

National Space Club Scholars Luncheon Speech, July 22nd, 2016
Aditi Shetty

Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Space Club Scholars annual luncheon. Before I even begin I would like to give a huge thank you to Mrs. Diane Cockrell for organizing all of this and basically our whole internships.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Aditi Shetty, and I am a rising senior in high school. This is my second year interning at Goddard in code 698, the Planetary Geodynamics Laboratory studying the early bombardment history of first the moon, and now Mars.

I am 17 years old, and when I grow up, I want to be an astronaut.

Now, that may sound like a joke, or a silly childish fantasy, but i am being completely serious.

I was first hooked on astronomy when I learned about the life cycle of a star in middle school. But this opportunity, afforded to me by the National Space Club, has shown me that I can turn that burning curiosity not just into any career, but into an incredible one.

I come from a long line of doctors, so when I tell my family that I want to study astrophysics, they are equal parts confused and amazed. I'm amazed too, and constantly humbled, that I get to work in this incredible facility with these brilliant people, all before I'm old enough to vote.

I have gotten to see the clean room where the James Webb Telescope is being constructed. Every day as I walk to my desk, I pass the office of a Nobel Laureate who I've gotten to hear speak on multiple occasions. I regularly bump into a former astronaut in my building. I got to be at NASA on the day *New Horizons* reached Pluto, and again a year later to hear about what we have learned.

It's incredible, and it's all because of the Space Club.

I'd also like to take a moment to recognize my beyond incredible mentor, Dr. Herb Frey. He unfortunately couldn't be here today, but I'd like to thank him anyway. Over the past two summers, I've learned so much from him. It's not just from his trove of knowledge about the solar system, which is practically endless, but also from his deep and undying passion for what he does.

Dr. Frey always said that when he was my age, his dream was to be the first guy to walk on Mars. Here I am, generations later, dreaming of becoming an astronaut as well. But I truly feel that for me, the National Space Club and this amazing opportunity have turned an idle fantasy into a future so close I can practically touch it.

Thank you.