

Watch Space Launch Of Boy Scout Troop's Experiment In Arlington Heights

A viewing party will be held for the launch that sends a biology project designed by Troop 209 scouts to the International Space Station.

Posted Fri, Aug 11, 2017 at 1:26 am CT



PALATINE, IL — A biology experiment created by a Palatine-based Boy Scout troop will rocket to the International Space Station early next week, and village residents will be able to watch it take off. Boy Scout Troop 209 is holding a viewing party in Arlington Heights for the launch of the project, which involves how

gravity affects DNA, aboard the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket Monday from Kennedy Space Center in Florida, according to the troop. The event and some of the behind-the-scenes action from the scouts' perspective also will be aired live on Facebook.

The project was designed by 12 scouts in the troop, along with the help of Norman McFarland — a retired engineer and longtime Boy Scout volunteer who was the experiment's adult point-person — and 13 other adult volunteers. It's the result of a collaboration between the Boy Scouts' Chicago-based Pathway to Adventure Council and the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space, the nonprofit that manages the US National Laboratory aboard the ISS.

Using a process called the Ames test, the troop's experiment will compare DNA's mutation rate in space's microgravity environment versus the greater gravity on Earth. Findings from the project could aid other scientific research, such as tissue growth and cancer. The scouts worked more than 5,200 hours over two years developing the experiment. (Get Patch real-time email alerts for the latest [Arlington Heights](#) news. And iPhone users: Check out [Patch's new app](#).)

“I remember at the beginning of the project [our leaders] told us that there are researchers in their 40s, 50s, older than us, who would die for a chance to do this,” Stephen Ma, a 13-year-old eighth-grader at Walter P. Sundling Junior High School, said in a statement from Community Consolidated School District 15. He's joined by another District 15 eighth-grader, SaipranavVenkatakrishnan, who attends Carl Sandburg Junior High School.

“We're all pretty excited to watch it go up,” Ma added.

Ten of the scouts — the students attend Palatine-area schools and range in age from 11 to 18 — will travel to Florida to watch the launch in person. Closer to home, the Pathway to Adventure Council's viewing party will be celebrating the launch with a bit of space-themed flair. Attendees will be able to watch the event on TVs inside a bus designed to resemble NASA's retired space shuttle. Viewers also will be able to talk to members of the experiment team via Skype.

"I am just so proud of this team," McFarland said in a statement from the Boy Scouts. "We started with young students and they have developed into young engineers, building, testing, resolving issue by issue until we have reached a final solution."

How to Watch the Launch

When: Monday, Aug. 14. The launch is scheduled for 11:31 a.m. The viewing party will be from 11 a.m. to noon.

Where: The viewing party will be at the Boy Scouts' Pathway to Adventure Council office, 617 E. Golf Road, Suite 101, Arlington Heights

Tickets: The event is free, but those planning to attend should contact the Boy Scouts via email. Go to [the viewing party's website](#) for more information.

Live-streaming video: The launch, as well as the activities leading up to it, [will be aired live](#) on the council's Facebook page. Check the page for the broadcasts' schedules.

Paying for the Florida trip: A [GoFundMe page](#) has been created to help fund the scouts' trip to Kennedy Space Center for the launch. So far, nearly \$1,500 has been raised for a goal of \$17,000. The project also has received contributions from the Men's Club of First United Methodist Church in Palatine (the troop's charter organization), the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space, Texas A&M University, NanoRacks and Sparkfun.

The time and date of the launch are subject to change because of weather or other complications.

Members of Palatine-based Boy Scout Troop 209 designed a biological experiment that will be rocketed to the International Space Station on Monday, Aug. 14. They include: (first row, from left) Stephen Ma, Harmon Bhasin, Elliot Lee, Saipranav Venkatakrishnan, Alex Safonov, (back row) Ben Carlsen, Andrew Frank, Ian Malek, and Daniel Yu. (Photo via Community Consolidated School District 15)