My Favorite Open House Story

Below is a collection of stories submitted by JSC employees detailing each one's favorite Open House memory. All submitted stories, while appreciated, could not be used due to space limitations.

Alice Ayala
JSC-GP

During Open House I greeted and provided information to visitors in the Building 2 auditorium. Whenever visitors came to the booth, I would greet them and also give them a blue NASA antenna ball for their vehicle.

Many of the visitors did not know this was an antenna ball and they would try to bounce it on the floor. I started to inform them that this was an antenna ball–but then some of the people and children would say, "But we have a 'Jack in the Box' antenna ball."

That is when I would reply, "Tell Jack, 'Hit the road Jack! NASA is here to stay and it's the way to the future!'"

The funny part is that on my way home after the Open House event, on Old Galveston Road, someone kept honking and honking their horn at me. I truly did not want to turn to see them. But when I did, there was a car full of people. All of the kids were crammed in the back seat and were all pointing to their antenna. There it was–the blue NASA antenna ball!

These people had recognized me as the lady that told them to tell Jack to "hit the road!" They were all smiling and they gave me a "thumbs up." I just laughed with joy and returned the "thumbs up" sign to them. As I went along driving and they went on their way, I thought to myself, "You CAN make a difference!"

Andres Mur-Dongil
JSC-DM35, United Space Alliance

During Open House, NASA receives a lot of visitors who only speak Spanish. Since I speak both English and Spanish, I enjoy explaining to them in their native language what we do here.

With time, I have come to realize that most of the non-English speaking visitors do not ask questions because they cannot communicate with the volunteers who are working at the different stands. Once these visitors find a person who has the ability to communicate in their native language, the amount of questions they ask is extremely surprising.

For me, working in the Open House is a wonderful experience. I can explain our job and objectives in the space program, and at the same time I can do it in Spanish. The expression in their faces, and their words of appreciation for my time, is the best experience that I get out of working at Open House. The most important thing for me is the joyful feeling of talking about the space program to these visitors who are willing to learn so much about our nation's space program and NASA.

Ron D. Smith
JSC-EM, Rothe Joint Venture

Our laboratory Open House exhibit contained a laser that measured several dimensional devices. There were two technical people manning the booth. An older man, a middle-aged man and a pre-teen boy came to our exhibit.

The pre-teen began to ask us deeper and deeper technical questions about the laser, to the point where we were out of technical answers. All the while the two men stood back observing. The technical depth of the questions showed the boy knew about lasers.

It turned out that the older man was a Ph.D. in physics, as was the middle-aged man and the son appeared to be on his way in the same direction. This was a case where you can never tell the intellect of the people that visit Open House at "big high technology NASA."

Lizabeth Cheshire
JSC-AQ

While working the first Open House, a man and his son walked up and asked about the launch of the Shuttle. He wanted to know where we launched. When I replied Kennedy Space Center in Fla., he told me, no, he wanted to know were we launched locally.

He then pointed toward the Reliant Energy Houston Lighting and Power facility across NASA Road One asking: "When is the next launch from there?"

You have to admit; from a distance there are some similarities to the structures.

Byron Winters
JSC-JC2

It was Open House once again, and as normal I met a small class of students from my old elementary school for the usual song and dance concerning NASA and JSC. This class was particularly special because my 5-year-old nephew Chris was in attendance.

Ms. Stroud, the teacher, introduced me as Chris's uncle, the proud NASA employee that was going to tell the class what he does at JSC. I received a round of clapping and shout-outs that lasted well over five minutes. I didn't understand all of the big fuss–it wasn't like I was an astronaut or anything.

I begin to tell the class the fun stuff kids like to hear, for instance pointing out the MCC and telling them that is where we talk to the Astronauts in space, etc. I also began to tell the class that I am an engineer and the role of my office is to provide facilities for the training of astronauts, and that we build stuff to help the employees do their job. It was at that time that the look on my nephew's face was a look of fear.

Many of the students had questions concerning the life of an astronaut, and how did it feel to be a real live astronaut, and then one asked me, was I not an astronaut? I regretfully said no but explained my role as a NASA employee was just as important.

My little nephew Chris had cheerfully told his classmates that his uncle Byron Winters was an Astronaut of the "United States." Christopher's day of fame quickly went down in flames as it was revealed that his uncle really wasn't an astronaut.

To volunteer for Open House, contact C.C. de la Garza at x31033 or register online at http://www4.jsc.nasa.gov/scripts/openhouse/index.cfm/

Imaginations soar with UHCL's space and exploration program

"American Frontiers: Exploration, Politics and Technology," a newly developed course at University of Houston-Clear Lake, will send imaginations soaring this fall.

"We will look at frontiers in American history as the outer edge of American expansion, as the outer limit of technological and cultural imagination, and as the outer zone of cultural interaction, where peoples and cultures contended with one another and with their physical environment to produce a dynamic that was unique to space and time," said Tyler Priest, professor of history. Priest will teach the class on Monday evenings, beginning Aug. 27.

The course is part of the space and exploration studies concentration in the master of arts in humanities program, which is offered by the UH-Clear Lake School of Human Sciences and Humanities.

This new field of study emphasizes the historical, philosophical and global meaning of the space pioneers' achievement, and analyzes exploration from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Courses in the history, politics and literature of exploration examine the relationship of space exploration to exploration through the ages, and develop intercultural understanding for multi-national cooperation in space.

"American Frontiers: Exploration, Politics and Technology" will focus on a broad range of frontiers–territorial, Indian, Mexican-American, urban, offshore-marine and outer-space–as well as the myth of the frontier.

A bachelor's degree in any field from an accredited institution meets the application requirement for this unique program. Courses are scheduled primarily in the evening, and all classes are held at UHCL, 2700 Bay Area Blvd.

Additional fall courses of interest to space and exploration studies students include "Negotiating Across Cultures" (sociology), "Cultural Diversity" and "Cultural Studies of Law" (anthropology).

For information about the space and exploration concentration and enrollment, contact Gretchen Mieszkowski, director of humanities, mieszkowski@cl.uh.edu, (281) 283-3312; or Ann Hinojosa, advising coordinator, hinojosa@cl.uh.edu, (281) 283-3333.

EXPERIMENT CORNER

Expedition II Science Experiments

HRF - Human Research Facility Rack 1 - Destiny Lab
A laboratory rack that enables scientists to study the physiological, behavioral and chemical changes that human beings experience during long-duration space flights. Provides power, command and data handling, cooling air and water, pressurized gases and a vacuum. Delivered aboard the Leonardo cargo module during STS-102/5A.1 in March 2001. The second rack is scheduled for launch in 2002.
More HRF info:
Expedition Two press kit, p. 17
http://hrf.jsc.nasa.gov/
http://hrf.jsc.nasa.gov/i2.htm
http://spaceflight.nasa.gov/station/science/experiments/hrf.html

H- Reflex: Effects of Spaceflight on Spinal Cord Excitability
Measures the ability of the spinal cord to respond to stimuli after being exposed to microgravity. Two tests were done on each Expedition Two crewmember on their second and seventh days in space. The third and final tests will be done shortly before the crew comes home to look for longer-term effects. The data will help researchers determine if exercise could be made more effective on long-duration space flights. Similar experiments have been flown aboard eight previous shuttle flights.
More H-Reflex info:
Expedition Two press kit, p. 16
http://spaceflight.nasa.gov/station/science/experiments/hreflex.html

For more details, please read the Expedition Two press kit at:
http://spaceflight.nasa.gov/station/crew/exp2/exp2_presskit.pdf