



WATERCRAFT DIVISION

**Media contacts:**

Cynthia Georgeson

262/631-6653 (office)

262/770-1022 (cell)

[cgeorges@johnsonoutdoors.com](mailto:cgeorges@johnsonoutdoors.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HULLAVATOR WINS SILVER  
INDUSTRIAL DESIGN EXCELLENCE AWARD  
Vehicle Roof-Rack Design from Thule and Johnson Outdoors  
Revolutionizes Watercraft Transport**

**RACINE, Wisc. (June 24, 2005)** – While kayaking is enjoying greater popularity among women and older kayakers, until recently there was a perceived barrier to getting involved with the sport: the physical strength required to transport a kayak or canoe. Johnson Outdoors and Thule have tackled this concern, and industrial design experts are taking notice. The Thule Hullavator, an innovative watercraft transport system born out of a partnership between Johnson Outdoors and Thule, has received a 2005 Silver Industrial Design Excellence Award (IDEA), one of the most prestigious, global awards for innovation in product design.

The Thule Hullavator is a transport system that assists in the loading of a kayak to a vehicle's roof. The innovative system uses a gas strut assembly that cuts in half the strength needed to lift a kayak to the top of a vehicle. The design also reduces the traditional loading height by 40 inches, allowing for strapping to be done easily and conveniently at waist level. The lowered load height also makes the Thule Hullavator ideal for shorter paddlers and SUV and larger vehicle owners.

“Consumer research identified car top watercraft transport as a major problem area due to the physical effort lifting a boat to a roof requires,” said Johnson Outdoors Watercraft Vice President Mark Leopold. “The Hullavator makes it easy for one person to load and unload watercraft and has generated an enthusiastic paddler response.”

- more -



The Thule Hullavator stood out as a Silver winner from a design submissions field of more than 1,380 from around the world. The Hullavator's ability to revolutionize the process of watercraft transport is what caught the IDEA jury's attention.

"The Thule and Johnson Outdoors designers have done a wonderful job tackling paddlers' long-standing problem of straining to load and offload their watercraft," said Budd Steinhilber, IDEA jury member. "They have devised a well-conceived, cleverly-engineered and handsomely-detailed, transport system that I believe will do wonders to help grow their sport."

"Thule is all about transporting your gear with ease and in style, and the Hullavator is a product that speaks volume to both," said TJ Hanson, VP of Marketing Thule, Inc. "Paddlers around the world have benefited from the Hullavator's functionality, and we're proud that the IDEA jury has also recognized it for its industrial design."

The IDEA awards – co-sponsored by the Industrial Design Society of America (IDSA) and Business Week magazine – are dedicated to fostering business and public understanding of the importance of industrial design excellence to the quality of life and the economy. They aim to showcase the best industrial design from across the United States and around the world.

### **About Johnson Outdoors**

Johnson Outdoors designs, manufactures and markets a portfolio of top quality products for the global marketplace across four categories: Watercraft, Marine Electronics, Diving and Outdoor Equipment. Johnson Outdoors' other familiar brands include, among others: Ocean Kayak™, Necky® kayaks, Old Town® canoes and kayaks, Escape® electric boats, Extrasport® personal flotation devices and wearable paddle gear, Carlisle® paddles and oars, Minn Kota® electric motors, Humminbird® fish finders, Scubapro® and UWATEC® dive equipment and Eureka!® tents. The company has 24 locations around the world, employs 1,500 people and reported annual sales of \$355 million in 2004. Visit Johnson Outdoors online at [www.johnsonoutdoors.com](http://www.johnsonoutdoors.com).

### **About Thule Inc.**

Thule Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary within the Thule Group. It is the leading US manufacturer of car rack products, with production sites in Seymour, Connecticut and Chicago,

Illinois. Thule's product line features multi-purpose roof racks, roof top boxes, rear mount racks and accessories for outdoor equipment including bikes, skis, snowboards, kayaks, canoes and surfboards. For more information, visit [www.thule.com](http://www.thule.com).

**For more information about Johnson Outdoors and its family of products, log on to [www.johnsonoutdoors.com](http://www.johnsonoutdoors.com).**

###