

Heads to Sky! SIUE's LRC Co-Hosts Solar Eclipse Viewing and Party

by Patricia Merritt
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EDWARDSVILLE - With the unofficial theme song of Bonnie Tyler's "Total Eclipse of the Heart" blaring from speakers and enjoying cooler temperatures under a darkened sky, more than 100 people raised their shaded faces to the sky to view the area's 2024 total solar eclipse.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville East St. Louis Center and Southwestern Illinois College students, staff, teachers and administrators, and community members assembled Monday, April 8 for the 2024 solar eclipse that was in the path of 99.09 percent totality on the grounds of the Wyvetter H. Younge Higher Education Campus in East St. Louis.

"It's a natural phenomenon that doesn't come around every year," said Mildred Fort, science, and Professional Learning Communities (PLC) leader at the SIUE East St. Louis Charter High School (CHS). "Our earth sciences students are studying astronomy and are currently looking at the sun, moon and Earth system, and how they relate to and impact each other. This is a perfect example."

"I see the sun looking like the moon," said Jaiden Wells, CHS junior, after her many glances at the sky. "We learned about it in science class. It's going to get really dark and cool very soon. This is a fun event. I like everyone coming together. It's like a family reunion."

"It's great because it's going to be an especially exciting moment," said CHS senior Aaliyah Coleman.

“I believe deeply in the connection to nature,” said Julia Parker, a sophomore studying horticulture at Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville. “Anything to do with the outdoors, I’m there.”

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” said Angie Stewart-Brown, SWIC director of the East St. Louis campus. “We believe in forever learning. Why not experience something you don’t experience every day?”

“I wanted to be part of history,” said Leverne Backstrom, president of the East St. Louis Arts Coalition. “This is a remarkable event, and I enjoy nature.” Backstrom is a retired teacher and retired president of the Katherine Dunham Center in East St. Louis.

“Exciting. Exciting. Exciting,” said Liza Cummings, PhD, CHS assistant director. “I’m so proud that the scholars got a chance to witness this infrequent event. The sliver of darkness was exciting!”

During the event, eclipse glasses were distributed and cookies, juice, snow cones and other refreshments were provided. Also available were string and clear beads, which change colors in sunlight, to those wanting to make bracelets.

The solar eclipse event was hosted and coordinated by SIUE and SWIC.



Photos:

People converged on the grounds of the Wyvetter H. Younge Higher Education Campus to witness the 2024 total solar eclipse. The individuals in the photos are mentioned below.

L-R: Preparing snow cones are CHS Nurse Marquita Holton, and CHS students Keya Anderson, Laylah Leech and Aaliyah Coleman. Showing off their snacks before the moon event are Angie Stewart-Brown, SWIC director of the East St. Louis campus, and Julia Parker, a sophomore studying horticulture at Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville.

L-R: Three CHS students take in a pre-show of the solar eclipse: Anaya Jackson, T' Niyah Black and Chross Mister. A group of SIUE Head Start/Early Head Start employees preview the "coming attraction."

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