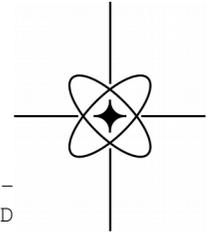


Meteor Write



PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE **MEMPHIS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**, A NON-PROFIT PUBLIC-SERVICE ORGANIZATION PROMOTING INTEREST AND EDUCATION IN ASTRONOMY AND RELATED SCIENCES. FOUNDED IN 1953.

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APRIL MEETING



The Memphis Astronomical Society will meet at 8:00 p.m. on Friday, April 7, 2017, in the Assisi Hall Science Auditorium on the campus of Christian Brothers University at East Parkway South and Central Avenue. Enter from Central opposite the Fairgrounds. A campus map can be found at www.cbu.edu/assets/2091/cbumap2014.pdf. Members are encouraged to attend and to bring guests. The public is welcome.

PROGRAM

WELCOME * * President Ric Honey will greet the members and guests and outline the evening's program.

BUSINESS * * The minutes of the March Board of Directors meeting will be read by Secretary Richard Townley, and the Treasurer's report will be read by Treasurer Sarita Joshi.

UPCOMING OBSERVING SESSIONS * * The Observing Sessions for April will be announced by Mark Matthews, Vice-President for Observing.

WHY WE SHOULD NOT GO TO MARS * * by Grace Sammarco

With Mars at the forefront of news in the astronomical world, it is easy to get swept up in the notion that colonizing Mars is the next "giant leap" for mankind. But is that really what's best? In this talk we will discuss the future of space travel and why some believe that this shouldn't include going to Mars.

BREAK: Time to refresh and mix and mingle. Please talk with our visitors and make them feel welcome!

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ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY USING GIMP * * by Keith Latiolais

Professional photographers, as well as expert amateurs, do everything they can to create the perfect picture. These days, that means working with some type of post-capture processing software program. Astrophotography is no exception. While it is an exciting and rewarding hobby, astrophotography can get expensive, quickly. Before you invest thousands, and discover the hobby just isn't for you, take advantage of some of the tools available for free. In this presentation, the speaker will introduce the group to a processing software program named GIMP. Although GIMP might not be as advanced as some software programs for astrophotography, you can't beat the price. Even if you have no interest in astrophotography, editing that family photo might just make next year's Christmas card list.

APRIL OBSERVING SESSIONS: Mark your calendars (or high-tech devices)! Saturday, April 22, 7:30 p.m. at Village Creek State Park near Wynne, Arkansas. We will have an indoor program with sky maps, constellation mythology, and a slide show, followed by an observing session. As always, we need lots of M.A.S. volunteers to help out. Of course, we need folks with telescopes, but we also need a number of other people just to assist with everything going on. Please plan on participating in this important out-reach event. If you can come, please notify Mark Matthews at mark.matthews.bec@gmail.com, or mmatthews@bec-memphis.com.

Saturday, April 29, 7:30 p.m. at Burton's Sugar Farm. Dark-Sky Observing.

REPORT FROM MID-SOUTH CON * * by Jeremy Veldman

Saturday, March 25, I gave a talk on the Solar Eclipse of 2017 to MidSouthCon. There were about 25 people in the audience and I want to thank Freddy Diaz, Ric Honey, Grace Sammarco, Rebecca Love, and everyone else who assisted for their support.

The talk is one that I will be repeating for the MAS program on the solar eclipse in May, along with Bill Wilson. Without getting into too many details (I'd prefer to save it for the May program), the talk was an overview of the August 2017 eclipse and the science behind solar eclipses, in general. I was pleased with the response at MidSouthCon. As the talk began, the audience immediately quieted down and were engaged from the start. As the presentation progressed, the attendees were more engaged and asked several questions. At the conclusion of the talk, several people came up to ask questions, and pick up free pairs of eclipse glasses and solar eclipse guide handouts. Overall, the participation was "stellar" (pun much intended).

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I've spoken at MidSouthCon before (Saturn's moon Titan, circa 2012) and it is a unique event. Attendees of all ages and genders come out to share their mutual passions and hobbies for science fiction, fantasy, gaming, space, comics, anime, and more. Also unique are the costumes- I did see the Incredible Hulk, The Joker, several Jedi, and some mutilated zombies courtesy of the makeup and masquerade artist across the hall from where I gave the talk (tough competition!). I remember distinctly being in a conversation with Ric Honey and seeing Jason from Friday the 13th (hockey mask, cargo pants, bloody chainsaw and all) approaching him from behind. After a brief moment of tension, I reminded myself that we were at a Fantasy Convention with "unique" attendees. No one need worry, Ric is still our president, and will be in attendance at the next meeting!

I've been somewhat mystified by the lack of interest and lack of awareness for the solar eclipse among the general public. Last fall, I printed out 500 business cards via VistaPrint to hand out to people I encounter in everyday life - clients, friends, colleagues, even total strangers. The responses were quite varied. At our company Christmas Party last December, I handed the card to one of our waitresses, and she was very excited. A month later, I told a group of Real Estate investors about the eclipse, and one person told me (somewhat sarcastically) that he'd "sleep right through it." Hard to believe for an event as spectacular as this one promises to be, but people are prisoners of the moment and the tyranny of the immediate wins.

But regardless of the response (or lack there of), I feel it is our duty as an astronomical society to inform as many people as we come in contact with about this event. At least they will have heard about it, whether or not they decide to travel into the path of totality on August 21. And MidSouthCon was just another opportunity for the MAS to make an appearance and educate the general public. Overall, I think we did our duty to inform the audience that day, and heighten awareness for this magnificent spectacle.

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