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The Aero Club of Washington Names Artemis II Mission Team as 2026 Persons of the Year

Washington, DC – The Aero Club of Washington proudly announces the selection of NASA's Artemis II Mission team as the recipient of its 2026 Persons of the Year Award, recognizing the mission's historic achievements in human space exploration and its profound impact in inspiring a new generation to dream bigger, reach further, and imagine what is possible.

Established by the Aero Club of Washington's Board of Governors in 2024, this honor is presented to individuals or groups who have made a positive and significant impact on aviation at the national level within the preceding 18 months.

On April 1, 2026, Artemis II launched on a nearly 10-day journey around the Moon, marking the first crewed flight of NASA's Orion spacecraft and a historic milestone in America's return to deep space exploration. NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, along with Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen, successfully completed the mission, splashing down in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of San Diego on April 10. At their farthest point, the crew traveled a record-breaking 252,753 miles from Earth, farther than any humans in history.

Beyond its extraordinary technical accomplishments, Artemis II captured the imagination of a nation and reignited a spirit of exploration that has defined generations of American achievement. The mission demonstrated the power of human ingenuity, collaboration, and determination, reminding the world that the pursuit of seemingly impossible goals can unite and inspire us. As NASA continues its Artemis program, laying the groundwork for future lunar exploration and eventual human missions to Mars, Artemis II stands as a symbol of what can be achieved when we dare to push beyond known boundaries.

“The Artemis II mission is a powerful example of what people can accomplish when they come together as a team,” said Kali Hague, President of the Aero Club of Washington. “Its success is the product of thousands of individuals working tirelessly toward a common goal. It is our honor to recognize the NASA team whose work led to the first crewed lunar flyby in more than 50 years.”

The Aero Club of Washington will present the 2026 Persons of the Year Award at the 78th Annual Wright Memorial Dinner on Thursday, December 17, 2026, at the Westin DC Downtown in Washington, DC. Former National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Chairman Robert Sumwalt will also be honored with the National Aeronautic Association's 2026 Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy at the same event.

For more information about the event, please visit the Aero Club website.

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Background on the Aero Club of Washington
As an industry cornerstone, the Aero Club of Washington is dedicated to providing a forum for discussion of aviation and aerospace issues and achievements. Hosting hundreds of national and international aerospace leaders at its monthly luncheon meetings over the years, the Aero Club has fostered and promoted interest in the principles and development of aeronautics since 1909.