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Economic Optimism Emerges From GAAS 2009 **338 Aftermarket Professionals Attend Annual Event**

CHICAGO, IL – May 14, 2009 – With predictions that the global economy is poised for a rebound in the near future, the 2009 Global Automotive Aftermarket Symposium (GAAS) was held Wednesday, May 6 and Thursday, May 7 at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare (near Chicago). This year's event included 338 aftermarket professionals who gathered for educational and networking opportunities.

Featured presentations on the current economic climate included: Jeff Applegate, chief investment officer, Citi Global Wealth Management; William Strauss, senior economist and economic advisor, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago; and Tony Cristello, senior vice president, BB&T Capital Markets.

"Though no one was predicting a quick turnaround, all of our featured speakers who addressed the economy sounded a note of optimism about the opportunities that are available now and when the economy fully turns around," said Dave Caracci, GAAS chairman. "We were greatly encouraged by the strong turnout for this year's event and the positive feelings that reverberated from the podium and in the hallways during networking sessions."

In his presentation, "Don't Waste This Crisis," John Waraniak, Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) vice president of vehicle technology, encouraged attendees amidst the recession and automotive industry difficulties to create new strategies to move their companies forward. Piggybacking on Waraniak's presentation, Bill Haas, vice president of education and training, Automotive Service Association (ASA), said that automotive service repair shops and their suppliers must adapt to new vehicle technology in order to ensure future profitability.

David Portalatin, director of industry analysis, The NPD Group, presented the results of research NPD conducted exclusively for GAAS on consumer attitudes toward repair and maintenance. Among other things, the research showed that 58 percent of those surveyed would spend more this year to keep their cars on the road longer.

Panel discussions looked at new strategies for parts manufacturers to survive, the future of the Internet in the aftermarket and a five-year outlook on the do-it-yourself (DIY) market.

Other presentations included a look at the environmental crisis and the automotive aftermarket industry from Dr. John Wormald, managing partner, autoPOLIS, and a look at "Finding the Aftermarket's Next Generation" from the winning team at this year's University of the Aftermarket Leadership 2.0 class. Team members included: Mirela Beecham, product manager, Federal-Mogul; David Lambert, business planning and analysis manager, Tenneco; Aaron Lowe, vice president of government affairs, Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association (AAIA); Vic Tarasik, owner, Vic's Precision Automotive; and Lloyd Wells, general manager, Ridge & Kramer Auto Parts/Federated.

GAAS 2010 will be held Tuesday, May 25 and Wednesday, May 26 at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare. For more information, visit www.globalsymposium.org or contact 301-654-6664.

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Image attached - 09GAAS0136 – Caption: 338 aftermarket professionals attended GAAS 2009 for fresh perspectives on the global economy and the DIY and DIFM vehicle repair markets. (Photo by Mark Baltzley)

[About the Global Automotive Aftermarket Symposium](#)

Founded in 1996, the Global Automotive Aftermarket Symposium (GAAS) has become the premier industry conference for senior-level aftermarket executives. The net proceeds from the event go toward funding industry scholarships. In 2008, 115 students who plan careers in the automotive aftermarket received GAAS Scholarships to help get their industry careers started. In the twelve years of the program, more than 1,400 students have received aid totaling more than \$1,400,000. Details about the GAAS scholarship program are available at www.automotivescholarships.com.

The GAAS program is a joint professional education effort of the of the Alliance of State Automotive Aftermarket Associations (ASAAA), Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association (AAIA), Automotive Aftermarket Suppliers Association (AASA), Automotive Industries Association (AIA) of Canada, Automotive Parts Remanufacturers Association (APRA), Automotive Service Association (ASA), Automotive Warehouse Distributors Association (AWDA), Motorist Assurance Program (MAP), Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association (MEMA), Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA), Tire Industry Association (TIA) and University of the Aftermarket. R. L. Polk & Co. is the corporate sponsor of the Global Automotive Aftermarket Symposium. For more information, visit www.globalsymposium.org.