

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Problem: How Does a Small Business Decide The Recipients of Corporate Giving?

One solution is to follow the passions of your employees.

Employees of Hernandez Engineering, Inc.(HEI), an engineering firm whose fingerprints grace every NASA flight, brought a unique art and science project to HEI management. HEI founders Tery and Mike Hernandez saw its value and added necessary underwriting to a grant from a consortium of local and national agencies. The result: a space-related educational experience for striving kids who live in public housing.

HEI partnered with Houston Women's Caucus for Art (HWCA), an all-volunteer, artist-run 501(c)(3) organization that creates opportunity for women's art to be seen, evaluated and sold. HEI employee Joy Mullett, an electronic publications specialist and past president of HWCA, is passionate in her belief that the creative process educates, reveals truth, heals wounds and enriches life.

When she received the Mars Millennium call for proposals, she saw a natural partnership between the two organizations that play such large roles in her life.

She expressed her conviction to like-minded coworkers and the HEI-HWCA team was born:



Brandt



Chestnut



Jennings



Nguyen



Mullett

Shirley Brandt (**Webster 77598**), HEI robotics engineer, currently working on a robotic arm on the international space station;

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Angie Chestnut (**Kingwood 77345**), HEI multi-media training developer (and elected trustee of Harris County Department of Education);

Dale Jennings (**Friendswood 77546**), HEI test engineer for the X-38, a space station rescue vehicle;

Jennifer Nguyen (**Clear Lake 77058**), HEI spacecraft simulation programmer;
and

Joy Mullett (**Spring Branch 77080**), artist and writer.

The team developed a series of July workshops designed for the students of Houston



Preparatory Academy, a 501(c)(3) educational organization that provides an intense summer program for Fifth Ward middle-school students with demonstrated academic achievement who live in public housing. Then they pitched their project to Tery and Mike Hernandez.

"I was struck by two things," says president Mike Hernandez. "First, the enormity of the challenge to the kids. Of course, it's possible that their leaps of imagination could lead to concrete ideas for the first Mars community. Secondly, early in my career I played a role in the Moon landing and I know in my heart that Hernandez Engineering will play a role in going to Mars."

As chief financial officer, Tery Hernandez says each week brings many requests to support charitable organizations. But it was her past career as a school principal and the enthusiasm of HEI employees that underscored her appreciation for the project's method for involving committed adults in the school lives of students.

"Sometimes children are unable to imagine a life unlike the one they're currently living," says Tery. "But when adults from all walks of life share their life stories and voluntarily spend time in the classroom, new worlds are revealed to the kids. Possibilities grow exponentially."

Mike and Tery Hernandez decided they would support the project, which challenges the students to create a Sensorium, a dedicated space within a residential environment designed to nourish the senses of Earthlings on Mars.

Additional supporters to the HEI-HWCA Sensorium project include United Space Alliance, Harris County Precinct One, Half Price Books and the National Management Association chapters of both Hernandez Engineering and United Space Alliance.

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Inspiration was provided by Astronaut Andy Thomas who, when landing in Florida after 130 days on the space station Mir, commented on the remarkable quality of Earth air, air with moisture and aroma. Our bodies have evolved to make the most of information we gain from our senses. But on Mars, human bodies will be deprived of Earthly stimuli for noses, eyes, ears and hands unless they are engineered into the Martian colony.

In August, the project will culminate in a "Three-Day Research and Design Extravaganza" courtesy of the Harris County Precinct One's Challenger 7 Park Educational Center, the Training Academy of United Space Alliance, and Space Center Houston.

The Sensorium, with other Mars Millennium projects from the Houston area, will be exhibited at the Children's Museum of Houston August 6 through September 12, 1999.

Hernandez Engineering, Inc., which provides aerospace safety programs, product assurance, training, engineering and technical services, celebrated its fifteenth anniversary in 1998 and has over 600 employees throughout the U.S.

Houston Women's Caucus for Art has been active in the Houston arts community for over 20 years. Through positions of responsibility and mentoring relationships, members develop valuable career and community skills, including financial management, public relations, and large-scale art project management.

Local granting organizations include:

Houston's Promise, Joint City/County Commission on Children, and Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County.

National granting organizations include:

the U.S. Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and its Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and the J. Paul Getty Trust.

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All classroom sessions led by the HWCA-HEI crew take place at 2:00 p.m., Room 131, Farish

Hall, University of Houston on the dates shown below:

July 22, July 29, August 5 - Joy Mullett, art-making workshops

July 21 - Jennifer Nguyen, "Packing to Go to Mars"

July 23 - Angie Chestnut, "Learning Through the Senses"

July 30 - Shirley Brandt, "Weather on Mars"

August 2 - Dale Jennings, "Parachutes on Mars"

The project culminates in a "Three-Day Research and Design Extravaganza:"

August 9, morning - Educational Center, Challenger 7 Memorial Park, Harris County Precinct One, 2301 W NASA One Blvd, "Senses Scavenger Hunt" and field trip to *Mother Earth Eco-Sculpture*

August 9, afternoon - Training Academy, United Space Alliance, 1045 Gemini, Houston 77058, intensive Internet research time

August 10 - Space Center Houston

August 11 - Educational Center, Challenger 7 Memorial Park, Harris County Precinct One, 2301 W NASA One Blvd, all-day design and create session

August 19 - Reception, Children's Museum of Houston, 1500 Binz, Houston 77004-7112.

Relevant web sites:

Houston Women's Caucus for Art

www.artwomenhouston.org

Hernandez Engineering, Inc.

www.hernandez-eng.com

United Space Alliance

www.unitedspacealliance.com

Challenger Park, Harris County Precinct One

www.co.harris.tx.us/comm_lee/
www.io.com/~pdhulce/chal7.html

Houston Preparatory Academy

www.neosoft.com/~houprep

Half Price Books

www.halfpricebooks.com

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