March brings us celestial treats

Our recent spring-like weather not-withstanding, the month of March brings us the official start of that sea-son as well as some striking celestial

groupings.
As March begins, the brilliant "eve-As march organs, the brillant 'evening star' planet Venus is visible in the southwestern sky. Venus sets around 8.30 p.m., about two hours after the sun. By the end of the month, Venus won't be setting until after 9.30 p.m. Five degrees to the lower right of Venus is Mars. This planet is much failed than Venus and the much collect than Venus and the much collect than Venus and the venus and venus

fainter than Venus — you may need bi-noculars to spot it.

IN THE LATE evening sky is Saturn, rising in the east-southeast after 10:30 p.m. Saturn is the bright "star" to the west (right) of the moon this morning in the southwestern sky before sunrise. To the right of Saturn is the star Spica in the right of Saturn to Virgo, On Saturday morning, the moon is

approaching Jupiter in the south. By Sunday morning, the last quarter moon has passed that planet.

Below Jupiter is the reddish star Antares in Scorplus. The moon, Jupiter and Antares form a nice triangle in the south before sunrise.

New moon is on Monday, March 14. It is located between earth and sun, so it is not visible.

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The crescent moon forms another triangle — this lime with Venus and Mars — in the west after sunset on Wednesday, March 16. Mars, still to the lower right of Venus, remains a difficult object to spot.

Spring officially arrives in the northern hemisphere Sunday, March 20, at 11:39 p.m. The sun appears to follow an imaginary line around the sky called the cellptic. Because earth's axis to tilted a 23th degrees, the cellptic appears to be tilted with respect to another imaginary line called the celestial equator. The celestial equator divides the sky into two hemispheres, just as earth's equator divides our planet.

THE TILTED ecliptic crosses the celestial equator at two points, once as it angles from north to south and again from south to north. When the sun reaches the crossing point, going from south to north, it is at the vernal equinox, the official start of spring. The sun will rise due east and set due west.

Also on the evening of March 20, the crescent moon will be above the star Aldebaran, the "eye" of Taurus.
The moon is at first quarter on the evening of the 21st.

Two olghts later, the moon will be in a line with Castor and Pollux, the two atars marking the heads of Gemini. Pollux is the star close to the moon; Castor is above Pollux of the moon; Castor is above Pollux of the moon has drifted from Gemini, through Cancer and is now in Lo. The bright star to the lower right of the moon is Regulus, the heart of Lo. Mercury is at superior conjuntion on March 26. The planet is located behind the sun, as seen from earth, and is not visible to us.

Jupiter begins retregrate (hack-

Jupiter begins retrograde (back-ward) motion on Sunday, March 27, It

has been slowly moving eastward through the stars of Scorplus, but the orbital motion of the earth around the sun produces an optical illusion. Jupi-ter will appear to drift westward from on eight to the next as earth comes around the sun and "catches up" to Ju-piter.

FULL MOON is on Monday, March 18. The moon rises in the east as the un sets in the west and is visible all

son sets in the west and is visible all night.

The moon, Saturn and Spica form a triangular grouping on the evening of March 29. Saturn is below the moon, Spica to the right. They will be seen rising in the cast-southeast.

By the end of the month, Saturn rises after 8:30 p.m. and Venus sets about ene hour later. Both planets are fascinating slight through a telescope. The observatory's telescope at Cranbrook Institute of Science is available for public viewing every Saturday night 8:30-10 p.m. For more information call 645-3200.

(The author is coordinator of the planetarium and observatory at Cranbrook Institute of Science.)

Roads newly paved

Farmington's 1982 road improvement pro-gram is complete with newly paved Grace and Adams streets and re-pairs on Drake Road.

The City Council Mon-day approved the final \$17,500 payment of the program's total \$57,000

Although most of the work was paid for with city funds, Farmington officials used a portion of the 1982 Community De-



Teen to compete for title

Kim Schwanke, the 16-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Schwanke of Farmington, has been se-lected to compete in the 1983 Michigan Miss Teen Pageant the weekend of July 1-13 in Kalarnazoo.

The pageant is the official statewide finals for the Miss Teen National Pageant, set for December in New

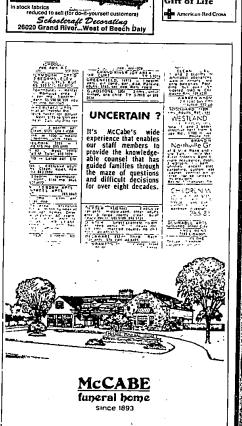
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