STELLARXPRESS
OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF STELLARXPLORERS

Happenings in this world and beyond…

NOVEMBER 2025

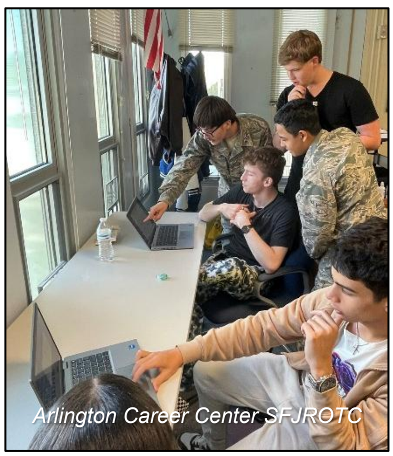
NATIONAL SPACE DESIGN COMPETITION

First scored round in the books for 2025-2026 Competition season

Hahnville High School AFJROTC

The StellarXplorers season is off to a strong start with the completion of Practice Round 1 and Qualification Round 1. Teams around the globe demonstrated impressive skill and creativity as they tackled challenging orbit planning scenarios. These early rounds gave participants the chance to refine their strategies and showcase their teamwork. Many innovative solutions were submitted, and we look forward to seeing even more inventive and precise solutions in the upcoming rounds

Dupo Jr-Sr High School AFJROTC



Arlington Career Center SFJROTC

We congratulate all teams on their hard work and success so far. The energy and enthusiasm from our teams is going to make this year's StellarXplorers season a fun one to be part of!

Teams will shift into Satellite Design starting with Practice Round 2 scheduled for Nov 13-16.

Good luck to all those competing!

STELLARCAMPS

The StellarCamps curriculum is available yearround for purchase (one-time purchase for $99). Whether you're looking to spark interest in aerospace or build foundational skills for competition success, StellarCamps provide the perfect launchpad. Depending on your needs, the StellarCamp curriculum can be used in a group setting or as a self-paced course for individuals.

Learn more or get started today at www.stellarxplorers.org/stellarcamps.

Photo provided by the Basic Research Innovation Collaboration Center (BRICC)

SPONSOR NEWS

Orion Meets SLS: L3Harris Technology Ready to go to the Moon

The Orion spacecraft for NASA's Artemis II mission is stacked on the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket in High Bay 3 of the Vehicle Assembly Building at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

NASA's Artemis II mission is a step closer to launch as the Orion spacecraft, equipped with critical L3Harris technologies for propulsion, communication and life support, is stacked atop the Space Launch System rocket.

The Orion spacecraft is designed to take crews to deep space destinations and return them safely to Earth. Four astronauts – Commander Reid Wiseman, Pilot Victor Glover and Mission Specialists Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen – will call Orion home during their 10-day Artemis II mission, which will send them on a journey around the moon and back.

L3Harris plays a critical role in Orion's capabilities, providing 22 engines and motors that enable precise maneuvers in space; the audio system that connects astronauts to each other, mission control and the world; as well as composite overwrapped pressure vessels that support the operation of the spacecraft during its journey. These technologies are essential to Orion's ability to carry astronauts farther into space for longer periods of time.

"This is the first time since 1972 that we've assembled a rocket and spacecraft that will carry humans to the moon's vicinity," said Kristin Houston, President, Space Propulsion and Power Systems, Aerojet Rocketdyne, L3Harris. "This is an exciting moment for the Artemis II mission, and the spacecraft's name 'Integrity' is fitting, as it embodies the trust, precision and resilience required to make this mission a success."

Read more about L3Harris' contributions to NASA's Artemis missions at www.l3harris.com/artemis-missions.

United Launch Alliance (ULA) prepares for Atlas V Via-Sat-3 Flight 2

ULA's Atlas V is launching the ViaSat-3 Flight 2 ultra-high-capacity broadband spacecraft for Viasat, a global technology company helping businesses, governments and communities transform their world through connectivity. Once in service, ViaSat-3 Flight 2 is expected to more than double the bandwidth capacity of Viasat's entire existing satellite fleet.

The launch window, originally set for Nov. 5 between 10:24 and 11:08 p.m. EST, was scrubbed. The launch will be reattempted on Thursday, Nov. 6 during a 44-minute window that opens at 10:16 p.m. ET.

This particular Atlas V 551 rocket, designated AV-100, stands 196 feet (59.7 meters) tall and will weigh 1.3 million pounds (587,000 kg) when fully fueled at liftoff. It will ascend from Florida's Space Coast and head easterly on 2.7 million pounds (12 megaNewtons) of thrust from its kerosene-fueled main engine and SRBs. Click here to read the pre-launch blog. Live launch updates and the launch broadcast can be viewed at www.ulalaunch.com/missions/next-launch/atlas-v-viasat-3-f2

STEM RESOURCES

Join the StellarXplorers Alumni Network

This is a private group for past and present StellarXplorers participants. You must be at least 16 years of age to join, according to LinkedIn account regulations. All requests to join will be reviewed by StellarXplorers staff to verify participation in the program.

To join, visit: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12721859/

SPACE NEWS

Curious About What's Happening Overhead?

Check out the Space.com Space Calendar to stay up to date with upcoming planned rocket launches and skywatching-worthy dates. And in case you missed it…

06 NOV 2025 | See stunning photos of November's full 'Beaver Moon' — the biggest supermoon of 2025

02 NOV 2025 | What's happening on the International Space Station while the government is shut down?

02 NOV 2025 | Meet Point Nemo, where the International Space Station will die in 2030

01 NOV 2025 | Blue Origin fires up powerful New Glenn rocket ahead of NASA Mars mission launch (video)

29 OCT 2025 | Venus loses its last active spacecraft, as Japan declares Akatsuki orbiter dead

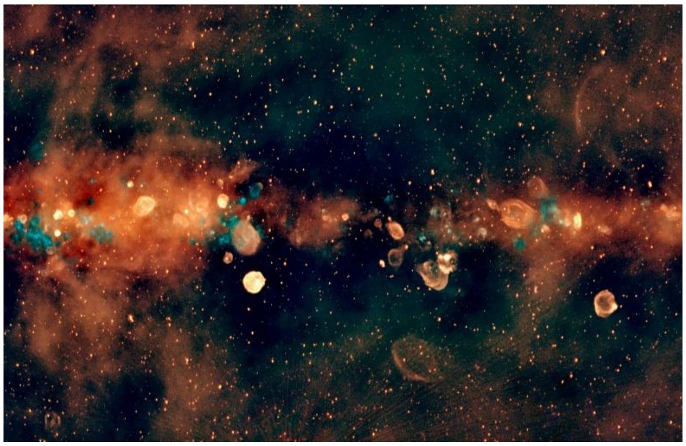
28 OCT 2025 | NASA's X-59 'quiet' supersonic jet makes historic 1st flight

28 OCT 2025 | 12-year-old discovers 2 possible new asteroids

18 OCT 2025 | Physicist and author Brian Greene to host 1st Global Space Awards in London

16 OCT 2025 | SpaceX's Super Heavy Starship booster hovers in mid-air before plunging into sea (video)

Photos from Space:



GLEAM/GLEAM-X view of the Milky Way galaxy

Astronomers have unveiled the largest low-frequency radio color image of the Milky Way ever created, offering a sprawling cosmic panorama that reveals supernova remnants, stellar nurseries, pulsars and the intricate glow of gas and dust weaving through our galaxy's heart.

Image credit: S. Mantovanini & the GLEAM-X team

James Webb Space Telescope spots the haunting Red Spider Nebula

The Redaftermath of a sun-like star that eventually reached the end of its life and poofed out into a cool red giant star. The lobes of the Red Spider Nebula are three light-years long each, inflated by gas from the central star shooting outward for thousands of years.

Image credit: ESA/Webb, NASA & CSA, J. H. Kastner (Rochester Institute of Technology)

JUST FOR FUN

“I hid a sandwich in my spacesuit.” *(Article by Hillary Brady, Smithsonian)*

Photo courtesy of NASA

The main objective of NASA’s Project Gemini was to learn how to send astronauts to the Moon, testing their ability to fly long-duration missions and to perfect rendezvous, docking, and spacewalking procedures. Not on the list of experiments? Seeing what happens to a corned beef sandwich in microgravity. NASA unknowingly tested this anyway, thanks to astronaut John Young.

Young—a Navy test pilot and an aeronautical engineering grad from the Georgia Institute of Technology—and Gus Grissom were assigned to the first crewed Gemini mission. Their 1965 flight was the first in the United States’ space program to carry two astronauts.

Grissom and Young had several experiments to conduct during their 4-hour journey; one of Young’s assignments was to test space food. As Gus Grissom described it to *Life Magazine* in 1965, the meals that they took along “came in plastic bags, and we had to insert a water gun into the bag and squirt liquid inside to reconstitute them.”

Photo courtesy of NASA

The (sanctioned) Gemini meal packages included a freeze-dried entree, vegetable, drink and dessert, protected with a 4-ply, laminated film coating. Young, it seemed, wasn’t interested in the freeze-dried option, so he brought something else on board. As he admitted to *Life*, “I hid a sandwich in my spacesuit.”

According to Young, his contraband corned-beef sandwich was thanks to astronaut Wally Schirra, who had it prepared at a restaurant in Cocoa Beach before Gemini 3 launched. Schirra was well known as a practical joker. Young said Grissom was “bored” with the official menus that they had practiced with in training, and packing a sandwich for the trip “seemed like a fun idea at the time.”

It was not, as it turned out, quite so fun. When the Gemini astronauts got hungry, Young pulled out the smuggled sandwich. In the transcripts of the Gemini 3 mission, Young tells Grissom, “Let's see how it tastes. Smells, doesn't it?” When Grissom took a bite, “crumbs of rye bread started floating all around the cabin,” he told *Life*. It’s possible for tiny crumbs like that to pose a big threat during spaceflight—they can fly off and get wedged in any of the many pieces of equipment that keep a spacecraft running. (That’s why they use tortillas instead of bread aboard the International Space Station.)

Young’s impromptu menu-change didn’t cause any harm, but it became a larger issue back on Earth, resulting in a House of Representatives Appropriations Committee meeting to discuss it. On the sandwich scandal, George Mueller, NASA’s associate administrator for manned spaceflight, said: "We have taken steps ... to prevent recurrence of corned beef sandwiches in future flights.”

Ultimately, the corned-beef chaos was a footnote to Young’s long and illustrious career at NASA: He was the first person to fly in space six times, the first person to circle the Moon alone, and the first Space Shuttle mission commander. He served as an astronaut for 42 years, longer than anyone else to date.

As for the infamous sandwich? That’s earned its place in history, too, a replica “preserved in resin,” to memorialize the historic moment at the Grissom Memorial Museum in Mitchell, Indiana.

Source: https://airandspace.si.edu/stories/editorial/how-astronaut-smuggled-sandwich-space

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We would love to share some stories about your team. Send them our way: info@stellarxplorers.org.

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