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CONTACT: Cher Murphy  
[cher@chermurphypr.com](mailto:cher@chermurphypr.com)  
(571) 263-2128

## **Meet a NASA Astronaut at WonderWorks, As Science & Space Fans Enjoy an Intergalactic Weekend**

**PIGEON FORGE, Tennessee – (September 18, 2017)** – WonderWorks in Pigeon Forge has planned a temporary exhibit that is out of this world, and everyone is invited to blast off with it. The indoor park that combines amusement and educational opportunities is hosting a NASA exhibit from October 5-8, 2017 that will focus on the amazing world of science and the planets. The exhibit will feature scaled models of spacecraft and a virtual reality experience of NASA's new rocket, the Space Launch System. There will also be artifacts such as a real moon rock that people can touch, and a meet and greet with former space shuttle astronaut Captain Robert "Hoot" Gibson. The fun and educational exhibit is slated to help further interest in STEM education and careers and is ideal for all ages.

"This is such an exciting exhibit for people and we are thrilled to be hosting it," states Ed Shaffer, General Manager for WonderWorks. "Being able to meet a real astronaut and touch a moon rock is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and one that you don't want to miss."

The NASA exhibit will kick off with Captain Gibson visiting local middle schools to speak to students about his experience being in space. He will be at WonderWorks in Pigeon Forge on Saturday, October 7, 2017. Meet and greet opportunities are from 11 a.m. to noon, 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., and from 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., where he will answer questions, pose for photos, and give autographs. Media interviews will also be available.

The NASA exhibit will feature:

- The Exploration Systems virtual tour allows participants to experience the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket and Orion spacecraft up close as they sit on the mobile launcher at Kennedy Space Center. Users will be transported to

Launchpad 39B where they will receive a brief overview of the different components that make up the most powerful rocket ever built, the SLS. Once the overview is complete, they will then be placed inside an Orion Spacecraft virtual environment prior to launch.

- Guest will be able to take and print a photo of themselves in a spacesuit with either an SLS, Orion, Mars rover, or International Space Station background. This is a one-of-a-kind keepsake!
- Space Launch System 1:50 scale model on a mobile launcher and a 1:20 scale Orion Spacecraft table top model.
- Touchable moon rock from the Apollo 17 mission.

“We are ready to grow interest in space explorations,” added Shaffer. “There will be plenty of opportunities for pictures, asking questions, and observing, making it an amazing experience for all.”

Capt. Robert “Hoot” Gibson served as a NASA astronaut from 1979 until 1996 and is a veteran of five space shuttle flights. He has logged more than 36 days in space, including having commanded the first docking of the space shuttle to the Russian space station Mir. He is also a graduate of the TOPGUN Navy Fighter Weapons School.

WonderWorks in Pigeon Forge offers 35,000 square feet of “edu-tainment” opportunities, billing itself as an amusement park for the mind. They offer over 100 hands-on exhibits covering natural disasters, space discovery, an imagination lab, a physical challenge zone, a far out art gallery, and a light and sound zone. WonderWorks is open daily from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. For more information or to register for the event, log onto their site: <https://www.wonderworksonline.com/pigeon-forge/nasa-journey-mars/>.

### **About WonderWorks**

WonderWorks, a science focused indoor amusement park, combines education and entertainment. With over 100 hands-on exhibits – there is something unique and challenging for all ages. Feel the power of 71mph hurricane–force winds in the

*Hurricane Shack*. Make huge, life-sized bubbles in the *Bubble Lab*. Get the NASA treatment in our *Astronaut Training Gyro* and experience zero gravity. Nail it by lying on the death-defying *Bed of Nails*. Conquer your fear of heights on our indoor *Glow-In-The-Dark Ropes Course*. WonderWorks is also home to Wonders of Magic, starring Terry Evanswood, the award-winning and longest running performer in Pigeon Forge. WonderWorks hosts birthday parties and special events seasonally. Open daily from 9 a.m. until midnight. <https://www.wonderworksonline.com/pigeon-forge>.

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