

Seeing stars at campus observatory

Karen Hill
FEATURE EDITOR

Stargazing may seem like something that's only possible on summer nights in deserted fields, far from the Portland city lights, but thanks to the Haggart Observatory, viewing the night sky can become a Saturday night ritual throughout the year—right here on campus.

"The winter sky is particularly spectacular," said Karen Halliday, faculty librarian and observatory volunteer. "You can see some of the biggest, brightest constellations."

The observatory features a variety of viewing options. Astronomical binoculars allow viewers to observe star clusters, constellations, and double stars. A 13" telescope presents the opportunity to see planets and objects high in the sky. The 24" telescope, kept in the dome of the observatory, is best for deep space objects (i.e., objects low in the sky).

The observatory is run by a group of 15 volunteers who are on call Saturday nights from 6-10 p.m. when the observatory is open. The decision to open is based on the weather. The opening status of the observatory should be posted on Saturdays by 4 p.m.

Occasionally, when a clear night develops later in the evening, a group of available volunteers might choose to open the tower. Halliday suggests to call the observatory's extension to confirm closure for locals who notice clouds in the early evening, but clear sky later on.

Halliday explained that many people, because of the clouds, trees and lights, are weary of finding anything in the sky.

"People think that stargazing isn't very good around here," said Halliday. "It's actually a good place to learn because when it's a really clear sky you can see so many stars [that] it's hard to tell what you're looking at. When you

can't see as many, it's easier to pick out what you're looking for."

The tower is limited by the fire marshal to ten visitors at a time. In an effort to keep the visitors waiting their turn up the tower occupied, the observatory has set up several stations on the ground. These include displays modeling the solar system, information on the stages of the moon and a computerized planetarium.

Another activity, coordinated by a volunteer, is a constellation walk through the athletic field on campus. The visitors are led through the field, directing their eyes and binoculars to objects of interest in the night sky.

"Constellation tours in the field are one of my favorite things," said Halliday.

The observatory, named after Harold Haggart, was opened to the public for the first time on March 7, 1989. Haggart, a long time of resident of Oregon City, constructed a domed observatory attached to his residence, which included a telescope of his own make and design. He sold the telescope to the City of Portland before his death in 1984.

In May of 1988, Haggart's widow Darcy arranged for the dome Haggart had built, which was still in perfect condition, to be donated to Clackamas Community College's Environmental Learning Center. An observatory was constructed around the dome. In 1989, an observing area was completed, reached by a circular stairway and surrounded by a six-foot wide deck.

In 1999, due to rotting timbers found in the deck, the observatory was closed for renovation. Thanks to over \$160,000 of donated materials and services, the observatory reopened two years later with a newly built deck, warming hut and stairs. Haggart's dome is still in place atop the new structure.

Halliday suggests viewers bring binoculars

when visiting the observatory.

"There's lots of little surprises," she said. There are many objects to the look at with binoculars, such as star clusters, deep space objects, and double stars, which Halliday describes as two stars so close together that they appear as one to the naked eye.

Presently, viewers can see Venus, Mars and Saturn with a telescope, according to Halliday, and soon Jupiter will be visible as well.



ANGELA GERHART CLACKAMAS PRINT

Home-school students get jump start on college education

Bethany Monroe
THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

The Home School Option Program at CCC offers home-schooled students under the age of 19 the chance to earn college credits while supplementing their home education.

Tuition is covered by the student's school district, so books and fees are the only charges that students enrolled in the program are required to cover. Numerous home-schoolers in Clackamas County are taking advantage of this opportunity.

Fifteen-year-old home school student Elizabeth Pearson has been attending Clackamas part-time since age 13.

She continues to study music, math and science at home, while taking several courses that interest her, such as history, speech and physical education, at the college.

Sarah Berens, now 16, has been a participant in the Home School Option Program since age 14. She enrolled in the program after her older brother's positive experience.

"He was one of the first people [to participate]," said Berens. "He was like the guinea pig."

Berens and Pearson both said that the transition from home studies to college courses has been painless. However, they have become accustomed to shocked expressions from faculty and fellow students when they reveal their ages.

"It's only a problem when people know I'm younger and treat me different," said Pearson. "Once they

accept me as a college student, it's really great."

Home-schooled students are not the only ones who profit from the Home School Option Program; the college appears to be benefiting as well.

Many of the home-schooled students are actively involved on campus. Along with her two older siblings, Pearson is a member of the Clackamas Speech and Debate team, and Berens, a second-year German student, is currently serving as president of the German Club.

While this program is not intended to entirely replace a student's at-home studies, it does give participants a jump start on their college careers.

Some students, including Pearson and Berens, will have accumulated enough college credits to earn an associate's degree before their 18th birthdays.

In order to be eligible for the Home School Option Program, students are required to be registered as being home-schooled with the Clackamas Education Service District. They must pass a "New Student College Success" course during their first term at Clackamas and maintain attendance cards for each of their college classes.

All students under the age of 16 must receive special permission from their class instructor in order to enroll.

For more information about CCC's Home School Option Program, visit the college website: www.clackamas.edu, or contact Sue Eggleston, program coordinator, at sueeg@clackamas.edu.

"It's only a problem when people know I'm younger and treat me different. Once they accept me as a college student, it's really great."

Elizabeth Pearson
Home School Options
Program student

Geology students await Death Valley

Jessica LeClaire
THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

Viewing old mining sites, playing in sand dunes and participating in hikes are just a few of the fun events that take place during the spring break campus affiliated trip to Death Valley, earning participants three biology credits.

The Natural History of SW Deserts (BI-165) class is only offered once a year. It is a nine-day trip through the desert regions of the southwestern United States. Geology professor John Snively started this annual expedition to Death Valley 30 years ago.

"It is not just a valley," said Snively. Death Valley is filled with many sites to see. Students will have the opportunity to learn about various animals, plants and geological features of the desert. Other topics include the environmental issues of the Great Basin Region and Death Valley National Park.

"I'm really excited to learn more about geology and pretty much how Death Valley was formed. There are some pretty amazing things that a lot of people don't know about Death Valley and that I still don't know," said CCC student Athena Murphy. "I am excited to learn more and to see the sites."

Many mysterious events have taken place in Death Valley. The mystery that still baffles scientists today is how the "moving rocks" actually move.

"I am most excited about learning about the wildlife and the extraordinary geological findings in Death Valley, such as the highest and lowest points of the mountains," said Murphy. "I'm also excited to see what the temperature is like because in the summer it's the hottest place in the world."

Some of the worthwhile sites students will see include the moving rocks, pup fish and the lowest point in

North America called Bad Water.

According to life science professor Bob Misley, students who go on the trip to Death Valley will learn a great deal about the desert by hands on experience; living, breathing and studying it.

"The best, real true learning in natural science is always done in the field. You don't learn from a talking head or by being confined by four walls," said Misley. "The only real truth is experience."

There is only room for 22 to 24 students to take this trip. The list fills up fast, so interested students should sign up now.

"I really hope I get [to go to Death Valley] because, not only would I gain a lot of knowledge, but I would walk away with a really awesome experience that will stay with me for the rest of my life," said Murphy. "If I don't get to go this year, I will definitely be the first one to sign up next year."

Meal Deal Coupons
BREAKFAST SANDWICH WITH MEAT
& A SIDE OF POTATOES
FOR \$2.95

ONLY VALID WHEN COUPON IS PRESENT

Not valid with any other coupons.

Offer valid thru Feb. 10, 2004 From 7:00a.m. - 10:30a.m.
Only in the Cougar Cafe, Clackamas Community College

Sarbucks
1 REGULAR 2 SHOT MOCHA
FOR \$2.75
ADD A FLAVOR FOR \$0.25

Open from 7a.m. - 3p.m.

ONLY VALID WHEN COUPON IS PRESENT

Offer valid thru Feb. 10, 2004

Only in the Cougar Cafe, Clackamas Community College

COUGAR CAFE

Aramark