

DailyCollegian.com

DESSERT'S ON US. STARTING AT \$5.99 EACH

FREE CHOCOLATE LAVA CRUNCH CAKE WITH EVERY Bread & Pastry PASTA

Categorized | News

Sunwheel tells of the coming of autumnal equinox

By: Matt Rocheleau
Published: September 22, 2009

Most college students rely on cell phones, watches, laptops or even wall calendars to keep track of the changing days and seasons, but one University of Massachusetts professor is inviting students and others from the local community to learn about one of humankind's oldest time-telling devices – the sunwheel.



Judith Young, a UMass astronomy professor, will hold the final of four informational viewings of the autumnal equinox at sunset today at 6 p.m. Previous gatherings were held at sunrise and sunset beginning on Tuesday.

The sunwheel may pale in comparison to the interactivity offered today by such programs as Google Calendar, but sunwheels have been a valuable resource for cultures dating back to 4,800 B.C. One of the most well-known examples is Stonehenge in England.

The University has hosted such gatherings for 12 years, and will celebrate 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy, according to the official website for the UMass Sunwheel, www.umass.edu/sunwheel.

A sunwheel is an outdoor stone circle. The standing stones line up with the locations on the horizon of the rising and setting sun at the times of the solstices and equinoxes.

For participants interested in learning about the sky, Young will discuss the significance of the equinoxes and solstices, the cause of the seasons and phases of the moon, and the story behind building the 130-foot diameter UMass Sunwheel, said a press release for the event. She will also discuss other calendar sites around the world, including the ancient astronomical observatories at Stonehenge and Callanish in Scotland. In addition, there will be an explanation of the moon's 18.6-year cycle, also called the major lunar standstill, the release said.

"Bring your questions, your curiosity, and be prepared for cool temperatures when the sun is down," added the release.

Wearing waterproof footwear and insect repellent is also suggested. Gathering will last for about one hour, and a \$3 suggested donation will help with the cost of additional stonework and future programs planned for the UMass Sunwheel. T-shirts and sweatshirts will be available for purchase. In the event of rain, the gathering will be cancelled.

The UMass Sunwheel is part of The Sunwheel Project, which involved the construction of sunwheels around the world, starting at UMass in 1997.

Gatherings will also be held for the winter solstice on Dec. 21 and 22 at sunrise, or around 7 a.m., and sunset, around 3:30 p.m.

The UMass Sunwheel is located south of Alumni Stadium, just off Rocky Hill Road. It can be reached from the center of Amherst, following Amity Street to the west. After crossing University Drive at the light, continue on Rocky Hill Rd. for about 1/4 mile, and make your first right onto Stadium Drive.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mrochele@dailycollegian.com.

Banking for the E-Generation

Check out mycoolbank.com

EB EASTHAMPTON SAVINGS BANK
My Bank. My Future.

Member FDIC Member NCUA Find ESB on facebook

STAY CONNECTED

DailyCollegian.com @

Twitter Facebook YouTube MySpace LinkedIn RSS

DailyCollegian.com presents:

Cirque du Soleil
in photos
by Matthew Harrison

POPULAR LATEST COMMENTS TAGS SUBSCRIBE

UMASS INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS OFFICE Education Abroad Fair

Monday, September 21
4:00-6:00 p.m.
Campus Center Auditorium

Find out how YOU can study abroad!

International Programs Office
Education Abroad
455 Hills South
413-545-5247
abroad@ipo.umass.edu www.ipo.umass.edu

FACEBOOK

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mrochele@dailycollegian.com.

This article was written by:

Matt Rocheleau - who has written 3 posts on The Daily Collegian.

Contact the author

« [PVTa tracker allows students to find arrival times online](#)

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

Submit Comment



COLLEGIAN PARTNERS

[Boston Criminal Defense Attorney](#)

[Boston Personal Injury Lawyer](#)

[Certificate of Deposit](#)

[Get Free Credit Report](#)

[Personalized Water Bottles](#)

MEDIA AFFILIATES

[The Amherst Wire](#) A Web-based news magazine and Collegian media partner.

[UVC-TV 19 UMass'](#) student-run TV station and Collegian media partner