



Aldemaro Romero | Special to The Sun

The Hall of Science is one of the outreach efforts by Arkansas State University to improve scientific literacy in Arkansas.

A-State slates activities for '09 Year of Science

BY ALDEMARO ROMERO
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As ASU heads into its centennial year celebration, it has been planning to take part in another celebration: "2009: The Year of Science" as declared by The Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (COPUS). This yearlong event is a grassroots effort with as goal to engage sectors of the public in science to increase their understanding of the nature of science and its value to society.

The choosing of 2009 as the Year of Science is to commemorate a number of historical events in science. Next year will be the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln (both were born on the same date — February 12, 1809). Darwin published his landmark book, "On the Origin of Species," in 1859 (150th anniversary) and Lincoln was, among other things, the founder of the National Academy of Sciences.

The year 2009 will also be the 400th anniversary of both Galileo's first use of a telescope to study the skies and the publication of Johannes Kepler's first two Laws of Planetary Motion. That is why it has been made the International Year of Astronomy and the International Year of Planet Earth, fostering outreach and research activities to raise public and political awareness of the vast potential of Earth sciences for improving the quality of life and safeguarding the planet.

Local participation in national event

At Arkansas State University the departments of Biological Sciences and Chemistry and Physics are active participants in these efforts. Both academic units have planned a number of events for each month, and all are open to the general public.

ASU will launch its celebration in January with a series of workshops and viewing of science documentaries.

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In February there will be the celebration of Darwin's 200th birthday that will include conferences, video showings and a birthday party. In March there will be an exhibit on lasers, while April will see energy audits at ASU to improve its environmental efficiency.

In May a new course on sustainability will be launched while June will open a marine mammals' exhibit. July will be the month for stargazing, and August will be hurricane month.

September will be the month of Biodiversity and Conservation, and the Department of Biological Sciences will present a concert at the Fowler Center accompanied by slide and video projections of fauna and flora, mostly from Arkansas.

October will have a seismic exhibit to educate the public about earthquakes. In November the Department of Chemistry and Physics will have the American Chemical Society Halloween Magic Show.

The Year of Science will culminate in December with a number of activities under the theme "Biology of Health," a fitness-health event with invited speakers.

The Year of Science celebrations are led by participants in COPUS, a network of more than 300 participating organizations representing universities, scientific societies, science centers and museums, government agencies, advocacy groups, media, educators, businesses, and industry — formed in response to recent concerns about national scientific literacy.

For more information, including the schedule of showings, contact the ASU Department of Biological Sciences at biology@astate.edu.

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