



Lake Afton Public Observatory

OR: 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: December 17, 2012

RE: Lake Afton Public Observatory – New programs for winter, 2013.

The Stellar Lifecycle and Exploring the Moon and Jupiter

The Lake Afton Public Observatory presents *“Life Story of a Star”*. Much like us, stars are born, they live, they grow old and they die. In other words, they have a life cycle. During this program, visitors will use the observatory’s 16-inch telescope to take a look at objects in the night sky that are representative of the various stages in a star’s life cycle. Visitors will have the opportunity to observe Jupiter, which some people consider a “failed” star, a cluster of newly born stars, a binary star, and a nebula. *“Life Story of a Star”* will be presented on the following evenings: January 4-5, 11-12; February 1-2, 8-9; March 1-2, 8-9, 29-30; April 5-6, 12-13 and 26-27.

The Observatory also presents *“Journey to Jupiter”*. The journey’s first stop will be Earth’s nearest celestial neighbor, the moon. Here, the mission is to use the Observatory’s telescope to explore its craters, smooth plains and mountains. The next stop is the gas giant, Jupiter. Here, the many moons, and astounding cloud features of the largest planet in our solar system will be explored. *“Journey to Jupiter”* will be presented on the following evenings: January 18-19, 25-26; February 15-16, 22-23; March 15-16, 22-23 and April 19-20.

The Observatory has numerous exhibits that complement the observing programs. One such exhibit explains how astronomers learn about the properties of stars – their temperature, size, mass and luminosity. Other exhibits show the different stages stars go through during their life cycles; the many interesting features of Jupiter; what familiar constellations look like now, in the future and from somewhere else in space. Additional exhibits let you make a telescope, explore the properties of light, touch a rock from space, use a computer to go on a scavenger hunt through the solar system or land a spacecraft on the moon. You can also use small telescopes and binoculars outside to observe astronomical objects on your own.

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

The Observatory also features a photography program each month where anyone with a 35mm single-lens reflex camera (that's a camera with a removable lens) can take celestial photographs using the Observatory's telescope as a giant telephoto lens. At 10:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 12th and again on Saturday, March 16th, the photography program will feature the largest planet in our solar system, Jupiter. On Saturday, February 9th at 10:00 p.m. the astrophotography program will focus on the beautiful Orion nebula. Then, on Saturday, April 20th at 10:30 p.m. the first quarter moon will be the subject of the photography program.

Please note that for these astrophotography programs your SLR camera must have a manual override and you should be familiar with using its manual settings such as changing ISO settings and exposure times. For photographing bright planetary objects like Jupiter and the Moon, an ISO setting of 400 or 800 and a cable release are recommended. For deep sky objects like Orion, an ISO setting of 800 or faster and a cable release are necessary.

If you do not have a 35mm SLR camera with a manual override, bring a USB flash drive instead. The Observatory staff will show you how to use their digital SLR camera to take your pictures. After you have taken your pictures, they will be transferred to your flash drive for you to take home, process and print.

Opening Times and Admission

The Lake Afton Public Observatory is open to the public on Friday and Saturday evenings. From January 4th through the end of February, Observatory hours are from 7:30-10:00 p.m.; during March, Observatory hours are from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.; and in April the hours are from 8:30 to 10:30 p.m. Admission to the Observatory is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children ages 6-12; children under 6 are admitted free. We also have a special family rate where 2 adults and their immediate children or grandchildren get in for just \$15.00. Current program information is available from our information line at WSU-STAR (978-7827) or on 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 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.

**Lake Afton Public Observatory
 Public Program Schedule January 2 – April 30, 2013**

Program	January	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Life Story of a Star</i>	7:30 – 10:00 p.m.	January 4-5, 11-12
<i>Journey to Jupiter</i>	7:30 – 10:00 p.m.	January 18-19, 25-26
Photography: Jupiter	10:00 p.m.	Saturday, January 12
Program	February	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Life Story of a Star</i>	7:30 – 10:00 p.m.	February 1-2, 8-9
Photography: Orion nebula	10:00 p.m.	Saturday, February 9
<i>Journey to Jupiter</i>	7:30 – 10:00 p.m.	February 15-16, 22-23
Program	March	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Life Story of a Star</i>	8:00 – 10:00 p.m.	March 1-2, 8-9, 29-30
<i>Journey to Jupiter</i>	8:00 – 10:00 p.m.	March 15-16, 22-23
Photography: Jupiter	10:00 p.m.	Saturday, March 16
Program	April	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Life Story of a Star</i>	8:30 – 10:30 p.m.	April 5-6, 12-13, 26-27
<i>Journey to Jupiter</i>	8:30 – 10:30 p.m.	April 19-20
Photography: First Quarter Moon	10:30 p.m.	Saturday, April 20

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