



FOOTHILL COLLEGE

12345 El Monte Road ■ Los Altos Hills, CA ■ 94022-4599

www.foothill.edu

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Marketing & Communications
(650) 949-7258 • (650) 941-4641 fax
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Lori Thomas, Media Relations
ThomasLori@foothill.edu

Foothill College Instructor Awarded 2002 Carl Sagan Prize for Science Popularization

Foothill College Astronomy Instructor Andrew Fraknoi has been named recipient of the 2002 Carl Sagan Prize for Science Popularization by Wonderfest, the Bay Area Festival of Science. Underwritten by *Annual Reviews* as a tribute to their President and Editor-in-Chief Samuel Gubins, the prize, including a cash gift of \$5,000, will be presented to Fraknoi **Saturday, Nov. 2, at 8 p.m.** at the TCSEQ Auditorium at Stanford University.

“The award celebrates Mr. Fraknoi’s outstanding devotion to bring the wonders of scientific inquiry to the public,” said Wonderfest Director Tucker Hiatt. Wonderfest is an annual teacher and public education program in science.

Fraknoi, of San Francisco, is an award-winning science educator and a scientist who is nationally known for his skill in interpreting astronomical discoveries and ideas in everyday language. Radio and television audiences have enjoyed his sense of humor and clear explanations on many local and national programs for more than 25 years.

As chairman of the Astronomy Program at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, he teaches popular courses on introductory astronomy and "physics for poets." More than 900 students enroll in his courses each year. Fraknoi has given more than 400 public lectures on such topics as: *Is There Worthwhile Real Estate (and Are There Real Estate Agents) on Other Worlds?*, *What Were the Atoms in Your Body Doing 8 Billion Years Ago & Why Should You Care?* and *Why Falling into a Black Hole is a Once-in-a-Lifetime Experience*.

For 14 years, Fraknoi served as the executive director of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, an international scientific and educational organization founded in 1889. He was also editor of its popular magazine, *Mercury*, and its newsletter for teachers, *The Universe in the Classroom*. During this time, he organized more than a dozen national workshops to help teachers in grades 3-12 do a better job in teaching astronomical ideas. He also founded Project ASTRO, a program that brings professional and amateur astronomers into 4th-9th grade classrooms. Project ASTRO is now active in 13 regional sites around the U.S. A new branch of the project, called Family ASTRO, on which he worked during his sabbatical in 2001, is developing kits and events to help families enjoy hands-on astronomy activities. (more)

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A prolific author, Fraknoi has edited two collections of science articles and science fiction stories for Bantam Books, and is the lead author of *Voyages through the Universe* (1997, 2000, Harcourt Brace), which has become one of the leading introductory astronomy textbooks in the world. He is also editor of a two-volume teaching guide called *The Universe at Your Fingertips*—one of the most widely used astronomy education resources in North America.

Radio listeners know Fraknoi as a frequent guest on local and national news and talk programs. In Northern California, he appeared regularly for more than 20 years on the Jim Eason Show on KGO and KSFO. Recently, he has again become a regular on the Pete Wilson Show on KGO. In the last seven years he has been one of the most regular guests on the *Forum* program with Michael Krasny on KQED, and is the "astronomer-in-residence" on the syndicated *Mark & Brian Show* in Los Angeles. Nationally, he has been heard regularly on *Science Friday*, *Weekend All Things Considered*, and *Sounds Like Science* on National Public Radio. His television appearances include *The Today Show*, *CBS Morning News*, *Larry King Live* and *The Pat Sajak Show*. During the 1980s, he was co-author of a weekly newspaper column on astronomy, which was syndicated by Chronicle Features, and appeared in newspapers in the U.S. and Canada.

Fraknoi serves on the board of trustees of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) Institute, a scientific and educational organization involved in identifying possible radio signals from civilizations around other stars. He is also a Fellow of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), specializing in debunking astrology. Recently, he was re-appointed to the prestigious American Astronomical Society Education Board.

Educated at Harvard University and the University of California, Berkeley, he has taught astronomy and physics at San Francisco State University, City College of San Francisco, Cañada College, and several campuses of the University of California Extension Division.

In 1994, Fraknoi received the Annenberg Foundation Prize of the American Astronomical Society, the highest honor in the field of astronomy education, as well as the Klumpke-Roberts Prize of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific which is given for a lifetime of contributions to popularizing astronomy.

Asteroid 4859 has been named Asteroid Fraknoi by the International Astronomical Union to honor his work in sharing the excitement of modern astronomy with students, teachers, and the public.

For more information about the award, access www.wonderfest.org.

For more information about the Foothill College Astronomy Program, access www.foothill.edu/ast/astclass.html.