

HAC'S ASTRONOMY OUTREACH EVENTS REQUEST - GUIDELINES & POLICIES

The Huachuca Astronomy Club (HAC) members are dedicated to sharing the wonders of the night sky with the public, area schools, youth and adult groups and other organizations throughout the year. These "Outreach Star Parties" give our members a chance to share their knowledge of astronomy with the lay public, students, parents and staff alike. There is no charge for these outreach events; this is a service our organization provides to our community. We want to stress that safety for all participants during these events is a top priority and we encourage requestors to think 'Safety' also.

These 'outreach' star parties may be arranged to be hosted either at a location of the requestor's choice or at one of our observatories in the Sierra Vista / Hereford / Cochise County area.

Star parties usually begin anywhere from a half hour to an hour after sunset, with volunteer members of the astronomy club arriving to set up their personal telescopes a half hour or hour prior. As darkness falls, group attendees begin arriving and soon the fun begins! All are encouraged to get a close look at many of the planets, stars and deep sky wonders they have been studying or are interested in (and are currently visible). Parents are invited to share their child's experiences at the telescope as well. Star parties for large groups (30+) usually last for a couple of hours. Smaller star parties can usually be over in an hour or so after observing begins.

Whoever the current HAC Outreach Events Coordinator (OEC) is, they will assist requestors, teachers or administrators in scheduling these outreach star parties and providing the guidelines set forth in this information sheet. Once scheduled, the OEC will work with you and your organization as your astronomy event date approaches to ensure an adequate number of volunteers and their telescopes will be arriving for your event. In the event of inclement weather, the OEC will contact your school/organization to handle the possibility of cancellation of the event. Every effort will be made to reschedule canceled events.

Here are the basics to setting up an outreach star party or event with the Huachuca Astronomy Club:

Contact the HAC Outreach Events Coordinator or a HAC Board Member early with Your Desired Date

- Contact the current OEC via phone or email. This HAC member's name and contact information may be found by visiting the club's web site or by contacting a current HAC officer or Board member. (www.hacastronomy.com)
- The OEC will help you select a date best for the moon, planets or deep sky objects, or consult with other members on a favorable date. This date is very important depending on the phase of the Moon. Under most circumstances, you do not want to select a date when the Moon is within a couple of days of being 'full' or at 'full moon'. This is true even for observing the Moon! If you have a specific date that cannot be adjusted, the OEC will try and schedule that date, regardless of the observing conditions.
- We generally require a minimum of four weeks notice for any star party. We book up early during fair weather months and during the school year, so contact us as early as possible! An alternate choice to this time frame is to take advantage of HAC's monthly public star party held in the Sierra Vista area. These are usually scheduled each month of the year and the OEC can provide such dates. Ample parking space is available. (See www.hacastronomy.com)
- Have participants dress for cool evening temperatures, including a hat or cap and jacket. Small flashlights (Red-light please, NO white-light) are useful to bring. Shoes without flashing lights are also preferred! Red-light flashlights are preferred because white-light ruins a person's night vision, which is always needed when observing through a telescope at night.

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- In case of threatening weather on the event date, contact a club officer or the Outreach Events Coordinator for information about star party cancellation.

You Will Need To Supply

- School organizer or event coordinator name and both daytime and evening phone numbers and email address, if available. A point of contact is absolutely necessary.
- Expected number of attendees, children and adults. Age range or grade level of the children. This is very essential information. The minimum recommended grade level is third grade and age level of eight years. Adult supervision during the event is mandatory.
- Specific location of the requestor's site. Directions need to be provided from major roadways or landmarks. If you have decided to have your event at one of HAC's observatory sites, directions will be provided.
- EXACT observing location at your school or event location, specific entrances and/or gates to use. Some event sites can be quite large, so we need to know details such as playground, campground, field, parking lot, backyard, etc.

What You Need To Do

- Provide as many details to the OEC as possible so that the event can be safely and successfully hosted.
- Walk the site (preferably at night) and look for dangers and bright lights. Select a location away from bright lights or arrange to have them shielded or turned off. Address hazards with the school or site staff.
- Get permission and make arrangements for none or very limited area lighting, suspended sprinkler systems, etc. in the viewing area. (The school is responsible for water damage to personal property occurring during a outreach event!)
- Classroom or group activity prior to a star party (e.g., how a telescope works, rules of conduct when around a telescope and at the observing site, what significant objects will be in the sky?) Note: the Outreach Events Coordinator can provide a list of significant celestial objects available during the viewing period when your Star Party is confirmed.
- Optional: Press release announcing event - photo opportunity! Publicize your school/organization and the Huachuca Astronomy Club.
- Plan alternate/twilight activities (scale of solar system, make a star finder, learning about notable constellations, log page on clipboard for students/teacher to record observations for next day discussion.)
- The astronomers will often need to drive to the immediate observing location to offload telescopes. This often means unlocking a gate onto a playground or field.
- Is there AC power available in the area? Some telescopes require electricity to operate at full efficiency. This request is not mandatory, but it is nice to know if it's available.