Many students attending classes in the Science Center have gotten used to walking around a large dome built right into the center of the lobby. A display case on the north wall of the lobby showcases the history of the dome and also provides some facts.

The dome is more appropriately called the M.T. Brackbill Planetarium. A plaque in the front has this inscription printed on it: “Dedicated to the Memory of Maurice Thaddeus Brackbill, 1891-1962 Professor of Physical Sciences and Founder of the Astral Society, Director of Vesper Heights Observatory. ‘The Heavens Declare the Glory of God’ AD ASTRA!”

In 1930, Brackbill gathered together a group of teachers and students interested in learning about the heavens above and formed the Astral Society. The group met monthly thereafter.

Many years passed by and Vesper Heights Observatory was eventually built on the hill behind the Campus Center. In 1967 a Planetarium was built into and along with the Science Center. The new Planetarium had a 30-foot dome and seated 80 people. Professor of Computer Science Joe Mast is the current manager of the planetarium.

Within the planetarium sits a Spitz A-4 Projector. Students who take the astronomy class offered in the spring will have an opportunity to sit inside of the planetarium and see such projections as the constellations (with over 1,200 stars), the sun, the moon and the planets.

Astronomy classes are not the only audiences to the planetarium. On certain Sundays the planetarium opens up to the general public for afternoon programs starting at 2:30 p.m. Many times elementary and middle school students can be found circulating through the Science Center during the morning. The highlight of their visit is their trip into the planetarium, which is a requirement for these students for Virginia’s now mandatory and controversial SOL (Standards Of Learning) test. Their visit also includes a trip to the D. Ralph Hostetter Museum of Natural History. Approximately 5,000 people pass through the planetarium every year.

The next program to be featured is a presentation on Black Holes this Sunday, Oct. 7. The museum opens at 2 p.m., and the program for the planetarium starts at 2:30 p.m. The planetarium will host a presentation on “Black Holes and Quasars” Nov. 10 and 24 at 2:30 p.m. Admission for both events is $2 per person.

"I think it’s good to reinforce the possible dangers of alcohol, but, at least for me, the information has been drilled into us for years..."

Steffen maintains that “the reality at EMU is that most students under 21 abstain or do not currently use alcohol, and most students at EMU indicate they would prefer to not have alcohol available at the parties they attend.”

She went on to say that the SEC, “wants to help people make choices that are well thought through and healthy. We also want to empower people to say something when they observe someone they care about taking high risks.”

The week includes a variety of activities. Starting on Tuesday, students will be able to attend programs on generational addictions where one can find out if he or she is at risk.

Thursday night’s activities will include a variety of games and activities: a faculty look-a-like contest, basketball tournaments, full contact Dutch Blitz and an obstacle course.

More games will be held on Friday night in the Commons from 9:00 to 11:00 p.m. EMU will hold its first Alcohol Awareness Triathlon on Saturday in the Commons. This event will consist of three activities that need to be completed by a team of three people. These groups will have to scale the climbing wall, take an alcohol/drug awareness test, as well as participate in a relay race wearing fatal vision goggles.

This may not be as simple as it sounds, though, because the intensity of “intoxication” increases with each team member.

The Triathlon continues until a winning team is found. When the points are totaled, the winners become the proud owners of t-shirts with their team’s picture on it.