

Sciencenter Connection: Sciencenter Sagan Planet Walk Expands to Hawaii



TERESA SMITH

Sciencenter Connection

The Sciencenter's Sagan Planet Walk will soon be the largest exhibition in the world! On Sept. 28, the exhibition will expand from Ithaca to Hawaii to include the star nearest to the Sun, Alpha Centauri. In keeping with the 1-to-5 billion scale of the exhibition, this new star station will be located on the Big Island of Hawaii at the Imiloa Astronomy Center of the University of Hawaii. The newly expanded Sagan Planet Walk will measure 5,000 miles from end to end.

The Alpha Centauri station has been two years in the making, a partnership of the Sciencenter, Imiloa Astronomy Center, Cornell University, the University of Hawaii and NASA.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is a large volcanic stone Hawaiian figure, sculpted by world-renowned Hawaiian artist Rocky Jensen. Graphic panels describe in both English and Hawaiian the scale of the solar system, the connection to Ithaca and the ways that Alpha Centauri is used by Polynesian voyagers for navigating the Pacific Ocean. An 8-foot diameter replica of a non-instrumental star compass will also be included to help teach native Hawaiian children about their heritage and the history of navigation.

Charlie Trautmann, executive director of the Sciencenter and adjunct professor of engineering at Cornell University, will participate in the dedication ceremony, which takes place during the annual Polynesian Wayfinding and Navigation Festival at Imiloa Astronomy Center. Imiloa is a hands-on science center in Hilo focusing on astronomy and the culture of Polynesian voyaging. The festival will feature many double-hulled, ocean-going canoes, live demonstrations and other activities that celebrate the proud heritage associated with centuries of non-instrumental crossings of the Pacific Ocean.



Here in Ithaca we'll also be celebrating the expansion with a special free tour of the Sagan Planet Walk on Sept. 29. Gregory Sloan, a senior research associate of Cornell's Astronomy Department, will provide the guided tour.

Rain or shine, meet us at the Sun Station on The Commons at 3 p.m. and we'll make our way through the solar system back to the Sciencenter for some Hawaiian-inspired refreshments. Don't forget your Hawaiian shirts and leis!

Teresa Smith is the Public and Media Relations Manager at the Sciencenter. Sciencenter Connection appears the second Thursday of the month in Ticket.