



1601 NASA Parkway
Houston, TX 77058

SPACECENTER.ORG



Support



Space Center Houston
is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Mission Impact

How supporters fuel our programs
and inspire the next generation

Dear Friends,

At Space Center Houston, we share the past, present, and future of space exploration. With a network spanning NASA, government entities, innovative corporations, and startups, research institutions, and 1.3 million yearly visitors, we are unmatched in access, impact, and legacy of partnership.

The pages of this Mission Impact report share just a few of our diverse programs that train individuals and inspire young minds to join the STEM pathway. Most importantly, these articles illuminate stories of people transformed by opportunities available only at Space Center Houston, and only made possible through the generosity of donors. If you are already a donor, thank you.

There are many ways you can have an impact through Space Center Houston. Steve Huzar is a remarkable example (see page 8), through his curiosity and enthusiasm for honoring NASA's legacy, his commitment as a SCH volunteer, and his vision in supporting the future through his planned gift.

Thank you, Steve, and thank you all for making these stories possible.

Whether you are a student, space enthusiast, donor, or volunteer, there is a vital role you can play in advancing space exploration.

Sincerely, ..



William T. Harris
President & CEO of Space Center Houston



Year in Review

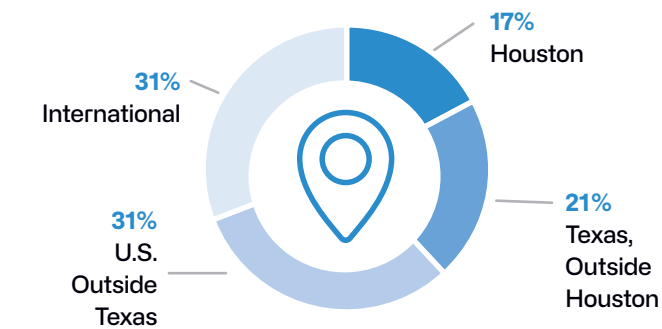
1,271,872

Total Number of Guests

First Time Guests

63% 

Where Our Guests are From



\$241.3M
Estimated Annual Economic Impact on Texas

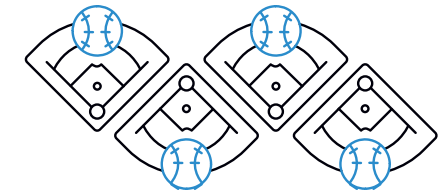
2,515
Jobs Created

134,000+
Hotel Rooms Booked

70%
of Groups Visiting Were Adult-Only

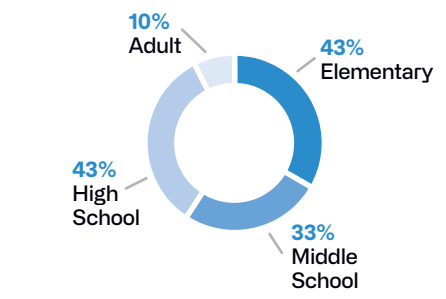
99,800
Freeze Dried Ice Cream Sold

Mission Control Tours
162,490 Guests
Equivalent to four, sold-out Major League Baseball games



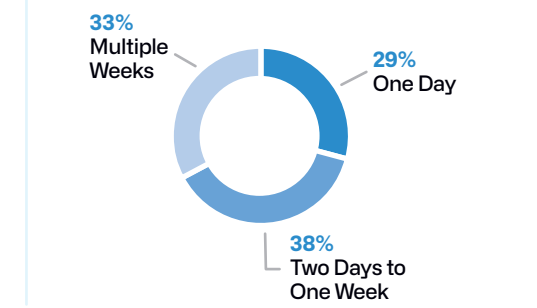
Education Programs by Age*

* Educational programs often target multiple age groups



289,394
Students and Teachers Engaged

Education Program Length



1,273
Unique School Visits

19
Offered Education Programs

Inspiring Growth on the Innovation Challenge Pathway

Space captures the human imagination at any age, making it an ideal means for education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Space Center Houston combines hands-on learning, personal mentorship and access to authentic experiences to bring STEM subjects to life, developing students' confidence and creativity to solve complex problems.

At the heart of our work is the **Innovation Challenge Pathway**, a series of programs that guide Pre-K-12 students through STEM challenges and competitions and prepare a new generation of innovators to tackle the problems of tomorrow:

In the **STEM Innovations in Schools**, presented by Chevron, even the youngest students learn about environmental sustainability and create prototypes for carbon capture innovations, exercising their creativity and putting STEM principles to work for the planet.

Girls STEM Pathway, presented by Boeing, offers access to authentic space challenges and personal mentorship in scientific research, bringing support and encouragement to under-represented students in STEM subjects.

And the **Conrad Challenge** is an esteemed, global innovation challenge that supports young problem-solvers to work together across borders and develop ideas complete with business plans and marketing strategies, all while receiving feedback from industry experts to make their ideas a reality.



[Learn More](#)



Citizen Science Ignites the Spark of Curiosity

One of Space Center Houston's flagship initiatives is the Scientist in Residence Program, established in 2018 with support from Barrios Technology. This program connects the public with real-world scientific research, allowing visitors to participate in authentic NASA space science experiments.

The program is led by our chief science officer and current NASA astronaut, Dr. Megan McArthur, along with science research manager, Dr. Andrea Ortiz, who has established collaborations with top-tier institutions such as Johns Hopkins University, Baylor College of Medicine, and the Berkeley Eye Center. These partnerships provide our visitors with opportunities to contribute meaningful data that furthers scientific understanding, keeping Space Center Houston at the forefront of citizen science.

In March 2024, Drs. McArthur and Ortiz took Space Center Houston to a new level with the Science Deck, a central hub for the public to participate in hands-on research opportunities with the International Space Station (ISS). One such Science Deck endeavor is the Ocular Alignment and Otolith Asymmetry study which investigates the ability of the inner ear to sense spatial awareness and the brain's ability to use that information to control eye position and posture. Spearheaded by Dr. Mark Shelhamer, former chief scientist of NASA's Human Research Program and current professor and director of the Human Spaceflight Lab at Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Shelhamer has pioneered multiple studies examining the physiological impact of long-duration space flight on the human body.

A version of this Ocular Alignment study was performed on the International Space Station (ISS). On the Science Deck, guests have the opportunity to participate in the very same computerized game as astronauts, which requires individuals donning 3D glasses to align two differently colored horizontal and diagonal lines. These experiments allow guests to learn more about their vestibular systems and contribute to scientists' greater understanding of how our bodies adjust to microgravity. Data generated in this study could help predict and prevent the motion sickness often felt by astronauts.

On the Science Deck, visitors can also test their reflexes and coding skills using pocket-sized micro:bit computers and learn how light and fluorescence help us investigate the makeup of our universe and the inner workings of our cells.

While research opportunities at the Science Deck may be out of this world, they also create down-to-earth connections for visitors. An inspiring moment unfolded when Estella Gillette, a retired NASA employee and member of Space Center Houston's Innovation Circle, happened to sit down at the same activity as a young girl who was visiting Space Center Houston for the first time. Estella offered guidance to the girl as she worked through the challenge of the activity. This moment of unexpected and inter-generational connection is at the heart of how Space Center Houston unites individuals from diverse backgrounds with a shared passion for space exploration.

The Scientist in Residence Program and the Science Deck exemplify how we foster scientific curiosity in all our guests. Our unique partnerships with companies like Barrios Technology help us craft unique opportunities that bring out the scientist inside each visitor, inspiring a lifelong passion for exploration and discovery. These are opportunities that can only be found at Space Center Houston.

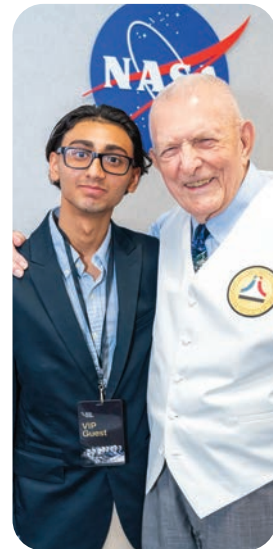


Donor Spotlight: Kirk Nass

Ever since a mind-blowing first visit to Space Center Houston in 2016, Kirk Nass has been an active donor to Space Center Houston's Annual Fund, which supports the Gene Kranz Space Center U[®] Scholarship and other educational programs. "I think Space U is phenomenal," he says. "A young adult's mind is like a sponge, and it's important for them to absorb all the information they can at that age. I give to Space Center Houston because I want students today to have the same opportunities I did."



Learn More



For the Future

Gene Kranz's impact on space exploration goes far beyond the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions he once directed. Now in his 90's, Gene continues to give inspiring talks at Space Center Houston about the lessons and impact of human spaceflight.

As the premier destination for space science learning, Space Center Houston uses spaceflight to ignite students' passion for STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. To celebrate Gene Kranz's commitment to nurturing and inspiring excellence, in 2018 Space Center Houston established the Gene Kranz Space Center U[®] Scholarship Fund.

The scholarship provides financial assistance to help under-resourced students learn about STEM careers through Space Center U[®] an immersive program that engages students in hands-on problem solving tied to space-related situations. Gene Kranz directed some of NASA's most notable missions—including the Apollo 11 Moon landing and the safe return of the Apollo 13 astronauts—and his legacy embodies the spirit of perseverance and innovation that the scholarship fosters in its recipients.

Space Center U[®] is just one of several unique educational programs, such as Explorer Camps and Stars & STEM, that provide memorable experiences to inspire students to explore, question, and innovate for the future.

These programs also address critical skill gaps in our future workforce. In the Houston area, only 31% of public and charter school students meet 8th grade-level expectations for math proficiency, and 78% of high school graduates fall short of benchmark readiness for college courses in STEM. With a clear and growing demand for STEM professionals, Space Center Houston supports and prepares students with educational programming that leverages our natural fascination with space and spaceflight.

The Gene Kranz Space Center U Scholarship, along with other educational programs supported by our Annual Fund, is a beacon of hope for inspiring students and addressing the skill gap in STEM fields. By supporting these initiatives, you help ensure that curiosity, passion and skill will live on in the next generation of leaders who follow in the footsteps of heroes like Gene Kranz.

Learn More



Discovering a Legacy

Stephen P. Huzar's involvement with Space Center Houston began with a family legacy at NASA Johnson Space Center (NASA-JSC). His father, Steve Huzar, was an engineer working on lunar trajectories and acoustic studies on the Apollo 11 Lunar Module. Unfortunately, he passed away when his son was very young.

After his mother, Patricia Lynn Tamborello, passed away as well, Stephen began to research his father's time at NASA. He found an incredible trove of material and colleagues of his father's like Estella and Pete Gillette, and Julie Kramer-White, a present-day leader at NASA-JSC. With help from them and the larger NASA Alumni League – JSC Chapter, Stephen learned about the "NASA Family," whose close ties and camaraderie led him to become part of the family of volunteers at Space Center Houston.

A CPA by profession, Stephen can often be found volunteering on weekends in Space Center Houston's Starship Gallery or by the Saturn V at Rocket Park, engaging visitors with stories about the NASA innovations his father helped pioneer.

His new ties to Space Center Houston inspired Stephen to leave a legacy gift to honor his father and ensure that space history would be preserved. In his will, Stephen has left a portion of his estate to a charitable remainder unitrust that will support his family members until their passing and leave the remainder to his named charities—including Space Center Houston, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

His gift will help Space Center Houston immerse visitors in space exploration through exhibits and archival information from other members of the "NASA family." "I was stunned to find them," he says. "They brought my dad's role to life in vivid colors. Preserving the history of NASA-JSC is vitally important to Houston, and to me."

Stephen encourages others to come explore their NASA family history and leave a gift that helps preserve and chronicle the history of human spaceflight. To learn more about leaving your legacy, please contact Amelia Kleiman, Director of Major Gifts at giving@spacecenter.org or by phone at 281-244-2119.

"I get so much more out of my time at Space Center Houston than I feel I have to give, especially when I see a guest's face light up."

In January 2024, Stephen Huzar was awarded Space Center Houston's Exceptional Volunteer Award, a tribute to his can-do spirit and enthusiasm for engaging visitors.

Learn More





Preserve the Past, Support the Future

Space Center Houston not only celebrates the legacy of America's spaceflight program but preserves and conserves its physical artifacts to ensure that future generations can learn from and be inspired by our accomplishments in space. More than 400 space artifacts and exhibits currently tell the story of human spaceflight: from the first phases that established NASA to the current plans to return to the Moon and venture to Mars and beyond.

Our conservation program is led by Paul Spana, Director of Collections and Curator, and Carmina Mortillaro, Collection Manager. Along with outside specialists, this team cares for our historical pieces according to conservation and authentication standards befitting our status as a Smithsonian affiliate.

Such authentication standards were recently applied to one of our most important artifacts: the "Moonshot" Lectern, from which President John F. Kennedy challenged America to go to the Moon on September 12, 1962, at Rice University Stadium.

Presidents typically travel with their own lecterns, leading one historian to recently challenge this lectern's authenticity. Further, in comparing our lectern to historic photographs of the event,

the historian noted the absence of a distinctive black line saw-cut. Space Center Houston began a thorough investigation into the lectern's origins, alongside a comprehensive restoration and conservation treatment of the long-displayed artifact.

Along with a local decorative arts conservation expert, and officials from both the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Rice University, the lectern was carefully disassembled over six months, which revealed a mechanism that could adjust its height. Though the mechanism was broken, the team was able to raise the lectern to discover the black line saw-cut. Additionally removing layers of varnish and thinned paint, the original wood grain pattern was visible and distinctive, clearly matching the many images of the well-documented event.

Fully restored and authenticated, the lectern was put back on display on September 12, 2023, the 61st anniversary of the famous speech. Says Space Center Houston President and CEO, William T. Harris, "This lectern is a powerful symbol of human achievement and aspiration. Its restoration and return to public display will allow us to continue educating and inspiring visitors for generations to come."



More Discoveries

The JFK lectern's adjustable height is far from the first surprise found in our artifacts. When the team began assessing the condition of our Skylab 1-G Trainer, they found many cabinets and storage lockers still contained items like what would have been used on Skylab in space: medical equipment, water filters, food storage containers and detailed checklists. A testament to the educational opportunities of space, conservators were especially delighted to find parts of three student projects leftover from NASA's invitation to high school students to design experiments for testing on Skylab.

Visiting conservators helped to inventory these artifacts and made recommendations for long-term care and conservation. This degree of assessment is now a baseline for regular condition checks and conservation protocols for all artifacts at Space Center Houston.

As stewards of these historic objects, it is our responsibility to monitor how they age and perform maintenance to preserve them for future generations. Plans are being made to cultivate a new generation of conservators by bringing in preservation students to help document and evaluate Space Center Houston's collection.

By preserving the past, you can be a part of the future. Support our conservation efforts by contacting Amelia Kleiman, Director of Major Gifts, at akleiman@spacecenter.org or 281-244-2119.

Learn More



Empowering Houston's Workforce

Houston's thriving industries have always relied on its talented, entrepreneurial workforce. But as the world advances, specialized skills in STEM subjects are needed to support the unique economic opportunities in our region—especially those in the rapidly-expanding space economy.

To counteract declining enrollment in workforce development programs across Texas, Space Center Houston is harnessing its public influence and deep connections with NASA, aerospace companies, and research institutions to prepare the emerging workforce for incredible opportunities in STEM careers.

In 2022, Space Center Houston partnered with Microsoft to launch [Accelerate Space](#), a program to prepare individuals at every career stage for employment in the Houston aerospace industry. These sessions combine professional skills like project management with mental and social strengths such as embracing uncertainty, taking calculated risks, and mastering leadership dynamics.

Recent graduate Kaulen Applin credits his time in the Accelerate Space program for helping him land a dream job at Boeing, where he handles environmental controls and life support systems for the International Space Station. Though being “on console” at NASA's Mission Control can be nerve-wracking, he recalls learning the skills that gave him the confidence to thrive in the hot seat: “You learn how to be in the moment and focus. Accelerate Space gave me the opportunity to develop that confidence. [It] taught me that if you lock in and you trust yourself, you can do anything.”

Your support will help expand the Accelerate Space program to recent high school graduates, veterans, and individuals with disabilities. You can help upskill Houston's future—join Space Center Houston's Innovation Circle or contact us for more information.

Learn More



“I'm proud of myself for getting here, and for the people who helped me get here.”

—Accelerate Space graduate Kaulen Applin, now with ISS Environmental Control & Life Support Systems at Boeing

Honor Roll of Donors

The listing below recognizes total giving to Space Center Houston in 2023 and includes all donor gifts in addition to those who were part of recommending such gifts.

Our special thanks to the following donors who were specially recognized by the Innovation Circle.

Flight \$25,000+	Dhaval Jadav	Peggy Kostial	
Ascent \$10,000-\$24,999	Amanda and Jacob Avery Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg Fund Susie and Pat Cunningham	Jeanne and Richard Filip Gwen Griffin and Al Saylor Nancy and Anna Josephs	Bud and Maryjane Scherr
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\$1,000-\$1,499	Mike Bloomfield Betsy and Fred Griffin Mike Hawes	Steven Miller Kyle and Michael Nelson Brian Rishikof	John Senn Kirk Shireman

Special thanks to the following individuals who have already gifted or have made provisions for a planned legacy gift to Space Center Houston

Philip T. Pegues Irrevocable Trust	David Cisco	Stephen Huzar	Sandy Wilder
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The following individuals were recognized for their support as Patron members in the Discovery Circle

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A special thanks for support from the following organizations

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\$10,000-\$24,999	Barrios Technology Collins Aerospace	Parallax Advanced Research Strake Foundation
\$5,000-\$9,999	Aegis Aerospace Cambio	NASA Alumni League JSC Powell Foundation
\$1,500 - \$4,999	alliantgroup	Amegy Bank Tranquility Lodge #2000

Matching Gift Organizations

Anonymous Boeing ExxonMobil Foundation	LMEPAC Marathon Petroleum Marsh & McLennan Companies	Microsoft Phillips 66 Shell HERO Program	Texas Instruments Foundation
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Our thanks also to the following organizations who give at our donors' request

Greater Houston Community Foundation National Christian Foundation	National Philanthropic Trust Silicon Valley Community Foundation
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Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of these lists. Please bring any errors or omissions to our attention at giving@spacecenter.org or please call us at 281.244.2126.

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Unlock Limitless Potential

There is a vital role you can play in advancing space exploration!

With your support and participation, Space Center Houston is able to provide impactful and revealing experiences to nearly 300,000 students and educators each year.

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Make a Gift



Volunteer

