



## The Adventures of Meg A. Mole, Future Chemist



**Mr. Jeff Michalski**

**I**n honor of this year's Chemists Celebrate Earth Week theme, "Get a Charge out of Chemistry," I traveled to Midland, Michigan. There I met with Jeff Michalski, who used to be the president and chief operating officer (CEO) of XALT Energy & Freudenberg Battery Power Systems. Mr. Michalski worked at this company for over 20 years.

I asked Mr. Michalski to tell me a little more about his role. He shared, "I led a team of highly specialized experts to make battery systems" for powering buses and ships, and even race cars.

"How exactly do they do it?" I asked. He explained that his team members "mix the metals that create the chemical reaction which stores and discharges electricity. They also make the cells and perform all the safety and quality tests." Additionally, he explained that the room where all this happens needs to be extremely dry and clean. Mr. Michalski also told me that people who work in that room need to wear outfits that look like spacesuits!

I asked Mr. Michalski what he enjoyed most about working with batteries. He answered that he loved how hard his team worked to create technology to make the world cleaner. "Being a scientist who pioneers such a change," he said, "can be very difficult, but also very rewarding." When I asked him if any of us might one day be impacted directly by his work, he exclaimed, "Of course! If you are ever on a bus that has a very quiet, smooth, and powerful ride, it might be powered by our batteries!"

I asked Mr. Michalski what he was like as a child. He said, "I was always interested in science when I was growing up. I was always interested in how things worked, and [how] science attempts to explain how the world around us functions. Chemistry experiments reminded me of performing magic tricks!" Mr. Michalski also added, "I was excited to be a part of something that was not only interesting, but also something that is so important and useful to humankind.... My favorite subjects were chemistry and math, which led to my decision to become a chemical engineer."

### Fun Facts

- **Favorite pastime/hobby:** I enjoy playing video games and travelling. Through my work, I have had the chance to live on three continents, learn a new language (German), and visit over 40 different countries. Getting to know different cultures is an amazing learning experience.
- **About your family:** My wife was born in Poland, my daughter was born in Germany, and my dog and I were born in the United States. We have great respect for the different cultures of the world and enjoy learning about them and trying to understand the differences.