

10 teachers in line to 'play Peter Pan'



WOULD-BE ASTRONAUTS: NASA official James Beggs holds model shuttle. Teacher-in-space finalists are, back row, from left: Sharon McAuliffe, Concord, N.H.; Peggy Lathlaen, Friendswood, Texas; Michael Metcalf, Hardwick, Vt.; Judith

Garcia, Alexandria, Va.; Niki Wenger, Parkersburg, W.Va.; Richard Methia; New Bedford, Mass. Front, from left: David Marquart, Boise, Idaho; Barbara Morgan, McCall, Idaho; Robert Foerster, West Lafayette, Ind.; Kathleen Beres, Baltimore.

By David Hathcox

Finalists explain space travel's lure

The teacher finalists and excerpts from their essays on why they want to go in space:

■ **Kathleen Anne Beres, 36,** biology, Kenwood High, Baltimore County, Md. "Desire to do the daring has always been a part of me."

■ **Robert S. Foerster, 34,** sixth-grade math, computer science; Cumberland Elementary, West Lafayette, Ind. "The fascination, mystery, excitement and challenge."
■ **Judith Marie Garcia, 44,**

French, Spanish; Thomas Jefferson School for Science and Technology; Alexandria, Va. "I cannot conceive of any greater honor."

■ **Peggy J. Lathlaen, 34;** elementary school teacher; Friendswood, Texas. "I am ordinary; I have the capacity to relate to people of all ages and status."

■ **David M. Marquart, 43;** business, computer science; Boise (Idaho) High. "To show the world that only in Ameri-

ca can an individual achieve this recognition."

■ **Sharon Christa McAuliffe, 35;** social studies; Concord (N.H.) High. "A unique opportunity to fulfill my early fantasies."

■ **Michael W. Metcalf, 39;** secondary government, geography; Hazen Union School, Hardwick, Vt. "To see the world from a vantage that leaves no doubt about the oneness of humanity."
■ **Richard A. Methia, 40;**

English, New Bedford (Mass.) High School. "Recapture for my colleagues their rightful place in a nation's history."

■ **Barbara R. Morgan, 33;** second grade; McCall-Dennelly Elementary, McCall, Idaho. "I will represent all individuals and not just myself."

■ **Niki Mason Wenger, 45;** gifted 7th- to 8th-graders; Vandevender Junior High, Parkersburg, W.Va. "Being a part of history."

By Peter Johnson
USA TODAY

Massachusetts high school teacher Richard Methia wants to be the first teacher in space to "raise the prestige of the profession."

But one of his students hopes Methia wins so he can have "brag rights." Besides, Methia said, "how many 40-year-olds get to play Peter Pan?"

On Monday, Methia and nine others — six women and three men — from nine states were named finalists for a berth on NASA's Challenger shuttle launch Jan. 22, 1986.

Aged 33 to 45, the finalists emerged from among 114 semifinalists and more than 10,463 teachers who sought the seat promised by President Reagan.

A panel of educators, astronauts and celebrities — including actress Pam Dawber and ex-basketball star Wes Unseld — made the final picks last week.

The final 10 were chosen on the basis of medical fitness and essays describing why they want to fly in space.

NASA Administrator James Beggs will pick the winner and a backup later this month after medical tests and interviews at Houston's Johnson Space Center. Training begins in September.

Perhaps the winner's most important chore: post-flight NASA public relations.

William Pierce, who headed the selection panel, said a key concern was, "Would I like to see this person on the cover of Time and on the Today Show?"