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Observing Active Galaxies with STACEE

STACEE (Solar Tower Atmospheric Cherenkov Effect Experiment) is an experiment that aims to study a variety of astrophysical sources, including active galaxies, gamma-ray bursts, neutron stars, supernova remnants, and pulsars in high energy gamma-rays. STACEE uses an array of solar mirrors (heliostats) at the National Solar Thermal Test Facilities (NSTTF) in Albuquerque, New Mexico to detect the nanosecond flashes of Cherenkov light that results from gamma-ray interactions with the Earth's atmosphere. On-site scientists control these heliostats by pointing them towards the relevant sources of observation based on their elevations in the sky at any given point during the night. In this talk I will describe my contributions to the STACEE team that include the *auto_chart* software. *Auto_chart* is a program designed to increase accuracy and reliability of the nightly source schedule by automatically generating a webpage that maps out the schedule of source observations in monthly intervals. The program, coded in C++ calculates the optimum window of opportunity to observe these gamma-ray phenomena. I will also describe my experiences working on site at the NSTTF on a STACEE observing shift.