

News Release

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December 8, 2014

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View winter skies, planets at IU Kokomo Observatory

KOKOMO, Ind. — The planets Mars and Jupiter will be stars of the show at Sunday's (December 14) free open house at the Indiana University Kokomo Observatory.

The evening begins at 7 p.m. with a presentation by Patrick Motl, associate professor of physics, about the Atacama Large Millimeter Array (ALMA), a new facility that studies the universe in millimeter radiation coming from dust, cool materials, and light from objects in the early universe.

"The capabilities of this new instrument, which is in northern Chile, were recently on display, with the 'best image ever' of planet formation in a new extra-solar system forming around the star HL Tau," Motl said.

After the presentation, stargazers may see Mars setting in the west, and Jupiter rising to join winter favorites such as the great nebula in Orion and the Pleiades, through the Observatory's two telescopes. The six-inch Takahashi refracting telescope provides exceptionally sharp images of planets, while the 16-inch Meade reflecting telescope allows viewers to see fainter objects in the sky, due to its larger light collecting area.

Observation will continue until 9 p.m., weather permitting. The open house is free and open to the public in the Observatory, 105 E. Rebecca Lane. Free parking is available on campus.

ALMA is an international partnership of the U.S. National Science Foundation, the European Organization for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere, and the National Institutes of Natural Sciences of Japan, in cooperation with the Republic of Chile. ALMA is a single telescope of revolutionary design, composed initially of 66 high precision antennas, located on the Chajator plateau, 5,000 meters altitude, in northern Chile. For more information, go to www.almaobservatory.org

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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