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Festival of Science

Moab Festival of Science

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Since 2016, the annual Moab Festival of Science has featured a fantastic variety of free events to the Moab community showcasing the wonders and value of science with a special focus on Colorado Plateau science. For many years the main events – like the keynote address, a science-themed movie, other scientific talks, and even a presentation with a live, rehabilitated great-horned owl took place in the historic Star Hall. In 2020, with the outbreak of COVID-19, the Festival committee struggled with the decision of whether to cancel the event, but in the end rallied to provide the same great science outreach but in new COVID-safe format. Movies were moved outside and shown on a giant inflatable screen, talks were shifted to virtual platforms, virtual discussions broadcast via Facebook Live with panelists joining from various locations, geology tours led via a podcast, and a greater number of themed hikes. While the changes related to COVID-19 that were seen initially as an obstacle quickly revealed that there were many other ways of sharing science that we had been missing out on. Rather than struggling to pull funds together to bring well-known keynote speakers to us we found willingness in renowned presenters, such as Katharine Hayhoe, a respected climate scientist, to participate virtually in our small-town event. She joined the festival via Zoom to discuss her new book, “Saving Us: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World”. In fall 2021, for our 6th annual festival, COVID threats had declined enough that we were able to create hybrid events with a limited number of people attending in person while others still joined virtually. One of the memorable changes during the pandemic was the shift to wearing masks to limit the spread of COVID. For the Festival we normally print t-shirts to commemorate the event, in 2020 we added cloth masks for participants to wear during outdoor and indoor events. We have shared one of these masks for the USU time capsule as a sign of the times, a representation of perseverance, and celebration of the science that helped society carry on during a pandemic. The Moab community is an epicenter of cutting-edge science, scientists, and science lovers and the Moab Festival of Science is proud to join with USU to showcase and safeguard our joined love of science for the next five decades.