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## Mason grad exploring space

by [Danielle Portteus](#), last modified January 02, 2010 10:51PM



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— Evening News photo by BRYAN BOSCH  
 Brian Trease holds a laptop computer showing the image of one of NASA's Mars rovers, a project the mechanical engineer is part of at the Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena, Calif., where he is employed. The 1995 graduate of Mason High School will be inducted into the school's first Hall of Fame later this month.

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A former Erie Township resident has a big job ahead of him. He needs to find a way to get a Mars rover out of the sand.

The rover, Spirit, has been stuck since April and Brian Trease is working with a team of scientists to get it out.

Dr. Trease, a 1995 graduate of Mason High School, works at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, Calif. He started working at the facility in January, 2007. The JPL is a facility run in conjunction with NASA and the California Institute of Technology.

"There is something different every day," Mr. Trease, 32, said of working at JPL. "New data comes in each week."

After high school, Dr. Trease attended the University of Toledo where he earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He worked for a year at Dana Corp. in Toledo before attending the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, for his master's and doctorate degrees in mechanical engineering.

Moving into the field of mechanical engineering was "a natural progression," the son of Denny and Kathy Trease of Erie said.

"I was always interested in science," he said. "I was into the Science Olympiad and Odyssey of the Mind while in school."

Mechanical engineering is an exciting field for Dr. Trease.

"There is that element of working with your hands," he said. "I was mostly interested in robotics and how things worked and moved."

The JPL is one of NASA's unmanned spacecraft centers. The facility launched the first U.S. satellite in 1958 and has two rovers on Mars. Working on spacecraft design is different than automotive engineering.

"The applications are different because you are never going to see most of this equipment once it's launched," Dr. Trease said. "There are challenges because you are never going to service this again so you have to make sure the mechanics survive the launch and temperatures changes."

One of the projects Dr. Trease is working on is the Space Interferometry Mission, known as SIM. The project will create a space-based telescope that detects the wobble in stars, he said. The project is in its prototype phase and being tested regularly to see if it will survive past a launch.

The most exciting project for Dr. Trease is the rover project.

"We are working on computer simulation to try and find maneuvers that will get the rover out of the sand where it has been stuck for months," he said.

The Mars rovers originally were to be on the planet for 90 days. Now, six years later, they're still providing information about Mars. The data collected from the rovers help make the argument for the continuation of the space program, Dr. Trease said.

"We learn so much about the history of Mars, which helps learn about the history of our planet," he said. "We continue to discover more water presence and find out how life evolved there. That can help us learn about how life evolved here."

On Jan. 23, Dr. Trease will be among the first class inducted into the Mason Hall of Fame.

"I hope it serves as a piece of inspiration," he said. "I think it's a great thing and I'm glad to be a part of it."

Dr. Trease and his wife, Amanda, were married in 2006 aboard the Willis B. Boyer museum ship in Toledo.



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