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## Space auction promises the moon: Astronauts sign on, suit up for charity

Ever wanted to shoot the breeze with a legendary moonwalker? Own a genuine relic of space travel from an astronaut's personal collection? Don a real astronaut flight suit? Now's your chance to bid on these and other cool space artifacts in the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation's seventh annual Astronaut Experiences and Memorabilia Auction at [www.astronautscholarship.org/auction](http://www.astronautscholarship.org/auction).

Like no auction around, this one offers unique lots like Diamond Seats at an Astros' Baseball Game with the last man to walk on the moon, Gene Cernan; dinner with Apollo 13 Commander Jim Lovell; an American flag that flew to the moon; and the first female space shuttle pilot and commander's NASA training shirt.

"Every last penny raised from this auction will go directly to support college students pursuing degrees in science and technology," said Apollo 16 astronaut Charlie Duke. "There are only so many space artifacts out there, so this is a way for folks to obtain an authentic space item while helping a great organization."

Mr. Duke is one of 70 astronauts from the Mercury to Space Shuttle programs, who have donated an artifact, signature or time to this cause. Twelve of the 50 auction lots are one-on-one experiences with hero astronauts, while the others boast autographed memorabilia, items flown into space and astronauts' personal relics.

All the lots are available for viewing now at [www.astronautscholarship.org/auction](http://www.astronautscholarship.org/auction). The launch window for bidding closes Nov. 7 at 10 p.m. Winning bids, over



COURTESY PHOTO

**Auction item lot 6: Fly High with Astronaut Sam Gernar in a 1942 Bi-Plane.**

fair market value, should be considered a charitable donation.

All auction proceeds go directly to support the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation, a 501(c)(3), nonprofit organization established in 1984 by the six surviving members of America's original Mercury astronauts. Its mission is to aid the United States in retaining its world leadership in science and technology by providing scholarships for college students who exhibit motivation, imagination, and exceptional performance in these fields. Today, more than 80 astronauts from the Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, Space Shuttle and Space Station programs have joined in this educational endeavor and in all, have disbursed \$2.8 million to students nationwide. For more information, call (321) 455-7015 or visit [www.AstronautScholarship.org](http://www.AstronautScholarship.org). ■

## 'Becoming Cosmopolitan' set for Nov. 19 at The Veranda restaurant

In celebration of the cosmopolitan lifestyle in Southwest Florida, this year's "Becoming Cosmopolitan" event is giving women what they love most: fashion, pampering and chocolate, thanks to the participation of several vendors in the community.

Community Cooperative Ministries' fourth annual "Becoming Cosmopolitan" event will be held from 6-9 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19, at The Veranda Restaurant in downtown Fort Myers.

"The generous support of these local charitable businesses helps make this fabulous event possible," said Sarah Owen, CEO of CCMI. "We are so appreciative of their services that will offer attendees glamorous shopping from artwork and jewelry to spa packages and travel destinations."

This year's list of vendors includes Gabby Gator, Wallace Gallery, Geraci Travel/Tauck World Discoveries/Culturious, Advanced Closet & Storage, The Shell Factory, Noble Jewelers and Esterra Spa at The Resort at Marina Village.

Items already in hand for the live and silent auction include deluxe spa packages, girlfriend getaways, hotel stays, jewelry, beauty treatments, sporting events, artwork, dining packages and more. Donations for the event's live and silent auctions are still being accepted.

More than 200 local women attended last fall's event and helped raise over \$38,000 for CCMI.

According to CCMI, the amount of the event ticket provides one month of Montessori Preschool Education to a child of a working poor family; three months of emergency food to a family of four who is struggling; a Parent Training scholarship to a single mother who wants to learn how to read to her child; one month of hot meals to a family living in their car; or sponsors a weekend backpack for a child for an entire school year.



Fox News 92.5 host Mandy Connell will serve as the evening's celebrity hostess and "world's worst auctioneer." A local celebrity Santa will also make an appearance during the evening, passing out "Naughty" and "Nice" stickers and gifts to attendees. With each paid ticket, attendees will receive a Gentleman Caller Card allowing free entrance at 8:30 p.m. for a male friend or significant other.

CCMI is the umbrella agency for the Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry, Meals on Wheels, Senior Transportation, the Montessori Preschool of Dunbar and Family and Homeless Services. CCMI serves Fort Myers and the greater Lee County area, including Bonita Springs, Cape Coral and Lehigh Acres. The Soup Kitchen serves a noontime meal six days a week to men, women, and children. In addition, CCMI prepares and delivers nutritious packaged meals and beverages for the homebound hungry, offers a food pantry and mobile food pantries that provide emergency groceries to families in need, serves two nutritious meals a day for the children in their Montessori Preschool and oversees a backpack program for local schoolchildren who would otherwise receive little to no food on weekends.

Tickets to the event are now available for \$100 each at [www.CCMILeeCounty.com/Cosmo](http://www.CCMILeeCounty.com/Cosmo). The first 100 online registrants will receive a special invitation to the Saks Fifth Avenue VIP Party with fashion giveaways. A limited number of "BFF" VIP tables for four are available for \$1,000. For tickets or more information, call 332-7687. ■