



Gemini Observatory Press Release:

Gemini Launches Local Students on an Exciting Week-long *Viaje al Universo*

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*La Serena's students and teachers are about to blast off on a *Viaje al Universo*! Next week Gemini Observatory's annual hands- and minds-on program takes flight in local schools. The *Viaje al Universo* program brings science and technology professionals from Gemini and other local observatories into area classrooms to share their work with the next generation of explorers. In addition, portable planetarium programs will bring the cosmos down to Earth with a universe full of exciting demonstrations and fun.*

A special addition to this year's programming is a week-long visit by the renowned science entertainers, *Big Van "Scientists on Wheels."* *The Big Van* are "science extroverts" according to Nancy Levenson, Gemini Deputy Director. Actually, they are astrophysicists (and a biologist) from Spain, who, after winning Europe's Monologues in Science, committed themselves to sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm with the world. They do this in fun and engaging ways – what they call "interventions." Their *interventions* consist of educational stand-up comedy routines which explain scientific concepts – and of course a good dose of humor. You can check out their website at: <http://www.thebigvantheory.com>

This year's *Viaje al Universo* program will engage students and teachers at: Trinity School, San Nicolás and St. Mary's School from El Milagro; San Joaquín School as well as Carlos Condell de la Haza, and Martín de Porres at Las Compañías. Students and teachers at each school are welcoming observatory astronomers and staff for presentations, StarLab portable planetarium programs, and *The Big Van* interventions.

Although *Viaje al Universo* focuses on area schools, *The Big Van* will entertain and enlighten audiences in a limited engagement at the Lighthouse Coffee Shop in La Serena (Matta #570), space is extremely limited. Their presentation: "Café conCiencia," is scheduled for October 20th at 6:30 p.m. and reservations are required and can be made by calling: 9 42782307. In addition, an after-school program at St. Mary's School - El Milagro is scheduled for students and area residents on Thursday October 22nd starting at 6:30 p.m. Space is limited and reservations are required, call: 51- 2293143

For more on *Viaje al Universo*, please visit: www.gemini.edu/viaje