

The Custer Comment

★ For The Curious ★

April 06

Volume XXXVI, Issue 4

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Amid St. Patrick's Day Festivities, Stephen Sanfilippo Delights Audience



Steve Sanfilippo belts out a chord during Custer's St. Patrick's day concert. During the concert, using a variety of instruments that included a guitar, harmonica and accordion, Steve performed as the sole musician, providing memorable, Irish music from traditional favorites to great, old ballads. In his capacity as a historian, the soon-to-be Dr. Sanfilippo introduced each selection with a piece-specific, historic backdrop, further adding to the performance. The concert was a masterful integration of history and music and was enjoyed by all.

Thank you, Steve!

For additional coverage and photos, please see inside.

Highlights for April 06

- Dome Delivery; Tuesday, April 4th;
- A Sidewalk Astronomer, April 5th, Huntington Cinema
- Spring 2006 Course Offerings:
 - April 22; Binoculars;
 - April 29; The Nature and Study of Cosmic Rays;
- In addition to the above Course offerings and spanning both days will be a seminar entitled: **How to Run a Successful Nonprofit in the 21st Century**

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Announcements & General Interest

Riverhead Dark Sky Advisory Committee

The Riverhead Dark Sky Advisory Committee has an opening for one more member. If you live in Riverhead Township and would like to get involved in the global fight to preserve our night skies and the environment while helping to reverse the ugly urbanization of Long Island, please contact this editor for further information. Custer's own indefatigable Susan Harder is a member of the committee which meets for about 2 hours every month.

Car Pooling To Dark Skies & Custer

Custer member, Rich Rosenberg, would like to hear from amateur astronomers in the NYC area looking for rides, riders or rentals to get to dark-sky locations such as Custer. If interested, contact him at richard.rosenberg@verizon.net.

Editor's Column

Tom Madigan, Editor

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Cutoff for submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication

Visit the new Custer Website at

<http://www.custerobservatory.org>

Custer Comment Archive:

<http://www.tommadigan.net/custer>

The Custer Comment is published monthly by

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Southold, NY 11971
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"I have loved the stars too fondly to be fearful of the night."

Sarah Williams

The Astronomy and Physics department of SUNY, Stony Brook is currently hosting a public lecture series entitled 'Astronomy Open Night' with lectures presented by the research faculty at 7:30 PM on the first Friday of every month. I have added my email address to their electronic distribution list and, starting with this issue, will be including a synopsis of the previous lecture. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the lecture of March 31st, and will be including Donna McCormick's synopsis instead. Thank you, Donna!


Best,
Tom

Tom Madigan, Editor

"To the youngsters of today, *I say believe in the future*, the world is getting better; there still is plenty of opportunity. Why, would you believe it, when I was a kid I thought it was already too late for me to make good at anything."

Walt Disney

NEAF 2006



NEAF
NORTHEAST ASTRONOMY FORUM

15TH ANNUAL NORTHEAST ASTRONOMY FORUM & TELESCOPE SHOW MAY 6-7, 2006

AMERICA'S PREMIER ASTRONOMY EXPO!
Only 30 minutes from New York City at
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THIS EXCITING 2-DAY EVENT FEATURES:

- More than 80 on-site vendors
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FEATURED SPEAKERS:
Dr. Ben Oppenheimer, AMNH, *Extrasolar Planets*
Dr. Mike Reynolds, *Meteorite Expert*
Chuck Shaw, NASA Flight Director, final HST mission
Gary Palmer, *Observing the Sun*

SHOW HOURS: SAT 8:30-6 PM, SUN 10-6 PM
For a detailed schedule, directions, admission
information or hotel accommodations visit:
www.rocklandastronomy.com/neaf
or contact Alan Traino at 973-421-2020.

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Rockland Astronomy Club
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**DON'T MISS THE NEW
NORTHEAST ASTRO IMAGING CONFERENCE**
MAY 4-5, 2006 PRECEDING NEAF

**FEATURING
WORKSHOPS &
LECTURES BY**

Tony Hallas	Ron Dantowitz	Robert Reeves
Rob Gendler	Don Parker	Richard Berry
Joe Patterson	Jim Misti	Jim Burnell

<http://www.rocklandastronomy.com/neaf.htm>

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For further information, please visit our websites:

<http://www.rocklandastronomy.com> <http://mysite.verizon.net/resqx7hr/ssp2005/nssp2005.htm>

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An Evening With John Dobson

VHS or DVD format, \$15.00, \$3.75 S & H

On September 17, 2005, noted sidewalk astronomer and cosmologist, John Dobson, visited Custer. He presented his classic cosmic slide show, packed with information and delivered with inimitable wit; he shared stories about his life as a monk, secretly grinding mirrors, making telescopes and introducing the public to the wonders of the night sky. Board member, Rich Huber, filmed this memorable event and has made copies on VHS and DVD. Running time is approx. 90 minutes. The cost: \$10 with 25% of the proceeds going to John Dobson's San Francisco Sidewalk Astronomers Association and a nominal \$3.75 for shipping and handling. You can pay for your tape using Paypal by sending \$18.75 to CusterPaypal@yahoo.com or by sending a check or money order (made payable to *Custer Institute*) to: Dobson at Custer, P.O. Box 1204, Southold, New York 11971. Please specify whether you would like VHS or DVD. If you have any questions, please contact Donna McCormick at mccormick@scientific-consultants.com.

Custer T-Shirts



Image, courtesy Tom Madigan

The editor's daughter, Kaitlin, sporting a Custer T-Shirt at Horton Point Lighthouse on Jamboree '05 night! The shirts are 100% heavy-weight cotton, machine-washable, and are available in adult sizes S-M-L-XL-XXL. The cost is \$15 plus \$3.75 S & H and the shirts are available only while supplies last. Custer would also like to *thank the East End Shirt Company* in Port Jefferson for their generosity and for having done an excellent job in producing such fine quality shirts on such short notice.

We have Susan Harder's patented & dark sky friendly **PARSHIELD®**

Outdoor Floodlight Shields

for PAR 38 type bulbs. Controls glare, reduces light trespass & allows you to direct the light where you need it.

Two shields per box in your choice of Off White or Bronze finish. \$20.00, tax incl.

ASTRONOMY FOR ALL AGES

By

Phil Harrington

&

Ed Pascuzzi

The Gift Shop still has a number of copies of this latest volume by Phil Harrington with co-author Ed Pascuzzi. Get your copy while supplies last. At just \$20, this is a real bargain! As an added bonus, copies are signed by Ed.

PARALLAX

By

Alan W. Hirshfeld

We also have a limited number of copies of this excellent volume by 2003-Jamboree guest speaker Alan Hirshfeld. Quantities are limited so hurry and add this well-written and informative volume to your collection while supplies last.

Heavenly Events To Watch For, April 2006

“Earth’s pristine people watched these Pleiads bright,
And centuries and centuries passed by;
Those stars that Job beheld, we see tonight.
The Seven Sisters shining in the sky.”

- Charles Nevers Holmes

Hiding deep within the brightness of a sky anticipating sunrise, MERCURY makes the poorest of its three morning “appearances” in April. It’s at greatest elongation west of the Sun on the 8th. Bright VENUS rises along the east-southeast horizon around daybreak, and climbs through the brightening sky until she’s about 20° high at sunrise. This month MARS is in full-flight eastward

from the horntips of Taurus and well into Gemini. By month’s end Mars will have faded to 1.5 magnitude, just a tad brighter than El Nath, the northern horntip of the Bull. Mars sets in the west-northwest around 1 AM at midmonth. JUPITER is retrograding westward in Libra, and will end the month about 1° north of the 3rd magnitude wide double star Zubenelgenubi. At midmonth Jupiter rises at nightfall and is due south around 2:30 AM. Early in the month SATURN begins to move eastward again in Cancer the Crab, back toward the Beehive Cluster. At midmonth Saturn is due south at sunset and sets in the west around 3 AM.

- 1 Don’t miss this evening’s wonderful occultation of parts of the Pleiades Cluster by the crescent Moon. Occultation timings for the brightest Pleiads for Long Island are given in my March Heavenly Events. BONUS: About the time Atlas (27 Tauri) disappears (about 8:39 PM), the 5th magnitude variable star Pleione (28 Tauri) will also wink out. Which one will go first? And don’t forget to turn your clocks ahead an hour tonight.
 - 3 Mars is beneath the waxing crescent Moon this evening.
 - 5 Retrograde ends for Saturn today.
 - 6 The waxing gibbous Moon rides westward above Saturn tonight.
 - 7 On April 7, 1976, 30 years ago, the 3.1 magnitude star Mebsuta, ϵ (Epsilon) Geminorum, was occulted by Mars. This extremely rare eclipse of a naked-eye star by a planet was thrilling to watch! During the five minutes of this occultation Mars’ ochre color visibly deepened as the yellowish light of Mebsuta was blocked out. (Coincidentally, Mars will be very close to Mebsuta again on April 30.)
 - 10 On April 10, 1986, 20 years ago, the outward bound Comet Halley came within 39 million miles of Earth, its closest approach on this visit. At the time it was in Lupus the Wolf, visible very low in the south at 2 PM.
 - 12 Forty years ago today Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth.
 - 13 Full Pink Moon sets before sunrise / rises after sunset.
 - 14 Jupiter rises to the left of the bright gibbous Moon.
 - 18 On April 18, 1906, 100 years ago, a tectonic plate adjustment took place on planet Earth, leading to significant disturbance of surface features in an area centered around San Francisco.
 - 22 Look for early morning Lyrid meteors coming from the northeast, at least until moonrise around 3:30 AM.
 - 24 Venus and the waning crescent Moon make a pretty pair low in the east-southeast after daybreak; 5 AM.
- May 1 The 4-day crescent Moon and Mars pair up this evening. Two evenings hence, Saturn and the Moon.

Prepared by Robert Chapin

Highlights for April 06

Dome Delivery Schedule

First and foremost, thanks to those who offered to help!

The dome is scheduled to arrive late-afternoon 4/3 or early-morning 4/4. The Ash engineer should be on site after 4/3. President Chuck Cardona will be coordinating and supervising the dome installation. If you've offered to help and need to change your schedule, please let Chuck or Jeff know (Chuck: 631-727-6769, email: cac@adzoneresearch.com; Jeff: 631-696-3333, email: katz@scientific-consultants.com).

With the exception of the roof, two or three workers from the contractor's crew will be doing most of the work.

Schedule

4/4 through 4/6: Custer crew will help unload the truck, bolt the dome together, and take off the roof;
4/6: If all goes according to plan, the dome should be dismantled by sundown. Kurt will coordinate (631-905-3094; kamassey@peconic.net);
4/6 evening: if the roof is off, Jeff will finish the electrical work;
4/7: crane will arrive on site;
4/7 or 4/8: dome will be lifted onto the building;

Assistants

Chuck Cardona: on site all week; **Kurt Massey**: some time on the weekends, 4/3 late afternoon, 4/4 noon to evening, 4/6 afternoon; **Rico**: whenever needed; **Myron Young**: whenever needed; **Rich Huber**: all day 4/3 through 4/6; **David Cohn**: all day 4/3 and 4/4; **Tom Madigan**: TBA; **Charlie Turner**: maybe some late afternoons/early evenings, and/or weekend; **Tom Burton**: weekends only; **Danny Janosick**: weekends only; **Paul Sciacchitano**: possibly weekends; **Bill Crispino**: 4/8, possibly other weekend days; **Dennis Wilde**: possibly weekends; **Al Leone**: possibly weekends; **Jim Eagan**: Friday nights.

Spring 2006 Course Offerings; Special Topics In Astronomy

Each week a different instructor will present a topic of special interest. Register for as many of the sessions as you like (30% discount if you register for all five). Remain after class, participate in any other events that are scheduled, and enjoy refreshments while Staff show you around the night sky. Classes will be held Saturdays from 6:00 P.M. to 7:30 P.M., April 22, 29 and May 13, 20 and 27.

April 22; Binoculars

Binoculars are NOT just for beginners and you'll learn why. The discussion will include an in-depth look at targets for binocular viewing in the current night sky and tips on how to select astronomically-worthy binoculars from the vast ocean of choices. Weather permitting, the program will include hands-on observing, so make sure you bring yours (binoculars)! **Instructor: Phil Harrington.**

April 29; The Nature and Study of Cosmic Rays

Where do cosmic rays come from? Are they survivors of the early universe or are they remnants of supernovae? The discussion will include the findings of the MARIACHI Project, a collaboration between faculty, staff and students of Suffolk County Community College and Brookhaven National Laboratory that addresses these questions. **Instructor, Dr. Mike Inglis**, is an assistant professor of astronomy at SCCC, a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and a NASA Solar System Ambassador.

How to Run a Successful Nonprofit in the 21st Century

An upcoming seminar at Custer

To be held

On

Saturday, April 22nd and April 29th

Whether you're just starting a nonprofit, or have been involved with one for years, there is always something new to learn. Each of these three-hour seminars is designed to help members of Boards, employees of not-for-profit organizations, and free-lancers hone their skills, enhance the operation of their organizations, and discover over-looked resources. In addition to providing information vital to every nonprofit, these sessions offer a forum for the free exchange of tacit knowledge between participants, and networking opportunities. Participants will receive materials to take home and study, as well as a professionally developed workbook and concrete suggestions for follow-up. A certificate of completion will be awarded to those who attend both sessions. Refreshments will be served during the break. Pre-registration is required.

Session 1, April 22nd;

Coverage will include practical information about management, Board development, legal issues, and community relations.

Session 2, April 29th;

Membership development, marketing, grantsmanship, & fundraising will be addressed.

About The Instructors

Dr. Raymond Knab

Has been involved in nonprofit organizations and grants-related activities for more than 33 years. His levels of involvement have ranged from reviewing and editing proposals, to development, negotiation and management/administration of multi-million dollar programs. He has been successful in grant seeking, acquisition and management for educational, health care, faith- and community-based organizations throughout the US and in many global projects.

Liz Irwin

After 25 years of creating award-winning marketing and advertising materials for nonprofits, Ms. Irwin has taken her talents directly to the industry: first as Executive Director of the Railroad Museum of Long Island and currently as the Project Coordinator for the Long Island Wine Country Winter Festival.

Both Dr. Knab and Ms. Irwin have been presenting these seminars to individual nonprofit Boards for years and have helped many organizations improve their functioning and achieve their goals. This is a rare opportunity to benefit from their instruction in a public forum at a substantially reduced-cost.

Please consider becoming a member of Custer, a 501(c)(3) New York nonprofit organization (est. 1927). We are staffed by volunteers, and rely on dues, proceeds from events, and the generosity of the community for our survival. Your membership will not only help us continue to provide educational, cultural, and research programs, but will support our current efforts to expand our facility and services.

Name _____ Email _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

I am a Custer Member: ___ Sign me up for both sessions at \$115; ___ just the 4/22 session at \$65; ___ just the 4/29 session at \$65;

I am not a Member: ___ Sign me up for both sessions at \$135; ___ just the 4/22 session at \$75; just the 4/29 session at \$75;

I would like to become a Custer Member: ___ \$45 Individual; ___ \$60 Family; ___ \$25 Senior (65+); ___ \$25 Junior (12-18) or Student;

_____ I have made payment via Paypal or _____ enclosed is my check or money order (payable to Custer Inst.) in the amount of \$ _____. **Confirmation of registration will only be sent by email.** Please mail your form to: Custer Institute, P.O. Box 1204, Southold, New York 11971.

For further information about the seminar, please visit Custer's website at <http://www.CusterObservatory.org>, email or call Donna McCormick at CusterDonna@yahoo.com, 631-696-3333 or call Liz Irwin at 516-983-4546.

Observatory & Other Staff Wanted

Custer is in the process of improving its facilities and expanding the services it offers to the public. The Observatory Committee is looking for individuals who are interested in volunteering just a few hours a month. People are needed for all kinds of jobs-from helping to give the public a tour of Custer and the night sky on Saturday nights, to assisting with events, research, fund raising, secretarial work, and even providing refreshments to our guests. If you are able to lend a hand on a regular basis or would just like to volunteer to help with a specific project, please contact Donna McCormick (mccormick@scientific-consultants.com or call 631-696-3333).

Starlab Portable Planetarium Wows Audience

Steve Tomecek (<http://www.dirtmeister.com>) impressed all who watched on the evening of March 11th, as he demonstrated the power and potential of the Starlab portable Planetarium. For more information on Starlab and all the other exciting programs available, please visit their website at <http://www.starlab.com>.



Steve Tomecek stands with Donna McCormick, Dr. Jeff Katz and Custer President Chuck Cardona

Family Astronomy Day And Concert Combo

Saturday, May 6th, 2 PM Saturday – 12AM Sunday (Midnight)

A full day of fun for the whole family begins with an astronomy-related puppet show performed by Tom Stock at 2, 3 and 4 PM, with additional lectures and demonstrations throughout the day.



Stellar Evolution The Life Cycle of Stars

4 – 5:30 PM;

As an added attraction, I'll be providing an encore presentation of my lecture first given on January 28th. Please see the February, 2006 issue of the Custer Comment (<http://www.tommadigan.net/custer/custercomment-february2006.pdf>) for a synopsis.

6 PM - Dinner;

7 PM - A Jazz / Rhythm and Blues Concert featuring the music of the Ahmad Ali Combo;

As always, Custer's staff will man the many telescopes for public observing both during the day and at the conclusion of the last program event for night-sky observing. Using Custer's many powerful telescopes and further enhancing this year's program will be Solar observing on an ongoing basis throughout the day, weather permitting.

As always, snacks and refreshments will be available.

Benefit Concert Featuring The Music Of Dreamer

A Concert to benefit Custer Institute will be given in the near future by *Dreamer*, an acoustic trio comprised of Charlie and Virginia Ward and Pamela Clark. Dreamer appears regularly at Eastenders Café, 40 East Main Street in Riverhead, on the first Saturday of every other month and specializes in a wide variety of classic covers from the past several decades as well as their own, original music. As a reference, Charlie Ward provided the professional recording services for Custer's mid-Winter classical concert featuring Anna Verticchio as the principal musician. Please see last month's Custer Comment (<http://www.tommadigan.net/custer/custercomment-march2006.pdf>) for a comprehensive synopsis.

Results from Globe At Night

Results from the initiative to determine the extent and impact of Light Pollution on a global scale will be published on April 10th at <http://www.globe.gov/GaN/index.html>. Please see last month's issue of The Custer Comment for my full article. The unofficial tally for all observations submitted through March 31st is 3,826 with this editor providing one of them.

Editor: Patchogue scored dismally, barley qualifying for the 4th magnitude chart. The planned, 9-story hotel, slated to be built on the former site of Sweezys Department store, right in the heart of Patchogue, should help immensely in this regard!

T'Was The Wearin O'The Green At Custer

Whether you're Irish, of Irish extraction or not Irish at all, you would have been proud to be among the attendees at this year's annual St. Patrick's Day festivities. Chef Cardona was at his best, preparing a sumptuous feast of Corned Beef and Cabbage for those who relish the Irish-American tradition of Corned Beef and Cabbage on St. Patrick's Day with others providing a variety of different dishes to round out the meal. As an added treat to this year's celebration, renowned Long Island musician Stephen Sanfilippo was on hand to provide a memorable concert of Irish music that included traditional favorites and grand, old ballads. In his capacity as a historian, the soon-to-be Dr. Sanfilippo introduced each selection with a piece-specific, historic backdrop, further adding to the performance. The concert was a masterful integration of history and music and was enjoyed by all. Along with a favorable mention of Custer, this year's Jamboree (Oct 13th, 14th and 15th) and our ongoing schedule of outstanding programs and events, the concert was featured prominently in Newsday's 'Local Guide' section: <http://www.newsday.com/entertainment/localguide/332033,0,313861.event>



Pam and Dr. Stu Selkin proudly wear the Green!



A delicious meal was had by all!



Custer President and resident Chef, Chuck Cardona, hard at work preparing the main course of Corned Beef and Cabbage



Mary O'Madagáin minding one of the many honorary Leprechauns who were in attendance
(O'Madagáin is the true spelling of this editor's ancestral name)

All images courtesy, Tomas O'Madagáin

A Sidewalk Astronomer

A Film about the Life and Times of

John Dobson



World renowned telescope maker, amateur astronomer, monk, celebrity and philosopher, John Dobson, speaks to an enthralled audience following his lecture of Saturday night, September 17th, 2005. Please see the Custer Comment for October, 2005 (<http://www.tommadigan.net/custer/custercomment-october2005.pdf>) for more details and additional pictures.

For those who missed John during his visit to Custer on the evening of September 17th, 2005 or the presentation of ***A Sidewalk Astronomer*** at Jamboree, '05, another opportunity presents itself! The Cinema Arts Centre of Huntington has scheduled a one-time event featuring this unique and compelling film about one of Astronomy's greatest, modern personalities. Reception and observing to follow, weather permitting. Please join the film's director, Jeffrey Fox Jacobs, former Vanderbilt Staff Astronomer and current Half Hollow Hills Planetarium Director, Tom Carey and myself as we field questions and observe the night sky with a Dobsonian, a telescope whose simple design has revolutionized amateur astronomy and that bears it's founder's name.

Where: Cinema Arts Centre
423 Park Ave, Huntington, NY;
When: Wednesday, April 5th, 7:30 PM;
Admission: Members, \$8.00; non-members, \$12.00.
(Admission price includes reception and stargazing to follow, weather permitting)

For more information, to make reservations or to become a member, please visit the Cinema Arts Centre website at <http://cinemaartscentre.org> or call (631) 423-7611.

National Sharing The Sky Foundation

Dateline Tucson, AZ, March 9, 2006

David H. Levy, discoverer of 21 comets and Science Editor of Parade Magazine, announced today the launch of the National Sharing The Sky Foundation. By sharing David Levy's passion for astronomy, this new Foundation is dedicated to providing inspiration to young people to pursue interests in science and engineering. David's interest in astronomy was sparked by experiences he had when he was 8 years old at summer camp. This spark of inspiration led to a lifelong passion for astronomy in David's life, a passion that led to his co-discovery of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 that crashed into Jupiter in 1994.

David's passion for astronomy is contagious. Through the National Sharing The Sky Foundation, David will provide a series of stimulating lectures to young people around the country to open their eyes to the wonders of our vast universe.

The National Sharing The Sky Foundation was founded, in part, due to a concern that our nation is falling behind in science and engineering skills required to maintain our position as a technology leader in the world. In the year 2004, our institutions of higher education graduated about 140,000 engineers, computer scientists, and information technology students with 4-year degrees, while China graduated 350,000. In the most recent data available, high school seniors in the U.S. scored below average in a test of general knowledge in mathematics and science given to students in 21 countries. In 2001, U.S. industry spent more on tort litigation than on research and development.

In order for our country to continue to be technologically innovative and economically competitive, we need to interest more young people in pursuing careers in science and engineering.

"It is my hope that the National Sharing The Sky Foundation will be a vehicle for inspiring young people to reach for the stars," said David Levy, President of the Foundation, "and that we will attract some of them to the fields of science and engineering." The National Sharing The Sky Foundation will also be giving a limited number of telescopes each year to schools and communities for use by students.

About the National Sharing The Sky Foundation

The National Sharing The Sky Foundation is a nonprofit charitable organization that sponsors a series of lectures around the country by David H. Levy to young audiences. By sharing David Levy's passion for astronomy with young people, the Foundation hopes to inspire our youth to consider potential careers in science and engineering. Through the generous support of Meade Instruments Corporation, the Foundation makes a limited number of 14-inch telescopes available for permanent placement at schools and for use in connection with elementary and high school educational programs. The Foundation also supports a regular radio talk show entitled "Let's Talk Stars," that is underwritten by Starizona.

The ultimate goal of the Foundation is to inspire our youth to reach for the stars. For more information contact David H. Levy at (520) 762-5685 or david@jarnac.org.

David Levy is on the Board of the International Dark Sky Association.

Editor: I can personally relate to David's inspiration as a child and his noble reasons for founding the National Sharing the Sky Foundation. Due to his active nurturing of my young, inquisitive mind and nascent interest in the natural world, specifically Astronomy, my father inspired in me a life-long love for Astronomy and science. As a young child on the streets of New York City (yes, you could still see the stars from the sidewalks of Manhattan in 1958), I fondly recall our walks together with my dad pointing out the belt of Orion and the Pleiades. The school children of today are our scientists and leaders of tomorrow. David Levy is to be commended for his far-sighted vision, commitment to youth and the future of civilization.

Dark Energy, Dark Matter

A Lecture presented by Professor Kenneth Lanzetta

Department of Physics and Astronomy

7:30 pm Room 001 ESS Building

Friday, March 31, 2006

Recent observations by ground- and space-based telescopes have demonstrated that the expansion of the Universe is accelerating. This entirely unexpected result requires that some 70% of what makes up the Universe must be a mysterious form of energy that cosmologists have dubbed "dark energy." These same observations have also demonstrated that most of the remaining 30% of what makes up the Universe is some mysterious form of matter that cosmologists have dubbed "dark matter." Dark energy is entirely unlike ordinary energy, and dark matter is entirely unlike ordinary matter. The world's cosmologists are now faced with the interesting situation that the nature of more than 95% of what makes up the Universe is entirely unknown.

In the next of the popular series Astronomy Open Night, Dr. Kenneth Lanzetta will describe the evidence for dark energy and dark matter, explain the implications of dark energy, dark matter, and an accelerating expansion rate for our cosmological world model, and discuss future observations that might shed light on the nature of dark energy and dark matter.

Dr. Lanzetta has been a faculty member at Stony Brook since 1993 and lives in Smithtown. He is an observational astrophysicist with special interests in Cosmology and formation and evolution of galaxies. Following the lecture, weather permitting, there will be a viewing session with the University's telescopes.

Synopsis by Donna McCormick

The universe is flat, not spherical or hyperbolic and is expanding at an ever-increasing rate of acceleration, consistent with dark energy model. We are in an inflation period: increased rate of acceleration verified by the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe. We know dark matter exists; the universe is composed of 74% dark energy, 22% dark matter, and only 4% atoms; no one knows what dark matter is, but it's THE hot topic now (can you imagine how such knowledge will eventually impact other disciplines!).

Editor: Thank you, Donna! With no offense intended towards Dr. Lanzetta, it is the opinion of this editor that the emergence of 'Dark Matter and Energy' as a viable explanation for a number of unanswered questions and paradoxes is more a weakness in our existing cosmological models than a serious explanation of what is observed and measured. Before it was established that light (and other Electromagnetic Radiation such as X-Rays, microwaves and infrared) is the propagation of an electromagnetic wave at 2.98×10^8 Meters/Sec, the notion that an invisible and unmeasurable 'Ether' was the conduit or medium of travel for light was being offered up as a serious explanation for what was observed. Compare this now invalidated and incorrect model with what is now being considered as serious science by the Astronomical community; sound familiar?

The home page for 'Astronomy Open Night' is located at <http://www.astro.sunysb.edu/openight/opennite.html>. The remaining lecture in the spring schedule will be presented at 7:30 PM on May 5th (the day before Family Astronomy Day) by Professor Michael Zingale, and is entitled "**Understanding Type Ia Supernovae**".

Night's Fading Darkness

Excerpt from The Suffolk Times Review for March 15th, 2006

Editor: Custer's Susan Harder was invited to speak to the Peconic Landing Association by the North Fork Audubon Society. Her talk, entitled '***The Economic and Ecological Consequences of Light Pollution***', was presented to a receptive audience at Custer last year and was the basis for the article that appeared in The Suffolk Times Review for March 15th.

Simple steps at home and business can limit light pollution. That's what Susan Harder, Long Island representative of the International Dark Sky Society, told a gathering at Peconic Landing Friday evening. Ms. Harder summed up her organization's mission in a conversation before her presentation with Gustave Gaertner, a resident of Peconic Landing. Mr. Gaertner described himself as an "outdoorsman" who liked to hunt and fish and was interested in all aspects of the environment. He said he didn't know much about light pollution. "What's important is to get rid of bad lighting," Ms. Harder said. Ms. Harder's presentation -- sponsored by the North Fork Audubon Society -- illustrated that often there is no rhyme or reason when lighting is installed at private residences, public buildings or for street lights.

Once considered a fringe issue, fighting light pollution has moved certain municipalities -- including Riverhead -- to enact legislation. Ms. Harder noted that people are waking up to the fact that something can be done to correct lighting that produces ugliness, waste, lack of safety and negative psychological effects. "The amount of money wasted on over-lighting is astonishing," Ms. Harder said, estimating that America wastes more than \$4.5 billion due to over-lighting. Glaring lights conceal more than they reveal, she added. Drivers and pedestrians are at risk when glare is present, and lighting up businesses or public buildings at night is no guarantee of safety.

The problem is that lights are not directed and more often than not shine up into the sky. This produces "sky glow," obscuring the heavens.

Also, lights "trespass" and illuminate properties all around them for no reason. She showed various pictures of streetlights that are so bright they produce nothing but glare, blinding motorists. In December 2002 Riverhead put in place a comprehensive "Dark Skies" code to control the flood of nighttime light. The legislation, sponsored by Councilman Ed Densieski, requires outdoor lights to be shielded to control light spreading up or out to the sides. Light poles in parking lots will be limited to 17 feet, and "canopy lights," such as those that illuminate gas stations, must have bulbs that are concealed and not visible from streets or nearby properties.

Dr. Joan Roberts, a professor of chemistry at Fordham University, has done research on "the effect of light on the eye, through the eye and into the brain," she said after Riverhead adopted the dark skies legislation. Light is an important part of life cycles, Dr. Roberts noted then. "Animals, people, plants, the planet itself has dark and light cycles, which are important biologically," Dr. Roberts said. Disrupting these cycles is dangerous, she said, as serious as light deprivation, which she has studied in controlled environments.

Ms. Harder quoted studies that showed that light pollution had a negative impact on wildlife, especially birds that migrate by celestial navigation and are thrown off because the sky glow has obscured the stars.

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