

AIAA Greater Huntsville 2017 Young Professional Symposium

Article by Kyle Knox
Photos by Alan Lowrey

The Second Annual AIAA Greater Huntsville Section's Young Professionals (YP) Symposium was held on October 23 -24 in Huntsville, AL. This year, the AIAA Greater Huntsville Section worked with NASA Marshall Space Flight Center and the American Astronautical Society to establish a connection between the YP Symposium and the Wernher von Braun Memorial Symposium (VBS). This mutually beneficial relationship encourages YP involvement in VBS and allows YPs more exposure to the senior executives generally in attendance at VBS.



The YP Symposium provided an opportunity for young professionals to give technical presentations to a group of peers and promote opportunities for interaction, both technical and non-technical, with senior professionals in attendance. With 130 attendees, including 81 young professionals, this year's symposium was a huge success. Over 30 young professionals affiliated with 13 organizations spanning government, industry, and academia delivered technical presentations on a wide range of topics over both days. The first day's activities ended with an evening networking social sponsored by Jacobs.

In addition to technical presentations, the symposium included panel discussions and keynote speakers alongside professional development and networking opportunities. The first panel this year was on



Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). This panel fostered an interesting discussion among UAS technical experts and program managers in the field of UAS. The second panel discussed the benefits of AIAA membership and involvement. It included members of the Greater Huntsville Section who are involved in all aspects of AIAA ranging from the local student section to

participation in AIAA Forums as part of a technical committee.

Leaders from the local aerospace and defense communities delivered keynote speeches at this year's symposium. The first keynote speaker was Ms. Alicia Ryan, CEO of LSINC. Ryan shared insight into the business side of the industry with a room full of engineers who hold a more technical focus. The second keynote speaker was Lieutenant General James H. Dickinson, Commanding General of the US Army Space and Missile Defense Command / Army Forces Strategic Command and Joint Component Functional Command for Integrated Missile Defense. Lt. Gen. Dickinson shared his experience directing some of the most cutting edge technology being developed in aerospace. He spoke of the exciting opportunities here in Rocket City insisting that YPs not only have big shoes to fill, but the responsibility of ensuring the next generation is ready to step up.



The final keynote speaker was Mrs. Jody Singer. Singer is the Deputy Director of NASA Marshall Space Flight Center. She spoke

of the exciting work being done by NASA in preparation for the journey to Mars and emphasized the importance of the next generation STEM workforce. Singer's keynote led directly into a mentorship event, a highly anticipated addition to this year's symposium.



The mentorship event, sponsored by Aerojet Rocketdyne, provided the opportunity for attendees to sit down with senior professionals and learn from their experience. The 11 themed tables focused on various topics such as professional development, executive leadership, women in space, public speaking, entrepreneurship, and work/life balance. The mentors for this event included CEOs, Program Managers, Presidents, and Directors representing government, government contracts, and industry partners.

Immediately following the closing of the 2017 AIAA YP Symposium, attendees were invited to attend the Wernher von Braun Memorial Symposium welcome reception and student poster contest.

For more information on the AIAA YP Symposium, please visit www.aiaayps.org.