



# Steward Observatory Newsletter

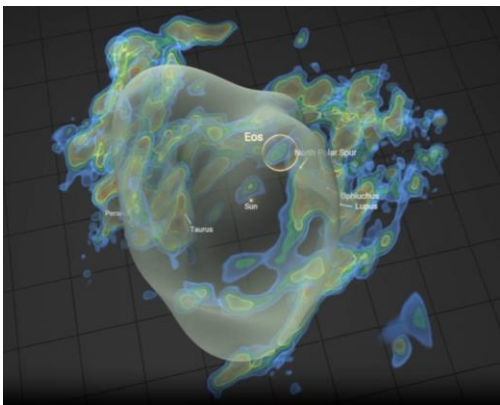
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Astronomy News

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June, 2025

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## A vast molecular cloud, long invisible, is discovered near solar system

An international team of scientists including University of Arizona astronomer Erika Hamden has discovered a molecular cloud that is one of the largest single structures in the sky, and among the closest molecular clouds to Earth ever detected.

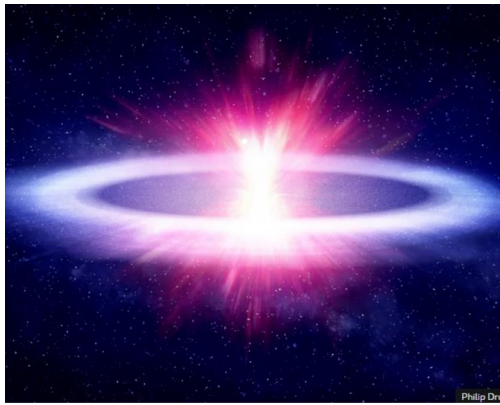
Previously invisible to telescopes, the discovery hints at the presence even more vast clouds in the near universe, visible only in ultraviolet wavelengths and more luminous and energetic than ever imagined. [Learn more](#)



### **NASA selects rocket for U of A-led Aspera mission**

NASA has selected Rocket Lab USA Inc. of Long Beach, California, to launch the agency's Aspera mission, which consists of a small satellite, or SmallSat, to study galaxy formation and evolution and provide new insights into how the universe works. The Aspera mission is led by one of the youngest principal investigators in NASA history – Carlos J. Vargas, an assistant astronomer at the University of Arizona Steward Observatory.

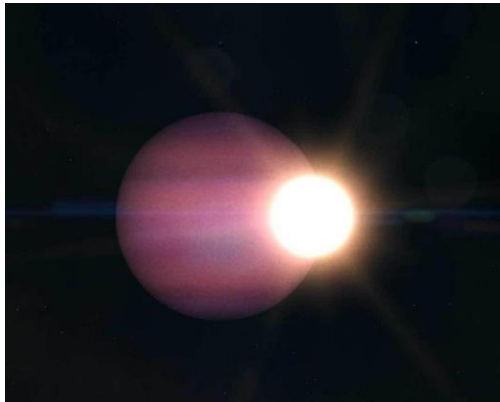
[Learn more](#)



### **The bizarre space explosions scientists can't explain**

The international research group studying a series of strange, bright cosmic blasts includes U of A Astronomy Professor Ann Zabludoff and former Steward postdoc Sixiang Wen

**Astronomers have spotted around a dozen of these weird, rare blasts. Could they be signs of a special kind of black hole?** [BBC article](#)



### **Former U of A Astronomy Major finds coldest exoplanet ever seen, and it orbits a dead star**

Mary Anne Limbach, lead author of the research, earned her Astronomy degree at U of A, working closely with Astronomy Professor Laird Close on adaptive optics research.

Astronomers using the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) have detected the first planet seen orbiting a dead star, offering new insights into how planets evolve during the final stages of a star's life. [Space.com article](#)

## **Student Spotlight**



**Congratulations to Roswell Roberts IV, with BS degrees in both Astronomy and Atmospheric Science.**

Roz is the great-great grandson of Clara Fish--the first-ever student of University of Arizona! Clara Fish first introduced A.E. Douglass to Lavinia Steward, who the observatory is named after. He will be returning to the U of A in the fall to work on his Masters in Atmospheric Science! [Learn more](#)

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Image: Messier 13 / NGC 6205 known as the Hercules Globular Cluster

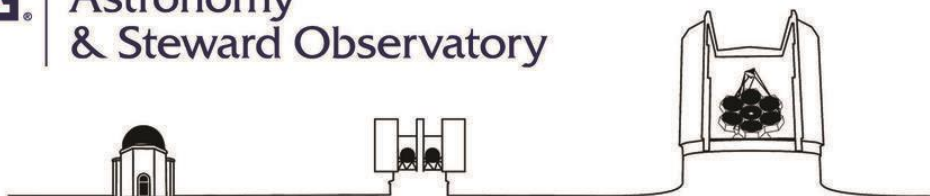
M13 is a globular star cluster, a huge globe-shaped stellar city teeming with hundreds of thousands of stars. Current estimates place M-13 at a distance of 25,000 light years, with an age of **14 billion years**.

This image was taken by the Schulman 32-inch telescope at the Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter by one of our [SkyNights StarGazing program](#) presenters Tommy Salanski in May, 2025. The Schulman telescope is the largest dedicated public viewing telescope in the southwest.

**Wishing our Friends of Steward Observatory a fabulous summer!**

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