

2024 YWCA Inspire Luncheon

Keynote Speaker Headshot and Biography



Mae Jemison

NASA Astronaut; Founder & President of Two Medical Technology Companies

- First African American Woman in Space
- Founder and President, the Jemison Group and BioSentient Corp – medical technology companies
- Leading 100 Year Starship - to assure human interstellar space travel to another star within the next century
- Inductee National Women's Hall of Fame & International Space Hall of Fame

Entrepreneur, engineer, physician, former NASA astronaut, educator and humanitarian, Mae Jemison, M.D. is at the forefront of integrating the physical and social sciences with art and culture to solve problems and foster innovation. Jemison leads 100 Year Starship® (100YSS), a nonprofit global initiative to assure that capabilities for human travel beyond our solar system to another star exists within the next 100 years while transforming life on Earth. 100YSS celebrated its 10th anniversary this year with Nexus Nairobi™ – When SPACE, PURPOSE & CULTURE Collide™—in the cradle of humans. Started thru a competitive seed-funding grant from DARPA, 100YSS pushes radical leaps in knowledge, technology and human systems.

Dr. Jemison served six years as a NASA astronaut and was the first woman of color in the world to go into space aboard a joint space shuttle mission with the Japanese space agency. Trained as an engineer, social scientist and dancer, Jemison, a medical doctor, was the Area Peace Corps Medical Officer for Sierra Leone and Liberia. Dr. Jemison founded technology organizations including The Jemison Group, Inc., a technology consulting firm integrating critical socio-cultural issues into the design of engineering and science projects. As an environmental studies professor at Dartmouth College, Dr. Jemison focused on designing sustainability into technologies for both the industrialized and developing worlds.

In 1994, Dr. Jemison founded the international science camp The Earth We Share™ (TEWS), which designs and implements STEM education experiences impacting thousands of students and hundreds of teachers worldwide and is a program of the non-profit Dorothy Jemison Foundation for Excellence (DJF). LOOK UP One Skyä, led by Jemison, developed the “Skyfie”™ App that connects people, on a single day worldwide, to weave a global tapestry of what we individually see, feel, think, love, fear, offer, need and hope as we look up at the sky.

A member of the National Academy of Medicine, Dr. Jemison is the Chair of the NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts External Council and is on the board of directors of Kimberly-Clark and the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. Dr. Jemison has led the Texas State Product Development and Small Business Incubator Boards among other national, state and city projects for business incubators and small business investment, infrastructure, disaster response and development of advanced industries and has served on multiple Fortune 500 company boards.

Dr. Jemison has received numerous awards, recognition and honorary degrees including an inductee in the National Women’s Hall of Fame, the National Medical Association Hall of Fame, Texas Science Hall of Fame, and International Space Hall of Fame as well as a recipient of the African Union Ambassador’s Mickey Leland Award, the West Point Sylvanus Thayer Award, The Common Wealth Award of Distinguished Service, the National Organization for Women’s Intrepid Award, and the Kilby Science Award.

Dr. Jemison “Find Where the Wind Goes: Moments from My Life” for teenagers and the Scholastic True Books’ 100 Year Starship series on space exploration. The first real astronaut to appear in the Star Trek TV series, she is a LEGO mini-figurine in the Women of NASA kit, Astronaut Mae in Sesame Street and voice and inspiration of the “Skipster” device in Marvel’s “Moon Girl and the Devil Dinosaur”. She is a series hosts of National Geographic’s “One Strange Rock” and the space operations advisor for its global miniseries, “Mars.”

Dr. Jemison graduated from Stanford University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering and a Bachelor of Arts degree in African and Afro-American Studies. She received her medical doctorate from Cornell University Medical College.