



Ad Astra Kansas Newsletter

Volume 24 / Issue 2

Summer 2025

Galaxy Forum 2025



**RISING STARS OF KANSAS:
INNOVATIONS IN ROCKETRY,
ASTROCHEMISTRY, &
ASTRONAUT HEALTH**

Galaxy Forum 2025
August 23, 2025 : 1:00–3:00 PM.
Cosmosphere, Hutchinson, KS
Free Forum admission — includes free Hall
of Space access for all attendees.

Rising Stars of Kansas

* August 23, 2025

* 1-3 PM

* Cosmosphere, Hutchinson, KS

* FREE admission to the Forum, plus complimentary access to the Cosmosphere's newly renovated Hall of Space Museum for all attendees!

Every year, we host a forum where scientists and engineers share research and experiences with the public. The speakers for our *2025 Galaxy Forum--"Rising Stars of Kansas: Rocketry, Astrochemistry and Astronaut Health"* will be our incredible scholarship winners: Julian Yie Jian Chee, Kai Smith and Lauren Coffman. These outstanding students are at the forefront of research and are gaining experience through work with NASA or private space companies.

This FREE event is open to the public. The talks will be tailored for a general audience and will feature engaging presentations on their work in rocketry, astrochemistry and astronaut health. A great event to bring the family or any student who wants to explore space. Register at contact@adastra-ks.org with name and number attending.

Courtesy photos. Poster / text credit: Sarah Lamm

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AIRFest 31 takes to the skies



Free / spectators welcome

Late summer is prime time for rocketry in Kansas. Harvest is over and the KLOUDBusters' 40-acre "Rocket Pasture" launch site is ready to go. It's time for their annual AIRFest event which will run Aug. 29 to Sept. 1 near Argonia, about an hour southwest of Wichita.

We're talking high-powered rocketry with an FAA launch waiver of 50,000' AGL. The KLOUDBusters Rocketry Club, a member of the national Tripoli Rocketry Association, has the only Tripoli high-powered rocketry launch site in Kansas.

KLOUDBusters has monthly Fun Flies (except during harvest) and two main events--the Argonia Cup Challenge which draws college competitors from across the country and the upcoming AIRFest 31 which is a "bigger Fun Fly" according to club president Amy Howell. During this Labor Day weekend an average 350-400 rocketeers will launch everything from kids' models (separate area for that) to rockets weighing 200 pounds and 10-20' tall.

Spectators are welcome. "Absolutely, we love it when spectators come. Anybody, all ages, families are always welcome. It's free. Just bring lawn chairs and your coolers and enjoy yourselves," said Howell. The club works with youth groups also.

This is a rural event. See information and directions below. *Courtesy graphic.*

[KLOUDBUSTERS website](#)

[AIRFest 31 info](#)

Have a blast at the Rocks and Rockets event

Growing every year!

Rocks & Rockets is free, open to all, and jam-packed with geology and space science fun! This come-and-go event is perfect for all ages.

Stay for a few hours and dive into the excitement! Families are encouraged to attend together, and the event is designed to be engaging for both children and adults. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Please bring socks to walk on the giant Mars maps! Sponsored by the Kansas Geological Foundation.

Courtesy image

[MORE INFO](#)

July 12-August 3

It's Sunflower Summer (SS)

More than 200 attractions across Kansas are available to visit for the 2025 SS. During this program, Kansas students (pre-K through 12th grade) and one

accompanying adult are granted free one-time pass to each participating attraction once per season. Sites around the state cover aviation, space, STEM, as well as art, museums, nature, history and more. Something cool--info can be accessed in nine languages!

Sunflower Summer Program
Information

Did you know?

NASA + is coming to Netflix

Beginning sometime this summer, rocket launches, spacewalks, mission coverage and live views of Earth from the ISS will be closer to home and more accessible with NASA's plan to stream NASA+ live programming on Netflix. Watch for launch date announcements. NASA+ remains free through the agency website. *Image credit: NASA*

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KU Rocketstars take top honors at First Nations Launch High-Powered Rocketry Competition

LAWRENCE--In April, the KU Rocketstars, a team of indigenous STEM scholars from KU and members of the KU American Indian Science and Engineering Society chapter, won two awards at the 16th annual First Nations Launch High-Powered Rocketry Competition, hosted by NASA's Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium, in Kansasville, Wisc.

The competition hosted an international field of top institutions including M.I.T., U. of Toronto, Northern Arizona U., U. of British Columbia, U. of Washington, Queens University of Canada, and tribal colleges such as Menominee Nation.

KU secured the Outreach Award and won the Patch Design Contest for its rocker, The Star Snagger.

Press release photo: From left are Trey Jimboy, Kate Rosa, Mollie Coffey, Aaron Newell (Tripoli Rocketry mentor), Chamisa Edmo, Annalise Guthrie and Benjamin Smit.

This is the final year of the First Nations Launch Competition.

MORE

KU students receive awards

Astronaut Scholar named

LAWRENCE--As a 2025-2026 Astronaut Scholar, KU senior Alexa Magstadt of Shawnee is majoring in molecular, cellular and developmental biology. Magstadt plans to use the \$15,000 scholarship towards her goal of earning a dual M.D. / PH.D. in cancer biology and practice as a physician scientist and medical oncologist.

The Astronaut Scholar program was founded in 1984 by the Mercury Program's six surviving astronauts to encourage students to pursue science.

Press release photos

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NSF Graduate Research Fellowships named

LAWRENCE--National Science Foundation fellowship awardee Joseph Hand, Overland Park, is working with Dr. Ian Crossfield to develop a machine learning model that can analyze the chemical composition of the atmospheres of stars by looking at their spectra.

A stipend of \$37, 000 plus an education allowance comes with the award. He will be attending graduate school at the University of Hawaii this fall.

Two other KU NSF awardees are Cecilia Paranjothi, chemistry; and Jasmine Perea, environmental and water resources science.

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Our mission is to advance the Kansas State Motto, “Ad Astra Per Aspera” (to the stars through difficulties), by promoting space science and education in Kansas.

Vision: We envision a Kansas known in the 21st century as the Ad Astra State and as a leader in space science research, development and education. Our goal is to: Interest Inform Inspire

Ad Astra Kansas Foundation

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