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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **NATIONAL SPACE CLUB AND FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES WINNER OF 2016 GODDARD TROPHY: NEW HORIZONS TEAM**

Washington, DC - The National Space Club is pleased to announce The New Horizons Pluto mission team has won the 2016 Dr. Robert H. Goddard Memorial Trophy, the Club's highest honor given annually to the individual or team who has provided leadership in ground breaking space and aeronautics capability to the USA. The Award will be presented at the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Robert H. Goddard Memorial Dinner, taking place at the Washington Hilton Hotel on Friday, March 11, 2016.

The New Horizons mission is honored for helping us understand worlds at the edge of our solar system by making the first reconnaissance of the Pluto system, and by venturing deeper into the distant, mysterious Kuiper Belt - a relic of solar system formation.

New Horizons launched on January 19, 2006; the spacecraft swung past Jupiter for a gravity boost and scientific studies in February 2007, and conducted a six-month-long reconnaissance flyby study of Pluto and its moons in summer 2015, culminating with Pluto closest approach on July 14, 2015. As part of an extended mission, pending NASA approval, the spacecraft is expected to head farther into the Kuiper Belt to examine an ancient building block of small planets like Pluto on January 1, 2019, more than a billion miles beyond Pluto.

Sending a spacecraft on this long journey is helping us answer basic questions about the surface properties, geology, interior makeup and atmospheres on these bodies. It also completed the historic era of first reconnaissance of the solar system begun in the 1960s. The United States, through NASA, was first to reconnoiter all of the original 9 planets in this historic quest, which stretched from the first reconnaissance of Venus by Mariner 2 in 1962 to the first reconnaissance of Pluto by New Horizons in 2015.

The National Academy of Sciences has ranked the exploration of the Kuiper Belt - including Pluto - as the highest priority for solar system exploration. Generally, New Horizons seeks to understand where Pluto and its moons "fit in" with the other objects in the solar system, such as the inner rocky planets (Earth, Mars, Venus and Mercury) and the outer gas giants (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune). Pluto and its largest moon, Charon, belong to a third category of planets in our solar system—the dwarfs. They have solid surfaces and are like the terrestrial planets, most are primarily made of rock, though they typically also contain significant portions

of ice. As revealed by the astronomical exploration of the Kuiper Belt, the dwarf planets are more numerous than all of the terrestrial and giant planets combined.

A close-up look at these worlds from a spacecraft promises to tell an incredible story about the origins and outskirts of our solar system. New Horizons is exploring - for the first time - how small planets like Pluto and Kuiper Belt bodies have evolved over time.

The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) in Laurel, Maryland, designed, built, and operates the New Horizons spacecraft and manages the mission for NASA's Science Mission Directorate. Alan Stern of the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI) in Boulder, Colorado, is the principal investigator. SwRI is responsible for science payload operations, data reduction and archiving, and leads the science team; as the PI institution of this PI-led mission, SwRI is also responsible through the PI to NASA for the entire mission.

The mission team also includes KinetX, Inc. (navigation team), Ball Aerospace Corporation, the Boeing Company, Aerojet Rocketdyne, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Stanford University, Lockheed Martin Corporation, the University of Colorado, the U.S. Department of Energy and a number of other firms, NASA centers and university partners. NASA's New Horizons mission is part of the New Frontiers Program managed by NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

Dr. Stern will accept the Goddard Trophy on behalf of the New Horizons project. at the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Robert H. Goddard Memorial Dinner on Friday, March 11, 2016, at the Washington Hilton. Individuals and organizations interested in attending may find more information on our website [www.spaceclub.org](http://www.spaceclub.org). For specific questions please contact NSCF at [info@spaceclub.org](mailto:info@spaceclub.org) or by calling 202-547-0060.

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The National Space Club and Foundation is a non-profit organization devoted to fostering excellence in space activity through interaction between industry and government, and through a continuing program of educational support. Awards are offered to recognize significant achievements in space science and enterprise. Scholarships and other education support are a major focus of Club activity.