



‘IMILOA
Astronomy Center of Hawai‘i

MEDIA INFORMATION

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3D Thursday Nights at ‘Imiloa
3D Hitchhikers Program: New Worlds

Hilo, Hawai‘i – The popular *A 3D Hitchhikers Guide to the Universe* series returns to the ‘Imiloa planetarium for a six-week run starting March 24 at 7pm. This time focusing “New Worlds: The Exoplanets”. This program is a limited run, offered weekly on Thursday evenings through April 28.

This live planetarium program, hosted by Shawn Laatsch, ‘Imiloa planetarium manager, uses the 3D stereoscopic projection capability in the ‘Imiloa planetarium to “fly” participants out into space on a unique and engaging tour of the new worlds that astronomers are discovering beyond our own solar system. Starting on Earth we will explore the local neighborhood of our solar system, including planets and their moons, and then traveling to the newest worlds discovered in our Universe.

Wearing special 3D glasses, audience members will take a journey outward to visit other star systems with planets, including ones recently imaged by Keck and Gemini Observatories on Maunakea as well as the Kepler Space Telescope. Exoplanets – planets beyond our own solar system – is one of the hottest topic in astronomy today. There are currently 528 exoplanets orbiting 442 star systems known beyond our own solar system, and this number is growing. As our technology gets better and better we might even find ones similar to Earth that harbor life. We hope you can join us for these special presentations.

The program highlights the newest datasets and discoveries in astronomy from numerous sources. The show is presented in stunning 3D making audiences feel as if they can reach out and touch the universe.

The *3D Hitchhikers Guide to the Universe* program will be offered weekly, starting on March 24, on Thursday evenings at 7:00 p.m. through April 21, 2011. Admission is \$10 for non-members, special member discounts apply. Pre-purchase tickets available at the 'Imiloa front desk or by phone, Visa and MasterCard accepted, call (808) 969-9703.

Shawn Laatsch serves as an executive officer in the International Planetarium Society, the world's largest organization of planetarium professionals and is actively involved in astronomy and science education outreach, and is a NASA JPL Solar System Ambassador. He is the lead on a multinational planetarium program called *Two Small Pieces of Glass* which currently is in distribution around the globe for the International Year of Astronomy in 2009. Prior to his positions at 'Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai'i, he served as the director of the Gheen's Science Hall & Rauch Planetarium at the University of Louisville and the Arthur Storer Planetarium in Prince Frederick, Maryland. In 1998 he was inducted as an International Planetarium Society Fellow for his work in promoting astronomy education.

Over the past 25 years he has been actively involved in planetarium program development and astronomy education in museum, university, and K-12 settings. He has taught astronomy at the University of Louisville, East Carolina University, and Pitt Community College. He has a passion for cultural and historical astronomy.

Audience may wish to add dinner to their evening at 'Imiloa's Sky Garden Restaurant, open Thursday nights for dinner starting at 5 p.m. The restaurant, which specializes in Chinese cuisine in the evenings, is also open on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights.

Opened in 2006, 'Imiloa Astronomy Center celebrates both Hawaiian culture and Maunakea astronomy. Through its exhibits and program, 'Imiloa strives to share inspiring examples of science and culture together advancing knowledge, understanding and opportunity. The Center is a part of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

'Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai'i is located at 600 'Imiloa Place in Hilo, off Komohana and Nowelo Streets at the UH-Hilo Science and Technology Park. For more information, go to www.imiloahawaii.org, or call (808) 969-9703.

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