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**Rotary Gala Honors Heroes of Space Achievement**

**HOUSTON, Texas (March 24, 2016).** 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 29, 2016, at the Houston Hyatt Regency.

The RNASA Foundation was formed by the Space Center Rotary Club in 1985, to publicly recognize the heroes of America’s space program. This year, the Foundation will present the 2016 National Space Trophy, to **Dr. Charles Elachi**, Director of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory. NASA Administrator, **The Honorable Charles F. Bolden, Jr.**, will present the prestigious award to Dr. Elachi who was nominated by **A. Thomas Young**, former Director of NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center. 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 recipients.

RNASA welcomes back **Miles O’Brien** who will serve as Emcee of this special 30th anniversary event, and Gemini/Apollo Astronaut **Lt. Gen.** **Thomas Stafford**, USAF (Ret.), will present an **OMEGA** watch to Elachi at the closing of the program.

In addition to the National Space Trophy, the Foundation is awarding the Space Communicator award to **Bill Nye**, best known as “Bill Nye the Science Guy”, a vocal advocate for space exploration, and CEO of [The Planetary Society](http://www.planetary.org/), the world's largest space-interest group. Nye’s nominator, **Elliot Pulham**, CEO of the Space Foundation, and the 2003 Space Communicator winner, and will present the award.

The Foundation is pleased to have **P.J. O'Rourke**, journalist and American political satirist serving as the featured speaker at the gala. As a long-time advocate of the space industry, P.J. has serves on the Space Foundation Board of Directors and has been a returning speaker at the annual Space Symposium.

Finally, **Stellar Awards** will be presented to people in the industry, in early career, mid career, late career, and team categories. RNASA Chairman Rodolfo González said, “We received an impressive 137 stellar nominations this year, 43 government and 94 corporate.” The nominations came from a.i. solutions, Inc., Aerojet Rocketdyne, Barrios Technology, The Boeing Company, Booz Allen Hamilton, ERC, Inc., GeoControl Systems, Jacobs, L-3 Communications, Lockheed Martin, NASA Ames Research Center, NASA Glenn Research Center, NASA Johnson Space Center, NASA Kennedy Space Center, NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, NASA Stennis Space Center, Oceaneering Space Systems, Orbital ATK, Pratt & Whitney, SAIC, SGT, SpaceX, United States Air Force, US Air Force Research Laboratory, UTC Aerospace Systems, and Wyle. For a complete list of the 2016 stellar nominees, visit [www.rnasa.org/stellarnoms.html](http://www.rnasa.org/stellarnoms.html). 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 Astronauts **Rex Walheim** and **Stephanie Wilson**.

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. The 2016 Stellar judges are **Dr. Glynn S. Lunney**, **Arnold D. Aldrich**, **Colonel Eileen Collins**, and **Captain Michael Coats.**

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 **Captain Sunita Williams,** who spent a record-breaking 194 days in space in 2007. The Stellar Awards Committee Chairman **Jennifer Devolites**, RNASA Foundation Chairman Rodolfo González, and Space Center Rotary Club President **John Branch** 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 **Reagan Johnson**. **Reverend William H. King, III,** Lead Pastor, Greater New Hope Missionary Baptist Churchwill 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.*