

The Adler Planetarium Reaches 500,000 Visitors For The First Time Since 1993

Adler Content, Programming, & Marketing Improvements

Fuel Highest Museum Growth in Chicago

CHICAGO – December 1, 2015 – On November 30, 2015 the Adler Planetarium welcomed its 500,000th visitor, an attendance number the museum has not reached since 1993. Over the last two and a half years, a new management team, led by President & CEO Michelle B. Larson, PhD, has enhanced or reimagined everything from exhibits and programming to customer service and marketing, resulting in a revitalized visitor experience. Through October, the Adler's attendance is up more than 22% over 2014 – is on track to be one of the highest growth rates– if not *the* highest – among Chicago's major museums.

"I am thrilled that the Chicago community has recognized the significant changes we have made and are joining us in exploring the Universe throughout the year," says Larson. "I couldn't be more proud of our wonderful Adler team and what we've accomplished. We're just getting started!"

Led by Sarah Cole, the Adler's Vice President of Visitor Experience, major changes were made to many of the museum's permanent exhibitions, with two new exhibits opening in 2015: *Community Design Lab (CDL)* and *Mission Moon*. Originally intended to be only a temporary exhibit offering, the *Community Design Lab* has proven so popular among visitors that the Adler has made it a permanent fixture. Hands-on, minds-on activities challenge visitors to design solutions to real life problems. In *Mission Moon*, visitors can follow the legendary career of Captain James A. Lovell, Jr.—a NASA astronaut immortalized on film as the Commander of the harrowing Apollo 13 mission. From his rocket crazed childhood through his quest for the Moon, at every point in the exhibition, Captain Lovell is there.

The Adler has also debuted two new sky shows since Larson's arrival. In *Destination Solar System*, passengers travel hundreds of millions of miles in just seconds on an adventure-filled tour led by Jesse, an enthusiastic, knowledgeable – but inexperienced – tour guide, and Max, a highly advanced, fully integrated onboard computer. Tours of the hottest hot spots and the coldest, stormiest and most spectacular sights in the Solar System await curious space explorers of all ages. *Cosmic Wonder* tells the compelling story of how, through time, we have pieced together an understanding of the cosmos, inviting audiences to ask questions and help scientists unlock modern mysteries of the unknown.

"New exhibits, captivating sky shows, strong fundraising, and record attendance – we're firing on all cylinders," said Marc Lapides, Vice President, Chief Marketing & Development Officer. "We are receiving calls from new donors and corporate partners interested in supporting our STEM initiatives, and Chicago leaders that would like to be part of the Adler Board. The community is recognizing the impact that the Adler is making."

The museum's Director of Guest & Member Services, Laurie B. Squire, said, "Even with our most optimistic projections, we never expected to exceed 500,000 with a month still to go in 2015! It's incredible."

About the Adler:

The Adler Planetarium—America's First Planetarium—is more than a museum; it is a laboratory, a classroom, and a community exploring the Universe together. Each year, visitors experience the museum's interactive exhibitions, live planetarium shows, hands-on, minds-on STEM education programs, and world-class collections. Founded in 1930 by Chicago business leader Max Adler, the Adler Planetarium is a recognized leader in public engagement. The museum's scientists, historians, and educators inspire the next generation of explorers and invite you to explore space with us.