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SPE® ANNOUNCES “LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER” – MICHAEL J. WHITENS WILL BE HONORED AT SPE AUTOMOTIVE INNOVATION AWARDS GALA NOV. 6, 2019

TROY, (DETROIT) MICH. — **Michael J. Whitens**, retired former Global Director for Ford’s Vehicle and Enterprise Sciences at Ford’s Research and Innovation Center, has been named the 2019 **Lifetime Achievement Award** winner by the Automotive Division of the **Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE®)**. In his most recent role at Ford (2014 – 2018) he led the development of technology strategy and implementation in support of emerging areas including plastics/polymers, advanced plastics processing technologies, composites and material formulations with responsibility for over 500 researchers at three Ford Motor Company global facilities.

He has demonstrated expertise working on several advanced plastics processes including micro-cellular foaming, long-fiber thermoplastic (D-LFT) composites, natural fiber composites, carbon fiber composites, nano additive based composites, metal-plastics hybrid molding, co-injection molding, twin screw extrusion compounding, polyurethane foams and more. His work includes the development of several innovations for numerous automotive plastics applications, ranging from interiors and exteriors to under the hood and safety – including instrument panels, door panels, door modules, molded-in-color, seating, NVH foams, fuel systems components and more.

An automotive industry veteran with over 30 years of experience, Whitens has spent the majority of his career at Ford Motor Company in various body engineering disciplines. He also spent three years as the Mustang PVT (Platform Vehicle Team) manager, bringing the second-generation Bullitt and Mach 1 to life.

He is a recognized leader in the development of innovative technologies in the automotive field, with 35 patents in many areas of component innovation, new material development, safety, body interior, exterior and vehicle execution. He will be honored for his lifetime of industry expertise and innovation, contributing to the advancement of the automotive plastics industry, at the **49th-annual Automotive Innovation Awards Gala** on November 6, 2019 at Burton Manor (www.burtonmanor.net) in Livonia, Mich.

“I am very grateful to be recognized with this esteemed SPE Automotive Division award for Lifetime Achievement, and especially grateful to the talented teams of people I have had the honor to work with who have made this possible,” said Whitens. “This award would not be possible without the challenging work experience that I enjoyed, the innovative support from my associates at Ford and their supplier base, participation in SPE and other professional trade associations and education,” added Whitens.

“Mike is known industry wide as one of the best problem solvers and innovators in the field of plastics and composites,” said Dr. Alper Kiziltas, industry expert, Ford Motor Company. “He has a rare combination of expertise that is hard to find in the industry, including an understanding of the total system – an interaction between polymeric materials and chemistry, plastic processes, plastics part design, CAE, characterization and tooling,” continued Kiziltas.

“Mike has a unique combination of global cross-functional leadership and refined people skills, giving him the ability to handle any business challenge,” said Dr. Cynthia Flanigan, chief engineer, vehicle research & technology, Ford Motor Company. “He’s a great leader who is very well-liked and respected in the industry, and most deserving of this award,” added Flanigan.

Michael J. Whitens Work Experience:

Global Director – Vehicle & Enterprise Sciences, Ford Motor Company (2014 – until Retired)

- Lead development of technology strategy and implementation in support of emerging areas. Responsible for more than 500 researchers at three global facilities.

Global Director – Body Interior Engineering, Ford Motor Company (2011 – 2014)

- Responsible for quality, cost, weight, function and delivery of a more than \$15 billion commodity base managing a \$100 million budget. This included an all global cockpit, hard and soft trim, seats, restraints, climate and interior lighting for all Ford vehicles globally, leading a team of over 2,000 people in nine engineering centers around the globe.

Global Chief Engineer – Body Interior Engineering, Ford Motor Company (2006 – 2011)

- Responsible for quality, cost, weight, function and delivery of more than \$6 billion commodity base, including all global cockpit, hard and soft trim, interior lighting and restraints for all Ford vehicles globally. Led more than 600 people in nine engineering centers around the globe.

Chief Engineer – Body Engineering Exterior & Interior Small Car Cluster (Mustang, Windstar, Focus, Escape, Villager, Lincoln LS), Ford Motor Company (2001 – 2005)

- Responsible for quality, cost, weight, function and delivery of all body interior and exterior commodities, including all small car vehicle body structures, closures, exterior ornamentation/lighting, global cockpit, hard and soft trim and seats and restraints.

Mustang PVT Manager, Ford Motor Company (1999 – 2001)

- Responsible for quality, cost, weight, function and delivery of all Mustang vehicles.

Lincoln LS / Jaguar S-type Global Body Structure Platform Supervisor, Bumper/Exterior Ornamentation Mirror Supervisor, Front End & Underbody CAD Supervisor, Ford Motor Company (1987 – 1999)

- Developed common underbody structure to support first Ford global vehicle platform.

Doors & Mechanical Component Engineer, General Motors (1985 – 1987)

- Developed door and deck lid mechatronics for C-H platform vehicles.

Michael J. Whitens' Significant Accomplishments and Awards include:

- Numerous Society of Plastic Engineers (SPE) –Automotive Innovation Awards
- Numerous PACE Awards in Collaboration with Suppliers
- Automotive News Award in Collaboration with Ernst & Young
- Design for 6-Sigma National Award Recipient, Ford Motor Company
- Awards for People Development, Ford Motor Company
- Numerous Quality Awards, Ford Motor Company
- Distinguished Alumni Recognition, Michigan Technological University, Electrical and Computer Engineering Academy (ECE Academy)

Michael J. Whitens' Contribution to Professional Societies, Leadership Roles and Academia Contributions include:

- Served as Board of Director of SPE Automotive Division
- A member of the Blue Ribbon Judging Committee for SPE Automotive Division Innovation Awards Competition and Gala
- Chaired, organized and contributed to several SPE technical sessions at industry conferences, including SPE TPO (Thermoplastic Engineered Polyolefins) SPE AUTO EPCON (Automotive Engineering Plastics), SPE ACCE (Automotive Composites) and SAE (Society of Automotive Engineers) conferences and events.
- SPE member since 2000
- Michigan Technological University External Advisory Board
- Our Lady of Victory Volunteer Coach

Michael J. Whitens' Contribution to Innovations and Intellectual Properties/Technical Speakers in Automotive Plastics include:

- **35 IP (Intellectual Properties) – US and worldwide PATENTS** related to plastics materials processes and automotive applications
- **His patents range** from plastics process innovations, material formulations, to product innovations (interiors, safety, seating, exterior and under-the-hood) and tooling
- **Invited Keynote Speaker** at prestigious conferences and exhibitions, both nationally and internationally, such as SPE ACCE, SPE TPO, SPE Antec, SAE, and more. Invited reviewer as a subject matter expert. Invited committee member for SPE Innovation Awards Competition.
- **Several citations** in prestigious magazines, such as Plastics Engineering, Plastics Technology, Modern Plastics, Ward's AutoWorld, Injection Molding, Automotive Engineering, Automotive Interiors International, Plastics World, Plastics Design Forum, Design News and other Automotive & Transportation Interiors publications

First given in 2001, the SPE Automotive *Lifetime Achievement Award* recognizes the technical achievements of individuals whose work in research, design, and/or engineering has led to significant integration of polymeric materials on passenger vehicles. Past winners include:

- J.T. Battenberg III, then chairman and chief-executive officer of Delphi Corp. (2001)
- Bernard Robertson, then executive vice-president of DaimlerChrysler (2002)
- Robert Schaad, chairman of Husky Injection Molding Systems, Ltd. (2003)
- Tom Moore, retired vice-president, Liberty and Technical Affairs at DaimlerChrysler (2004)
- Mr. Shigeki Suzuki, general manager - Materials Division, Toyota Motor Co.(2005)
- Barbara Sanders, then director-Advanced Development & Engineering Processes, Delphi Corp. (2006)
- Josh Madden, retired executive at General Motors Corp. (GM) & Volkswagen of America (2007)
- Frank Macher, former CEO of Collins & Aikman Corp., Federal Mogul Corp., and ITT Automotive (2008)
- Irv Poston, retired head of the Plastics (Composites) Development-Technical Center, GM (2009)
- Allan Murray, Ph.D., retired technology director at Ford Motor Co. (2010)
- David B. Reed P.E., retired staff engineer, Product Engineering, GM (2011)
- Gary Lowndale, P.E., then chief technology officer, Plasman Carbon Composites (2012)
- Roy Sjöberg, P.E., retired staff engineer - Body, Chevrolet-Pontiac-Canada Div., GM and retired executive engineer-Viper Project, Chrysler Corp. (2013)
- Dr. Norm Kakarala, retired senior technical fellow, Inteva Products LLC (2014)
- Fredrick Deans, P.E., chief marketing officer, Allied Composite Technologies LLC (2015)
- Dr. Lawrence T. Drzal, university distinguished professor of Chemical Engineering and Director-Composite Materials and Structures Center at Michigan State University College of Engineering (2016)
- Dr. Suresh Shah, retired senior technical fellow at Delphi Corporation, formerly General Motors – ACG (Automotive Components Group) (2017)
- Dr. Rose A. Ryntz, retired vice president, Global Advanced Development and Material Engineering at International Automotive Components Group (IAC). (2018)

The evening begins with a VIP Cocktail Reception at 4:00 p.m. sponsored by Celanese Corporation. At 4:30 p.m. the main exhibit area opens for general admission, and guests can review this year's **Automotive Innovation Awards** nominations and enjoy the vehicles on display. Dinner will begin at 6:15 p.m. and the awards program will last from 7:00-9:00 p.m. For those who wish to extend merrymaking and networking activities, the ever-popular *Afterglow* – also sponsored by Celanese – runs from 9:00-11:00 p.m.

SPE's Automotive Innovation Awards Program is the oldest and largest competition of its kind in the world. Dozens of teams made up of OEMs, tier suppliers, and polymer producers submit nominations describing their part, system, or complete vehicle and why it merits the claim as the *Year's Most Innovative Use of Plastics*.

This annual event typically draws over 800 OEM engineers, automotive and plastics industry executives, and media. As is customary, funds raised from this event are used to support SPE educational efforts and technical seminars, 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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