

THE CAROL J. GREER COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

St. Stephen's Community Church, UCC

P.O. Box 841 - East Lansing, MI - 48826

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Serving Lansing Area Families and the Development of At-Risk Youth

January 2022

Meteors, Asteroids and Comets, Oh My!

This Abrams Planetarium meeting of the Young Astronomers Club was timely. News media reported Comet Leonard, a giant ice ball, visible in late December, was the brightest comet visible in 2021. On the Planetarium's dome ceiling, youth were shown the many asteroids and meteors in our galaxy and their orbits as well as streaking comets and what to look for. Encouraged to ask questions, the youth were exposed to the wonders of space rocks by the Planetarium's instructors.

After the showing, youth moved to the lobby and engaged in space rocks activities. One instructor used her tablet to show a depiction of Comet Leonard, how to find it in the night sky and when. She invited them to "make" a comet using such as dry ice, sand, ammonia, and syrup. Wearing goggles and heavy rubber gloves, youth made fist-size facsimiles of a comet.



Another instructor had a flour mixture laid out to demonstrate the surface of the moon. Dropping balls of different sizes and weights onto the "moon's surface," the youth measured the depth of the craters made and discussed what characteristics determine their depth and size. The youth also drew vehicles that might collect particles from a planet's surface.

A space rocks display stimulated many questions. Sharing information about Abrams' impressive collection, the instructor encouraged the youth to handle these materials from outer space and consider their differences. A special gift of a genuine meteorite was given to each participant as we left. A visit to the nearby MSU Dairy Store for ice cream capped off the trip.



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A December night at Lansing's Potter Park Zoo*

To enjoy the magic of the Potter Park Zoo's Wonderland of Lights, the Saturday morning Greer Center program made a schedule change. The bus left Hildebrand at 5:15pm as the sun was setting. Looking out of a window, one of the girls



exclaimed to the others how beautiful the sky looked. The underside of the blanket of puffy graying clouds was bathed in a bright crimson, almost like they were on fire. Arriving at the Zoo, the sky had become dark

and partly clear, lit magnificently with a bright $\frac{3}{4}$ moon. The Zoo competed with nature's show greeting our group with a beautiful display of Christmas lights.



But mostly the youth enjoyed the animals. Those that lived in outdoor cages were generally unseen, curled up asleep in their caves on the cold windy night but animals in buildings behind glass were a big hit. Seeing a male lion, even a sleeping one, up close enough to touch (if it had not been for the glass) was a moment to remember. A female lion was asleep inside the glass too. While the leopard also was asleep, the porcupines were rooting around in their cage, displaying very sharp quills, their major defense weapon.



In another building there were many different kinds of reptiles that were coiled up in their caves or slithering along their branches. In yet another there was a variety of birds. Outside there was a bald eagle but it was too dark to see it very well. While the light show was enjoyed and the youth had lots of fun, a return trip in the daylight when the outside animals are active would be even more enjoyable and instructive.

**Zoo tickets, courtesy of the Potter Park Zoo, were very much appreciated.*



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By check: Mail to St. Stephen's Community Church with Greer Center on the memo line, 1007 Kimberly Dr, Lansing, MI 48912

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PLEASE NOTE: *The Greer Center Board and Staff are sincerely grateful for contributions made by those who included the Greer Center among their donations on Giving Tuesday and at Christmas. Thank you.*