



# AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit



February 2009

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

## February's Meeting

Our February speaker, Bob Richard, will give a talk titled "My Astrophotography Journey: A Work in Progress." Bob, a retired clinical psychologist, grew up in Santa Barbara and became interested in astrophotography in high school. He will share his development as an astrophotographer with the hope that other amateurs like him will be encouraged to delve into this fascinating aspect of astronomy. He will also show how astrophotography can be a great outreach tool for stimulating interest in astronomy among family, friends, students, and the wider public.



*Chuck McPartlin sets up at the SBMNH. Photo credit: R. Gutierrez*

## Outreach Report

Since the last newsletter, AU volunteers Evelyn Alfago, Chad Caprio, Brian Clark, Tim Crawford, Mike Farris, Lori Flynn, Ruben Gutierrez, Art Harris, Jürgen Hilmer, Tom King, Chris Larson, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, David Morrow, Ron Nixon, Edgar Ocampo, Erin O'Connor, Mark Parker, Javier Rivera & the Quasars, Nancy Rohrer, David Salvia, Ryan Shapiro, Samantha Thompson, Jonathan Weber, Tom Whittemore, Tim Wittenburg, and Shane kicked off the International Year of Astronomy by showing cool stuff to 376 happy customers. That's a great volunteer turnout!

## February Events

Here's the schedule so far for February. Remember, the events are subject to change, so for the latest updates, contact Chuck at 964-8201 or [macpuzl@west.net](mailto:macpuzl@west.net).

### Tuesday, February 3, setup 7 PM

Telescope Tuesday at the Camino Real Marketplace in Goleta. We set up in the plaza between Borders and the theater.

### Wednesday, February 4, setup 6 PM

Telescopes for kids and parents at St. Andrews preschool, on Arroyo Road near Auhay Drive in Goleta. The official address is 4575 Auhay Drive, but the entrance is off Arroyo.

### Thursday, February 5, setup 6:30 PM

Telescopes for "Moon and Stars" event for 3rd graders at Vieja Valley Elementary School, at 434 Nogal Drive.

### Friday, February 6, 7 PM

Catch a quick planetarium show, followed by our monthly meeting at 7:30. This month's speaker is club member, Bob Richard, who will speak about astrophotography using a DSLR camera.

### Saturday, February 14, 5 PM

Monthly AU planning meeting in the classroom outside Javier's office. Come help your club plan our activities for IYA 2009.

### Saturday, February 14, 7 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at the Museum. Saturn should be high enough to make an appearance near the end of the party. Valentines Day!

### Friday, February 20, 7 PM

Monthly Westmont Public Telescope Night at Van Kampen Observatory. The big 24-inch scope should be open for viewing.

### **Thursday, February 26, 5:30 to 7:30 PM**

Telescopes for Ellwood Elementary School's Science Night. They're at 7686 Hollister Avenue in Goleta.



*Ruben and Brother Laurence give "Big Al" some tips at the Griffith Observatory.*

### **Griffith Observatory Star Party Trip**

On Saturday, March 7th, SBAU will take a charter bus trip to the Griffith Observatory. We will not only enjoy the many presentations of this beautiful facility, but also join a Star Party with the historic Los Angeles Astronomical Society as well! The Star Party actually starts at 2:00 PM (solar observations) with stargazers having access to a variety of telescopes through 9:45 PM. Our bus will leave from the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History at 2:00 PM and return at approximately 10:45 PM. A round trip ticket is only \$30. There is no admission fee to the observatory or the Star Party. Because of a smaller bus, we only have room for 23 people, so please submit your reservations right away. Please make your check payable to the Santa Barbara Astronomical Unit, mail it to 3078 Calle Fresno, Santa Barbara, CA, 93105, and get ready for yet another fantastic AU field trip!

### **An Open Letter from Krissie Cook**

Greetings from Florida:

Happy IYA from the Sunshine State! I hope this newsletter finds you well. It's been five months since I left the Museum and we moved to Florida and it's been one big change after another. I'm now

a stay-at-home mom and spend almost as much time at the park as I did in the planetarium. It took me about 30 seconds to realize that even if I'm employed teaching astronomy, I am an astronomy educator no matter where I am. So I've embraced IYA as fully as I can. I joined the local astronomy club, the South Florida Amateur Astronomers Association. They are a Night Sky Network club, but they didn't have anyone ready to jump in with both feet on the toolkits. I took care of that. I also signed on with JPL's Solar System Ambassador program. In addition, I'm jumping on board as a presenter at the local Buehler Planetarium. Finally, I started an astronomy blog, The Stay-At-Home Momstronomer (You can find it at <http://momstronomer.blogspot.com>). The blog is focused on sharing astronomy news and information as well as helping people share astronomy with others. I'm also specifically targeting families and other people who want to teach astronomy to very young audiences. I know it can be hard to communicate such upper level concepts to young kids, but I hope that my experience can help other people share their passion with the children they care about. I hope you'll stop by the blog and check it out. And if there is someone you think would enjoy it or could benefit from it, please pass along the URL. If you have any suggestions for topics, questions, activities you like, improvements I should make, please pass that on to me. In the meantime, my sources tell me that you've all been very busy at your end with IYA. Good for you, and keep it up!

Wishing you all the best and missing SBAU,

Krissie Cook

[momstronomer@gmail.com](mailto:momstronomer@gmail.com)

### **From our President...**

This year is off to a running start with great turnouts for both the January General and Planning Meetings. At this point the focus of AU is continued outreach to the community and zeroing in on International Year of Astronomy 2009, more specifically, "100 Hours of Astronomy" that will take place on four consecutive days in April. More details on this event will be in next months AU AstroNews. Suffice it to say AU "will not just talk the talk, but will walk the walk." Contact any Board Member to sign up and take part in this truly amazing event. As already mentioned, AU is

reaching out to not only the local community but to other astronomy enthusiasts in Southern California. To this end, the field trip for 2009 will be to the Griffith Observatory on March 7th in order to enjoy a Star Party with the Los Angeles Astronomical Society. What a day that's going to be! As for February, how lucky can we get to have Valentines Day fall on this month's Star Party at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History as Venus is reaching its most brilliance in the Winter Skies? Just take your Valentine out to dinner, then glide over to the Star Party and enjoy a simply enchanting evening viewing the stars through Cupid's Telescopes.

Ruben Gutierrez, SBAU President



*AU members at the Griffith Observatory, summer 2007.*

## **Poetry Corner...**

### **The Final Riddle – Mind in the Middle**

*by Jürgen Hilmer*

Ptolemy, Copernicus and Hubble, too  
 Put us in the middle of the Cosmos – Yahoo!  
 To make sure a Cosmos exists, it created a twist –  
 A mind like ours to make it exist – Yahoo!  
 It stands to reason that mind in the middle was the  
 only way to solve the riddle – Yahoo!

### **Our Cosmos**

*by Jürgen Hilmer*

Cosmos, you don't know your future!  
 Your life evolves, just like ours.  
 Cosmos now – but it will also end.  
 So, why comprehend your end or ours?  
 Ending the vastness of your Time –

A flicker of ours – your end will not know your future – just like ours!

### **AU Information Box**

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### **AU Astronomy Information Pager**

(Leave a short message) **564-9002**

### **SBMNH Astronomy Program Coordinator**

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### **SBMNH Astronomy Program Tape**

Updated monthly 682-4711x405

**AU AstroNews**, the monthly publication of the **Astronomical Unit (AU)**, is mailed to the AU membership. For publishing consideration for the next month, submit astronomical items by the 20th of the current month!

### **AU annual membership rates:**





**Single = \$15 Family = \$25**

### **AU mailing address:**

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## February 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 	3 Camino Real Marketplace 7PM	4 St. Andrews 6PM	5 Vieja Valley Elementary School 6:30PM	6 AU General Meeting 7PM	7
8	9 	10	11	12	13	14 AU Planning Meeting 5PM SBMNH Star Party 7PM
15	16 	17	18	19	20 Westmont College 7PM	21
22	23	24 	25	26 Ellwood Elementary 5:30PM	27	28

### The Astronomical Unit

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