

Notes From The President

by Mae Smith

March has resulted in considerable behind the scenes work for TAAA. Starry Messengers (SMSIG) has been at work on educational activities such as evaluating projects for the annual science fair and making sure that TAAA this year continued to give awards to students for astronomy science projects even though everything was conducted virtually. Coordination with the Pima County Public Libraries has continued on the Library Telescope Project, involving a TAAA Zoom training of librarians regarding understanding, using and working with patrons using TAAA's managed telescope donations to the Library system. This training included an excellent video that can now be provided to all patrons interested in checking out the telescopes and all librarians working with the telescopes. The decision was made to conduct the TAAA Astronomy Festival annual spring event virtually. Work is underway on designing and videotaping astronomy education activities and planning virtual star party activities to include both daytime and nighttime virtual events. Please see further information below from Terri Lappin regarding the TAAA Astronomy Festival.

As some of you are aware, consideration is being given to determining how TAAA may best serve members through its publications. The last Bulletin that came out a few weeks ago, generously spearheaded by David Rossetter and Ken Bertschy, was a beginning effort in determining how that publication might be expanded from the previously events-only focused publication. Further consideration of TAAA publication needs is underway. If you have any interest in contributing to this effort at any level, please contact David or myself so we can discuss your interest and get you involved.

In response to the decision to conduct the Grand Canyon Star Party 2021 as a virtual event, TAAA volunteers have been working with astronomers and the National Park Service regarding TAAA's video contributions for the virtual event. Efforts are underway to build upon virtual learning experiences during the last year and grow the GCSP virtual offerings for 2021. While this development takes some extra effort, it is also exciting for TAAA volunteers and NPS to work on.

In the last month, CAC reservations have been allowed within guidelines sent to members. Reserved member use of CAC has been occurring and did fill to the limit of 50% capacity on a couple of nights. In person star parties for public and for paid events have also been occurring on a limited basis. TIMPA was accepting reservations for a limited opening this last month but it was rained out.

Compilation by Jim Knoll of material for an article on CAC to be published in Astronomy Magazine has been underway throughout the month. The article is accepted and we will let you know the expected date of publication when we find out. However, that date is anticipated to be months away.

The TAAA Forum that Ben Bailey established months ago on Groups.IO is doing well and having a lot of activity. Tom Rolfsmeyer and Gregg Ruppel from the Astro-Imaging Special Interest Group (AISIG) have inspired activity on the Groups.io site and all of us who enrolled in the TAAA Forum are benefiting from viewing the interesting images. A lot of growth and learning is occurring as well. Great job!! Thanks to all contributors for sharing with us!

As you know, David Rossetter and the NVRC team have been working on changes that were previously decided upon regarding the TAAA Elections process. Much work has been dedicated to assembling a list of candidates for the May election. Currently, software for use in the election process is being tested.

Some March activities of the TAAA Board included:

1. Slight rewording, for clarification, of TAAA COVID-19 policies.
2. Discussion and proposed follow-up regarding CAC construction.
3. Approval of funding for software to be used for voting in TAAA Elections.
4. Agreement to explore endowment fund possibilities for TAAA.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The email address you have been using for me is ssmith@email.arizona.edu. Please UPDATE my email address to ssmith@arizona.edu.