

## **VIRTUAL THERMOPLASTIC ELASTOMER CONFERENCE A SUCCESS**

The Akron Section of the Society of Plastics Engineers, along with the TPE Special Interest Group of the SPE, again hosted a conference this fall that highlights a unique blend of polymers, Thermoplastic Elastomers (TPEs). This is the 14<sup>th</sup> time the conference has been held (normally every other year). The theme this year was **“Exploring Sustainable Innovation 2020”**.

We were well into planning for the 2020 TPE TOPCON when the Covid 19 pandemic gained traction. Since we had an excellent program, it was decided to move to a virtual platform for 2020. Past conferences have pointed out the value of this technical exchange to our industry. Our program contained two full days of technical and market presentations delivered by leaders in the plastics industry. As an added bonus, registrants are permitted to access presentations at their leisure to review and revisit information shared during the conference.

Presentations focused on segments of TPE use in Medical, Electronics, Automotive innovations and sustainability and sports/recreation markets. Examples were:

- (1) Robert Eller of Robert Eller Associates LLC discussed TPE opportunities in the Covid-Impacted automotive environment.
- (2) Salvatore Monte gave a compelling overview for post-consumer recycling possibilities.
- (3) Presentations looked at the medical world and biomedical backgrounds with TPE involvement related the current super bugs and corona type viruses and ways that could be used to combat/stop them prior to exposure.

This conference pushed the envelope of development as we featured two keynote addresses. Jason Hauer (The Garage Group) discussed Innovation Renewal and the Garage Group Story. Judit Puskas (The Ohio State University) presented her work on Piezo Active Elastomers for Biomedical Applications.

After the first day was completed, a Virtual Cocktail Hour was held. It was quite valuable catching up and meeting “like minded” folks with passion.

We thank the attendees as well as 11 sponsors for their support.

In addition to fostering new ideas and spreading innovation this conference supported the Akron Section and TPE SIG in their efforts to provide student scholarships and opportunities for students to participate in plastics industry events.