

UNCC Rocketry Team Blasts Off!

Lincoln Herald Staff

CHARLOTTE––They have lift-off.

They’re the members of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte rocketry team, and they recently placed third overall in the 2024 NASA Student Launch Competition at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala. This is the seventh consecutive year the team has placed among the competition’s top three.

Among the members is Gracie Judy, the team leader.

“Ever since I was a little girl,” said Judy, “I always knew I wanted to pursue a career in aerospace. I just wasn’t sure where I would fit best.”

After high school, Judy became part of the NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars Program before transferring to UNCC.

“I immediately became a member of the ’49’er Rocketry Club,” she said, “which helped me figure out that high-power rocketry was something I was really passionate about.”

Each year, NASA challenges middle school, high school and college and university students from across the United States to design, build and launch a high-powered amateur rocket, fly it to an altitude between 4,000 and 6,000 feet and make a successful landing. Teams are judged in several categories, including re-usable launch vehicle, STEM engagement and safety. The ’49’ers placed second overall in re-usable launch and STEM engagement and third in

safety.

In addition to Judy, a mechanical engineering major in the William Lee College of Engineering, the team members are Anthony Konstantinidi, electrical and computer engineering; vehicle team leader William Vitola, mechanical engineering and physics; recovery officer Andrew McPartland, mechanical engineering; safety officer Chase Jackson, computer engineering; Kathleen Arrington, computer engineering; Austin Clavijo, mechanical engineering technology; Elliot Kohut, mechanical engineering; Amanda Solorio, mechanical engineering; and Jorge Young, mechanical engineering.

Seventy teams from 24 states plus Puerto Rico participated. The University of Notre Dame finished first, and Iowa State University placed second.