

Students, teachers participate in wet, wild adventure

MORE THAN 5,300 STUDENTS converged on the Johnson Space Center during the first two weeks of March to participate in the JASON X Project in the Teague Auditorium, sponsored by JSC's Education and Community Support Branch.

Area students and teachers participated in the live telepresence broadcasts titled "Rainforest: A Wet and Wild Adventure." JSC served as

a primary interactive network site for the telecasts.

The JASON Project is a year-round scientific expedition designed to excite students in science and technology. It was founded in 1989 by Dr. Robert Ballard, after his discovery of the R.M.S. *Titanic*. This year's JASON X Project is designed to study flora and fauna in Peru's Amazon rainforest.

Each year, several students and teachers are selected to accompany Ballard on the JASON Project expedition as argonauts.

These special ambassadors help the

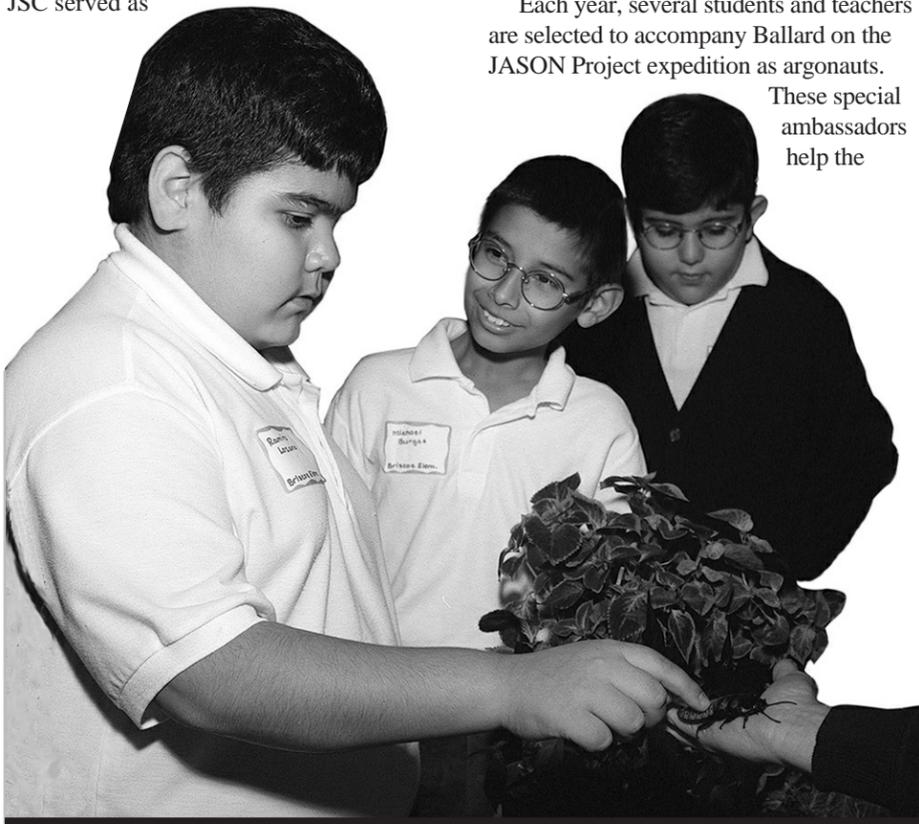
scientists on site with their research and explain ongoing activities to the telepresence audience.

This year, Deer Park Independent School District student argonaut Rosa Robledo left Houston February 22 on her way to the Peruvian rainforest. On March 2, all 625 students and teachers from her school, Deepwater Middle School, were in attendance in the Teague for the JASON broadcast.

From oceans to rainforests, from volcanoes to outer space, the JASON Project explores Earth in search of answers to questions such as "What are the Earth's dynamic systems?" to "How do these systems affect life on Earth?" to "What technologies do we use to study these systems and why?" Each year, JASON mounts a major scientific expedition that examines one or more of Earth's physical systems. Teams of teachers and students visit JSC annually as part of their "expedition."

The JASON Project XI expedition, "Going to Extremes," will feature the International Space Station and will originate from JSC during early March 2000. ■

Students attending the JASON Project X live broadcasts in JSC's Teague Auditorium got an up close and personal look at hissing cockroaches. Insects and several examples of flora and fauna found in the Earth's rainforests were exhibited. Students studied the rainforests and conducted some of the same experiments shown in the live programs.



JSC Photo S99-03632 by Benny Benavides

21st annual FOD Chili Cookoff set

JSC WILL HOST its 21st annual FOD Chili Cookoff from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. May 1 at the Gilruth Recreation Center picnic area.

Sixty-two teams from JSC, NASA contractors and related organizations have signed up for the event, according to cookoff co-chair Sandy Griffin. Trophies will be awarded for the best chili, people's choice and showmanship. Each team is required to cook at least four gallons of chili. The fee for each team is \$45. Call Griffin at 483-1056 to sign up, or e-mail sandra.griffin1@jsc.nasa.gov. The deadline for team sign-up is April 16.

Tickets cost \$3 through April 23 and \$4 after that date and during the day of the cookoff. Children under 3 are admitted free. Tickets include admission, chili tasting, beverages, live bands, skits, games and other festivities. Tickets may be purchased through team captains or at the Exchange Stores in Bldgs. 3 and 11 starting April 12.

Team captains will meet in late March to pick up cookoff details and instructions. Captains also are encouraged to attend the April 21 chili clinic at the Gilruth Recreation Center picnic area at 4:30 p.m., featuring a champion chili cookoff winner from the Chili Cookoff World Championships in Terlingua, Texas. ■

Employees empowered for safety: Civil servants, contractor employees attend VPP conference

By Dee Ann Haney

THE 1999 REGION VI Voluntary Protection Programs Participants Association annual conference was held March 1-3 in Austin. The theme of the conference was "'Capitolizing' on the Future." Region VI is comprised of Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma.

About 70 JSC civil servants and 90 contractor employees attended the conference including JSC team members Tim DeLong, Brown and Root; Dee Ann Haney, Lockheed Martin; Sonia Fontenot, SPACEHAB; Elmer "Bubba" Johnson, NA; Julie Strawn, Kelsey Seybold and Paul Savage, United Space Alliance.

Guest speakers for the opening general session included John Miles of OSHA, Pete DeLeeuw, CEO, Sterling Chemicals, and Joe Mundy, president and chairman of The Mundy Companies.

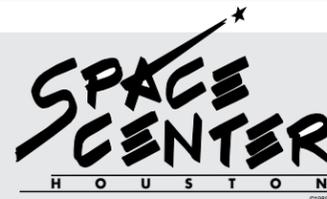
Workshops were offered in the afternoon. General sessions were structured for first-time conference attendees and in many cases dealt with specific OSHA regulations. General sessions included "Confined Space Entry," "Hazard Recognition," "Innovative Safety Meetings," and "Respiratory Protection." Advanced sessions generally targeted sites that are trying to maintain viable VPP programs. Advanced sessions included "Maintaining OSHA VPP" and "Employee Participation."

Featured speakers during the next day's general session included former Houston Oilers' Head Coach Bum Phillips and former quarterback Dan Pastorini; and Paula White of OSHA. Workshop sessions were offered in the afternoon. A hospitality reception held that evening gave everyone an opportunity to meet and interact with OSHA representatives and employees from other VPP certified sites.

March 3 included one final workshop session. The closing session featured a report from Lee Ann Elliot, executive director, national VPPPA. The guest speaker was Cactus Pryor.

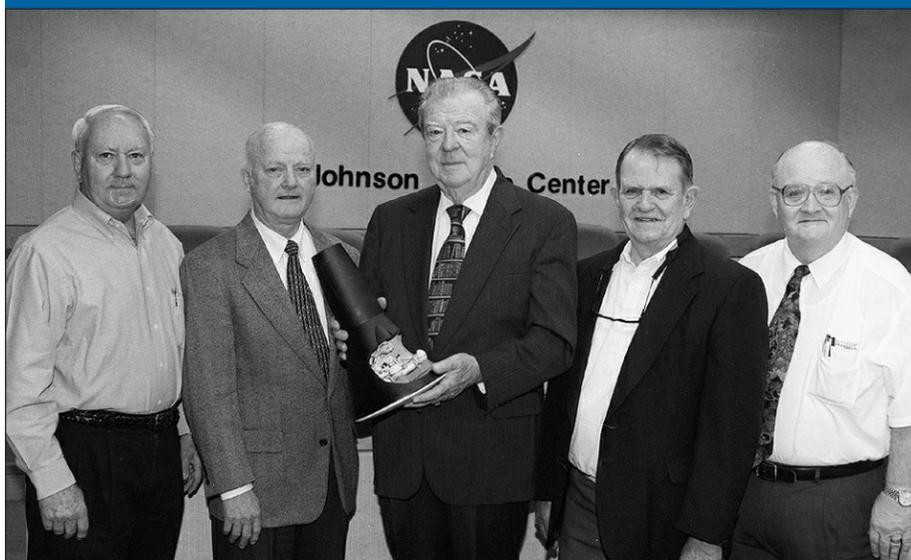
I know there are many of you who wonder why we at JSC need to achieve VPP and what is in it for you. First, there is a direct correlation between a site initiating and achieving VPP, and a drop in accidents/injuries. Since 1985, when combined measurements were first used to aggregate the VPP results in terms of individual industry averages, lost workday case rates have stayed more than 50 percent below the industry averages as a group. This is important because we want all employees to go home from work in the same condition in which they arrived. Another key benefit of these conferences is the chance to work with and learn from other VPP participants through the VPPPA. Programs, policies, and procedures are available by mentoring with other sites that have already achieved VPP. ■

Space Center Houston extends courtesy visits for retirees



Civil service retirees from NASA are now eligible for free visits to Space Center Houston (for themselves only). At your next visit to SCH please identify yourself and display your retiree badge to the SCH staff, and they will add a bar-code strip to the back of the badge, permitting you unlimited free visits to SCH.

Former Gemini manager visits JSC



JSC Photo S99-03021 by James Blair

CHARLES "CHUCK" MATHEWS, manager of the Gemini Program at JSC in the mid-1960s, visited the center recently to participate in the JSC Oral History Project. While in Houston he was able to visit with many of his old friends in the JSC Chapter of the NASA Alumni League. Reminiscing about the engineering challenges of the Gemini spacecraft are, from left, NAL members John Kaltenbach, Chester Vaughan, chair of the Houston NAL Chapter, Mathews (holding Gemini model), Guy Thibodaux, and Norman Chaffee.



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