



DR. CLAIRE MAX TO RECEIVE CHABOT SCIENCE AWARD

—To Be Presented at the Annual Chabot Science Awards Gala, May 20—

OAKLAND, CA (May 4, 2006) — Chabot Space & Science Center is pleased to announce Dr. Claire Max, Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics at the University of California, Santa Cruz and Astronomer at UC Observatories, as this year's recipient of the Chabot Science Award, to be presented at the Center's Gala on May 20, 2006. The \$5,000 award honors excellence in the field of scientific and technological discovery and is in recognition of her work in adaptive optics, a technology that can remove the blurring effects of turbulence in the earth's atmosphere, allowing telescopes on the ground to see as clearly as if they were in space. Dr. Max has been active in the development of advanced adaptive optics systems for current and future large ground-based telescopes and has observed nearby active galactic nuclei (galaxies with black holes in their cores), the planet Neptune, and Saturn's moon, Titan. Dr. Max graduated from Radcliffe College and earned her doctorate at Princeton University. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Physical Society.

"We are extremely proud to have this opportunity to honor Dr. Max for her outstanding contribution to science," said Dr. Edward Penhoet, chair of the selection committee and a member of Chabot's Board of Directors. "Not only is the use of adaptive optics useful in learning about space objects and understanding the universe, her research also promises to provide new tools for the diagnosis of eye disease, and for improving the correction of vision via laser surgery and contact lenses."

Max is also the Director of the Center for Adaptive Optics at UC Santa Cruz, one of a number of Science and Technology Centers funded by the National Science Foundation. The center is involved in the design of a ground-based 30-meter telescope, to be equipped with adaptive optics (a giant segmented mirror telescope, or GSMT). Once completed, the telescope will be able to make distant-galaxy images that are more than ten times sharper than those of the Hubble Space telescope, detect planets around young stars in the closest "stellar nurseries," and to see more clearly what is happening close to the million-solar-mass black hole in the core of our own Milky Way galaxy.

Stars twinkle at night because their light is distorted by air currents in the atmosphere. Unless a telescope has an adaptive optics system, the images received will be blurred and fuzzy. This same blurring can occur in the living retina. The use of adaptive optics technology can compensate for these aberrations, enabling a new era in astronomy and human eye research and vision correction. The cost of building the land-based Keck Adaptive Optics telescope was about twenty times less than the cost of

building the Hubble telescope; yet Keck has a larger light gathering area and a better resolution. Adaptive optics utilizes a high speed computer to actively compensate for the changing distortions that cause blurring of images. Additionally, the system requires precision optics, special sensors and deformable mirrors.

Chabot's Gala is a fundraiser to support the Center's public and schools educational programs, as well as its teacher training programs. Through the generosity of an anonymous donor, a special fund has been established to benefit the next two recipients of the Chabot Science Award. The theme of this year's Gala is "Reach for the Stars," and highlights the achievements of students in the Galaxy Explorers program. Galaxy Explorers targets underserved and underrepresented youth, ages 14 to 18, with a goal to develop leadership and professional development skills through meaningful, visible and challenging work experiences within the Science Center and in outreach presentations.

The Gala will also include presentation of the Accenture Teacher of the Year Award. The Gala will begin at 6 pm with a cocktail reception, followed by dinner, award presentations and a live auction.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Chabot Space and Science Center, a Smithsonian affiliate, is a 501c3 nonprofit teaching and learning center focusing on astronomy and the inter-relationships of all the sciences. Its observatory, planetarium, exhibits, and natural park setting are a place where a diverse population of students, teachers, and the public can imagine, understand, and learn to shape their future through science.

For more information, call (510) 336-7300, or visit www.chabotspace.org

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