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Journey through the Universe

Editorial by Valerie Takata, Hilo/Laupahoehoe/Waiakea Complex Area Superintendent,
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Our schools in the Hilo/Laupahoehoe/Waiakea **Complex Area** are filled with anticipation, excitement and wonder at the approach of Journey through the Universe, a week-long series of astronomy events that begin on February 5th. Through the collaborative efforts of the Department of Education, local Astronomy organizations and other community and business partners, Journey Week helps us support an integrated science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education for K- 12 students at our schools. The program includes teacher and astronomer workshops, family science events, and classroom visits by over 55 local and visiting scientists. Three hundred fifty two classes will be visited, and nearly 7800 students will benefit from the presentations in which speakers share their expertise, pique curiosity, and inspire students to consider careers in science. Through this phenomenal collective effort, students and teachers have been able to enjoy scientists' engaging annual visits for the past several years.

The Hilo/Laupahoehoe/Waiakea Complex Area, now in its fifth year of the project, is currently one of 11 communities around the nation designated *Journey through the Universe* sites. A national educational initiative developed by the National Center for Earth and Space

Science Education (NCESSE), the program engages entire communities in sustained science, math, and technology education. It is aligned to the Hawaii State and National Science Standards and provides continual professional development in space science curriculum. As one teacher wrote, “This is an exciting program for both students and teachers- it is a special experience to be visited by a local researcher, and students learn about careers in science.”

This year, Journey Week will help celebrate the International Year of Astronomy through the participation of scientists from local observatories. In addition to classroom visits, the project includes activities for teachers and family members. Based on this year’s theme, Voyage through the Solar System, an Educators’ Workshop will be held at the ‘Imiloa Astronomy Center on Saturday, February 7, to give teachers hands-on practice with lessons and materials to take back to the classroom. The session will be conducted by nationally acclaimed astronomy educator, Dr. Tim Slater from the University of Wyoming. Family Science Events will be held on February 8th and 11th at ‘Imiloa Astronomy Center and on February 10th at Borders Book Store to provide students and their families with additional opportunities to participate in activities, interact with participating scientists, and experience the wonder of space exploration.

Accompanied by “ambassadors,” community members who assist them, scientists provide classroom presentations on a variety of topics from stars and planets, to magnetism, light energy, and robotic vehicles used in space exploration. One astronomer made snow fall in the classroom, while another gave students the opportunity to try on a spacesuit. No matter what the topic, presenters encourage children to ask questions and to engage in inquiry about science. Math, science, and language skills come alive for students as these skills are integrated into fun, real-life experiences.

The success of Journey through the Universe has been due to the willingness of people to dream of what can be on behalf of our children. We extend a very special thank you to various individuals and organizations including master educators, scientists and researchers, observatories, ambassadors, donors, community and business partners. It is their heart and passion that has developed, promoted, supported and sustained Journey through the Universe over the years. We are truly grateful for the overwhelming enthusiasm and support that continues to sustain our efforts.

Journey through the Universe is the cornerstone for our broad vision of science education which has been developed with teachers and community partners in the Hilo/Laupahoehoe/Waiakea Complex Area. This unique and exciting program brings Scientists, Astronomers, Educators, and Community Partners together to engage students in meaningful learning and to help them imagine endless possibilities for the future. For further information contact Janice Harvey at 974-2603, <http://www.gemini.edu/journey>