



SPACE

St. Petersburg Astronomy Club **Examiner**

December 2023

Editor – Guy Earle

The St. Petersburg Astronomy Club has been the center of family astronomy in the Tampa Bay Area since 1927. Our 398 adult members are dedicated to promoting and sharing the wonders and science of astronomy. We host a dark-sky star party each New Moon at Withlacoochee River Park, along with local star parties, telescope-making workshops, science lectures, astronomy lectures, educational outreach sessions and much more.

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Astronomy Image of the Month

NGC 891 - the Silver Sliver galaxy by **Peter McLean**



January Preview

Next month, stellar SPAC deep sky imager extraordinaire, Bob Stelmock, will be contributing our main Examiner article, “New Low Cost Robotic Imaging Telescopes, Are They Worth It? This will be a summary of the Seestar and Dwarf telescopes and what they can and cannot do. This is a quickly growing sub category in amateur astronomy, and perfectly fits the niche of those who are just starting out with deep sky imaging or want a low-cost, easy solution that yields surprisingly good images.



December General Meeting

This month's general meeting will take place on Thursday, Dec. 14th at **7:00 PM** (set up @ 6PM). The meeting will be *in person* at St. Petersburg College, Gibbs Campus, 6405 5th Avenue North, Philip Benjamin Social Arts Building, **Room 116**, (map on last page).

This will be our end of the year holiday party, so come on out to enjoy the festivities! If you can, bring a dish to share with others.



Please see a map to the event location near the end of the newsletter.

The club's **New Moon observing weekend** will be by December 8th-10th at [Withlacoochee River Park](#) east of Dade City.



New SPAC Members

We would like to welcome Michael Schulman, Robert Hart, Bill Manley, Mike Rozycki, and Paul Jakubski & Linda Maney to our family of members.

Examiner Staff

Editor	Guy Earle	813 785-1972
Space News	Steve Robbins	386 736-9123
Field Reporter	Kelly Anderson	813 672-2751
Mirror Lab	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086

OBS Commemorative T-shirt

The **OBS t-shirts** are available to order until **JANUARY 7th**, and will be distributed at the star party. You can click [HERE](#) to order from Custom Ink in various colors, sizes, and styles.

SPAC OBS 2024 Event Apparel Order Site

Welcome to our 2024 OBS Event Apparel Order Site. Please check the sizing guide and order accordingly. I generally order one size larger to be safe. The last day to order event apparel is January 7th, 2024.

Doug | [Contact](#)

Hanes Beefy-T Crewneck T-shirt – Orange



Hanes Beefy-T Crewneck T-shirt – Deep Royal



*SPAC New Moon Weekend
Withlacoochee River Park
November 10-12, 2023*

By Intrepid Field Reporter



Heart Nebula (IC 1805) by Joe Canzoneri

As we approach the Winter months everyone is anticipating clearer skies and less sweltering temperatures. For our November New Moon Weekend we got it ... well, kinda.

As usual Joe Canzoneri led the weekend arrivers on Thursday. Close on his heels were Elizabeth Lieb, Bob & Rita Mizell, Fred & Diane Friedman, and your Intrepid Field Reporter.



KELLY ANDERSON

That evening the fair-weather cumulus of the afternoon gave way to mostly clearing skies with some moisture aloft that created long contrails at airline cruising altitudes. After an hour or so of fairly good seeing a bank of clouds drifted by enforcing a break in astronomic activities, followed by another period of clear skies. This alternating cloud/clear skies proved to be the pattern all night, terminating with fog in the wee hours.

Not great, but good enough to get in enough observing and imaging to assuage our astronomical longings denied to us for most of the Summer.

On Friday our star village was enlarged with the arrival of Pete MacLean, Jack Brockhurst, Gerry Graszl, Peter & Rachel Haviland, and Kyle Brinkman. Kyle, for some reason, staunchly refuses to install a trailer hitch on his Mustang convertible so he can't pull an RV. Sad case, that.

Friday night seeing was virtually identical to Thursday night's alternating clouds and clear. Again, enough clear skies to get in some astronomical fun, but enough clouds to be mildly annoying.

On Saturday several of our campers headed out to previous commitments, no doubt being encouraged by a pessimistic weather forecast. Unfortunately, the people who are paid to make weather forecasts were right on the money. We were treated to solid clouds and some moderate rain showers all evening.



Jellyfish Nebula (IC 443) by Joe Canzoneri

The bright side of the weekend weather was that temperatures were much more comfortable than Summer's torrid heat without being annoyingly cold at night.

Imagers: If you capture any pictures you'd like to share in this monthly report please email me at kander13@verizon.net. I'll be happy to include them and your SPAC readers will love to see them.

December's New Moon Weekends are always gifted with perfect astronomy weather (well, sometimes) so mark your calendars for the 8th thru 10th. Then, remember to look for the Geminid meteor shower on the 12th thru 14th. Then, the Ursids are scheduled to appear on the 22nd and 23rd, followed closely by the Quadrantids on January 3 and 4.

Lots of reasons to keep looking up!

Introducing myself...again?

If you've been reading the newsletter the past few years, then you pretty much know me already. If you've enjoyed a certain Italian beverage that I make, then you probably *really* know me already. Starting January 1st, I will be your club vice president alongside Mike Partain, who will be taking over as president.



GUY EARLE

I started with SPAC back in 1993, when Wayne Tripp and Dennis Farr were holding these offices, comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 was a year out from striking into Jupiter, and the shuttle program was in its stride with the Hubble Space Telescope deployed only a few years before. I was far skinnier back in 1993 and a just few years out of high school, and that May I got my first telescope, a 60mm Meade model 227 refractor. It was a birthday gift from my parents, as I was in junior college at the time and was a Star Trek fan with an interest in all things space. I ended up finding SPAC, mentioned by my astronomy professor, and happened to live only a few miles from

Dennis and Ellen Farr's house in Town N Country, where I ended up many times as I started out in the club. Dennis was always a patient teacher to the noobie.

I quickly exhausted the targets on my beautiful little refractor and upgraded to a 6" Meade Starfinder equatorial reflector, which—humorously now—I said was "too cumbersome" to haul around. My main telescope the past 16 years has been a 16" Dobsonian reflector, so older me now laughs at younger me. I quickly started joining SPAC members at "the Hill," our beloved old clubhouse in Brooksville. Any old timers reading this, make sure to say "hi" to Joe down at Papa Joe's restaurant. My wife and I stopped in a few weeks back and I had a long talk with Joe. He still very much remembers our group dinners down there before our Saturday evening observing sessions. Just mention to the server that your group is part of the "astronomy club" and to tell him, and he said "he'd take care of us." The man has always been a good friend to SPAC.

Back around 2004, when after about 9 years of observing I was hitting a lull in the hobby, I was introduced in Chiefland to a binoviewer and I never looked back. Since then, I use my Denkmeier binoviewer for almost all my observing. The years went on, life kept me from being as active in the hobby as I wished, then in 2017 a change in career brought the hobby back. I had far more freedom in my own schedule and could start observing more often, doing two-night New Moon weekends and longer than one night at OBS. In 2019, the hobby took another turn, thanks to Mike Partain. You see, he's a bit of a scope...well, I can't say the other word we call him, let's just say that he's good and wheeling and dealing, finding all sorts of telescopes for sale across multiple platforms. I was fine, chugging along with my big Dob and the binoviewer, but that changed when Mike suggested I pick up a scope he found, a 10" f/7.1 Cave equatorial reflector from 1959. As part of my introduction to astronomy, I also had an additional part-time job as a planetarium employee at MOSI. At that time, we took the MOSI telescopes out every Friday and Saturday night; they were a 17.5" Coulter Dobsonian and 12" f/6 Meade research grade equatorial with rotating rings. I loved the Meade and even had made a 12" Dob myself prior to getting my 16" in 2007. Some may even remember it, as I had built a table onto the back for my charts and some speakers to play music. It had a Nova Optical primary---my god, was that a fantastic mirror.

Anyway, I restored that 10" Cave and started taking planetary photos, which you all have seen here in the newsletter and on Facebook as I've continued to improve over the past four years. Earlier that year, in March 2019, I had also taken over being the editor for the Examiner from Jack Fritz. Since then, both the newsletter and this hobby have changed, yet I've managed to not go down the deep sky imaging rabbit hole and have stuck exclusively to planetary and lunar imaging, always trying to get a little bit better each season. Since 2019 and following Mike's logic, my garage now has multiple scopes, which my wife frequently points out, especially after she's done some damage at Home Goods or TJ Maxx.
































Lastly, the past few years I've been helping Mike out when he runs the OBS star party each February, and when he told me that he'd stand for the presidency only under the condition that I went along as vice president, I agreed. There are some projects and ideas that have been rolling around in my head for some time, mostly with a notion of mimicking aspects that brought me into the club back in the mid 90's. I've always been an observer first and see that as the core directive of the club, so things like our Mirror Lab having a place to call their own again is a key thing for me. The Mirror Lab in conjunction with outreach and the general meetings should all flow together into being an observer. I'm also very much in support for inter-club cooperation; there's nothing which says just because you belong to one club that you can't also have friends and observe elsewhere too. Too often we get compartmentalized in clubs, even territorial. Having that mindset only hurts our hobby, and by default, us. We are a small community and it only helps to know and cooperate with others in our love of the night sky. Clear skies, everyone, and I hope to see you at the December New Moon weekend on Saturday the 9th.

2024 SPAC President

Next month our club will have a new transition when our current Club President steps down and rides off into the sunset. I would like to take the time to both recognize Brad and thank him for his time as President of our club. We hope to continue to grow our club in both membership and value for members. My name is Mike Partain and I first came to the club in 2001 when I was a school teacher. I had a brief interlude from 2007 until 2013 after I was diagnosed with cancer and survived. My primary interest is visual and night vision astronomy but have also dabbled with some astro-photography. I have also been our annual star party's chairman since 2018. Recently I attended two different star parties this year and look forward to the revitalization of the Chiefland astronomy club. One of my hopes is that we can work with our fellow astronomy clubs to network with one another.

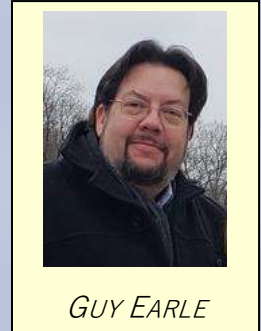


January Lunar Calendar

««		January 2023						»»	
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat			
1		2		3		4		5	
6		7		8		9		10	
11		12		13		14		15	
16		17		18		19		20	
21		22		23		24		25	
26		27		28		29		30	
31									

Howard Ritter Memorial Telescope

In the July issue of the Examiner, I had posted an *in memoriam* for SPAC member, Howard Ritter. He passed away on July 2nd after recently having been diagnosed with cancer. Howard himself was an oncologist, so he was very aware of his circumstances and made plans with his family. One of those was to donate a telescope that he had stored at their winter home in Sun City



Center. He actually had many telescopes, both here in Florida and their home up in Ohio. Howard was an avid deep sky photographer and posted absolutely stunning images on our club Facebook page, with many of them being the Astronomy Image of the Month on the Examiner's cover page.

So, it was a shock when Howard emailed the club to say that he wasn't coming back south and that this was his goodbye to everyone. His son, Phil, and I have been in contact many times as the family has tried to work through such a traumatic loss. I was on the phone with Phil when I went out

to their home in Sun City back in September to pick up the telescope, a 20" f/3.5 Teeter Dobsonian. It's a beast. I loaded it into my SUV and then got to work hooking everything back up and doing some electrical plug repairs, but 98% of the telescope was in perfect order. Now, we just needed a night to test it.

Christian Rubach and Tim Harris joined me on a clear night in late September at Withlacoochee River Park. There may have been a First Quarter Moon up, but that was okay. You see, it's not just a 20" Dob, which alone is staggering, but that the Teeter scope is motorized with GOTO capability through a Sky Commander's digital setting circles. What does this mean? Picture this large telescope, with the push of a button, slewing around to point at the object you've selected,



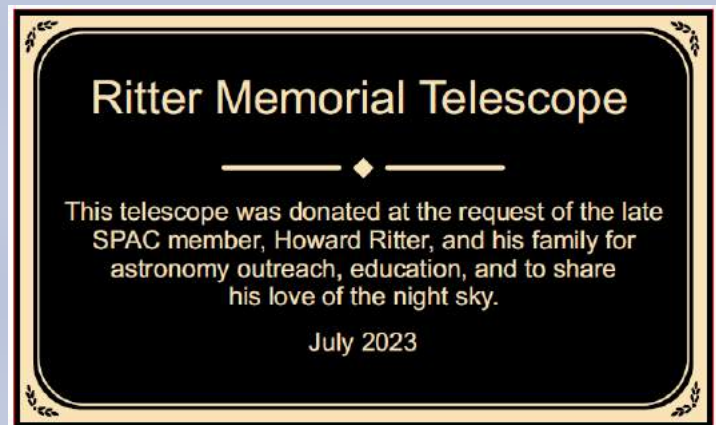
its motors humming away as it orientates itself, like some giant WW1 artillery piece aiming far off in the distance. It's just awesome.

We looked at M13, the Hercules globular cluster, and despite the Moon it was broken way down to the core and was a really clean image. Of course, we went to the Moon and nearly burned out our retinas from our foolishness. Excitedly, we kept hopping to a few other objects but then suddenly lost the sky, never to recover that night.



Another SPAC member, Mike Partain, joined me the following on the 17th of October after the first cold front blew through, clearing the sky. He had his PVS 14 night vision eyepiece that he eagerly wished to try out in Howard's large scope. The telescope

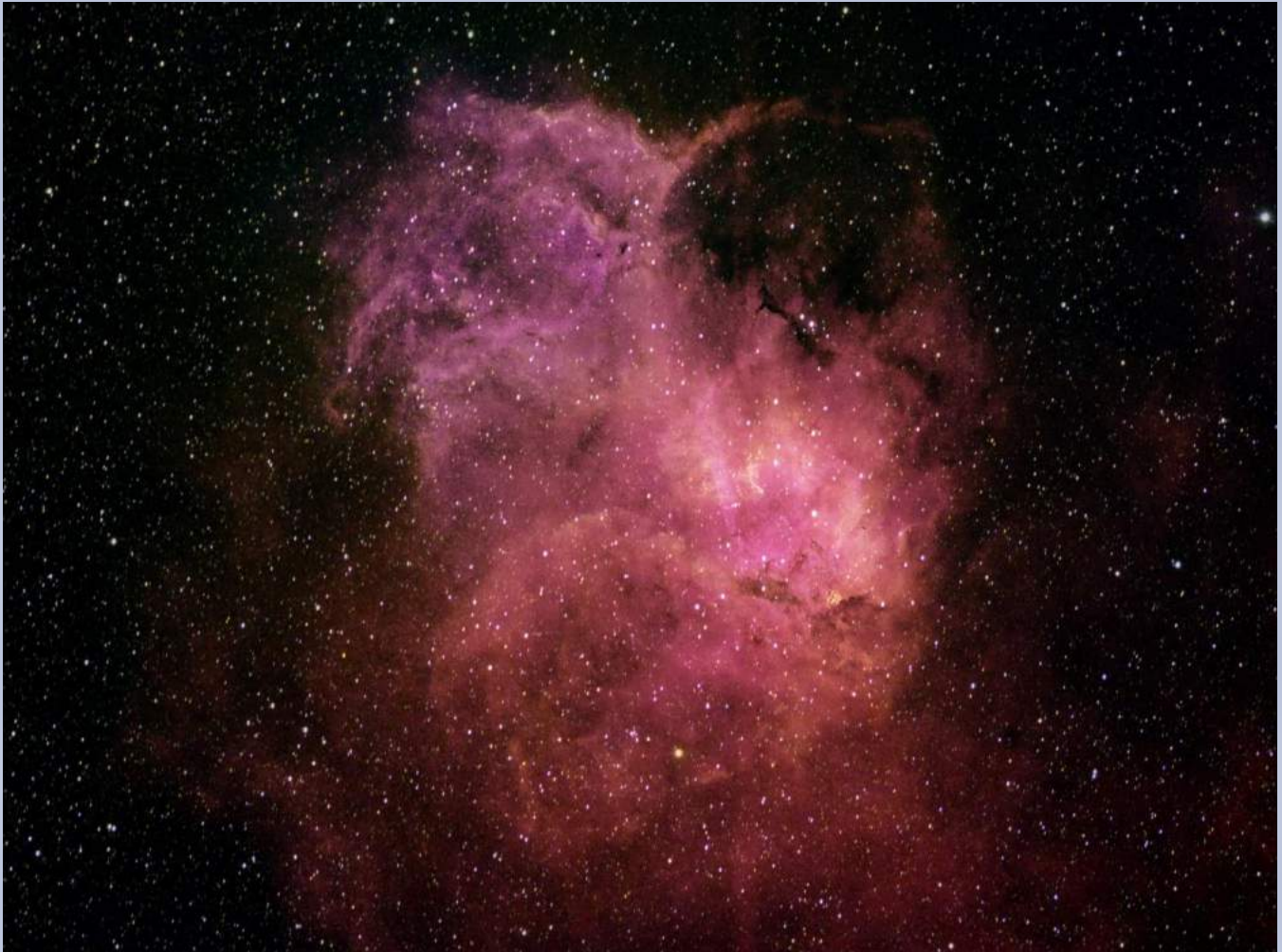
has two fans that blow turbulent air away from the surface of the mirror and out vents on the opposite side, encoders for finding objects, and a motor drive system so the objects track along with GOTO ability. There's a heater on the secondary mirror with a large finderscope and focuser. It was Howard's wish, supported by his family, that his telescope be used by the club for outreach and general events. At this time, a memorial plate is being made that will join the manufacturer's plate on the rocker box, noting it as the Howard Ritter Memorial Telescope.



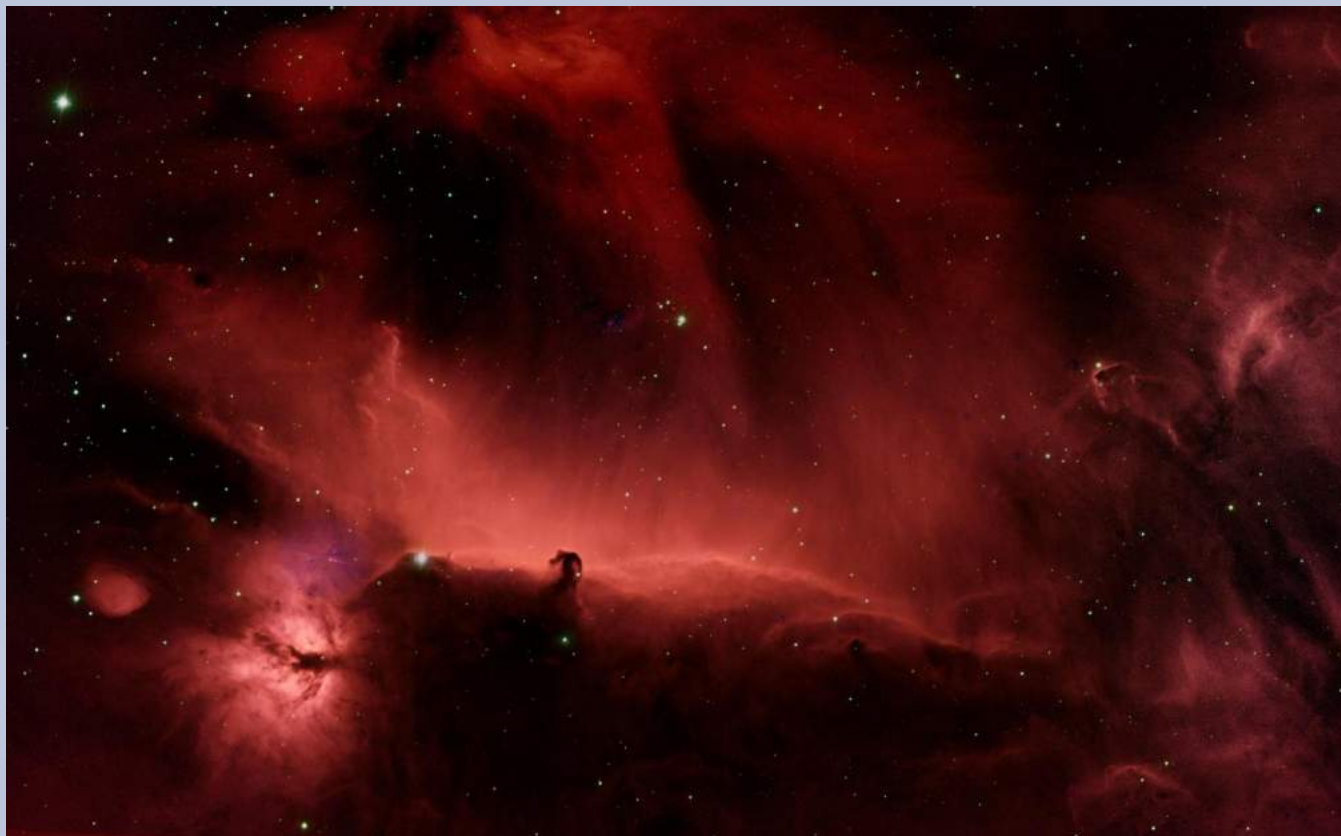
SPAC Image Gallery



Here are some excellent astrophotography highlights from our fellow SPAC members. Anyone who would like to share his or her work, I encourage you to [email the editor](#) to submit for future newsletters or share them on our [SPAC Facebook page](#).



Above: SH2-132 Lion Nebula w/8" RASA 300 sec x18 integration by Johnny White



Above: **NGC 2024**, IC434 Flame Nebula and Horse Head Nebula. captured date Nov. 19, 2023, RASA 8 inch telescope RGB 300 sec X 13 Ha, 300 sec x 13 SII 300 sec x 13 OIII integration time, RGB Baader filters, ASI2600MM camera. Stacked and processed in Pixinsight by **Johnny White**

Right: **NGC2174** The Monkeyhead Nebula located in the constellation Orion imaged 11/19/23 from my Bortle 5 location with the ASI533MC with the Antila triband filter by **Peter McLean**



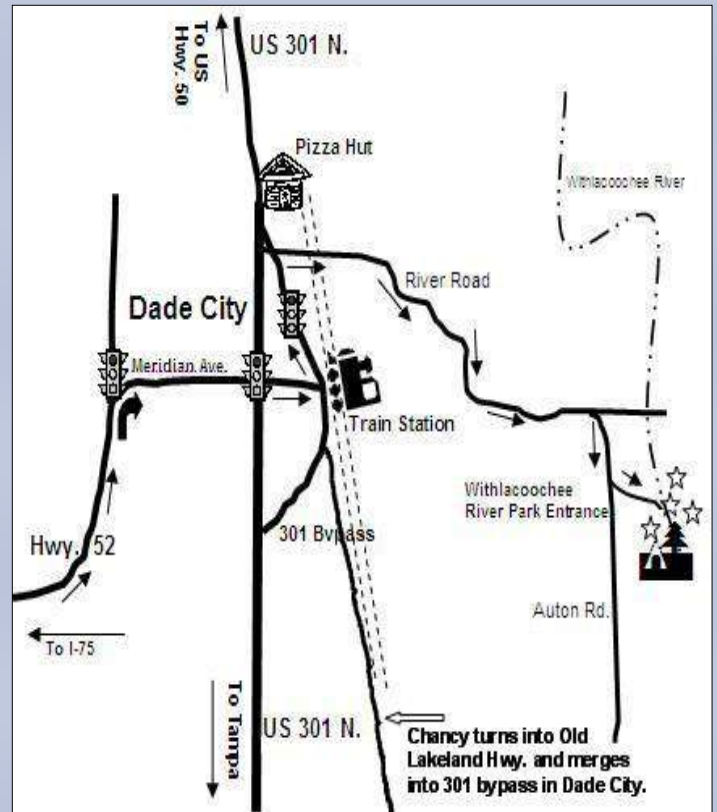
SPAC Business Meeting

Our next business meeting is **Wed., Jan. 10th, at 8:00 PM** via conference call; details upon request. All interested members are invited to attend. All club business decisions are made at the business meeting so as not to encumber the general meeting.

Officers & Directors

President	Brad Perryman	727 420-1957
Vice Pres.	Paul Krahmer	727 535-5827
Secretary	Shirley Vuille	727 864-2624
Treasurer	Jim Hunter	813 507-8415
Dir.-at-Large	Kyle Brinkman	727 455-6931
Dir.-at-Large	Steven Gaber	727 215-0464
Dir.-at-Large	Jack Fritz	727 692-9831
SPACE Editor	Guy Earle	813 785-1972
Public Relations	John O'Neill	727 637-5945
Membership Chair	Shirley Vuille	727 864-2624
Mirror Lab Chair	Paul McNabb	727-345-5713
Outreach Chair	Jim Hunter	813 507-8415
Star Party Chair	Mike Partain	850 339-0828
Librarian	Ralph Craig	727 384-2086
Club Webmaster	Jack Fritz	813 508-5680
Dark Sky Chair	Leeann Muszynski	813-601-0986

Click on the name to send email



Withlacoochee River Park - Dade City, FL

Detailed directions can be found at:

www.StPeteAstronomyClub.org

Withlacoochee New Moon Weekends

There's no need for reservations. However, the park closes at sundown, so you will need to arrive before then. The park rangers will give you the gate-code once you're inside the park. Please do not call for the gate code as they are not allowed to give it out over the phone.



Reservations are not necessary. Please print and display our [Friends-Of-The-Park Pass](#) on your dashboard.

Please join us! All astronomy enthusiasts are welcome. You do not need to be a club member to

attend. Please refer to our [Club Calendar](#) for details and scheduled dates.



St. Petersburg Astronomy Club

Recognition of Patrons & Benefactors

Lakeisha & Stephen Black	Benefactor	Bill & Norma Amthor	Patron
David Brewer	Benefactor	Jan Anschuetz	Patron
Walter Brinkman	Benefactor	Steven Balke	Patron
Dave & Deborah Catalano	Benefactor	Christopher Bankston	Patron
Stephanie Colon		Sean Bloch & Emiliy Kulokas	Patron
& Ariel Grajales	Benefactor	Kyle Brinkman	Patron
Jack & Roni Fritz	Benefactor	Michael Callahan	Patron
Michael Haworth & Melanie Otte	Benefactor	Ralph & Christine Craig	Patron
Valerie Hyman	Benefactor	London & Leslie Crosby	Patron
Jamie Kenas	Benefactor	Dan Denney	Patron
David Knowlton	Benefactor	Peter & Jaclynn Dimmit	Patron
Laura & Roy Lanier	Benefactor	Guy & Kelly Earle	Patron
Greg Legas	Benefactor	Joseph & Pamela Faubion	Patron
Brenda Lorenz	Benefactor	Darla & Peter Flynn	Patron
Dave Lorenz	Benefactor	Steve & Cindy Fredlund	Patron
Tod Markin	Benefactor	Steve Gaber & Karen Sell	Patron
Kelly McGrew	Benefactor	Richard & Mary Garner	Patron
Kevin & Karen Mulford	Benefactor	Steve Gross & Julia Winston	Patron
Will & Jenni Nelson	Benefactor	Ben Groves & Veronica Bynum	Patron
David & Tara Pearson	Benefactor	Timothy & Mary Ann Harris	Patron
Rath, Damon & Jean Futch		Charlie & Linda Hoffman	Patron
Benefactor		Matt Hughes & Manuel Ordonez	Patron
Howard Ritter	Benefactor	Bruce King	Patron
Christian & Wendy Rubach	Benefactor	Matt Labadie & Jennifer Willman	Patron
Jill & Robin Sumner	Benefactor	Bill Larsen	Patron
Andrew & Bonnie Watts	Benefactor	Steve & Jeri Maiaroto	Patron
*****		Allen Maroney & Tracee Elliott	Patron

Herb Monroe & Martha Stewart	Patron
David & Kathryn Musser	Patron
Leeann Muszynski	Patron
Robert Nadeau & Ali Wuchert	Patron
Bill & Kim Northup	Patron
Dominick Oppolo	Patron
Stephen Oros	Patron
Michael & Carli Partain	Patron
Brad & Lisa Perryman	Patron
Alan Polansky	Patron
David & Jenny Powell	Patron
Thomas & Andy Prince	Patron
John & Abbie Redmond	Patron
Mike Rozycki	Patron
Gregory Satchwell	Patron
Nancy Schafer	Patron
Anthony Staiano	Patron
Jonathan Stewart	Patron
Tom & Michelle Sweet	Patron
Wally & Ramona Vazquez	Patron
Alexie Velez & Yanira Hernandez	Patron
Elizabeth Wood	Patron



St. Petersburg Astronomy Club Membership Form

Membership in St. Petersburg Astronomy Club, Inc. (SPAC) is open to anyone, regardless of age, who is interested in astronomy. Benefits of membership include a monthly subscription to the SPAC Examiner newsletter, reduced camping rates and use of the club's bunkhouse at our dark sky site at Withlacoochee River Park, the ability to serve on the SPAC board and voting privileges. Dues are considered donations and are non-refundable. Membership options are available as listed below.

You are now able to choose how you wish to join or renew your membership:

- **Preferred On-line Website Option: New instructions as our website has been updated.**

Go to https://www.stpeteastronomyclub.org/Sign_In.php on the SPAC website where you can join, view and update your membership profile, provide payment, and **print your membership card**.

- **US Mail Option: Takes more time to process manually because we are all volunteers.**

Complete the attached membership form and send it along with your payment to:

Jim Hunter
17316 Oak Ledge Drive
Lutz, FL 33549.
(Checks should be made payable to SPAC, Inc.)

Adult 1: _____ Adult 2: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Number of Children under 18: _____

Memberships:

Single: ☐ \$ 30.00/YR. Includes one adult, minor children, the "SPACE" newsletter, and all the rights and privileges of membership.

Family: ☐ \$ 35.00/YR. Includes two adults, minor children and the above rights and privileges.

Patron: ☐ \$ 50.00/YR. A Patron member is entitled to the above rights and privileges.

Benefactor: ☐ \$100.00/YR. A Benefactor member is entitled to the above rights and privileges.

Student: ☐ FREE. SPAC offers free membership to full time high school and college students.

Expected date of graduation: _____

Total Submitted: \$ _____

Your SPAC Membership Card is required for reduced fees at the campground.

SPAC December Meeting 12/14/23 Christmas Party 7 PM

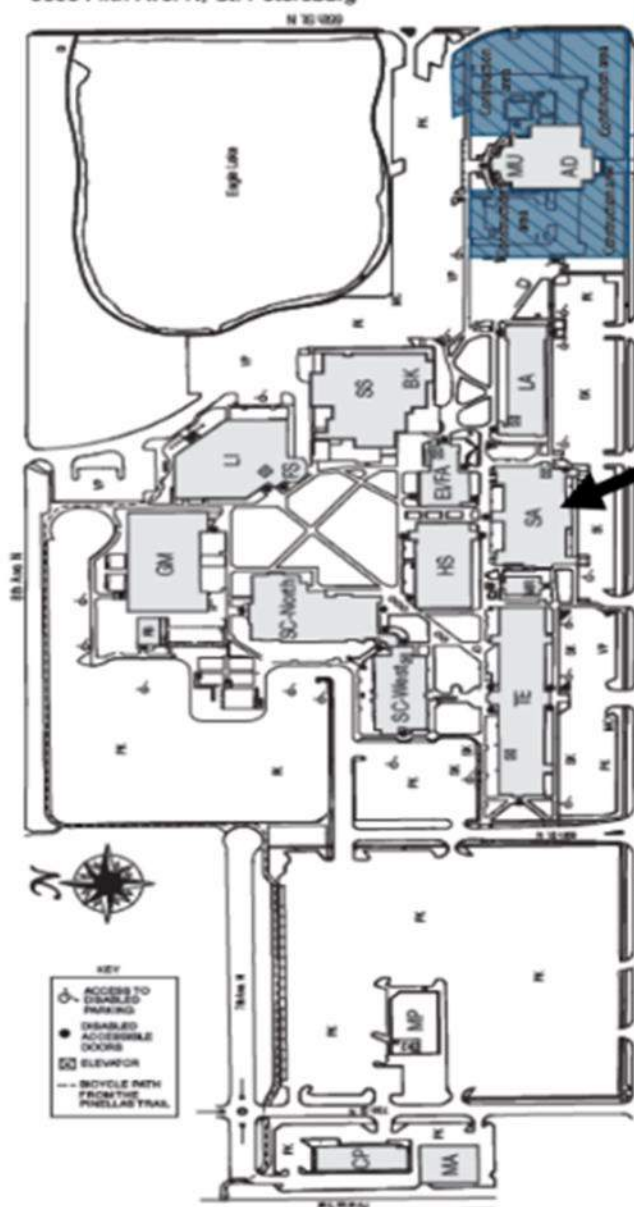
Location: Philip Benjamin Social Arts Building - Party Room 116.

Barbecue Pork provided by SPAC. Please bring a dish to share.

Park on the south side of the building next to 5th Ave. S. It is ok to park in several Staff Parking spaces during this time. The only unlocked door to the building will be the Room 114 outside access door facing the south parking lot. The rest of the building's outside doors will be locked.

St. Petersburg/Gibbs Campus

St. Petersburg/Gibbs Campus
6605 Fifth Ave. N., St. Petersburg



New Student Success Center under construction. All services have been moved to the TE building.

ST. PETERSBURG/GIBBS CAMPUS BUILDING CODES

- AD - ADMINISTRATION
The Administration Building is under construction and will become the new Student Success Center. The Provost office has been moved to SC 231. All other administrative departments have been moved to either the Technical Building (TE) or the Social Arts Building (SA). Please see the list of departments for each building.
- BI - BIOLOGY
- CH - CHEMISTRY
- GM - GYMNASIUM
- HS - HUMANITIES
Humanities and Fine Arts
- LA - LANGUAGE ARTS
Communications
- LI - LIBRARY
Cafe
Library
Writing Studio
- MA - MAINTENANCE
Facilities Management
- NC - NURSING CENTER
- NR - NURSING
- PE - PHYSICAL EDUCATION
PORTABLE 501
GED Program
- RT - RUNNING TRACK
- SA - SOCIAL ARTS
Career Services (Rm 137)
CROP College Reach Out Program (Rm 101)
International Programs/International Student Center (Rm 111)
Mathematics
Social and Behavioral Science
Special Programs (Rm 101)
Student Support Services (Rm 101)
Veterans Services (Rm 135)
WOW Women on the Way (Rm 124)
- SC - SCIENCE
Planetarium
Provost Office (Rm 231)
Science
- SS - STUDENT SERVICES
Bookstore
St. Petersburg Collegiate High School
Student Life and Leadership
- TE - TECHNICAL BUILDING
Accessibility Services (Rm 128)
Associate Provost (Rm 128)
Admissions and Registration (Rm 100)
Business Office (Rm 128)
Career and Academic Advising (Rm 100)
College of Business
College of Computer and Information Technology
College of Education
Financial Assistance (Rm 101)
Learning Support Commons (Rm 200)
Security (Rm 210)
Testing (Rm 100)
- WE - WELLNESS CENTER

Outside access
door to Room 116

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N-----S
W