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Spaceport News

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http://www-pao.ksc.nasa.gov/kscpao/snews/snewstoc.htm John F. Kennedy Space Center

Sean O'Keefe leaving NASA

Administrator Sean O'Keefe, who over the past three years led the National Aeronautics and Space Administration through an aggressive and comprehensive management transformation and helped the Agency through one of its most painful tragedies, has resigned.

In his resignation letter to the president, the administrator wrote, "I will continue until you have named a successor and in the hope the Senate will act on your nomination by February.

"I've been honored to serve this president, the American people and my talented colleagues here at NASA," said O'Keefe. "Together, we've enjoyed unprecedented success and seen each other through arduous circumstances. This was the most difficult decision I've ever made, but it's one I felt was best for my family and our future."

O'Keefe, 48, is NASA's tenth administrator. Nominated by President George W. Bush and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, he was sworn into office Dec. 21, 2001. It was the administrator's fourth presidential appointment.

After joining NASA, Administrator O'Keefe focused his efforts on successfully bringing financial credibility to the Agency and eliminating a $5 billion budget shortfall for the International Space Station program.

He introduced a number of innovative management and budget reforms. He led all federal agencies in the implementation of the President's Management Agenda, which is designed to make government more responsive and efficient. In three of the original five categories on the Agenda, NASA's performance is at the highest standard.

The tragic loss of seven astronauts aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia as it re-entered the Earth's atmosphere during STS-107 on Feb. 1, 2003, focused the nation's attention on the future of America's space program.

Administrator O'Keefe directed significant changes in

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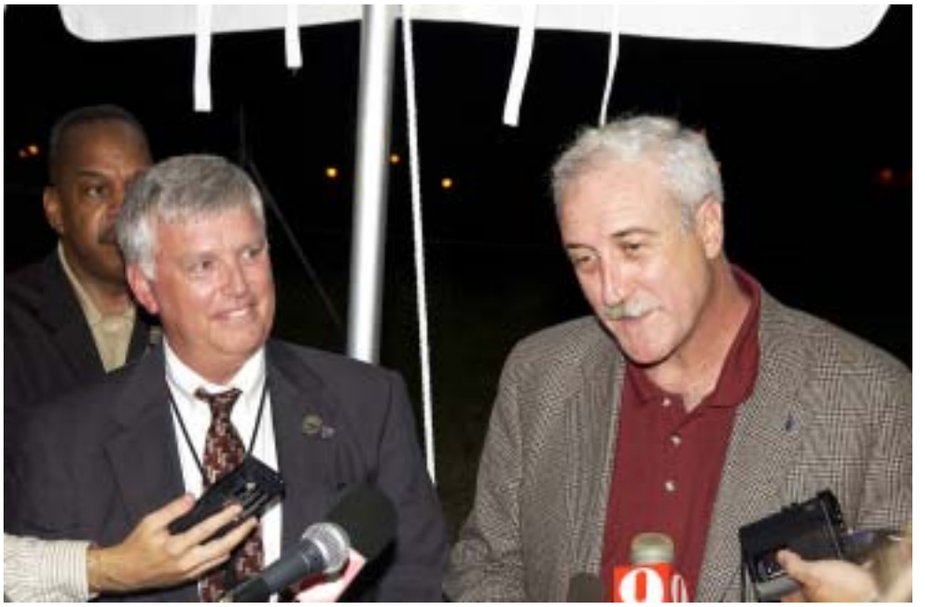

NASA ADMINISTRATOR Sean O'Keefe (right), who recently accepted a new position at Louisiana State University, talks to the media following the July 7, 2003, launch of Opportunity from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, while Center Director Jim Kennedy looks on.

'Pride and Patriotism' on display at Center

KSC EMPLOYEE Debbie Odom (far right) and her daughter, Army Pvt. Dharasena, who will serve at least a year in Iraq, stand next to the "Pride and Patriotism" Christmas tree in the lobby of the Headquarters Building. Next to Dharasena are STS-114 Commander Eileen Collins, Deputy Center Director Dr. Woodrow Whitlow and Associate Director Jim Hattaway.

Kennedy Space Center Director Jim Kennedy comments on NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe's announcement

Sean O'Keefe's "tenure as our administrator is defined by brilliant leadership and bold action and NASA is a better agency now than prior to his arrival," Kennedy said. "He courageously led us through both the Columbia tragedy and the investigation that followed. Sean's leadership transformed our structure and culture, paving the way for our Space Shuttle's successful return to flight in 2005.

"But without a doubt, his greatest legacy is America's new Vision for Space Exploration. Working with the president, his administration and Congress, it's now the official space policy of the United States that will take NASA back to the Moon, then to Mars and beyond. It was evident from the very beginning he cares about the NASA and contractor family and it inspired us all to achieve greatness. I know the entire KSC family wishes Sean, Laura and their family the very best in their future!"

The Kennedy Update

Jim Kennedy
Center Director

Happy holidays, everyone! 2004 was a busy year, but I hope you're able to find some quiet time with family and friends and enjoy the next two weeks. My holiday wish is to have everyone back safe and sound in 2005!

As you have heard by now, Sean O'Keefe is leaving NASA. He was asked to be a candidate as chancellor at Louisiana State University, which he intends to accept. Sean will stay on board with NASA until a new administrator is selected.

Sean has proven to be an excellent leader, leading us through the difficult times of the Columbia accident and boldly putting in place the right strategies for the new Vision for Space Exploration. We wish Sean, Laura and their family much success in his new career; we know he will excel in his leadership to LSU.

This has been a special month, and I appreciate everyone turning out for both the KSC holiday picnic and holiday coffee. They were both spectacular events as we honored our hurricane heroes and socialized with our KSC family.

I thank everyone who took the time to throw two first-class events. Judging by the smiles and feedback, thousands of people had a very enjoyable time.

I want to thank the KSC One NASA Team for the super Leader Led Workshop held yesterday. I hope everyone had a chance to attend or catch the main session on NASA TV. It was super to have leaders such as Fred Gregory, Retired Adm. Craig Steidle and Lynn Cline share with us their views on the Agency's transformation and brief us on the progress of the Vision for Space Exploration.

After hearing their presentation, I'm excited about Return to Flight and the challenges in 2005.

Congratulations to our Space Shuttle program on two significant Return to Flight milestone accomplishments that will be completed by the end of the year.

First, all three of Discovery's main engines were installed and are ready for final processing for the May-June launch. Second, by the end of next week, stacking of the Solid Rocket Boosters for STS-114 will be completed.

With the external tank set for arrival in early January from Michoud, it's obvious the wheels for Return to Flight are quickly turning. My congratulations to the team, and I look forward to the external tank arrival after the new year.

January 3, 2005 represents a special day for many people, as this is the official retirement date for several NASA employees. I'm sure many of our contractor partners are making retirement plans, as well. I want to personally thank all of you for your faithful service to our Agency and country, whether it was for 20, 30, or in some cases, 40 years and beyond.

The legacy of accomplishment you leave behind is what we will build upon to achieve the Vision for Space Exploration. When an American astronaut lands back on the Moon, then on Mars, and one day travels beyond our universe, you can rest assured your work played a part in our success.

So to all of our retirees, God bless, good luck, and enjoy your golden years!

To everyone, from Bernie and me, have a joyous holiday season, a wonderful new year, and we'll see everyone back here safe and sound in 2005!

"When an American astronaut lands back on the Moon, then on Mars, and one day travels beyond our universe, you can rest assured your work played a part in our success."

December Employees of the Month

THE NASA December Employees of the Month, standing from left, are: Cindy Gooden, Equal Opportunity Office; Laurie Brown, Information Technology and Communications Services; Debbie Clarke, Chief Financial Office; and Judith "Charlie" Blackwell-Thompson, Shuttle Processing. Seated in the front row, from left, are: Vicki Miletello, Cape Canaveral Spaceport Management Office; Michael O'Neal, Spaceport Engineering and Technology; and Jessica Rodriquez, International Space Station and Payload Processing.

O'KEEFE . . .

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the Space Shuttle's safety and management programs. He was a key architect of the president's new Vision for Space Exploration, announced in January during a historic speech at NASA Headquarters in Washington.

The new Vision for Space Exploration led a transformation of NASA and has positioned the Agency to meet the challenges of safely returning the Space Shuttle to flight, completing the International Space Station, exploring the complexities of our home planet, and going back to the Moon, on to Mars and beyond.

"The president and Congress have demonstrated their faith in us," added Administrator O'Keefe. "We need to seize this opportunity. NASA has a new direction that will push the boundaries of technology, science, space flight and knowledge, and will inspire new generations of explorers for years to come and secure this great nation's future."

Encouraging students to study mathematics, science and technology has been a priority for the administrator. In April 2002, he unveiled a new Educator Astronaut Program, in which a select few of the most outstanding teachers would be chosen to join NASA's Astronaut Corps. The new Educator Astronaut candidates were introduced in May on Space Day.

During his tenure, Administrator O'Keefe realized a number of significant mission triumphs, including Cassini's exploration of Saturn and its moons, the recent successful hypersonic test flights of the X-43A and the historic landing of the twin Mars Exploration Rovers Spirit and Opportunity on the red planet in January.

Childree helps others 'exceed their potential'

By Jennifer Wolfinger
Staff Writer

Improving the professional aptitude of others has simultaneously strengthened Karen Childree's outlook, and these skills recently earned her Kennedy Space Center's Employee of the Year award.

As a Launch Services Program administrative specialist and training coordinator, she works with supervisors and employees to ensure the work force is adequately trained.

"Since training is a vital part of maintaining and improving our efficiency and effectiveness in the launch business, my goal is to help our employees reach and exceed their potential," said Childree.

But she didn't receive the honor for simply meeting job requirements. "I always try to do my best and be helpful and understanding when problems arise," said Childree. "I work to find solutions that will benefit all parties concerned."

She benefits from her hard work just as much as those she helps. "I was humbled and very grateful for the honor," Childree said.

"I enjoy working with people and personally feel satisfaction helping employees get the training they need to achieve their goals."

With the exciting state of her personal life, it's no wonder she eagerly tackles the daily grind. In June she married Edwin, who she sings with in her church choir, and now spends her spare time traveling, swimming and golfing.

"What a year this has been - newly married and receiving Employee of the Year," she said. "These very obvious high points of the year, plus the privilege of working with such a wonderful, very intelligent group here in Launch Services, gives me so much to be grateful for."

IN JUNE, Karen Childree, a Launch Services Program administrative specialist and training coordinator, married Edwin, who she sings with in her church choir. She now spends her spare time traveling, swimming and golfing. "What a year this has been - newly married and receiving Employee of the Year," she said, adding "these very obvious high points of the year."

NASA's Farrant stresses importance of safety

By Linda Herridge
Staff Writer

Safety and training are very important to Ralonda Farrant, an administrative specialist in the business office of the Spaceport Engineering and Technology (SE&T) directorate.

Her work includes coordinating the on-site, off-site and security training of 273 workers, as well as 22 co-op students.

Training topics include area access, safety, security, information technology, conferences, academic subjects and ethics. Among these, Farrant says the hot topics include area access and the Voluntary Protection Program safety classes.

She was selected as SE&T Employee of the Month in July and subsequently received the 2004 Employee of the Year Award for "outstanding dedication and support for SE&T administrative and personnel requirements…and providing superior commitment and service to the SE&T directorate employees."

RALONDA FARRANT, an administrative specialist in the business office for Spaceport Engineering and Technology.

The award is well deserved, said SE&T's Business Office Chief C. David Shelton. "Her efforts directly support the entire directorate's work force on an individual-by-individual basis. Receipt of this honor is testament that her co-workers respect, value and appreciate her support and assistance in training and administrative matters."

In 1989, Farrant started as a co-op student in what was the Design Engineering directorate. In 1990, NASA hired her to work in that directorate. After the current reorganization, she remained in SE&T.

"I was surprised and appreciate the recognition," Farrant said of the award. "My co-workers are great. I really enjoy my job."

Her current projects include serving on the KSC Area Permit Working Group to determine new area access requirements.

She is also a member of the Canaveral Spaceport Technical Training Users Group, which keeps her aware of any new technical issues that require workers to receive appropriate training.

Farrant also coordinates the personnel actions, orientations and Accelerated Training Program for co-op students hired as NASA full-time employees and serves as the directorate's property coordinator.

The Titusville native attended Brevard Community College, where she earned an associate degree in Office Automation in 1990. One of her outstanding memories is getting hired by NASA in her current position.

Farrant is married and has one daughter. She enjoys taking weekend trips to nearby Florida locations including the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, and also visits family in North Carolina.

Farrant summed up the importance of training.

"Training helps keep the workers up-to-date on their job skills, and training for safety and security is vital so workers can perform their job safely."

Holiday Celebration brings NASA employees together

The 2004 KSC Holiday Celebration at KARS 1 Park recently gave NASA civil servant employees a chance to wish each other happy holidays and enjoy great food and fun. A group of children, all 4 years old, captured the audience's attention with a heart-warming Pledge of Allegiance, followed by Ivette Rivera's singing of the National Anthem.

The event was also a chance to recognize members of the Combined Federal Campaign for their hard work in exceeding this year's goal. A check for $389,000 was presented to United Way's Frank Ramsey by the team.

In addition, attendees enjoyed a traditional holiday dinner, live entertainment and door prizes.

THE KSC HOLIDAY CELEBRATION was also the occasion for presenting the Center's Combined Federal Campaign check to United Way of Brevard. The 2004 campaign netted $389,000 in donations. At right is Center Director Jim Kennedy. Next to him, at left, is the campaign chairman, KSC's Chief Financial Officer, Nap Carroll.

NASA CIVIL SERVANTS enjoyed a traditional holiday dinner at this year's Holiday Celebration.

CENTER DIRECTOR JIM KENNEDY enjoys the company of two employees while playing Santa Claus with a child at the 2004 KSC Holiday Celebration.

THIS GROUP of 4-year-olds from the Child Development Center opened the celebration with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Holiday Coffee gives employees chance to reflect

Center Director Jim Kennedy invited all Kennedy Space Center employees to the annual Holiday Coffee Dec. 14, where workers exchanged greetings with friends, co-workers and former employees at the Headquarters Building. Employees also had a chance to talk to members of the STS-114 Return to Flight crew. Refreshments were provided on every floor.

THE HOLIDAY COFFEE featured refreshments on every floor of the Headquarters Buildingand a chance to meet other members of the Center work force.

STS-114 CREW MEMBER Wendy Lawrence talks to two employees at the Dec. 14 Holiday Coffee.

SOME OF "Santaís helpers" who helped coordinate the Holiday Coffee included, from left, Rose Rayfield, Michelle Foster and Pat Christian.

STS-114 CREW MEMBER Andy Thomas (left) talks to External Relations Deputy Director Jack Fox (with hat) and other Center employees.

THE FIRST FLOOR of the Headquarters Building was standing room only for the annual celebration.

NASA RETIREES are invited back to the Center for the annual Holiday Coffee, including Robert Yarbrough (left) and Edward Taylor.

NASA living legend John Young retires after 42 years

After four decades and half a dozen space flights - including a Moonwalk and the first Space Shuttle mission - veteran NASA astronaut John Young is hanging up his flight suit. So, how did this amazing career of exploration get off the ground?

Forty-three years ago, Young, then a Navy test pilot, tuned in on a small, black-and-white television at the Naval Air Test Center in Florida as President John F. Kennedy addressed the nation.

After hearing the president's bold proposal to land a man on the Moon and return him safely to Earth, Young knew what he had to do.

"I thought returning safely to Earth sounded like a good idea," quips Young, who has stood on the Moon, driven 16 miles in a lunar rover and spent three nights on the lunar surface. He is the only person to travel into space as part of the Gemini, Apollo and Space Shuttle programs and was the first to fly into space six times (or seven, counting his lunar liftoff).

That's quite a resume. But by the way the retiring astronaut describes the extraordinary achievements of his 42-year career, he was merely doing his job.

Young's impressive career at NASA began in 1962 when he was selected from among hundreds of young pilots to join NASA's second astronaut class, known as the "New Nine."

His father, a civil engineer, was Young's role model. Young graduated from Orlando High School in Florida and went on to earn a degree in aeronautical engineering from Georgia Tech, where he graduated with highest honors in 1952.

THE STS-114 CREW and retired NASA astronaut and John Young stand underneath Discovery. The crew includes (from left) Mission Specialist Stephen Robinson, Pilot James Kelly, Mission Specialist Charles Camarda, John Young, Commander Eileen Collins and Mission Specialists Andrew Thomas, Wendy Lawrence and Soichi Noguchi.
Below, Young and Bob Crippen flew Columbia on STS-1 in 1981, the Space Shuttle program's maiden voyage.

Following graduation, he joined the U.S. Navy and, after a year's service aboard a destroyer, was sent to flight training.

He flew fighter planes for four years, then completed test-pilot training and served three years at the Navy's Air Test Center, where he heeded the president's call to go to the Moon.

In March 1965, Young made his first flight as an astronaut, joining Gus Grissom on Gemini 3, the first manned flight of that program. As Young prepared for the monumental task, obligation overruled excitement or any other emotion.

"We were just thinking about doing the job right," he says.

Young commanded Gemini 10 in July 1966. He and pilot Mike Collins rendezvoused with two Agena target vehicles, and Collins did a spacewalk to retrieve a micrometeorite detector from one of them.

Young's career was full of firsts, with none more notable than in April 1981, when he commanded the first flight of the Shuttle program, Space Shuttle Columbia on STS-1. It was the first time a piloted spacecraft was tested in space without previous unpiloted orbital flights. Young and pilot Bob Crippen accomplished more than 130 flight test objectives during their almost 55-hour mission.

Launch pad rescue team completes successful training

ON LAUNCH PAD 39-A (left), team members help astronaut-suited co-workers near the slidewire baskets prepare for a recent emergency egress scenario.

At right, a rescue team member and astronaut-suited worker approach landing in a slidewire basket reaching from the Fixed Service Structure in the background during an

Center opens first ethanol fuel station for vehicles

By Jennifer Wolfinger
Staff Writer

We all know food energizes our bodies, but corn and other grain products are now providing ethanol fuel for several hundred vehicles at KSC.

Housed at the station behind the Headquarters Building, the renewable energy is typically produced from corn and other grain products relying on the fermentation of the plants' sugars.

"It's a constant resource that doesn't deplete oil supplies," said Dennis McGilvray, station owner.

This fuel's other name, E85, refers to its 85-percent ethanol composition. The remaining 15 percent is gasoline.

While it causes slightly reduced mileage and power, E85 does reduce greenhouse gas emissions and is biodegradable.

E85 also lessens our foreign fuel co-dependency. Selling for nearly the same price as unleaded gasoline, ethanol is domestically produced, making U.S.-grown feed grains more valuable.

Additional ethanol resources, such as agricultural and forestry wastes, are under investigation. Wood, cheese whey, potato and brewery waste are a few specific examples that may prove economical. After ethanol is produced, the remaining protein, minerals, vitamins and fibers are sold as livestock feed.

Carbon dioxide escapes through processing, but no need to worry; crops capture the emissions as nutrients and the cycle repeats.

In the case of a spill, ethanol also poses less environmental risk than oil or gasoline, as ethanol degrades quickly in water.

Alternative fuel vehicles run on ethanol or gasoline. However, gasoline engines shouldn't fill up on E85. Recognizing E85's benefits, the Center not only welcomes the fuel, but is home to 364 ethanol-compliant vehicles as well.

This effort is a response to a 1992 presidential Energy Policy Act.

BRUCE CHESSON, NASA traffic management specialist, and student intern Jennifer Alvarado pump ethanol fuel into alternative-fuel government vehicles at the Citgo gas station behind the Headquarters building.

Second Kennedy Space Center Store opens in Orlando International Airport

APOLLO 17 Commander Gene Cernan autographs his book for attendees at the recent grand opening ceremony of the second Kennedy Space Center Store at Orlando International Airport. KSC Director Jim Kennedy and Cernan participated in the grand opening ceremony. The store will help educate millions of airport visitors about America's space program and is operated by Delaware North Parks and Resorts.

Facts about ethanol vehicles

Ethanol vehicles are called Flexible Fuel Vehicles (FFV) due to their ability to run on ethanol (E85), gasoline or any combination of the two fuels. E85 is a blend of 85 percent denatured ethanol and 15 percent gasoline.

- Ethanol is produced mainly from corn, but can be made from virtually any starch feed stock such as sugar cane, wheat or barley.
- Because ethanol is produced from crops, it is a renewable fuel and reduces the nation's dependence on imported oil.
- The adaptable fuel has grown in popularity. There are approximately 100 refueling sites in North America, and a continually developing infrastructure.
- FFVs automatically adjust for any mixture for environmentally sound driving. On-board sensors monitor the fuel mixture and the on-board computer adjusts spark timing and fuel flow to optimize performance.
- Flexible Fuel Vehicles, including those that meet California emission standards, can be ordered and serviced through any dealership. Executive Order 13149 requires that federal fleets must decrease their petroleum use by 20 percent by 2005.

Training Auditorium gaining high-tech upgrades

By Linda Herridge
Staff Writer

RICHARD DUELL, a voice systems technician, adjusts the new high-definition light projector in the Training Auditorium. The Center is also upgrading the auditorium with a new matte white viewing screen and telephone system.

Employees and guests attending events and presentations in the Training Auditorium in Kennedy Space Center's Industrial Area soon will enjoy some of the best technology the 21st century has to offer.

KSC is upgrading the auditorium with a new matte white viewing screen, high-definition digital light projector and a new telephone system.

"This is a quantum leap in technology for the auditorium," said Mike Rein, chief of Media Services at KSC's News Center. "People will definitely see presentations in higher quality than ever before. I appreciate everyone's hard work in making this happen."

Josiel Torres, NASA Information Technology public affairs office engineer, said the new screen installed on the stage, coupled with the new projector, will provide better clarity and color to viewers.

The new phone system, manufactured by Telos, is like one used at NASA Headquarters in Washington. It will allow callers to phone in and ask questions from around the Center, as well as other NASA centers, instead of just limiting them to the people in the audience.

Callers can also hear the answers to their questions over the phone.

The call-in feature was made possible by ISDN (digital phone) lines and the Hybrid phone system. Recently installed fiber optics will allow video to be transmitted from the Training Auditorium to the News Center.

The nearly $200,000 project was made possible with NASA reinvestment funds and a partnership between the External Relations and Information Technology directorates, Torres said. Work began in June of this year and is scheduled to be completed by March.

To increase capabilities at the News Center, new high-definition camcorders and digital still cameras were purchased.

Fiber optics were also installed around the launch pad perimeters and other critical areas. This will allow for high-definition viewing of activities in these locations once additional high-def cameras are purchased and installed.

Other improvements include a new Character Generator recently installed and operational at the News Center. This updated technology will allow logos, names and captions to be added on-screen during live airings of press conferences and other events.

New spaceport research institute taking shape

The ASRC Aerospace Corporation and the University of Central Florida are working together to establish and develop the Spaceport Research and Technology Institute (SRTI). Through SRTI, university researchers will play a prominent role in helping NASA make space travel and space range operations safer and less costly.

SRTI will bring together UCF and 30 other university affiliate researchers from throughout the nation to work with NASA and ASRC scientists on projects such as developing the technology to detect corrosion on Space Shuttles without having to remove the tiles, and finding better ways to monitor space traffic with satellites.

The universities could "help open up missions to Mars and the Moon and make them more affordable," said Mike O'Neal, NASA's assistant to the chief technologist for university research at KSC.

The work undertaken by the university researchers will depend on the specific research needs of NASA. It is anticipated that SRTI will engage in many research activities involving NASA's new exploration initiative. Plans for SRTI began just months following NASA's award of the UCF-affiliated Spaceport Technology Development Contract to ASRC. The contract has incentives to increase university involvement in the space program.

John F. Kennedy Space Center
Spaceport News

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Managing editor. . . . . Bruce Buckingham
Editor. . . . . Jeff Stuckey
Copy editor . . . . . Corey Schubert

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