

2019 Las Cruces Space Festival Guide



LAS CRUCES
**SPACE
FESTIVAL**
Making Space For Everyone

THE LAS CRUCES
Bulletin

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

- “Our Place in Space” artwork by local artists is displayed alongside large-scale Hubble images throughout the city in the “Our Place in Space - Las Cruces” exhibition, which will open on Monday, April 8. See Page 4 for more info.
- Rio Grande Theatre downtown has a strong line-up of events. On top of the five classic space movies spread across the week, there will be presentations by keynote speakers and theatrical performances.
- On Friday, April 12, downtown Las Cruces will be celebrating Yuri’s Night. The “Space Walk” will be lots of fun for the family; come dressed as your favorite space character, real or imaginary, the more adventurous costumes on display the better on the Plaza de Las Cruces. See Page 5 for more info.
- Tim Fitzpatrick, artist in residence for the Sloan Digital Sky Survey in New Mexico, is creating site-specific art on the landscape as part of his installation “Hand Made Light.” You will be able to hear about his exhibitions during his presentation on Monday, April 8, at the Southwest Environmental Center.
- Want to escape the noise and the crowds? Two stargazing parties are being held on Friday, April 12; one at White Sands National Monument and one at Dripping Springs in the Organ Mountains where the NMSU Astronomy Department and the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces will guide visitors to get the best views of star constellations and distant galaxies.
- Think you know space? Challenge yourself at the Big Space Quiz on April 10 at the Game Sports Bar and Grill, 2605 S. Espina St., at 6 p.m. 2018’s champions achieved an astounding 100 percent accuracy.
- Making Contact at the Las Cruces Convention Center will run from 11 a.m.-7 p.m. on Thursday, April 11. Representatives from NASA, White Sands Missile Range, Virgin Galactic, Spaceport America and many more space-related organizations will be on hand to showcase the growing space industry in New Mexico. This is an opportunity for anyone interested in learning more about space-related career fields and what paths to take to achieve success.
- The Las Cruces Space Festival is all about “making space for everyone.” On Saturday, April 13 there will be tons of interactive exhibitions and booths on the Plaza de Las Cruces from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Younger audiences will also be entertained by “WALL-E” at the Rio Grande Theatre at noon, followed by Science Girl’s Laboratory.

ABOUT THE COVER

This NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope image shows the Eagle Nebula’s Pillars of Creation, as seen in visible light, capturing the multi-colored glow of gas clouds, wispy tendrils of dark cosmic dust and the rust-colored elephants’ trunks of the nebula’s famous pillars. This image will be part of the Las Cruces Space Festival’s “Our Place in Space” exhibit. See Page 4 for more info.

Credit: NASA, ESA/Hubble and the Hubble Heritage Team (spacetelescope.org)

Las Cruces Space Festival relaunches bigger and better

By **ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH**
Las Cruces Bulletin

Once upon a time, in a child’s dreams, space was the place to be. Floating through the quiet dust of the outer atmosphere or planting that flag on some far away planet’s moon was the goal of every young engineer and physicist. Everyone wanted to be an astronaut.

Today, that dream has fallen into the background; young people still grow up looking to be engine mechanics and computer technicians, but space doesn’t enter their minds as much. The outer limits of existence have lost their romance. The Las Cruces Space Festival is here to bring the adventure back to the forefront of our minds.

Southern New Mexico is rife with the history of space exploration from the early rocket research at White Sands Missile Range, which started in the mid-1940s, and Clyde Tombaugh’s work at WSMR and New Mexico State University, to the current activities at WSMR, NASA White Sands Test Facility and Spaceport America, and the planned space flights of Virgin Galactic. The Las Cruces Space Festival is focused on uniting the dreams of the past with the exploration of the future.

From Sunday, April 7 to Saturday, April 13, the festival begins with an open house at Spaceport America, ropes children in with activities in and out of school, features an art show across the whole city and a day to explore career opportunities at the Las Cruces Convention Center. And that’s just a beginning.



At the previous Spaceport America Open House STEM activities led by Explora, WiSTEM (Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and Spaceport America’s Bill Gutman kept the future generation mesmerized. STEM activities will return for the 2019 Las Cruces Space Festival.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPACEPORT AMERICA

The theme of the festival, established in 2018, is “Making Space for Everyone.”

The Making Contact event, April 11 at the Las Cruces Convention Center, is geared towards inspiring students of all ages to pursue careers in space-related fields, and offers the opportunity for budding astronauts, curious minds and science buffs to interact with and ask questions from experts in space travel, aerospace and space exploration.

Representatives from White Sands Test Facility, Spaceport America, Virgin Galactic, New Mexico Museum of Space History, the NMSU Engineering and Science and Art faculties and others will be there.

Throughout the week, presentations from leaders in the space industry will be offered at venues around Las Cruces. All festival presentations and activities are free and open to the public.

The week is one long opportunity for youth to learn about and get excited about space and for older generations to celebrate the

impact that space has had in their daily lives.

“We were all pleased with the response to the first Space Festival in April, and the coverage that the event received nationwide,” said Festival Director Jonathan Firth. “The organizing group planned to have the 2019 event take in a wider range of activity, including bringing in art and cultural elements.”

Event partners include NMSU, City of Las Cruces, Visit Las Cruces, Las Cruces Public Schools, Spaceport America, Virgin Galactic, White Sands Test Facility, Jacobs Technology, New Mexico Space Grant, KTAL Community Radio, Las Cruces Sun-News, Las Cruces Bulletin, Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces, Las Cruces Challenger Learning Center, Insights El Paso Science Center, jexplora!, Cruces Creatives, the Rio Grande Theatre and more.

For information, visit lcspacefestival.com.

Elva K. Österreich may be reached at elva@lascrucesbulletin.com.

A WEEK-LONG **SPACE EXTRAVAGANZA**

SUNDAY APRIL 7TH Open House at Spaceport America*

10 am/12:30 pm

Open House morning session/
afternoon session

10 am - 3 pm

Book Signing by Joseph Page

10:30/11:30/12:45/1:45

Spaceport America's Susan
Raitt to welcome visitors

11 am/1 pm

Safety Team Demonstration

11 am/1:30 pm

Virgin Galactic Astronaut
Pilot CJ Sturckow

11:15 am/1:15 pm

Bill Gutman Demo

11:30 am

Dance Performance

Noon

Mark McKinnon
(VLA) Presentation

Noon/2 pm

Systems Go Rocket Launch

1:30 pm

Dance Performance

MONDAY APRIL 8TH

10 am

'Our Place in Space - Las
Cruces' Ribbon Cutting
at Mesilla Valley Mall

9 am - 4 pm

'Hand Made Light' Installation Begins
on Roof of Old
Doña Ana Courthouse

6 pm - 8 pm

Challenger Learning Center Mission

6 pm

Tim Fitzpatrick Presentation on
'Hand Made Light' at SWEC*

6:45 pm

ESA Hubble Space Telescope Project
Scientist, Antonella Nota Presentation
on 'Our Place In Space' at SWEC

7:15 pm

'Our Place In Space - Las Cruces'
Curators, Brenda Trinidad
and Lori McCravey to talk
about the project at SWEC

TUESDAY APRIL 9TH

9 am - 5 pm

'Our Place in Space - Las Cruces'

10 am - 2 pm

Apollo Anniversary Kilbourne Hole
Tour (paid tour provided
by Southwest Expeditions)

11 am

NMSU's* Emily Johnson at Kilbourne
Hole to talk about the site's
geological significance.

11:30 pm

Tim Fitzpatrick 'Hand Made Light' Art
Installation at Kilbourne Hole

5 pm

NMSU's Henry Cathey Presentation 'A
Trip to the Stratosphere' at SWEC

5:45 pm

Resilient Solutions 21 Founder,
Charles Rath Presentation at SWEC

6 pm - 8 pm

Challenger Learning Center Mission

7 pm

'Apollo 13' at Rio Grande Theatre
(doors open at 6 pm)

WEDNESDAY APRIL 10TH

9 am - 5 pm

'Our Place in Space - Las Cruces'

2 pm/5:30 pm

Las Cruces Space Festival Special
'Get Artrageous' at Doña Ana Arts
Council (paid workshop provided
by Doña Ana Arts Council)

7 pm

'2001: A Space Odyssey' at Rio Grande
Theatre (doors open at 6 pm)

6 pm - 8 pm

Challenger Learning Center Mission

6 pm - 9 pm

The Big Space Quiz at The Game
Sports Bar and Grill, S. Espina Street

THURSDAY APRIL 11TH

9 am - 10 am

Pre-K Planeteers at the Museum
of Nature and Science

9 am - 5 pm

'Our Place in Space - Las Cruces'

11 am - 7 pm

'Making Contact' at the Las
Cruces Convention Center -
including presentations by:

5 pm

NM Workforce Solutions' Bill McCamley

5:30 pm

Magdalena Ridge Observatory's
Ifan Payne

6 pm

NASA Mars Rover Scientist Jim Rice

6:30 pm

New Space NM Founder and
Director, Casey DeRaad

6:15 pm

Presentation by NMSU's Chris Churchill
at Rio Grande Theatre

7 pm

'Contact' at Rio Grande Theatre
(doors open at 6 pm)

6 pm - 8 pm

Challenger Learning Center Mission

7 pm

New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum
- Satellites, Water and New
Mexico's Agricultural Future

7 pm

Live reading of the new TV pilot script "Way
Beyond" at Las Cruces Convention Center

FRIDAY APRIL 12TH

9 am - 5 pm

'Our Place in Space - Las Cruces'

4 pm

Tim Fitzpatrick Art Installation 'Hand
Made Light' at Dripping Springs

5:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Space Walk on Main Street

6 pm - 8 pm

Challenger Learning Center Mission

6 pm

Doors Open at Rio Grande
for 'Yuri's Night'

7 pm

Excerpt from 'Yuri's Night'
at Rio Grande Theatre

7:45 pm

Alires Almon Presentation-
'Space: Our Dream and Our
Reality' at Rio Grande Theatre

8:30 pm

Excerpt from 'Silent
Sky' at Rio Grande Theatre

7 pm - 9 pm

Triple Jack live in the
Plaza de Las Cruces

7 pm

Stargazing at La Cueva Picnic Area,
Dripping Springs

7:30 pm

Talks by Magdalena Ridge
Observatory's Colleen Gino
and NMSU's Chris Churchill
at Dripping Springs

7:30 pm

Stargazing at White Sands National
Monument Amphitheatre

SATURDAY APRIL 13TH

9 am - 5 pm

'Our Place in Space - Las Cruces'
'Making Space For Everyone'
on the Plaza de Las Cruces - Hands
on fun for all ages!

10 am - 2 pm

Challenger Learning Center Mission

11 am - 1:30 pm

'WALL-E' at Rio Grande Theatre
(doors open at 11 am)

12 pm

Tim Fitzpatrick Presentation 'Hand Made
Light' on the Plaza de Las Cruces stage

12 pm

Tim Fitzpatrick Presentation 'Hand Made
Light' on the Plaza de Las Cruces stage

2:30 pm

'Science Girl's Lab- Science
Girl in Dr. Von Heister's
Hijinks' at the Rio Grande Theatre

3 pm - 5 pm

Challenger Learning Center Mission

7 pm

'The Martian' at Rio Grande Theatre
(doors open at 6 pm)

KEY:

- Presentations/Talks/Demos
- Art/Music/Dance
- Movies
- Challenger Learning Center Missions
- Stargazing
- Misc. Educational Fun!

*SWEC: Southwest Environmental Center

*All April 7 activities take place at Spaceport America

*NMSU: New Mexico State University

'Our Place in Space' Hubble telescope exhibit links art with science

By MIKE COOK
Las Cruces Bulletin

When is the last time you saw the Milky Way?

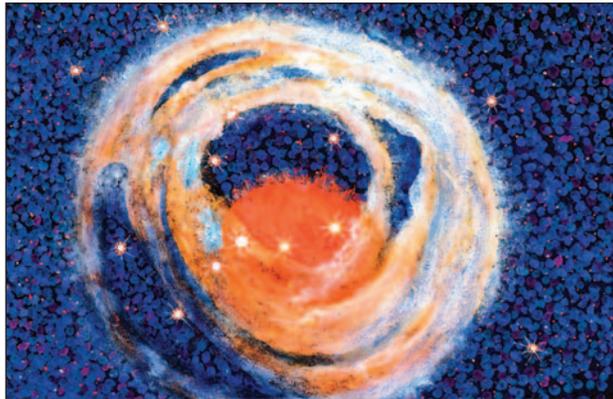
You'll get a first-in-America chance to see the galaxy that Earth and our entire solar system are part of during the Las Cruces Space Festival's "Our Place in Space" art exhibition.

European Space Agency Hubble Space Telescope Project Scientist Antonella Nota will cut the ribbon at 10 a.m. Monday, April 8 at Mesilla Valley Mall, 700 S. Telshor Blvd., to officially begin the exhibit. The mall and seven other

will each host between two and 19 images from the Hubble telescope and local artists' work. A total of 44 Hubble images will be showcased.

The other locations hosting art exhibits are Thomas Branigan Memorial Library, 200 E. Alameda Ave.; Las Cruces City Hall, 700 N. Main St.; Branigan Cultural Center, 501 N. Main St.; Rio Grande Theatre, 211 N. Main St.; Visit Las Cruces, 336 S. Main St.; Cutter Gallery, 2640 El Paseo Road; and the New Mexico State University Art Gallery, 1390 E. University Ave.

The mall will host the largest collection of Hub-



COURTESY PHOTO

"Monocerotis," by Las Cruces artist Jo-An Smith, an artist partner in the "Our Place in Space" art exhibition. The Cutter Gallery, 2640 El Paseo Road, will feature her space-themed original art during an art opening on Saturday, April 13. Additional talks about space and art will be held at Cutter Gallery on Saturday, April 20, 27 and May 4.

ble art during the show, with one piece on loan from the Space Telescope

Science Institute measuring 30 feet by eight feet, said Las Cruces Space

Festival Coordinator Alice Carruth.

The exhibition is coordinated in conjunction with Nota and Hussein Jirdeh, head of communications and public outreach at the Space Telescope Institute in Baltimore. It will continue during the festival and through the end of April, and even longer at some locations during each host gallery's regular business hours.

"We are delighted to have the opportunity to host an 'Our Place in Space' exhibition in Las Cruces," said Space Festival Director Jonathan Firth. "Similar exhibi-

tions have been held successfully in Italy, Germany and Austria, attracting large numbers of visitors, and this is a first for the U.S."

The exhibit is "focused on galaxies, nebulas and star clusters, which are among the most iconic images that people connect with the Hubble," said Brenda Trinidad, co-coordinator of the exhibition and self-proclaimed "cheerleader" for the Hubble experience.

The images "show the variance in what Hubble has been able to do as we have learned about

SEE ART, PAGE 5



**LAS CRUCES
SPACE
FESTIVAL**
Making Space For Everyone

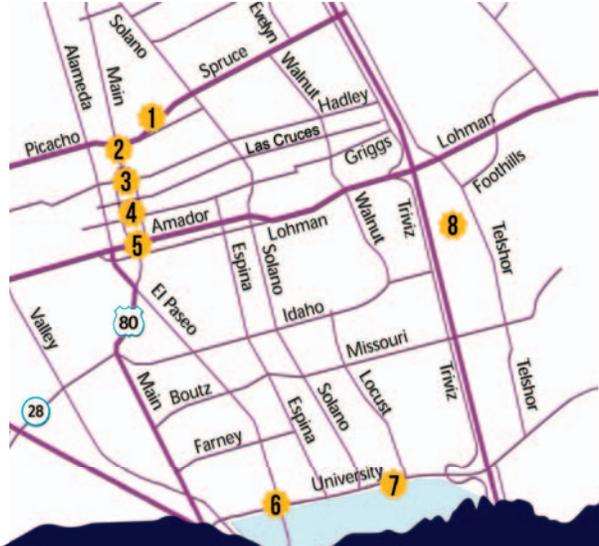



PHOTO CREDIT:
NASA, ESA, M. LIVIO AND THE HUBBLE 20TH ANNIVERSARY TEAM (STSC)

Our Place in Space - Las Cruces is an exhibition on display at eight locations throughout Las Cruces designed to get visitors thinking about where humanity fits in the grand scheme of our universe. The exhibit features large images taken from the Hubble Telescope alongside artwork inspired by the universe. The exhibit is organized in conjunction with Dr. Antonella Nota, Associate Director of the European Space Agency and Hubble Telescope Project Scientist, and Dr. Hussein Jirdeh, Head of Communications and Public Outreach at the Space Telescope Institute.

1. BRANIGAN LIBRARY | 200 PICACHO AVE.
2. CITY HALL | 700 N. MAIN ST.
3. BRANIGAN CULTURAL CENTER | 501 N. MAIN ST.
4. RIO GRANDE THEATRE | 211 N. MAIN ST.

5. VISIT LAS CRUCES | 336 S. MAIN ST.
6. CUTTER GALLERY | 2640 EL PASEO RD.
7. NMSU GALLERY | 1390 E. UNIVERSITY AVE.
8. MESILLA VALLEY MALL | 700 S. TELSJOR BLVD.



OPENING MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2019
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT LCSpaceFestival.com



NASA, ESA AND THE HUBBLE SM4 ERO TEAM

This Hubble telescope image will be on display at the Rio Grande Theatre, as part of the "Our Place in Space" exhibition. What resembles dainty butterfly wings are actually roiling cauldrons of gas heated to nearly 20,000 degrees Celsius.

Celebrate Yuri's Night at the 2019 Las Cruces Space Festival

By ALEXIA SEVERSON

Las Cruces Bulletin

Fifty-eight years ago, on April 12, 1961, Yuri Gagarin, a Soviet pilot and cosmonaut, became the first human to orbit Earth, a trip that was completed in 108 minutes.

In recognition of Gagarin's historical achievement and humanity's journey in space exploration, Yuri's Night has become an annual celebration, with parties and events held around the world. Yuri's Night also marks the launch of the first space shuttle on April 12, 1981.

This year's Las Cruces Space Festival will celebrate Yuri's Night with a lineup of several events and activities on Friday, April 12.

"The reason we want to celebrate (Yuri's Night) here in Las Cruces is that we have such a rich history of space flight in this region, with White Sands Missile Range and White Sands Test Facility, and the future of commercial space flight at Spaceport America," Las Cruces Space Festival Coordinator Alice Carruth said.

Yuri's Night also raises awareness about who Gagarin was and what he accomplished, Carruth said.

"I don't think people who don't have a relationship with space understand who Yuri is and his initial space flight and



Las Cruces residents participated in the Space Walk down Main Street during the 2018 Las Cruces Space Festival.

BULLETIN PHOTO BY STEVE MACINTYRE

what that meant," Carruth said. "He was the first person to get up in space and we followed him shortly thereafter in America. I think that's really important to anyone interested in the future of space flight, as well as those interested in the past."

One of the main events of the evening will be the Space Walk,

organized by the Downtown Las Cruces Partnership, on N. Main Street.

Participants of all ages will have the opportunity to dress in their favorite space-related costumes with the best dressed awarded a prize.

"The Space Walk is a fun healthy activity for the whole family," said DLCP Execu-

tive Director Jennifer Garcia Kozlowski. "It gives the adults a reason to play and gives the kids a dream to become whatever they want to – Yoda or an astronaut."

Registration for the Space Walk will be at 5:30 p.m. in front of the Color Me Cruces mural next to Insta-Copy Imaging, 318 N. Main St. The

walk starts at 6 p.m. from the point of registration to the Plaza de Las Cruces and across the stage for voting.

Following the walk, live music will be provided by Triple Jack at 7 p.m. on the Plaza de Las Cruces. There will also be several food trucks available and space cocktails provided by Little Toad Creek Brewery and Distillery.

Also taking place at 7 p.m. are several performances and presentations at the Rio Grande Theatre, 211 N. Main St., beginning with an excerpt from the play "Yuri," presented by New Mexico State University assistant professor Larissa Lury.

The play is a part fact, mostly imagined, tale of Gagarin's trip into space. The audience will get a front-row seat to his journey as it "collides with the life of his daughter long after his death, with his own memories and experiences and with the life of a contemporary teenager working out an algorithm to help him to interact with others," according to the Las Cruces Space Festival website.

For more information about events taking place on Yuri's Night, refer to the Space Festival schedule or visit lcspacefestival.com.

Alexia Severson may be contacted at alexia@lascrucesbulletin.com.

ART

CONTINUED FROM 4

the science of imaging," Trinidad said. The photographs provide "scientific data about what we're seeing out there to understand the makeup of the cosmos (and are) beautiful, aesthetically rich images at the same time. It's the perfect marriage of science and art."

The total impact of the Space Festival, including the art show, could make the Las Cruces event a game changer, Trinidad said. "This is a brand-new thing. There is so much that we can learn," she said, including ways to help other communities host similar events – not just to "come take a picture and look at some picture, but to create rich dialogue opportunities

around what really is our place in space. Bringing in something as powerful as the Hubble exhibit really is an easy way to start a dialogue."

The exhibit can also help to define "Las Cruces' imagination and role and purpose in creating the way we go into space," she said.

Trinidad said she is anxious to learn people's reactions to the exhi-

bition. There will be comment books at each participating gallery so visitors can write down their inspirations and questions, she said.

Largely because of light pollution, scholars are concerned that "there's a whole generation of people who have not seen the Milky Way," Trinidad said. That could impact our "ability to hold onto origin stories

and add to this sense of disconnect from the universe that an exhibit like Hubble can build a bridge back from."

The images on display can "create an awareness, reawaken an interest about the beauty and the wonderfulness of the night sky and where we come from," she said. "This is our origin story; this is where we come from; we are the star-

dust." The art, she said, can "inspire action and stories about how we define ourselves as we move into an interplanetary species. We're bringing space down to people."

For more information about the exhibit, visit lcspacefestival.com/our-place-in-space-las-cruces.

Mike Cook may be contacted at mike@lascrucesbulletin.com.

To Mars and back: Astrogeologist James Rice to discuss past and future of space exploration

By AVRA ELLIOTT
For Las Cruces Bulletin

From the time he was six years old, James Rice was fascinated by space exploration. While he describes himself as a highly average student, as a boy growing up in 1960s Tuscaloosa, Alabama, he devoured the biographies of scientists and explorers, and followed the news of the Apollo Space Program intently.

Supportive of his interest, Rice's parents would take him to the NASA center in Alabama and allow him to stay home from school to listen to the news coverage of the Apollo Program. As soon as the news was over, he was sent back to school where he couldn't understand why none of the other children were as excited as he was. For Rice, it has never been a question about why we should care about space, but who wouldn't?

"If it doesn't give you a thrill exploring a planet for the first time, I don't know what will," Rice said, and he speaks from experience.

The boy who watched men walk on the moon would, 35 years later, be selected by NASA to serve on the Mars rover team. After a long and circuitous route, Rice said he finally had his opportunity to see the first glimpses of another planet's surface as he controlled both the Spirit and Opportunity rovers.

Rice had been involved



COURTESY PHOTO

Astrogeologist James Rice will present "From the Sea of Tranquility to the Mountains of Mars" at the Las Cruces Convention Center on April 11.

in Mars landing site selection for every NASA Mars Mission since the Mars Pathfinder in 1995. As a co-investigator and geology team leader on the NASA Rover Project, he'd purposely chosen landing sites on opposite sides of Mars. While controlling both rovers left him with only four hours of sleep at night, and two hours

of flex time for rest during the day, Rice said he could sleep in the grave. This was the chance of a lifetime.

"It wouldn't have mattered if I'd had time to go home," he said. "I wouldn't have been able to sleep. I had too much adrenaline from the excitement of wondering what we'd discover next."

The excitement lasted longer than anyone had expected – or budgeted. What was proposed as an expedition of a few months became an adventure that spanned over 15 years. The limited funds meant the teams were forced to work from their home institutions in a dedicated group effort that changed and paved the way for future technologies and communication while, Rice said, "rewriting the textbooks on Mars."

NASA's Opportunity Rover Mission came to an end in February of this year. Rice said though the rover may have been built from bits of aluminum and silicon, losing Opportunity was like losing a good friend. The team knew the night before it was announced to the public, and on top of their loss was the knowledge that the team would disband. They'd worked hard to keep the rovers alive, and Rice said it was a loss everyone would continue to feel.

While Rice said he will miss waking up and seeing new photos of Mars every morning, he believes humankind and Mars continue to have a future together.

"It sounds like science fiction, but I've no doubt we'll live on Mars someday," he said. "When it happens and who does it is yet to be determined."

Rice continues to work as an astrogeologist at the Planetary Science Institute in Arizona

and will be visiting Las Cruces for the Space Festival in April. Rice will offer a talk titled "From the Sea of Tranquility to the Mountains of Mars." The sea of tranquility in the title refers to the Apollo landing site on the moon, and Rice said he plans to speak of how close the 1960s Space Race was, the work of the Mars rovers, as well as the future of space exploration, and, as he puts it, "the thrill of it all."

The presentation is part of the Las Cruces Space Festival's Making Contact event, an all-day showcase of space-related activities and opportunities at the Las Cruces Convention Center, 680 E. University Ave., on Thursday, April 11. Rice is scheduled to speak at 6 p.m., with other activities taking place throughout the day from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The event is open to the public, and the Las Cruces Space Festival website describes it as a day of resume building opportunities, recruitment for internships, a Q&A with industry leaders, college course guidance, talks by NMSU graduates working in the space industry and more. Rice said any science background can lend itself to a career in space, and now is the time to pursue it.

"We're in a unique moment of history," he said. "We'll never do these things for the first time again."

Aвра Elliott may be contacted at elliott.avra@gmail.com.

Visit us at www.lascrucesbulletin.com

Las Cruces native to present her vision on space travel

By **ALEXIA SEVERSON**

Las Cruces Bulletin

The Las Cruces Space Festival will once again welcome keynote speaker and Las Cruces native Alires Almon back to her hometown to present her vision on “Space: Our Dream and Our Reality” at the Rio Grande Theatre at 7:45 p.m. Friday, April 12.

Almon, who lives in Denver, graduated from Mayfield High School and received her master’s degree in experimental psychology at New Mexico State University. She attended last year’s space festival to discuss her role as orchestrator of engagement for Mae Jemison’s 100 Year Starship Project, an independent, non-governmental, long-term initiative that aims to make human travel beyond our solar system a reality within the next 100 years.

In 2018, Almon founded an international research team doing business as Deep Space Predictive to look at the selection, monitoring and psychological performance of groups of humans in space and other extreme work conditions.

“What we do at Deep Space Predictive is develop behavioral technology for long-term space travel, finding ways to help humans manage their emotions as they go through their space journeys, whether it’s just a journey up, like Virgin Galactic, or if we’re going to the Moon or going to Mars,” Almon said.

This year, Almon will discuss her experiences with 100 Year Starship



ALIRES ALMON

and Deep Space Predictive, as well as “all the wonders and opportunities that space exploration provides,” she said.

“...It’s about humanity’s quest for space and why,” Almon said of her space festival presentation, “but also looking at where we are in that quest and really showing that this a journey for many lifetimes.”

While a degree in psychology may not seem like a natural pathway to getting involved in space exploration, Almon said it’s something she’s always been interested in.

“I’m a nerd from way back,” she said. “The reason I went into psychology is because of the science fiction I was reading – Isaac Asimov’s ‘The Foundation’ series. I wanted to have a mathematical model of human behavior.”

An interest in space may also run in Almon’s blood. Her grandfather, along with other NASA and White Sands Missile Range employees, did work at White Sands Test Facility to provide program support for the Apollo missions.

“I have a card of thanks from the NASA administrator that recognizes his work for the moon landing,” Almon said. “He definitely had some influence in the sense that he was scientifically focused and loved math. He encouraged me to explore my interests in space.”

Almon has been part of 100 Year Starship since it

was started in 2012 with seed-funding through a competitive grant from DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency). While met with some skepticism, the organization’s goal is to launch an interstellar mission by the year 2112 – possibly to Alpha Centauri, our solar system’s nearest neighboring star system. The journey would take 70,000 years at current technical capabilities.

“We’ve found out in the last three or four years that there are planets that are in the Goldilocks zone – possibly able to support life as we know it (in Alpha Centauri),” Almon said. “So, it’s not only close, but there might be something that resembles life.”

But with 93 years left to go in the project, there is still a lot of progress to be made in order to make this kind of space travel a reality, and it will require the help of multiple generations, Almon said.

“I’m only going to have 20 or 30 years left in the study before we hand it off to the next generation,” she said.

The nearest goal, Almon said, is Mars.

“Going to Mars is going to be one of our first challenges of sending people to a place where they’re going to be self-sufficient,” she said. “On the way to Mars, it’s those astronauts in that vehicle – they only have each other and the knowledge and training we sent with them.”

And the ultimate goal in space travel? “Star Trek” – or at least, something similar to that concept, Almon said.

“If you watch a ‘Star



COURTESY PHOTO

Alires Almon, orchestrator of engagement for the 100 Year Starship Project, left, speaks with 2018 Las Cruces Space Festival attendees at the Mesilla Valley Mall.

Trek’ episode and just look at all the conveniences they have, communication is instantaneous, food supply is instantaneous. It’s a self-sufficient society,” she

said. “How do we get to do that?”

Almon said space exploration is important because it provides so many opportunities.

“It’s another arena

for jobs,” she said. “It’s an opportunity for great strides in research and application. We get new, cool things out of space, but it gives us opportunity and choice as we go out into space. We get to become a multi-planetary species; it perpetuates humanity and where we can exist.”

Almon said she hopes the Las Cruces Space Festival sparks interest among people of all ages.

“I hope they’re curious enough to come share their thoughts and ideas about space and space exploration because it is for everybody and it affects everybody,” she said.

Alexia Severson may be contacted at alexia@lascrucesbulletin.com.

THE LAS CRUCES

Bulletin

No login.
No fees.
Free archives!

Check out the entirety of the
Las Cruces Bulletin, it’s archives and
annual publications online at

www.lascrucesbulletin.com

ADVANCING SPACE KNOWLEDGE & INNOVATION

As New Mexico's lead Space Grant institution, New Mexico State University continuously works to expand opportunities in space-related education and research.

Thanks to the work of many NMSU departments and especially the endeavors of the New Mexico Space Grant Consortium (NMSGC), New Mexicans are nurturing a vibrant space ecosystem.

NMSGC - a statewide collaboration of industry, government and academic partners - is helping to create our nation's future space workforce through the promotion of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

**TOGETHER, WITH AN EYE TOWARD THE
FUTURE, WE LOOK TO NEW HORIZONS
TO ENHANCE ECONOMIC, EDUCATION
AND SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES THAT WILL
BENEFIT US ALL.**



BE BOLD. Shape the Future.
New Mexico State University

