

# Students Race to the Future in NASA's Great Moonbuggy Race

March 16 2006

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It's not common knowledge, but high school and college students across the country know it is quite possible to ride across the surface of the moon without leaving Earth.

Fifty-eight high school and college student teams are putting the finishing touches on designs of their very own lunar vehicles. Teams from the United States and Puerto Rico are competing in NASA's 13th annual Great Moonbuggy Race. The event, which is open to the media and public, runs April 7-8 at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Ala.

The race was inspired by the lunar rover vehicles astronauts drove on the moon during three Apollo missions. Students will race their human-powered vehicles in time trials across a simulated moon surface.

Teams have spent countless hours working on their designs. They had to find parts, manufacture and fine-tune their vehicles to ensure they survive the rough terrain of the race's half-mile obstacle course. Along the way, students learned valuable lessons about teamwork, engineering and overcoming challenges to reach goals.

"The competition draws the next generation of scientists and engineers," said Jim Ellis, manager of the Academic Affairs Office at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Ala. "The lessons they learn here can be carried on into their future studies and eventually to their careers. These students may become our next explorers, carrying out the

Vision for Space Exploration to return to the moon and travel to Mars," he added.

Moonbuggies don't race side-by-side, but against the clock. Awards are given to the top three teams in both high school and college categories that complete the course with the best times. Awards are also presented for unique; most improved and best overall designs. There's also a new category this year, an award for the team that designed its moonbuggy with safety in mind.

The first Great Moonbuggy Race was in 1994. It commemorated the 25th anniversary of the Apollo 11 lunar landing. Eight college teams participated the first year, and in 1996 the race was expanded to include high school teams.

Volunteers from both Marshall and the space industry help ensure the success of the event. The Northrop Grumman Corp. sponsors this year's race. Other contributors include the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics; ATK Thiokol; CBS affiliate WHNT Channel 19 of Huntsville; Jacobs/Sverdrup; Morgan Research Corp.; SAIC; the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the System Safety Society Inc.; and the United Space Alliance, LLC.

For event details, race rules, information about the course and photos from previous competitions on the Web, visit: [moonbuggy.msfc.nasa.gov](http://moonbuggy.msfc.nasa.gov)

Source: NASA

Citation: Students Race to the Future in NASA's Great Moonbuggy Race (2006, March 16) retrieved 7 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-03-students-future-nasa-great-moonbuggy.html>

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