

# Bright March skies signal the start of spring

The month of March features a close conjunction between Venus and Mars, and the official start of spring. Three planets will be visible in the predawn sky this month. Brilliant Venus, Mars and Saturn all will be in the southeast before sunrise. Jupiter will be a bright beacon nearly overhead after sunset. Mercury is too close to the sun to be seen. The amount of sunlight we receive will increase by one hour and 26 minutes in March.

## Folk art at county center

County art aficionados can view a variety of crafts at the Country Folk Art Show March 2-4 at the Springfield Oaks Activities Center.

Handmade crafts by more than 100 artisans will be on display. Among the items for sale will be Appalachian style baskets, Shaker furniture, quilts, weathervanes, decoys, country clocks and children's furniture.

"The Country Folk Art Show is recognized as the leading folk art show in the nation. Only the best artisans in the country appear at our show," said Betty Long, co-organizer.

Show hours are 9-5 p.m. Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Admission fees are \$6 on Friday and \$4 on Saturday and Sunday. Children ages 10 and under pay \$2 and children under age 5 are free.

Food concessions will be available. The Springfield Oaks Activities Center is on Andersonville Road, near Hall Road, in Davisburg.

For more information, call Betty Long or Rhonda Blakeley at 634-4151 or the Springfield Oaks Activities Center at 625-8133.

## Expecting? Classes set

The Oakland County Health Division will sponsor six expectant parent classes at its Southfield office, 27725 Greenfield Road.

Classes will be 7-9 p.m. on consecutive Wednesdays beginning March 7. The cost is \$10 and preregistration is required by 5 p.m. Friday, March 2. Information is available at 424-7942.

Topics to be discussed include preparation for labor and delivery, good nutrition, growth and development of the fetus and the baby, infant care and parenting.

## Please Help A Neighbor's Child In Need!

In Third World countries, hundreds of thousands of children are in desperate need of food, clothing, medical care—the basics of life. These girls and boys are even denied the opportunity to attend school. They are our neighbors in a world that grows smaller every day.

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Sunrise on March 1 is at 7:08 a.m. and sunset is at 6:22 p.m., allowing for a possible 11 hours and 44 minutes of sunlight. On March 31, the sun rises at 6:17 a.m. and sets at 6:57 p.m. for 12 hours and 40 minutes of sunlight.

Mars passes one degree south of (below) Saturn on the morning of March 1. Look southeast about 45 minutes before sunrise. The brilliant "star" about nine degrees to the east (left) of Mars is Venus.

The last grouping between Mars and Saturn was in February 1988; the next will be in March 1992.

THE MOON is in the constellation of Taurus the bull on the evening of March 2. The Pleiades (PLEE-ah dees) star cluster, the "shoulder" of Taurus, is immediately to the left of the moon.

Fifteen degrees to the left of the



skywatch  
**Raymond E. Bullock**

moon is the star Aldebaran (al DEE-ah ran), the bull's "eye." Aldebaran is a red giant star. It is 40 times larger than the sun and 125 times brighter, but doesn't look it because it's 68 light years away. The light we see tonight left Aldebaran 68 years ago in 1922.

The very bright star to the left of Aldebaran is the planet Jupiter.

The moon is at First Quarter phase at 9:05 p.m. March 3. It is one-quarter of its way around the Earth. The moon will form a large triangle with the Pleiades and Aldebaran.

On the next night, the moon will be about five degrees to the left of Jupiter.

The moon will be aligned with the twin stars, Castor and Pollux, on the evening of March 6.

Look high in the east southeast to find the moon. The star above and to the left of the moon is Pollux; above and to the left of Pollux is Castor. These stars each mark a "head" of the Gemini twins.

LOOK AT these two stars closely. Castor is also known as Alpha Gemini.

norum (gem in OR um); Pollux is Beta Geminorum.

Stars not only have "proper names," they also are distinguished by catalog numbers and letters of the Greek alphabet.

By custom, the brightest star in a constellation is given the first letter of the Greek alphabet. The second brightest star gets the second letter, and so on. The Greek letters were assigned in a star atlas published by a Bavarian astronomer named Bayer in 1603.

Modern measurements of stellar brightness have determined that Pollux (beta) is nearly half a magnitude brighter than Castor (alpha).

While that is not a major noticeable difference, it does mean that while Pollux is the 17th brightest star in the sky, Castor is farther down the list at 23rd brightest. In addition, Pollux, lying at a dis-

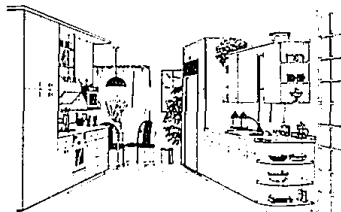
tance of 35 light years (the light we see tonight left Pollux in 1955), is 10 light years closer to us than Castor.

THE MOON is in the constellation of Leo the Lion on the evening of March 9, about 10 degrees above the star Regulus (REG-uh-lus), the lion's "heart."

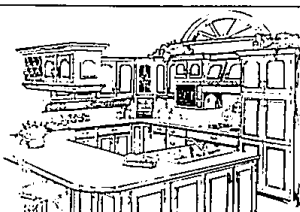
Regulus, also known as Alpha Leonis (lee OH nis), is the 21st brightest star in sky, brighter than Castor, but not as bright as Pollux. On the following night, the moon will be directly below Regulus.

Full Moon is at 5:58 a.m. March 11. The moon is fully lighted by the sun and will rise as the sun sets, be visible all night, and set as the sun rises.

ON THE morning of March 12, Venus and Mars will appear at their closest. They will be 7.5 degrees apart.



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