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From left, Elizabeth Steenwyk, Elizaveta Bondarenk and Peter Corey

LTU Students Capture Top Spots in Steel Wheel Design

The Steel Market Development Institute's (SMDI) Wheels Task Force, in partnership with Michelin, announced the winners of its fifth annual Steel Wheel Design Competition at Lawrence Technological University (LTU) at the program's awards presentation last week.

The event, which awarded scholarships to LTU students for their designs that communicate the lightweighting and styling benefits of steel wheels, took place at the LTU campus in Southfield. SMDI is a business unit of the American Iron and Steel Institute (AIS).

"The students did an outstanding job this year designing wheels that highlight steel's lightweighting and durability benefits, while also creating their styling features to enhance wheel appearance," said Ron Krupitzer, vice president, automotive market for SMDI.

"The competition not only proves to be a great way to show steel benefits to consumers, it also helps wheel makers and automotive manufacturers meet new fuel economy standards with lighterweight wheels."

The competition is an option within the LTU curriculum and is based on engineering results from SMDI's Lightweight Steel Wheel Project.

Students were tasked with designing an advanced alloy steel wheel that communicates the lightweighting and styling benefits of steel in the competitive wheel market.

The renderings and steel wheel features were judged by a panel of steel experts, automotive designers, engineers and

wheel manufacturers on the following criteria: material celebration; changing customer perception by communicating environmental issues and performance; creativity through a unique and innovative design that maintains functionality; and an executed design concept that complements the vehicle's aesthetics.

The winning wheel design winners were:

- First place - Elizaveta Bondarenko. She designed for the GMC Terrain. Bondarenko's lightweight 17-inch steel wheel features inspiration from the vehicle's exterior design and its grille to come up with the idea to insert the mesh pattern into the wheel. This creates a unique and innovative look, as well as better aerodynamics.

- Second place - Elizabeth Steenwyk. She designed to integrate classic Volkswagen lines and a sporty feel into a lightweight steel wheel for the 2014 Volkswagen Beetle GSR Turbo.

Steenwyk's concept is a drop-center wheel, which reduces the amount of material used. It also features a groove along the spokes, where a black rubber insert with a yellow pinstripe sits.

The pinstripe echoes the iconic rush exterior of the GSR to create a sportier, powerful design that better fits the Beetle.

- Third place - Peter Corey. He designed for a Fiat 500. His 17-inch steel wheel features several layers, including folded-over steel for a 3-D effect, bent sides and welded sheets. The unique, lightweight design mimics an eagle's wings when it's swooping down from the sky.

UPS Goes Propane with Local Supplier

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

cates, integrates the engine to a chassis. This is no simple task, Pachla said. The company must integrate engineering and calibration to make sure the engine and the chassis "work" well together.

"We also certify the product," Pachla said. "We employ about 30 people in our Madison Heights facility. We've been working on the LPG project since November of 2012. "We decided to do this because, while we normally supply regular gasoline engines, we also realized that alternative fuel engines are the up-and-coming thing."

So, Pachla said, they decided to start out of LPG because propane suppliers make it an easy alternative fuel to use.

"If you have a big enough LPG order, the supplier will often build a fueling station for a user like UPS for free," Pachla said. "On the other hand, it might cost up to a million dollars to build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) fueling station."

UPS will use the 1,000 LPG vehicles in and around Louisiana and Oklahoma.

With the right infrastructure in place, Pachla said, this can be an economical way to power a fleet.

'Driverless Cars' Just Around Corner?

LOS ANGELES (AP) - California's Department of Motor Vehicles is wading into the complex question of how to regulate the use of automobiles that rely on computers - not people - to drive them.

Though they sound like something from the future, some say "driverless cars" could be commercially available by decade's end.

Last week, the DMV heard ideas on how to integrate the

cars onto public roads. Questions range from data privacy and security to whether a person will have to be in the driver's seat at all.

The DMV already has drafted rules governing how companies can test the technology.

This was a reaction to the fact that Google had been testing on highways and in neighborhoods well before the Legislature decided to regulate.

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