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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SPE NAMES HAROLD (HAL) GILHAM THERMOFORMER OF THE YEAR**

**CAROL STREAM, IL, U.S.A., August 3, 2021:** The Society of Plastics Engineers (SPE) Thermoforming Division has named Harold (Hal) Gilham as Thermoformer of the Year.

The award will be presented during SPE's Thermoforming Awards Dinner, held in conjunction with the 28<sup>th</sup> SPE Thermoforming Conference®. The conference will take place **September 20-22, 2021 in Grand Rapids, MI**, at DeVos Place, the JW Marriott Grand Rapids and the Amway Grand Hotel. The Awards Dinner will be held on Tuesday, September 21, at the JW Marriott Hotel.

As a young adult, Hal Gilham began his informal education by working at Productive Woods, his father's wood pattern shop. Mr. Gilham graduated from Lynchburg College with a degree in political science and for a short time he successfully entered corporate sales in the greater New York City area. However, motivated by the freedom and opportunity he saw in his father's small business, Hal joined the company and quickly made an impact by bringing in modern accounting, job costing, and business operations analysis. It wasn't long before more business came in, including thermoforming tooling. After working with a team reworking a fiberglass mold, Hal saw an opportunity and decided to expand the business into plastics processing. He purchased his first machine, and Productive Woods became Productive Plastics.

As the business grew with a steady flow of heavy gauge work, Mr. Gilham sought ways to expand his business, which included providing 'value added' services. By offering information on the materials, design, and the thermoforming process to his customers, Mr. Gilham expanded the business into more active markets. The electrical device market in the New York Metropolitan Area and the introduction of pressure forming as an alternative to injection molding created even greater opportunity.

In the 1990s, the company continued to expand into other markets. Under Mr. Gilham's leadership, Productive Plastics increased its pressure forming capabilities and began serving the medical device industry, utilizing more heavily engineered materials that required specifications

above the usual ABS or HDPE. As new technologies were used in 5 Axis CNC machining and tooling techniques with loose pieces, process improvement became a core value and a catalyst for running the business. During this time Hal's father James, the founder of the company, retired and Hal gained complete control of Productive Plastics.

Toward the end of 2010, Productive Plastics conducted numerous projects where plastics purchases were equal to those in metal in cost, which was highly unusual for a small thermoformer. In the same time period, Productive Plastics reduced its machinery from 12 thermoforming machines and 15 CNC machines to six thermoformers and six CNC machines while more than doubling their output.

A former SPE Thermoforming Division Board Member, Hal joined SPE in 1991 and is now an emeritus member of SPE. During his tenure on the Board, Mr. Gilham served as Chairman of the Materials Committee, the Processing Committee, the Machinery Committee and Parts Competition Chair at a few SPE Thermoforming Conferences. In addition, he served on the Division's Awards and Nominating Committees. Mr. Gilham is now retired but remains engaged in the industry where he spent most of his 40+ year career. His son, Evan Gilham, is now Chief Operating Officer of Productive Plastics.

"Hal Gilham's career is an inspiration to us all. From the next generation of plastics professionals to those who carry the entrepreneurial torch – in spirit or in practice – Hal's accomplishments motivate us all to think big," said Steve Zamprelli, SPE Thermoforming Division Chair. "The SPE Thermoforming Division Board is honored to name Hal Gilham as the 2021 SPE Thermoformer of the Year."

Past recipients of the Thermoformer of the Year Award may be found on the SPE Thermoforming Division website at <https://thermoformingdivision.com/awards-recognitions/thermoformer-of-the-year/past-winners/>.

More information is available at <https://thermoformingdivision.com> or by contacting Lesley Kyle at 1-914-671-9524 or [lesley@openmindworks.com](mailto:lesley@openmindworks.com).

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THE SPE THERMOFORMING DIVISION is a technical division of the Society of Plastics Engineers, based in Danbury, CT. The Thermoforming Division's mission is to facilitate the advancement of thermoforming technologies through education, application, promotion and research. The Division hosts an annual educational conference and publishes an award-winning technical journal, *SPE Thermoforming Quarterly*®. The Division has also funded over \$275K in equipment grants and tens of thousands of dollars in undergraduate scholarships since it was first formed. For more information, please visit <https://thermoformingdivision.com>.