

EPO*: NRAO's Community Connection

*Education and Public Outreach

July 2004

Muehlberg and Revnell Receive Star Awards for EPO Work

At the Electronics Division meeting the end of April, Jim Muehlberg and Mike Revnell



Jim and Danielle make adjustments to the dish.

received Star Awards for their work with the N^2I^2 . N^2I^2 is the 2-element interferometer located at the Etscorn campus observatory at New Mexico Tech. It was built for use by Tech students, NRAO summer

students, and for NRAO-sponsored teacher workshops in radio astronomy.

When NRAO and New Mexico Tech agreed to build the Instructional Interferometer, it was with the understanding that NRAO would contribute monetary support only: aside from the preliminary design review, no employee time would be used in its construction or upkeep. Jim Muehlberg supplied the block diagram for that review. He and Mike Revnell took a personal interest in the construction and in its use for educational purposes. They assisted Danielle Lucero (the graduate student in charge of the project) with the assembly of the 3-meter dishes. Pulling cable through the conduits and physically getting it all put together required team work and communication, and they both jumped right in, contributing a

considerable amount of time to NRAO's Education and Public Outreach effort. We're pleased their efforts were recognized with this award.

Eight New Mexico Teachers "Do Dishes" in June

Imagine eight, hard-working New Mexico teachers, newly freed for the summer from their classroom duties, electing to spend up to fourteen hours a day to learn about radio astronomy... That's just what happened the first week of June when NRAO hosted "Doing Dishes: Observational Radio Astronomy for Science Education."

Funded by a \$10,000 grant from the NASA Ideas Program, the workshop was a pilot class in which teachers learned about radio astronomy and gave us suggestions and ideas about the best way to teach radio astronomy to teachers. They spent four days with Mark Claussen, Lisa Young, Dan Klinglesmith, and Robyn Harrison learning through lectures, hands-on activities, field trips, and actual observing using the Small Radio Telescope at the site (remotely!) and the interferometer and optical

telescopes at Etscorn. After enduring project anxiety, instrument failure, long nights, and

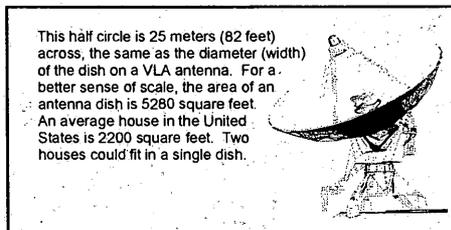


Teachers came from Santa Fe, Aztec, Zuni, and Socorro to participate in the workshop.

utter exhaustion, the teachers presented their research findings along with the implications of the program for their classrooms. Thanks to their evaluations and suggestions, we have put together a first-rate 2-week radio astronomy class for teachers to be offered through Tech's Master of Science Teaching program. The class will be offered every other summer, with the first session to be July 12-23, 2004.

Just How BIG is One of Those Dishes?

The grounds crew at the VLA has completed a new outdoor exhibit along the walking tour. Just north of the whisper gallery they have poured a semi-circular curb to give our visitors an idea of the size of our dishes. Prior to this, we had a half-circle painted on the parking lot at the control building, but people kept parking in the middle of it. Although this did give guests an idea of how big a dish really is (how many cars could you park in a dish?) it was difficult for third graders to see each other across the dish if they couldn't see over the car.... As always, the grounds crew went above and beyond Robyn's request for a mere half-circle. They've packed the ground and surrounded it with a railroad tie border and have plans for future landscaping.



New Gift Shop Hours and Staff!

The VLA gift shop has been running at full tilt ten hours a day (9 am to 6 pm) since just after Memorial Day. We're pleased to have Helen Walker as the new weekend gift shop clerk to aid us in those efforts, working Friday through Sunday. Helen is married to Bob Walker, security staff at the VLA. She comes to us with a background in sales and marketing and is a great addition to the Visitor Center staff.



Visitor Center Sees Record Numbers in June

June was a record-breaking month for the VLA visitor center, with 2,945 visitors. Prior to that time our busiest month was July of 2003 with 2,363 guests. One contributing factor is the new Boy Scout camp across the road.

Philmont Scout Ranch has expanded its program to the H&H Ranch north of Highway 60. The Scouts spend a week backpacking and looking at the VLA from afar. Naturally they are curious enough to stop by for a visit after their trek. In June we hosted the 42 Scout camp staff members for a tour of the VLA

"The mission of the NRAO is to design, build, and operate large radio telescope facilities for use by the scientific community; to develop the electronics, software, and other technology systems that enable new astronomical science; to support the reduction, analysis, and dissemination of the results of observations made by the telescope users; to support the development of a society that is both scientifically and technically literate through