

Harford County Astronomical Society

Bel Air, Maryland
www.harfordastro.org



Volume 32 Issue 9

September 2006

General Meeting:
Saturday, Oct. 7, 2006 7:30pm (19:30)

Public Star Parties (Open House):
Saturday, Sept. 30, 2006 at dusk
Saturday, Oct. 28, 2006 at dusk

Club Calendar for 2006:

<u>Meeting Night</u>	<u>Open House/Public Star Party</u>
November 4, 2006	November 25, 2006
December 2, 2006	December 30, 2006

Meeting time is 19:30 (7:30pm) unless noted otherwise.

Please check the website for possible schedule updates and changes:

<http://www.harfordastro.org>

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Minutes of September HCAS Meeting

1. President Jim Garrett opened the meeting at 7:31 PM. The August meeting minutes were published in the newsletter. The minutes were approved as written. He welcomed Conrad, a new member, along with guests Ken, Alex, and Kenny Bassford.

2. Treasurer: Tim Kamel reported that the club's bank balance was \$5895.47. We have 50 paid members. He sent a third follow-up mailing to 11 potentially lapsed members. So far he has received 1 reply. He sent off the Astronomical league dues. He also contacted the insurance company. They will reinstate the club's old coverage at a premium of \$320 per month. A motion was approved to authorize this payment.

The magazine subscription rates have gone up by \$5 per year. The membership form on the club website needs to be updated to reflect this new cost. Tim will contact the people who now owe the extra \$5.

3. Observatory operations: none this month.

4. Outreach:

a. Tom Rusek will conduct an indoor program at the Fallston library on September 18th.

b. On October 23rd, he will give an indoor and outdoor program at the Abingdon library. The indoor part begins at 7:00, and the outdoor part begins at 8:00.

c. A Girl Scout group will attend the club's October 28th public open house. Tom will bring them to the observatory classroom for a presentation, and then they will be able to participate in the outdoor part of the open house. The rain date for this is the November open house.

d. The club will participate in the Swanfest event at Swan Harbor Farms in Havre de Grace on October 15th.

5. Old business:

a. Roy Troxel said he was going to prepare the September newsletter this week. He asked for contributions. They did not need to be technical- club promotional activities, observation reports, and anything else of interest can be submitted. In future issues, Roy will include reports gleaned from other newsletters and web sites.

6. New business:

a. George has not contacted anyone in the club about supporting this semester's astronomy class. Mark Kregel said he would contact him and get the latest schedule.

b. The club will conduct a telescope buyer's seminar/workshop at the November 4th meeting. Jim Garrett will lead the seminar. He will bring several of his telescopes as examples of the available types. Jim and Grace will make a flyer to advertise the event. Grace will arrange for a room at the college to accommodate the people who want to attend. The seminar will be planned to run about an hour, including time for questions.

c. Tim Kamel suggested we schedule an extra open house for 30 September, since the next planned one is on 28 October. The club agreed to support this.

d. Tim will contact lapsed member Steve Channel about conducting a training session on the observatory telescope and cameras.

e. The club approved Tim's request for reimbursement for expenses incurred by mailing renewal notices and for hardware needed for his refurbishment of the club's reflector telescope.

8. The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 PM.

Monroe Harden

Treasurer's Report – September

As of 9/1/06, balance in the checking account is \$5895.47.

We now have 50 paid members. I have sent out my third and last follow up on the dues and only got one response.

I have processed the Astronomical League dues for \$250.00.

I received an insurance quote from our old insurance carrier, Westchester Insurance, basically giving us the old coverage that we had. Premium is \$320.00. I need the club approval to pay it. It will go into effect the day they receive our check. The check was mailed on 9/11.

Tim Kamel

Open House Thank-You

Dear Astronomical Society,

I would like to thank you folks for signing all those pieces of paper for my kids' extra credit on Jan. 7. Too bad it was overcast, but they thought it was neat to see people who have an interest, and actually want to look toward the stars. Keep up the looking up!!

Sincerely,

Craig McLeod
Science Teacher
Fulton High

Mr McLeod is a science teacher at Fallston High School. Last February he assigned an extra credit assignment to his students to attend the HCAS open house. Several of us showed up to conduct this open house, but the clouds rolled in and we were unable to observe. But as we stood around waiting for the clouds to part, the students in the class began to arrive. They all told us they were there for Mr McLeod's extra credit assignment, and they needed someone to write a note confirming their attendance. We told them that we couldn't do anything because it was cloudy, but we did sign their papers.

Harford County Community College ASTRONOMY CLASS SUPPORT

The Harford County Community College has an astronomy program and the Fall Semester class has just started. We, as the Harford County Astronomical Society have supported this program for many years. This is a little more than just an outreach program; it is an expectation. We have had a close relationship with the College, use one of their classrooms for our monthly meetings, use the observatory and store our equipment there. The College also insures our activities while on College grounds.

The support is fairly simple. We set up telescopes at the Observatory and allow the students to observe the objects that they are being taught in class. Dr. George Thomson, the Astronomy Professor, takes the lead in talking with the students and lets us know where to point the scopes. The students arrive from their class at about 9:30 PM and observe till about 10:00 PM. We would plan on getting there shortly after 9:00 PM to set up and get ready. We have 3 Dob-mounted reflectors and one refractor in the closet at the observatory available for this use if you do not want to bring your own.

I supported the program during the Spring Semester and thoroughly enjoyed it. I brought my own scope since I was more comfortable with using it. I did some observing and got to interact with young and enthusiastic students and answer some basic questions about my scope and the night sky. Between the full moon nights, the weather and college closings, there was an average of less than two sessions per month. I plan to support the program again this year and am looking forward to it.

This semester, the astronomy class was a sell out, with over 30 students enrolled. If we have the same HCAS participation that we had last year, about 4 scopes each session, that will be about 8 students per scope. This is not a good ratio for only a half hour of observing.

So, we need more members to participate, folks. You do not need to participate in all the session, just a few. But if enough members do so, we will give the students a better experience and reduce the burden for those members that do come to support.

If you would like, I can serve as a coordinator and you can let me know which sessions you'd like to support. Please reach me on hkamel32@comcast.net or on my cell at 410-937-8008. Here is the schedule for the Fall Semester:

Tim Kamel

[See next page for full schedule. Please print for your convenience.]

**HCCC ASTRONOMY 151
Fall 2006 Observation Schedule**

September

Sept. 18, 2006 (Orientation Session – Moonless)

Sept. 25 (Moonless)

October

Oct. 2 (2 days past 1st quarter)

Oct. 9 (Full moon – no session)

Oct. 16 (moonless)

Oct. 23 (moonless)

Oct. 30 (1 day past 1st quarter)

November

Nov. 6 (Full moon no session)

Nov. 13 (moonless)

Nov 18 (4:00am session at observatory)

**Nov 19 (4:00am session – to be held ONLY if session
on preceding night is cancelled)**

Nov. 20 (moonless)

Nov. 27 (1st quarter)

December

Dec. 4 (Full moon – no session)

Dec. 11 (moonless)

Dec. 18 (Final exam – semester ends – no session)

**Astronomical Society of the Pacific
to Meet in Baltimore,
September 16 -18**

In support of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific's (ASP) mission to increase the understanding and appreciation of astronomy, this national conference will focus on building and supporting a vibrant and connected community of individuals and groups engaged in educational and public outreach (EPO) in the disciplines of astronomy, astrobiology, space, and earth science.

For more information, visit the society's Web site at:

<http://www.astrosociety.org/events/meeting.html>

Or contact:

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HCAS Outreach Programs

Fallston Library

Monday, Sept. 18th, Indoor program / outdoor possible

Abingdon Library

Monday, October 23rd, Indoor program and outdoor program

Girl Scouts at Open House

Saturday, Oct. 28th for outdoor observing and at the observatory at 7pm for talk.

*For further information, please contact Tom Rusek at
rusek54@yahoo.com*

New Members In September

Please welcome our newest member:
Franz Younghans – Perry Hall, MD.

Swanfest

It's Swanfest time again!

Swanfest is a family-oriented event that takes place at Swan Harbor Farms located at 401 Oakington Road, Havre de Grace, MD 21078.

It includes crafts, food, games, live entertainment, activities for children, a chili contest, hay rides, mansion tours, and many vendors selling a wide range of items.

Food is also available at the event.

HCAS receives a booth for free. We give out information about astronomy, our club and let people take a look at the sun. The event will take place on Sunday, October 15 from 11 AM to 4 PM. Volunteers are needed to help out with our booth. If you have solar viewing capability, please bring your equipment and share with the public. People are amazed that you can look at the sun with a telescope.

If you don't have a telescope, you can still help. We give out information about our club and upcoming events we are holding as well as general astronomy information. Sometimes people are hesitant to volunteer because they don't think they know enough about astronomy. You don't have to have all the answers. Someone who volunteers will know the answers and you will be amazed what you can learn by helping out at these events.

Swanfest is a fun event in a beautiful setting. Come out for a good time and to help out with a club event. If you are interested in helping, please get in touch with **Grace Wyatt at 410-836-7285 or dgracew@comcast.net**. When it gets closer to the event, I will send information about where to set up, what to bring, etc. to those who express an interest in helping out.

Swanfest:

<http://www.aberdeenpr.com/Programs/swanfest.htm>

Swan Harbor Farm, 401 Oakington Road, Havre de Grace, MD

Solar Observing

There are a number of sun-enthusiasts among amateur astronomers and they take some amazingly beautiful photos of “our nearest star.” These sites provide some guidelines for the hobby:

<http://www.astro-nut.com/sun.html>

<http://www.popastro.com/sections/solar/chap3.htm>

Solar observers are interested in a number of things, including sunspots, solar flares, and solar photography.

Observing and photographing the sun requires a number of precautions, of course. Aside from the possibility of burning your eyes or ruining your eyepieces, there is also the danger of too much ultraviolet light exposure. It is the UV rays that cause sunburn and skin cancer, so you can imagine what they can do to your retinas. There are filters on the market that block these rays, but remember that everyone’s eyes are different, so you might consult an eye doctor first.

There are two standard ways for observing the sun. The first is through a filter placed on the object (front) end of your scope. However, never use the eyepiece filters that come with some scopes. Heat is quickly generated onto the eyepiece due to the focused rays, and this can crack the glass or dry up any adhesive. (The rays won’t be doing your camera any good, either – so take the required precautions.) The second way of observing the sun is by projecting its image onto a blank white sheet. This is safer for your eyes, but it does leave your scope’s lenses unprotected.

Here are some guidelines for filters and solar observing safety:

<http://astronexus.com/book/print/3>

One of the more popular (but expensive) filter types is the Hydrogen-alpha filter. Technically speaking, Hydrogen alpha (H-a) is the name of the visible spectrum in the red at 6563 angstroms. It is also the line of atomic hydrogen. The filters allow you to see this part of the spectrum only. This enables you to observe and photograph **prominences**, the large hot hydrogen gas flares which emanate from the Sun. For some examples of H-a photography, check this page: <http://www.astro-nut.com/sun-processing.html>

There are a few companies that create specific products for the amateur solar astronomer, the most prominent being Coronado Solar Filters at <http://www.coronadofilters.com/>. You can purchase a complete PST (Personal Solar telescope) from Coronado for about \$500.

This newsletter is the official publication of:

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Bel Air, MD 21014.**

*For the year 2006, any items for publication in any issue are due to the editor
by the 15th of the preceding month.*

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HCAS Newsletter

c/o Roy Troxel

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<http://www.harfordastro.org>

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