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KSC COUNTDOWN

First RCC panel installed on Discovery

NASA Direct! to host first educational outreach webcast

▲ Shuttle Update: Discovery processing milestones continue to be achieved in preparation for the Return to Flight mission. The No. 2 rudder speed brake actuator was sent back to the vendor to be refurbished and to have the gears placed into the proper orientation. It will be returned to KSC in about six weeks for re-installation on the vehicle. Following a successful fit check, the body flap was installed March 12. The first reinforced carbon-carbon (RCC) panel was installed on the left-hand leading edge of the wing (above). Discovery is now in a two-week power down period for orbiter electrical wiring inspections and high-potential voltage testing.

▲ NASA webcast brings students and scientists together: NASA's Launch Services Program and Macon County Middle School in Franklin, N.C., will participate in the first NASA Direct! educational webcast at 10 a.m. March 31. The webcast is designed to provide students of the school with the unique experience of learning about the space program directly from NASA engineers and scientists. Albert Sierra, NASA project manager at KSC, will answer questions presented by the students in a direct, interactive webcast between NASA Direct! and the school. Sierra was mission integration manager for the launch of the Mars Exploration Rover Spirit in the summer of 2003.

◆ **NASA 2004 Software of the Year Award nominations sought –** This prestigious award is designed to give recognition to developers of exceptional software created for or by, and owned by, NASA. Every NASA Center and Facility is cordially invited to participate in the competition. The award includes the NASA Software Medal, a certificate signed by the Administrator, and as much as $100,000. The NASA Inventions and Contributions Board (ICB) Web site, **http://icb.nasa.gov,** contains information about the last 10 competitions. Eligibility information for the award is on the Web at **http://icb.nasa.gov/swoyinfo.html**,which also describes the selection process. The deadline for nomination packages is April 9. All submissions must be submitted through the appropriate Administrative Offices to YA-C1/Carol Anne Dunn, 867-6381.

◆ **NASA Science –** The five brightest planets are gathering in the evening sky for a rare after-dark display. Every few years or so, something wonderful happens: all five planets seen by the naked-eye appear in the evening sky at the same time. You can walk outside after dinner, and without any kind of telescope, see Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter. Venus is so bright that it can be seen in broad daylight – if you know where and when to look. March 24 is a good time to try, because the crescent Moon and Venus will be side by side. During the day, try scanning around the Moon using a pair of binoculars. When you find Venus, it will seem to pop out of the blue – a pleasant surprise. Go to **http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2004/19mar_planets.htm** on the Web to read more about it.

◆ **Did You Know?** The application deadline for Federally Employed Women (FEW) scholarships (high school and/or college students) is March 27. Students must have a 3.0 GPA or higher to be considered. For additional information or an application, please contact Betty Valentine at 861-2016 or e-mail: *Elizabeth.Valentine-1@nasa.gov*.

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E-mail news to Anita Barrett at *Anita.Barrett-1@ksc.nasa.gov*. For questions or information, e-mail or call 321-867-2815
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