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CONTACT: Laura Heisler, laura@warf.org; Samantha Mulrooney, smulrooney@warf.org

Explore nearly 300 virtual and in-person events at the 11th annual Wisconsin Science Festival

From "magic" mushrooms to a celebration of the stars, the 2021 [Wisconsin Science Festival](#) is back in full swing October 21-24. This year's festival will feature nearly 300 events in over 40 counties throughout Wisconsin.

Activities include a variety of in-person and virtual activities including hands-on science experiments, Q&As with scientists, demonstrations, performances, readings and more – along with take-home activities such as [Science in a Bag](#).

[Laura Heisler](#), director of the festival and programming for the [Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation](#) and the [Morgridge Institute for Research](#), says the festival is the perfect event to engage youth in science.

“I think it’s a way of having fun with science,” Heisler says. “Getting to talk with scientists who look like you do and who can share their experiences is a hallmark of the festival. There aren’t that many opportunities for kids, and adults for that matter, to get to talk to scientists and share their passion.”

The festival will kick off with [Big Ideas for Busy People: How Do We Know What We Know – The Role of Evidence in Advancing Understanding](#), a fast-paced event featuring five-minute talks from some of UW-Madison’s biggest brains. Big Ideas has been one of the most popular events for the past several years, and this year our scientists will delve into the role evidence plays in our scientific discoveries.

This year’s festival also features a special focus on all things fungi, from a panel on the role that psychedelic compounds can play in medicine to how to identify beneficial and harmful mushrooms to celebrating the importance of fungi in many of Wisconsin’s legacy industries like cheese making and brewing.

Heisler and her team noted that they learned a great deal from last year’s virtual festival and were grateful for the opportunity to engage with a wider variety of youth across the state of Wisconsin. Despite all the frustrations and constraints of the pandemic, they were still able to connect with people and spark an interest in science — festival attendance increased by approximately 30% to more than 43,000 people across Wisconsin.

[Sam Mulrooney](#), program manager for the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, has worked tirelessly alongside the [Madison Central Business Improvement District](#) to bring back Science on the Square. This year, Science on the Square will be joined by the Madison Night Market for a night you won’t want to miss.

“Science is everywhere, and the Night Market in downtown Madison is the perfect place to showcase it,” Mulrooney says. “Meeting people where they are and highlighting the science and art that happens all around us is what makes this event so unique and accessible. Science on the Square has always been one of the most inspiring parts of the Festival for me.”

Check the [Wisconsin Science Festival](#) website for more detailed information about the full festival schedule.

Highlighted events include:

[Big Ideas for Busy People: How Do We Know What We Know – The Role of Evidence in Advancing Understanding](#)

This popular, fast-paced event featuring five-minute flash talks from some of UW-Madison's biggest brains is back! Join us for a fun-filled evening at the Discovery Building – moderated by Eric Wilcots, Dean of the College of Letters & Science – as we explore how we know what we know.

Details: Thursday, October 21, 7:00 p.m. held at the Discovery Building and virtually

[Science on the Square / Madison Night Market](#)

Back for its fourth year, the ever-popular Science on the Square event is fusing with the Madison Night Market to create a unique way to explore hands-on science activities while also supporting local businesses and vendors. Learn more about the science that surrounds us every day.

Outdoor STEM-themed activities will mix with Madison Night Market vendor tents throughout State Street. Indoor locations will showcase specialty cocktails or interesting exhibits for you to check out. And don't forget to hunt for our hidden [Beeslys](#) for your chance to earn great prizes!

Details: Friday, October 22, 5:00 p.m. held in Downtown Madison

[Culturas Celestiales: Astronomy in Chile](#)

Celebrate Latinx Heritage Month with stars, stories and cultural perspectives throughout Latin America. Hosted by the Manfred Olson Planetarium at UW-Milwaukee, this event features astronomer Antonio Hales at the ALMA Observatory who will take audiences on a virtual guide of the Chilean night sky. Chile is known as the "Capital of Astronomy" because of its very dark, clear skies.

Details: Friday, October 22, 7:00 p.m. held virtually

[Magic Mushrooms? New Research on Fungus Derived Hallucinogens at UW-Madison and Beyond](#)

Psychedelic compounds from fungi and other plant sources are being studied in combination with psychotherapy for the treatment of a number of mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, PTSD and addiction. UW-Madison has launched a new transdisciplinary center and master's degree program to support the next generation of research on the potential value of these psychoactive agents to address a range of conditions and contexts. Wisconsin Public Radio's Steve Paulson and a distinguished panel of experts will explore what we know about these compounds, how they work, and their role and impact across cultures.

Details: Saturday, October 23, 12:30 p.m. held at the Discovery Building and virtually

[Free Outdoor Movies with the Madison Mallards](#)

Back for its second year, join the Wisconsin Science Festival and Madison Mallards for a fantastic night of outdoor movie events featuring mesmerizing mushrooms and a world of wonder! Featured films

include *Fantastic Fungi* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Before the lights go down, explore self-guided fungi displays and information presented by Wisconsin mycology experts!

Must register to attend as spaces are limited.

Details: Saturday, October 23, 5:30 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. held at the Madison Mallards Duck Pond

[Tea and Tech: Girls' STEM Day](#)

Ada Lovelace Day is an international holiday that recognizes the achievements of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Girls ages 8–17 can participate in this Ada Lovelace Day-inspired day of activities sponsored by the Mead Public Library in Sheboygan. Special guest mentors include Isabel Mendiola of Gearbox Labs, Brooke Brighton of Spectrum Weather and Laser Tech FTC. Keynote presenter is Dr. Julia Cline of NASA Langley Research Center.

Must register to attend as spaces are limited.

Details: Saturday, October 23, 10:00 a.m. held virtually

[Wisconsin Book Festival: Fuzz \(Mary Roach in Conversation with Joshua Foer\)](#)

Join “America’s funniest science writer,” Mary Roach, on an irresistible investigation into the unpredictable world where wildlife and humans meet. Roach will discuss her newest book, “Fuzz”, in conversation with Joshua Foer, author of *Moonwalking with Einstein*.

Details: Sunday, October 24, 11:00 a.m. held virtually

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