

1-20-2009

01/20/2009 - EIU To Host International Year Of Astronomy's New Media Expert

University Marketing and Communications

Follow this and additional works at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_2009

Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "01/20/2009 - EIU To Host International Year Of Astronomy's New Media Expert" (2009). 2009. 6.

https://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_2009/6

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Press Releases at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2009 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

EIU to Host International Year of Astronomy's 'New Media Expert'

Jan-20-2009

Pamela Gay, who has been chosen by the United Nations to serve as the "new media expert" for the International Year of Astronomy, is to speak at Eastern Illinois University this month.

Her lecture, "The Once and Future Role of Citizen Science: The Great Discoveries of Public Astronomers Across History," is set for 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 29, in the EIU Physical Science Building's Phipps Lecture Hall. Admission is free.

The event will kick off EIU's yearlong celebration of the International Year of Astronomy, a worldwide commemoration of many historic astronomical achievements, including the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first look through a telescope and the 40th anniversary of man's first steps on the moon.

Gay, an assistant research professor at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, describes her lecture as follows: "From William Herschel to Hanny van Arkel, regular everyday people with a passion for astronomy have found ways to make memorable discoveries. Every day, citizen scientists are building an ongoing legacy that includes documenting variable stars, discovering asteroids, tracking supernovae rise and fall, and even capturing the optical afterglow of gamma-ray bursts."

Gay's "Astronomy Cast" Internet radio show is one of the most popular in the world, consistently ranking among the top 25 of the Science and Medicine podcasts section on iTunes. Each month, listeners download more than 200,000 shows.

Jim Conwell, the EIU physics professor who is organizing EIU's IYA events, said Gay's talk should appeal to "anybody interested in not only astronomy but in communication and podcasts -- anything to do with new media."

"We are very lucky to bring her," Conwell said. "She's the expert. If it's good enough for the United Nations, it's good enough for us."



Pamela Gay



In 2007, the United Nations named Gay the "new media expert" for this year's International Year of Astronomy. In that role, Gay has many responsibilities with the IYA website (<http://astronomy2009.us>), including designing, programming maintaining and editing online content, calendars, RSS feeds and forums.

For more information about Gay, see her blog at <http://www.starstryder.com>. She describes its content as being "focused on astronomy, academia and the scientific method, with occasional editorial content related to teaching, the boundary between science and religion, and life as an astronomer."

All of EIU's IYA events, including Gay's appearance, are sponsored by the EIU College of Sciences and the EIU Department of Physics.

Conwell is currently finalizing EIU's IYA celebration, which is expected to include five additional guest speakers, an astromurals exhibit in the Physical Science Building, and the department's regular monthly open houses at its observatory.

Through donated funds, the physics department will be sponsoring 12 podcasts during "365 Days of Astronomy: Daily Podcast of the IYA" which can be found online at <http://365daysofastronomy.org>. The sponsorship will provide worldwide exposure for the department.

In addition, a donor has provided funds to purchase a Galileoscope for every third-grade classroom in Charleston. The telescopes should be ready for use in the fall, Conwell said.