

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

News Release

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ALBUQUERQUE FIFTH GRADERS GET CHANCE TO QUIZ ASTRONAUTS

Albuquerque, New Mexico - On the morning of May 9th, a group of Albuquerque fifth-graders at Sunset Mesa Schools will have a chance to quiz an astronaut aboard the International Space Station via Ham Radio. Radio contact with the ISS is expected to begin at 8:39 a.m., when the space station is scheduled to rise above the horizon. Over the next nine to ten minutes, students will be able to ask their questions about life on the ISS. The opportunity is being made available through the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) program.

Sandoval County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (SCARES) will be operating the portable amateur radio satellite communications equipment from the school during the contact.

“Sunset Mesa and SCARES made application to the ARISS project more than two years ago. We feel very fortunate to finally get our chance to talk with the astronauts,” commented Sunset Mesa’s Laura Maricle. “This contact is a special once-in-a-life-time opportunity our students will remember for a long time.”

Michelle Clark, school principal, continued, “Our students have the opportunity to participate in a broad range of intellectual, artistic, and physical activities. This is just one more way we have of giving the students unique educational opportunities at Sunset Mesa.”

Less than three hundred school contacts have been made from the ISS world-wide since the start of the program in January 2001. This will be the third direct radio contact with the ISS from New Mexico.

“This project gives us the chance to expose a new generation to amateur radio and perhaps get some of them interested in science and engineering”, said Charlie Christmann, K5CEC, SCARES PIO. “It also gives our group a chance to practice important emergency communications skills by setting up and operating our equipment in the

field. Satellite communications is a challenge, but it could be vitally important during a real disaster.”

Vance Loen, WV5L, agreed, “This is one of the more difficult tasks we have tried in the field with portable equipment. But, we feel confident we could put this type of communications service in place anytime it is needed.”

ARISS offers an opportunity for students to experience the excitement of Amateur Radio by talking directly with crewmembers on-board the International Space Station. Teachers, parents and communities see, first hand, how Amateur Radio and crewmembers on ISS can energize youngsters' interest in science, technology, and learning. The ARISS project is a joint effort between the Amateur Satellite Corporation, the American Radio Relay League, NASA, and the ARISS international partners including Canada, Russia, the European Partners, and Japan. The program's mission is to foster amateur radio communications between the astronauts and cosmonauts who reside on the station. Many of the astronauts are eager to earn their amateur radio license before launch so that they can participate.



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.

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For more information see the following websites:

Sunset Mesa Schools - 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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