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RNASA donates \$26,340 to space education

RNASA Chairman Rodolfo Gonzalez, center, and Treasurer Geoff Atwater present a check for \$16,340 to Texas High School Aerospace Scholars Program Manager Jessica Cejka during dinner at Cullen's Upscale Grille.

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Proceeds from the Rotary Space Banquet are being donated to education this year, Rotary National Award for Space Achievement Chairman Rodolfo Gonzalez has announced.

"We celebrated our silver anniversary this year, and thanks to the generous support of our corporate sponsors. We're pleased to be able to donate proceeds of \$26,340 to support high school and college students to study science, technology and engineering," he said.

Breaking it down, he said \$16,340 will be donated to the Universities Space Research Association, which supports the Texas High School Aerospace Scholars Program that provides opportunities to students to participate in special summer programs hosted by the Johnson Space Center, where they work in teams to cooperatively design a human mission to Mars.

Program Manager Jessica Cejka noted that RNASA donations through the years have allowed more students to participate in the program, which is free to those who qualify. "About 9,100 Texas students have participated in the Scholar's program to day," she said, adding, "We are truly grateful for the generous support."

The other \$10,000 will go to the U.S. Air Force Academy Endowment in honor of this year's National Space Trophy winner, USAF Gen. (Ret) Kevin P. Chilton, former commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, and academy graduate and also a former astronaut.

Endowment CEO Gen. Stephen Lorenz said it will be used for engineering programs at the academy which provide cadets an opportunity to design, analyze, build, test, launch and operate small satellites to conduct Department of Defense space missions.

In his acceptance speech, Chilton noted that "Someday, in the future, another human being will stand on the moon. And they'll plant a flag. To me, it matters whether that flag is an American flag or not. Because in the future, when someone does that, the rest of the world is going to look at that country and say, 'I want to be like those guys.'"

"The human space flight program is not only an inspiration to our youth – it's an inspiration to the entire world. And, being a leader in that program is important for the United States of America, and my family."