NASA's Kepler Mission Celebrates One Year in Space
4 March 2010

The Kepler Mission is designed to observe more than 150,000 stars continuously and simultaneously for signs of Earth-size planets until at least November 2012. Some of the planets are expected to orbit in a star's "habitable zone," a warm region where liquid water could pool on the surface.

(PhysOrg.com) -- One year ago this week, NASA's Kepler mission soared into the dark night sky, leaving a bright glow in its wake as it began to search for other worlds like Earth.

"It was a stunning launch," recalled former Kepler Project Manager James Fanson of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif.

Following Kepler's spectacular nocturnal launch from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla., aboard a United Launch Alliance Delta II rocket at 7:49 p.m. Pacific Time (10:49 p.m. Eastern Time) on Friday, March 6, 2009, science team members whooped with joy.


Since the search began, NASA's plucky exoplanet hunter has achieved significant success in its quest to answer the timeless question: "Are we alone in our galaxy?" Two months ago today, Kepler scientists jubilantly announced the discovery of five large exoplanets (planets located beyond our solar system) named Kepler 4b, 5b, 6b, 7b and 8b.