

The Adler Planetarium Records Highest Attendance in 23 Years, Welcoming Nearly 570,000 Guests in 2016

CHICAGO—January 11, 2017—The Adler Planetarium welcomed 568,814 guests in 2016; an attendance number not seen since 1993 when the museum was free. Led by President & CEO Michelle B. Larson, PhD, the Adler has experienced unprecedented growth over the past few years fueled by enhanced and reimagined guest experiences in every aspect of the museum. In 2015, The Adler broke the 550,000 visitors mark for the first time in 22 years with attendance up over 22 percent from 2014.

"I am delighted that people are responding to the meaningful ways in which the Adler is engaging guests inside the museum, around our community and across the country. In 2016, we enabled almost 45,000 people to #LookUp and discover the Universe around us through the Doane Observatory and programs like *'Scopes in the City* and *Galaxy Ride*, and with telescopes on the museum floor," says Larson. "We are igniting a spark of curiosity in people of all ages, which is an exciting purpose."

The Adler is igniting curiosity through award-winning exhibitions and sky shows as well. Led by Sarah Cole, Adler's Vice President of Guest Experience, a new, temporary exhibition opened in March of 2016. *What is a Planet?* addressed some of the most compelling questions in astronomy, like why Pluto is no longer a planet, in a fun, dynamic way, and demonstrated how new approaches and perspectives in science can help change our view of the Universe. The exhibition was awarded first prize in the 2016 British Society for the History of Science (BSHS) Great Exhibitions competition. *What is a Planet?* closed January 8, 2017, to make room for the next temporary exhibition: *Chasing Eclipses*, which opens March 25.

The Adler also debuted a new sky show in May 2016—*Planet Nine*. The show explores the largest of Pluto's neighbors in the Kuiper belt, inviting visitors to join in the search for a new ninth planet. Viewers follow "Pluto Killer" Dr. Mike Brown and his team of scientists at CalTech as they hunt for a planet that may be hiding deep in the outer solar system. Breathtaking visualizations, created by the Adler's own Space Visualization Group, help tell this fascinating story.

"Last year when we announced our highest attendance in 22 years, we said the Adler was 'firing on all cylinders,'" says Marc Lapidus, Vice President, Chief Marketing Officer. "This year, I honestly don't even know how to describe the energy that continues at the Adler. New exhibits, new sky shows, telescope viewing events all over Chicagoland—Incredible!"

"2017 is also shaping up to be an exciting year," says Sarah Cole. "This year, the U.S. will experience its first total solar eclipse in 38 years, with Chicago being the closest it's been to the path of totality since 1806. From our new temporary exhibition *Chasing Eclipses*, to a viewing party for 10,000 at the museum, to a special *Galaxy Ride* down to the path of totality in Carbondale, Illinois, 2017 will be an amazing year for the Adler Planetarium."

For more information and to plan your visit, please visit: adlerplanetarium.org.

VIDEO FOOTAGE:

Adler Planetarium b-roll: <https://vimeo.com/149789386>

About the Adler Planetarium

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, nearly 570,000 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.

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