

'Tank Lady' wins Finance & Business QSQP Award

When Lysa Holland came to Penn State four years ago to oversee several of the University's environmental programs in Environmental Health and Safety, she never imagined that one day she would be nominated for an award, much less win. But that's exactly what happened.



(Above, Gary Schultz presents Lysa Holland a plaque at a reception honoring her on Dec. 8 at the Nittany Lion Inn. At right, Lysa's husband, Tom McNichol, and daughter, Bailey, attended the reception.



The comfortable-behind-the-scenes Holland is this year's Finance & Business Quality Service Quality People Award recipient for her exemplary leadership in environmental stewardship. The Quality Service Quality People Award was established in 1999 as part of Finance & Business's strategy to create, encourage, and maintain an environment within the organization that supports, develops and motivates the workforce.

Holland, who is often referred to as the “Tank Lady” and holds the title with pride, manages the Storage Tank Management Program, which aims to protect the environment and people, while meeting the needs of the University. The tanks include those used for the storage of oils and hazardous materials. The program goals are to minimize the number of tanks and the volume of material stored, develop alternatives to storage tanks, ensure good installations, meet regulatory requirements, and remove tanks that put the University at risk of causing environmental damage.

“The award was a pleasant surprise,” she says. “My work is always part of a team, so to be singled out is something I'm not used to.”

Holland credits the success of the program to the many people of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) with whom she works, and the ever-growing relationship among the researchers, administration and operations personnel at the University.

“We have fabulous researchers here doing great things, and I am able to help bring them together with others in the University to better the environment. Penn State is so open-minded with environmental issues,” she says. “I take being the steward of University property very seriously.”

Maurine Claver, EHS director, realizes Holland's commitment to the University. “Lysa established a program that is considered by her peers and state regulators to be a benchmark in which others are measured,” Claver says. “It is clear that the University benefits tremendously from such a talented and committed individual.”

Gary C. Schultz, Senior Vice President for Finance & Business/Treasurer, recognizes the work Holland is doing as important to the University's commitment to environmental stewardship. “Penn State has a responsibility to the environment and the community, and this requires the work of people like Lysa who are ever-vigilant and mindful of potential hazards that could threaten the ecosystem,” he says. “The work that goes on behind the scenes is not always recognized, so I am pleased that the dedication displayed by Lysa and the entire EHS staff is being honored this year.”

In addition to her work with storage tank management, Holland is also involved with the University's push to develop alternative biodegradable fuels and lubricants for vehicles and equipment to reduce the environmental impacts of spills and releases from diesel and hydraulic fluids. She worked with faculty and staff from academic and administrative units to implement the use of these fuels in equipment throughout the College of Agricultural Sciences and within the Office of Physical Plant. As a result, more than 200 pieces of farm equipment including trucks, tractors and attachments are now using biodegradable fuels and fluids instead of petroleum-based fluids.

“By implementing this program the University has not only saved money on spill cleanups, but is also leading the way to a better future,” says Kevin Myers, manager of EHS's Hazardous Materials Program. “This is just one example of how Lysa is always looking for better and more environmentally friendly ways of doing her job.”

Holland believes that her working relationship with members of the University community is responsible for the program's success. “The work is all in relationships,” she says. “When there is spill or another problem, people feel comfortable calling me.”

Holland came to University Park in 1984 to complete a master's degree in mining engineering. She worked for a private company in the area and as an environmental consultant before coming to Penn State in 2001.

“I definitely feel that the University community has come not only to respect, but to even enjoy working with the ‘Tank Lady,’” Myers adds.