

40th Moon Landing Anniversary

On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon. 2009 is also the International Year of Astronomy. This is how the Mae Jemison U.S. Science Reading Room celebrated:

July 8: SKA & MeerKAT with Kim de Boer

Kim de Boer, from the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) and Karoo Array Telescope (MeerKAT) projects, gave a brilliant interactive visual presentation to fifty Mamelodi students on these two important programs. Her presentation started with a look at the Universe and where we fit in, and then went on to the MeerKAT project and South Africa's bid to host the SKA. The pupils were also treated to extraordinary photos of the Universe taken with the Hubble telescope.



July 15: Hartebeesthoek Radio Astronomy Observatory

Early on July 15, 50 Mae Jemison members boarded a bus and headed for the Hartebeesthoek Radio Astronomy Observatory (HartRAO), west of Johannesburg. The students ran experiments, toured the facility, and listened to a lecture on modern-day astronomical research. They had a great time, asking lots of questions, especially about career opportunities in science and technology. This was our first field trip, and we welcome ideas for future trips! You can read more about HartRAO on its website at <http://www.hartrao.ac.za/>.



July 29: Web Chat with NASA astronaut Daniel Tani



A lively group of 50 high school students talked with American astronaut Daniel Tani via a "web chat" at the Mae Jemison U.S. Science Reading Room. Tani was at his home in Houston when he responded to students' questions about his experiences as a NASA astronaut. Tani has served on two missions to the International Space Station and logged over four months in space. The students asked a myriad of questions ranging from the personal to the technical, but his best advice may have been to "learn how to learn" and to be passionate about your career.

August 5: The Stars

Christopher Middleton of South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) presented a very informative talk on stars at the Mae Jemison Science Reading Room. The enthusiastic audience of 60 pupils learned about different types of stars, and how stars are born. They were very excited and asking lots of questions. Mr. Middleton has offered to present an evening program, bringing a telescope to the Reading Room so that the students can take a closer look at the starry sky.



Celebrating Arbor Week in September

We have a special program on Wednesday September 16 at 2.30 p.m.: a tree planting ceremony!

In South Africa the first week of September is **Arbor Week**, also known as Iviki Lezihlahla.

We also celebrate **Heritage Day** on the 23rd. According to a University of Kwa-Zulu Natal website (<http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/>), South Africa boasts a total of eight World Heritage sites; four cultural; three natural and one mixed cultural and natural site. These are:

- ◆ iSimangaliso Wetland Park, KwaZulu-Natal
- ◆ Robben Island, Western Cape
- ◆ Cradle of Humankind, Gauteng and North West
- ◆ uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, KwaZulu-Natal
- ◆ Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape, Limpopo
- ◆ Cape Floral Region, Western and Eastern Cape
- ◆ Vredefort Dome, Free State and North West
- ◆ Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape, Northern Cape.

Our Sci-enza friends will give a presentation on SA's natural heritage, including its trees, and we will plant four trees outside the reading room:

- ◆ *Acacia galpinii* (Monkey Thorn) — Tree of the Year
- ◆ *Halleria lucida* (Tree Fuscia) — Rare Tree of the Year (1)
- ◆ *Pterocarpus rotundifolius* (Round-leaved Teak) — Rare Tree of the Year (2)
- ◆ *Portulacaria Afra* (Spekboom) — has enormous carbon-storing capabilities.



Acacia galpinii



Halleria lucida

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Theme for August: Weather & Climate

"Celebrating weather and climate may sound strange at first - sure we can celebrate a sunny day, but a tornado?"

"What we are celebrating is how much we continue to learn about the dynamic forces within our atmosphere. The scientists who investigate how to predict weather and who provide models of climate change and their impacts are providing us with valuable tools and critical information that enable us to proactively respond to situations that otherwise are out of our hands."

Theme for September: Biodiversity & Conservation

"Medical advances comprise just one of the many reasons for preserving and studying biodiversity, the quantity and variety of all living organisms. From the tiniest bacteria to elephants to humans, all biodiversity is interconnected in a complex yet fragile network of relationships. The tiniest perturbation to this network can cause its wholesale collapse, which is why we must be responsible and informed citizens of our environment."



Pterocarpus rotundifolius