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Last Updated: 7:52 am | Tuesday, September 19, 2006

Subject: The universe; audience: Everyman

Free lectures come with viewing through telescope

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

Terry Flesch has said one of his goals is "to just give people the opportunity - free of charge - to be awed by the universe."

For the past year, the Thomas More College physics and astronomy professor has used his knowledge and the school's telescopes to give presentations to the public one night a month during the academic year.

His presentation on Sept. 1 was "Our Cosmic Origins." Because it was a cloudy night, the 35 or so audience members - attendance is normally double that on clear nights - didn't get to use the telescope. Instead they learned how a universe with no solid particles came to be and how it is after 14 billion years.

Flesch said with knowledge "the faint and fuzzy becomes impressive."

"Normally, I like to give a presentation concentrating on the objects that we will be observing that night if the weather is clear," Flesch said. "I have found that people have a greater appreciation of what they are looking at through the telescope if they know something about the objects."

Ron Ketterer of Fort Thomas began attending last year's series and hasn't missed one since.

"He is very entertaining with his quick wit and humor and makes a subject that may seem dry to some people fun for everyone," Ketterer said.

Geniene Ward brings along her husband, Jack, son Ian, and sister-in-law Joyce McKinley.

"My husband and I have been watching the stars for years," Ward said. "My first recollection is as a girl when my mom would wake us up in the middle of the night to watch Sputnik go over. Dr. Flesch is a great speaker and teacher. He presents his information as more of a story than a lecture plus he has a great sense of humor."

Flesch sees the presentations as more than entertainment.

"Our society seems to be increasingly science-illiterate despite all the technology we see around us," Flesch said. "I look on these open houses as a way to help people learn about science and thereby improving their chances of making better decisions, whether it be in local school board elections or ballots on national and world issues. We pay for our ignorance."

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