



BOK TOWER GARDENS

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

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HARMONY Dark Sky Festival & Star Party Returns Saturday, January 13

LAKE WALES, FL— Discover the Gardens by the light of the Milky Way at the HARMONY Dark Sky Festival & Star Party Saturday, January 13. The festival is included in general admission and is free to members. Speakers begin at 4pm and the gate closes at 9:30pm.

Highlights of the festival include learning about the night sky with leading astronomers, nocturnal animal encounters, a mobile

planetarium, Orlando Science Center discovery stations and a special astronomy-inspired carillon concert.

Acclaimed researcher Dr. Richard Stevens will present two talks entitled “*A Modern Marvel turned Urban Blight*” the ‘*Wicked Problem*’ of *Light Pollution*.”

Dr. Stevens joins a stellar line-up of scientists discussing a variety of astronomy topics including NASA speaker Russell Romanella and University of Central Florida professor Dr. Joshua Colwell. Local astronomers will have telescopes on display for stargazing and Star Wars inspired characters from the 501 Legion will also be joining the out-of-this-world fun!

Schedule of Events

Dr. Richard Stevens “*A Modern Marvel turned Urban Blight*”: 4pm & 7pm

Francine Prager “*Bats of the World*”: 5pm

Dr. Joshua Colwell “*The Ringed Planet*”: 6:30pm

Russell Romanella “*History of Space Exploration*”: 8:30pm

Orlando Science Center “*Digital Planet*”: 6pm, 7pm & 8pm

Evening Carillon Concert with Geert D'hollander: 8pm

Continuous Exhibits

Astronomer and telescopes on Great Lawn: 6pm-9:30pm

Orlando Science Center Hands On Science: 6pm-9pm

Mobile Planetarium: 6pm-9pm

Owl Encounter: 6pm-9pm

Bat Encounter: 6:30pm – 8:30pm

501st Legion: 6:30pm-8:30pm

According to the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), more than 80% of the world’s population experiences light polluted skies and 99% of Americans are experiencing the harmful effects. Darkness not only adds to the aesthetic qualities of the wilderness but it also is important to the health of wildlife and humans.

Central Florida is listed as one of the world's hot spots for artificial light pollution and the HARMONY Dark Sky Festival & Star Party aims to educate visitors about the natural importance of darkness and how controlling light pollution is vital for all of Earth's inhabitants. In anticipation of the festival, the level of artificial light above Bok Tower Gardens was measured by an IDA representative and was found to be only three points higher than the darkest point on the globe and the Milky Way was visible to the naked eye.

The event is proudly sponsored in part by Harmony Institute and Harmony on Lake Eloise.

About Light Pollution and the Effects of Skyglow

Throughout history, humans have evolved to the rhythm of sunlit days and dark nights known as circadian rhythm or more commonly known as a "biological clock." However, with the spread of artificial lighting, most humans no longer experience truly dark nights. Research published by Harvard University suggests that artificial light (especially blue LED lighting) at night can negatively affect human health, increasing risks for obesity, depression, sleep disorders, diabetes, breast cancer and more.

From a health perspective, exposure to light pollution has been found reduce the production of the hormone Melatonin, which induces sleep, boosts the immune system, lowers cholesterol, and helps the functioning of the thyroid, pancreas, ovaries, testes and adrenal glands. The dark-sky movement aims to educate about the importance of suppressing light pollution and celebrating the wonder of our solar system and beyond.

About Keynote Speaker Dr. Richard Steven

One of the premier scientists exploring the effects of light pollution and possible links to cancer, Dr. Richard Stevens received a B.S. in Genetics from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Ph.D. in Epidemiology from the University of Washington in Seattle.

After many years of cancer research, he proposed in 1987 a radical new theory that use of electric lighting, resulting in lighted nights, might

produce 'circadian disruption' causing changes in the hormones relevant to breast cancer risk, and thereby play an important role in breast cancer causation worldwide. Dr. Stevens' theory has received wide scientific and public attention including publication in many medical journals.

About NASA Speaker Russell Romanella

With over 30 years of NASA experience, he has had many leadership positions at the Kennedy Space Center during his career including International Space Station and Spacecraft Processing Director, Associate Director for Engineering and Technical, and most recently Director of Safety and Mission Assurance. His broad range of experiences include Space Shuttle processing, the International Space Station, and NASA's Exploration program. Mr. Romanella has received numerous achievement and performance awards including NASA's Exceptional Service Medal, the Center Director Award, and the Presidential Rank Award for his leadership in preparing Space Station elements for launch from the Kennedy Space Center.

About Dr. Joshua Colwell

Dr. Josh Colwell is a Planetary Scientist and Professor of Physics at the University of Central Florida. Since 2011 he has been Associate Chair of the Department of Physics and Interim Assistant Director of the Florida Space Institute. He came to UCF in 2006 following a twenty-one year career at the University of Colorado that started as a graduate student in the Department of Astrophysical, Planetary, and Atmospheric Sciences.

His research interests are in the origin and evolution of the solar system with a particular emphasis on small bodies in the solar system. He is currently a Co-Investigator on the Ultraviolet Imaging Spectrograph of the Cassini mission, a spacecraft in orbit around Saturn since 2004. He studies the structure and dynamics of Saturn's rings with data from Cassini, following earlier studies of the ring systems of Uranus and Neptune from the Voyager 2 spacecraft.