



Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

www.braastro.org

September 2012

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hey Everyone,

I hope this message finds everyone well after the storm. As for the HRPO, little damage was reported, but it has been without power now for a few days. Hopefully all will be up and running soon, though.

The summer is going away and with its passing we also bid farewell to Neil Armstrong. My wife sent a text to me when she had heard and I was compelled to perform a little test. Over the next half hour or so, I randomly quizzed several people passing by that appeared to be age 30 or under. "Who was the first man to walk on the Moon?" I asked. I received in response 3 Neil Armstrongs, 2 I don't knows, 4 Lance Armstrongs and 1 Louis Armstrong. Also for the record, not a single correct answer for who was the other man with him on that first walk.

That wasn't a great result to say the least. It would be easy now to start speaking along the common thread in astronomy clubs about how interest is waning and membership is "graying." I say common thread because I've seen such articles and discussions not only on other club's message boards, but in the Reflector and Sky and Telescope. "What can we do?" is the common question.

I'm happy to report that our club does not seem to be suffering this malady. In fact, about 10% of our club members are under the age of 20 and many of them are active in amateur astronomy. That bodes well for the future of amateur astronomy in Baton Rouge. The trick is how to KEEP everyone interested so the club continues to grow. As a club, we try to provide interesting programs once a month and offer opportunities to do outreach in the community and to just get together and do some observing. Here is my question for the month...

How are we doing? Is BRAS everything you expected when you joined? If not, what would you like to see? I can pretty much assure you that if it has anything to do with astronomy, you aren't the only person here that would be interested. We have some great ideas in the works that can help to get more people active in the club, but we need more. Please let us know if you have any ideas or criticisms. Communication is the only way we can keep this club vibrant and growing for another 30 years.

So, 7 out of 10 couldn't name Neil Armstrong. That was cause for a little worry and introspection. The light side of the issue, though, is that I think if I conducted a similar quiz asking the name of the latest rover to land on Mars, I may have gotten 7 out of 10 CORRECT responses. The latest landing wasn't just a great PR event for NASA or JPL, it was a great PR event for space exploration and interest in astronomy. Through our own outreach and our partnership with BREC and LSU in the HRPO, hopefully we can capitalize on that and help nurture the spark of inspiration in our community.

Clear Skies
Ben Toman
BRAS President
tomanben@gmail.com

NOTES FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Our next BRAS meeting comes up very quickly, since September 1st was a Saturday. Our next meeting will be September 10, at the Observatory. Forrest Smith will show off an inexpensive home-made dew zapper. We figured it would be a good time to cover this, since DSRSG and cooler weather is coming in a couple of months. If you want to build your own, this would give you plenty of time to construct and test it.

We will also cover a couple more neat astronomy themed websites. One will be a visual treat.

We will also cover some details about DSRSG. Hope to see you there.

Merrill Hess
BRAS Vice President

OUTREACH

We have a call to help out with the Sally Ride Science event on September 22nd from 1PM-4PM. People helping out with this event will have an opportunity to hear a speech given by a guest NASA astronaut. If you'd like to help out, please contact outreach@brastro.org.

Last month, we received a call from a Cub Scout leader requesting our help with an event they are having in the future. The event will be at the Lamar-Dixon center and they expect somewhere in the neighborhood of 500 kids and adults to be in attendance.

They would like to know if we can bring as many telescopes as we can find so their kids can view objects as part of an educational exercise.

The event will be held on Saturday, October 6th, 2012. We will start sending requests for help in the near future, so start thinking if you can attend.

The Deep South Regional Star Gaze is open for registration as well. Thanks to Trevor for providing the following application. You'll find it as a separate attachment to the email newsletter, and included in the mailer.

MESSAGE FROM THE HRPO

AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE ISAAC

Entergy restored power at HRPO by 8am on 4 September. This power outage lasted about forty-eight hours fewer than the Gustav outage. Aside from three or four large branches down and some “green” debris in the parking lot the overall effect of Isaac on HRPO grounds was nothing for worrying. The archery range/ball field section of Highland Road Park was quite flooded, and those waters are receding very slowly, frustrating several archers in town (including, perhaps, a couple in BRAS).

FRIDAY NIGHT LECTURE SERIES

all start at 7:30pm

7 September: “Solar Cycle 24”

14 September: “From Magnetism to Superconductivity”

21 September: “The Astounding CCT”

28 September: “Women in Space”

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS: ON SITE

*Saturday, 8 September from 5pm to 8pm. Two volunteers. This is the Hasta la Vesta celebration, as Dawn leaves that asteroid to head to Ceres. Refreshment table duty, some games and demos for the kids; training provided.

*Saturday, 29 September from 6pm to 10pm. One additional volunteer in addition to regular BRAS compliment. Evening Sky Viewing Plus. Marshmallow roast, demo and clock tables. Easy; training provided.

EDITOR'S NOTES

I came across a website that I got really excited about. Check out www.coursera.org. It's a site that aggregates all the free online courses offered by major universities throughout the globe. I signed up for a couple of astronomy related courses, and can't wait for them to start!

There are courses covering a broad spectrum of disciplines, so even if you aren't interested in the astronomy and physics related courses, there's probably something there that would capture your interest.

Right now, I'm signed up for Introduction to Astronomy, Galaxies and Cosmology, and Astrobiology and the Search for Extraterrestrial Life.

Geoff Michelli
BRAS Newsletter Editor and Treasurer

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

- Introductions.
- Kathleen Geisfeldt thanked those members who volunteered to help out with the International Planetarium Society convention.
- Chris Kersey reported that over 300 people came to the observatory for the Perseid meteor shower. Also, he plans to meet with Dan Hebert of BREC concerning the shielding of lighting around the observatory.
- Forrest Smith received the Messier 110 Award.
- Merrill Hess gave a talk on astronomical websites, including the new BRAS facebook page.
- Ben Toman mentioned u-tube; my astro images; zooniverse.org; stellarium.org; seds.org; and spaceweather.com.
- Steve Boeker provided members with a list of sites, including night skies network.com and slooh.com, to name a few.
- Marvin Owen has donated 75 books on astronomy to the BRAS library.
- A raffle was held, and the meeting was adjourned.