



Spaceport America Cup Secures New Mexico Hospitality Association Top HAT Award for Outstanding Event

LAS CRUCES, NM (Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023) – The world’s largest intercollegiate rocketry competition can now also be called one of the best overall events in the Land of Enchantment.

During the New Mexico Hospitality Association’s annual Top HAT (Hospitality And Tourism) Awards ceremony Tuesday (Nov. 14) night at the Sheraton Uptown in Albuquerque, N.M., Spaceport America and the Experimental Sounding Rocket Association were awarded with a Top HAT Award for Outstanding Event. The award recognized the exemplary efforts of both organizations to host the Spaceport America Cup.

“The Spaceport America Cup is a one-of-a-kind event with a size and scale that puts the efforts of thousands of future members of the aerospace and engineering workforce on display for a national audience,” commented Spaceport America Executive Director Scott McLaughlin. “How better to show the country and world the spaceport and what New Mexico is doing to become a major player in commercial space. Winning the Top HAT award is an honor and a special ‘pat on the back’ to Spaceport America’s staff, and the many volunteers at the Experimental Sounding Rocket Association. We also wish to thank our many sponsors of the event.”

Doled out on an annual basis for over a decade, the Top HAT Awards celebrate outstanding teams, businesses, individuals, campaigns, experiences, and lodging properties that have demonstrated exceptional dedication to their company or organization’s brand promise over the past year. Almost two dozen Top HAT Awards were presented to organizations around New Mexico in categories such as Best Broadcast Campaign, Best Print Campaign, Best Social Media Campaign, Outstanding Event, Outstanding Attraction/Experience and more.

Held annually since 2017, and scheduled for Monday-Saturday, June 17-22, 2024, the Spaceport America Cup brings together collegiate rocketry groups from around the globe drawn by the opportunity to collaborate and compete at a world-class spaceport facility. The competition and event are held in partnership with the Experimental Sounding Rocket Association (ESRA), which started the event in Utah in 2007 as the International Rocket Engineering Competition. Student teams represent the best and

brightest from more than 150 institutions located around the world. In 2023, almost 6,000 students participated worldwide and nearly 1,700 of them made the journey to southern New Mexico. They, and more than 100 volunteer judges, learned about New Mexico's growing "Space Valley" and the region's growing aerospace sector.

An economic driver for the cities of Las Cruces and Truth or Consequences, the Spaceport America Cup generates millions of dollars for southern New Mexico as a direct result of the collegiate rocketeers, sponsors and other individuals who make the trip to witness over 100 rocket flights over a four-day span.

The complete field of 157 participating teams for the 2024 Spaceport America Cup was announced Saturday, Nov. 11. Squads from 34 of the 50 United States and 21 different nations from all six populated continents were among the final list of participants.

Numerous additional sponsorship and vendor opportunities remain for the 2024 Spaceport America Cup. Businesses and organizations may learn more about these opportunities by visiting the [sponsorships page of the Spaceport America Cup website](#).

###

Spaceport America (www.SpaceportAmerica.com) is the first purpose-built commercial spaceport in the world. The FAA-licensed launch complex, situated on 18,000 acres adjacent to the U.S. Army White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico, has a rocket friendly environment of 6,000 square miles of restricted airspace, low population density, a 12,000-foot by 200-foot runway, vertical launch complexes, and about 340 days of sunshine and low humidity.

Some of the most respected companies in the commercial space industry are tenants at Spaceport America: [Virgin Galactic](#), [HAPSMobile/ AeroVironment](#), [UP Aerospace](#), and [SpinLaunch](#).

The **Experimental Sounding Rocket Association (ESRA)** is a non-profit organization founded in 2003 for the purpose of fostering and promoting engineering knowledge and experience in the field of rocketry (www.SoundingRocket.org). ESRA's primary focus is providing safe and exciting opportunities for academic groups to compete in aerospace challenges. ESRA's flagship event, the Intercollegiate Rocket Engineering Competition (IREC) has attracted tens of thousands of students since 2006 and is now known as the Spaceport America Cup.

The **Spaceport America Cup** (www.SpaceportAmericaCup.com) is the world's largest IREC – Intercollegiate Rocket Engineering Competition - for student rocketry teams. With over 140 teams from colleges and universities in dozens of countries, the competition continues to grow every year. Students launch solid, liquid, and hybrid rockets to target altitudes of 10,000 and 30,000 feet. The 2023 Spaceport America Cup saw nearly 1,700 student rocketeers from around the planet travel to Las Cruces, N.M., to take part in the global competition.

The **New Mexico Hospitality Association** (www.NewMexicoHospitality.org) is a nonprofit (501c6) that is focused on serving its members and all segments of the hospitality industry. The association delivers decades of combined experience to lead public policy and workforce development strategy for a more prosperous economy. Tourism & hospitality is one of the state's strongest private industries. In 2017, the hospitality and tourism industry contributed \$662 million in state and local tax revenue. Tourism had its

largest economic impact in state history in 2017, injecting \$6.6 billion into New Mexico's economy and supporting nearly 94,000 jobs. The association represents member interests at the state and national level, cultivates professional development, and targets opportunity to incubate and foster long-term job and wealth creation statewide. The association's members are true investors and are playing a crucial role in growing tourism and New Mexico's economy.

Media Contact for Spaceport America

Charlie Hurley, Public Information Officer

(575) 305-5257 | Charles.hurley@spaceportamerica.com

Media Contact for the Experimental Sounding Rocket Association (ESRA)

Dustin Koehler

dustin.koehler@esrrocket.org