From Dusty Darkness to Brilliant Light:  
The Birth of Stars  

by  
Ms. Kristen Erickson  
Department of Physics and Astronomy  
University of Missouri - St. Louis

The stars seem to be eternal as well as distant. Their constellation patterns do not change noticeably over many centuries. But the stars do have life cycles, even though they are very long compared to those of humans. They eventually die, whether in a colossal explosion or in a quieter outflow of dust and gas. And new stars are born, from immense clouds of dust and gas scattered about the night sky. Ms. Erickson will talk about the process of star formation - how and where it occurs and how astronomers are able to study the birth of stars.

Kristen Erickson is a Doctoral candidate in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. She began her collegiate studies at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Nearby was the mountaintop cluster of large telescopes operated by the Kitt Peak National Observatory. Her research interests center on star formation, particularly on the stellar nurseries in the constellation of Serpens and near the star Rho Ophiuchi.

Astro 101 - Our Magnetic Sun - Jim Small

We’ll take a look at some of the activities offered up by the latest ToolKit from Night Sky Network!

Upcoming speakers:

June    Ernst Zinner (Wash U)  
July    TBA  
August  Fred Buenges (Kansas City Astronomical Society)  
September  Carroll Iorg (Astronomical League)  
October  Angela Spec - Univ of MO Columbia  Astronomer

This Weekend:  
Regular Meeting, Dark Sky Observing at Danville.  
Partial Solar Eclipse May 20, Transit of Venus June 5
Thanks to all the folks who manned the tables at this year’s Astronomy Day held at the McDonnell Planetarium. We had 14 volunteers and plenty of people showed up to the event! Look for an article on Astronomy Day next month.

Don’t forget that MidStates is coming up quickly! The early deadline is now over, but you can still head online and register. The housing costs are very inexpensive, especially if you share the room with someone and bring your own linens!

There are a number of events coming up this weekend. I already know a couple of folks that are skipping the meeting to do some observing out at Danville Friday night as that looks to be the pick night of the weekend at this time. The scheduled Dark Sky event is Saturday night at Danville.

Sunday evening has the Partial Solar Eclipse coming our way and there are a number of places that are broadcasting the annular eclipse live. One of them is Panasonic, who is broadcasting live from the summit of Mt Fuji in Japan totally via solar power. The site for that transmission is http://panasonic.net/eclipselive/. Many National Parks here in the United States are also in prime location to view the annular eclipse. A list may be found here: http://www.nationalparksblog.com/best-national-parks-to-see-solar-eclipse-may-2012/. Andy Lunt of Lunt solar systems will be providing the live feed for the eclipse from the South Rim of the Grand Canyon for a company in Japan. Andy will also be providing the live feed for the transit for NASA from Mauna Kea. See the NASA web site for the transit feed. Bryce Canyon is having it’s annual star party in conjunction with the eclipse this week, ending on Sunday.

SLAS will not be doing any formal event for the eclipse due to it’s short duration. We will be providing viewing for the Transit of Venus at the Grand Pavilion in Forest Park. Be sure to join us for that one should you desire! Come even if you don’t have a telescope setup to bring. We will certainly appreciate the help! It is also possible that we might set up at West County Shopping center once we get permission to do so.

Elections are upcoming and we will be taking nominations at the April meeting or you may nominate on SLASDialogs. I will personally be running for President again and the rest of the board is running again as well. There is a board member at large position that will be open as Bill Breeden will not be running again for that post due to obligations with the River Bend club. Linda Follis has been nominated for that position.

The empty credit card at NEAF did indeed prove to be dangerous, but I didn’t spend TOO much more money that I wasn’t already planning on spending. I’m looking forward to putting the new equipment into service!

I’ll see you at the Solar Events this month and next as well as Mid-States! I’ll have a number of materials from the NEAF conference for folks to browse through.
Safe Solar Viewing

The transit of Venus is a rare and striking phenomenon you won't want to miss— but you must carefully follow safety procedures. Don't let the requisite warnings scare you away from witnessing this singular spectacle! You can experience the transit of Venus safely, but it is vital that you protect your eyes at all times with the proper solar filters. No matter what recommended technique you use, do not stare continuously at the Sun. Take breaks and give your eyes a rest! Do not use sunglasses: they don't offer your eyes sufficient protection.

Fantastic Viewing Resources
- Dr. Doug Duncan, astronomer, Department of Astrophysical & Planetary Sciences, Univ. of Colorado and Director of Fiske Planetarium
- Definitive advice on viewing the sun safely; by B. Ralph Chou, MSc, OD.
- Six ways to see the transit!; by Chuck Bueter

Viewing with Protection -- Experts suggests that one widely available filter for safe solar viewing is number 14 welder's glass. It is imperative that the welding hood houses a #14 or darker filter. Do not view through any welding glass if you do not know or cannot discern its shade number. Be advised that arc welders typically use glass with a shade much less than the necessary #14. A welding glass that permits you to see the landscape is not safe. Inexpensive Eclipse Shades have special safety filters that appear similar to sunglasses, but these filters permits safe viewing. Eclipse shades are available through retailers listed at http://www.mreclipse.com/Totality/TotalityApC.html under "Solar Filters."

Telescopes with Solar Filters -- The transit of Venus is best viewed directly when magnified, which demands a telescope with a solar filter. A filtered, magnified view will clearly show the planet Venus and sunspots (http://skyandtelescope.com/observing/objects/sun/article_101_1.asp). Never look through a telescope without a solar filter on the large end of the scope. And never use small solar filters that attach to the eyepiece (as found in some older, cheaper telescopes.) See "Solar Filters" as cited above for retailers.

Pinhole projectors -- These are a safe, indirect viewing technique for observing an image of the Sun. While popular for viewing solar eclipses, pinhole projectors suffer from the same shortcomings as unmagnified views when Venus approaches the edges of the Sun. Small features like the halo around Venus will not likely be discernible. Pinhole projectors and other projection techniques are at http://solar-center.stanford.edu/observe/.

Related projection methods -- One viewing technique is to project an image of the Sun onto a white surface with a projecting telescope. http://www.skyandtelescope.com/observing/objects/sun/Solar_Projection.html and http://www.astrosoociety.org/education/publications/tnl/05/stars2.html. Others follow:


The Sunspotter telescope viewer (recommended for younger viewers) is commercially available from Learning Technologies Inc. at http://www.starlab.com.

Sourced from NASA – Goddard Space Flight Center
Welcome to the following NEW members of SLAS!

January
Kevin Fernlund
William Cruzen
Dale & Gaylene Engelbrecht
Martin Hoog

February
David Ritchey

March
Thomas Swanson
Gene J. Dultz, Jr.
Jeremy Naethe

April
Matthew Hansen
Anil & Juli Dharna
Gina Burke
Kathy Poeschel

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Book Review: “Space Chronicles”
by Neil DeGrasse Tyson, edited by Avis Lang
by Jim Trull

This book is a collection of articles and speeches made by Tyson. Its 26 chapters have previously appeared in periodicals such as “Natural History”, Parade, etc. Since these articles are complete in themselves, there is substantial redundancy in content.

Tyson is an astrophysicist and Director of the Hayden Planetarium so it is no surprise that he is an advocate of space exploration. Tyson makes the case that the urge to explore is part of our nature. He believes there are three motivators for funding exploration: glorification of Royalty or religion; opportunity for profit; or seeking advantage in war.

Congressional willingness to fund NASA and the space program was a direct response to the cold war and the launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union. At this time, none of these motivators is compelling, so funding is lagging.

The International Space Station doesn’t fire up the same interest as the Apollo program. However, when NASA announced the decision to abandon the Hubble Telescope repair mission, there was a surprising public outcry which led to reversing the decision. Hence public interest is present and needs to be stirred up to motivate Congress to fund NASA at the Apollo levels.

Tyson is an excellent communicator so the repetition in the articles is not objectionable. This is a good read.

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SLAS Bucks Report
by John Newcomer

We had 10 events scheduled throughout the month of April, however, 5 were cancelled. My attendance count for the month is 420. However, I did not receive any counts for Parkway North on 2012-04-12 (also, nobody logged any hours to NSN) or for Night Sky over Babler on 2012-04-14 (only two logged hours for this event, which seems like too few). Even with such a high cancellation rate, the attendance was respectable, although below the April average of 504. This has not been a good year for our outreach. Over 40% of our scheduled events have been cancelled YTD.

April drew 18 SLAS Volunteers, including first-timer Andrew Kniffen, who collectively earned 30 SLAS Bucks. Currently, 15 SLAS Bucks are held by 4 ex-members, and the society has 536 SLAS Bucks outstanding.

The SLAS Bucks Program rewards members for volunteering at our public outreach activities. Each time a member participates, s/he earns one SLAS Buck. These bucks can be redeemed for SLAS logo merchandise, membership dues, or other items as approved by the Executive Council. The SLAS Bucks policy is published on the SLASdialogs Yahoo group here: http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/SLASdialogs/files/Bylaws/2011-02-SLASBucksPolicy.pdf

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MICDS Star Party Report
by Mike Malolepszy

Four SLAS members setup telescopes for a 5th grade science class overnight campout at MICDS on Thursday, May 10, 2012. About 56 1-10 year olds attended plus some teachers and other MICDS staff. A little after 9pm they came from their other activities to look through the 4 scopes we setup - Larry's 3" reflector, Byron's 4" reflector, John's 8" dob and my 4" refractor. Since I had the one clock driven EQ mount, I had my scope on Saturn the entire night using around 150X. This produced a wave of "Wow!", "OMG!", "That is the Bossest thing I've ever seen!" reactions. We didn't end until about 11pm.

SLAS volunteers: John Beaury, Byron Brooks, Larry Campbell, Michael Malolepszy
Mid-States Convention Details June 1-3, 2012

The deadline for early registration for Mid-States has now passed. The pay-pal cart is available. The link for the convention registration is [http://msral.org/MSRAL-Con%20Reg.html](http://msral.org/MSRAL-Con%20Reg.html) You may either print the form and mail a check or pay via pay-pal.

We’ll have the traditional Star B-Que Friday evening and a planetarium program at Science City/Union Station. If you’ve never seen Union Station here in Kansas City this will provide you the perfect opportunity to view this magnificent structure.

On Friday evening after the planetarium program the 16 inch Newtonian reflector at the UMKC Warkoczewski observatory will be open for your viewing pleasure. As will the ASKC’s Powell Observatory located in Louisburg, KS.

The Mid States business meeting will kick off the beginning of the festivities on Saturday morning. We have a great lineup of speakers for your enjoyment through the day and vendors will be present. If Mother Nature cooperates there will be solar viewing available just outside our meeting room.

When we break for lunch the group photo will be taken and immediately following the photo the Amateur of the Year committee will meet to select this year’s recipient. Be sure to nominate a member of your own club for this prestigious award and submit their name along with a short note explaining why you feel they should receive the award. Submit nominees to Cook Feldman or to one of the convention staff. Remember, we must have nominees no later than the lunch break on Saturday.

More details are now available at the Mid States web site at www.msral.org. You can print copies of the registration form and mail them along with your registration check or you can use PayPal. The pre-registration deadline of May 15th is fast approaching so don’t delay. Send your registration in NOW to avoid the $15 penalty.

Please pass this information along to MSRAL astronomers and organizations to help us get the word out.

Thank you for your assistance and we hope to see you here in Kansas City this June.

Clear skies, Gary Pittman  MSRAL Registrar and Co-Chair

Elections are Upon Us!

May will bring the elections for the SLAS board once again. Nominations for elected positions are the following: Jim Small: President, Bill Biemann: Vice President, Rhonda Whelan: Treasurer, Mark Jones: Secretary and Linda Follis: Board Member at Large   You may nominate either at the meeting or via SLASDialogs.

Plans for the Partial Solar Eclipse in May and the Venus Transit in June

The SLAS board decided that there would be no official activities for the Partial Solar Eclipse May 20 due to the short duration here. For the Transit of Venus, one of the sites will be the Grand Pavilion area in Forest Park. We will be working with the Science Center for that location. Other tentative locations (awaiting approval) will be the top of the parking garage at West County Shopping Center and at Chesterfield Mall. Both sites have a good western horizon and can accommodate a reasonable size crowd with convenient parking. More information will be made available as plans are completed on both the SLAS calendar and on SLASDialogs. The SLSC will also be hosting events, but the site has not been made official yet. The partial solar eclipse begins around 7:30 pm on May 20 and the sun will set before the eclipse is completed. The Venus Transit will begin at 5:05 pm and will not be completed before sunset. For more details on the Venus Transit and to see how you may obtain the AL Observing Award for the transit, see the article on page 4.
What a great week! My Tuesday night class finished around 10:00 pm and as usual, my plans of having the car packed and ready to go straight after class didn’t exactly work. No matter, it only took half an hour to pack my suitcase from the dryer and toss it in the car and head east. There are a couple of options to get to New York; I chose the I-70 route. I did ok the first night, I made it to Terre Haute before calling it a night. I finished the drive to Suffern, NY on Wednesday and got settled into the room. I would have stayed up to talk to the obvious group of astronomers at the bar downstairs, but I was pretty wiped and the Northeast Astronomical Imaging Conference (NEAIC) started early the next morning. I woke up to the intense odor of bacon sifting under my door and got up and headed downstairs to registration and the included breakfast (which did NOT include bacon… lol). I had sent in my registration via PayPal earlier in the week and got to meet Bob Moore, the organizer for NEAIC, when I registered. Bob and his daughters did a great job organizing everything for the imaging conference.

The imaging conference was phenomenal. It covered every aspect of astrophotography, from rank beginners to making your data scientifically viable and calibrated. There were three lines of talks, beginning, intermediate and advanced in concurrent sessions, then there were several sessions for the entire group with no conflicts with other meetings. The large group talks included astrophotographers like Tony Hallas, Robert Reeves, and Chris Go to name just a few. All of the talks I attended were excellent; a fabulous two days worth of conference. All of the talks will also be made available to attendees in the form of videos and/or powerpoint files with audio. It was great to have that benefit because I didn’t have to concentrate so much on notes and could listen to the talks. As an example, I learned more in one hour talks with Tony Hallas on Photoshop CS5, Robert Reeves in high resolution lunar imaging, and Chris Go on planetary imaging than I had in all my previous reading! Great tips on software, techniques and equipment for imaging. What made it even better were the vendors. With NEAF coming the two days after the imaging conference, ALL of the major imaging manufacturers were there, showing off their equipment and offering deals. Point Grey for example, offered up half price on all of their cameras for attendees. The imaging conference by itself was worth the trip!

Then there was the Northeast Astronomy Forum (NEAF). If you’ve ever heard Tim Allen’s routine about the “grunt” he does whenever someone mentions tools (like when he walks in the Sears Hardware store…), it was the same thing at NEAF for astronomy. Picture a college size gymnasium complex filled wall to wall with booths of astronomy vendors and you can start to get an idea. NEAF is the

(Continued on page 7)
conference where many manufacturers unveil new equipment and telescopes. It is also a terrific place to save some money as nearly every vendor offers some kind of discount. OPT for example was offering 10% off nearly everything they sell. There were 3 giant aisles completely filled on both sides with booths. Each aisle was probably 200 feet in length. the end caps were also filled. I was helping to man the Night Sky Network booth and talk to astronomers about their clubs and getting them some help to do what they do. NEAF was a great show to move around and see and try all the equipment you normally only see in a catalog somewhere… Wish I had taken a sample of thumbscrews, etc that I needed because University Optics had 16 feet of table set up with nothing by scope hardware. You name it, they had it in a small bin. I didn’t really get too much of a chance to do any serious work at the booths because of my obligations at the NSN booth. I’ll just have to go back. We were in a good location, however, because I had the International Dark Sky Association on one side of us and the Astronomical League on the other!

The equipment was nice. The talks were nice. But the best part of the conference was the people I got to meet. Mark Stowbridge came by the booth and explained his program to put telescopes in libraries for check-out to patrons. Tom Kazner stopped by and showed us a great solar funnel constructed out of PVC pipe, a large funnel, a Folgers coffee can and drafting vellum. It was great to talk to all the astro-imagers about their equipment and what it takes to be able to do what you want in the way of photography. It was also nice to get multiple expert opinions on telescopes and equipment to avoid making a mistake in what you want to complete your system. I had intentions of getting many more photographs at NEAF, but time just didn’t allow for spending a lot of time with photography while I was there. I did get to spend lots of time with Marni Berendsen from ASP, Skip Barth from Maryland and Keith Murdick (from our McDonald Observatory trip). I also had lunch with Louis Berman in downtown Philadelphia on the way back. Louis sends greetings to everyone!

If anyone is inclined, it would definitely be worth the road trip to attend again next year! NEAIC was $225 and included breakfast and a great lunch both days and access to all the talks. NEAF is only $20 by itself and that fee is included in the NEAIC conference price.
Build a Solar Funnel for the Solar Eclipse and Venus Transit

Tom Kasner came by our Night Sky Network booth with his version of a solar funnel, a device which allows eyepiece projection onto a screen through virtually any telescope. (remember that cheap refractor you have laying around somewhere?)

What makes his design a touch different than most is the construction of the main body from an ordinary Folger’s Coffee can. The funnel is attached to the bottom of the can and the top of the can has a piece of drafting vellum across the opening. The big advantage for this setup is that the lid from the can may be placed over the vellum and protect it when it isn’t in use.

Tom cut one end of a large funnel to fit the back side of the coffee can and sliced off the other end to fit a piece of PVC pipe that mates to the piece of PVC that holds the eyepiece. Screws are driven into the piece of PVC that holds the eyepiece and then wrapped in black tape to prevent injury. Once it’s completed, you should have a very durable funnel to use for viewing the eclipse, the transit or sunspots!
SAINT LOUIS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY  
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING – April 12, 2012

Those in attendance were: Jim Small, Rhonda Whelan, Mark Jones, Grant Martin, Cook Feldman, Jim Trull and Don Ficken

1. Opening Activities  
Meeting called order 7:01pm  Motion made by Cook Feldman and seconded by Mark Jones to approve the March minutes. Motion passed.

2. External Business  
4/28/12 Astronomy day 10am to 2pm. Whole science center is closing at 2:30pm. SLSC is setting up 6 tables for us, volunteers should RSVP in NSN. SLSC will spring for pizza. SLAS members welcome to stay for robotics. New SLSC president may be at our May board meeting. John Lakey looking into observing at SLSC for both the Venus transit June 5th and partial solar eclipse May 20.

3. Director Reports:

President – Jim S  
Results of NSN trip. 2 day work shop in San Francisco. Lots of new tips. Looking inot adding a couple of additional fields for loaner scope or library to the NSN mailing group options in order to make it easier to start message groups from NSN. For example an observers group. Sandra Magnus event. Good traffic at welcome table. 10-15 sign up for mailing list.

Vice President – Bill Biermann  
April Speaker - Jim Small - Particle Physics and Cosmic Ray Research in high school    April 10 – Sandra Magnus @ planetarium. Kudos to Bill Biermann for the hard work to set up the event. $100 for security for the evening is the only expense. Rhonda needs to know what $175 bill was for. May Speaker - Kristen Erickson from UMSL – Star Formation

Secretary – Mark J  
Dialogs e-mail list being updated to remove expired memberships Night Sky Over Babler planned for April 14th, no cloudout date, volunteers should RSVP in NSN

Treasurer/ALCor – Rhonda W  
Monthly reports and quarterly report were sent. Board reviewed and discussed the budget statement for end of 1st quarter, no discrepancies noted. Next review will be at the July board meeting

Hospitality – Grant M  
No report

Board member at large reports  
Cook Feldman updated NSN e-mail duplications removed and gaps removed now only on list to maintain. Sent out RSVP list for Magnus. Bill Breeden – no report  Jim Trull – no report, Ann Trull completed updates to the star party list for handing out at outreach events

4. Committee Reports: If needed  
Membership Don Ficken, see separate report. 158 current paid members. 11 new members YTD. Trying to collect more e-mail addresses for potential members. Grag Gaines taking over name tags at meetings. Larry Miller stepping down

Merchandise – 2 hats sold last month for $10 total.  
Telescope Making – no report but new member Jeremy Naethe wants to know about telescope making

Librarian – no report

Night Sky Network (Jim Small) – training in San Fran to mentor other groups, notices on MSRAL and other groups. Jim going to NEAF to work NSN table.

Newsletter (Jim Small) – Please send in any articles, photos from Sandra Magnus event. Elections in May.

Dark Site (Mark Jones) – Next event April 21 at Danville

Loaner Equipment (Jim Small) – Newly donated scope 6" scope given to Linda

Observing Programs Jim Small) – A101 Venus transit pin from AL.

Star Party Coordinator/outreach – Michael Malolepszy submitted separate report.  
Publicity report: Recent publicity activity: Press release issued March 30 for the astronaut Sandra Magnus lecture. Also posted on St. Louis Today (Post-Dispatch) and Nine Network. The Nine Net site listed the talk as one of the most-viewed entries. Re-issued the release on April 6. TV and KMOX Newsrooms were contacted by phone on April 6

SLAS Bucks report. (JohnNewcomer) – SLAS had 5 event scheduled for March and all 5 were held, no cloud outs! Public attendance for the month was 330. 15 members volunteered for these events with Jeremy Naethe earning his first SLAS buck at Francis Park,

5. New Business  
Elections - Open nominations at April meeting, election at May meeting

6. Closing Activities  
Cook made motion to adjourn, seconded by Mark, meeting adjourned 8:55pm
Upcoming Star Parties and Other Events

For details on this and other upcoming events, check out the Night Sky Network Calendar linked on the Home Page for SLAS at http://www.slasonline.org

Dark Sky Observing Dates

May 19, 2012
June 16, 2012

Francis Park Events: These events are on Wednesdays the week nearest the first quarter Moon

May 23, 2012 (3-day old Moon)
Jun. 27, 2012 (7-day old Moon)
Jul. 25, 2012 (6-day old Moon)
Aug. 22, 2012 (5-day old Moon)
Sep. 19, 2012 (3-day old Moon)
Oct. 24, 2012 (9-day old Moon)
Nov. 21, 2012 (8-day old Moon)
Dec. 19, 2012 (6-day old Moon)

Future SLSC Public Telescope Viewing Events:
These events are held the first Friday of the month

June 1st

SLAS Events

A Look at May/June

May
18    SLAS regular meeting
19    SLAS dark sky event (Danville)
20    Partial Solar Eclipse
23    Francis Park
26    East Central College
31    Stargazing at the Gateway Arch

June
1    SLSC Public Telescope Viewing
1-3  Mid-States Regional Convention
4    Partial Lunar Eclipse
5    Transit of Venus
7    SLAS board meeting
15   SLAS regular meeting
16   SLAS dark sky observing

SLAS Executive Board Meetings Location will be at the Edward Jones YMCA.

June 7, 2012
July 12, 2012
August 9, 2012

Gateway to the Stars Dates:

May 31
June 28
July 26
August 30
September 27
October 25 (All Thursdays)

LET US KNOW YOU ARE COMING!
To RSVP for any of these events log in to the Night Sky Network and submit your RSVP. If the event is canceled, you will be notified immediately according to the preferences you have selected. For more information about events, such as Moon phase, clear sky clock, weather report or a map of what’s up, see the calendar online.
SLAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: Last __________________________________________________________
First, Middle Initial _____________________________________________________
Address __________________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip Code __________________________________________________________________
email address __________________________________________________________________

Youth @ $10.00 / 1 year (18 yrs or younger) $_____________
Individual @ $25.00 / 1 year $_____________
Family @ $40.00/1 year $_____________

Publications with discount available with your SLAS membership:
Sky and Telescope @ $32.95 / 1 year $_____________
(S&T may also be renewed at their website: http://www.skyandtelescope.com)
Astronomy @ $34.00 / 1 year $_____________

TOTAL ENCLOSED $_____________

Check all that apply:
___ Renewal
___ Address Change Only
___ Please send my newsletter by regular mail
___ New Member!

Please send completed form with check (no cash please) made payable to
St Louis Astronomical Society
Rhonda Whelan, Treasurer
P.O. Box 256
Waterloo, IL  62298
e-mail: treasurer at slasonline.org

SLAS OFFICERS

President        Jim Small 314-307-0692
president at slasonline.org
Vice President    Bill Biermann 314-596-6738
vicepresident at slasonline.org
Secretary         Mark Jones 636-394-2342
secretary at slasonline.org
Treasurer         Rhonda Whelan 314-750-0262
treasurer at slasonline.org
Hospitality      Grant Martin 636-634-6607
hospitality at slasonline.org
Board Members at Large:
Bill Breeden 314-276-3613
board12 at slasonline.org
Jim Trull 314-842-6165
board13 at slasonline.org
Cook Feldman 314-984-0868
board14 at slasonline.org

ALCOR            Rhonda Whelan 314-750-0262
(Astronomical  League Correspondent )
treasurer at slasonline.org
msral_rep at astroleague.org

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership        Don Ficken 636-225-0269
membership at slasonline.org
Publicity         Rich Heuermann 314-962-9231
publicity at slasonline.org
‘SLASdialogs’ Moderator  Mark Jones, Rhonda Whelan
dialogsmoderator at yahoo.com
Webmaster         Jim Small 314-909-7211
webmaster at slasonline.org
Newsletter Ed.    Jim Small 314-909-7211
newsletter at slasonline.org
Loaner Equip.     Linda & John Follis 636-583-3485
loaner at slasonline.org
Merchandise       Grant Martin 636-634-6607
merchandise at slasonline.org
Librarian         Jim Small 314-909-7211
librarian at slasonline.org
Star Party Coord  Mike Malolepszy 314-781-4701
starparty at slasonline.org
Dark Site Coord.  Mark Jones 636-394-2342
darksite at slasonline.org
Observing Programs  Mark Jones 636-394-2342
observing at slasonline.org
Telescope Making  Bill Davis, Jim Melka 314-469-3061
telescope at slasonline.org
ST. LOUIS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Who We Are and What We Do
St. Louis Astronomical Society is a not-for-profit organization established in 1936. SLAS is devoted to the interest and advancement of the science of astronomy. Our mission is to promote an understanding of the science of astronomy to our members and to the public. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in astronomy.

For more information contact any SLAS officer or visit our website listed above. SLAS is affiliated with the Astronomical League, Night Sky Network and the Mid-States Region of the Astronomical League.

Meetings are held the 3rd Friday of each month at McDonnell Hall at Washington University. See the map to the right for directions.

St. Louis Astronomical Society
Jim Small
13128 Cozyhill Drive
St. Louis, MO  63122