PLASTICS MAGAZINE

SPRING 2022 ISSUE

PLASTICS ON THE ROAD

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Special thanks to Greg Hannoosh and Next Step Communications for their reporting on "Leading Roles in the Big Show."

a letter from our CEO

It is a privilege to introduce this edition of *PLASTICS* Magazine as the new President and CEO of the Plastics Industry Association.

Over the past few years, I have become somewhat of a road warrior in defense and promotion of the plastics industry—traveling to more than forty states for meetings with local, state, and federal elected officials. That kind of travel makes this issue perfect to have as my first, as we take a look at some of the amazing things plastic makes possible in the automotive sector. The innovation achieved by the incredible people of the plastics industry in making automobiles more efficient and durable makes me proud to represent them.

And speaking of being on the road, we've been having some great planning meetings getting us on the road to NPE2024. Steve London leads off this edition of *PLASTICS* Magazine with his perspective from the NPE2024 Chair. Plus, you'll meet two women who are making NPE history as the first female Chair/Vice Chair duo to lead an NPE committee.

Also in this issue, we're beginning a regular feature focused on PLASTICS' efforts to help the next generation of plastics professionals build their capabilities and careers through FLiP (Future Leaders in Plastics). Our first article features a mentor and mentee from the FLiP Mentorship Program who have built a strong and productive relationship.

Bringing up the rear for Spring 2022, we have a look at a classic toy that took plastic automotive innovation to a whole new level—the level of a toddler!

I think you're going to come away from this issue with a lot of pride in being a member of PLASTICS.

Enjoy!

Matt Seaholm
President and CEO

PLASTICS MAGAZINE

Have a great story to tell? Share it with us at
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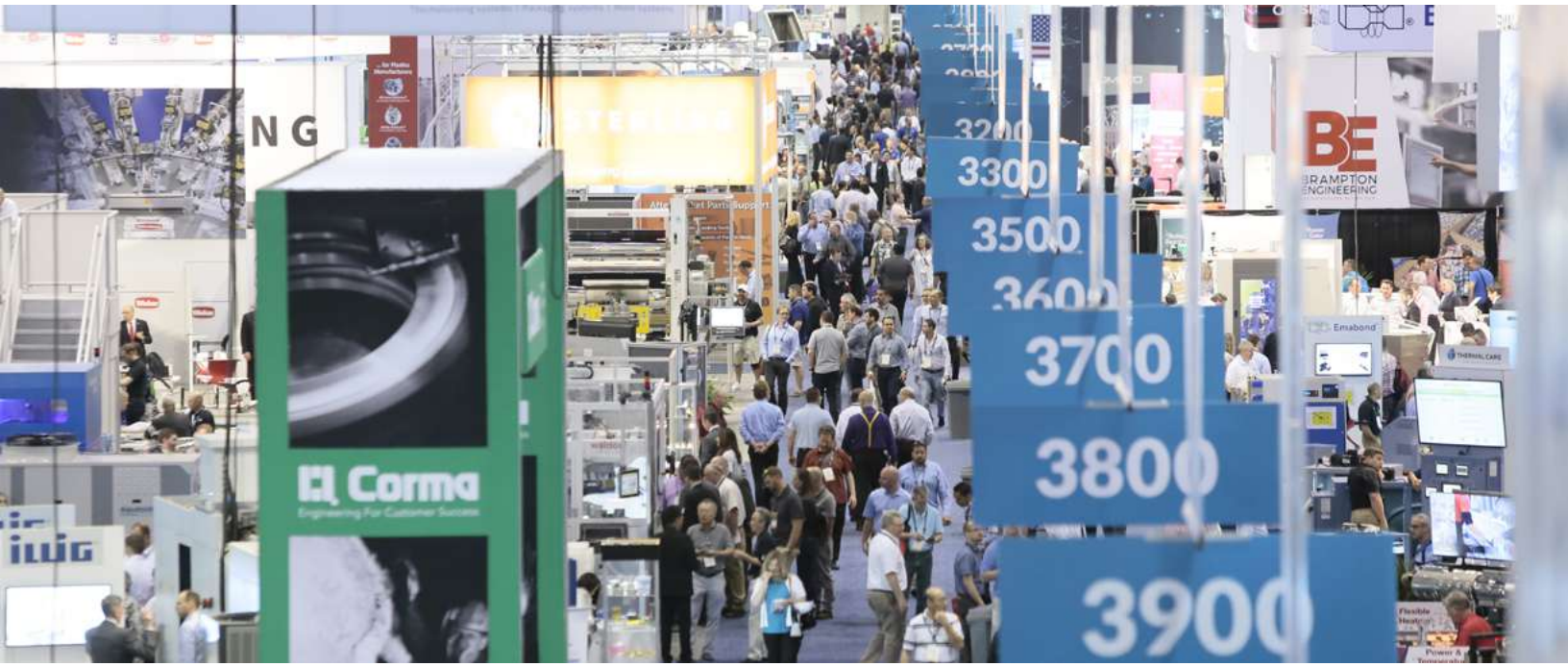


Get Ready for NPE2024

Steve London
Chair, NPE2024

As Chairman of NPE2024: The Plastics Show, I am happy to report that you have a great team of people working to make NPE2024 an extraordinary event. It is an honor and a privilege to work alongside these members who, through their efforts, drive our industry and association into the future.

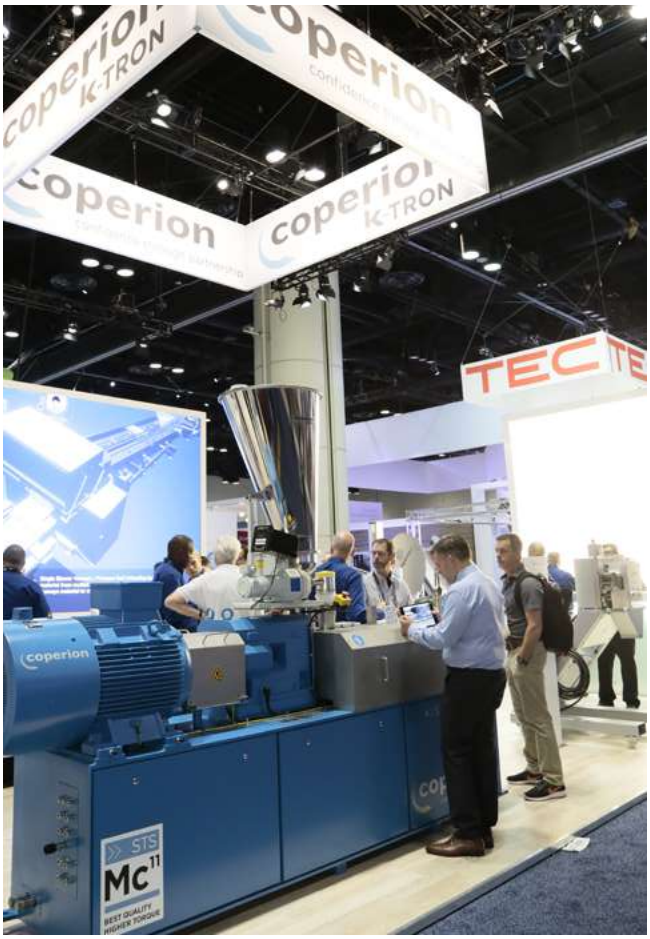
The planning for NPE2024 began in December 2021 with our traditional three-year show cycle kick-off meeting. More than thirty-seven member companies have signed on to support the NPE2024 effort.

Representing the entire value chain

The composition of our three standing committees (Operations, Sales & Marketing, and Content) spans all of the membership councils and ensures that the planning and execution of NPE2024 is a benefit to all members of the association.

I am also impressed by the generational makeup of the committees; we have plenty of NPE experience in the mix as well as an infusion of young, enthusiastic energy that says great things about the future of PLASTICS and our industry.

Steve London, President/COO of Bekum America Corporation



By the way, Annina Donaldson and Tammy Straw are making some history on the Sales & Marketing Committee. You can read all about it on Page 20.

Going live for the Space Draw

Early in our planning discussions, everyone present felt the need to go back to a live in-person Space Draw. We are planning that live event for the first quarter of 2023.

There is a big benefit for exhibitors in having a live event, as it enables us to have members of the various NPE committees on hand as a courtesy to offer exhibiting companies the benefit of past experiences and other valuable insights into the show. That will be especially helpful for companies that are relatively new to the NPE Space Draw.

There will also be opportunities for exhibitors to meet with many service providers who can help enhance their booth presence. A variety of sponsorship opportunities will be available, as well.

We believe the in-person event also dispels any misconception about the order in which booths are selected, and possibly subsequently moved. The goal of the team is to provide a completely transparent process for the selection of booth space.

Planning in a changed world

We have all gone through transformational changes in the last two years, and now our trademark exposition also needs to transform to meet the needs of all interested parties. So, in addition to preparing for the Space Draw, the team is looking back, evaluating NPE2018 as well as plans that were previously laid out for NPE2021 to be sure our planning reflects the experiences of recent years.

I can assure you that your fellow members have every aspect of planning well in hand. Please join me in thanking the volunteers who are working tirelessly on all of our behalf to put NPE2024 together and wish them success on their current mission.

PLASTICS **ON THE ROAD**

From headlights to taillights, plastics are making vehicles better, stronger, faster and safer.

Despite constant claims by activists that plastics are killing the planet and those of us who live here, we in the plastics industry know that exactly the opposite is true. Plastics save and protect both human beings and the planet we live on every day.

Nowhere is plastic doing more for people and planet than in the cars we drive and the trucks, buses and other vehicles that fuel economies the world over. Lightweight parts that reduce gasoline use, versatility and strength that allow a greater ability to absorb impact, unique contributions to the rise of electric vehicles—those are just a few of the advantages plastics have brought to the table.

Plastics save fuel

Michael Cirone, President of Manar, Inc. and Chairman of PLASTICS' Transportation & Industrial Plastics (TIP) Committee, knows that better than most. His company does a lot of work in the automotive and transportation sector, and he's well-versed in the reasons why today's vehicles are fifty percent plastic by volume.

"The major thing within automotive is better fuel economy," Cirone said. "That's what's been driving a lot of the move toward plastics over the years. They always want things to be lighter weight."

Wherever you look in your car, you'll find the type of contributions companies like Manar make to the quality and fuel-economy of your vehicle. And those innovations go beyond all the plastic you can see while sitting behind the wheel.

For instance, heat-resistant under-the-hood parts help cars last longer because reinforced plastic maintains its rigidity and doesn't rust. Plastic heating and air conditioning components provide comfort without adding burdensome weight.

Cirone explained that advancements in plastics have allowed the lightweighting trend to extend even into high-temperature areas that were once the sole domain of metals, such as piston cooling nozzles in which glass-filled plastic is now combined with metal for enhanced rigidity and lighter weight.

"In selecting a material and designing a part, you usually start with temperature requirements, then chemical resistance, and then dimensional objectives," Cirone explained. "For instance, do you need the part to be flexible or rigid? In the case of larger piston-cooling nozzles you need rigidity for a tight tolerance. Using glass-filled plastic for those provides rigidity and cuts down shrinkage."

Piston nozzles may not sound like a lot of interior weight if you don't work in automotive, but the savings add up. Especially when combined with other larger weight-savings that are also invisible to the driver, such as a large defroster duct Manar designers started work on in the late 1980s for a major pickup truck brand. A piece that started out as hefty steel went through a series of plastic metamorphoses since then from polycarbonate to polyethylene, reducing costs and decreasing important weight. The contemporary version of the part weighs in at a 5.6 pounds (73%) weight savings over the original metal part.

"In addition to lighter weight and better performance, plastics have helped in the creation of safety elements that have contributed to a drop in fatalities among people who get into accidents."

Plastics = Innovation

"Even ten years ago, manufacturers wouldn't have considered plastics in high-temperature situations," Cirone said. "But through a lot of hard, collaborative work among resin manufacturers, material processors and original equipment manufacturers, we've been able to change that."

"We couldn't do the things we do in vehicles without plastics," Cirone added. "In addition to lighter weight and better performance, plastics have helped in the creation of safety elements that have contributed to a drop in fatalities among people who get into accidents."

Even the instrument panel of a car is designed to be a safety feature.

"One thing people don't realize," Manar's Cirone said, "is that the instrument panel is designed to break in certain areas in order to absorb impact and protect the people in the vehicle."

And vehicle manufacturers take the safety benefits of plastics very seriously. Cirone recalled a time when he was working with a transnational auto manufacturer on a project. "We wanted to change the plastic being used for the instrument panel," he said, "but they wouldn't do it. It was going to save them half a million to a million dollars, but they had already done all the testing on the original plastic and knew what to expect in terms of safety."

What Cirone and his team were suggesting was a switch from one type of ABS plastic to another, one that would have provided safety at less cost, but the manufacturer chose to err on the side of spending more to ensure safety.

From the malleable materials that allow automobile designers to create efficient and convenient cupholders to the reinforced plastics in crumple zones that can absorb six to twelve times as much energy as steel, significantly decreasing the amount of impact that reaches passengers in a collision, plastics are—and will continue to be—essential to the many vehicles we rely on to keep life moving.

Michael Cirone, President of Manar, Inc.

ADVANCING SAFETY IN PLASTICS

Plastics Machinery Safety Standards Now Available

The Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS) is an American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-accredited standards developer, working to ensure all plastics machinery is safely built to standard to protect our industry's most valuable resource: our people. To contribute your expertise, as a member of a PLASTICS technical committee improving both safety and productivity, email Director of Industry Standards Jeffrey Linder at **jlinder@plasticsindustry.org.** Make your voice heard.

Why choose PLASTICS standards?

- Become a voting member with influence over industry standards
- Lead a technical committee dedicated to your business
- Gain a competitive edge in the marketplace
- Improve efficiency in sectors from food and healthcare, to home goods and sustainability

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Driving on Susta

There is a growing demand for recycled plastics in the automotive market

The idea of using plastic in the manufacturing of automobiles has probably been around as long as the auto industry itself. Bakelite, the revolutionary plastic that enabled the creation of small plastic parts for manufacturers came on the scene in the early 1900s, at roughly the same time as the modern automobile industry.

Here in the 21st century, there's a new revolution going on. Not only do we want and need plastic in our vehicles, for safety and fuel economy, we want that plastic to keep coming back in the form of recycled material that can be used to produce new vehicles.

Catching up with a trend

"Recycled plastic has been used in making automobiles for more than twenty years" said Alex Lukshaitis, Automotive Business Manager for Entec Polymers, a distribution subsidiary of the Ravago Group. "In many cases, it's something that the automotive industry hasn't taken credit for," he added.

That isn't the case anymore. Consumer demand for "green" products and processes have made recycled materials an important element for building consumer trust and market share. Lukshaitis' colleague at Entec Polymers, Eric Parrell pointed out that major auto makers have been leading in their marketing that way, and that more and more are asking for recycled content.

"We're working on a couple of hot programs for multiple auto OEMs right now, where all they want is recycled material," Parrell said. "We're seeing more manufacturers asking for recycled

ainability Street

materials and including them in specifications where they can."

And that's just on what you might call "current cars" that are for the most part, running on combustion engines. Be ready to see a lot more plastic on the road in the not-too-distant future with an increase in vehicles that run on actual current... electrical current.

Opportunities are increasing

"A whole new world has opened up with electric vehicles and the issues of battery life and driving range which are tied to lightweighting," said Robert Render, Business Development Manager for Sustainability at Ravago Recycling Group. "There are specific projects going on, involving recycled materials, that are focused on the way batteries are stored, covered, and held in place." An electric car battery can weigh as much as a thousand pounds, so any weight savings that can be connected to them are important."

Render went on to point out that recycled materials aren't just for passenger cars. "Automotive also includes light trucks and delivery vehicles such as the Amazon vehicles you see in your neighborhood," he said. "There are all kinds of opportunities there that you wouldn't think of that are appropriate for recycled plastics. We're working on a project combining micronized rubber from worn tires with polyethylene or polypropylene to manufacture wheel wells and flooring for trucks." Such projects—using parts from existing trucks to make new parts—are steps toward closed-loop recycling scenarios in which the goal will be to use no new virgin material in the manufacturing equation.

Robert Render of Ravago Americas

Alex Lukshaitis of Entec Polymers

Eric Parrell of Entec Polymers

Heather Lodispoto of Entec Polymers and Ravago Americas

Having been founded on finding value in discarded products, Ravago and its subsidiaries are way out in front on the overall concept of sustainability.

Since style isn't as much of a concern in commercial vehicles, the kind of modular differences that might make closed-loop feasible may be more likely to turn up there. "We can't imagine an entirely closed-loop vehicle today, because it doesn't exist," said Lukshaitis, "but that doesn't mean it couldn't exist. It would take a concerted effort and the willingness to do some things that we don't do today, so a vehicle could be taken apart efficiently and recycled properly."

Given the number of commercial vehicles in the world, the opportunities for recycled plastic use are many. "When you rent a Penske van, for instance, the flooring in that truck is hardwood," Render said. "And hardwood comes from old-growth forests in Central America and the Amazon. It takes a long time to renew, so replacing that wood with composite materials is a priority. Especially if it means lighter weight and fuel economy, as well."

Using composite instead of wood in commercial vehicle applications also makes for a more stable, better insulated vehicle since composites don't expand and contract with temperature and moisture the way wood does.

It's not just recycling

Exploring the opportunities for recycled materials in automotive manufacturing leads inevitably to the larger issue of sustainability, of which recycling is just a part—an important part, but not the entire answer when it comes to the larger goal of reducing carbon footprints on a global scale.

Having been founded on finding value in discarded products, Ravago and its subsidiaries are way out in front on the overall concept of sustainability.

Heather Lodispoto, Communications Director for Entec Polymers and Ravago Americas, said, "We're able to stay ahead of the game on distribution, being ready when needs arise for things like the expanding electric vehicle market, because we have our own sustainability initiatives in place." She added that most distribution partners

don't have such initiatives and that Ravago and Entec Polymers continue to refine their own already robust initiatives, adapting to the developing sustainability efforts and needs of the companies with which they interact.

Robert Render echoed the importance of a broad perspective on sustainability. "In highly consumer-facing industries like automotive, people want to know that the products they're getting and the materials that make them are made in a sustainable manner," he said, "and that they're delivered in a sustainable manner." Noting that while Ravago is invested in important areas such as alternative energy (solar, wind and biomass), Render says it's important to think even more broadly than that. "It's thinking about carbon impact throughout the entire manufacturing and distribution process, and the whole product lifecycle," he said. "Just as people look at the total cost of ownership when it comes to factoring things like insurance and maintenance into the cost of owning a car, we look at the total cost of carbon at every step of our processes. We have a 2025 goal to be carbon neutral in our plants and eventually in all of our warehousing and distribution."

RECYCLING POTENTIAL, RIGHT AT YOUR FEET

When you open the door of your car, there may very well be a discarded carpet partly responsible for making that happen. Ravago Manufacturing Americas is the world's largest recycler of nylon carpet fiber, processing it into raw material for numerous uses, including automotive applications. This graphic shows some of the automotive parts made possible by Ravago Manufacturing Americas' recycling of carpet fiber and other post-consumer and post-industrial nylon.

Mentorship Is a Gift that Gives Back

Finding a mentor and being a mentor are both rewarding experiences.

Think back over your personal life. Were there people who were there for you at the right time and the right place? Family members, other relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, kind neighbors—most of us can point to a few people who have helped us navigate life in important ways.

Now, what about your professional life? Is there someone from way-back-when, elsewhere in your industry, or just down the hall who has made a difference in your career? Someone who took the time to care about your personal success and help you achieve? Someone who stepped up as a mentor?

Hannah Smith, a senior product development engineer with Printpack knows exactly what that feels like, courtesy of the mentorship program run by PLASTICS' Future Leaders in Plastics (FLiP) committee.

"Keeping up with customer demands in the wake of COVID, the limitations it has presented, the raw material shortages, the shipping and logistical challenges, being an effective contributor in a remote workplace—those were just some of the things I wanted to talk through with someone," Hannah said. "Getting a fresh perspective from someone outside my company and talking with someone who has gone through similar experiences from both a work and personal standpoint was wonderful."

Talent sharpening talent

The FLiP Mentorship program pairs plastics professionals under the age of 40 with volunteer mentors from throughout PLASTICS' member companies. In Hannah's case, she was paired with Monica Filyaw, Director of Quality, Safety and Regulatory Affairs for PolyQuest. Monica brought plenty of experience to the table both from her corporate life and from the PLASTICS perspective; she is the first woman to chair the association's Food, Drug and Cosmetic Packaging Materials Committee.

"Monica understood my role and the dynamic within the company and was able to pull from similar past experiences to talk through some of the challenges I face," Hannah said. "She's a strong, genuine person, committed to her family, community and work."

The mentorship program provides some guidelines, but mentors and mentees are free to take their partnership in whatever direction they choose. Distance and COVID restrictions prevented Hannah and Monica from meeting face-to-face, so they met online once a month for an hour, and discussed such issues as problem solving, work/life balance, and communicating and influencing at multiple levels and across departments.

"I found that our meetings were a great opportunity to run different scenarios by someone," Hannah said. "Monica was able to provide feedback and suggestions on ways to improve. It's great to get perspective from someone who's not into the weeds of day-to-day activities at your company."

Rewarding experiences, all around

In case you're wondering, all these positive feelings are mutual; Monica is convinced that Hannah "is going to do great things" in her career. And the mentorship program experience turned out to be just as rewarding for the mentor as it was for the mentee.

Monica was especially happy to be there for someone traveling a similar path to her own. It wasn't long ago that she, like Hannah, was a young mom caring for two small daughters, a young woman working a technical job in a largely male manufacturing environment. "When I was a young engineer at DuPont," Monica said, "it would have been nice to have someone in the industry outside of my company to talk to about things, someone to be a sounding board. That's what I would have liked to have when beginning my career, so that's what I wanted to provide for Hannah."

Hannah Smith of Printpack (above). Monica Filyaw of Polyquest (below).

Hannah and Monica remain in touch, enjoying a genuine friendship made possible by the FLiP Mentorship Program. Hannah is thankful to the program for doing "a great job" selecting her mentor.

"Our meetings quickly became more like a chat between friends. I felt comfortable talking about any topic," Hannah said. "This program was a great opportunity to network and meet another woman in the plastics industry, outside of my current organization. I would recommend the FLiP Mentorship Program to anyone interested."

And Hannah's mentor has some words of encouragement for her peers among PLASTICS members. "We're all busy," Monica said, "but this is a way to nurture the next generation, so we don't have to stick around until we're seventy. We can help make sure they don't get burned out at a time in life when they're being pulled in a hundred different directions by sharing our experience and giving them support in dealing with their challenges."

Be connected. Be heard. Be represented.

Be involved, with the Plastics Industry Association.

WHO ARE WE?

The **Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS)** represents the entire plastics supply chain, globally — from materials and equipment suppliers to processors, converters and recyclers. Partnering with leading brand owners, we allow innovative companies to shape our industry's future. To help your business thrive, PLASTICS provides valuable connections to industry peers, exclusive economic data, the latest standards and regulatory information, and a voice in every state and the nation's capital.

WHY CHOOSE US?

- **Information**— Access to exclusive economic reports, the latest manufacturing standards and more
- **Events** — Dozens of special events each year promoting partnership and innovation
- **Networking** — Meet new suppliers and customers to grow your business
- **NPE®** — We organize one of the world's largest plastics industry trade shows

WHAT DO WE DO?

ADVOCACY

Advocate for an environment where the plastics industry thrives.

COMMUNICATIONS

Educate society on the true value of plastic.

ENGAGEMENT

Deliver value that drives growth and engagement for members and customers.

SUSTAINABILITY

Lead and rally the plastics industry in sustainable materials management.

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Building a Sustainable Future

A conversation with PLASTICS new VP for Sustainability

Patrick Krieger joined the staff of PLASTICS in 2015. Among his many accomplishments these past seven years are the creation of the PLASTICS Recycling and Sustainability Summit, the launch of our Bioplastics Week and Recycling Week online events, and contributing to the growth of Operation Clean Sweep.

Patrick sat down with PLASTICS Magazine recently to chat about the association's increasing focus on sustainability.

What are your general impressions on having been named VP for Sustainability?

Well first, I think it's fair and unsurprising to say this is an exciting opportunity that I'm incredibly happy for. Plastic has such a positive sustainability story and is a major contributor to improving the sustainability of other industries like packaging, building construction, automotive, healthcare, and on and on. Of course, that doesn't mean we don't want further improvement. I'm trying to temper my excitement by working very hard to not become overwhelmed with the enormity of everything sustainability means for our industry.

Why is sustainability an important focus for the organization?

Sustainability is an important topic because it's about longevity. It's about ensuring that there is a world in the future that we can continue to live and work in. For instance, I'm impressed by how long many of our member companies have been in business. Equipment for injection-molding can have a service life of decades, so that manufacturer wants to be around to sell you that replacement.

When you're dealing with such large time horizons, sustainability is relevant to understanding and addressing challenges that might not be an issue now but will be in coming decades. And while plastic is an amazing material that can do things almost nothing else can do, there are external and internal pressures in our industry to advocate for sustainability and encouraging us to do better. Sustainability is all about doing better for the long term.

What do you hope to accomplish in this role?

One of the first things I hope to accomplish is to create a unifying vision for what sustainability means for our industry and the association. There are so many initiatives to address the variety of challenges that plastic can solve. I would like to do my part in ensuring that we can focus those efforts to prioritize some major actions.

What can member companies do to support the association's sustainability efforts?

It's not an understatement to say that our members are the only reason we're able to do what we can. We need our members to be engaged, to tell us what they think is important and what they value, to provide the data, the resources and the manpower necessary to accomplish the things we need to work on collectively to ensure that plastic continues to be the sustainable material of choice. Plastics industry companies should also be seen as role models for how businesses can be forces for good. So plainly speaking, for the industry association to be all in on sustainability, we need our members to be all in on sustainability.

Anything else you want members to hear?

First, I want to thank them for their support. Second, I am here to listen, and I value their feedback, insights, and experience. If they have opinions on what we're doing, they should reach out! And finally, I have been a part of this industry for seven years and I think it is the responsibility of everyone involved to leave things better than we found them. I know that challenges exist and what I want to do is encourage others to pitch in as well.

The Challenges of the Chair

Meet Tad McGwire, Chair of the PLASTICS Board of Directors

As the third-generation CEO of Industrial Heater Corporation in Cheshire, Connecticut, a top supplier of specialized heating units for plastics and other industries, Tad McGwire has manufacturing in his blood. He's been in and around it his entire life. That lifelong perspective is just one reason why his peers in the association elected him PLASTICS' current chairman of the board. We caught up with Tad for a conversation about his new role with the association.

Tell us about your journey to the CEO's chair at Industrial Heater.

Industrial Heater is a family business, so naturally that's where my career began. But I felt it would be a good idea to broaden my background with experiences I could later apply at Industrial Heater. So, I left for eight years during which I worked at two automotive suppliers in the Chicagoland area. The second of those companies, Phoenix Lighting Products, was a start-up I formed with two partners to manufacture interior lighting components for autos and RVs. After receiving my MBA in 1990 from the University of Chicago, I sold out my ownership in Phoenix and returned to Industrial Heater, where I've been CEO ever since.

What is your history with PLASTICS?

In 1979, when the association was still called SPI (Society of the Plastics Industry) and I was an undergrad at the University of Chicago, my father asked me to help out at NPE. Then, in 1982 he asked me to attend the first meeting of the association's newly formed Components Division. I became active in the components group in 1991 when I took over Industrial Heater. Over the years, I have served as Chair of the Components Division, Machinery Division, Equipment Council, NPE, and now the association.

What was your impression of that first NPE you attended in 1979?

That was the first time I was truly introduced to the plastics industry, and I was in awe of the equipment and technology. I think our trade show is the best venue to showcase our industry. I became active on the NPE Committee with the 2006 show and have served in various capacities ever since. My term as chair of the show ended with the cancellation of NPE2021.

With regard to NPE2024, I'm very happy that we were able to resolve our remaining outstanding concerns. We can now credit our exhibitors 2021 deposits towards 2024, giving the current Chair, Steve London, and his team a fresh start towards putting on the great show we have all come to expect.

Why should CEOs give serious consideration to enrolling their companies in PLASTICS?

The Plastics Industry Association is the voice of the industry. We are the only association that represents the complete plastics supply chain. Accordingly, we provide strong networking opportunities through our many conferences and events. Also, we have a vibrant and impactful advocacy team. Our Washington Fly-in fosters important connections with national political leaders. I've also always felt our economic data and statistics are valuable tools.

What do you see as the most significant challenges facing the association and industry today?

Clearly, the biggest problem we face is the movement to deselect our products due to the solid waste problem. We design and manufacture products that make people's lives better, reduce the carbon footprint of man and protect our food chain. We have a lot to be proud of, but our message is being drowned out. We need to sharpen our message and be much more proactive about getting in front of our critics, legislators, and the public.

Tell us what you hope to accomplish as Chairman.

I have three goals for my term. First, I think we need to demonstrate sound financial management. Our members trust us with the resources to fight their fight but the cancellation of NPE2021 was a seismic event for PLASTICS. Our CFO, Wayne Popham, and his team did an outstanding job managing our finances over the last few months and we were never in any financial danger. However, the pandemic has been a rude reminder of the unpredictability of life, and we need to plan appropriately.

Second, we need to rally our industry around the challenges we face. The association is made up of the entire supply chain as represented by our three councils (Materials Suppliers, Processors, and Equipment Manufacturers). I hope to help facilitate a higher level of coordination and cooperation among the councils so we can speak in a unified voice.

Third, our voice has to have better reach and be more targeted. We are using the three councils to help us with the targeting and we are in the process of building out the communications team to sharpen the message and get it in front of the right people. My goal is for our communications to become even more robust and effective.

What are your thoughts on building interest in the association among younger professionals to ensure a vibrant, committed membership for the future?

We have to continue to grow and build the value proposition for our FLiP (Future Leaders in Plastics) group, and part of that is opening avenues for our younger members to have a voice. Frankly, if you look at my history, it simply takes too long for any member to rise into a leadership position within the councils or on the board. We need to find a better balance between giving our FliP members an opportunity to serve and maintaining some continuity. We often say, "An engaged member is a committed member," so we need to create more avenues for engagement for our younger professionals.

feature story

Leading Roles in the Big Show

Meet the first women to lead an NPE committee.

History is being made in the NPE2024 planning process. As Chair and Vice Chair of the NPE Sales & Marketing Committee, Annina Donaldson and Tammy Straw are the first female team to lead an NPE committee.

Donaldson is President of Florida Operations for Maxi-Blast, working with her brother, other family members and employees in St. Petersburg, Florida where she focuses on managing the company and its Engineered Thermoplastics line of blast media for plastics and rubber cleaning processes.

"I grew up in the plastics industry," Donaldson said. "My siblings and I would go to the factory, shred paper in the office or sweep the shop floor. In high school, I would do random projects filling sample bags or separating plastic. After I finished graduate school and tested out other jobs, my father asked me to interview for a full-time position working alongside him and eventually taking over."

Straw started at ENTEK, a leading manufacturer of twin-screw extruders, aftermarket spare parts and turnkey extrusion manufacturing plants in 1999 with no idea that she was beginning a long and successful career in the plastics industry. "I was looking for a short-term job at the time, which has turned into a great career of twenty-two years and counting," she said. Straw heads up marketing and business development for ENTEK.

Doing their mentors proud

When asked about mentors, Donaldson mentioned her father, the founder of Maxi-Blast, and the late Gail Barker, former Maxi-Blast President. "All my life, I watched my father strive to maintain his work ethic and grow his knowledge of the plastics industry," she said. "Working alongside him was a daily mentorship program. Gail, however, was the first person to really take me under her wing. She was President of Maxi-Blast when there were even fewer women in the industry than there are today. She gave me advice about leadership, being a woman in a male-dominated industry, and how to work with family. The year she mentored me was, and is still, the most invaluable of my career."

Annina Donaldson of Maxi-Blast

Tammy Straw of Entek

For Straw, mentors include John Effmann, former Director of Sales & Marketing at ENTEK, and Linda Campbell, ENTEK's current Vice President of Sales. "I learned a lot working alongside John for ten years, and we grew ENTEK's brand recognition in the industry over that time," she said. "John was Chair of NPE2012, so I had exposure to NPE committee duties. When he retired in 2016, he let PLASTICS know I was interested in a committee. Next thing I knew, I was on Sales & Marketing."

Straw has worked closely with Linda Campbell for more than twenty years. "Linda has been forging a path for women in manufacturing, in plastics, and at ENTEK throughout her career," said Straw. "She's passionate about mentoring women and making sure they're prepared when opportunities arise."

Stepping up to a challenge

In their Chair and Vice Chair NPE roles, Donaldson and Straw oversee a committee of thirteen members from a variety of large and small companies representing processors, equipment manufacturers and materials suppliers. The committee manages a large and diverse set of marketing projects, from advertising, public relations and social media campaigns to outreach campaigns designed to attract exhibitors and attendees.

Given the cancellation of NPE2021 due to COVID-related concerns, NPE2024 committees are stepping up to the challenge of providing an excellent experience for an industry that has been starved for opportunities to showcase itself. Donaldson, who was Vice Chair of the NPE2021 Sales & Marketing Committee, is optimistic that NPE2024 will be a big success. "Our industry wants and needs to get back to in-person shows," she said. "NPE has always been an important event on the global plastics industry's calendar, and we are working hard to make NPE2024 the best yet."

The forefront of change

Phyllis Hortie, Senior Director of Trade Show Services at PLASTICS, confirmed that Donaldson and Straw are the first female duo to serve as Chair and Vice Chair of an NPE committee. "According to the historical documentation we have on hand, Annina and Tammy are the first," she said, "but there were three women who served in leadership roles previously."

These included Marlena Heydenreich of Foremost Machine Builders, Inc., Chair of the NPE1994 Public Relations & Advertising Committee; Toby Royal of Krupp Werner & Pfleiderer Corporation, Chair of the NPE2000 Public Relations & Advertising Committee; and Tamara Greathouse of LyondellBasell Industries, Vice Chair of the NPE2009 Sales & Marketing Committee.

Donaldson was quick to point out that, in addition to the milestone being set by herself and Straw, Eve Vitale of the Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE) is serving as Vice Chair of the NPE2024 Content Committee, marking the first time in NPE history that there have been three women on the NPE Executive Committee.

Glenn Anderson, Chief Operating Officer at PLASTICS, said the association is working hard to promote more diversity in its ranks. "I have been in the plastics industry for almost forty years, and while I feel our industry as a whole is quite diverse, that diversity isn't necessarily as visible in the leading industry associations as it should be, including ours," he said. "We are taking the necessary steps to change this. For example, in our Fall 2021 *PLASTICS* magazine, we featured several dynamic women, including one building a career through a diversity-focused apprenticeship program at BASF. In addition, we have recently filled two very important Equipment and Materials council director roles with remarkable women and look forward to expanding diversity at PLASTICS even more in the future." Anderson added that Leslie Jutte now leads the Material Suppliers Council, and Whitney Taveras was recently promoted to lead the Equipment Council. Both were internal promotions at PLASTICS.

When asked what she sees as the importance of her role, Tammy Straw said, "The history of leadership at NPE is no different than the history of the entire plastics industry, and there hasn't been a lot of diversity. Neither Annina nor I want to be labeled as trailblazers, but we do feel it's important to show those entering careers in plastics that our industry is more diverse than ever before, and that women and minorities have a strong place and strong voice in this industry. I've witnessed this change first-hand over the past twenty-two years and both Annina and I are honored to be a part of it."

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PLASTIC CLASSIC

A Cozy Ride Called the Cozy Coupe

Consider the giants of American automobile history...Henry Ford, Walter Chrysler, the Dodge Brothers, Jim Mariol.

Jim Mariol? That's right. He invented one of the bestselling cars in American history—a red, yellow-roofed, no-motor car driven by millions and millions of happy customers who never once had to worry about the price of gasoline.

Mariol (1930-2020) was the designer of the cute, compact, and now classic, Cozy Coupe...which, by the way, is made of low-density polyethylene, in a rotational molding process. Go, plastic!

Born out of a passion for cars

Manufactured by the Little Tikes toy company, Cozy Coupe is the wildly popular brainchild of a man who got the idea for it after scooting around on his office chair. It has become so much a part of American kid-culture that *Smithsonian* profiled the car and its creator in 2020, not long after the 40th anniversary of Cozy Coupe's 1979 arrival in stores.

Born and bred in Ohio, Jim Mariol grew up dreaming of becoming an automobile designer and even won a college scholarship for one of his concepts. That scholarship brought him to the University of Cincinnati and a co-op program that allowed him to design hubcaps, steering wheels and hood ornaments for Chrysler while attending school.

After the Korean War interrupted his college career, Mariol and some partners founded a firm called Design Alliance, serving clients including Procter & Gamble and Emerson Electronics in various one-off projects. Then, in 1976, the consultancy struck up a relationship with Little Tikes, where history would be made.

Going pedal-free

There were riding toys on the market in the 1970s, but they all required the ability to push pedals. Even the legendary, child-friendly Big Wheel tricycle has a recommended minimum age of 3 to ensure enough pedal-pumping power. But where was the joy for the toddler set, kids just getting their "sea legs," so to speak?

"There weren't many moving toys for

Little Tikes, like many companies, is concerned about reducing its carbon footprint. In addition to developing new toys that have sustainability designed into their themes, they've enlisted Cozy Coupe to star in this online video about recycling.

Fun Fact: Cozy Coupe was originally designed as red with a black hard top; it was changed to a yellow top in production to be more kid friendly.

younger children," said Michelle Parnett-Dwyer, of the National Toy Hall of Fame, quoted by *Smithsonian*. "Cozy Coupe was an opportunity for little ones to experience what adults do. Kids love to mimic mom and dad. It was perfect for toddlers."

One of the reasons Cozy Coupe was so perfect is that Mariol had always-at-the-ready focus group and testing help—his grandchildren.

"Dad knew it would be a big hit from the start," Mariol's son, John, said in *Smithsonian*, adding "My kids got to test the Cozy Coupe model. Dad would take photos of them in the car to see how they fit into it." He also laughingly referred to his children as their grandfather's "test dummies."

If you were too grown up to have ridden one when Cozy Coupe first hit the market, odds are you've watched toddlers discover the joy of opening the door, getting behind the wheel and going wherever their little feet can take them, just as Jim Mariol watched his grandchildren as they helped him develop a legend in the world of toys.

A Community Coupe

Logan Kramer, at the wheel of the neighborhood Cozy Coupe.

Autumn Kramer is Senior Manager for Information Technology at PLASTICS in Washington, D.C. She's also the mom of two boys who are part of a long line of neighborhood Cozy Coupe lovers...all lovers of the very same Cozy Coupe.

"Quite a few years ago now, when some neighbors of ours adopted a little boy, we all pitched in with things they might need. One of those items was a Cozy Coupe that someone's kids had outgrown—and had already been through two other neighborhood families."

Later, when the neighbors who had adopted that little boy eventually moved from D.C. to San Francisco, care of the community Cozy Coupe fell to Autumn's family.

"We held onto it probably longer than anyone else in the neighborhood because it went through both of our boys," Autumn said. "But every single kid in our neighborhood also knew that we had it, so they would come over and all decide to try squeezing as many of them as possible into this little car. You had 6 and 7-year-old kids sticking themselves inside like it was a clown car!"

When Autumn's boys outgrew the car, and "flew the Coupe" so-to-speak, the family put it outside to see if anyone else wanted it. "Another family down the block took it," Autumn said. "Then it got passed from that family to a lady who runs a daycare in the neighborhood. It's now going through a whole other generation of kids. This toy car is probably twelve or thirteen years old. It's amazing how long they last."

"Little Tikes toys and the way they put them together is amazing," Autumn continued. "We know people with Little Tikes kitchen sets from the eighties with corded play telephones on them and they're still in great shape." As a further testament to the longevity of the Cozy Coupe, Autumn mentioned several Washington D.C. parks that have those red-and-yellow classics sitting on their playgrounds for children to use, along with other riding toys. "The thing about Cozy Coupes is that every child loves them," Autumn said. And apparently, it's a love that doesn't fade, since she added, "Even my ten-year-old, when he sees one, still tries to stuff himself inside!" Autumn also pointed out the great memories attached to a such toy. "When kids around here see that Cozy Coupe, they enjoy a sense of 'we all shared that car' nostalgia and the satisfaction that comes from being part of a tradition."

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Being surrounded by the best and brightest future leaders in the plastics industry I am confident we are all headed in the right direction. FLiP continues to connect the future of plastics with mentorship, leadership, personal growth, community improvement and networking opportunities. I encourage all young professionals to get involved with FLiP. The friendships I've built will last a lifetime.

Jon Smalling,
Nalle Automation Systems (NAS)

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