

# COLUMBUS EAST HIGH SCHOOL

## Planetarium should be promoted as city jewel

Columbus has been blessed with a number of treasures, many of which have been promoted and exploited to a highly successful degree.

However, the city has some other treasures which are equally valuable in their potential but neither promoted and in some cases not utilized to their fullest capacity.

One of them is the planetarium at Columbus East High School.

The L.S. Noblitt Planetarium has been a fixture on the East campus since the school was opened in 1972.

It was named for a former local teacher who shared his fascination with astronomy with his students and the community.

When East opened, it was on of the few high schools in the country to host such advanced equipment. It instantly became popular not only with students and



teachers but with community members at large who were treated to unique visions of the stars in groups or club tours of the facility.

The novelty of such a treasure did eventually wear down as technology advanced and other callings took priority.

Computer programs were not updated to keep pace with the changing technology and budgetary concerns forced major cutbacks.

Eventually, the school corporation was forced to cut staffing of the facility.

It has been in use but primarily on a voluntary basis by teachers after school hours or during teacher preparatory classes.

Ironically, it was the Flood of 2008 that gave new hopes to supporters of a greater use of the facility. The planetarium was one of those rooms that were undated in the disaster. The school corporation was able to use insurance compensation to essentially rebuild the facility and update the computer software.

The result is a planetarium that once again should put Columbus in the forefront of science education and technology.

One problem, however, remains. The school corporation is still unable to staff the facility.

Given the economy and the reduction of resources forced upon most school corporations, the BCSC administration and board are understandably reluctant to

dedicate so much to a venture of this nature.

That is not, however, to understate the value of this community treasure. Now, more than ever, is an ideal time to promote science among all generations.

That is best done by a staff person who would not only be charged with scheduling, maintaining and teaching but also with promoting use of the planetarium throughout the South Central Indiana area.

It is vital that some means be found to bring this about, either from within the school corporation budget or with support from the private sector.

In a community that is looking to technology as an economic development model, the East planetarium would seem to be an ideal marketing tool.

