



West Valley Astronomy Club

Monthly Meeting Minutes

April 2, 2024

Meeting: Beardsley Recreation Center - 12755 W Beardsley Rd, Sun City West, AZ 85375 - #1 Chicory Room

Board Members & Volunteers Present: Bob Randle (President), Paul Bleikamp (Vice President), Bob Colvert (Treasurer & Program Director), John Hiatt (Outreach Director), Janie Randle (Membership Director), Larry Matney (Star Party Coordinator), Bud and Betsy Johnson (Secretary), along with volunteers, members and visitors (= 41 total present).

1 - Opening Remarks: The regular meeting of WVAC was called to order at 7:00 pm by President Bob Randle. Bob Introduced himself and thanked everyone in attendance.

First Speaker: Bob Colvert introduced tonight's speaker, Dr. Joseph Lazio, Interplanetary Scientist at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology; via NASA Space Network YouTube Channel
Topic: Science from Across the Solar System and Beyond: NASA's Deep Space Network (DSN)
Most of the images of other planets and space objects have been transmitted to us through one or more antennas of NASA's Deep Space Network (DSN). There are three complex networks of antennas across the world; they broadcast information and guide spacecraft to their destinations across the Solar System, send them commands for actions to take upon reaching their destinations, and receive data back from them. The Voyager 1 Spacecraft's signals are very faint; it takes a big antenna (70 meters) to receive Voyager's signal. The information gathered by the missions will also be used for planetary defense, by predicting future orbits of dangerous meteor strikes.
There is another antenna being constructed in Goldstone, California. Doctor Lazio said that the Deep Space Network this week is enabling about 36 missions of exploration. There are also other countries exploring Outer Space.
Dr. Lazio said that asteroids are likely to have moons. The asteroid Apophis (380 meters in diameter) can be seen across the sky by the naked eye in May, passing within 30,000 km of Earth.

Second Speaker: John Hiatt, Outreach Director
Topic: How a Three-year-old Changed My Mind About Astronomy Phone Apps!
John used to dislike seeing cell phones at astronomy gatherings, until this year, seeing his three-year-old niece in the Chicago area being so excited about an astronomy App, "Sky View Lite." Gianna was thrilled by the depictions of the constellations in the sky, particularly of animals! John mentioned several apps, saying "Sky Safari Eclipse 2024" may be best; you can get a promo version for 99 cents. John has changed his mind and now thinks cell phone apps and cameras help with the public's interest in astronomy. He would like to explore his new idea, "Sidewalk Astronomy," to get people to experience the thrill of seeing the moon or planets or nebulae through a telescope, and would like to have input from members for venues and ideas. So, if you have an idea where a telescope viewing could be done, where people gather in this area, please let him know your ideas!

3 - Future Meetings: The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 7 pm. This will be the last meeting until September, and it will be a picnic and telescope workshop; so bring your telescope; we'll set them up outside. And share eclipse stories and pictures; bring those, too!

6 - Other business: Bob Randle gave an update: Peggy Ann Tweedy is in rehab/recovery, but did not have cancer; good news and best wishes for a smooth recovery, Peggy Ann! Deb Bleikamp has volunteered to take care of the Hospitality task for April and May. Thank you, Deb!

The door prizes tonight were five NASA calendars.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Minutes submitted by Bud and Betsy Johnson, via email on **April 2, 2024.**

Minutes approved by: _____ Date _____

Bob Randle (WVAC President)