

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Five Astronauts Converge in Arizona for Asteroid Day

Grounded in Arizona's unmatched asteroid legacy, Asteroid Day 2026 explores both the risks asteroids pose to our planet and the extraordinary opportunities they represent for science and exploration, June 26-27, Flagstaff, Arizona

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz., June 2026: Every year, a prize is awarded to a young scientist working on one of the most important problems our civilization faces: what to do about the rocks in space that could one day threaten life on Earth. The prize bears the name of [Rusty Schweickart](#), which is fitting. More than perhaps anyone alive, Schweickart made that problem impossible to ignore.

In 1969, as an Apollo 9 astronaut, Schweickart floated in the void above Earth and saw the planet the way very few humans ever have: fragile, luminous, and utterly alone. The experience did not leave him. In the years that followed, he became one of the foremost advocates for planetary defense, co-founding B612 Foundation to advocate for and build the science, technology, and policies needed to detect and deflect asteroids before they can do what the rock that carved a mile-wide crater into the Arizona desert did some fifty thousand years ago.

The banner features a dark space background with stars and a purple-hued horizon. At the top, logos for Asteroid Day 30 June, B612, Lowell Observatory, Meteor Crater, and Schweickart Prize are displayed. The main title 'ASTEROID DAY ARIZONA 2026' is in large white and orange letters, with 'JUNE 26 - 27 • FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA' below it. A row of six astronauts is shown: Anousheh Ansari, Steve Smith, Dr. Ed Lu, Rusty Schweickart, Nicole Stott, and Scott Manley. Below them, a list of activities includes exclusive astronaut photo opportunities, a STEM festival with Kerbal rocket contest, a Starlight Supper at Lowell Observatory, and astronaut & science presentations at Lowell and Meteor Crater. A QR code and the website 'asteroiddayaz.com' are in the bottom right.

ASTEROID DAY 30 JUNE B612 Lowell OBSERVATORY METEOR CRATER SCHWEICKART PRIZE

ASTEROID DAY ARIZONA 2026

JUNE 26 - 27 • FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA

ANOUSHEH ANSARI STEVE SMITH DR. ED LU RUSTY SCHWEICKART NICOLE STOTT SCOTT MANLEY

- Exclusive **astronaut photo opportunities**
- Free family-friendly **STEM festival** featuring Kerbal rocket contest with Scott Manley, and art workshops with astronaut Nicole Stott
- Intimate **Starlight Supper** at Lowell Observatory with Astronauts
- **Astronaut & Science presentations** at Lowell and Meteor Crater


asteroiddayaz.com

On June 27, 2026, Schweickart and his twin sons, Randy and Rusty B. Schweickart, who serve as co-chairs of the prize, will gather in Flagstaff to hand the award that bears their family name to this year's recipient. The ceremony takes place in the shadow of the observatory where Pluto was discovered, within driving distance of the first proven and best preserved impact crater on Earth, Meteor Crater. He will be

joined by four fellow astronauts, Arizona residents, and B612 supporters who have traveled from across the country for two days of science, celebration, and planetary defense.

“Every year the [Schweickart Prize](#) reminds me of why we started B612 in the first place: the scientists who will defend this planet are out there right now, early in their careers, working on ideas that most people haven’t heard of yet. This prize finds them and says: we see you, we believe in you, and this work matters. That is not a small thing.”

Rusty Schweickart, Apollo 9 astronaut and co-founder of B612 and Asteroid Day

Asteroid Day Arizona 2026 unfolds June 26–27 across two of the state's most iconic science sites, presented by Lowell Observatory, Meteor Crater, and Meteor Crater Education Alliance, with support from B612. Arizona has one of the longest and most storied relationships with asteroid science, meteoritics, and planetary discovery anywhere on Earth. This is its celebration.

Joining Schweickart are [Anousheh Ansari](#), the first Iranian-American in space and first female private space explorer; [Dr. Ed Lu](#), a three-time NASA astronaut and B612 co-founder; [Nicole Stott](#), four-time NASA astronaut and internationally recognized space artist; [Steve Smith](#), four-time Space Shuttle astronaut and Arizona native; and [Scott Manley](#), one of the most widely followed space science communicators in the world.

“Arizona isn’t just a backdrop for space exploration; it is woven into the story of how we came to understand our place in the solar system. From the ancient impact that formed Meteor Crater to the observatories that have tracked the heavens for over a century, this state has always been where humanity looks up and asks the big questions. Asteroid Day Arizona is exactly the kind of event this place deserves.”

Steve Smith, NASA astronaut and Arizona native

The programming spans two days and two of Arizona’s most iconic science sites. On Friday, June 26, SpaceFort Flagstaff opens to the public free of charge from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., offering hands-on activities, a Kerbal rocket contest with Scott Manley, art workshops with Nicole Stott, and astronaut Q&As. That evening, Lowell Observatory hosts the Starlight Supper, an intimate dinner with the astronauts under the Arizona sky. Saturday brings guided tour experiences at Meteor Crater, special scientific presentations, and the culminating prize ceremony at Lowell Observatory. Full program and ticketing at [asteroiddayaz.com](#).

“From Luxembourg to Lagos, São Paulo to Mumbai, Asteroid Day has grown into a truly global movement: hundreds of events, more than 190 countries, every June 30. But some places carry the asteroid story in the ground itself. Arizona has been asteroid country for fifty thousand years. We are just making it official.”

Danica Remy, president of B612 Foundation and co-founder of Asteroid Day

The Schweickart prize winner will be announced publicly on June 23 via a live online event open to the press and the public. Registration is available at [schweickartprize.org](#). The formal award ceremony follows on June 27 at Lowell Observatory, where Schweickart will personally present the \$10,000 grant alongside a physical prize that includes a meteorite.

Alongside the prize, Heritage Auctions will open a Space Exploration sale on June 23, featuring personally [flown](#) Apollo memorabilia from Schweickart himself, consigned by B612, with proceeds supporting the prize. Details and lot information are available [here](#).

B612 is also launching a separate [auction of unflown Schweickart memorabilia](#) today. Bidding is now open and will close at the Asteroid Day Starlight Supper at 9 pm PDT on June 26, with proceeds benefiting the Schweickart Prize.

About B612 Foundation: A United States-based nonprofit, founded in 2002, develops tools and technologies to understand, map, and navigate our solar system and protect our planet from asteroid impacts through its [Asteroid Institute](#) program and supporting educational programs, including Asteroid Day and the [Schweickart Prize](#). [Founding Circle](#) and [Asteroid Circle](#) members, as well as individual donors from 46 countries, support the work financially. For more information, visit [B612foundation.org](#) or follow on social: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Linkedin](#) or [Bluesky](#).

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