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**William Shatner to receive RNASA’s 2018 Space Communicator Award**

**HOUSTON, Texas** (February 20, 2018). The Rotary National Award for Space Achievement (RNASA) Foundation has selected William Shatner to receive the prestigious 2018 Space Communicator Award. Shatner will be unable to attend the banquet but will send a video acceptance speech.

Long known for his role as Captain James Kirk of *Star Trek’s* *USS Enterprise*, Shatner has inspired generations of young explorers. His role as Captain Kirk spanned nearly three decades, first on the 1960’s NBC television series and, later, in seven feature films between 1979-1994.

Bob Jacobs, NASA Deputy Associate Administrator for Communications, who nominated Shatner said, “Many past, present, and future NASA astronauts, engineers and scientists admit their inspiration for pursuing their particular careers was because of the adventures over the past five decades of Capt. James T. Kirk and the crew of the starship *U.S.S. Enterprise*.”

Shatner has long been an advocate of international space exploration efforts. In recent years, he has supported numerous NASA outreach activities to educate the public and to inspire a new generation of explorers.

Shatner said of his award, “I am honored for RNASA to select me as the recipient of the 2018 Space Communicator Award. As a lifelong fan of space exploration, I’m pleased I’ve been able to contribute to the public’s greater understanding and appreciation of space.”

In 2011, Shatner donated his time in honor of Space Shuttle Discovery’s final flight. He recreated the famous Star Trek introduction for the crew of STS-133 saying, “These have been the voyages of the space shuttle Discovery. Her 30-year mission: to seek out new science, to build new outposts, to bring nations together in the final frontier, to boldly go and do what no spacecraft has done before.” He also narrated the space shuttle 30th anniversary documentary.

In 2012, Shatner narrated the *Grand Entrance to Mars* presentation which guided viewers through Curiosity’s complex landing on the Martian surface. In order to make a successful soft landing, the Curiosity spacecraft had seven minutes to slow down from 13,000 mph as it rocketed through the atmosphere. It was appropriately dubbed the “seven minutes of terror”.

He continued his support in the fall of 2017 by sending a message to the Voyager spacecraft on its 40th anniversary. It read “We offer friendship across the stars. You are not alone.” Launched in 1977, the Voyager probe is beaming back data from the furthest reaches of our solar system. As of January 2018, Voyager was 13 billion miles from Earth.

Shatner was born in 1931 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. He graduated from McGill University in 1952 with a Bachelor of Commerce degree. His career began in 1954 where he performed at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario in productions such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex and Henry V.* Shatner has three daughters and lives in Southern California with his wife, Elizabeth. He owns a 360-acre farm in Kentucky where he breeds American Saddlebred horses. In 1994, he rode one of his horses as the Grand Marshal of the Tournament of Roses Parade in California.

The RNASA Space Communicator Award was created in 1997 in honor of KTRK, Houston Channel 13 space reporter and long-time RNASA Advisor Stephen Gauvain who was tragically killed in a car accident in 1996. The award is presented to an individual or team that makes exceptional contributions to public understanding and appreciation of space exploration The previous recipients of the award are: William Harwood of CBS; Miles O'Brien, formerly of CNN; Elliot Pulham of the Space Foundation; the NASA-Contractor Communications team that responded to the Columbia accident; Mark Carreau, formerly of the Houston Chronicle; Neil deGrasse Tyson of the Hayden Planetarium at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, Veronica McGregor, Manager of News and Social Media at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California; former [Canadian Space Agency astronaut, author, and musician Chris A. Hadfield](http://www.asc-csa.gc.ca/eng/missions/expedition34-35/profile.asp); Bill Nye (the science guy) CEO of the Planetary Society, and Rob Navias of NASA’s Johnson Space Center.

Shatner will be honored with the 2018 Space Communicator Award at RNASA’s 32nd annual National Space Trophy Banquet on April 27, 2018, at the Houston Hyatt Regency. Mr. Robert Lightfoot, NASA’s Acting Administrator, will receive the 2018 National Space Trophy.

The RNASA Foundation invites members of the public and the aerospace community to attend the black-tie event on April 27, 2018, at the Houston Hyatt Regency. Please visit **http://www.rnasa.org/tables.html** to reserve your table for the RNASA Banquet and find information about sponsorships and tickets. To reserve a room at the Houston Hyatt Regency, please visit **http://www.rnasa.org/houston.html** or call 713-654-1234 and request the RNASA group rate. The RNASA website is [**http://www.rnasa.org/**](http://www.rnasa.org/)**.**

*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.*