

# SPECTRUM

Northern Cross Science Foundation Newsletter

October 2005

## LOOKING UP

October 6 Thursday  
General Meeting  
6:30 p.m. Astronomy 101  
7:30 p.m. Business Meeting

October 7 & 8 Fri. & Sat.  
Public Viewing Nights  
7:00 p.m.  
Harrington Beach S. Park

October 20 Thursday  
Board Meeting  
7:30 p.m.  
Home of Jeff Setzer

October 28 Friday  
Public Viewing Night  
6:00 p.m.  
Harrington Beach S. Park

October 29 Saturday  
Haunted Hike  
6:00 p.m.  
Harrington Beach S. Park

November 3 Thursday  
General Meeting  
6:30 p.m. Astronomy 101  
7:30 p.m. Business Meeting

November 17 Thursday  
Board Meeting  
7:30 p.m.  
Home of Jeff Setzer

## Invitation To A Star Party By Don Miles

Recently I was talking with a couple of members about past star-parties we've been to, and ones we would like to attend. While the big events are normally held at some of the more remote places (dark sky's), they also usually require lots of advanced planning and some expense. This gives those people attending something extra special to look forward to, while passing time till that special event. While a few of the NCSF members have been to one or multiples of the larger star parties, the vast majority of NCSF members may never consider attending one. Those people are the people this letter is geared towards.

If you're reading this, you've got at least some interest in astronomy, but maybe not enough to set aside some of your hard earned vacation time to go to another state to enjoy pristine skies. What I'm getting at, is that there are many opportunities to get away from the bulk of the city lights, and all within a short drive from your homes. Even if the skies aren't as dark as Nebraska, it's still worth going to one of the local events. One of those local events that I'm referring to would be one of the "Members Night" dates that are listed on the front of each months *Spectrum*. One of the advantages of attending one is that it is "local". (If the member willing to host the event attends the regular monthly meeting, they probably live fairly close.) Another advantage is that you can't attend many things any cheaper...It's FREE. You don't have to buy anything, or own any astronomy related equipment.

What follows are just *my* tips for attending a typical "members night", and to give every-

one who has never been to one, an idea what it is they're missing (or *not* missing).

There are usually reminders at the regular NCSF meeting, so if there is an upcoming night that fits into your schedule, talk to the person who is hosting it. This serves a couple of purposes. First, you'll get better directions from somebody that is familiar with giving usable directions to their place. And second, it gives the host some idea of how many people might be dropping by. This would help the hosts avoid making arrangements/provisions for large numbers of people, when only a few people might actually show up. Once you've decided on an event, there are a few tips that I've learned make these gatherings fun for all.

1. *Try* to make it there before it gets completely dark. If you can't, please be courteous to the other attendees by parking on the street, or generally a little bit away from the observing area. This prevents the dreaded commotion of pulling into their driveway with headlights blazing, thus wrecking everybody's night vision. (You'll only do this once). This also gives you some time to get familiar with the yard layout under regular light so there are no surprises when darkness finally arrives. It also gives you time to catch-up with other members without seeing everything in

(Invitation on page 2)

## September Meeting Minutes By Kevin Bert

The September business meeting of the Northern Cross Science Foundation was held at the Unitarian Church North in Mequon. President Jeff Setzer opened the meeting at 8:30 p.m. to 27 members and guests. Among the guests were a couple that recently moved from Illinois and were members of the Rockford Astronomical Society, a UCN member with children and a person that heard about the club and thought they would check us out. Jeff thanked all attendees for being there and asked for standard reports.

Treasurer Rob Powell reports that the savings account has been closed and the money deposited into the checking account for upcoming expenses on the observatory.

Secretary Kevin Bert was waiting for information on the Astronomical League Convention. He also asked for members not getting the Reflector to contact him.

Under old business Jeff told us about the problems we are having getting an official Wisconsin architectural stamp for the observatory prints. It will hopefully be resolved soon. At the last board meeting, input from former construction worker Nick Nichols on foundation details was helpful and appreciated.

Joyce Jentges informed the member-

ship that the order for shirts and hats has been turned in, but the option for polo shirts with a small logo could still be made if you would see her before Astrofest. Joyce encouraged members to attend the September 17<sup>th</sup> brat fry at the Saukville Piggly Wiggly.

Rob Powell said that the latest estimate for Observatory construction, including site preparation and miscellaneous items, would be close to \$14,000. Lists of other supporting equipment would push the cost up even higher. Along those same lines he said a special meeting of willing board members was held to get an estimate of what the club membership might contribute. About \$5,000 was their best guess. Naming rights for the observatory and outside contributors were briefly discussed. Rob then talked about the benefits of giving certain stocks as an option. A former Rockford Astronomy club member who had some experience with fundraising and had moved to the area gave helpful information too. She said that big donors are inclined to give if you get pledges from the membership ahead of time.

Under new business Jeff covered a list of upcoming NCSF events. Astrofest on September 8-10, with a public viewing nights on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> at Harrington Beach. Members' night at

Kevin Bert's home on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Jeff read the thank you letter received from the Ice Age Center. The public viewing night was a very successful evening and an estimate of close to 200 people looked through telescopes under dark clear skies.

Scott Tannehill gave the membership an update on a viewing night at St. Mary's Ozaukee. It was thought best to wait until construction at the hospital was complete. Scott said that he might contact West Bend instead.

Charlotte DuPree said that some McDonalds are using bright searchlights to advertise. Jeff said it might be a good idea if we draft a letter to protest it and that he would check the Internet for more information and possible solutions. Along those same lines, Joyce Jentges was keeping on top of the Belgium Luxembourg Center lighting issues and will keep us informed on any progress.

With no further new business, Jeff closed the business meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Bert, secretary

*(Invitation from page 1)*

"red light" (somebody always has one new gadget or another that is the topic of discussion). Avoid using a white light flashlight...Just about any flashlight can be temporarily modified to add a simple cheap red filter to make it night vision friendly. Any library's astronomy section will have books spelling out the simple instructions on how this can be done.

2. Bring a folding chair. There may be times where banks of clouds temporarily block viewing, and it helps the comfort factor while you're chatting and waiting for the sky's to clear.
3. Dress warm, or have warm clothes along. Even if the temperature isn't supposed to drop significantly, stargazing typically doesn't cause you to "work up a sweat". Being comfortable makes it possible to relax, and absorb an image

in an eyepiece.

4. Try to retrieve things you think you may need (warm clothes, thermos, etc.) out of your car *before* it gets dark. The dome lights and door lights that don't seem very bright normally are a lot brighter than you think when your (and everybody else's) eyes are dark adapted.
5. Be courteous. I've never run into anyone at any of these events who aren't willing to

*(Invitation page 4)*

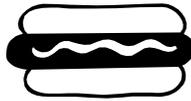
## Brat Fry Update

By Joyce Jentges

The Sept. 17th brat fry at Piggly Wiggly in Saukville is over. I had anticipated that we would not do very well at this brat fry, but I was pleased to be proved wrong. Including the donation jar, we brought in \$347.00. One of the reasons for this, is that we decided to sell a bit longer than at the other fries. We kept having people come up to us looking for food, so we decided to extend the sell time.

All in all, I am very pleased with the profits we have made from the brat fries we have had this summer. We have put nearly \$700.00 into the observatory fund.

This would not have been possible without the help of our membership, specifically Gene and Charlotte DuPree. They have brought all of the equipment we needed, and helped make decisions on what to buy. To everyone who showed up to help, or support our efforts, thank you very much. Your time is precious, and we appreciate you taking time out of your busy lives to help raise some money for the club.



The members night at Nichol's Observatory in Richfield has been cancelled. It coincided with the Haunted Hike at Harrington Beach on October 29th.

Those of you who ordered shirts and hats, the t-shirts and sweatshirts are finished. I am hoping to get the first shipment by the meeting. The rest of the order will be finished soon. If you have not paid me yet, see me at the meeting for payment.

**Welcome to new members Bob & Anabel Mason of Grafton.**

At our October public viewing nights, we will be focusing on Mars. At the November meeting, we will plan on doing some Mars viewing.

**New email address: Please note that my email address has changed. Please see page 4 for my new email address.**

Six of our members, including Jeff Setzer will be attending the Twin Lakes Star Party in Kentucky this week. The October meeting will be led by Joyce Jentges.

## Astronomy 101 And Main Program

By Kevin Bert

The October 101 class will be "The Planet Mars" and led by Kevin Bert. Mars may be the most interesting of all the planets to observe. Unfortunately Mars spends most of the time at a great distance and appears as a disappointing tiny featureless egg shaped disc in most amateur telescopes. But in periods of just over two years, Mars reaches opposition and is poised for optimum viewing from the Earth. Just such an opposition will happen in early

November. Please attend this class to learn more about the red planet.

The featured constellation will be Pegasus.

Details on the main program were not available at the time of printing.



## Astrofest 2005

By Joyce Jentges

Astrofest 2005 was clear and hot! This is the 2nd year that Astrofest was held at Vana's Farm. There were nine members of the NCSF who attended. While skies were clear, the sky glow was pretty bad, so we spent Saturday night exploring some interesting double stars. We did get a few nice views of Mars.

As usual, there were several nice dis-

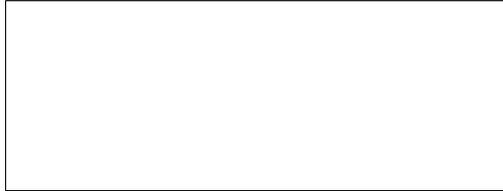
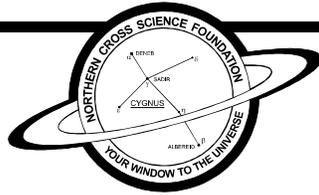
plays by vendors selling all sorts of astronomical wares. I finally broke down and bought a green laser pointer. We did notice that some of last year's vendors did not return this year, which was a disappointment.

Kevin Bert did win a telescope making award for his solar scope, which was made in the class last year. The

same scope was entered last year, but didn't win an award. Congratulations Kevin!

With temperatures in the 90's, most of us did our walking and checking out the vendors in the morning, and hung out by our camp in the afternoon. In all, I think we all had a good time, despite the heat.

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(Invitation from page 1)

answer (or do their best to answer) any question that you may have (no matter how "stupid" you may think it sounds). No one person knows everything, but are all willing to go out of their way to let you know what they have learned if approached with a genuine interest. You'll get to look through equipment that may cost thousands of dollars...for free. If you have a specific object that you want to see, be patient, and I'm sure they'll do their best to accommodate your request.

6. Be courteous. It may sound redundant, but whoever is hosting this has usually taken quite a bit of time and effort to organize the event, and opened their house/garage/shed/field/ or whatever to people that they may not even know, just to get together with people having like interests. Thank the host before leaving, and if you had a good time, please let them know. A sincere "Thank-You" goes a long way to help them decide if they want to host another event the following year.

Even if the conditions are less than perfect, it is a much less hurried pace than trying to talk to everybody within the couple hours at the regular meeting.

With a few of the things mentioned above, I hope you will give a "Members Night" a try.

Hope to see you there.

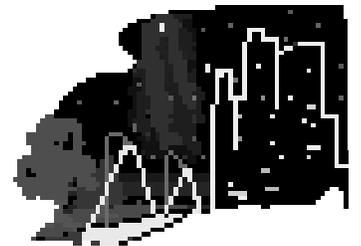
Don Miles

## SPECTRUM

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