

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No. 014012

Media Contact: Anna Kate Twitty, (803) 898-4948 (o), (803) 348-6010 (c), [AnnaKate.Twitty@scmuseum.org](mailto:AnnaKate.Twitty@scmuseum.org)

## South Carolina State Museum Hosts its Grand Opening Celebration on Saturday, Aug. 16

*New planetarium, observatory and 4D theater unveiled at public grand opening*

**COLUMBIA, S.C., Thursday, Aug 7, 2014** – The South Carolina State Museum will celebrate the grand opening of its new observatory, planetarium and 4D theater from **9 a.m. – 7 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 16**. The grand opening will mark a significant moment in history, as it will be the first time in the nation a planetarium, observatory and 4D theater, plus an expansive museum, will be housed under one roof.

“This is truly an exciting and momentous time for our state,” said Willie Calloway, executive director, S.C. State Museum. “We are extremely proud of what we have accomplished and are excited for South Carolina residents and visitors to experience our new facility and programs.”

Guests are encouraged to come early because the first 100 people will receive free general admission and other free tickets and great discounts to the museum for an entire year (also known as the museum’s Family Basic Membership). To kick off the day at 9 a.m., there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony and model rockets launched by students attending the Challenger Learning Center located in Columbia, S.C.

The day will be packed full of entertainment and activities, including a special video message from South Carolina native and TV personality Stephen Colbert, planetarium shows, 4D movies, solar observing, astronomy discussions, new exhibits and galleries, live music, giveaways, balloon art, face painting and other family-friendly activities.

### Grand Opening Highlights:

- **Seven Wonders:** “Seven Wonders” will debut on the planetarium’s new immersive 55-foot digital dome projection screen. Guests can turn back the pages of time and witness the ancient wonders of the world as they have not been seen for thousands of years. This film was developed especially for large planetariums around the world and makes the most of the dome environment, showcasing stunning Hubble space telescope images. “Seven Wonders” will play continually throughout the day.
- **Ice Age Dawn of the Dinosaurs – The 4D Experience:** Get ready for an adventure of mammoth proportions in the museum’s new 4D theater with “Ice Age Dawn of the Dinosaurs – The 4D Experience!” Featured in eye-popping 3D with multisensory effects, including seat vibrations, air blasts, ankle ticklers and more, “Ice Age Dawn of the Dinosaurs” delivers more thrills, more chills and more mammoth-sized laughs for everyone! “Ice Age” will play continually throughout the day.
- **“What Galaxies Have Done For You”:** Columbia native and astronomer Dr. Molly S. Peeples will lead “What Galaxies Have Done For You” at 1 p.m. in the observatory classroom. The discussion will showcase beautiful imagery from the Hubble Space Telescope to illustrate the story behind the diversity of galaxies seen in today’s universe. Dr. Peeples works with the Space Telescope Science Institutes, which operates the science program for the Hubble Space Telescope.

– Continued –

- **Live Entertainment:** Live music, representing popular South Carolina genres, will take place throughout the day, including an eclectic mix of Americana, bluegrass and acoustic blues from Conservation Theory, Piedmont Blues from Michael King and Freddie Vanderford, African-American spirituals and uplifting gospel music from Capital City Chorale, and beach music from Heart 'n Soul.
- **Cotton Mill Exchange:** The expanded Cotton Mill Exchange museum store will be reopen in a new location in the main lobby. The store boasts a variety of gifts, apparel, jewelry, toys, books, artisan crafts and more.
- **Lobby Partners:** Three of the museum's partners, Columbia Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, South Carolina Educational Television and the South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department, have their own unique permanent spaces in the museum's new lobby. All three partners will be onsite throughout the day providing giveaways. In addition, Smart Cat, the SCETV mascot, will be onsite from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., meeting and greeting his little fans, giving high-fives and posing for pictures.
- **Solar Observing:** Solar observing opportunities will be available between 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. through the 1926 Alvan Clark 12 3/8-inch refracting telescope housed in the new observatory. The Midlands Astronomy Club will be onsite with several portable telescopes for additional solar viewing on the observatory terrace.
- **New Exhibit and Gallery Openings:**
  - **Building a Universe:** The newly renovated Lipscomb Gallery will reopen with a new contemporary art exhibit, *Building a Universe*. The exhibit features original work by 15 South Carolina artists whose work deals with space and the universe, either directly or conceptually. A wide variety of media can be found in the exhibit, including installation art, painting, printmaking, collage, sculpture and mixed media work. The exhibit will be open until Sunday, March 15, 2015.
  - **NASA Gallery:** A new permanent NASA gallery can be seen in the planetarium lobby. The gallery features interactive capabilities and artifacts from South Carolina astronauts. Some of the objects include Apollo Astronaut Charles Duke's training suit, helmet and wrist band with lunar activity instructions from his mission, as well as some of Ron McNair's objects that were recovered from the 1986 Challenger explosion.
  - **Robert B. Ariail Collection of Historical Astronomy:** The new permanent telescope gallery features an expansive collection of antique astronomical instruments dating back to 1730. This incredibly rare collection has been praised by the Antique Telescope Society as the best public collection of early American Telescopes in world. The collection includes the oldest surviving American-made observatory instrument, which is a 5.6-inch Henry Fitz made in 1849 for Erskine College in Due West, S.C.

All grand opening activities will take place at the museum, located at 301 Gervais St., Columbia, S.C. 29201. Visit [scmuseum.org](http://scmuseum.org) to learn more about the grand opening.

***About the South Carolina State Museum:*** On Oct. 29, 1988, the South Carolina State Museum opened its doors, bringing to the citizens of the Palmetto State the newest, and one of the finest, state museums in America. The Museum has four large floors devoted to the disciplines of art, history, natural history and science/technology. It houses both long-term exhibits and five changing exhibit galleries. For more information about the museum, visit [scsmuseum.org](http://scsmuseum.org) or follow @SCStateMuseum on Twitter.

####