

**SUNSET MESA SCHOOL
AND
SANDOVAL COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO
EMERGENCY SERVICE**

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
4PM MDT May 9, 2007

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INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION SCHOOL CONTACT A SUCCESS

Albuquerque, New Mexico - Students at Albuquerque's Sunset Mesa School were fascinated as the voice of U.S. astronaut Suni Williams on-board the International Space Station was heard loud and clear over ham radio. Students at the school were then able to talk with Williams as the ISS flew over New Mexico. The radio contact between the school and the ISS is part of an educational project made possible by the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) project in cooperation with the Amateur Satellite Corporation, the American Radio Relay League,

NASA, and the ARISS international partners including Canada, Russia, the European Partners, and Japan. Members of the Sandoval County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (SCARES) provided the equipment and technical know-how to make the communications possible.

The SCARES amateur radio, "ham" station, using W5SCA as its call sign, began calling the ISS at 8:44 a.m. On the third call, as the ISS rose to about three degrees above the horizon, Williams answered. The students immediately started to ask their questions. Over the next eight and one-half minutes, Williams fielded fourteen questions from students. Unfortunately several students were unable to ask their questions when time ran out and the ISS disappeared behind Sandia Mountain. Williams was very friendly and informative. "She was wonderful," commented on of the parents in the audience.

Charlie Christmann, K5CEC, began working with Sunset Mesa in December of 2004 to make application to the ARISS project for the school contact. After a two-and-a-half year wait, the school was finally notified they had been accepted. It took another two months to get a firm time due to ISS orbits and astronaut work and sleep schedules. This was truly a one-shot, once-in-a-life-time event.

Laura Maricle, school coordinator, was ecstatic, "We are so grateful for everything that was done to make this

morning the huge success it was! All the adults - school staff and parents - were in awe of what the experience meant, and the students both in the participating class and in the audience were filled with curiosity and excitement."

Technical coordinator, Gary Bonebrake, W5BI, said about the students after the contact was complete, "I was overwhelmed with their response and the intelligence of their questions. It was obvious that they had done their homework."

Audio and video of the event will be available in a few days on the SCARES website at www.nmscares.org.

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List of questions from the students:

Sean - How does the transition from liftoff to weightlessness feel?

Samuel - Does the space station's orbit around the earth make you feel dizzy?

Jessie - Are you able to see space junk as you travel in your orbit around the earth? If so, how much and what kinds?

Michelle - Can you see any bodies of water on Earth that are smaller than oceans?

Elise - Are the Northern Lights visible from the space station?

McKenzie - Other than Earth, are any other planets visible to you from your current location? If so, which ones?

Colby - Since you are closer to the planets than when you are on Earth, have you seen anything interesting or weird on any of them?

Meagen - By observing planets while you are in space, can you predict how the relationships between planets might change in the future?

Phillip - Have you seen a solar eclipse while you were in space? How does a solar eclipse seen from space look different from one seen from Earth?

Matthew P. - What is the most interesting thing you have seen in space during your mission?

Robyn - How many of the planned laboratories are completed and what is their average size?

Amir - Do you receive special training for the experiments you are conducting, besides the training you have for being in space?

Claire - Is there anything in space that holds promise for curing diseases that we don't have cures for on Earth?

Sally - What scientific discoveries are being made during this mission?

Tyler - Has your current experiment on flames and metal alloys provided any improvements that might prove useful on Earth?

Nicholas - Have you ever wanted to quit being an astronaut? If so, why?

Matthew R. - Do humans age slower in space than on Earth?

Johnathan - What do you and the other astronauts do for fun while you are on your mission?

Cody - How do you get oxygen when you are inside the Space Station?



Expedition 15 Flight Engineer Suni Williams, KD5PLB, answers questions for students during an ARISS school contact from NA1SS. She's using the Kenwood D700 ARISS Phase 2 station aboard the ISS. [NASA Photo]



The current ISS Expedition 15 crew complement (L-R): Suni Williams, KD5PLB; Commander Fyodor Yurchikhin, RN3FI; and Dr Oleg Kotov. [NASA Photo]

Full resolution images are available in JPG format from k5cec@arrl.net or www.nasa.gov.

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For more information see the following websites:

Sunset Mesa School - www.sunset-mesa.com

SCARES - www.nmscares.org

ARISS - www.rac.ca/ariss/

ARRL - www.arrl.org

AMSAT - www.amsat.org

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