News Briefs

Houston Symphony to perform in Teague

The Houston Symphony will perform "It's A Sounds Like Fun Circus," concert at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 4, in Teague Auditorium. The free concert is open to the public and individuals are encouraged to come 30 minutes early so children can visit the "Instrument Petting Zoo," see the "Live Instrument" and visit with Ronald McDonald. For details call 587-7395.

NASA, Japan to cooperate on asteroid sample mission

NASA and Japan's Institute of Space and Astronautical Science have agreed to cooperate on the first mission to collect samples from the surface of an asteroid and return them to Earth for in-depth study. Known as MUSES-C, the mission will be launched on a Japanese M-5 launch vehicle in January 2002 from Kagoshima Space Center, Japan, toward a touchdown on the asteroid Nereus in September 2003. A NASA-provided miniature robotic rover will conduct in-situ measurements on the rocky surface.

NASA studies urban environment

Using space-age technology, NASA researchers are studying how "urban forests" may allow cities to continuously grow while maintaining air quality and the environment, as well as lower cooling costs during sweltering summer months. Collaborating with 10 Atlanta schools, NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center began a study in Atlanta this month to learn how rapid urbanization affects temperature and air quality, and what can be done to lessen the impact.

Hyakutake X-rays show way to monitor comets, solar wind

A supercomputer simulation of Comet Hyakutake's interaction with the solar wind demonstrates that resulting X-ray emissions can be used to monitor comets and solar wind phenomena. The simulation was conducted using an Earth sciences supercomputer at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, and results match and explain the March 27, 1996, observations of Comet Hyakutake by Germany's ROSAT satellite, the first detection of X-ray emissions from any comet. The model also supports a leading theory for how the X-rays are generated.

JSC revises procedure for centerwide voice mail

JSC's Public Affairs Office is now the single contact point for distribution of centerwide voice mail messages.

Recognizing that centerwide voice mail is an effective means of internal communications, Sue Garman, the associate director for management, has delegated responsibility for reviewing and approving requests for posting such broadcasts to Public Affairs.

The criteria for initiating centerwide voice mail messages will be similar to the criteria for using other mass communications tools available to management, including the biweekly Space News Roundup, the Daily Space Fax Roundup, the recorded Employee Information Services telephone system and printed bulletins:

• The information to be dispensed must be of broad interest and of general use to a wide cross section of JSC employees;

• The messages must serve a useful purpose from the perspective of top center or agency management;

• The messages will be used sparingly and only when other equally effective communications tools are not available; and

• The message to be conveyed must lend itself to a very brief, unambiguous audio presentation.

The point of contact for centerwide voice mail requests is the Public Affairs Office's Information Services Team. Requests should be submitted by fax (244-5165) or by E-mail to Information Services Team Lead Kelly Humphries (khumphri@gp301.jsc.nasa.gov). Requests must be received several days in advance, as they must be recorded only during non-peak hours.

Robot Zoo opens Saturday; Summer camp schedule set

Space Center Houston is hosting a national unveiling of Robot Zoo, a first-time exhibit this weekend.

Robot Zoo, scheduled to be unveiled Saturday, May 24, mechanizes ordinary animals into extraordinary robot creatures, revealing nature's magic as master-planned machinery. Through entertaining, educational and interactive 3-D adventure stations, SCH guests may look at the marvel of nature through the genius of engineering.

Larger-than-life animated robots include a 9-foot-long chameleon, a 9-foot-long rhinoceros, a 6-foot giant squid with 18-foot tentacles and a 9-foot-long platypus. Also featured are a 6-foot-long house fly with a 10-foot wingspan, a 9-foot-long grasshopper, a 6-foot bat and a giraffe whose head and neck alone stretch 9 feet tall.

Space Center Houston also will host summer camps for children ages 5-14. Children can choose among nine different day camps that provide hands-on fun in an educational environment.

These camps are available:

Spacecrafts—Children ages 5-7 will have the opportunity to create crafts with a space theme. Camps will be from 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-3:30 p.m., June 30, July 2, 4, 22, 23 and 24. Cost is $25 and includes materials and a snack.

What Planet Are You From?—Children ages 5-7 will explore the solar system through experimentation and creativity. Activities include designing a solar system and a spacesuit. Camps will be held from 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-3:30 p.m., July 1, 2, 3, 21 and 25. Cost is $25 and includes materials and a snack.

Space "U"—The University of Houston Clear lake and Space Center Houston will team up to present a full week of all-day space camps. Children ages 8-11 will design and construct model parachutes, airplanes, rocket-powered cars and space stations. There will be opportunities to test the models, view an IMAX film and take home a books to continue to learning. Camps will be from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. June 16-20 and July 28-Aug. 1. Cost is $230 and includes all materials, lunch and mid-day transportation.

Mission Space Mobilization—Children ages 8-11 will become special agents on an exploration mission, designing and building an exploratory vehicle using Lego bricks. Once the vehicle is built, it will be used to explore and investigate an unknown planet. Participants will take home a Lego Hovertron to create at home. Camps will be from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. June 26, July 7, 15, 23 and Aug. 7. Cost is $45 and includes all materials and lunch.

Rocket "Engine"-uity—Children ages 8-11 will blast off with Sir Isaac Newton and explore his three laws of physics through rocketry. Children will investigate launch vehicles while building a rocket to launch at Rocket Park. Camps will be held from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. June 23, July 8, 16, 24 and Aug. 8. Cost is $45 and includes materials and lunch.

If It Suits You—Children ages 8-11 will explore actual spacesuits of and learn how astronauts train for space walks. They will study how the vacuum of space affects the astronauts and visit with a scientist who designs spacesuits. Camps will be from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. June 25, July 11, 14, 22 and Aug. 6. Cost is $45 and includes materials and lunch.

To the Moon and Back—Children ages 8-11 will fly to the Moon and perform crater experiments, collect data about the lunar environment and design and construct a lunar base from Lego building blocks. Camps will be from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. June 24, July 9, 17, 21 and Aug. 5. Cost is $45 and includes all materials and lunch.

Mission to Planet Earth—Children ages 8-11 will join with NASA on a mission to save planet Earth. Participants will conduct hands-on environmental experiments and learn the role of the space program in helping the planet. Camps will be from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. July 10, 25 and Aug. 4. Cost is $45 and includes all materials and lunch.

Aviation Adventure—Children ages 12-14 will build and launch a model space shuttle rocket, discover how the astronauts prepare for life on the International Space Station, conduct experiments related to aerospace principles, learn the importance of robotics, visit Mission Control and talk with a pilot. Camps will be from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. June 27 and July 18. Cost is $65 and includes all materials and lunch.

For more information, call Space Center Houston at 244-2105.

JSC Photo 97E01281 by Robert Markowitz

Students from Reichter Elementry in Dayton Independent School District check out a mechanized grasshopper in the Robot Zoo.

Linenger to return on *Atlantis* after four months on Mir

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worked with several experiments in the Biorack system inside the Spacehab. Mission Specialist Ed Lu conducted a photo survey of the Mir station, and Russian Mission Specialist Elena Kondakova took hot and cold water samples on Mir.

Precourt said Linenger was ecstatic when *Atlantis* docked May 16 and the hatches opened at 11:25 p.m. and the 10 space workers greeted each other. Linenger was at the door as the *Atlantis* crew went on board the Russian station and he welcomed them with a quick "flying" lesson.

"He's had a really good mission and I think he's feeling a real sense of accomplishment, especially now that Mike is here," Precourt told reporters during the flight. "Jerry and Mike are working real hard right now to get the equipment for the science stowed where it's easily accessible for Mike so he can be more efficient than Jerry was—and Jerry was pretty darned efficient—so he's got a real sense of accomplishment. He's got a lot to be proud of, and he's real happy to be coming home with us."

Precourt's counterpart, Mir 23 Commander Vasily Tsibiliev, expressed satisfaction with the safety of the Russian station, which has withstood several systems problems over the past few months. Tsibliev said an onboard fire in February, caused by a faulty back-up oxygen-generating canister, almost forced an evacuation.

"We saw that we had put the fire out and the crew was in a condition to continue its mission, so we waited for a couple of hours," Tsibliev said. "You see, I'm alive and healthy, smiling, so the condition of the station is just the same way."

Aside from some crowding because of outdated cargo, some of which will be returned to Earth aboard Atlantis, the station is operating normally, he said.

"Everything is very reliable," he said. "The problems that we had with the terminal control system were fully repaired so everything's working fine. It has a back-up now so we practically have no problems."

Phase 1 Program Manager Frank Culbertson said the smooth transfer work was an indicator of how well the two crews and commanders are working together.

"What we continue to see on these missions is that when the shuttle and Mir come together, you end up with one crew that works together very well," Culbertson said. "What you are seeing is an increasing professionalism and efficiency."

Atlantis lifted off on schedule at 3:08 a.m. CDT May 15 after a smooth and uneventful countdown.

The *Atlantis* crew was to bid farewell to Foale, Tsibiliev and Flight Engineer Alexander Lazutkin on May 21, and test a new European laser docking sensor as it undocks and drifts away from the Russian outpost. Landing is scheduled for Saturday, May 24. Linenger will have spent just over 132 days in space if *Atlantis* lands as scheduled.

Thrift Savings Plan open season goes into full swing

Open season for enrolling in the Thrift Savings Plan is now under way and continues through July 31.

During open season, eligible employees may begin contributing to the plan, change the level of contributions, allocate contributions among different investment funds, terminate participation in the program or waive enrollment.

The effective date for joining the program or making a change depends upon when the election form is received by Employee Services.

Federal Employees' Retirement System employees not making contributions, may still elect to invest all or any portion of their agency automatic contributions in any of the investment funds.

Investors can choose from three different investment funds. Government Securities Investment Fund is a short-term risk-free U. S. Treasury securities that are specially issued to the Thrift Savings Plan. The Common Stock Index Investment Fund is a stock index fund that tracks the Standard and Poor's 500 stock index. Fixed Income Index Investment Fund is a bond index fund that tracks the Lehman Brothers Aggregate bond index.

Information about the most recent returns are available at the Thrift Savings Plan website at: http://www.tsp.gov or by calling the Thrift Savings Plan Thriftline at 504-255-8777.

For more details, visit Employee Services in Bldg. 45, Rm. 140.

Space News ROUNDUP

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Editor . . . . . .Kelly Humphries
Managing Editor . . .Karen Schmidt

Fourth all-hands eyes Phase 1, station, future

The fourth in a series of all-hands meetings that started after NASA Deputy Administrator Jack Dailey's visit early this year will be conducted at 2 p.m. Wednesday, May 28, in Teague Auditorium.

JSC Assistant Director, Technical, Brian Duffy will moderate a panel discussion on the status of the Phase 1 and International Space Station Programs and plans for future exploration.

Phase 1 Program Manager Frank Culbertson will discuss activities, challenges and plans of the shuttle-Mir docking program. International Space Station Program Manager Randy Brinkley will address similar topics relating to the planned permanent orbiting outpost, and Space and Life Sciences Director David Short will look at projects focused on the future, Mars meteorite research and human life sciences research.

All JSC civil service and contractor employees are invited to attend and ask questions.

The forum is designed to inform employees of key activities across the center, and to illustrate how JSC is implementing the NASA and Human Exploration and Development of Space strategic plans.

More information is on-line.

The Strategic Management Handbook is at: http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/codez/strahand/frontpg.htm

The NASA Strategic Plan is at: http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/nsp/NSPTOC.html

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