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## Speakers illuminate our galaxy

By COLIN M. STEWART  
*Tribune-Herald staff writer*

If you were orbiting the Earth and you looked down at Hawaii, it would appear to be a very lonely place — alone in the center of the Pacific, cut off from the rest of the world.

But if you think big, like Kumiko Usuda, Hawaii is separated from its earthly neighbors by hardly any distance at all.

That's because Usuda, an outreach education scientist with Subaru Telescope, is primarily concerned with studying our galaxy. And earthly distances are oh-so-tiny when compared to the gulfs between stars, planets and galaxies.

"We live in the galaxy," Usuda said,



USUDA

## GALAXY

From front page

"and I want to connect what we see in the night sky to our world. To help people know other worlds, outside of Hilo and outside of Earth. To broaden people's eyesight."

To share her mission with other Big Island educators and community members, Usuda and other speakers will take part in Galaxy Forum 2010 happening Sunday in Hilo.

According to organizers with the International Lunar Observatory Association (ILOA), the Big Island is perhaps the best place in the world for teachers to foster a love and respect for astronomy among students, and the forum is an opportunity for teachers to learn about all of the unique resources at their fingertips.

Beginning at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at 'Imiloa, the

### If you go

**What:** Galaxy Forum 2010 Hawaii

**Where:** 'Imiloa Astronomy Center, Hilo

**When:** Sunday, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**RSVP:** Call 885-3474 or [info@iloa.org](mailto:info@iloa.org)

**More info:** [www.iloa.org](http://www.iloa.org)

forum will feature Usuda as the main speaker, discussing how to integrate galaxy awareness in the classroom, from preschool to college. She will be followed by a presentation by 'Imiloa's Shawn Laatsch, Gemini Observatory's Peter Michaud, the Hawaiian Culture and Galaxy Education group's Ali'i Kimo Pihana and Koa Rice, and a presen-

tation by ILOA.

According to ILOA founding director Steve Durst, increased galaxy awareness in Hawaii schools can help shift students from a "challenged position to a primarily leadership position" on the national science stage.

"We've discovered some amazing resources that let us think of Hawaii Island as 'Galaxy Central,'" he said.

Students, he said, will be well served by learning how Earth and its solar system fit into the galaxy, and how the Milky Way, in turn, fits with our universe.

"It's my conclusion that this understanding of our galaxy is as important as anything else in the 21st century. As relativity was one of the most important concepts of the 20th century, 'galacticity' may be as

important in the 21st century."

Usuda agrees. She has studied our galaxy for 15 years, and it still finds ways to surprise and amaze her. A recent discovery by a Japanese student at the Subaru Telescope is just an example of what keeps her coming back for more.

"The telescope has a very wide field camera," she said. "We can take very good pictures of galaxies. ... With it, astronomers found the outer part of our galaxy. I'm very interested in the outer edge of our Milky Way. ...

"I'm very excited, because before Subaru was built, nobody could see a lot of things outside the galaxy."

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