



Letter from the Executive Director

Steve Otten

Our astronauts have not only been busy working the Space Station, but our crew has been busy at the center preparing for new missions. We are happy to announce that two new staff members and several volunteers have joined the Challenger Team and everyone is very excited to work with you and your class this year.

Ms. Chantel Madson joins us as Co-Lead Flight Director/Curriculum Development along with Commander Maureen. Commander Maureen has been with the center flying missions for four years and Commander Chantel is looking forward to an exciting year working with the many students scheduled to visit the center this school year. She brings great experience working with and teaching children and we are excited to have her.

Next, we have several new volunteers to the Challenger Center. Today, over 25 volunteers fill roles for the Challenger Center from supporting the front desk, completing important mission documents to providing assistance during the missions. The center even has volunteer laborers who help clean, paint and provide us with other important maintenance roles. Please introduce yourself to our excellent and dedicated volunteer team as they welcome your class aboard!

The Challenger Center has also enjoyed welcoming a few new additions that will enhance your experience when visiting the center. This summer, NASA loaned our center a tire that actually went into space on the Space Shuttle Endeavour! The tire was part of the landing gear on mission STS-111 which launched on June 5, 2008 and returned to earth on June 19, 2008. On loan from NASA for three years, your class will marvel at the size and acquire hands on learning in understanding that this wheel is part of six wheels that must support more than 200 thousand pounds, landing at speeds in excess of 400 miles per hour and has special cups constructed within the treads designed to assist in slowing the shuttle during landing maneuvers.

In addition to the shuttle tire, we have added all new computers in Mission Control & Space Station. Our old G-4 Macs served us faithfully for seven years but the time came to upgrade the hardware, software and operating system. Mac Mini's will now power our missions and teachers will see a more "high-tech" look at the individual computers the children use. The Center was able to upgrade thanks to a grant received in late 2007. Special thanks go out to Other World Computing (O.W.C.) who helped us with the upgrade process.

We look forward to another year of successful missions and to serving your class again this year. To date, nearly 60,000 children have been inspired by the center to pursue careers in math, science & technology. Fly Safe and we see you soon!