



# Stars in Santa Clarita

Later this month the College of the Canyons Canyon Country Campus will host its first community "Star Party."

If you're expecting Meryl Streep, you may be disappointed, but if you're thinking "Star Wars," you're a lot closer. This Star Party is about the wonder of the cosmos, the mysteries of universes and galaxies, of supernovas and black holes, of planets, comets, meteors, of how we all fit in to a REALLY BIG PICTURE.

Typically, a Star Party is a gathering of amateur astronomers and other community members to which attendees bring telescopes, binoculars and other instruments to observe the sky. Such events are generally held in areas that have low levels of ambient light while also providing, from a topographic standpoint, a sweeping view of the sky.

Lucky for us, the college's Canyon Country campus meets both of these criteria and the campus' Carl A. Rasmussen outdoor amphitheater is a perfect space for a large group to gather.

And for this party, the public has already been put on the guest list, invited to experience the cosmos with the aid and guidance of the College of the Canyons astronomy department. Make plans to attend the **Canyon Country Campus Star Party from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Friday October 23. The event is free to the public and light refreshments**

**will be provided.** So bring your beach chairs and blankets and prepare to be dazzled.

"We are excited to share the wonders of astronomy with the community through this event," said Dr. Dena Maloney, founding dean of the Canyon Country Campus. "Many of our students have already noted the beautiful night sky here on campus and have witnessed comets and falling stars as they leave their evening classes. So bring your beach chairs and blankets and prepare to be dazzled!"



Among those who have already previewed the Canyon Country campus' celestial surroundings are COC English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor Peggy Khoury and her summer session class of adult ESL students. One student

shared that she had witnessed her first shooting star on campus. Soon enough the class conversation turned to meteor showers and the space shuttle and international space station.

Knowing that the shuttle was currently in orbit and had just detached from the space station, Khoury quickly turned to the Internet for information on when they would be visible again. "Miraculously it was that night at 8:46 p.m., just before our class ended," Khoury said. "I asked if anyone would be interested in seeing them and I got a rousing response of 'YES!'"

Leaving the classroom a few minutes before class officially ended, the group quickly found a dark area on campus and began watching the sky. "All of a sudden a meteor zipped across the sky, visible to all of us. The students shrieked with excitement," remembered Khoury. "A minute later the shuttle appeared, followed closely by the space station."

As the shuttle and station slowly traversed the darkness the group was lucky enough to see a second meteor quickly appear and disappear, before the two spacecraft finally faded out of sight.

"It was such a wonderful, magical experience for them, and for me, to be able to share an event like that with my students," added Khoury. "I encourage anyone with an interest