



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: June 22, 2015

RE: Lake Afton Public Observatory – New summer programs.

Saturn and the 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. Visitors to the Lake Afton Public Observatory for the program, *Life Story of a Star*, will use the observatory's 16-inch telescope to look at objects in the night sky that are representative of the various stages in the life cycle of stars. Visitors will have the opportunity to observe a stellar nursery called a diffuse nebula, a cluster of newly born stars, a binary star and a planetary nebula created by the death of a sun-like star as they learn how the life cycles of stars differ. Saturn will also be observed at the beginning of the program. *Life Story of a Star* will be presented on Friday and Saturday evenings, July 3, 10-11, 17-18, 31; August 1, 7-8, 14-15; September 4-5 and 11-12.

Saturn is a wonder to behold through a telescope. It, along with the craters and smooth plains of our nearest neighbor, the Moon, and the most distant planet in our solar system, Neptune, will be featured in the program, *Sizing up Saturn*. During the program, Observatory visitors will view Saturn, Moon craters and maré, and the dark blue gas giant, Neptune, through the 16-inch telescope as their similarities and differences are discussed. *Sizing up Saturn* will be presented on Friday and Saturday evenings, July 24-25; August 21-22, 28-29; September 18-19, and 25-26.

The Lake Afton Public Observatory has numerous exhibits that complement the observing programs. One exhibit examines the different life cycles of stars while another explores some of the beautiful features of Saturn. Another looks at the strange and mysterious facts surrounding black holes. Other exhibits show you how to make a telescope or test your astronomy knowledge to launch the Space Shuttle. 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 11:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 11th, the photography program will feature the beautiful ringed planet Saturn. Then at 11:00 pm on Saturday, August 29th, the photography program will feature the full Moon. Finally, at 10:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 12th, the astrophotography program will focus its attentions on a giant cluster of almost a million stars in our galaxy called M13.

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 and exposure settings. For all astrophotography programs a cable release is recommended.

But wait! What if you don't have a 35mm SLR camera? The Observatory has a solution ... just bring a USB flash drive with you. The Observatory staff will help you use the Observatory's camera to take your pictures. Your pictures will then be transferred to your flash drive for you to take home, process and enjoy.

Opening Times and Admission

The Lake Afton Public Observatory is open to the public every Friday and Saturday evening. However, on Saturday, July 4th, the Observatory will be closed in observance of Independence Day. From July through the end of August, Observatory hours are from 9:00 to 11:00 p.m. In September, Observatory hours change and they will be from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Admission to the Observatory is \$6 for adults and \$4 for children ages 6-12; children under 6 are admitted free. There is also a special family rate where 2 adults and their immediate minor children or grandchildren get in for just \$18.00. For program information, you can "friend" the Lake Afton Public Observatory on Facebook, call the information hotline at WSU-STAR (978-7827), or go to the Observatory's 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.

Lake Afton Public Observatory Public Program Schedule July – September, 2015

Program	July	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Life Story of a Star</i>	9:00 – 11:00 p.m.	July 3, 10-11, 17-18, 31
<i>CLOSED</i>		July 4
Photography: Saturn	11:00 p.m.	Saturday, July 11
Bring Your Own Telescope	9:00 – 11:00 p.m.	Friday, July 17
<i>Sizing up Saturn</i>	9:00 – 11:00 p.m.	July 24-25
Program	August	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Life Story of a Star</i>	9:00 – 11:00 p.m.	August 1, 7-8, 14-15
Perseid Meteor Shower	12:00 – 3:00 a.m.	Thursday, August 13
<i>Sizing up Saturn</i>	9:00 – 11:00 p.m.	August 21-22, 28-29
Bring Your Own Telescope	9:00 – 11:00 p.m.	Friday, August 21
Photography: Full Moon	11:00 p.m.	Saturday, August 29
Program	September	Fridays and Saturdays
<i>Life Story of a Star</i>	8:00 – 10:00 p.m.	September 4-5, 11-12
Grandparents' Day Weekend	8:00 – 10:00 p.m.	Fri. & Sat. September 4-5
<i>Sizing up Saturn</i>	8:00 – 10:00 p.m.	September 18-19, 25-26
Photography: M13	10:00 p.m.	Saturday, September 12
International Observe the Moon Night	8:00 – 10:00 p.m.	Saturday, September 19
Smithsonian Magazine Museum Day	8:00 – 10:00 p.m.	Saturday, September 26

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