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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AAVSO Collaborates with the International Planetarium Society and Ball State University to Bring Astronomy Home

The American Association of Variable Star Observers launches their monthly planetaria series, bringing astronomy to homes across the Northern Hemisphere.

Cambridge, MA (January 15, 2021) - The American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO), an international nonprofit organization of amateur and professional astronomers who are interested in stars that change in brightness, is today announcing their monthly collaboration with The International Planetarium Society and Ball State University to make astronomy more accessible at home and guide individuals into exploring the night sky by making their first scientific observations. The goal of this partnership is to bring the planetarium experience home by highlighting one variable star each month, encouraging new and seasoned observers in the Northern Hemisphere to come together, collect data, and potentially even make a scientific discovery.

Each month, as part of the planetarium experience, the AAVSO will release a sky chart to identify a special star in a different constellation. Participants can search and identify the star and observe it, or if they want, can measure the star's brightness over the month and identify how it changes with time. Participants can submit measurements to the AAVSO International Database, alongside data from hundreds of other citizen scientists worldwide. You don't need a science degree to contribute to science in a meaningful way; the AAVSO has a collection of resources, tutorials, and videos to help even the most novice astronomers with variable star observations. People from all experience levels, backgrounds, and age levels are encouraged to take part.

To kick off this planetarium experience series, the variable star of the month for January is Pleione, a member of the bright Pleiades star cluster in the constellation Taurus. The stars can all be seen with the naked eye, but using binoculars may make it easier to pick out the individual clustered stars. Pleione is next to the brighter star Atlas in the handle of the small "cup" formed by the brightest stars in the Pleiades cluster.

Additional information on each variable star as well as how to find them is available through the AAVSO website. All featured variable star content is the result of a group effort between the AAVSO, Ball State University, and the International Planetarium Society. AAVSO's collaboration with The International

Planetarium Society and Ball State University will continue through December 2021, highlighting different variable stars each month.

The AAVSO has some of the largest and most comprehensive databases in the world, including the AAVSO International Database (AID), the largest digital variable star database in the world that contains over 34 million variable star observations, and the Variable Star Index (VSX), which contains minute-to-minute data on over 200,000,000 variable stars. These databases contain observations from citizen scientists, and allow professional astronomers to advance their scientific research and further probe the complexities of the universe.

Target stars for subsequent months include:

- February- Betelgeuse
- March- Propus
- April- R Leonis

To get more information about AAVSO's planetaria events, please visit www.aavso.org/featured-variables .

ABOUT THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STAR OBSERVERS

The AAVSO was founded in 1911 to coordinate variable star observations—made largely by amateur astronomers—for Harvard College Observatory. The AAVSO was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1918 as a non-profit scientific and educational organization. Today, as an independent, private research organization headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with active participants in more than 100 countries, and an archive of over 34 million variable star observations, it is the world's largest association of variable star observers. Learn more about the AAVSO at https://www.aavso.org/.