

Decades of Success

Three Aspen institutions celebrate big birthdays this year.

Fine wine, community empowerment, and theoretical physics—only in Aspen could institutions serving such diverse interests hit the thirty-, forty-, and fifty-year marks, respectively. Despite their differences, they share some commonalities: humble beginnings, rich histories, and big plans for the future.—CA



FOOD & WINE CLASSIC 30th

ORIGIN STORY Founded in 1982 by Gary Plumley, owner of Aspen's Of Grape & Grain, as a way to stimulate shoulder-season business, the Snowmass International Wine Classic initially drew forty paying guests—plus a gaggle of local freeloaders recruited to fill out attendance. The festival gained steam in 1986, when *Food & Wine* magazine became the title sponsor. In 1992, the event relocated to Aspen's Wagner Park, its home ever since.

HISTORICAL NUGGET Of all the culinary personalities who've attended the festival over the years—Jacques Pepin, Emeril Lagasse, Bobby Flay, and Mario Batali, among many others—none were bigger than Julia Child, whom Plumley recalls daftly flashing a sword while sabering Champagnes at a cookbook signing.

ANNIVERSARY EVENTS A fireworks extravaganza on June 14, the inaugural Food & Wine Charity 5K run hosted by Bobby Flay, a late-night dessert shindig hosted by Gail Simmons, and a June 16 anniversary bash at the Benedict Music Tent, where Elvis Costello will perform.



GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY TELEVISION 40th

ORIGIN STORY Envisioned by former UCLA professor John Smith as a television network accessible to all and censored by none, GrassRoots TV was shocked to life in a trailer park on Smuggler Mountain in 1972 after Smith and his merry band of broadcasters had cajoled cable-company owner Bil Dunaway into giving them a channel.

HISTORICAL NUGGET Tens of thousands of local events and personalities, along with countless visiting international celebrities, have been aired on GrassRoots TV. Only on the first community television station in America could you see former heavyweight boxing champ Evander Holyfield explain to a pair of precocious high schoolers the sensation of having his ear bitten off by Mike Tyson.

ANNIVERSARY EVENTS With its staff plenty busy helping locals make television, GrassRoots is choosing to mark its fortieth in a low-key way: by airing the live music it has recorded over the years—by John Denver, Jimmy Buffett, John Oates, and many others—as a form of celebration every Saturday night. And GrassRoots is giving a great birthday gift to the valley: a new facility that will soon open in Carbondale.



ASPEN CENTER FOR PHYSICS 50th

ORIGIN STORY In 1961, Carnegie Institute of Technology physics PhD student and Champion Spark Plugs heir George Stranahan (the money) brought together Aspen Institute president Bob Craig (the land) and physicist Michael Cohen (the talent recruiter) for a meeting at the Pittsburgh airport. They hashed out the plan for what has become one of the world's leading physics centers since it opened in 1962.

HISTORICAL NUGGET More than 10,000 theoretical and experimental physicists—from sixty-five countries and including fifty Nobel Laureates—have visited the center. Some of the ideas that led to string theory's formulation took shape in Aspen in the early '80s, and it is believed that magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was first imagined by physicists visiting the center in 1979.

ANNIVERSARY EVENTS The celebration runs all summer. More than a dozen public events include a July 7 birthday party at the center, a Nobel Laureate-studded panel discussing "The Future of Physics" on Aug. 11, and an Aug. 30 lecture, "The Origin of String Theory in Aspen." Look for an ACP float in the Fourth of July parade. It'll be the one with the really smart people on top.