



News release

Contact: Stephanie Wilcox
2525 Bay Area Blvd., Suite 640
Houston, Texas 77058
Phone: 281.486.5535
Fax: 281.486.5068
Email: stephanie@bayareahouston.com
Visit: www.bayareahouston.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 17, 2007

CONTACT: Jaime Napoli or
Melissa Hodges
Griffin Integrated Marketing
281-225-0200
jaime@griffinmktg.com
melissa@griffinmktg.com

Premature babies get high-tech support from NASA engineers

BAY AREA HOUSTON, Texas – Texas Children’s Hospital (TCH) and the Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program (SATOP), administered through the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership (BAHEP), recently collaborated to smooth the ride for low-birth-weight infants being transported in incubators.

The TCH Biomedical Engineering Department, whose goal is to minimize vibration levels during infant transport and explore how the vibration levels affect neonatal infants, contacted SATOP for assistance with this project. Officials with SATOP recruited engineers from NASA Johnson Space Center to provide insight on the incubator, which is used to transport infants born six months or more before their due date. A NASA-funded program, SATOP provides small businesses with free technical assistance through the expertise of the U.S. space program, as well as aerospace contractors, NASA field centers, colleges and universities.

“The same technology and expertise that allows astronauts safe passage in space can be used to get these babies on their way to a healthier future,” said Bob Payne, SATOP program manager.

Whether in the back of a helicopter or an ambulance, the ride can be rough for the incubator and its precious cargo. Although improvements have been made to transport incubators in a manner that will reduce vibration levels, more studies are needed.

“The first phase of research will measure and characterize the vibration during transport,” said Nick Gardner, project engineer for SATOP. “The transport incubator has been outfitted by NASA JSC with accelerometers that are used by NASA to detect and measure vibration on the space shuttle.”

The second phase will be conducted at Texas A&M University in College Station, where the data will be compiled and analyzed. From there, Texas A&M University researchers will work with NASA JSC to make recommendations to TCH on how to incorporate changes to the incubator that will minimize the vibrations and aid in a smoother transport.

About Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program:

Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program (SATOP), funded by NASA and the State of Texas, provides small businesses with free technical assistance through the expertise of the U.S. space program, as well as aerospace contractors, NASA field centers, universities and colleges. Small business owners can get up to 40 hours of tech help from a “rocket scientist.” For more information on SATOP, or to request technical assistance, visit www.SpaceTechSolutions.com or call Gardner at (281) 486-5535.

About Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership:

Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership (BAHEP) is a nonprofit organization that promotes the growth of the Bay Area Houston region through the retention, expansion and recruitment of target industries. Visit www.bayareahouston.com for more information. Bay Area Houston is an economically and internationally diversified, high-tech region that is home to NASA Johnson Space Center and numerous industries including aerospace and specialty chemical.

-###-