

Trek Station might get eyes on night sky

➤ Local astronomy enthusiast working with tourism co-ordinator to bring in telescopes

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Reporter

Visitors and residents could be seeing more than stars like Leonard Nimoy on T-shirts at the Tourism and Trek Station if a local astronomer succeeds in a bid to bring in telescopes.

Neel Roberts has recently been discussing with Catherine Pooley, Vulcan's tourism co-ordinator, the possibility of introducing a means for residents and visitors to view all kinds of stars and celestial objects from the comfort of the Trek Station.

He had originally hoped to have remote-controlled roof-mounted telescopes in which people could see what was being focused on through a computer screen, but Roberts said there isn't much flat space on the Trek Station roof and that access would be too much of an issue.

"That's not likely going to happen," he said about roof-mounted telescopes. But he hasn't given up, and still wants

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— *Neel Roberts, local amateur astronomer, commenting on setting up telescopes at the Trek Station*

to introduce some telescopes at the Trek Station.

Having the telescopes would be "a wonderful compliment to the town's current Star Trek theme, and another thing to do for visitors to Vulcan," Roberts told the Advocate.

But the idea to bring telescopes to the Trek Station isn't just for visitors, but for local residents as well.

"No doubt interest has to exist" locally for the initiative, said Roberts. "But it'll be one of those ideas that'll have to develop as we go."

Pooley is behind Roberts' idea, and said that it would be "brilliant" since it offers a chance to combine the Star Trek theme with what the county

has to offer. It also combines science fiction, Star Trek, with science fact, astronomy. Although the Trek theme is a great hook, Pooley said that it's not the only thing that defines the area.

Pooley and Roberts have met, and continue to do so, considering their options and investigating available grant money through the Canadian Space Agency (CSA).

A grant of \$5,000 is up for grabs, "and once we have an idea with the centre as to what needs to be done, we send our application to the CSA," said Roberts.

Anytime that tourism can add something new without a cost to the Town is a good thing, Pooley said.

"We're very dependent on how much grant money is available," she said, adding that it is rather unrealistic to be putting in for additional expenses in the budget.

Although the initiative is in its developmental stage, Pooley said it would have the potential not only to draw people from outside of the area, but also to provide local events for residents.

"We should know in 2011 if it'll fly or not," said Roberts, about the idea to have telescopes at the Trek Station.