

**July 27 – July 31, 2006 Teacher Professional Development Workshop
“Chandra and the X-Ray Universe”**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Location:

The University of Texas McDonald Observatory is located 6,800 feet elevation atop Mt. Locke and Mt. Fowlkes in the heart of the Davis Mountains of West Texas. The observatory web site is: <http://mcdonaldobservatory.org>

Although every person reacts differently to high altitude environments, you might experience shortness of breath as a result of our modestly high altitude; therefore, please take your time and avoid strenuous physical exertion. Due to the high altitude and dry climate we suggest that you drink plenty of water while at the observatory.

Transportation:

Driving: If you are traveling east on Interstate 10 from El Paso take Highway 118 south at Kent for the 39-mile scenic drive to the observatory. Remember that the Observatory is on Central Time (El Paso is on Mountain Time – one hour behind the Observatory). If you are traveling west on Interstate 10 take Highway 17 south at Balmorhea to Fort Davis, then Highway 118 north 19 miles to Mt. Locke. If you're coming from the Big Bend National Park, take Highway 118 north through Alpine and Fort Davis to the Observatory. If you are traveling west on Interstate 20 take Highway 17 south at Pecos to Balmorhea (following I-10 for 1 mile) and Fort Davis, then Highway 118 north 16 miles to Mt. Locke.

Flying: The closest airports are in Midland and El Paso unless you have access to a private airplane, which would then land in Marfa or Alpine. From either Midland or El Paso you need to rent a car. The drive to the Observatory is approximately 3.5-hours either from Midland or El Paso, if you take it casually. Remember that the Observatory is on Central Time (El Paso is on Mountain Time – one hour behind the Observatory).

Lodging:

You will be staying in the McDonald Observatory Astronomers Lodge (AL.) Each room at the AL has twin beds and is furnished with all amenities such as towels, bed linens, and a pillow. Each room has a bathroom with a bath towel, hand towel, and face cloth for each participant. In most cases, double occupancy rooms have been reserved and roommates have been pre-assigned. The AL has a central area for watching TV, and a private phone-booth; there are no phones in the rooms. Workshop fees include your room and meals, however they do not include any other incurred expenses such as telephone. Please review the enclosed “Astronomers Lodge and General Guidelines” form for information regarding telephone calls and much more.

Reservations have been made for AL check-in at 5:45 PM on July 27, and check-out by 8:00 AM on the final day.

Emergency Phone Contact:

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You can be reached at one of the following three phone numbers. The main phone number in the classroom, where you will be mostly, is 432-426-4163 and there is voice mail at this phone. The number for the Visitors Center information desk, available from 9:00PM – 5:00PM, is 432-426-4102 ext. 4. The main phone number during business hours on weekdays for the observatory is 432-426-3263, although after 5:00PM and on weekends calls made to this number are forwarded to the AL. Please note that cell phones probably will not work in the mountains. Long distance phone calls can be made only with a calling card.

Check-in procedure at Astronomers Lodge:

The Astronomers Lodge (AL) is located at the summit of Mt. Locke, and check-in period begins at 5:30pm. I have enclosed a map to help you become familiar with the summit of Mt. Locke. Always drive slowly and cautiously on the observatory grounds; you will see observatory staff as well as visitors on foot. Once you arrive at the summit, you may park, temporarily, close to the AL facility for unloading your car. After unloading, please move your car in the teacher parking area, designated on the summit map. We ask that you use this AL parking area for the remainder of the workshop period. After checking in, our evening meal will be served from 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM in the AL dining room.

Check-out:

The workshop ends in the morning on the final day. Plan to check-out of the AL facility that morning before our workshop resumes at 8:30 AM.

Meals:

Self-serve continental breakfast is available at any time at the Astronomers Lodge. Workshop participants are treated to lunch at the StarDate Café, located at the Visitors Center and buffet-style dinner meals at the AL dining facility. The StarDate Café will provide a menu from which you will choose a variety of excellent lunch meals. For dinner, the AL has a chef who plans well-balanced, hot meals. Dining at the AL is family style at shared tables. Various staff members and astronomers will likely join you during meals.

Other than meals: The AL dining room has a refrigerator and microwave provided for participants to use at any time, as well as a limited variety of drinks and foods available to you 24 hours a day. These drinks and foods include: milk, tea, hot chocolate packages, lemonade, fruit punch, regular coffee and instant decaf coffee, orange juice, 4 kinds of generic cereals (raisin bran, corn flakes, cheerios, rice krispies), packages of instant oatmeal, yogurt cups, hard boiled eggs (in the refrigerator), bagels, muffins, peanut butter, bread, and fruit. Please note there are no soft drinks at the AL; you may bring your own if desired, or purchase them from the StarDate Café in the Visitors Center. You are welcome to bring other snack items with you; however, we ask that you not bring your prepared dinner meal into your room.

During your workshop day: The Visitors Center has a small staff refrigerator and basic first aid cabinet in an office next to the classroom. Since others share the refrigerator, it is important to limit its use by storing only what is necessary for a single day – such as

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important medications. Soft drinks, water, coffee and snacks can be purchased from the StarDate Café in the Visitors Center

Weather:

At nearly 7,000 feet above sea level, the weather at McDonald Observatory is difficult to predict and highly variable. Summer mornings and evenings are chilly, so we recommend bringing a jacket or windbreaker. Sunscreen is a must at this altitude. Check out the current weather conditions at the Observatory by going to the following web site:

http://weather.as.utexas.edu/latest_5min.dat

Due to the high altitude and dry climate we suggest that you drink plenty of water while at the observatory. Many people like to use body lotion and lip balm for this climate. Closed-toe shoes are safer for the evening observing experiences and tours.

Medical Emergencies:

McDonald Observatory has several EMT trained staff to assist with medical emergencies.

Photo-release permission form:

We might photograph a portion of the workshop to inform others of our experience together, and include the images in brochures or web sites. Therefore, we will provide a Photo-release permission form for you to sign, if you don't mind having your picture taken.

Incidental Expenses:

Meals will be provided during the workshop, but bring enough money to cover any incidentals or souvenirs you might wish to purchase. There is a gift shop at the Visitors Center with a great deal to choose from. If you find material or items you would like to use in the classroom, you can avoid paying tax if you can provide your school ID and tax-exempt number. The gift shop will accept VISA, MC, & DISCOVER cards, but will not accept a school PO.