

# NATIONAL CENTER FOR INTERACTIVE LEARNING

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Education & Outreach Newsletter



A child trying to determine if the rock she is examining is a "Meteorite" or a "MeteorWrong".

Photo Credit: Linda Prince, Amateur Observers Society of New York



## Giant Worlds Tour Schedule

February 1 - April 30, 2011  
Lafayette Natural History Museum and  
Planetarium  
Lafayette, Louisiana

June 1 - August 31, 2011  
OPEN

October 1 - December 31, 2011  
OPEN

*Only two more dates available for this tour!*

Contact Lisa Curtis-- [curtis@spacescience.org](mailto:curtis@spacescience.org) or  
visit [www.giantworlds.org](http://www.giantworlds.org) to learn more!



## Great Balls of Fire Tour Schedule (Large Exhibition)

June 1st - December 31st 2011  
Science Museum of Virginia  
Richmond, Virginia

October 1st - December 31st 2012  
Catawba Science Center  
Hickory, North Carolina

## Space Rocks ToolKits a Huge Success

The Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP) has been hard at work creating the Space Rocks ToolKit in conjunction with NCIL's *Great Balls of Fire: Comets, Asteroids, and Meteors* exhibition (opening Summer 2011).

ASP has sent toolkits to more than 120 amateur astronomy clubs in 40 states. Each kit includes a set of materials for conducting hands-on activities with the public to help them understand comets, asteroids and meteors. In addition, the kits contain many resources for learning more about these mysterious objects and how best to conduct the included activities. ASP has been developing toolkits for its network of about 350 amateur astronomy clubs since 2004. Like other ASP kits, the Space Rocks ToolKit was developed through testing and vetting the content and prototypes with amateur astronomers and members of the public.

ASP sent the toolkits to clubs that had at least 2 documented public outreach events in the previous year. To receive the kit, clubs must agree to keep track of how often it is used, and make notes about which activities were the most popular.

So far, the "Meteorite or MeteorWrong" activity has been one of the most popular components of the toolkit. Teresa Lappin, an amateur astronomer using the toolkit said, "The bag of rocks and meteorites was a big hit. I don't think I've ever had as many people looking over a toolkit as I did with this one!"

If you have any questions about the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, or the *Great Balls of Fire* traveling exhibition, visit:

[www.astrosociety.org](http://www.astrosociety.org)  
[www.greatballsoffireexhibit.org](http://www.greatballsoffireexhibit.org)

## "Making Space Social" with Facebook

NCIL's Dr. James Harold has received support from NSF and NASA to develop and implement a stellar and planetary evolution game for Facebook.

The game will feature a sporadic play model, similar to the format of popular games like *Farmville*, *Mafia Wars*, and *Mousehunt*. This allows extended involvement and continued learning over a period of months, without dominating a large chunk of the players' free time.

Each player will have complete control over his or her galaxy's destiny, choosing where and how to build stars and planets, while watching as their systems evolve in scaled real time (a million years for every minute).

Massive stars will go supernova within minutes, while lower

*Dates available for this tour!*

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more!



A screen shot of an early game prototype, showing the galaxy home page and a history of the player's various star systems.

mass stars (like our own sun) will live for weeks before entering the red giant phase and ending their virtual lives as white dwarfs. Successful systems will generate in-game currency, allowing players to invest in more stars and planets, customize their worlds, and attempt to stimulate the evolution of life.

Facebook games have an enormous reach, and adults and women are better represented on Facebook than in many other educational game environments. The project's accompanying research and evaluation program will document both the effectiveness of this game as well as the implications of this class of game for the education community.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Dr. James Harold at [harold@spacescience.org](mailto:harold@spacescience.org)



*Expanding the frontiers of knowledge and understanding*

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