

## Tech Center News

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## Expert on Titanic Slates April Talk

Those who wish to learn more about the doomed voyage of the Titanic are invited to join the Warren Historical Commission for “The Last True Story of Titanic” presented by Jim Clary, marine artist, author & historian.

The event begins at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 3, in the Warren Community Center (5460 Arden), conference room A.

Clary’s presentation will be based on his latest book. He will share his experience as the project artist and historian for the 1983 Titanic search. Clary will tell tales and facts about the Titanic and what actually happened on that fateful night in April 1912.

He will donate a print of his sketch “Nearer to Thee” to be raffled at the program.

For more information, call the research center at 586-258-2056 and leave a message.

## Corvette Shaped to Meet Performance Expectations

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“It’s fitting to introduce the new Stingray convertible on the global stage at Geneva, because Corvette is the face of Chevrolet the world over,” said Susan Docherty, president and managing director of Chevrolet and Cadillac Europe. “It is an icon that has long been recognized and admired even in countries where it’s never officially been offered.”

All of the performance technology and capabilities introduced on the Corvette Stingray coupe carry over to the convertible. The only structural changes are limited to accommodations for the folding top and repositioned safety belt mounts. Central to the Corvette Stingray’s driving experience is an all-new, more rigid aluminum frame structure, which is 57-percent stiffer and 99 pounds (45 kg) lighter than the current steel frame.

All models are powered by the new LT1 6.2-liter V8, with an estimated 450-hp (335 kW) and 450 lb-ft of torque (610 Nm). As no structural reinforcements are required for the convertible, both models share almost identical power-to-weight ratios.

The LT1 combines several advanced technologies, including direct injection, Active Fuel Management and continuously variable valve timing to support an advanced combustion system designed to balance power and efficiency. The new Corvette Stingray is expected to improve upon the current model’s fuel economy of 13.6L/100km (EPA-estimated highway fuel economy of 26 mpg).

With the top up, the Corvette Stingray convertible is designed for what GM calls a refined driving experience. A thick, three-ply fabric top, along with sound-absorbing padding and a glass rear window, contributes to a quiet cabin and premium appearance.

With the top down, GM boasts that the Corvette Stingray’s sig-

# Fori Automation Reaches Beyond the Auto Industry

by Ross Raybin

A local company with its roots firmly planted in the auto industry continues to grow, diversify and evolve.

Fori Automation, in Shelby Township, was recently recognized by Macomb County as a “Diversification Leader” for the work the firm doing in the county and around the world.

Founded in Shelby Township in 1984 by Arthur Koerner, Fori now has eight locations worldwide, including South Korea, Brazil, Germany, China, India, Mexico and Chattanooga, Tenn.

“Shelby Township is where our headquarters is located,” said Mike Beck, vice president of Fori Automation, “We have 180 employees at HQ and 450 worldwide.”

With its beginnings in the auto industry, Fori has become well-known by those in the business. They produce conveyors, end-of-

line testing items, stored power systems and welding systems.

“Roughly 80 percent of our business is through the auto industry,” said Beck.

Right about the time the auto industry bottomed out, 2009 or so, Fori developed a brand new technology that has allowed them to delve into such industries as aerospace, agriculture and recreational vehicles.

Through the development of Automated Guided Vehicles (AGVs), Fori has been able to branch out and establish its footing in other areas.

“We saw a niche and developed AGVs,” said Beck, “We saw that it could be applied to non-automotive areas.”

AGVs are designed to move materials, components or vehicles using a custom-designed navigation system.

The patented technology is helping growing fields such as the aerospace industry.

## NDIA Event Offers Chance to Mingle

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The recipient must have made significant contributions that have led to the strengthening of our national security by developing, procuring, or supporting Tactical Wheeled Vehicles or critical technologies that contribute to the same,” Loerch said.

The defense community in Detroit isn’t exactly small, Loerch said. But it is tight-knit. By joining a group like the Michigan Chapter of the NDIA, people wishing to make connections will find it easier to meet people who can help make that happen.

“The car industry is very com-

petitive, and so is the defense industry,” Loerch said. “But in the car industry, at the end of the day, it’s Ford’s job to beat Chrysler and Chrysler’s job to beat GM and GM’s job to beat Ford.

In the defense industry, the ultimate goal is to protect the war fighter. Despite competition within the industry, people understand what the ultimate goal is and there’s more a sense of family, of teamwork. But it helps to make the right connections. I urge people interested to attend the meeting.”

For more information visit [www.ndia-mich.org](http://www.ndia-mich.org).

“The aerospace industry is now adopting automotive philosophies,” said Beck, “They’re using moving lines to produce more output.”

The same is true in the agricultural industry. According to Beck, Fori is working on a power assembly line for Caterpillar so they can produce large electric motors.

“We’re using experience from the last 25 years in the auto industry to apply elsewhere,” he said.

By diversifying their products, Fori has been able to branch out and expand into new and exciting fields.

“We wanted to stay competitive,” said Beck, “We didn’t want to be heavily dependent on the Big 3.”

While new jobs are being lined

up and talks of expansion swirl, these new industries only make up 20 percent of Fori’s business. The automotive sector still has a huge role in what they do.

“The auto industry is our backbone,” said Beck. “Our goal is to get to 30 or 40 percent in the other industries.”

Just last year, Fori Automation expanded their Shelby Township facility and are looking to possibly add a new location in the near future.

For info on Fori Automation, visit [www.foriauto.com](http://www.foriauto.com).

## Got News?

If you have solid business news for this paper, please contact us at [News@TechCenterNews.com](mailto:News@TechCenterNews.com).

## Survey: Consumers Willing to Pay Modest Premium for Electric Cars

Charging stations and battery swap locations are the most crucial to developing a sustainable electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, according to more than 40 percent of respondents to Price-waterhouseCooper’s (PwC) Electric Vehicle Survey 2012.

Global hybrid and EV market share is forecast to reach 6.3 percent by 2020, according to PwC’s Autofacts.

As municipalities continue to work with the private sector to meet future demands and develop “Smart Cities,” finding the ideal ratio between integrated public charging stations and the number of EVs on the road is a prevailing challenge when investing in existing and future infrastructure.

“Continued investment to improve upon the electric vehicle value chain, along with the pace of advancement in competing alternative fuel solutions will ultimately determine the level of success EVs are able to achieve,” said Brandon Mason, senior analyst, PwC’s Autofacts.

“While we don’t expect one to be parked in every driveway anytime soon, there is no doubt that EVs are here to stay.”

Approximately 25 percent of survey respondents said one public station for every 20 EVs is an ideal ratio, while 20 percent indicated one station for every five vehicles is ideal. Roughly 80 percent of respondents also indicated that 30 minutes or less charge time is considered fast charging for EVs.

Focusing on price, nearly 46 percent of respondents felt that long-term total cost of ownership savings is the most likely reason

consumers would be willing to pay an upfront premium for an EV. Automakers continue to evaluate the price premium consumers are willing to pay for an EV.

Survey respondents indicated that consumers willing to pay a premium price for an EV would need to see the electric car premium remain within \$5,000 (PHEVs 57.9 percent, PEVs 47.7 percent) of what they would normally pay for a similar vehicle without such technology because price is still a factor in the decision to buy an EV.

“Automakers accelerate their efforts to find solutions to reduce costs for battery, alternative drive train and the vehicle overall,” said Oliver Hazimeh, automotive cleantech transportation leader, PwC. “Passing high initial development costs on to the consumer is not a long-term option as it is not viable to rely on long-term government incentives.

Auto companies need to deploy smart vehicle and technology platforms and global partnerships to achieve economies of scale.”

Survey respondents indicated global collaboration (26.6 percent) will lead the development and production of EVs and supporting technologies by 2020. Respondents said China will lead by 2020 (25.9 percent).

Automakers are working to find a balance between production and consumer demands. The trend is to build where you sell.

Automakers planning for long-term success will likely have the competitive edge.

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