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**Rotary Gala Honors Unsung Heroes of Space**

**HOUSTON, Texas (March 26, 2015).** The Rotary National Award for Space Achievement (**RNASA**) Foundation will recognize people in the space industry at their annual space awards gala on Friday, April 24, 2015, at the Houston Hyatt Regency.

When people think of space achievements, they usually think of astronauts or they might picture spacecraft like the Mars Curiosity Rover bravely exploring the unknown, but it is the dedication of the workers on Earth that make the astronaut’s historic deeds possible.

To publicly recognize all the "unsung heroes" of the space program alongside the more well-known achievers, the RNASA Foundation was formed by the Space Center Rotary Club in 1985, and presents an American citizen with the National Space Trophy each year.

This year the RNASAFoundation will present the 2015 National Space Trophy, to **Colonel Robert D. Cabana**, USMC (Ret.), Director of NASA’s Kennedy Space Center and former NASA astronaut, STS-41, STS-53, STS-65 and STS-88.

**Dr. Ellen Ochoa**, Director of the Johnson Space Center and former NASA astronaut [STS-56](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-56), [STS-66](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-66), [STS-96](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-96), and STS-110, will present the prestigious award to Colonel Cabana. Cabana was nominated by **Dr. Ochoa**, **Michael L. Coats**, Former Johnson Space Center Director, **Dr. Michael D. Griffin**, former NASA Administrator, and Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Schafer Corporation, **Rick Hieb**, Vice-President of Lockheed Martin Civil Programs, as well as former CNN correspondent **John Zarrella** who will serve as the Master of Ceremonies at this year’s event. Gemini/Apollo Astronaut **Lt. Gen.** **Thomas Stafford**, USAF (Ret.), will present an **OMEGA** watch to Cabana at the closing of the program.

The National Space Trophy honoree is selected each year by the RNASA Foundation's Board of Advisors. This board represents a Who's Who of government and corporate aerospace leaders, including former Trophy and Space Communicator Award recipients.

In addition to the National Space Trophy, stellar awards will be presented to people in early career, mid career, late career, and team categories. RNASA Chairman Rodolfo González said, “We received an impressive 147 stellar nominations this year, 51 government and 96 corporate.” The nominations came from a.i. solutions, Inc., Aerojet Rocketdyne, ARES Technical Services, The Boeing Company, Booz Allen Hamilton, The Charles Stark Draper Laboratory, Exelis Inc., GeoControl Systems, Jacobs, L-3 Communications, Lockheed Martin, MEI Technologies Inc., MIT Lincoln Laboratory, MRI, NASA Glenn Research Center, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, NASA Johnson Space Center, NASA Kennedy Space Center, Oceaneering Space Systems, Orbital ATK, SAIC, SpaceX, United States Air Force, USAF Air Force Research Laboratory, and UTC Aerospace Systems.

Of all the nominations, only a few Stellar awards are given, and are announced the evening of the banquet. The winners will receive engraved marble trophies generously sponsored by Orbital ATK. The trophies will be presented by NASA Astronaut and [United States Marine Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Marine_Corps) [**Colonel**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonel_(United_States)) **Randy “Komrade” Bresnik** - [STS-129](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-129) and NASA Astronaut **Tracy Caldwell Dyson** - Mission Specialist [STS-118](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-118) and [Expedition 23/24](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expedition_24).

The RNASA Stellar Awards Evaluation Panel ranks the nominations received from industry and government in all categories, based on whose accomplishments hold the greatest promise for furthering activities in space and the extent to which the nominee meets the goal of recognizing "unsung heroes”. The 2015 Stellar judges are **Dr. Glynn S. Lunney**, **Arnold D. Aldrich**, **General Kevin P. Chilton, USAF (Ret.)** and **Colonel Eileen Collins**,USAF (Ret.)

The Stellar Award nominees and team representatives will enjoy a behind-the-scenes tour of the Johnson Space Center and a luncheon where all are recognized with framed certificates and a **Fisher Space Pen** donated by the company. The **Fisher Space Pen** was originally carried by the astronauts of the Apollo moon missions and is still used on manned space flights to this day. They are precision assembled, hand tested, and guaranteed to perform underwater, at any angle including upside down, in extreme temperatures, and of course in zero gravity. The keynote speaker at the luncheon will be **Mark S. Geyer,** Program Manager for NASA’s[Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle](http://www.nasa.gov/exploration/systems/mpcv/#.Uyr-XPldV8F) **(**MCPV). Orion is NASA’s next generation of spacecraft and was built to enable human exploration of the solar system.

The Stellar Awards Committee Chairman **Jennifer Devolites**, RNASA Foundation Chairman Rodolfo González, RNASA Committee NASA Liaison **Duane Ross**, and Space Center Rotary Club President **Scott Rainey** will also address the nominees at the Stellar Awards luncheon.

The reception begins at 6 p.m., and the program starts at 7 p.m with a welcome by RNASA Chairman **Rodolfo Gonzalez.** Following will be a presentation of the colors by **Clear Lake High School Army JROTC**, accompanied with the national anthem sung by the **Kam Franklin**, lead singer for [**The Suffers**](http://www.thesuffers.com/). **Rev. Stephen Oglesbee,** Lead Pastor, Clear Lake Presbyterianwill do the invocation. After dinner, the awards ceremony will kick off with a multimedia show summarizing the year's space events produced by **Space City Films**.

The RNASA Foundation invites members of the public and the aerospace community to attend the black-tie event. Individual tickets are $300, and corporate tables range from $2,000 to $5,000. Please use <http://www.rnasa.org/tables.html> to reserve your table for the RNASA Banquet, and for information about sponsorships and tickets. To reserve a hotel room, please use <http://www.rnasa.org/houston.html> at the Houston Hyatt Regency.

*About RNASA: 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 nonprofit Foundation presents the National Space Trophy and Stellar Awards each year.*

Caption for photos:

Photo #1 Dr. Ellen Ochoa, Director of the Johnson Space Center and former NASA astronaut [STS-56](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-56), [STS-66](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-66), [STS-96](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/STS-96), and STS-110, will present the prestigious 2015 Rotary National Award for Space Achievement to Colonel Cabana. Photo credit: (NASA photo)

Photo #2 Master of Ceremonies former CCN correspondent John Zarrella. Photo credit: RNASA Gala – April 2014

Photo #3 Stellar Award presenter Astronaut Randy “Komrade” Bresnik Photo credit: (NASA photo)

Photo # 4 Stellar Award presenter NASA Astronaut Tracy Caldwell Dyson (Photo credit**:** (NASA photo)