

# Adler's new lab lets kids launch a thousand space experiments

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What happens to a marshmallow when it launches into space? Does it expand, shrink or explode?

Find out at the Adler Planetarium's Community Design Lab, where children have the opportunity to participate in a Near Space Experiment that simulates the journey of different everyday materials as they travel to and from the vacuum of space.

The temporary exhibit, which launches Sunday in conjunction with Adler's Summer of Science programming series, gives visitors of all ages the opportunity to tackle real science problems through hands-on experiments.

The initial walkway leads to a workshop equipped with bright yellow tables, shiny whiteboards, and buckets and buckets of colorful kid-friendly materials: 12,000 yards of duct tape, 10,000 Popsicle sticks, hundreds of cardboard sheets, balloons, shaving cream and rubber bands among them. Here guests have the opportunity to solve one of three challenges using the provided resources and lots of creativity.

In addition to testing the ways different supplies such as marshmallows, balloons and shaving cream react to the pressures of a vacuum chamber, children also can create their own cosmic sky shows using storyboards and digital technology, as well as figure out how to build smartphone mounts for telescopes in order to utilize astrophotography.

"We really wanted to create a place for our community to workshop ideas that are specific to the Adler," said Annie Vedder, Adler's associate director of experience development. "We want to see how you do science."

The exhibit also celebrates the planetarium's past, present and future with a tribute to Adler's 85-year-old history and its future of science, curiosity and innovation.

A modern photographic display welcomes children at the entrance of the exhibit, highlighting the planetarium's key moments and accomplishments over the past 85 years. As kids stroll down the walkway, the photos move them through time in an authentic black-and-white-to-color montage where they learn the stories of achievement and progression for the museum and science.

Along with historic images of professionals like Maude Bennot, Adler's director from 1937 to 1945 and the first woman to lead a major science museum, the wall also displays many shots of children's interactions with astronomy: a kid holding



ADLER PLANETARIUM

Rachel Giannini investigates what materials will survive a journey 100,000 feet above the Earth's surface at the Adler Planetarium's new Community Design Lab.

her homemade rocket, two friends looking at the Apollo 15 lunar sample, a girl playing with a roller robot, etc.

Vedder said these images reflect the objective of the Community Design Lab.

"We wanted to celebrate people doing science," she said.

In the workshop, kids get to experience trial and error, as professional scientists do. In addition, kids can display their completed projects to inspire other visitors to build on them, Vedder said.

Interactivity goes beyond the lab.

Chicago area residents have helped the Adler staff with the exhibit's development and execution.

Beginning last September, 14 students from the Illinois Institute of Technology's Interprofessional Projects Program class spent two semesters conducting research and developing prototype programs for the lab. Concepts were tweaked to appeal to all ages.

"(The Community Design Lab) is just a safe place to come and explore and discover and learn about science," Vedder said. "And it's fun. Science is playful and messy. ... We really hope that people come down for the Summer of Science and get their hands dirty with us."

Maybe even with marshmallows, which — spoiler alert — expand inside the vacuum chamber. (Kids, if you can explain why, type it and ask your parents to email your response to [justkidding@chicago.tribune.com](mailto:justkidding@chicago.tribune.com)).

Adler Planetarium's Community Design Lab will be open during Adler hours through Sept. 8.

**\*justkiddingchicago.com**

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RUSH HOUR CONCERTS

## Make Music Chicago

Let's hear it for the all-day, all-free musical celebration of the summer solstice! Now in its fifth year in Chicago, Make Music Chicago celebrates the longest day of the year with live concerts at dozens of city locations. Highlights include the Youth Music Showcase at the Old Town School of Folk Music at 10:30 a.m.; Sousapalooza (a DIY marching band)

at the northwest corner of Millennium Park at 11 a.m.; and SuZOOki Play-Along (featuring current and former Suzuki students) at Lincoln Park Zoo at noon.

■ **Where and when:** June 21. See the online schedule for full details: [www.makemusicchicago.org](http://www.makemusicchicago.org)  
■ **Cost:** Free.

## 'Don Quixote'

Great Britain's Royal Ballet returns to Chicago after a 37-year absence with this comedic ballet, whose bumbling hero should entertain the whole family. The Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University is one of only three U.S. stops on this tour — and you've got five chances to catch it, Thursday through Sunday. For the family matinee (2 p.m. Saturday), buy one adult ticket and get half off a kids ticket (ages 17 and younger).

■ **When:** Thursday through Sunday, June 21  
■ **Where:** The Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress Parkway.  
■ **Cost:** \$32-\$137.



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