

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **SPIRIT OF '45 HONORS SIX AMERICAN FIRMS WITH FIRST "ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY" AWARDS**

SAN DIEGO, CA December 29 -- **Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive!** an organization dedicated to honoring the greatest generation and encouraging young people to rekindle a spirit of national purpose, announced it is presenting "Arsenal of Democracy" awards to six American firms that helped win WWII and that continue to contribute to America's greatness, National Coordinator Warren Hegg announced today.

The firms, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, retooled to a war footing in record time and produced the planes, trucks, tanks, guns and other equipment which overwhelmed the enemies of democracy, Hegg noted. They helped sustain the Western powers during the Cold War and continue to this day as mainstays of the American economy.

"Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Ford, General Motors and Chrysler performed perhaps the greatest industrial achievement in history and provided the men and women of the Greatest Generation with the tools they needed to achieve victory in the most devastating war of all time," Hegg said. "America's aviation companies continue to lead the world in terms of innovation and the defense of our nation. Our auto industry leader have adapted to overcome challenges and remain a bedrock of American industry."

The Arsenal of Democracy awards will be presented during the **Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive!** annual conference February 17-19, 2012, in San Diego, during a dinner hosted by the San Diego Air & Space Museum. Presenting the awards will be men and women who drove, flew or built the vehicles and airplanes produced by the recipients during WWII. They will include members of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen, the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, survivors of the battles of the Bulge, Iwo Jima, Okinawa and Midway, and women who worked in the defense industry symbolized by "Rosie the Riveter."

HISTORY (formerly History Channel) is one of many organizations that have supported the Spirit of '45 initiative through publicity and outreach. "We are so pleased to be working with the Spirit of '45 initiative," said Dr. Libby O'Connell, Chief Historian and SVP of Corporate Outreach, for HISTORY. "Their work is helping preserve the legacy of the World War II generation and is inspiring young people throughout our country to learn more about this watershed era in our nation's history."

"We are delighted to be able to honor these six companies for their service to America," said Jim Kidrick president of the San Diego Air & Space Museum. "Together, they represent the collective spirit of American manufacturing industry – past, present and future."

The three aircraft manufacturers share a rich WWII heritage. Boeing produced the B-17 "Flying Fortress" and B-29 "Superfortress" heavy bombers that were essential to the war effort. Lockheed Martin produced nearly 20,000 aircraft during the war, including the P-38 Lightning fighter plane, the only American fighter aircraft in production throughout WWII. Northrop Grumman's Hellcat fighter plane accounted for more than half of all enemy aircraft downed by Navy and Marine pilots during the war. All three companies depended on tens of thousands of "Rosies," who replaced men who were called to service, forever changing the role of women in America.

The awards were announced today on the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of President Franklin Roosevelt's famous "Arsenal of Democracy" radio speech delivered on December 29, 1940. During World War II, FDR appointed GM President & CEO William S. Knudsen, as head of wartime production. The Company produced vast quantities of armaments, vehicles, and aircraft.

"Ford Motor Company is proud of our historic and on-going efforts to support the men and women whose sacrifice and bravery have upheld the principles of democracy and community," said Jim Vella, president, Ford Motor Company Fund. "In particular, the stories of the World War II generation offer all of us inspiration and an example for the future."

"The Chrysler Group is proud of the role that the iconic and loyal Jeep® 4x4s and Sherman M4 tank played in our nation's fight for freedom during World War II," said Jody Trapasso, Senior Vice President, External Affairs – Chrysler Group LLC. "Over the years, as Chrysler continued to support the men and women of the United States Armed Forces, National Guard and Reserve, we developed numerous military-related programs, ranging from training and employment opportunities to providing financial support to military academies. The Arsenal of Democracy is a symbol of our unwavering commitment to them and we are honored to accept this award on their behalf."

**Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive!** is a 501 (C)(3) non-profit, non-partisan initiative that is preserving the legacy of service of the men and women of the WWII generation by helping to establish an annual national day of remembrance in August so that their example of courage, self-sacrifice, "can-do" attitude and commitment to community can help inspire a renewal of national unity in America at a time when our country once again must come together to meet historic challenges. [www.Spiritof45.org](http://www.Spiritof45.org)

The **San Diego Air & Space Museum** is California's official air and space museum and education center. The Museum is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and it was the first aero-themed Museum to be accredited by the American Association of Museums. Currently on display: *SPACE: A Journey To Our Future*, produced by Evergreen Exhibitions and presented in collaboration with NASA, this dynamic, multimedia exhibit looks back into the history of aeronautics and examines the many unknown questions of existence posed by future space exploration. The Museum is located at 2001 Pan American Plaza, Balboa Park, San Diego, CA 92101. [www.sdasm.org](http://www.sdasm.org)

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