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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Connecticut Science Center Honors Apollo 11 Moon Mission with Events, Exhibit, Film, Kids' Rocket Launch

State's Role in 1969 Mission and Future Innovations Highlighted

Hartford, CT, July 15, 2019—The Connecticut Science Center is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the milestone launch of the Apollo 11 lunar mission as a way to honor Connecticut innovators of the past and inspire those of the future. The historic landing on the moon and first-ever human steps on the lunar surface four days later are the centerpiece of a series of special events and activities throughout July.

In addition to noting Connecticut's role in the development of the American space program in the 1960's, the Connecticut Science Center will highlight current and future opportunities in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in order to set today's students on a path to exciting careers of innovation and discovery, as well as meeting the employment needs of businesses and strengthening the state's economy for the 21st century.

The special commemoration includes a kick-off "stomp rocket launch" by Science Center camp kids and the unveiling of a new space display on July 16 at 12 NOON, coinciding with the launch date of Apollo 11.



"This anniversary of remarkable accomplishment reminds us that science can take us very far," said Connecticut Science Center President & CEO Matt Fleury. "As was evident 50 years ago, we can collectively be mobilized by moon-shots, and we need a large view of our potential to solve big challenges, but all of that begins with individual students recognizing the potential of science and seeing themselves pursuing that path."

The Science Center will unveil the newest addition to its permanent collection – a Connecticut State Flag that flew in space on the Space Shuttle Atlantis and in the International Space Station (ISS) in 2000. The flag was donated to the Connecticut Science Center by Connecticut native and astronaut Captain Dan Burbank. A photograph of Burbank and fellow Connecticut astronaut Richard Mastracchio, who both were on the ISS in 2000, is featured in the exhibit. Burbank, of Tolland, retired from NASA last year; Mastracchio, of Waterbury, retired in 2017.

"Apollo represents the pinnacle of scientific and engineering achievement in the 20th century," said Dan Burbank. "Five decades on it still stands as a magnificent inspiration to today's engineers and spacefarers, beckoning them to reach ever further destinations, and in so doing to build a brighter future for humanity."

Connecticut's critical role in the Apollo mission is embodied by Ed O'Connor, retired UTC engineer and longtime Connecticut Science Center volunteer educator. O'Connor describes the imagination, expertise, and innovation of the local engineering team which created environmental control life support systems in the 1960's for the Lunar Module and the Portable Life Support Systems (PLSS), to make the lunar landing mission possible.

"I looked forward to being involved [in the Science Center], I wanted to pay back, and not just teaching them [children] about science, but also making kids feel good about themselves, and what they can do," O'Connor explains. "Because in science, and in your own life, you've got to learn how to think outside the box, and I give them the means to do that. You can see that they're



learning.” O’Connor and the Science Center’s team of STEM educators are on track to reach 50,000 people with their specific message about STEM careers during 2019.

The space-flown flag joins a lunar sample, a basalt rock fragment on loan from NASA from the Apollo 15 mission, on display in the permanent “[Exploring Space](#)” Gallery, presented by United Technologies. Hands-on activities in the Gallery include a Lunar Lander simulation for young children and space pod galaxy simulation, along with educational and hands-on features on rocketry, crater making, and lunar topography. A copy of the 200+ page “press kit” developed by NASA for media covering the Apollo 11 mission in 1969 can also be seen, along with a replica Apollo-era space suit. There will be games from that era for young visitors and blog posts on Apollo 11 and the space program, then and now, during the week on the “Down to a Science” blog on the Connecticut Science Center website.

The newly released cinematic masterpiece *Apollo 11: First Steps Edition* is playing throughout the summer in the Science Center’s theater. On Saturday, July 20 visitors can see it for only \$1.50 – the same price as a movie ticket in 1969. *Apollo 11: First Steps Edition* is a special giant screen version, made exclusively for science centers and museum theaters, of Douglas Miller’s critically-acclaimed theatrical documentary which highlights the journey of Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin, and Michael Collins, and the men and women that made it possible. Crafted entirely from archival materials including a newly-discovered trove of never-before-seen 70mm footage and more than 11,000 hours of uncatalogued audio recordings, the film puts audiences at the center of NASA’s historic mission. *Apollo 11: First Steps Edition* is a family friendly film and runs 47 minutes.

All activities are included FREE with General Admission or Science Center Membership. Theater shows require an additional ticket. The film and activities throughout the Science Center celebrate Connecticut’s role as an aerospace pioneer and a global leader while highlighting careers in STEM fields looking to future milestones of accomplishment.

“For all the science that a space probe can accomplish, nothing beats the drama and immediacy of humans traveling and living further away than ever,” said Connecticut Science Center STEM Educator Nick Villagra. “Before 1960, the thought that we’d be able to walk on the moon was pure fantasy. No rocket was powerful enough to get a human to the moon, let alone survive there. Brand new technologies that didn’t exist had to be invented. It was an unprecedented undertaking, requiring billions of dollars with no guarantee of success. And we did it — footprints were made, a flag was planted, and we went made it home.”

The Apollo 11 commemoration is part of a year-long observance of the 10th anniversary of the Connecticut Science Center, building on a solid foundation as a catalyst for innovation with new strategic initiatives, exhibits, special events, and programs to advance its forward-looking mission and adapt to the changing needs of science education and the need for an innovative, diverse, STEM-ready workforce.

The Apollo 11 programming is supported by the NASA Connecticut Space Grant Consortium. It is a “wonderful match towards the NASA goal of promoting STEM in Informal Education,” said Hisham Alnajjar, Director, NASA Connecticut Space Grant Consortium.

The 1969 cultural ambiance will be recaptured July 20 by *CJ West and the Downtown Train* performance, featuring the premier tribute to the bands that graced the stage at Woodstock in 1969. Visitors can relive moments that made rock’n’roll history - the sights, the sounds, and the songs. (The Who, Janis Joplin, Crosby, Stills and Nash, Jimi Hendrix, Melanie, The Grateful Dead, and Santana to name a few.) Anyone who was there...or wishes they had been, is going to love taking this hour-long TRIP on The Train – at 11:00 and 12:30!



Jungle Jim is returning to the Science Center with his out-of-this-world stage show; Ballooniverse. This mesmerizing show combines space, science, and exploration with comedy, improvisation, magic, and balloons. Ballooniverse encourages audiences to explore the larger world around them through science and imagination. Featured in the program is a balloon lightsaber duel, rocket propulsion science and a galaxy-driven 6-foot balloon! The show will be presented outside on the plaza stage at 12PM, 1:30PM, and 2:30PM.

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About the Connecticut Science Center: The LEED-Gold certified Connecticut Science Center, located in downtown Hartford, sparks creative imagination and an appreciation for science by immersing visitors in fun and educational hands-on, minds-on interactive experiences while maintaining an environmentally conscious presence. Serving more than 3.25 million people since opening in 2009, the Science Center features more than 165 exhibits in ten galleries. Covering a range of topics, including space and earth sciences, physical sciences, biology, the Connecticut River watershed, alternative energy sources, Connecticut inventors and innovations, a children's gallery, and much more. Other features include the state's only year-round butterfly habitat, five educational labs, a 200-seat 3D digital theater, function room, gift store, and ongoing events for all ages. The Science Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing science education throughout the state of Connecticut and New England, providing learning opportunities for students and adults of all ages, and engaging the community in scientific exploration. The Connecticut Science Center is also the home to the **Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Academy for Teachers**, offering powerful Professional Development for educators. *More information:* CTScienceCenter.org or (860) SCIENCE.