

Who can promise you the Sun, Moon & Stars . . . *and actually deliver!*



Spring, 2019

Happy spring, everyone! Doesn't it feel good to say that after the winter we've had! Even as this issue goes to press, temps are still chilly. What better way to watch the stars than from the climate-controlled comfort of a planetarium seat? It will be a busy spring for the planetarium staff as the teachers have begun calling about field trips, the search for a new director continues, and we have the anniversary of Apollo 11 coming up this summer. We hope you'll use your current FOSP card to pay us a visit.

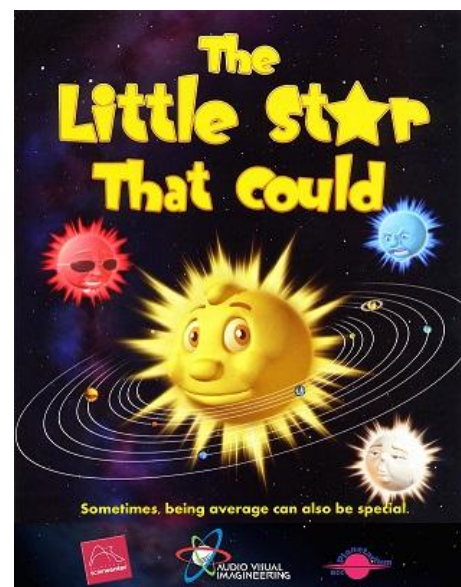
Clear skies,

The staff of the Staerkel Planetarium

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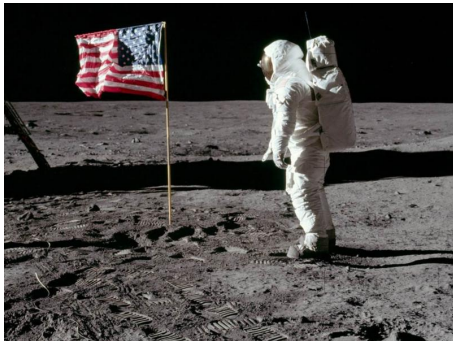
Summer Schedule Altered

Those of you who take in our summer matinees will notice an alteration to this summer's schedule to accommodate Dave's retirement and one-less-person performing public programs. Instead of Tuesday afternoon programs, all summer matinees in June and July will be on Thursdays with programs at 10am and 11am then again at 1pm and 2pm (and we are closed July 4th). As in the past, we'll temporarily suspend Saturday programming for those two months, though we will still be open Friday nights. Enjoy "The Little Star That Could" and "Coyote Explores the Earth, Moon, & Sun" this summer! *Remember your current FOSP card gains you free admission!*



Planetarium Director Search winding down

The search committee continues its work to select the next director of the Staerkel Planetarium. The successful candidate will be the planetarium's fourth director. When the planetarium opened in October of 1987, James Manning was at the helm. Jim came to Champaign from the Morehead Planetarium at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Second was Dave Linton, who was an astronomy instructor at Parkland when the Staerkel Planetarium was built. Then Dave Leake, who officially took over in 2000 though he has been on staff since the fall of 1989. Dave's last Friday night show as director will be June 21 though there is a wedding in the dome scheduled for the next day! We will feature the next director in the summer newsletter once the selection has been made.



Apollo 11 Anniversary this Summer!

We will celebrate the anniversary of Apollo 11 with the return of the fulldome show "Dawn of the Space Age" in the 8pm time slot Friday nights in June and July. The actual anniversary of the Moon landing is July 20. We are also fortunate to have the "Many Inspired Steps" display appearing in our lobby. To see the steps that took us to the Moon, walk past

the dome entrance towards the metal doors that lead to the rest of the college and you can't miss it. We also have a scale Model Earth and Moon hanging from the ceiling, a Moon globe with the Apollo landing sights marked and a Lego Saturn V rocket, courtesy of Thomas A. Lesser, who organized and donated the exhibit. We will also relive the final 10 minutes of the Moon landing in "Prairie Skies" this summer. *Join us!*

Last Kaler Science Lecture appears in April

Our last talk in the James B. Kaler Science Lecture Series for the academic year will be held on April 5 at 7pm. Dr. Alexander Schwing will be our guest as he elaborates on the hot topic of artificial intelligence. Our outgoing director, Dave Leake, has been asked to book speakers into the 2019-2020 series. If you know of a good speaker or even a hot science topic (and it doesn't have to be astronomical either), let Dave know at dleake@parkland.edu. We apologize if you did not get a seat to the March talk by Andrew Pritchard on tornado chasing. Mr. Pritchard sold out the dome!



Celebrate Dark Skies in June

Last year the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve was awarded Dark Sky Park status, the first such park in the state of Illinois. Join us in celebrating this great feat on June 1 at the park. There will be an official proclamation, some informational talks, activities for the kids, food trucks, and telescopes to check out the wonders of the spring sky. As this issue is being distributed the exact details have not been released but the date is firm.

"CI Living" to visit in May

The last episode of the "Big Bang Theory" television shows will air on Thursday, May 16. To commemorate the date, WCIA will bring their "CI Living" program to the planetarium dome. Plans haven't been finalized but we are talking about a planetarium trivia contest, hands-on lobby displays for the kids and prizes for the best costume. *You will need a ticket to attend!* Tickets are free and will be given away by WCIA (not the planetarium). Stay tuned for details!



Space Suit Tour this Summer

With the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing coming up this summer, there has been increased interest from libraries in our traveling space suit program. It is interesting that, in the 30 year lifespan of the one-hour outreach program, we've never gone to Indiana. That changes this summer. Already programs have been scheduled in the following spots:

- May 29 (1pm) - Vermillion Public Library, Newport, Indiana
- June 5 (11am) - Attica Public Library, Attica, IN
- June 12 (1pm) - Chatham Public Library, Chatham, IL
- June 13 (9:30am) - Mattoon Public Library, Mattoon, IL
- June 14 (10am) - Rockville Public Library, Rockville, IN
- June 14 (2pm) - Terre Haute Public Library, Terre Haute, IN
- June 19 (11am) - Covington Public Library, Covington, IN
- June 19 (1pm) - Veedersburg Public Library, Veedersburg, IN
- July 18 (4pm) - Tolono Public Library, Tolono, IL

Author Alice McGinty in the house

On Saturday, May 18, noted local author Alice McGinty will visit the lobby of the Staerkel Planetarium signing her new children's book entitled *"The Girl Who Named Pluto: The Story of Venetia Burney."* She'll be in the lobby from 6-8pm. At 7pm, the planetarium will show "In My Backyard." McGinty is the author of over 40 children's books.



EXPLORE SCIENCE
Earth & Space

New NISE Kit Arrives

The National Information STEM Education Network (NISE) has sent the planetarium a box of goodies! Included in the kit are outreach materials that can be done with families, such as fun with filters, and the expanding universe game, a way to safely observe the Sun, and several others. We will definitely take the materials to "Market at the Square" at Lincoln Square Mall on May 11 from 8-noon and to the Champaign Public Library from noon-2pm on May 12. Stop by if you're in the area!

Illinois State Planetarium meeting nearby

Planetarians in the state of Illinois meet annually in the spring. This year, the planetarium at Illinois State University will be our host. ISU modernized their 30-foot dome that includes a new projection system and new seating. Tom Wilmitch will be our host. You do not have to be a member of the Great Lakes Planetarium Association to participate in a state meeting. Any interested individual may attend. The meeting will most likely be held from 9-1pm on April 11 which includes a Dutch

treat lunch at a local establishment. It's free to attend the meeting but there will be registration so they can acquire a head count for lunch. Contact Dave at dleake@parkland.edu if you are interested. The ISU Planetarium opened in 1964 but just underwent a massive renovation, reopening to the public last June.



Spring Prairie Skies

The vernal equinox occurs at 4:58pm CDT on March 20 this year. And not a moment too soon! We begin spring with Mars as the only planet in our evening sky. But Mars is clear across the solar system from us. Last July it was just over 35 million miles from us but now it's over 145 million miles away. Truth be told it isn't impressive through a telescope. Mars attempts to stay ahead of the Sun but its set time gets earlier and earlier, from just after 11:30pm (CDT) at the beginning of spring to near 10pm at the end.

In late April, Jupiter will begin to rise at midnight. Jupiter's opposition occurs on June 9, meaning the planet rises as the Sun sets and it is closest to our Earth. Look for it in the southeast, rising just after the red star Antares. Two hours after Jupiter makes an appearance, Saturn rises near the Teapot asterism of Sagittarius. Both Jupiter and Saturn will be wonderful summer objects in the south. Saturn doesn't reach opposition until July.

Elusive Mercury has its best evening view late in the season. Rising from the glare of the Sun in late May in the west-northwest, Mercury splits the horns of Taurus, the Bull, and a thin crescent Moon passes to the left of it on June 4. Look just after sunset. The Moon is near Mars the next night. You can watch Mercury approach Mars and the pair are only 0.3 degrees apart on the evening of June 18. They'll set at 10:15pm CDT. Mercury will head back towards the Sun soon after and it will be tough to see by early July.

In the morning sky you'll find Venus though it isn't very high at sunrise. In fact, Venus rises about an hour before the Sun throughout the spring, but the sunrise time gets earlier and earlier each day. Early in the season, Mercury is to the lower left of Venus but it will be difficult to spy. A lovely crescent Moon is near Venus on the mornings of April 1, May 2, and June 1 though you'll need a low, unobstructed horizon.

The CUAS Observatory will hold free public open houses (weather permitting) on April 13, May 11, and June 8. See www.cuas.org for more information and directions.

GIERTZ GALLERY
at parkland college



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