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Media Contact: Teri Chouinard CBC, APR, SPE Automotive Div. Comm. Chair 248.701.8003. teri@intuitgroup.com

SPE® ANNOUNCES NEW CATEGORY FOR 2021 AUTOMOTIVE INNOVATION AWARDS COMPETITION & GALA:

“AUTOMOTIVE PLASTICS INDUSTRY SOLUTIONS FOR COVID-19”

TROY, (DETROIT) MICH. – The Automotive Division of the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE®) is announcing a new category for its 50th annual *Automotive Innovation Awards Gala*, the oldest and largest recognition event (established in 1970) in the automotive and plastics industries. The new category, “Automotive Plastics Industry Solutions for COVID-19,” will highlight how automotive OEMs and suppliers adapted their processes, materials, or business to support the international needs for battling COVID-19. “The automotive plastics industry developed a number of extraordinary innovations for battling COVID-19,” said Jeffrey Helms, global automotive director, Celanese Corp., who returns as the 2021 *SPE Automotive Innovation Awards* chair. “Protective masks, face shields, clothing; medical supplies; ventilators and more were made possible or enhanced with plastics,” continued Helms. “We’re looking forward to honoring our industry heroes who worked together to provide fast, efficient and effective solutions for COVID-19 at this year’s special 50th SPE Automotive Innovation Awards Gala. “

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 12 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. 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. A special Hall of Fame (HOF) award will be given to the top 5 most innovative HOF winners since the category was established in 1983. The HOF Award honors an application that has been in continuous use for 15 years or more and has made a significant and lasting contribution to the application of plastics in automotive vehicles. Nominations must be submitted online via:

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

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.

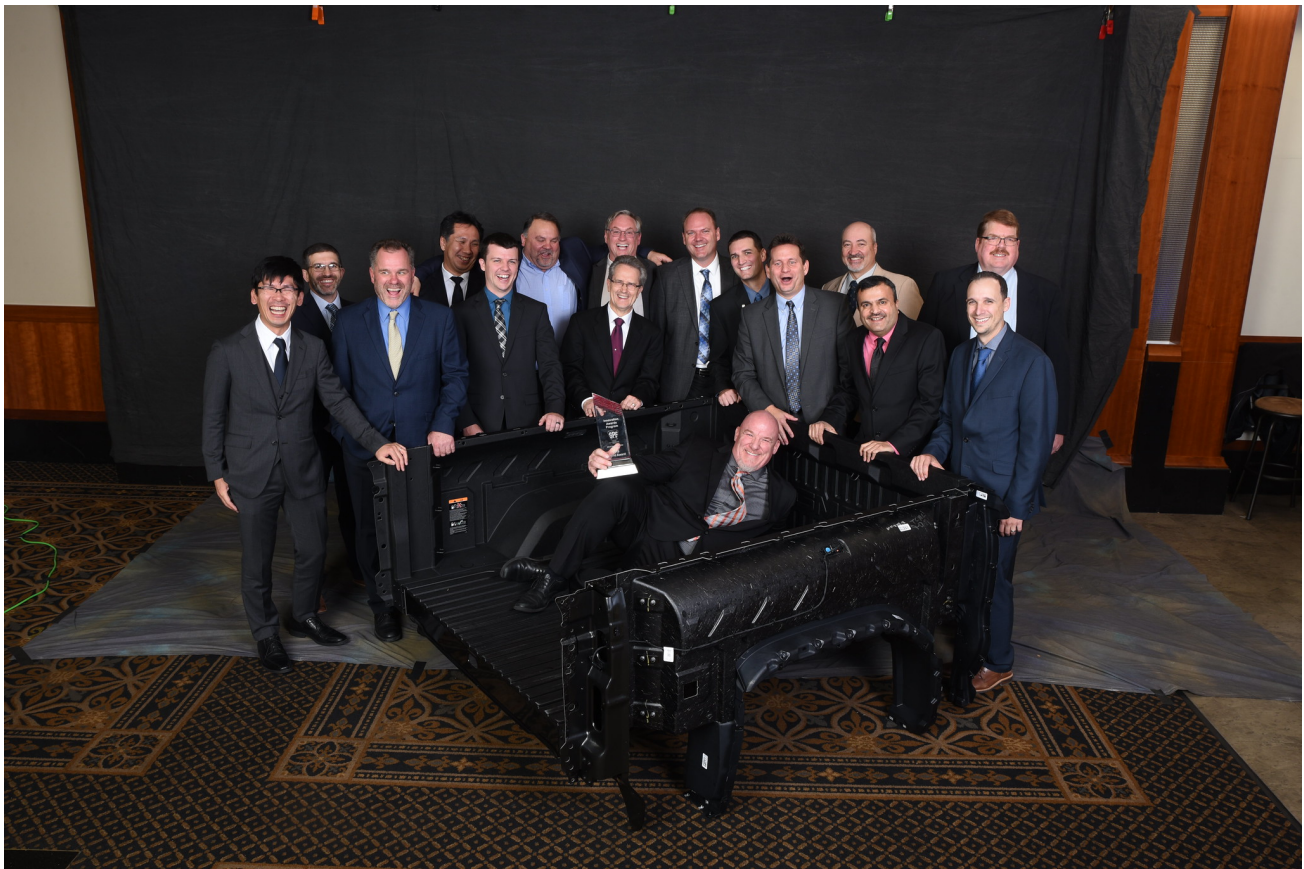
Over the years, the competition drew attention to plastics as an underutilized design tool and made industry aware of more progressive ways of designing, engineering, and manufacturing automotive components. From its humble beginnings, the competition has grown to be one of the most fiercely contested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