

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **CONSTELLATIONS STAMPS STAR IN NATIONAL STAMP COLLECTING MONTH CELEBRATION**

WASHINGTON—Millions of stars took a celestial trip through the galaxy in the form of postage today when the U.S. Postal Service issued the Constellations commemorative postage stamps at the Cranbrook Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills, MI.

Stargazers won't need telescopes to see Orion, Leo, Lyra, and Pegasus today. These four well known constellations are available for viewing close-up in Michigan Post Offices today. They can be seen nationwide day and night, in fact 24 hours a day, seven days a week at Post Offices and Philatelic Centers beginning Oct. 4.

This year's theme for National Stamp Collecting Month, which runs through October, is "Be a Stargazer: Let the Stars Guide You into Stamp Collecting!" It is a shared effort by the U.S. Postal Service and astronomers to familiarize stamp collectors with astronomical sciences. These stamps are expected to be very appealing to both children and adults.

The host of the first day ceremony, Cranbrook Institute of Science is a natural history and science museum with an active astronomy team. Its telescope observers are knowledgeable on all aspects of the field and the hobby of astronomy. The Cranbrook Institute of Science is Michigan's premiere natural history museum with dynamic interactive exhibits, astronomy and laser shows, Digistar planetarium, dinosaurs and more than 200,000 items in its collection.

"The U.S. Postal Service is proud to dedicate this stellar collection of Constellations," said U.S. Postal Service Southeast Michigan Cluster Senior Plant Manager, Kelly L. Sigmon, who officiated at the first-day-of-issue dedication ceremony. "They are vivid reminders of the wonders of the universe and the enduring educational power of myths."

Joining Sigmon in dedicating the stamps were David E. Failor, Executive Director of Stamp Services, U.S. Postal Service; Rick Nahm, President, Cranbrook Educational Community; the Honorable



Joseph Knollenberg, (R-MI), 9th District; Dr. David Brose, Director, Cranbrook Institute of Science; and Michael J. Narlock, Chief Astronomer, Cranbrook Institute of Science.

Throughout National Stamp Collecting Month, the Postal Service focuses on stamp collectors, students, and those new to the hobby. Stamp collecting is a great way to learn about the world and its many wonders. It opens the door to an exciting world of history, science, geography, the arts, technology and sports.

The Constellations stamp sheet, available in panes of 20 stamps, features the Northern Hemisphere star patterns of Leo, Lyra, Pegasus, and Orion. Graphic designer and educator McRay Magleby, Provo, Utah, created these starry patterns based on star maps of well-known celestial cartographer Wil Tirion. Tirion, who lives in the Netherlands, has been called "this generation's foremost celestial cartographer."

Constellations of stars have inspired imaginations through the millennia and that continues for stargazers everywhere with the issuance of the Constellations commemorative postage stamps. From humanity's earliest days, people have gazed upward and "connected the dots." Some cultures believed that constellations were living beings placed in the sky by their gods. Constellations have marked time, served as reminders for agricultural tasks and festivals, acted as guides for travelers, and helped astronomers navigate their way around the heavens. The International Astronomical Union recognizes 88 constellations, many of which bear Greek or Latin names and are associated with fascinating myths from ancient times.

Current U.S. stamps and stationery, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free telephone order at 1-800-STAMP-24. A wide selection of stamps and other philatelic items also are available at the Postal Store, [www.usps.com/shop](http://www.usps.com/shop).

### **How to Order the First-Day-of-Issue Postmark**

Customers have 30 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at the Postal Store Web site at [www.usps.com/shop](http://www.usps.com/shop), by telephone at 1-800-STAMP-24 and at their local Post Office. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place in a larger envelope addressed to:

CONSTELLATIONS STAMPS  
POSTMASTER  
71 E LONG LAKE RD  
BLOOMFIELD HILLS MI 48304-9998

After applying the first day of issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by November 2, 2005.

### **How to Order First Day Covers**

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first day of issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly USA Philatelic catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 1-800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

INFORMATION FULFILLMENT  
DEPT 6270  
US POSTAL SERVICE  
PO BOX 219014  
KANSAS CITY MO 64121-9014

Since 1775, the Postal Service and its predecessor, the Post Office Department, has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits 142 million homes and businesses every day, six days a week and is the only service provider delivering to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$69 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mailing and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The Postal Service delivers more than 46 percent of the world's mail volume -- some 206 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year -- and serves seven and a half million customers each day at its 37,000 retail locations nationwide. Its website, [usps.com](http://usps.com), attracts more than 21 million visitors each month.