

**Planetary Wonderings**  
**April Focus: *Getting Started, Part III* and Selene Project**  
**By Mary-Frances Bartels, NASA JPL Solar System Ambassador**

When it rains, it pours! Some months there does not seem to be much to write about. Others quite the opposite occurs. This is an example of the latter.

First, as promised last month, I will discuss local astronomy clubs and activities. Then I will present an exciting project from NASA that needs YOUR help if you are a student between ages 13 and 18 with access to the internet.

Running an internet search for astronomy-related organizations revealed a few possibilities for those of us in central Ohio. I found the Columbus Astronomical Society, Lancaster Astronomy Club, OSU Astronomical Society, Mid-Ohio Observers Group in Reynoldsburg, Wayne County Astronomical Society in Wooster, Richland Astronomical Society in Mansfield, and Astronomy for Youth near Mansfield.

The Columbus Astronomical Society was covered here in June 2006. They work with the Perkins Observatory near Delaware. Public observing is available most Fridays and Saturdays. Tickets must be purchased in advanced.

The OSU Astronomical Society is a new group on campus open only to OSU students and faculty. They plan to start an outreach program sometime in the future.

The Wayne County Astronomical Society holds public viewing nights at the Freedlander Park observatory the second Saturday of every month. Freedlander Park is at 400 Hillside Drive, Wooster.

The Richland Astronomical Society runs the Warren Rupp Observatory. All 2007 Public Nights will be held on the first Saturday of each month, March through November, and special programs are offered on alternative weekends. This observatory near Mansfield promises an exciting afternoon and evening celebrating Astronomy Day on April 7. They plan to have exhibits on the sun, black holes, telescopes, comets and more. Weather permitting there will be an evening observing session. Events begin at 4:00 PM. The observatory is located in the Hidden Hollow Camp at 5127 O'Possum Run Rd, Bellville, OH. Through e-mail I "spoke" with the observatory's president who extended her invitation to the Sunbury Home Educators to visit the WRO.

Astronomy for Youth offers a Public Star Party on the third Saturday of the month, March through November, weather permitting, at the Malabar Farm State Park in Lucas. Rain date is the fourth Saturday. Like the RAS, they also have a relationship with the Warren Rupp Observatory.

Now, on to the Selene Project --- The NASA-sponsored Classroom of the Future is looking for a few good young men and women to help in research on videogame learning. Why does NASA want students to play this video game? The organization recognizes that video games are becoming the new paradigm in student learning, so students' serious participation in this study will help NASA and other researchers discover how to use games to help students learn science.

Participation is **by invitation only**, so consider this article an official invitation. Okay, what is entailed? First, the student must get verbal parental consent to join. Then the student plays an online game about lunar geology. During the month of May players will have access to the game 24/7. It should take only one hour to play the game and complete the study requirements. Once this happens, he or she has access to play it as

much as desired for the rest of the month. Absolutely NO personally identifiable data will be collected, just demographic information. The only “pay” students will receive is the fun of playing an online game and satisfaction in knowing that they participated in a real NASA study. **No previous astronomy experience is required.** Want to know more? Check out the link to the Selene Project at the end of this article. Anyone wanting to sign up **must** contact me **ASAP**. Please either call (telephone number is in the directory) or e-mail me at stargazer @ keeplookingup.net.

**Resource of the Month:** The *What’s Up* weekly column at <http://www.astrowhatsup.com/>. Find out night by night what is going on in the night sky, also includes historical information.

**Activity of the Month:** Find out the length of a day on Saturn. This might not be as easy as it seems as there has been a new development in this area very recently!

Suggestions, questions, and comments about “Planetary Wonderings” are welcomed and may be directed to stargazer @ keeplookingup.net. (remove spaces)

**Remember to *keep looking up!***

Sources: <http://www.wro.org/> Warren Rupp Observatory  
<http://www.the-cas.org/> The Columbus Astronomical Society  
<http://www.astronomyforyouth.org/> Astronomy for Youth  
<http://my.raex.com/~dbalint/wcas/index.html> The Wayne County Astronomical Society  
<http://selene.cet.edu/> Selene Project