



Wonder Series

The Science of Awe



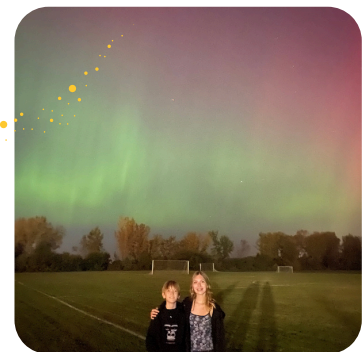
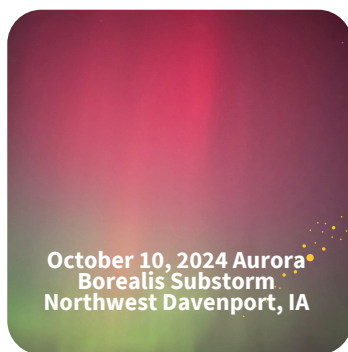
Noteworthy November

Welcome back to the Wonder Series! As a reminder, we are exploring “awe.” Awe is the feeling we get when something leaves us breathless, inspired, or mystified. There are many ways to help facilitate the feeling of awe. It can help us feel happier, healthier, and more connected!

This edition is a very special one because it has to do with a natural phenomena that has always fascinated me and that I have now seen in person, the Aurora Borealis!

Auroras are known as the Aurora Borealis or “Northern Lights” in the Northern Hemisphere or the Aurora Australis or “Southern Lights” in the Southern Hemisphere

You can’t beat the aurora as far as natural spectacles go! When I was a child, I thought I would only ever be able to see the aurora if I traveled to Iceland or Alaska. However, we have had two wonderful opportunities to view the aurora borealis right here in the Quad Cities this year. My family and I were lucky to see it both times, first on May 11 then again on October 10. The October 10 aurora was amazingly brilliant and truly evoked a sense of awe. I’ve included some pictures from our aurora chasing.



Inspired by the aurora but haven’t seen it in person yet? Make your own aurora art! Check out the instructions from NASA: <https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/pastel-aurora/en/>

What is the aurora?

The Earth has a magnetic field. When solar storms occur on the sun, a burst of energized particles are sent to Earth, hitting our North and South Poles. When the particles mix with the different gases here on Earth it creates different displays of color. For a video and additional scientific resources on the aurora you can visit this website: <https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/aurora/en/>

Want to “chase” the next aurora? Auroras are notoriously difficult to predict. However, you can stay up to date on aurora predictions by visiting the following websites or utilizing aurora update apps:

Websites:

- <https://www.swpc.noaa.gov/products/aurora-30-minute-forecast>
- www.spaceweatherlive.com
- <https://cdn.softservenews.com>

Apps:

- Aurora Alert
- Aurora Pro
- Aurora Forecast



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Keltner, D., & Haidt, J. (2003). Approaching awe, a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic emotion. *Cognition and Emotion*, 17(2), 297–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930302297>

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