



Dudley Observatory Selects New Interim Executive Director

Melanie Evans will lead Dudley Observatory from August 9, 2020

Albany, NY, Release: August 20, 2020. *For Immediate Release*

Dudley Observatory announced today that Melanie Evans has been selected as the observatory's interim Executive Director. Ms. Evans assumed the role on August 9th, 2020 and has been working with departing director, Valerie Rapson, Ph.D. The Dudley Observatory is a non-profit serving the Capital District since 1856 and strives to provide education and outreach programs to bring the wonders of science, particularly astronomy, to people of all ages. It cultivates interest and understanding of science, history of science, science careers and scientists, and helps non-scientists appreciate science in an approachable and enjoyable way.

"I am absolutely honored and very excited to have been selected as Dudley Observatory's interim Executive Director. The organization has an exceptionally long history and its Board of Trustees continues to be very committed to making science and astronomy accessible to all." states Evans. "They are committed to continuing to encourage and develop young scientists through these times of social distancing and I look forward to helping Dudley succeed in its mission during these unprecedented times. Astronomy can serve as the perfect activity for families and individuals looking to further explore science. It is something that can be enjoyed by anyone in their own backyard, deck or sidewalk and doesn't necessarily need extensive equipment. There is so much to discover with a pair of binoculars and star chart on a clear night or even the naked eye. Astronomy can be for anyone."

Ms. Evans succeeds Valerie Rapson, Ph.D. who will be leaving at the start of September to join

SUNY Oneonta as Assistant Professor in the Physics and Astronomy Department. Dr. Rapson will be teaching both physics and astronomy classes, involving students in public outreach, and helping run their planetarium and observatory.

Ms. Evan's selection as interim Executive Director was part of a rigorous and comprehensive search spanning a wide variety of sectors of non-profits and business fields. "We are so excited to have Melanie on board as the Dudley Observatory interim Director. She has extensive experience in museums and non-profits, and will ensure that the Dudley Observatory remains a strong resource for astronomy education and outreach." said Dr. Rapson. Dr. Rapson passed the organization's responsibilities to Ms. Evans on August 20th with a tongue in cheek exchange of their large meteorite from the Odessa Meteor Crater from observatory's collection.

Ms. Evans has more than 15 years in nonprofit management focusing on guest relations, adult and youth volunteer engagement and informal educational programming. She served as the Guest Services Director at Mystic Aquarium for over three years, and before that worked at the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, Illinois and Phoenix Zoo in Phoenix, Arizona. Ms. Evans has a Bachelor of Science from University of Manitoba, a professional certificate in Nonprofit Management from Arizona State University's Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation.

Dudley Observatory's Board of Trustees consists of President Heidi Newberg Ph.D., Professor of Physics, Applied Physics, and Astronomy at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Vice President Francis P. Wilkin, Ph.D., Union College; Treasurer Paul Schoch, Ph.D., Rensselaer College; Secretary Joan Wagner, retired science teacher; John S. Sherman, JD; J. Douglass Klein, Ph.D., Union College; John Moustakas, Ph.D., Siena College; Gregory Nowell, Ph.D., Albany Area Amateur Astronomers; Cecilia Levy, Ph.D., U Albany; and Mary Crone Odekon, Ph.D., Skidmore.

Founded in 1856, Dudley Observatory strives to be a nationally recognized center for education and outreach in astronomy.

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