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NASA NEWS

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NASA Announces First Centennial Challenges' Prizes

NASA and its partner, the Spaceward Foundation, today announced prizes totaling \$400,000 for four prize competitions, the first under the agency's Centennial Challenges program.

NASA's Centennial Challenges promotes technical innovation through a novel program of prize competitions. It is designed to tap the nation's ingenuity to make revolutionary advances to support the Vision for Space Exploration and NASA goals. The first two competitions will focus on the development of lightweight yet strong tether materials (Tether Challenge) and wireless power transmission technologies (Beam Power Challenge).

"For more than 200 years, prizes have played a key role in spurring new achievements in science, technology, engineering and exploration," said NASA's Associate Administrator for Exploration Systems Mission Directorate, Craig Steidle. "Centennial Challenges will use prizes to help make the Vision for Space Exploration a reality," he added.

"This is an exciting start for the Centennial Challenges program," said Brant Sponberg, program manager for Centennial Challenges. "The innovations from these competitions will help support advances in aerospace materials and structures, new approaches to robotic and human planetary surface operations, and even futuristic concepts like space elevators and solar power satellites," he said.

The Tether Challenge centers on the creation of a material that combines light weight and incredible strength. Under this challenge, teams will develop high strength materials that will be stretched in a head-to-head competition to see which tether is strongest.

The Beam Power challenge focuses on the development of wireless power technologies for a wide range of exploration purposes, such as human lunar exploration and long-duration Mars reconnaissance. In this challenge, teams will develop wireless power transmission systems, including transmitters and receivers, to power robotic climbers to lift the greatest weight possible to the top of a 50-meter cable in under three minutes.

The winners of each initial 2005 challenge will receive \$50,000. A second set of Tether and Beam Power challenges in 2006 are more technically challenging. Each challenge will award purses of \$100,000, \$40,000, and \$10,000 for first, second, and third place.

"We are thrilled with our partnership with NASA and we're excited to take the Tether and Beam Power challenges to the next level," said Meek Shelef, president of the Spaceward Foundation.

The Centennial Challenges program is managed by NASA's Exploration Systems Mission Directorate. The Spaceward Foundation is a public-funds non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the cause of space access in educational curriculums and the public.

For more information about the Challenges on the Internet, visit:

<http://centennialchallenges.nasa.gov>

<http://www.spaceward.org>

For information about NASA and agency programs on the Internet, visit:

<http://www.nasa.gov>

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