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## Inspiration Highlights NPS' Day of Discovery

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Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey California

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# Inspiration Highlights NPS' Day of Discovery

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MC2 Michael Ehrlich | December 1, 2017



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More than 1,000 Monterey Peninsula elementary through high school students packed King Auditorium on the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) campus, Dec. 1, kicking-off Discover NPS Day, a rare open-campus event designed to introduce the regional community to the university. Countless STEM activities and demonstrations, open research labs, keynote lectures and topical panel sessions were just a few of the day's highlights, that all began with a welcome message straight from the commander of the International Space Station.

"Astronauts come from very diverse backgrounds," said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Randy "Komrade" Bresnik. "We are fighter pilots, engineers, professors, scientists and teachers. Our crew on the ISS represents each one of those professions.

"We do have one thing in common, though," he continued. "We were all inspired by someone or something in our past that got us here to orbit 250 miles above the surface of the earth. I hope you find something that inspires you, for there is no stronger motivation than inspiration."

Throughout the day, visiting students and their parent and teacher chaperones had free reign over much of the campus, packing Spanagel Hall for the Department of Physics' popular demonstrations in the science of sound, electricity, mechanics and many more. Standing-room

only crowds descended upon the university's MOVES Institute, where virtual reality and 3D printing activities were a huge hit. Meanwhile, in the RoboDojo, students flew mini UAVs and learned the basics of coding.

"I liked all of the hands-on experiences, getting to see and do everything has been a lot of fun," said Monterey Bay Charter School Sixth Grader Riley Reagan.

Even the teachers and chaperones were impressed with the events, and the opportunity NPS offered the regional community.

"I think it's fantastic what NPS is doing for young kids, being able to learn about all the different sciences," said Cecilia Barnett, a chaperone with Walter Colton Middle School in Monterey. "The favorite amongst my kids was the sound deprivation chamber. And it's really exciting for the kids to meet an astronaut ... They're all getting more excited about space"

In Ingersoll Hall, students were given the controls to operate Ant Weight Combat Robots, one of the most popular events for the day.

"My favorite thing at NPS so far was the robot battles, but I heard there are [virtual reality goggles] and I'm sure that will be too, but we haven't done it yet," said Monterey Bay Charter School Sixth Grader Katheryn McKee.

Only half the day was dedicated to fun and games, with New York Times columnist, author and three-time Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas Friedman kicking off the afternoon schedule in King Auditorium with a conversational discussion on world affairs with NPS Department of Defense Analysis Chair, Dr. John Arquilla.

Friedman discussed his recent interview with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, followed by a recap of his recent interactions with U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff David Goldfein. The audience was also afforded an opportunity to field their own questions to the renowned author.

In offering his views on several current issues across modern society, Friedman provided his unique perspective to today's complex issues, from online ethical conduct to globalization to political instability. As he often does with his regular contribution to the New York Times, Friedman demonstrated his rare ability to present deep insights into society's immensely complex issues, in a manner the audience easily followed along with.

The afternoon culminated with three breakout panel sessions on varied subjects, ranging from climate change, HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief), and all things cyber, along with a research poster showcase and several open lab tours.

"This is a huge opportunity for kids that get to grow up in Monterey, so they can understand not only what is here, but really what is out there for them," said Bayview Academy teacher Kyle Virerra. "It's great for NPS to demonstrate what they can go to school for in the future that can change the world."