Lake Afton Public Observatory
2014 Public Programs

Observatory Hours

The Observatory is open to the public on Friday and Saturday evenings. Observing through the telescope begins shortly after the doors open. Public program times are given below, but please note that they are subject to change. Call 316-WSU-STAR (316-978-7827) for information on specific programs and times.

January 2 - February 28 7:30-10:00 p.m.
March 1 - 31 8:00-10:00 p.m.
April 1 - 30 8:30-10:30 p.m.
May 1 - August 31 9:00-11:00 p.m.
September 1 - 30 8:00-10:00 p.m.
October 1 - December 21 7:30-10:00 p.m.
December 22 - January 1 CLOSED

Program Cancellations

An Observatory program will automatically be canceled if there is a severe thunderstorm warning or tornado warning anywhere in Sedgwick County during the hour prior to the start of a program. Programs will also be canceled if travel conditions are hazardous. If possible, the recorded program information at 316-WSU-STAR will be changed to reflect any program cancellations.

Admission

Admission is $5 for adults, $3 for children ages 6-12, and free for children under the age of 6. We also have a family rate of $15.00 for Mom, Dad and all their immediate minor children. (Please note that we cannot accept credit and debit cards.) Reservations are not necessary. Call 316-978-3191 during normal office hours for group rates. Admission charges, program times, and program topics are subject to change. Call 316-WSU-STAR (316-978-7827) for current program information.

Public Programs

Each program consists of observing three to five objects though the Observatory’s 16-inch telescope. These objects are chosen with a common theme in mind. Of course if it is cloudy the program objects cannot be seen, although exploration of the Observatory’s exhibits and displays is still possible.

Discovering Stellar Secrets
Jan. 3-4, 17-18, 24-25, 31
Feb. 1, 21-22, 28
March 1, 21-22, 28-29
Have you ever wondered how astronomers find out how hot, massive or big a star is or what it is made of? Visit the Observatory to look through the big telescope at a gas giant planet, the spectrum of a bright star, a multiple star system, clusters of stars, and glowing clouds of gas as we discuss how the secrets of stars are revealed.

Voyage through the Solar System
Jan. 10-11
Feb. 7-8, 14-15
March 7-8, 14-15
Using the Observatory’s big telescope, visitors can journey through our solar system as we commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Voyager spacecraft’s fly-by of Jupiter. Our first stop will be the Moon, then we will visit Jupiter, and then on to Uranus (until 2/15).

Worlds of Science & Imagination
April 4-5, 11-12
May 2-3, 9-10
June 6-7
Science fiction often depicts astronomical objects – but how accurately? During this program we will observe the Moon, then Mars, Jupiter and Saturn (beginning in May) and a multiple star system as we discuss the science and the fiction surrounding them.

Celestial Favorites
April 18-19, 25-26
May 16-17, 23-24, 30-31
June 13-14, 20-21, 27-28
With so many beautiful objects to view in the night sky, sometimes it is hard for us to pick what you might like to look at. So in addition to looking at Mars, Jupiter, or Saturn, a cluster of stars and a “nearby” galaxy, we will have our visitors choose an additional object to observe.

Apollo to the Moon
July 5, 11-12
Aug. 1-2, 8-9
Sep. 5-6
Commemorate the 45th anniversary of the first moon landing by observing some of the six Apollo landing areas through the Observatory’s big telescope. Then look to the future as we observe Uranus and Neptune and speculate what a trip to the outer reaches of our solar system might be like.

Famous Astronomers
July 18-19, 25-26
Aug. 15-16, 22-23, 29-30
Sep. 12-13, 19-20, 26-27
Earth turns on its axis; stars fuse hydrogen into helium; our galaxy is one of billions in a vast expanding universe. Today we know these things, but who were the men and women who figured them out? Find out while we look at Saturn (through 9/13), a multiple star system, a cluster of stars, a planetary nebula, and a distant galaxy.

Reflections of the Moon
Oct. 3-4, 31
Nov. 1, 7-8, 28-29
Dec. 5-6
Sunlight reflecting off the surface of the moon shows us craters, mountains, and smooth, dark maria. Join us as we explore this harsh landscape through the Observatory’s big telescope. We will also observe the two most distant planets in our solar system, Uranus and Neptune.

How Far is Far?
Oct. 10-11, 17-18, 24-25
Nov. 14-15, 21-22
Dec. 12-13, 19-20
Planets and stars are only a bit more than a stone’s throw away, right? During this program we will observe a gas giant planet, a multiple star, a cluster of stars, a nebula and a nearby galaxy as we discuss just how far away they really are and how we determine vast distances in space.

Observatory programs are subject to change. Call 316-978-7827 to confirm dates and times.
Photography Programs

Have you ever wanted to take astronomical photographs of the planets, Moon, or stars? If so, join us for our special photography programs.

Bring your 35 mm single-lens reflex camera (the type with a removable lens) to take astronomical photographs using the Observatory’s telescope. [Note that your camera must have a manual override and you should be familiar with using its manual settings such as changing ISO, and exposure times.]

If you do not have the proper camera, bring a USB flash drive instead. We will allow you to use the Observatory’s digital SLR to take your pictures, and then transfer them to your flash drive for you to take home and print.

Object | Time and Date
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Orion (M42) | 10:00 p.m., Jan. 25
Orion (M42) | 10:00 p.m., Feb. 22
Jupiter | 10:00 p.m., Mar. 1
Mars | 10:30 p.m., Apr. 19
Mars | 11:00 p.m., May 3
Saturn | 11:00 p.m., June 14
Saturn | 11:00 p.m., July 12
M13 | 11:00 p.m., Aug. 23
Beta Cygni | 10:00 p.m., Sep. 20
Sun | 3:00 p.m., Oct. 4
Andromeda (M31) | 10:00 p.m., Nov. 22
Full Moon | 10:00 p.m., Dec. 6

1ISO 800 or faster setting, telephoto lens, and cable release are required.

Exhibits

Only part of the world of astronomy can be seen through a telescope. Satellites bring us close-up views of distant planets and their moons. Computers help astronomers unravel the lives of stars. These ideas and more are brought down to Earth by the Observatory’s interactive exhibits and displays.

You can make your own telescope, travel through the solar system on a scavenger hunt, explore the properties of light, examine rocks from both Mars and the Moon, learn to use a small telescope and much, much, more.

School Programs

Tuesday and Thursday evenings as well as Wednesday mornings and afternoons are available for school groups by reservation only. For information about school programs, school resource materials, or making a reservation, contact the Observatory office at 316-978-3191 during normal business hours.

Cloudy Night Activities

It is a fact of life that there will be cloudy nights. While the telescope can’t see through clouds, there is still much to do at the Observatory. You can:

- receive a tour of the telescope and an explanation of how it works,
- use a computer to view images of objects you would have seen that evening had it been clear and to discover how those objects are related,
- explore the Observatory’s hands-on astronomy exhibits.

Current Sky Information

For information on events taking place in the sky call 316-WSU-STAR and choose option number six.

Contact Us

Program information can be found at:
316-WSU-STAR
(316-978-7827)

For inquiries and reservations call:
316-978-3191
during normal office hours

Our Internet address is:
www.wichita.edu/lapo

Friend us on Facebook:
Lake Afton Public Observatory

Location

The Observatory is located approximately twenty 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 MacArthur; west from Wichita on U.S. 54 to 199th St. West in Goddard, then south three miles to MacArthur and then three miles west; or southwest on K-42 to the stoplight at MacArthur Road and then nine miles west (turn right) on MacArthur

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Wichita State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, political affiliation, status as a veteran, genetic information or disability. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies: Director, Office of Affirmative Action, Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount, Wichita, Kansas 67260-0145; telephone 316-978-3371.

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The Lake Afton Public Observatory is supported primarily by Wichita State University and operated by the WSU Fairmount Center for Science and Mathematics Education. Additional support is provided by Sedgwick County.