



*AEA Gives Members*  
**A MILLION REASONS**  
to Gather in Orlando

STORY BY CHRISTINE KNAUER ♦ PHOTOS BY JEFF KIRCHHOFF

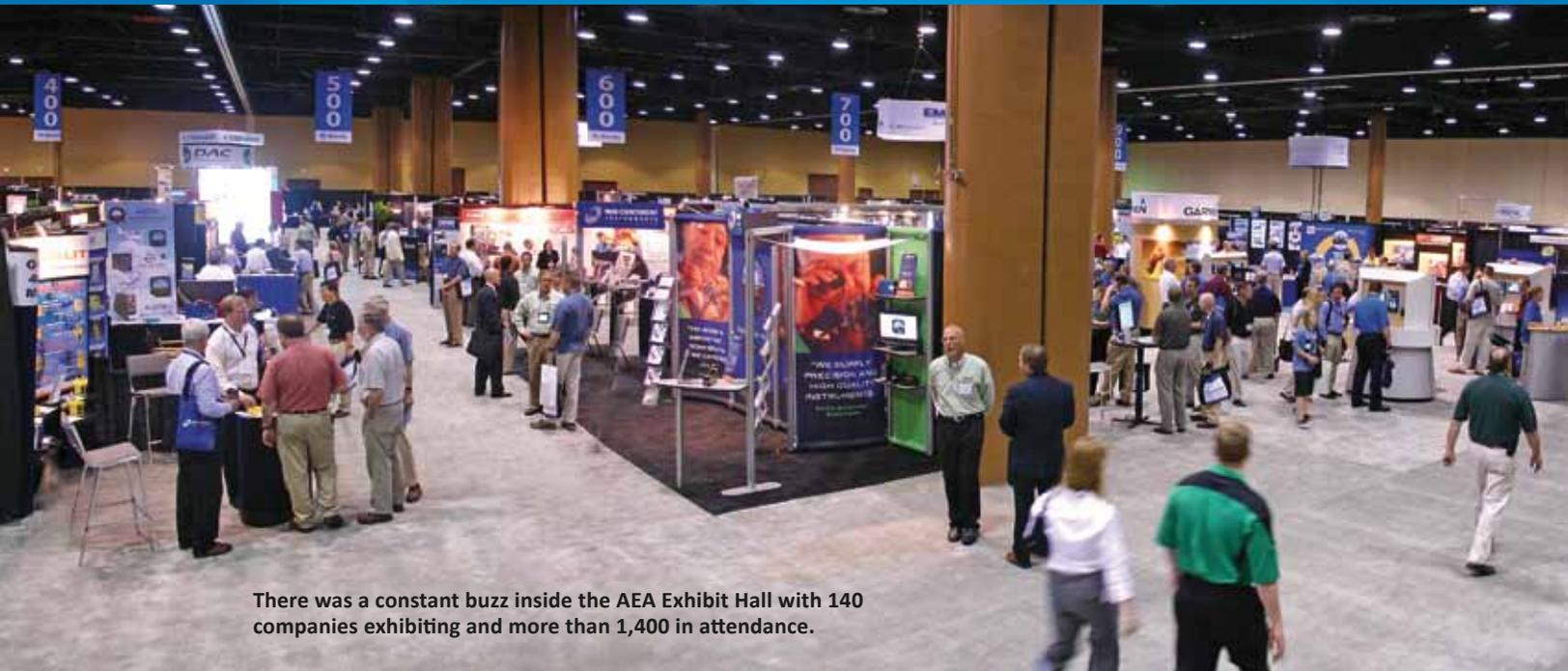


*William Tramer, field service engineer with L-3 Avionics Systems, instructs during a Fast Trak training session at the AEA convention.*



*The AEA offered the NCATT AET certification exams at no charge during the convention.*

# AEA International Convention & Trade Show



There was a constant buzz inside the AEA Exhibit Hall with 140 companies exhibiting and more than 1,400 in attendance.

Alligators in the hotel atrium? Thousands of dollars in door prizes? A guitar-wielding speaker? The Aircraft Electronics Association's 53rd annual AEA International Convention & Trade Show in Orlando, Fla., offered plenty of wonderful surprises, big and small.

Hosted at the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in April, the convention drew more than 1,400 avionics manufacturers, distributors, repair stations and other aviation professionals. They came for the training and industry updates, to hear about new products and services, and for the opportunity to meet with long-time friends and customers.

Packed with more regulatory sessions, more technical training and more networking opportunities, the four-day convention filled attendees' schedules from early morning to late at night, making for some bleary-eyed breakfast meetings.

"I need six of me to get to all the things that I want

to see and do this year," said Murray Forbes, owner and avionics engineer for Sebroy Aviation Services Ltd. in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada.

For spouses and families who joined AEA members



AEA Administrator Randy Babbitt was the featured speaker prior to the FAA Leadership Panel, "What is the FAA's National Vision?"

in sunny Florida, the hotel offered exciting diversions, including shopping and dining, playing boogie ball and volleyball, and exploring 4.5 acres of indoor gardens,

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*Barry Aylward, now immediate past chairman of the AEA board of directors, and Paula Derks, president of the AEA, listen as Dan Walker addresses the audience after accepting the AEA Lifetime Achievement Award.*

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including a multi-story atrium complete with waterfalls and ponds filled with turtles and young alligators.

The AEA's First-Nighter Party at SeaWorld took members and their families to the wild side with an open bar, catered dinner, steel-drum band and full access to the park's rides and exhibits. AEA members were spotted catching the Shamu show, flying head first at 56 mph aboard the Manta roller coaster, and peering at penguins.

During the convention's opening cer-

emonies, AEA President Paula Derks invited guests to look under their chairs for the possibility of finding special prizes. Some 60 lucky members found Gaylord Palms gift cards and other prizes.

On the floor of the AEA Exhibit Hall, manufacturers collectively offered dealers tens of thousands of dollars in savings in cash rebates, purchase incentives and specially priced AEA Show Specials.

During the annual New Product Introductions, Robert Clare, director of North American marketing for Universal Avionics Systems Corp., took to the stage singing and playing a guitar as he

unveiled the company's new standalone AHS-525 attitude heading reference system.

When Floyd Roney, director of sales for Kannad North America, introduced his company's new personal locator beacons, he told customers, "It's because of you we've been able to grow sales 866 percent in the last two years."

Roney's remarks were a welcomed peek at the industry's slow emergence from the recession, and echoed Derks' earlier comments about the recovering economy.

"Since the beginning of January 2009, the effects of our world's econo-

**"The dealers bring their experiences from the field to the training session. This is their opportunity to tell us how things are going. Their questions are a priority for us, and we have already followed up with most of the customers."**

**MIKE BERRYHILL,**  
aviation product trainer for Garmin

mies have taken their toll on the general aviation industry... (but) in talking to our members around the world, the AEA staff senses a feeling of optimism and, dare I say, an air of confidence," Derks said.

Immediately prior to an inspiring welcome from AEA Chairman Barry Aylward of Kitchener Aero in Breslau, Ontario, Canada, the convention was kick off with a high-energy video featuring hundreds of photos of AEA members set to the tune of "I Gotta Feeling" by the Black Eyed Peas.

It was a swift reminder there truly are a million reasons to be a part of this unique association and its annual convention. The video captured the sense of family many AEA members feel, a kinship knitted together by a passion for aviation and aircraft, and the desire to help each other succeed.

"It's all about relationships. 2009 was a difficult year for all of us," said Paul DeHerrera, chief operating officer of Universal Avionics Systems Corp., the sponsor of the convention's official opening ceremonies. "Whether your goal is to recover from the recession, resolve issues with a vendor or just learn more about the avionics industry, I can assure you, you are in the right place.

"Over the 30 years of being involved with the AEA, I've learned that the most important item among the hundreds of benefits the AEA provides its members is the setting it offers for networking and developing business relationships," DeHerrera said.

Gary Picou, AEA board member and vice president of quality systems for PS Engineering in Lenoir, Tenn., agreed.

"In 1990, Mark Scheuer (founder of PS Engineering) turned to the AEA and (then AEA president) Monte Mitchell for advice on how to grow and prosper

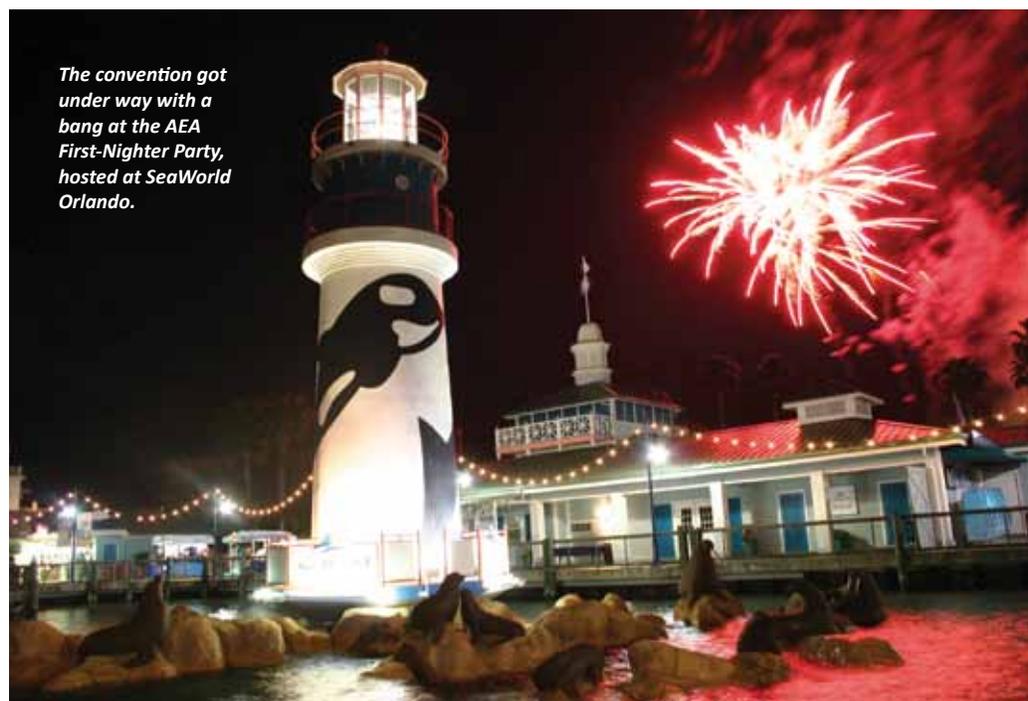
in this industry. Apparently, the advice worked. Our company has succeeded and was named AEA Associate Member of the Year in 1997. Now, we're celebrating 25 years in business," Picou said.

### **Inspired by 'The Miracle on the Hudson'**

For many, another highlight of the convention was hearing from Jeff Skiles, first officer of US Airways Flight 1549, who was the guest speaker during the AEA Annual Awards Luncheon, which was sponsored by Rockwell Collins and

my team have the tools they need?' On January 15, 2009, we used the tools we brought with us, the tools that have been developed over decades by thousands of others. We used them to work through our problem and find a solution in an incredibly difficult situation," Skiles said.

"The story of Flight 1549 is one of many, many people who had a role to play. They were all part of our team," said Skiles of himself, Capt. Chesley Sullenberger, the flight attendants, air traffic controllers, passengers, first re-



*The convention got under way with a bang at the AEA First-Nighter Party, hosted at SeaWorld Orlando.*

Pacific Southwest Instruments.

In January 2009, just after takeoff, a formation of Canada geese crashed into the engines of an Airbus A320, leading to what has become known as "The Miracle on the Hudson."

After a touching and humorous retelling of the story, Skiles emphasized that training, established procedures and teamwork led to the successful outcome of the emergency landing on the water.

"You need to ask yourself, 'Does

sponders and others, as well as the experts who created the modern cockpit systems onboard the aircraft.

"All had a role to play, whether great or small. Every one of them was critical to the outcome. It doesn't take a miracle. It doesn't take a hero. It takes a little luck and everyone working together," he said.

Skiles received an enthusiastic stand-

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*Jodie Brown (center) of Summit Solutions and Holly Simon of Smart Transformation stressed the importance of customer service in driving sales during a lively, interactive training session. Attendees learned techniques for providing exceptional customer service and building customer loyalty.*

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ing ovation from AEA members.

"You can hear or read about such an event from the media, but to hear the story told first-hand was amazing," said Jim Slicer, avionics supervisor for Heritage Flight in South Burlington, Vt.

### **Regulations Bring Caution, Opportunities**

The 2010 AEA Convention focused heavily on regulatory issues, with each day offering a regulatory general session and several guest speakers from the Federal Aviation Administration. The organization also hosted three special

international regulatory round tables representing Canada, Europe and the South Pacific.

During the AEA Regulatory Leadership Panel, guest speaker FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt said, "As an industry and as a federal agency, I don't think we have done a good enough job of explaining to people what NextGen is.

"It's a system of very complex systems. Every component of flight will benefit. You'll have more info than you've ever seen before," said the former 25-year veteran pilot of Eastern Airlines.

According to Babbitt, the benefits of NextGen include more precise weather

tools, more precise traffic and position information on the ground and in the air, and tremendous fuel savings of 50 to 60 gallons per descent.

The convention's final AEA Regulatory Rise & Shine Session covered a variety of topics, including the Part 23 turbojet rule. Wes Ryan and Lowell Foster of the FAA Small Airplane Directorate briefed the audience on the Part 23 turbojet rule and the Part 23 certification process review. "It should be called the 'turbofan' rule," Ryan said.

Of the changes to contract maintenance, Ric Peri, vice president of gov-

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# Thanks to You.

We wish to express our most sincere appreciation to the AEA Membership for awarding the 2010 Associate Member of the Year to DAC International. We profoundly thank you for your continued support and look forward to continue contributing to the advancement of our great industry. Your friends at DAC International.



[www.dacint.com](http://www.dacint.com)





DAC International (above) was honored as the 2010 AEA Associate Member of the Year, and Rick Ochs (below) was named the 2010 AEA Member of the Year during the AEA Annual Awards Luncheon.

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ernment and industry affairs for the AEA, said the FAA actually made them better.

"It's one of the best-kept secrets in the system. They got it right. They did a fabulous job," Peri said. "Don't go back and change what you're doing, you'll be in violation. Just remember to incorporate the changes the next time you update your repair station manuals."

According to Peri, the changes to Part 21 are extensive enough to make members nervous.

"You're going to start to see some disclaimers that say, 'Thou shalt not install this,' because the manufacturer doesn't want to get caught by this. That's going to create some challenges. The devil is in the details, and we don't know what the details are yet," said Peri of Part 21.8.

Under the new rule, each applicant for or holder of a production certificate, parts manufacturer approval or technical standard order authorization is required to have a documented quality system.

"Bottom line, this is going to affect mechanics. They can't produce a simple L-bracket to keep the wires off the fuselage under this because they don't have a quality system. A repair station can because it has a quality system," Peri said.

A packed room also heard from two speakers from TSA discussing the Repair Station Security Program.



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*Ric Peri, vice president of government and industry affairs for the AEA, hosts a Regulatory Rise & Shine Briefing to address the best practices for compliance with a wide range of regulatory issues.*

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In a session with AEA counsel Jason Dickstein of the Washington Aviation Group, Dickstein discussed how the new parts manufacturing rule impacts distributors, repair stations and manufacturers.

Regarding part failure liability issues, Dickstein said both the STC holder and the repair station can be held liable. “DERs don’t get sovereign immunity like the FAA. They can be sued individually,” he said.

Dickstein cautioned repair stations to make sure they carry enough liability coverage because plaintiffs often will

settle for the company’s policy limit if it is considered “reasonable.”

AEA Canada regulatory consultant John Carr hosted a separate meeting regarding the U.S./Canadian Bilateral Aviation Safety Regulations.

“Essentially, it is a ‘free-trade’ agreement that allows repair stations on both sides of the border to compete for work on all aircraft operated in the U.S. and Canada,” said Carr who has 40 years of experience in aircraft avionics systems design and certification.

According to Carr, it is not a difficult process to incorporate Canadian-registered aircraft into a U.S.-based repair station’s business.

“An FAA 145 repair station needs to include procedures in their repair station manual for work to be conducted on Canadian-registered aircraft,” Carr said. “These procedures have to be approved by their local FAA MIDO inspector. There is FAA guidance available for this, and it is a fairly simple process and should not take too long, provided the MIDO is familiar with the process.”

In another regulatory meeting, Raymond DeCerchio, a cyber security expert with the FAA Aircraft Certification division, discussed how wireless interfaces, interconnected systems and packet-switching networks are adding to the vulnerabilities of aircraft systems.

**“I think attending the AEA convention is the most cost-effective way to keep up on your required training and, at the same time, see all the new products. Also, it’s a great time to talk to your manufacturer sales reps.”**

**JOHN WICKLE,**  
avionics supervisor for the  
Ohio State University Airport.

“The threats are growing and becoming more sophisticated. The hacking tools are getting more sophisticated,” DeCerchio said. “You can actually download these (from the Web) and, if you’re good enough or have the desire, you can tweak these tools and make them more specific for the type of environment you’re trying to hack.”

### **Training Sessions Helpful to Members, Manufacturers**

During the convention, AEA members took advantage of more than 75 hours of training sessions and professional development workshops. The sessions proved so popular AEA staff scrambled to offer more seating for the standing-room-only crowds.

“I think attending the AEA convention is the most cost-effective way to keep up on your required training and, at the same time, see all the new products. Also, it’s a great time to talk to your manufacturer sales reps,” said John Wickle, avionics supervisor for the Ohio State University Airport.

Slicer agreed, “One of my primary goals for attending the convention this year was to participate in the NCATT Aircraft Electronics Technician Certification Prep Class offered by Global Jet Services and to take the certification exam, which I can say I thankfully passed.

“Another goal of mine was to learn as much as possible about satcom and Wi-Fi interface technology. I attended as many of the vendor classes as possible that offer these products,” Slicer said.

For some avionics manufacturers, the training sessions included interactive conversations with customers — a valuable dialogue that leads to improved products and services.

“The dealers bring their experiences from the field to the training session.

This is their opportunity to tell us how things are going,” said Mike Berryhill, aviation product trainer for Garmin. “Their questions are a priority for us, and we have already followed up with most of the customers.

“Our dealer network is the best in the business...I just hope they know we take all comments seriously and work to incorporate them daily,” he said.

To help members grow their businesses, the AEA offered a workshop dedicated to customer service, hosted by Jodie Brown, president of Summit Solutions, which specializes in recruiting, consulting and training for the aviation industry.

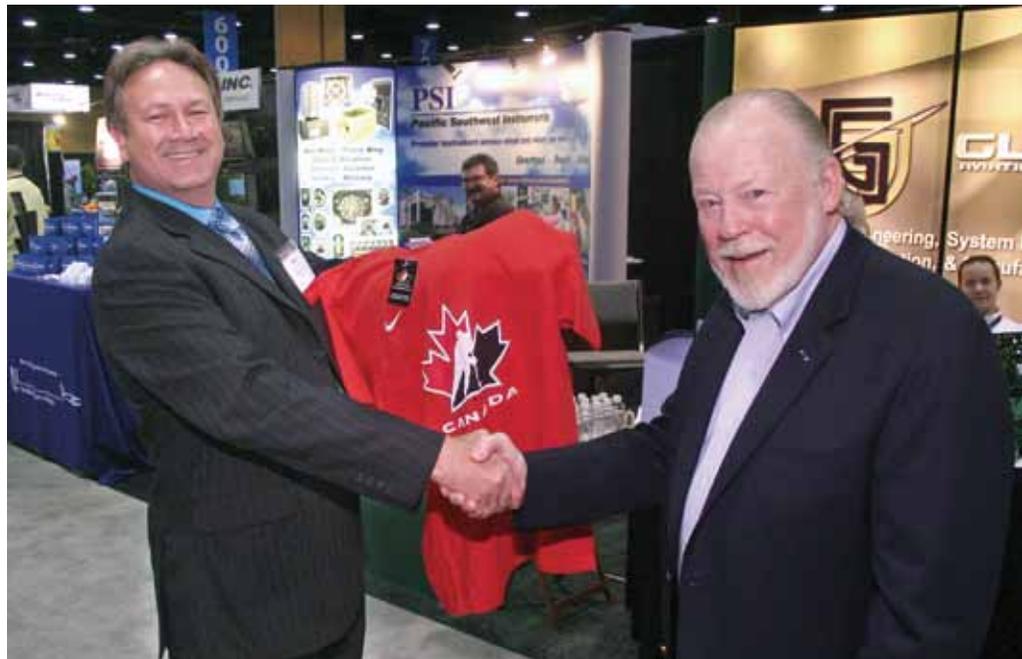
Brown stressed the importance of

“Employers often ‘throw’ employees into the fray and expect them to succeed with little to no training. Few people have the knack to be gracious and knowledgeable under fire. Successful service-focused companies invest in customer-skills training,” she said.

### **Exhibits Offer First Look at Avionics, Equipment**

More than 140 exhibitors displayed thousands of products and services in the massive AEA Exhibit Hall.

AEA members who were unable to attend the convention were treated to live-streamed speeches, online reports and interviews direct from the exhibit floor



*Barry Aylward of Kitchener Aero (left) offers Jim Irwin of Cool City Avionics a good-natured reminder of Canada’s Olympic hockey victory over the U.S. in February.*

building customer loyalty and providing employees with proper customer-service training.

“It costs more than 10 times to bring in a new customer than to keep an old one,” Brown said. “Customers who are loyal will help market your business. That’s huge.

and special events, all of which Aero-News Network and Aero-TV produced and broadcast as part of its inaugural live-streaming feeds from its website.

For dealers, the convention offered a direct line of communication to the avi-

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onics experts who design and build the equipment, and a chance to discover new product options.

“As a Garmin dealer, I took the opportunity to spend some extra time with the Garmin people and get a number of my questions answered and problems solved,” Forbes said. “Several booths had new products that I was not aware of, like PSI now supporting the old Collins’ microline, and the in-seat power systems, which a current customer had been looking for. I also take the opportunity to track new products and keep up-to-date on others.”

For avionics manufacturers, the exhibit floor is a cost-effective place not only to do business, but also to simply meet face-to-face with customers.

“At Avidyne, we like attending the AEA convention because it allows us to meet with many of our dealers at one time,” said Jared Butson, global

sales operations manager for Avidyne. “We certainly are interested in managing our travel expenses, and we find the AEA convention is a cost-effective way to see our customers and also to provide training to a larger number of our dealers.”

## AEA Honors Various Award Winners

The AEA board of directors honored Dan Walker, past director of domestic marketing for King Radio Corp., with the AEA Lifetime Achievement Award for 2010.

During his acceptance speech at the AEA convention, Walker recognized four industry leaders who helped him during his career in sales for King Radio: Winford Lentz, avionics manager at Atlanta’s Hangar One; LeRoy Dahler, founder of Avionics Specialist Inc.; the late Johnny Davis, founder of Dallas Avionics; and Monte Mitchell, retired AEA president.

“I share and accept this award on behalf of these men and King Radio,” Walker said.

During the AEA Annual Awards Luncheon, Rick Ochs, founder and president of Spirit Avionics, was named the 2010 AEA Member of the Year. The 25-year industry veteran, who manages his Columbus, Ohio-based FAA repair station, also is very involved in the industry.

Ochs serves on the AEA board of directors and on its program and member services committee. He is involved with NBAA’s maintenance management committee, NCATT, Youth Aviation Adventure board of directors and the FAA/AMT outreach committee. Ochs also serves on advisory boards for Garmin, Honeywell, Rockwell Collins and Universal.

“This is an incredible honor and a complete surprise,” Ochs said. “Let me just say, it was technology that brought me into this industry, but it was truly the people that kept me here. It’s been such a wonderful experience to be involved in the aviation and avionics industry.”

DAC International Inc. of Green-



*Robert Clare, director of North American marketing, puts a musical twist on Universal Avionics’ new product introduction.*



*Jeff Skiles, first officer of US Airways Flight 1549, tells the riveting story of “The Miracle on the Hudson” as the featured speaker at the AEA Annual Awards Luncheon.*

**“Over the 30 years of being involved with the AEA, I’ve learned that the most important item among the hundreds of benefits the AEA provides its members is the setting it offers for networking and developing business relationships.”**

**PAUL DEHERRERA**

chief operating officer of  
Universal Avionics Systems Corp.

wich AeroGroup received the 2010 AEA Associate Member of the Year award. A member of the AEA since 1982, the company specializes in the sale and distribution of avionics and test equipment to the commercial, military, business aviation and special mission markets.

“We are very grateful for this award and look forward to continue working diligently at making our industry and the AEA platform a success going forward,” said Francisco Hernandez, vice president of sales for DAC International.

The AEA membership votes on both of these annual awards.

The AEA also announced the 74 member companies that received the 2009 Avionics Training Excellence Award, which recognizes a commitment to ongoing regulatory and technical training through participation in AEA-approved instruction.

The AEA Educational Foundation awarded more than \$100,000 in scholarships to 27 individuals for the

2010/2011 academic year to pursue careers in the general aviation maintenance and aircraft electronics industry. Since its inception, the AEA scholarship program has awarded more than \$1 million in scholarships. Awards range in value from \$1,000 to more than \$30,000.

### **New AEA Board Members Elected**

Following the results of the AEA board of directors’ election, board members elected a new chairman, Greg Vail, general manager of Bloomington Avionics, Bloomington, Ill., and a new vice chairman, Gary Harpster, avionics sales representative for Duncan Aviation, Lincoln, Neb.

The AEA also announced the newly elected members of the board. The four open board of director seats for U.S. representation were filled by incumbents Greg Vail; Chuck Freeland of Sandel Avionics, Vista, Calif.; and Rick Peavley of Vero Beach Avionics, Vero Beach, Fla.; and first-

time board member Mike LaConto of Epps Aviation, Atlanta, Ga., who has served as a member of the AEA’s government and industry affairs committee since 2007. The AEA board of directors re-elected Freeland to once again serve as secretary of the board.

Those who were elected to the new international seats on the AEA board of directors are Garry Joyce of IAE Ltd., Cranfield, England, representing the European region, and Michael Kus of Avionics 2000, Melbourne, Australia, representing the South Pacific region. Vince Scott of Midland Instruments Ltd., Ontario, Canada, who was not up for re-election, represents the Canada region.

### **AEA Reno 2011**

Join the aviation/avionics community next year for the 54th annual AEA International Convention & Trade Show from March 22-25, at the Grand Sierra Resort in Reno, Nev. For more information, visit [www.aea.net](http://www.aea.net) or call 816-347-8400. □



*The AEA Exhibit Hall featured 140 exhibitors and busy foot traffic throughout the three days the AEA Exhibit Hall was open.*



*Two days of the convention were devoted to some of the industry’s best training, with AEA Fast Traks and AEA Technical Training Sessions.*