newsworthy trends

Businesses Believe Space Is The Place

(NAPSA)—Interest in the commercial development of space is taking off. Increasingly, products and services that were previously the domain of NASA or the military are now being offered by innovative private firms.

Many believe that satellites and space transportation are two of the most promising commercial sectors for an entrepreneurial approach.

At present, the amount of money spent on commercial satellite launches surpasses the amount spent on government launches.

The space travel sector is also growing. Many hopeful space travelers have already put down deposits for future excursions into space, perhaps available soon.

One company with experience in developing micro- and nanosatellites, as well as safe sub-orbital and orbital hybrid rocket-based propulsion systems, is working on a private-sector approach to space travel.

Recently, SpaceDev announced it had been selected to supply hybrid rocket propulsion system components for Scaled Composites' hybrid motor that powers SpaceShipOne, a private-sector-manned sub-orbital spacecraft.

The project has enabled SpaceDev to successfully demonstrate its safe, unique patented hybrid propulsion technology.

"I am extremely proud of my engineering team at SpaceDev for successfully developing this elegant but simple rocket propulsion system, and we are delighted to be part of helping make affordable access to space a reality," said Jim Benson, chairman and chief executive officer of SpaceDev. "This project is a great opportunity for us to demonstrate our safe, low-cost hybrid rocket propulsion capabilities for a wide variety of commercial and military applications."

A hybrid rocket motor may play an historic role in moving human space flight from government to the private sector.

"SpaceDev did a great job," said Burt Rutan, designer of the SpaceShipOne craft.

The company began working on Scaled's proprietary hybrid propulsion research program in September 2001. That work has resulted in successful test firings of a unique hybrid propulsion system, believed to be the largest of its type in the world, that uses nitrous oxide (laughing gas) and HTPB (rubber) as the safe, clean and inexpensive propellants.

The company is also developing commercial hybrid rocket motors and small high performance space vehicles and subsystems, and has been awarded contracts from Air Force Research Laboratory, Boeing, California Space Authority, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Lockheed Martin and National Reconnaissance Office.

For more information, visit www.spacedev.com.