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July 28, 2005

## It's all in the stars

### Mysteries of astrology snag millions

BY TOM BREEN  
 FLORIDA TODAY

Leslie Marlar's body is in Indialantic, but her mind is in the heavens.

She is standing in a tropical screened-in room, fretting about the unpredictability of Scorpio moons, smiling about nature-loving Taurus moons and reminding people, if anyone should forget, how everything taking place in outer space affects everything happening down here.

"The world above us has an effect on all of life's successes and happiness," she tells a group of six women gathered this Saturday morning on the back porch of a new-age store called Aquarian Dreams on State Road A1A across from the ocean.

Marlar, of Satellite Beach, is an astrologist, fervent about an activity long labeled a pseudoscience but one that produces scores of horoscopes daily, which are reproduced in newspapers, magazines and on



**Star-gazer.** Astrologist Leslie Marlar laughs during a monthly astrology chart workshop at Aquarian Dreams in Indialantic. Christina Stuart, FLORIDA TODAY

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Astrology, which contends the positions of the moon, stars and planets affect all our personalities, is not to be confused with astronomy, a recognized science that studies the universe. Also, academic degrees are not required for astrologers as they are for astronomers.

Still, astrology is taken seriously by millions of people, including the six Brevard County women discussing their charts with Marlar.

"Astrology is its own world with a separate language," she says.

Marlar and the others talk about this planet squaring with that moon, and this particular sign falling into one of many "houses" in a person's astrological chart.

To one woman, Mary Beth Fishpaw of Melbourne Beach, Marlar says, "You need to own and manage your Scorpio moon."

Scorpio moons, as all astrology buffs know, can be tricky creatures, often causing emotional turmoil.

"You can say that again," Fishpaw says.

But Taurus moons, Marlar tells a woman who has one, Joy Jones of Indialantic, "represent stability and practicality and a love of nature." Jones, however, isn't quite so sure, saying, "Taurus isn't always stable."

At times, Marlar sounds much like a mental-health counselor, declaring the "only way to make something positive happen is to take action," or that "we all need to manage stress better."

But all her findings are tied to preparing personal charts of people based

will gather for a major conference from Aug. 17-21 at the Indian Lakes Resort in Bloomingdale, Ill.

The U.S. International Society of Astrological Research and the Astrological Association of Great Britain are co-sponsors of the conference.

More than 75 astrologers are scheduled to teach 120 classes.

For information, go to [www.isaraastrology.com](http://www.isaraastrology.com)

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### Predicting the future

Astrology is not the only activity predicting the future. A few of them, far less academic than astrology, include:

- **Tarot cards:** These probably were introduced to Europe in the Middle Ages. Each card's meaning is represented by an illustration. The tarot deck has 78 cards.
- **Palm reading:** A palmist predicts the future by studying major lines of the hand. Hands are grouped into four categories: earth, fire, water and air.
- **Crystal ball reading:** A fortune teller looks into the ball in what is believed to be an ancient pagan ritual.
- **Fortune cookies:** You get a paper fortune, lucky numbers and a cookie.
- **Ouija board:** A device used by mediums to contact the spirit world.
- **Hydromancy:** Predicting the future by reading reflections in water.
- **I Ching:** A Chinese practice of consulting the "Book of Changes." -- *The Johns Hopkins Newsletter and FLORIDA TODAY research*

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on the time and place of a person's birth and not on her personal opinions, she says.

Before the Internet, the preparation of such charts took hours but now can be done much faster, says Holiday Mathis, a syndicated astrologer who writes daily horoscopes for about 400 U.S. publications including FLORIDA TODAY.

"Now I just check the date, and where the planets are aligned, and go with my gut as to what it all means," Mathis says in discussing her newspaper column from her home near Los Angeles.

Today, for example, the planets Mercury and Mars are at odds with one another. Mercury, named for the God of Commerce, and Mars, named for the God of War, are battling over money, Mathis writes in her column.

"Mars is in a heroic mood, ready to fight for our right to financial stability. This action planet wants to get started on project finance, but Mercury has other mischief in mind -- like messing up the details so that we'll look more closely at our real financial picture. Go over bank statements with an open mind about improving spending habits."

The apparent message: Stay away from your checkbook today.

When writing the column, Mathis does not pretend to be a scientist, although she takes the idea of astrology seriously.

"There is a scientific aspect to preparing these charts, but my column also is about trying to spark imagination of people, to have them ponder" the questions of the universe.

Sometimes, her writing prompts heartfelt responses from readers, including one from a man "who sat near his father while he died" after reading his horoscope.

Marlar, for her part, recognizes the power of newspaper horoscopes but contends her personal charts rely far more on scientific principles despite what many critics might say.

"People need to recognize popular astrology such as newspaper horoscopes and real astrology, which was practiced by people such as the 16th century astronomer Johannes Kepler," Marlar says. Kepler is credited with discovering three major laws of planetary motion.

Marlar became enamored of people like Kepler after taking an astronomy course while a student at a junior college near Los Angeles, but soon gravitated toward astrology.

"Initially, I had been a little critical of astrology because it wasn't scientific enough, but now I'm a believer, especially as I see how people's personalities really are tied to planetary positioning," Marlar says.

She noted on July 7, the day Hurricane Dennis was moving toward the

southern United States and terrorists were attacking London, the sun was 90 degrees away from powerful Mars.

"Mars' location predicted bad things," she says.

In teaching astrology during the past 20 years in Brevard County, Marlar has tutored individuals, taught at Brevard Community College and given small classes such as the one at Aquarium Dreams. At the Indialantic store, which sells New-Age products such as natural fiber clothing and meditation stones, the astrology sessions have become a tradition.

"People have come to rely on these gatherings," store owner Cheri Hart says. "It's very important to them. It really helps people figure out why they do some of the things they do. It's comforting in such a dangerous world."

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