

**THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ASTRONOMY: NASA CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNITED STATES THEMES.** L. L. Lowes<sup>1</sup>, S. A. Shipp<sup>2</sup>, D. Smith<sup>3</sup>, M. E. Dussault<sup>4</sup>, and M. Lindstrom, Hashima Hasan, Doris Daou<sup>5</sup>. <sup>1</sup>Jet Propulsion Laboratory (MS 200-108, 4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena CA 91109, Leslie.L.Lowes@jpl.nasa.gov), <sup>2</sup>Lunar Planetary Institute (3600 Bay Area Blvd, Houston TX 77058, shipp@lpi.usra.edu), <sup>3</sup>Space Telescope Institute (3700 San Martin Drive, Baltimore MD 21218, [dsmith@stsci.edu](mailto:dsmith@stsci.edu)), <sup>4</sup>Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (60 Garden Street, Cambridge MA 02138, mdussault@cfa.harvard.edu), <sup>5</sup>NASA Science Mission Directorate (NASA HQ, 300 E St SW, Washington DC 20546-0001, mlindstr@hq.nasa.gov, hhasan@nasa.gov, doris.daou-1@nasa.gov).

**Introduction:** In turning his telescope to the heavens and communicating his findings to the public, Galileo Galilei triggered a scientific and cultural revolution that continues today through a wide variety of astronomical observatories, space probes, and communication techniques. The 2009 International Year of Astronomy (IYA) will celebrate astronomy's contributions to society and culture, encouraging citizens of all ages and backgrounds to discover the universe for themselves. The NASA Science Mission Directorate education and public outreach (E/PO) community will contribute to this global celebration through a series of coordinated activities aligned to United States IYA themes. These plans involve education and public outreach professionals representing 20 institutions nationwide, and represent strong partnerships between scientists, educators, and high-impact organizations and networks.

**Planned Activities:** SMD activities are being coordinated through the NASA SMD Education Forums. The efforts will support the United States IYA themes, while focusing on unique NASA events and educational resources. For example, the Night Sky Network of amateur astronomy clubs will host star parties. IYA-themed workshops and conference presentations will be provided by NASA-affiliated scientists, educators, and mission programs. Special exhibit panels, educational resources, and speaker's bureau will be available for 40 libraries nationwide. Monthly themes will focus on NASA SMD discoveries, mission events, and related celestial events.

**Relevance to Solar System Topics:** Galileo's first uses of the telescope for astronomical use were aimed primarily at objects within the solar system and gave rise to significant related discoveries. NASA IYA activities will include featured information and related E/PO opportunities about the NASA missions that currently study solar system bodies. The intent is to bring a meaningful connection between participants in the events and the neighborhood which is our solar system – through a connection to the human endeavor that is observation and exploration. These will be framed in the larger context of NASA's current and past contributions to astronomy.

**Websites:** NASA IYA web site <http://astronomy2009.nasa.gov>. United States IYA web site: <http://www.astronomy2009.us>.