

Understanding the universe

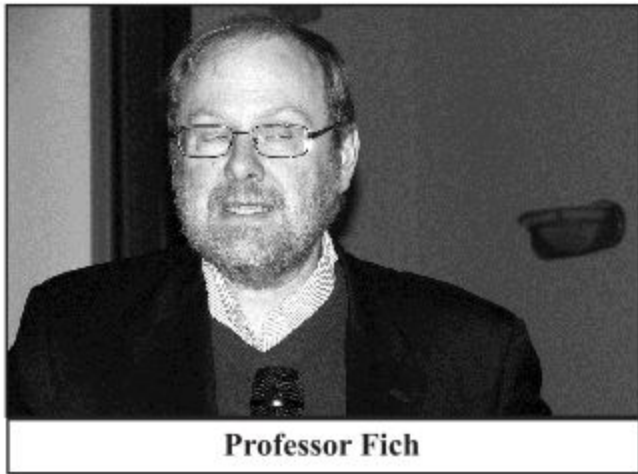
High-tech innovations save lives and answer big questions

How and when did all the structures in the universe – the planets and stars – get formed? Those questions are the “current frontier” in astronomy, according to Waterloo University Physics and

2 appearance at the Absolutely Acton Speakers’ Series.

Fich, a rural Acton resident, introduced the large crowd at the Acton Town Hall Centre to the “far infrared” – what he called “the gas and stuff between the stars,” that will help answer a lot of unanswered questions, including how and when stars, planets and galaxies are made.

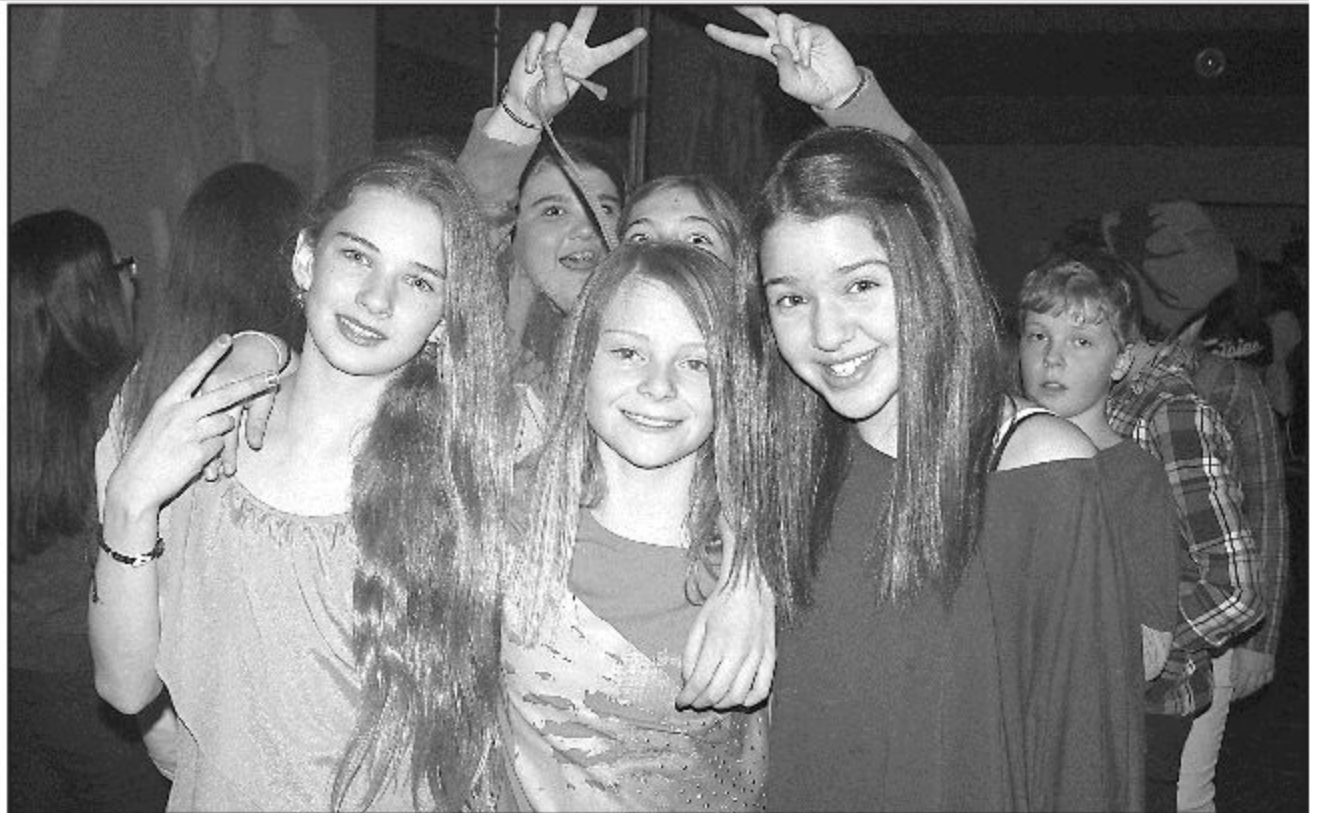
“So, if you’re trying to understand how stuff gets made in the universe, you



Professor Fich

Astronomy Professor Michel Fich who offered an astronomical travelogue during his March

have to understand this gas,” Fich said, adding they have a good understanding of stars and



TWEEN TIME: Acton’s Natalie Longpre (left), Riley Muise and Bailey Skelhorne partied with their pals on Friday at the monthly tween dance at the Legion. - Ted Tyler photo

galaxies, but need more study on planets.

With the unabashed pride of an ubre-geek, Fich showed pictures and described the equipment of his profession – telescopes worth \$100-million and state-of-the-art cameras and software to assess data. With telescopes located in Hawaii, and one being built by a partnership of Canada, American and European universities in

Chile, Fich said he travels to very cold places that have very little oxygen.

As to the why he, and the brilliant people who could be “out in the world making a fortune” chose astronomy - he said it is because of curiosity. “This is something that really drives them, and what they do is they invent stuff, because all this stuff I’ve showed you – 20 years ago someone had to invent it.”

And what is the use of astronomy? Fich said astronomers trying to analyse data wrote the software that runs CT scanners. Medical researchers at Rice University working with x-ray detectors used it. Fich said they gave away the software – not knowing enough to copyright it in what is now a \$300-to-\$400-million a year industry.

“Its estimate we saved

25,000 lives by having that software ready five years before they guys at Rice University would have had it,” Fich said.

The good, bad and ugly of Canadian politics will be revealed at the next Absolutely Acton Speakers Series on April 3. Guest Martin Stringer, a veteran researcher/reporter, now host of CPACS Primetime Politics Weekend, will offer his front row perspective.

Plastic pins, not live Daffodils in Acton

There will be no live blooming Daffodils sold in Acton this April as part of the annual Canadian

Cancer Society’s campaign for funds, but plastic Daffodil pins will be sold on several dates at several

locations in town during the month.

Nationally, the Society determined it would be more cost-effective and efficient to enter into a deal with Loblaw which will sell live blooms of

Daffodils - the Society’s symbol of hope and courage - at its stores during April.

As Acton has no Loblaw or affiliate store, there will be no live bloom sales. In past years, those

sales have garnered approximately \$7,000, and Lorraine Skarratt, manager of the Wellington Unit of the Society, stressed that no Acton programs will be cut or reduced by the loss in revenue.

“Absolutely nothing will be impacted in terms of services or access to any of our research programs, clinical trails, research programs or peer support, and nobody in Acton will be impacted by that \$7,000 or \$8,000 not being raised in the community,” Skarratt said.

She said the deal with Loblaw — it will donate \$2 from each \$5.99 bunch of Daffodils sold — is a very cost-effective way to still have flowers in the

community without using a lot of volunteer time.

“We still have a very strong residential campaign during April, and we hope that people in Acton will continue to support that...but we don’t have anything to replace that (live Daffodil sales) campaign,” Skarratt said, adding the Acton Branch is “keen” to do something to replace the lost revenue.

Because the deal with Loblaw is exclusive, Skarratt said a suggestion by an Acton Branch official to approach Sobey’s about selling live daffodils “is not possible.”

The dates and locations for plastic Daffodil pin sales in April have not been announced.

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