

Newsletter of The
United Astronomy
Clubs of New Jersey

www.uacnj.org

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The FOCUS

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April - August 2006

From the President

It's hard to believe that we're more than halfway through our season. We've already had our Astronomy Day, and our Picnic, and we're headed toward our Symposium on September 23. I hope that you will, and have been able to, attend our events for this year.

Our work sessions have been successful in restoring and preparing UACNJ facilities for use by our membership. We also found it necessary to reorganize our Executive Board to more evenly distribute the many duties of UACNJ. This was done by establishing several Select Committees so that we're able to function more efficiently and effectively.

For the purpose of providing a useful resource for our member clubs, we have reinstated our Speakers Bureau. Also, if a member club requests it, we will visit that club in order to make a special presentation to explain the advantage of UACNJ membership.

In addition, we are looking forward to the possibility of participating in research using a mobile science trailer, which we expect to have on our premises in October. It's called "The Second generation Optimized Fabry-Perot Doppler Imager" (a.k.a. SOFDI Generation). While it is at Jenny Jump, one of the activities in which our members could participate, is using the data from SOFDI Generation to determine meteor flux rates, direction, etc. There'll be more on this later.

As always, we are looking for ways to increase our observer membership. To accomplish this, we ask you to offer suggestions that might help us in this area. If you are not already an observer member of UACNJ, please seriously consider becoming one. We have dark skies, and overnight accommodations. Let us help to improve the status of amateur astronomers in New Jersey.

Clear and Dark Skies,
Karl J. Hricko

State Shutdown Briefly Closed UACNJ

by Gordon Bond (AAI)

As the politicians were still debating the state's budget, though the July 1st deadline was fast approaching, amateur astronomy clubs with observatories on state land were left wondering the fate of star parties, public nights and work sessions. If a budget was not agreed upon, the state government would begin shutting down all but the most essential services - including the State Park system. The extension beyond the 4th of July holiday did little to help.

UACNJ's home at Jenny Jump State Forest was under a similar cloud. In addition to the scheduled public night on July 8th, there were also work sessions planned both by the UACNJ itself and member-club AAI. UACNJ President, Karl Hricko (AAI) got word that Jenny Jump - and, therefore,

UACNJ - was indeed shut down. Members of NJAA at Vorhees State Park reported they too had been informed of the closing.

A budget agreement was finally announced by Thursday afternoon, July 6th. However, it would take another two days before everyone would be back to work, so the parks remained closed on Saturday, July 8th, forcing the cancelling of UACNJ's public night and work sessions after all.

Fortunately, the closing was only for one day, but it did raise questions about how much our access to our property could have been legally limited and about liability issues, particularly with the public.

Hopefully, we won't have to worry about these things again anytime soon!

AAI Honored with Asteroid

by Gordon Bond (AAI)

When Joe Montani discovered a new asteroid in April of 1997, he remembered the late George Chaplenko. Back from 1968 to 1975, when Montani was a young member of Amateur Astronomers, Inc. in Cranford, NJ, Chaplenko had been a friend and mentor, encouraging the love of astronomy that would lead him to Columbia University and on to becoming a Senior Research Specialist with the Spacewatch Near Earth Asteroid Survey Project in Arizona.

So when he had an opportunity to name his new asteroid, Montani sought to honor his old friend by naming it after the club that had brought them together. It would take some two years before one

of the names he proposed was accepted by the IAU: 9667 Amastrinc (for AMateur ASTRonomers, INC.).

Though he had kept in contact with Chaplenko over the years, Montani had been unaware that his friend had passed away, so the honor is particularly poignant. "I will miss George" he wrote to AAI President, Vince Henderson, "whenever I think of AAI, I think of his kindnesses and kind voice and face."

For more information about the Spacewatch Program, visit:

<http://spacewatch.LPL.Arizona.edu>
Information about the main-belt object Amastrinc 9667 will be posted on the Tutorials page of AAI's website:

www.asterism.org

Progress at Jenny Jump!



Gill Jeffer really getting "into his work" on the emergency generator shed.



Gill Jeffer installing the emergency switch by the furnace.



Bill Eberly (MMAS) puts the finishing touches to the shed.

The last few work sessions up at Jenny Jump have accomplished much. Thanks to Gil Jeffer (NWJAA), the switch has been installed that will allow the house's furnace to be powered by the new emergency generator. The generator itself is housed in a small shed behind the house.

Jeffer also used the tractor to remove boulders in the ground behind the two northernmost observatories, flattening and clearing the area for much-needed additional parking.

Inside the house, volunteers have been clearing and cleaning the variety of items that have been deposited there over the years. Well-meaning members have left a variety of electronics, telescope accessories and household items at the house, thinking that the UACNJ might be able to make use of it. We have been sorting through it all, determining what can be used, what can be sold

to raise funds and what should be trashed. This tidying up has opened more space in the house, making it more comfortable for our members as well as the visiting public.

Thanks to Kevin Conod (NJAG) for saving lovely display panels from a meteorite exhibit that had been installed at the Newark Museum and were slated for the trash when it closed. Conod is the Director of the museum's planetarium and astronomy columnist for the Star Ledger. Gordon Bond (AAI) will be using these panels to develop UACNJ's meteorite display. He is working with Al Witzgall (AAI), who helped stabilize and secure UACNJ's meteorite collection following the destruction of the displays area in the flood.

Bond also created a temporary display featuring two chart recorders that had been used by Penzias and Wilson on loan from AAI.



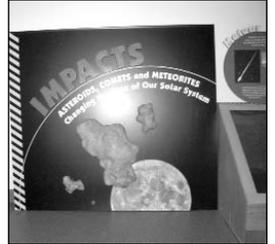
By clearing out the field behind the observatories, more parking has been opened up.



You can see the floor! The workroom looks very neat.



Some of the piles of stuff that needed to be sorted as part of the cleaning efforts.



One of the several display panels Kevin Conod donated for the displays area.



Gordon Bond's temporary display on Penzias and Wilson.



Alan Midkiff with his 20" scope.

NWJAA Off to a Good Start!

The new North West Jersey Amateur Astronomers (NWJAA) club has gotten off to a great start with several meetings and a picnic. The club is focused on observing, so meetings are scheduled around clear skies and may be called as little as 24 hours in advance, offering opportunities for members to enjoy observing either at a member's home or the UACNJ Observatory at Jenny Jump. A secondary focus of the club is bringing in new members for UACNJ, ranging from the seasoned amateur to individuals and families who are interested in astronomy but don't know where to begin to

pursue this hobby. A recent picnic at club co-founder Alan Midkiff's home was attended by about 20 people. Unfortunately rain cancelled plans to observe with Alan's 25" telescope but everyone is looking forward to another opportunity in the near future. The rain didn't dampen the conversation though and everyone enjoyed an afternoon of astronomy and space related discussions. Alan and co-founder Gil Jeffer were pleased to welcome several members of the now disbanded Hopatcong Area Amateur Astronomers (HAAA) club.

Gil Jeffer