

## Kaleidoscope

## Corporate support brings funds to Planetarium

By Joy Thompson  
Staff Writer

A new corporate support program is one of several ways the Morehead Planetarium plans to raise funds for its programs in the future, according to Executive Director Lee Shapiro.

Admittance fees were the main source of income for the Planetarium 20 years, Shapiro said in an interview.

However, under Shapiro's direction the Planetarium will employ some new, more efficient methods for raising money. These methods include a corporate support program and a membership program.

Shapiro, along with Michelle Fletcher of The Carolina Fund (and Office of Development), came up with the ideas for the programs, Shapiro said.

"We didn't want to attack the problem from one direction," Shapiro said. "Our goal was to attack the problem from a variety of sources."

When talking with corporations and potential members, Shapiro said, he first had to explain the Planetarium's financial independence from the Morehead Foundation.

There are actually four parts to the Morehead Building, Shapiro said.

The Public Service Operation of the Planetarium, which Shapiro directs, controls the two exhibition floors of the East Wing of the building and operates the Star Theater, he said. This is the section to receive corporate and other donations.

"The Morehead Foundation is a private foundation that provided the money (to build the Planetarium), and in essence rents back a couple of floors," Shapiro said.

The building also contains an observatory, built 15 years ago on the fourth floor of the East Wing, and directed by the Physics and Astronomy Departments, he said.

There are also two dining and recreational halls run by the Office of Public Information. This office is connected with the University news bureau and handles publicity and campus tours.

The Public Service Operation of the Planetarium is not run or financed by the Morehead Foundation, Shapiro said.

"The Public Service Operation of the Planetarium is like a museum," he said. "And most museums find it impossible to operate on just the people coming through the doors."

Except for some University support, the Planetarium was run solely on admittance fees to its programs; there was no corporate support or a membership program, he said.

"When I came here three years ago one of my goals was to try to get operations on a more equitable level," Shapiro said.

His first year at the Planetarium, Shapiro talked with Fletcher of The Carolina Fund about ways to raise additional funds for the Planetarium.

The Carolina Fund is a University organization whose job includes "organizing fundraising on behalf of alumni and friends of the University," Fletcher said. It also gives fundraising advice as in the case of the Planetarium, she said.

Shapiro and Fletcher came up with the idea of a corporate support program, which has been in operation now for 15 months.

Through the corporate support program, corporations can make donations to the Planetarium.

Shapiro said he met with 12 corporation representatives and gave them information packets about the program and the Planetarium. The corporations he interviewed were of local interest and operated in the Research Triangle and Piedmont areas, he said.

"We received positive responses from one-third of the corporations," he said. Another third said they would consider donations later, and the rest responded negatively, he said.

So far the corporations participating in the program are Union Carbide (the newest participant), IBM, the Cooper group and Boddie-Noell Enterprises which owns and operates Hardee's Food Services.

"They've (Hardee's) actually been with us the longest," Shapiro said.

For the past seven years Hardee's has been sponsoring the printing of program schedules for the Planetarium. Every year the printing bill is sent to the company, Shapiro said.

Last year Hardee's paid \$5,000 for printing fees, IBM donated \$3,500 through the corporate support program, and Cooper donated \$500, he said. Union Carbide donated \$450 this year.

It was decided that the donations would be gifts only, so the corporations do not get any special privileges, Shapiro said.

"We keep them informed about what their money will provide," he said. The corporations are sent a copy of the upcoming programs, he said.

"They (the corporations) don't even receive the basic things that members receive, such as free tickets to programs, discounts at the gift counters and discounts on classes," he said.

Shapiro and Fletcher also came up with the idea of a membership

program which started last November, Shapiro said.

Members are called "Friends of the Planetarium," and annual membership fees run from \$10 for students and senior citizens to \$130 for patrons.

In addition to receiving free tickets and discounts, members also receive a free subscription to the Planetarium's newsletter and invitations to special members-only events, he said. "In terms of membership, from the people we've been talking to we've been getting very good responses," Shapiro said.

The corporate support and membership programs are developing slowly, he said. "We hope to move in some bigger leaps and bounds in the future," he said.

The Planetarium is also looking into grants as financial sources, Shapiro said.

Last year the Planetarium received a \$30,000 grant from the Institute of Museums, a federal agency. It received a \$39,000 grant from the Institute this year, he said.

"Applying for a grant is more than just sending letters in," Shapiro said. "You have to investigate, particularly among private foundations."

Investigation involves seeing what are the grant foundation's interests and what kind of projects appeal to them, he said. This also takes time, Shapiro said.

The Planetarium is now working on a grant from the Math and Science Education Network, located in the Education Department in Peabody Hall on campus. The purpose of this grant is to increase science education for students in the middle school range, he said.

"We'll learn about that grant sometimes next year," Shapiro said.

Some of the things that have to be considered when applying for grants are their deadline and the time it takes for notification, he said.

"And like with the corporate support program, it is important to get with other people because a majority of the grants are turned down," Shapiro said. "Yet we seem

to be doing better than average."

The amount of State support for the Planetarium has also increased over the years, he said. State money (given through the University) is "picking up more salary dollars," he said.

Last year the State added one person, and this year it added two and a half people, he said.

These increases, however, do not reflect the physical staff of the Planetarium, only salary dollars, he pointed out. Last year the Planetarium had a staff of 19 people, he said. It only has 18 this year.

The staff of the Planetarium includes dining service people, technicians, teachers, technicians and house maintenance, he said. Many of the staff members usually have more than one task, he said.

Despite the smallest of staff, however, the Planetarium has a huge program planned for next year, Shapiro said. The fund-raising programs proceed slowly "because we (the staff) have to fit it in between programs," he said.

"This year is going to be a big campaign drive," he said.

In addition to trying to increase corporate support and membership, Shapiro said, the Planetarium is going to slowly phase in a volunteer program to help alleviate the staff workload, he said.

"The volunteers would have to function as non-paid staff members," he said. They would be accepting full staff responsibilities.

The Planetarium's schedule will be heavier than usual this year, Shapiro said.

"I can say for certain that next year we're going to be looking for breathing room," he said.

Beginning Sept. 3 "The Return of the Comet," dealing with Haley's Comet, will be shown, Shapiro said.

"We're also planning the spectacular opening of a wide angle film show of the space shuttle," Shapiro said. This 35 mm movie is entitled "The Space Shuttle: An American Adventure."

"We've never had this capability

before," Shapiro said. The Planetarium is in the process of installing the 35 millimeter projector for the space shuttle film.

In mid-November the traditional "Star of Bethlehem" film will be shown which examines the "possible astronomical explanations for the long ago appearance of the Star of Bethlehem," Shapiro said.

In February the Audio-Visual Imagineering Company will bring its light show to the Planetarium. "Those shows are very popular," Shapiro said.

The show running most often this summer is "Planet Search," which deals with the possibility of finding other planets, Shapiro said.

"Sky Rambles" is shown every Friday night at 7 p.m. The show gives the public the opportunity to look at the night's sky, he said.

On Thursdays at 10 a.m. preschoolers and children in up to the 3rd grade can see "Winnie the Pooh and the Golden Rocket." During the school year there are a number of shows for pre-school to high school students.

"The most popular show is "Planet Seekers" which is shown for fourth through seventh graders," Shapiro said.

The Planetarium also offers classes. "Star-crossed" is a popular sky-watching class held once a week for six to eight weeks, he said.

"With the increased interest in the Comet Haley, a lot more people want to learn and do observing," Shapiro said.

The Planetarium also offers one-day work sessions.

"We did some for the the eclipses last year, and we're doing a couple this summer for the Comet Haley," he said.

A variety of other public programs are offered too, Shapiro said. For a complete listing and times of Planetarium programs and information about the membership and other programs, stop by the Planetarium's Business Office.

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