

**STARS:** More star party events are in store for Sisters

*Continued from page 3*

International Space Station passes over Sisters. As I stood at the door of the SPRD building looking up into the gathering darkness it took only six minutes for it to go over just as the sun was setting, and was so imagination stimulating. When we got to the telescope area, Saturn and Mars were very visible, which was fun to know the planets and which Greek mythology the stars were associated with. What a fun night! I was glad I went, and I'm planning on going next month as well!"

Five members of the club assembled their telescopes on the north side of the SHS parking lot. Thomas Jeffrey was there, along with Jim Hammond, Rod Moorehead, Jim Doherty and SHS science/astronomy teacher Rima Givot, who set up the high school's RECON scope with the help of SHS science student Rylee Funk.

Funk and fellow astronomy student Alex Burroughs are two of only eight high school students chosen from the West who attended the RECON Conference August 3-5 in Carson City, Nevada.

RECON is the acronym for Research and Education Collaborative Occultation Network, a project designed to determine the size of rocky, icy bodies that orbit the sun beyond the planet Neptune, and a regular part of the SHS astronomy class.

Even in the dark, Jim

Hammond, long-time SAC member stands out — both for his physical size, and his knowledge of just about everything you'd want to know about astronomy. In the dim light, aiming his powerful laser into the area of the Andromeda Galaxy, he said, "OK, here's a much abbreviated version of the Andromeda and Perseus myth, we'll start with Perseus carrying the head of Medusa and rescuing Andromeda but also include the part about Cepheus sacrificing Andromeda and Cassiopeia bragging about the beauty of Andromeda."

At that moment he had the attention of just about everyone within hearing distance as he continued, waving the laser around.

"The constellations of Cassiopeia, Perseus, Andromeda and Cepheus are close together in the sky. Cetus, the sea monster, is not too far away, and part of the constellation of Perseus is the head of Medusa."

With that he stopped, turned off the laser and added, "and there's a link to a longer version." (<http://www.greeka.com/greece-myths/perseus-andromeda.htm>)

As the evening got darker, many of the participants began to notice that the stars that make up the constellation Scorpius on the southern horizon became more distinct. While one of the participants was looking through Karen and Jim Doherty's telescope for a better view of Mars, he asked Jim how long he'd been studying outer space.

"Karen and I are retired and residents of Sisters. I've

been into astronomy since I've been about 13 years old," he said. "That makes some 53 years into this hobby."

"My current telescope is the sixth one I've owned; it's a Celestron, collapsible, Sky-Watcher." Then he pointed overhead and added, "The Milky Way's clear, tonight's excellent for viewing many man-made and celestial objects; the international space station came over twice. The planets, Jupiter, Saturn, Mars and Neptune are all in full view, and there's no moon to ruin the dark skies."

He added, "Dark skies in Sisters needs to be a trademark of our community. The Sisters Astronomy Club has been working hard to help keep it this way. Our community needs to realize the value of seeing the heavens and appreciating the grandeur of the Milky Way Galaxy above us. It's too easy to allow excessive night lighting to gradually creep into our lives and lose this most precious view. Once lost, it is very hard to get it back."

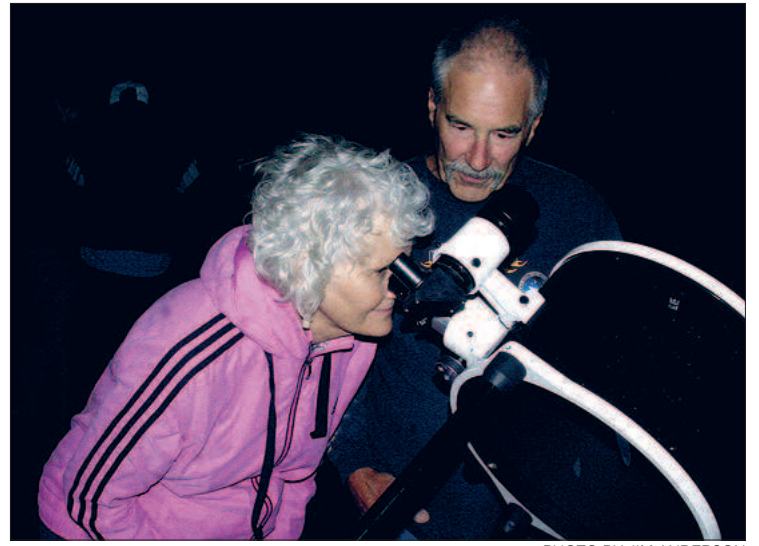


PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Karen and Jim Doherty of Sisters tuning up their telescope for viewing the heavens Saturday, July 31, in the Sisters High School parking area.

"The Sisters Astronomy Club is focused on providing a source of education and entertainment for all of our community, and devoted to expanded education of our youth in the fields of astronomy and science, and I have to give special thanks to the Sisters High School astronomy class for their work."

The next SAC viewing night will be Saturday, August 27, at 8:30 p.m., same location.

“ Our community needs to realize the value of seeing the heavens and appreciating the grandeur of the Milky Way Galaxy above us. — Jim Doherty

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