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SPE® ANNOUNCES POSTPONEMENT OF 50TH ANNUAL AUTOMOTIVE INNOVATION AWARDS COMPETITION & GALA ORIGINALLY PLANNED FOR NOV. 19, 2020 – NOW RESCHEDULED TO NOV. 10, 2021

TROY, (DETROIT) MICH. – The Automotive Division of the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE®) is announcing the postponement of its 50th annual *Automotive Innovation Awards Gala*, the oldest and largest recognition event (established in 1970) in the automotive and plastics industries. Originally planned for Nov. 19, 2020, the event commemorating “*50 Years of Plastics Innovation*,” is rescheduled to Nov. 10, 2021. The *SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Gala* is an iconic industry event that has grown to attract over 800 attendees. The 2021 event will be held at the Burton Manor (www.burtonmanor.net) in Livonia, Mich., where it has been held for many years.

“Postponing the celebration of 50 years of innovation in automotive plastics is very unfortunate for our industry,” said Jeffrey Helms, global automotive director, Celanese Corp. and 2019 SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Chair. “Social distancing, recommended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, simply is not possible at this event while still providing a close collaborative environment we have come to expect for the Innovation Awards Gala,” continued Helms. “We are looking forward to properly celebrating ‘*50 Years of Plastics Innovation*,’ next year which will offer our attendees the personal connection, industry camaraderie and reunion they expect and enjoy at this great event.”

Part nominations (now due by **September 15, 2021**) in 10 different categories, and the teams that developed them, will be honored with a “Most Innovative Use of Plastics” award. Categories include: Additive Manufacturing, Aftermarket & Limited Edition/Specialty Vehicles, Body Exterior, Body Interior, Chassis/Hardware, Environmental, Materials, Powertrain, Process Assembly & Enabling Technologies, and Safety. A “Grand Award” will be presented to the winning team from all category award winners. Special recognition will be given to the Top 10 “Hall of Fame” winners since the category was established in 1983. The criteria for a HOF award is that the nomination be in use for at least 15 years and be: game changing; very successful worldwide; innovative in materials, process and application, and still being used. A Lifetime Achievement Award, honoring an individual who has demonstrated leadership and technical achievements in research, design, and/or engineering, etc., that has led to significant integration of polymeric materials on automotive vehicles, will also be honored at the event.

Nominations must be submitted online via: <http://speautomotive.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2020-SPE-Innovation-Awards-Program-Part-Nomination-Form-V1.pdf>

“Next year’s event will celebrate a half century of automotive advancements enabled by innovative plastics technologies,” said Jeffrey Helms, global automotive director, Celanese Corp. who will return as the 2021 *SPE Automotive Innovation Awards* chair.

“In addition to honoring innovation via awards in the different part categories as usual, we will also celebrate our 50th anniversary honoring key innovations in automotive plastics and the many benefits plastics have enabled over the years. This will include advancements in safety, including seat belts, air bags, and sensing devices – all enabled by advancements in plastics technology. The environmental benefits made possible with and by plastics, including improved fuel efficiency, reduced carbon emissions and the growth of automotive innovations with natural and recycled materials for improved sustainability will also be highlighted. Notable innovations in plastics enabled design and styling will also be honored. Society has and will continue to benefit from the ability of plastics to deliver form and function in unique ways through the creativity of automotive engineers and designers,” continued Helms.

Since 1970, the ***SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Competition*** has highlighted the positive changes that polymeric materials have brought to automotive and ground-transportation industries, such as weight and cost reduction, parts consolidation, increased safety, and enhanced aesthetics and design freedom. At the time the competition started, in 1970, many OEM designers and engineers thought of plastics as inexpensive replacements for more “traditional” materials. To help communicate that plastics were capable of far more functionality than their typical use as decorative knobs and ashtrays indicated, members of the board of directors of SPE’s Automotive Division created the competition to recognize successful and innovative plastics applications and to communicate their benefits to OEMs, media, and the public.

Over the years, the competition drew attention to plastics as an underutilized design tool and made industry aware of more progressive ways of designing, engineering, and manufacturing automotive components. From its humble beginnings, the competition has grown to be one of the most fiercely contested recognition events in the automotive and plastics industries.

Today, polymeric materials are no longer substitutes for more expensive materials, but rather are the materials of choice in hundreds of different applications throughout the vehicle. Without plastics, many of the auto industry’s most common comfort, control, and safety applications would not be possible.

During the competition phase of the event, dozens of teams made up of OEMs and suppliers work for months to hone submission forms and presentations describing their part, system, or complete vehicle module to support claims that it is the year’s ***“Most Innovative Use of Plastics.”*** To win, teams must survive a pre-competition review and two rounds of presentations before industry and media judges.

There is no cost to nominate parts, however, nominations that are accepted into the competition need to be presented (in person or via webinar) by their nominating teams during the first round of ***Automotive Innovation Awards Competition*** judging, September 23– 24, 2021 in Auburn Hills, Michigan. Finalists from that round advance to a second presentation before a panel of Blue Ribbon judges made up of media, retired chief engineers, and other industry experts on October 4, 2021 (also in Auburn Hills, Mich.) This annual event currently draws over 800 OEM engineers, automotive and plastics industry executives, and media. Funds raised from the event are used to support SPE educational programs including technical seminars and conferences, which help educate and secure the role of plastics in the advancement of the automobile.

The mission of SPE is to promote scientific and engineering knowledge relating to plastics worldwide and to educate industry, academia, and the public about these advances. SPE’s Automotive Division is active in educating, promoting, recognizing, and communicating technical accomplishments in all phases of plastics and plastic-based composite developments in the global transportation industry. Topic areas include applications, materials, processing, equipment, tooling, design, and development.

For more information about the SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Competition and Gala see www.speautomotive.com

For more information on the Society of Plastics Engineers, see www.4spe.org.

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