



Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

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October-December 2006

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Instructor Spotlight: Alex Langoussis

Astronomy Instructor

*The black sky is like the great ocean at night.
So far away yet close enough to touch the stars.*

from *The Night Sky* by Shannon Crawford

"I've been interested in the stars since I was a kid," says Alex Langoussis, who teaches *Astronomy - What's Out There*. "After all, astronomy doesn't just offer you the world, it offers the universe!"

For 20 years, Alex has volunteered at the Fernbank Science Center's observatory, helping high school students with astronomy projects and assisting with open houses. So putting together a class for older adults wasn't too much of a stretch. "I did have to come up with everything from scratch (myself), which resulted in a class that's different from most. But I have thoroughly enjoyed it."

Alex's class guides students to gaining an understanding of the universe and finding their way around the night sky. "Most importantly, I want students to experience the beauty and come away with a sense of awe and also a sense of peace," he says. The class includes some demonstrations, use of some astronomy software as well as a telescope, and a field trip away from the city lights.

His schedule as a substitute teacher for Cobb County Schools and a stay-at-home dad gave Alex the flexibility to turn his love of astronomy into a business opportunity. He offers telescope tours of the night sky for corporate events and school groups as well as teaching stargazing classes. "The opportunity recently arose to be a guest astronomer at a conservation lodge in Namibia, Africa. The lodge is a five hour jeep ride on gravel roads from the nearest town of any size. But being so far from civilization meant viewing the night sky the way it was meant to be seen, sparkling with countless stars right down to the horizon, with no lights interfering."

In addition to his teaching skills, Alex is also a supernova hunter. He has made 22 discoveries of supernovas, or exploding stars, in other galaxies. "It's rewarding to contribute to the science of astronomy," he relates. "The work itself can be tedious, but the thrill of discovery is a rush that's hard to beat and worth the effort".

Alex's class meets seven consecutive Wednesday evenings. "I hope that the students will feel the excitement when they discover the beauty and scale of the night sky," says Alex.



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