

Planetary Wonderings
May Focus: Astronomy Week/Day
by Mary-Frances R. Bartels, NASA JPL Solar System Ambassador

Looks like spring has finally sprung. Some of my garden is planted; the radishes are even up. We are spending more time outside, and the familiar winter constellations dip lower towards the western horizon, soon to disappear, each evening. With warmer weather comes Astronomy Day. Astronomy Day is a grass roots movement designed to share the joy of astronomy with the general public. Astronomy clubs, science museums, observatories, universities, planetariums, laboratories, libraries, and nature centers host special events and activities to acquaint their population with local astronomical resources and facilities. This year Astronomy Day is May 6.

Astronomy Day activities within two hours of the Columbus area include:

1. The Boonshoft Museum of Discovery and Miami Valley Astronomical Society in Dayton will host solar observing, weather permitting from noon to 4:00 PM on May 6. Other activities are planned regardless of the weather. Contact Cheri Adams at 2600 DeWeese Pkwy, Dayton, 45414.
2. The Nationwide Insurance Astronomy Club in Dublin will host Astronomy Day events for Nationwide employees on May 5 from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM. There will be a telescope set-up with a solar filter as well as demonstrations on how to use a planisphere and how to read a sky map. Contact Keith Hughes at 5100 Rings Road, Dublin, 43017.
3. COSI in Columbus will host a number of hands-on activities during normal business hours from May 1 through 7 (Astronomy Week). Contact Mat Vandeneinden at 333 West Broad Street Columbus, 43215.
4. Starting at dusk on May 6 the Warren Rupp Observatory on O'Possum Run Rd. in Mansfield will offer observing using their 31" telescope as well as a variety of other telescopes for both the beginner and seasoned amateur astronomer, weather permitting. In case of inclement weather, they will still offer tours and provide quality educational programs.
5. Astronomy For Youth, Inc. is offering activities at the Malabar Farm Horseman Area on May 6 from dusk until 11:00 PM in Mansfield. Programs are designed for all ages. Contact Greg Gerhart at 470 Rudy Rd., Mansfield, 44903.

One of the neat things about homeschooling is that it allows families to set their own school calendars. That means that vacations do not have to coincide with public school breaks. Anyone planning a trip to southern California this month, or "someMay" in the future might be interested in NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory's annual open house. This year's event is from the 20th to 21st in Pasadena. For more information see <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/ps/oh.cfm>.

This month's recommended resource is Space.Com. The site, which covers everything from observational astronomy to spaceflight to space technology, has a daily e-newsletter to which you may subscribe.

Remember that questions, suggestions, and comments on this column are appreciated. Please let me know your thoughts — stargazer@keeplookingup.net.

Keep looking up!!