

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

April 10, 2002

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***Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn***  
**in the Western Horizon and Planet Week at the**  
**Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum**

Experience a rare and exciting opportunity to observe a grouping of five planets together in the western sky. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn – all the planets known to the ancients – will be visible to the unaided eye from late April until mid-May. The five planets haven't been seen this close together since 1921 and will not appear so near each other again until the year 2040.

Visit the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum for special events including astronomer facilitated telescope viewing of this breathtaking sight Monday April 29<sup>th</sup> through May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. on the Adler's observation decks.

A beautiful lead-in to this event occurs from April 14<sup>th</sup> through April 18<sup>th</sup> as the thin crescent Moon passes by four of the planets in daily succession.

“The position of the Moon, our natural satellite, provides a great opportunity to locate and identify these planets,” remarks Dr. Mark Hammergren, Adler Astronomer.

On Sunday April 14<sup>th</sup>, a very thin crescent Moon will pass near the bright planet Venus. The next evening, April 15<sup>th</sup>, the Moon will appear next to Mars, which is quite a bit fainter in the night sky than Venus. On April 16<sup>th</sup>, the Moon passes very close in the sky to Saturn. On April 18<sup>th</sup>, the Moon slides past Jupiter, which will be shining high in the western sky.

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## **Add One / Planet Week**

In late April, the addition of Mercury in the evening sky heralds the start of the five-planet grouping. According to Hammergren, Mercury, the closest planet to the sun, is notoriously difficult to view and can often be lost in the twilight.

“This is the best opportunity for people to see Mercury for the next several years,” comments Hammergren.

A highlight of the planetary grouping will occur on May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Venus, Mars and Saturn will be a striking sight when they form a small triangle less than 3 degrees across. Jupiter remains slightly removed from the others, higher in the sky. Later in May, Mercury rapidly fades from view towards the Sun, bringing the planetary event to an end.

To celebrate this astronomical event, the Adler is hosting **Planet Week** from April 29<sup>th</sup> through May 3<sup>rd</sup> with special activities and events highlighting the planets and other celestial happenings.

### **Evening activities:**

#### **Public telescope observing**

Outdoor observation of the five planets, April 29<sup>th</sup> through May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. Facilitated by Adler astronomers and volunteers, the public observing will be weather permitting. The Doane Observatory, housing the Adler’s 20-inch reflecting telescope, will also be open for tours during evening observing. Presentations about the planet grouping will be given throughout the evening in the Adler’s classrooms.

**Far Out Friday on May 3, 5-10 p.m.** Planet Week comes to an end with an exciting evening of observing, family activities and other special events, including a lecture by Janna Levin entitled “How the Universe Got its Spots.” Students from Lawrence School in Chicago will also be present, as they observe the night sky with telescopes they made themselves.

### **Daytime Presentations:**

**Where do I look?** In the CyberSpace Gallery, presentations will be given highlighting the sunset planetary groupings, including what to look for and when & where to look. Sky maps will be given to interested audience members to assist them in locating the planets on their own.

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## **Add Two / Planet Week**

**National Space Day** On Thursday, May 2, watch the "Cyber Space Day" web cast from the National Air & Space Museum! "Cyber Space Day" is a live, interactive web cast that brings the excitement of living and working in space to students, teachers and space enthusiasts around the world. This year's "Cyber Space Day" web cast topic will be "Adventure to Mars."

**Space Shuttle Launch** Watch a real-time presentation of the Space Shuttle *Endeavor* launch on May 2. This launch will deliver hardware and the Expedition 5 crew to the International Space Station. Depending on launch time, the Adler's CyberSpace gallery will play host to the broadcast of the Space Shuttle launch, including NASA TV broadcasts of launch preparations from Kennedy Space Center. The date is tentative and the launch time is unknown, but check the Adler website for updates.

### **General Information**

Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum hours:

9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

On the first Friday of each month the Adler offers special programs with extended hours from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

### **Regular Admission:**

Ultimate Universe Adventure is \$16.00 for adults, \$15.00 for seniors 65 and older and \$14.00 for children 4 – 17.

This package includes admission and the choice of two sky shows.

Galaxy Passport is \$13.00 for adults, \$12.00 for seniors 65 and older and \$11.00 for children 4 – 17. This package includes admission and choice of sky shows.

The Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum is the first planetarium in the Western Hemisphere. Its astronomy programs have reached over 40 million people during the past 72 years. Nine state-of-the-art exhibition galleries located in the stunning new Sky Pavilion and the recently renovated landmark 1930s building present modern space exploration along with the history of astronomy. The world's first StarRider™ Theater, the most technologically advanced, audience-interactive planetarium, fuels the imagination of visitors during virtual flights through the cosmos. With a staff of almost 200, the Adler pursues its mission to present the human quest to better understand the universe. Adler scientists and historians, who hold joint appointments at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, are working at the forefront of research in astronomy and its fascinating history. The Adler is leading the way into the new "Space Millennium."

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (312) 922-STAR**

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**[www.adlerplanetarium.org](http://www.adlerplanetarium.org)**

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