

# Southern Skies

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Journal of the Southeastern Planetarium Association

Summer 2007



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# President's Message

Adam Thanz  
Bays Mountain Planetarium  
Kingsport, TN

I hope you are enjoying (and surviving) your summer at work. I have quite a lot on my plate at this time, but it is always great to hear positive comments from the public. Our current summertime planetarium show is about planet status (status?) from the early Greeks to the present. I have had many children in the 8-12 age range tell me specifically that they like the show. It is a different type of praise than I'm used to from school shows. It is not a generic "that was great" or "cool," but that they enjoyed the content of the show itself. Have you received feedback like that? Let me know at the upcoming conference!

Speaking of shows, we are in the midst of finishing the original video animations for SEPA's *The Planets* program here at Bays Mountain. Show production is much more complex and time consuming than it ever was in the past. A short animation (~1 min.) of flying over Saturn took five days to render! But, it includes animating the spokes on the rings and changing from a visible to UV view of the Gas Giant. Relating to the distribution, our goal is to make the program as usable as possible to all facilities. There will be lots of content with some neat surprises in the detail!

By the time you read this, each planetarium facility that includes a current SEPA member should be receiving a copy of *The Planets*. This is a SEPA-produced planetarium show that covers our Solar System. I hope you enjoy it. It was written so that it would not be dated and covers topics that will be important for visiting school groups. I feel that the mix of words, music and imagery created for the

program will make this a valuable addition to your theater.

It was written by Jon Bell from the Hallstrom Planetarium in Fort Pierce, FL and was narrated by *Star Trek Voyager's* Kate Mulgrew! An original score was produced by Jonn Serrie and based on Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. The animations were created by Allen Davis from Bays Mountain Park in Kingsport, TN. The still art was from Deborah Mann, also from Bays Mountain. Richard McColman from Morehead Planetarium provided the 360° pans. The video edit and DVD production were created by myself and Jason Dorfman, also of Bays Mountain. Gary Meibaum has agreed to produce a 1K dome master with the visuals for those who can use this format.

As I write this, Steve Mitch has agreed to allow us to present the program at the triple conference in Wheeling, WV in October. This will allow non-SEPA members to evaluate the program and hopefully seek out licensing the show for their facilities. A cost has not yet been determined by Council, but it should be quite reasonable.



SEPA President Adam Thanz

(Continued on page 9)

# IPS Report

**John Hare**  
**ASH Enterprises**  
**Bradenton, FL**

## *IPS dues increase update*

Several issues ago I mistakenly announced the dues increase for IPS was to take place January 1, 2007. Well, I was wrong. The increase will not go into effect until January 1, 2008. This means you have an opportunity to save not only on your dues renewal or new membership, but you can still take advantage of the even greater savings to be had with a 2-year membership.

Current dues are \$50 for 1 year and \$90 for 2 years. The new rates will be \$65 and \$100.

You can join by e-mail. Go to [www.ips-planetarium.org](http://www.ips-planetarium.org)

Or, contact Shawn Laatsch, IPS Membership Chairman:  
Phone 808-969-9735  
Fax 808-969-9748

Chicago's Adler Planetarium will host the 2008 IPS Conference. Please note the following DATE CHANGE. A last-minute vote was required by the IPS Council to endorse the date change and I voted against the change. The new dates are June 27 to July 2. This is later than the previously announced dates of June 15 to June 20 and was necessitated by limited hotel availability. Adler should have known better and had they acted on the issue earlier, this could have been avoided. At the Council meeting in Rio, I will propose that action be taken to prevent a last-minute change from occurring in the future.

The IPS Council meeting will have taken place by the time you read this so look for comprehensive details regarding the 2008 IPS conference in the next issue of Southern Skies.

# Editor's Message

**James Sullivan**  
**Buehler Planetarium & Observatory**  
**Davie, FL**

Rates and submission formats for advertising space in SEPA's quarterly journal *Southern Skies* are:

Rates	Dimensions
\$100.	Full-page 7" wide x 10" high
\$50.	Half-page 7" wide x 4.5" high
\$25.	Quarter-page 3" wide x 4" high

These rates are per issue and in B&W copy. The entire back cover of our journal is also available either in B&W for \$125, or in color for \$150. A 10% discount to any size ad can be offered only with a year's (four issues) commitment of advertising. Ads accepted on a space available basis. Ads must be camera ready and conform to dimensions listed. Payment must accompany advertisement order, made payable to the Southeastern Planetarium

Association (send payment to Secretary/Treasurer Mickey Jo Sorrell). The underlying mission of our advertisements is to promote resources, products, and services related to the planetarium profession. SEPA reserves the right to refuse advertisements. .

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.

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Staff Position \_\_\_\_\_  
IPS Member? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
Contribution to Scholarship Award Account: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# Small Talk

**Elizabeth Wasiluk**  
**Hedgesville High School Planetarium**  
**Hedgesville, WV**

FROM THE EDITOR: Last month, this article began with the following:

*For those who have forgotten, this column is supposed to be about contributions of all of you out there who work in small planetaria. Small can be any way you judge it, just as Jane Hastings, the now retired planetarian from Richmond, VA defined it years ago. You can have a small staff, a small dome (like me), a small budget, etc. Since I never get material from any of you, it becomes a monologue instead of a dialog. This is just a friendly reminder that suggestions and contributions are always accepted. Since I have only gotten one in all the years that I have been doing this column, I thought it a good idea to remind you.*

**This a contribution from Adam Thanz, Bays Mountain Planetarium, Kingsport, TN**

We have been pleased with a neat introduction that we have been showing in the theater as people walk



in and seat. It is ideal to use a computer with Key-note or Power Point, but our tiny, old computer finally gave up the ghost. So, I made a DVD version and use a cheap (~\$25) DVD player to show it. It uses two of Jonn Serrie's songs (which we have in-house rights to) and has many different "slides" that cover all sorts of topics. Two sets of images are separated by an animated park logo. The DVD also loops automatically, so I don't have to worry about the music running out if there are unknown delays in the lobby. The length of the presentation is about 14 minutes long, so it would be very unlikely that anyone would see it repeat.

It covers house rules like (not in any particular order):

Turn off your cell phone  
Remove loud/crying children  
Where the exits are (and that they can't get back in)  
No food or drink and to not leave trash

Local events like:

Club meetings  
Public daytime and nighttime viewings

Basic astronomy info like:

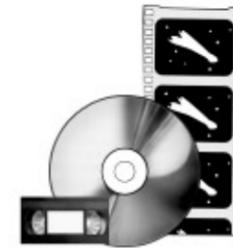
How to use a starchart  
Fun facts about the planets, telescopes, sun, stars, galaxies, etc.

Other material like:

Behind-the-scenes about show production or how the theater works

None of the slides have much text at all so it makes it easy to just glance at it. Many of the images are very old, so it makes for an interesting and humorous way of conveying information. This is very close to what Becky Lowder described at the last conference in her presentation. Maybe you can do something like this with your theater!

# Astro Video Review



**Priscilla Bernardo**  
**Orlando, FL**

## *Monster Of The Milky Way*

I'll be honest. It was the title of this number that caught my eye. Maybe it is because, as I find myself sadly leaving my last little outpost in this field of astronomy, I can identify with the idea of a monster within my midst destroying everything bright that circles around it. A peek at Dome-L these days and I know I am not alone. As my particular event horizon approaches, being spaghettified seems a silly choice to make. And so it is that I hit play on the last 56 minutes as your Astro Video Editor and hope that once the DVD stops my trip into the unknown will one day lead me back to my starry home.

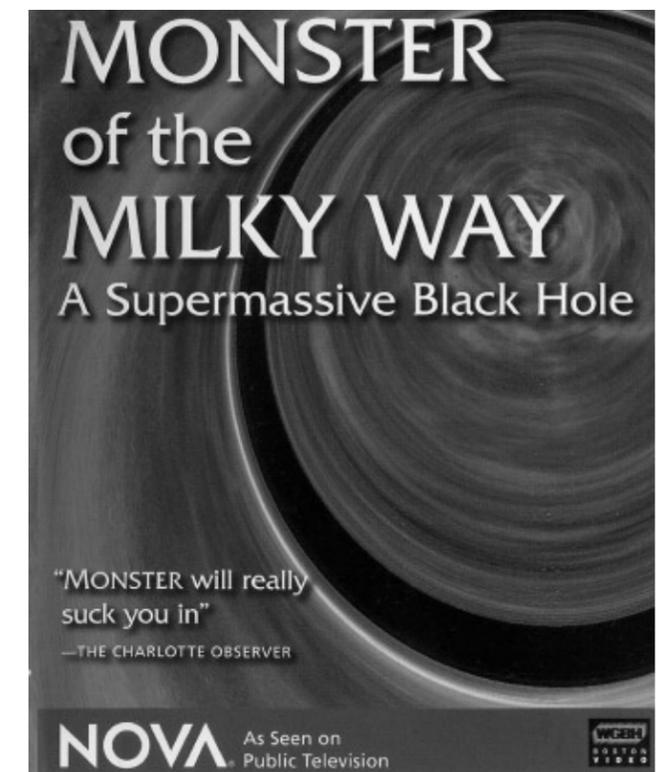
As one expects from a NOVA production (\$19.95 at [www.wgbh.org](http://www.wgbh.org)) this is a slick episode with great graphics, humor and science put forth in an easy to understand fashion. Not an easy thing to accomplish when talking about that oddball, the black hole. Even the experts show us that when talking about black holes, even the best get tongue-tied.

It all begins with one question. What is at the center of our Milky Way? You might think, put a telescope out there and look but that would be like standing in the suburbs and trying to see downtown. You probably would see all the light pollution but not where it was coming from. It is just this kind of creative little metaphor that is used to describe not only the challenges of seeing into the center of our Milky Way but also understanding how we live a quiet suburbia style life out here. Inside it is like New York City;

full of action, danger and erratic behavior. There is a thug in neighborhood jerking everyone around and like cops to a crime scene, the scientists are on it.

As we try to discover the identity of this local bully we learn along the way how scientists have had to develop new ways to view our galaxy. Looking for the telltale paw print of a black hole we come to understand how they are born and how we might die if captured by one. We look at how science fiction has portrayed black holes and explore the possibilities of what a trip into a black hole might look like. It is here that the graphics really do a nice job of simulating the journey and the scientists do their best to keep a bright outlook on being torn to shreds or vaporized.

When the scientists hone in on the perpetrator we find that our ill-mannered resident is typical of what other galaxies are putting up with. We have a super-massive black hole wreaking havoc on our Milky Way. Explore how it got there and what it means for the future of our home galaxy. Find out what happens when a black hole eats up something around it by watching our own black hole have a 1999 snack. Can anything good come from having this monster at the heart of all we hold dear? That answer still lies in the realm of speculation.



# SEPA BUSINESS

Adam Thanz  
Bays Mountain Planetarium  
Kingsport, TN

## Proposal for a Change and Addendum to SEPA's By-Laws

### Proposal:

This is a proposal to add a two-year membership payment option to the single-year payment. This will only apply to full membership. In addition, there will be a 20% discount for the two-year membership payment.

This will not affect the one-year membership payment option nor any of the other membership options such as associate or supporting.

### Benefits of Proposal:

1. This will minimize the number of membership renewals each year and the associated work involved in record keeping.
2. A significant discount to the cost of dues for full members.
3. An incentive to keep members.
4. An incentive to attract members.

Changes to the By-Laws are proposed as follows:

### Original:

§ 3. Dues: Annual dues shall be an amount determined by a majority vote of the membership at the Annual Business Meeting.

### New Version:

§ 3. Dues: Annual and bi-annual dues shall be an amount determined by a majority vote of the membership at the Annual Business Meeting.

-----  
An addendum to the By-Laws will also be proposed to address the percentage discount for two-year membership dues.

### Addendum to the By-Laws are proposed as follows:

In addition to the annual dues for full membership, there will be a two-year membership option that will provide a 20% discount over the term of the membership. This option, nor the discount, will not apply to any of the other membership options such as associate or supporting.

-----  
Voting will take place at the business meeting during the triple planetarium conference in Wheeling, WV, Oct. 13, 2007.

Thank you for your consideration,

Adam Thanz  
Bays Mountain Park & Planetarium  
Kingsport, TN

### President's Column (Continued from page 3)

Many thanks go to those involved in this production, especially Michael Sandras, who had the insight to start the project. A huge amount of work was put into it by all those involved.

Distribution will be as follows: Leasing contracts will be sent to facilities with a SEPA member to be filled out and returned. Upon the document's return, your facility will receive the program. You will be able to use the program at no cost as described in the contract. The same lease restrictions will apply to the all-dome version as well. If your facility did not receive a copy after distribution, and you are a member of SEPA, please contact the Secretary/Treasurer, Mickey Jo Sorrell. Her contact information is at the beginning of this journal. If you are not a member of SEPA but would like to purchase a copy, please contact Mickey Jo.

I would like to thank James Sullivan and Jon Elvert in working out a pricing scheme and format for advertisement in the SEPA journal. I'm sure you'll notice the ads in this issue. It not only allows us to find out what's new in the business end of our profession, but it also provides some additional funds to SEPA.

I would also like to thank Drew Gilmore for adding some new content to the SEPA website. There are past journals as well as biographies of some Council members.

I have also noticed an increase in participation in the state news section of our journal. I think it may be the best part of the journal as it allows us to see what others in our profession are doing. We tend to be at far distances from each other, but these small entries close the gap. They are like letters from an old friend letting us know how they are doing.

But, let's not be complacent! Write an article! Submit content to the state news! Send Betty Wasiluk some material! Definitely send in photos!

As a side note, in addition to all my work at Bays Mountain, my wife, Robin, and I are building a log home. No, we are not putting the logs up ourselves, but we have never owned a home before and this is our dream home. Robin (you may have met her at

past SEPA conferences) is an Associate Professor and teaches full time at Northeast State Community College. I am an adjunct instructor there as well and teach one class a semester. Each semester, we have college students over for a potluck to have fun, have a meal, and observe the night sky. Our intention with our new home is to have more of these events at our place. Not only will we have an observing platform to use, but we are incorporating a small planetarium theater in our home. It will be on the upper floor of a two-story turret. We are hoping to acquire an old projector (at no cost) that works and that will fit in a 13'-14' dome.

The last bit of official news is that the triple conference is coming up very soon. It will be held in Wheeling, WV at Oglebay on October 9-13, 2007. Steve Mitch and his cohorts over there are working most diligently to provide an excellent event for not only SEPA, but also GLPA and MAPS folks as well. It will be great to see old friends and make new ones. The annual conference is the best part of membership. Where else will you be able to commiserate with those like you? Where else will you be able to learn new techniques on how to present an astronomical topic? Where else will you be able to see the largest collection of Woodchucks?

See you in October!

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# Adventures with Day Camp

**Jason Dorfman**  
**Bays Mountain Planetarium**  
**Kingsport, Tennessee**

The middle of summer is quickly approaching and as I write this we are wrapping up our Day Camp program here at Bays Mountain. As the newest member of the planetarium staff, I was given the task of working with the campers for part of their visit to the park. This involved developing an astronomy-related activity for them to do, followed by a presentation in the planetarium. This was going to be a new experience for me. Though I have given many presentations to school groups, I have never had to guide a group of children through an activity. I knew this would present some new challenges but would also be very rewarding.

The campers are here for one week and we work with them for a couple of hours during one of those days. They spend the rest of their time exploring other areas of Bays Mountain Park and doing various activities with the camp counselors. The Day Camp program is split into two age groups. The first six weeks are 6 to 8 year olds and the last two weeks are 9 to 11 year olds.

For my first time working with Day Camp, I decided to follow a model of what had been done in previous years. We normally start with an activity to demonstrate and increase their understanding of concepts in astronomy. Then, we take them into the planetarium and show them a presentation. And finally, we end with a space ship ride, which they all excitedly look forward to and, unfortunately, is the part they always remember. For the planetarium portion, I would be showing them our Sky Tellers show,

which would be perfect for the 6 to 8 year olds. This show combines two Native-American stories with a more scientific explanation as a follow-up to each story. The first story is about why Polaris is a special star and teaches them how to use the Big Dipper to locate it. For the activity, I looked for something that would help reinforce this lesson. Looking through the Astronomical Society of the Pacific's Project Astro resource book, I found a Big Dipper finder, which was developed by MAPS. I thought this would be the perfect activity to go along with the show. I felt it was simple enough to make for this age group, gave them something they could use year round and hopefully would get them interested in learning to find other constellations.



*Jason Dorfman with group.*

For the older age group, I decided to stay with the idea of a star finder. Also contained in the Project Astro resource book was a simple planisphere created by the Pacific Science Center. One of its nicer features is a reversible constellation wheel. On one side is a simple group of constellations and on the other is a more complex group to use when they become more familiar with the night sky. This activity would take a little longer for them to create, so I decided to change the planetarium portion a bit. I showed them how to use the planisphere using the planetarium stars and then pointed out several constellations in the summer sky. Of course, I ended everything with a spectacular space ship ride.

Overall, I have really enjoyed my experience with our Day Camp. All of the kids have been really

*Day Camp (Continued from page 10)*



*Group at Bays Mountain Day Camp*

good and seemed to enjoy everything. With some constructive criticism from Adam Thanz, I have also learned some new skills to use with our regular school groups. My goal for our future Day Camps is to develop a new spaceship ride which incorporates learning about astronomy along with the thrill and excitement.

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# Constellation Shoot-out

**Jon Bell**  
**Hallstrom Planetarium**  
**Indian River Community College**  
**Fort Pierce, FL**

Dear MAPS, GLPA and SEPA Colleagues,

Since 1996, when the first "Constellation Shootout" was held at the Sudekum Planetarium in Nashville, Tennessee, I have been conducting star and constellation identification contests at SEPA and IPS conferences. Similar events are lately being featured in other conferences, such as MAPS' and GLPA's "Shoot Your Mouth Off," where colleagues share their best constellation stories and techniques.

I think this is a very good thing, as it helps us to hone and improve our identification and story-telling skills, and it also showcases the planetarium's star-field, that aspect of our profession for which we are rightfully best known. One of the things I most enjoy about visiting another planetarium facility is the chance it gives me to look at and, under the best of circumstances, admire someone else's "sky." (Of course, the other side of the coin is that we get to critique and sometimes be chagrined at seeing defects in our own and others' star-fields, such as a star out of place, or of the wrong magnitude, or once in a while, just plain missing - and this is of substantial benefit to us all as well!)

In the upcoming MAPS/SEPA/GLPA Triple Conjunction conference at the Benedum Planetarium in Wheeling, West Virginia this fall, I'd like to once again offer up the Constellation Shootout, and there's been talk also about doing a "Shoot Your Mouth Off" event (those of you who've partici-

*(Continued on page 12)*

pated in the last few Shootouts know that we've also added a storytelling segment to our competition.)

At this point it does not look as though there is time in the busy conference schedule to allow for either of these activities, and of course so many of us will be attending that we wouldn't all fit in the dome at one time anyway! Therefore I'd like to see if there is enough interest among those attending to hold these events on the Saturday afternoon immediately after the conference ends, say from 1 pm to 6 pm, followed perhaps by a dinner. This would be Saturday, October 13, 2007.

Once again, I'd need some help in conducting these activities. I am also looking at making some modifications to the Shootout to make it go a little more smoothly. Up until now, a judge has called out a star, constellation or deep-sky-object visible on the dome, and the contestant has five seconds to point it out correctly. Point it out wrong, and that person is out of the contest, somewhat like an old-fashioned spelling-bee. Now I'd like to try "The Minister's Cat" or "dueling" method, and it would work like this:

1. Chosen by lottery, the first contestant looks at the star-field, announces to everyone what he's about to point out, then points out that object. If he correctly points it out, he is still in the game.

2. The next person now does the same thing, but can not point out the things that have already been identified. If he forgets, judges will remind him that the object's already been pointed out and he must point out something else.

3. Competition continues in this way until all the easy stuff has been pointed out, and people begin to drop out as they run out of things that they know. Play continues until only one person remains.

4. After this first phase of the game is done, the storytelling part begins. I'd like to lengthen the amount of time a contestant has to tell a story, from 2 minutes to 4 or perhaps 5 minutes. (Up to now, it's been 2 minutes because in all past contests, we could only be in the dome for an hour; if we can have the facility to ourselves for a few hours, then we can be a little more relaxed about things...)

5. Following these competitive games and the awarding of prizes to the participants and winners (I'm working on getting some now,) we would take a short break, then reconvene in the theater, get comfortably seated, and just "Shoot Our Mouths Off," where anyone and everyone with a pointer can contribute stories, pointing methods, identification tips, and anecdotes about our colleagues (remind me to tell you about the first time I gave a live star talk on Orion and Taurus and ended up saying exactly the wrong thing!)

If you would like to be a part of this activity, or have any suggestions or comments, or would like to help organize and run things, please contact me either on or off-list.

Thanks!

Per aspera ad astra.

Looking for planetarium slide shows?  
Does it seem like all new planetarium shows now are full-dome video programs?  
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**KONICA MINOLTA**

# News From SEPA States

## FLORIDA

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### Florida Planetarium Association (FLORPLAN)

Contact George Fleenor for details.

### Buehler Planetarium Broward Community College Davie, FL

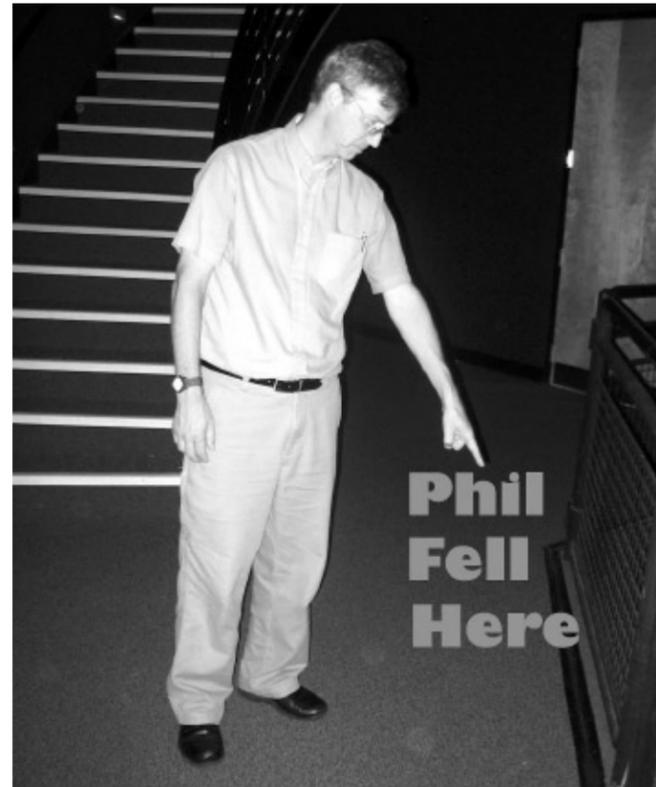
Susan J. Barnett reports: The Buehler Planetarium & Observatory is running public shows four days a week. The weekend shows and monthly specials for Summer and Fall include *Our Place In Space*, *In Search of New Worlds*, *MoonWitch*, *Springtime of the Universe* and *First Light: The Space Telescope Story*.

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

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.

### Astronaut Memorial Planetarium and Observatory Brevard Community College Cocoa, FL

Jack Dunn supplied this photo of conference host Mark Howard from last year's conference:



### Hallstrom Planetarium Indian River Community College Fort Pierce, FL

Jon Bell reports: In Fort Pierce we're putting the finishing touches on the seemingly never-ending hurricane repairs from the devastation caused by Frances, Jeanne and Wilma. The planetarium dome got a good scrubbing at last (love that algae!) and a fresh coat of paint, and the linoleum flooring that



had gone through three big floods was pulled up and ceramic tile laid down.

*The Planets* soundtrack is completed; Jonn Serrie did an excellent job with the music (arrangements from Holst's *The Planets*) and Kate Mulgrew's narration is wonderful. Adam Thanz is putting visuals together, and we hope to have it in everyone's hands by late summer/early fall. Oh, in case you have concerns about that object out beyond Neptune, no worries, Pluto is referred to as "a world," so you can run the show without any trouble.



I'm on summer break now, hope to see you all at the conference at Steve Mitch's Benedum Planetarium in Wheeling this fall (please see my request for help on the Constellation Shootout elsewhere in this issue of the journal)!

### Kika Sylva Pla Planetarium Santa Fe Community College Gainesville, FL

Laurent Pellerin reports: I assumed the position as the first Coordinator for the Kika Sylva Pla Planetarium here in Gainesville, Florida, at Santa Fe Community College, on June 1st. We are getting the KSP Planetarium up and running as fast as possible. Currently we are running a short demonstration show to display the capabilities of both the Goto Chronos computer-controlled mechanical-optical star projector, and the Spitz SciDome full-dome digital projector. We have been running these shows for scouts, civic organizations, youth groups, and for an International Conference of University and Civic leaders that met at the University of Florida.

Current plans are to open to the public and the schools this Fall on Labor Day weekend with a highly flexible Show that I am producing to be modified on the fly to match 85%, or more, of each grade level's Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Space Science Objectives, and be used for the general public as well.

Following my formal training with Chronos and SciDome systems in July, I will begin production of shows specifically tailored to the FCAT objectives for each grade level, as well as producing a new public show.

### Planetarium Science Center of Pinellas County St. Petersburg, FL

Madeline McNaughton reports: The Science Center of Pinellas County's 'Spirit of Columbia' planetarium is busier than ever. The Science Center of Pinellas County is scheduling public astronomy events in conjunction with the Saint Petersburg Astronomy Club and offering planetarium shows as part of the admissions fee. The planetarium shows

coincide with each astronomy event. For example, if the Science Center is doing a Jupiter Watch, then the shows in the planetarium will highlight Jupiter. The public is showing up hours before the event just so that they can make it into a planetarium show.

The 'Spirit of Columbia' planetarium at the Science Center of Pinellas County features a state of the art Minolta MediaGlobe projector. This high-powered machine transports children, adults and visitors to the outer realms of space and beyond. For show times or to arrange a class or private tour including a Planetarium Show, call the office at 727-384-0027.

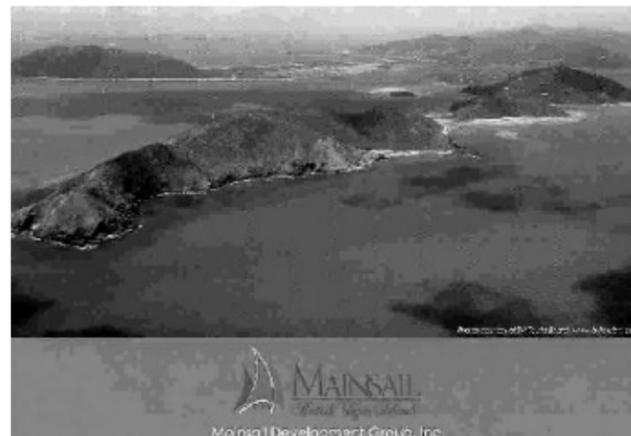
The Science Center of Pinellas County is a non-profit organization and is always looking for planetarium show donations that fit our projector. Please call 727-384-0027 if you are able to donate a show.

#### **Sunwest Space Systems, Inc. St. Petersburg**

Ronnie Beck reports: ROBOTIC OBSERVATORY PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY IN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Mainsail Development Group, located in Tampa, Florida, is building a 5 star world class resort complex in the BVIs and is making a first class observatory part of the facility. You can get more of a perspective of the resort itself by going to <http://www.mainsailbvi.com/> or googleing mainsail bvi.

The most fascinating aspect will be a robotic observatory and dessert bar atop the island's peak providing 360-degree views of the sky and Caribbean waters. The astronomy program will consist of the main fully robotic observatory with a telescope in



the 14 to 16 inch range and associated CCD camera system. The dessert bar will have plasma screens to display telescope images to the guests.

In addition, they plan an onsite astronomy program of public observing, education, and related events. To support that program there will be portable GOTO telescopes set up for the guests to view through.

Mainsail Development Group is looking for a partnership with a university and/or planetarium facility to use its facility for research and teaching purposes. The partnership will give the partner a chance to share their knowledge and experience with the guests/participants and they may have the chance to visit a Caribbean 5-star resort either free or at a fraction of the cost depending on the circumstances.

For a full discussion of possibilities please contact: Ronnie Beck, Sunwest Space Systems, Inc.  
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**GEORGIA**  
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Atlanta, GA  
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#### **Fernbank Science Center Planetarium Atlanta, GA**

*FROM THE EDITOR: This submission was to go along with pictures that were published in the last issue:*

Becky Lowder reports: The spring semester is almost over as I type this report, and we've had a wonderful season of public events and school shows.

Dr. James Higdon presented his fascinating research on *When Galaxies Collide* in January. *RingWorld II* was shown in February along with the latest updates and fun hands-on activities on Saturn and the Cas-

sini Mission in the lobby for children. We gave away 4 paper models of Cassini and 4 styrofoam/cd models of Saturn to young visitors along with very nice color NASA lithos of Saturn, Moons of Saturn, and bookmarks to all visitors. Saturn was beautiful through the telescopes following the presentations.

Our largest ever turnout for Astronomy and Space Day was in March along with the total lunar eclipse, which was clouded out at first. Members of the Statesboro Astronomy Club along with faculty, staff, and students of the physics department helped out with hands-on Night Sky Network astronomy activities, paper rockets, and telescopic observing of the Moon, Saturn, and more, telescope/meteorite/space/Mars exhibits, star shows, Moon rocks, and videos were big hits. Later in March, Sun-Earth Day was a blast with university students, faculty, staff, and home-school groups participating in activities and solar observing outdoors. Kids traced their shadows with chalk on the sidewalk and later came back to discover in amazement how fast the Earth had rotated since their shadows had moved! Indoors under the dome visitors enjoyed star shows and *Cosmic Collisions* playing each hour. The last week of April will bring our last presentation of the semester, *A Star is Born* presented by our intern II, Cory Rosenberger. He will explore life cycles of stars and have hands-on demos and activities for all ages during the presentation. If clear we will have telescopes on the Crab Nebula, the Orion Nebula, the Moon, and Saturn.

We're really going to miss our enthusiastic planetarium student interns and assistants who will be taking their finals first week in May and leaving for the summer. For other planetariums associated with universities/schools, you know how incredible these students are and how much they bring into the dome. Once they get over their shyness, most of them have that very same passion and joy in sharing astronomy as we do as career planetarians. They bring new and fresh ideas that are added into our daily school shows, and create new shows of their own. They are also the backbone of our daily operations, public events, operating the telescopes, giving star shows, and sharing the hands-on activities with the public and school groups. We couldn't do all that we do without them. We will be saying goodbye to our assistant and history major, Jimmy Sheahan,

as he graduates in a couple weeks. He started here as a planetarium intern and liked it so much he took it a second semester completing the internship II. Having a natural talent to give the live shows and capture the imaginations of any age group listening to his stories of the night sky, his enthusiasm is contagious. He will be missed but will be very successful no matter where he goes in his new journeys.

On May 10th we are hosting another NASA Lunar and Meteorite Sample Certification Workshop for our university faculty/staff and also any surrounding area planetarians interested in attending to become certified to borrow Moon rocks and meteorites from NASA. I look forward to see some kindred spirits of the domes!

Starting in late April we will share our ViewSpace exhibit with more of the public in a large summer exhibit called *Spacing Out* that the Georgia Southern Museum will be having on campus in the Continuing Education Building though late July. We will give planetarium shows to the public and to summer camps upon request in May and June. Since my job is still a "casual labor" position we have to close the planetarium for the month of July, but I'll be back in August for a new semester to share the science and joy of astronomy with others.

We are going to be teaching more astronomy labs in the daytime now starting this fall of 07, so the planetarium will be very busy in the daytime starting in August with more university students taking astronomy.

We don't have the fall semester events set up yet, but that will be for our next report. One speaker we do have lined up is our adjunct astronomer, Dr. Sarah Higdon, who will give a presentation on her research at Arecibo on galaxies.

Until next time, clear skies!

Additional news from Becky Lowder: We will be closed for the rest of the summer and will start back up for the fall semester. More in the next issue.

## LOUISIANA

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### St. Charles Parish Library Planetarium St. Charles Parish Library Luling, LA

Gary Meibaum reports: We had a good attendance this summer for the show *Astronaut* from the National Space Center. It is very well written with stunning visuals. Even on our twenty-foot dome using our MEDIAGLOBE projector, it is quite impressive. Late this summer we plan to present *The Great Space Race*, a full dome production from Ott Planetarium in Ogden, UT. We will finish off the year with Loch Ness' *Season of Light*. My associate Jason Talley and I are continuing to experiment with the conversion of various format shows into immersive full dome programs. Our latest success was transforming a NASA "video" into a presentation, which covers the whole dome. This method is feasible only when the source material has a high enough resolution that will allow the video to be disassembled, placing images around the dome. At this writing, we are looking forward to the MEDIAGLOBE Users Group conference to be held in Salinas, CA at Hartnell College in August. Jason and I will be lecturing on the advanced techniques of full dome show production using such programs as Adobe's© Photoshop© and After Effects©.

## NORTH CAROLINA

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### Morehead Planetarium and Science Center University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, NC

*EXTINCTION!*, the newest multimedia star show

at Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, discusses the "KT event" which spanned nearly 10,000 years and triggered the extinction of thousands of species. Through graphic representations, timelines and interviews with leading scientists, *EXTINCTION!* explores this event and the factors that cause extinctions even today.

Narrated by Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning actor William Shatner, *EXTINCTION!* effectively weaves entertainment into its educational message, featuring a reenactment of the KT event that engages the senses on many levels.

Its script, written by Will Osborne (author of the Center's popular *Magic Tree House® Space Mission* show), reflects science objectives outlined in North Carolina's Standard Course of Study for middle school and high school students. The show also encourages critical thinking about the degree of control humans have in preventing the loss of species on Earth.

Two interesting Science 360 interactive programs are currently being offered free to the public: "What Happened to Pluto?" and "Hurricane's Unleashed." The opportunity is being funded by a National Science Foundation grant.

### James H. Lynn Planetarium Schiele Museum Gastonia, NC

Summer programming includes an original show, *One Small Step*, that helps the audience explore the moon with Kim, as her computer, Sarah, introduces her to our nearest neighbor in space. The show illustrates how people have viewed the moon from ancient times to modern exploration. The program is family-oriented and suited to all ages.

Other offerings include the ever-popular *Bear Tales and Other Grizzly Stories* and *The Summertime Sky Show*.

In May, CAPE (Carolina Association of Planetarium Educators) held their annual meeting here graciously hosted by Jim Craig.

### Robeson Planetarium and Science Center Public Schools of Robeson County Lumberton, NC

Weekday public shows are being offered this summer on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from June 26th until August 10th. Ken Brandt is providing a different educational and enlightening experience each week. The shows offer insightful information detailing many current space missions. His topics include: *Hubble Space Telescope: 17 years*, *Deep Impact*, *Solar Max!*, *Pluto or Bust!*, *Apollo magnus*, *Robots on Mars* and *Cosmic Collisions*.

### PARI StarLab Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute Rosman, NC

Bob Hayward reports: PARI has had one staff change: Ben Goldsmith has joined the team replacing Charles Osborne, Chief Engineer, who left PARI to return to the Atlanta area.

Christi Whitworth and Bob Hayward have completed the SERCH-PLATO project outlined in a previous report. In this project they worked with sixth grade students at Cherokee Elementary School on the Qualla Boundary, the home of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation, to have students tape in both English and Cherokee four sky legends of the Cherokee. These are available on a CD to any SEPA member; contact Christi at [cwhitworth@pari.edu](mailto:cwhitworth@pari.edu).

In addition, the radio sky STARLAB cylinders developed at PARI under a NASA IPSE grant are now available through Learning Technologies, Inc.

On the first Saturday in May, PARI's annual Space Day Open House was well attended. Since PARI is somewhat isolated in the middle of the Pisgah Nation Forest, these open houses serve as opportunities for members of the local community to visit and become aware of PARI's programs. The STARLAB was especially popular. On the Friday before PARI's educators hosted about seventy-eight homeschool students for what has become a popular semi-annual Homeschool Day event.

PARI has instituted a weekly docent-led tour of facilities for the public on Wednesday afternoons.

This allows individuals and small groups who just want to see the facilities to do so. The "Evening at PARI" programs on the third Fridays is also growing in popularity. The feature for the June session was a "homecoming" for many of the people in the area who were employed at the site when it was a NASA tracking station and later a National Security Agency station. Many of these enjoyed visiting their old office and lab areas and seeing how PARI staff has put facilities to use since obtaining the site in 1998.

As of this writing, Summer programs are rocking along:

\* PARI educational staff has just completed hosting a two-week residential program for twenty-two high school student enrolled in the Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP).

\* Coming up in July are two week-long sessions of Space Science Lab (SSL) for a total of twenty-eight high school students from Henderson, Jackson and Transylvania Counties. This is the second year of three for this program funded by the Burroughs-Welcome Fund. (A closing project presentation/graduation session was held in May for the students who participated last summer and continued in the program during the past school year.)

\* A summer session of the Robotics: Opportunities for Building Outstanding Talented Students (ROBOTS) program is in the works. This follows up on six ROBOTS sessions taught for teachers throughout North Carolina over the past year.

\* Additional summer programs have been presented to the Math, Science, Engineering Network (MSEN) at Western Carolina University and on campus at PARI for college students enrolled in North Carolina Central University's Initiative for Transforming and Sustaining Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (ITSSTEM).

Many of these programs are initiatives resulting from PARI's participation in the Grassroots Museum Alliance and the North Carolina Alliance to Create Opportunities through Education (NC OPT-ED) of which PARI is a collaborative partner institution.

Three undergraduate college students are, as of this writing, engaged in internships in astronomy and technology. These internships are generously supported by individuals and the local Citizens Tele-

phone Company.

PARI had three more successes in obtaining grants to support its growing K-12 education programs.

\* A grant from the Rudnick Community Foundation to train middle and high school teachers in Buncombe, Henderson and Transylvania Counties, NC, in the School for Galactic Radio Astronomy (SGRA), i.e., use of the "Smiley" radio telescope with their students over the Internet.

\* A grant from the Z Smith Reynolds Foundation to conduct Smiley workshops for teachers in rural counties.

\* A grant from the United Way in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Transylvania County to bring students to a day camp at PARI later this summer.

**Margaret C. Woodson Planetarium**  
**Horizons Unlimited, Rowan-Salisbury Schools**  
**Salisbury, NC**

Patsy Wilson reports: The SERCH-PLATO grant effort was completed in June when over 100 ESOL elementary and middle school students engaged in a month-long computer camp were treated to a free planetarium visit. *The Blue Planet* was shown in keeping with their theme about the environment and preservation of the Earth's resources. In total, the SERCH grant funded planetarium admission for nearly 300 underserved community groups.

The need for new speakers in the planetarium became apparent during the Spring run of rented laser shows. In fact, Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* basically "fried" one of my tired, old speakers during the last weekend of shows. ASH Enterprises recently completed a speaker upgrade, replacing devices that had been in operation at least 17 years!

The director of Horizons Unlimited wrote a grant to purchase our own laser system after the community responded so positively to the rented system in the Spring. In late May, we were shocked and delighted to learn that the foundation approved the grant. At this time, we are contracting with AVI to install one of their full-color, full-dome laser systems. This is scheduled to take place in August.

Since we are owned and operated by a school system

and there is no budget for summer programming, this is our "down" time and it's great to garden, read, enjoy family and basically rejuvenate before the new school year begins. We are offering several summer camps and continue to do show for the public every 3rd Saturday of the month.

**Ingram Planetarium**  
**Museum of Coastal Carolina**  
**Sunset Beach, NC**

Scott Kucera reports: Ingram Planetarium Celebrates 5 Trips around the Sun. Ingram Planetarium opened the doors to an excited crowd on the first day of business back on May 25, 2002. Visitors leaned back in one of the 85 seats and gazed up at the 40-foot domed screen in complete darkness. Then with the flip of the switch on the control panel the voyage began. Planets, stars, clusters, and galaxies dimly came into view as the upturned eyes became adapted to low light in the Sky Theater. The dream of founder Stuart Ingram became reality on that day. It was the start of a new day for his non-profit organization which also includes the Museum of Coastal Carolina.



Members and volunteers were treated to a re-view and a preview during the 5th anniversary on May 25th, 2007. Mark Jankowski, senior technician, dusted off our Just Imagine program which was the first show presented in 2002. And thanks to a sponsorship from Sunset Properties of Sunset Beach we added a new show to our line up, Hubble Vision 2. After the shows we enjoyed cake and coffee.

This summer we again offer children's programs but slightly modified. Last year we had trouble offering 2 concurrent activities for 2 age groups. Either the children did not like dividing their family group, or the parent wanted "baby Einstein" in the



(l-r) Mark Jankowski - senior technician, Scott Kucera - executive director, Lynn Wiedman - gift shop manager, Tom Deacon - board chairman. Photo by Frank Wiedman.

older group. So we decided to promote Family Fun Science Activities this year. We encourage family units to participate instead of the "adult-sits-and-watches" model of previous years. We want young and old to have fun as a group exploring Solar Power and Rockets. This model is consistent with recent data suggesting the prime reason for visiting museums and science centers is spending quality time with family.

Laser shows return this summer for the month of July. I understand the purists' denial of quasi-science programming. But as a NPO, we are realistic about finding alternative revenue streams in a competitive, commercial environment. We had great success last winter with willing show sponsors and excited audiences that might not have stepped inside,

Lastly, I lament the encroaching development of 2 and 3-story town homes next to our Planetarium. Gone are the days of unobstructed sunsets and minimal light pollution during post-show gazing. On the positive side though, this may lead to increased foot traffic around our building. We are very appreciative of the developer who purchased Ingram Planetarium family memberships for his new clients!

Have a wonderful summer.

**SOUTH CAROLINA**

contact: Glenn Dantzer  
Settlemyre Planetarium, Rock Hill, SC  
dantzer@chmuseums.org



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

Glenn Dantzer reports: The Settlemyre had a great spring season. Attendance was up and the kids seem to really enjoy their field trips to the museum and planetarium. Now that summer is here, we are offering public shows on Thursday and Friday mornings and afternoons. We received very good comments on our 3 pm Saturday and Sunday show *Point of No Return*. People really seemed interested in black holes and it is just the right length for a weekend public show. The fall weekend shows have not been decided upon as yet except for our Saturday morning program. It will be *Rusty Rocket's Last Blast*. On the down side I regret our weekend presenter will be leaving shortly. She has been a great asset for five years. I don't know what this will mean for me as her position is slated not to be filled. Oh well, we will trudge along.

Best wishes and goodbye for now from South Carolina.

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

News from the DuPont Planetarium: The biggest news for the DuPont Planetarium at the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center (RPSEC) on the campus of the University of South Carolina Aiken is the re-re-installation of the Bechtel Telescope. In the last issue of *Southern Skies*, we reported the difficulties with the Bechtel Telescope housed in the RPSEC Observatory. The Bechtel Telescope is a 16-inch, Meade LX-200 that had first light in January 2000. Since that time it had significant issues with a run away drive problem. Most recently, the telescope spent some additional time with Meade in California and was returned to service in March. Initially, everything seemed fine. Soon after submit-

ting a positive report in the last issue of *Southern Skies*, however, the telescope failed to respond at all. Under the direction of the Meade technical support, we learned that there were some burned pins on one of the chips on the controller board.

The people at Meade located a drive base for a 16" LX-200 that had never been used. They sent that to us and we installed it. The telescope is now performing as it never has done before. We are hopeful that we have finally found a permanent solution.

The DuPont Planetarium is in the midst of its summer schedule. During the academic year, school groups comprise a significant amount of activity in the planetarium. With school not in session during the summer, there is a transition to local summer camps using the facility. Many child-care organizations find that bringing children to the planetarium for part of a day is very beneficial for them. We enjoy the opportunity to reach more young people with the majesty of the heavens, so it is a win-win situation.

In May, the planetarium presented a local production, *Mission to Mars*. The premise of this show is a discussion between the planetarium presenter and a patron who begin to talk about Mars after a night sky presentation. The patron's uncle recently took a trip into space and would like to take his nephew with him to Mars some day. In their discussion they explore the many attributes of the Red Planet.

In June, the planetarium presented *In My Backyard* from the Calgary Science Centre and *Digistar Virtual Journey*, which is a local production. In July, *Larry Cat in Space* from Lochness Productions and *Digistar "Laser" Fantasy* were shown to the public. In August, the planetarium will present *The Explorers of Mauna Kea* produced by the Bishop Planetarium in Hawaii and have an encore presentation of *Digistar "Laser" Fantasy*.

The 3rd annual meeting of the Carolina Association of Planetarium Educators (CAPE) that was held May 7 and 8 at the Lynn Planetarium in Gastonia, North Carolina was a great success. The CAPERs had a great time networking and sharing their ideas with each other. Jim Craig will serve his second time as president of this distinguished group of

planetarians. Plans are being made for next year's meeting at Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute. You will see more information about this meeting as the time draws near.

**TENNESSEE**  
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Sudekum Planetarium  
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### **Bays Mountain Planetarium Kingsport, TN**

Adam Thanz reports: Greetings from East TN! As usual, summer activities keep us very busy. In addition to daily programming, we are preparing our current show, *The Case of the Disappearing Planet*, for distribution! This is very exciting for us. It has been quite successful with the public, especially the 8-12 year olds and adults. I think they enjoy the characters, their voices (especially the street-savvy private eye's), the artwork and music.

While that is going on, we are also working on the animations, artwork, and formats for distribution of *The Planets* show that SEPA is producing. We think that you will be pleased with the results.

In October, I will be working with a local orchestra called the Symphony of the Mountains. I will provide video graphics of the Solar System to be played in association with a live performance of Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. It should be a lot of fun.

By the time you read this, we will be finished with day camp activities. We have children visit the park every day for a week as they learn about nature, animals, ecosystems, etc. They have lots of fun. Jason is running the astronomy section in association with the counselors and has incorporated a cool activity that they make and then use in the theater! His article describing the activity is in this issue.

On the astronomy club side of our job, we are gearing up for public viewings in the Fall. We are also working on the final plans of our annual StarFest event. We have about 100 amateur astronomers (and planetarians) visit from the southeast US. Our

main speaker will be known by some of you, Doug Gegan. He runs the observatory at Roper Mountain in Greenville, SC and has been to SEPA conferences in the past. He'll be talking about the history of their 23" Alvan Clark refractor.

**WEST VIRGINIA**  
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Avampato Discovery Museum Planetarium  
Charleston, WB, cspivey@theclaycenter.org



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

Kelly Herbst reports: Summer is crazy, as always. Kids summer camps are in full swing, with myself and John teaching 4 weeks of classes. *Skies of Jamestown* has had a good run, and will return again in the middle of August through Labor Day. We're anxiously awaiting the arrival of some equipment that will allow us to run HD movies on our dome thanks to Cinemuse. If any of you have had any experience with these folks, I'd love to talk to you and find out what you think.

Our aging theater is holding together (You hear me, theater? Hold together!), but some reproduction work on several of our school programs is needed. We hope to be getting that underway this summer.

Our Abbitt Observatory has been given an overhaul, with new paint, and some new amenities - including a new system to allow us to project nice big images of the Sun on an LCD screen! Volunteers and guests alike are enjoying the new equipment. Construction is underway right underneath the observatory for a café, which we hope will bring even more people up to the roof to enjoy the sky.

John, Jim, Judy and I are all looking forward to the Triple Conjunction Conference in October. Hope to see everyone there!

### **Thomas Jefferson HS Planetarium Richmond, VA**

Leslie Bochenski reports: I survived another school

year! Following the completion of structural repairs, the planetarium opened during the last week of January, and I saw over 80 school groups before May 18.

Local teachers were pleased to bring their classes to my 'tried and true' selection of programs; *The Moon's Changing Face*, *Spinning in Space*, *On the lookout for Planets*, and *The Astronomy Connection*. Since I had to get things going in a hurry after Winter Break, I stuck with my old program lineup, but I'm looking forward to re-vamping the old standards, and bringing in some new programs for the 2007-08 school year.

In April, I visited Dr. Steve Schiff at the Poinciana Planetarium in Boynton Beach, Florida. This is a very impressive facility for an elementary school. Dr. Steve has constructed a Space Shuttle and Space Station simulator in what used to be a photographic darkroom and a closet! He used some donated equipment, some grant money, and a lot of creativity to create multi-unit lessons for students in grades K-6. I hope I succeeded in talking Dr. Steve into presenting a paper on his simulator at the Triple Conjunction Conference so everyone can see the terrific things he's doing.

In closing, I want to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to my Teacher's Assistant for the last 2 years, Miss Apryl Pecht. Because I run my facility single-handedly, I rely on a student aid to help me with scheduling, maintenance, and all the times I need an extra set of hands to do a job like installing a projector in a tricky location. Apryl has been loyal, trustworthy, and always willing to go the extra mile. A perfect example of her dedication came on a Friday afternoon in January. We had been cleaning up plaster dust for three weeks, remnants of the recently completed repairs. It was a dirty job and we both wore a layer plaster dust on our clothes and in our hair every day. I was looking at staying until about 7 p.m. Friday night, and spending about another 3 hours on Saturday to get the place ready for the first group on Monday morning. Apryl VOLUNTEERED to stay after school and help me until the work was finished, we got it all done by about 6:30 that evening. Not many teenagers would be willing to stay late on a Friday, especially to do work like this! Apryl graduated as the Valedictorian of her class, with numerous awards and honors. I'll miss her, and I wish her success as she continues her studies at Virginia Commonwealth University this fall.

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## Technology for Domed Theaters and Exhibits



Indianapolis, IN

IUPUI Informatics

Internet II HQ 3D Theater

Shanghai, China

Shanghai Museum of Science and Technology

40' Domed Theater

Virginia Beach, VA

Tidewater Community College Planetarium

125 seat, 40' Planetarium

San Jose, CA

Independence High School Planetarium

Planetarium Audio & Video Systems

Nashville, TN

Adventure Science Center

Interactive Exhibit & Planetarium Systems

Chicago, IL

Adler Planetarium

Planetarium Audio Systems & 3D Theater

