

Ariz. innovators commended at awards ceremony

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Whether their technology is keeping people alive hundreds of feet underwater or analyzing Mars millions of miles away in space, the winners at this year's Governor's Celebration of Innovation have gone to the Earth's ends and beyond to boost Arizona's reputation as a growing technology hotbed.

Tucson-based Paragon Space Development Corp. and the University of Arizona's Phoenix Mars Mission were among the winners Thursday night at the fifth-annual awards event, which took place on the field of University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale.

In addition to businesses and academic researchers, the event also recognized politicians who have put forth or supported legislation to advance technology development in Arizona, as well as high-school students who are working on the next wave of scientific discoveries.

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Intel Corp., which produces microprocessor chips and other computer hardware, and employs about 10,000 workers in the state, received the Innovator of the Year Award in the large company category.

It is given to an Arizona-based firm that has been in **business** for two or more years and generates at least \$50 million in annual revenue.

The company opened its latest manufacturing plant, Fab 32, at its Ocotillo campus in Chandler in October.

Paragon, founded in 1993, received the same honor in the small-company category, which is given to a business in operation for at least two years that brings in less than \$50 million in annual sales.

The company makes life-support products that enable people to stay alive in extreme conditions underwater and in space.

"Fifteen years ago we were too crazy to know that it was something unheard of to start an aerospace company on student loans and **credit cards**," said Taber MacCallum, co-founder and CEO. Paragon wasn't the only space-related entity to receive recognition Thursday night.

The Phoenix Mars Mission, a project at the University of Arizona that is sending a spacecraft to study the makeup of Mars' surface, received the Innovator of the Year Award in the academia category for accredited higher education

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institutions.

In the start-up category, reserved for a company that has been in business for less than two years, Tucson-based medical firm MSDx LLC was selected as the winner for its efforts to commercialize the first diagnostic blood test for multiple sclerosis, a disease that affects the central nervous system.

"Not only is this a great commercial opportunity, but it's really a chance to make a difference and have an unbelievable neurology group here and we're going to make a difference in Arizona," said Marie Wesselhoft, president of the year-old firm.

Iridium Satellite LLC, a Bethesda, Md.-based spinoff of Motorola Corp. that has an office in Tempe, received the Pioneering Innovation Award. The honor is given to a company that has shown a long-term commitment to Arizona's business community and has been doing business here for at least five years.

Iridium sells its voice and satellite communication equipment to the aerospace and defense industries, among others.

Other award recipients were:

- Vicki Chandler, director of the BIO5 Institute at the University of Arizona, received the Ed Denison Business Leader of the Year Award.
- Bob Horn, president of Cybernetic Research Laboratories Inc. received the William F. McWhortor Community Service Leader of the Year Award.
- Timothy Barry, science teacher at Salpointe Catholic High School, was recognized as Teacher of the Year.
- State Rep. Kirk Adams was named Outstanding Tech Representative of the Year and State Sen. Barbara Leff was named Outstanding Tech Senator of the Year. Ten other state politicians were recognized as 2007 Tech Legislators.

- In addition, four high-school students were recognized as Future Innovators of the Year. They were: Edward Lee, a senior at Hamilton High School in Chandler, home-schooled student Parker Owan, William Guarino of Salpointe Catholic High School in Tucson, and Niles Frazier, a Tucson High School graduate.

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