



November 2023

Teachers and Principals,

The annual Fountain Hills Dark Sky Art Contest is arriving soon. The event has come to be a pretty big deal here in town. We hope you and your students will join our March 30, 2024 educational and entertaining celebration at the Community Center. We'll have a host of speakers, telescopes, fun activities, food, and exhibits.

This year, we are once again sponsoring a student Dark Sky Art Contest. We hope your students' successes last year will translate into excitement about this year's contest. This contest provides a chance to showcase your students' skills as well as let them earn a monetary prize (Over \$1,200 in cash prizes will be awarded). Over the past few years, the winners were thrilled at receiving monetary prizes as well as newspaper fame!

We know teachers need time to incorporate lessons into their curriculum, so we're reminding you early. The theme this year is DISCOVER THE NIGHT SKY. (Their art can create pictures showing the night sky from earth, at the stars, constellations and planets, or the even the critters who inhabit the night sky.) Students can begin their work anytime, at home or as a school assignment, but can only enter one art piece in each category.

All artwork must be submitted to the art teacher or the school's main office, with a signed parent-permission entry form taped to the back, **by Thursday, February 29, 2024.** We will collect student work from each school's office on **Friday, March 1, 2024.**

Cindy Couture and Peggy Yeargain are this year's contest organizers. Please call, text or email them with any questions. They will drop off entry blanks at each school the first week of January. The entry blank is also attached to this email. Feel free to make copies as needed.

A group of talented, artistic, cosmos-minded judges will select winners—winners will be announced and awarded prizes at the Dark Sky Virtual Festival on Saturday March 30, 2024.

The contest provides an excellent chance for students to show off their talent, and it's a terrific marketing event for Fountain Hills Schools. We hope you are as excited as we are to get this contest underway. Students must live in Fountain Hills or attend a Fountain Hills School to enter. Please reply by email or call one of us to let us know that you will be encouraging students to enter the contest.

Thanks so much,

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About the Dark Sky Association:

The **Fountain Hills Dark Sky Association** is a group of stargazers dedicated to educating the community about the advantages of smart lighting and protecting our unique dark sky. With your help, light pollution and light trespass can be minimized so that we and future generations can enjoy the wonders of space and the nighttime universe. We frequently speak to science classrooms as well as hold telescope stargazing gatherings outside the library and in Fountain Hills Park. Find us online at fdarksky.com.

Fountain Hills stands apart from other communities for a number of reasons: its signature Fountain, its geography and scenery, its small-town feel in the corner of a major metropolitan area, its adjacency to parks, preserves, and national forest, and its dark skies. To preserve our night skies, you see very few streetlights in town, and many, many stargazers have made Fountain Hills their home.

When humans use more light at night than they need, or shine it into places beyond their homes, streets, and sidewalks, we call it light pollution. Light pollution makes life difficult for nocturnal animals. Newly born sea turtles wander away from the sea instead of toward it, fireflies can't see the light of their mates, mice have a harder time hiding from owls, and moths wear themselves out circling a light instead of eating so it can stay healthy.

The Fountain Hills Dark Sky Association helps the people of our community learn how they can do easy things to protect the nocturnal animals in our desert. We show people how to shield their lights so the light doesn't spill into animal habitats or into the sky, how to choose a warmer colored light to protect the night vision of animals and to attract fewer moths, and to use motion-activated lights to provide light only when you need it.

Our current goal: Fountain Hills, Arizona was awarded the rare distinction of being designated an International Dark Sky Community by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) leading to the proposed International Dark Sky Discovery Center, a 15,000 sq. ft. facility with a Dark Sky Observatory, Hyperspace Planetarium, Inspiration Theater, and an Immersion Zone. We hope to build this near the town library, in the next decade.