

# Family Stories and Stellar Clusters: Outreach at ESO, a Personal Experience

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Due to the "International Year of Astronomy", there was the chance to collaborate with the ESO's outreach people, and they invited me to give a talk in the North of Chile, in Calama. I gave 2 talks there, one in a private high-school. There were around 60 adolescents who were talking and laughing, and suddenly the school director said to the noise ones: "if you do not stop with your chat, we will stop here this presentation". Three young girls in the first line, called me and they said me: "Do not worry about the others Mrs., they are always like that. So, please, go on, we are listening to you".

The other talk was for everybody in the town hall, and in the first chair there was a very young girl of around 4 years old, she put up her hand and she said, after globular and open clusters were presented: "Mrs., this one (globular cluster) is nicer than the previous one (open cluster), do not you think so?" I guess she was right!

Working at ESO in Chile I had the opportunity to attend "AstroDay-2009", a yearly event in La Serena (near La Silla, Tololo and Las Campanas observatories) and it was a great success, thousands of people came to learn more about Astronomy and astronomical observatories in Chile. All the major observatories in Chile participated, as well as some universities, amateur groups and other organizations. ESO's table was especially popular, with a big crowd there for much of the day asking questions and getting some souvenirs.



Three ESO fellows: Margaret Moerchen, Irina Yeregova and my self in the Astro Day-2009, La Serena, Chile.



Green stars indicate the places where I presented public talks: Argentina, Chile and Perú. I have 3 more for this year: Santiago, Córdoba and Buenos Aires (yellow).



One of the participant at AstroDay-2009, Chile.

At the beginning of 2009 I attended a meeting in Lima, Perú, and I took that opportunity to give a public talk there, presenting ESO's observatories. Since then, when I travel, and if there is the opportunity to give a public talk, I do it. So, while I was travelling by private matters to the Argentinean Patagonia, I went to my nieces' school (Comodoro Rivadavia, Chubut) and there, I presented ESO and also stellar clusters. At the end of the talk, I showed an slide indicating the universities where they could go if they want to become an astronomer, because usually people do not realize that studying Astronomy is a possibility. In fact, one of the boys (around 17 years old, ending the school) he asked me if it is possible to live as an astronomer, because he would like to have a family too, and he was wondering if he will be able to give them all they will need.

Most of the times outreach activities are not recognize by our employers (I have the fortune to find an exception!). So, usually, the talks are prepared in private times. Besides that, it is an exciting experience that I always enjoy, because the feedback is really good. You see the face of people, their eyes are shining in the darkness of the conference room, and after few minutes when my fear is going down (for me, it is not so easy to speak to everybody) I beginning enjoying the session.

When I was a very young girl, watching Carl Sagan's series "COSMOS" changed my life and motivated me to become an astronomer. My Family was pivotal in enabling my success, as they believed in me and supported my dreams. I feel very lucky as an astronomer to be able to do what I do for living, so I believe that astronomers should be active in outreach and astronomy education, because this is the way to give something back to the others.



I do not know if it is correct or not, but I take this opportunity to say: "Thank You, Carl Sagan"

Discussing with some students at Argentinean Patagonia school.



Stellar clusters are my research area, so when I present a talk, usually I speak about them, and I compare them with families. I introduce globular clusters as huge families, with a lot of members, staying together for ever; while as well as happen in Life, there are small families, that as time goes by, finally they dissolve. At the end, usually I present a brief abstract of my personal scientific research and people really enjoy it.



Introducing ESO observatories at the Peruvian astronomical meeting.

