



ESA, ESO, NASA, IYA

Opening Eyes to the Wonders of the Universe.

CIT Blackrock Castle Observatory has found new and exciting ways to reach out into the community and engage the public in matters of space and astronomy.



The Need

As a recently established and expanding facility, BCO seeks to identify creative and captivating opportunities to bring astronomy to people in the community, celebrating important space dates and events and forging space partnerships.

The Solution

To celebrate the 400th anniversary of the first astronomical observation through a telescope by Galileo Galilei, the International Astronomical Union (IYA) named 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy under the theme "The Universe: Yours to Discover". To commemorate the occasion, CIT Blackrock Castle Observatory formed a partnership with Cork City Council Arts & Community Enterprise Project and Cork Printmakers to create "Capture the Cosmos". The St. Patrick's Day Festival Weekend was themed "Cosmic Chaos" and Dan Tani, the NASA astronaut, was Grand Marshall of the Parade. Partnerships with the European Southern Observatory (ESO), the European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA developed as BCO became a key public engagement facility. To commemorate the International

Space Station flights, BCO conducted a live on orbit interview with NASA astronaut Dan Tani and for its last flight, celebrated a Shuttle Party with gifts from NASA for the community.

Critical Success Factors

These memorable events have been made possible by the expertise of the staff at BCO and their close partnerships with research staff at BCOLabs and space experts NASA, ESO, ESA, and the IYA.

Benefits of the Engagement

Many BCO public events raise funds for charities. BCO's *Capture the Cosmos* programme raised funds to purchase a telescope and binoculars for schools in Tanzania. BCO has been established as an ESO Partner in Outreach and will potentially host ESA's "Take Your Classroom into Space" event with André Kuipers aboard the International Space Station in 2012. Through industry networks, public talks, classes, courses, workshops, exhibitions, collaborations and a lot of fun, BCO is affecting much change in the community.

"Blackrock Castle is a place that enables. Their work to make the wonder of the Cosmos a practical and personal experience for all ages is where this begins. It has been a sheer joy to watch them expand into an exploration of how better to serve people of Cork in as many ways as can be imagined. BCO truly does think cosmically and act locally."

Marius Griffin

