

Focal Point



March and April 2009

Milwaukee Astronomical Society

Messier Marathon Paul Gruener

If you are interested in getting some fresh air and seeing the stars (Saturn, galaxies, and nebulas), feel free to join me at the Milwaukee Astronomical Society Messier Marathon March 27th. On this night some club members will be trying to track down as many deep sky objects as possible. Others, like me, will be out for a good night of observing. The location is in the southern unit of the Kettle Moraine State Park. It is a wonderful lake side location. If the sky is clear I plan to be there. Feel free to join me.

Here are the details:
MAS Messier Marathon
Friday, March 27, 2009

Ottawa Lake Recreational Area

Part of the Kettle Moraine Southern Unit
The park is 6 miles south of Dousman

Notes: If you do not have an annual state park sticker, you will need to purchase a day pass at the park entrance. I expect to be on site before sunset to setup. You do not need to bring a telescope to observe. I am happy to share the view through my 10" scope. Others that are not working the marathon are often happy to do the same. After entering the park, turn left and follow the road to the parking lot with the boat launch. We will set up in this parking lot. You are welcome to stay as long as you wish, even all night.

Messier Marathon directions:

From Milwaukee:

- I-94 West to STH 67
- STH 67 South (Left) to CTH ZZ
- CTH ZZ West (Right) 200 yards

2009 Schedule of Events

March 20, 2009 8:00pm

Horwitz Planetarium

Located in the
Retzer Nature Center
S14 W28167 Madison Street
Waukesha WI 53188

March 27 to 28, 2009

Messier Marathon

Ottawa Lake

April 2 to 5, 2009

100 Hours of Astronomy

May 2, 2009

Astronomy Day 2009

July 24 to 26, 2009

WOW 2009

September 11 to 13, 2009

MAS Campout

December 4, 2009

MAS Holiday Party

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Decline of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society

Dan Yanko

Hello MAS,

My name is Dan Yanko and I have been a member of the MAS for 26 years. There has been a decline in membership of the MAS for many years. Our hobby of Amateur Astronomy is on the decline. There are many reasons for this decline. Some reasons for the decline in Astronomy we have no control over but there are many things we do have control over.

If we did a self audit on ourselves I would say we have to make some changes on how we do business for the MAS to survive. We are running out of time! We are a club that has been lucky enough to have had plenty of finances for the past twenty some years. But we have neglected our membership for too long. We have taken the fun out of the MAS. Morale is at an all time low. We have made the MAS boring! We have spent thousands of dollars on expensive equipment that only a few members can use but we have neglected the member who just wants to find a galaxy or globular cluster with a pair of binoculars. We need to cultivate these members and make Astronomy fun again so they come back again and again bringing their families and friends.

We need to make some positive changes at the MAS in 2009. We will be having many new officers and board members in 2009. It is up to all of us to support them and to make the MAS a fun observing club again. It is our survival. Here are some ideas that need to be discussed at the Board meetings to get the membership out to the MAS events. We need to brainstorm and get suggestions from the MAS members and Board of Directors. Then we need to act on the best ideas. "JUST DO IT!"

- We need to expand membership. Each member should mentor and recruit someone to join the MAS. If 50% of members mentored and recruited one member each, we would see a big increase in the membership.
- Sell and promote the MAS at all the Open Houses and club events every chance we can. Improvement is greatly needed in that area. We have to sell ourselves.
- We must change our attitudes. We must present ourselves in a professional and positive manner. Negative attitudes are not welcome. We must have a "CAN DO" attitude and show that we are accessible for the membership as well as friendly to observe with.
- We need to retain present members before they all leave. What have we done lately for the present members? How can we transform the MAS into more fun for members and families?
- Schedule Saturday work days to fix up the MAS. There are many small projects that need to get done to improve the MAS for the membership.
- Saturday key holder nights are member's nights. Key holders must be there for new members. Let's get the membership out there on Saturday nights. Everyone who is at the MAS on a Saturday night should welcome new members and show them around. Give them a tour of the heavens.
- Every member should volunteer at least 5 hours a year

at the MAS. Members keep track of their own time. Just come to an Open House or Saturday work day whenever you can. Those are some of the best ways to meet other members and get to know the equipment. You would be surprised how much of a positive impact that can be for the club and the Membership.

- We must fill the Committee Chairs to keep members active and have some ownership in the decision making process. The Committees will help make the MAS a better Astronomy Club.
- Show new members the basics about Astronomy. Do not talk down to them or above their heads. Also, keep in mind that the MAS can be intimidating to perspective members in that, because we observe in the dark, faces may not be clearly seen or remembered and the layout of the observatory and scopes can be confusing at first. Green lasers and telrads are great teaching tools for new members. Show them a few Constellations and how to find some easy objects like a galaxy or globular cluster right next to that bright star there and they will become hooked on Astronomy. Basic Astronomy 101.
- Join the Astronomical League immediately. Money is not an issue. Many members want to get involved in Binocular Messier lists, Messier lists, Hershel lists etc. The Astronomical League has a lot to offer and joining them can only benefit the MAS members.
- We need to look at long term plans for the MAS hill. Repair what we presently have or replace the Quonset hut. Do we want another dark sky location? Will the majority of the membership benefit from another site or just a few members? That is a long range plan. That decision must be made in the best interest for the entire membership.
- We used to have three campouts a year, now we are down to one. Why not have a member's campout on the MAS grounds for a summer weekend? Expand to some other site as interest improves.
- We schedule Open Houses for the public to observe at and we get three volunteers to show 200 people the night sky. We must have more volunteers to help out!
- Rotate Board meetings at member's houses to improve camaraderie. Have meetings on Sunday evenings.

These are just some ideas I have. I am sure the MAS members have more suggestions to improve the club. Let us collect these new ideas to make some positive changes at the MAS in 2009. The International Year of Astronomy.

I am writing this letter to promote a positive change at the MAS. Some members do a lot for the Milwaukee Astronomical Society, while other members do little or nothing. We all need to be pulling in the same direction to promote the Milwaukee Astronomical Society. If we do nothing then our members will continue to leave. There are many other Astronomy Clubs in Wisconsin.

Dan Yanko

Note from the Editor

This is a "Letter to the Editor" and has been printed as such, this letter is the opinion of Mr. Dan Yanko and is not printed as an indication of the opinion of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society, if you have a letter to the editor please feel free to send it in for publication. Thank you, The Editor

Saturday Night Key Holder

On Saturday nights the MAS opens its New Berlin facilities to all its members. If interested in using an observatory on the following nights, the following key holders will be on hand. Please contact them in advance to ensure access.

March

28 Scott Jamieson 262-8960119

April

4 Lee Keith 414-425-2331

11 Scott Laskowski 414-421-3517

18 Bob Manske 608-849-5287

25 Jill Roberts 414-587-9422

May

2 Terry Ross 262-784-2093

9 Gerry Samolyk 414-592-9051

16 Becca Setzer 262-707-7478

23 Tom Schmidtkunz 414-352-1674

30 Neil Simmons 262-889-2039

June

6 Dan Yanko 262-255-3482

If there are any new members or current members of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society that are interested in doing some observing at the MAS with binoculars or just to learn the Constellations of the evening sky let me know and I will set up a time when to do this. I am available on some Saturday and Sunday evenings. Send me an email to danheleny@aol.com or call me at home at 262-255-3482 and we can set up a time.

One of the best ways to get acquainted with the night sky is to attend the MAS Open Houses and introduce your selves to members who have a scope out. They will be glad to show you many objects in the night sky. That is one of the best ways to network with club members and learn the night sky at the same time.

Another great way to get to know the Milwaukee Astronomical Society is to call the key holder and let them know you want to go to the MAS on a Saturday night. Different members are key holders every Saturday evening. Give them a call and ask the key holder to show you around the grounds and also the evening sky. That is also another way to network and get to know your way around the Milwaukee Astronomical Society.

Dan Yanko

MAS Officers / Staff

President:

Steve Diesso (262) 641-0331

Vice President:

Rebecca Setzer (262) 707-7478

Treasurer:

Brian Ganiere (414) 961-8745

Secretary:

Henry Gerner (414) 774-9194

Observatory Dir:

Gerry Samolyk (414) 529-9051

Newsletter Ed:

Rebecca Setzer (262) 707-7478

MAS Observatory:

NOW WORKING (262) 542-9071

Loaner Telescopes

These telescopes are available to members for local use.

Scott Jamieson (Waukesha)
(262) 896-0119 8"

Paul Borchardt (MAS site)
(262) 781-0169 6" & 8"

MAS Membership is open to anyone interested in enriching their knowledge of Astronomy and related topics.

Yearly Membership Dues:

Student (under 18) \$13

Resident (Milwaukee and adjacent counties resident) Non-resident

Individual \$36 Individual \$23

Family \$42 Family \$27

Members can get subscriptions to *Sky & Telescope* (©) and *Astronomy* (©) at a club discount.

For more information contact:

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