

# **DARK SKY FESTIVAL 2026**

## **FAQs and other information**

### **Table of Contents**

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| General Information .....        | 1 |
| Dark Skies .....                 | 1 |
| Speakers.....                    | 2 |
| For The Kids .....               | 2 |
| Food and Drinks .....            | 4 |
| Live Music .....                 | 5 |
| Silent Auction .....             | 5 |
| River of Time Museum .....       | 6 |
| Fountain Hills Library .....     | 6 |
| Exhibitors .....                 | 6 |
| Star Party and Laser Tours ..... | 8 |
| Volunteers .....                 | 8 |
| Sponsors .....                   | 9 |

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### ***Why is there a Dark Sky Festival?***

It's a celebration of the Town of Fountain Hills' recognition as a Dark Sky Community by DarkSky International in 2018. The Festival offers an array of captivating activities and informative sessions aimed at highlighting the importance of preserving the darkness of the night sky.

### ***How much does the festival cost?***

Our festival has always been **FREE!** We're able to do that because of our generous sponsors. Want to help us Keep Our Festival Free in the future? Become a Festival Sponsor or drop a donation into the donation box.

### ***Where should I park?***

The closest parking spots are in front of the Community Center, the open parking space in front of the International Dark Sky Discovery Center, along both sides of La Montana Drive, along both sides of El Lago Drive, and across the street from Town Hall in the Post Office parking lot.

### ***Where do I start? What is there to do?***

Get a handout with schedule & maps

Indoors: exhibitors, speakers, virtual reality, silent auction, festival merchandise, student art contest, science activities

Outdoors: exhibitors, live animals, beer/wine garden, live music, food trucks, library, museum, Star Party & Guided Laser Tour

### ***Where are the RESTROOMS?***

Inside the Community Center & Library

### ***Do you have Dark Sky Festival MERCHANDISE?***

YES! Visit our table inside the Community Center

## **DARK SKIES**

### ***How can I learn more?***

Visit the International Dark Sky Discovery Center tables

Watch demonstration of outdoor lighting

Enter the Light Glare Demonstration Tent

Visit our indoor and outdoor exhibitors

### ***How much is membership in the FH DARK SKY PRESERVATION?***

Annual membership is just \$25 for up to 2 email addresses per household. Benefits include a monthly newsletter and annual members' picnic.

DONATIONS are welcome.

Visit and join via our website: [fhdarksky.com](http://fhdarksky.com)

## **SPEAKERS**

***All speaker presentations will take place in the Community Center Ballroom.***

**4:15pm Mayor's Welcome & Student Art Contest Winners Announced**

**4:45pm Wildlife Biologist Tony Palmer**

**"Protecting the Jewels of the Night: How you can support Arizona's Fireflies"**

Did you know there were fireflies in Arizona? Spoiler alert, there are! Wildlife Biologist Tony Palmer will focus on the biology of fireflies, paying special attention to the species found in Arizona and highlighting some things you can do to help protect these rare and beautiful insects.

**5:45pm International Dark Sky Discovery Center Update with Joe Bill & "Dr. J"**

Learn about the exciting features and progress of the International Dark Sky Discovery Center.

**6:00pm Keynote Speaker: Astronaut & Author Susan Kilrain**

**"An Unlikely Astronaut"**

Retired Astronaut Susan Kilrain will share her journey from gazing up at the stars as a little girl to flying among them. Following her time in space, she returned to Earth with a new appreciation for our planet.

## **FOR THE KIDS**

### ***What activities do you have for kids?***

Live animals (until sunset), hands-on activities, library and museum activities, Festival PASSPORT with many exciting prizes, student art contest display, Avocado The Puppet, Face Painting 4-6pm

***How old do you need to be to participate in VIRTUAL REALITY activity? 4 - 8:30pm***

Participants must be 10 years old or older.

The Virtual Reality “Tour of our Solar System” is sponsored by the FH High School and located in the Yavapai Room in the Community Center.

***What is the STUDENT ART CONTEST? 4:15pm Awards Ceremony***

Students K-12 submitted art illustrating our dark sky using the theme *Discover the Night*. Displayed inside the Community Center (outside the ballroom near the glass windows).

***What is the SOLAR SYSTEM WALK? 4-6:45pm***

A fun, fill-in-the-blank activity to learn about our planets. Located outside.

***What’s inside the SCIENCE (Hopi/Pima) & O’Flynn rooms? 4-8pm***

Activities for all ages including:

- ASU Mars Tarp
- Make a Star Wheel
- Make digital postcards that will be sent to space
- NASA coloring pages
- Make a Meteor Crater
- Make a Pocket Solar System Map
- Play & Experiment with Light
- ASU Astronomy Dept
- Space Travel Photo Op
- Big Red Telescope (how a telescope works)

***What is the Festival PASSPORT? 4-7:00pm, Prize drawing 7:15pm***

Activity booklet for children 2-4 yrs, 5-10 yrs., and 11-15 yrs.

***Where can they get the Festival PASSPORT?***

Pick up the Passport at the LIBRARY.

***What is involved?***

1. Kids visit 4 selected stations, do the activity and write about each in their passport. Parents are encouraged to help.
2. Younger group only do 2 of the 4 activities. All groups get stickers.
3. Return the completed Passport to the Library for the final sticker.
4. Fill out the last page with name, email, adult’s phone # and drop in the appropriate raffle box. Prize drawing at 7:15pm in the main ballroom.

***Which stations are involved?***

Group 2–4-year-olds:

- Solar Walk
- Mars Walk
- Face Painting

- Wildlife Exhibit

Group 5–12-year-olds:

- Solar Walk
- Wildlife Exhibit
- Do a “Make Any” activity (inside Community Center).
- Museum Table: “Scorpion & Saguaro Fun”

Group 13–17-year-olds:

- ASU Astronomy Dept (Hopi and Pima Rms)
- IDSDC Table or O’Flynn Rm Exhibits
- Light Glare Demo
- Any Explore & Play with Light Activity (Hopi/Pima Rms)

**Balloons will designate each station.**

**Maps will be included in all Passports.**

***Are there Prizes?* 7:15pm drawings in the main ballroom**

- Raffle drawing for prizes
- Grand Prize drawing - Bikes for each age group sponsored by McDowell Mountain Cycles.

## **FOOD AND DRINKS**

***BEER & WINE 4-9pm***

***How much are tickets?*** \$10 per serving

***When is the last call for alcohol?*** Alcohol Last call: 8:30pm

***Do I really have to show my ID for alcohol?***

Yes. It’s important to us to continue serving alcohol at future events, so we will abide by the rules in our permit. Everyone of every age will be carded before receiving a beer/wine band.

**Must show ID and wear wristband to purchase alcohol**

Bone Haus beers: an IPA and light Lager

Grapeables wines: 2 different reds and 2 different whites

**All alcohol must stay within BEER & WINE GARDEN.**

***FOOD TRUCKS 4-9pm***

### ***What kinds of FOOD TRUCKS are available?***

Fountain Hills Food Cart – Burgers, hot dogs and fries  
Pop Daddy Kettle Korn – Popcorn with or without nuts, Italian ice, fresh squeezed lemonade  
Gabeesh – Fresh handmade whole and slices of specialty, pepperoni & cheese pizzas  
Lomi & Pop's Ice Cream – Many flavors of handmade ice cream in bowls, waffle cones & shakes  
Mana Hawaiian Fusion – Hawaiian BBQ chicken, shortribs, tacos, poke bowls, loco moco  
Cotton Jack's BBQ – Shredded chicken & pulled pork sandwiches served with baked beans  
The Green Fig – Healthy protein bowls, salads, vegan meals  
Sahara Turkish Coffee- Hot & cold coffee drinks, tea, baklava, cookies & other treats  
Noble Cookie Fundraiser – Individually wrapped chocolate chip, snickerdoodle, peanut butter & jelly, and deluxe gluten free cookies

### ***Where can I eat?***

Seating is available near the food trucks and in the beer and wine garden.

## **LIVE MUSIC                      4:30pm – 6:45pm**

The Killer B's -

Local Fountain Hills Acoustic Guitar & Vocal Duo specializing in familiar and forgotten hits from yesterday to today

## **SILENT AUCTION                      4-8:00pm**

### ***How do we bid on an auction item?***

Online via the GiveSmart website.

<https://26darksky.givesmart.com/>

Bidding ends precisely at 8pm

### ***Why do I have to enter my credit card for the auction?***

We are using an incredibly fun auction website called GiveSmart.

You don't need to enter your credit card to look.

You **DO** need to enter your credit card to bid. This allows GiveSmart to charge you if you win your bid. Don't worry, you still have to authorize the charge before it is processed.

Don't wait until the last minute to enter your credit card. It can take up to a minute or two to register your card and that might be all it takes for you to miss out.

### ***How do I enter my credit card or view the auction?***

Visit the Auction inside the Community Center lobby.

Use the QR code to direct you to the online auction.  
Or Text 26DarkSky to 76278

### ***What items are available?***

Lots of items available including telescopes, telescope equipment, gift baskets and gift certificates from local businesses, stargazing experiences, many varieties of artwork and jewelry and more.

### ***How will I know if I win?***

You will be contacted through the online program as long as you enter your phone number or email. Otherwise keep an eye on the website.

Just show your website "You won!" message to the volunteer to pick up your winnings.

**Winners must pick up their winnings by 8:45pm.**

### **RIVER OF TIME MUSEUM 4 - 7:00pm**

Visit the River of Time Museum Passport Station where kids will participate in a project called "Scorpion & Saguaro Art Fun!"

### **FOUNTAIN HILLS LIBRARY 4 - 7:00pm**

Hosting the passport program

### **EXHIBITORS**

***Which exhibitors are INSIDE the Community Center lobby and main hall? 4pm - 8:00pm  
(Merchandise sales till 9:00pm)***

- 00 FHDSP Welcome Volunteer Sign In
- 1.-2. FHDS Merchandise
- 3. FHDS Preservation
- 4. Night Sky Tourist
- ★ Susan Kilrain Book Promotional Table
- 5. International Dark Sky Discovery Center
- 6. U of A Carris Mirror Lab / Mt. Lemmon Observatory
- 7. Arizona Travel Trails
- 8. Mesa Community College Planetarium
- 9. Phoenix Astronomical Society
- 10. Milky Night Photography
- 11. Prospect Park Apache Junction
- 12. Pipe Springs Nat. Monument

13. Peralta Regional Park
14. Fountain Hills Crisis Team
15. Flagstaff Dark Skies Coalition
15. City of Flagstaff Dark Skies Compliance
16. Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce
-  Embry Riddle Astronomy Department
17. Adero Scottsdale Resort and Spa Hotel
18. Ft. McDowell YAVAPAI Nation
19. Museum of Indigenous Peoples
20. Sonoran Conservancy of Fountain Hills
21. City of Campe Verde Dark Skies
22. City of Cottonwood Dark Skies
23. Lowell Observatory
24. City of Bisbee Dark Skies
25. Oracle State Park
26. Saguaro National Park
27. Presby Pickers
28. Fountain Hills Community Chorus
29. Fountain Hills Botanical Gardens
30. River of Time Museum

***Which Animal/Critters exhibitors are OUTSIDE? 4pm - 6:45pm***

- Desert Rivers Audubon & Maricopa Bird Alliance
- Tucson Bird Alliance
- Southwest Monarch Study
- Arizona Bat Rescue
- Desert Nature Alliance
- Center for Native and Urban Wildlife
- Maricopa County Parks
- S.W. Conservation Center
- Phoenix Herpetological Sanctuary
- Wild at Heart located near Library

***What other activities are outside? 4pm - 6:45pm***

- Face Painting (4-6pm)
- Selfie Station
- Solar System Walk
- JPL & Mars Walk
- Outdoor Meteorite Exhibit
- Meet life-size Avocado The Puppet!

- Mars Tarp Map
- McDowell Mountain Cycling
- International Dark Sky Discovery Center Information
- Solar Walk
- Telescopes
- Sky View Tents
- Cookie Sales Fundraiser

## **STAR PARTY and LASER TOURS**      **7- 9pm**

### ***Where can I find the STAR PARTY?***

Outdoors after dark in the center of the festival and at the Dark Sky Discovery Center stargazing terrace.

### ***How many telescopes will be there?***

Opportunities for Night Sky Viewing through more than a dozen telescopes.

### ***When are the GUIDED LASER TOURS?***

Guided laser tours of the night sky will begin at **7:30pm, 8pm, 8:30pm.**

Vicky Derksen and Ted Blank, local amateur astronomers, will give a laser-guided tour of the night sky while sharing cultural star stories.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

### ***What is the check-in procedure?***

- All volunteers must check in at the Fountain Hills Dark Sky Welcome table when you first enter the Community Center lobby.
- Please arrive to check in at least 15 minutes before your scheduled shift begins.
- You will be given:
  - ***A Festival Volunteer - ASK ME sticker, a volunteer lanyard and name tag to put on prior to your shift (please return lanyards to check-in table after your shift)***
  - ***Water***
  - ***Snacks***
- All after-dark, outdoor volunteers (greeters & info table) will be given glow-in-the dark necklaces to wear and red light flashlights so they can be recognized.
  - Please return the flashlights & necklaces to the check-in table after your shift.

### ***Who do I contact for more information?***

Contact Leigh Martinez (847-323-9051) or [volunteers@fhdarksky.com](mailto:volunteers@fhdarksky.com)

## **SPONSORS**

### Universe (\$5000+)

Adero Scottsdale Resort

### Galaxy (\$1000)

John & Beth Culp

Paul's Ace Hardware

McDowell Mountain Cycles

Dick & Gretchen Wilson

AZ Trails Travel

Mary Mount

Chris and KT Hines

Night Sky Tourist

Fountain Hills Farmers Market

### Star (\$500)

Presby Pickins' Flea Market

Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation

Chiricahua Sky Village

### Planet (\$250)

River of Time Museum

Lisa Murray, Russ Lyon Sotheby's

Streets of New York Pizza

Maricopa County Library District

Pisa Pizza

## **FOUNTAIN HILLS DARK SKY PRESERVATION**

<https://fhdarksky.com/events/festival/>