

Don't let stars fade

Posted by the [Asbury Park Press](#) on 03/10/07

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For 30 years, busloads of schoolchildren made their way to Ocean County College, where their fascination with the heavens was nurtured at the Robert J. Novins Planetarium. But it was closed last year for budgetary reasons, robbing future grade school classes of the unique experience of learning about the universe in a star-filled auditorium.

A fundraising group hoping to reopen the planetarium is seeking help from the county government. The Ocean County Board of Freeholders should make the planetarium a priority, with a substantial contribution and a firm commitment for the future. The Monmouth County freeholders also should allocate funds. The planetarium is a regional attraction that has benefited thousands of Monmouth children through their visits each year.

College officials also should re-evaluate their vision for the facility, which they shut down last year, saying it wasn't cost-effective to repair the outdated equipment. One supporter of the planetarium was concerned about the apparent desire to make it a fully self-supporting enterprise. While charging a modest admission fee and generating added revenue from its gift shop may be helpful in the future, OCC's Board of Trustees and administration should view the planetarium as an educational responsibility, similar to the library or computer lab, and invest in it accordingly.

The fundraising is a year behind schedule because when the planetarium was closed an anonymous donor pledged \$2.5 million. That didn't happen. The so-called "philanthropist" — Edward Devine of Berkeley — made plenty of phony promises he didn't keep, leaving several nonprofits with unfulfilled pledges. The Astronomical Society of Toms River — ASTRA — mobilized quickly to start a fundraising effort when Devine's false promises were made known.

ASTRA and their devoted stargazers deserve the support — in finances and encouragement — from the counties, the college and the community, to show future grade-schoolers that the sky's not the limit. As ASTRA vice president Robert Gamba said, "To let this gem fade away would be a disgrace."

STORYCHAT 

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Professor Germann,

"I'm Helping to Save the Planetarium" t-shirts are currently available in all sizes from infant to youth sizes and adult sizes up to 4XL.

Right now the way to make your donation is to make a list of the sizes you would need and quantity of each. Then include this list with your minimum donation of \$15 for each t-shirt, and mail to:

Save the Planetarium Fund, Inc.
1001 Fischer Blvd., #103
Toms River, NJ 08753

Also, on your list please include contact information, (phone number and email address) so we may contact you to let you know when your t-shirts will be ready for pickup. In addition, please indicate for each person that is donating whether or not they would like their name to be displayed on our list of donors to be published on our website, and what name they want to use.

All t-shirts can be picked up at:

Sunshine Pack & Ship
1001 Fischer Blvd.
Toms River, NJ 08753
732-573-1700
www.sunshinepackandship.com

If pickup is inconvenient, please include an additional \$5 per order to ship to a location you specify.

We will be adding other pickup locations throughout the county at a later date.

Once again Thank You for your support in helping to Save the Planetarium.

Posted by: SavethePlanetariumPrez on Sun Mar 11, 2007 10:54 am

OCC PLANETARIUM - A Worthwhile Community Facility Worth Saving

Where do I go to buy a T-shirt "Save the Planetarium" and to make a \$100 donation? It may not be a large sum, but times 2000 it may just save the Planetarium.

I took my young sons to the Planetarium when they were boys. Today as adults Michael and Timothy both enjoy and have an interest in astronomy. I have seen hundreds of young grade school students enter the Planetarium and leave with big smiles on their faces. Isn't this a worthwhile community facility worth saving?

Reach for the Stars

Professor Herb Germann
Ocean County College
Teacher of the Year 2005 🏆

Posted by: Herb Germann on Sat Mar 10, 2007 11:32
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