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First Exeter UFO Festival is Saturday, Sept. 5

Jennifer Feals | Portsmouth Herald

EXETER — Believers and skeptics alike will find out just what an out-of-this-world community Exeter is this weekend during the town's first UFO Festival.

Exeter is considered a mecca for when it comes to ufology, particularly because of an event that took place in 1965, during which Norman Muscarello reportedly witnessed a hovering craft with five red flashing lights. Following his report, a series of similar stories throughout the area began emerging and the incident was captured in the book titled "Incident in Exeter," which has become a UFO classic.

"Exeter is just a nice little place — like a postage stamp you could fit on the top of a building in Boston or New York," said local UFO researcher John Oswald of Hampton. "However, we are world-class when it comes to ufology.

"Exeter is the smoking gun," he said. "The buck stops at Exeter." The Exeter UFO Festival will be held from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. in downtown Exeter on Saturday, Sept. 5, with events such as a UFO Children's Charity Art Show, chalk drawings, UFO construction for kids using recycled materials, a simulated alien crash site and debris field, an "E.T." costume contest, and a 1960s rock 'n' roll dance.

Also scheduled are discussions with authors Kathleen Marden of "Captured! The Betty and Barney Hill UFO Experience;" Peter Robbins of "The Power of Ridicule vs. A Most Uncomfortable Truth: Why We Need to Take UFO's Seriously;" Peter Geremia of "September 3, 1965 'Incident at Exeter' and N.H. UFO's;" and Ted Loder, Ph.D., of "The Disclosure Project: UFO Secrecy and Our Future."

The day culminates with a rock 'n' roll dance Saturday night. Dubbed the "Earthling and Alien Ball," it will feature the local band, The Morlocks, who will dedicate two Ventures songs to Norman Muscarello, who saw the UFO in Kensington and reported the sighting to the Exeter Police Department. The Ventures were Muscarello's favorite group.

Attendees are encouraged to celebrate in costume as earthlings, aliens or hippies. Event organizer Dean Merchant said Exeter's Party People on Lincoln Street has some great costume ideas.

While the day's events are free, The Kiwanis Club of Exeter will be sponsoring a hamburger and hotdog stand and there will be a booth selling commemorative T-shirts.

The Kiwanis Club is raising money for its organization, which supports local initiatives like Rockingham Community Action's Head Start.

The Exeter Historical Society will be selling copies of the September 1965 edition of the Exeter News-Letter following the Sept. 3, 1965 "Incident at Exeter." Proceeds will benefit the society.

Proceeds from a children's art show, to be displayed at the Exeter Public Library, will be donated to the Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce's Children's Fund. The fund provides clothing vouchers to needy children of the communities served by the chamber. Children's art can be dropped off at the Exeter Public Library or Stratham's Wiggin Memorial Library through Friday, Sept. 4.

UFO Festival volunteers David and Barbara Munsey supported the purchase of T-shirts to sell during the festival. Proceeds will help cover the overhead costs of running the festival.

The T-shirt displays an alien and proclaims Exeter as "An Out of This World Community."

Munsey and Merchant will be at the Exeter Farmer's Market on Thursday, Sept. 3, selling the T-shirts and also providing information on the festival. The cost of the shirts will range from \$7.50 to \$12.50, depending on size.

Friday night, the Exeter Elms Campground, which has 50 camp sites open, will show the film "E.T." under the stars to its campers. For more information, call the campground at 778-7631.

Also on Friday, the Stratham Wiggin Memorial Library teen center will celebrate the festival with a triple-play matinee of "Doctor Who," a popular British science fiction television program. The matinee begins at 1 p.m.

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