



AU AstroNews

The Newsletter of the Astronomical Unit

April 2026

Sponsored by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



Setting up for International Astronomy Day at the Camino Real Marketplace. Photo: Tom Totton.

OUTREACH SUMMARY

Since the last newsletter, AU volunteers Brandy Ackerman, Tim Crawford, Joe Doyle, Tessa Flanagan, Rachel Freed, Ronnie Herron, Sean Kelly, Ila Jade Komasa & Quasars, David Larson, Pat & Chuck McPartlin, Janet & Martin Meza, Edgar Ocampo, Javier Rivera, Michael Robertson, Sohini Sengupta, Tom Totton, Chuck Watson, Diane Welcenbach, Tom Whittemore, and Jerry Wilson & Pat Forgey showed cool stuff in the sky to **3281** people, helped by Mike Chibnik, Mike Jacoby, David Feinberg, and Ken Kihlstrom and Jen Gee with Westmont students.

SBAU volunteers must have undergone the SBMNH background check, and conform with the SBMNH policies for dealing with the public, to participate in outreach activities. To get vetted, contact SBMNH Volunteer Manager Rebecca Coulter <rcoulter@sbnature2.org>. It's quick and painless.

INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMY DAY

Our big event this month will be International Astronomy Day at the Camino Real Marketplace. Join us for solar and lunar viewing and activities during the day, and a star party that evening.

OUTREACH EVENTS

APRIL 3, 6 PM

AU monthly meeting in Farrand Hall at SBMNH. SBAU merchandise sales at 6 PM. Quick planetarium show at 6:30, then AU business briefly at 7, followed by our speaker, Dr. Matt Malkan of UCLA on JWST, “The Astronomy Revolution is Now.” We end promptly at 9 PM.

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, SETUP 5 PM

Science Night at Franklin Elementary School, 1111 E Mason, Santa Barbara.

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, SETUP 7 PM

Monthly Public Star Party at SBMNH, next to Palmer Observatory, from 8 PM to 10 PM.

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 4:30 PM

SBAU Monthly Planning Meeting on Zoom. Watch your email for the link.

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, SETUP 4:30 PM

Telescopes for Science Night from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM at Vieja Valley Elementary School, 434 Nogal Drive, Santa Barbara. It won't be dark, so show the Sun, or just talk about astronomy.

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, SETUP 7 PM

Monthly Public Telescope Night at Westmont's Keck Observatory, next to the athletic fields.

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, ARRIVE AT 5 PM

Telescopes for the Girl Scout Kaleidoscope campout at Live Oak Campground, enter by the Rancho San Marcos Golf Course along Highway 154. Volunteers must have registered with Chuck by April 1.

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, SETUP 7 PM

Telescope Tuesday in the plaza by the theater at Camino Real Marketplace.

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, SETUP 6:30 PM

Star Party at Los Flores Ranch Park, 6245 Dominion Road in Santa Maria. We enter via a dirt road to the north past the main entrance - look for the sign.

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, SETUP 9 AM AND 7 PM

International Astronomy Day at Camino Real Marketplace in Goleta. Solar and lunar viewing, plus astronomy activities from 10 AM to 4 PM, then a break for dinner, followed by a star party at 7 PM.

TIME

Jerry Wilson

Marcus Aurelius once said of time: "The future is ahead of us and the past is gone. We only have the present."

Centuries later, Isaac Newton described space as an absolute, universal stage and time as an absolute flow. Time for you is the same as time for me or for the Andromeda galaxy.

Einstein realized that is not true. He showed that time and space are relative. If you move at near-light speeds, time slows down and your length contracts (shrinks) relative to a stationary observer. Similarly, gravity warps time; it ticks slower in a strong gravitational field than in a weak one.

Einstein eventually viewed the distinction between past, present, and future as a 'stubbornly persistent illusion.' This 'Block Universe' suggests a four-dimensional landscape where all of time exists simultaneously.

But it gets weirder. Quantum Mechanics (QM) suggests the future is a web of probabilities (the wave function) that only collapses into a definite 'particle' state when observed, as seen in the famous Double Slit experiment.

Further, some modern theories suggest that time is not fundamental at all, but an emergent property, much like how temperature is just the result of many atoms moving around. This leaves us with a universe where the past is a record, the future is a cloud of probability, and the present is the only place where we actually 'happen.' It reminds me of the Bangles' 1987 hit, 'A Hazy Shade of Winter,' which captures that sense of standing in the middle of a shifting landscape:

“Time, time, time
See what's become of me
While I looked around for my
Possibilities.”

THE BEAM OF LIGHT

Tim Crawford

Tom Whitemore and I were texting back and forth about math. He sent me an image of what he called "light geometry." It was a beam of light you could see easily shining through a shutter at an angle.



In my mind I suddenly remembered something from my very early days. I grew up on a street called Isleta Avenue. Our house's front door faced roughly southwest. I was sitting in a somewhat darkened front room and at a specific time, the sunlight would shine through a peephole in the door. I was totally

mesmerized by the way the circle of light caught the dust particles and expanded as it came through the peephole.

I remember thinking it was kind of like having my own theatre in our front room. I remember seeing the dust particles floating in the beam that floated like a ghost through the front room. Silent, and seemingly not going anywhere at all, it was just suspended there. If there was a wisp of a air in the room, the dust would move with the currents in the room. How light, silent and peaceful, could create such a beam like this, freely suspended. It just floated in air like magic, and caught everything in its path. Then, it was gone.

Days might go by, and where was my light? I wanted to ask for it to come back. But, it didn't, until one day like magic, it was back. I guess I looked at that light for what seemed an eternity. And then, once again, it was gone. Somehow, I reckoned it was the hole in the door that had to wait for the light to fall on it.

People have always asked, how did you get interested in Astronomy. Well, I never thought until today that I had an answer. This may not be the whole answer, but certainly it may be part of it.



"Solar Sunday" at the SBMNH's Palmer Observatory. Photo: Tom Totton.

AU Information Box	
President:	Jerry Wilson 252-2206 jerryawilsonphd@gmail.com
Vice President:	Ronnie Herron vicepresident@sbau.org
Secretary:	Mike Lawson sbau.secretary@gmail.com
Treasurer:	Pat McPartlin 964-8201 treasurer@sbau.org
Equipment:	Tom Totton 562-8795 equipment@sbau.org
Outreach:	Chuck McPartlin 964-8201 outreach@sbau.org
Newsletter:	Tom Whitemore 687-2025 kometes@aol.com
Webmaster:	Tom Totton 562-8795 webmaster@sbau.org
Events:	Diane Welcenbach Events@SBAU.org
Merch Manager:	Pat McPartlin 964-8201 Merchmgr@sbau.org
SBMNH Astronomy Programs Manager	
	Ila Jade Komasa 682-4711x164 ijadekomasa@sbnature2.org
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 rate: \$20	
AU mailing address: Astronomical Unit c/o Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History 2559 Puesta Del Sol Road Santa Barbara, CA 93105	
On the Web: http://www.sbau.org/	

The Astronomical Unit

c/o Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

2559 Puesta Del Sol Road

Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2998

APRIL 2026						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 FULL MOON	2	3 GENERAL MEETING 6PM	4
5	6	7	8	9 LQ MOON FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY 5PM	10	11 SBMNH STAR PARTY SETUP 7PM
12 PLANNING MEETING ON ZOOM 4:30PM	13	14	15	16 VIEJA VALLEY ELEMENTARY 4:30PM	17 NEW MOON WESTMONT 7PM	18 KALEIDOSCOPE LIVE OAK CAMPGROUND 5PM
19	20	21 CAMINO REAL MARKETPLACE 7PM	22	23	24 FQ MOON LOS FLORES RANCH PARK 6:30 PM	25 INTERNATIONAL ASTRONOMY DAY 9AM
26	27	28	29	30		