

Dr. Judith Marie Garcia (nee Faunce) was born in Morgantown, West Virginia in the United States. There she attended West Virginia University, receiving a B.A. degree in Political Science. After graduation, she began teaching French, Spanish and history in Fairfax County, Virginia. She continued post-graduate studies at George Mason University, and earned a Masters degree in Secondary School Administration. After nearly twenty years of teaching, she applied to NASA's Teacher In Space Program, which was initiated by President Reagan. Her application was one of over 47,000 received by NASA. Through a rigid selection process, ten teachers were selected from the applicant pool. From one of the ten, Dr. Garcia was chosen as one of three teachers to fly in the space shuttle Challenger.

After training at Johnson Space Flight Center in Houston, Dr. Garcia was sent to the diverse NASA centers. She was instructed to learn as much as possible in each center regarding, manned and unmanned space exploration, aeronautics, and spin-off products and research that support everyday life on Earth. Her assignment was to interpret this information to the public. She was sent nationally and internationally to speak at universities, military bases, schools, as well as making appearances on television and radio. She made presentations to audiences that varied from school children to presidents and generals.

During her travels, she saw many inequities in the resources available for teachers and students in the K-12 levels. She decided to try to alleviate the situation through "Distance Learning". After completing her tenure with NASA, Dr. Garcia enrolled in Oklahoma State University, the only US university at that time that offered K-12 courses via satellite. At the time, computers were in their infancy. After receiving her doctorate in Communication Technologies, she returned to Fairfax County Public Schools, as Director of Television Program Development at the Fairfax Network. She developed distance learning courses for subjects that were not taught in most schools due to lack of qualified teachers. Partnering with government organizations, universities and corporations, she produced documentaries and live and interactive programs that were available nationally and internationally at no cost to schools. Many of the programs were award winners.

After retiring from Fairfax, Dr. Garcia accepted a position with the Palm Beach County School District, to restore their television production studios. After construction was completed, the studio and its three, 250 foot communications towers were destroyed by hurricanes. With no available public funding to rebuild, Dr. Garcia sought support through private donations. Within a year, the restoration was completed with no public funds expended.

Documentaries, distance learning courses and news programs were produced, winning many awards including an Emmy. Dr. Garcia partnered with the WXEL Public Broadcasting System (PBS), and served as a member of the Board of Directors. The studios shared programming and resources. She then played a key role in the merging of Miami's WPBT - PBS with WXEL. This broadened the outreach to a major eastern sector of Florida, strengthening the quality and quantity of programming offered free of charge to viewers.