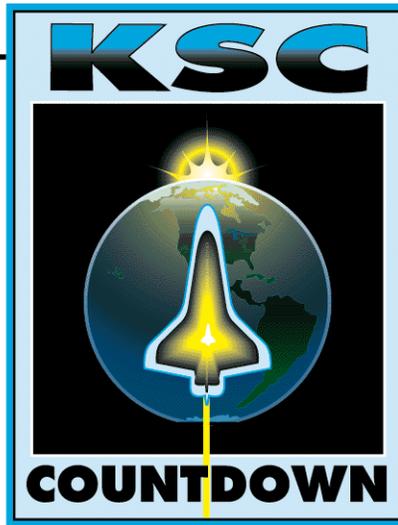


All-American Picnic promises fun, food and festivities



MESSENGER is blanket-wrapped for flight



▲ **Countdown to the 2004 All-American Picnic:** Get ready for a day full of fun, laughter, entertainment, food, drink and festivities March 27. The program comprises

a variety of exhibits, such as Big Cat Rescue, Camp KSC Rocketry and Tuskegee Airmen; activities such as rock-wall climbing, a dunking booth, Space Coast Galactic Squad (storm troopers); and a chili cook-off. Helping fill out the day are children's games and family sports, along with many community demos, such as the Humane Society, KSC Fire Department with Sparky the Fire Mascot, a Fire Prevention demo, SWAT display, airboat/patrol gunboat, and the Brevard Sheriff's Department forensic artist and fingerprinting specialist. Bands like the Community Band of Brevard, Native American Flautists and A Mixed Bag (rock and roll and country) will provide the festive background.

▲ **ELV Update:** Processing of the MESSENGER (Mercury Surface, Space Environment, Geochemistry and Ranging) spacecraft for launch began last week, including checkout of the power systems, communications systems and control systems. Workers are attaching the thermal blankets to the spacecraft for flight. The scientific objectives of the mission are to characterize the chemical composition of Mercury's surface, the geologic history, the nature of the magnetic field, the size and state of the core, the volatile inventory at the poles, and the nature of Mercury's exosphere and magnetosphere over a nominal orbital mission of one Earth year. The spacecraft will fly past Venus three times and Mercury



twice before starting its year-long orbital study of Mercury in July 2009. The Venus flybys, in November 2004, August 2005 and October 2006, will use the planet's gravity to guide MESSENGER toward Mercury's orbit. Mercury flybys in October 2007 and July 2008 will fine-tune the MESSENGER path and allow the spacecraft to gather data critical to planning the mission once it is in orbit. Launch is scheduled for no earlier than July 30.

◆ **Why long-term care?** – The Federal Women's Program Working Group is hosting a 45-minute financial planning presentation, "Long-Term Care," to be given by Nicki Biamonte, a Financial Services executive with Metropolitan Life, at 1 p.m. April 15 in the O&C Mission Briefing Room. Learn what to consider when looking at long-term care protection, why it is so important now, and how much it costs. Also learn what Medicare and Medicaid covers. All civil service and contractor personnel are invited. For additional information, call Kandy Warren, 867-7711.

◆ **NASA Science** – The NASA/ESA Ulysses spacecraft is perilously cold as it begins a newly extended mission to study the sun. To read the full story, go to the Web site at http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2004/17mar_ulysses.htm

◆ **Did You Know?** The main cause of skin cancer is damage to skin from ultraviolet (UV) radiation, a type of light that's given off by the sun and by special lights used for tanning. Over time, UV radiation can penetrate skin and damage skin cells. It's responsible for most cases of skin cancers, and also to blame for wrinkles and age spots. Therefore, picnic-goers are reminded to wear sun protection, especially lotion with high SPF and hats, and ensure your children are protected on March 27.