

GATERS 'Indulge their wonder!'

On a cloudy Sunday evening in mid-October, several hundred Gifted and Talented Students from across Vacaville Unified School District, joined together to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Galileo's discovery that the earth was not the center of our Solar System. With the help of Mr. John Gregg from Project Astro and several devoted local Astronomers, the students gazed at the night sky as VUSD GATE delivered its first ever STAR Party.

The cool evening opened with an overview presented by Mr. Gregg regarding the basics of how to view the sky through a telescope. The students and families in grades 3-6 were invited to bring along their scopes and view those that the resident experts from Fairfield and Sacramento brought along for exploration. The evening's agenda included the students moving through learning centers that included using their 'Naked Eye' to explore the night sky and key points of interest, traveling to the Astronomers' scopes that were strategically placed on Zunino Field at Vacaville High School and finally observing a digital night sky in amobile planetarium.

The students were challenged to find points of interest first without support, via the telescopic view and finally upon the Sky Dome ceiling with its digital display presented by Mobile Education Productions and Professor Mario. As the students completed the spectacular view with an almost perfectly clear night sky right on cue, they enjoyed a camp-fire snack of Smores that were provided graciously by Schwan's. The evening wrapped up with Astronomical incentive raffle prizes including a Galileo Commemorative Telescope that was generously donated by Project Astro.

Many thanks to the Science Department at Will C. Wood, the AP Physics students at Vaca High under the guidance of Mr. David Morton, Principal Ed Santopadre , Anthony Marietta and Carol Chappell for their culinary skills and Mr. Jeff Erikson for inspiring the logistics for the evening's event! As a result of the great interest, this STAR Party will be followed by our VUSD future Astronomers gathering later this year for another enriching evening of star gazing soon so that they may continue to keep looking up!

Thanks for your continued support,

Jo

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