**ASTEROID DAY RETURNS TO CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF DEDICATED ASTEROID MISSIONS**

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**LUXEMBOURG (11 February 2021) --** Asteroid Foundation’s annual Asteroid Day will return on 30 June. The theme for this year will be the 25th launch anniversary of NASA’s NEAR-Shoemaker spacecraft, and the 2021 launch of three new asteroid missions, NASA’s Lucy, NEA Scout and DART – the world’s first mission to test an asteroid deflection technique.

On 17 February 1996, NASA launched the Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous (NEAR)-Shoemaker mission. It was the first mission dedicated to exploring asteroids and it became the first mission to orbit and touch down on an asteroid – paving the way for all future asteroid missions.

Now it’s time for another milestone mission: NASA’s Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) mission.

The Chelyabinsk meteor, which shook the skies over Russia on 15 February 2013, was a startling wake up call that asteroids will occasionally hit Earth. DART will open a new frontier in asteroid science and planetary defence by impacting asteroid Dimorphos in a carefully controlled attempt to measurebly shift its orbit. Then ESA’s Hera mission will survey the impact effects of DART on Dimorphos.

All major space agencies now take asteroids very seriously. In 2020 alone there was a surge in activity. In September, ESA awarded a contract to OHB to build HERA. In October, NASA’s OSIRIS-REx mission collected samples from asteroid Bennu, and in December, JAXA’s Hayabusa2 returned samples of asteroid Ryugu to Earth for analysis.

Asteroid Day’s theme of 25 years of asteroid missions will be promoted throughout the month of June, kicking off with Asteroid Day TV June 1st. This year’s programme will include interviews with key personnel from the missions of yesterday and tomorrow. It will explore how technologies have changed, what scientific surprises were waiting on the asteroids, how the goals of the missions have evolved, and what the future has in store for asteroid research and planetary defence.

“We’re looking forward to producing this year’s Asteroid Day festivities virtually from Luxembourg. We have been fortunate to have had partners like Broadcasting Center Europe and SES, who have allowed us to disseminate professional video content worldwide via satellites and streaming,” says Asteroid Day Programme Director Colleen Fiaschetti, “We’re especially excited about this year’s theme. With the launch of the first-ever asteroid deflection test mission in July and the continued strengthening of global coordination between space agencies, it’s the perfect time to reflect on how far we have come and inspire the next generations of space explorers.”

In addition, Asteroid Day’s extensive network of volunteers organise thousands of independent events around the world, making it a truly global day of education and awareness. Upcoming events include: on 15 February the organizers of [Asteroid Day Israel speak with OSIRIS-REx instrument scientist Dr Amy Simon](https://asteroidday.org/resources/asteroid-learning/amy-simon-the-osiris-rex-adventures/); on 18 February the students on educational online peer to peer platform [iDialogue speak with cosmonaut and Asteroid Foundation Vice Chair Dumitru-Dorin Prunariu](https://asteroidday.org/resources/asteroid-learning/idialogue-asteroid-foundation-astronaut-dorin-prunariu/).

Asteroid Day has been made possible thanks to partnerships with the [Association of Space Explorers](http://www.space-explorers.org/), [Broadcasting Center Europe (BCE)](http://www.bce.lu/), the [B612 Foundation](http://b612foundation.org/), [SES](https://www.ses.com/), the [European Space Agency](https://www.esa.int/), [Euro-Composites](https://www.euro-composites.com/en/), [OHB Systems](https://www.ohb-system.de/main-company.html), the [Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce](https://www.cc.lu/accueil/), the [Luxembourg Space Agency](https://space-agency.public.lu/) and [Twitch](https://www.twitch.tv/).

“Luxembourg has established itself as an international hub for the space economy, the research and exploration of space over decades. A center of excellence and a driver of innovative and disruptive technologies and business ideas. A start-up nation, champion of federating international partners and forces and founding alliances across all borders. It is the ideal hub and home for the Asteroid Day and the Asteroid Foundation. We are looking at space as an enormous opportunity and a rich resource to improve our life on Earth, to develop our economies, societies and environment. Luxembourg has a vision and we are happy to be part of it,” says Markus Payer, Asteroid Foundation Board Chair.

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**Asteroid Day:**

[Asteroid Day](https://asteroidday.org/) is held on 30 June each year to mark the date of Earth’s largest asteroid impact in recorded history, the Siberia Tunguska event. Asteroid Day was co-founded by astrophysicist and famed musician [Dr Brian May](https://asteroidday.org/people/dr-brian-may/) of the rock group Queen, Apollo 9 astronaut [Rusty Schweickart](https://asteroidday.org/people/rusty-schweickart/), filmmaker [Grig Richters](https://asteroidday.org/people/grigorij-richters/), and B612 President [Danica Remy](https://b612foundation.org/members/danica-remy/), to educate the public about the importance of asteroids in our history and the role they play in the solar system. In 2016, with the leadership of the Association of Space Explorers (ASE), the United Nations declared Asteroid Day to be a global day of education to raise awareness and promote knowledge in the general public about asteroids. Major events in past years have taken place in London, San Francisco, Washington, DC, Tanzania, Milan and Rimini, Italy; Garching, Germany; and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; in addition to [thousands of events worldwide](https://asteroidday.org/events/?tribe_eventcategory=2&tribe_event_display=past). Asteroid Day’s core programs comprise Asteroid Day TV and Asteroid Day LIVE. Over the past six years, Asteroid Day has evolved to include the participation of major space organizations such as ESA, NASA, JAXA, Roscosmos and ISRO, as well as prominent scientists, astronomers, educators and media worldwide. Asteroid Day is a programme of the Luxembourg-based nonprofit Asteroid Foundation.

**About Asteroid Foundation:**

Asteroid Foundation was formed in 2017 with a mission to promote worldwide awareness of asteroid opportunities and challenges, and the emerging space economy. The Asteroid Foundation undertakes programmes and activities to support scientists, engineers and students around the world providing free educational tools, newsletters, original articles and resources year round. Annually, the Foundation organizes events surrounding International Asteroid Day, a United Nations recognized day of education and awareness observed on 30 June. Visit their [Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/182871239%40N02/albums) account to see pictures from previous events. <https://asteroidfoundation.org/>

**About Association of Space Explorers**

Founded in 1985, the Association of Space Explorers (ASE) is an international nonprofit 510c3 professional and educational organization of more than 400 flown astronauts and cosmonauts from 38 nations. ASE’s International Committee on Near Earth Objects (NEO), chaired by former astronaut Tom Jones, works to promote global awareness of the asteroid impact threat. ASE delivers subject matter expertise and the astronaut perspective on key topics in the NEO hazard space, including developments in planetary defense, advancements in NEO discovery and characterization, and impactor mitigation campaign design. ASE NEO Committee members also support the bi-annual IAA Planetary Defence Conference and the annual Asteroid Day event in Luxembourg.

<https://www.space-explorers.org/>

**About B612**

B612 is dedicated to protecting Earth from asteroid impacts. It does this by driving forward science and technologies needed to protect the Earth from asteroid impacts through the Asteroid Institute. It educates the public, the scientific community, and world governments about asteroids through programs such as Asteroid Day. Since the organization’s inception in 2002, its work has been carried out entirely through the support of private donors. What started in 2002 as a visionary idea to develop the technology to deflect an asteroid has grown into a world-renowned organization and scientific institute with a key role in the emerging field of planetary defense. [www.b612foundation.org](http://www.b612foundation.org)

**About BCE**

Broadcasting Center Europe (BCE) is a European leader in media services, system integration and software development in the areas of television, online video, streaming, radio, production and postproduction, telecommunication and IT. With its extensive experience on the media market, our team provides high-quality services and will always find the solution that matches your project and budget. With more than 200 highly qualified and motivated people, BCE serves about 400 clients in various sectors, such as TV channels, radio stations, film distributors, producers, advertising companies, sports federations, fashion, events, institutions and telecommunications operators.

[www.bce.lu](http://www.bce.lu/)

**About ESA**

The European Space Agency (ESA) is Europe’s gateway to space. Its mission is to shape the development of Europe’s space capability and ensure that investment in space continues to deliver benefits to the citizens of Europe and the world. ESA is an international organisation with 22 Member States. ESA's programmes are designed to find out more about Earth, its immediate space environment, our Solar System and the Universe, as well as to develop satellite-based technologies and services, and to promote European industries. By coordinating the financial and intellectual resources of its members, it can undertake programmes and activities far beyond the scope of any single European country. <http://www.esa.int>

**About Luxembourg Space Agency**

Luxembourg Space Agency (LSA) develops the space sector in Luxembourg by fostering new and existing companies, developing human resources, facilitating access to funding, and supporting academic research. The agency implements the national space economic development strategy, manages national space research and development programs, and leads the SpaceResources.lu initiative. Furthermore, the LSA represents Luxembourg within the European Space Agency and space-related programs of the European Union and the United Nations. <https://space-agency.public.lu/>

**Join the Asteroid Day conversation on Social Media:**

* Hashtags: #AsteroidDay #AsteroidDayLIVE #AsteroidDayTV
* Website: [AsteroidDay.org](https://asteroidday.org/)
* TwitchTV: [www.twitch.tv/asteroidday](http://www.twitch.tv/asteroidday)
* Twitter: [@asteroidday](https://twitter.com/AsteroidDay)
* Facebook: [www.facebook.com/AsteroidDay](http://www.facebook.com/AsteroidDay)
* YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/asteroidday](https://www.youtube.com/user/asteroidday)
* Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/asteroidday> asteroidday

**A Media Kit,** including quotes, photos, video, and B-roll, is available in the [Asteroid Day Newsroom.](https://asteroidday.org/resources/asteroid-day-press-kit/) [Photos from 2019 Asteroid Day Luxembourg](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v1WcBYLtxEycHDeachfgwkNVR_29iisMenwJDltWb_M/edit?usp=sharing) activities are available.

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