



Upcoming Events

by
 Mike Brooks
 GVO Operations Manager

For the coming months we're looking for volunteers for the following activities...

The observatory is beginning to gear up for the our coming season. For the next coming months our volunteer needs are limited until our full season hits... Every Friday & Saturday night from June 17th through September 17th.

Thursday April 21 at 7:30 PM - Assist with Dr. Taylor's WSC class. We'll need a dome operator and two outside scope operators.

Saturday April 30 at 1:00 PM - Clean-up at the Observatory

During the month of May we'll be setting up some evening training sessions to better prepare the volunteers to use the small scopes, large scope, its software, and the video camera assist. I'm planning on setting up training session for the following evenings at 7:00 pm (they're Friday's & Saturdays) May 20, 21, 27, 28 & June 3rd. Which of these dates might suit your availability?

If you know what Fridays & Saturdays you'll be available in June & July please pass that information on to me and also feel free to indicate what volunteer tasks you'd like to take on. Maybe some of you would like to take on new challenges.

Astronomy Volunteers Needed

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The observatory is interested in developing a well-trained group of volunteers, who have general astronomy awareness and are capable of operating small amateur telescopes for public viewing. If you are interested in learning about the night sky, how to identify constellations, locate basic deep-sky objects (star clusters, nebula and galaxies), how to operate one of the observatory's small telescopes (or even the large 30" telescope) and have a hidden passion for astronomy, then we, at GVO, would like to provide you with the free training necessary to accomplish these goals (we will be setting up training session, based on member's interest, during the months of May and June 2011).

Additionally, GVO is always interested in developing working relationships with academically trained astronomers and well-informed amateur astronomers who would like to assist in the creation and delivery of public presentations and astronomy related lectures. Finally, in addition to these types of volunteers, the observatory is also in need of people who would like to serve as greeters, assist in landscaping development and facility upkeep, and assist with public relations tasks. For more information on these opportunities please contact the observatory's Operation's Manager, Professor Mike Brooks at mbrooks@western.edu or give him a call at home (970) 641-6181.

www.gunnisonobservatory.org

Gunnison Valley Observatory Board Meeting
Thursday; April 21, 2011; 8:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

AGENDA

1. Call meeting to order and welcome guests
2. Approval of minutes (March 10, 2011 minutes)
3. Financial Report: GVO Board indicated in March it wanted to review Startup budget in April
4. Report from Operations Manager:
 - a. Administration of facility:
 - i. As Operations Manager, resignation from GVO Board, so replacement Board member can be named
 - ii. Computer Technology Opportunities: brief update on ongoing discussion
 - b. Physical operations:
 - i. GVO brochures and posters (Mike)
 - ii. Restocking GVO gift shop (Mike, others)
 - iii. Concrete pads; trenching, lighting before June 17 (Mike, others)
 - iv. Site cleanup and landscaping plans; (Mike, Chris, others) v. Season schedule
 - c. Volunteer Coordination: Volunteer recruitment and training
 - d. Subcommittee reports:
 - i. “Young Astronomer’s Day Camp”: report from subcommittee on planning meeting held March 31st
 - ii. GVO sign on Highway 50: update
 - iii. Grant subcommittee report: Car Club grant application submitted
 - iv. Membership Committee: report
 - v. Gunnison Valley Newsletter: Please send articles for next edition of GVO newsletter to Hughes Glantzberg at hughes@glantzberg.us
5. Other business
6. Adjournment

At-Large Board Member

by
Laura Easley

Your at-large Board Member, roaming around out of state, dropped by Houston Space Center's Visitor's Center in November. It's been several years since I was there, and it has changed a lot. There are exhibits of all the astronauts and cosmonauts uniforms, a cutaway display of the International Space Station's interior whose guide will select 2 or 3 children from the audience to come up and actually get velcro'd into the sleeping unit and sit in the bathroom cubicle! Hey, what about us "grown-ups" who have followed the space missions from Mercury on? A small standing area gives you an IMAX experience of a launch from base of the platform, with the steam and wind but without the heat of the rocket engines! Another theater and speaker gives you the feel of being in Mission Control. I did miss out on the actual bus tour of the Space Center itself, but I stocked up on freeze-dried ice cream sandwiches and Mission badges. My budget does not allow for Moon rocks, but there

were exhibits of the lab and research on them!

In January my kids took me over to Gulfport (to the casinos!) but along the highway, I was surprised to see the rest area was also the Welcome Center for the John C. Stennis Space Center, where all the NASA rocket engines are tested. The rest area has a lunar lander (up on pylon stilts, no viewing the interior). A tour bus takes you to the actual Stennisphere Visitor's Center, which has an interactive globe of the world, and many other exhibits, which I will have to go back again to see.

You know another space shuttle has been retired. Rumors are that the Kansas Cosmosphere in Hutchinson has been bidding to get one for their displays. Hmm, haven't been there for, oh..20 years or so. About time I went back to see what's new!

Holmes and Dr. Watson were going camping. They pitched their tent under the stars and went to sleep.

Sometime in the middle of the night Holmes woke Watson up and said: Watson, look up at the stars, and tell me what you see?

Watson replied: I see millions and millions of stars.

Holmes said: And what do you deduce from that?

Watson replied: Well, if there are millions of stars, and if even a few of those have planets, quite likely there are some planets like earth out there. And if there are a few planets like earth out there, there might also be life.

And Holmes said: Watson, you idiot, it means that somebody stole our tent!!

Camping with the Stars

by
Gail Davidson

One of the goals of the Gunnison Valley Observatory is to educate and excite the young people in our Valley about astronomy. To that end, a GVO "Young Astronomers Day Camp" is being developed and will be held this summer at the observatory. Young

Campers will enjoy a day at the observatory and will be exposed to astronomic concepts ranging from our own planet and moon to far away galaxies. A Subcommittee has been formed and has met to develop an astronomy curriculum and hands-on learning activities. If you are interested in volunteering for this day-long fun and educational activity, please contact Gail at gail@cityofgunnison-co.gov.

Gunnison Valley Observatory Board Meeting March 10, 2011, Draft Meeting Minutes

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair Bill Powell at 8:31 A.M.

Silent Roll Call: Present: Bill Powell, Mike Brooks, Stu Ferguson, Bill Maier, Daryl Cunningham, Brant Porter, Chris Madison, Gail Davidson.

Approval of Minutes of February 10, 2011, Board Meeting:

Brooks moved and Madison seconded the motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Ferguson abstained from the vote as he was not in attendance at that meeting. Motion approved by unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Financials: there was no report from Bookie due to tax season. Cunningham reported we have received the \$1000 contribution from Thompson Creek Metals for printing of the brochures and posters. Cunningham then reported he has just been paying the routine off-season bills. The lease payment was paid to the County. An invoice is forthcoming from the County for the facility liability insurance. The Ted Violett restricted funds have been placed in a CD at Community Banks. Brooks asked about the Gunnison Valley Astronomic Society (GVAS) funds. Cunningham stated that it is identified and there is approximately \$1,300 in funds. Brooks suggested that the season start-up budget be reviewed at the April meeting. The County is donating \$1000 in-kind service funds for the electric work. Ferguson stated the City Manager has indicated the City will help with this project as well.

GVO Brochures and Posters: Brooks reported the brochures are being printed at B&B Printers again. They kept the same price as last year and they will "throw in" the printing of the poster. They should be done by the end of the month. Jane Chaney will send out the brochures with the Tourism Association information. Davidson asked Brooks to email her the electronic brochure so that she can send it out with public service announcements.

Operations Manager Sub-Committee Report: Cunningham reported the subcommittee has met and has been working on the job description. The GVO has growing pains which is a good thing. Mike has been doing a lot over the years and we are now at a point we need an operations manager. We have a benefactor who will underwrite the position for the next three years. The sub-committee developed a job description for the position. This was passed out to the Board Members. Brooks discussed the division of responsibilities and intent, the oversight duties and volunteer duties. Discussion ensued. Brant Porter stated that in the volunteer experience at the NPS, if a volunteer doesn't show up, the volunteer coordinator has to have contingencies in place to cover those tasks. Porter stated it is good to have sub-committees for the various tasks and the operations manager would make sure their actions mesh and work together. Porter stated that as the volunteer coordinator at the NPS it doesn't take 100% of his time. Ferguson stated it is the intent that not everything gets dumped on the operations manager. Brooks stated we are in a transitional phase and we need to flow and work into the future. In the first year we will find out what's working and what needs to be re-worked. This is a framework that is a living document. It will be modified over time in the next few years. Ferguson stated that more volunteers need to be recruited and trained to prevent burnout by the operations manager. The fact that we have a very generous benefactor for the next three years really takes the pressure off for fundraising to pay for the position and will allow for the position to develop over those three years. Powell stated he took the document to Bookie and discussed the status of a stipend or honorarium for the position. There is no specific tie to payment per hours. He then stated that this is a transition, baby steps over the next three years. Most non-profits have very active Boards as well. Powell then suggested that perhaps we have a separate sub-committee specifically for fundraising. Brooks stated that we don't want

the operations manager to preclude board member involvement or to be the sole fundraising person. The role will be refined in-route.

Madison moved and Ferguson seconded the motion to approve the job description as submitted with the understanding the document will be revised and refined through the season. Discussion ensued and Porter suggested breaking out 2 to 3 major tasks then placing the other tasks as sub-bullets under the major duties. The three major duties will be: administration of the facility; physical operations management; and volunteer coordination. After much discussion, the first and second of the motion were agreeable to the amendment. Call for the vote. Unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Cunningham suggested the need to advertise the position and get the hiring process underway. Discussion ensued. Brooks stated he is willing to take on the position this year and is comfortable with the process. Ferguson moved and Madison seconded the motion to appoint Mike Brooks as Operations Manager for the 2011 Season and will serve at the will of the Board of Directors. Unanimous affirmative voice vote. The Board thanked Mike.

Miscellaneous:

Day Camp: Davidson passed out an proposal for a Young Astronomers Day Camp to be held this summer at the Observatory. The purpose of the camp is to further the astronomy education for children mission of the facility. Discussion ensued. Ferguson stated his daughter Laura, who is also a science teacher at a NSF-sponsored school, has been to Space Camp, and is interested in volunteering to assist with the camp. Brooks moved and Cunningham seconded the motion to approve the idea for a Young Astronomer's Day Camp and to appoint a sub-committee to work on planning the event. Unanimous affirmative voice vote. Brooks, Davidson, Ferguson, Powell, Madison and Maier agreed to serve on the sub-committee. Porter informed the Board he has some educational resources from Goddard and NASA that might be used for curriculum development. The sub-committee will meet on March 31st at 8:30am at City Hall.

Landscaping: Madison, landscaping sub-committee chair, explained that he spoke with Eric McPhail of the Extension Office and native grasses should be seeded on the berm. Brooks moved and Maier seconded the motion to approve the purchase of grass seed from the BLM for reseeding the berm. Unanimous affirmative voice vote.

Telescope Donation: Ferguson informed the Board that Ann Ashe has a 6" telescope with tracking capabilities and all of the accessories that she would like to donate to the GVO. The Board will prepare a thank you and donation information for Mrs. Ashe.

Computer Opportunity: Ferguson informed the Board that we have a computer technology opportunity. His business has a donated server from a local firm that could be used to centralize GVO data storage. It can also be the host email server and could potentially host the website as well. We could use the info@gunnisonobservatory.org email address as well. Ferguson will work closely with Kevin McGruther on information for the website.

Chair Powell called for additional items and hearing none the meeting adjourned at 9:39 A.M.

Board President, William Powell

Board Secretary, Gail A. Davidson

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We're on the Internet at
<http://gunnisonobservatory.org>

Don't miss out on the excitement of seeing our universe up close and personal! Be part of the fun, learning new things, sharing the joy of astronomy with others, and helping make the Gunnison Valley Observatory the premiere community observatory. Renew your membership now!

Cosmic Corner

April 18 - Full Moon. The Moon will be directly opposite the Earth from the Sun and will be fully illuminated as seen from Earth. This phase occurs at 02:44 UTC. This full moon was known by early Native American tribes as the Full Pink Moon because it marked the appearance of the moss pink, or wild ground phlox, which is one of the first spring flowers. This year, it is also known as the Paschal Full Moon because it is the first full moon of the spring season.

April 21, 22 - Lyrids Meteor Shower. The Lyrids are an average shower, usually producing about 20 meteors per hour at their peak. These meteors can produce bright dust trails that last for several seconds. The shower usually peaks on April 21 & 22, although some meteors can be visible from April 16 - 25.

May 3 - New Moon. The Moon will be directly between the Earth and the Sun and will not be visible from Earth. This phase occurs at 06:51 UTC.

May 5, 6 - Eta Aquarids Meteor Shower. The Eta Aquarids are a light shower, usually producing about 10 meteors per hour at their peak. The shower's peak

usually occurs on May 5 & 6, however viewing should be good on any morning from May 4 - 7. A thin, crescent moon will set early in the evening leaving dark skies for what could be an good show. The radiant point for this shower will be in the constellation Aquarius. Best viewing is usually to the east after midnight, far from city lights.

May 7 - Astronomy Day Part 1. Astronomy Day is an annual event intended to provide a means of interaction between the general public and various astronomy enthusiasts, groups and professionals. The theme of Astronomy Day is "Bringing Astronomy to the People," and on this day astronomy and stargazing clubs and other organizations around the world will plan special events. You can find out about special local events by contacting your local astronomy club or planetarium. You can also find more about Astronomy Day by checking the Web site for the Astronomical League.

May 11 - Conjunction of Mercury, Venus, and Jupiter. The three planets will form a 2-degree long vertical line in the early morning sky. The planet Mars will also be visible nearby. Look to the east near sunrise.