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# Astronomical Society President Discusses Solar System Origins in Lawrence Science Hall Colloquium

*Posted on: May 4th, 2004 by Rick Peterson*

Catherine Pilachowski, president of the American Astronomical Society (ASA), discusses the latest research on the origins of our solar system and the Milky Way in a Lawrence University Science Hall Colloquium.

Pilachowski, the Daniel Kirkwood Professor of Astronomy at Indiana University, presents “Giant Telescopes, Heavy Metal and Ancient Superstars” Thursday, May 13 at 8 p.m. in Youngchild Hall, Room 121.

With the aid of giant telescopes and high-resolution spectroscopy, Pilachowski studies changes in the chemical composition of stars and star clusters. Those changes provide scientists with a glimpse to the evolution of the first stars that formed from primordial hydrogen and helium at the birth of the universe some 10 billion years ago. Pilachowski will discuss the chemical elements present in the Milky Way galaxy today and the clues they provide on the origins of our own solar system, which was created from the debris of both ancient and modern supernovas.

A member of the scientific staff of the National Optical Astronomy Observatory in Tucson, Ariz., for more than 20 years, Pilachowski joined the faculty of Indiana University in 2001 as the first recipient of the Kirkwood chair in astronomy. A specialist in the chemical composition of stars, she also conducts research on light pollution, astronomical instrumentation and large telescope design. She earned her Ph.D. in astronomy from the University of Hawaii.

Pilachowski’s appearance is supported by the ASA’s Harlow Shapley Visiting Lectureships in Astronomy, which provides

scholars and professional astronomers to colleges and universities for public lectures and classroom instruction.