 24th Events Successful.....2
- Two Computers Donated to TCAA3
- January Meeting Tentatively Slated for Challenger Center.....3
- Minutes of August 5th Board Meeting3
- Work Day Continued at SGO.....4
- Perseid Meteors Observed.....4
- SGO Update.....5
- SGO Key Holders, Take Note.....5
- July Treasurer's Report.....6
- Discount Rate Magazine Subscriptions7
- Einstein@home Screen Saver....7
- Coordinating Committee Meets..7
- Solar Filter for SGO 12-Inch Arrives.....7
- Announcing New TCAA Members.....8
- September Sky Calendar Insert

TCAA Calendar of Events

August 13: Shirley Church Presentation and Observing Session, time 9:00 p.m.

August 14: Member-only Observing Session -- Sugar Grove Nature Center
Dusk to Dawn

August 21: Regular Meeting and Observing Sessions -- Sugar Grove Nature Center
7:00 p.m., Global Positioning System Hunt (Carl Wenning, coordinator)
8:15 p.m., Workings of GPS (Thomas Holbrook)
9:15 p.m., Presentation on Open Cluster M11 (Rebecca Wenning)
9:30-11:00 p.m., Public Observing Session

The Observer

Newsletter of the TCAA, Inc.

The Observer is a monthly publication of the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, Inc., a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization of amateur astronomers interested in studying astronomy and sharing their hobby with the public.

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Membership Dues

Individual Adult/Family \$40
Full-time Student/Senior \$25

To join the TCAA, send your name,
contact info, and dues payment to:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761

once again. The club remains a vibrant organization that has much to offer to the Central Illinois community.

The club is working with the ISU Planetarium and the Challenger Learning Center to present programs and expand the club's public outreach. This month, the group will expand to include the Sugar Grove Nature Center, the Audubon Society, and the Children's Discovery Center. This collaboration will increase the club's ability to bring astronomy to the public. These outreach activities have become an important part of the club's activities.

We have two major presentations this fall, the GPS symposium in August and the presentation on Cassini at Saturn in October. I encourage you to attend and let your friends know about the wonderful events.

I would like to thank those who came out to help upgrade the Sugar Grove Observatory. The repairs and upgrades make the observatory safer and easier to use.

I would also like to thank Dan Miller and Roy Ostberg, the donors of a new PC and laptop to the club. We have already used them to upgrade the LX200. This equipment will expand our ability to use the LX200.

On the scientific front, the Cassini-Huygens mission is returning amazing images of Saturn and its moons. If you have not seen these images, I encourage you to visit the NASA site http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/cassini/main/index.html. Spirit and Opportunity continue to work on Mars, returning new images and discovering more about the Red Planet. The rovers have continued to operate for three months longer than originally planned. The additional data developed by these rovers open new frontiers on our understanding of Mars. The Messenger probe to Mercury was successfully launched. This eight-year-long mission will conclude in 2012 after multiple flybys of the planet and a year spent in orbit of Mercury.

Lyle Rich

Note from the Editor

For those of you unaware, I just returned from two months spent in Acámbaro, a medium-sized town in north

central Mexico. It is a land of beautiful starry nights and dry, clear skies – a great haven for any astronomy fanatic, so long as you can get away from the city lights! Fortunately, you can count on the poor electricity system failing in the entire town on occasion (even on perfectly calm nights), providing you with an even more marvelous sky.

During my absence my father, Carl Wenning, was kind enough to edit *The Observer* newsletter, and even purchase new software to give it a more professional look. I would like to formally express my gratitude to him for his time and hard work put into writing articles for the newsletter (something he does all the time anyway!), creating a new template on the new software program, and doing all the paperwork involved in printing, folding, and sending out all the newsletters. Thanks!

Minutes of Meeting with SGNC Reps

On Wednesday, July 14, Duane Yockey and Carl Wenning met with SGNC representatives John Rhetmeyer and Angela Smith at Dixie Truck Stop in McLean from approximately noon until 12:50 p.m. The meeting was arranged for the purpose of establishing better communications between the two Boards. The following points were discussed:

- It was pointed out that Dan Meyer had resigned from the TCAA presidency and that for now Carl Wenning will serve as the official point of contact between the two Boards. Angela will be the point of contact for the SGNC.

- Angela was thanked for approving the TCAA public events of July 24th, and pointed out that a GPS workshop will be held August 21st. Angela will see if the SGNC calendar will permit this public event and get back with Carl. The club's flier with the remaining public observing sessions was provided to John and Angela. Carl will establish one or more "geocaches" at SGNC, and post the information on <http://www.geocaching.com/>.

- A sheet with contact information for all TCAA Board members and officers was provided to John and Angela. This list will also be posted in the SGO and kept up to date.

- Angela noted that the SGNC will

have its grand opening on October 16th, and asked the TCAA to consider getting involved in the events that will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The idea was received favorably by Duane and Carl.

- Carl asked if hangers could be put up in the SGNC picnic shelter for the projection screen used for TCAA public events. It was agreed that this would be possible. Carl will provide both hangers and placement location.

- SGNC will appoint Angela to be part of the TCAA/CLC/ISU Planetarium Coordinating Committee. Angela mentioned that we might also want to consider asking the Ecology Action Center and the Audubon Society to join the group. Again, the idea was received favorably by all in attendance. There is expected to be a planning meeting in August to coordinate an already-proposed scout merit badge workshop and the October 16th grand opening of the “new” nature center at Sugar Grove.

- Both groups mentioned that their respective buildings would be re-keyed in the near future. One or two keys will be exchanged between the two groups, with the keys being housed in both the SGNC and SGO. It was pointed out the Mike Rogers now holds the one TCAA key to the SGNC.

- Angela noted that the SGNC will begin mailing out a bi-monthly newsletter starting probably in September. Angela asked Carl to spread the word in the upcoming issues of *The Observer*, and via list serve. He will collect names and mailing addresses, and provide them to Angela.

July 24th Events Successful

Work Day at SGO was quite successful. Starting at about 3 p.m. William Carney, Carl Wenning, Duane Yockey, and Lyle Rich showed up to clean the observatory and install toe stops between the steps leading up to the dome. Thanks to a generous donation of 3/4-inch plywood by Vic Connor, 15 of the 25 steps leading to the 12-inch telescope were outfitted. The “unusual” step design and a lack of sufficient plywood on site left the 10 steps in flights 3 and 4 incomplete.

By 5 p.m. all work was concluded in the

observatory and William, Duane, Dan, and Carl took a hike to see the “Woodhenge” re-creation that is located about 1/4-mile northwest of the SGO. Returning from the hike, an informal picnic was held. In addition to those already named, Alice Chien, Mary Jane Rich, and Mike Rogers attended the picnic. At the conclusion of the picnic, a voice vote was taken to appoint Mike Rogers to the TCAA Board of Directors, completing Dan Meyer’s unfilled term. It was decided that the Board would meet during either the first or third week of August to appoint a new president. It was agreed then and there that William Carney would serve out Dan’s term as TCAA property manager.

The telescope workshop was presented by Carl Wenning beginning at 7:30 p.m. Unfortunately, the public attendance was low (only 3 non-TCAAers in attendance) due to an overcast sky; nonetheless, our visitors (Jason and Dave, and a friend who arrived with TCAAer Sheri Rodgers) were quite interested in the subject matter. There was substantial lively discussion during and following the session. Starting at 9:00 p.m., William Carney presented at 25-minute talk dealing with M8 and M17. The presentation was followed by a tour of the SGO. The events drew to a close at about 10 p.m.

Two Computers Donated to TCAA

On Saturday, July 24th, Dan Miller showed up at the SGO with a computer system. The like-new PC computer, a donation to the TCAA from Mike’s father-in-law, is a Pentium 3 with a 500 MHz processor, 512 Meg RAM with a 17-inch monitor and CD/DVD player. The computer is outfitted with Windows 98 and Starry Night Pro. The computer will replace the rather antique computer housed at the observatory. The older computer, put on loan to the TCAA by Dan, was donated to William Carney. The computer will be updated with available astronomy software, and should be a great adjunct to both public and private observing sessions at SGO.

On Tuesday, July 27th, Roy Ostberg donated a laptop computer to the TCAA in response to a request

appearing in the July edition of *The Observer*. Though the computer is six years old, it should be able to handle our needs for running the 12-inch LX200 telescope housed at Sugar Grove Observatory. The computer is an ARM laptop with Windows 98, an AMD-K6 3D processor, 64 Meg RAM, with 3.8 GB hard drive, a 58k modem, a 3.5 floppy drive and CD-ROM. This computer will be outfitted with software and connecting cables that will allow it to directly drive the LX200 mount with the click of a mouse.

These computers will be integrated into the offerings available at the SGNC. Property Manager William Carney will work with club members to update these computers and set up the required networking. Thanks and a “tip o’ the hat” to both Dan and Roy for their most generous donations.

January Meeting Tentatively Slated for Challenger Center

The January meeting of the TCAA is tentatively slated to be held at the Challenger Learning Center in Bloomington. Hosting this event will be TCAA member and lead flight director Janet Moore. Janet will provide a tour of the center, and an orientation, and there will follow-up presentations and social activities. Activities are expected to begin at 7:00 p.m. if things can be arranged.

The Challenger Learning Center is a multi-million dollar educational facility with a space mission simulator as its centerpiece. The center opened December 13, 2003, after a four-year fund raising and development effort. Those in attendance will tour the following two simulators and



CLC Space Station Simulator

rooms:

- Space Station ~ A realistic simulator reflective of the International Space Station that gives students the opportunity to work at eight stations: Data, Communication, Navigation, Life Support, Medical, Isolation, Remote, and Probe.
- Mission Control ~ Modeled after Mission Control at Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, CLC Mission Control allows students to communicate with their counterparts on the Space Station and provide ground support for the mission.
- Briefing Room ~ A round, amphitheater-style room for mission briefing sessions and presentations. Features state-of-the art audio/visual equipment and dome-shaped ceiling with a fiber optic sky for astronomy discussions.

This event promises to be one of the most exciting ever.

Minutes of August 5th Board Meeting

The meeting of the TCAA Board of Directors was called to order by President Pro Tem Lyle Rich at about 5:30 p.m. at the office of Brown, Yockey, and Miller, Inc. Also in attendance were Board members Duane Yockey, Carl Wenning, Kal Kumar, and Michael Rogers. William Carney joined the group at about 6:30 p.m. at which time he was brought up to date on the discussion that had occurred thus far. The following items were addressed:

- It was agreed that the plaque for the G. Weldon Schuette Society of Outstanding Amateur Astronomers would be moved from the ISU Planetarium to the SGO for greater visibility.
- It was noted that two computers had been donated to the TCAA by Dan Miller and Roy Ostberg. The Secretary will write official letters of thanks; the Treasurer will send official letters of recognition for tax purposes.
- Lyle noted that he is donating an 8-foot computer cable from Meade to allow for connecting the laptop computer to the LX200; he also has the necessary file to perform a software update on the LX200. This will be done shortly, perhaps as soon as Saturday, August 7th.
- Various software packages will be tried on the laptop to determine what is best for controlling the LX200.

- Lyle has been authorized to purchase a standard door lock mechanism for replacing the current mechanism at SGO. The target date for replacement will be slightly before February's Annual Meeting. At that time new keys will be issued to key holders whose dues and key holder renewals are up to date.

- William Carney will purchase a weather strip that will be attached to the SGO main door as early as Saturday to keep out mice, insects, dust and snow. The expense is expected to be less than \$20.

- William, Lyle, and Carl will attempt to finish installing the toe stops at SGO on Saturday afternoon, August 7th.

- William was officially appointed to serve as Property Manager of the TCAA.

- William reported that he has been able to have all loaned telescopes returned (Deep Space Explorer and Odyssey 8") with the exception of one (Meade 102 refractor), and that he will continue to pursue the return of this instrument which has been on loan for an unacceptably long period of time.

- It was agreed that a new loaner policy for all materials needs to be established; it was suggested a two-month renewal period, with new requests for use of equipment taking precedence over renewals.

- Duane and William will work to update the current inventory listing; William will conduct a complete review of all TCAA holdings.

- Carl noted that the 4.5-inch offset solar filter that he ordered from Thousand Oaks should show up any day now. It was noted by several Board members that it would be nice to host solar observing as part of some future event.

- The Calendar of Events was reviewed with the following notes: Carl will coordinate the GPS meeting on August 21 and Rebecca Wenning will coordinate the POS on the same date; Carl will coordinate the meeting of October 16, and Michael will coordinate the POS on the same date; a Saturnalia party will be held in December and plans will be made for a meeting at the Challenger Learning Center in January. The Annual Meeting will be held in February (but at a location other than SGNC as it will no longer be available for such events).

- A coordinators' meeting will be held in mid-August with the following groups to be invited: TCAA, Challenger Learning Center, ISU Planetarium, Sugar Grove

Nature Center, Children's Discovery Museum, Audubon Society, and Ecology Action Center. Carl will arrange and coordinate this event with Janet Moore at the CLC.

- Mike will look into finding a free computer-based autodialer program to be used to remind TCAAers about club and public events.

- It was motioned, seconded, and carried that Lyle would serve as the new president, replacing past president Dan Meyer; it was motioned, seconded, and carried, that Mike Rogers would serve as Vice President. As such Mike will be responsible for newspaper publicity, and updating the TCAA web site. Lyle will provide Mike with his contact list.

- It was decided that there would be a "members only" Perseid meteor shower observing session at SGNC on the night of August 11/12 clear skies prevailing. The event will run from 11 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. Carl will inform Angela at SGNC about the event; the event will be promoted via TCAA list serve once approved by Angela.

- It was noted that the Bylaws should be reviewed individually by the Board members to determine whether or not amendments need to be proposed at the Annual Meeting. This topic will be included in the discussion at the next Board meeting, and Mike will make a more evident link on the TCAA web page so that all members can readily find and review the Bylaws.

- It was noted that the next Board meeting should take place in early October.

- The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Work Day Continued at SGO

TCAAers William Carney, Lyle Rich, Rebecca Wenning and Carl Wenning returned to the SGO on Saturday, August 7th, to complete work on the toe stops that was started on July 24th. Ten steps were completed using the 3/4-inch oak plywood donated to Vic Conner. At the same time, William completed work on the observatory door by installing a weather strip, closing the large opening between the door and the concrete foundation that often admits bugs, mice, snow, and rain.

In addition to completing the toe stop and door work, the laptop computer

donated by Roy and Barb Ostberg was set up within the observatory, and linked to the LX200 with a special cable worth \$30 donated to the TCAA by Lyle. Lyle took the opportunity to update the LX200 software – this being the first time the process has been done since the telescope was purchased some three years ago. The only thing remaining is to install software to run the 12-inch telescope from the computer with a click of a mouse.

The SGO is now a much more user-friendly place, and should be a safer facility as well. Thanks and a tip of the hat to all who assisted with the projects during the months of July and August.

The hooks for hanging the TCAA slide screen were put up in the picnic shelter near the SGO by SGNC staff on August 12th.

Perseid Meteors Observed

Eleven current and past members of the TCAA gathered at SGNC on the night of August 11/12 to observe the Perseid meteors. Viewing started at about 10 p.m. Meteors were observed by the group at a rate of about 30 per hour for the duration of the session for a total of about 100. The clouds departed during early evening, and the sky was quite transparent early in the session. M31 was readily visible to the naked eye after it rose higher in the sky. The sky remained clear until around midnight when wispy tendrils of stratus clouds began to form in place.

At around 12:30 a.m. a very bright meteor (estimated at about -5 magnitude) was observed that exhibited colors of yellow and green. Many meteors left persistent trails. Observing the meteor shower gave plenty of opportunities for old and new members to get to know one another a bit better. The event was enjoyed by one and all. The session continued until 1:00 a.m. by which time the sky had become mostly overcast. In attendance were Jean, Cheyenne, and Sierra Adams, Sheri Rodgers with her two children, and Mrs. Kerr with her daughter, William Carney, Brian Barling, and Carl Wenning.

SGO Update ~ William Carney

A number of members finished up cutting and nailing toe stops for the observatory stairs and the last have been

installed. They will be painted at a later date. These boards will reduce the falling hazard on the stairs. The steps probably will be painted medium to light blue because it's the only color I have in any quantity, but that's better than dull gray.

A weather strip was installed on the bottom of the door to the observatory so anyone opening or closing the door should do it slowly as not to damage the strip. I was told by Eric Funk that they will spray coat the buildings with stain in a few weeks. They will include the observatory. If they don't get to it, we will need to restrain the bottom part of the outside panels because of dirt being splashed up by rain. We might want to place some white rock around the base before autumn to keep the dirt from collecting on the siding. Eric did not have a problem with this, but I will probably need to talk to the TCAA Board before the job is done. A layer of web fabric would be put down before the rock to prevent grass and weeds growing around the foundation and the electrical equipment. This will also help in fill in the height difference between the sidewalk and the side of the observatory. If you go right just out side of the door, you have to step down four or five inches which is too much of a step for the public because it is close to the door. It could represent a falling hazard.

The software was updated on the telescope. The update deleted the SGO position. It runs somewhat differently than before, and may ask for your location when the telescope is booting up. Just hit Enter with "SGO" as the site name if the software asks.

I got a copy of *Cartes du Ciel* installed on the laptop. It took a little work, but observers can now control the telescope through the computer. I will be working on written details for the computer. For the software to work one must first have the telescope running and star aligned. The astronomy program is a fairly good projection program and will show the night sky. The program will show where the scope is pointed in the sky and even go to an object once you click on it and select GOTO.

I did notice that it is easier to use a mouse and not the laptop's touch pad. The computer screen is also a little too bright, but a red filter might help. When using it a few times I noticed that if I tilted the

computer screen back, I could still see the screen but not get the bright glare from looking at it directly. Once key holders get used to this setup they will really like it.

With supervision, observers could even have a guest or public observer pick and select an object and tell the scope to GOTO it very easily. Some younger observers will get a kick out of being able to point the telescope at an object. Using the computer to point the telescope is a lot faster than using the telescope's keypad. I was able to observe eight Messier objects in the southern sky in less than five minutes on the night of August 11th. It is much easier than using the keypad of the scope.

SGO Key Holders,

Take Note ~ William Carney

Here are a few reminders for key holders who use SGO:

- The observatory will be re-keyed, but the time has not been precisely set. Only members in good standing – active members with dues paid up to date – are allowed to be key holders.
- ANYONE unscrewing the outside light bulb at Sugar Grove Nature Center MUST screw it back in when observing is done. If the light is on when you arrive, it must be on when you leave.
- Open and close the outside door to the observatory slowly to minimize damage to the weather strip.
- If observing with the LX200 or other instruments housed at the observatory, you must sign in on the log sheet.
- If you check out to yourself or other members any items except books, you must e-mail me or phone me as well as complete a check out form. I don't go down to SGO every day, so I would like to know when any equipment is being loaned out. Any member may check out one of the scopes so long as they are in good standing. The sixteen-inch scope is not to be taken from the observatory unless it's for a star party with prior permission.
- I have found that if the dome is left pointing to the south or west, storms will force water into the dome. Observers should leave the dome pointed to the east when shutting down and locking up for the night. Fewer storms come out of the east.
- Leave the power strip on at all times. The laptop computer's batteries are not all

TCAA Treasurer's Report – July 2004

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – June 30, 2004 - \$ 1,298.02

Income

Dan Miller (dues renewal) - \$ 40.00
Cynthia Cripe (student dues) - \$ 25.00

Expenses

Carl Wenning (Newsletter Expenses) - \$ 38.75
Dan Miller (desk) - \$ 48.72

OPERATING FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2004 - \$ 1,275.55

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – June 30, 2004 - \$ 906.64

Income

Dan Miller (key holder renewal) - \$ 8.72

Expenses

Carl Wenning (2 keys) - \$ 3.85
Carl Wenning (solar filter) - \$ 151.00

OBSERVATORY FUND BALANCE – July 31, 2004 - \$ 760.51

TOTAL TCAA FUNDS – July 31, 2004 - \$ 2,036.06

Respectfully submitted,
L. Duane Yockey, Treasurer

Sugar Grove Observatory

Listing of Official Key holders (Paid \$10 deposit/\$5 renewal)

Jim Swindler (April 2001, renewed through 2004)
Duane Yockey (April 2001, renewed through 2004)
Sandy McNamara (June 2001, renewed through 2004)
Dan Miller (August 2001), renewed through 2004
Michael Rogers (August 2001)
Dan Meyer (February 2002, renewed through 2003)
William Carney (March 2002, renewed through 2004)
Vic Connor (August 2002)
Neale Lehmkuhl (May 2003, renewed through 2004)

Carl Wenning (January 2004)
Brian Barling (February 2004)
Lenore Trainor
Jim Baker
Lyle Rich (August 2004)

that great as is with most laptops.

I will be reviewing the key holder responsibilities and procedures, and will be adding some of the above to them – with the Board’s approval of course.

Discount Rate Magazine Subscriptions ~ William Carney

Astronomy: \$ 29.00

Special until September 30, \$ 55.00 for two (2) years

Sky & Telescope: \$ 32.95

Remember, if the club falls below five members subscribing to each of the magazines, the club will lose it’s pricing benefits. We just barely have enough subscribers right now. If you would like to subscribe to one of these magazines, make your check payable to “William Carney,” not the club. Send your check to the post office box below. Please enclose a stamp or prepaid envelope from the magazine. I will send your check to the magazine. Contact me if you have any questions: 309-829-7748, willcarney@aol.com, wcarney@titan.iwu.edu.

William Carney

PO Box 52

Bloomington, IL 61702

You may drop your check by my home address at 504 Catherine in Bloomington, but don’t mail it there. Use the PO Box above only for mailing purposes.

Einstein@home Screen Saver

You probably have heard about Seti@home, the screen saver used to search for signs of extraterrestrial intelligence collected by the Arecibo Radio Telescope. Now, there is a new screen saver – part of a “distributed computing project” – that will allow personal computer users to help analyze data from the Laser Interferometer Gravitational wave Observatory (LIGO). The goal is to perform a whole-sky, gravitational wave survey of pulsars. Beta-test versions of the Einstein@home screen saver should be available by the end of the summer, and final release is planned for early 2005. To keep track of

events, check out the following URLs: <http://www.physics2005.org/events/einsteinathome/index.html> and <http://science slash dot org/article.pl?sid=04/07/14/2339230&tid=134&tid=185&tid=14>

Coordinating Committee Meets

The multi-association coordinating committee met on Thursday, August 12, to make plans for coordinating future events. In attendance at the Challenger Learning Center were Janet Moore (CLC), Michelle Covi (Ecology Action Center), Jim and Lauri Swindler (TCAA/Children’s Discovery Museum), Carl and Rebecca Wenning (TCAA/CLC), and Tom Willmitch (ISU Planetarium). The meeting was called to order at 6:12 p.m. Two activities were discussed.

The group has agreed to work with SGNC to celebrate their grand re-opening on Saturday, October 16th. It was decided that, with Angela Smith’s approval, each of the coordinating committee’s associations would present talks (30-minute talks on the hour every hour) and provide for static displays, crafts, and family activities. The TCAA will sponsor a talk by Jerod Gross who will speak about Cassini at Saturn, and will host shorter talks and day and night observing. It was decided to await contact with Angela before further details would be worked out.

It was agreed that the TCAA will work with the CLC to present a two-day scout merit badge workshop for about 20 Boy Scouts and Cadette/Senior Girl Scouts on Friday/Saturday, October 23/24. Ages of these scouts run from about 11 to 18 years.

Formal activities will take place from 6 to 10 p.m. on Friday, and from 8 or 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday. Check in will begin on Friday at 5:30 p.m. This will not be an overnight event. Meals will be provided. A field trip to SGO is planned for Friday night and for the ISU Planetarium on Saturday night; parents will provide rides for their scouts. The order of the events will be switched if it is cloudy on Friday night.

The event will be held at the CLC with field trips to the ISU Planetarium, Sugar Grove Observatory, and a site to launch model rockets. The event will focus on two Girl Scout badges (*Space Exploration* – coordinated by Rebecca, & *Museum*

Discovery – coordinated by Janet) and three Boy Scout badges (*Aviation* – coordinated by Janet, *Space Exploration* – coordinated by Carl, & *Astronomy* – coordinated by Jim and Tom). The GSA *Museum Discovery* merit badge will be addressed tangentially through other merit badge activities. Each of the coordinators is now to work out how they will use a 5-hour time frame to provide activities in relation to their topics; cost estimates should also be made. Carl will make a per-person cost estimate for the three meals.

There will be a participation fee of \$60 to \$75 per scout. It is anticipated that with major contributions of time and effort by the CLC, TCAA, ISU Planetarium, and possibly Image Air, there should be a fair distribution of profits earned from this event if any. The issue needs to be discussed further.

Promotion of this activity will be coordinated through local scout councils. Rebecca will contact “Keisha” at the Girl Scout office about promotion, fees, and creation of an aerospace council badge.

The next meeting of the key participants of the merit badge workshop will be on Thursday, August 19, at 5 p.m. The meeting place will be the CLC. The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Solar Filter for SGO 12-Inch Arrives

The 4.5-inch offset 2+ solar filter approved for purchase by the TCAA Board of Directors has just arrived from Thousand Oaks. By the time this newsletter arrives, the filter should be in place at the SGO. The visual filter is fitted into a ~14-inch diameter cell designed to fit snugly on a 12-inch Meade telescope.

Once the filter is in place, additional precautions need to be taken such as making certain that lens caps are in place on the main instrument’s finder telescope (but not the Telrad). Observers should use extreme caution when turning the telescope to the sun; all filters need to be in place before doing so. If uncertain about the use of this filter, please contact one of the more experienced solar observers in the TCAA.



**Announcing New
TCAA Members**



Nestor Gutierrez
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Welcome!

The OBSERVER
Newsletter of the TCAA, Inc.

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Are Your Dues Due?

The Dues Blues?

If you see a check in the box above, it means your dues are due. To retain membership, please send your dues renewal to our esteemed Treasurer:

Duane Yockey
508 Normal Avenue
Normal, IL 61761