

Acton teacher has right stuff

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

John Shewfelt's colleagues felt he had the Right Stuff at Honeywell's U.S. Space and Rocket Centre in Huntsville, Alabama.

At the camp Shewfelt was selected by his teacher colleagues for the special honour – the Astronaut with the Right Stuff award – the phrase coined to signify that special something possessed by the first astronauts to travel in space.

Shewfelt, an Acton resident for two years and a 15-year teacher with the Halton District School Board, taught the daughter of a Honeywell employee who told him about the Educators at Space Academy program.

He was stunned to earn a place at the June 25 to July 1 camp, one of 144 teachers from 17 countries selected by Honeywell to help teachers inspire the next generation to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math.

During the week Shewfelt made a heat sensor with wire and tinfoil that survived an aviation challenge – and has the badge to prove it – and rode a simulated shuttle launch.

"It was a blast. I took lots of notes. We were being students, but it was lots of fun," Shewfelt said last week, still thrilled with his experience.

When they arrived at the



SPACE CAMP: Acton's John Shewfelt (kneeling, second from right) had a blast as one of 144 teachers from 17 countries who earned a scholarship to Honeywell's U.S. Space and Rocket Centre in Huntsville, Alabama last month. The Georgetown teacher wants to share what he learned with local groups. – Submitted photo

Space Academy, the teachers were assigned groups of 15 or 16 – Shewfelt's was Opportunity – and their education – 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. most days – began.

"There was everything from geography to history to crew systems," Shewfelt said, adding they quickly learned to call the shuttle, "the orbiter" because "NASA likes their lingo – we had a whole course on that."



MISSION SPECIALIST: Acton's John Shewfelt was ready to launch a simulated shuttle mission during his week at Honeywell's Educators in Space academy at the U.S. Space and Rocket Centre in Huntsville, Alabama last month. Shewfelt, an Acton resident who teaches in Georgetown, was one of 144 teachers who earned scholarships to Honeywell's space camp. – Submitted photo

The NASA classes were taught by group leaders, all teachers and space nuts with specialties who bring the student teachers up to speed on the course, and by NASA experts.

"We did a really neat experiment with heat shields. They gave us a couple of thin wires, a piece of tinfoil and a dowel with a screw that was hot glue-gunned to the end of the dowel," Shewfelt said.

"We had to shield the screw from the heat of a blowtorch. We went almost three minutes. One group, they finally turned it off at 12 (minutes)," Shewfelt said, adding he'd launched bottle rockets with his classes in the past, but never with \$300 and \$400 stands.

Shewfelt said he had no clue he was in for a special honour at their graduation ceremony.

"Totally unbeknownst to us, each group leader had to pick one person from their groups to be the Astronaut with the Right Stuff, and I was chosen for that. That was a real honour because I was with 14 other amazing people, teachers that I would love

to be in their classrooms," Shewfelt said, adding he received a medal engraved with the shuttle.

One of the great local spin-offs from Shewfelt's association with Honeywell will be a Space Week at his school, Silver Creek Elementary in Georgetown, including a mock shuttle launch.

Honeywell has provided the plan for the students to build a one-tenth scale model of a shuttle and a script of an actual shuttle launch.

"The kids could take the parts of shuttle commander and we could launch a shuttle and dock with a space station. They've got a whole script down for us and I'm even envisioning – they gave us lots of slides and movies of the shuttle going up and at certain parts we could put video of the shuttle going up on the gym wall. That would really blow their imagine," Shewfelt said, his imagination growing as he talked about the plan.

Keeners that Shewfelt's group is, they've already started another project, hoping to use the project as an application to Honeywell's

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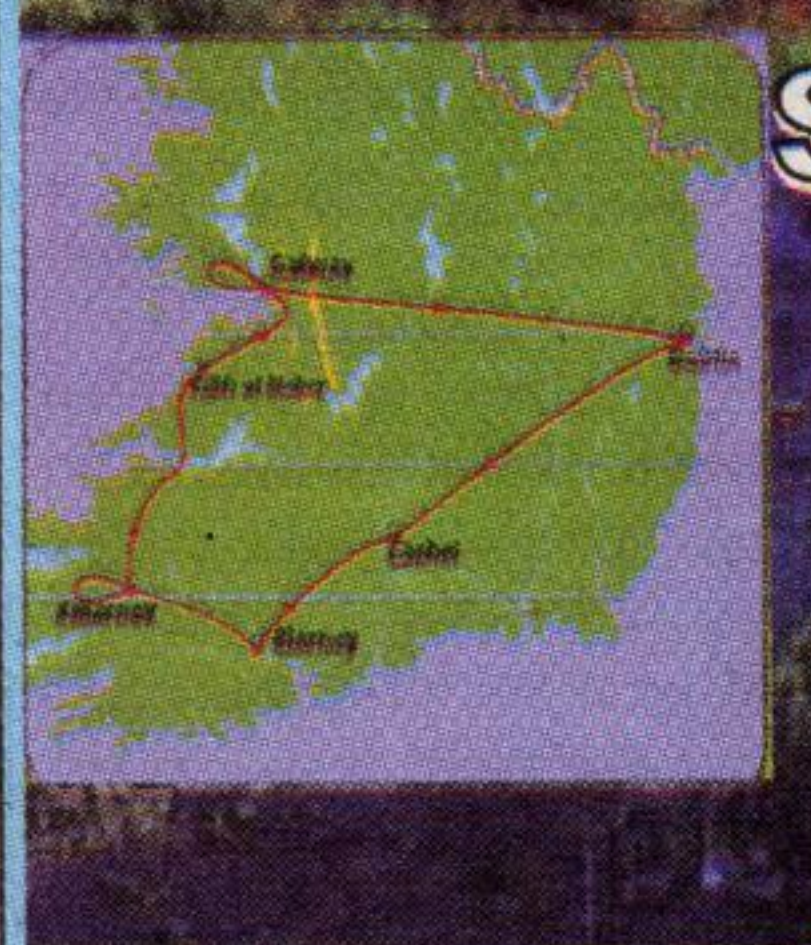


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