

# NEWS FROM WHITE SANDS

## Family and Friends Day delights people of all ages

By **Cheerie R. Patneade**

“When I discovered that a classmate of mine had become an astronaut, it reminded me of how astronauts can touch our lives. They represent all of us,” Dave Loyd, Chief of the Quality Assurance, Reliability, Safety Office at NASA White Sands Test Facility (WSTF), told a standing room only audience at the Family and Friends Day on June 30.

Loyd introduced Astronaut Laurel Clark, Commander, United States Navy, to the White Sands Test Facility employees and their families. He also surprised her with some old yearbook pictures. Loyd was a classmate of Clark’s from Monroe Junior High, Albuquerque, N.M.

Clark, who is scheduled to fly her first mission aboard STS-107 next year, answered questions from the audience after her presentation.

On the topic of balancing life and children, she said that either she or her husband stayed home to take care of their son. Clark said she is not afraid about going into space for the first time, but admitted to being nervous, yet always excited, about her new role as an astronaut. When asked about particular courses of study to improve a person’s chances of becoming an astronaut, she said there is no set curriculum or career path. She challenged aspiring astronauts in the audience to, “find what it is you really like to do, and then do your very best at it.”

Joseph Fries, Manager of WSTF, said to the audience after Clark’s presentation, “It’s great to know that we are supported at

home in the work we do here. Many of you have worked long hours at WSTF, and I want to thank you for the work you do and thank you for coming today.”

The day was preceded by the special appearance of the International “Space Station Imagination” Exhibit in Las Cruces, two days before its arrival at WSTF for the Family and Friends Day. WSTF personnel, as well as Joan Von Wolff and Jan Plante, supported the event. Over 1,400 people visited the exhibit during the two viewing days.

Xavier Avalos, the City of Las Cruces’ Summer Playground Director, was instrumental in bringing many of the summer school program attendees to the exhibit.

Children praised the exhibit after exiting. Some were too small to put it in words, but their actions spoke volumes. Teagan Moore, age 4, nodded and then smiled when asked if she liked the

exhibit. Moore visited the exhibit again on Family and Friends Day.

Comments about the Family and Friends Day were equally enthusiastic. Mary Edgerly, a librarian at Bowie High School in El Paso, Texas, said she was impressed with the test facility and the amount of activities available.

More than 23 activities, tours and demonstrations were scheduled for the event besides Clark’s presentation and the ISS exhibit trailers. Some of the events included: Past and current test programs, a personal protective equipment fashion show, thrust measurement, flammability of materials, fire hazards in

oxygen systems, engineering design with 3-D modeling, build and launch your own rocket and WSTF Fire Department fire prevention related activities.

Family and Friends Day at WSTF was a great success, with more than 900 people attending. Thanks to all the WSTF volunteers, their families and our special friends from Houston. ■

**Paul Maribal (HTSO) helps his son into the sleeping bag onboard ‘Space Station Imagination.’**



**A young visitor to the ‘Space Station Imagination’ exhibit takes time out in the hands-on laboratory.**



**Mike Hirsch (WSTF) talks about hypervelocity to Robert and Judy Duke. Robert is a Honeywell employee.**

**Employees, friends and family talk while waiting for entrance into the ‘Space Station Imagination’ exhibit trailers.**



**Lt. Danny Aranda, of the WSTF Fire Department, shows Kailene and Lucas Ruttle how to ‘strike out fire.’**

