

# EEC STAFF FACT SHEET

## Chandler Solar System Walk at Veterans Oasis Park



**WHAT:** A free, privately funded educational project designed to promote astronomy to visitors at Veterans Oasis Park. It is a series of stone monuments and interpretive signs representing the sun, eight planets, dwarf planets, comets, asteroids and other significant objects in our solar system. The signs include statistical information about the planets, including their axis tilt, diameter, mass, rotation period, orbit around the sun, and known moons. There are also references to the ancient cultures that first studied the night sky, and the mythologies they created about the planets and stars.



**WHERE:** The 14 signs are placed along the 2,500-foot pathway that surrounds the lake at distances that are relative to the scale of the solar system. Every foot traveled on the pathway represents 1.5 million miles in space. For example, while 93 million miles separates the earth from the sun, the actual distance within the park is 62 feet.

**WHEN:** The Solar System walk is accessible during normal park operational hours, which are 6 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., every day. If visiting the walk at night, please bring a flashlight to help ensure that you can see and read all the signs.

**WHO:** The Solar System Walk was developed through a public-private partnership between the City's Recreation and Parks divisions, the East Valley Astronomy Club (EVAC), and the family of Howard Israel. Mr. Israel was the first astronomy instructor at the park's Environmental Education Center (EEC) when it opened four years ago. An avid amateur astronomer, he was a past vice president of EVAC, a group which conducts Star Parties at Veterans Oasis Park. After receiving a terminal cancer diagnosed in late 2011, Israel's family and friends wanted to honor him with a legacy project at Veterans Oasis Park that would continue his longtime efforts to further the public's understanding of science and astronomy. Over several months, they raised more than \$25,000 to design and construct the project, and to support additional astronomy activities at the EEC in the future.



Amateur astronomer Howard Israel gives a lesson on operating a telescope to a young student during the 2011 Earth Day Celebration at the Environmental Education Center.

**WHY:** It is hoped that those who experience the Solar System Walk will develop a greater appreciation for science and astronomy, and be motivated to ask more questions and seek more answers. Howard Israel was dedicated to teaching others what he had learned about the cosmos, and doing it in ways that made them excited about astronomy, too. This walk will be a lasting tribute to that legacy.

**QUESTIONS?** If you have questions about the Solar System Walk, or would like to provide suggestions for improvements or additional astronomy programs at the Environmental Education Center, please visit the website at [www.chandleraz.gov/eec](http://www.chandleraz.gov/eec) or call 480-782-2890.

