



# Carpe Noctem

**Celebrating 30 Years**

**The News of Central Texas Astronomical Society (CTAS)**

**April– June 2024 VOLUME XXXI, NUMBER 2**

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## Spring Star-Gazing 2024 Begins!!!

### New Members 2024 First Quarter:

The following new members have joined CTAS from  
January-March 2024. **Welcome!!**

Michael Adams

Lyle Aldridge

Boatright Family (Abigail, Cayla, Evan, Katrina,  
Kyle, and Olivia/Hayden)

Brian Brondel

Brian Coia

Dine Cooney

Scott Drew

Ron & Donna Eberhardt

Bill England

Rod Goble

Gary Hoover

Amy Hosick

Jonathon, Melissa & Athena Kizer

Chelsea Lynch

Matt, Elle & Ford Morrison

Kara Neely-Goble

John Rentmeesters

Coleman & Sandra Swoveland

Note: CTAS members automatically receive membership into The Astronomical League and by mail, *The Reflector*, a quarterly publication. This magazine contains insight and access into competitions, DarkSky International updates, informative articles plus information about ALCon 2024 in KC in July and Member Star Parties!!



### Betty Smith Memorial Observatory

Celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> year, Central Texas Astronomical Society (CTAS) will add a second observatory to the 5-acre Turner Research Station site near Clifton, Texas. Construction of the Betty Smith Memorial Observatory will begin in the Spring of 2024.

David Smith, an active member of CTAS and astronomy supporter, and his family will fund the project in memory of his wife and their mother, Elizabeth “Betty” Smith. The new 320 square foot education and research facility will feature a hydraulic roll-off roof providing functionality for both day and night presentations and research.

This new observatory will complement the Paul and Jame Meyer Observatory (PJMO) and Auxiliary Building funded in large part by Alice Chandler and family. The latter houses additional field telescopes, plus mechanical, maintenance, and public toilet facilities. The architectural facade of white steel and metal will match the existing structures. It will contain two fixed-base telescopes (a 12” Meade™ and 14” Celestron™) and feature a large public education space with planned interactive educational experiences. The current PJMO 24” telescope and camera have remote capabilities for single researchers, but the new addition

will expand the opportunities to include multiple educators, classrooms, and novice researchers.

This significant memorial contribution to the CTAS mission of public outreach of stargazing, education, astrophotography, and research will double the capacity for the general public and triple telescope research access to our members and research affiliates. A Fall 2024 Open House and Clifton Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting ceremony will be announced.. CTAS has a heartfelt thank you to the Smith family.



## Presentation to CTAAC

Jocelyn Williams, Coordinator of the Center of Business Excellence Cen-Tex African American Chamber of Commerce (CTAAC) introduced CTAS members Johnny Barton and Dave Eisfeldt as guest speakers on April 2, 2024, at the Doris Miller Center in Waco. Approximately 20 CTAAC members were present to hear a 30-minute informational program about CTAS, PJMO, and our mission. A Solar Eclipse Program of the expectations regarding behavior of animals and plants, atmospheric changes, stages of the eclipse and how to safely view those stages was included. Thank you, Johnny, and Dave!

## CTAS Rejoins Clifton Chamber of Commerce

CTAS has renewed their Clifton Chamber of Commerce membership. As CTAS representative, members Don and Lucia Harcum attended their Boots & Business Annual Chamber Dinner. They spoke to the membership and presented solar glasses and the new brochure to advertise our open houses. Most Clifton Chamber Members were unaware of the existence of PJMO with only one recalling going to the observatory when they were in elementary school! More public outreach is needed specifically to our adjacent towns of Turnersville and Clifton.

## Paul Derrick & Star-B-Q

An anticipated visit by Co-founder and author, Paul Derrick is expected sometime later this spring and hopefully we can have gathering with him and his wife. Notice of the event for longtime friends and new admirers of the author will be emailed by President Johnny Scarborough.



Girl Scouts of Central Texas Earning Badges



Girl Scouts learning about Dark Skies

## Girl Scout PJMO “Bunk Over”

Eighteen Cadett Girl Scouts, all part of Girl Scouts of Central Texas' Midtown Service Unit, located in north central Austin from troops 42615, 845, and 1281 participated in an overnight camping experience at the Turner Research Center on March 23, 2024. They took part in several activities to complete the criteria for two fun patches: the Sol Spectacular (solar topics) Fun Patch and the Dark Sky Fun Patch (covering light pollution problems and solutions).

CTAS members joined forces to present a unified presentation. Heading up this task included our CTAS member and an Eagle Scout himself, Jim Kline. Multiple CTAS members also attended and actively participated in the event including Lawernce Widacki, Doug Peters, Dan Doyle, Lucia Harcum, Mike Mack, and David Smith.



Jim and Lucia presented programs related to their fun patches as each patch had several activities of completion. Jim presented a very extensive program on the eclipse and demonstrated how to transform existing white-light flashlights to night-vision friendly red flashlights. Scouts also discussed light pollution with Luci as they located their hometowns interactively on the CTAS computer with Jim. Doug gave the Scouts an extensive tour of his private observatory and explained in detail about the telescope. Dan presented information on the history of CTAS, Lawrence toured them on the workings of the dome and the 24" telescope plus his personal solar telescope he had set up outside. David operated two mini-travel-ready telescopes (the size of a boot box). And Mike easily showed how simple it is to access photos from David's small telescopes to your iPhone. Earlier in the day, solar flares and sunspots were observed from Lawrence's telescope and laptop.

At the Turner Research Station, near the Scout tents, multiple telescopes were set up for the Scouts to become aware of the stargazing process but, unfortunately, heavy cloud cover prevented any real-time night-sky watching. Yet, the temperature and camping was great fun! A special "thank you" goes out to Jim Kline for his continued involvement with both the Boy and Girl Scouts and always volunteering to "bunk over" at PJMO with the Scouts!

## CTAS Community Service

In March, CTAS distributed solar glasses with safety instructions for watching the Total Eclipse and/or the new CTAS brochures were made available via mail or in person to the following businesses locations: Turnersville Chamber of Commerce, Clifton Chamber of Commerce (Office and Annual Banquet), Multiple McLennan County Libraries, Waco Chamber of Commerce, Bosque Museum, Fort Hood, Optimist Club, Barbara Castanheira, Baylor Faculty, and Harker Heights Outdoor Program, Ralph Wilson Youth Club- Temple, Gatesville Chamber of Commerce, Jonesboro Independent School District, Clifton Library, Nova Science Trust, Anna & Neil Rasmussen Trust, The Kaira and Jonathan Goldstein Family Fund, the Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation, the Heising-Simons Foundation. Additional suggestions for contacts regarding (possible) grant requests should be sent to Lucia Harcum, Education Chair.

## CTAS OPEN MEETINGS

Always, all members are welcome to attend any CTAS zoom Board meetings on the third Tuesday of each month at 18:30. Let President, Johnny Scarborough know via email or phone (254-326-1037) and he will send you a link on the day of the meeting.



All ages...Clifton & Midland Family at PJMO!



NTAC Couple outside "Brickhouse" observatory will return with Granschildren in the summer to see the Milky Way!



Doug's giving a NTAC Presentation at his observatory!



Dan, Lawrence, & Johnny hosting NTAC Program

## CTAS Hosts NTAC Pre-Eclipse Event

President Amy Van Artsdalen of the North Texas Airstream Community (NTAC) and Mike Mack also a NTAC and CTAS member (past board member) hosted an Eclipse Weekend at their residential community in Hillsboro. The community is limited only to owners of recreational vehicles manufactured by Airstream, Inc.

NTAC partnered with CTAS to offer a Saturday mid-morning pre-eclipse event at PJMO. Mike spearheaded and organized all the CTAS member speakers throughout the morning into 3-activity stations.

Station 1: Aubrey Brickhouse, past CTAS President and CTAS Operations Chair., along with Doug Peters (CTAS Secretary) giving tours of their private observatories that are based at the Turner Research Site. Doug presented the technical complexities of a private observatory and also the thrill of telescope operation and astrophotography and sharing astronomy with others.

Doug served as a Star Party Coordinator for several years at the Bell County Star Parties. Many guests stayed well past their station time as he is quite engaging.

Aubrey, well known among astronomers for his astrophotography, explained his technical use of computers and remote access. He also explained our future location for the Betty Smith Memorial Observatory to be completed by the fall 2024.

Station 2: A Power Point presentation was given by CTAS Vice President Dan Doyle with CTAS President, Johny Scarborough presiding. Doug covered the CTAS history, membership, research, member astrophotography, and the ongoing community involvement. Dan also included a beautiful array of personal photographs, taken by him, during his first total solar eclipse in 2017 and added anecdotal remarks on things to be aware of during the total eclipse .

Station 3: The group moved inside the dome to watch Lawrence Widacki, a CTAS Board Member, who explained the operations of the 24" Meyer research telescope. After demonstrations of how the telescope works, he answering all their questions.

Mike and Lucia Harcum guided the groups from station to station, keeping them on time and organized, while promoting the sale of the Paul Derrick book. The final tally of books was over \$400 in sales. Lucia joined the CTAS Board in January 2024.

The CTAS guest book signatures and locations confirmed this event was indeed nationwide with 41 NTAC members attending. Our Airstream guests came from: Arizonia (Phoenix & Tucson) , Texas (Burlington, Gun Barrel City, Hillsboro, Livingston, Odessa, and Pottshome), Kansas (Overland Park and Olathe), Washington state (Prosser), Nebraska (Panama), Florida (Delray Beach), Florida, Utah (Syracuse), and Minnesota (Grand Marais)! All CTAS members had a great time and a special nod to Mike (and wife Lynne) for organizing the NTAC carpool logistics from Hillsboro to PJMO and getting CTAS members together for this fun event!

**Education Committee:** This committee promotes knowledge and awareness within the field of astronomy. If you are a writer, educator (past or present) or have knowledge about topics about astronomy please consider joining this online group! The Chair is Lucia Harcum. The Education Committee is also charged with supporting fundraising efforts through grant writing and



community outreach projects. If you are interested in this group, join up online.

**Open House.** “Starman” Dan Doyle is reporting an increase in Open House interest such that some events require the attendees to be in three groups to rotate the attendees through the telescope experience of outside night sky view, Control Room experience and operations of the dome and 24”Telescope. The new Roll Off Roof telescopes on the south end of the field will help with managing the large groups. We also need more educational space. The Board is considering several options, and a committee is now studying the viability of additional space and venues.

### **AED Grant & Funding Request**

Lucia Harcum, Education Chair, along with Aubrey Brickhouse, Operations Committee Chair, are seeking a \$2,500 gift or grant to purchase an automated external Defibrillator (AED) to be housed inside PJMO. Due to the distance of hospitals from Meyer Observatory, we need to have the ability to create an Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP). We have five volunteers willing to be trained in using the AED but we can always use more. Please consider joining or a donation for this device.

## **CTAS 2024 OFFICERS**

**President:** Johnny Scarborough

**Vice President:** Dan Doyle

**Treasurer:** Dave Eisfeldt

**Secretary:** Doug Peters

**2024 At-Large Board of Directors:**

**Director No. 1:** Lawrence Widacki

**Director No. 2:** Lucia Harcum

**Director No. 3:** Forrest Z. Marler

**AAVSO Representative:** Bradley S. Walter

**Webmaster:** Dan Doyle

**Astronomical League Rep.:** Johnny C. Barton

*Committee Chairs are listed online.*

## **CENTRAL TEXAS PHOTO GALLERY FOR THIS QUARTER**



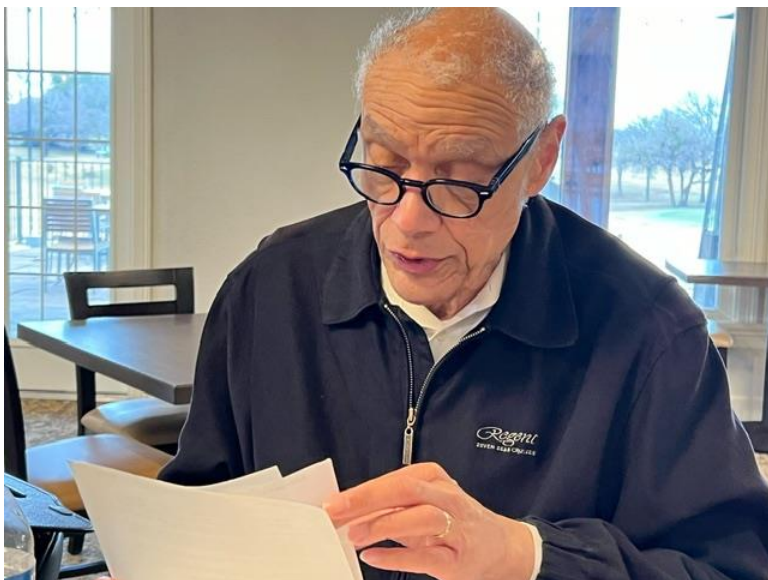
The Wizard -Astrophotography by Aubrey Brickhouse



Aubrey Brickhouse and telescope 2023



Open House – standing room only – “Starman” Dan presenting (right) March 2023 with public photo permission



Dean Chandler 2024



Dick Campbell 2023





Doug Peters and telescope 2023



Lawrence Widacki at Annular Solar Eclipse 2024



Don Harcum and telescope, 2023



Mike Mack Marking proposed roll-off site 2024





PJMO Remote Telescope Member Training 2023



Betty Smith Memorial Observatory planning meeting site discussion 2024





Betty Smith Memorial Observatory planning meeting inside PJMO 2024