

Looking to the sky

Business provides learning opportunity for kids, adults

By EMILY VOTAW
Staff Writer

WOOSTER — Local retired science teacher Chris Stephan hopes to pull people's noses out of their iPhones and laptops and point them to the beauty of the sky above them to understand "science."

Earlier this year, Stephan opened Classical Science by Stephan at 338 S. Market St., selling everything from high tech equipment for studying the stars to antique science equipment dating back into the 1800s.

He made the jump to opening the retail store after retiring from a teaching position and coming to the Akron area, applying for over 100 jobs without any bites. He began selling various vintage telescopes, microscopes and more on Etsy, a retail website. As his business online prospered, Stephan made the decision to open a storefront — which is one of the few of its kind in the nation.

"This is the only telescope store in Ohio," Stephan said, noting the stores that had formerly existed in the Cleveland and Columbus area have either gone out of business or have shifted their merchandise to no longer include the items Stephan does.

"It's been fun trying to get the word out about the business," said Stephan,



Mike Schenk photo/www.buydrphotos.com

Classical Science by Stephan owner Chris Stephan poses with a few of the wares in his shop. Starting Tuesday, Stephan will hold a number of free science workshops in his store. He hopes to attract amateur scientists of all ages, especially homeschoolers, with topics ranging from picking out a telescope to astrophotography.

who noted he has been reaching out to everyone from schools to homeschoolers. He is an advocate of homeschooling, something his own children went through.

As a retired teacher, Stephan is big on getting in touch with young scientists, something he considered himself to be in his youth.

"I feel that we need to mentor more young scientists," said Stephan, who mentioned most of the folks he deals with in his business are anywhere from the age of 40 to 60. "People don't want to look into galaxies and stars and craters on the moon anymore because there is a software program where they can just pull those images up."

He said over the course of his teaching career,

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Owner Chris Stephan

he saw the landscape of American education changed drastically. While learning about science, Stephan said he used to see children express more excitement and interest in looking for fossils or examining the sky.

He feels programs like No Child Left Behind and the current emphasis on standardized testing have harmed the educational system.

Stephan is very knowledgeable on astronomy, and he is holding several free workshops on various topics this summer.

The workshops kick off Tuesday, focusing on telescopes. Stephan said he will help beginners decide what type of telescope is best for their uses, how to use them and even take them for a spin if the sky is clear.

On July 28, the workshop will shift from focusing on big things in the sky to very small things only visible with the aid of a microscope. Binoculars and spotting scopes will be the topic of discussion Aug. 25 and Stephan will touch on using antique science instruments Sept. 29.

On Oct. 23, the workshop will look into astrophotography and imaging through telescopes.

"These aren't going to be sales pitches for items in the store," said Stephan. "As a retired teacher, I just love to see how people's eyes light up when they find something in science, in nature."

The workshops take place 7:30-9 p.m. on every night on the schedule.

For more information, contact the store at 330-202-9032 or visit www.OhioTelescopeandMicroscope.com.