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**RNASA donates $26,030 to Aerospace Education**

**BAY AREA HOUSTON, Texas** (August 28, 2015) On August 20, 2015, the Rotary National Award for Space Achievement (RNASA) Foundation announced a total donation of $26,030 to various programs during their annual RNASA Volunteer Appreciation Dinner held at Cullen's Upscale Grille.

President Rodolfo González said, “The RNASA Foundation is very grateful to our generous corporate sponsors who accomplish so much for our nation’s space programs. It is very fitting that the proceeds yielded from the 2015 Space Awards Gala be invested in programs that inspire our future engineers and leaders.”

The RNASA Foundation hosts a gala awards celebration each year to honor individuals and teams for their accomplishments in aerospace, and presented its top award, the National Space Trophy, to Colonel Robert D. Cabana – Director of the Kennedy Space Center, former NASA astronaut, and retired United States Marine Corp Colonel at the RNASA Space Awards Gala on April 24, 2015 at the Houston Hyatt Regency.

The RNASA Foundation will donate $10,000 of this year’s gala proceeds to Col. Cabana’s name to his choice of worthy beneficiaries, to which Col. Cabana said “It was a true honor to receive the National Space Trophy, but it is more rewarding to be able to provide a donation to these deserving organizations that are stimulating an interest in the space program and STEM education.” Col. Cabana designated $3,000 to the Association of Space Explorers, $3,000 to the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation, and $4,000 to the Buzz Aldrin ShareSpace.

González told the RNASA directors and guests that the Foundation made an additional donation of $16,030 to the NASA Texas Aerospace Scholars program, which consisted of $6,030 for polo shirts for the 260 participants of the 2015 summer program as well as an additional $10,000 donation toward next year’s program. The NASA Texas Aerospace Scholars is implemented through a cooperative agreement between Texas A&M University/Oklahoma State University and the Johnson Space Center.

González and RNASA Foundation Treasurer Geoff Atwater made the presentation to Stacey Welch, Education Specialist from Texas A&M, who gratefully accepted on behalf of the NASA Texas Aerospace Scholars Program. Welch, a former junior math and science teacher, works on High School Aerospace Scholars and In-flight Education Downlinks to engage young minds in opportunities that provide insight into NASA and STEM careers and inspire them to one day join the STEM workforce. Welch says “as an educator, this is the best job there is – opening the door to NASA to the next generation on space explorers.”

Welch shared the impact of the program by quoting two students. “*This program allowed me to delve into the journey that NASA has been on for a while. I have been able to see what employees are doing and be part of that journey as I work with other innovative minds to create a Mars colony. Although stressful, the work experience under the pressure-of-time allows me to understand what it is like working efficiently with a group of people. HAS was very enjoyable and inspiring as I continue to strive to have a bigger impact on society.*”

*“Collaborating with other students and having real deadlines to our work made it feel like we were actual NASA interns. Also, being able to listen to actual NASA experts was probably one of the best parts of the program. By doing that, i was more informed of NASA projects for the future that I might actually take part in.*”

The Texas Aerospace Scholars consists of Texas middle-school, high school programs and community college and internships; Women in STEM High School Aerospace Scholars (WISH), a nationwide program; and The National Community College Aerospace Scholars.

Finally, González announced that $5,000 has been allocated in support of a new scholarship initiative that will be offered to participants of the 2016 Aerospace Scholars program.

González acknowledged special guest, long-time RNASA stellar evaluator, and RNASA’s 2005 National Space Trophy winner, Glynn S. Lunney, who was a key figure in America's manned space program from Project Mercury through the coming of the Space Shuttle. Lunney was a flight director during the Gemini and Apollo programs, and was on duty during historic events such as the Apollo 11 lunar ascent and the pivotal hours of the Apollo 13 crisis.

The RNASA Foundation’s 30th annual gala will be held at the Houston Hyatt Regency on April 29, 2016. For information on sponsorship opportunities and photos from previous events, please visit [www.rnasa.org](http://www.rnasa.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

*About the RNASA Foundation: The Rotary National Award for Space Achievement (RNASA) Foundation was founded by the Space Center Rotary Club of Houston, Texas, in 1985 to organize and coordinate an annual event to recognize outstanding achievements in space and create greater public awareness of the benefits of space exploration. The National Space Trophy and other awards will be presented next year at the RNASA Gala on April 29, 2016. See [http://www.rnasa.org](http://www.rnasa.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) for more information.*