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Art Exhibit Celebrates Chrysler Workers' Multiple Talents, Creativity in Manufacturing Process

November 21, 2013, Detroit - The UAW and Chrysler Group LLC today unveiled an art show that recognizes multidimensional employees from the shop floor and celebrates the role of the creative process in manufacturing automobiles.

The jointly sponsored 2013-2014 Artists at Work Exhibition features 92 pieces of art by 50 UAW-represented and non-bargaining unit Chrysler Group employees.

UAW and Chrysler Group officials honored the employee-artists at a reception this evening at the UAW-Chrysler National Training Center (NTC). Artists at Work is the country's only juried art show sponsored by a major corporation and a labor union.

The exhibit consists of work by 34 UAW members from 13 locals and 16 non-represented employees. They come from 15 Chrysler Group locations and reflect a cross section of the workforce.

The collection features a diverse range of art forms, from paintings to ceramics, textiles and photography, and includes a towering metal sculpture that weighs more than 800 pounds.

"Art and manufacturing have more in common than you might think," said Keith Mickens, NTC co-director from the UAW. "The creative process involved in producing a memorable image on a canvas can be used to help build quality vehicles on an assembly line. We're celebrating both through Artists at Work."

World Class Manufacturing (WCM), Chrysler Group's production system, places a premium on employee involvement and creative approaches to building quality vehicles in the safest, most cost-efficient manner possible.

"There is a remarkable correlation between the artistic process and the manufacturing process," said Michael Brown, NTC co-director from Chrysler Group. "Transforming innovative ideas into reality – an artist's formula for success – is what drives WCM, and gives Chrysler a competitive edge in the marketplace."

A panel of four Detroit-area art professionals chose work for the exhibit from among about 600 entries submitted by U.S.-based Chrysler employees. They awarded "best of show" prizes to three employees and selected 11 employees for honorable mention recognition.

The first-place winner is Joseph Auito, a joint activities representative for UAW Local 412 and a former Warren (Mich.) Truck Assembly Plant employee. He impressed the judges with his miniature, functioning double Ferris wheel assemblage sculpture that was a year in the making.

The innovative piece consists of various recycled parts, including the rototillers salvaged from a John Deer tractor, seats from an old Erector Set and a toy steam engine.

"I like my work to make a statement," Auito said. "If you look at it and say 'that's pretty' or 'it's not saying anything,' I have failed as a sculptor in my eyes, and that piece hits the scrap pile. What's important to me is that I have created a piece of art you will remember and think about when you get home."

Auito also earned honorable mention for two necklace pendants he has in the exhibit.

Shannon Jones, an electrician at Mt. Elliott Tool and Die in Detroit, earned second place for his bold acrylic painting of a welder at work. It was the first painting he's ever done.

A member of UAW Local 212, Jones has a four-year degree in electrical engineering. He said he's "kind of an academic guy ... and I like to draw," but to enter the Artists at Work competition "I had to learn to paint on the fly."

To create art, he said, "You've got to be driven."

Shan Haq, a project chief in Body Closures Engineering, won third place with a Photoshop composite photograph that captures the "giving back" spirit of Chrysler Group employees who perform community service.

The photograph that is the basis for the composite was taken at a farm where Chrysler volunteers were picking corn donated to Forgotten Harvest, which donates fresh food to the hungry.

In the picture, the volunteers appear to be seen through the windshield of a Jeep Wrangler Rubicon that was superimposed on the bucolic scene, along with the image of a semi-truck from Forgotten Harvest that seems to be reflected in the Jeep's rearview mirror.

Haq, who works at the Chrysler Technology Center in Auburn Hills, Mich., was one of the volunteers.

The other employees who received honorable mentions are:

- Sabrina Dao, data architect, Information and Communication Technology Building, Auburn Hills, Mich., photography
- Loel Gnadt, electrician, UAW Local 869, Warren (Mich.) Stamping Plant, wood turning
- Chaka Kpotufe, electrician, UAW Local 685, Kokomo (Ind.) Transmission Plant, pencil drawing
- Mark Lesch, millwright, UAW Local 1268, Belvidere (Ill.) Assembly Plant, pencil drawing
- Clifford Mosier, tinsmith, UAW Local 1264, Sterling Stamping Plant, Sterling Heights, Mich., metal sculpture
- Sherry Richards, product designer, UAW Local 412, Chrysler Technology Center, Conte crayon drawing
- April Shipp, storekeeper, UAW Local 412, Chrysler Technology Center, textile
- Jon Walters, manufacturing mechanical engineer, UAW Local 1302, Indiana Transmission Plant II, Kokomo, Ind., pencil drawing
- Clay Warnock, events coordinator, UAW Local 889, Chrysler Technology Center, photography
- Tammie Wilson, human resources assistant, UAW-Chrysler National Training Center, photography

Following today's opening, the Artists at Work Exhibition will travel to the Chrysler Technology Center where it may be viewed by employees and visitors at the headquarters complex through the end of January.

The National Training Center, located near downtown Detroit, and the UAW-Chrysler World Class Manufacturing Academy in Warren, Mich., will host the artwork for a year upon its return from corporate headquarters.

This is the ninth Artists at Work show sponsored by the NTC. Since its inception in 1999, the program has showcased more than 1,100 pieces of art by 536 Chrysler employees.

The new exhibit, which may be viewed online at www.uaw-chrysler.com, is not open to the public.

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