SMCAS presents:

Dr. Dana Backman
Lead, NASA Airborne Astronomy Ambassadors, SETI Institute / NASA Ames

SOFIA: Past, Present and Future

7:00 p.m., Saturday, February 20, 2021
Via Zoom Videoconference, virtual Star Party following
Free and open to the public. To join, click here
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SOFIA, the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy, is a Boeing 747SP aircraft modified to carry a 2.7-meter (106-inch) reflecting telescope. Flying into the stratosphere at 38,000-45,000 feet puts SOFIA above 99 percent of Earth's infrared-blocking atmosphere, allowing astronomers to study the solar system and beyond in ways that are not possible with ground-based telescopes. In this presentation Dr Backman will give us an overview of SOFIA and discuss the research results it has enabled including water on the moon, and other recent and planned research.

Dr. Backman received his B.Sc. in physics from MIT, Ph.D. in astrophysics from the University of Hawai`i, then was an Infrared astronomy post-doctoral researcher at Kitt Peak National Observatory in Tucson, Arizona and at NASA's Ames Research Center. He then was Professor of Physics and Astronomy for 12 years at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, followed by being SETI Institute director of education and public outreach for SOFIA at NASA-Ames from 2003 to 2016, and now Lead - NASA Airborne Astronomy Ambassadors, SETI Institute / NASA Ames. Has taught courses on introductory astronomy at Santa Clara University and on global climate change in Stanford University's Continuing Studies Program. He is co-author with Michael Seeds of three college introductory astronomy textbooks: "Horizons", "Foundations", and "ASTRO". He has won three NASA group achievement awards for his work with SOFIA., and is credited as author on many publications related to SOFIA an IR Astronomy.