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Oak Park to Honor Resident Selected NASA Astronaut Candidate

Future astronaut and current Oak Parker Robert L. Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., will be honored at a ceremony scheduled for 6:30 p.m., Mon., Aug. 2, at Village Hall, 123 Madison St.

Congressman Danny K. Davis and Village President Joanne E. Trapani will preside over the event, which will include the reading of a special proclamation honoring Dr. Satcher for his contributions.

One of only 11 Americans selected to begin astronaut training at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Dr. Satcher was among 2,000 applicants this year for the chance to be a member of a NASA crew. Once the astronaut candidates complete a year of training, they are eligible to be assigned to a mission.

Dr. Satcher is an orthopedic surgeon at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and an assistant professor for the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Northwestern Medical Center.

A nephew of former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, Dr. Satcher lives in Oak Park with his wife, D'Juanna, and new baby girl.

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Bobby Satcher, Mission Specialist



"There's some scientist in me. There's some explorer in me," says Dr. Bobby Satcher. "There's a humanitarian in me also. Space is the one venue that has the highest potential for benefiting people if we continue to be serious about exploring it."

Satcher, 38, a medical doctor who also holds a doctorate in chemical engineering, is one of 11 Americans selected to begin astronaut training this summer at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. "I have always had an interest in service and an interest in science," says the future mission specialist. "I am interested in exploration, too. Becoming an astronaut lets me do all three."

Image left: 2004 Astronaut Candidate Robert Satcher. Click for High Resolution Image. Photo credit: NASA/Johnson Space Center.

Dr. Satcher comes to NASA from a research post at Northwestern University in Illinois. He's an orthopedic surgeon at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

"The focus of my research has been studying how bone cells respond to stresses," he says.

He brings his experience to NASA at a key time, when it's working to fulfill the new *Vision for Space Exploration*. The vision calls for NASA to focus its research efforts on studying the effects of long-duration space flight. "One problem when it comes to living and working in space is bone loss. I'm interested in looking at ways of preventing that," he says.

In his medical practice, Dr. Satcher treats patients who suffer from cancer in their arms and legs. He teaches doctors-in-training and graduate students as well. "The questions we're interested in are how the skeleton responds to external forces and how cancer spreads to the skeleton.

"It's difficult to predict what the benefits of space travel and space-based research will be to those of us on the ground," he says. "There are things in our lives today – things that have transformed society – that are simply the result of exploration."

Dr. Satcher grew up in Hampton, Va. and attended Denmark-Olar High School in Denmark, S.C. He earned a Bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and went on to earn his Ph.D. at MIT, as well. He went to medical school at Harvard University.

"When I was a kid, I spent a lot of time learning about space," he says, a hobby that followed him into adulthood. "I kept up an interest in NASA through college and also in my medical training."

Dr. Satcher is also enjoying his newest title: Dad. His wife just gave birth to his first child, a baby girl. Outside of the hospital, Dr. Satcher is "a low-level runner of races, mostly 10k and 12k races." He also has done some training toward becoming a private pilot, and he has done charitable medical work overseas.

"Things are out there to be discovered," he says. "Some of the things we dream about are now becoming more possible."

DR. BOBBY SATCHER, Mission Specialist

AGE: 38

BORN: Hampton, Virginia

EDUCATION: BS, Chemical Engineering, MIT, 1986; PhD, Chemical Engineering, MIT, 1993; MD, Harvard University, 1994

CURRENT JOB: Assistant Professor, Department of Orthopedic Surgery, Northwestern University Medical Center

QUICK FACT: As a doctor, treats patients who suffer from cancer in their arms and legs.

QUOTE: "There are things in our lives today – things that have transformed society – that are simply the result of exploration."