



# STAR STUFF

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

Volume 16, Number 1

January 2007

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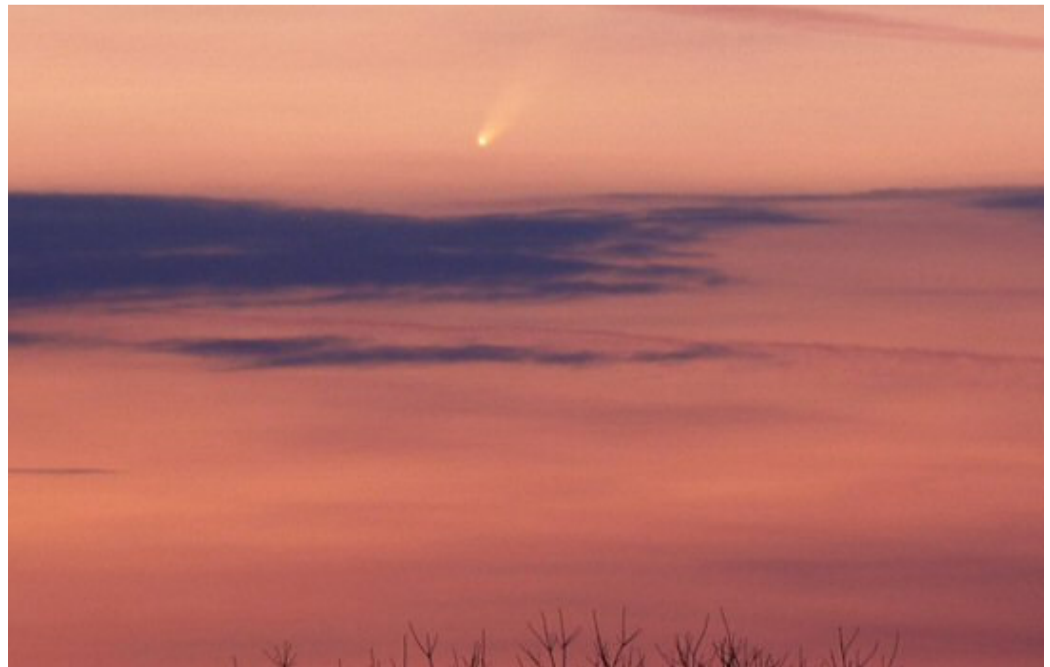
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## Comet Catchers



Above, Comet McNaught (photo by John Kirchhoff, January 10, just after 6pm). Jim Frisbie (who submitted a fine photo also, see p. 6) and Kirchhoff went to the park site in South Lyon. Operating under quite a few clouds, the two caught a little clearing just after sunset. Said John, "The comet was easily visible to the naked eye and is the brightest comet I have ever seen."

**Image details:** William Optics ZS66 SD w/.8 focal reducer and Canon 10D DSLR 1 second exposure @ f4.7 ISO 400



## A Great Big Wreck

Dr. Tony Phillips

People worry about asteroids. Being hit by a space rock can really ruin your day. But that's nothing. How would you like to be hit by a whole galaxy?

It could happen. Astronomers have long known that the Andromeda Galaxy is on a collision course with the Milky Way. In about 3 billion years, the two great star systems will crash together. And Earth will be in the middle of the

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# STAR STUFF

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**STAR STUFF** is published eleven times each year by the

**FORD AMATEUR ASTRONOMY CLUB**  
P.O. Box 7527  
Dearborn MI 48121-7527

PRESIDENT:	Don Klaser
VICE PRESIDENT:	Ed Halash
SECRETARY:	Ken Anderson
TREASURER:	Gordon Hansen
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Dale Ochalek

## CLUB INFORMATION

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club (FAAC) meets on the fourth Thursday each month, except for the combined November/December meeting on the first Thursday of December – at Henry Ford Community College, Administrative Services and Conference Center in Dearborn. Refer to our website for a map and directions ([www.boonhill.net/faac](http://www.boonhill.net/faac)).

The FAAC observes at Spring Mill Pond within the Island Lake State Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. The club maintains an after-hours permit, and observes on Friday and Saturday nights, and nights before holidays, weather permitting. The FAAC also has use of the dark skies at Richmond Airport, Unadilla, given prior permission. See the FAAC Yahoo Group\* for more information.

Observing schedules and additional info are available on our website, or via the FAAC Yahoo Group.\* Or call the **FAAC Hotline**, for info, and leave a message, or ask questions: **248-207-2075**.

Membership in the FAAC is open to anyone with an interest in amateur astronomy. The FAAC is an affiliate of the Ford Employees Recreation Association (F.E.R.A.). Membership fees:

Annual – New Member:	\$30	(\$15 after July 1)
Annual – Renewal:	\$25	(\$30 after January 31)
Life Membership:	\$150	(N/A after January 31)

Membership includes the *STAR STUFF* newsletter, discounts on magazines, discounts at selected area equipment retailers, and after-hours access to the Island Lake observing site.

## ASTRONOMY or SKY & TELESCOPE MAGAZINE DISCOUNTS

Obtain the required form from the FAAC club treasurer for a \$10 discount. Send the completed form directly to the respective publisher with your subscription request and payment. Do not send any money directly to the FAAC for this.

## STAR STUFF NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Your submissions to *STAR STUFF* are more than welcome! Send your story and/or images to the editor at [dake00k@yahoo.com](mailto:dake00k@yahoo.com). Email text or MS Word is fine. *STAR STUFF* will usually go to press the weekend prior to each general meeting. Submissions received prior to that weekend can be included in that issue.

\* FAAC Members are welcome to join our **FordAstronomyClub** Yahoo! Group. Messages, photos, files, online discussions, and more! URL: [groups.yahoo.com/group/FordAstronomyClub](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FordAstronomyClub).

## President's Corner

Don Klaser, President, FAAC

I don't know about you, but it doesn't seem like January to me. Temperatures are in the forties, the grass is still green and the spring bulbs are poking their heads up. But it must be January because Jan and I shared a champagne toast at midnight, the Christmas tree is providing shelter for the birds in the backyard and oh, yes - Michigan lost another bowl game!

So, now that we've cleaned that up let's take a look at how the FAAC has fared over the past year. As in previous years, our outreach program has brought the hobby and science of astronomy to young and old alike at the following venues: Lake Erie "Ice Daze," Forest Elementary School, Astronomy Day at the DSC and Kensington, Astronomy on the Beach at Kensington Metro Park, Beginner's Nights at Island Lake, the Sally Ride Science Festival at Macomb College and solar viewing prior to a performance of "The Planets Suite" by The Detroit Symphony Orchestra at the Meadowbrook Music Theatre. Also involved in public outreach are our members who present the planetarium shows at HFCC each month.

Because of our track record in awareness programming, we entered Astronomy Magazine's Contest to try and win the first prize of \$2,500. And while we didn't win, place or show, I'm looking forward to this year's entry!

And lest people think we only come out at night, we continued our tradition of holding our club banquet at Station 885 in Plymouth, the third annual Astronomy Swap and Show in Livonia, and added a new one - the joint SEMSA/FAAC picnic at Richmond Airfield. Our scholarship Committee presented a \$250 award to a young man who began his studies in science this past fall at MSU. Our Astro-Imaging Special Interest Group continues to support strong attendance while expanding the knowledge base of its members, and our library is adding new titles -- please remember to make use of this valuable resource! I also want to recognize all the individuals who gave a presentation at our meetings, with a special 'Thank you' to our guest speakers. I found all the talks to be very informative and interesting

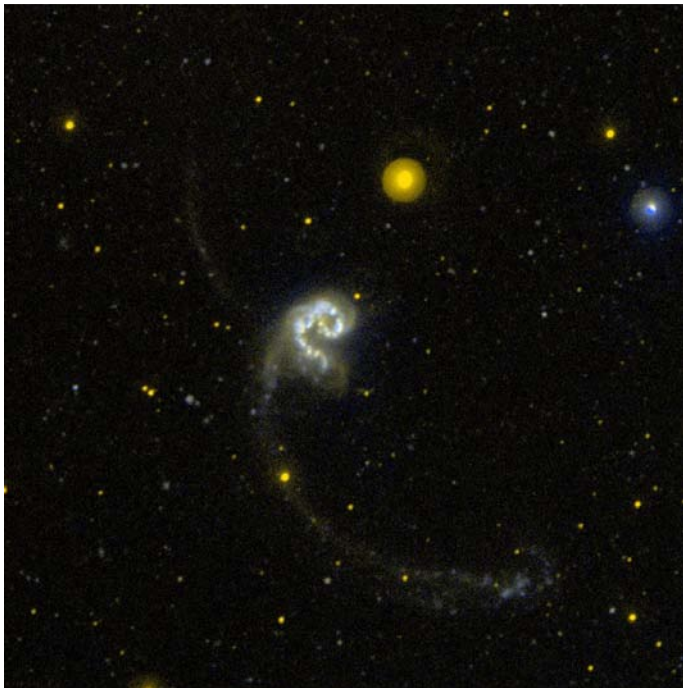
And finally, I would like to recognize the diligent efforts of our Board - they make my job a lot easier. With all of this synergy, I think 2007 will be another "stellar" year for our club!

## A Great Big Wreck... *(continued from page 1)*

biggest wreck in our part of the Universe. But Astronomer John Hibbard isn't worried.

"Galaxy collisions aren't so bad," he says. A typical spiral galaxy contains a hundred billion stars, yet when two such behemoths run into each other "very few stars collide. The stars are like pinpricks with lots of space between them. The chance of a direct hit, star vs. star, is very low."

Hibbard knows because he studies colliding galaxies, particularly a nearby pair called the Antennae. "The two galaxies of the Antennae system are about the same size and type as Andromeda and the Milky Way." He believes that the Antennae are giving us a preview of what's going to happen to our own galaxy.



*This GALEX UV image of the colliding Antennae Galaxies shows areas of active star formation, which is not in the tidal tails as one might expect.*

The Antennae get their name from two vast streamers of stars that resemble the feelers on top of an insect's head. These streamers, called "tidal tails," are created by gravitational forces—one galaxy pulling stars from the other. The tails appear to be scenes of incredible violence.

But looks can be deceiving: "Actually, the tails are quiet places," says Hibbard. "They're the peaceful suburbs of the Antennae." He came to this

conclusion using data from GALEX, an ultraviolet space telescope launched by NASA in 2003.

The true violence of colliding galaxies is star formation. While individual stars rarely collide, vast interstellar clouds of gas do smash together. These clouds collapse. Gravity pulls the infalling gas into denser knots until, finally, new stars are born. Young stars are difficult to be around. They emit intensely unpleasant radiation and tend to "go supernova."

GALEX can pinpoint hot young stars by the UV radiation they emit and, in combination with other data, measure the rate of star birth. "Surprisingly," Hibbard says, "star formation rates are low in the tidal tails, several times lower than what we experience here in the Milky Way." The merging cores of the Antennae, though, are sizzling with new stars, ready to explode.

So what should you do when your galaxy collides? A tip from GALEX: head for the tails.

To see more GALEX images, visit [www.galex.caltech.edu](http://www.galex.caltech.edu). Kids can read about galaxies and more at: [spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/educators/galex\\_puzzles.pdf](http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/educators/galex_puzzles.pdf).

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## November-December Minutes

Ken Anderson

Meeting officially started at 5:30 pm with pizza and pop available 15 minutes earlier, in the Hackett conference room of the HFCC Health Careers Building. Don Klaser, President, chaired the meeting and led the introductions, and asked for observations.

John Kirchhoff observed the Moon occulting M45 Pleiades open star cluster on 12/3/2006 at 7pm. Ken Anderson observed at Richmond alone on two back to back days around Thanksgiving, using his new 2" Hydrogen beta filter to observe the North American and California nebula with was moderately bright and even the extremely challenging Horsehead nebula. The Horsehead was extremely faint and required more than 15 minutes to fully dark adapt. With the H beta most of North American (except Florida) was visible, with OIII North American was still faintly present, where previously (~2 years) Ken could

*...continued on page 4*

## Meeting Minutes... *(continued from page 3)*

only see brighter Mexico with OIII. This shows the more you observe, and know what you are looking for, the better you can pick things out.

John Kirchoff, manager of Rider's Hobby in Livonia, gave the Tech Talk, "Holiday Astro Gear." During this time, smaller items were passed around. Items included the Vixen A80x5 short tube 80mm refractor. The Vixen short tube 80mm refractor is on sale for \$299. This 50X is rich field for low power night and daytime viewing. The \$399 portamount uses friction and is clampless with a hidden Allen wrench, and holds up to a 4" refractor. Also shown: \$219 Orion binoviewers (similar to Celestron), 16 Large Sky and Tel star wheel, planesphere, \$25 "Celestial Sample" book by Sue French, \$30 "2000 Double Star" book, \$14 "Patterns in the Sky" book, \$20 "Pocket Sky Atlas 7th magnitude, 119 Orion 2" Dielectric star diagonal (like Williams) with 1.25" insert, Kendrick's Digifire 7 Digistar controller, Dewheater with 4 jacks & 2 jacks 12v, Celestron Sky Scout, \$40 42" 3D solar system mobile with remote control for the kids (and some big kids).

The main presentation "3D Celestial Navigation Star Strider (Space Travel in 3D)" was given by Dave D'Onofrio of the Warren Astronomy Society. It is a virtual spaceship traveling through space up to 3159 light years. The solar system assumes Newtonian physics, whereas the other stars uses both Newtonian and relativistic physics. Anaglyph red/blue glasses are required. The internet site is [www.starrider.com](http://www.starrider.com). First we manually traveled to Polaris. Then we did 3 pre-programmed tutorials: Earth and Saturn, Solar System, Star Constellations.

Don Klaser led the business portions and events discussions. Ken Anderson gave the Secretary's Report. George Korody requested a correction to the October minutes, to emphasize the Astronomy Village exists only as a concept. George will set up a meeting to brainstorm with those interested and seek a volunteer leader (not himself) to pursue. October minutes, found on the web and newsletter, were then approved. Don Klaser gave the Treasurer's report in Gorden's absence, the update totaling \$4914, of which \$1500 is allocated towards GLAAC, as of 11/30/2006.

Many FAAC members attended the Mercury Transit event at South Lyon "Mount Trashmore" but unfortunately the weather did not cooperate

since the overcast clouds never broke. We can all wish for better weather in 2012 when Venus transits the sun for perhaps the last time in our lifetimes.

The next SIG meeting is Jan 11th at HFCC in the Rosenau conference room, topic TBD.

The nominating committee will be seeking those willing to run for election at the January meeting.

Equipment Chairperson Wanted to store and track or log equipment in/out! We previously lost/misplaced a donated medium Dobsonian telescope a few years back. Jim Frisbie will be evaluating sound systems rental vs. purchase (I believe we also own laptop and projector for presentations).

Swap Meet will be Saturday, Feb. 3, 2007, 9am-3pm. See details in this newsletter and also in files section of FAAC website. Tom Blaszak is coordinating, and there will be presentations plus a blow up planetarium (which fits in a gym; participants from both Michigan and Indiana).

On January 20, Ice Daze at Lake Erie Metropark; setup at Noon, with daytime solar observing, snow snakes. Ice carving, dog sledding, 4 pm classroom presentation, 5 pm Three Amigos Mexican dinner. Public observing till 10 pm. They will have a bonfire, heated restrooms, and hot chocolate. Bob MacFarland is coordinating the astronomy portion.

Forest Elementary School January 31 6-7:30 pm near Farmington Rd and 13 mile. Displays and observing if clear.

Seeking 2007 speakers for both FAAC 30min-1hr Main Presentations, and 15-20min Tech Talks. Call Don Klaser at 586-596-9150 or [dklaser4750@wowway.com](mailto:dklaser4750@wowway.com). Jim Barnes from SUNSMA at Richmond Airfield informed us that we no longer require two day advance notice to observe. However, they would like to be informed if 10 or more people observe, or plan to observe. Keep track of how many people actually are present and report back. We still plan to have the mid-summer picnic.

The 2007 Calendars (with Whirlpool cover) from Astronomy Magazine are still available for purchase at \$7, cheaper than if purchased individually from Astronomy magazine.

## Meeting Agenda - January 25

5:30 pm

**Opening/Introduction/Member Observing**

**New Members and Guests** - Diane Worth

**Tech Talk - Stellar Distances** - Dave Wright

**Presentation: "Ask the Astronomer"** - All

**Club Business/Secretary/Treasurer reports**

**Club Projects/Committees/Member support**

- Elections of Officers – Doug Bock
- Astro-Imaging SIG - Tony Licata
- 4th Annual Swap Meet & Show-Feb. 3 - Tom Blaszk
- Club Banquet - Diane Worth
- Dues Renewal - Gordon Hansen
- Ice Daze at Lake. Erie Metro Park - recap - Bob MacFarland
- Forest Elementary -Jan. 31 - Don Klaser

## Treasurer's Report\*

Gordon Hansen

### Bank Accounts

Checking	\$	962.00
Savings	\$	1442.89
		-----

**TOTAL Bank Accounts \$ 2404.89**

### Cash Accounts

Cash Account	\$	108.83
		-----

**TOTAL Cash Accounts \$ 108.83**

### Asset Accounts

GLAAC	\$	1497.21
Projector	\$	686.38
Scholarship	\$	217.05
		-----

**OVERALL TOTAL \$ 4914.36**

Checking	\$	962.00
Savings	\$	1442.89

\*(as of November 30, 2006)

## Astro Imaging SIG

Tony Licata

The next meeting of the Astro Imaging SIG is Thursday, February 8th, 2007, 5:30 pm, Roseneau Rooms A-B, at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, in the Administrative Services and Conference Bldg. (same as the FAAC General Meeting).

We will continue our discussion of a dark sky workshop. Other topics will be determined at a later date. So look for updates on the Yahoo group list.

Club members and their guests are invited. If you drive up to the Faculty parking lot gate, it should open, allowing parking close to the building.

## FAAC Events 2007

Bob MacFarland

<b>January</b>	<b>20</b> – Ice Daze – Lake Erie MetroPark <b>31</b> – Last day to get Lifetime Membership <b>31</b> – Forest Middle School Public Outreach, Farmington, MI
<b>February</b>	<b>3</b> – 4th Annual FAAC Astro SWAP Meet <b>12-17</b> – Winter Star Party, near Marathon Key, Florida
<b>March</b>	<b>31</b> – FAAC Annual Dinner – (tentative)
<b>April</b>	<b>21</b> – Astronomy Day - Detroit Science Center & Kensington MetroPark, with Beginners' Night, Island Lake Recreation
<b>May</b>	<b>19</b> – Beginners' Night, Island Lake Recreation Area
<b>June</b>	<b>23</b> – Beginners' Night, Island Lake Recreation Area
<b>July</b>	<b>21</b> – Beginners' Night, Island Lake Recreation Area
<b>August</b>	<b>18</b> – Beginners' Night, Island Lake Recreation Area
<b>September</b>	<b>14-15</b> – Great Lakes Star Gaze, Gladwin <b>21-22</b> – Astronomy on the Beach – GLAAC, Kensington Park
<b>October</b>	<b>20</b> – Beginner's Night - Island Lake Recreation Area
<b>TBD 2007</b>	– Sand Hill / FAAC Picnic – Detroit Symphony Orchestra night

## Items for Sale

**Coulter 10" Dobsonian** telescope. \$400.  
Contact Bob Stonik, 313-361-4954.

**Celestron Orange Tube 8"** (mid-1970s) Very good condition, no scratches, w/camera mount, tripod. RA bearings, slo-mo Dec fine. Corrector plate needs cleaning; needs a visual back and diagonal.

Contact Dr. Nicolle Zellner, Albion College  
nzellner@albion.edu

### **Schmidt-Newtonian 10" -**

F5.35, 1360 mm focal length with 2" focuser. Includes 60 mm guide scope, Full aperture solar filter by Thousand Oaks (Mylar). Also includes cooling fan, extra set of "O" rings. Corrector plate made by Opton systems (division of Nazca Corp. of Callifornia).

Also available is the Crestliner mount (on wheels). Scope made by Nelson Lewis of Detroit Astronomical Society in 1962. Purchased Nov. 10, 1981.

Selling telescope for \$325.  
Mount for \$200.

Contact: Harold Thomason  
313-584-7465

## Time to Renew Membership

Gordon Hansen

It's time to renew your membership in FAAC! Send your check in today payable to FAAC, P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, Michigan 48121-7527.

Membership includes access to the observing sites at Island Lake Recreation Area, Lake Erie Metro Park, and Richmond Airport. Discounted subscriptions to *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines. **AND** most importantly, the interaction with people who share your love for astronomy.

Renewal fees for 2006 are only \$25, and after January 31, \$30! Or sign up for a Life Membership for \$150 and never pay dues again.

**NOTE: No new lifetime memberships available after January 31, 2007!**

## 2007 Calendars, Club Wares

Gordon Hansen

The FAAC still has a few Astronomy Magazine's 2007 calendar; members can purchase them for \$7.00 - normally \$12.95, for a 45% discount!



Calendars will be available at the January 25 meeting. If you will not be attending, you can send an email to: [fordastronomy@comcast.net](mailto:fordastronomy@comcast.net)  
Mailing charges of \$3 will be added.

Also available at the meeting will be those awesome FAAC logo wearables - hats, shirts, etc.!

## Caught, another McNaught

Jim Frisbie



*Image details: 10 Jan 2007, 23:03 UTC, South Lyon, Canon 10D, WO ZenithStar 66 APO, @ f/4.7, 0.7 sec., ISO 400*



*The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual*

# Astronomy Show & Swap Meet

Hosted by  
Ford Amateur Astronomy Club (FAAC)  
and **Rider's Hobby Shop – Livonia**

**Saturday, Feb 03, 2007 9:00 am - 3:00 pm**

Holy Cross Church Gymnasium, 30650 Six Mile, Livonia, 48152

## Included: ASTRONOMY PRESENTATIONS

- 10:00 am: **Al Rothenberg** "Eclipses: Short But Oh So Sweet";  
11:00 am: **Clay Kessler** "Getting Started In Astronomical Imaging"  
12:00 noon: **Jim Frisbie** "Binocular Observing"  
1:00 pm: **John Kirchhoff** "Astronomical Hardware and Equipment"

*Planetarium Lectures @ 10am, 11am, 1pm, 2pm*

### *Earn Cash By Selling Your Extra:*

Telescopes - Eyepieces - Cameras - Binoculars - Mounts  
Tripods - Software - Publications - Accessories, etc.

***Or, locate that special bargain you might not otherwise find!***

Admission: \$5.00 in advance or \$6.00 at the door  
(children 15 and younger – Free)

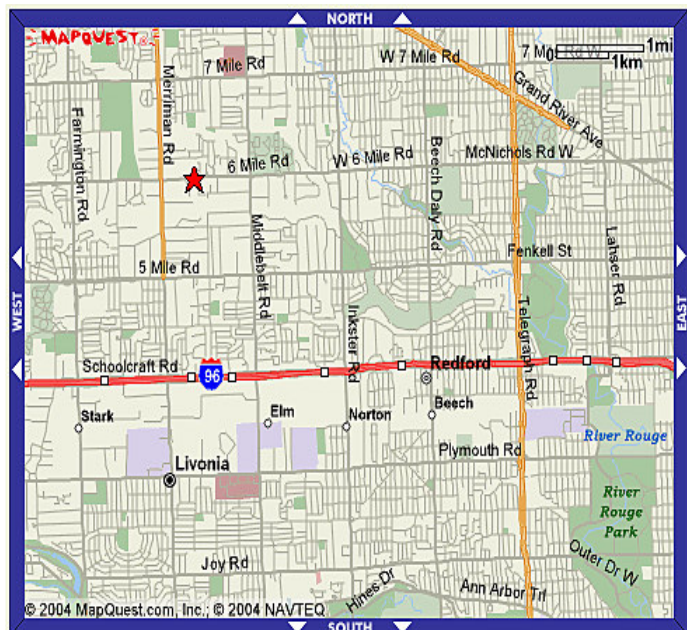
Sales Table: **\$15 in advance, or \$20 at the Door, as available. One admission included.**

**Advanced Registration ends January 21, 2007.**

Doors open **8:00am for setup**. Complimentary coffee & donuts provided by Rider's Hobby.

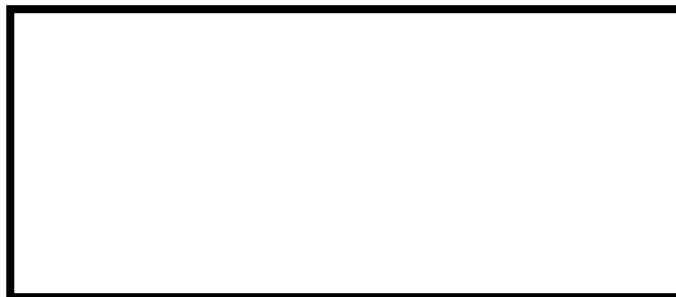
Send check, payable to FAAC, for advance admission or table registrations: FAAC, P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, MI 48121-7527 - by Jan. 19, 2007.

**Location:** Holy Cross Lutheran Church Gymnasium  
30650 Six Mile, Livonia, 48152, north side of Six Mile,  
½ mile east of Merriman. See **STAR** on map.



For More Information: **Contact Tom via email: [key\\_string\\_guy@yahoo.com](mailto:key_string_guy@yahoo.com) or call (313) 516-5978, or John Kirchhoff via email: [riderslivonia@aol.com](mailto:riderslivonia@aol.com) or call (734) 425-9720**

**Ford Amateur Astronomy Club  
Star Stuff Newsletter  
P.O. Box 7527  
Dearborn MI 48121-7527**



# **RIDER'S**

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## **HOBBY SHOPS**

**Store Hours:**  
M-F 11am-8pm  
SAT 10am-6pm  
SUN Noon-5pm

**Gen. Manager:** John Kirchhoff  
**Website:**  
**<http://www.riders.com>**

30991 Five Mile Road  
Livonia MI 48154  
Tele: (734) 425-9720  
FAX: (734) 425-2029

### **New Vendor - New Item!**

#### **William Optics Zenith Star 66SD**

**with Crayford dual speed focuser and fitted hard case  
Celestron Orange or Meade Blue**

**Only \$299.99**

**See you at the Swap Meet!  
(Feb. 3 – see Flyer inside)**