

Southern Skies

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President's Message

Adam Thanz
Bays Mountain Planetarium
Kingsport, TN

My how time flies! Didn't I just join the SEPA Council? It's really incredible to think about how much has happened in the last two years. Even with the apparent compression of time, it shows how important it is to keep up with our fellow colleagues. We have experienced quite a bit of activity and change under the reign of Patsy Wilson, now holding the position of Past-President. I would like to say that she has done a great job and I will be using her work ethic as an example to follow.

Let me summarize just a bit of what has happened in the last two years. The conferences of 2005 (Fernbank Science Center; Atlanta, GA) & 2006 (Astronaut Memorial Planetarium & Observatory; Cocoa, FL) were true highlights for SEPA. What can be better than to meet with old friends and to make new ones, especially with an unusual field like ours. Who else can truly understand what we do for a living?

The changing of Council members in the last two years is also of note. The position of Secretary-Treasurer is held by Mickey Jo Sorrell from Morehead Planetarium in Chapel-Hill, NC. She replaced Duncan Teague of Craigmont Planetarium in Memphis, TN who worked hard at being the treasurer as well as being the journal editor, for a long period of time. That also brings up the new editor of the *Southern Skies* journal, James Sullivan of Buehler Planetarium & Observatory in Davie, FL. Though not part of Council, he provides a vital service to SEPA. We all appreciate his hard work on a great task he does four times a year. A note to all other SEPA members: please send James your articles! The journal reflects your participation! Let us know what's happening at your facility. Did you provide

an interesting program? Did you figure a way to complete an unusual task? Do you use some piece of software, equipment, or tool in a manner that allowed you to get the job done? We all want to read about it.

With the calendar change to the January of an odd-numbered year, so changes those holding position of President. I've already discussed Patsy changing position to Past-President. She replaces Michael Sandras of Kenner, LA. The new President-Elect is Jon Elvert from the Irene W. Pennington Planetarium in Baton Rouge, LA. He will do a great job in his six years for SEPA. He has held the position of President of IPS, so I'm sure I'll learn a lot from him. I am changing from President-Elect to President and hope to do well by you and serve the SEPA membership successfully. A person is only as good as the people he/she works with. I am very lucky to work with such a great team. This includes John Hare of ASH Enterprises in Bradenton, FL, SEPA's IPS representative, who has many years of experience from which I will learn.

(Continued on page 8)



SEPA President Adam Thanz

IPS Report

John Hare
ASH Enterprises
Bradenton, FL

In case you haven't heard, new IPS officers effective January 1, 2007 are:

- President Elect- Tom Mason, Armagh, Ireland
- President- Susan Reynolds Button, Chittenango, New York
- Past President- Martin George, Tasmania, Australia
- Secretary- Lee Ann Hennig, Alexandria, Virginia
- Treasurer- Shawn Laatsch, Hilo, Hawaii

The 2007 IPS Council meeting will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, August 4-5. Since our next SEPA conference will be after the IPS Council meeting, it is important that I hear your feedback regarding the site choice and any other issues pertaining to IPS prior to August 1, 2007.

Three sites are under consideration as possible hosts for the 2010 IPS conference:

- Alexandria, Egypt
- Beijing, China

St. Etienne, France
I will furnish a detailed breakdown of each site in the next issue of *Southern Skies*.

The 2008 IPS Conference will be hosted by Chicago's Adler Planetarium. The conference dates are June 15-20 which is the reason the dates for SEPA 2008 had to be pushed into July. The last IPS conference in North America, Wichita in 2002, attracted over 400 delegates, and Chicago promises to be larger still. Detailed 2008 conference information should be available following this summer's Council meeting.

Dues were increased effective January 1, 2007. A new category of membership, Corporate, was established effective with the new rate structure.

The new rates are:

- Individual 1-year- \$65
- Individual 2-year- \$100
- Institutional- renewal \$125, new \$250
- Corporate- * see note
- Library- \$45

* Details on corporate memberships can be obtained from Shawn Laatsch <laatschs@ecu.edu>

Please don't hesitate to contact me in regards to any IPS business.

Editor's Message

James Sullivan
Buehler Planetarium & Observatory
Davie, FL

Thanks to everybody for contributing to *News from SEPA States*. This is much appreciated, so keep the information coming, including pictures. If you'll notice in this issue, all the states that contributed have coordinators. Mississippi and Alabama do not have coordinators. If you are from one of these, you might consider taking up this worthwhile task.

I would also like to thank our regular column contributors, Betty, John, and Priscilla. Also, thanks to Patsy for her past columns and Adam for this one and the next seven. Remember, you too can contribute articles at any time. Some of you may be afraid that what you have to offer, we already know. Believe me, all of us have room to learn, and what you can contribute may make a huge difference in someone else's planetarium.

Don't forget, we always are looking for pictures, especially for the cover. Please, don't make me print more pictures of the Shuttle.

We can receive electronic files in most any format. Also, graphics can be received electronically or in hardcopy, including slides or photos, and will be converted to digital with sufficient resolution.

Submission deadlines: January 1 (Winter), April 1 (Spring), July 1 (Summer), October 1 (Fall).

Thanks to BCC and its wonderful printing department for assistance.



Paul Campbell Fellowship Award Nomination Form

Nominees must have been a member of SEPA for at least ten years, and they must display qualities in each of five areas, as represented by the five-pointed star shaped award: integrity, friendship, service, knowledge, and vision. Please submit this form to any SEPA Council member.

Nominee's Name: _____

Qualifications: _____

SEPA Membership Form

Please send your check for \$25 (or \$15 if outside the SEPA geographical region) to SEPA, c/o Mickey Jo Sorrell, Morehead Planetarium & Science Center, CB#3480 UNC-CH, Chapel Hill, NC 27599.

Name _____

Organization _____

Planetarium _____

Address _____

City _____

State / Zip Code _____

Voice Phone _____

Fax Phone _____

Email Address _____

Staff Position _____

IPS Member? Yes _____ No _____

Contribution to Scholarship Award Account: \$ _____

Small Talk

Elizabeth Wasiluk
Hedgesville High School Planetarium
Hedgesville, WV

As I write this it is nearing the winter solstice and my students in first period astronomy have gotten extremely lucky. They had just finished observing the sun during class, quite a feat, when the sun is low in the horizon at eight a.m. in the morning. Even more striking was to have such a nice look at the sunspot with the sun so low in the sky. Students reported seeing it naked-eye with solar eclipse glasses. It was awesome in a pre-Learning Technologies' Sunspotter and 8" Celestron with Thousand Oaks Solar Filter. Also the weather was warm for December and the kids were having so much fun that they didn't want to come in. We had seen on <spaceweather.com> that this area of activity sent off an X-ray flare and a student reported that the shuttle astronauts and space station inhabitants had to take shielded cover for protection. (Look on the site's archive for December 14, 2006 for a neat video of the associated flare.) Students also got to look at



recent SOHO (Solar Observatory and Heliospheric Observatory) and TRACE images. Their favorite was the "solar tornados" imaged by TRACE.

Speaking of SOHO: I don't know if the whole East Coast was clouded out for the November 8th Transit of Mercury as we were, but I got a great look at it from SOHO, who sent me downloaded images every 5 minutes. I guess not a lot of people thought of going to SOHO as the site was not jammed as the Exploratorium and Kitt Peak and Sacramento Peak sites. Even the mirror site put in place by Sacramento Peak kept jamming. Speaking of SOHO, they have just revamped their web site. If you haven't been there recently, check out their new revamped look at <http://sohowww.nascom.nasa.gov/>

The weather was not so terrible for a friend, Conrad Jung out at Chabot Observatory in Oakland, CA. He managed to take a shot of the transit and e-mail it to the Tri-State Astronomers and me.

I read with interest the information given by Patsy Wilson on the history of space flight and the visit of Tom Stafford and Eugene Cernan to Irene W. Pennington Planetarium in Baton Rouge, LA. It seems like these guys were making the rounds, as I got a chance to see them in November at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC along with fellow astronaut Wally Sherra. It was neat meeting these space pioneers and picking up their books and having them sign them. As you can imagine the lines were huge and I got to meet lots of space enthusiasts in line with me, including a gentleman who works at Goddard on a solar probe taking still pictures of the sun. I think the probe was called RHESSI, but am not sure.

On the sad side, you may have heard of the death of long time planetarian Jose Olivarez. I met Jose many years ago when I lived in Nebraska. He had been director of the planetarium in Wichita, KS when I was there. He spent a stint in Oakland, California as the director of the planetarium at Chabot Science Center, before retiring to Florida. He was very active in the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO) and was noted for his extensive observations of the planet Jupiter. If you'd like to send a card of condolence, you can send it to his widow at:

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Astro Video Review

Priscilla Bernardo
Orlando, FL

Meteors: Fire in the Sky

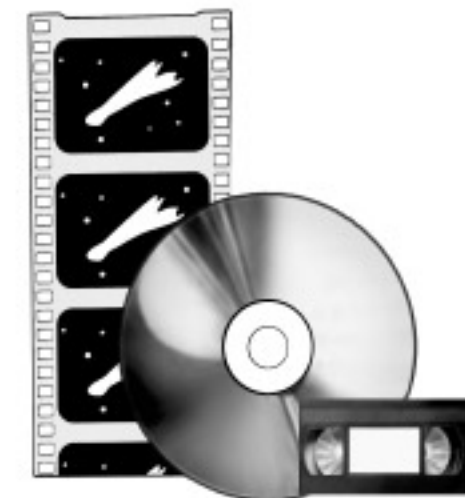
Turn on your meteor shower effect inside your planetarium and you are almost always assured an Ahhhh or an Ohhhhh as soon as your audience notices. Very few astronomical phenomena carry the almost magical quality of meteors and meteor showers.

Knowledge about what those "falling stars" actually are often varies, but most know that these "stars" are just pieces of cosmic dirt interacting with our atmosphere. Then most folks give a loving glance towards the sky and their clear, protective security blanket. Many do not make the connection that these cute little pebbles illuminating our night sky are akin to the boulders from the heavens that have changed the course of history on our planet. This presentation is a good tool in correcting that flaw.

A quick charge of \$29.95 to Amazon.com and you get 100 minutes of history, science and a little mythos all melded together into a journey of realization by humankind that we are but temporary specks existing under temporary circumstances. It makes an enlightening trip for those who have grown up with the assumption that we are just a ball on the cosmic pool table waiting to get smacked. Many youngsters do not know, especially those who were most impressionable at the time of the SL-9 impacts, that this precarious view of ourselves and our place in the universe is a very recent development.

Written by Mathew Hickey and produced by Luke Ellis for the History Channel (2005), we follow the progress throughout the ages to discover just what meteors are, what they are made of, where they come from and how they might affect our planet as well as ourselves. On the way there are many clear descriptions of the various terms related to the study those items that may impact our world. Well crafted was the portrayal of the scientists throughout history; as avant-garde and ahead of their time but in the end...right. This presentation is inspirational for youngsters (and a great reminder to us oldsters) by showing that often you must follow your scientific gut, against the odds and against the opinions of others in order to blaze your own trail. What a most fitting message to go away with at the start of a brand new year.

I would like to take a little space to pay tribute to the passing of an unknown amateur astronomer but who was a giant in the field for me. This October, Gilbert Bernardo, my father, passed away suddenly at age 63. He was a gifted teacher in every sense of the word, spending almost his entire career in education. I find writing this first column since his passing difficult because I shared so many of these kinds of shows with my father. I find myself remembering most being a young girl of nine, sitting next to my father trying my very best to understand what a dark haired man chasing after a dandelion, was saying. "Cosmos" forever made an impact on me, as did the faithfully watched astronomical updates



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Meteors: Fire in the Sky (Continued from page 7) given by Jack Horkheimer, but not because of how well they were written, delivered or produced. They became significant because I shared them with someone I admired, someone I loved to learn from. In a world where so many children are just set in front of a screen and expected to come away somehow changed, I ask each of you who use video presentations to please always remember that nothing can replace your enthusiasm. No video can ever take the place of a person willing to share time and knowledge with another. We all know this to be true but now more than ever, I truly understand how much of a difference a person can make; how a person can make something mundane into an indelible memory. While I may recommend in this column one video or another; it is only your passion for the heavens that will make anything seen on a screen become inspirational to those who view it. May your new year be blessed with happy viewing and be filled with abundant opportunities to share with others.



Gilbert Bernardo with one of his many students.

Small Talk (Continued from page 6)

Louise Olivarez
70 SE 14th. Street
Ocala, FL 34471-3307

There can be found a fitting tribute in the East Bay Astronomy Club's newsletter at <http://www.eastbayastron.org/2006/0611>

As for me, I am gearing up for an invasion of cub scouts to descend on the planetarium come 2007 to work on merit badges. All the best in 2007, may it be problem free in your dome.



President's Report (Continued from page 3)

Finally, I would like to say that it will be an honor and a challenge to do my best for SEPA and its members. I feel that there will be a great need for our organization to assist planetarians in this time of change. We are in a major evolution of technology and educational challenges. In addition, there have been and will be a lot of changes in personnel in our region's planetaria. As such, I would like to work toward increasing membership and its benefits. I also want to let you know that I will be pleased to listen to suggestions and comments that you may have about our organization. I, and the rest of Council, want to help you get the most out of being a member of SEPA.

Which Lenses Are Prime?

Suresh Atapattu
Buehler Planetarium & Observatory
Davie, FL

A Comparison of the Canon 400mm and 600mm

Digital photography is here to stay and it has revolutionized the field. An ever increasing number of amateur photographers are turning out quality pictures that compete with the professionals. A substantial part of this success has been the ability to cheaply photograph multiple pictures and make real time adjustments due to flexibility of digital media. Also, the ability to further process the pictures on a computer has put the otherwise expensive and cumbersome post processing techniques within reach of the masses. One of the salient features of digital

photography has been the rapid development of the technology and hence the ability to make the newest digital camera obsolete in a very short period of time. At press time, the high end professional camera is in the 16.7 mega pixel range while the semi-professional digital cameras are hovering around 10 mega pixels. While the camera is one part in the equation of photography, there is another equally important part that does not have the dynamic fluctuations in options seen previously. This is the camera lens and the technology is relatively static with the occasional improvement or tweaking. Thus, a good camera lens can survive a few camera bodies and be of long-term use to the photographer. While camera lens cover the spectrum of possibilities, this article focuses on a series of "prime" lenses or fixed lens. They are the Canon 400mm F/2.8 L IS and the Canon 600mm F/4 L IS.

Both lenses are ruggedly constructed, with their metal lens barrel finished in white. Each has a non-removable, rotating tripod collar with detents at the vertical and horizontal positions. This has a very large foot which is threaded for both 3/8" and 1/4" screws. The generously deep plastic lens hood is removable, and can be reversed on the lens for storage. It comes with a soft cover that slips over the reversed lens hood and serves as a lens cap while protecting the lens hood from being scratched.

The bigger of the two lenses is the first 600mm lens with an Image Stabilizer (IS) for added steadiness and sharpness when working at slower shutter speeds. The 400mm lens also has IS built into it. The 600mm shares the same lightweight, weather-resistant construction as the 300, 400 and 500mm IS series.

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TABLE 1: Comparison

	Canon 600mm	Canon 400mm
Focal Length & Max. Aperture	600mm 1:4.0	400mm 1:2.8
Lens Construction	17 elements in 13 groups	17 elements in 13 groups
Diagonal Angle of View	4° 10'	6° 10'
Focus Adjustment	Inner focusing system with USM	Inner focusing system with USM
Closest Focusing Distance	5.5m / 18 ft	3m / 9.8 ft
Filter Size	52mm Drop-In	52mm Drop-In
Max. Diameter x Length	6.6" x 18.0",	6.4" x 13.7"
Weight	11.8 lbs	11.8 lbs
Price (\$)	\$ 6,999.95	\$65595.95

Right: 600mm versus 400mm side by side comparison



Below: Fully assembled, with camera, lens and lens hood



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This is clearly not a lens for everyone given its size and cost. It is for the serious photographer; this bulky telephoto gives the additional reach when a subject is dangerous or difficult to approach, or when the photographer's ability to move is hampered by physical barriers or sidelines. This lens is extremely sharp, with plenty of sharpness to spare for teleconverters. However, the extra weight and effort required to manipulate and move this size equipment is more than rewarded with quality of shots made available by the long reach. The following photographs depict examples from this combination of lenses.



Discovery landing on July 17, 2006. Photo taken with Canon 600mm. F/4, ISO 200, 1/2000 Camera body was a Canon 1Ds MK II.

Among the key features claimed by Canon for these lenses are:

- Fluorite & UD elements eliminate secondary spectrum chromatic aberration
- AF speed is the fastest in the world
- Full-time manual focus override
- AF Stop function shuts off autofocus when an obstruction appears
- Dust & moisture resistance made exceptional by magnesium alloy lens barrel and new rear gasket at lens mount
- Two-stage image stabilization; dual-axis camera shake correction or vertical axis only (for panning)
- 3-stage focus limiter
- Focus preset function allows for returning to a specifically set focus by turning a ring in front of the focus ring

According to Canon, the newly designed optical system has one fluorite element and two UD-glass elements to obtain high resolution and high contrast. Also, the minimum focusing distance was reduced to 18 ft. (5.5m). Extender EF 2x II can be attached to increase the focal length to 1200mm while retaining AF. The following is a zoom comparison of a Canon 300mm, 600mm and 600mm X 2 =1200mm lens. All comparison photos are of *Atlantis* on pad, September 9, 2006.



Picture taken with a 300mm lens.



Picture taken with a 600mm lens.



Picture taken with a 600mm lens with Extender EF 2x II =1200mm.



Comparison of the Zoom capability side by side, 300mm vs 600mm vs 1200mm.



Space Shuttle Atlantis taking off on September 9, 2006. Camera is Canon 1Ds Mk II 1200mm F/6 1/2000 ISO 200.



Discovery on pad, June 30, 2006. Photo taken with Canon 400mm. F/2.8, ISO 100, 1/200 Camera body was a Canon 1Ds MK II.

News From SEPA States

FLORIDA

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GeoGraphics Imaging and
Consulting, Bradenton, FL
Jetson1959@aol.com



Florida Planetarium Association (FLORPLAN)

Contact George Fleenor for details.

Buehler Planetarium Broward Community College Davie, FL

Susan J. Barnett reports: The Buehler Planetarium & Observatory is running public shows four days a week. The weekend shows and monthly specials include *Rusty Rocket's Last Blast*, *The Search for Life in the Universe*, *A Dozen Universes*, *African Sky Lore* and *Women Hold Up Half the Sky*.

We continue to rotate shows on Wednesdays, and these shows include *The People*, *Endless Horizon*, *To Worlds Unknown* and *2061: Secrets of Mars*.

The Buehler Observatory has viewing four times a week. It has free public observing Wednesday,

Friday, and Saturday evenings. In addition, we observe the Sun on Wednesday afternoons. We usually have one telescope set up to view sunspots, and watch flares through a Hydrogen-Alpha filter on another.

Planetarium Calusa Nature Center Fort Myers, FL

Carole Holmberg reports: We borrowed some items from Johnson Space Center over the holidays, including an inflatable 30-foot high Space Shuttle stack. I thought that the picture might look nice in *Southern Skies*. It's so "typically Florida."

[Editor's note: See cover.]

GEORGIA

contact: David Dundee
Fernbank Science Center
Atlanta, GA
david.dundee@fernbank.edu



Fernbank Science Center Planetarium Atlanta, GA

David Dundee reports: Fernbank survived a busy summer of camps, NASA programs, and planetarium shows.

The planetarium hosted over 16,000 visitors from June through August. Astronomers Ed Albin and Angela Sarrazine re-sealed the observatory deck and freshened the telescope with a new coat of paint. We completed the distribution of the high energy astronomy program *Hotter Than Blue*, produced in collaboration with Huntsville's Marshall Space Flight Center. This fall, a full complement of school programs joins the new in-house production *Stellar Life Cycles* for our public audiences. Plus a new Children's program *Moon & Stars*, another in-house production, which is also presented to school groups.

In mid-September, the planetarium was host site for a teacher workshop of several hundred National Board Certified Teachers and new math and science teachers from around Georgia.

October brings the return of our popular *Scarecrow's Halloween* program. The *Creatures of the Night* exhibit features nocturnal animals, to go along with the Halloween planetarium show. Special programs on the weekends before Halloween invite children to come costumed as their favorite animals, and to participate in make-and-take activities, a Chemical Magic demonstration, visiting the observatory and an Owl Prowl in Fernbank Forest. The accompanying photo shows Dr. Angela Sarrazine and avian friend at last year's event.

After Thanksgiving, the holiday planetarium programs include the Loch Ness production *Season of Light*, and a new in-house production for children. *The Snowflake Puzzle* explores shapes, colors, and the seasons.



Halloween at Fernbank

Georgia Southern Planetarium Statesboro, GA

Becky Lowder reports: We've had another very busy and exciting year sharing astronomy and space science with the public and university students down in southeastern Georgia. Our planetarium is a teaching planetarium where we teach our university astronomy lab courses, as well as the planetarium internships I and II. Our interns gain planetarium experience with the visiting school groups from 2 year olds to university level, as well as private groups of all ages. We cover the Georgia Performance Standards in astronomy and space science in our live presentations and include fun interactive hands-on activities to reinforce topics such as Moon phases, solar system scale, colors/sizes of stars, etc. In addition to the weekday school shows, we offer other free public events. We started off 2006 with Dr. Clayton Heller, Planetarium Director, presenting a fascinating presentation on interstellar space travel. Planetarium interns presented their own excellent presentations on asteroids, constellation mythology, and the history of astronomy during public evenings. We shared our telescopes with the public during Sun-Earth Day, Astronomy and Space Day, the Taygeta Graze, and the transit of Mercury. We also took our telescopes for public viewing with the Statesboro Astronomy Club to our local regional library and botanical garden. Other public evenings included *Stardust*, *Explorers of Mauna Kea*, *Saving the Night*, and *December Skies* with telescopic observing outdoors following the presentations.

I am proud to announce the addition of two new galactic astronomers to our physics department, Dr. James Higdon and Dr. Sarah Higdon. They come to us from Cornell University and we are so happy to welcome them aboard to teach astronomy. We are currently working on a large-scale solar system walk across our campus in a partnership with our art department. The physics department is working on expanding our astronomy courses offered. Dr. Clayton Heller, Professor and Planetarium Director, began a new upper level course in galactic astronomy this fall. New and exciting things yet to come in astronomy at Georgia Southern University!

We plan on having our solar telescopes set up for

the public to observe the transit of Mercury on November 8th. We will discuss the transit during our Oct 27th public evening to get folks prepared on why it's happening and how to safely observe it. Holiday lights, music, and refreshments await our visitors for our annual December Skies shows in December for a festive evening under the dome! This is always one of my favorite events of the year!

We've had our share of technical problems this year with our blue cove lights going out, air conditioning and LCD projector problems, but they are working on repairing them.

2007 is looking to be just as exciting! In addition to all the thousands of visiting school children, we have a stellar lineup of public events! Dr. James Higdon will start it off in January with his research on *When Galaxies Collide!* Saturn will be front and center in February with *Ringworld II*, *Astronomy and Space Day* with a total lunar eclipse in March, and interns will present their excellent shows TBA in April.

Clear skies!

LOUISIANA
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Pennington Planetarium
Baton Rouge, LA
jelvert@lasm.org



**Lafayette Planetarium
Lafayette Natural History Museum
Lafayette, LA**

Dave Hostetter reports: The planetarium at the Lafayette Natural History Museum is expecting a busy autumn, hoping to see a return to normal attendance by school groups following the hurricane disruptions of the previous school year. A public program about the transit of Mercury and the fall meteor showers opens in mid-October, and telescope plans include four public star parties from October

through December and public transit observing at a park in November.

Weekly sidewalk astronomy besides the Museum building during the summer proved very successful, with over 400 people seeing and learning about the sun (and getting information about the Museum and its programs!).

As of early September, there is an opening for an Assistant Planetarium Curator in Lafayette. The job involves many aspects of planetarium programming in a traditional dome, and pays \$23,213 annually with benefits. For more information contact Adam Marcantel in Lafayette's Civil Service Division at (337) 291-8331 (phone) or (337) 291-8349 (fax).

Don't forget that the successful candidate will have the extra fun of helping to plan the 2008 SEPA conference!

SOUTH CAROLINA
contact: Glenn Dantzler
Settlemyre Planetarium, Rock Hill, SC
dantzler@chmuseums.org



**DuPont Planetarium
Ruth Patrick Science Ed. Ctr., USC
Aiken, SC**

News from the DuPont Planetarium: The DuPont Planetarium at the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center (RPSEC) on the campus of the University of South Carolina Aiken is in the midst of celebrating the 20th anniversary of the RPSEC. A number of celebration activities have already occurred and there will be more to come. On November 30, 2006, the planetarium hosted the first annual Galaxy Gala. This was a fund raising activity that provided supporters with an opportunity to "adopt" a heavenly body at the DuPont Planetarium. The night included a silent auction, heavy hors d'oeuvres, an open bar, the USCA Jazz Ban and pianist Ariana McGhee

(a USCA music education major). The adopters of the heavenly objects became the objects' Galactic Guardians for 2007.

The Galaxy Gala is something that has been in thought and planning stages for some time. The idea to do something like this gained momentum each time someone contacted the planetarium to inquire about buying a star. After a very kind, tactful and gentle explanation about how one cannot buy a star, the inquirer was informed of a future plan to adopt a star at the DuPont Planetarium. With such an adoption, their money could go to support an educational entity instead of lining the pockets of some for-profit company that often preyed upon the unsuspecting and susceptible people (OK- Off of soap box now). This future plan became a reality with the Galaxy Gala.

A few months before the gala event, a number of volunteers and planetarium staff began to meet to plan the activity. Before long, the Galaxy Gals came on the scene. One of the volunteers was part of a small group of ladies who would get together to watch the Miss Universe contest. They would dress up as planets and poke fun at the spectacle of the pageant. This group enlisted a few others and the twelve Galaxy Gals became an entity. The ladies dressed up as the eight planets, the dwarf planet Pluto (complete with a protest sign about being kicked out of the planet club), the Sun, the Moon and the Milky Way Galaxy. The gals wandered around the science center asking supporters to bid on them. Our planetarium director, Dr. Gary J. Senn was the Galactic Social Worker for the evening and was available to help match needy celestial bodies with caring, adoptive guardians. A great time was had by all and the planetarium was able to raise a few thousand dollars.

Other activities are planned for the first half of this year. On March 3, 2007, we will host activities related to the lunar eclipse and on April 21, 2007, we will have activities surrounding National Astronomy Day. On May 31, 2007, we will have a "Blue Moon Festival" on the second full moon of May to finish out the year of celebration.

We had a very successful Christmas season, with the annual presentation of *Tis the Season*, from Loch-

ness Productions. In January, we presented, *More than Meets the Eye*, also by Lochness Productions. Our school groups were able to choose from *More than Meets the Eye*; *Larry Cat in Space*, also by Lochness Productions; *Star Stories*, one of our own productions; or *Cruising Through the Constellations*, also one of our own productions.

In February, we will show *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by the New Jersey State Museum Planetarium and the Raritan Valley Community College Planetarium for the general public and for school groups. School groups may also choose to see *The Explorers of Mauna Kea* produced by the Bishop Planetarium in Hawaii. In March, we will be showing a local production *Dark Shadows*, a local production and *Blown Away: The Wild World of Weather* by The New Detroit Science Center. These shows will be available to both school groups and the public.

**Settlemyre Planetarium
Museum of York County
Rock Hill, SC**

Glenn Dantzler reports: The Settlemyre Planetarium had a successful autumn with both weekend and school groups. Since we integrated our eight show offerings into the school curriculum we have found this to be the most successful way to maintain school attendance numbers. Our public shows are offered each Saturday and Sunday. The Saturday 11 a.m. show is always for families with younger children. It is not as well attended as our other shows but if you don't have one for small children YOU WILL GET AN EAR FULL ABOUT NOT PRESENTING A SHOW. Two of our other shows are live sky constellation and planet shows and how to use the current monthly sky map. We also offering, as an experiment this year, a show devoted to a more in-depth look at a single astronomical or space exploration subject. We have also added "schools out days" to the planetarium schedule and have had bus loads of kids from day care centers.

Our astronomy club is benefiting with the lower price of "go to" telescopes on the market. We seem to gain at least one new member a month with one

of these types of 'scopes. I guess new comers to the hobby have little interest in using a star chart to star hop to a deep sky object. But any way to reverse falling membership is ok with me.

I have yet to hear from any other planetariums I have talked to regarding submitting an article to *Southern Skies*. I can be reached at: Dantzler@chmuseums.org. Let's get more planetariums represented in our publication.

Hope everyone has a successful second semester school attendance and so long from South Carolina.

TENNESSEE

contact: Kris McCall
Sudekum Planetarium
Nashville, TN
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Bays Mountain Planetarium Kingsport, TN

Adam Thanz reports: Lots has happened since my last journal entry. The last time I wrote about Bays Mountain, our new Educational Interpreter, Jason Dorfman, was to start in three days. Well, three months later, he has fit in really well. He brought in not only planetarium experience, but also audio experience! He does a fine job giving programs in the theater and is just about to write his first script for us about the winter skies. As far as the audio, we just purchased some studio speakers and headphones as well as a Mac Mini with Logic Pro 7. We already had a basic 49-key USB music keyboard and a good mic for narration. This will allow us to make good audio narration recordings as well as create soundtracks and sound effects. Even in 5.1 audio! For those of you out there with a Mac and OS X, you can use GarageBand to do your audio creation, editing, and mixing. It is part of the iLife suite

and comes free with new Macs or is available to purchase. If you can get the educational discount, the price is 50% off, or \$39. This also includes a video editor, website creator, photo manager, DVD creator, and more. I feel it's always good to let others know of a good deal.

Getting back to Jason, his first week included not only learning the theater's operations, he also got thrown in the maelstrom of our annual StarFest event. This is a regional star party our astronomy club holds each Fall. Part of his third day at work was spent going to Sam's with me and Allen Davis (one of the Park's artists) to pick up about 500 sodas, hundreds of snacks, and lots of paper goods. Then on Saturday at 8:30 a.m., the work started for the event. I think he finally went home about 1 a.m. This was after all the meals and activities associated with StarFest. Then on Sunday at 9 a.m., it started up again with a big country breakfast and more activities.



Allen Davis and Jason Dorfman rest a bit after hauling sodas and such for StarFest 2006 held each year at Bays Mountain Park.

Part of the StarFest event was a showing of our in-house production of *You Are Here*. I wrote about it in my last article. It was written and narrated by Robin Byrne and is about the changing understanding of our galaxy and Universe. It has been well received. We have been using it as part of our 5th grade Universe program.

Work continues on *The Planets*, a SEPA-produced planetarium show that will be distributed to facilities that have SEPA members. It features the writing skills of Jon Bell and a custom music score by Jonn Serrie. It is occupying a lot of our time as we are creating custom animation and artwork as well as acquiring public-domain visuals for the program. I think that you will be impressed.

Around the time you read this, we will be hosting the latest incarnation of the Tennessee Planetarium meeting on March 5-6, 2007. We named it SAPS (Southern Appalachian Planetarium Social) to encourage visitation by planetarians in our general area. We are hoping those that don't usually attend meetings will do so since it will be short and very low cost. \$12 will include attendance, all meals in the 24 hours it covers, and being able to sleep in our Nature Center. It will be mainly planetarian-driven, where those visiting will provide the various presentations for all to share. We will even have a vendor present, Zeiss/Seiler, to provide a short demonstration of their optical projection system. In the late afternoon on the 5th, we'll make use of more of our Park's facilities and partake of an outdoor program like a barge ride on our lake or learn about our wolves. We hope those who visit will learn a lot and have fun visiting with others like you.

Our annual observing sessions start this Spring. We have our StarWatch night viewings every Saturday night in March and April. Solar viewing will be held every clear Sat. & Sun. in the afternoon. This includes white-light and H-alpha views.

Sudekum Planetarium Adventure Science Center Nashville, TN

Kris McCall and Drew Gilmore report: Many of you already know about our secret, but now it's official.

<http://www.adventuresci.com/media/2006/20061017skyspace.shtml>

Looks like we will actually have to build this thing.

Our last day of operation is January 7, 2007. As a result, we will have a lot of material resources that we simply cannot store or use in the new theater.

- Spitz 512 star projector and console - 35 years old but has had regular PMA, no automation
- Spitz star lamps and cups - 3 of them
- Spitz 40 foot dome - was cleaned and painted in 1994, dirty again, but otherwise in good shape
- 116 Irwin planetarium chairs - dark blue with high, Naugahyde headrests, in good condition, plus extra seat and backrest covers
- SkySkan comet projector
- SkySkan bolide projector with strobe
- SkySkan sunset projector
- Spitz meteor projector
- Spitz solar system orrery
- homebuilt warpspeed projector - not as nice as those offered by Ash Enterprises, but does have a set of the Ash disks on it
- a few pieces of Clearlight automation
- as yet undetermined but probably a significant amount of ECCS automation components
- a number of TMC or other brands of single slide projectors
- 35 mm slide file - a wide variety of topics and quality, in hanging file pages
- a number of Elmo slide projectors and parts - many have quite a few miles on them, others do not
- assorted lenses for slide projectors
- a variety of telescopes: Criterion 6 inch, 10" Dob, 3" Tasco refractor, Questar 7, and others
- 16 mm movie film - unexposed, several emulsions
- 35 mm film - unexposed, might be some Kodak 160T, LPD4, or others
- ArriFlex S 16 mm movie camera and more.



If you are interested in any of this stuff, please let us know. We will be posting pictures and addition listings to a website in the next few days. I'd really rather not send these treasures to the dump if you can use them.

We will not pay to ship anything, so if you want it, you'll have to come and get it or pay the cost of shipping plus a packing charge. If you really want something, make us an offer. The same shipping rules will apply even if you purchase an item. If more than one person expresses an interest in something, you'll have to bid for it.

We have not set a closing date for disposition of materials. Right now, I am thinking the end of November. Some items will be available immediately. Others, we will be using until January 14th at the latest.

As soon as we have a web address, I will post it to dome-1.

Renderings of the planned facility:



VIRGINIA
 contact: Kelly Herbst
 Virginia Living Museum Planetarium
 Newport News, VA
 kelly.herbst@thevlm.org



**Chesapeake Planetarium
 Chesapeake Public Schools
 Chesapeake, VA**

Dr. Robert Hitt reports: We are in the process of scheduling all grade levels at the planetarium. We installed new carpet and are about to order a new video projector for our star theater. It seems that video projectors will be replacing all the slide projectors soon. We are also looking into the purchase of a new LED cove lighting system and the addition of a full dome video projector. Our planetarium will soon be celebrating its 45th year of operation. To mark the occasion we will investigate going full

dome video for all projectors and special effects.

The planetarium's web site is at www.cpschools.com.

**Virginia Living Museum Planetarium
 Newport News, VA**

Kelly Herbst reports: As many of you now know, major changes, and none for the better, have taken place here at the Virginia Living Museum. Budget constraints forced management into staff reductions, and one of the positions eliminated was the Director of Astronomy. After 27 years, Dave Maness was let go from the museum at the end of October. At the same time, it was decided that the technology of the planetarium theater was no longer meeting the expectations of our audience. Management therefore also decided to suspend all public programming in the planetarium pending renovation of the facility and upgrades to state-of-the-art equipment. School programming continues at this point. The day after these changes were announced, Melissa Zellers, our planetarium lecturer, gave her two weeks notice, having found a full-time position as Director of Education at the Louden History Museum in Leesburg, Virginia. We wish her all the best in her new position.

So as the last remaining planetarian here, things have been a little strange. I have been given the new title Astronomy Curator and now report to the Director of Education here at the museum. We have recently hired on a new part-time Science Educator, John Wright, who is training on planetarium operations, and will also be training on our natural science programs. School programs are continuing

We decided to reopen for this one week, between Christmas and New Years, to offer our traditional holiday program, *Star of Wonder*, to the public. We have run this program every year we have been in operation, and it is a perennial favorite with visitors. Attendance has been high, and many people are quite dismayed to hear of the closing of our theater for public programming.

Unfortunately, as part of our discontinuing our public programs, we have also stopped offering

our laser shows. With no income to bolster it, the system will be returned to AVI next month. We are hoping to be able to rent it again in the not-to-distant future, and will be applying for grants to fund the system through NASA.

We plan to open to the public again for two Saturdays in February to offer our well-received *Follow the Drinking Gourd* program during Black History Month. Our version adds upon the wonderful program for children by the New Jersey State Museum and Planetarium with some African star lore, and local history.

Thus far, the earliest I have been told we might resume public programming is Fall 2007. Until then, much of my time will be spent updating our roster of school programs, and updating programming in our observatory and our sundial exhibit.

Any Virginia Planetarian with news to share with SEPA should contact Kelly Herbst at kelly.herbst@thevlm.org or 757-595-1900 ext. 256





SOUTHEASTERN PLANETARIUM ASSOCIATION

