



Web of Stars: Celebrating the Relationship between Cork & San Francisco

CIT Blackrock Castle Observatory (BCO) houses Ireland's first fully-interactive science centre, built around the theme of astronomy. The official partnership with the Chabot Space & Science Centre, (CSSC) San Francisco Bay Area, has produced a unique remote astronomy project designed to teach science, technology, engineering and maths to Cork students. This online sister city initiative is called *Web of Stars*.

Since October 2009, astronomers at the Chabot Space & Science Centre (CSSC) have been observing the night sky in the San Francisco Bay Area for targets, all chosen by Cork students. The US astronomers deliver the astronomical images to the students (via a video link at live sessions) in CIT's Blackrock Castle Observatory during monthly workshops. Colour image impressions are then created by the students using free to download software.

Inspiring curiosity and teamwork using the medium of astronomy, Web of Stars also supports the further development of academic links, teaching, learning and research, between the educational institutes in the two cities. To celebrate Cork's Colaiste Choilm's recent overall award winning achievement in the 2011 Pharmachemical Ireland *Industry Awards for Science Teaching Excellence*, the next *Web of Stars* session will go to 20 Colaiste Choilm students. The awards were given to schools where the science teachers demonstrated their ability to make science more current and appealing, and in doing so, motivating young students to study science. This live link with Chabot Space & Science Center is scheduled to take place on May 25th at CIT Blackrock Castle Observatory.

Time differences facilitate the perfect environment for live sessions as it is dark in San Francisco when it is bright in Irish schools. This allows work to be carried out in the classroom or at BCO (if schools prefer) during normal school hours. BCO offers a reciprocal arrangement with sister centres in San Francisco. Funding for the project was kindly received from Cork City Council under the 2011 twinning grant and the Cork San Francisco Sister City Committee.

To date *Web of Stars* has been extremely successful in building a relationship with San Francisco and educating students of Cork. It celebrates the educational and cultural ties between the sister cities and highlights the Memorandum of Understanding that exists between Cork & San Francisco.

Interviews can be organised through:

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Full details on Web of Stars can be obtained from <http://www.bco.ie/education/web-of-stars>