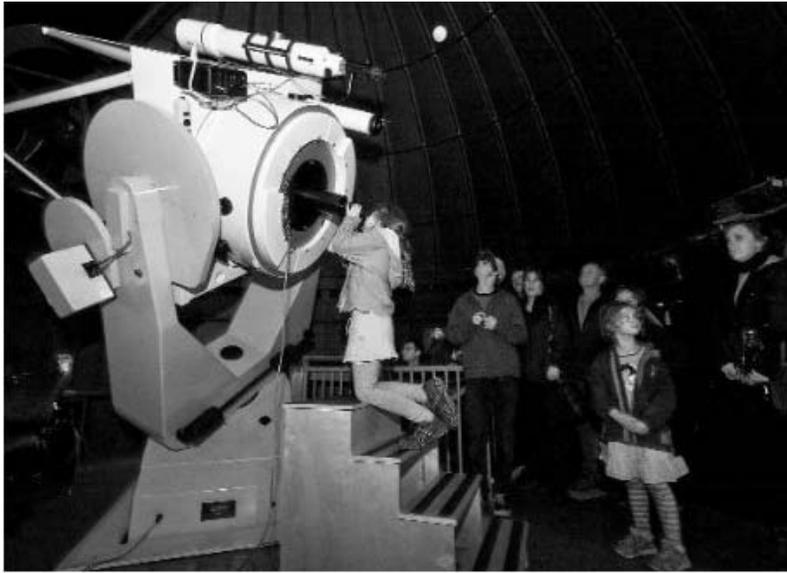


Stargazers invited to weekly viewings

By Jeff Bell, Times Colonist October 17, 2010



Clara Walter, 7, looks through the new telescope on the roof of the Bob Wright Ocean and Sciences Building at the University of Victoria, on the first free Wednesday-night session for the public to access the fifth-largest telescope in Canada.

Photograph by: Debra Brash, Times Colonist, Times Colonist

Most Wednesdays from now until next April, the University of Victoria's astronomy department will be getting the public in touch with the stars.

Free 8-10 p.m. viewing sessions with the university's new \$700,000 telescope, installed in July on the roof of the Bob Wright Centre, began last week. The telescope is the largest at any Canadian university and the fifth-largest in the country.

The idea is to share the telescope with all students and the wider community, said

Russell Robb, senior lab instructor for the department of physics and astronomy. In many cases, telescopes of its calibre are located in out-of-the-way places, he said.

"You can get up here by bus, and the students from the residence just have to walk across the street and they can take a look through it. It just makes it so much more accessible."

He said the telescope was purchased through a gift from an as-yet-unannounced donor.

Robb said UVic also still has an older telescope on top of the adjacent Elliott Building.

Visitors to the open-house events do not need to have any scientific acumen to enjoy the experience, Robb said. A group of senior students leads the sessions, he said.

Public viewings will run weekly, except for the last two Wednesdays in December.

Rotary gives boost to youth literacy

The READ Society and Rotary are teaming up to support literacy next weekend.

READ, a non-profit literacy organization, and the Rotary Club of Saanich hope to raise \$40,000 for child and youth literacy programs when they host the Plant a Seed to Read gala Oct. 23 at the University of Victoria's University Club.

The evening includes dinner, silent and live auctions and entertainment from the Esquimalt Jazz Band, the Pearson College dancers and dance band Loose Change.

"We're not content to leave anyone behind in this community because they haven't had the opportunity to get the literacy skills they need," Rotary's Alan Jones said in a statement.

Rotary's literacy initiatives include annual scholarships and bursaries at UVic and Camosun College, and international exchange opportunities for high school students. For the READ Society, the fundraising event comes as it enters its 35th year with a renewed commitment to helping young people from low-income families enhance their academic skills.

This November, READ will institute a sliding-scale for tuition assistance to try to help as many people as possible.

Tickets are \$100, which includes a \$60 tax receipt. Call 250-388-7225 or 250-592-7044, or email crettie@readsociety.bc.ca or alanf.jones@telus.net.

The literacy event caps a busy two-night stretch at the University Club, which begins Friday with some pre-Christmas merriment.

Organizers of the annual Christmas Spirit Community Dinner, a fixture for the past 19 years, are holding their annual fundraiser to help ensure that food and children's gifts are in place when they welcome up to 1,000 people this holiday season.

Friday's 7-11:30 p.m. event includes a casino, a DJ and dancing at the University of Victoria's University Club. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased online at christmasspiritdinner.ca or by calling 250-507-4641.

Central Saanich tackling graffiti

Spray-painting vandals in Central Saanich should read the writing on the wall: A new anti-graffiti program in the municipality aims to do away with unwanted scrawl.

Central Saanich police launched the program this month. It is being run out of the department's community-policing section under the direction of volunteer Tom Watson.

Watson's task is to meet with victims of graffiti and provide them with such things as discount coupons for paint, prevention tips, and a graffiti-removal kit.

Digital images of the graffiti will also be compiled to help in the identification of those responsible.

Waste Management Canada and Home Hardware in Saanichton are sponsoring the effort.

An evening of African heritage

Africa's food, fashion, music and dance will be celebrated Oct. 23 at the second annual African Eloquent Pageant.

The event is presented by the African Heritage Association of Vancouver Island, which strives to build a strong community for people of African descent and to share their culture with others.

The University of Victoria's department of community relations and alumni association are sponsoring the 6:30-10 p.m. gathering in UVic's Hickman Building, Room 105. Admission is by donation.

The evening revolves around a competition involving 10 youth who will showcase such talents as essay recital and singing. A tale from an African storyteller will complete the proceedings.

For further details, contact the African Heritage Association of Vancouver Island at 250-370-0827 or info@ahavi.org.

Sooke lending ear to its residents

Sooke councillors and staff want to hear from the people Thursday when they host an open house at Sooke Community Hall.

From 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., residents are encouraged to drop in and discuss whatever local projects and policies interest them -- from cycling routes to salmon enhancement to the municipality's revised strategic plan. Refreshments and children's activities will be provided courtesy of the Sooke Fire Rescue Service.

A bus tour of the Sooke area from 1:30-4 p.m. is also being offered, departing from the municipal hall. Space is limited, so call 250-642-1634 to book a spot.

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