



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

# Astronomy & Steward Observatory

April Newsletter

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## **Congratulations! 2026 Rieke Prize Awarded to Dr. Dennis Zaritsky**

The College of Science is pleased to announce **Dr. Dennis Zaritsky** as the recipient of the 2026 Rieke Prize. Through a generous gift from Marcia Rieke and George Rieke, this prize recognizes and rewards excellence in research demonstrated by faculty members in the College of Science. [Learn More](#)



## **The Conversation: 'Project Hail Mary' explores unique forms of life in space – 5 essential reads on searching for aliens that look nothing like life on Earth**

Chris Impey, an astronomer from the University of Arizona, attended a workshop where scientists across disciplines came together to try to understand how and why systems in the universe – from organisms to

languages and information – change or grow more complex over time. [Learn more](#)



### **Newly discovered star opens 'laboratory' for solving cosmic dust mystery**

The discovery, [published](#) in the *Astronomical Journal* and led by Thomas Stuber, a postdoctoral research associate at the U of A's Steward Observatory, represents the highest-contrast detection of a stellar companion ever achieved with the European Southern Observatory's MATISSE instrument. It provides scientists with their first natural "laboratory" for understanding hot exozodiacal dust, a phenomenon that complicates humanity's quest to find potentially habitable Earth-like planets around other stars. [Learn more](#)



### **A galaxy next door is transforming, and astronomers can see it happening**

"We are seeing a galaxy transforming in live action," said Himansh Rathore, a graduate student at Steward Observatory and the lead author of the paper. "The SMC gives us a unique, front-row view of something very transformative of a process that is critical to how galaxies evolve." [Learn more](#)

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## Spring 2026 Public Evening Lecture Series

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**Monday**

### **Standing on the Sky: A Visual History of the Kitt Peak Rocket Program**

**April 6**

In 1959 at the very beginning of the space race — and before it had built a single telescope — the new Kitt Peak National Observatory created a Space Division. While the new observatory led the country in creating access to the ground-based instruments of astronomy, its Space Division was inventing whole new technologies for science. By 1963, it had a rocket program, lifting Kitt Peak’s “long eyes” above the clouds into the vacuum of space. This is the story, in pictures, of Kitt Peak’s rocket astronomy program, 1963-1973, a triumphant decade of pure science above the atmosphere, driven by a very American spirit of collaboration and adventure.

Researcher James Edgar Lockridge is a University of Arizona Science Journalism graduate student, NASA Solar System Ambassador, and an evening guide at Kitt Peak National Observatory. He shares the visual history of Kitt Peak’s Rocket Program for the Steward Observatory Public Evening Lecture Series on Monday, April 6.

**This lecture is scheduled for April 6. HOWEVER, if the UA Men’s basketball team reaches the National Championship game on April 6, we will move the lecture to the following Monday, April 13.**

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Lectures are in-person or

Watch via **ZOOM** link <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/4470189357>

Location: Steward Observatory Lecture Hall N210

**Doors open at 7:00 pm and Lectures begin at 7:30 pm MST**

Nearest parking 2nd Street or Cherry Ave Garage

Telescope viewing follows at 8:30 PM - Weather Permitting

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[Videos of previous public lectures](#)

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### **Space Drafts: Astronomy Lectures**

Space Drafts is moving! Join us on the third WEDNESDAY of each month at our new location, Zerai's International Bar (2725 E Broadway Blvd). Our next installation will be on wednesday, October 15th at 7:30 PM. Stay tuned to our communication channels for future updates. In addition to email announcements you can also follow us on social media, we're on [Facebook](#) and [Bluesky](#).

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### **Friends of Steward Observatory**

*"Your generosity powers discovery and inspires future astronomers."*

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### **Steward Observatory: A Season of New Discovery**

As April brings warmer days and new life across the desert, Steward Observatory at the University of Arizona is embracing a season of growth and discovery.

Not just in nature—but in the ideas and innovations that shape our understanding of the universe.

## **Where Curiosity Takes Root**

In astronomy, progress begins with curiosity. A new question, a fresh perspective, a breakthrough observation—each one a seed that can grow into something extraordinary. This spring, our students and researchers continue exploring distant galaxies, uncovering exoplanets, and expanding the boundaries of human knowledge.

## **Growing Possibilities Together**

Behind every discovery is a community that nurtures it. Your generosity supports scholarships, enhances our facilities, and provides students with hands-on research opportunities. Because of you, curiosity grows into discovery—and discovery into lasting impact.

This April, we celebrate the season of renewal and the continued growth made possible through your partnership.

 **Here's to new beginnings, bold exploration, and discoveries just starting to bloom.**

[Learn more](#)

[Make a Gift](#)

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## **Connect With Us!**



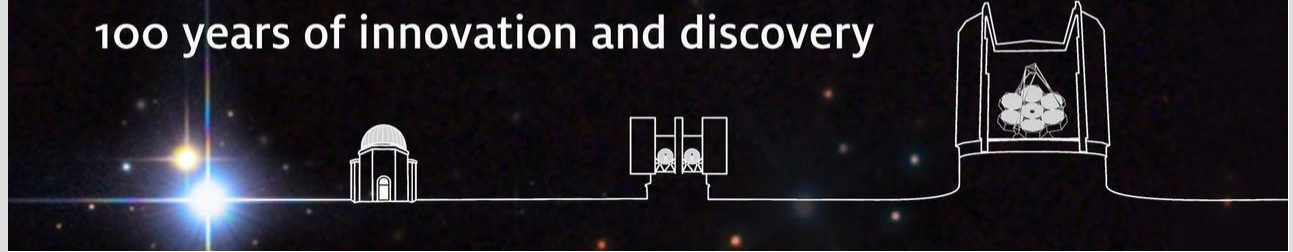
[Have a Friend Sign up For Our Monthly Astronomy Newsletter](#)

For more information or questions

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# Steward Observatory

100 years of innovation and discovery



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