GEORGE C. Marshall SPACE FLIGHT CENTER

From Rockets to Space Exploration

NASA/MSFC Retirees Association

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

**NOVEMBER 2026 ISSUE**

# QUARTERLY MRA LUNCHEON

*Tuesday, December 8, 2026 The Ledges*

*Social & Registration 11 – 11:45 a.m.;*
*Lunch. 11:45 am–12:15 pm Program Time 12:15 – 1:00 pm*

***Menu:***
*Roasted Turkey Breast with Gravy, Southern Cornbread Dressing, Sweet Potato Casserole, Dinner Rolls, Coffee & Tea. Dessert: Carrot Cake*
*Costs: $35.00*

Please RSVP to Bennie Jacks no later than **Noon, December 3, 2026** at benniejacks@att.net, or cell phone: 256.603.0894.

Help us avoid the long line in the entryway by purchasing your lunch ticket in advance here: https://www.marshallretirees.org/product/quarterly-luncheon-ticket/.

A 72-hour cancellation notice is required by The Ledges.
No shows are expected to pay for meals to MRA.

**PROGRAM: No speaker planned.** The December luncheon has traditionally been left open for fellowship and some storytelling.

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Warm greetings to MRA members.

What a month we have had!

October is designated Space Explorers month in Huntsville and Madison County, and we started the month off with two days of events featuring former NASA Administrator General (Ret.) Charles Bolden, along with the Space Shuttle mission 45 crew. Their visit was capped off by the unforgettable 2nd annual Space Explorers Celebration at the Wall of Honor and in Saturn V Hall at the US Space and Rocket Center. Our great thanks to past MRA President Rick Chappell and the USSRC Education Foundation for their hard work in planning such a wonderful event.

In mid-month, we learned that our own former MRA President Steve Cash had been selected as the new Marshall Center Director. Congratulations Steve! MRA looks forward to working with you in coming months.

MRA again supported the large STEAMFest event on October 24 at the Boys and Girls Club of North Alabama.

The month came to a gala ending with the 38th Annual von Braun Dinner, where the MRA always sponsors several tables. Please enjoy the pictures from all these events in the following pages of our newsletter

We will end the year with our December Christmas luncheon, which, as usual, will not have a keynote speaker, but will instead allow ample time for fellowship and this year, we will seed the fellowship time with some story-telling. Please come prepared to share a story or two of your own, or twist the arm of a fellow MRA member to tell one of their favorite NASA stories.

Have a great fall everyone, and I look forward to seeing you on December 8th at The Ledges.

*Melissa McGrath*

# 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
Thrift Savings Plan: 1-877-968-3778; www.tsp.gov
Social Security: 1-800-772-1213; www.ssa.gov
Report Death of Employee/Spouse: 1-888-767-6738; retire@opm.gov. (Debbie Allen is no longer involved in these services at MSFC.)

# 2027 MEMBERSHIP DUES

As of September 1, dues collected will be applied to 2027. Dues are $50 and may be paid on line. Visit www.marshallretirees.org and select: Make a Payment. If you chose to pay by mail, send 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 8th at The Ledges.

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 retirement occurs after the first day of September, membership will be free for the remainder of the current year and for the entire upcoming year. Spouses of deceased MRA members may attain membership status with membership dues waived.

If your mailing address or e-mail address changes, please remember to let Mary Spaulding know by e-mailing her at **md_spaulding@comcast.net** or calling 256-682-0441, so we can keep our records up to date. Plans are also underway to update the MRA Membership Handbook, and we want to make sure your information is current.

Your membership is important to help fund scholarships to deserving students in the engineering field through local colleges and trade schools.

If you prefer to receive the email only newsletter and not the hard copy mailed to your home, please let the Newsletter Editor know at 256.508.4203.

# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS
# (Since last newsletter)

We are always excited to welcome new members to MRA and hope that you will become a part of our mission to continue to inspire our country to explore outer space.

**Robyn Brick**
**Mary Duncan**
**Eric Eberly**
**Todd Holloway**
**Denise Lewis**
**Shelia Nash-Stevenson**
**Tina Smith**
**William Taylor**
**Michael Wilson**

# MRA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

**Help Us Finish the Journey - Give Before December 31st.**

As the year draws to a close, MRA is closing in on a milestone. As you review your end-of-year giving for tax purposes, please consider contributing to the MRA endowed scholarship at Alabama A&M University. Thanks to those who have made contributions already, we have raised almost half of the needed $25,000 goal and now we need your help to cross the finish line.

Once fully funded, this scholarship will support a student every year, in perpetuity. It will be a lasting legacy that extends far beyond any single semester or graduate.

**Your gift now makes the difference.** Every contribution, large or small, moves us closer to the day this scholarship is fully funded and a student's future is changed. **Please consider making your gift before December 31st** and help us end the year with the goal in sight.

You may donate by three 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. **Qgiv: give online by clicking the following link:** NASAMSFCRetAssocEndowment

The link will take you directly to the NASA MSFC Retirees Association Endowment Fund. Follow the prompts to continue processing your donation.

3. **By Check/Money Order:** Make payable to AAMU Foundation – *note NASA MSFC Retirees Association Endowment Fund* in the memo section. 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.

# NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The following MRA members were selected by the MRA Board at its March 2026 meeting to become Board Members beginning January 1, 2027 for three-year terms:

## Pete Allen

Pete Allen began his career with NASA working for Teledyne Brown Engineering as a Pressurants and Propellants support contractor. In March, 1987, he transitioned to civil service in the Facilities Office as a pressure systems engineer. Pete spent a great portion of his career in the Facilities Office before moving through the Engineering Directorate, the Ares Program Office, and the Safety and Mission Assurance (S&MA) Directorate. He retired in 2020 as Deputy Director of S&MA. Pete has two adult children. He enjoys traveling and good times with family and friends. Pete is also a musician with the Madison City Community Orchestra and a local band, playing the base guitar and electric guitar, respectively.

## Tia Ferguson

Tia Ferguson, originally from Natchez, MS, began her NASA career at KSC. At KSC, Tia worked Spacelab experiment integration. After 5 years there, she transferred to MSFC. She worked many programs and projects before becoming the Director of the Space Systems Department in the Engineering Directorate. After 35 years of service, Tia retired in the director position in December 2025. She and her husband of 30 years, enjoy traveling to visit their two children, canoeing, hiking, fishing, and sailing. In retirement, Tia remains engaged as a volunteer with Tulane University. She currently serves as Chair of the 2027 Tulane Engineering Forum, and member of both the Alumni Association Board and School of Science and Engineering Dean's Advisory Board.

## Regina Grant

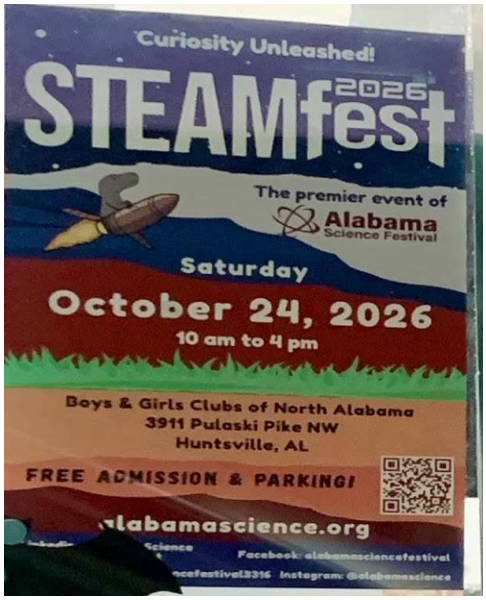
After over 40 years of service, Regina Grant retired from NASA in January of 2026. She began her career at NASA as a Secretarial Co-operative Education Student from Drake State Technical College. Regina continued her education to receive her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Faulkner University and worked several positions with increasing responsibilities. At her retirement, she was the Administrative Specialist for the Office of the Director and an elected member of the Marshall Exchange Council. Regina is the proud parent of two children. She is ecstatic to be a new grandmother in her retirement.

We look forward to successfully meeting the goals and objectives of the organization with the additional enthusiasm and commitment being brought by these additions to the board.

Rotating off the Board are **Jack Stokes, Annette Tingle and Lybrease Woodard**, who have dedicated their time and resources to the MRA mission and projects. Thank you for your dedication and service to MRA.

# MRA OUTREACH PROGRAM

Thank you to the dedicated MRA members and friends who supported this year's STEAMFEST held on Saturday, October 24 at the Boys and Girls Club of North Alabama: Jack Stokes, Richard Hoover, Ron Paulus, Heidi Collier, Dennis Foster and Melissa McGrath.









# ANNUAL SPACE EXPLORERS' CELEBRATION

The second Annual Space Explorers' Celebration held on October 2, 2026 is now a wrap! The 500+ Marshall retirees, friends, family and contractors enjoyed a packed evening starting with the addition of new Marshall names to the Wall of Honor and ending with a delightful dinner under the Saturn V in the Davidson Center. Local TV anchor and staunch space exploration supporter Liz Hurley, served as emcee for the evening.




To make the event even more exciting, Rick Chappell, Chair of the Planning Committee, saw the opportunity to include the 40th anniversary of the beginning of training of the STS-45 Crew, led by Commander Charlie in this Celebration.

Members of the Crew that were able to participate in the reunion, autograph sessions and the dinner were: Charlie Bolden, Commander, David and Patti Leestma, Mission Specialist, Byron Lichtenberg, Payload Specialist, the wife and daughter of Alternate Payload Specialist, Mike Lampton, who is deceased, and Rick Chappell and Brenda, Alternate Payload Specialist.

# ANNUAL SPACE EXPLORERS' CELEBRATION(Cont'd)



**Wall of Honor**

Charlie was the keynote speaker at the dinner and shared lots of personal insight into NASA's leadership and the national situation. He also touched on the family's role is supporting their space explorers. Charlie was recognized as being the best at bringing people together and building an environment of dedication and mutual respect. His personal story is captured in his book "Star Sailor" which shares the experiences that he had growing up and becoming a naval aviator and four-time shuttle mission Commander. Photo below is crew signing autographs.



Also, during this celebration, we had three Space writers, Mel Croft, John Youskouskas, and Valerie Neal for book signings sessions. They will also be writing about this event.
This event was done in partnership with the USSRC Education Foundation and proceeds will be used to support the maintenance of the Space Exploration Wall of Honor.

# 38th ANNUAL WERNHER VON BRAUN MEMORIAL DINNER

The 38th Annual Wernher von Braun Memorial Dinner was held on October 28, 2026 in the Saturn Ballroom at the VBC with 1,200 space explorers attending. Also, known as the Space Prom. MRA was well represented with several sponsored tables.



L to R: Katheryn Cataldo, Brenda & Rick Chappell, Kelly & Mike Splawn and Tammy & Mark Splawn. Front: Joann Splawn, widow of our beloved Jim Splawn



L to R: Bennie Jacks, Patrick Manning, Jean Lee, Jack and Becky Stokes

# 38th ANNUAL WERNHER VON BRAUN MEMORIAL DINNER



Parker and Debbie Counts



Jan Davis & Dick Richardson



Ron Paulus & Stephanie Wilborn



Steve & Pam Cash

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS AT UAH

Under an agreement between MRA and the UAH Special Collections Division of the Salmon Library, we are conducting interviews in an informal and comfortable setting on the campus of UAH, giving you an opportunity to share your stories and experiences during your career. Think about the potential for future members of your family being able to view and hear your voice as you share your stories. Don't miss this opportunity.

To check out these interviews, visit https://www.libarchstor.uah.edu to view other Marshall retirees' interviews.

If you would like more information or would be willing to participate, please contact Jack Stokes at 256-468-2743 or email: jackstokes1962@gmail.com, or Kathryn Cataldo at 256.797.0995, or email: katknews@gmail.com. Both are conducting interviews.



# OBITUARIES

Barfield, Thomas Kenneth "Ken", 87, of Huntsville, died November 1, 2026.
Beasley, John L. "Jack", Jr., 89, of Decatur, died September 2, 2026.
Breazeale, William Larry, 90, of Huntsville, died October 8, 2026.
Cavalaris, James "Gus", 93, of Miramar Beach, FL died October 4, 2026.
DeSanctis, Gerrldene N., 87, of Huntsville, died October 29, 2026.
Murray, Bettie Jane Allgood, 93, of Huntsville, died August 30, 2026.8
Parr, Richard A., 85, of Scottsboro, died October 14, 2026.
Paseur, Barbara Lucille Mullins, 93, of Huntsville, died September 20, 2026.
Webber, Dora Bailes, 92, of Houston, TX, died September 14, 2026.

**NOTE**: The obituaries listed here are collected from local funeral homes and information received from friends/colleagues. If you know of the passing of a Marshall retiree that lived outside of the local area, please notify the Newsletter Editor, Jean Lee, Bjeanlee@aol.com, or text 256.508.4203 for inclusion here.

NASA/MSFC Retiree Association
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## MRA OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS, PAST PRESIDENTS, AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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New Member Recruitment: TBD