EXCITE. EXPLORE. DISCOVER.

Education & Outreach Newsletter

Photo Credits: Space Science Institute, Courtesy NCIL/SSI

Large Exhibit (3000 sq. ft)

May 28 - December 31, 2011
Science Museum of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia

February 1 - April 30, 2012
OPEN

Small Exhibit (750 sq. ft)
Sept. 1, 2011 - May 31, 2012
Tyler Community College Planetarium

Great Balls of Fire! Opens As Dawn Approaches Vesta

Ever wondered about the origins of comets, asteroids, and meteors? Or what they tell us about Earth? As NASA's Dawn spacecraft approaches the asteroid Vesta to begin a year-long orbit, these questions will be in the news.

Visitors to the *Great Balls of Fire!* exhibition, which opened at the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond on May 28th, are already exploring these mysterious space rocks through hands-on activities, computer-based interactives, meteorite specimens, scale models, and an immersive audio-visual experience.

The National Center for Interactive Learning (NCIL) at the Space Science Institute (SSI) led the development of the exhibition. Project partners include the Catawba Science Center, the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, the Institute for Learning Innovation, the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC), and the NASA Dawn and WISE Missions.

Connecting Exhibit Content to the Classroom and Outreach

The *Great Balls of Fire!* exhibition is part of a larger project that includes Education and Outreach Programs for classroom teachers, museum educators, and amateur astronomers. The weekend that the exhibition opened at the Science Museum of Virginia, NCIL and its partners from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP) and the Catawba Science Center provided workshops for docents, museum educators, teachers, and amateur astronomers.

Workshop attendees learned about the science content of the exhibition and how to implement a number of hands-on activities with museum visitors, members of the public, and students in the classroom. All of the project's classroom activities are designed to align with national standards for science education for upper elementary and middle school students.

One of the unique aspects of the *Great Balls of Fire!* project was the role of three teams of middle school students who participated in exhibit design and evaluation. One of those teams, who met at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, developed, prototyped, and tested floor activities that host museum staff can use with visitors. The materials for these activities are stored in an activity cart that travels with the large version of the exhibition.

For the project's outreach program, ASP developed the *Space Rocks ToolKit* for its Night Sky Network of amateur astronomy clubs. The activities in the toolkit expand on the science content of the exhibition and can be used with the public by astronomy clubs that partner with host museums or as part of other

Tyler, Texas

www.greatballsofireexhibit.org

Giant Worlds Tour Schedule
Only One Date Left!!

February 2011 - August 2011
Lafayette Natural History Museum and Planetarium
Lafayette, Louisiana

October 1 - December 31, 2011
OPEN

Contact Lisa Curtis
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or visit
www.giantworlds.org
to learn more

outreach events. As with all of ASP's outreach products, the *Space Rocks* activities were prototyped and tested with several groups who were representative of the intended audiences before the final versions were produced.

Elizabeth Warner, a scientist at the University of Maryland who is a member of NASA's EPOXI mission to study comets, gave a presentation at the teacher workshop and provided attendees with materials for their classrooms. Paul Dusenbery (Project Director) and Anne Holland of NCIL, Erin Graves of the Catawba Science Center, and Suzy Gurton of ASP facilitated the workshops.

The project's classroom activities can be downloaded at www.greatballsoffireexhibit.org

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SPACE SCIENCE INSTITUTE

Expanding the frontiers of knowledge and understanding

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