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Press Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NASA Comes to Nut Swamp

Middletown: Thomas J. Estill of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, who came to visit Nut Swamp's elementary school students in November, let them in on a big secret—Man is going back to the Moon! But the Moon, Mr. Estill explained, is just practice for the real endgame—that is getting men to Mars.

“We have come a long way”, he informed the students in Mrs. Rathjen and Kocur's fifth grades, adding, “We have already tested the rockets and the ship will hold six astronauts as opposed to the three-man ship that went before.”

The new mission is called *Project Constellation*, and although it is waiting on confirmation of government funding from the new Obama administration, it will replace the Space Shuttle which is scheduled to take six more flights before it is retired. That very evening, the Space Shuttle was passing right over Nut Swamp School. The all-day program had hoped to stretch into the early evening for viewing the Space Station; however, the cloud cover was too dense to see it, even with the special telescope NASA sent to Middletown for the occasion. However, the children learned that they probably had seen the space station and thought it was a bright moving plane, in fact they learned that it was the third brightest star in the sky since it has been circling earth.



Nut Swamp fifth graders marvel how the sun's ultraviolet rays have turned their special white beaded necklace into a rainbow of colors during an exercise conducted by Tom Estill from NASA who visited the school for the day.

actual pulsating solar flares, replete with sound. Mr. Estill explained how the sophisticated instruments of NASA and the Space Station can record and transmit the sounds of the sun and even other planets back to earth. The children discovered that Saturn, which lacks just enough mass to qualify for sun status, is a particularly vocal planet when recorded.

“It sounds spooky. Like a scary movie!” the children exclaimed!



Tom Estill, from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland recently visited Nut Swamp Elementary School in Middletown to inform students on the Space Program and explore the Sun with the latest NASA technology.

In addition to discussions on NASA's space exploration, the lesson focused on the brightest star in the sky—our Sun. Using the school's internet and projector capability, Mr. Estill directed the students to a special website-- <http://sohowww.nascom.nasa.gov> to see real time pictures and movies of the sun. There they could see sun spots on the sun the size of our earth. The students were astonished to see a real-time movie on

The students learned that the earth's magnetic field acts as a shield protecting us from most solar flares. However, sometimes the flares do penetrate our atmosphere and, though harmless to humans, can disrupt the electrical grid. One year, the city of Toronto went black due to a solar flare, Mr. Estill explained.

In further discussion on characteristics of the sun, the children were asked to create a beaded bracelet with special white beads. When the children walked outside and lifted their hand off the white beads, even on a very cloudy day, the ultraviolet rays of the sun transformed them into a rainbow of colors. The students learned that NASA keeps a very close watch on the sun as Mr. Estill explained, to protect our astronauts and the space station. After school, a workshop was conducted for elementary school teachers to learn of the resources NASA has available for school teachers.

Middletown's District Director of Math and Science Curriculum Marjorie Caruso stated of the visit, "If the looks on their faces are any indication, today was an experience that the second and fifth grade students at Nut Swamp School will long remember. The district is grateful to teachers from Nut Swamp School that met Mr. Estill at an astronomy workshop at Raritan Valley Community College this summer and invited him to Nut Swamp to so passionately share his love of space with our students. Everyone who had the opportunity to meet Mr. Estill today could not help but be amazed by the discovery of how technology has made it possible for us to actually experience a frontier that until recently we could only read about and imagine. Mr. Olausen, the principal of Nut Swamp, is already making plans for Mr. Estill to return again next year."

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