STEM SPEAKER SERIES

"The Hunt for Earth-like Planets Around Other Stars and the Discovery of Proxima B"

Our Sun does not have the only planets in the Galaxy. Astronomers now know that planets around other stars, called "exoplanets", are very common. I will explain several techniques that astronomers use to detect these exoplanets. Humans naturally are most interested in finding Earth-like, rocky exoplanets, and I will describe NASA missions involved in that search. How common are Earth-like planets, and could they possibly have the right conditions to support life? What are the conditions to support life as we know it? The recent discovery of an Earth-like planet called Proxima B has captivated the world because it is "only" 4.2 light-years away and it orbits the very nearest star to the Sun.

Susan Stolovy

ECC Physics & Astronomy Professor

Wednesday, October 5
4:00 p.m.
Alondra Room

Dr. Susan Stolovy earned her B.A. in physics from Johns Hopkins University and her Ph.D. in physics from Cornell University. She worked as a professional astronomer before joining the faculty at El Camino College, including 10 years as a Staff Scientist at CalTech supporting NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope. As a researcher, she has used infrared telescopes to unravel the mysteries of celestial targets ranging from comets to distant galaxies. Dr. Stolovy is enjoying her second career here teaching physics and astronomy and giving public planetarium shows. She also enjoys chasing solar eclipses around the world and playing the violin.

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