

The Newsletter
of the United
Astronomy Clubs
of New Jersey.

www.uacnj.org

FOCUS

Deadline for next issue: 1-15-10 Editor: Diane Jeffer, astrodiane@gmail.com December 2009

Kevin Brady Donation

Gil and Diane Jeffer, NWJAA

Kevin Brady was passionate about astronomy. His sister Maureen remembers that he built a pier in the backyard of their childhood home in Queens to mount a telescope but found that passing traffic caused vibration. Later, he moved to New Jersey and built an observatory in his yard complete with an Astro-Physics seven-inch F/9 telescope.

When Kevin died earlier this year, Maureen Brady decided to donate all of Kevin's astronomical equipment, valued at nearly \$50,000, to UACNJ. By springtime, Kevin's observatory will be relocated from his backyard in Millington to our facility in Jenny Jump State Forest. This observatory and telescope will be used during public programs for planetary observing.

Additional items donated by the Brady family are still being catalogued and will be available for use by Qualified Observers when this process is complete. A ceremony to dedicate the Kevin Brady Observatory is planned for 2010.

Thank You!

Krishnadas Kootale is a 2009 Sustaining Observer, bringing the total number to 15 - nearly one third of all Observers.

The other Sustaining Observers for 2009 were listed in the last issue of Focus.



Photo by Diane Jeffer

Site of the future Kevin Brady Observatory.

Upcoming Events

January 9, February 6, March 6

Work Sessions

January 9 - Noon

Board meeting

New officers will be seated

All Observers welcome

January 15

Club Forms due

Club Memberships

The 2010 Club Membership Form and fee are due by January 15, 2010. This deadline allows us to include your club on the 2010 Observer Form which will be distributed at the end of January. The club form, which includes a list of the benefits of membership, is available at www.uacnj.org or by contacting Ron Russo at ron@roned.com.

Donations Appreciated!

Please remember to leave a donation when you use the UACNJ facilities. There is a donation jar in the kitchen to help pay for replenishing supplies and one in the bedroom to help pay for heat for those who stay overnight.

The Importance of Signing In

Please be sure to sign in whenever you visit the observatory, noting the approximate number of hours spent working on UACNJ projects if applicable. The numbers at the right reflect the 2009 log books. The Jenny Jump State Forest Superintendent asks for this information for an annual report to the state; the number of visitors and volunteers at the park are considered when state funds are being allocated.

The Observer log book is kept in the upstairs meeting area.

2009 Statistics

Public Donations: \$393.70

Visitors to Observatory
during the 2009 public
season: over 700

Paid Observers: 47

Sustaining Observers: 15

Volunteer Visits: 512+

R A P I D

Gil Jeffer (NWJAA)

A new special-interest group has been formed at UACNJ. When he spoke at the UACNJ Symposium in October, Jim DeLillo (MMAS) impressed us with the images derived from his work with remote astrophotography. Jim is an experienced photographer who has successfully marketed and published his pictures worldwide. Of particular interest to us is his experience in using his PC to operate and acquire data in real-time from professional-grade telescopes around the world without ever leaving his Oakland, NJ home.

Dale Gary (AAI) occasionally brings his 10-inch Meade LX200 GPS to the UACNJ facility. On colder nights he mounts up his SBIG camera and runs the cabling through an access port to his laptop inside the house. In addition to astrophotography, Dale has captured data for scientific analysis, such as detecting extra-solar planets using CCD photometry.

The ability to operate telescopes remotely from within our warm meeting rooms on cold nights fit perfectly with the plans Jim Norton (NWJAA) has been developing to use the UACNJ facilities year-round. RAPID (*Remote AstroPhotography Development*) has been formed to develop and promote this capability at UACNJ.

By the end of the second RAPID meeting, Dale was remotely operating AAI's 14-inch Celestron from the downstairs lecture area. Dale's computer was in the observatory, interfaced to both the telescope's Losmandy mount and Dale's SBIG camera. A second laptop in the lecture room remotely operated Dale's laptop through UACNJ's wireless network. The presentation projector displayed the control panel for the mount and camera, and the resultant captured images.

Those who have participated in the initial RAPID meetings have found it to be a dynamic and interesting group. The group is working to sort out the hardware and software, determine best practices, and educate others in the intricacies of operation and image processing. This will open the door to a host of new activities for the amateur astronomer at UACNJ, both for imagery and for collecting data for scientific analysis.

To become part of this adventure, come to the next meeting. RAPID meeting announcements are posted to the UACNJ Yahoo group which is open to all current UACNJ Observers. To join, simply send an email to subscribe-uacnj@yahoogroups.com. If you are not yet a UACNJ Observer, you can download the 2010 Observer Form at www.uacnj.org.

UACNJ Symposium

Diane Jeffer (NWJAA)

Our first UACNJ Two-Day Symposium was a great success despite the uncooperative weather. We weren't able to do any observing, but over 100 people enjoyed ten different speakers on topics including Mars, astrophotography, solar radio astronomy, and observing with binoculars.

Plans are already underway so stay tuned for information about the 2010 symposium or contact Ron (ron@roned.com) if you would like to help with planning the 2010 event.

Club Events

Amateur Astronomers, Inc. (AAI) will present Mars Mania in January. Two nights of viewing and lectures will be offered to those interested in learning about Mars as it passes close to Earth. Events will take place from 7:30 to 10 PM, snow or shine, on Friday, January 22, at the William Miller Sperry Observatory on the campus of Union County College in Cranford and on Saturday, January 23, at Hennings Hall on the campus of Kean University in Union. Visit www.asterism.org for more information.

ITEK Update

The foundation for the ITEK telescope joint project with New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) is being poured in three stages. The first was completed on December 1 and the second will be taking place on the next warm day. Updates can be found on the homepage at www.uacnj.org.

A team of volunteers has been working tirelessly to prepare the Itek site with hopes of transporting the telescope from storage in Bridgewater in early 2010.

Thank you to the following:

- Andrew Gerrard, Associate Professor NJIT, principal investigator
- Peter and Austin Karcher, Karcher Construction
- County Concrete

Volunteers who helped with the forms and first pour:

- Vladimir Alexandrov (NJAA, UACNJ)
- Amaru Alzogaray (AAI, UACNJ)
- Dale Gary (NJIT, AAI, UACNJ)
- Gil Jeffer (NWJAA, UACNJ)
- David Jeffer (NWJAA)
- Jules Papp (RAC, UACNJ)
- Nor Schramm (NWJAA, UACNJ)
- Toby Terranova (AAI, UACNJ)
- Anthony Teti (NJIT)
- Tony Tilli (NWJAA)

Equipment:

- Alan Midkiff (NWJAA, UACNJ) - Vibrating plate compactor
 - Jim Norton (NWJAA, AAI, UACNJ) - Power washer
 - John Walters - Symons forms
- Photographer:
- Warren Westura (SHAA, UACNJ)