

Friday, January 11, 2013

Washington, D.C. – New Mexico Representatives Ben Ray Luján and Michelle Lujan Grisham congratulated the Air Force Research Lab (AFRL) at Kirtland Air Force Base for earning recognition for their efforts to advance Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education. It was recently announced that the Air Force Research Laboratory, Directed Energy and Space Vehicles Directorates will be the 2013 recipient of the Federal Laboratory Consortium's (FLC) STEM Award, which recognizes the efforts of an FLC laboratory employee or team that has demonstrated outstanding work in support of STEM education during the past year.

“From early education to post-graduate work, the Air Force Research Lab has invested in programs that will encourage students to develop their skills in the STEM fields that are vital to growing a stronger economy and creating an educated workforce that is prepared to out-innovate the competition,” Congressman Luján said. “These programs use the exciting and cutting-edge work occurring at the lab to get young people excited about a career in the STEM fields and help lay the foundation they need to be the next generation of innovators.”

“By investing in these programs, the Air Force Research Lab is making huge strides into furthering the education of the youth in New Mexico,” said Congresswoman Lujan Grisham. “The importance of supporting and promoting STEM education is vital to current and future job growth in New Mexico. We need to continue to develop a skilled work force if we're going to compete for jobs in a 21st Century economy.”

“This is just another example of how valuable of a community partner Kirtland AFB and their units are to not just Albuquerque, but the whole state of New Mexico.”

The Directed Energy and Space Vehicles team has implemented a number of programs and outreach efforts for students beginning in fifth grade and continuing through the doctoral level. The STEM programs recognized in the national award include:

- University Nanosat Program – encourages university students to competitively design, build, launch and track a small satellite or Nanosat, reaching over 500 undergraduate and

graduate students from 10 universities last year. Approximately 4,500 undergraduate and graduate students from 27 universities have participated as well as thousands of K-12 students since its inception.

- AFRL Scholars Program (Space Scholars, Directed Energy Scholars, and Phillips Scholars) – objectives are to create a well-qualified science and engineering recruiting pool for the laboratory and its industry and academic partners; attract top students from across the nation to conduct original research to enhance Air Force technology; and increase diversity in the laboratory workforce.

- Strategic Education Partnership Agreements with University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, and New Mexico Tech – seeks to facilitate collaborative research opportunities between AFRL and the N.M. universities; improve career opportunities for N.M. students; and expand STEM education outreach activities through the N.M. educational system.

- AFRL La Luz Academy - inspires future scientists and engineers by providing hands-on STEM activities. AFRL La Luz Academy served over 3,000 students during the past year with programs for students from fifth grade to high school participating in Mars Missions Flights; AFRL research activities such as learning the electromagnetic spectrum and properties of light; robotics; and teams using the engineering design process to build a launching device that safely delivers an egg payload. The Air Force has served over 77,000 K-12 students from 377 schools in New Mexico through the AFRL La Luz Academy since the mid 1990's.

- Evergreen/Explora Museum STEM Outreach programs – partners two prominent museums to create experiential science education programs for families of children who are underrepresented in science and technology careers. AFRL has lent historical research and development artifacts to Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum in McMinnville, Oregon, and Explora Science Center and Children's Museum in Albuquerque, N.M to develop educational programs in science, technology and art.

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