



## North American AstroPhysical Observatory (NAAPO)



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### **In Search of Planets** *(The Extrasolar Planetary Foundation Report)*

By: George D. Gatewood

Perhaps even more basic than the question of extraterrestrial life is that of extrasolar planets. It is hard to imagine life evolving without a planetary home, and so far our Solar System seems to have provided only one such abode. Thus, extraterrestrial life would seem to require extrasolar planetary systems. If

neighboring planetary systems exist, and if they contain inhabitable planets devoid of life evolved from their own ecosystems, the question of extraterrestrial life will need redefinition: by this I mean that the extraterrestrials may come to be understood to be none other than humans from Earth who have colonized other planets. Although the distances are vast, they are not insurmountable and our descendants will some day be able to venture to the stars.

The advent of new astronomical detectors has made the first step in this adventure possible now. Small groups of scientists working at several institutions across the United States are developing the first instrumentation capable of discerning which stars harbor their own planetary systems. To help these groups test new ideas and concepts, and to help them to begin the observational programs that will point the way for the future, we have formed the *Extrasolar Planetary Foundation*. With a Board of Directors composed of astronomers and lay persons with related backgrounds, we hope to act as a focal point for those who would like to give this new effort a measure of support. Our experience suggests that the number of people who would like to participate in this effort is large enough to raise an endowment of several hundred thousand dollars. The interest earned by such a fund would become a perpetual source of support, providing new instrumentation and providing the long- term stability necessary for the observational programs that will be required.

The editors of **COSMIC SEARCH** support our effort and have offered us this space to begin a regular column. We will here report to you further on both our foundation and the research we hope to support. For further information, write Extrasolar Planetary Foundation, Observatory Station, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15214. Your tax deductible patronage will be greatly appreciated.

**George D. Gatewood**

Chairman of the Board

Extrasolar Planetary Foundation

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