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This program list was updated in October 2025.

All programs are appropriate for adults. If children wish to attend, it is at the discretion of their parents or guardians, though a general recommendation is that these programs would be appropriate for children ages 10 and up. Don't see a topic you are interested in? Let me know if you have a theme to help connect to other programs you are planning. I can suggest something – or I may be able to create a new program for you.

My Newest Programs

Ignition and Liftoff!

The mighty rockets of today trace their roots to technology from over two millennia ago. We'll travel through the history of rockets via the people who were inspired to move objects farther, faster, and higher.

Ten Books that Changed Astronomy

For several thousand years, books have made a significant impact on how we view the cosmos and our place in it. We'll start with a book by a Greek philosopher that influenced thinking about the Universe for almost 2,000 years, we'll touch on important books from more recent centuries, and we'll end with a book that inspired an entire modern generation to explore the stars.

Who Named Jupiter's Four Largest Moons?

The naming of Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto is a tale of discovery and Jupiter-sized egos that resulted in the destruction of an astronomer's reputation. We'll walk through these fraught events, highlight what we know about these four moons, and end with an overview of two spacecraft missions that are on their way to the Jupiter system now.

Our Moon: Known and Unknown

Our Moon is one of the most familiar objects in our sky, but there is still a lot we don't know about it. Spacecraft landings there seek ice, metals, rocks, and minerals that – we hope! – can tell us much more about the history of our satellite. This talk will include an overview of what we know and what we still need to learn about our closest neighbor in space.

Exploring the Andromeda Galaxy

The Andromeda Galaxy is one of the most important objects in the sky. We'll showcase the work of Wheaton, Illinois' own Edwin Hubble and the other astronomers on whose shoulders he stood to use the Andromeda Galaxy to unlock the key to understanding the structure of our entire Universe. You'll also learn where and when you can see the Andromeda Galaxy for yourself with just your eyes – no telescope required!

Get Involved

Light Pollution: What Can Be Done?

Light pollution is the excessive or inappropriate use of outdoor artificial light. It affects public safety, human health, wildlife behavior, and our access to the night sky – and it wastes energy and money.

We'll talk about the problems of light pollution as well as practical solutions you can implement at home to make an immediate impact.

Our Solar System

Revealing Venus

Earth's nearest planetary neighbor seems far from earthlike – but the two planets have some important similarities. We'll discuss what we know about Venus now, what it may have been like in the past, what Venusian mysteries we would still like to solve, and connect the search for planets around other stars to the study of Venus and Earth.

Comets & Asteroids: Cosmic Storytellers

Studying comets and asteroids tells us about how our solar system formed, and comet and asteroid impacts may have played a part in the development of life on Earth itself. This program will highlight what we know now and what we hope to find out about these cosmic storytellers.

Artemis: Returning to the Moon

The goal of the Artemis program is to return people to the surface of the Moon. In the next few years, NASA will take the next steps toward doing just that. We'll discuss the plans and technologies that will get humanity back to the Moon for the first time since 1972.

12 Things that Make Life on Earth Possible

Earth has sustained life in many different forms for more than 3 billion years, and so far, it's the only known planet – anywhere - with life. We'll highlight a list of 12 characteristics that make Earth very special in our Universe.

Icy Worlds

Ice: it's not just the stuff you shovel off the sidewalk. Many different ices are all over our Solar System – and it is really...cool...stuff to study. We'll investigate ices on hot planets and cold comets, moons made mostly of ice, flowing and floating glaciers, and even ice volcanoes.

Armchair Tour of the Solar System

Explore our Solar System without leaving your seat! We will showcase some of the latest NASA spacecraft images of our Solar System, touching on our stunning Sun, planets, and much more. *Note: This program can be presented as a one-evening program or as Part 1 of a two-evening program series with Armchair Tour of the Universe.*

Past, Present, and Future

Where Do Constellations Come From?

There are 88 constellations that astronomers use to delineate the entire night sky. Where does the list originally come from and what are these constellations used for? We'll explore the history of how we got this list and the people involved, plus several of the constellations that were created and disappeared along the way.

Defining Time

What time is it? That is a surprisingly complicated question to answer! We'll venture through several thousand years of history in the human quest to measure and define time.

The Space Race

In the 1960s, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were locked in a race to send men to the Moon. How did it all begin? How did the Soviets try to beat the Americans? And, what happened to the Soviet effort after Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the Moon in July 1969?

Eight Women Who Changed Astronomy

Women have played a part in astronomical discoveries for centuries – but many of their stories are overlooked or untold. We will first highlight how science was – and was not - available to women of the past. Then, we'll learn more about eight women who blazed paths in astronomy, as well as the hardships they had to overcome to be able to explore the Universe.

Women in Space Exploration

Women have been involved in getting people to space for decades. We'll start by focusing on several trailblazers who helped popularize and advance air travel, and then we'll spotlight women who were pioneers in the era of rocketry and space exploration. Come learn about these groundbreaking women!

Space Food

This presentation will highlight the development of space eats from the earliest days of space travel, show how food is eaten – and grown - on the International Space Station today, and what food might look like for future long-term space missions.

Astronomy Near and Far

The Webb Space Telescope

The Webb Space Telescope has begun to fundamentally alter our understanding of black holes, the early Universe, stars, planets, and more. Learn more about this groundbreaking mission as we explore the latest stunning images from the telescope. *Note: This program is updated frequently with new science results and images, as available.*

Searching for Other Earths and ETs

We have found over 6,000 planets around other stars in the past 30 years. A few are similar, in some ways, to our own home planet – and many are just plain weird. Join us for an overview of the search for distant planets, as well as ways in which scientists are investigating the possibilities of life elsewhere in the Universe.

Armchair Tour of the Universe

Go on a trip around the Universe! This presentation will take you on a whirlwind visit through our Universe's most amazing objects using images from the world's most advanced telescopes. *Note: This program can be presented as a one-evening program or as Part 2 of a two-evening program series with Armchair Tour of the Solar System.*

Skywatching

Skywatching Using Your Eyes

So much observation of our daytime and nighttime skies can be done without a telescope. This presentation will focus on an overview of celestial observations you can do with just your eyes, including Moon phases, eclipses, planets, stars, and much more in a session suited to an astronomy novice.

Note: This is a presentation facilitated indoors. Unfortunately, our uncertain & often-cloudy weather makes an outdoor program impractical. This program will be updated for the time period of your specific program.

Skywatching Using a Telescope

Bring the Universe to your neighborhood! (Your library name here) (has/soon will have) (telescopes/a telescope) for you to check out and use at home. Learn how to operate this telescope and get tips for skywatching with your eyes and with mobile phones.

Note: This program is specifically for institutions that have, or soon will have, a telescope or telescopes for patrons to check out. I will tailor my program to the model of telescope that your institution has acquired.