

Stull Observatory open for Mars-gazing

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The Stull Observatory at Alfred University will be open to the public Wednesday and Thursday nights this week, as the planet Mars comes closer to Earth than it has anytime in the past 60,000 years, give or take a millennium or two. Dr. G. David Toot, professor of physics at Alfred University and director of the Stull Observatory, considered to be one of the finest academic observatories in the United States, said the observatory will open at 9:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday evenings. Mars will actually rise about 10 p.m., said Toot. Although Wednesday is "the day" when Mars comes closest to Earth, Toot said the difference between what viewers see on Wednesday and Thursday nights is "pretty minimal." Observers will be able to see the planet through the oldest of the University's seven telescopes, an 1863 model, and they will be able to view Mars on computer screens in the adjacent classroom building via the observatory's newest telescope.