

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces: Peña Planetarium Offers Two May Public Shows Friday, May 15 and 29, 2009 • 2500 Burrel Ave., Visalia

Visalia - The **Peña Planetarium** will hold two special events in May to commemorate the **2009 International Year of Astronomy** — a worldwide celebration of the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first recorded astronomical observations with a telescope and Kepler's publication, *Astronomia Nova*, in which he described the fundamental laws of planetary motions.

On **Friday, May 15**, in conjunction with the showing of a new full-dome feature entitled *Two Small Pieces of Glass: The Amazing Telescope*, the **Tulare Astronomical Association (TAA)** will offer free instruction and troubleshooting for telescope owners who pre-register with the TAA and bring in their telescope. To register, contact Greg Eckes at (559) 739-7270. Those who register will receive a free ticket to that evening's planetarium program. *Two Small Pieces of Glass: The Amazing Telescope* explores the history of the telescope and the discoveries these wonderful tools have made. The audience will learn how telescopes work and how the largest observatories in the world use these instruments to explore the mysteries of the universe. In

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addition, they will explore the Galilean Moons, Saturn's rings, and the spiral structure of galaxies and learn about the discoveries of Galileo, Huygens, Newton, Hubble and many others.

On Friday, May 29, three free public presentations of the full-dome program, *Dawn of the Space Age*, will be offered at 6:00, 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. One ticket will be distributed to the first 70 people standing in line 30 minutes before each show time. No tickets will be pre-sold for these three shows. Attendees must be present to receive a ticket. *Dawn of the Space Age* is the world's first 360-degree, 3D stereo planetarium program. It accurately portrays man's first steps into space – from the launch of the first artificial satellite Sputnik, to the magnificent lunar landings and privately-operated space flights.

The Planetarium is located on the southwest corner of West Main Street and Woodland Avenue in Visalia, in the Educational Enrichment Center. "We are proud of the increasing number of full-dome shows we can offer and in the continuing partnership with the Tulare Astronomical Association," says County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak.

Tickets for *Two Small Pieces of Glass: The Amazing Telescope* can be purchased at the Impact Center Office 30 minutes before show time or in advance on weekdays between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. Tickets are \$4 for adults and \$3 for children under 12. No late seating is offered once the planetarium doors close. For information, call (559) 737-6334.

For more information about the Peña Planetarium, visit www.tcoe.org/ImpactCenter.

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