

First Light Lite

July 1, 2020

Jim Lynch – Editor

Message from the CCAS President

As there was an interim edition of First Light Lite two weeks ago, this issue will be somewhat abbreviated in content. There are a few new announcements to make, so please take the time to scan this newsletter if you can!

Werner Schmidt

During this week, Werner Schmidt's son Paul has been performing the hard task of sorting through his father's belongings. In doing so, he has generously donated an assortment of amateur astronomy gear to CCAF/CCAS and radio amateur gear to a local ham group we contacted. We thank Paul and his family (and in memoriam, Werner) for this generous contribution, which will certainly be put to good use.

Officer and Trustee Election (July 2nd Meeting)

To date, we have the current officers of CCAS willing to stand for their offices again (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) and that Mike Hunter has put his name forward for CCAF Trustee (the Secretary position). Nominations can still be made "from the floor" at the virtual meeting tomorrow night, if anyone wishes to make one. If there are no new nominations, we will just vote on the entire slate, barring objections.

Invitations to our virtual meetings

To date, we have been inviting people to the CCAS virtual meetings (via providing a link and a password through email the morning of the meeting) using a recent members list, and also by creating a list of people on this FLL mailing list who have contacted me (at jlynch@whoi.edu) stating that they wanted to log into

the meetings. The offer to be put on our “meeting login list” remains open, and anyone who is interested, but has not received a previous invitation only needs to contact me and express interest. We have some *excellent* speakers enlisted for the entire rest of the year (see below), and plenty of room in our virtual lecture hall for a bigger audience! Please consider this offer!

Local School Interactions

The coronavirus has made the local school situation messy, to understate the situation brilliantly. So, our interactions with the schools has also been problematic, in that we must wait until they have made plans before we can make joint plans with them. All I can say at this point is that we are in contact with the school personnel about a number of programs, and will keep the CCAS membership informed as to what transpires via this newsletter. We remain firm in our desire to help our local students (and teachers and administrators) through some difficult times.

Virtual Star Parties

We are still working towards having this capability (which might even remain useful in a post-Covid world), and have acquired a webcam, tripod, and the other small equipment needed to start on this road. Telescope adjustments and this virtual capability are on the work agenda for this summer, and all we need is some clear weather and a few hours of our volunteers.

Miscellaneous

A few last items, before getting to our coming speakers! Two smaller items, which were mentioned previously, are: 1) the CCAS website is still being redone, and 2) there will be no dues this year, as the pandemic has greatly attenuated our program. Also, we are working on both social media and traditional media advertising resumptons in the not-too-distant future. What would have been easy in the past has become a bit harder, but we are not giving up on improving things!

Coming Speakers (Summer)

The speakers we have lined up for this summer and fall are really a stellar (pun totally intended) group, and I hope that you will avail yourself of the opportunity to hear them!

July 2nd, 2020

Speaker: Brother Guy Consolmagno, Director Vatican Observatory

Topic: “Astronomical Ideas That Were Almost Correct” (an update of his 2014 Sagan Medal talk)

I suspect many people are familiar with Brother Consolmagno’s book “Turn Left at Orion,” which he co-authored with Dan Davis. In addition to his prolific public writings, Brother Consolmagno is well known for his research into asteroids and meteorites. Brother Consolmagno is Director of the Vatican Observatory, and his friend and CCAS member Marinna Martini has supplied this link to his CV:

<http://www.vaticanobservatory.va/content/specolavaticana/en/who-are-we-/staff/guy-j--consolmagno--s-j---1-.html>

Abstract: Astronomy is more than just observing; it's making sense of those observations. A good theorist needs to blend a knowledge of what's been observed, with a good imagination... and no fear of being wrong. Ptolemy in ancient Rome, the medieval bishops Oresme and Cusa, the 19th century astronomers Schiaparelli and Pickering, all rose to the challenge; and they were all *almost* correct. Which is to say, they were wrong... sometimes hilariously, sometimes heartbreakingly so. What lessons can we take from these discarded images of the universe?

August 6th, 2020

Speaker: Dr. Antony Stark, Senior Astronomer HSCfA

Topic: Astronomy Can Save Your Life: The Search for Near-Earth Objects

One of our favorite speakers over the past few years is Dr. Tony Stark, who has given great talks on topics such as “Imaging Black Holes”, “The Cosmic Background”, and “Star Formation in the Milky Way and Beyond.” While Tony is

lamenting not being able to stop down at the Cape for a summer vacation for the first time in 25 years, he is still agreeable to giving a remote talk, and we look forward to hearing of his latest adventures.

Abstract: There's a lot of stuff floating around in the Solar System, and occasionally some of it crashes into the Earth. People worry about the dinosaur-killer events, but those only happen every 100,000,000 years or so. Much more common --- once a decade? ---are the city-killer sized events like the near-miss Chelyabinsk meteor. These 20-meter sized asteroids can now be detected and tracked, although current instrumentation has limitations and is still somewhat hit-or-miss. The same instrumentation network also detected the weird interstellar "asteroid" Oumuamua.