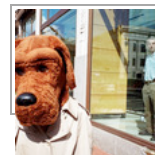
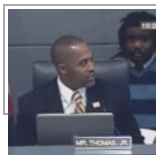


## Invalid Argument

The Facebook Connect cross-domain receiver URL ([http://dcist.com/mt-static/plugins/FacebookCommenters/xd\\_recei](http://dcist.com/mt-static/plugins/FacebookCommenters/xd_recei)) must have the application's Connect URL



## Look Up: What's in the Sky This Week?



Photo by Eric Long/NASM, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution

Back in early August, we previewed the [Public Observatory Project](#) at the [National Air and Space Museum](#); this week the ribbon was cut and the telescope is officially in business. (Before I get too far, I should disclaim that I'm now a volunteer at POP -- having worked in observatories during college, this was too good an opportunity to pass up -- so I'm obviously a big fan of the project, and you may attempt to complete your DCist editor bingo card by trying to find me there during my weekly shift.) The observatory is focused on daytime observing and will be open Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The research-grade 16" Boller and Chivens telescope, on loan from Harvard University, is fitted with a solar filter, making it perfect for viewing the Sun and Venus. On especially nice days, a portable 11" Celestron scope is rolled out, to which are attached two smaller scopes fitted with [H-alpha](#) and [CaK](#) filters, allowing viewers to see different wavelengths of light coming from the Sun -- during my first training session we caught spectacular [prominence](#) through the CaK scope. Programs with D.C. Public Schools will begin in November. The museum also has a new program in the [Einstein Planetarium](#), *Journey to the Stars*.

### Events:

>> Friday is a big day for planetary science: [NASA's LCROSS mission](#) (short for Lunar **CR**ater Observation and **S**ensing **S**atellite), which has been headed on an elongated path towards the Moon since June, will finally slam into the natural satellite's surface. LCROSS's target site had a last minute change last week to a different crater that scientists predict has a higher concentration of hydrogen -- that is, water. The confirmation of [water on the Moon](#) has been big news the past couple of weeks, and LCROSS's impact on Friday (which, scientists hope, should kick up lots of water from beneath the Moon's surface) should provide incredibly helpful data. In addition to helping us further understand the Moon's makeup, this discovery could have great implications regarding long-term human travel to the Moon and Mars. If you're an early riser, head to the [Newseum for an observing event](#) featuring NASA's Deputy Administrator Lori Garver and the museum's 40-foot high-definition media screen. Doors open at 6:30 a.m., program starts at 7 a.m., LCROSS's first satellite is scheduled to impact the Moon at 7:25 a.m. and the second at 7:30 a.m.

>> The Observatory at the University of Maryland holds [Open Houses](#) on the 5th and 20th of every month. Head down this Monday to take a peak through their [four telescopes](#): an 8" refractor donated by NASA, a 7" Astro-Physics refractor, a Celestron 14" Schmidt-Cassegrain reflector, and the hefty 20" Eichner Bent Cassegrain reflector. The event is rain or shine, beginning with a short lecture by a guest speaker and a tour of the facilities, followed by observing if possible. 9 to 10:30 p.m.

>> This Thursday, the [Koshland Science Museum](#) will host a lecture by John Mather, Senior Astrophysicist in the Observational Cosmology Laboratory at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. This talk is for cosmology lovers,

covering the Big Bang and universe expansion, along with a preview of Hubble's successor, the James Webb Space Telescope. 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., \$7 or \$5 for students.

>> Probably the only time I wished I was still in middle school: [President Obama is holding a star party](#) at the White House this Wednesday with some middle schoolers to "highlight the President's commitment to science, engineering and math education as the foundation of this nation's global technological and economic leadership and to express his support for astronomy in particular—for its capacity to promote a greater awareness of our place in the universe, expand human knowledge, and inspire the next generation by showing them the beauty and mysteries of the night sky." Though we suspect his commitment to all those things would be more greatly felt if, instead of pointing out Jupiter to a bunch of 12 year-olds, he actually spoke out and stood behind a plan for the future of NASA and the human spaceflight program, as most of the industry has been waiting for him to do since the [Augustine Committee summary](#) was released. Nevertheless, have fun kids -- can't say we're not jealous.

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By [Heather Goss](#) in [Miscellaneous](#) on October 4, 2009 11:15 AM [3 Comments](#) [6 Likes](#)

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