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The 2013 SGAC Name An Asteroid Campaign – Overview, Results, Lessons Learned – A Strategy for IAWN to Educate the General Public

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ABSTRACT

Most members of the general public are fascinated by the opportunity to name a celestial object. SGAC was donated the discoverer's naming privilege for two asteroids to use in outreach. In 2013 SGAC held a global asteroid naming campaign open to the general public of all ages. The aim was to engage as many people as possible to submit a name as well as to provide educational material about NEOs in the form of links for the interested participants. During the seven week campaign over 1500 entries were received from 85 countries. The submissions were grouped into two age groups, shortlisted, and sent to the IAU's CSBN who approved all six suggestions.

Observations from the campaign included that regardless of age and country of origin, preconceived notions about asteroids could be broadly grouped into 2 categories: they either bring death and destruction or are a symbol of hope and a better future for humanity. The level of knowledge about the actual facts can be considered low despite the availability of educational material.

In September 2014 the SWF hosted a two-day workshop on communication about NEOs for the benefit of IAWN. One of IAWN's aims that has been discussed is for IAWN to establish itself as a trusted and credible source of information for the general public for NEOs. One of the recommendations of this workshop was for IAWN to establish a 5-year plan with actions to reach that goal.

While the SGAC naming campaign was aimed at raising awareness about NEOs it did not aim to educate the general public about the facts and threats of asteroid

impacts, it can nevertheless be used as an example how such a campaign could look like by building upon the lessons learned.

This paper will outline the SGAC Name An Asteroid Campaign including its results and lessons learned. Further it will recommend a strategy for IAWN to utilize similar campaigns around the globe to reach its aim of establishing itself as a credible and trusted source for the general public about NEOs while simultaneously raising the awareness and knowledge about NEOs among the general public.