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SPE® ANNOUNCES “CALL FOR NOMINATIONS” FOR 50TH ANNUAL AUTOMOTIVE INNOVATION AWARDS COMPETITION & GALA – “50 YEARS OF PLASTICS INNOVATION” (Nov. 10, 2021)

• **Most Innovative Use of Plastics Award Nominations (due September 15, 2021)**

• **New Category for 2021: Automotive Plastics Industry Solutions for COVID-19** – will highlight how automotive suppliers adapted their processes, materials, or business to support the international needs for battling COVID-19.

Additional Categories include: Additive Manufacturing, Aftermarket & Limited Edition/Specialty Vehicles, Body Exterior, Body Interior, Chassis/Hardware, Environmental, Materials, Powertrain, Process/Assembly/ Enabling Technologies, and Safety.

• **The Top 5 Most Innovative Hall of Fame Award Winners over last 39 years will be recognized**

TROY, (DETROIT) MICH. – The Automotive Division of the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE®)

Is announcing a “Call for Nominations” for its 50th annual **Automotive Innovation Awards Gala**, the oldest and largest recognition event (established in 1970) in the automotive and plastics industries. This year’s Awards Gala will be held **Wednesday, November 10, 2021** at the Burton Manor (www.burtonmanor.net) in Livonia, Mich. Winning part nominations (due by **September 15, 2021**) in 11 different categories, and the teams that developed them, will be honored with a “Most Innovative Use of Plastics” award. A “Grand Award” will be presented to the winning team from all category award winners. This year’s program will include a new category - **“Automotive Plastics Industry Solutions for COVID-19”** - highlighting how automotive OEMs and suppliers adapted their processes, materials, or business to support the international needs for battling COVID-19. Additional categories include: Additive Manufacturing, Aftermarket & Limited Edition/Specialty Vehicles, Body Exterior, Body Interior, Chassis/Hardware, Environmental, Materials, Powertrain, Process/Assembly/Enabling Technologies, and Safety.

To further commemorate **“50 Years of Plastics Innovation,”** the Innovation Awards Gala planning committee is working on special events to celebrate. One of the events will be a special Hall of Fame (HOF) Award honoring the top 5 most innovative HOF winners since the category was established in 1983. Instead of picking a single Hall of Fame Winner for 2021, the HOF committee will determine the top 10 from the previous 38 winners - from 1983 to 2019. Then, the HOF committee will select the top 5 to be honored with special recognition at the event. 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. The HOF committee consists of engineers, managers, executives, technical experts, SPE Fellows, SPE Honored Service Members and automotive industry technical experts having served at least 30 plus years in the industry. Nominations must be submitted online via:

<https://speautomotive.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2021-SPE-Innovation-Awards-Program-Part-Nomination-Form-V13.pdf>

“We’re really looking forward to celebrating a half century of automotive advancements enabled by innovative plastics technologies,” said Jeffrey Helms, global automotive director, Celanese Corp., who returns as the 2021 *SPE Automotive Innovation Awards* chair. “Unfortunately, we had to postpone the 2020 event due to CDC (Center for Disease Control) recommendations for social distancing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,” added Helms. “This year, in addition to celebrating ‘*50 Years of Plastics Innovation*,’ we will showcase how polymer technologies enabled solutions for battling COVID-19,” continued Helms. “Protective masks, face shields, clothing; medical supplies; ventilators and more are made possible or enhanced with plastics,” said Helms. “Our society benefits from the ability of plastics to deliver form and function in unique ways through the creativity of automotive engineers and designers.”

The program 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.

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.

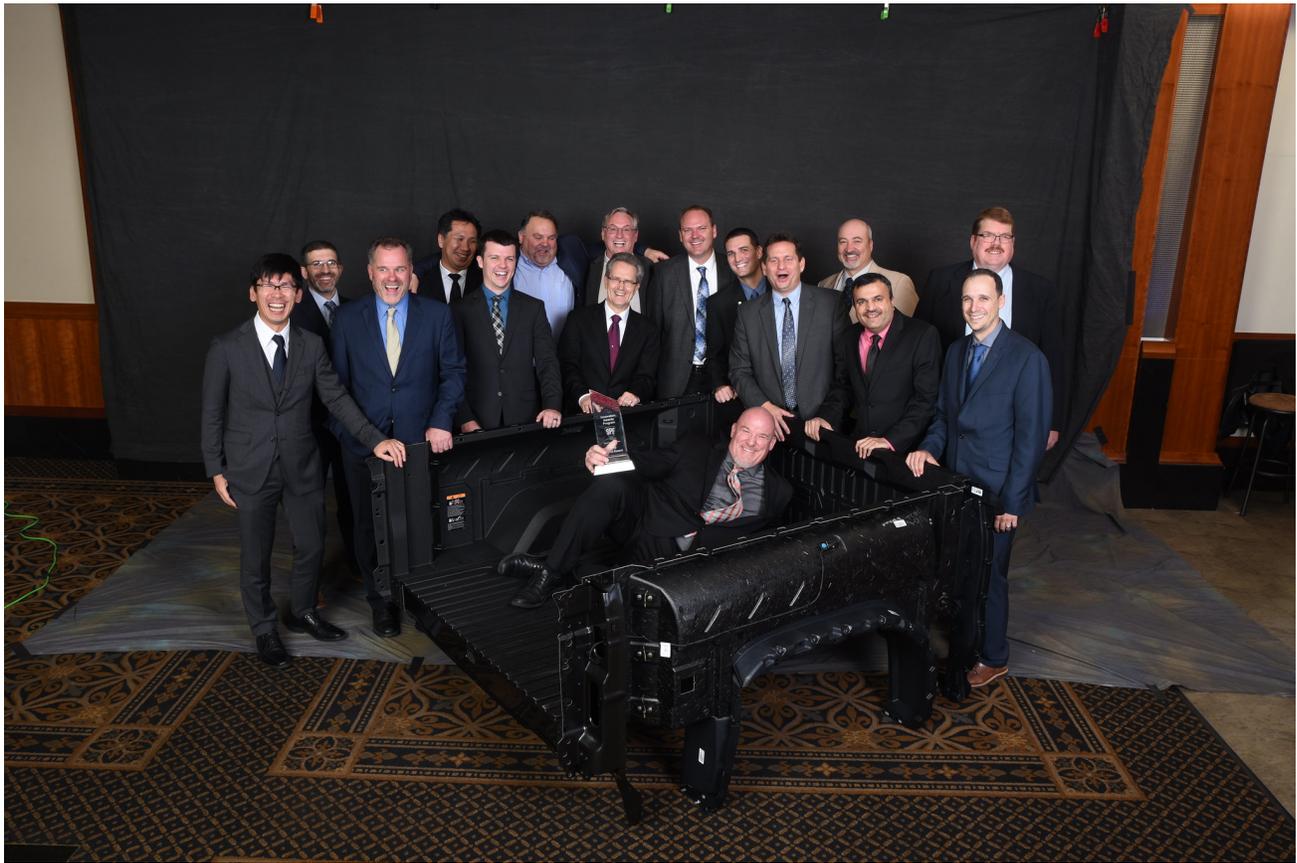
Over the years, the competition drew attention to plastics as an underutilized design tool and made industry aware of more progressive ways of designing, engineering, and manufacturing automotive components. From its humble beginnings, the competition has grown to be one of the most fiercely contested 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 1, 2021 (also in Auburn Hills, Mich.) Winners of each part category, the Grand Award, Hall of Fame, and Lifetime Achievement winner will all be honored during the *Automotive Innovation Awards Gala* on November 10, 2021. 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 Div., see <https://speautomotive.com/>. For more information on the Society of Plastics Engineers, see www.4spe.org.

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<https://speautomotive.com/innovation-awards-competition-and-gala/>

Shown above are members of the team that developed the 2019 Grand Award and Body Exterior category winner – the Composite Pickup Box on the 2020 GMC Sierra LD FST pickup from General Motors Co.

Attn: Editors: A large collection of SPE Automotive Division digital photography is available for download at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/speautomotive/albums/with/72157673717033072>

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