

MEDIA RELEASE

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Mineral Vault Cracked at Desert Museum

TUCSON (January 6, 2014) Each January the Desert Museum rocks out with its annual *Mineral Madness* event as a harbinger to the February Tucson Gem and Mineral Show. At this year's event, for the first time ever, visitors will have an opportunity to view the Museum's private mineral vault housing what is recognized as one of the most comprehensive regional mineral collections in the world.

This popular annual event, scheduled for January 18-19, 2014, is an occasion for everyone, from the novice to the serious collector, to learn something new about minerals and rocks. For example, did you know that minerals can make you give you double vision?

Visitors will want to spend some time viewing the Museum's public mineral display at the Earth Sciences Center cave before heading to the gem and mineral marketplace at the Baldwin Education Building.

"With expert staff and docents to guide visitors with their selections, this event is a great place to start a collection, especially for kids," offers Debra Colodner, Director of Conservation Education, and Science. Visitors can find new treasures for their collections with great bargains -- some specimens selling for as little as \$1.00.

The mineral marketplace will be held in the Baldwin Education Building from 9 AM to 4 PM on both days. The displays will be themed including: Collectors' Treasures, Start-A-Collection, Spruce up the Yard, and Fossils & Gemstones. Jewelry demonstrations are also planned.

The Museum's most precious specimens, housed in its private vault, are not normally on view to the public. This year, behind-the-scenes vault tours will be offered for the first time to the general public.

This is an amazing chance to get an up-close view of some of the rarest specimens in the collection while learning more about minerals from a Museum expert. Due to space limitations, tours are limited to 10 people each. Four tours will be offered through an on-line reservation system. As each tour fills, another will be opened. Tours are \$35 per person (plus the price of admission).

As part of the day's festivities, family activity stations will be located around the museum grounds from 10 AM to 4 PM both days. Activities include Finding Fossils, Ride-Through-The-Rock-Cycle, Discover Micro-Minerals, Crystal Origami, Special Properties of Minerals, Meteorites, Minerals in My Chocolate, and Mineral Wheel of Fortune.

At each activity station, children can collect a free rock or mineral specimen in their own egg-carton collection box. Children are encouraged to bring their own egg-cartons but the museum will have some available for children who need them.

For more information about the event itself, visit www.desertmuseum.org. For behind-the-scenes vault tours, reservation information can be found online at http://desertmuseum.org/visit/keeperwalk_reg.php?tour=6

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is one of the nation's leading outdoor, living museums, featuring more than 230 animals and 1,200 varieties of desert plants. Its purpose is to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world by fostering love, appreciation, and understanding of the bi-national, Sonoran Desert region. The museum is located at 2021 N. Kinney Road, in Tucson Mountain Park adjacent to Saguaro National Park (West). It is open daily year round with operating hours varying by season. Call (520) 883-2702 or visit www.desertmuseum.org for more information.