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# The Celestial Observer

*Newsletter of the North Shore  
Amateur Astronomy Club*

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**April, 2008**

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## **From the President**

Members looking forward to a letter from our new President, Jim Foy, will have to wait another month. Jim does not officially take office until the March board meeting, which will have occurred by the time you read this but is still a week away as I write.

Your 2008 Board of Directors was elected by acclamation at the March business meeting. The new NSAAC Board of Directors is comprised of President Jim Foy, Vice-President Tom Rauschenbach, Treasurer Kevin Ackert, Secretary John Hobbs, Membership Director Theresa Earle, and two Members At Large, Bill Drown and Jim Bastable. Kudos to all for volunteering your time to help the club!

I would like to personally thank Jim Koerth for serving two years on the board as Membership Director, Rick Margolies for serving one year as Vice-President and one year as Member At Large, and Paul Roy for doing one year as Member At Large. I really appreciate the great job you guys did! And while I'm at it, I'd like to also thank all the members, past and present, who served on the board during my four years as president: Theresa Earle, John Hobbs, Tom Rauschenbach, Russ Pinizzotto, Ron Sampson, Art Schneiderman, Barrie Sawyer, Tony Costanzo, Fred Sammartino, Chris Nicholl, and Lew Gramer. It was a pleasure working with all of you!

I've enjoyed being president the past four years and have benefited greatly from the experience. I'm looking forward to being the Treasurer and devoting time to the Young Astronomer Program.

It's Galaxy Season! And a terrific planet hanging out in Leo! Watch the list server for people gathering. I'll see you under a dark sky soon!

*Kevin Ackert  
President*

## **NSAAC Welcomes Our New Members:**

Brad Glenn of North Reading, MA  
John Gray of Groveland, MA  
Kevin Hocker of Lawrence, MA  
Tom Meyer of Melrose, MA

*Theresa Earle,  
Membership Director*

## **Minutes of the NSAAC Business Meeting, March 7th, 2008**

President Ackert called the March Business Meeting of the NSAAC to order at 8:25 PM. There were 14 members present plus 4 Board members. There was an official quorum.

Secretary: The minutes of the January business meeting were accepted by acclamation.

Treasurer:  
We are solvent. The Treasurer gave a brief report and said that we now have 55 renewals out of 102 members.

Membership:  
Five new members since the last meeting:  
John Gary from Groveland  
Joseph Morency from Salem  
Kevin Hocker from Lawrence  
Brain Wells from Haverhill(rejoined)  
Gary Meehan from Danvers(rejoined)

## Committee Reports

### Early Meeting Announcements:

No announcements. Open forum on the agenda after New Business

### Committee Reports:

### Young Astronomers Program:

Kevin Ackert has contacted the Striking Sparks program in California to discuss the club's YAP program with them since they have been doing this for some 23 years. Kids submit essays through the school with the help of the club and the schools. The club selects the best essay and makes rewards based on the essays.

### Merrimack College:

Jeff Hayes opened the dome last Wednesday night. Fred Sammartino ran the dome for the Lunar Eclipse and a Lawrence Eagle Tribune reporter was there and wrote an

article for the newspaper. Fred also had a troop of scouts on February 27, but it was cloudy.

#### Salem State:

Kevin's e-mail to the college was forwarded to Todd Wimpfheimer, the current department chair, and he has replied that he is interested in how the school can work with NSAAC.

#### Entertainment Report:

Kevin plans to do another constellation conversation this year and would like for more members doing these. The entertainment for the evening will be a presentation by Russ Pinizzotto on Stellar Evolution.

#### Star Party Committee:

Friday March 14<sup>th</sup> there will be a star party at the Bates Elementary School in Salem.

Tuesday April 1<sup>st</sup> there will be a star party at the Sanborn School in Andover, MA with Brewster giving three staggered presentations with observing following. There will be 150-200 students so several scopes will be needed.

Friday April 11<sup>th</sup>, star party for the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust, Chelmsford, MA.

Monday May 12<sup>th</sup> there will be a star party for the friends of Fort Hill Park in Lowell, MA.

Monday May 16<sup>th</sup> there will be a star party at the Bell Elementary School in Marblehead MA. This party will start with the presentation at 7:30PM

#### Telescope Clinic:

We got a note from Joe Morency who brought his 8 inch Newtonian in because he was having trouble focusing. Dan Smoody and Ron Sampson discovered problems with both his primary and secondary mirrors that need to be corrected. Mr. Morency was very appreciative for the help and became a member of the club. Dan and Ron will continue to help with his problem.

#### News, Correspondence and Upcoming Activities:

Earth Hour day is March 29<sup>th</sup>. It is the hour between 8 & 9 PM and all are urged to consume the least amount of energy possible, Please see [www.earthhour.org](http://www.earthhour.org) for more information.

World Astrocast day is also March 29<sup>th</sup> and the topic for this webcast is "Hunting Planets with Gravity's Telescope". This is at 6:00 PM EST and a broadband connection is required.

#### Old Business:

Marc O'Connor has presented some of his ideas for the improved club logo. There was favorable discussion of some of his ideas and he would like to attend the next board meeting and present his ideas for the board discussion.

Astronomy Day is Saturday May 10<sup>th</sup> this year. The board is discussing what to do for this event. Kevin has suggested organized guerilla astronomy groups in public places. Doing nothing is NOT an option.

We have the 2008 use permits for the dark site and they are for both Friday and Saturday nights. We still have to find a safe place to leave the gate key.

Kevin Ackert has purchased the new software for the books and he will attempt to have everything in order for the next board meeting.

The Vice President read the slate of candidates for the officers of the club for the upcoming election. President – Jim Foy

Vice President – Tom Rauschenbach

Treasurer - Kevin Ackert

Secretary - John Hobbs

Membership – Theresa Earle

Members at Large – Jim Bastable and Bill Drown

He opened the floor to any nominations from the floor. There were no nominations from the floor and a motion was made and seconded for a vote by acclamation for the new slate of officers. The vote was by acclamation. The President thanked the outgoing board members for their service and welcomed the new board members.

#### New Business:

VMP work days will be Saturday March 8 and Sunday March 9. The work might be finished that day; but if not there would work on Sunday or a later date.

Rick Margolies has worked on a business type card for the club. He had an example of the card and needs to have it cleaned up and printed.

Board meeting is scheduled for Monday March 17<sup>th</sup> a 7:00 PM

Meeting adjourned at 9 15 PM.

*Respectively submitted,*

*John Hobbs, Secretary NSAAC*

## 2008 Dues Now Past Due

Dues for 2008 were due at the March business meeting. If you have not yet paid your dues please send a check for \$20.00 as soon as possible. Membership privileges will be extended temporarily while we await your 2008 dues.

*Soon-To-Be Treasurer,  
Kevin Ackert*

## Star Party News

There was a Star Party at the Bates Elementary School in Lynn, Ma, on Thursday March 6<sup>th</sup> for the school-wide Science Night. The seeing was poor with low thin clouds, but views were seen of Mars and Saturn and the Orion Nebula was barely visible using an O3 filter. Five telescopes were provided by Bill Drown, Jim Bastable, Jim Foy, John Hobbs, and Fred Sammartino. There were steady lines of about 150 students and parents.

Tuesday April 1<sup>st</sup> there will be a star party at the Sanborn School in Andover, MA with Brewster giving three staggered presentations with observing following. There will be 150-200 students so several scopes will be needed.

Friday April 11<sup>th</sup>, star party for the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust, Chelmsford, MA.

The Star Party Committee thanks all our members who take the time to support these activities.

*John Hobbs,  
Star Party Coordinator*

## Astrotalk

by Barrie Sawyer  
***Celestial Sampler* by Sue French**

Sue French is well known for her monthly columns on observing in *Sky and Telescope*. This book collects 60 of her articles into a single reference for \$24.95. They are arranged by month and each one focuses on one particular area of the sky. There is a list of highlights, decent descriptions of a variety of objects and finder charts.

Why buy it if you own a more detailed observing book like the 2-volume *Night sky Observer's guide*? Well, the strength of the *Celestial Sampler* is in Ms. French's descriptions. Most describe what you should expect to see

through a small scope in a moderate sky. She includes helpful hints on how star hop to find objects and how many of them will respond to various filters. While most of the objects will be familiar to observers, several lesser known and challenge objects are included. For example, she mentions the Arcturus Group and discusses Barnard's Loop in Orion that was the subject of a two part series by Steve O'Meara in *Sky and Telescope*.

The book is loaded with photos, but surprisingly, there are only about a half dozen eyepiece drawings. My only other quibble is that I found a few of the star hopping guides like for M81, M82 and for the Helix nebula less than adequate.. If the clouds clear at the last minute and you find you have an hour or two to observe, this book is for you, especially if you haven't had the time to make up your own observing list. The author's enthusiasm will whet your appetite. You can peruse *The Celestial Sampler* at Borders or order it from Sky Publishing.

*Clear skies,  
Barrie Sawyer*

## Entertainment for April

Russ Pinizzotto's talk on stellar evolution and the HR Diagram at the March business meeting was the best entertainment we've had in a long time! The new board of directors will be discussing how we may be able to have more speakers for entertainment. Meanwhile, we find ourselves once again at deadline time with no planned entertainment for April. The board will come up with something at our meeting and announce it via the list server.

If you have a suggestion for an entertainment idea please submit it to us with no obligation to do it yourself.

## Help Wanted

Below is a list of positions which need to be filled in our club. Please consider volunteering for one of these positions if you have the means. Please contact any Board member with questions about these positions.

### Snacks & Coffee

Persons to be responsible for seeing that we have cookies and coffee for every meeting. Two people could collaborate on this.

### Star Party Volunteers:

Please check the Star Party schedule and help out if you are able.

## Getting to Veasey Memorial Park

From Interstate 95 north, take the Route 133 west (54B) exit, and follow it into Georgetown Center. Go straight through the light, now on Route 97N. Go about 1.5 miles and take a left onto Salem Street (Tea Garden Restaurant at this intersection). Stay on Salem Street and turn left onto Washington Street. VMP is down a bit on the right.

Directions to all of the NSAAC observing sites are available on our web site's "About" page at:

<http://www.nsaac.org/about.htm>

## Contact Information

For more information about the club and its activities, contact Theresa Earle, Membership Director, email: [membership at nsaac.org](mailto:membership@nsaac.org) or contact Jim Foy, President, e-mail at [president at nsaac.org](mailto:president@nsaac.org). If you have no email access, you may phone Kevin Ackert at (978) 663-5305

Our club web site is: <http://www.nsaac.org>.

The *Celestial Observer* is edited by Leor Zolman. Feedback, and member contributions are welcome. Contact: [newsletter at nsaac.org](mailto:newsletter@nsaac.org).

New development on the NSAAC web site is currently being coordinated and implemented by Mike Deneen. Suggestions regarding the content of the NSAAC web site are always welcome; Please email [webmaster at nsaac.org](mailto:webmaster@nsaac.org) with your ideas.