In memoriam – Colleen Kelly

We regret to inform the membership of the passing of Colleen Kelly. Colleen was a member of ASEM for only a short time. Very few of us had the opportunity to meet her. Jim Roe knew her the best of us and has this to say about her brief association with us:

“Colleen mostly came to the Beginners meetings. She worked nights at Boeing. Sometimes, as often as we could, we would move the beginners meeting to Broemmelsiek for hands on beginning astronomy and she came out. I don't recall seeing her at the FNOHs [Friday Night Open House]. She owned a 10-in (I believe) LX-200 but never brought it to a meeting. Yvonne knew her as well and we were shocked and saddened to hear of her passing.”

Next time you’re out at the park, look up and give her a thought or two.

Volunteers needed to help with Spring Cleaning at Broemmelsiek park

Well it’s that time of the year: Spring cleaning at home and at the park! Chuck Simms, the ASEM equipment manager, is organizing an equipment cleanup and maintenance session for Saturday April 14th and the following Saturday, the 21st. We need a few volunteers to help with keeping Broemmelsiek park the preeminent astronomy park in the country. Yes, that’s right, in the country. No other park system that we can find has an area open to the public that is specifically dedicated solely for astronomical observing – and we have equipment installed!

Please drop a note to equipment@asemonline.org if you can assist in any way. Chuck will put out an email listing the various tasks that need to be completed and you can let him know what you can do.

Your help will be greatly appreciated by the organizers, membership, parks department and especially the public.

This just in from Carla Kamp:

For those who took pie servers to the February meeting: Please check your Pie servers. A member got home with one that was not the same as the one she brought. The one taken home by mistake has a brown handle but the one she brought was all silver. They can email hospitality@asemonline.org and Carla will get them in touch with one another. Or bring them to the ASEM general meeting on the 10th ;) [ed: And I was almost successful in not referring to a “3.14159 server mixup” - drat ;)]
Now back to our regularly scheduled newsletter….

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As the not so winter-like season comes to an end, I am amazed at the resilience of our members. I have seen so much dedication to astronomy in these “less than ideal” months. The volunteers at Broemmelsiek have been extraordinary considering the cool temperatures, and the membership taking advantage of the site and Danville have reminded me that astronomy is definitely a passion for our membership.

Be sure to begin planning your spring observing, March is an ideal time to attempt your Messier Marathon (my personal best is 98 in one night without digital setting circles). Don’t forget to attend one of our meetings or SIG events, there is a wealth of good knowledge to be exchanged.

Unfortunately not all things are rosy, the Parks Department has taken a step backward in our pursuit of anchoring the 32” telescope on Gallileo Way. But I continue to pursue the furthering of our partnership and am confident in eventual completion of our goal of showing the wonders of the heavens to our members and county residents.

Thanks again for all of your efforts on behalf of ASEM and the AfA. Keep your eyepieces clean and your optics dew free!

Stacey Thater - sthater@stchas.edu
January 25 DIY SIG Meeting
Submitted by Tom Richards (SIG coordinator)

Again, for those who missed it, we saw some very interesting craftsmanship on display at this past DIY-ATM meeting. Here is a run down from my notes and impressions:

Carl Turek (left) gave an excellent presentation of the modifications he made to his 12 inch Meade LightBridge dobsonian, in particular the addition of an AZ axis setting ring (mounted on the base plate) and a slow-motion hand-control for the Alt axis. This involved some amazing metal-work and ingenuity of using parts on hand, and if not, making something into something else for the part that is needed. Great job. Carl also noted the use of a magnetic Digital Angle Gauge (Inclinometer), that was found at Harbor Freight) in conjunction with his Az axis setting circle and Palm-Pilot program (that is similar on other older "pads" he still has) to find an object by its Alt/Az coordinates. Carl also pointed out other Meade LightBridge attachment and collimation screw issues, and his approach in improvements there, as well as how to use a barlow with a laser collimator to improve a reflectors final collimation adjustments. Lots to see and discuss here.

Steve Boerner (right) showed his "fix-a-scope" wood mount that is aimed at improving the Alt/Az mount interface for low-cost refractors or small reflectors to. The mount is simple to build, with few wood pieces to cut, common household parts, and clamps or holds the scope by light side "squeeze" pressure.

Grant Martin displayed his automatic red-light for the inside lid of his large equipment box. The red-lights are $14 automotive (12V) led strips (2 in a package, found at Autozone) and he added a low-cost mercury switch in the circuit. A very simple and effective approach to night-vision lighting needs. He also showed a few low cost (< $2) LED lights that can be bought a discount and party stores for guarding one’s scope or tripod legs at a public star-party. Great ideas.

All in attendance chatted more on the feasibility of a scope building workshop for beginners, of which the club is giving consideration in sponsoring along with the DIY-ATM SIG’s support. Please keep thinking on this. Steves’ "fix-a-scope" maybe of interest in this regards too.

More images of the equipment in this report can be found here:

http://tinyurl.com/asem-diy-1201

By the way, it’s the first quarter of the year, so we will meet every month during this quarter now, before it gets a bit warmer, and building stuff slides to second place after observing. The next meeting is on.
Sunday March 11, daylight saving time begins at 2A.M. or here we go again.. I don't suppose it really matters, as far as astronomy goes, we can adjust to time change and find the objects we want to see. My question is, do we really save energy by shifting time back and forth. I have never seen a savings chart showing the advantage. Any thoughts here?

Jupiter and Venus are closing in on each other; the first of February they were 40 deg apart.

In early March, Jupiter is about 4 deg. east of Venus. Jupiter is in retrograde, westbound, and Venus is climbing to its maximum of 46 deg. distance from the Sun. Venus is following an 8 year cycle, basically repeating its 2004 path which will position it for a transit of the Sun, June 6.

In researching the above paragraph, I noticed the alignments of the visible planets and it reminded me of a horse race, I can just hear race track announcer Dave Johnson calling this one: "They are coming around the far turn, Jupiter is in the lead, Venus is coming up fast on the inside, with Mercury running a distant third, and Uranus bringing up the rear!" You won't forget that one will you.

Everyone has heard the old saw; March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. Usually they are referring to the weather, the lamb being mild weather and the lion a blizzard, or bad weather. However, these are also astronomical facts. In March Aries, the ram, is low and setting on the western horizon. Meanwhile overhead Leo, the Lion, is almost to the zenith. Just below Jupiter is Mars.

**COMET WATCH**

When asked if there were any comets worth looking at, comet hunter in Chief Jim Twellman had this to say: “The only comet that I'd recommend club members go after right now is Comet Garradd. It is currently just a mag 7 fuzzball in Draco/Ursa Minor:

http://www.ki.tng.de/~winnie/kometen/aktuell.html

and


It is making its' closest approach to Earth in early March, but the tiny tail seems to be gone now. I have yet to observe it in binos, so I recommend a 6"+ telescope at low mag (wide field) with a clear dark (moonless) sky to find it, best around 4am.”
**Calendars Club**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Beginner Meeting 7PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Membership potluck and entertainment (?) 6PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Digital SIG 7PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>DIY-ATM SIG 7PM</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

All meetings take place at the Weldon Springs Nuclear containment site at the specified times (Don’t worry, you won’t be irradiated any more than usual ;)

**Outreach (Via Jim Twellman)**

Looking at the ASEM calendar and the STL Astronomy calendar, I see no upcoming "road-trip" outreach events thru March. We of course will have FNOH’s [Friday night open houses - ed], weather-permitting.

**Astronomical Events for March (Via Marv Stewart)**

This is a good month to study the Moon’s motion and use it as a marker to find interesting objects in the night sky.

Watch Mars brighten from mag -0.5 to -1.2 (the brightest it will get this year as opposition is March 3rd). Its’ size will also grow from 12 arc seconds to nearly 14”. Look for the North polar cap and various light and dark features on the globe.

Mars makes its closest approach in two years on the fifth. The last closest approach was February of 2010. An interesting web site that shows Earth’s and Mars’ orbit, and gives a simulated telescopic view of Mars can be found at [http://www.windows2universe.org/mars/mars_orbit.html](http://www.windows2universe.org/mars/mars_orbit.html) This one has been on my favorites list a long time.

Its 9 P.M. has anyone seen Jim Melka?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Mars closest to Earth. Mag -1.2 and 13.9″ apparent diameter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>The full Moon is below Mars.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Moon is close to Saturn in very early morning. Starlight wasting time begins – set yer clocks forward one hour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Jupiter 3 degrees from Venus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Last quarter Moon.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jupiter and Venus 3 deg. apart 6 A.M. our time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Vernal equinox occurs just past midnight our time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>New Moon. Rare opportunity to see, well, hear, Jim Twellman at his scope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Barely visible new Moon near Jupiter in western sky at sunset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>First quarter Moon. Mars now only mag -0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note from the ed: Consult your Ottewell Astronomical Calendar for a number of interesting planetary events this month. What? You don’t have a calendar? Why, check with Grant Martin the next time you see him. He has a few for sale at the low low price of just $20.00 each!

**Astronaut Sandra Magnus to appear locally**

The Saint Louis Astronomical Society has booked local astronaut Sandra Magnus for a public talk April 10th. The time and location will be firmed up sometime in March so keep your calendar open for this date.
Several notes from Carla Kamp, our Hospitality director:

Jim and Yvonne Roe will be bringing Corned Beef for the March potluck main dish! We do need volunteers for April and the months to follow. Please help by dropping a note to hospitality@asemonline.org or by signing up at the general meeting.

“There have been a few people ask about ASEM shirts, if there is enough interest we can place an order, have them let me know so I can get an idea of how many are interested.”

Thanks
[You’re very welcome Carla and thank you for your efforts– ed]

The February potluck had a record (?) turnout: 46 members and guests attended! We filled nearly three tables. And the fare was DEEEELicious!
Steve Boerner received 3 awards:
- The Binocular Messier Club. The Binocular Messier Club requires observing fifty of the Messier objects with binoculars.
- The Messier Club. This level required observing at least seventy of the one hundred ten Messier Objects. When he finishes observing the balance, he will be awarded the prestigious Honorary Messier award!
- Outreach Club - Basic level. This is the initial level of a three level award process. Basic requires 10 hours of outreach contact time with the public.

Chuck Simms received recognition for both Basic and Stellar levels for the Outreach Club based on his efforts at Broemmelsiek and other public viewing sessions. As noted above, the Basic level requires logging ten hours of contact time. The Stellar level requires an additional fifty hours and the recipient will "report" on one of their outreach events; these reports can be used in The Reflector and elsewhere to overview what amateurs are doing in Outreach and share ideas. The final level, Master, requires an additional 100 hours of contact time and the Master Outreach Award nominee will report on what seems to work best for their outreach efforts; this can be specific activities, locations, etc. As in the case of the Stellar Outreach Award, these reports can be used in The Reflector.

Grant Martin received recognition for completion of the Binocular Double Star Club. This Club requires observing fifty double stars with binoculars from a list of one hundred twenty. Five of the doubles observed with binoculars must also be observed with the naked eye (An exception is allowed for over the hill types like Grant: An additional double star may be observed with binoculars for each naked eye pair not observed). In Grants case, he was only able to observe one double star naked eye so he had to observe 4 more doubles with binoculars – 54 total observations!

Congratulations to all award recipients!
**CLUB CONTACTS**

**MEMBERSHIP**
Membership issues can be addressed through our executive director Stacy Thater (pronounced “totter”) at these addresses:

- **Email:** sthater@stchas.edu
- **Snail mail:**
  - Alliance for Astronomy (ASEM)
  - PO Box 141
  - New Melle MO 63365

**COMMITTEES**
Comments, questions, suggestions and money (just kidding) may be sent to the following addresses:

- **programs@asemonline.org**
  - Use this address to communicate with the program committee. If you have something to present at a meeting or wish to contribute and let someone else perform, send it here. Questions and/or suggestions about programming etc. Remember, they are here to help you. This is a user friendly society and we like to see members get up and share.

- **equipment@asemonline.org**
  - This address is used to find out about ASEM loaner equipment. If you find something amiss at BPark by all means report it here. If you are curious about borrowing an item, put in a request via this address.

- **hospitality@asemonline.org**
  - Got a main dish you’d like to bring to the potluck? We sure could use it AND you will be reimbursed for your expenses.

- **newsletter@asemonline.org**
  - Primary contact for the newsletter. Got an article or notice you’d like to see published? Send it here and be famous!

- **Outreach@asemonline.org**
  - Special requests for groups at Broemmelsiek Park including:
    - Notice of large party (more than groups of twenty)
    - Request for specific requirements needed (school assignment, merit badge requirements, etc.)
    - Requests for Star Party / Telescope event at another location

- **steve.boerner@asemonline.org**
  - Web page and all other communications not covered above

**ENTERTAINMENT**
Late breaking news and member adventures (or shenanigans as the case may be) can usually be found at STL Astronomy in yahoo groups. If you aren’t a member, you should join. Go to

[http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/STLAstronomy/](http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/STLAstronomy/)

and click “Join”

*Think Clear, dark skies*