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GM CEO Dan Akerson congratulates employees on their quality efforts.

Quality Victory in Hand, GM Executives Praise Employees for Their Handiwork

by Jim Stickford

GM CEO Dan Akerson took some time last week to congratulate the employees at GM's Tech Center in Warren for their part in GM's excellent showing in the J.D. Power Initial Quality Rankings for 2013.

The celebration was held on June 26 in the VEC building and, to kick off the event, Detroit Tigers pitcher Max Scherzer said a few words to the gathered employees.

"It's great to be at GM because every GM employee I meet loves the Tigers," he said. He congratulated the employees on their good year and said that the Tigers had a great season in 2012, but that didn't make them complacent in 2013.

WJR radio personality Paul W. Smith acted as master of ceremonies and said that Scherzer was having a pretty good 2013 himself. Scherzer, who had an 11-0 record at the time, has the chance, Smith said, to be the first pitcher in major league baseball to go 14-0 in almost 20 years.

Smith then introduced Alicia Boler-Davis, GM's senior vice president, Global Quality and Global Customer Experience.

Boler-Davis said that it was great

to speak to the people who made GM's recent success possible.

She added that GM was the only manufacturer to score below 100 defects per 100 vehicles in the survey. GM had eight vehicles finish in the number one slot in their categories. And fully 50 percent of GM's vehicles finished in the top three in their categories.

She said the workers of CAW Local 222 deserve credit because their plant – Oshawa in Ontario, Canada – makes the Impala and the Equinox. The Impala took first in its category and the Equinox finished among the top three in its category.

"Special congratulations go to all team members within all of our plants," said Boler-Davis. "Clearly, we're making good progress building quality into our manufacturing.

"But let's remember that quality is a team sport that requires the commitment and engagement of the entire enterprise. It's about understanding our customers – how we design, engineer and manufacture our vehicles . . . and the experience our customers have with our dealer partners during and after the sale."

In the past, Boler-Davis said,

people might complain about something in a vehicle if it broke down, but today's customers are more demanding and they will complain about something if it doesn't look right, feel right or operate the way the customer wants it to operate.

"I cannot stress enough how important customer retention and loyalty are to achieving our long-term business goals," Boler-Davis said. "That's why we need to continue listening to our customers and anticipating their wants and needs well before we build any new vehicle.

"Long gone are the days where we could launch a vehicle with problems and plan to fix them later. Today, we need the first car off the line to be as good as the last.

"A great example is the Buick Encore, which is one of our eight segment winners in its launch year. Now, that is what we need to achieve with every new vehicle we introduce."

And Boler-Davis said Scherzer was right when he talked about not resting on last year's success. GM must sell to its customers every day and every year. She wants the June 26 celebra-

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SRT Brand Carries Torch For Chrysler Performance

by Irena Granaas

Approximately two years ago, Chrysler named its SRT (Street & Racing Technology) as a separate company brand within Chrysler.

Today, the SRT brand includes its family of performance vehicles – the Charger, Challenger, Viper, Grand Cherokee and the 300 – and the company has launched the brand's first advertising campaign.

Titled, "Body and Soul," and debuting June 14 on Youtube, the

new campaign celebrates the relationship between the "maker" and the machine.

"We wanted to infuse our first-ever SRT creative campaign with grit, beauty, longing, desire and nostalgia for the tradition and history of the automobile, but to also give a nod to the relationship between the machine and its maker," said Olivier Francois, chief marketing officer, Chrysler.

"The Charger, Challenger, Viper, Grand Cherokee and 300

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Schaeffler Auto Helps Carmakers by Building Better Parts

by Jim Stickford

Building a better transmission goes beyond coming up with a better design. It also means designing and building the parts that will make that new transmission a reality.

That's where Schaeffler Automotive in Troy comes in. The company has been working with Chrysler to develop the bearings needed to make the company's new nine-speed transmission – that's featured in the latest Jeep Cherokee model – work.

Jitesh Modi, group leader and principal engineer for transmission applications at Schaeffler Automotive, said the development of transmission with eight, nine or even 10 gear shifts is vitally important for OEMs.

"The nine-speed transmission is special because it offers real fuel economy improvements," Modi said. "This is important because by 2015, the average fleet mileage OEMs will have to achieve is 32.5 mpg. By 2025, that figure becomes 54.5 mpg."

Having more gears means less

energy is needed to accelerate, which means better gas mileage, Modi said, adding that having more gears also means being heavier and requiring more space, which is a trade-off and traditionally the OEMs settled on having six gears in a transmission.

Modi was quick to emphasize that it's the OEMs like Chrysler who come up with new transmission designs.

It's Schaeffler's job to work with the OEM to design and build the components that will go into

newly-designed transmissions.

The challenge of designing new bearings to go into a nine-gear transmission was coming up with parts that don't make the transmission bigger, Modi said, noting that part of getting better gas mileage is keeping the engine small and not adding weight. More gears means more parts, he said, which means more weight.

Schaeffler was able to accomplish its job of meeting OEM parts standards by developing

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2013 Chevy Spark



2013 Dodge Dart

'Coolest Under \$18K' List Names 3 Detroit OEMs' Cars

Detroit's OEMs were well-represented in Kelley Blue Book's (KBB) new list of the "10 coolest cars under \$18,000 for 2013."

Ford Focus (2nd), Dodge Dart (5th) and Chevrolet Spark (10th) made the "cool" list.

About the Focus, KBB reviewers said, "The Ford Focus single-handedly demoted the Mazda3

from 'most fun-to-drive' to 'one of the most fun-to-drive' cars in the category.

"And, just like the Mazda, the Focus looks as good as it moves. Factor in a richer, more stylish interior and a serious tech advantage, and you've got this year's

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2013 Ford Focus

Faurecia's Sales Ranking Surges From 8th to 5th

by Irena Granaas

Whether it's an interior, the emissions control technologies or seating, the chances are at least part of your current vehicle owes its origin to a global supplier born in France called Faurecia.

The supplier born in France has surged from eighth place just two years ago to fifth place in sales among all automotive suppliers in North America in 2012.

The company's sales leaped from \$4.7 billion in 2011 to more than \$6 billion last year.

The climb up the ladder of three positions by Faurecia was greater than that of any other supplier in the top 10, according to data from Faurecia.

"Faurecia's ranking reflects our company's progressive expansion across the U.S., Mexico and Canada over the past several years," said Faurecia North America President Michael Heneka.

"We have gained increasing recognition for our technology innovation, and our introduction of new lightweight products that save fuel, reduce emissions and make driving more comfortable has drawn the attention of a steadily enlarging proportion of the automaker market. We are most grateful for our customers' confidence in our capabilities and for their partnership in our growth."

Headquartered in Auburn Hills, Faurecia North America plans to break ground soon on a

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