

Media Relations

The Sky's *Not* The Limit At N.E. Astronomy Fest At UNH Oct. 14 - 15

October 3, 2011

The sky's not the limit - rather, just a starting point -- Oct. 14 and 15, 2011, when the University of New Hampshire hosts the first-ever New England Fall Astronomy Festival (NEFAF). The free, family-friendly event boasts a multitude of telescopes for sky-watching, talks by amateur astronomers and professional scientists, and several events with NASA astronaut (and UNH alumnus) Lee Morin.

"This festival is about passing along the passion for astronomy to our neighbors in New Hampshire and beyond," says UNH Observatory manager Ian Cohen, who is also a doctoral student in the UNH physics department. The NEFAF is hosted by the physics department and its observatory, in conjunction with the New Hampshire Astronomical Society (NHAS) and amateur astronomers from Maine to New York. Tom Cocchiaro of NHAS and John Gianforte, both Seacoast residents, are organizing and coordinating the activities with local astronomers and organizations that wanted to share the wonders of the universe with students of all ages and their families.

The festival, at the UNH Observatory on Spinney Lane in Durham, begins Friday evening at 6 p.m. A lineup of short talks by Mark McConnell and Jim Ryan, both of the Space Science Center in UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space, along with Gianforte and NHAS members, launches the evening's activities, which also includes night sky observing using UNH's telescope as well as many telescopes brought to the festival by NHAS members and other astronomers.

Saturday's events begin at 10 a.m. and include hands-on activities for kids, astronomy talks for all ages, safe solar observing, rocket launches and a balloon payload demonstration as well as a telescope clinic and telescope demonstrations. Concessions will be available for purchase on both Friday and Saturday.

Lee Morin, M.D., Ph.D., will deliver a keynote address Saturday at 1:30 p.m., followed by an autograph-signing session at 2:30. He will join other panelists in a discussion at 4:30.






Morin, a naval flight surgeon who served in Operation Desert Storm, was selected as a NASA astronaut candidate in 1996 and took part in the 13th space mission of the shuttle Atlantis in 2002 as it traveled to the International Space Station. During the mission, Morin and fellow crewmate Jerry Ross successfully attached a \$790 million girder to support the station's solar panels.

After the Atlantis mission, Morin served in the State Department as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Science, Space, and Health in the Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science. He is currently assigned to the Exploration branch of the Johnson Space Center where he is working on NASA's newest spacecraft, the Crew Exploration Vehicle. A native of Manchester, Morin received a B.S. from UNH in 1974 and an honorary degree in 2010.

For more information, including directions, parking, accessibility, and weather updates, go to physics.unh.edu/observatory/NEFAF.

The New England Fall Astronomy Festival received funding and support from the UNH President's Fund for Excellence, the UNH Office of the Provost, New Hampshire High Tech Council, the UNH physics department, New Hampshire Space Grant, the UNH Alumni Association, and the UNH Parents Association.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

 
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Photographs available to download:

Caption: Lee Morin, NASA astronaut and guest at the New England Fall Astronomy Festival at UNH

<http://unh.edu/news/campusjournal/2010/Mar/31gsa01-morin.jpg>

Credit: Courtesy of NASA

Caption: The UNH Observatory hosts the first-ever New England Fall Astronomy Festival Oct. 14 - 15, 2011.

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/nightdome.jpg>

Credit: John Gianforte

Caption: Astronomers of all ages will enjoy a multitude of telescopes for sky-watching, talks by amateur astronomers and professional scientists, and several events with NASA astronaut (and UNH alumnus) Lee Morin at the first-ever New England Fall Astronomy Festival Oct. 14 - 15, 2011.

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/observatory.JPG>

Credit: Courtesy of UNH Observatory.

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