

# Mayor Dickey presents at Smithsonian 'Lights Out' exhibit



**Fountain Hills Mayor Ginny Dickey greets visitors at the Smithsonian Institution's dark sky exhibit in Washington, D.C. Photos courtesy of Jim and Ginny Dickey.**

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The Town of Fountain Hills is featured as part of an exhibit in the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. Lights Out: Recovering Our Night Sky is a 4,340-square-foot exhibition about the global loss of the night sky to light pollution.

The exhibit opened on March 23 and has since hosted thousands of visitors to learn the history of lighting, the connection between humanity and the night sky, the unintended consequences of excessive outdoor lighting and the principles people can use to reduce light pollution. Fountain Hills was included in the exhibition to show visitors that they can find ways to experience the night sky in their communities, wherever they are.

On Thursday, July 6, Mayor Ginny Dickey was on hand at the exhibit sharing the Fountain Hills journey to becoming an International Dark Sky Community.

“Somewhere in Chile, two kids are walking around with Fountain pins on their collars. A family from Arkansas, too,” Mayor Dickey said. “People in Indiana, West Virginia, Texas and more are

wearing our State 48 T-shirts and raising interest and curiosity about the Dark Sky Community of Fountain Hills, Ariz.,” Dickey said.

Along with the museum visitors, Rep. David Schweikert’s (AZ-1) office staff and interns stopped by to chat and learn about the dark skies in their home district and snap a photo.

“Some of the comments and questions demonstrated lots of curiosity in how to become dark sky-friendly and curiosity about how it affects everyday life. The most revealing one was, ‘If we visited Fountain Hills, how would we get to the place where you can see the stars and planets, is there a shuttle?’ They were taken by surprise that you can see them virtually from anyplace,” Dickey said. “It was exciting to share the process and the intriguing International Dark Sky Discovery Center plans and photos. There was also a great deal of interest in the Fountain, as you can imagine.”

Due to the Town’s dedication to protecting local night skies through public policy, promoting quality outdoor lighting and outreach to residents and visitors, in Fountain Hills people can still glimpse the Milky Way, even with skyglow from nearby Phoenix. The International Dark Sky Association accredited the town as an International Dark Sky Community as a result of these efforts in 2018.

Dickey and her husband, Jim, were planning a trip to the Washington, D.C., area.

“Jim suggested we contact the museum and after reaching out to the Office of Education, Outreach and Visitor Experience, we had a plan,” Dickey said.

Staff invited Dickey to share Fountain Hills’ story as part of the museum’s “Experts Within” program.

“We even got a glimpse of the offices and storage areas, which reminded us of the prop room at the Santa Fe Opera where our nephew worked,” she said. “Long-time Fountain Hills friend Carol Comito, who recently moved to Washington, met us at the exhibit and got the tour.”

Dickey admits a primer on the Smithsonian Institute would have been helpful, as several people asked her how to get to the aeronautical building or when the next star-gazing film was starting, or even if she considered standing still and scaring people.

“One man said he couldn’t believe there was a live person there and high-fived me,” Dickey added. “It’s good to know that there are a couple of hundred more people in the world that know about LED lights and how to make them dimmer, astro-tourism, animals and the night sky, the IDSDC (International Dark Sky Discovery Center) and the incredible Town of Fountain Hills, Arizona.”

To learn more about Fountain Hills dark skies, visit [fhdarksky.com](http://fhdarksky.com) and check out the planned International Dark Sky Discovery Center at [darkskycenter.org](http://darkskycenter.org).