

The Ultimate Field Trip: Challenger Center's MESSENGER Educator Fellowship Program Takes Teachers on a Voyage to Mercury

ALEXANDRIA, VA (04/16/04): The human race is sending a spacecraft back to Mercury! In support of NASA's MESSENGER mission, only the second spacecraft to study the mysterious innermost planet of the Solar System, the space agency has tasked Challenger Center for Space Science Education with creating a complementary Educator Fellowship Program. Through the program, a select group of master teachers, called MESSENGER Educator Fellows, will train teachers nationwide on educational materials that support the MESSENGER mission and address its unique scientific questions. After a rigorous selection process, Challenger Center for Space Science Education announced today its second class of MESSENGER Educator Fellows, creating a total cadre of 30 Fellows.

MESSENGER—short for MErcury Surface, Space ENvironment, GEOchemistry, and Ranging—will be launched from the Kennedy Space Center in late summer 2004. The spacecraft will fly past Earth once, Venus twice, and Mercury three times before starting its orbital study of Mercury in 2011.

Collectively, these thirty MESSENGER Educator Fellows share over 190 years of classroom teaching experience, represent grade levels from elementary to college, and come from diverse geographic areas. Using MESSENGER Education Modules created by Challenger Center for Space Science Education and Carnegie Institute of Washington, the Educator Fellows are expected to conduct training workshops for a minimum of 120 teachers annually. Over the lifetime of the MESSENGER program, which will last

eleven years, more than 27,000 teachers are to be trained. This can translate into classroom activities for more than one million students across the country.

When asked about the MESSENGER Educator Fellows, Dr. June Scobee Rodgers, Founding Chairman of Challenger Center and widow of Challenger Shuttle Commander Dick Scobee, said, “As a former educator myself, I know what a difference it makes when teachers have classroom materials they have confidence in, as well as the proper training to use them confidently. The MESSENGER Educator Fellowship Program offers both. All of us at Challenger Center look forward to the great work the MESSENGER Educator Fellows will do as they take teachers and students on this most exciting space adventure.”

Challenger Center is very proud of their new class of Fellows and look forward to the impact they will have on teachers and classrooms nationwide.

About Challenger Center for Space Science Education

Challenger Center for Space Science Education is a global not-for-profit education organization created in 1986 by the families of the astronauts tragically lost in the Challenger 51-L mission. Dedicated to the educational spirit of that mission, Challenger Center develops Learning Centers and other educational programs that continue the crew’s mission of engaging students in science, mathematics, and technology and foster in them an interest to pursue careers in those fields. For more information on our diverse programs, including our network of Challenger Learning Centers, please visit us online at www.challenger.org.