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Monterey Students Set to Receive Call from Orbiting Space Shuttle Astronauts -- Including Former Teacher

WASHINGTON -- Eighth grade students and children of the military community in California's Monterey Peninsula area will speak with astronauts orbiting 220 miles above Earth on Saturday, April 10.

The call with the students and space shuttle Discovery Commander Alan Poindexter, Pilot Jim Dutton, and Mission Specialist Dottie Metcalf-Lindenburger will take place at 7:36 a.m. PDT at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif.

Reporters interested in attending the event must contact Alan Richmond at 831-656-3649 by 3 p.m. on April 7.

The Naval Postgraduate School has educated 38 NASA astronauts, including Poindexter and former astronaut Dan Bursch, the school's National Reconnaissance Office Chair, who is leading the downlink event.

Discovery and its crew launched Monday, April 5, from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. During the 13-day mission to the International Space Station, the astronauts will deliver science experiments and supplies; take three spacewalks to switch out a gyroscope on the station's truss, or backbone; install a spare ammonia storage tank and return a used one; and retrieve a Japanese experiment from the station's exterior.

Metcalf-Lindenburger is one of three teachers selected to fly as shuttle mission specialists in the 2004 Educator Astronaut Class. She operates the shuttle's robotic arm. Without robotics, major accomplishments like building the station, repairing satellites in space and exploring other worlds would not be possible.

To introduce the students to the mission and prepare them for the downlink, the Naval Postgraduate School produced a video using NASA footage of Discovery and the STS-131 crew in training. Astronaut John Phillips and former astronaut Jim Newman, both professors at the school, will join Bursch to provide an overview of the mission. They will answer questions before and after the downlink about how to become an astronaut, pursue a career in space, and train for shuttle missions. Students from the Graduate School of Engineering and Applied Sciences will host a variety of space artifact displays for the student participants.

The Naval Postgraduate School is a leader in space systems education and active in space-related outreach and education in the local and regional community; it celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2010.

The event is part of a series with educational organizations in the U.S. and abroad to improve teaching and learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The in-orbit call is part of Teaching From Space, a NASA project that uses the unique environment of human spaceflight to promote learning opportunities and build partnerships with the kindergarten through 12th grade education community.

NASA Television will air video of the astronauts during the downlink. For NASA TV downlink, schedule and streaming video information, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov/ntv>

For information about NASA and robotics, including messages from Metcalf-Lindenburger for teachers and students, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov/education/robotics>

For information about NASA's education programs, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov/education>

For information about the space shuttle and its crew, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov/shuttle>

The Naval Postgraduate School's STS-131 video is available at:

<http://www.nps.edu/video/portal>

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