

ABOVE THE FOG

• BULLETIN OF THE SAN FRANCISCO AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

VOL. 52, No. 12 – DECEMBER 2004

DECEMBER 15, 2004 – GENERAL MEETING

RANDALL MUSEUM
199 MUSEUM WAY
SAN FRANCISCO

7:00 PM DOORS OPEN
7:30 PM ANNOUNCEMENTS
8:00 PM SPEAKER

Member's Night

Although generally we don't have a speaker, this year we have a special treat for those in attendance --

STEVE GOTTLIEB

Steve Gottlieb will speak regarding his trip to Costa Rica with Ray Cash's telescope.

CARL TROST

Carl Trost will speak regarding his travels to Luxor, Egypt, to see the Transit of Venus with a group of enthusiasts, including some Bay Area observers

ART OWENS

Art Owens, long time solar observer will demonstrate how solar winds work and particles are affected by electromagnetic forces using a Van de Graff generator. This machine is a very interesting way to show how these systems work....and the bonus of having some hair raising experiences too along the way.

ANNUAL AWARDS



Astrophotography

Members are encouraged to submit astrophotographs (up to three entries per member) for judging in the astrophotography award. Submissions are accepted October, November or at the December general meeting. All entries will be exhibited at the December meeting and voted upon by the general membership. Entries must have been taken this year (2004) and be of an astronomical theme. Size should be reasonable (11' x 14' or less), mounted or unmounted.

Astronomical Arts

This contest is open to all members and will be judged by the membership at the December General Meeting. We had several fine entries at the inaugural competition last year. Any art related to astronomy is welcome. Your drawings of astronomical objects are worth sharing with other club members, as well as craftwork, sculpture, jewelry, and paintings. There are almost no restrictions here. Size is a consideration since we have to fit all entries, and club members, in the Randall Museum, alongside the Astrophotography Award entries. Also, no living critters, please. The museum may frown upon any living, breathing things that are not part of official exhibits. Live acts are restricted to the human kind. Please bring your entries to the Meeting on December 15, 2004. Any questions can be directed to club officers, listed on page two in this bulletin.

Observer of the Year

The Observer of the Year Award is given for noteworthy observing accomplishments during the year, such as qualifying for the Messier Award, the Herschel Club, observing all the planets, getting articles or photographs published, etc. Nominations accepted in October and November. Members may submit their own name or the names of anyone they feel is qualified. Candidates should prepare a list of their observing accomplishments in 2004 for judging by the December meeting.

2003 CLUB OFFICERS & CONTACTS

President	Michael Portuesi	(415) 550-9366
Vice President	Nancy Cox	(415) 269-8259
Secretary	James Mace	
Treasurer	Lorrie Boen	
Speaker Chair	Linda Mahan	
City Star Party	Randy Taylor	(415) 255-8670
Membership & Subscriptions Bulletin	Lorrie Boen	
Editor-in-Chief	Phil Estrin	(415) 703-4533
Associate Editor	Annette Gabrielli	(415) 703-4539
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Honorary Director	John Dobson	
Board Members	Jim Webster	
	Steve Bryson	
	Danny Christian	
	Cheryl Schudel	
	Ken Frank	
	Slava Evaniokoff	
	Randy Taylor	
Alt. Board Members	John Dillon	
	Phil Estrin	
Webmaster	Joe Amato	

MEMBERSHIP DUES

The mailing label on the back of this issue shows the month and year through which your membership was paid. If the date has passed, your membership has expired. Members may receive no more than one bulletin after the expiration of membership.

Please renew soon if your membership is expiring.

CLUB TELESCOPES

The SFAA owns 4 club loaner telescopes, Dobsonian/Newtonian reflectors: 6" f/10, 8" f/7, and 10" f/8 and a Starblast. They are available for extended periods (30 days or more) to SFAA members. These are generally very fine scopes, easy to use and well-suited for deep sky, planets, and star parties. The loaner custodians are Pete Goldie & Sarah Szczechowicz, located in San Francisco. If you are interested in borrowing a scope, or if you have items you can donate for the loaner program (eyepieces, star maps/books, collimator, etc.) please contact them via email (<mailto:pg@lbin.com>) or phone (415-206-9867). Email communication is preferred and strongly recommended for a quick and accurate reply.



CLUB ASTRONOMY VIDEOS

The SFAA owns a series of astronomy videotapes featuring Alex Filippenko, a world-renowned professor of astronomy at UC Berkeley. The videotapes provide an introduction to astronomy and cover topics such as the Solar System, the lifecycles of stars, the nature of galaxies, and the birth of the Universe. The SFAA loans the tapes free to all members. If you are interested in viewing these tapes, you may check them out at any of the SFAA General Meetings. These tapes were kindly donated to the SFAA by Bert Katzung. Our librarian is Dan Christian.



For information on the course tapes themselves:

<http://www.teach12.com/ttc/assets/courseDescriptions/180.asp>

ONLINE SERVICES FOR SFAA MEMBERS



The SFAA's Secretary's Web Site helps keep SFAA information together and accessible to members. The site URL is <http://www.whiteoaks.com/sfaa/>. At this site you can find such information as minutes from meetings of the Board of Directors, the SFAA official by-laws, and other information. SFAA also offers email lists to supplement the bulletin board offered at the SFAA's official web site. At present there are two email lists – an unmoderated list for use primarily for business and discussion by the Board of Directors (but open to all members), and a moderated announcement list for all SFAA members. If you would like to be added to the SFAA-announce email list, please contact the secretary (<mailto:secretary@sfaa-astronomy.org>) and let him know. You can also sign up for the list yourself at this URL: <http://www.whiteoaks.com/mailman/listinfo/sfaa-announce>

Above the Fog is the official bulletin of the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers. It is the forum in which club members may share their experiences, ideas, and observations. We encourage you to participate by submitting your articles, announcements, letters, photos and drawings. We would also like to hear from our new members. Tell us about yourself – what you have done in the past and what other clubs you have joined. The deadline for the next issue is the seventh day of the month. Send your articles to Phil Estrin at pestrin@dir.ca.gov.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Michael Portuesi

Thank you to everyone who stepped in at the last minute and pledged their time and effort to save SFAA. We have a full ballot for the officers and board positions. It appears in this newsletter. Please take the time to fill it out and return it. We have multiple candidates for some officer and board positions, so your choice is important!

There is still an opportunity for you to speak on your favorite astronomical topic at the December 15 meeting. That will be Member's Night, and Linda Mahan is still signing up people who want to give a 15-20 minute talk to the club. Maybe you've gotten started with a new telescope and would like to share what you've learned. Perhaps you've just gotten the coolest astronomical gadget and want to enlighten the rest of us. Or maybe you'd like to share with us your personal readings and research on astrophysics or cosmology. Or you went on a trip and want to provide us a report. Whatever. If you'd like to talk, please let Linda know: <doublestar@comcast.net>.

If you have astrophotos you'd like to show (CCD, digicam, webcam, even film!), consider entering them (3 max per person) into our Astrophoto contest. And if you are the creative type, you can enter your astronomically-related artwork (drawings, sketches, painting, mixed media, edible, whatever) into the SFAA Art competition. Details appear in this newsletter.

Is there a club member you feel should be honored in some way, for their accomplishments, contributions, and dedication to SFAA and to amateur astronomy in general? We have three yearly awards - the *Observer of the Year* Award, the *Service Award*, and the *Herman Fast* Award.

Observer of the Year is awarded to the club member who has made the most accomplishments, or who has shown the most enthusiasm as an active observer during 2003.

The *Service Award* is given to the club member who has provided the most noteworthy support for SFAA, or for amateur astronomy in general.

The *Herman Fast Award* honors the late Herman Fast, at one time the heart and soul of SFAA and one of the most dedicated observers ever. It is awarded for exceptional long term support of SFAA and amateur astronomy, both at and away from the telescope.

Finally, the Board also awards one Lifetime Membership each year to an especially deserving long-time member.

Each December the Board selects the recipients for these awards, and we are seeking nominations for 2004. If you have a name or two in mind, please let us know!

Regardless of whether you will be entering our year-end competitions, you will most certainly want to be on hand to watch the winners receive their prizes at the Annual Dinner Saturday, January 22. Even if you're not entering any contests, come out for a nice dinner with your fellow astronomers! This year, we will have Dr. Debra Fischer as our keynote speaker. Dr. Fischer is one of the world's leading researchers into extra-solar planets, and she's a fantastic speaker. You're silly if you miss this dinner.

Reservations are necessary, so get your confirmation in to our Treasurer, Lorrie Boen, soon. The Awards Dinner takes the place of a general meeting in January, and it's a great time to socialize with the rest of SFAA. Hope to see you there.

SAN FRANCISCO CITY STAR PARTIES

SATURDAY

DECEMBER 18, 5:00 P.M.

Join the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers (SFAA) in sharing the wonders of the night sky in San Francisco. Ask about your favorite constellation or astronomical phenomenon. Telescopes will be provided, or you may bring your own. The star parties will be held in the parking lot next to the *USS San Francisco* Memorial at Lands End on El Camino del Mar, just north of 48th and Pt. Lobos avenues, off of Geary Blvd. For more information about the program and weather conditions, please call the SFAA hotline at (415) 289-6636 or visit the SFAA website at <http://www.sfaa-astronomy.org/>

SFAA Annual Awards Dinner

Saturday, January 22, 2004

6:00 p.m. - No-host Bar 7:00 p.m. - Dinner

Basque Cultural Center . 599 Railroad Ave . South San Francisco
(650) 583-8091

Keynote Speaker

DR. DEBRA FISCHER

San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley

Dr. Debra Fischer is an astronomer at San Francisco State University and the University of California, Berkeley. Since 1997, she has been a member of the planet-hunting team led by Geoff Marcy and Paul Butler. Together, this team has discovered or co-discovered the majority of the over-100 known planets orbiting stars other than the Sun, making it the most prolific planet-hunting team in history. While Marcy and Butler observe primarily at Keck, Dr. Fischer conducts the planet search at nearby Lick Observatory, where she observes 400 stars with the 3-meter Shane Telescope and the 1-meter Coude Auxiliary Telescope.



Menu Choices

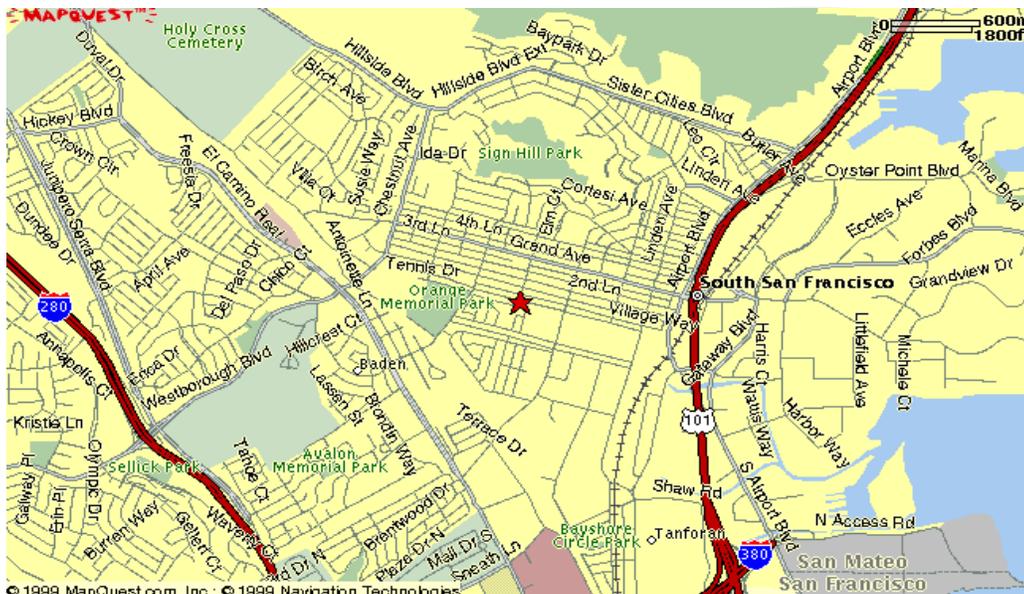
Prime Rib with Scalloped Potatoes & Vegetables (\$32.50)

Breast of Chicken Chasseur with Vegetables & Rice (\$23.50)

Vegetarian Pasta (\$20.50)

Soup, salad, bread & butter, ice cream and coffee included. Tax and gratuity included.

Please send a check or money order (made out to San Francisco Amateur Astronomers), along with your choice of entrée, to SFAA at P.O. Box 15097, San Francisco CA 94115 by **January 5, 2005**. **Any requests received after this date cannot be guaranteed.**



Basque Cultural Center From Highway 280: Take Highway 280 North to the Avalon Drive Exit in South San Francisco. Continue on Junipero Serra Blvd. to Westborough Blvd. Turn right and proceed to El Camino Real. Turn right; proceed to Orange Blvd. Turn left and proceed to Railroad Ave. Turn right. Continue to 599; turn right into parking lot.

From San Francisco, take Highway 280 South. From Highway 280, take the

Westborough Exit, following the same directions as above after Westborough Blvd.

Basque Cultural Center From Highway 101: Take Highway 101 North to South San Francisco Grand Avenue Exit, turn right. Turn right on East Grand Ave., then left on Grand Ave. Turn left on Magnolia and proceed for two blocks. Cross Railroad Ave. into the Basque Cultural Center parking lot.

From San Francisco, take Highway 101 South to the Grand Ave. Exit in South San Francisco. Continue on Grand Ave. Turn left on Magnolia and proceed two blocks. Cross Railroad Ave. into the Basque Cultural Center parking lot.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

<p>BOARD MEETING DECEMBER 8 FEBRUARY 8 7:00 P.M. Western Addition Library Scott & Geary Streets, San Francisco</p>	<p>SFAA GENERAL MEETING & LECTURE DECEMBER 15 JANUARY 22 – ANNUAL DINNER – 6:00 BASQUE CULTURAL CENTER 599 RAILROAD AVENUE, SO. SAN FRANCISCO</p> <p>FEBRUARY 16 7:00 P.M. DOORS OPEN – 7:30 P.M. ANNOUNCEMENTS 8:00 P.M. SPEAKER Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way (near 14th Street and Roosevelt)</p>
<p>CITY STAR PARTY DECEMBER 18 – SUNSET – 4:53 P.M. JANUARY 15 – 5:00 P.M. FEBRUARY 19 – 5:30 P.M.</p>	

Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2005, 7:00 p.m.

Silicon Valley Astronomy Lecture Series

Smithwick Theater, Foothill College, El Monte Road and Freeway 280, Los Altos Hills, California
Non-technical, illustrated talk

Astronomer Jeff Cuzzi, NASA's Ames Research Center

"Exploring the Lord of the Rings: Cassini at Saturn"

Free and open to the public. Parking on campus costs \$2.

Call the series hot-line at 650-949-7888 for more information.

After a 7-year journey, the Cassini spacecraft arrived at Saturn in July 2004, to start a 4-year tour of the planet, its icy moons, and its vast ring system. In January, a probe from Cassini called Huygens will explore the haze-shrouded giant moon called Titan (the only moon in the solar system to have a thick atmosphere.)

Dr. Cuzzi, one of the world's experts on ring systems around planets, will describe the Cassini-Huygens spacecraft and the plans for this fascinating mission. He will highlight the most exciting results from the first few months of Saturn system exploration, with an emphasis on what we are learning about the complex structure and composition of Saturn's ring system and how such a dramatic set of rings may have originated.

Jeff Cuzzi is a research scientist in the Space Science Division at NASA's Ames Research Center and serves as the Interdisciplinary Scientist for Rings and Dust on the Cassini-Huygens. He was a "ringleader" in planning all the ring images taken at Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune by the Voyager spacecraft in the 1980s. Among his other research interests, he studies the formation of the first large objects during the birth of our solar system.

No background in science will be required for this talk, which will interest everyone who enjoys the latest news of exploration at the frontiers of astronomy.

Co-sponsored by

* NASA Ames Research Center * The Foothill College Astronomy Program * The SETI Institute * The Astronomical Society of the Pacific

PORTABLE PLANETARIUM INSTRUCTOR OPENING

* * * * *

CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES MORRISON PLANETARIUM

The California Academy of Sciences is seeking an instructor for its outreach program, which involves traveling to elementary schools throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and offering PowerPoint presentations in classrooms and setting up and delivering presentations in a portable (16' inflatable) planetarium. The selected individual will be dealing with groups ranging from kindergarten up to grade 8 and should be able to point out the prominent stars and constellations for any season, locate and identify the planets, and discuss the night sky and its motions for approximately 40-45 minutes. A California driver's license is required and teaching/public speaking experience is highly desired. The portable dome apparatus includes components that weigh approximately 50 pounds, and the instructor should be able to maneuver the load into and out of a vehicle. This position pays \$20 per hour plus mileage from the Academy to the destination school and back. Hours are variable, depending on school requests, but generally are between 9 am and 2 pm.

Interested parties should send a letter of interest and resume to Margaret Boeger, Outreach Manager (mboeger@calacademy.org) or Bing Quock, Planetarium Chairman (bquock@calacademy.org) at the e-mail addresses listed or at California Academy of Sciences, 875 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Bing F. Quock
Acting Chairman, Morrison Planetarium
California Academy of Sciences
875 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Voice: (415) 321-8186
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Website: www.calacademy.org



San Francisco Amateur Astronomers

SFAA
P.O. Box 15097
San Francisco, CA 94115

BALLOT

2005 OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

_____ President	John Dillon <jdillon@randallmuseum.org>
_____ Vice-President	Steve Bryson <stevepur@mac.com>
_____ Secretary	Jennifer Myers <jenfrey@earthlink.net>
_____ Treasurer	_____ Stefanie Ulrey <SULrey1680@aol.com>
	_____ Lei Deng <undergroundcows@yahoo.com>
_____ Write-ins	_____
_____ Write-ins	_____

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

_____ Russell H. Cashin <rhplace@earthlink.net>	_____ Dirk Lammerts <dirk_lammerts@sbcglobal.net>
_____ Peter Schumacher <drschu@itsa.ucsf.edu>	_____ Nancy Cox
_____ Jorge Morales <volare1@prodigy.net>	_____ Michael Portuesi <portuesi@jotabout.com>
_____ Kenneth Frank <kennethfrank@planitarium.net>	_____ Alternate 1 - Don Charles <Don.Charles@sun.com>
_____ Robert English <renglish@bogusnet.net>	_____ Alternate 2 - _____
_____ Write-ins	_____
_____ Write-ins	_____

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS

The club members listed above are candidates for Officers and Board of Directors of SFAA for the year 2004. Please vote for a total of four officers and a total of seven board or directors including write-ins. **Voting for more than four officers or for more than seven board members per ballot will invalidate the entire ballot.** Family memberships must submit a separate ballot for each voting family member. Write-ins for officers must include the candidate's name and office for which he or she is nominated.

All candidates, including write-ins, must have committed to attending at least seven board meetings and may not miss more than two consecutive meetings during the calendar year for which they are nominated.

The seven board of directors' candidates who receive the highest number of votes will become regular board members. The two candidates receiving the next highest number of votes will become alternate board members. The new Officers and Board of Directors will be installed at the Annual Awards Dinner in January 2004.

*Please return your ballots to: SFAA Secretary, at the address above. **Ballots must be received no later than the general meeting on Wednesday, December 17, 2003.***



MT TAM PROGRAMS OVER FOR THE SEASON

Tinka Ross

Our public programs on Mt Tam are over for this year. It was a rocky season, to put it mildly, with the worst observing since the inception of the programs in 1989. We started out with a cold March, then a windy May and our last three observing sessions, Aug-Oct were completely fogged out. The Rock Spring parking area was selected for observing way back in the early 70's by the then active Tamalpais Astronomical Society because the normal weather pattern finds the fog stopping just below that elevation. As it blocks out the city lights and lets us observe a naked-eye Milky Way, we usually welcome the summer fog. But not this year! Fog rolled in, all the way to the Mountain Theatre itself. We can just hope for a return to the old pattern next season.

Many thanks are due to the dedicated members who volunteered to be in charge of the SFAA observing area and monitored the gate after the public left. Many more thanks go to those of you who shared your instruments and knowledge with the public. The club is offering a valuable public service and sometimes it seems like a lot of work with no results. But this isn't the case. I get many calls and emails of appreciation from people who have first discovered the wonders of the universe by looking through a telescope at one of our Star Parties. And we have become an integral part of the science curriculum for several colleges and schools in the area. The SFAA deserves a lot of credit for a job well done!

Now is the time to give me feedback to help improve our programs. Are there particular speakers or topics that should be considered? Also, if you would like a 2005 Astronomical Pocket Diary they are now available. These little books are invaluable for planning your observing sessions, and all the astronomical events listed are calculated for the Bay Area. Just send a check for \$11 (\$10 diary plus \$1 postage and handling) payable to MTIA to me at Tinka Ross, 89 Dominican Drive, San Rafael, CA 94901 and one will be in the return mail to you. 50% goes directly to the Mt Tam Astronomy Programs and is a tax-deductible donation.

Have a great winter and I look forward to observing with you all on the Mountain come spring.

Tinka Ross
Mt Tam Astronomy Program Coordinator



SFAA 2005 CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 15 CSP TELESCOPE CLINIC 4 PM
- 15 CITY STAR PARTY 5 PM
- 22 SFAA ANNUAL DINNER 7 PM

FEBRUARY

- 9 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 16 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM
- 19 CSP TELESCOPE CLINIC 4:30 PM
- 19 CITY STAR PARTY 5:30 PM

MARCH

- 9 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 16 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM
- 19 CSP TELESCOPE CLINIC 5 PM
- 19 CITY STAR PARTY 6 PM
- 19 MOUNT TAM PUBLIC STAR PARTY

APRIL

- 13 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 16 MOUNT TAM TELESCOPE CLINIC
- 16 MOUNT TAM PUBLIC STAR PARTY
- 20 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM

MAY

- 11 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 14 MOUNT TAM TELESCOPE CLINIC
- 14 MOUNT TAM PUBLIC STAR PARTY
- 18 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM

JUNE

- 8 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 11 MOUNT TAM TELESCOPE CLINIC
- 11 MOUNT TAM PUBLIC STAR PARTY
- 15 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM

JULY

- 9 MOUNT TAM TELESCOPE CLINIC
- 9 MOUNT TAM PUBLIC STAR PARTY
- 13 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 20 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM

AUGUST

- 10 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 13 MOUNT TAM TELESCOPE CLINIC
- 13 MOUNT TAM PUBLIC STAR PARTY
- 17 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM

SEPTEMBER

- 14 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 10 MOUNT TAM TELESCOPE CLINIC
- 10 MOUNT TAM PUBLIC STAR PARTY
- 21 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM

OCTOBER

- 8 MOUNT TAM TELESCOPE CLINIC
- 8 MOUNT TAM PUBLIC STAR PARTY
- 12 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 15 CSP TELESCOPE CLINIC 5:30 PM
- 15 CITY STAR PARTY 6:30 PM
- 19 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM

NOVEMBER

- 9 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 12 CSP TELESCOPE CLINIC 4 PM
- 12 CITY STAR PARTY 5 PM
- 16 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM

DECEMBER

- 10 CSP TELESCOPE CLINIC 4 PM
- 10 CITY STAR PARTY 5 PM
- 14 BOARD MEETING 7 PM
- 21 GENERAL MEETING –
ANNOUNCEMENTS 7:30 PM
SPEAKER 8 PM

CURRENTLY UNSCHEDULED:

- YOSEMITE TRIP
- ANNUAL PICNIC

Founded in September 1952, the San Francisco Amateur Astronomers (SFAA) is an association of people who share a common interest in astronomy and other related sciences. Our membership consists of people from all walks of life, educational backgrounds and ages. Many SFAA members own their own telescopes; some have been made by hand in local telescope-making classes and vary in size from 6 to 25 inches.

Treasurer, SFAA, POB 15097, San Francisco CA 94115

make checks payable to **San Francisco Amateur Astronomers** and mail to:

- \$10 enclosed, youth/student membership
- \$25 enclosed, individual membership
- \$30 enclosed, family or foreign membership
- \$40 enclosed, institutional membership
- \$75 enclosed, supporting membership

Select one category:

Email address:

Address:

Name: Telephone:

San Francisco Amateur Astronomers Membership Application

San Francisco Amateur Astronomers
P.O. Box 15097
San Francisco, CA 94115



Information Hotline: (415) 289-6636

Web Page: www.sfaa-astronomy.org

Sharing the Wonders of the Universe

Has your membership expired? Your mailing label includes the month and year through which your membership is paid. If it is past, your membership has expired and this may be your last issue.