

Merrillville Community Planetarium
Fact Sheet
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The Merrillville Community Planetarium is a unique theater for presenting programs about astronomy and the space sciences. The planetarium is equipped with a domed ceiling and a special projector that projects stars on the dome, giving the audience the illusion of looking up at the night sky. Slides, movies, videos, special effects, lasers, and sound are all used to present shows in the planetarium theater.

The Merrillville Community Planetarium is the only planetarium in Northwest Indiana presenting public and group programs. The planetarium is part of the Merrillville Community School Corporation. The theater, which seats 64 visitors, has a 30 foot perforated aluminum dome that serves as the screen for the approximately one hundred projectors and special effects.

The heart of the planetarium is the Spitz model 512 star projector. The star projector, located in the center of the theater, is capable of projecting the sun, moon, planets, and stars on the domed ceiling. The result is a simulation of the nighttime sky that can be seen day or night — cloudy or clear. And, it never rains or snows in the planetarium. In addition to projecting the stars and planets, the planetarium is also equipped with projectors for slides, movies, video, and various special effects that are part of the planetarium's programs. A stereo sound system is used for background music, sound effects, and program narration. The planetarium is also equipped with a roof-top observation deck and telescopes for observing the real sky.

The planetarium serves three audiences: classes from within the Merrillville schools, school and civic groups outside of the school system, and the general public. The planetarium provides a comprehensive program in astronomy and space science education for Merrillville students. Every student from kindergarten through middle school visits the planetarium at least once a year and sees a show designed especially for his or her grade level. Some of the topics include an introduction to the planetarium, the sun, moon, and planets, stars and galaxies, and space travel. The planetarium provides a unique means of teaching students about the universe in which we live.

The Merrillville Community Planetarium also serves classes from other school systems, youth, and civic organizations. A variety of shows on various topics and for various ages are available for groups visiting the planetarium. Shows can be scheduled during the day, after school, evenings, weekends, and summer. To help defray the cost of operating the planetarium, there is a charge of \$65 per show. Anyone wishing to schedule a visit should contact the Planetarium Director to arrange a date and topic for their program.

The planetarium also offers shows to the public. There are several different public programs each year. Programs are usually presented on Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:30 p.m. Call the planetarium for schedule details. Admission to public programs is \$3.00 for adults and \$2.00 for children. Because of limited seating, reservations are recommended.

The planetarium is located on the second floor of Clifford Pierce Middle School at 199 East 70th Avenue in Merrillville, Indiana 46410. For more information, call (219) 650-5486 or visit www.mcpstars.org.