

New JSC Center Director addresses the workforce

By Melissa Davis

Strength. Integrity. Honor.

New Center Director Gen. Jefferson Davis Howell Jr. left no doubts about his leadership style in his first address to the Johnson Space Center workforce on April 16. The audience responded to the inspiring self-introduction by the retired U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant General with thunderous applause and a standing ovation.

The event opened with NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe giving Howell a glowing introduction, saying Howell meets all the criteria he set for the Center Director position. "...I could not think, could possibly not dream, of having the opportunity to have selected a gentleman who manifests every one of those characteristics," he said.

O'Keefe also said he has "complete confidence" in Howell's ability to lead the Center, and to be a great contributor in the NASA family.

Howell then walked to the microphone and said, "What an introduction! That concludes my remarks," as the audience erupted in laughter.

Throughout his life, Howell said he has been blessed with loving and supportive parents, numerous friends, a devoted wife, two children who make him prouder every day, the ability to be a Marine and the opportunity to be a fighter pilot.

"I am truly a lucky, lucky man," he said. "And this certainly goes well beyond that as the icing on the cake as far as the blessings that I've received."

When it comes to his personal outlook, Howell said he is a positive thinker.

"I have very few dislikes. I guess really when I thought about it there are only a couple of people I don't like to be around," he said. "Mainly, it's people who don't care. I can't stand to be around people who don't give a darn. And I don't think I'm going to have that problem here. I surely haven't run into it so far since I've been here."

He said he also doesn't like people who pass the buck. "I like people who take responsibility for their actions or inaction, and then try to do better," he said.

Expectations

Teamwork is key to Howell. "We're one team, and that's the way we're going to be," he said. "And, except for just the requirements by law that we have certain rules and regulations we must follow as civil servants vs. contractors, other than that, it's a badgeless society as far as I'm concerned. That's the way we're going to do business around here. We're all in this thing together."

He then spelled out what he expects from the JSC team:

Total Integrity

"I think that every association that I have been successful in has been total trust with those that I associate with, and that's what I expect here with you and me, and with you and each other. We've got to be truthful, and we've got to be responsible for our actions. We must be people of honor – total integrity, No. 1."

Total professionalism

"We must have technical excellence, and we must give superior performance and strive for that on a daily basis. Our nation expects it of us, because we are NASA, and we must be the best of the best. Not everybody is dealt the same hand of cards. There are some people better at things than others. So not everybody is going to hit a home run every time they get up to bat. However, that doesn't mean we can't strive for that. That's what I'm asking for, is we must all give everything we have to what we're doing to be the very best we can be in our jobs ... We are just as strong as our weakest link. Everybody, no matter what your function is, has to give a 100 percent and be great at it for us to excel."

Respect one another

"I expect us to have a common courtesy and civility between all of us as we work here together. I expect managers to treat their employees as a teacher would their students – to advise, to give guidance and to assist. If there is anybody around here who thinks because they are in a position of responsibility or management that they can bully other people, they're in the wrong place. That doesn't work around here. We're all going to respect one another. We're going to cooperate with one another and we're going to show regard and consideration for each other. Things such as race, sex and religion don't count. It's the individuals and their contribution here, and that's the way we're going to deal with one another all the way up and down."

Commitment

"That's the glue that carries all these values together. It's our dedication to this noble endeavor that we're a part of. It's the courage to do the right thing. It's loyalty to each other, and it's a passion for our work."

FROM THE DESK OF GEN. JEFFERSON D. HOWELL, JR.



As I said in my talk on April 16, it is indeed a pleasure to be here at Johnson Space Center and it is an honor for me to work with you. Each one of you is a critical part of this team and your contributions are vital to making JSC a success. This is an exciting time for us and there is much to address. To be successful, we need to stay connected and focused, and to do that, we all must be on the same page.

I appreciate having this forum in the *Roundup* to speak to you each month. While it would be a privilege to talk with each of you individually, it is not feasible, at least in the short term. My communications to the workforce will help ensure that you know where I stand on the issues. As I told my staff last month, I am the Rumor Control Officer at JSC and I plan to keep the communication lines open to you. Therefore, I plan to use this as my personal letter to every one of you each month.

My expectations of you: I expect integrity, professionalism, respect for one another and commitment. I will settle for no less. In return I will give you the same. I also give my promise to serve you and our nation's space program to the best of my abilities.

Additionally, I want to express my gratitude for the warm reception I receive as I meet more of you each day. I appreciate your support and trust as I work to uphold your expectations – as I know you will work to uphold mine.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication. You are the best of the best. Never forget that.

The direction of JSC

Howell said mission support is a priority for JSC and will be for several years to come. "I know you'll carry it out just the way you have in the past. It's just an incredible challenge and something we can all be proud of," he said.

The team also needs to continue research in regard to conducting long-range human exploration. "If we are going to go out beyond as we say in our vision, we've got to learn how to cope with that as humans in a very, very harsh environment," he said.

In addition, Howell believes safety is an essential issue in everything that is done at JSC. "It's just a part of us. It's part of the air we breathe because professionals are safe," he said. "You can't be a professional and not be safe. Professionals do things correctly, and if you do it correctly, you're going to do it safely."

The future

"I think our challenge is to marry human exploration to our vision that we have been given so well by our Administrator," Howell said.

Howell said the Center's roadmap is now the vision and mission statements that O'Keefe unveiled on April 12. (See page 3 for both statements)

The Center's guidelines are the President's Management Agenda, which can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2002/mgmt.pdf>.

"That's the way we're going to do business. If you have not read this or become familiar with this, I expect every person at this Center, on this team, to become familiar with this and start doing business in accordance to the way the President wants us to," he said.

Howell also stressed that JSC must "learn to collaborate and cooperate with the other Centers so that we can carry out human exploration along with the other exploration and scientific research that's going to be done."

Doing so means JSC participating in the Space Launch Initiative. (For more information on the initiative, visit <http://www.slinevents.com/>)

A special team

"You need to remember, you need to understand how special you are: You – the JSC team; we – NASA," Howell said.

He said only an elite group is selected to work at JSC. "Nobody does it better than you. Nobody knows how to do it better than you," he said. "You are the best of the best, and you should recognize yourself for that."

The flipside of the coin, Howell said, is the 'curse' of being at JSC. "The curse is: You are only as good as you are today... We have all these glorious achievements that we have done, but if we don't cut it today, it doesn't amount to a hill of beans," he said.

"That's our burden, that's our challenge and that's what makes it exciting. That's what makes it worthwhile because it is so noble, and because we make a difference." ❖



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