

Raquel Yanez, of Weslaco, Participates in High School Aerospace Scholars at the Johnson Space Center

Fall 2006

By Raquel Yanez

This time last school year, I was trying to find programs to participate in for the summer. I had decided that I was not going to waste another summer. I found one that had many good reasons for me to apply; it was fully paid, it looked fun, and it was taking place at the Johnson Space Center. I was very happy to be admitted to the program. The only obligation I had was to complete an assignment every two weeks from January until May, and send in a final project.

The assignments came and went, and the week I was scheduled to go came around. I had assumed up until this point that it would be a fun experience, but nothing special.

I do not think I could have been more wrong. It was awesome. Everyone participated in one of four groups, and were asked to research an aspect of a space flight to Mars for a presentation on the final day. We were also given a budget for the rocket, egg lander, and land rover we had to build. We had to keep track of all expenses, and deal with everything from budget cuts to penalties for mistakes.

Now that may sound simple enough, but we were thrown right into the deep end. I will not spoil some of the surprises in case someone reading this attends the program, but everything was very fast paced. Some of the things we had to do seem humanly impossible in the time given. It is hard to imagine how you can make a rocket launch several hundred feet when all you have in front of you is a sheet of cardboard, a straw, and some other very odd pieces of trash, but it all came through in the end.

The mentors, teachers, and other staff at JSC were great as well. We got to see so many neat things going on, and we got to meet many brilliant people. It was hard to believe sometimes that I was being watched by someone who worked with astronauts while the astronauts were in orbit. At one point, I was standing right next to an astronaut. Not to mention the fact that during my week, I met so many great students! I met some of the greatest kids from all over the state. I still talk frequently to many of the friends that I made there.

This may sound like a big cliché, but it truly was a great experience - there is no reason to pass up this chance.

High school juniors interested in applying for the 2006-2007 program should visit: <http://aerospacescholars.jsc.nasa.gov>

Racquel Yanez is a senior at the Science Academy in Mercedes, Texas

reprinted by permission -- Constellation, USRA Employee Newsletter