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VIA STELLARIS

The Monthly Newsletter of the Von Braun Astronomical Society

VBAS Highlights

Public Programs for May -June

Our next society meeting will be held on Friday, May 21st at 7 PM. VBAS Meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of each month & they're open to the public!

Regular planetarium programs are held on Saturdays at 7:30 PM. This month, we explore the Constellations of the summer: Ursa Major, Bootes, and Virgo. We'll have a special show to explain: "How the Earth Moves through the Universe". Admission to planetarium shows is free for VBAS Members, \$5.00 for Adults, \$3.00 for Students, and free for children under 6. Observation of the night sky through various telescopes will follow planetarium program, weather permitting.

Calendar of Events

On page 2, Messier Marathon and other events for May.

The Night Sky for May

On page 3, Saturn, Mars, Venus easily seen after dark!

Spring Star Party

On page 4, Jared provides a photo report!

VBAS Supports Earth Day Events

On page 4, VBAS outreach efforts.

Yuri's Night: Rocks the Rocket City

On page 7, Global Astronomy Month Yuri's Night Celebration

Stellar Events for May

On page 5, Doug Horacek's report on astronomical events

VBAS supports SWE Earth Day Event

On page 7, Society of Women Engineers supports STEM

Richard Norman
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Deadline for June Via Stellaris submissions is May 30, 2010.



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Calendar of Events

Saturday, May 1st, 8th, 22nd, & 29th 2010, 7:30 PM

Planetarium Show: “Constellations Ursa Major, Virgo, Bootes”

Location: VBAS

Join us for a family-friendly program as we explore these early summer constellations. Weather permitting, we will be viewing the night sky afterwards through powerful telescopes, too.

Saturday, May 15th, 2010, 7:30 PM

Planetarium Show: “Motions of the Earth”

Location: VBAS

Join us for a family-friendly program to explore how our Earth moves through the universe. Weather permitting, we will be viewing the night sky afterwards through powerful telescopes, too.

Friday, May 14th, 2010, 7:00 PM - 10 PM

Youth and Adult Observing Night

Location: VBAS

Presented by David Lofts and Doug Horacek

March and April Adult Observing nights were a big success so be sure not miss the May event! May is the same as Youth and Adult Observing evening Beginning at 7:00, David Lofts and Doug Horacek will give a planetarium tour of the current night sky including clusters of galaxies by, followed by observing time. Handouts will be provided showing how to use the little dipper to determine your local level of light pollution. Adults can arrive before 7 to set up their scopes if needed. David will assist both young and old beginners finding their around the sky, and some of our adult observers will have their telescopes for the youth to look through to explore space. If cloudy or rainy we will have tours of the observatory instead. Call David Lofts at 726-0275 or Doug Horacek at 772-6788 for more information.

Friday, May 21st, 2010, 7 PM

Regular Monthly Meeting

Location: VBAS

May is our Annual Meeting to elect our board members and present the Annual Budget. Visitors are welcome!

Nominees are:

VP & Pres Elect: Tom Burleson Jr.

Secretary: Nazirah Jetha

Student Director: Andrew Courtney

Dir. of Planning and Research: Jeff Delmas

Saturday, June 5th, 12th, 19th, & 26th 7:30 PM

Planetarium Show:

Location: VBAS

Weekly public planetarium shows continue.

Friday, June 18th 7 PM

VBAS Regular Monthly Meeting

...And as always, for the most up-to-date information about VBAS events, be sure to check the web site at vbas.org.



*Venus & Mercury Conjunction Party at Doug's Place
photo by John Young*

Spring Star Party

photos by Jared Cassidy

We're planning one star party each month this spring. Our March and April star party were a big success, with observers in the field until the early morning. In addition to the scopes in the field we had the 16 and 21" scopes of the Swanson and Angele active!

The third in our series of three spring star parties is set for **Friday, May 14th!** Bring your telescope to the society observing field on Monte Sano that evening to join with fellow observers in this evening-long celebration.

The May Star Party coincides with our Youth and Adult Observing night. We'll start setting up around 6:30pm. The youth observing planetarium presentation will start around 7 pm and observing will continue as long as there are willing participants!

Mark your calendars, and join us before the summer heat gets here. Jared provides a photo journal of what you have missed:



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Earth Day Events

by Richard Norman

The Global Astronomy Month has picked an excellent month to celebrate astronomy! April is also Earth Day! VBAS has supported Earth Day for many years to promote the fact that an Earth Day is 24 hours long, and includes both sunlight and darkness, which life forms have become to rely upon. The advent of artificial light has clearly impacted the balance of dark and light! VBAS members Melissa Snider and Gena Crook have regularly helped support raising Dark Sky Awareness on Earth Day each year. VBAS needs additional support for this important effort! Don't rely on others to defend your night skies, or you'll become as blinded as the Owls!



Earth Day at Haye's Nature Preserve
Come join us next year!

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Stellar Events for May 2010

by Doug Horacek

1st: At Dusk use binoculars or a small telescope to spot 4th magnitude Kappa Tauri about 15 minutes to the lower left of Venus. Look 5 minutes to the lower left of Kappa 1 for 5th mag Kappa 2.

4th: At dusk 4th mag star Tau Tauri is less than a degree to the left of Venus Tau Tauri is a double star with 7th mag companion just 63 seconds of the primary.

5th: Last Quarter Moon (11:15 pm CDT)

9th-10th : At dawn a waning crescent Moon is above Jupiter on the 9th, and to the left of Jupiter on the tenth.

13th: New Moon (8:04 pm CDT)

14th at dawn look for 20 Piscium 15 minutes to the lower left of Jupiter at 5.5 mag. The moon IO emerges from behind the planet at 5:14 CDT to join the other three moons.

15th: The moon is to the lower right of Venus and on the upper left on the 16th. At 10 hours UT. In Africa and Southern Asia the moon occults the planet Venus.

19th: The Moon is 6 degrees below Mars.

20th: The Moon is 5 deg to the lower left of Regulus, and 12 deg to the left of Mars. First Quarter Moon (6:43 pm CDT)

21st: Use a small telescope or binoculars to view star cluster M35 and NGC 2158 less than a degree to the lower left of Venus.

22nd: Saturn is 8 deg above the moon.

24th: Spica is 6 deg above the Moon.

27th: Full Moon 2 deg above Antares

Spring Star Party... cont

by Jared Cassidy



Kevin Winder & his 12 inch Zhumell Dob.



Kevin Winder, Jeff Delmas, and Observatory Director Wes Swift

... continued on page 6

Spring Star Party... cont

by Jared Cassidy



Former President, John Young only opens his stealth scope after dark!



Andrew Wilson, Richard Christiansen, Gert Schmitz, & Richard Norman anticipate a stellar night at VBAS!

Gert started the night off right with a photo journal presentation of the history of VBAS after the society meeting.

Earth Day Events... cont



Give a Hoot, Don't Light Pollute!



Melissa Snider raises Dark Sky Awareness!

Earth Day Events... cont



Melissa helps the next generation create a new Milky Way Galaxy, and recycle the old one at the same time!

VBAS Supports SWE Event

by Richard Norman

Although tornadoes delayed the event for a week, the Society of Women Engineer's hosted a special Earth Day event to encourage youth to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). After viewing a Movie about the Oceans the kids were challenged with two real world problems. The kids were challenged to think

about how to solve the problems using simple everyday materials. The event was a success, and hopefully SWE and VBAS can collaborate on future events that promote our common goal of inspiring kids to pursue careers in STEM fields.

Yuri's Night Rocks!

The Rocket City kicked off Global Astronomy Month well this year with the 1st Rocket City celebration of Yuri's Night. VBAS supported the event with a couple of telescopes on the terrace of the Space and Rocket Center despite the light pollution of the Saturn V exhibit. We have been invited back again next year, and hope that other members can join us for this unique public outreach event.



...Yuri's Night is out of this World!

Contributions to Via Stellaris

We welcome contributions to our newsletter that may be of interest to the astronomical community. Contributions are best sent by email to Richard Norman at astrodude@mchsi.com.

Membership and Renewal

The VBAS currently has four categories of membership. All four include free admission to the planetarium shows; subscription to this newsletter; membership in the Astronomical League; and use of VBAS library and equipment. The four categories of membership, and the dues for each, are: REGULAR at \$24.00 per year, FAMILY at \$36.00 per year, STUDENT (must be full-time student) at \$12.00 per year, and LIFE at \$500.00. Newsletter Only is also available for \$12.00 per year. Membership renewal occurs for all members annually on March 1st.

All VBAS memberships came up for renewal on March 1, 2010. If you have questions regarding membership, please contact a VBAS officer.

Please send your renewal to the Membership Secretary at VBAS, P.O. Box 1142, Huntsville, AL 35807. Make checks payable to the Von Braun Astronomical Society.

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Richard Norman, Via Stellaris editor