



## ***NASA/MSFC Retirees Association***

---

NASA/MSFC Retiree Association P.O. Box 4492, Huntsville, Alabama 35815

### **NOVEMBER 2025 ISSUE**



### ***QUARTERLY MRA LUNCHEON***

*Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025 \*The Ledges*

*Social & Registration 11 - 11:45; Lunch. 11:45 - 12:15; Business & Speaker 12:15 - 1:00 p.m.*

*Menu:*

*Oven Baked Ham, Sweet Potato Casserole, Southern Green Beans, Dinner Rolls, Coffee & Tea.*

*Dessert: Pecan Pie with Whipped Cream*

*Cost: \$35.00 per person*

Please RSVP to Bennie Jacks no later than **Noon, Dec.4, 2025**, at [benniejacks@att.net](mailto:benniejacks@att.net), or cell phone: 256.603.0894. A 72-hour cancellation notice is required by The Ledges. No shows are expected to pay for meals.

**\*PLEASE NOTE THAT WE RETURN TO THE LEDGES FOR THIS LUNCHEON.**

## **PROGRAM:**

At this luncheon, a speaker is not scheduled and attendees are encouraged to enjoy fellowship among members.

## **2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES**

At this time of year, we begin collecting dues for 2026. As you recall, dues increased to \$50 in 2024. Dues may be paid by mailing a check, made payable to MSFC Retirees Association to: MSFC Retirees Association, P. O. Box 4492, Huntsville, AL 35815, or by paying at the next luncheon on December 9, 2025, at The Ledges.

For the convenience of our members, we have added a feature to the [www.marshallretirees.org](http://www.marshallretirees.org) website, whereby you can pay membership dues and meals at the luncheons, on-line. If on a phone, click on the 3 bars at the right-hand top of the screen and select MAKE A PAYMENT. If you are on a computer, select MAKE A PAYMENT from the top menu. We will have a list of those who have paid on line, but will continue to set up a table at the luncheons for payment of meals and annual membership dues for those of you who prefer the cash or check methods of paying. If you have issues with online service, please contact Gray Settle for assistance, [gsettle@gmail.com](mailto:gsettle@gmail.com), 256.682.0334.

Membership in the Association is open to **former MSFC and other NASA Center civil service employees**. New retirees are automatically offered a free membership for the remainder of the year in which they retire.

If your mailing address or e-mail address change, please remember to let Mary Spaulding know by e-mailing her at [md\\_spaulding@comcast.net](mailto:md_spaulding@comcast.net) or calling 256-682-0441 so we can keep our records up to date.

## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS (Since Last Newsletter)**

**Rodney Grubbs  
Karen Lawler  
Terry Ware**

**Judy Balance  
Angelia Walker**

**Leigh Gordon  
Ed Miller**

## *Message from the President:*

It is hard to believe that another year has come and gone. MRA has had a great year, I want to thank Bobby Watkins and his team for all the great speakers that his team provided.

This year has seen over 491 retirements from MSFC. If you know any of them, tell them about MRA and invite them to join and to get involved.

This year we celebrated MSFC's 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and I really appreciate all of the support MRA gave to the celebration at the Orion.

We also saw the completion of the Space Explorers Wall of Honor after seven years of planning, fund raising and construction. Rick and his team have given MSFC and the Space and Rocket Center a tremendous gift that will mean much to a lot of families in Huntsville and throughout NASA.

I also wanted to say congratulations to Rick for receiving the Jack Lee Community Service Award at this year's Von Braun Memorial Dinner. This award is named in honor of Jack Lee and represents individuals who have given of their time and energy to support the space community and the Huntsville community.

I want to wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. In closing, it is hard to believe that three years has gone by so quickly. It has been my honor to be President of the MRA these last three years. I want to thank each of you for all your support. I could not have done it without you.

At the December Luncheon we will present your new officers. They are a great group that you will be proud of, and I hope you will give them the same great support you have given me.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Ledges for lunch on December 9<sup>th</sup>, Remember the December meeting is just for fellowship so there will be no speaker. The doors will open at 11:00 am.

*Steve Cash*

## **FIRST ANNUAL SPACE EXPLORERS' CELEBRATION**

2025 has been a year of excitement for MRA. The Wall of Honor was dedicated on April 17, 2025. On October 1, 2025, we continued the celebration with the first annual Space Explorers' Celebration at the USSRC with the addition of names to the Wall, as well as the first Space Explorers' Dinner. The City of Huntsville and Madison County Commission have proclaimed October as Space Exploration Month and we plan to continue with annual events.

Lessons were learned in organizing this first event and special thanks goes to Gray Settle for his exemplary efforts in redesigning the MRA website so that we could sell tickets for the October 1st dinner, a first for MRA. We were honored to have Dr. Margrit von Braun, daughter of Dr. von Braun, as the guest speaker, who shared wonderful stories of the von Braun family growing up in Huntsville. WAFF anchor Liz Hurley served as master of ceremonies.



**Dr. Margrit von Braun, Dr. Rick Chappell and Liz Hurley**

## PHOTOS FROM OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup> CELEBRATION



Pete Allen, Bennie Jacks, Jan and Jim Zielinski

Dr. Margrit von Braun & Caroline Wang (local artist and MRA member). Margrit is wearing her Mother's (Maria von Braun) favorite jacket in her honor.

## OPM IMPORTANT NUMBERS AND ON-LINE CONTACTS:

**Taxes:** Annuitant Express, change in tax withholding (1-800-409-6738)

**Federal Long-Term Care:** 1-800-582-3337; [www.LTCFEDS.COM](http://www.LTCFEDS.COM)

**Thrift Savings Plan:** 1-877-968-3778; [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov)

**Social Security:** 1-800-772-1213; [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

**Report Death of Employee/Spouse:** 1-888-767-6738; [retire@opm.gov](mailto:retire@opm.gov)

**Point of Contact for MSFC Retirees:** Debbie Allen:

256.544.7536; [Deborah.a.allen@nasa.gov](mailto:Deborah.a.allen@nasa.gov); [allenda0927@gmail.com](mailto:allenda0927@gmail.com)

## **WERNHER VON BRAUN MEMORIAL DINNER**

The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Wernher von Braun Memorial Dinner was held on October 28, 2025 at the Von Braun Center to celebrate the achievements in space exploration and to honor the next generation of trailblazers shaping the future of space exploration. Commonly referred to as “The Space Prom,” over 1,200 individuals from government, contractor and community gather for this event.

One of the awards given is the Jack Lee Service Award. This award was established in 2019 in memory of Jack Lee, the 6<sup>th</sup> Center Director for his dedication to the space program both at Marshall and in the community. Jack passed away from pancreatic cancer. This year’s recipient is Dr. Rick Chappell. He has served in a number of leadership roles in his career at Marshall, including Chief Scientist. Throughout his career, he has been an active communicator for the space program from kindergartens to senior adults. He served as President of MRA and took on the role of building a Wall of Honor to recognize MSFC space explorers both civil service and industry. Congratulations to Dr. Rick Chappell!



**L-R: Jerry Cook, Rick Chappell, and Steve Hanna**

# PHOTO GALLERY FROM VON BRAUN DINNER



**Steve Cash, President and Maggie Powell,  
CEO of the National Space Club-  
Huntsville**



**Parker and Debbie Counts**



**Debbie and Mark King**



**Rick and Brenda Chappell, Lisa and  
Chris Chappell**

## PHOTOS FROM VON BRAUN DINNER



**Iris von Braun, daughter of Dr. von Braun and Rick Chappell**



**Gray and Juletta Settle**



**Ron Paulus and Stephanie Winborn**



**Jean Lee and son Patrick**

## MRA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee presented the following slate of officers for the 2006-2028 term to the MRA Board on November 11, 2025:

President: Melissa McGrath      Vice President: Jim Turner

Secretary: Charles Finnegan      Treasurer: Mark King

Board Members:

Charles Scales (2<sup>nd</sup> three-year term)

Jean Payne (2<sup>nd</sup> three-year term)

The Board accepted the nominations and the slate will be presented to the membership and voted on at the December 9<sup>th</sup> luncheon. Thank you for agreeing to serve.

\*\*\*\*\*

## HUMAN RESOURCES/OFFICE OF HUMAN CAPITAL RETIREES LUNCHEON



The HR/OHC Retirees met on November 13, 2025 at Logan's Roadhouse.

**Front Row (L-R)** Greg Walker, Danny Hightower, Rachel Stewart, Karen Burton, Camille Velvet, Darthy Barnett, Delores Chambers, Phyllis Lones, Debbie Allen, Angelen Hochberger, Tom Essenmacher. **Back Row (L-R)** Jim Bramblett, Willie Love, Thom Holden, Mack Blackman, Charlie Holliman, Don Chafin. (Not pictured: Carolyn Lundy)

# MRA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

As we approach this time of year, it is the time to look at “end of year” donations to help with tax deductions and the RMD (Required Minimum Distribution) requirements from your IRA’s.

As we outlined in the August issue of the MRA newsletter, the MRA Board has voted to begin the process of raising funds to endow a scholarship at Alabama A&M University. 20% of the funds needed has been raised. You are encouraged to support this endowment. You may donate by two methods:

1. **Scan the QR Code:** the code will take you directly to the NASA MSFC Retirees Association Endowment Fund form on Qgiv. Simply, select your giving amount and follow the prompts.



2. **By Check/Money Order:** Make payable to AAMU Foundation – *note NASA MSFC Retirees Association Endowment Fund* in the memo section of your check (very important to make the designation to this fund, ensuring that it gets to the right account). Mail to:

AAMU Foundation  
Attn: Kim M. Davis  
P. O. Box 1057  
Normal, AL 35762

All donations are **100% tax deductible**. If you work for a corporation or private company, please check with your human resources department to inquire about the matching gift process, which could multiply to your gift.

# DOCENTS AT WORK



MRA docents were participants in the Alabama Science STEAMFest 2025, held on the campus of UAH on October 25, 2025. Our scientists and engineers were there to encourage students to chart their career and educational paths in science and math fields. Pictured: Dr. Richard Hoover, Heidi Collier, Bennie Jacks, Ron Paulus, Willie Weaver and Jack Stokes



## HUNTSVILLE CITY COUNCIL RECOGNIZES ED BUCKBEE ON HIS 89<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY



City Councilman David Little introduced a resolution honoring Ed Buckbee, a legend in space education and exploration, at the City Council meeting on October 23, 2025.

He was the founding director of the USSRC and the creator of Space Camp and Aviation Challenge. He worked alongside astronauts from the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo programs and authored and published several books documenting the history of the space program.

Ed also is a longtime member of MRA and has served in a number of leadership roles including President of MRA 1999-2002. Happy 89<sup>th</sup> Birthday Ed and congratulations on this special recognition.



## OBITUARIES

- Bauer**, Larry Alan, 74, of Huntsville, died August 27, 2025.
- Braam**, Frederick William, 90, of Huntsville, died August 19, 2025.
- Brewer**, Patricia Byard, 85, of Huntsville, died October 29, 2025.
- Brothers**, Bobby Gene, 85, of Decatur, died October 23, 2025.
- Corum**, Clarence Clifford, Jr., 100 of Huntsville, died August 8, 2025.
- Cothran**, Ernestine King, 85, of Huntsville, died October 7, 2025.
- Dickson**, William “Bill”, Sr., 101, of Huntsville, died October 12, 2025.
- Elsner**, Ronald Fred, 77, of Delaware, MD, died September 15, 2025.
- Gober**, Esther Smith, 105, of Huntsville, died July 10, 2025.
- Keyes**, Patrick Francis “Pat”, 98, of Huntsville, died September 5, 2025.
- Odom**, James Burton, 91, of Decatur, died September 7, 2025.
- Perry**, Guy Douglas, 92, of Dadeville, AL, died September 9, 2025.
- Sanford**, James Edward, 93, of Huntsville, died November 5, 2025.
- Six**, Norman Frank, 90, of Huntsville, died November 15, 2025.
- Swann**, Linda Calline Reitzel, 87, of Huntsville, died October 20, 2025.
- Thomas**, Glynda Marie Smith, 81, of Harvest, died October 3, 2025.
- Thomas**, Truman Byron, 86, of Madison, died September 11, 2025.
- Wilbanks**, James Aaron, 101, of Athens, died August 29, 2025.
- Yarbrough**, Leonard Sherwood, 81, of Blountsville, died August 2, 2025.