

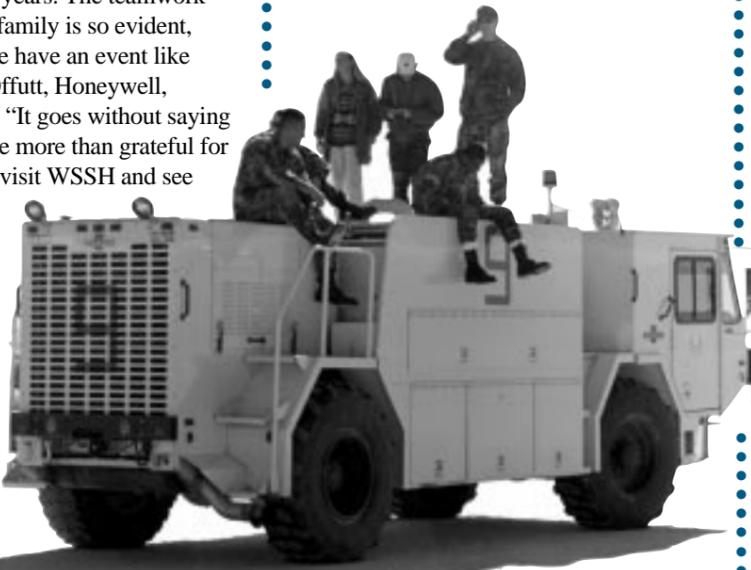
White Sands Space Harbor hosts first-ever Family Day

Imagine waving goodbye to your spouse every day for more than 20 years as he or she departs for work, yet never seeing your mate's workplace.

That has been the case for families of employees of White Sands Space Harbor in New Mexico, a branch of JSC's White Sands Test Facility for decades. But recently, WSSH opened its gates to friends and family for a first-ever Family Day event.

"I have had the pleasure of working with this group 17 years. The teamwork within the WSSH family is so evident, especially when we have an event like this," said Frank Offutt, Honeywell, WSSH supervisor. "It goes without saying that the families are more than grateful for their being able to visit WSSH and see what is done here. They'll be talking about Family Day at WSSH for a long time. We extend our thanks to everyone who supported this event."

WSSH, while unknown to many outside of its



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these runways in top condition so having this event means a lot. It's something we'll never forget." Bernal, along with more than 155 WSSH personnel, family and special visitors spent the day touring the expansive site and meeting astronauts. A highlight of the day was a special demonstration of the STA approach 'dives' practiced routinely at WSSH. Adding to the excitement was the fact that legendary Astronaut John Young was piloting the aircraft.

Firefighters and paramedics from nearby Holloman Air Force Base are part of the team at White Sands Space Harbor. They are on standby, supporting all STA fly-ins for shuttle pilot training and were part of the crowd during Family Day.

"We always see the planes from the outside and you wonder who is on the inside flying, so this was a neat opportunity for us to get to meet some of them who are actually doing it," said Jeremy Hazel, one of five firefighter/paramedics from nearby



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Astronaut John Young pilots the Shuttle Training Aircraft to two shuttle landing simulation "dives" as part of WSSH Family Day. Jack "Triple" Nickel and Henry Taylor also were part of the flight crew.

Fans of all ages met shuttle astronauts in person at the first-ever Family Day event. Shown at right, Astronaut William McCool signs an autograph for a youngster.

Holloman Air Force Base who support training missions at WSSH. Rescue emergency personnel from Holloman support all STA practice sessions and any landings at WSSH. "Providing safety is a job we have to do, but this is an incredible way for our management to recognize us for it."

In addition to Young, 13 other astronauts (Clayton Anderson, Dan Burbank, Laurel Clark, Bonnie Dunbar, Mike Fossum, Chris Hadfield, Rick Mastracchio, William McCool, William (Billy) Oefelein, John Olivas, Charlie Precourt, Dan Tani, and Jim Wetherbee)

attended the event, signing autographs and answering questions from the visitors.

"This is our chance to thank you all for maintaining the great runways for us to train on all the time," said Wetherbee, JSC deputy director and director of JSC Flight Crew Operations. "You can see White Sands from outer space and it's always comforting to look at. Thanks for doing all the work you do here on this side of the mountain."

Young also addressed the packed meeting room, saying, "This is the greatest landing field on the planet. You keep at it – you're the ones who have made possible the thousands of practice dives done out here and they've helped train every astronaut that's had a successful flight. We really appreciate it."

According to WSSH management, the event was very

well received and will be long remembered by the employees and visitors.

"The excitement level is going to be high for a long time after this," said Robert Mitchell, NASA WSSH manager. "The Honeywell employees at the Space Harbor are some of the most dedicated workers I have ever had the pleasure of working with in my career and to be able to give them an opportunity to shine is just the tip of the iceberg. Their efforts often go unrewarded, so it is good to be able to recognize them and their great work." ■



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JSC Deputy Director and Director of Flight Crew Operations Jim Wetherbee entertained WSSH friends and family members with anecdotes from his shuttle mission experiences.



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More than 155 family and friends of JSC's White Sands Space Harbor staff gathered at the 100-square-mile site to watch the Shuttle Training Aircraft demonstrate its unique ability to mimic the space shuttle landing characteristics. Guests were also treated to a tour of the facility and a luncheon with several NASA astronauts.

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