



Lake Afton Public Observatory

FOR: Immediate Release

FROM: Lake Afton Public Observatory
WSU Fairmount Center for Science and Mathematics Education
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DATE: May 21, 2012

RE: Lake Afton Public Observatory - Programs for June, July & August, 2012.

Saturn and Things that aren't Comets

Saturn is a wonder to behold through a telescope. It, along with the craters and smooth plains of our nearest neighbor, the Moon and a distant star with its own planets will be featured in the program, *Sizing up Saturn*. During the program, Observatory visitors will view Saturn, Moon craters, Moon Maré, and a star with planets of its own through the big 16-inch telescope as the amazing facts surrounding these objects is discussed. *Sizing up Saturn* will be presented on Friday and Saturday evenings, June 1-2, 22-23, and 29-30; July 27-28; and August 24-25, and 31-Sept 1.

The program *Messier Album* will explore some of the many objects catalogued by the late 18th century comet hunter, Charles Messier. These objects were catalogued so that they would not be mistaken for comets when seen through a small telescope. During this program, visitors to the Observatory will have a chance to observe clouds of gas and dust called nebulae, vast clusters of stars, and a galaxy far, far away. *Messier Album* will be presented on Friday and Saturday evenings, June 8-9, and 15-16; July 6-7, 13-14 and 20-21; and August 3-4, 10-11 and 17-18.

The Observatory also has many exhibits for visitors to explore. Some exhibits bring to light what has been learned from the Cassini/Huygens mission to Saturn; the history of the Hubble Space Telescope and its many amazing discoveries; the features of Saturn; and what nebulas are and how they form. Other exhibits give visitors the opportunity to: discover the properties of light; touch rocks that came from space; use a computer to go on a scavenger hunt through the solar system, 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 the Moon or Saturn? If so, the Observatory is the place to go. Each month throughout the year, on selected Saturday evenings 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

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1845 Fairmount
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(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

removable lens) can take celestial photographs using the Observatory's 16" telescope as a giant telephoto lens.

On Saturday, June 30th at 11:00 pm the Observatory's astrophotography program will feature our closest celestial neighbor, the Moon, during its gibbous phase. On Saturday, July 14th at 11:00 pm, the astrophotography program will attempt to capture the beautiful details of Saturn and its ring system. Finally, on Saturday, August 25th at 11:00 pm the astrophotography program will focus on the craters and maré of our Moon.

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. From June 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 June 1 – September 1, 2012

Program	June	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Sizing up Saturn</i>	9:00-11:00 pm	June 1-2, 22-23, 29-30
Solar Transit of Venus	4:45 pm – 8:00 pm	Tuesday, June 5
<i>Messier Album</i>	9:00-11:00 pm	June 8-9, 15-16
<i>Fathers' Day Weekend</i>	9:00-11:00 pm	June 15-16
Bring Your Own Telescope	9:00 pm	Friday, June 15
Photography: Gibbous Moon	11:00 pm	Saturday, June 30

Program	July	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Messier Album</i>	9:00-11:00 pm	July 6-7, 13-14, 20-21
Photography: Saturn	11:00 pm	Saturday, July 14
Bring Your Own Telescope	9:00 pm	Friday, July 20
<i>Sizing up Saturn</i>	9:00-11:00 pm	July 27-28

Program	August	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Messier Album</i>	9:00-11:00 pm	August 3-4, 10-11, 17-18
Perseid Meteor Shower	11:00 pm-2:00 am	Sunday, August 12
Bring Your Own Telescope	9:00 pm	Friday, August 17
<i>Sizing up Saturn</i>	9:00-11:00 pm	August 24-25, 31-Sep 1
Photography: First Quarter Moon	11:00 pm	Saturday, August 25