



Mingo Creek Park Observatory

# The Guide Star

Newsletter of the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.

Founded June 9, 1929 by Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanton

Website: [3ap.org](http://3ap.org)



Nicholas E. Wagman Observatory

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## FEBRUARY MEETING: THE BUHL PLANETARIUM PRESENTS "TWO SMALL PIECES OF GLASS"

Next Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. we meet at the Carnegie Science Center for our annual Buhl Planetarium show. Continuing our celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the telescope, we will see an all new show (opening just that week) entitled, "Two Small Pieces of Glass." Friends and family are welcome. The show starts (and the doors close) promptly at 8:00 p.m., so you'll want to be on time.

"Two Small Pieces of Glass" was produced for the International Year of Astronomy celebration by the Buhl Planetarium in cooperation with Interstellar Studios, the Imiloa Planetarium in Hawaii, and the International Planetarium Society.

This new full-dome planetarium program illustrates how the telescope has helped us understand our place in space and how telescopes continue to expand our understanding of the Universe. Audiences will also learn about the history of the telescope and the discoveries these wonderful tools have made. Let's meet upstairs. Hope to see you there!

## OUTREACH OPPORTUNITY IN PITTSBURGH

By Vivian White

Night Sky Network Administrator

Astronomical Society of the Pacific

Night Sky Network: <http://nightsky.jpl.nasa.gov/>



There is a very cool new project coming up that I think you all might be interested in. A documentary that was just screened at the US IYA opening event is having a special premier in 8 locations around the country, including Pittsburgh. "400 Years of the Telescope" will be debuting on PBS on April 10th. I was lucky enough to see the premier and it's very good!

The producers are hoping to have an event around that time and connect with the Buhl Planetarium to present the related show, "Two Small Pieces of Glass". So we hoped that the Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh might be interested in giving a star party afterwards. WQED will be organizing the event with food and publicity, and they would be thrilled if you all would bring your scopes and do what you do best. There is even a grant to give away planispheres to families that night and a telescope to a local education institution. The Night Sky Network has come up with a new ToolKit called Glass and Mirrors that you could use to show how telescopes work and if you would like to participate, you would be among the first clubs to get one.

I will have more information on this for you soon, but I just want to give you a heads-up and see if you all are interested in joining the event. There are no dates set so far, and there are still some details to be worked out with the PBS station, but I will tell you what I know as soon as I know it! Happy IYA!

## FROM THE TREASURER

By Michael Meteney

The following is a summary of the income and expenses for 2008. A complete detailed breakdown of all accounts and categories is turned over to auditors every year for review. If anyone wants to review the detailed report, about 70 pages, you can contact me.

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	
50/50	\$ 388.00	Awards	\$ 154.35
Donations	2,185.50	Bank Fees	54.00
Recycling	40.00	Gifts/prizes	391.10
Fish Bowls	579.00	Food	112.92
Government	200.00	Guide Star Printing	1,846.07
Key fee	705.00	Insurance	4,000.00
SSP donation	1,500.00	Mail	1,142.82
Interest	7,693.72	Meetings	878.72
Memberships	10,984.00	Merchandise	1,638.45
Merchandise	1,634.00	Equipment	37,173.00
Other	2,803.76	Supplies	1,006.56
		Officers Expenses	820.05
Total Income	\$28,712.98	Planetarium Service	600.00
		Star Finders	998.75
		Audit/tax prep	4,261.48
		Utilities-Mingo	1,792.64
		Utilities-Wagman	2,791.49
		Other	3,552.86
		Total Expenses	\$63,215.26

**Net Income/Outcome -\$34,502.28**

As you can see, we had a net cash flow of -\$34,502.28. This is due to the installation of the new mount for the 24-inch telescope at the Mingo Park Observatory. Note the equipment expense of \$37,173.00.

### Account Balances as of 1/20/2009

USX Credit Union	\$106,183.04
Cash	50.00
Checking	1,647.35
Savings	10,081.45
Valley View	22,700.86
Total Accounts	\$140,662.70

A copy of the membership renewal forms is on Pages 7 and 8.

## GLOBE AT NIGHT TELECON, FEBRUARY 19th - SPECIAL BONUS

By Kathy DeSantis

As a special gift to Night Sky network clubs, GLOBE at Night (<http://www.globe.gov/GaN/>) is giving away 20 full outreach kits including a Sky Brightness Meter, (<http://unihedron.com/projects/darksky/>) to help you get the word out about light pollution.

Join us for the next upcoming Night Sky Network dark sky telecon with Connie Walker of GLOBE at Night through the National Optical Astronomy Observatory (NOAO) on February 19th at 6 p.m. Pacific Time (9 p.m. Eastern). Hear all about the initiatives for dark skies and what clubs, classrooms, and individuals can do to get the word out about light pollution. You can record your unaided eye observations from anywhere and add to the worldwide Star Count happening from March 16-28, 2009.

To qualify for a kit, with activities and resources, our club must commit to the following:

1. At least one club member will attend the Telecon on February 19th to learn about the project and how to use the instrument.
2. Our club will hold a public event during the GLOBE at Night Campaign Event from March 16-28, 2009. You also agree to log your observations from that week on their easy-to-use website (takes less than 2 minutes): <http://www.globe.gov/GaN/>.

To log into the Telecon on Thursday, February 19th between 8:45 - 9:00 p.m. (Eastern Time): Use the IYA year-long toll-free conference call line number: 1-888-455-9236. An operator will answer and:

- You will be asked for the pass code: NIGHT SKY NETWORK
- You will be asked to give your NAME and the CLUB you belong to, and number of people listening with you. This information is also posted on the Night Sky Network member homepage.

## NIGHT SKY NETWORK PINS

By Kathy DeSantis

Participants in five or more 2008 NSN outreach events to receive award pins are listed below.

Thanks to all who shared their time, telescopes and expertise to bring science, technology, and the inspiration of NASA's missions to our community. These members listed below will receive 2009 NSN (Night Sky Network) Award pins, based upon their performance to organize and/or participate in five or more outreach events in which Night Sky Network materials were used/advanced during 2008. Expect distribution at February's Membership Meeting, depending on shipment date.

NSN Award Pin recipients, those who helped organize or participated in at least five outreach events during 2008 where NSN resources were used/advanced, are listed in alphabetical order:



1. Melody Bishop
2. Shirley Ann Caseman
3. William Mitinger Cress
4. Kathy DeSantis
5. Mary DeVaughn
6. John Diller
7. Eric Fischer
8. David Godlewski
9. Herb Godlewski
10. George Guzik
11. Dick Haddad
12. Bill Hayeslip
13. Jason Herring
14. Donald Hoecker
15. Todd J Kelly
16. Fred Klein
17. Jim Klueber
18. Gene Kulakowski
19. Mike Meteney
20. Dennis Morton
21. Ed Moss
22. Bill Moutz
23. Maureen Moutz
24. John D Mozer
25. Mike Nizinski
26. Ann Norman
27. Joyce A Osborne-Fischer
28. Al Paslow
29. Frank Pastin
30. Tom Reiland
31. Flo Rusch
32. Gerard Schuster
33. Lori Seitz
34. Dave Smith
35. Glenn Smith
36. Larry Sneider
37. Flaccus Stifel
38. Richard Stephen Urban
39. Wallace Watson
40. Bill Yorkshire
41. Pete Zapadka

## MESSIER MARATHON BEST DATES

By Tom Reiland

It's getting close to the best months to try a Messier Marathon. You should have observed all 110 objects before you attempt it. March 26 will be New Moon and the prime night in 2009, but it is about a week to ten nights after the best shot to get 109 out of 110 in Western Pennsylvania. We cannot see all 110 in one night from our location. I suggest doing some practice runs before you go for an all night marathon. Work on the evening objects one night, hunt for the midnight fuzzies another and finish with the morning objects. Do the same thing the weekend before Winterfest and practice on some of the M objects after the public leaves the night of Winterfest. The skies will have to cooperate and this time of the year, the chances of that are slim to none.

You can also practice in the evenings when the Moon isn't visible and the same goes for the morning observing sessions. M74 and M77 won't be visible during this year's prime New Moon period in March. M33 and M79 will be difficult. M31, M32 and M110 can be observed in both the evening and morning skies at this time. M30 will not be visible until sometime in April. You will need a location with dark skies and unobstructed horizons. Wagman Observatory is okay, except for the southern horizon. The club's Greene County spot is a good location. That's where I did my first complete Marathon sans M30.

Here is the list of the most difficult evening and morning M objects:

Evening sky M objects: M74, M77, M33, M31, M32, M110, M76, M79 and M34. M55, M75, M15, M2, M72, M73 and M30 in morning sky.

The Messier Marathon is a test of one's observing skill and the observer's ability to locate these objects without electronic assistance. Good luck. Remember that you need to train for this event just like a regular marathon. It will take ten hours to complete a full marathon. February's New Moon offers 105 to 106 Messier Objects in one night. March has 107 possible this year and April is similar to February's totals.

## OBSERVATIONS

**Jim Klueber:** Posted January 20, 2009. I just came back from taking my garbage down to the street for pickup and as I was looking up at the sky, I saw light pillars like Sherry O'Neill reported last week. They weren't quite as dramatic as the ones in the pictures from Latvia, but they were definitely all across my southern horizon towards Greensburg. This was about 10:35 PM tonight. I never saw anything like it before. Pretty cool.

**Sherry O'Neill:** Posted January 21, 2009. At least I got to see one light pillar last night. Even before reading Jim's posting, I was thinking it would be a good night for light

pillars. In 1991, I too saw them towards Greensburg. I was on the high part of Route 48, up by channel 40. Now, the time I saw them in 1989, that was awesome! I looked out my kitchen window and there were about two dozen bright spikes of blue and orange lights extending about a third of the way up the sky from below the horizon. Like someone on the [www.Spaceweather.com](http://www.Spaceweather.com) website had said, I thought we were being invaded by aliens! It's something very awe inspiring to see.....especially if you don't have a clue what it is. After some research at the library (how did we live before the Internet), I found out what I had seen. The lights from the Penn Hills Shopping Center, Frankstown and Duff Roads, all about a mile away were the source. Anyway, last night I was going up the hill on Duff Road in Penn Hills. From my vantage point, this one particular streetlight in the parking lot of Hebron School, was below the rise of the hill. A bright blue spike was shooting up from it. I thought there would be a good show last night. But when I got home and started checking along my own particular horizon, I didn't see any. It was evidently a little colder, or slightly different weather conditions out Jim's way. It was also pretty cloudy here. I would imagine it would take a relatively clear sky for them to show up well, if at all. Both times I saw them, it was clear.

**Jim Klueber:** Posted January 3, 2009. There were plenty of Quadrantid meteors to be seen this morning. I went out shortly after 4:00 and I wasn't out the door more than 15 seconds before I saw my first one. The skies were mostly clear in my neighborhood, however, transparency was fair, although it improved closer to dawn. I was out for about an hour and 45 minutes. Most of the time I spent doing some imaging to finish off a roll of film I've had in my camera too long. I counted 32 meteors of which all but perhaps two of them were Quadrantids in between taking pictures. When I was watching, I would say I averaged seeing one meteor per minute easily, including one flurry of five in about 20 seconds. I'm hoping I caught some of them in my pictures. Most of them had fairly short trails and were of moderate brightness. Temperature was 17 degrees, but it was dry, cold, and no wind, so it really wasn't too bad. Hopefully, some of the rest of you caught the show this morning.

**Tom Reiland:** Posted January 22, 2009. I decided to go up to Wagman Observatory tonight even though I didn't know what the conditions were like. I was pleasantly surprised to find that someone had shoveled out the snow around the gate and made a path with his vehicle up to the building and shoveled the area around the door. I think it might have been new member, Dan Cousineau. If it was Dan or someone else, you have my sincere appreciation. It wasn't that easy to drive up to the building once I got past the gate because of the snow, but I made it by engaging my snow traction on my Highlander. The roll-off roof for the 21-inch scope was another story. It took me several minutes to open it and clean off the snow so that it wouldn't fall into the Scanlon Room of the Manka scope. I installed the digital converter on the TV in the Brashear room while I let the scope cool down. We get good reception, better than at my house, and a good number of channels, including Channel 4's weather station.

**OBSERVATIONS (continued)**

I observed for a little more than an hour and a half starting just after 7:30 PM. The conditions weren't great, but I made a few nice observations, especially the Orion Nebula, and the other deep sky objects surrounding it. I was able to pick out Uranus near Venus with my 10 X 50's and the 5-inch refractor at 25X. I swept a degree and half to the ESE of Venus to locate Uranus with the 21-inch at 115X. I picked up two NGC galaxies in Taurus to add to my log books. One is a Herschel object. I observed a satellite pass in front of M33 while observing with my binoculars. I'm going to try to observe Comet Lulin Friday morning with my 5-inch refractor at 31X and then try to find it with my binoculars. Scattered cirrus clouds moved in and out and the sky appeared hazier later in the evening when I decided to close up. Seeing was fair. I had no trouble observing Venus nude-eye this evening from my house well before sunset without using any optics to locate it first. This is a great time to see if you can find it in daylight.

**COMET LULIN 2007 N3**

By Tom Reiland

Comet Lulin is approaching naked-eye visibility in the morning sky. Here is a brief copy of its ephemeris from the IAU comet webpage:

<http://www.cfa.harvard.edu/iau/Ephemerides/Comets/>

You can get a map/chart from: [www.skyhound.com](http://www.skyhound.com)

The comet might be as much as a full magnitude brighter than the listed predictions from the IAU. It should be an easy binocular object under good conditions from a decent location. It will be less than a degree north of Zubenelgenubi in Libra on the morning of February 6. It is moving west along a line slightly north of the plane of the ecliptic.

Date 0 hr UT	RA	Dec	mag
2009 02 01	15 14.01	-17 10.1	7.4
2009 02 02	15 10.45	-16 56.4	7.3
2009 02 03	15 06.61	-16 41.3	7.2
2009 02 04	15 02.46	-16 24.6	7.2
2009 02 05	14 57.96	-16 06.1	7.1
2009 02 06	14 53.08	-15 45.6	7.1
2009 02 07	14 47.78	-15 22.8	7.0
2009 02 08	14 42.01	-14 57.3	6.9
2009 02 09	14 35.72	-14 28.8	6.8
2009 02 10	14 28.86	-13 56.8	6.8
2009 02 11	14 21.36	-13 20.8	6.7
2009 02 12	14 13.16	-12 40.4	6.6
2009 02 13	14 04.19	-11 54.8	6.5
2009 02 14	13 54.38	-11 03.3	6.5
2009 02 15	13 43.65	-10 05.4	6.4

**BOOKS OF INTEREST**

By Tom McLaughlin

These ideas may be already well known, but I received two books from my future son-in law for Christmas gifts, and I would recommend them to anyone interested in science or history. They are by Dava Sobel, and are titled "*Galileo's Daughter*" and the other is "*Longitude*". The first is an excellent biography of the old guy and includes many letters that Galileo kept sent by his daughter, which gives wonderful insight into his daily life. The second book covers more than just the "Harrison" story and is a good read.

**WELCOME NEW MEMBER**

William Gormley

**AAAP LISTSERVER DISCONTINUED  
JANUARY 23, 2009**

By Michael Skrowvron

This message is a reminder that the email list (aaap@list.pitt.edu) will be discontinued January 23, 2009.

It is being replaced by the Yahoo Group AAAPgh.

If you are not already signed up for the Yahoo Group, please do so now. You can join using any of the following methods:

1. Via the web: Go to:

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/AAAPgh/> and click on the blue "Join This Group" box on the right-hand side. Fill in the required information and be sure to identify yourself as being a current member so we can approve the request.

2. Via email:

Send a blank email message to:

[AAAPgh-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AAAPgh-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). You will get a confirmation email back. Just reply to the confirmation message to confirm your email address and you will be subscribed.

3. Send a personal message to me ([michaels@3ap.org](mailto:michaels@3ap.org)) or John Close ([jmc10@dental.pitt.edu](mailto:jmc10@dental.pitt.edu)) asking us to manually add you to the Yahoo Group.

Yahoo has lots of help pages available at:

<http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/groups/original/members>

## COOL WEBSITES

If you have the desire and would like to try some software, Skygazer, from Carina Software is available as a free download for MAC OS X and Windows here:

<http://www.carinasoft.com/products/skygazer/index.html>

This website shows the average clear/cloudy stats for a variety of star parties in North America. (Note that some have shifted months since it was published. Double note—Wagman Winterfest is included.)

<http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~jander/starparty/starpartywx.html>

A nice website showing the stars orbiting the black hole at the center of our galaxy and a recent flare.

<http://www.mpe.mpg.de/ir/GC/index.php>

Watch the video here of the new Moon Buggy!!

<http://link.brightcove.com/services/link/bcpid823433113/bctid6799960001>

Terrible Towel in space:

<http://anon.nasa-global.edgesuite.net/anon.nasa-global/ccvideos/steelers.asx>

## IMPORTANT DATES

**February 9**—Full Moon

**February 11**—Saturn 6° north of Moon

**February 13**—**Carnegie Science Center Meeting at 8:00 sharp at Planetarium**

Mercury at greatest elongation (26° west)

**February 17**—Mars 0.6° south of Jupiter

Antares 0.04° south of Moon

**February 19**—GaNTelecon 9:00 p.m.

**February 22**—Mercury 1.1° south of Moon

Jupiter 0.7° south of Moon

**February 23**—Mars 1.7° south of Moon

Mercury 0.6° south of Jupiter

**February 24**—New Moon 8:35 p.m.

**February 27**—Venus 1.3° north of Moon

**February 28**—**Winterfest**

**March 1**—Mercury 0.6° south of Mars

**March 4**—First-quarter Moon 2:46 a.m.

**March 7**—Mars 0.8° south of Neptune

**March 10**—Full Moon 10:38 p.m.

Saturn 6° north of Moon

**March 13**—**Carnegie Science Center Meeting 7:30 p.m.**

**March 16-28**—Globe at Night (see web calendar for details at [www.3ap.org](http://www.3ap.org))

**March 17**—Antares 0.2° south of Moon

**March 18**—Last quarter Moon 1:47 p.m.

**March 20**—Spring Equinox 7:44 a.m.

**March 22**—Jupiter 1.5° south of Moon

**March 23**—Neptune 2° south of Moon

**March 24**—Mars 4° south of Moon

**March 26**—New Moon 12:06 p.m.

**March 28-29**—CSC Space Out Weekend (see web calendar for details at [www.3ap.org](http://www.3ap.org))

## WAGMAN WINTERFEST FEBRUARY 28, 2009 AT 4:00 P.M.

By Pete Zapadka



There is no need to register to attend Wagman Winterfest. Admission? It's free. Parking fees? Nope. But be sure to bundle up. Bring a warm beverage, such as hot chocolate or hot cider. Dress for the weather conditions!

*Please be careful where you park and walk—the grounds may be slippery.*

If the weather cooperates, we'll take a look at some of the winter's wonders, such as the Orion Nebula! Did you receive a telescope for Christmas and you don't know how to use it? Bring it along and we'll try to help.

Wagman Winterfest is held weather permitting. Severe cold or heavy snow will cause the star party to be canceled. So will persistent cloud cover, for which Pittsburgh is famous!

For more information, call the AAAP's Wagman Observatory at 724-224-2510 or Wagman Winterfest Director, Pete Zapadka, at (412) 487-9363 or email Pete at: [pzapadka@3ap.org](mailto:pzapadka@3ap.org).

## *AAAP Membership Renewal Form – 2009*

(2)

ITEM	PRICE	ENCLOSED PAYMENT
AAAP Adult Membership (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 2009)	\$24.00	
AAAP Junior Membership (under 18)	\$15.00	
“Sky & Telescope” Subscription (12 issues per year) <b>Use the attached form for new subscriptions or your renewal form from S&amp;T to renew your subscription. Do not send S&amp;T subscriptions to the AAAP! You should pay \$32.95 for the discounted subscription.</b>	XXXXXXX Do not send Payment to AAAP	XXXXXXX Do not send Payment to AAAP
“Astronomy” Subscription (12 issues per year) <b>Both new and renewals are processed through the AAAP. Do not renew your subscription directly with Kalmbach Publishing, you won’t get your discount.</b>	\$34.00	
Key Fee: check appropriate observatory <b>Only current key holders! Mingo ____ Wagman ____</b>	\$15.00	
Tax Deductible Donation	----	
<b>TOTAL PAYMENT (make checks to AAAP, Inc.)</b>	----	

It is very important that all payments be received ASAP so that magazine subscriptions can be processed in a timely manner.

Prices are subject to change without notice. Payments must accompany this application.  
 Make checks payable to: **AAAP, Inc.**

Send this form with payments to:

**Michael Meteney**  
**1070 Sugar Run Road**  
**Venetia, PA 15367**

Membership questions?

E-mail: [MembershipSecretary@3ap.org](mailto:MembershipSecretary@3ap.org)  
 Phone: 724-628-3499

Billing questions?

E-mail: [Treasurer@3ap.org](mailto:Treasurer@3ap.org)  
 Phone: 724-348-9087

# AAAP Membership Renewal Form – 2009

(1)

Completely fill in the following information: Check here if these are changes: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

Check if you want your e-mail on the AAAP List Server (\_\_\_\_)

How do you want your "Guide Star" Delivered? Online (\_\_\_\_) Snail Mail (\_\_\_\_)

Which of the following AAAP positions would you volunteer for?

- I would like to help at star parties at: Mingo (\_\_\_\_) Wagman (\_\_\_\_)
- I would like to serve on observatory committees at: Mingo (\_\_\_\_) Wagman (\_\_\_\_)
- I would like to serve on other association committees (\_\_\_\_)  
Specify Committees:

- I would like to run for an association office (\_\_\_\_)  
Specify Offices:

What areas of astronomy interest you?

What type of Astronomical equipment do you want listed under your name in the membership directory?

## DYING BEAUTIFULLY IN A CROWD

By Phil Plait

<http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/badastronomy/>



Hubble picture of the planetary nebula NGC 2818.

[Click to way embiggen.](#)

Credit: NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA).

First off, *whoa*. It's gorgeous. What you're looking at is a planetary nebula (it doesn't have much to do with planets; these objects were named thus because they looked like planets through small telescopes). It was a star something like the Sun that reached the end of its life and blew off a strong wind of gas. Eventually, as more material left the star, deeper layers of the star got exposed. Eventually, the core was all that was left: a hot, small, dense object called a white dwarf. It flooded the nebula with UV light, ionizing the gas and lighting it up. The complex interaction of the gas and the radiation produced the shape and the different colors.

But NGC 2818, as it's called, is an oddball. When I first saw this picture, I didn't even think it was a planetary nebula; I thought it was a much larger gas cloud that *forms* stars. The shape is not much like other planetaries! Usually they are round, or hourglass shaped. This one is squashed and weird. The colors are pretty much normal: the outer parts are loaded with nitrogen and are reddish, while the inner region is hotter, less dense (because late in the game, the wind from the star got hotter and less dense), and glows blue due to oxygen. The fingers or towers pointing toward the center are due to the light and wind slamming into denser blobs of material. They're a bit like sandbars that form in a current.

In fact, NGC 2818 does appear to be a bit different. I think the star that formed it (which should be right smack in the middle, but I don't see much there; it might be hidden by one of the fingers) was more massive than the Sun.

[The wind speed is higher](#)

(<http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/1984ApJ...287..341D>), indicative

of a more massive star. The nebula itself is much larger than other planetaries; they are usually a light year or so across, and this one is well over three. The amount of different elements in the cloud also seem to say that this was a bigger and hotter star than usual, too.

What makes this guy most unusual, though, is that [it appears to be inside an open cluster](#), ([http://www.astrosurf.com/antilhue/ngc\\_2818\\_in\\_pyxis.htm](http://www.astrosurf.com/antilhue/ngc_2818_in_pyxis.htm)), a loose aggregation of stars about 10,000 light years from Earth. Most planetaries are loners, since they come from old, dying stars. The Sun has a ten billion year lifespan, enough time that were it born in a cluster, it would have long ago drifted away. But NGC 2818 is located in a cluster, and the safe assumption is that this was where it was born. That means it must be from a relatively young star (or else it would have left the cluster)... and massive stars age faster and die younger than low mass stars.

So I think the star that formed this beautiful and intricate web of gas was a big one, maybe even close to the limit between where stars die this way, and explode as spectacular supernovae. I had never heard of this particular object before, and I'm glad astronomers got this image so that it can be studied more carefully. You can learn a lot looking at things that are up against the edge of two different behaviors, and investigating stars like this give us a lot of insight into what happens at that limit between going gentle into that good night, and raging against the dying of the light.

This content distributed by the [AAVSO Writer's Bureau](#) (<http://aavsowritersbureau.blogspot.com/>)

## AWAY STAR PARTY REQUEST

By John Mozer

My wife, Sheila, is chairperson of the Recreation Board here in Churchill Borough. She has asked me if some volunteers from the AAAP would be interested in conducting an astronomy program at the Churchill Borough Building the evening of Friday, April 24, 2009. The program would begin with a lecture on some topic in astronomy in the borough building followed by an outdoor star party at a nearby appropriate location. I thought we could use parts of one or more of the NSN kits for the presentation. I will be responsible for organizing this event, so if any of you are interested, please contact me at my AOL e-mail address: [jdmozer@aol.com](mailto:jdmozer@aol.com).

**Amateur Astronomers Association of Pittsburgh, Inc.**

*Founded June 9, 1929 by*

*Chester B. Roe and Leo J. Scanlon*

**2008-2009 Executive Officers:**

- President: **Edward Moss**  
[president@3ap.org](mailto:president@3ap.org)
- Vice President: **Ann Norman**  
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