

Minni Tek - August 18, 2009

Local SPE and the Governor Help Support Manufacturing in Minnesota

The SPE - Upper Midwest Section helped sponsor Minni Tek on August 18, 2009. SPE realizes small businesses and the local manufacturing sector are vital elements to keeping local economies strong, and last week, Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty reinforced that message during his keynote address to a crowd of nearly 170 people attending Minni Tek, a half-day, invitation-only event organized by Vista Technologies. The educational event introduced attendees to the new methods and technologies used to manufacture low volume production parts including additive fabrication, milling and aluminum tooling.



During his speech, Gov. Pawlenty noted that the public perception of manufacturing is 20 to 30 years out of date, and praised Minnesota manufacturers for adopting niche and value-added systems to counteract decline in the sector. He also commented on the prevalence of Minnesota growth due largely in part to in-state entrepreneurs who build their businesses locally.

The Governor had a tough act to follow, because Chapter President Richard Bopp had the podium before Governor Pawlenty to discuss the local SPE chapter and all the positives there are to joining. He highlighted the Online Technical Library, technical conferences, opportunities to network and for career development and the Golf Event on September 15, 2009. There were no member applications leftover on the Sponsor Table so we are looking for a great upswing in membership!

Dan Mishek, co-owner of VistaTek and on the SPE Board (Membership Committee), and his grandfather, Ken Wilson, founder of Wilson Tool, introduced the Governor together.



The event was held at North Oaks Golf Club in North Oaks, Minn. Attendees included engineers and purchasers from companies including Medtronic, Lockheed Martin, St. Jude, Toro, 3M and Boston Scientific.

About Minni Tek

Minni Tek strives to increase the awareness of the growing niche of low volume production and its struggles. The intention of this platform is to educate companies of new technologies and the successes that follow. For more information on MinniTek or to download the presentations, please visit www.lowvolumeproduction.com.

The session concluded with an expert panel discussion on the trends of low volume production and the implications these trends have on the Minnesota economy.

Other participating experts at the event included:

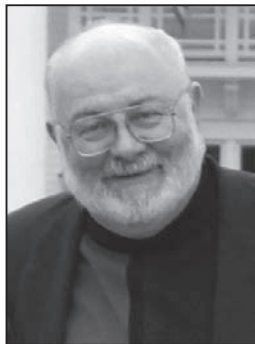
- Dr. Art Erdman**, University of Minnesota, event moderator
- Gloria McDonnell**, HLB Tautges Redpath, LTD., presenting on manufacturing and regulations
- Jeff Hanson**, RedEye, presenting on Direct Digital Manufacturing
- Dave Reasor**, Product Development Solutions, Inc., presenting on CNC Machining
- Dan Mishek**, VistaTek, presenting on Rapid Tooling and Injection Molding
- Expert panelists **David Sparks** - Andersen Corporation
- Michael Thorsfeldt** - Clearfield
- Paul Hennen** - Donaldson
- Bill Buenz**, Graco
- Kimberly Stenerson**, Medtronic



President's Remarks

Dick Bopp

Thanks to the graciousness of Dan Mishek and the VistaTek organizers of Manufacturing in Minnesota, a one-day MinniTek Symposium on Low Volume Production, held at the North Oaks Country Club on August 18, I was given the opportunity to present an overview of the



SPE along with an invitation to all assembled to join the Upper Midwest Section of the Society. (Please note Dan's MinniTek review later in this issue.) The meeting space was filled to capacity to hear invited speakers and panelists present a shared vision of a fundamental change in prototyping from making one or two mockups to manufacturing fully functional low volume production units. Moreover, they noted that "low volume" can mean up to 60,000 units produced.

Dan captured the moment in his introduction when he used the term, "excitement," to describe what was happening in his industry. Because indeed you could feel electricity in the room from start to finish. Of course, having the Honorable Gov. Tim Pawlenty on hand to give a keynote address outlining his plans for retaining small business in Minnesota didn't dampen the mood one bit. But, beyond the governor's well-received address, the spirit of the MinniTek was marked by a series of revelations on what is now possible with low volume production technology, e.g., Direct Digital Manufacturing (DDM), advances in CNC machining and VistaTek's progress with rapid tooling.

OK, but how does this all relate to the Society of Plastics Engineers? It relates because the MinniTek is an excellent example of a grass roots effort demonstrating how the SPE—year in and year out—helps keep us current with rapidly developing technology and business advances in our ever changing field. Other examples would include SPE's GPEC (Global Plastics Environmental Conference), annually held TopCons for Thermoforming, Foams, Vinyl, etc. and, of course, the Annual Technical Conference (ANTEC) and EuroTEC. Added to this list of teaching vehicles are SPE's technical journals and an impressive catalogue of seminars and webinars.
