

Cultural Astronomer Danielle Adams Leads Flagstaff Dark Skies Coalition as Organization Takes on Ambitious Vision

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – As the Flagstaff community comes out to celebrate and enjoy its extraordinary view of the stars in the free Flagstaff Star Party, Sept. 26-28, at Buffalo Park, the Flagstaff Dark Skies Coalition will be led by newly appointed Interim Executive Director Danielle Adams, Ph.D., a cultural astronomer, dark sky advocate and astrotourism consultant, whose work inhabits the intersections of art and science.

"Flagstaff is not only the world's first International Dark Sky City; with 75,000 residents and an airport, it is the largest and most accessible International Dark Sky City," said Adams. "That we who live here have the Milky Way as our companion on every clear night, even from downtown, is remarkable and adds to our quality of life. I am delighted to serve as interim executive director as the organization presses into a new vision for a world in which everyone can see the Milky Way where they live."

That new vision stretches far beyond Northern Arizona with an ambitious charge: Bring the Milky Way Home. The FDSC states that it envisions a world in which everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status, can see the Milky Way in a dark sky that is cherished by their community and beneficial for all life.

The nonprofit organization, instrumental in promoting Flagstaff as the first International Dark Sky City, states: "The splendor of a night sky lit by thousands of stars has for millennia inspired and connected humanity with a shared sense of awe and wonder, yet some 80% of U.S. households live under nighttime skies that are too bright from artificial light to see more than a few hundred stars, let alone the Milky Way, and our skies continue to brighten."

"The community of Flagstaff stands out as a success story and model for other cities in stemming light pollution and restoring dark skies for the whole population, just a few of which are astronomers," said FDSC Board President Chris Luginbuhl. "Thus, the Flagstaff Dark Skies Coalition can help other communities reduce their light pollution so that everyone can see the Milky Way once again and reconnect to the night sky."

Adams invites Flagstaff residents and visitors to experience "the sublime skies of Flagstaff," during the three nights of stargazing at the Flagstaff Star Party "and learn about our exciting vision for the future," she said. Flagstaff Star Party activities begin at 6 p.m. this Thursday, Friday and Saturday. As many as two dozen telescopes and their volunteer hosts will be poised for stargazing from nightfall until 10 p.m. each night.

At 6 p.m., Thursday and Friday, Sept. 26 and 27, Lowell Observatory's Brian Skiff will take guests on a journey of the sky with "Sunset Shadows and Circles," as day transitions to night. Following this outdoor experience, Twilight Talks are scheduled for 6:45-7:15 p.m. On Thursday, National Park Service Ranger Rader Lane will share his presentation, "Touching the Stars at Grand Canyon National Park." On Friday, Lowell Observatory's Dr. Michael West will present "Guided by the Night: Can Animals See the Stars?"

At 6 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 28, the Dark Sky Quartet will perform an outdoor concert, "Night Music," as guests enjoy the crisp autumn air with night-sky inspired compositions and prepare for an evening of stargazing.

Adams has served on the FDSC Board of Directors since January 2022. With a background in cultural astronomy research, strategic marketing, revenue generation and science communications, Luginbuhl says she has been instrumental in advancing the renewed vision of FDSC and making the case for starlit skies wherever she goes.

With a dissertation on indigenous Arabian astronomy, she earned her doctorate from the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies at the University of Arizona and a minor in cultural anthropology after earning her master's degree in cultural anthropology from the University of Arkansas and studying classical Arabic literature at the American University of Beirut and Princeton University.

Adams is an organizing member of the International Astronomical Union's Commission C5 on Cultural Astronomy and a member of IAU's Working Group on Star Names, where she lends her expertise on Arabian and Islamic astronomical traditions and nomenclature. She has lived in Flagstaff since January 2019, when she arrived to work at Lowell Observatory as the chief marketing and revenue officer, a role she held until 2023.

For more information, visit www.FlagstaffStarParty.org

###