



NEWS

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NASA Astronaut Koichi Wakata to speak at El Camino College Space Science Day 2007

Astronaut Koichi Wakata will visit El Camino College April 21 to participate in Space Science Day 2007.

The free daylong science event for youngsters is scheduled from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 21 at El Camino College's planetarium and science classrooms, 16007 Crenshaw Boulevard, near Torrance.

Sponsored by El Camino College and American Honda Motor Co., Inc., the event is coordinated by the El Camino College Astronaut Ellison Onizuka Memorial Committee. It is free and open to serious-minded science students in grades five through 12.

"What a great way to spend a Saturday at El Camino College," said President Thomas M. Fallo. "This event offers young people a direct look at science in an exciting environment. We hope that this experience might influence young people to pursue careers in science."

Astronaut Wakata will address the students, offering insights about his educational and career path as well as details about his work with the space program.

A native of Saitama, Japan, Wakata is a flight engineer for International Space Station Expedition 18 scheduled to begin in late 2008. Since December 2000, he has been a NASA robotics instructor astronaut, in addition to being in training for a long-duration expedition on the International Space Station. In July 2006, he served as the commander of the 10th NASA Extreme Environment Mission Operations (NEEMO) mission, a seven-day undersea expedition at the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's Aquarius habitat located off the coast of Florida.

His space flight experience includes work on the *Endeavour* in 1996 where Wakata flew as the first Japanese Mission Specialist on this nine-day mission during which the six-member crew retrieved the Space Flyer Unit (launched from Japan 10 months earlier), deployed and retrieved the OAST-Flyer, and conducted two spacewalks to demonstrate and evaluate techniques to be used in the assembly of the International Space Station.

Wakata received a Bachelor of Science degree in aeronautical engineering in 1987, a Master of Science degree in applied mechanics in 1989, and a Doctorate in aerospace engineering in 2004, all from Kyushu University.

After Wakata's presentation, students at Onizuka Space Science Day will join classroom presentations and demonstrations led by El Camino College professors, Science FEST students, and guests from JPL and other institutions.

Participants will join a variety of hands-on science activities and experiments, including the traditional Egg Drop Competition, where students attempt to build the perfect apparatus that will let an egg drop from a rooftop without breaking when it lands.

Reservations are required for the free science event. For more information, call 310-660-6791.

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