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**Jeffrey Donnell Receives HAI's Salute to Excellence
Maintenance Award**

Alexandria, Virginia (January 11, 2022) – Helicopter Association International (HAI) is pleased to announce Panther Helicopters mechanic Jeffrey Donnell as the recipient of the Salute to Excellence Maintenance Award. This award, presented by Rolls-Royce, recognizes an individual for long-standing excellence in rotorcraft maintenance, maintenance instruction or supervision, or a single significant contribution to rotorcraft maintenance. It will be presented Monday, March 7, at HAI HELI-EXPO 2022 in Dallas, Texas.

For more than 25 years, aircraft and powerplant mechanic Jeffrey Donnell has ensured that helicopters are safely and properly maintained while providing superior customer service.

Donnell began developing his mechanical prowess when he was only seven years old, working in his stepfather's auto shop and gas station in Maine.

"If it ran on gasoline, we worked on it," Donnell recalls. "Cars, trucks, outboard engines, boats, tractors, motorcycles, lawn mowers—you name it. I worked there [starting at age] seven, but after high school, I wanted to work for the airlines."

Donnell enrolled in East Coast Aero Technical School in Bedford, Massachusetts, receiving his airframe and powerplant license in 1976. While he planned to work for the airlines, it was the helicopter industry that was hiring at the time. He landed his first mechanic job at Petroleum Helicopters Inc. (PHI) in the fall of 1976 with no helicopter experience.

"The position at PHI was the best job I could have taken because of the incredible amount of experience I received while I was there," he shares. "That job set me up for my career, giving me the opportunity to gain experience on numerous aircraft and attend Bell factory training."

In time, Donnell's reputation preceded him. He was dedicated, focused on doing the job right the first time, and had a special skill at getting along with everyone he encountered. It wasn't long before he was offered other positions.

In the early 1980s, Donnell took a lead mechanic job that soon led to a director of maintenance position in Houston maintaining Bell 222s operated within a helicopter airline. When the airline suffered the loss of a major client, Donnell accepted a position at Helitrans Co., where he worked as a mechanic maintaining a fleet of Bell 206 and 206L helicopters.

MAINTENANCE EXCELLENCE

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Eight years later, he was recruited away again, this time by Dallas Airmotive, as a regional sales manager and field service technician for the Rolls-Royce 250. While he had no sales experience, his expert maintenance skills and customer-support focus quickly won over customers. Then, in 2001, he was recruited by StandardAero, only to be laid off 13 years later due to budget cuts.

“I took a year to decide what to do next and was approached by Panther Helicopters, a customer I’d known for 20 years, to be a mechanic,” Donnell recalls. “The happiest time of my life is when I’m a mechanic. The pilots are like family, and I really enjoy making sure the aircraft operate properly and keeping them, my family, safe.”

Now in the industry more than 45 years, Donnell is a mechanic at Panther, based in Picayune, Mississippi. He plans to retire in the next two years to enjoy the rest of his years reflecting on a career that made a difference.

Joe Patrick, a program manager at StandardAero, sums up what most everyone who has worked with Donnell says: “From his early days as a hands-on mechanic, through his time as DOM of a Houston-based operator, to his days as a salesman of engine MRO, and now back as a hands-on mechanic (his true love), Jeff has shown himself to be unwavering in his dedication to excellence in maintaining these complicated machines.”

The Maintenance Award will be presented during HAI HELI-EXPO 2022. HAI HELI-EXPO®, the world’s largest helicopter trade show and exhibition, will be held at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas, Texas, March 7–10, with the exhibit hall open March 8–10. For more information on HAI HELI-EXPO 2022, visit heliexpo.com.

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HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry and represents more than 1,100 companies and over 16,000 industry professionals in more than 65 countries. Each year, HAI members safely operate more than 3,700 helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft approximately 2.9 million hours. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective method of commerce and to the advancement of the international helicopter community.