

## Henderson State University Marsh White Report

This has been a great year for our SPS Chapter at Henderson State University. We have spent many meetings planning and organizing a “Star Party” to promote physics within our community by guiding local students to explore the night sky. Receiving the Marsh W. White Outreach Award led to a grand start for our local SPS outreach program. First, there was a meeting dedicated to the members of SPS becoming more familiar with the telescopes. Another meeting was devoted to making star charts to pass out to the local students that we were expecting to attend. Enough star charts were made for each participant to take home and hopefully use on another clear night with family and friends.

Our viewing site was at Ouachita Technical College in Malvern, AR on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Although there was a chance of rain, the skies were perfectly clear that evening. Local students of all ages were invited and over twenty took part in our astronomical viewing experience. The SPS members that were able to attend set up the telescopes in a nice open area at OTC. As people arrived, star charts were passed out and individual directions were given on how to use them.

Everyone really enjoyed looking at the moon, especially the young kids because there is so much detail that can be seen. As the sky grew darker, different stars and constellations were pointed out with help from the star charts. Fun facts and stories were exchanged as different objects were found in the telescopes. Although the light pollution had an effect on the amount objects we were able to observe, the local students were far from disappointed. Everyone left with smiles on their faces and star charts in hand.

Since our first “Star Party” was a success, we planned a second one for May 8<sup>th</sup> at the lower dam in Caddo Valley, AR with the local fifth and sixth graders. Unfortunately, it was canceled due to inclement weather. Consequently, our SPS chapter has decided to try to make the “Star Party” a standing outreach event occurring once a month on the same day each month starting this Fall 2009 semester. This will be a good way to get more kids interested in astronomy. We are looking forward to the “Star Party” becoming a monthly SPS event!

