

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 18, 2007

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Teacher in Space Ambassadors Still Touching the Future

- *Bear, Delaware*

For 21 years, 112 teachers from around the country have been waiting for one special space shuttle flight. On August 7th their wait will be over as many of them gather at Cocoa Beach, Florida to watch Barbara Morgan lift-off as a crew member of mission STS-118 on the space shuttle Endeavour.

In 1985 Christa McAuliffe was selected as the first "Teacher in Space" with Morgan as her back up, from the 114 state finalists in the Teacher in Space Project. McAuliffe, along with the rest of the Challenger crew, perished seconds after lift-off while a stunned nation, including her Teacher in Space colleagues, watched.

In the ensuing years, Morgan remained working with NASA's education program, even while in her classroom. Eventually, in 1998, being selected as an Educator Astronaut Candidate she successfully completed her two years of training to become an official member of the Astronaut Corps. She was assigned a flight and named Mission Specialist in 2002. Morgan will perform various duties on the STS-118 mission including operating the robotic arm and being in charge of logistical support for moving supplies and other materials between Endeavour and the International Space Station. Morgan fondly remembers her early space education roots and states, "The Space Ambassadors represent all that is good in education. They have always inspired me, as great teachers and great people. What they have given to their communities, their colleagues, their students, and to NASA is truly heroic."

The Teacher in Space Project evolved into the Teaching from Space Program, and now the Educator Astronaut Program. Barbara Morgan is the first NASA Educator Astronaut selected for that newest program and is the first to fly with that designation. The NASA's Educator Astronaut Program includes three additional teachers who were selected for astronaut training in 2002 and currently are aspiring to train for future missions. Including teachers on flights was a goal and dream of the Teachers in Space-Space Ambassadors that has finally been realized with Morgan as a crew member of STS-118.

The Teachers in Space (TIS) who were involved in the inaugural program have continued to make a broad impact in their communities, states, and nationally. Designated by the NASA Administrator in June 1985 as Space Ambassadors (SAs), members of this group have been passing on their space education expertise, knowledge, resources and experiences since their first gathering in Washington, D.C. in 1985. Many have continued as exemplary classroom teachers, leaders in curriculum, school administrators, museum and planetarium directors, aerospace industry employees and creators of new statewide innovative programs. Some have continued in these roles and others are now exploring new and exciting initiatives and interests.

Some of the Space Ambassadors will be wearing replicas of the original patch at the launch, issued to them in June of 1985 by NASA. An element of the original TIS Project patch, the flaming torch, is included in the STS-118 mission patch.

NASA's official description of the Teacher in Space Project patch:

"The design represents the Space Shuttle in flight carrying the first teacher into Earth orbit. The light of knowledge and education is symbolized by the flaming torch. Its message is to reach out, grasp the torch, share the learning experience and then pass it on to future generations."

Frank Owens, currently Associate Executive Director with the National Science Teachers Association, who served as a former senior executive with NASA's Office of Education from 1985-2003, said "Christa, Barbara and the Space Ambassadors have had a lasting impact on NASA's education programs and teachers and students throughout our nation. They have touched the lives of millions and inspired a new generation of scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and technologists. And they have inspired a new generation to enter into what is arguably our nation's most important profession, that of teaching." Larry Billbrough, recently retired from NASA as the Acting Director of the Elementary and Secondary Education Division said, "Barbara has never lost sight of the goals and objectives of the Teacher in Space Program to honor and recognize the contributions of teachers and the teaching profession. When she launches she will be taking the Nation's classrooms with her into orbit."

NASA's education programs and website provide a rich offering of educational information for students, educators and the general public. The NASA mission of aeronautics, Earth and space science, and exploration are highly inspirational themes that naturally inspire students to pursue subjects and careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). And as stated in numerous national reports, in order for today's students to succeed in the 21st century, they need to have an understanding of mathematical and scientific processes and technological methods, a fundamental belief of the TIS -Space Ambassadors. In support of NASA and the Educator Astronaut Program, the TIS-Space Ambassadors continue their mission to strengthen and enhance STEM education in the United States.

During the TIS-SAs Launch Conference, the Space Ambassadors will reflect on their accomplishments over the past 21 years and share innovative ideas, resources and initiatives in an effort to continue to pass this "flame of knowledge" to their colleagues and students when they return to their home states, territories, agencies and organizations.

Gail Breslauer, TIS-SA from Vermont, will be attending the conference and launch. (See related story connection below.)

The Delaware AeroSpace Education Foundation (DASEF), an educational non profit since 1990, has committed both personnel and financial resources to sponsor the Teacher-in-Space Conference/STS-118 Launch Update at Cocoa Beach, August 4 -12 (depending on launch date). DASEF's mission is to inspire and educate people in learning about the Earth's environment, space science, mathematics and technology through the use of our academies, presentations, symposiums, professional development, events and activities and the resources of the Innovation Technology Exploration Center (ITEC).

The Delaware Space Grant Consortium and Space Florida have provided additional funding to support aerospace education and awareness.

Related links:

- 1) Mission Information:
http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/shuttle/shuttlemissions/sts118/index.html
<http://www.nasa.gov/sts118>
- 2) Mission Specialist/ Educator Astronaut Barbara Morgan
Interview with Barbara Morgan:
http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/shuttle/shuttlemissions/sts118/morgan_interview.html
Barbara Morgan's Biography:
<http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/Bios/htmlbios/morgan.html>
- 3) NASA Educator Astronaut information
http://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/k-4/features/F_Educator_Astronauts.html
http://education.nasa.gov/divisions/eandsec/overview/F_pathfinder_edu_astronaut.html
- 4) Teachers in Space - NASA Space Ambassadors (TIS-SAs)
For more information about the Space Ambassadors please see the article published in Ad Astra written by Pennsylvania TIS-SA, Patricia Palazzolo.
http://vtpaceeducation.org/images/vsep/ad_astra_article.pdf
- 5) Educators' Resource Page for STS-118:
<http://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/stseducation/home/index.html>
- 6) Conference Sponsors:
Delaware AeroSpace Education Foundation www.dasef.org
Delaware Space Grant www.delspace.org/
Space Florida www.spaceflorida.gov/



VERMONT STORY CONNECTION FOLLOWS

In 1985, two Vermont teachers were selected as TIS-SAs (from approximately 55 Vermont teacher applicants (and about 11,000 nationwide), Gail Breslauer and Michael Metcalf.

Gail Breslauer was formerly a teacher at Fayston Elementary School and founded "Vermont Space Education Program" (VSEP). With support from NASA, she also initiated and helped establish a NASA Educator Resource Center (ERC) in Vermont. She is again following her dreams, seeking sustainable funding and a suitable space to establish a permanent NASA ERC (and more) to be located in the Mad River Valley as a service for all Vermont educators. As well, Breslauer continues to travel throughout Vermont providing outreach educational programs for students and professional development workshops and resources for educators.

www.VtSpaceEducation.org

Gail Breslauer is also affectionately known as the "queen of email" for the TIS-SAs. She created and has maintained an e-distribution list for well over a decade, that keeps the TIS-SAs networked and sharing information via the Internet. She is one of the initiators of the TIS-SA Conference for STS-118 and serves on the Conference Committee. She will be at the conference and the launch.

(Photo of Gail Breslauer in front of the Space Shuttle orbiter Endeavour during "roll out" for a previous mission, can be provided by Breslauer.)

Many Vermont students were part of NASA's "Name the Orbiter" education project. Students across America did research and submitted their names based on classroom projects they participated in. Breslauer says, "This mission, with Barbara's flight on Endeavour, is an example to students of the importance of keeping dreams, setting and working towards goals and persevering for what you believe. Life is all about having dreams and making choices that enrich your life and that of others.

"The TIS-SAs had the privilege of seeing Endeavour being built as part of one of our space education conferences, so she's special to us as well for this mission. I've also had a chance to see her finished and rolled out from one building to another getting ready to fly a mission. I'm excited to see Barbara fulfill her dream--and our dream as well for her."

http://www.vtspaceducation.org/current_missions.html

Michael Metcalf continues to teach and inspire students at Hazen Union High School in Hardwick, Vermont. He was selected as one of the final 10 along with Christa McAuliffe from New Hampshire and Barbara Morgan from Idaho. In addition to teaching, he has served in the Vermont legislature.