



Press Release

June 20, 2012

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Mayor Annise Parker Will Attend Groundbreaking Ceremony for Artwork Honoring Russian & U.S. Space Pioneers

Ceremony to Take Place at NASA's First Houston Home, Gragg Park

A Groundbreaking Ceremony for artworks honoring the first two space pioneers to orbit the earth, Russian Cosmonaut Yuri A. Gagarin and United States Astronaut John H. Glenn, will be held at the first headquarters of NASA in Houston, currently the headquarters of the Houston Parks & Recreation Department. The art is being donated to the City of Houston in commemoration of the 50th anniversary in 2011 of Cosmonaut Gagarin's orbit as the first man in space & the 50th anniversary in 2012 of Astronaut Glenn's orbits in space. The gift of the artworks is being made possible by the Moscow-based International Charity Public Fund Dialogue of Cultures - United World. The event will be held on Thursday, June 21, at 10:00 a.m. at Gragg Park, 2999 South Wayside Drive.

Who:

Minnette Boesel
Mayor's Assistant for Cultural Affairs

Mayor Annise Parker
City of Houston

Joe Turner
Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department

Council Member Mike Sullivan
City of Houston District E

Alexander Zakharov
Consul General of Russian Federation

Ruslan Bayramov
President, International Charity Public Fund Dialogue of Cultures - United World

Dr. Ellen Ochoa
Deputy Director of NASA Johnson Space Center

What:

Groundbreaking Ceremony

When:

Thursday, June 21
10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Where:

Gragg Park
2999 S. Wayside Drive
Houston, TX 77023

Why:**Groundbreaking Ceremony for Artwork honoring Russian & US Space Pioneers**

The artwork of Cosmonaut Gagarin is a 9' tall bronze statue created by Russian artist Aleksey Leonov. The artwork for Astronaut Glenn has been conceived by architect Ron Witte & artist Randy Twaddle. It is an 8' 6" by 17' steel panel with an image of Mr. Glenn. Fabrication & installation of the artworks together will be overseen by the Houston Arts Alliance & Metalab. The artworks are seen as symbolic of Russia's & the United States' efforts to collaborate on space exploration, particularly on the International Space Station. An October dedication ceremony of the artworks is planned. Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was born in 1934. In 1955, he began military flight training & joined the Soviet Air Force. In 1960, along with 19 other pilots, he was chosen for the Soviet space program. On April 21, 1961, Cosmonaut Gagarin became the first man in space & the first to orbit the earth aboard the Vostok I. Gagarin continued his distinguished military career & achieved the rank of Colonel. He was killed in a routine training flight crash in March of 1968. Astronaut John H. Glenn was born in 1921. In 1942 he entered the Naval Aviation Cadet Program & was commissioned in the Marine Corps in 1943. During his World II service he flew 59 combat missions. He also flew in the Korean War conflict. In 1957, Glenn flew the first transcontinental flight from Los Angeles to New York that reached average supersonic speed. In 1959, Glenn was chosen as a Project Mercury Astronaut & moved to Houston in 1962 to become a part of the NASA Manned Spacecraft Center. On February 20, 1962, aboard the Friendship 7 Mercury spacecraft, he became the first American to orbit the earth. Glenn achieved the rank of Colonel & served as U. S. Senator from Ohio from 1974 to 1999. He currently lives in Ohio.

The Houston Parks & Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards & manages over 38,752 acres of parkland & greenspace for the City of Houston & develops & implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks & Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit www.houstonparks.org.