

A Gift of Honor

Huntsville family donates two million dollars to complete Saturn V Center

HUNTSVILLE -- The new building that will eventually house Alabama's own Saturn V rocket vehicle at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center will be officially known as the Davidson Saturn V Center, thanks to a phenomenally generous gift of two million dollars from Dr. Julian Davidson and his wife Dorothy Davidson.

"This is an incredible gift the Davidsons have bestowed upon – not just the Space Center – but all of Huntsville today," said Larry Capps, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center's CEO. "It means a lot of things, but perhaps most important is knowing that many future generations of Americans will be able to pass through here and marvel at the behemoth Saturn V rocket that Alabamians designed and built, the vehicle that took men to the moon," he added.

It also means the Center has reached its goal of \$7.5 million for the restoration of the Saturn V rocket and construction of a permanent home for the vehicle, a project that began three years ago and included the solicitation of both public and private funds, and additional efforts such as coffee and brick sales and the creation of a new Alabama vanity car tag that depicts the Saturn V rocket with the motto, "First to the Moon."

As a member of the Saturn V Restoration Executive Committee that spearheaded the effort to restore and preserve Huntsville's Saturn V, Dorothy Davidson is quite familiar with the project and efforts to obtain its funding. She also serves on the Alabama Space Science Exhibit Committee that oversees the operation of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center.

The Davidson Saturn V Center will consist of a 68,200 square foot facility that will serve as the new front door for the U.S. Space & Rocket Center. Exhibits, ticket desk, a 350-seat auditorium, even a fully equipped kitchen to facilitate the many anticipated special events and conferences will be included in the new facility.

The Saturn V rocket will be moved to its new home the week of July 9. It's a four day project that culminates on Friday, July 13th with the Fourth Annual Saturn/Apollo Reunion, presented this year by Pratt & Whitney Rocketdyne. Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin will be the featured speaker.

A formal grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for the Davidson Saturn V Center, as well as the unveiling of special new exhibits planned for the new facility is scheduled for January 19, 2008.

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