



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Kennedy Space Center, FL, May 22, 2024 - The National Space Society Mourns the Passing of CEO Anita Gale

The National Space Society mourns the passing of its CEO and longtime Board member Anita Gale. She took the position of Chief Executive Officer of the decades-old organization in 2021 after serving multiple Board terms as well as holding other senior officer positions. During her tenure as CEO the organization was transformed in a number of important ways, including the opening of a new headquarters office at the Kennedy Space Center and garnering a \$1 million grant from Blue Origin's Club for the Future.

"It has been an honor working with Anita. Her dedication to the cause of space settlement was an inspiration to all of us. With her passing, a giant has left our Earth for the stars," said Dale Skran, NSS COO/SVP.

Gale joined the NSS when she was an aerospace engineer employed by Rockwell International working on the space shuttle program. She joined the aerospace industry at a time when women were uncommon in the technical workforce and faced those challenges with determination and dignity.



**Veteran Aerospace Engineer Was a Member of the Organization for 33 Years**

"I grew up in a suburb of Seattle," Gale remembered. "In high school, there was a class called engineering concepts that had 35 kids and two of those were girls, so I was exposed early to this idea of going down paths that were nontraditional." In college in the early 1970s, she was often the only woman in engineering classes. "I was the only person who didn't see a girl in class, because I was the girl," she often said.

When Gale entered the aerospace workforce, women had to take the lead on conduct. "Our male coworkers had been around women who were secretaries, but they hadn't been around women who were peers, and the poor guys just literally didn't know how to behave. We had to help them. Now, women are just part of it."

Gale started working on the space shuttle program in 1974 with Rockwell International in Downey, California. She provided conceptual designs for cargo integration on future launch vehicles, contributed to R&D for Shuttle upgrades and future missions of both reusable and expendable launch vehicles, and developed process improvements. She held three U.S. patents on launch vehicle payload interface standardization and containerization, which were to become essential technologies for reducing future vehicle processing costs and schedules. During this time, she joined the L5 society, a predecessor organization to the National Space Society.

In 1984, Anita and her husband Dick Edwards co-founded the Space Settlement Design Competitions, an industry simulation activity that engages high school students in designing future space settlements. The

competitions evolved into an international activity involving over 1000 students each year on six continents. She has been widely lauded by countless students, many of them women, as their key inspiration to move into technical fields.

Gale's many awards and industry recognitions included the University of Washington's Distinguished Alumni Award and the NSS Space Pioneer Award. She was an active member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) and Society of Women Engineers (SWE). Gale was also a member of the AIAA Space Colonization Technical Committee, chaired technical conference sessions on space settlements, and wrote technical papers about space settlement requirements, designs, and the triggering events that will contribute to the goal of constructing space settlements in the future. She was a luminary and leader in the quest to expand humanity beyond Earth.

Hoyt Davidson, NSS Executive Vice President, noted, "We will miss Anita dearly as a friend, leader, and valued colleague—but perhaps the immeasurable loss will be for the thousands of students who will miss out on her inspiration, mentoring, and encouragement. How do you replace a kind and caring legend?"

Karlton Johnson, Chairman of the NSS Board of Governors and acting CEO, added, "Anita was a force of nature for positive change. Her precision, poise, and intellect made lasting improvements within the NSS. She will be missed, but her legacy will endure for years to come."

Gale was also an avid sailor, often competing in sailing contests, and taught many other people the skills she had learned. For many years she also took groups on annual rafting trips down the Grand Canyon.

Just weeks before her passing Gale was still driving thousands of miles every few months, overseeing the space settlement competitions she had founded, conducting NSS business, and visiting friends all over the country. One of her motivating goals was to continue to help young people, especially girls, to realize their talents in technical fields.

"Every culture has treated women differently than men," Gale once said. "I think we'll always know and see the difference between men and women and just acknowledge it less in the workplace. The differences between us are not really what's important; what's important, especially as engineers, is getting things accomplished."

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The National Space Society was founded in 1987 via a merger of the National Space Institute and the L5 Society. The NSS is the preeminent citizen's voice on space exploration, development, and settlement. To learn more about the NSS and its mission to establish humanity as a spacefaring species, visit us on the web at [nss.org](https://nss.org).

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