

NEWS RELEASE – May 29, 2025

Contact: Nick Letzkus

letzkus@smenet.org

RETC 2025 to Feature UCA Awards Program

Recognizing the people and projects exemplifying excellence in the tunneling and underground construction industry



At the 2025 Rapid Excavation and Tunneling Conference© (RETC 2025) in Dallas, TX, Underground Construction Association (UCA) awards will be presented as part of the RETC program for the first time, having previously been presented exclusively on even years at UCA's biannual North American Tunneling Conference (NAT). These awards honor outstanding individuals and project teams across the industry and represent the establishment of an annual UCA awards program tradition.

RETC 2025 (June 8-11) will bring together a domestic and international collective of over 1,500 professionals and students plus over 180 exhibitors engaged in the tunneling and underground construction industry. It will be the largest tunneling conference in North America to be held in 2025.

"We are delighted to acknowledge the tunneling achievements made by these stand-out individuals and projects, selected by their industry peers, who have all helped in some way to grow, enhance, innovate, or improve our collective excellent reputation across the industry," said Colin Lawrence, RETC 2025 Chair and Global Tunnel Sector Advisor at Hatch. "Please join us in celebrating the outstanding achievements of the following class of individuals and project teams."

UCA Lifetime Achievement Award – David R. Klug, President, David R. Klug & Associates, Inc.



The UCA Lifetime Achievement Award is awarded to a professional who has made an indelible mark on the industry. David R. Klug has brought enthusiasm, leadership and extensive contributions to the advancement of tunneling and underground construction industry practices. He has continuously demonstrated his dedication to fostering collaboration, embracing innovation, and educating industry practitioners and owners, both internationally and here in the USA.

UCA Muddy Boots Award – David Dorfman, Tunneling Construction Manager, Walsh Construction Company



The Muddy Boots Award was created to recognize field supervisors able to implement efficient work operations, mentor future leaders, provide high quality work, and demonstrate a record of fostering a strong safety culture. This year, David Dorfman receives the Muddy Boots Award for his dedication, contributions and leadership in the tunneling and underground construction industry.

UCA Outstanding Educator Award – Youssef Hashash, Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



The Outstanding Educator Award is presented to Youssef Hashash for his outstanding research, design, and mentorship contributions to the understanding of the interaction of underground structures with their surroundings.

UCA Person of the Year – Sanja Zlatanic, Chair – National Tunnel Practice, HNTB

In recognition of exceptional contributions and leadership to the tunneling and underground construction industry and efforts in promoting its global significance and development, Sanja Zlatanic is honored as the Person of the Year.

UCA Project of the Year – Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Yellow Line Tunnel Rehabilitation Project - Kiewit Infrastructure Co.

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Yellow Line Tunnel Rehabilitation Project included updating two 40-year-old tunnels about 3,000 feet in length. The work involved rehabilitating the steel-lined structure to provide structural support for the existing tunnel and restoring the structural integrity of the tunnel and extending its useful life for at least another 50 years. Congratulations to Kiewit Infrastructure Co. and WMATA.

UCA Young Member Award – Luis Augusto Avila, Assistant Vice President – Geotechnical and Tunnel Engineering, WSP USA



This year, we recognize Luis Augusto Avila with the UCA Young Member Award for outstanding achievements and contributions in his early career to both the industry and the Underground Construction Association. Luis pursues excellence in all he takes on.

For more details regarding RETC 2025, visit retc.org.

About RETC

The very first Rapid Excavation and Tunneling Conference® (RETC) was held in Chicago in 1972. Every two years, industry leaders and practitioners from around the world gather at the RETC, the authoritative program for the tunneling profession with a focus on tunnel construction, lessons learned, and successfully applied innovation and new technology.

About SME

The Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration (SME) brings together the mining and mineral industry's brightest and most dedicated professionals. Over 14,000 global members advance their careers with the world-class technical resources, educational programs, networking opportunities and professional development tools from SME. Our members are focused on sharing best practices for safety, environmental stewardship and moving mining forward. SME. *Inspiring mining professionals worldwide.*