



CARLOS ROTELLAR

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Cosmic Hat dazzles in night sky

A cosmic hat in the night sky.

During the month of May, we celebrate the Mexican holiday "Cinco de Mayo." It commemorates the Battle of Puebla in 1862, when the Mexican army defeated a much larger and better-equipped French force. During this day, as celebrations bring images of colorful hats, music, and culture to mind, the night sky offers its own famous "hat" — the Sombrero Galaxy.

Hats will also be on full display at the Kentucky Derby this weekend.

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Carlos Rotellar

Earth, we see it almost edge-on, which allows a thick, dark dust lane to cut across its bright central bulge. At the heart of the Sombrero Galaxy is a supermassive black hole with a mass estimated to be around one billion suns. The dark dust lane that forms the galaxy's "brim" is made of cold gas and dust, the

name from its resemblance to a wide-brimmed sombrero floating in space. It is located about 28 to 31 million light-years away in the constellation Virgo. From

raw material for forming new stars.

The "glow" you're seeing in the Sombrero Galaxy is primarily the result of its massive stellar bulge. While many spiral galaxies have a central core, the Sombrero's bulge is exceptionally large and luminous, extending far above and below the thin, dark dust lane that gives the galaxy its name. The source of the intense light is a combination of hundreds of billions of old yellow-white stars, a supermassive black hole, and 2,000 globular star clusters hovering around the galactic plane. A globular cluster is a massive, tightly bound, and

nearly spherical group of tens of thousands to millions of stars. Our Milky Way has only 200 of them.

The Sombrero Galaxy is about 50,000 to 100,000 light-years across, and it contains between 100 and 800 billion stars. It is moving away from the Milky Way at a speed of 2.3 million miles per hour.

¡Feliz Cinco de Mayo! Happy Derby Day!

— Dr. Carlos Rotellar is a Bowling Green nephrologist who has had an interest in astrophotography and has been taking images of the universe from his driveway for several years. Website: Skyastrophotos.com.

Local autism support available

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental difference characterized by a wide range of strengths, traits, and support needs related to communication, social interaction, and behavior.

Autism is described as a spectrum because individuals experience and express these characteristics in diverse ways, rather than through a single, uniform profile. Many autistic individuals demonstrate unique perspectives, strong interests, and distinct ways of engaging with the world. No single trait defines autism on its own, and the combination and intensity differ from person to person, leading to different levels of needed support.

Local support can be found through the Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex (CEC) at WKU. The CEC uses a model of multi-discipline education that integrates training, research, and services from childhood through college for individuals with

autism and other developmental needs. Several programs are part of the CEC, focusing on providing an assortment of services.

The Renshaw Early Childhood Center provides inclusive early learning classrooms for young children with and without disabilities. The Kelly Autism Program (KAP) "Prime Time" offers afterschool opportunities for students with autism, focusing on the development of social, communication, and independent living skills within a structured and supportive environment.

The SAV-Y and Circle of Support programs are for college-aged individuals seeking further education. The SAV-Y program is a Comprehensive Transition Program that supports students with intellectual disabilities in accessing an inclusive postsecondary education.

Through SAV-Y, students enroll in WKU courses, build workplace skills, and engage in campus life while working



Maureen Maheny

toward a certificate and earning program-specific micro-credentials.

The Circle of Support program is designed to provide additional, targeted, disability-focused supports for credential-seeking WKU students with autism. This program supplements the broader university experience by offering individualized supports that promote academic success, independence, and meaningful engagement across campus.

Support for these programs is vital for their continued success, and one such annual tradition is the LifeSkills Run for Autism, which had its 19th event on April 11th this year. According to Alexis Hutcherson, Family Resource Specialist for the CEC, this year had over 380 participants and raised over \$7650 for the CEC. "We hope to do more and

more things to keep it fresh for all of the amazing attendees every year" Hutcherson said.

This year the event hosted a 4-mile Run around WKU's campus which had roughly 100 runners. For shorter distances there was a, 1-mile Run, 1-mile Walk, and a Kid's Fun Run. With it being her first time running the event, Hutcherson said, "I did learn you can't be prepared for everything, but we had an amazing event with amazing people. We had new prizes this year for winners, and I look forward to improving it every year."

To Help Raise Awareness, April is known as National Autism Acceptance Month

— Maureen Mahaney coordinates public information for LifeSkills, Inc. a non-profit, behavioral health care corporation that plans for and serves the people of southcentral Kentucky in three main areas: mental health, addiction, and developmental disabilities. Her column appears monthly.

My second Camino

We leave for the Camino in two days. And I've been thinking about it.

We've been planning this trip for months. We've been doing six-hour training walks, eating healthy foods that taste like wet napkins, and gathering our outdoor gear.

This will be our second Camino.

People ask you about the Camino when they find out you're doing it. Their main question is usually a version of: "Why?"

This question comes in different iterations. "Why are you doing this?" "Why are you doing this to YOURSELF?" Or in my case: "Why are you doing this AGAIN?"



Sean Dietrich

And you always reply, "It's the people."

Whereupon, they look at you funny, then wait for you to explain. But you never can. There's never enough time.

And even if you could choose adequate words, you still couldn't explain something the heart feels. So, others naturally assume you're going for the exotic experience, and for all the natural beauty. But you're not.

It's not the enormous sky. It's not the arresting greenery found in craggy alpine valleys. It's not the Pyrenees Mountains, capped with clouds, so you can't tell where the sky begins and the earth ends.

Neither is it living out of a backpack, having nothing to your name except what you can cram inside — which in your case is two T-shirts, a change of shorts, and a Montgomery Ward fiddle.

It is the older Brazilian woman who walks beside you. Limping because of her bad hip. Who stops at every landmark to pray. Who finds a miracle in, literally, everything. In every flower. Every sparrow. Every stray cloud. Who kisses you whenever she hugs you even though you're an uptight American who does not kiss strangers.

It was the group of teenage boys you expected to be typical junk-food-eating, girl-chasing teens. But who, instead, walked in contemplative prayer, trying to find clarity in life. They were reading books by Saint John of the Cross, and Brother Lawrence, and "The Cloud of Unknowing."

And when these boys found out that you, too, had been the kind of teenage boy who once read those books, they felt kinship with you. They even — dare I say it? — liked you.

It was the older Australian man, who lost his backpack and all his belongings, midway through his Camino. So he walked the rest of the way without these things. He carried nothing. He simply depended on kindness to carry him through.

"I've always been too proud to let others help me," he said to you one evening. "My father

See **CAMINO**, 3C