

## NEWS RELEASE

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### RELEASE ON RECEIPT

QUANAHA, TX – The constellation Scorpius and the Milky Way galaxy will highlight the July StarWalk®, set for Saturday the 22<sup>th</sup>, as the acclaimed stargazing program continues to celebrate a decade of unique and outstanding public astronomy presentations. Program originator Jeri Turner will lead a naked-eye exploration of the night sky for the popular family event beginning at dusk, or around 9:15 p.m., at Big Pond Campground.

Selected in May as a participant program in the Night Sky Network sponsored by NASA and the Jet Propulsion Lab, the StarWalk this year expands its presentation format to demonstrate hands-on astronomy materials that the public can experience. This year also features a brief “In The Sky” current events segment presented by Skyguides and guest astronomers based on up-to-the-minute astronomy news.

In addition to the after-dark program, SkyGuide volunteers regularly offer an afternoon of Sun Fun from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Sun Fun offers the public rare views of our own star, the Sun, through telescopes fitted with special filters for safe viewing. Notable among these filters are a “white light” filter that allows views of sunspots, magnetic storms that are larger than the Earth, and a hydrogen alpha filter that allows views of solar prominences.

The nighttime observing begins after sunset. Turner will begin the fun, family-oriented program with a tour of the darkening sky – the StarWalk. Blending science with history, legends and lore, Turner takes participants on a trip through major constellations in all four directions, and introduces a technique known as “star-hopping” to find other interesting objects. This Saturday Turner will focus on constellations such as Scorpius and the Milky Way galaxy as well as some of the more familiar summer constellations. Following the naked-eye Presentation, the public is invited to view a number of dark-sky objects through the park’s binoculars and telescopes as well as through larger scopes provided by knowledgeable SkyGuides. These volunteers come from throughout northern and western Texas and Oklahoma to assist the StarWalk program through the generous use of their own equipment.

The ongoing 2006 slate of StarWalks includes Saturday presentations on August 19, September 2 and October 14, weather permitting. Upon entering the park, StarWalk signs direct visitors to Big Pond Campground and parking. The quarter-mile walk into the observing site is on well-lighted asphalt, and extra assistance for the handicapped is available from park personnel.

StarWalk is sponsored by the Quahadi Society, Inc., the non-profit support group for Copper Breaks State Park. For more information on park facilities or programs, or the Quahadi Society, call the park weekdays during business hours at (940) 839-4331.