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Students, educators experience astronaut training at US camp

WEEK-LONG PROGRAMME WAS PART OF AL WORDEN ENDEAVOUR SCHOLARSHIP

DUBAI

BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN
Chief Reporter

From simulated space missions to the intricacies of rocket engineering, two teams of students and educators from the UAE had an out-of-this-world experience at a US Space Camp.

They joined peers from around the world for an all-expenses-paid, hands-on astronaut training experience at the US Space and Rocket Centre Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama, as part of the Astronaut Al Worden Endeavour Scholarship.

Gillian Hammond, Principal of Repton School Dubai, who led the Dubai members of the UAE team, said the week-long camp included splashdown drills, where the aspiring astronauts practiced safely exiting their space shuttle capsule and were rescued by a helicopter.

For the final mission simulation, the team detached a lunar landing module, completed two Extravehicular Activities with science experiments, and safely returned to base.

Hammond worked with eight teams from six different countries and won the award for the educator who best exemplified the spirit of Al Worden.

Riaane Al Tamimi, Head of Assessment and Digital Learning Coordinator at ICS Abu Dhabi, led the Abu Dhabi members. "We took part in a Mars Mission and got trained in rocket launching. We got the chance to go through some teaching activities and got access to a lot of resources. We also got to meet some writers like Homer Hickman, the writer of the book *Rocket Boy*," she said.

Two students win awards

At the graduation, the teams were presented with their wings by astronauts Charlie Duke and Mike (Bloomer) Bloomfield. Two members of the UAE team bagged two of the four student awards.

Shahad Abdulla, a student of Dubai National School, Al Barsha, won the Right Stuff Award "for the trainee who goes above and beyond to make their team's week a success, holding the traits of the brave jet setters who came before us". Yousuf Baha Ismail Al Badawna, a student of International Community School, Mushrif in Abu Dhabi, won the award for "spirit".

Yousuf said: "I got to experience scuba diving for the first time and learned how astronauts spacewalk. It was a fun educational lesson getting to



■ Above: The UAE team with Tom Kallman, astronauts Charles Duke and Michael J. Boomfield and Mohammad Al Shamma at the US Space and Rocket Centre Space Camp in Alabama.

■ Left: Yousuf Baha Ismail Al Badawna from International Community School, Mushrif in Abu Dhabi and Shahad Abdulla from Dubai National School, Al Barsha, bagged two of the four student awards.

WHAT IS ENDEAVOUR SCHOLARSHIP?

The Endeavour Scholarship is the leading corporate social responsibility initiative of Kallman Worldwide, organiser of the USA Partnership Pavilion at major trade events like the Dubai Air Show and ADIPEC. It was launched by President and CEO Tom Kallman in 2019 to honour the legacy of his friend and Astronaut Al Worden, pilot of the Apollo 15 Command Module *Endeavour*. The programme promotes STEM education and has awarded scholarships to 80 students and 20 educators from nine countries, including the UAE.

STUDENT MEMBERS OF THE UAE TEAMS

The UAE students were part of the eight national mission teams worldwide in the Endeavour Class 2024, including Australia, Chile, Poland, Singapore, and the US.

The members of Mission Team #16 (Endeavour missions are assigned in numerical order) were **Fatma Mansoor Habib**, **Hind Khalid Al Suwaidi** and **Shahad Abdulla** from Dubai National School, Al Barsha, and **Hamad Bushahab** from Almwakeeb School Al Khawaneej. The members of Mission Team #17 were International Community School students **Zainab Alfaqeeh** (ICS Abu Dhabi) and **Yousuf Baha Ismail Al Badawna** (ICS al Mushrif), **Sara Abuhaleeqa** (Aisha Bint Abi Baker High School for girls in Abu Dhabi) and **Salmeen Khaled** (Al Yasmina Academy in Abu Dhabi).

The students were selected after multi-round competitions.



Students, educators share transformative journey at astronaut training camp in US

I envision a career in space exploration for future generations, due to the infinity of space knowledge.

Yousuf Baha Ismail Al Badawna | Student of International Community School, Mushrif in Abu Dhabi

learn so much about space and astronomy. I envision a career in space exploration for future generations, due to the infinity of space knowledge."

Another student, Zainab Alfaqeeh from ICS Abu Dhabi, said: "This experience has not only enriched my personal life but will also be invaluable in my future endeavors. It has significantly fueled my interest in astronomy, providing me with a solid foundation to pursue my passion further."

Tom Kallman, President and

CEO of Kallman Worldwide, which offers the scholarship, said: "The UAE's participation in the Endeavour Scholarship programme highlights the nation's commitment to fostering international collaboration in space exploration and STEM education. The experiences and skills gained by the students and educators will contribute to the UAE's space aspirations."

Did you know?

An Astronaut Al Worden Innovation Centre opened on the ICS Mushrif campus in 2023. It was launched to memorialise Worden's visit to the school during the 2017 Dubai Airshow and perpetuate his spirit of discovery and passion for STEM learning and problem-solving.