



STAR STUFF

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club Newsletter

Star Stuff

This newsletter is published eleven times per year by:

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn, MI 48121-7527

Officers

President:	Dan Smith
Vice President:	Sean Pickard
Secretary:	Cheri Grissom
Treasurer:	Arica Flores

Departments

Webmaster:	Liam Finn
Membership:	Doug Bauer
Newsletter:	Tim Campbell
Equipment:	Jeff Gorman
Speakers:	Sandra Macika

Club Information

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club meets on the fourth Thursday of each month, except for the combined November/December meeting which meets on the first Thursday of December – at Henry Ford College Administration Services and Conference Center in Dearborn.

Notes from the Editor

by Tim Campbell, StarStuff Editor

Astronomy at the Beach

As a reminder, Astronomy at the Beach is next month on September 18th & 19th.

This is the largest public star party in Michigan and likely the entire United States. Most star parties tend to be hosted by astronomers and *for astronomers* rather than as public outreach events. This event is by the astronomers *for the public*. We encourage parents to bring families & kids to learn about the universe around them. The event is completely free and open to the public. All of the astronomy clubs in southeast Michigan participate and most have a club table in the club tent — including the Ford Club. It tends to draw between 3,000 - 5,000 visitors across Friday and Saturday nights.

Please consider bringing your telescope or helping at one of the tables.

Gordon Hansen is organizing volunteers to staff the club table. You don't need any special skills. We need people to staff the table to answer questions about the club and help out with the scavenger hunt.

The scavenger hunt is traditionally organized by us ... the kids get a sheet with astronomy objects they need to try to find while observing on the telescope field (things like the Moon, a planet, a double star, etc.) and the astronomers sign-off that kids did see that object. When they complete their sheet, they head back to the table and get a prize (stickers, etc.).

Arica Flores is running the raffle table and can always use an extra hand. The raffle is our largest source of income needed to host the event ... so it's kind of a big deal if we want to be able to keep doing this as a free event. Please consider lending a hand.

Club Information

Refer to our website for a map and directions:

www.fordastronomyclub.com

Observing

The FAAC primary observing location is Spring Mill Pond located within the Island Lake State Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. The Club maintains an after-hours permit. Club members can contact any club officer for procedures to enter or exit the park when the main gate is locked.

The club also has use of a private observing site near Gregory Michigan. See the FAAC Groups.io Group for more information.

Inquiries can be directed to info@fordastronomyclub.com

Membership

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in amateur astronomy. The FAAC is an affiliate of the Ford Employees Recreation Association (FERA).

Fees

Annual - New Members: \$30
Annual - Renewals: \$25
(\$30 if not renewed by Jan 31)

Benefits

Membership includes the Star Stuff newsletter, discounts on magazines, discounts at selected

Secretary's Report

by Cheri Grissom, Secretary

FAAC General Meeting – July 23, 2026

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Vice President Sean Pickard. President Dan Smith was absent. Secretary Cheri Grissom and Treasurer Arica Flores were present. We had a total of 26 in-person attendees. We did not offer an online option this month as it was an open forum/social hour type meeting. Sean asked for member and guest introductions.

Member Observing: Doug Bauer observed with the Seven Ponds club with his solar scope. They had a good session. Noah Pickard, Sean's young son, commented on the red sun he saw due to all the wildfire smoke. Jameson Sullivan and a friend were able to observe sunspots through only a cell phone due to the smoke in the air. John McGill was able to see the pink-tinted sun in a smoky sky, but his camera was unable to pick it up. It seems that everyone who observes either visually or through imaging has been heavily affected by the smoke lately.

What's Up in the Night Sky: Sean went through our events calendar, which can also be found on our website, fordastronomyclub.com, as well as on our Groups.io site. Full moon is July 29. There will be a partial lunar eclipse on August 28. Sean went through ISS lunar and solar transits that will be coming up in our area. Transit-finder.com is a good site to find dates and times for these. Earthsky.org is also a great website for general astronomy information.

Club Business:

Secretary's Report: No report.

Treasurer's Report: Arica gave our current balance.

Social Media/Website: Liam absent. John McGill talked a bit about our YouTube channel, "Astronomy for Everyone," which is sponsored by Wyandotte Connects and Monroe Impact. Please check it out if you haven't already done so. A new episode is put out about every month, and there are many years of older episodes available to watch. John is currently asking for volunteers willing to help produce our new segments.

Club Equipment: Jeff Gorman reports nothing new at this time.

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area equipment retailers, and after-hours access to the Island Lake observing site and private observing sites.

Astronomy or Sky & Telescope magazine discounts are available by contacting the FAAC club treasurer treasurer@fordastronomyclub.com for the discount form. The form should be sent to the respective publisher with your subscription request and payment. Do not send money directly to FAAC.

The FAAC has a pool of equipment including telescopes, cameras, and other gear used for outreach. Much of the gear can be borrowed for personal use in the interest of furthering your knowledge and experience in astronomy.

Please see the equipment list for further information.

Club Wear

Club logo-wear (embroidered with club logo) can be ordered directly through LLBeanBusiness.com

See the groups.io files section for ordering information and instructions on how to request the correct logo.

Communication

The FAAC uses Groups.io for our email distribution list (both formal and informal discussion.)

Observing nights & locations (scheduled and unscheduled as weather permits), equipment

Scheduled Club Events

Month	Date	Sunset	Location
September	18 & 19th	4:00pm	Astronomy at the Beach at Island Lake (Kent Lake Beach)

Hammond Planetarium

Date	Time	Topic
September 16th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show
October 14th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show
October 16th	7:30pm	Fall Planetarium Show

Club Meeting Topics & Speakers

Meeting	Speaker	Topic
August 27th	Kalée Tock	Observing Binary Stars
September 24th	Dr. Deana Weibel	The Ultraviolet Effect and the Universe Beyond Our Solar System

August Meeting

Observing Binary Stars

Kalée Tock, Stanford Online High School

Description:

Kalée Tock will explain how observers can contribute valuable data and analysis to the Washington Double Star Catalog and AAVSO even without owning a telescope. Large collections of observations such as those maintained by the US Naval Observatory and the AAVSO photometric database can be used to analyze companion stars (and sometimes planets!) and understand the orbital parameters of these systems. As part of the talk, she will discuss how you can join the multi-generational project of understanding and analyzing visual double star systems by publishing a measurement in the Journal of Double Star Observations (JDSO).

Bio:

As an undergrad, Kalée majored in Chemistry. She started a PhD program for Chemistry but decided to stop with a master's degree when

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questions, events, outreaches, etc. are normally discussed via this list.

Join by visiting <https://groups.io/g/FordAstronomyClub> to request membership.

Articles & Submissions

Your submissions to Star Stuff are welcome! Send your story and/or images to the editor at: starstuff@fordastronomyclub.com

Observatory

The FAAC maintains and operates the Hector J Robinson Observatory (HJRO) at Lincoln Park Schools.

The observatory houses a 14" Celestron C14 Schmidt Cassegrain Telescope as well as other instruments and can be used by club members.

The observatory is adjacent to the athletic field situated between the Lincoln Park Middle School and High School buildings near

1701 Champaign Rd.
Lincoln Park, MI 48146

The school system has designated four "key-holders" within the club who have the ability to open the observatory.

Call (313) 444-5850 to learn when the observatory is opening (or request an opening).

Secretary's Report (Con't from Page 2)

Club Picnic: The date is August 15. Doug Bauer will be there about 2 p.m. to reserve a few tables for us. The official start time is 5 p.m., but any members who wish to get there early and keep Doug company are welcome! This date coincides with our monthly General Observing Night, which will begin at 8 p.m. Doug is trying to get a rough number of how many will be attending. If you haven't already done so, please respond to his recent Groups.io request.

Open Forum/Social Hour

Arica reminded all of us that our club is one of the main sponsors of Astronomy at the Beach, which is coming up soon. The Great Lakes Association of Astronomy Clubs (GLAAC) is the organization that will be putting this on September 18 and 19. As treasurer of GLAAC, Arica shared that expenses for the event have gone up greatly. She is in the process of putting up a GoFundMe page to ask for donations to help cover these expenses. You can go directly to GLAAC.org for more information. There is always a raffle at the event, and this year's grand prize is a smart telescope. We also need volunteers from among our membership to help staff our FAAC table this year. All we ask for is maybe an hour or two over one or two nights. Many hands make light work. No great knowledge of astronomy is needed, just a willingness to talk to the public who stop by our table under the big tent. There will be multiple people there at all times, so don't worry about being there alone. We may also need help operating our big Dob out on the field.

We did not have an hour-long guest speaker tonight. Instead, we had pizza and friendly conversation! Additionally, we had two of our members give short talks. Tim Campbell did a presentation on "Science of the Solstice." This was an abbreviated version of the talk he typically gives at the Hammond Planetarium. Following that, John McGill gave a photo presentation of the many space launches he has attended, including many at NASA facilities, as well as SpaceX's Starship Starbase in Texas.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Board Meeting Summary – August 6, 2026

(Videoconference meeting.) President Dan Smith, Secretary Cheri Grissom, and Treasurer Arica Flores present. Vice President Sean Pickard absent. Five other members present.

Planetarium

FAAC members are volunteer operators for the Hammond Planetarium at Henry Ford College.

Planetarium shows are free and open to the public.

Four seasonal planetarium shows are offered per year with the stars and constellations of the current season as well as a multi-media presentation featuring select planets.

Public planetarium shows are normally the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm. Please see the planetarium schedule for specific times. It is posted here:

fordastronomyclub.com/hfc-planetarium

Social Media

The FAAC has several social media accounts. Members are encouraged to join and follow them.

Facebook

facebook.com/FordAstronomyClub

Twitter

twitter.com/Ford_Astro

Discord

<https://discord.gg/RH6rhAPWb8>

(Please note that the summaries printed in “Star Stuff” are just that, a brief summary of the board meeting minutes. Full minutes are in the club records.)

Our next General Meeting will be on August 27, and our guest speaker, Kalee Tock, must start her presentation at 7:00 sharp, due to another obligation she has afterwards. So we will ask members who will be attending to be present and seated earlier than usual. We will be sure the auditorium will be open by 6:30. Our guest speaker will go first, and our regular meeting will follow.

Club Business:

Secretary's Report: Cheri mentioned the fact that 2027 is coming up fast, and the board positions of both Vice President and Secretary are term-limited, and someone new will have to run for those. Dan said he already has that topic on his agenda for next month. Cheri also reminded us that the club calendar on our website still has not been corrected as far as dates for November and December meetings.

Treasurer's Report: Arica gave us our current balance. She went over our funds for this year compared to previous years. We are down a little bit. We had a brief discussion about whether there is anything we should do to address this. Several suggestions were made, but we will have more discussion with the membership before implementing any changes. The donation jar that we put out at each meeting and at special events helps a little, at least in covering the cost of the snacks we provide at the meetings.

Membership: Doug Bauer reported that we have had two new members join in the last month. At this time, we have 76 regular members and 65 lifetime members. Of those life members, 33 are active and 32 had not been active for a long time.

Club Picnic: Doug says we are all set. We hope to see a lot of members at Spring Mill Pond a week from Saturday, which coincides with our monthly Observing Night.

Astronomy at the Beach: We are still in a position of not knowing if we will have enough volunteers to staff our table both nights. We will continue to get the word out to members that their help is needed.

Equipment

The FAAC maintain an equipment pool of telescopes, binoculars, cameras, and other equipment used for special events. Much of this equipment is available to members.

Each piece of equipment is either stored by a club volunteer who offers to be the caretaker of the item, or by the person who last borrowed the item.

Most equipment can be borrowed for one-month durations. At the end of the month, the borrower can extend the loan if no other members have requested it.

Some items are reserved for special events use and are not normally available to be borrowed.

If you are interested in borrowing an item, please contact either the current holder of the equipment, or contact the club equipment manager, Jeff Gorman, at equipment@fordastronomyclub.com

Item	Held by	Item	Held by
Telescopes		Display Items	
TK1 Coronado Personal Solar Telescope (Doublestack) w/Meade Autostar Goto Mount	Kristie Whittington	Astronomy Event Sign (3' x 6')	Gordon Hansen
TK5 4.5" Reflector on Fitz GEM mount	Bob MacFarland	Astronomy Event Signs 18x24" (x8)	Liam Finn
TK6 8" Orion XT8i Dobsonian	Dan Smith	PVC Display Board - Folding	Sandra Macika
TK7 TPO 8" f/4 Newtownian Astrograph (OTA Only - no mount)	Gary Gibson	Banner - Small (24" x 32")	Sandra Macika
TK8 20" f/5 Obsession Dob, Ladder & EP Kit	Liam Finn	Banner - Medium (24" x 72")	Sandra Macika
TKn Celestron 6" Refractor & AGT Mount		Banner - Large (32" x 16')	Sandra Macika
TKn Meade 8" f/5 Newtonian & LX-70 Mount		Tri-Fold Presentation Boards	Sandra Macika
Zhumell 20x80 Binoculars		Other	
Presentation Tools		Canopy (10' x 10')	Liam Finn
Projector (older)	Jim Frisbie	Pop Cooler	Sean Pickard
Projector (newer)	Gordon Hansen	TA Sky Quality Meter	Liam Finn
Projection Screen 8'	John McGill	36" Flat-Top Griddle	Gordon Hansen
Bullhorn	Liam Finn	Demonstration Tools	
Speaker System w/Wireless Mic	Liam Finn	Weigh on Planets Scale	Liam Finn
Logo Tablecloth (x2)	Gordon Hansen	Lunar Phase Kit	Bob MacFarland
		100' Scale Model Solar System Kit	Bob MacFarland
		NSN Meteorite (Outreach) kit	Sandra Macika

Item	Held by
Imaging Cameras	
C2 Meade Deep Sky Imager Pro III w/Autostar Suite	Gordon Hansen
C6 Canon 60Da Astrophotography DSLR and accessories	Tim Dey
Other Imaging Equipment	
CA1 Rigel Systems Spectrascope	Gordon Hansen
C7 Canon EOS EF 70-200mm f/1.4L IS USM lens & tripod mounting ring (for Canon EOS cameras)	Gordon Hansen
Rokinon 8mm f/3.5 Fish-Eye Lens (Canon EOS Mount)	John McGill
Special Event Items - Not available for Loan Out	
BK2 Zhumell 25x100 Binoculars, hard case, & Zhumell TRH-16 tripod w/soft fabric bag	Sandra Macika
TAK1 Night Vision Image Intensifier for telescopes (2" barrel size)	Tim Dey
Lunt 100mm H-alpha Solar Telescope with Celestron CG-5 equatorial mount	Liam Finn

University of Michigan Dearborn Observatory

Month	Day	Time
September	11	8:30pm - 10:30pm
	25	8:00pm - 10:00pm

Month	Day	Time
October	2	8:00pm - 10:00pm
	9	7:45pm - 9:45pm
	16	7:30pm - 9:30pm

Speaker (Con't from Page 3)

she realized that she liked teaching more than research. She completed a second master's degree in Learning, Design, and Technology, and now teaches science at Stanford Online High School. Over the years, she has taught Chemistry, Physics, General Science, Astrophysics, Astrobiology, and an Astronomy Research Seminar. Ms. Tock's special passion is designing science experiments, some of the best ideas for which have come straight out of the lab notebooks of her curious and creative students, and she has launched four high-altitude balloons. She also

has a wonderful family including her husband and three children.