

The Springfield

News from the STARS



Stars Club

"Sharing the Wonders of the Night Sky"

SINCE 1934

July, 2002

"On the Horizon" – A Note from the President

Nearly seventy years ago, a small group of local residents who were interested in making telescopes had a vision. Having just founded *The Springfield Telescope and Reflector Society (STARS)*, they acquired a twenty-inch glass disk poured from the same melt as the 200-inch mirror that now sits atop Mount Palomar. Working diligently for the next five years and joined by others, these original Stars Club members produced a polished, concave telescope mirror. With their work interrupted by World War II, the group eventually donated the mirror to the Springfield Science Museum, where it would remain for nearly the next fifteen years. Then, in 1959, **Dr. Richard Scott** and **Warren Fillmore**, who had been part of the original group, proposed to resume the project by constructing a telescope for the mirror. Work began to design and build the telescope and a permanent observatory in 1968, after a large anonymous contribution was obtained. The project was completed and the observatory donated to the Museum in 1972.

Today, three decades removed from "First Light," the massive catadioptric remains one of the centerpieces of astronomy education at the Science Museum. On the first Friday of each month, weather permitting, the observatory is opened to the public during "Stars Over Springfield" programs. Thousands of people have peered through its eyepieces, many witnessing their first-ever views of the night sky through a telescope. Please join us at the September meeting for *"A Vision of the Stars"* as we celebrate the history of this fine instrument and renew the remarkable legacy it represents.

- Mike Kozicki

Get Well Wishes

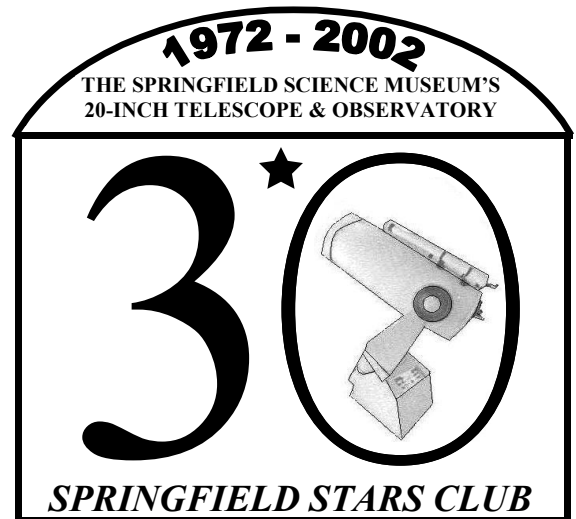
The entire club sends its best wishes for a complete recovery to **George Schnare**, who underwent surgery in May. He is doing better now and has already attended the June club meeting. In recent years, George has become a regular volunteer at the Friday night "Stars Over Springfield" programs. *Welcome back, George!*

The Korkosz Award Presentation

Congratulations to **Dr. Judith Young** of the University of Massachusetts, the latest recipient of the Stars Club's Frank D. Korkosz Award for Outstanding Contributions to Astronomy. Dr. Young received the award during a "Solstice Sunset" on June 21, 2002 at the UMASS Sunwheel, which she designed. Since its opening in 1997, hundreds have participated in special equinox and solstice presentations at the Sunwheel, including the members of the Stars Club and other local astronomy organizations.

Fountain Park Revisited

Despite bitterly cold temperatures, our first public star party at Fountain Park in Wilbraham on March 22nd was a great success! Under clear skies, more than 150 participants took in views of Comet Ikeya-Zhang, the Moon and several planets. Hoping to build upon this first effort, we are planning a return visit for this fall. More information will be available at upcoming club meetings and at <http://www.reflector.org>, the club website.



Target: Mars - 2003

Since September, 1988 amateur astronomers have eagerly been awaiting the next perihelial opposition of Mars. Although nearly invisible for most of this summer, passing through solar conjunction on August 10th, the Red Planet will begin drawing closer to Earth. Just one year from now, on August 27, 2003, Mars and the Earth will make their closest approach to one another in all of recorded history!

With the public already captivated by Mars following the Pathfinder mission in 1997, interest in the Stars Club and its events will likely see a sharp rise next spring and summer. If you have suggestions or ideas for Mars-related programs, meetings or observing sessions, please inform one of the club officers or directors.

NOTICES

Executive Committee Meeting - The next Stars Club Executive Committee meeting will be held on **Monday, November 4th**. If you have ideas for events or speakers, notices for the newsletter, or anything else you would like to bring to the club's attention, please contact one of the officers or directors prior to this meeting.

Club Newsletter - If you have an email address and would prefer to receive the club newsletter electronically rather than by traditional mail, please contact one of the officers or directors. Several members have already chosen this method, which will hopefully save the club time and expense.

Club Telescope - The Stars Club has a 4" f/15 Unitron refractor available for member loan on a monthly basis. If you are interested in using it, see any of the club officers or directors at a monthly meeting. Due to several factors, the Executive Committee is exploring the possibility of selling this telescope with the goal of purchasing a new one for member loan. This topic was discussed at the May, 2002 club meeting. A formal vote on the matter will likely be held next spring. Please let us know if you have input regarding this.

Membership Dues - To pay your club dues for 2003, please send a check for \$20, payable to the Springfield Stars Club, to **Rich Sanderson** at P.O. Box 2793, Springfield, MA 01101. Your dues offset costs of running the club, mostly the museum room rental fee and mailings.

Annual Club Election - The club election will be held at the November meeting. If you would like to nominate someone for a position, please contact one of the current officers or directors by October 31st.

We Need You! - Volunteers are needed to help out at club meetings, for "Stars Over Springfield" programs and public star parties. If you have a telescope you can set up, that's great! Even if you don't, there are still ways in which you can help, including assisting with crowd control. We are experiencing higher attendance at our programs this year. To volunteer for an event, please see one of the club officers or directors.

THE OBSERVING LOG

More Meteors Typically considered to be the year's best shower, the Perseids roughly coincide with this year's Stellafane Convention (Aug. 9 & 10), peaking under moonless skies on the morning of August 12th. Then, following last year's spectacular display, the Leonids may offer an opportunity to witness an even more intense meteor "storm," despite bright moonlight, on the morning of November 17th. Several other showers, including the Orionids, Taurids and Geminids, are active during the year's final months.

The Solar System Following a gathering of all five classical planets in the evening sky last spring, Venus lingers low in the west throughout summer. Meanwhile, Saturn, Jupiter and eventually Mars return to the morning sky, to be followed by Venus in mid-November. The Moon has interesting conjunctions with Jupiter before dawn on September 4th and October 2nd, then a close pairing with Venus and Mars on December 1st.

Full Moon Dates: July 24, August 22, September 21, October 21, November 19, December 19

New Moon Dates: July 10, August 8, September 6, October 6, November 4, December 4

Autumnal Equinox (Start of Fall) - September 23, 2002 at 12:55a.m. EDT.

Winter Solstice - December 21, 2002 at 8:14p.m. EST.