



# **NASA astronaut Leland Melvin to speak to local students about STEM careers**

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**EDWARDSVILLE** - Every day, the **Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities (MJCH®)** is accomplishing great things.

On Wednesday, March 29, 2017, the MJCHF will partner with the **Regional Superintendent of Education, SIUE, and Lewis & Clark Community College**, to host former **NASA Astronaut Leland Melvin**, who flew on two Space Shuttle missions.

Melvin will speak to more than 600 students from Granite City, Madison, and Venice high schools. The program will be held in the Granite City High School Auditorium. Melvin will address the importance of not shying away from math and science (STEM), staying focused, staying true to your dreams, and never giving up.

“Melvin will be so inspirational,” (MJCH®) Director Dr. Ed Hightower said. “We are so excited to have Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Leland Melvin on back-to-back days. Mr. Melvin has accomplished so much in his life and we are so glad to hear about his life experiences.”

Hightower encouraged people to save the date and join us at our next fundraising event the day after on March 30, 2017, at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

“Thanks to Mannie Jackson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar will join us as our special guest at this highly anticipated event,” Hightower said. “The format will be similar to the event we held in 2016 featuring Colin Powell offering guests cocktails, dinner, and a Q&A between Abdul-Jabbar and (TBD).”

Please find the link to Melvin's YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEmddAPgIVI>

Leland has a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry and a master's degree in materials science engineering. He worked at NASA Langley Research Center in the area of nondestructive testing creating optical fiber sensors for measuring damage in aerospace vehicles resulting in publications in numerous scientific journals. After hanging up his space boots he was appointed head of NASA Education and served as the co-chair on the White House's Federal Coordination in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education Task Force developing the nation's 5-year STEM education plan.

Leland was the United States representative and chair of the International Space Education Board (ISEB), a global collaboration in space. He uses his life story as an athlete, astronaut, scientist, engineer, photographer, and musician to help inspire the next generation of explorers to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) careers. Leland is also currently seen as the host of the Lifetime competition series Child Genius and a judge for ABC's competition series BattleBots.

Leland holds four honorary doctorates for his service in education, the sciences and philanthropy. He was chosen as an ICON MANN with Quincy Jones, Forrest Whitaker, Steve Harvey and 24 other men selected for their ability to inspire people of all ages through their vision and commitment to creating positive change throughout the world.

Leland has been honored with the NFL Players Association “Award of Excellence” for inspiring athletes to pursue excellence on and off the field. He has written a chapter on the power of visualization in Venus Williams’ book Come to Win. Leland has appeared on Top Chef as a celebrity judge and Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmerman, while Cesar Milan helped him with his unruly pooch Jake on an episode of The Dog Whisperer.

He was featured in a Sci Fi Channel program documenting the making of the “Reach for the Stars” will.i.am song, which was transmitted to Mars and back to inspire students to pursue STEAM. After 24 years with NASA as a researcher, astronaut and Senior Executive Service leader he looks to share his stories of perseverance and excellence to inspire communities for lasting positive change.

Leland currently resides in Lynchburg, Virginia.