The 2017 Manufacturer of the Year keynote speaker was Economic Development Partnership of Alabama President Steve Spencer. The EDPA was created in 1991 by business leaders who shared a vision to make Alabama more competitive in order to compete on a global stage for major economic development projects. The EDPA works to attract, retain and grow jobs in Alabama, while encouraging innovation through its Alabama Launchpad program, which helps early stage companies start, stay, and grow in the state.

“Almost 13 percent of Alabama’s employees are in manufacturing,” Spencer said. “We want Alabama to get more manufacturing.”

The Business Council of Alabama and the Alabama Technology Network in partnership with The Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama and the National Association of Manufacturers presented the prestigious Alabama Manufacturer of the Year Awards to three outstanding Alabama manufacturers earlier this spring.

Recipients of the 2017 awards in the large, medium, and small manufacturing categories, respectively, were: Mercedes-Benz U.S. International Inc., in Tuscaloosa County, LINE-X LLC in Huntsville, and Central States Manufacturing Inc. in Jasper.

The Manufacturer of the Year Awards recognize Alabama’s Outstanding Manufacturers for 2017.
manufacturers that exhibit excellence in leadership, performance, profitability, and workforce relations. An independent panel of judges selected winners who demonstrate superior performance in customer focus, employee commitment, operational excellence, continuous improvement, profitable growth, and investment in training and retraining.

This year’s event on April 20 at the Alabama Activity Center in Montgomery was attended by more than 200 people. The first awards were in 2000.

BCA Chairman Jeff Coleman of Coleman Worldwide Moving in Dothan said the BCA and its partners were honored to recognize Alabama’s best manufacturers for the key role they play in Alabama’s economic health.

“For the past 18 years, the Business Council of Alabama has been proud to join the Alabama Technology Network in presenting the Alabama Manufacturer of the Year Awards,” Coleman said. “Alabama has been blessed for more than a decade by diversification and expansion of the state’s industrial base. Alabama manufacturers are creating jobs and making world-class products.”

BCA President and CEO William J. Canary recognized the important partnership between the BCA and the ATN in headlining manufacturers not only for their valuable role in the state’s economy but also the economies of their employees and suppliers. “The ATN is the driving force behind this award and its valuable experience, skill, and innate understanding of the manufacturing process bring great credibility to the companies we recognize today,” Canary said.

Keith Phillips, interim president of the Alabama Technology Network that plays such a vital role in Alabama’s technology revolution, was a co-presenter.
“Alabama’s Community College System is a great resource for Alabama manufacturers,” Phillips said. “A great example is the Alabama Technology Network, which is part of the community college system and which can help you troubleshoot whatever problems you have.”

Manufacturer of the Year finalists for 2017 and their locations, in alphabetical order, were: Amerex Corp., of Trussville; Central States Manufacturing Inc., in Jasper, CMC Steel Alabama in Birmingham, Hyundai Power Transformers USA in Montgomery, LINE-X LLC in Huntsville, KAMTEK Inc., in Birmingham, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International Inc., in Vance, and, To Your Health Sprouted Flour Co. in Fitzpatrick.

Winners were selected in categories based on the number of employees - the large category is for 400 or more employees, the medium category is for 100 to 399 employees, and the small category is for one to 99 employees.

“This event is special to us, for more than 1,300 of our members are manufacturing companies,” Canary said. “As the BCA is Alabama's exclusive affiliate to the National Association of Manufacturers, you can see why the BCA and our partners are honored to be able to recognize Alabama’s best manufacturers for the key role they play in the economic health of Alabama.”

High School Robotics Competition Award Presented

The 2016 BEST of the BEST Award was presented to Mobile's Davidson High School students who work in the BEST Robotics Inc. program located at Auburn University. BEST Robotics excites and inspires students about engineering, science, and technology careers through participation in sports-like competition.
The Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association presented Supplier of the Year awards to Efi Automotive in Limestone County in the Large Supplier of the Year category, TASUS Alabama of Florence in the Small Supplier of the Year category, and Air Hydro Power in Birmingham in the Service Provider category.

“The awards are AAMA’s premier recognition for automotive industry supply chain partners who demonstrate distinguished performance in quality, affordability, and reliability in nine different categories,” AAMA President Ron Davis said.

The BCA was a founding member in 2001 of the AAMA that serves as a platform for interaction among automotive companies in Alabama. Members share information, provide awareness of manufacturing trends, techniques and concerns and advance the business of manufacturing. The two work on various events to raise awareness and promote the importance of the multi-billion-dollar automobile manufacturing sector in Alabama, including Original Equipment Manufacturers and the supply chain.

“That valuable association also provides strategic direction for workforce development by strengthening business and education alliances, improving automotive manufacturing processes and systems, and conducting programs to share knowledge on issues impacting the automotive industry in Alabama,” Canary said. TMA
Mercedes-Benz U.S. International Inc. in Tuscaloosa County is the 2017 Manufacturer of the Year in the large manufacturer category. Mercedes-Benz rolled its first vehicle off the production line 20 years ago and became the catalyst for Alabama’s success in automotive manufacturing when it pioneered modern automotive manufacturing in the South.

Now in its 21st year of producing multiple models of premium automobiles and SUVs, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International has produced more than 2.5 million vehicles at its expanded operation in Vance. MBUSA is committed to local causes and initiatives and provides more than 3,600 jobs and another 7,000 to 8,000 jobs in support staff daily. Parent company Daimler AG has invested more than $5 billion in Tuscaloosa County and the manufacturer exports more than $1 billion in products each year across the world. TMA
Line-X LLC in Huntsville is the 2017 Medium Manufacturer of the Year. Line-X makes high-performance protective coatings not only for the automotive industry, but also emergency responders, the U.S. military, and other manufacturers around the globe.

LINE-X is a global leader in protective coatings development and availability that has expanded beyond bed liners into other areas of the automotive aftermarket, such as specialty automotive coatings and accessories. Its products have been used to safeguard bridges, farm equipment, heavy machinery, boats, trailers, and even the walls of the Pentagon.

LINE-X was a California startup and moved its headquarters to Huntsville in 2009. Today, LINEX has 102 employees with about 60 of them working in Alabama. Company growth required LINE-X to double its facility size and a move to the Huntsville Jetplex area. Huntsville is LINE-X’s R&D, testing and commercialization center for its products that are sold in 70 countries.

LINE-X has won numerous awards and focuses on consumer, employee and product development. LINE-X provides leadership classes and offers the training as optional for franchisees and master distributors. Leadership and time management training programs are provided to staff and LINE-X offers cross-training classes so employees can learn all aspects of the business. In Alabama, LINE-X focuses its community involvement on helping children and the less fortunate. TMA
Central States Manufacturing announced in 2005 it would build a 40,000-square-feet facility in Jasper’s Bevill Industrial Park and begin producing both panels and trim for metal buildings. That successful beginning in 2006 with 12 employees and more than $3 million invested has resulted in and its operation expanded CSMI Jasper’s employee-owners manufacture components for metal buildings and other uses. As an employee-owned company, Central States Manufacturing encourages their growth and wellbeing, provides quality products and service to customers, and serves the communities where employees live and work.

In 2009, CSMI Jasper added another 14,000 square feet to the facility and added a new production line and another $1.1 million in capital investment has been budgeted this year. Today, the Jasper facility has 92 employee-owners who convert more than 70 million pounds of cold rolled steel into metal building components that is predominantly sold and shipped to a six-state region in the Southeast. As an employee-owned company, CSMI’s mission is devoted to the growth and wellbeing of owners while satisfying customers and serving the communities where employees live and work. CSNI invests in employee training and community involvement.

CSMI considers 2016 a banner year for significant improvement in all key performance indicators compared with 2015 in safety, quality, delivery, quality of life, and financial. TMA
From leading the surge in Iraq as a General in the U.S. Army, to serving as Director of the CIA, David H. Petraeus has distinguished himself as one of the most prominent U.S. military figures of the post-9/11 era. On September 20th, investors in the “carrying the flag for business” campaign will have the opportunity to hear him give his account of a lifetime spent protecting the United States of America and our way of life.