



Northwest Skies

The Official Newsletter of the Tacoma Astronomical Society
Tacoma, Washington State, USA

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76 Years of Amateur Astronomy in the Pacific Northwest

July—August 2007

The Editors Letter

by Sion Heaney

I'm taking this opportunity to substitute an Editors Letter instead of the regular Presidents Message. It's a break with tradition but not without good reason.

Firstly, I am sure that you don't need reminding that the annual Table Mountain Star Party is July 12th through the 14th. I hope many of you are heading up there and will enjoy the opportunity of excellent dark skies. Bill Briggs posted a checklist on the TAS bulletin board that I hope he does not mind if I plagiarize for a short article in this edition.

Secondly, the following month of TMSP, the Astronomy Fair is scheduled for August 18th. The Tacoma Astronomical Society has held the Astronomy Fair for five years now and this is one of the important events for encouraging the public to come see what the society offers. We often see membership rise after this event and after the Puyallup Fair in September where TAS has a booth.

These key events for the next few months are important for TAS gets noticed by the general public who may consider becoming members, which is the most important aspect of any society. It makes for a very busy time for the board and those key individuals of the society who make it all happen. I would encourage you, if you have not volunteered your time before, to take the plunge and help out as best you can. The experience is very rewarding and you will meet some great people. Plus, by increasing membership, and hopefully drawing back some past members too, there will be more opportunities to network with other astronomy aficionados in the area.

I have another reason, two in fact, for taking the opportunity to write directly to you all and I hope this does not come as a surprise. I need to let you all know that I am handing over the torch for the society website,

tas-online.org, to Dave Norberg. Dave graciously contacted me after the president requested someone take over the website. Over the next few months I will be transitioning the administration and operation of the website to Dave. Please provide him with your encouragement as he takes over.

I am also handing over the newsletter to new editors when they are ready to take the reins. They will be facilitating the publishing, the upload to the website with Dave Norberg's help, and the printing and mailing of the newsletter. This is what I have sought for sometime now and I look forward to seeing a new newsletter that will be read by all.

Thank you all for reading Northwest Skies and many special thanks to all the contributors over the years who have helped made the newsletter what it is today.

- Sion

Northwest Skies is a bi-monthly publication of the Tacoma Astronomical Society. All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Tacoma Astronomical Society.

Original article contributions are strongly encouraged and may be submitted as an email attachment to

editor@tas-online.org

Bert Brown
draws our
attention to the
efforts of the
'Universe
Aware' global
outreach
program and
the benefits it is
providing
throughout the
world.

People to Contact

You can also contact us via email through our website at

www.tas-online.org

Our mailing address is:

**The Tacoma
Astronomical Society
PO BOX 8881,
Tacoma, WA 98418**

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What's Up In Astronomy

by Bert Brown

Tacoma Astronomical Society members who have been involved in astronomy outreach activities may be interested in an international astronomy outreach program described by Toni Feder in the June 2007 issue of *Physics Today* (pages 30 - 31). In the article, "Astronomy Outreach Used For Social Good", Feder outlines the program called Universe Awareness (with the acronym UNAWE) developed by George Miley, an astronomer at Leiden University in the Netherlands. A project of the International Astronomical Union's International Year of Astronomy, it targets disadvantaged children of many countries. The goal, according to Miley, is not to produce scientists, but to "use astronomy for social



purposes, to make more rounded human beings... [to] teach tolerance, inspire awe, and instill self-confidence."

Children are naturally inquisitive, and UNAWE seeks to get them inter-

ested in the nature of the solar system and universe around them. Methods will differ from country to country due to the different cultures. UNAWE itself does not fund programs, but it will serve as an 'umbrella'

organization for participating groups around the world, so funding will have to be developed in each area that participates in UNAWE. "The idea is to use synergies and piggyback on existing structures", according to Carolina Ödman, the project coordinator at Leiden University. She further states the project's three components are, "The development and production of high-tech materials - films, toys, cartoons and the like - that could be translated according to language and cultural needs, the training and workshops offered, and the facilitation of international networking."

Several examples of activities that have already occurred are given. In South Africa, 10-year old children used Skype - communications software for making free telephone calls over the Internet - to talk to children in Germany during a total lunar eclipse. They did so to compare what was seen from the two different hemispheres. In Tunisia, Tunis Science City opened the doors of their museum to younger children, and they have an astronomy bus that goes to villages across the country. There are three photos in the Physics To-

day article. The first, from India, showing a teacher and group of children intently studying what appear to be astronomy diagrams or drawings. A second, in Tunisia, of children with a table-top operating model of the solar system (not to scale, of course), and a third, in Venezuela, of children dressed as celestial objects performing a dance routine. The Venezuela program is aided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

This intermingling of science and folklore was attractive to Ram Ramanujam, a logician and outreach organizer in Tamil Nadu, a state of southeast India. The Tamil Nadu Science Forum had already been using songs, skits and a dance about eclipses. The villages of southern India are blessed with dark skies, unlike the big cities.

Kevin Govender, head of public outreach at the Southern Africa Large Telescope, is leading the introduction of UNAWE in South Africa. His work is in a northern rural part of the country, where there are vestiges of apartheid. Govender hopes to "use astronomy to try to inspire people not only to be curious about the universe, but also to give them a perspective that is beyond poverty, beyond the hardships they face, and give them hope." Previous outreach programs in South Africa have targeted middle to high school students and the public in general, but UNAWE hopes to also involve a younger age group. They hope that participation in UNAWE will help generate government financial support for their outreach work.

I wonder if UNAWE would have any use for Tacoma Astronomical Society stomp rockets?



Membership Subscriptions for 2007

Membership subscriptions for 2007 are now due. Please mail your membership renewal to

**The Tacoma
Astronomical
Society
PO BOX 8881
Tacoma, WA 98418**

or bring your check along to the next General Meeting and hand them to John Pettit, our Treasurer.

Membership dues are the primary income for the society and it allows us to fund member activities and parties as well as the Outreach and Student Programs. Your membership is very important to us.

The annual fees are:

Family: **\$35.00**
Adult: **\$25.00**
Student: **\$15.00**
Senior: **\$10.00**

Thank you.

January Schedule of Events

- **July 3rd: General Meeting.** Please note we are meeting at Wyatt Hall, Room 109 at UPS until further notice. 7:30 PM.

- **Outreach event** at Wainwright Elementary School, Fircrest. Stomp rockets. 9:15 — 10:00 AM

- **July 7th: Public Night** at Pierce College, Sunrise Building. Program will be 'Astrophotography' presented by Dr Charles Jacobson. 9:00 PM.

- **July 12th—14th: Table Mountain Star Party.** Trustee meeting will be held at TMSP.

- **Outreach event** at Wainwright Elementary School, Fircrest. Workshop on comets. 9:15 — 10:00 AM

- **July 19th: Outreach event** at Boys & Girls Club South Pugest Sound, Lakewood. Stomp rockets. 12:30 — 4:00 PM

- **July 21st: Public Night** at

Pierce College, Sunrise Building. Program will be 'Auroras' presented by Matt Flood and Ray Stinson. 9:00 PM.

- **July 23rd: Outreach event** at Tacoma Public Library, Ta-

coma. Presentation on The Moon. 1:30 — 3:00 PM

- **July 24th: Outreach event** at Wainwright Elementary School, Fircrest. Presentation on The Moon. 9:15 — 10:00 AM

- **July 31st: Outreach event** at Wainwright Elementary School, Fircrest. Solar party. 9:15 — 10:00 AM

July 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 General Meeting. Outreach event.	4 Outreach event.	5	6	7 ☾ Public Night.
8	9	10	11	12 Table Mountain Star Party.	13 Table Mountain Star Party.	14 ● Table Mountain Star Party.
15	16	17 Trustee Meeting. Outreach event.	18	19 Outreach event.	20	21 Public Night.
22 ☽	23 Outreach event.	24 Outreach event.	25	26	27 Student Meeting.	28
29	30 ○	31 Outreach event.				

February Schedule of Events

- **August 6th—8th:**
Outreach event at Stanly Stamm Children’s Hospital Camp, Buckley. Stomp Rockets and Star Party
 10:00—12:00 PM
- Please note we are meeting at Wyatt Hall, Room 109 at UPS until further notice.
 7:30 PM.
- **August 14th:**
Outreach event at Wainwright Elementary School, Fircrest. Planispheres workshop.
 9:15 — 10:00 AM
- **August 10th:**
Members Only Star Party at Bill Briggs Residence. Graham.
 9:00 PM
- **August 16th:**
Outreach event at Puyallup Recreation Center, Puyallup. Stomp rockets and solar viewing.
 8:30 — 12:00 PM
- **August 18th:**
 Astronomy Fair V, Pierce College, Sunrise Building and Observing Hill. Middy to midnight.
- **August 25th:**
 Public Night at Pierce College, Sunrise Building. Program will be ‘Spectroscopy’ presented by our guest speaker.
 9:00 PM.

August 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5 ☾	6 Outreach event.	7 General Meeting. Outreach event.	8 Outreach event.	9	10 Members Only Star Party.	11
12 ●	13	14	15	16	17	18 Astronomy Fair V
19	20 ☽	21 Trustee Meeting.	22	23	24 Student Meeting.	25 Public Night.
26	27	28 ○	29	30	31	

Northwest Skies



First Class

If undelivered, please return to

Tacoma Astronomical Society
PO BOX 8881
Tacoma, WA 98418

We need your articles.

If you are interested in contributing an article or would like to make a suggestion as to what you'd like to read in **Northwest Skies** then please do contact the Editor. We are always in need of original contributions.

Deadline for submitting articles for inclusion in the next edition of **Northwest Skies** is the last Thursday of the month before publishing.

Observations: Preparing for TMSP

by Sion Heaney

I shall always be indebted to David and Dan Gifford for saving a much coveted area under the shade of trees at the Table Mountain Star Party several years ago. If one is unaccustomed to the midday heat as one is still sleeping after a late night / early morning observing then such areas are sought after by early arrivals.

During the day there is much to keep attendees occupied and there are many vendors selling scopes and accessories at considerable discount. It is important to remember to bring plenty of cash, or

to place a spending limit on one's credit cards.

It is also important to remember these key items to make the three day star party much more pleasurable. Firstly, and foremost, remember to bring warm clothing such as hat, gloves, blankets, and also hand warmers as the nights can get chilly. Likewise bring plenty of protection from the sun during the day including insect repellent, first aid kit and sunglasses.

Bring personal effects such as towels, soap, shampoo and other toiletries.

In addition to checking all your telescope gear is in order also check all your camping supplies. Also, make sure all your telescope accessories are accounted for and packed. Change all your batteries and have plenty spare just in case. Rope, perhaps 50', is also useful for the trip and camping needs.

If you can, bring extra food for the TAS potluck and be prepared to have lots of fun.

Finally, make sure you have plenty of water and keep hydrated throughout the day.

We're on the web!
WWW.TAS-ONLINE.ORG