



Lake Afton Public Observatory

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FOR: Immediate Release

FROM: Lake Afton Public Observatory  
WSU Fairmount Center for Science and Mathematics Education  
Robert Henry, 316.978.3991 or Greg Novacek, 316.978.3854

DATE: February 20, 2011

RE: Lake Afton Public Observatory - Programs for March, April, & May, 2012.

### **Mars is Back for another Closest Pass**

The planet Mars is closer to Earth now than it will be for the next two years. So don't miss this opportunity to see it through the telescope at the Lake Afton Public Observatory. During the program *Stars and Mars*, visitors to the Observatory will view Mars, a double star, an ancient star cluster, and a distant spiral galaxy through the 16-inch telescope as their appearance is discussed. *Stars and Mars* will be presented on Friday and Saturday evenings, March 9-10, 16-17 and 23-24; April 6-7, 13-14 and 20-21; and May 11-12, and 18-19.

The program *Volcanoes in our Solar System* will explore volcanic activity in the solar system and examine how that activity is similar to, and different from, that found on Earth. During this program Observatory visitors will observe the Moon, Mars, Venus (through May 5th), and Saturn (beginning April 27th) through the Observatory's telescope. *Volcanoes in our Solar System* will be presented on March 2-3, and 30-31; April 27-28; and May 4-5 and 25-26.

Some of the Observatory's many exhibits focus on Mars. These exhibits explore: how and where scientists will look for life on the Martian surface; geological features on Mars; and spacecraft that have been sent to Mars. Other exhibits give visitors the opportunity to: learn about volcanism in the solar system; discover the properties of light; touch rocks that came from space; use a computer to go on a scavenger hunt through the solar system or land a spacecraft on the Moon; learn how to use a small telescope; or use binoculars to explore the night sky.

Have you ever wanted to take a picture of Mars, the Moon or Saturn? If so, the Observatory is the place to go. Each month, on a selected Saturday evening after the regular program, the Observatory features an astrophotography program. During these programs, anyone with a 35mm single-lens reflex (SLR) camera (a camera with a removable lens) can take celestial photographs using the Observatory's 16" telescope as a giant telephoto lens.

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**Office:**  
1845 Fairmount  
Wichita, KS 67260-0032  
(316) 978-3191

**Program Information:**  
(316) WSU-STAR  
**Internet:**  
<http://webs.wichita.edu/lapo>

**Observatory:**  
20 mi. SW of downtown Wichita  
on MacArthur Rd. at 247th St. W.  
(316) 794-8995

On Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 pm the astrophotography program will focus its attentions on the mysterious red planet, Mars. On Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 pm, the program will feature astrophotography of our nearest celestial neighbor, the Moon. Finally, on Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 pm the astrophotography program will reach deep into our solar system for pictures of the beautiful ringed planet, Saturn.

For the photography programs listed, the ability to shoot color pictures at ISO 400 or 800 is recommended.

Note that if you do not have an SLR camera, that's ok too. Bring a USB flash drive with you and the Observatory will let you use their digital SLR camera to take your astronomy photographs. When you have finished, your pictures will be transferred to your flash drive for you to take home and enjoy.

### **Opening Times and Admission**

The Lake Afton Public Observatory is open to the public every Friday and Saturday evening. During the month of March, the Observatory is open from 8:00-10:00; in April, from 8:30-10:30 pm; then from May through the end of August, Observatory hours will be from 9:00-11:00 pm. Admission is just \$5 for adults and \$3 for children ages 6-12; children under 6 are admitted free. There is also a special family rate where 2 parents and their immediate minor children or grandchildren get in for just \$15.00. Current program information is available on our information hotline at WSU-STAR (978-7827) or from our website at <http://webs.wichita.edu/lapo> .

### **Location**

The observatory is located about 20 miles southwest of downtown Wichita on MacArthur Road at 247th Street West in Lake Afton County Park. It is immediately north of the lake, just off MacArthur Road. Lake Afton can be reached by any of the following routes: west from Wichita on U.S. 54 to the Lake Afton sign at Viola Road three miles past Goddard, then three miles south and one mile east; or southwest on K-42, 7 miles to Schulte and nine miles west on MacArthur.

### **Events Taking Place in the Sky**

Would you like to know when the full Moon will occur? Have you ever pondered the name of the bright star you saw near the Moon? Is there a meteor shower this month? To discover the answers to these questions or if you just want to know what events are taking place in the sky during the current month, call the Observatory's Program and Sky Information line at WSU-STAR (978-7827).

The Lake Afton Public Observatory is operated by the Fairmount Center for Science and Mathematics Education, a part of the Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Science at Wichita State University.

## Public Program Schedule March 1 – May 31, 2012

| <b>Program</b>                       | <b>March</b>  | <b>Fridays and Saturdays</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Volcanoes in our Solar System</i> | 8:00-10:00 pm | March 2-3, 30-31             |
| Photography: Mars                    | 10:00 pm      | Saturday, March 3            |
| <i>Stars and Mars</i>                | 8:00-10:00 pm | March 9-10, 16-17, 23-24     |
| <b>Program</b>                       | <b>April</b>  | <b>Fridays and Saturdays</b> |
| <i>Stars and Mars</i>                | 8:30-10:30 pm | April 6-7, 13-14, 20-21      |
| <i>Volcanoes in our Solar System</i> | 8:30-10:30 pm | April 27-28                  |
| Photography: First Quarter Moon      | 10:30 pm      | Saturday, April 28           |
| <b>Program</b>                       | <b>May</b>    | <b>Fridays and Saturdays</b> |
| <i>Volcanoes in our Solar System</i> | 9:00-11:00 pm | May 4-5, 25-26               |
| Mother's Day Weekend                 | 9:00-11:00 pm | May 11-12                    |
| Bring Your Own Telescope             | 9:00 pm       | Friday, May 18               |
| <i>Stars and Mars</i>                | 9:00-11:00 pm | May 11-12, 18-19             |
| Photography: Saturn                  | 11:00 pm      | Saturday, May 19             |
| Partial Solar Eclipse                | 7:00-8:30 pm  | Sunday, May 20               |