

About

History

Many dramatic changes take place for young people during their middle school years. With a heightened sense of awareness, they discover things that, in many cases, have surrounded them all their lives. Things such as gender differences, the challenge of relationships, their own limitations, and even their surroundings. It is during this time of discovery that many of these students are introduced to astronomy and, for some, a lifelong love affair with the stars and planets of our universe is kindled.

The Beginnings

With this in mind, Stan Strike and Scott Mecca began a project to help students develop an even greater awareness of their surroundings. An awareness that would go far beyond any textbook, video, or computer program could take the students on their own. This dream began to take shape during the Spring of 1996 as they formalized plans for the Cody Middle School Observatory.

Construction for the CMS Observatory began in June, 1996 and the building was completed by August, 1997. Two permanent cement piers were built in the 24'x36' observation room and one of the piers was fitted with a platform, a 3 meter dome, and insulated walls. The observation room was wired to support 10 networked computers and two televisions. The control room was wired to the schools Local Area Network (LAN) and was equipped with its own phone line.

Over \$50,000 in astronomy equipment and software was purchased including a Celestron 14" telescope, a Paramount GT-1100 computerized base, a SBIG ST-7 digital camera, a CyberMax computer, and The Sky astronomy software. The telescope and base were mounted on the permanent pier beneath the dome in the enclosed telescope room.

Following the completion of the building construction the Fall of 1997, Pete Idema joined the team and helped Stan provide students and members of the community the opportunity to view planets, stars, star clusters, galaxies, and nebulae. In 2004, Stan Strike retired from teaching 8th grade science. Now Pete Idema manages the observatory.

Money to start, maintain, and improve the observatory has come from organizations such as US West and Marathon, from groups like the Optimist and Rotary Clubs, from foundations such as the Stock Foundation, from Park County School District #6, and from individual donations of money and labor.

The 2006 Revamp!

In the Fall/Winter of 2006, Amos Olson, Brian Reavis and Brandon Reavis worked to revamp the observatory website and assisted Pete Idema in giving the observatory an overhaul. The website is up and running with a fresh, new look and the facility continues to make improvements!

Right Now

Currently, the observatory is used by 8th graders as part of the 8th grade science curriculum as well as for a math & science elective course and for science fair projects. The CMS Observatory can also be used by individuals, schools, and astronomy organizations by making requests in advance.