

## To the stars in Old Town

„ The Cosmos Planetarium offers hourly shows on weekends.

BY STEPHANIE BARNARD Eagle correspondent

Old Town has long offered a mix of bars, restaurants, museums and retail shops.

And now it has a planetarium.

Cosmos Planetarium, inside Mosley Street Market at 312 N. Mosley, has been up and running since mid-June. Shows occur hourly when the market is open Friday through Sunday.

Though an indoor flea market might seem a strange choice for a venue, the building's high ceilings and dark, warehouse-like feel work well for the 460-square-foot planetarium, which is run by Jon Salley, a former planetarium director at the Kansas Cosmosphere in Hutchinson.

Salley says his love of astronomy began at a young age, when his father showed him a comet through a pair of binoculars.

"I've literally never stopped. It's been a part of my life since then," he said.

The 45-minute show, which costs \$5, begins with a night sky segment. As the sun sets, Salley uses a remote to highlight the constellations projected overhead. His digital equipment, he says, is as state-of-the-art as that found anywhere in Kansas.

It features what is described as a Digitarium Alpha 2 mobile planetarium projection system housed in a 25-foot-diameter portable dome. Equipment includes a professional PA system and LED projection of still images and video.

The planetarium can accommodate as many as 90 children or 60 adults.

After the night sky segment comes one called "Two Small Pieces of Glass," an educational film about the invention of the telescope. This year marks 400 years since Galileo developed the astronomical telescope, and 2009 has been deemed the International Year of Astronomy.

Salley said he plans to change the program about three times a year. A Christmashemed show will begin in mid-November. He also works with Girl and Boy Scout groups and will tailor a private show to a customer's needs.

Salley also takes his show on the road, bringing the planetarium to schools and recreation centers across Kansas. He's slated for shows at the Maize and Derby recreation centers beginning later this month.

He's able to fit all of his equipment inside his subcompact Toyota Corolla, he says.

Salley says he wants visitors to leave with a better understanding of the universe, as well as a heightened sense of curiosity.

"The more you learn about the universe, the more fascinating it is," he said. "If I flip that

9/14/2009

To the stars in Old Town

lightbulb on for people, my mission is done.”

Since leaving the Cosmosphere in 1999, Salley says, he has worked on providing a more intimate, interactive experience than he was able to offer visitors there.

“It’s a really personal experience,” he said. “Look up at the sky and you’re going to be hooked.”



Jon Salley, former planetarium director at the Kansas Cosmosphere in Hutchinson, owns the mobile planetarium set up inside Mosley Street Market in Old Town. Fernando Salazar/The Wichita Eagle

Print