

Flagstaff Academy Invites Scientist to Present on Mission to Outer Space

By LISA KREBS
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Flagstaff Academy invited Dr. Cathy Olkin, deputy project scientist on the New Horizons mission team at Southwest Research Institute, to visit Flagstaff Academy middle school students to give an interactive presentation on the New Horizons mission to Pluto.

Olkin, a planetary scientist, explained how limited our knowledge of Pluto is despite many spacecraft missions to other planets. The New Horizons mission will provide information about Pluto as well as the outer solar system and is due to pass close to Pluto in July 2015. Olkin talked to students about the spacecraft, the types of instruments that will collect data and her role and work on the mission.

Olkin's personal interests lie in the icy, outer solar system worlds, and students used the words "cool" and "awesome" to describe her presentation. One middle schooler said she was surprised at how little we know about Pluto. "It will be interesting to see what we learn [from the mission]," she said. "I was surprised too, at how far away Pluto really is, and how long it takes to send messages to the spacecraft. I'd never thought about that."

The visit coincided with the historic Philae/Rosetta Comet

mission, the first spacecraft to ever land on a comet to gather data, and Olkin took time to explain the significance of this mission and shared the first pictures from the lander as they became available.

Teresa Ewing, the middle school technology teacher, was grateful for Olkin's visit. "She's an incredible scientist, and with her work on this mission, I found the personal details the most fascinating," Ewing said. "She's been with this spacecraft from conception to fabrication, through testing to launch, and soon, fly-by. I find it inspiring, and I'm sure my students did as well."



Photo courtesy of Flagstaff Academy

Dr. Cathy Olkin presents on the New Horizons mission slated to pass close to Pluto in July.

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- December 3rd- informational meeting current 8th grade student interested in the pre-IB/IB DP @ Sunset MS 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM
- December 4th- Niwot HS's OPEN HOUSE @ NHS 6PM - 8PM

For more information about the IB Diploma Programme in St. Vrain Valley School District, please call Niwot High School at 303- 652-2550 or check out the Niwot High School's IB web page. <http://nhs.svvsd.org>

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