

Meet Perseverance: Mars rover gets name ahead of July launch

March 5 2020, by Marcia Dunn



In this Dec. 17, 2019 photo made available by NASA, engineers watch the first driving test for the Mars 2020 rover in a clean room at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif. On Thursday, March 5, 2020, NASA announced the explorer's name will be "Perseverance." (J. Krohn/NASA via AP)

NASA's next Mars rover finally has a name. Perseverance, a six-wheeled

robotic explorer, will blast off this summer to collect Martian samples for eventual return to Earth.

The name was suggested by Alex Mather, a Virginia seventh-grader, as part of a naming contest for U.S. schoolchildren. The U.S. space agency announced it Thursday at Alex's school in Burke, Virginia, and he got to read his winning essay live on NASA TV.

"We are a species of explorers and we will meet many setbacks on the way to Mars. However, we can persevere," Alex wrote. "We, not as a nation, but as humans, will not give up. The human race will always persevere into the future."

NASA's associate administrator for science missions, Thomas Zurbuchen, noted that the space agency's Curiosity rover has been roaming around Mars since 2012, when Alex and his classmates were babies or little kids.

"Perseverance and curiosity together are what exploration is all about," he said.

Nearly 4,700 volunteer judges had narrowed a pool of 28,000 contest entries down to 155 semifinalists. Once it was down to nine finalists, the public was invited to vote online.

Mather and his family won a trip to Cape Canaveral, Florida, to watch Perseverance get launched into space in July. The boy became enamored with space at age 11 while attending Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama. That's when video games took a back seat. He said he wants to become an engineer and work for NASA.



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The rover is undergoing final preparations at NASA's Kennedy Space Center. The nameplate will be on the rover's robot arm and serve as a protective rock guard.

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Citation: Meet Perseverance: Mars rover gets name ahead of July launch (2020, March 5)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-03-perseverance-mars-rover-july.html>

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