

Important Update Concerning the White House Star Party

Note: The White House Star Party is no longer under a press embargo so you are welcome to distribute this information, which is current as of Saturday, 3 October, 2009.

To All International Year of Astronomy Leaders:

For a long time many of you have worked hard to get a star party at the White House during the International Year of Astronomy (IYA). This effort has paid off, and we now need to make the most of this event.

This is the official statement from the White House Office of the Press Secretary:

"On Wednesday, the President will award the National Medal of Science and the National Medal of Technology and Innovation in a ceremony at the White House. The President will also meet with his national security team on Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the evening, the President and First Lady will host an event at the White House for middle-school students to highlight the President's commitment to science, engineering and math education as the foundation of this nation's global technological and economic leadership and to express his support for astronomy in particular - for its capacity to promote a greater awareness of our place in the universe, expand human knowledge, and inspire the next generation by showing them the beauty and mysteries of the night sky."

Here is a summary of the planned event from an official WHSP organizer:

"The White House 'Star Party' will take place Wednesday October 7th. President Obama will kick-off the event with a brief address that will be streamed live on the whitehouse.gov website (estimated beginning at 8 pm EDT). The program at the White House includes more than 20 telescopes set up on the White House lawn focused on Jupiter, the Moon and select stars; interactive dome presentations, and hands on activities including scale models of the Solar System, impact cratering, and investigating meteorites and Moon rocks. You may wish to prepare similar activities at your facility. We will hear from NASA TV on Monday on what channel the President's address will be broadcast on NASA TV."

Our Advice:

* Please do not "lobby" your contacts at NASA, in Washington, DC, etc. to get an invitation or to get your own program promoted at the WHSP event. The WHSP organizers already have a complete plan and guest list in place. As the saying goes, "Don't call them, they'll call you."

* It is fortunate that the WHSP will happen prior to significant IYA events in October such as Galilean Nights, the Great World Wide Star Count, World Space Week, Fall Astronomy Week, etc. Publicity surrounding the WHSP can benefit all IYA and astronomy outreach programs.

* Please begin drafting your own press release or public announcement about your programs, since this is a great opportunity to promote IYA events both globally and locally.

* If appropriate for your group, please consider tying in to these global IYA events happening this fall:

October 4-10 -- World Space Week www.worldspaceweek.org

October 9 -- NASA's LCROSS impact lcross.arc.nasa.gov/education.htm and groups.google.com/group/lcross_observation

October 13 -- Hubble's Amazing Rescue premieres on NOVA www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/hubble

October 9-23 -- Great World Wide Star Count www.starcount.org

October 19-25 -- Fall Astronomy Week, including Fall Astronomy Day on Saturday, October 24, with the Astronomical League www.astroleague.org

October 22-24 -- IYA Galilean Nights global star party www.galileannights.org

November 10-30 -- NASA's Image Unveiling hubblesource.stsci.edu/events/iyafinale

* The accompanying flyer of October IYA events, which Rick Fienberg kindly prepared at the invitation of the WHSP organizers, will be distributed to WHSP participants. Feel free to print and distribute copies at your own events, too.

* You can download a draft press release or an IYA bi-fold brochure and customize it with your group's contact information via the "How to Host an IYA Event" website at: <http://astronomy2009.us/howtohost/>

* The "Get Involved in IYA" web page has information flyers ready to hand out to various groups, including ones for families, for teachers, and for amateur astronomers: <http://astronomy2009.us/getinvolved/>

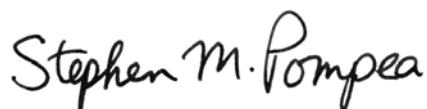
* If possible, please support the International Year of Astronomy in your press release and other materials by referring to these websites:

U.S. International Year of Astronomy website: www.astronomy2009.us

IAU International Year of Astronomy website: www.astronomy2009.org

Thank you very much, and we look forward to having a successful White House Star Party that leads to additional public interest in astronomy and the International Year of Astronomy!

For the IYA2009 Project Team,



U.S. IYA2009 Project Director



U.S. IYA2009 Project Manager