

- Special to the Daily Leader

Southwestern Heights High School has planned a planetarium open house from 2 to 4 p.m. for March 27.



The open house is taking place to showcase the new planetarium projector. The funds used to purchase the new projector were donated by the Mercer family.

Rhonda Mercer is the current ESL teacher at SWH. Her late husband, John, was an alumnus of SWH and then later served on the USD 483 Board of Education.

The open house will be a come-and-go format with planetarium shows presented by Ken and Amy Shoenrock, who teach science at SWH. Mr. Shoenrock has already put on a few shows for high school and elementary students within the USD 483 district.

SWH is possibly the only high school in Southwest Kansas that houses a planetarium. The planetarium was widely used throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s by former science instructor Ed Rush.

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Monday, 15 March 2010 13:04

Mr. Rush put on planetarium shows for many groups and organizations, as well as students from around the area. Over time, the projector became inoperable.

When the decision was made to reopen the planetarium, it was decided that a new projector needed to be purchased. In researching the old projector, SWH learned that it was the original Hutchinson Planetarium projector.

The Hutchinson Planetarium eventually grew into what is now known as the Cosmosphere. Through a joint effort, the original projector was returned to the Cosmosphere last spring.

In efforts to reopen the SWH planetarium, woodworking students created a beautiful new cabinet to house the new projector. Other plans are also being made to enhance the planetarium. SWH would like to invite any and all who would like to attend.