

Charles Bolden, NASA Administrator

National Capital Area Council, Boy Scouts of America

Citizen of the Year Award

McLean, Virginia

November 29, 2011

- Thank you. I accept this award on behalf of an incredibly dedicated NASA team, including the more than 180 NASA astronauts since 1959 who have been active in Scouting.
- My thanks to National Capital Area Council Scout Executive, Les Baron. Congratulations on your Centennial year celebration.
- I also want to thank Sam Haskell for his words of inspiration.
- I want to acknowledge Distinguished Eagle Scout and former Congressman from Indiana, the Honorable Ed Pease.

- Finally, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to the selection committee, especially the chair of the Boy Scouts of America STEM initiative and former NASA astronaut, Dr. Bernard Harris.
- My congratulations to all of tonight's awardees. I am honored to be in such good company.
- NASA and scouting have a long history. The leadership, teamwork, the skills, and positive role models that are a part of scouting help create motivated, high-achieving adults who may go on to become astronauts, scientists, and engineers.
- For years, NASA has recognized Boy Scouts earning the prestigious Eagle Scout and Girl Scouts earning the prestigious Gold Award.
- The Boy Scouts of America launched the Space Exploration merit badge in 1965 and has awarded more than 420,000 badges since then.

- And this year, we introduced a new Robotics merit badge to support the Boy Scouts of America's new STEM initiative.
- In a few years, today's scouts could be among the next generation of space explorers who will help us better understand our solar system while improving life here on earth.
- On Saturday, we launched a rover to Mars – aptly named “*Curiosity*” – as a precursor to sending humans to the Red planet by the 2030's. We fully expect that former Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts will be among the first humans to walk on the surface of Mars.
- That's not just wishful thinking. The fact is, more than two-thirds of all current and former astronauts have been involved in scouting.

- Of the 24 men to travel to the moon on the Apollo 8 and Apollo 10 through 17 missions, 20 were scouts, including the first two men to walk on the moon, Eagle Scout, Neil Armstrong and Tenderfoot, Buzz Aldrin – both of whom were honored on November 16th, along with John Glenn and Michael Collins, with the Congressional Gold Medal, the nation's highest civilian honor.
- I am proud of my own scouting experience, even though I have to admit I only made it to the rank of second class before leaving after the loss of our Scout Master.
- Like many young scouts, I came to view my scoutmaster as a teacher, mentor, and friend. He was a great example of the importance of adult volunteer leadership that is necessary for a successful scouting program.
- Finally, let me congratulate the National Capital Area Council for your participation in the Boy Scouts of America's new STEM initiative.

- As NASA Administrator, one of my greatest challenges and passions is to lead our NASA team in inspiring the next generation of Americans to once again become interested in STEM disciplines.
- NASA's partnerships with the Boy Scouts, schools, universities, and communities in every corner of this country is not just about keeping our own workforce pipeline fresh and flowing, it is also about ensuring that America will have the technological expertise needed to win the future in this 21st century global economy.
- There is a crisis in this country that stems from the gap between our growing need for scientists, engineers and other technically skilled workers, and our available supply. This crisis in education, if not resolved, will contribute to future declines in qualified employees to meet demands in critical careers that affect U.S. global competitiveness and the national economy.

- As President Obama has wisely noted, “The country that out-educates us today will out-compete us tomorrow.”
- That is why STEM is the foundation of NASA’s education initiatives. In the coming year, we will continue to capitalize on the excitement of NASA’s mission to inspire student and educator interest and proficiency in STEM disciplines.
- For example, this was the second year of our Summer of Innovation, an intensive STEM teaching and learning program targeted at middle school students and teachers.
- We are also continuing to partner with academic institutions, professional education associations, industry, and other government agencies to provide K-12 teachers and university faculty with NASA experiences that they can bring back to the classroom to spark their students’ interest and involvement.

- We are providing similar hands-on experiences to Boy Scouts and other students – offering them opportunities that blend NASA research and engineering with classroom study and mentoring.
- We plan to increase the use of NASA resources and expand the availability of opportunities to an even more diverse audience of educators and students, including women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. And we are broadening community college participation in NASA research and STEM workforce development.
- All of this means growth for our economy, prosperity for our country and jobs for our people.
- So, to all the young, would-be future astronauts out there, I say, take advantage of scouting's new STEM opportunities.
- Human spaceflight requires more than piloting skills; and our space program requires more than astronauts.

- We are going to need even more scientists, engineers, and technicians to help us take the next big leap into deep space exploration.
- NASA needs you. Your country needs you. And scouting is one of the best ways to prepare yourself to lead.
- Again, thank you for this honor.