

10TH ANNIVERSARY • CHICAGO • JUNE 2026

10 Years. 100 Go For Launch! Events. One Incredible Milestone.

THE STORY

Deerfield, IL. This year, the nonprofit Higher Orbits will host its **100th Go For Launch!** event, capping a decade of putting middle and high school students face-to-face with astronauts, scientists, and engineers, and sending their experiments to the International Space Station along the way.

Founded in 2016 by former NASA flight controller Michelle Lucas, Higher Orbits has grown from a single program into an internationally recognized STEM education organization. The 10th anniversary celebration in Chicago will bring together four former NASA astronauts, alumni, educators, and industry partners to mark the milestone, and to look ahead at what a space-enabled future workforce will require.

100

GO FOR LAUNCH! EVENTS

10

YEARS OF IMPACT

24STUDENT EXPERIMENTS
FLOWN**4**FORMER NASA ASTRONAUTS
ATTENDING

WHY IT MATTERS

The space industry is rapidly evolving, requiring a workforce that is technically skilled, collaborative, and diverse in thought. From agriculture to pharmaceuticals to emergency response, space-enabled tools are reshaping everyday industries, and the next generation needs new pathways in. Higher Orbits bridges the gap between inspiration and opportunity.

FORMER NASA ASTRONAUTS ATTENDING

- [Wendy Lawrence](#)
- [Kate Rubins](#)
- [Dottie Metcalf-Lindenburger](#)
- [Don Thomas](#)

STORY ANGLES FOR EDITORS

- **Anniversary & milestone:** A grassroots STEM program reaches 100 events and 10 years.
- **Workforce of the future:** How space-enabled industries are reshaping STEM education.
- **Local angle (Chicago):** Hometown students working alongside former NASA astronauts.
- **Alumni success:** Four named alumni stories available, spanning universities, aerospace, and research.
- **Women in STEM:** Female-founded nonprofit; all four alumni profiles are women in STEM.

MEDIA CONTACT

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higherorbits.org/news