

First IEEE Region 5 Stepping Stone Award Presented to Southwest Research Institute

On 18 April 2017 IEEE leadership presented the first IEEE Region 5 Stepping Stone Award to the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI) for their role in the successful accomplishments of the New Horizons spacecraft [1]. The Stepping Stone Award honors outstanding technical achievements that are on track to become IEEE Milestones. This first award recognizes the historic achievement of NASA's New Horizons Spacecraft Project coordinated by SwRI's engineering, science and program management. The New Horizons mission completed the reconnaissance of the solar system with the exploration of Pluto and its moons.

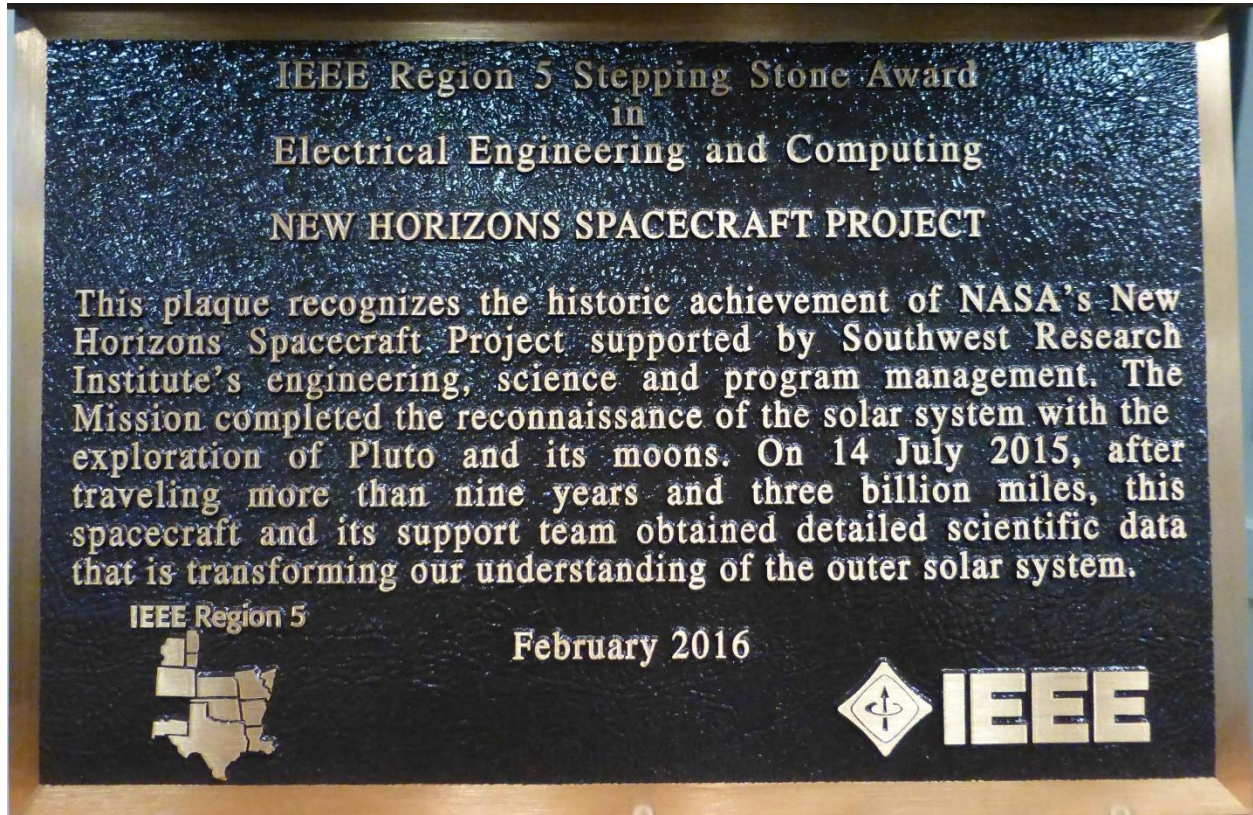
When the New Horizons Spacecraft flew by Pluto last July 14, 2015, that event made history in the research of the outer planets. Pluto was the last of the known planets to be visited by spacecraft launched from earth.



Figure 1.

Spearheaded by Scott Atkinson, South Area Chair, IEEE Region 5, and Theodore (Ted) Bickart, IEEE Fellow and former chair of both the IEEE Milestone subcommittee and the IEEE Region 5 History Committee, the Region 5 Executive Committee developed the awarding of the very first Stepping Stone Award to Southwest Research Institute for their role in the New Horizons Mission to Pluto.

Two bronze plaques were cast with the following:



Opening the Award Ceremonies at the SwRI headquarters in San Antonio, Mr. Adam Hamilton, President and CEO SwRI welcomed the group to the Award's Ceremony. Mr. Walt Downing, EVP and COO, SwRI, explained the long-term relationship between the IEEE and SwRI and expressed their pleasure of this special recognition by the IEEE. Dr. Randy Gladstone, Program Director, SwRI Space Science and Engineering Division then presented the history of the development and execution of the New Horizons Spacecraft Mission to Pluto.

IEEE remarks were led off by Mr. John Purvis, Chair of the IEEE Region 5 History Committee, who provided an overview of the development of the IEEE Region 5 Stepping Stone Award Program. Additional remarks and congratulations were offered by Dr. Francis Grosz, Director IEEE Region 5, and Ms. Karen Pedersen, President IEEE-USA.

Upon complete of the introductory presentations, Mr. T. Scott Atkinson, unveiled the plaque and presented it to the SwRI Management Team. Accepting for SwRI, Dr. Randy Gladstone expressed appreciation for the Award and that it would be prominently displayed in their Aerospace Science and Engineering Building 263. A second plaque will be presented at the SwRI offices in Boulder, CO where most of the SwRI New Horizons Spacecraft operations are conducted. Presentation date and time to be announced.



Figure 2.

The IEEE Region 5 Stepping Stone Award may be given up to three times a year that will honor recent outstanding achievements that took place in the Southwestern United States that have made a substantial impact in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The Stepping Stone Award could be considered a precursor to an eventual nomination for an IEEE Milestone Award. More information on the Award may be found at: <http://sites.ieee.org/r5/files/2016/03/Region-5-Stepping-Stone-Award-Description-and-Process-version-4.pdf>.

[1] Bickart, Theodore A., “IEEE Award Recognizes Recent Breakthroughs Likely to Be Milestones (Stepping Stone Award honors technical achievements that benefit mankind)”, The Institute, IEEE, 27 April 2016.

Figure 1: Pluto - Image from Institute

Caption: NASA's New Horizons spacecraft captured this high-res image of Pluto.

Figure 2: Stepping Stone Award presentation held 18 April 2017 at Southwest Research Institute offices in San Antonio, TX.

Caption: Mr. Scott Atkinson (center left) and Dr. Randy Gladstone (center right) unveil the first IEEE Region 5 Stepping Stone Award in the presentation to Southwest Research Institute. Also in the picture, left to right are Dr. Grosz, Ms. Pederson, Mr. John Purvis, Mr. T. Scott Atkinson, Dr. Randy Gladstone, Mr. Walt Downing and Mr. Adam Hamilton.

