**Debbie Fairbrother**

**Ultra Long Duration Balloon Project Manager, NASA**

Debbie Fairbrother is currently transitioning from full-time employment to official retirement in January 2026 from NASA‘s Goddard Space Flight Center‘s Wallops Flight Facility as the Ultra Long Duration Balloon (ULDB) Project Manager (PM). As the ULDB PM, she was responsible for the qualification of the Super Pressure Balloon (SPB) which is being developed to provide a stable stratospheric platform for science at mid-latitudes.  The goal of the effort is to lift one-ton of scientific instruments to 33.5 km for weeks to months.

Prior to that, she served as the Chief of the NASA Balloon Program Office (BPO) for 11 years.   As Chief of the BPO, she led a team of nearly 100 civil servant and contractor personnel who manage the space agency’s scientific balloon program. The contractor personnel are located at NASA Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility in Palestine, Texas.  The BPO is responsible for 10-15 science missions per year launching from worldwide locations, such as New Zealand, Antarctica, and Sweden as well as in the United States.

Fairbrother, a native of Plano, Texas, attended Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Mechanical Engineering in 1990 and 1992.  She was honored to have been awarded the Mercury 7 Foundation (now known as the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation) scholarship in 1990 and 1991 while at Texas A&M.   After graduation, she began her career in ballooning as an engineer working for Winzen International Inc., where she worked on a number of new scientific balloon manufacturing technologies, such as a heat seal flaw detector. Additionally, she worked on key programs developing new modeling tools to better characterize balloon ascent trajectories as well as balloon performance. Debbie joined NASA in 1999 as a balloon technology manager at Wallops Flight Facility.

As she transitions into retirement, Debbie is looking forward to relaxing, reading, crafting, traveling, and catching up with friends and family.