

Astronaut's Dog Becomes Unlikely Star

When a NASA astronaut took a photo of her dog into space, she unknowingly launched an Internet star.

Posted: December 8, 2007, 5 a.m. EST

Gorby the Jack Russell Terrier is a famous astronaut – sort of.

When Gorby's owner, NASA astronaut Suni Williams, blasted off to spend six months on the international space station last December, she took a photo of Gorby along and placed it on a space station wall.

During video teleconferences beamed to Earth during her six-month stay on the station, Williams waved Gorby's photo as part of her sign-off. Space enthusiasts and school kids studying space took notice and nicknamed the dog's picture "Flat Gorby." Soon "Flat Gorby" sightings started popping up on the Internet.

"It grew into something larger than I ever thought it would, but I'm happy for it," Williams told the Huntsville (Alabama) Times. "Gorby deserves his fame."

Williams, who returned from space in June, is thrilled the dog is helping to encourage kids to learn about space. "It's hard for young people to relate to space science," she said. "But they can relate to Gorby because he's so cute. If that gets them interested in the work we are doing on station, that's even better."