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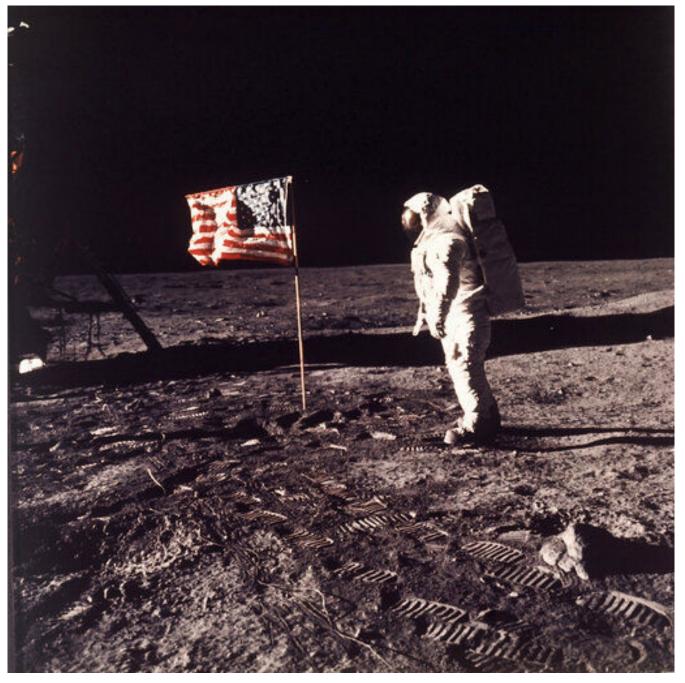
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Hardin Planetarium to host moon landing celebration

By DRAKE KIZER dkizer@bgdailynews.com Jul 5, 2019



Astronaut Buzz Aldrin poses for a photograph beside the U.S. flag deployed on the moon July 20, 1969, during t 11 mission.

NEIL A. ARMSTRONG, Nasa/via AP

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing July 20, 1969. In honor of the historic event, Western Kentucky University's Hardin Planetarium will host a Moon Landing Celebration on July 20.

Richard Gelderman, director of Hardin Planetarium, 1501 State St., lived through the first moon landing, which makes him "nostalgic." He called the event "one of the most important 50th anniversaries" and joked that it was not a "crazy baby boomer thing." Instead, it's reliving an event that won't be forgotten.

"I'm doing it because this really does deserve to be celebrated," Gelderman said. "I'll bet (future generations) forget about everything. The Great Depression, I'll bet, won't be so great 150, 200 years from now. I'm not even sure the two world wars will be all that important compared to the first moment we set foot on another world outside the Earth."

Attendees are guaranteed to have plenty to do and see at the "rain or shine" event – Kelly Thompson Hall features a large "overhang," which means the event won't need inclement weather plans, Gelderman said. The celebration will also feature free admission and free parking for all planetarium guests.

"There's something to keep everyone happy," Gelderman said about the celebration, which will feature food trucks, solar observation and more in the mostly open areas surrounding WKU's complex of science buildings.

A full day of activities kicks off at 1 p.m. with a screening of "Spider," which is the fifth episode of the 12-episode HBO series, "From the Earth to the Moon."

Screenings and discussions will continue until 7 p.m. Films, "The Dish" and "Apollo 11," will play at 2 and 4:45 p.m., respectively, and two more episodes of "From the Earth to the Moon" will be shown at 3:45 and 6:15 p.m.

Eventgoers can attend the planetarium show, "Max Goes to the Moon," at 1:30 and 4:15 p.m. Gelderman said the show is not new, but it's "very special" because it's not done on a regular basis at the planetarium.

The Hands-On Activity Festival begins at 2:30 and lasts until 5 p.m. Activities will include games, challenges, exhibits and one-on-one interactions about space, lunar exploration, research and missions at "two dozen tables."

Gelderman said the middle of the day is "important" because it includes the moment when Neil Armstrong said, "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." The moment will lend itself to an eventwide moment of glee. "My hope is instead of just knowing that it happened that day, I imagine it being really fun for a whole lot of people," Gelderman said. "Hundreds, maybe even more than a thousand people, all together and doing a big cheer and just kind of having that group social memory of, 'Yeah, 50 years, The Eagle has landed.' "

Patrons will get "all sorts of stuff" to take with them, but the longest lasting memory might be getting to walk on a lawn behind the science complex.

"If that's where the lunar module landed, that's where they walked, it fits perfectly," Gelderman said while pointing to a map of the area he drew by hand. "That scale in that lawn matches the astronauts' paths, and so as you come around you'll be able to walk in the footsteps of the astronauts."

The Fountain Square Players will present an excerpt from their "Footsteps to the Moon" show at 2:45 and 3:30 p.m. to preview the full show later on. The Rocket Launching Challenge begins immediately after the activity festival at 5 p.m. and lasts until the Moon Landing Trivia Contest gets underway at 5:45 p.m.

Locals will be able to test their knowledge of the Apollo 11 spaceflight until 7 p.m., which is when the Fountain Square Players will present "Footsteps to the Moon" in its entirety. To conclude the evening, a play by Andrea Brunello, "Fly Me to the Moon," will be presented by Jet Propulsion Theatre at 8:15 p.m.

Gelderman said anyone who wants to hang around after the play is welcome to stay at the planetarium for one last "toast and hurrah" to 50 years at 9:56 p.m. – when in 1969, Neil Armstrong uttered the iconic phrase, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

"We truly believe that there's something for everybody," Gelderman said. "We figure that the biggest complaint will be, 'Oh man, I wish I could've gotten to do that, I was doing this instead.' That's what we expect the day to be like."

⁻ Daily News reporter Drake Kizer may be reached at dkizer@bgdailynews.com or by calling 270-783-3257.

Drake Kizer

Judy Wildman Hughes Fellow. Will spend 10 weeks at the Bowling Green Daily News during summer 2019, primarily covering news and other general assignment stories.

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