

## Guest narrator Aldrin draws crowd

By EVE BYRON, Independent Record - 07/20/08



Photo courtesy of Chris Taleff of ExplorationWorks - Buzz Aldrin keeps busy shaking hands and signing copies of his book 'Reaching for the Moon' at ExplorationWorks Saturday afternoon.

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ExplorationWorks was literally abuzz Saturday afternoon as hundreds of Helena residents stood in line for hours to meet Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin.

Aldrin, looking fit and wearing a blue shirt and broad smile, signed his name to more than 300 copies of his children's book "Reaching for the Moon." He was happy to pause for photographs, as parents introduced children to the explorer who, 39 years ago today, became the second man to walk on the moon.

"We decided that our commander (Neil Armstrong) would be the first person off, and you people in the media always like to focus on the first person," Aldrin said, laughing. "Only me and Avis care about being number two. But we try harder."

While waiting in line, John Chiampas recalled watching Aldrin take those steps.

"I was sitting there, glued to the TV, watching and hearing the whole thing," said Chiampas, who was 28 years old at the time. "I wanted to meet him in person. What an opportunity. I brought my grandchildren too."

Aldrin also remembers those days vividly.

"We lifted off on July 16 and landed on July 20," he said. "We all considered ourselves to be very fortunate people to get this kind of opportunity."

Although he stuck mainly to signing books, Aldrin did plant a sacred "Buzz" on the upper left orange jumpsuit worn proudly by 8-year-old Matthew Leavitt.

"I want to be a scientist and study rocks and stuff from the planet," Leavitt said.

Seven-year-old Ethan House wants to be an astronaut, just like Buzz.

"Space captivates his imagination; it's something he's always been interested in," noted his mom, Ty House, as Ethan shyly stood in line. "He's always talking about walking on the moon, so getting the chance to meet someone who has walked on the moon is really something."

Those are the types of attitudes Aldrin encourages.

"We need to get back to exploration again, because that's what humans need to do," Aldrin said. "It's also in our spirit to inspire not only the children but other people in the world with the words we left on the moon — 'We come in peace for all mankind.' "

He paused briefly, looking at some of the 300 pieces of space artwork lining ExplorationWorks walls, created by the students at Smith Elementary School.

"And I think we have a lot of future astronomers with us here," Aldrin added.