

4-13-2001

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Sharon Keeler

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Recommended Citation

Keeler, Sharon, "UNH Holds Public Celebration of Sun Earth Day April 27" (2001). *UNH Today*. 2463.
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UNH Holds Public Celebration of Sun-Earth Day April 27

By [Sharon Keeler](#)
UNH News Bureau

April 13, 2001

DURHAM, N.H. -- We all know that the Sun is overwhelmingly important to life on Earth, but few of us have a deeper understanding of how the Sun impacts our planet beyond the light we see and heat we feel.

The University of New Hampshire hopes to change that when its Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS) hosts an open house Friday, April 27, to celebrate Sun-Earth Day. The event is part of a national celebration of the Sun, the space around the Earth (geospace), and how all of it affects life on our planet.

Eberhard Moebius, professor of space physics, says the Sun is at the peak of its 11-year cycle, which is called the solar maximum, "making it the perfect time to recognize the Sun-Earth connection, and also to educate people about the research in this field that takes place at the university."

During a solar maximum, turbulent storms take place on the Sun's surface, spawning tremendous eruptions -- called solar flares and coronal mass ejections -- into the atmosphere. These eruptions hurl billions of tons of electrified gas and radiation into space. If they're directed toward Earth, such storms can disrupt satellite communications and power grids and produce dramatic aurora displays, better known as the Northern Lights. Just this month, the largest solar flare ever recorded was detected by NASA satellites, and dazzling aurora -- usually confined to high altitude locations -- seen as far south as Mexico.

UNH scientists have several instruments on satellites, like SOHO, ACE and Cluster II, that are studying such things as the internal structure of the Sun, the origin of the solar wind and cosmic rays, and how the Sun

interacts with the Earth's magnetic field. Moebius says the instruments are collecting enough data to keep the scientists "busy for a lifetime."

The public will get a chance to see some of that data at UNH's Sun-Earth Day celebration, which takes place from 1 to 3 p.m. in the fourth floor atrium of UNH's Morse Hall.

It will begin with a dedication of the institute's new radio telescope and of the "environment friendly" conversion of UNH's observatory to solar power. The radio telescope, which resides on the roof of Morse Hall, records radio waves from the solar corona, which are made visible on a computer monitor. Both facilities are important resources for UNH education.

EOS will have several stations set up where visitors will have the opportunity to see and hear activity from the Sun, as transmitted from satellites. Music composed of ACE satellite data, coined "solar sounds," will be performed by Martin Quinn of Design Rhythms in Lee.

In addition, the UNH Observatory will be open, where viewers can look through a filtered telescope to see sunspots, dark regions produced by concentrated magnetic fields in the active regions of solar storms.

For more information, contact Eberhard Moebius at 603-862-3097 or Clara Kustra at 603-862-3484.

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