



LEADERS & LEGENDS

Gala



JULY 24, 2026
RENAISSANCE NEWPORT BEACH

Welcome

Welcome to the **50th SEMA Leaders & Legends Gala**, a milestone evening celebrating the passion, innovation and leadership that continue to shape the automotive aftermarket industry.

Tonight, we are pleased to welcome a new member to the **SEMA Board of Directors** and to recognize those Directors whose continued service helps guide and strengthen our association. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the outgoing Director for dedicated leadership and lasting contributions to SEMA and the industry. In addition, we are honored to induct the **SEMA Hall of Fame Class of 2026**, recognizing individuals whose extraordinary achievements and enduring influence have helped define our industry and inspire its future.

This evening also celebrates a cause that reflects the generosity and spirit of the SEMA community, the **SEMA Cares Industry Cup Challenge**. Held in conjunction with the Gala, the Challenge brings companies together to sponsor pinewood race cars built by children and compete in spirited, head-to-head races. These efforts support SEMA Cares and its work with organizations including the **Austin Hatcher Foundation, Childhelp and Victory Junction**, helping improve the lives of children and families in need.

We are also proud to recognize our dedicated volunteers. Their time, energy and commitment, together with the efforts of SEMA staff, help make possible the many programs and initiatives that serve our members throughout the year. Their contributions strengthen this association and reflect the very best of our community.

On behalf of everyone at SEMA, thank you for joining us for this landmark celebration and your continued support, leadership and commitment to the future of our industry.



Melanie White
Chair of the Board
SEMA



Mike Spagnola
CEO
SEMA



Kathryn Reinhardt
Chair
SEMA Cares Committee

AGENDA

PROGRAM BEGINS AT 7:00 P.M.

NATIONAL ANTHEM – **NATALIE GONZALEZ**

SEMA CARES UPDATE – **LORI RAMSEY**

DINNER SERVICE

CEO REMARKS – **MIKE SPAGNOLA**

CHAIR OF THE BOARD REMARKS – **MELANIE WHITE**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CEREMONY

HALL OF FAME RECOGNITION

2026 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE RECOGNITION

DOUG DWYER

JAY LENO

ELLEN McKOY

DENNIS OVERHOLSER

PRODUCTION:

EVENT HOST: **KEVIN OESTE**

EVENT PRODUCTION & DESIGN: **LUCID**



YOU'RE INVITED AFTER THE GALA

RENAISSANCE NEWPORT BEACH
BAMBOO GARDEN

\$200 PAC CONTRIBUTION | \$75 SEMA & PRI STAFF CONTRIBUTION

JULY 24
9:00 p.m.–Midnight

THE PARTY CONTINUES INTO THE NIGHT TO BENEFIT SEMA & PRI PAC:
OPEN BAR, LIGHT BITES, AND ALL YOUR FAVORITE COLLEAGUES FROM
ACROSS THE INDUSTRY.



RSVP

ELEANOR ROLLINGS (202) 935-5684
ELEANORR@SEMA.ORG



TOGETHER WE CARE

SEMA Cares would like to acknowledge the following volunteers for supporting our 2025/2026 charitable efforts:

SEMA CARES COMMITTEE

KATHRYN REINHARDT
Chair

LORI RAMSEY
Immediate Past Chair

JOEL AYRES
Committee Member

RICH BARSAMIAN
Committee Member

KIRSTIN BACKES
Committee Member

LANA CHRISMAN
Committee Member

DAWSON DRUESEDOW
Committee Member

JENNA JEFFERIES
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COLBY MCLAUGHLIN
Committee Member

MICHELLE MCGAUGHY
Committee Member

SARA MOROSAN
Committee Member

MATT REASONER
Committee Member

EMMA SAUVE
Committee Member

JOE ESCOBAR
Project Manager

SEMA CARES COMMITTEE

Tom Brooks
Judy Brooks
Rich Butler
Chad Coltrane
Gary Cutuli
Renny Doyle
Amy Faulk

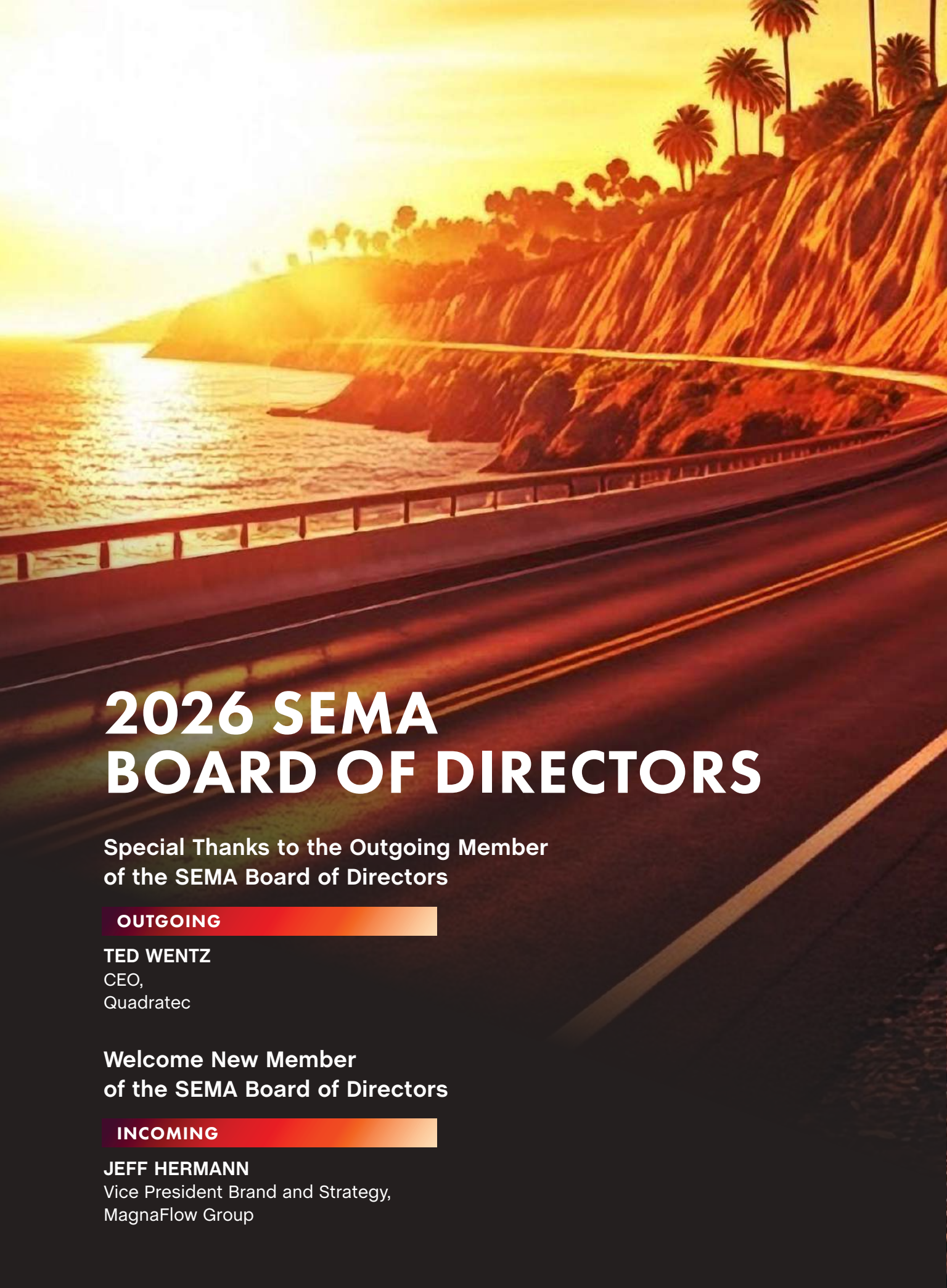
Vaughn Gittin Jr.
Greg Henderson
Dave Kindig
Joey Logano
McGaughy's Classic
Chevy Parts

Michael Medoro
Wes Mills
Thad Moffit
Gerry Morosan
Amy Jo Osborn
Jim Osborn

The Petty Family
Josh Poulson
Carson Reinhardt
Lyn St. James
Melanie White

SCAN THE QR CODE AND SEE HOW YOU CAN
MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN A CHILD'S LIFE





2026 SEMA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Special Thanks to the Outgoing Member
of the SEMA Board of Directors

OUTGOING

TED WENTZ
CEO,
Quadratic

Welcome New Member
of the SEMA Board of Directors

INCOMING

JEFF HERMANN
Vice President Brand and Strategy,
MagnaFlow Group

CHAIR OF THE BOARD

MELANIE WHITE
President,
Hellwig Products

IPC/SECRETARY

KYLE FICKLER
Director of Business Development
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KIM PENDERGAST
CEO,
Magnuson Superchargers

MELISSA SCOLES
President and CEO,
QA1

MARCUS UMLAUFF
General Manager - Remarketing, KINTO, and Fleet Management,
Toyota Financial Services

COUNCILS & NETWORKS

No matter what niche you're in, there's a dedicated council or network for each of the following industry segments:



Chris Compton, Chair
Distinctive Industries
Jesse Henke, Chair-Elect
JH Restorations
Angela Richardson, Director



Bob Morreale, Chair
The Tuning School
Karen Salvaggio, Chair-Elect
Scorpion EV
Angela Richardson, Director



Jerid Suchy, Chair
BuiltRight Industries
Dan LaRou, Chair-Elect
Chrome Enhancements
Nicole Bradle, Director



Jeff Grantmeyer, Chair
Borgeson Universal
Kevin Oeste, Chair-Elect
V8TV Productions, Inc.
Angela Richardson, Director



Brian Bohlander, Chair
Old World Industries
Brian LeBarron, Chair-Elect
Fluidampr
Denise Waddingham, Director



Kevin Gillis, Chair
Integrity Customs
Ron Leslie, Chair-Elect
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Tiffanie Hartenstein, Chair
Oracle Lighting Technologies
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Brett Kinsfather, Chair
Corteco
Dan Guyer, Chair-Elect
Aftermarket Performance Group
Nicole Bradle, Director



FIND YOUR COMMUNITY

CLASS OF 2026

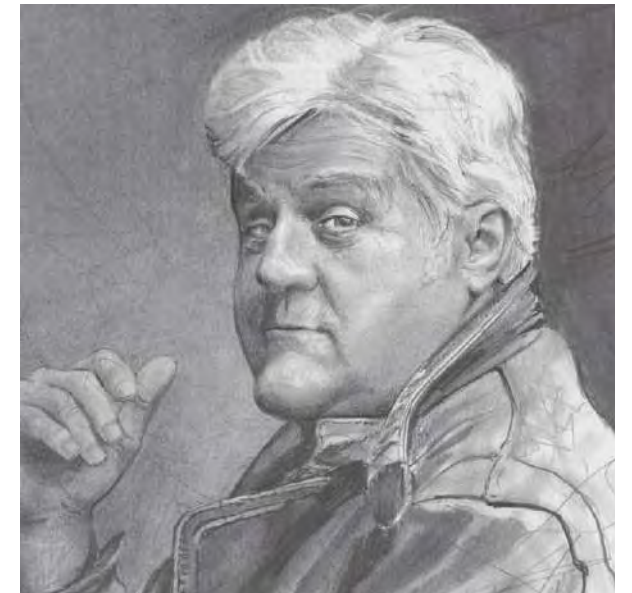


The SEMA Hall of Fame was created in 1969 to honor outstanding persons in the industry who have “enhanced the stature of, or significantly contributed to, the industry and/or association’s growth.” It is the most prestigious award presented to an individual by the association. Candidates must have made a significant contribution to the specialty aftermarket over a period of at least 10 years. The ultimate inductees are chosen by a special committee of industry peers. Over the years, Hall of Fame inductees have been

honored for their accomplishments across a wide variety of fields, and the 2026 inductees are no exception. They are represented by a beloved and innovative manufacturer, an accomplished and respected marketer, a long-time association executive and a famed car restorer. Taken collectively, they stand out as leaders who have represented the specialty-equipment industry at its best, expanding its reach, contributing to growth and serving as examples for those who come behind them.



DOUG DWYER



JAY LENO



ELLEN McKOY



DENNIS OVERHOLSER

CLASS OF 2026



DOUG DWYER

LIVING AND GROWING THE INDUSTRY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Doug Dwyer likes to say he was born into the automotive business, and in many ways he was. But that simple line doesn't quite capture the depth of a career shaped by curiosity, grit and a lifetime spent at the center of the performance aftermarket. His story is one of immersion in cars, in people, in the culture of speed, and of a man who learned early that success comes from showing up, working hard and treating everyone with respect.

Raised in Compton, California, during the '50s and '60s, Dwyer grew up in what would become the beating heart of the performance industry. "People need to understand that within 25 mi. of Compton were 80% of the companies that were in the 1980 SEMA Show," he says. "Isky, Edelbrock, Mickey Thompson—all of them.

And we were within earshot of both Lions Drag Strip and Ascot Park Speedway."

Cars weren't just nearby, they were everywhere. With four older brothers deep into hot rodding, Dwyer spent his childhood holding a drop light over open engine bays until his mother dragged him inside for bedtime. His father, an aircraft mechanic, kept the garage stocked with tools and equipment, and it wasn't unusual to come home from school and find neighborhood gearheads wrenching away in the family garage. "It became a neighborhood thing," he says. "Art Chrisman was right there in town."

So, when a friend across the street asked if he wanted a job at his uncle's tire store, Doug didn't hesitate. Only later did he discover the "tire store" was actually Carroll Shelby Enterprises—Goodyear Racing Tires. Still in high school, he worked weekends and summers, answering phones and doing whatever needed doing while the regular crew was away at races. At 18, he went full-time, doing the grunt work that keeps a racing operation moving. Much of it involved tire testing. "It was nothing to go with Goodyear to Riverside or Phoenix and spend two or three weeks mounting and balancing hundreds of test tires," he says.

Those early years gave him a foundation in racing tires and performance applications that would shape the rest of his professional life.

In 1969, Dwyer was drafted into the U.S. Army, serving with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam. He graduated with honors from the Combat Leadership Academy, earned a commendation medal and returned home in 1970 as a staff

sergeant—disciplined, focused and ready for whatever came next.

What came next was a job interview at Appliance Industries. Dwyer applied for a mechanic position, only to learn the sole opening was in sales. He thanked them and walked out until a man in an orange polyester leisure suit chased him into the parking lot.

"Where you going, kid? We're hiring!" Doug recalls. "I told him, 'I'm no salesman.'" The man, Jim Kavanagh, threw an arm around him and said,

Inside Doug Dwyer's garage today, along with his Margay go-cart, you would find a '50 blackberry Lincoln built by his brother, plus welders, plasma cutters and all the shop tools that support his role as neighborhood fix-it guy.



DWYER BUILT A RÉSUMÉ THAT READS LIKE A GUIDED TOUR THROUGH THE PERFORMANCE AFTERMARKET [AND] HAS 27 BUSINESS CARDS TO SHOW FOR IT...

"Stick with me, kid. I'll have you driving big black cars, smoking long cigars and farting in silk."

It was the beginning of a new direction.

Kavanagh gave him a lesson he never forgot. "He said, 'Selling is like riding a bicycle. The back wheel drives you; that's product knowledge. The front wheel steers you; that's people knowledge. Now ride this bike to town and ask for the order. That's 80% of what you need to know.'" When Doug asked about the other 20%, Kavanagh told him, "That'll take you the rest of your life."

Dwyer took the advice seriously. He began studying both product and people—the two skills that would define his approach to business for decades.

In 1972, he attended his first SEMA Show as Appliance's western states sales rep. It was the start of a streak that would eventually reach 46 SEMA Shows, spanning nearly half a century of industry evolution.

Over the next several decades, Dwyer built a résumé that reads like a guided tour through the performance aftermarket. He has 27 business cards to show for it, each from a SEMA-member company. The titles vary—sales, sales engineer, sales manager, vice president of marketing, executive VP, owner—but the through-line is unmistakable: Doug Dwyer has spent his entire adult life helping companies grow, products succeed and people connect.

His career mirrors the industry's own trajectory. He came up in an era when the aftermarket was still raw and entrepreneurial, driven by innovators who built parts in their garages and tested them at the dragstrip that same night. Dwyer learned from those pioneers and carried their lessons forward. He learned how to talk to customers, how to build trust, how to read a room and how to represent a product with both confidence and honesty. He learned that relationships matter more than transactions and that the best salespeople listen more than they speak.

In addition to his work with major manufacturers and industry leaders, Dwyer also helped shape the communications side of the aftermarket. He became a founding partner of Bryson Dwyer Inc. (BDI), a public-relations and advisory firm that supported companies across the performance and automotive sectors. For more than a decade, BDI provided strategic messaging, media relations and industry guidance rooted in Dwyer's deep experience and extensive network. In 2005, the firm merged with Schiefer Media, where Dwyer transitioned into the role of executive vice president, expanding his influence into integrated marketing, brand strategy and high-level client advisory work.



In 2023, Dwyer's decades of contributions were formally recognized when he was inducted into the SEMA Wheel & Tire Council (WTC) Hall of Fame, one of the industry's highest honors. The award acknowledged not only his technical expertise and sales leadership, but also his mentorship, his advocacy for the aftermarket and his unwavering commitment to the people who make the industry what it is.

Today, Dwyer's story stands as a reflection of the performance aftermarket itself: inventive, resilient, people-driven and always evolving. From holding a drop light for his brothers to mounting test tires for Goodyear, from representing companies across the country to shaping brands through BDI and Schiefer Media, from attending nearly five decades of SEMA Shows to earning a place in the WTC Hall of Fame, and now the 2026 SEMA Hall of Fame, Doug Dwyer has lived the industry from the inside out.

And through it all, he has remained exactly what he started as: a guy who loves cars, loves people and knows how to make things happen.

(Above left) Having just wrapped up a paintball war at the Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, Dwyer relaxes for a moment with friend and fellow ex-Carroll Shelby Enterprises employee Steve Drew.

(Above right) Dwyer regularly worked with and around motorsports celebs. Here he is with Mario Andretti at the Las Vegas Grand Prix in 1982.

(Below left) Dwyer was inducted into the Wheel & Tire Council Hall of Fame, recognizing his long-time contribution to the wheel industry.

(Below right) Dwyer still occupies an office and gets his email at Truespoke Wire Wheels, where he looks after sales and packaging.



CLASS OF 2026



JAY LENO

CELEBRITY, PHILANTHROPIST AND FERVENT CAR GUY

In the world of car collectors, there are all different kinds. One guy might end up with a barn full of Camaros; another guy, five Ferraris. Some collectors insist on 100-point restorations of classic cars while other guys are happy just to restore cars to driving condition.

Jay Leno is more like a car guy who can appreciate anything and everything since the beginning of the automobile.

Anyone who has taken a lap through Leno's car collection can see that he is interested in a lot of different things—automotive history, innovation, engineering and provenance. He is the kind of car collector who can tell you about each car, where he found it, what condition it was in, what he had to do to restore it and why he likes it. This, despite a collection estimated at around 200 cars and 150 motorcycles.

"I never sell anything," he once explained. "They're like my children. I can't bring myself to. No, I'll keep that one and put it in the corner."

It's the measure of any man to consider what the people who know him best say about him. "He always likes to buy the story, so he's definitely not a 100-point guy," one of his producers who has worked extensively with Leno observed. "He likes engineering achievements throughout history, right? So things that might embody a particularly innovative or even strange piece of engineering, maybe things that weren't even deemed a success, but are still."

Jay Leno has exhibited multiple cars at the SEMA Show, many by working closely with General Motors. Here, he is showing the GM executives around the Show.



That's why his collection includes multiple alternative-powertrain vehicles—like steam cars—and perfect examples of Vincent Black Shadow motorcycles, the early British superbike that T.E. Lawrence liked to ride. Or you might find a Firebird with a six-cylinder, overhead cam motor. He has also entered cars in the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, an event that he regularly attends.

He regularly attends SEMA Show as well—and has brought cars. One of the most memorable is a twin-turbo V6 Camaro that debuted at the 2009 SEMA Show, one of several collaborations with General Motors. Working with SEMA, he has done just about everything you can do. He has been an attendee, an exhibitor and featured entertainment more than once.

His passion for car collecting has spun off into a car-care business, working with outside experts and his in-house detailers. It started when he was looking for a quality metal polish that didn't have an abrasive pumice or anything similar in the polish itself. Coincidentally, at that time he was approached by a gentleman who had experience in making car-care products. They had a metal polish that they developed with Leno to clean up cars around the garage. His foray into car-care was born out of that one product. Then they expanded the line to include a quick detailer and waxes, ceramic coatings and more. When asked, one of the people who knows Leno best told us: "Yes, he's got a business in car care that makes money, but I really do think Jay is simply there because he loves it."

Having accumulated a vast collection of cars, motorcycles and memorabilia, Leno has been generous when it comes to sharing his passion. His private Big Dog Garage in Burbank, California, is available for tours, though it is not open for daily public walk-ins. He uses the garage for charity auctions, special contests or exclusive, sometimes pre-arranged visits. The vehicles are restored and maintained by an expert staff.

Known as a hard-working entertainer with a sharp sense of comedy, Leno started out working in night clubs 300 nights a week. His entertainment industry profile describes him as "a big, sweet guy with a very good comedy routine." His big break came when he took on the "The Tonight Show." So, who is Jay Leno, bottom line?

"I think he's a very humble guy," confided a producer who has worked with Jay on his television show. "What I can tell you is that he gives to so many people—you would never be able to capture how many people he gives to personally. Jay contributes to charities, yes; he regularly auctions off tours of his garage for charities. But I'm talking about one-on-one. Jay helps and supports a tremendous number of people... He's doing a lot behind the scenes, stuff that never sees the light of day."

Leno is also known for his everyday accessibility, especially when it comes to fellow car enthusiasts. "He never has a problem picking up the phone," said another producer who has worked with him in the



past. "Like, if somebody sent him a letter, went out of their way to send them some information on a car that he didn't know about, he never has a problem picking the phone up and calling..."

Clearly, his love for cars, generous personality and involvement with SEMA has fostered greater awareness of car culture and a broader public appreciation of all things automotive. And for that reason, Jay Leno belongs in the SEMA Hall of Fame.

Fostering broader public awareness of car collecting, Jay Leno has also been instrumental in "Leno's Law," a California bill that would eliminate smog checks for true collector vehicles used for shows, cruises, charitable events and historical exhibitions.



HE IS THE KIND OF CAR COLLECTOR WHO CAN TELL YOU ABOUT EACH CAR, WHERE HE FOUND IT, WHAT CONDITION IT WAS IN, WHAT HE HAD TO DO TO RESTORE IT AND WHY HE LIKES IT.

CLASS OF 2026



ELLEN McKOY

GROUNDBREAKING BUSINESSWOMAN, LEADER AND ADVOCATE

When it comes to serving SEMA, Ellen McKoy has done it all. She has been a volunteer, an energetic SEMA staff member and served on the SEMA Board of Directors. Along the way, she became instrumental in professionalizing the restyling community, a force for supporting women in the industry and one of the reasons you might see SEMA-member products in your car dealership today.

It all started after she graduated from college and went to work for a Manhattan book publisher and then a real estate company. In the mid-'70s, she and her husband, who had worked for a renowned interior vehicle designer and customizer, had an idea. Electric sunroofs were just coming of age in America and there was a growing opportunity in installing them.

"Around 1974-ish," she recalls, "we decided that maybe this was something we should do. I had marketing and PR experience. Didn't know much about automotive at all, but I figured if I can market a real estate company, I can certainly sell sunroofs or vinyl tops. So, we opened our first facility in Hempstead, Long Island, in 1975."

That put her in proximity to industry people like Nat Danas, who founded Auto Trim and Restyling News magazine. There McKoy became a contributing editor and eventually, editor. "Nat was a visionary and my mentor. He ran his own trade shows on the East Coast. Of course, we had advertisers that supported the publication, so I got to know all of them."

That was when McKoy became aware of SEMA. Installers had turned to truck accessorizing and ground effects and the manufacturers were a growing presence at the Show. As a result, she began attending the SEMA Show in 1984 and has been to every one since.

By the late '80s, there were a dozen or more ground-effects manufacturers at the Show, competition was intense, and when OE manufacturers began to raise concerns about the quality of the product, a need was perceived to enhance product quality and installation procedures.

Manufacturers and others, including McKoy and Danas, met and formed a group called AARM, Automotive Aftermarket Restyling Manufacturers, which soon became the Professional Restylers Organization (PRO). McKoy attended meetings, and when PRO came under the SEMA umbrella, she eventually became chair and, ultimately, was hired for a SEMA staff position by then-



BY CONVINCING OE MANUFACTURERS THAT DEALERS COULD IMPROVE THEIR BOTTOM LINE AND MOVE MORE CARS BY ACCESSORIZING, McKOY WIDENED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS BETWEEN SEMA, THE OEMS AND DEALERS.

SEMA President Chuck Blum in 1994.

Over the years at SEMA, she developed the SEMA Installer Certification Program and played a key role in the merger of the Truck Cap & Accessory Alliance (TCAA), now the Truck & Off Road Alliance (TORA), into SEMA. As the first council director and liaison to five groups, she later worked as PR director for SEMA Vice President of Communications Dick Wells and then marketing director. She also became senior director of dealer relations, "which moved me into the OE department, which was really fun because I knew Carl Sheffer [former SEMA vice president of OEM relations] from when he worked at GM." Leveraging editorial communication skills she acquired early in her career, she also wrote articles for *SEMA News* magazine.

By convincing OE manufacturers that dealers could improve their bottom line and move more cars by accessorizing, McKoy widened communication channels between SEMA, the OEMs and dealers. She organized SEMA/PRO exhibits at National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) Conventions and was instrumental in developing a warranty assurance program called ProPledge.

"I was responsible for training participating shops. I developed a training manual so they would understand how the program worked and how it benefited the dealer and the consumer," she explained.

After her years at SEMA, McKoy freelanced through her own agency, EMK Marketing, but remained a force in the idea and implementation of sales training. "When I left SEMA, I was presenting restyling seminars at the Show for restylers, for dealers to learn about it, and so on," she said. Subsequently elected to the PRO select committee, she helped develop the SEMA Accessory Sales Professional (SASP) certificate program during her tenure as chair. "So, I've always focused on that educational



side. But the training and the certification was, to me, really critical."

Today, McKoy has an office wall full of awards, plaques and appreciations for her contributions, including SEMA Woman of the Year. Not least of those would be SBN's 2024 Athena Award. "That was from SBN [SEMA Businesswomen's Network], and it was basically their Mentor of the Year award," she mused. "And you know, sometimes you don't realize that you're mentoring somebody. You just try to be helpful, offer some advice or guidance or maybe just do something that sets an example."

"There were a lot of things that SEMA did that were very innovative and that, long-term, really helped broaden the industry's talent pool, just by having education and certifications, and especially by getting more women involved," she said. "And I am proud to be part of a group that instigated that."

For these reasons and others, Ellen McKoy has been selected by her peers to join the SEMA Hall of Fame.

"I feel pretty humble...and in very good company."



At the 2016 PRO Industry Awards Reception, poolside Westgate Las Vegas Resort, with Scott Wolin (left photo, podium), PRO chair, when McKoy was chair-elect and Van Woodell (right photo, center), 2010 SEMA Hall of Famer and Carol Woodell (right photo, far right).

(Left) McKoy with Jesse Rawls of Truckers Toy Store, winner of the 1996 PRO Truck Accessory Specialist of the Year Award.

(Right) McKoy receiving the 2018 SBN Mentor of the Year Award from SBN Chair Lana Chrisman, presented during SBN's Gear-Up Girl event.

CLASS OF 2026



DENNIS OVERHOLSER

HOT-RODDING, HARD WORK AND PAINLESS PERFORMANCE

It's been an amazing journey for Dennis Overholser, a high school kid with a street rod who became founder of a multi-faceted company that today has 66 employees in a modern 45,000-sq.-ft. facility, manufacturing more than 500 products for show cars, hot rods, dragsters, rock crawlers and everything in between.

That success did not come along early in life. Rather, it was the product of a long and varied work history that included military service, heavy-equipment mechanics, no small amount of drag racing—and a knack for making friends and collaborating with customers.

"I was raised on a corn farm in Indiana; my family farmed several acres about 60 mi. due north of Indy, between Kokomo and Lafayette," Overholser relates.

"In 1964, I had a little three-window coupe, with a Flathead in it. That's where it all started—in drag racing. I've done just about everything you can do in drag racing, even worked on a crew and made my own front-engine top gas dragster. I've always been a hands-on person."

After high school, he worked at McDonald's by day and went to school at Nashville Auto Diesel College by night. It was the Vietnam War era, and when he got a draft notice, he enlisted in the Air Force, where his mechanical and electrical aptitude was quickly noticed. "I went in and went through basic. Went through three months of electronic school," he told

us, but he ended up in vehicle maintenance. "I worked on aircraft tugs, dump trucks—you name it."

After his military service came a job "in a little dirt-floor garage, working on cars, tractors, some combines and various farming equipment. It was cold work, and I was sick and tired of the cold. That's why we moved to Texas, and we've been in the Fort Worth area ever since."

His first job in Texas was for a local tractor dealer. There he worked for 20 years, became service manager and also accumulated more than 500,000 mi. behind the wheel of an 18-wheeler, driving back and forth from Fort Worth to Detroit more than 80 times. "That was in 1984. I knew every bump and hole in the roads throughout Oklahoma and Missouri or wherever."

Not surprisingly, his first products came about working on the hot-rod side.

Around 1989, "A friend of mine told me there's this guy that's making various items for the van-conversion industry. He was looking for somebody that would help him design something that could be sold in the hot-rod or street-rod industry. I went out there, worked evenings and designed the first harness and put it in a '37 Ford—displayed it at the Fort Worth Rod and Custom Show in March of 1990. We then went into production. I took it to the Pate Swap Meet and sold three kits. Later, I went to the Street Rod Nationals in Columbus, took 10, sold them all the first day...and that's my story." Back then, the company was known as Perfect Performance Products.



These days, Painless Performance Products is known in the automotive community for working closely with customers to ensure their success and as one of those manufacturers that is always willing to lend a hand on a project.

An example would be when Overholser was calling on a customer who was working on an early '90s Chevy pickup that had weak lighting due to an inadequate electrical system. Overholser came up with a relay kit that plugged right in, "so whenever we hit the high beams, all four lights came on. Dimmer switch, low beams come on, high beams go off. We still sell that harness today and we've sold thousands of them. Basically, it's just the little things most people don't think about that give you inspiration.

"I used to write a lot of stories for different editors. They would be working on some other project, and we would get to talking about it and start sharing ideas. Not only did I feed them a lot of information, but I also wrote three how-to books myself."

Along the way, he's made a lot of friends and accumulated accolades, like the Recognition Award from the Street Rod Manufacturers Association, (which later became the SEMA Hot Rod Industry Alliance council). "I am blessed to have so many friends, and so many people I have become real close to, it is an honor to know them all. And, yeah, it's been pretty cool."

In the end, Overholser's ability to listen, plus persistence and technical acumen, spawned a company that made its place in the industry by innovating with award-winning products, each one a neat solution for anyone working on a project vehicle. That is not to discount the long-term effect of hard work. "You can't do it eight to five," he muses. "You might be able to sleep from eight to five, but that's it."



(Left) Home at the farm on a three-day pass, Overholser had a chance to reunite with his '62 Chevy in the summer of 1966.

(Right) The three-window coupe Overholser built (and drag raced) while in high school had a Flathead that came out of a pickup and "poorwall" faux whitewall tires.

AFTER HIS MILITARY SERVICE CAME A JOB "IN A LITTLE DIRT-FLOOR GARAGE, WORKING ON CARS, TRACTORS, SOME COMBINES AND VARIOUS FARMING EQUIPMENT..."



An acknowledged expert when it comes to automotive electrics, Overholser often conducted trade seminars to share his knowledge.



Upon the establishment of Painless Performance, Overholser became a regular exhibitor at the SEMA Show, and developed a reputation for working closely with his customers.



Now semi-retired, Overholser can still be found in his office three days a week. "You can't do it eight to five," he muses. "You might be able to sleep from eight to five, but that's it."

In addition to building an innovative company that has been recognized for numerous product awards, Dennis Overholser found time to contribute as a SEMA volunteer.





The SEMA Hall of Fame recognizes the visionary leaders, innovators, and passionate enthusiasts whose contributions have shaped the automotive aftermarket and fueled the growth of the industry. These individuals turned bold ideas and emerging businesses into a powerful movement that laid the foundation for what SEMA represents today. Their legacy is a testament to entrepreneurial spirit, determination, and ingenuity in action.

For a complete list of SEMA Hall of Fame members and more information on each inductee, scan the QR code:



2026

Doug Dwyer, Truespoke
Jay Leno, Big Dog Productions
Jay Leno's Garage
Ellen McKoy, EMK Marketing
Dennis Overholser, Painless Performance Products

2025

Luanne Brown, eTool Developers
George Lathouris, Keystone Automotive/
Warn Industries
John McLeod, Classic Instruments
Larry Pacey, National Performance Warehouse

2024

Les Rudd, Bob Cook Sales
Jack Preigel, MSD
Jon Wyly, Arrow Speed Warehouse
Chris Kersting, SEMA

2023

Steve Ames, AMES Performance Engineering
John Iannotte, Kunzman and Associates
Mitch Williams, Rigid Industries

2022

Walker Evans, Walker Evans Racing
Jack Roush, Roush Enterprises Inc.
Gene Winfield, Gene Winfield Rod & Custom

2021

Jessi Combs, Jessi Combs Foundation
Rick Love, Vintage Air Inc.
Bob Moore, Bob Moore & Partners
Carl Schiefer, Schiefer Media

2020

Rich Barsamian, Advanced Clutch Technology Inc.
Jack Chisenhall, Vintage Air Inc.
John Gaines, G&M Performance Parts
Joe St. Lawrence, RTM Studios

2019

Bob Chandler, Bigfoot 4x4
Bruce Crower, Crower Cams & Equipment Co.
Marla Moore, Legendary Companies

2018

Donnie Eatherly, P&E Distributors Inc.
Ed Pink, Ed Pink Racing Engines
Chris Thomson, TMG Performance Group

2017

GiGi Carleton, Margie and Robert E. Petersen Foundation
Doug Evans, Crower Cams & Equipment Co. Inc.
Barry Meguiar, Meguiar's

2016

Matt Agosta, Steele Rubber Products Inc.
Chip Foose, Foose Design
Gary Hooker, Hooker Headers

2015

Joel Ayres, Automotive Aftermarket Charitable Foundation
Jim Bingham, Winner's Circle Speed & Custom Inc.
Dennis Gage, MadStache Inc.

2014

Nile Cornelison, Direct Communications Inc.
Jim Cozzie, Brenton Productions Inc.
John Menzler, COMP Performance Group
Fred C. Offenhauser, Offenhauser Equipment Corp.

2013

George Barris, Barris Kustom
Eric Grant, Past SEMA Executive Director
Wade Kawasaki, Coker Tire Company
Joe Schubeck, Schubeck Racing

2012

Nick Arias Jr., Arias Pistons
Bill France Sr., NASCAR
Mark Heffington, Hypertech Inc.
Bob Larivee Sr., Promotions Inc.

2011

Gray Baskerville, Hot Rod Magazine
Art Chrisman, Chrisman's Auto Rod Specialist
Chris Economaki, National Speed Sport News
John Towle, Performance Warehouse Association

2010

Richard "Dick" McMullen, McMullen Advertising
Chuck Schwartz, ConvExx
Van Woodell, Weathers Auto Supply

2009

Bill Perry, Bill Perry & Associates
Rolan "Jeep" Worthan, Auto Meter Products Inc.
Henry "Smokey" Yunick

2008

Raymond Bleiweis, Rocket Industries
Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell
Corky Coker, Coker Tire Company
Bob Cook, Bob Cook Sales

2007

Ron Funfar, Hedman Hedders/Trans-Dapt
Russ Deane, Trainum, Snowdon & Deane
Nate Shelton, Driven Performance Brands

2006

Steve Bolio, Scafidi-Bolio & Associates
Dick Maxwell
Rick Rollins, Superchips Inc.

2005

Paul "Scooter" Brothers, Competition Cams Inc.
Herb Fishel, The Business of Motorsports
Burke LeSage

2004

Bob Keller, Turbonetics Inc.
John Simmons, SECO Performance Centers
Charlie Van Cleve, Hedman/TD Performance
Jim Wirth, Wirth & Wirth Advertising

2003

Brian Appelgate, B&M Racing & Performance
Bob McJannett, Performance Improvements
Marvin Rifchin, M&H Tires
Bob Vandergriff, Hedman/TD Performance

2002

Amy Faulk, Hypertech Inc.
Harry Hibler, Nanotech Fuel Corp.
Arnold Kuhns, SFI Foundation Inc.
Ray Lipper, Center Line Wheel Corp.

2001

Don Alderson, Muldoon Engineering
Jim McFarland, AutoCom
Andy Granatelli, Consultant



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