Service Learning at Kirkwood Observatory

**Goal:** Develop your skills at explaining astronomy to the public and learn how to set up and run a public event at Kirkwood Observatory

**What to hand in** - Hand in a reflection of your service learning experience, including:
- A journal describing each night's experience (see below).
- A summary on what you learned through the service learning experience (see below).

An appropriate length is 3-4 typed pages, single spaced, 12-point font, with 1" margins, Be sure to review the general lab instructions on the "lab options" sheet.

**Kirkwood Observatory Public Open Nights**
Public outreach is an important part of the life of an astronomer. Most people are interested in astronomy and are eager for a chance to look through a telescope at the night sky. Astronomy also helps to interest kids in science and serves as a gateway into studying science. Federal agencies that fund astronomy research expect grantees to conduct a significant level of public outreach, and astronomy students should have the opportunity to learn to interact with the public.

The IU Astronomy Department conducts a weekly outreach event at Kirkwood Observatory. The Observatory is open to the public each Wednesday evening until November 14, weather permitting. These events are staffed by graduate students in the Astronomy Department. The hours of each open night are available on the web at http://www.astro.indiana.edu/kirk_sch.shtml.

If you are interested in a service learning experience in astronomy, you may volunteer to help at three Kirkwood Open Nights during the semester. These nights must be times when the weather is good and the Observatory is actually open. Your Lab Instructor can assist you in scheduling your volunteer service at Kirkwood and can introduce you to the graduate students hosting the event on those nights.

Service learning includes a reflection on your service experience. For this lab you must keep a journal of your experience. Your journal should include a record of the objects observed, the public's reaction to viewing the objects, and particular questions asked by members of the public and how those questions were answered. Also describe any events or interactions during the Open Night, or any problems that occurred and how they were solved. Personal observations and reflection on the experience are also encouraged.

At the conclusion of your three service nights, write summary of your impressions of your service learning experience. Include what you see as successes of the Kirkwood public program and identify any problems you noted and suggest possible improvements to the Open Night program.