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Monday, August 18, 2008

Local Boy Scout troop to talk to astronauts



BY BENJAMIN GOTTLIEB

DAILY SOUND CORRESPONDENT

A group of local children will be communicating with the stars early this morning, as UC Santa Barbara will play host to a live conversation with the International

Space Station (ISS).

Beginning at exactly 8:39 a.m. today, Boy Scout Troop 105 will be given



a rare opportunity to communicate with NASA astronaut Gregory

Chamitoff, the flight engineer and science officer currently aboard the

International Space Station, through a live radio feed. Lasting nearly 15

minutes, the conversation will take place on the observation deck of

UCSB's Broida Hall, located on the roof of the building – the university

invites the public to attend the event.

“Normally, it's a five-year wait for this kind of event,” said Troop 105

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scoutmaster Glenn Schiferl, in a prepared statement. "But, one of my assistant scoutmasters was a classmate of Greg at Cal Poly. They kept in touch and anticipated doing this."

In addition to his role as scoutmaster, Schiferl manages the computer systems for the UCSB physics department. The space conversation was made possible by Schiferl's associate John Schlesselmann, who met astronaut Chamitoff while in attendance at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

Contact with the ISS will be made as the station reaches ascends to an approximate 80 degrees from the Broida Hall roof. Then, members of the Santa Barbara Amateur Radio Club will establish a direct radio link with the ISS and Astronaut Chamitoff and the participating scouts will each be given time to send one question into outer space.

"Contact between UCSB and the ISS will be made possible through the use of a Ham Radio Antenna," said Ken Owen, radio technician and member for the SB Amateur Radio Club. "The antenna will relay our signal to the ISS and follow its movement in the sky for the duration of the conversation. We'll be pushing 100 hertz with our equipment"

Owen will also be assisted by fellow SB Ameteur Radio Club member Calli Marquez and the UCSB Physics Dept. during the proceedings.

In the event of a failure in communications, Owen said the team is prepared with backup equipment, including an omni-directional and handheld antenna, however the team does not expect complications to





arise.

“Most of the astronauts were scouts in the past and even Ham operators,” Schiferl said. “This experience will give the kids a taste for astrophysics and also offer them a chance to earn a merit badge for radio communication.”

Although radio communication with the ISS is expected to be successful, Schiferl said the team has taken the necessary steps to ensure the scouts are able to participate in the timely activity.

“Questions for Greg were submitted a week ago so that the scout’s questions could be answered promptly,” Schiferl said. “They will still be asking questions directly to the astronaut. It will have a better effect if it is staged for the kids. We are trying to make sure that everyone has a positive experience.”

The conversation will also be made available online via live video steam at <http://n6kth.com/iss/>.

at 10:45 PM

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