

Kansas woman gets NASA dream

By Kathy Hanks
The Hutchinson News

HUTCHINSON (AP) — Over the years there have been plenty of last days at the Kansas Cosmo-sphere and Space Center for Teresa Sindelar.

Twenty summers ago as a camper in the Future Astronaut Training Program, Sindelar said "so long" after a fun adventure.

Then, over the years, as a counselor and even camp director, there were plenty of farewells.

Wednesday it was goodbye again.

This time Sindelar was headed off to pursue her lifelong dream of working for NASA.

She'll begin work at Houston's Johnson Space Center as a NASA Education Specialist in the Teaching from Space office on Aug. 9. In this new position she'll work closely with astronauts, taking what they do in orbit and turning it into classroom curriculum.

In this new job there will be no typical day. One day she'll be talking to astronauts, the next talking to Congress about the importance of the space program for students of tomorrow. The next day she'll be telling students how cool it is to fly.

In retrospect, it seems all roads have led Sindelar to this moment, despite the fact that she had applied and been turned down for various positions at NASA at least five times over the years. Wednesday that was a lesson she was

teaching on her last day at camp, telling campers she's living proof that dreams come true.

"Everything I've ever done has led to securing this job," Sindelar said. "But, it hasn't been a walk in the park."

Perhaps it was in the stars for the young girl, who begged her mother to send her to space camp, to just wander into an Omaha store. That's where she met Apollo astronaut Tom Stafford who was signing autographs. And her mother learned from Stafford of the great summer camp in Kansas just a state away.

Then, if it hadn't been for Helen Unruh, a former camp director, reassuring Teresa's mother that she'd be just fine at the camp, there might not have ever been the camp experience.

"Helen has been a mentor, as has everyone here," Sindelar said. They are encouraging, always telling her she'd get to NASA, she just had to find the way.

While her desire to work for NASA was strong, she struggled in math and foreign languages, skills NASA looks for in their employees. But she loved science, and also came to realize her gift was teaching.

Camp director Todd Ray remembered the first time he laid eyes on the 11-year-old camper. Sindelar was wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat like she was headed to a garden party, rather than the Future Astronaut Training Program.

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Dr. Sharma graduated from the G.S. Medical College and K.E.M. Hospital Program at the University of Mumbai in India. After completing his internship and residency, he earned his diploma in orthopedic surgery at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Mumbai. He moved to the United States in 2005 and completed several clinical fellowships.

Dr. Sharma's fellowships include: Orthopedic Spine Surgery: The Christ Hospital, Cincinnati Children's Hospital, University of Cincinnati, (Cincinnati); Orthopedic Sports Medicine and Arthroscopy: Boston Children's Hospital,

Harvard Medical School (Boston); Pediatric Orthopedics: B.J. Wadia Hospital for Children (Mumbai, India), Cincinnati Children's Hospital, University of Cincinnati (Cincinnati); and Joint Reconstruction and Arthroplasty, University of Minnesota (Minneapolis).

He's also put his expertise to work as an orthopedic physician for the Boston Ballet, the Boston Marathon and NCAA games in Boston.

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