



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

STAFFORD AIR & SPACE MUSEUM WELCOMES EXPANSION

Beginning in 1981 with a simple display case featuring a few donated personal items from the career of astronaut Lt. General Thomas P. Stafford, the Stafford Air & Space Museum is now about to expand again to become a 40,000 square foot educational center and museum that houses one of the United States' premier collections of space-flown artifacts and aeronautical exhibits.

The Stafford Air & Space Museum currently occupies 35,000 square feet of space, but that figure will increase with the completion of a new 5,000 square foot interactive educational discovery room to be constructed in 2008. The new Rose and Tom Luczo Educational Center will be dedicated to academic motivation and excellence through "hands-on" learning experiences that will incorporate the relationship between mathematics and science as they relate to successful flight and space travel. Rose and Tom Luczo are the parents of Stephen J. Luczo, Board Chairman of Seagate Technology, who is the major donor for this new addition.

The city of Weatherford, Oklahoma owns and operates the Stafford Air & Space Museum, and has asked General Stafford on several occasions to help expand the collection from that first simple display case. Initially a museum architect was hired, and two more rooms were added to the museum. General Stafford's Soviet counterpart in the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, cosmonaut General Alexi Leonov, the first man to walk in space, attended the opening of the Smithsonian-quality displays in the new museum addition in 1993.

Another major expansion occurred in 1999, when 12,000 square feet of space were added to house large artifacts that were loaned to the city of Weatherford for display in the collection. A private collection of space and aeronautical artifacts, including full-scale replicas, was purchased in 2001, triggering the construction of yet another large display area.

A new gift shop, rest rooms, foyer area and the 150 person capacity and multi-function Apollo Room were constructed in 2003. The Hubble Gallery Classroom and exhibit area, including space-flown artifacts related to the Hubble Space Telescope, the Gemini missions, and the space shuttle program was added in 2006, and encompasses 8,700 square feet of space. An actual Titan II rocket launch vehicle displayed horizontally and indoors visually dominates this area of the museum.

The museum now features major items on loan from NASA, the National Museum of the United States Air Force, and the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. Major corporations, individuals and General Stafford have also donated and loaned significant exhibit items.

The Stafford Air & Space Museum has cooperative agreements in place with area public schools and Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) which allows the free use of the museum's facilities by these students. SWOSU holds regular classes at the museum, and the museum employs several SWOSU Stafford Scholarship and NASA Scholarship students as interns. SWOSU engineering students are involved in several ongoing display projects in the facility.

NASA sponsors workshops for current and future teachers at the museum that concentrate on the excitement of teaching about flight and space exploration. The goal of this program is to encourage teachers to support academic excellence by demonstrating activities that can be used in the classroom to prove how mathematics and science are used in flight and in the space program. The workshops motivate teachers to promote the understanding of basic physical sciences.

Grant funding opportunities at the Stafford Air & Space Museum have been increased by a series of organizational changes that have clarified the museum's 501(c)3 status. The museum recently received a \$25,000 grant from the Weatherford Hotel/Motel Tourism Tax Board that will supplement the marketing budget to aid in attracting visitors to the museum and to Weatherford. The Stafford Air & Space Museum has also been included as part of grant-funded programs originating at SWOSU. The organization will soon begin its annual membership drive, which will include opportunities for supporters to be eligible for special, members-only privileges, such as special museum tours or dinners with General Stafford.

A new featured exhibit at the Stafford Air & Space Museum available in spring of 2008 is a full-size F-35 Strike Fighter cockpit simulator.

The Stafford Air & Space Museum is named in honor of Lt. General Thomas P. Stafford, USAF (Ret.), who was born and raised in Weatherford, Oklahoma and graduated with honors from the United States Naval Academy. He piloted Gemini VI, and commanded Gemini IX, commanded Apollo 10, and the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project Mission. Stafford was the eighth recipient of the Congressional Space Medal of Honor. Stafford later served as Deputy Chief of Staff, USAF, for Research, Development, and Acquisitions. The Stafford Air & Space Museum boasts one of the few Titan II rockets displayed indoors. Also on display, on loan from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, is the flight space suit General Stafford wore on Apollo 10, a mission that included the first flight of the lunar module near the moon. There are displays featuring numerous space-flown artifacts as well as several full-size aircraft, including a Russian MiG21R and a USAF F-16 Fighting Falcon. Full-size replicas on display include the Wright Flyer, 1911 Curtiss Pusher, *Spirit of St. Louis*, Apollo Command Module, and Gemini spacecraft.

For more information visit www.staffordmuseum.com or call 580-772-5871.

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