



For more information, contact:

Mike Edwards

Director of Media Relations and Public Affairs

(919) 833-3836 ext. 112

medwards@ncmedsoc.org

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NC Medical Society to Honor State's First Astronaut

(Raleigh)—The North Carolina Medical Society will be presenting William E. Thornton, MD, with the Presidential Award at its Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 22, 2011, at the Raleigh Marriott City Center Hotel, Raleigh, NC. Dr. Thornton is being recognized for his accomplishments in medicine, space exploration and education. He holds the distinction for being the first astronaut from North Carolina. He was born and raised in Faison, NC.

Dr. Thornton received a B.S. in Physics and a medical degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, developed medical instrumentation for the United States Air Force space program, and created the first in-flight space treadmill for NASA. Dr. Thornton has had over 2000 hours of jet pilot time and served two missions on the Shuttle Challenger. After leaving NASA, Dr. Thornton taught cardiology and developed teaching programs at the University of Texas Medical Branch.

Dr. Thornton has a patent for developing the first automatic EKG analyzer, which is one of over fifty patents that he has received. Dr. Thornton was also the recipient of several awards including the Air Force Legion of Merit, the NASA Exceptional Service Medal and the University of North Carolina Distinguished Alumni Award.

Today, Dr. Thornton researches and develops for NASA and the Japanese space program in the diagnostic teaching program. He lives near San Antonio, Texas, with his wife. They have two children.

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About the North Carolina Medical Society

The NC Medical Society represents nearly 12,000 physicians and physician assistants in North Carolina. Founded in 1849, the NCMS is committed to ensuring access to quality health care for every North Carolinian through leadership in medicine.

For more information regarding the Annual Meeting or media inquiries, contact:

Mike Edwards,
medwards@ncmedsoc.org
ph: 919-833-3836
cell: 919-621-5926