

GRAA NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 1184, Greenbelt, MD 20768-1184

August 2026 <https://GoddardRetirees.org> 42nd Year of Publication

UPCOMING LUNCHEONS: We will meet at 11:15 AM on August 11th at the American Legion Post #136 at 6900 Greenbelt Road. ***Reservations must be made no later than the Wednesday before the luncheon*** by contacting graalunch@gmail.com (preferred) or calling 410-709-8889 **by Wednesday, August 5th.**

Aug 11	 	Dr. Jennifer Wiseman HST Senior Project Scientist, NASA Goddard Jim Jeletic HST Deputy Project Manager, NASA Goddard <i>"The Hubble Space Telescope: Eyeing the Future"</i>
Sep 8		Dr. Ira Thorpe Project Scientist, Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (LISA), NASA Goddard <i>"Listening to the Dark Universe with LISA"</i>

TREASURER'S REPORT: Jackie Gasch received donations from: Eileen Smith and Ed Powers. Please know that all GRAA operating costs are covered by donations. Donations can be made in person at a GRAA luncheon, or by check to GRAA at P. O. Box 1184, Greenbelt, MD 20768-1184.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

We are delighted to welcome the following new members:

- Sharon Cooper
- Bill Danchi
- Chris Scolese
- Steve Volz

RETIREMENT BADGES:

The Security Office has ALL RETIREE badges completed and ready for pickup. You can get a retirement badge from the Goddard Badging Office (Greenbelt: Bldg. 17, 301-286-1347; Wallops: Bldg. N-1, 757-824-2222, Hours of Operation, Mon-Fri, 7 am to 3 pm). The retirement badge allows you access for GEWA sponsored events (examples: Music and Drama Club theater,

Running Club 2-mile Fun Run, events at the Recreation Center) and the public areas of the campus (examples: Building 1 at Greenbelt, auditoriums for colloquia, recreational areas) where you show your badge to the security guard at the gate and tell them why you are coming on campus. If you are specifically visiting an employee, you should arrange for a visitor's badge.

WHAT'S UP WITH OUR MEMBERS:

Your colleagues and friends would enjoy hearing about your life experiences after Goddard before they see your name in our "Remembering Our Former Colleagues" section. News of interest to our members could be professional, volunteer activities, awards and recognition, a personal achievement, or an unusual adventure or hobby. Please feel welcome to send a concise message (<100 words, photos welcome) to Pam Sullivan (zsullivan@alum.mit.edu). Inputs may be edited for content and length.

Pete Sarmiento was recently featured in a "From Uniform to Unforgettable" [post](#) by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Minority Veterans. Pete served in the U.S. Air Force in Germany and North Africa during the Cold War before coming to GSFC, where he worked from 1961-1982 as a Material Failure Analyst. Today, he emphasizes that "I am not completely retired! I belong to a VFW Post located at Fort Washington, in which I am the Judge Advocate of the post. I am also an active member of the Fil-Ministry Church of St. Columba in Oxon Hill, and most importantly, I am a very active "astrophilatelist" designing space launch covers." Pete designs envelope artwork for all of the launches from Cape Canaveral, Kennedy Space Center, Vandenberg, Wallops Island, and Port Isabel (SpaceX's SpaceShip launch site): an example of his work is pictured here. You can find more of Pete's work, and that from other astrophilatelists, in the bulletin of the Astro Space Stamp Society [here](#).



FROM THE GODDARD ARCHIVES: On August 9, 2000, a Soyuz-Fregat rocket launched from Baikonur carrying the Cluster II mission to replace Cluster I, which was lost due to an Ariane 5 launch failure. Cluster II consisted of four spacecraft which were placed in a highly elliptical orbit, with perigee at 4 Earth radii and apogee at 19.6 Earth radii. Cluster II was part of the joint ESA/NASA Solar-Terrestrial Science Program. Reentry of the two remaining Cluster II satellites is projected for August and September 2026

COMMENTS FROM TONY COMBERIATE AND CARL STAHL

Our July luncheon speaker was **Dr. Shawn Domagal-Goldman**, Director of the Astrophysics Division at NASA HQ, who spoke about ***“NASA Astrophysics Portfolio and Plans.”*** This month’s audience included ten Goddard summer student interns who introduced themselves and described their summer projects. Dr. Domagal-Goldman inspired them to pursue science careers and described NASA programs that build the future of the astrophysics workforce.



Dr. Domagal-Goldman began with an inspiring video narrated by the actor John Rhys-Davies highlighting the discoveries made by NASA’s great observatories. He gave us his insight into how these flagship missions have complemented one another to provide a more complete understanding of the universe:

- Hubble Space Telescope (April 24, 1990 – current) has changed humanity's understanding of the universe through a remarkable range of discoveries, from observing the atmospheric composition of planets around distant stars to discovering dark energy.
- Compton Gamma-Ray Observatory (April 5, 1991 – June 4, 2000) was a sophisticated satellite observatory dedicated to observing the high-energy universe.
- Chandra X-ray Observatory (July 23, 1999 – current) is the world's most powerful X-ray telescope. It has eight-times greater resolution and can detect sources more than 20-times fainter than any previous X-ray telescope.
- Spitzer Space Telescope (August 25, 2003 – January 30, 2020) scanned the infrared sky near and far for 16+ years, revealing a wispy ring of Saturn, the most remote galaxy ever detected, and the first known star system with seven Earth-sized exoplanets (Trappist-1).

The presentation covered the four astrophysics spacecraft that have already been launched this year, the first three in January and the fourth in July:

- Pandora: a SmallSat that is part of the Astrophysics Pioneers program, Pandora observes transiting exoplanets and their host stars with long time baselines and simultaneous optical photometry and infrared spectroscopy.

- Star-Planet Activity Research CubeSat (SPARCS): the first mission to provide dedicated, long duration UV observations of red dwarf stars.
- BlackCAT: a CubeSat with a wide-field telescope to monitor the X-ray sky for high-redshift gamma-ray bursts, gravitational-wave counterparts, and other transient events.
- Swift Boost Mission: a rapid-response mission designed to boost the Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory, which was launched in 2004 and, without intervention, would soon reenter the Earth's atmosphere. Swift is considered scientifically irreplaceable, and the Boost mission was conceived and launched in less than a year to maintain its capability.

Dr. Domagal-Goldman described how NASA is going to work in the future. The Centers have a leadership role in specified areas (i.e.: GSFC is designated the Earth and Space Science Center of Excellence), resulting in a less competitive posture between Centers. HQ will provide strategic direction and support to the centers, and increase the security and stability of their funding.

He also touched on several upcoming missions:

- Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, designed to answer questions about dark matter and dark energy, and understand the fundamental nature of the evolution of cosmic time. Scheduled to launch August 30, 2026, Roman arrived at Kennedy Space Center nine months ahead of schedule, an amazing accomplishment for such a complex mission and considering the impacts of two long government shutdowns and a global pandemic.
- Compton Spectrometer and Imager (COSI), an Explorer mission launching in 2027, with a gamma-ray telescope that will study energetic phenomena in the Milky Way and beyond.
- Ultraviolet Explorer (UVEX), a NASA Medium Explorer mission to explore the ultraviolet sky, with an expected launch date in 2030.
- Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (LISA), a European mission with significant NASA support, will be the first dedicated space-based gravitational-wave observatory. It will detect and measure gravitational waves — ripples in spacetime caused by the most energetic events in the universe — using laser interferometry. It will sense merging supermassive black holes in distant galaxies, literally to the edges of the universe.

Lastly, Dr. Domagal-Goldman spoke about the next astrophysics flagship mission, the Habitable Worlds Observatory (HWO), which he considers his lifelong passion project. HWO is a large infrared/optical/ultraviolet space telescope designed specifically to search for signs of life on planets orbiting other stars. With a powerful set of instruments, it will also provide a platform for transformational astrophysics. His goal is to complete the technology development and architecture studies early, so that the team can complete phase A by the end of the decade in order to clear the path for future missions in a program called Astrophysics Strategic Technology & Research Accelerator (ASTRA) designed to identify, study, and advance early-stage mission concepts that could become large, strategic astrophysics missions.

Dr. Domagal-Goldman left our members and the Goddard Interns with the feeling of confidence that the future NASA Astrophysics and Goddard is bright and is in good hands.

Suggestions for Luncheon Topics and Speakers

We welcome your suggestions for specific topics and speakers for our monthly luncheons. It can be a speaker outside of Goddard and NASA as well as on a non-technical topic you think would be of interest to our luncheon attendees. Please contact Carl Stahle (carl.m.stahle@gmail.com) who has the responsibility to organize our Luncheon Speakers' Program.

Goddard Leadership Changes

Cynthia Simmons, Deputy Center Director, was selected by NASA HQ to serve as the Director of NASA's newest headquarters organization, the Space Reactor Division within the newly formed Research and Technology Mission Directorate (RTMD). She will be working with Wanda Peters (Goddard alumnus), who is the RTMD Deputy Associate Administrator. **Mark Voyton** was selected to serve as Acting Director of the Engineering and Technology Directorate (ETD), effective Aug. 2, 2026. Segrid Harris, Director of ETD, is stepping down to explore new opportunities outside the Center.

Goddard's Area 400 Transferred to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

On Tuesday, July 7, leaders from NASA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) convened with other officials in the area of Goddard's campus known as Area 400 for a ceremonial transfer



of the approximately 105-acre plot from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center to the USFWS. Area 400 is primarily a wooded tract with a clearing of approximately 2.5 acres that until recently held 11 buildings and their infrastructure, such as plumbing. In the early days of Goddard, Area 400 was a location for propulsion research, and the propulsion systems developed there have been essential in maneuvering space satellites. Area 400 is now part of the Patuxent Research Refuge, which is the largest contiguous block of forested land between Washington, D.C., and

Baltimore. Read the full [story](https://greenbeltnewsreview.com) at greenbeltnewsreview.com.

NASA Swift Boost Mission

NASA's Swift Boost Mission successfully launched on July 3, 2026, aboard a Northrop Grumman Pegasus XL rocket to save the 22-year-old Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory. Dr. Brad Cenko and Dr. Russell Carpenter described this mission at our February GRAA Luncheon. Katalyst Space Technologies is utilizing their LINK robotic spacecraft to capture and raise the decaying space telescope, preventing its uncontrolled atmospheric reentry. Katalyst's LINK spacecraft remains healthy and is about halfway through this commissioning process. The commissioning process will continue over the coming weeks, with flexibility built in to allow the team to pause, assess data, and adjust as needed. LINK then will begin its transit phase to meet up with Swift. Monitor NASA's Swift blog for continued updates: <https://science.nasa.gov/blogs/swift>.

Assessment of Technical and Scientific Capabilities at NASA Goddard

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine are conducting an assessment of the technical and scientific capabilities at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC). You can follow the progress of the study committee and view the recorded public presentations with questions and answers from the study committee. So far, three meetings have been held with a kick-off meeting that focused on discussions with Congressional staff and NASA (both at HQ and GSFC), a site visit to GSFC/Greenbelt, and a panel discussion for how Decadal Surveys inform NASA's mission and the role GSFC plays in implementing decadal survey priorities. Go to the events tab to find the recordings: <https://www.nationalacademies.org/projects/CAST-PSSI-26-04>.

ACTIVITIES FOR MEMBERS:

Volunteering Opportunity: The **Goddard Visitors Center** has a need for someone to cover the Front Desk of the Visitors Center on Friday mornings from 10am to 1pm. They would greet visitors as they arrive, answer the phone, and hand out and then check scavenger hunts. Please contact Amanda Harvey at 301-286-9041 or amanda.c.harvey@nasa.gov

Medicare Presentation Materials Available: GRAA had a virtual presentation on Medicare on May 18th by Patrick Hamilton from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), within the Department of Health and Human Services. The webinar was expertly tailored for our audience. You can request the presentation charts and Q&A document from Carl Stahle carl.m.stahle@gmail.com

Job Opportunity: McCallie Associates is the Systems Engineering (SEAS II) prime contractor for GSFC's Engineering and Technology Directorate (Code 500). McCallie is looking for experienced design and development systems engineers that may be interested in either full time or part time employment to support mission and instrument systems engineering opportunities. If interested, please contact the SEAS II Program Manager, Roger Prokic at 443-570-8849 or rprokic@alutiiq.com.



Recreational and Volunteer Opportunity: The **Greenbelt Labor Day Festival** happens on September 4-7 in Old Greenbelt and includes carnival rides, live music, food trucks, craft booths, a photo show, art show, talent show, and parade! All are welcome! Please register to enter the photo, art, and talent competitions and the parade. Find the festival details at <https://greenbeltlaborday.com/>. If you would like to be part of the volunteer committee, please reach out to greenbeltlaborday@gmail.com

GRAA IS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: We are now on LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network. Members can visit [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com) and search for NASA Goddard Retirees and Alumni Association. You are welcome to be a follower of this group.

DIRECTORIES AND NEWSLETTERS: Send your email address to goddardretirees@gmail.com to get our monthly Newsletters. Past Newsletters and links to videos of the talks are on our website <https://goddardretirees.org>. Multi-month abstracts of Newsletters are mailed to the retirees with only residential addresses in our files. We depend on retirees to furnish their home addresses to be listed in the biennial GRAA Membership Directories, only available as mailed hardcopies to members. These mailings are supported by donations to GRAA, P. O. Box 1184, Greenbelt, MD 20768-1184.

REMEMBERING OUR FORMER COLLEAGUES:

William E. Behring, 94, passed away on March 16, 2018. William was a prominent solar physicist in Goddard's Space Sciences Directorate (Code 600) who made foundational contributions to solar spectroscopy during his 45 year career. His research included developing the Orbiting Solar Observatory's Extreme Ultraviolet spectrometer to measure solar emissions, observing the solar corona using soft X-ray spectrometers, and mapping atomic spectral lines in the 60-385 Angstrom range, providing scientists with data needed to understand the physical conditions of the Sun. William's work has been displayed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Elbert F. Jones, 91, passed on February 24, 2019. Elbert served in the U.S. Army prior to working starting his 30-year Federal career, which included working at GSFC in the Technical Information Division's Visual Arts Branch (Code 255). After retiring from the Federal government, Elbert taught at the University of Maryland for another 26 years.

William F. Gallagher, 98, passed away on September 14, 2023. Bill served in the United States Navy before coming to Goddard in the early 1960s. He supported several of NASA's pioneering space science missions including the Orbiting Solar Observatory (OSO) and the International Sun-Earth Explorer (ISEE). Bill worked at Goddard for 25 years and retired in 1985.

Hector A. Zayas, 83, passed away on October 27, 2023. Hector had a 30+ year career at Goddard starting in the 1960s in the Manned Flight Engineering Division (Code 814). He held multiple roles in tracking data and network systems engineering, including supporting the Satellite Servicing Project (Code 408). Hector retired from NASA as a Flight Operations Manager.

William D. Boyer, 89, passed on May 4, 2026. William began his career in industry before entering federal service, first at the National Security Agency (NSA). In 1968, he came to Goddard where he worked in the Manpower Utilization Division (Code 225), supporting the Apollo program, among others. He left NASA for an appointment with the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, and he retired as that organization's Deputy Director of Administration in 1995.

John P. Purcell, 91, passed away in June 2026. John's early career was in industry before joining the U.S. Army, where he served in Berlin during the Cold War. He came to Goddard in 1963 and worked in the Facilities Engineering Division, helping to physically transform the Center into its modern campus. John retired in 1991 after 28 years at NASA.

Ray Valion "R.V." Gladding, 87, passed away on July 12, 2026. Ray served four years in the U.S. Air Force before starting his NASA career in 1961. He worked at the Wallops Flight Facility in the Telecommunications Section (Code 833.1) for 32 years. Ray was recognized with the prestigious Silver Snoopy Award, one of NASA's highest honors, for his invaluable contributions to the Space Shuttle program.

Matt Opeka, 95, passed on July 19, 2026. Matt's career began in the U.S. Air Force where he was a pilot. He later worked in industry, then at the Federal Aviation Administration, and by the early 1960s, joined NASA. At Goddard, Matt worked his way up to become the Engineering Services Division (Code 750) Assistant Chief for Operations and then its Associate Chief. One of his notable assignments was assisting the President's Commission in the investigation of the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island. Before he retired, a tree was planted in his honor for his years of service. Matt continued to work in the NASA contractor community until he was 88 years of age. *A memorial service is planned on Saturday, July 25 at 2 PM at the Donald V. Borgwardt Funeral Home, 4400 Powder Mill Rd in Beltsville. A visitation follows at 3 PM.*