

## Skies are on display at Longway



Skies Over Michigan plays in the full dome at the Longway Planetarium in Flint. PHOTO/KATERINA MIHAILIDIS

BY KATERINA MIHAILIDIS  
OU News Bureau

Skies Over Michigan is a live, interactive star-talk show presented in the full dome of the [Longway Planetarium](#) in Flint, Michigan.

“We set the sky to look like it’s going to look tonight,” said Jeffrey Stark, planetarium manager of Longway. “A star-talk is pretty much a star-talk no matter what planetarium you’re at.”

In the show, a presenter explains what can be found in the sky that night and describes how to find certain constellations and planets, visible if conditions allow. The presenter could discuss the solar system and the size of the universe. The night sky is projected on the walls and ceiling inside the dome while audience members lean back in their seats and watch.

The show — one of many at the planetarium — is “a tour of how to find things” in the sky, according to Stark. Much like the sky, the show changes gradually over the course of the year, making them similar if attended daily.



Jeffrey Stark has been planetarium manager for the Longway Planetarium in Flint for four years. PHOTO/KATERINA MIHAILIDIS

“Within a couple of weeks, the sky doesn’t change much, except for the moon,” Stark said.

Skies Over Michigan attracts families and people in search of a hobby, according to Stark. Attendance fluctuates, with weekends and flashy space-news bringing more people in.

If presenters have time, they will incorporate recent developments in astronomy as well.

“If there’s any kind of news that we think is interesting or is starting to kind of get a little bit of coverage or the public is aware of it, then we try to address that,” Stark said.

The news of the meteorite that fell in southeast Michigan on the evening of Jan. 26 brought in crowds to the planetarium, according to Stark. The event has been incorporated into the show. The lobby features a piece of the meteorite.

“During the solar eclipse last year, we were selling out shows left and right because people were excited and they wanted to hear about it,” he said.

Star-gazing [apps](#) make it easy to spot what is in the night sky, according to [Business Insider](#). Individuals can see the night sky clearly through their phones just by pointing them up. Users can see celestial bodies on the other side of the planet by pointing their phones at the ground.

So, why go to a planetarium?

“The problem with those is that they can’t answer questions for you,” Stark said, referring to the apps. “The big benefit to a planetarium is that you have the chance to interact with a knowledgeable person.”

If it’s dark enough, stargazers at this time of year can see the Andromeda Galaxy, the constellations of Orion and Taurus, and planets Mars, Saturn and Jupiter, according to Stark. In the summer, there’s the Milky Way and in spring there’s Leo and other constellations.

“It’s informational, educational and fun to watch,” Neel Moudgal said.

Young Moudgal and his family came to the planetarium for his birthday

“There was a lot of information,” said Varsha Moudgal, Neel’s mother.

Neel’s father, Vivek, added that the family has been looking up at the sky for quite some time but had never imagined how much there was actually there.



Short URL: <http://www.ounewsbureau.com/?p=12256>