

AGGREGATES
MANAGER

2009 AggMan of the Year

Cheryl Ann Suzio
York Hill Trap Rock Quarry

All in the

FAMILY

CHERYL ANN SUZIO

A strong sense of family and a keen ability to facilitate groups have propelled the AggMan of the Year for 2009, Cheryl Ann Suzio, to success in state and national leadership roles.

by Therese Dunphy, Editor-in-Chief

Cheryl Ann Suzio, secretary of Meriden, Conn.-based York Hill Trap Rock Quarry and a third-generation member of the family business, grew up with an awareness of the responsibility that comes with having her family name on a fleet of trucks traveling throughout the local community. “As kids, we were taught to give back,” she says, noting that she watched her parents and grandparents not only lead the business, but also volunteer within various community organizations.

That lesson has led Suzio to assume not only a leadership position in her family’s company, but also throughout state and national associations, as well as numerous civic associations and non-profit organizations. In recognition of her countless hours to improve the safety, health, and well being of others, the staff of *Aggregates Manager* is proud to recognize Cheryl Ann Suzio as the AggMan of the Year for 2009.

“As a long-standing active member, then leader of our Safety and Health Committee and later chair of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association’s (NSSGA) Environment, Safety and Health Division, Cheryl Suzio has been an important contributor to the cause of aggregates industry worker health and safety for many years,” says Joy Wilson, president and CEO of NSSGA. “Cheryl’s contributions to improving

NSSGA’s training efforts as well as analysis of proposed regulations has enabled the industry to work intelligently — and always with passion — on behalf of work safety and health.”

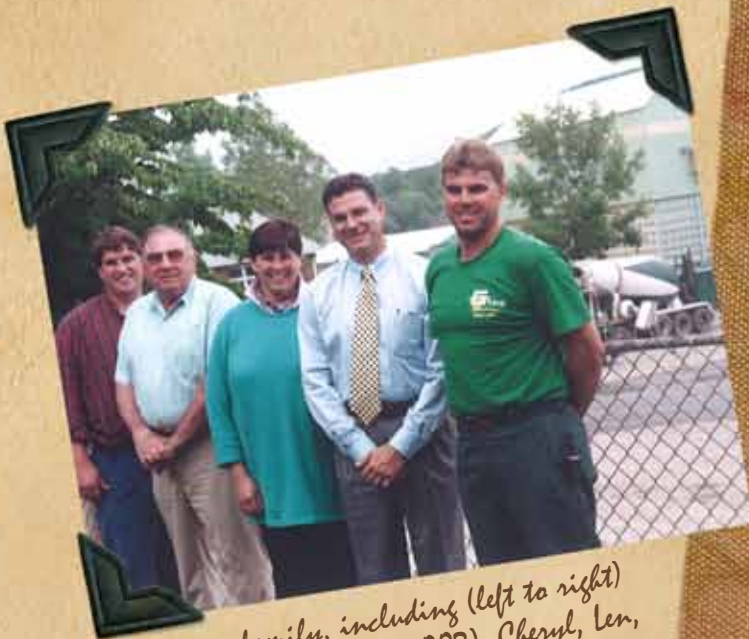
“I can’t think of a better recipient for the AggMan of the Year award,” adds Anne Kelhart, director of safety and human resources for Martin Stone Quarries, Inc., in Bechtelsville, Pa. Kelhart, who has worked with Suzio on NSSGA’s Safety and Health Committee, says, “She is the ultimate advocate for the safety of front-line employees. She works tirelessly to ensure that training for these people is the best it can be. Our industry is a better place because of Cheryl Suzio.”

Finding her own path

As a young child, Suzio says she recalls sitting on her father’s desk and thinking it was very cool. “Being the first, I spent as much time with my dad as I could,” she says. Suzio also remembers long-time employees who occasionally served as babysitters to her and her siblings. When some of those employees helped paint the family home, a young Suzio demonstrated her creative side by using all of the colors from the household walls to liven up the floor of the garage with a one-of-a-kind finger painting. “They weren’t employees,” she says of her sometimes ad hoc



Each year, Suzio decorates a construction-themed Christmas tree for a local charity auction.



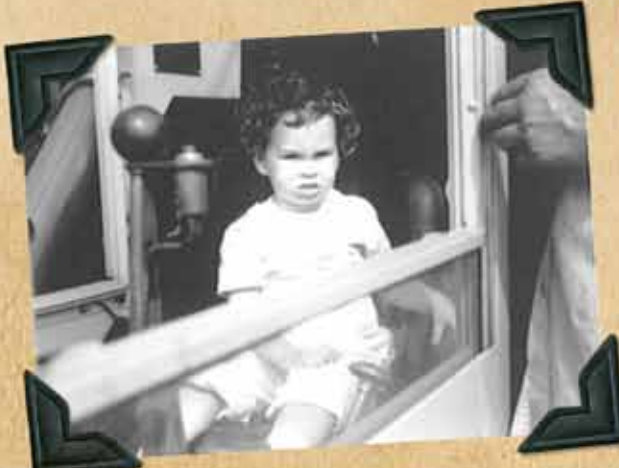
The Suzio family, including (left to right) Ric, Leonardo (deceased 2002), Cheryl, Len, and Scott, have provided second and third generation leadership to the family company.



On Feb. 15, 2003, NSSGA and MSHA signed its historic alliance. Industry representatives included: (back row, left to right) Horace Willson, Cheryl Suzio, Ed Elliott, and Gary Stoneburner. Pictured in the front row are NSSGA's Joy Wilson and Dave Lauriski, the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health.



Suzio's golden retriever, Molly, often accompanied her to the site. Molly even tagged along during numerous MSHA inspections.



As a young child, Suzio often visited her father at the family business and, occasionally, got to sit in the equipment.

household. “They were part of the family.”

Of course, Suzio admits that her early memories of the family business were filtered through a child’s eyes and were sometimes a bit off base. “We were all sitting around the table and my father was late for dinner,” Suzio recalls. “He had an appointment with Allis Chalmers. I thought ‘Alice’ was a woman my father was meeting.”

Although she grew up aware that her father spent many hours building the family business, Suzio says he always found time to be at important family events. “You can often put business aside and still be a family,” she says. “Sometimes, it’s harder to remember that you have to set the family aside and be a business.”

When Suzio grew up, she wanted an identity outside of the family business. As a teenager, she worked with developmentally disabled youth and decided to become a teacher. Suzio earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education rehabilitation and a master’s degree in special education. She then spent seven years teaching in Maine and New Hampshire. In 1985, she was named the New Hampshire Teacher of the Year.

Returning to the fold

As she approached her thirtieth birthday, Suzio’s father asked her to take on the mission of safety within the family business. In September 1985, Suzio returned to Connecticut and began to oversee the company’s safety program. The business’ insurance company provided basic safety orientation classes through its risk-management school, but she rounded out that training via her involvement with the then-National Stone Association’s (NSA) Safety and Health Committee. “That’s where I got a good portion of my training,” she says, noting that she started off with veteran safety professionals such as James Christie. “I remember there were probably a dozen people at the safety meeting sitting around a board table talking. They took me under their wing. It was exactly what I needed to get the practical, hands-on learning experience to complement what I had gotten from the basic classes.”

Suzio was not only active with the Safety and Health Committee, but as her brother, Ric, points out, she was one of the original members of the Young Leaders Council. Through people she met at NSA, she learned of and joined other associations including the National Safety Council’s Cement, Quarry and Mineral Aggregates group and the Holmes Safety Association. Suzio chaired the Holmes Safety Association’s scholarship committee for several years and was named its Woman of the Year in 1996. Because the family

business is vertically integrated in both ready-mixed concrete and asphalt, Suzio also became involved in groups such as the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association and the Motor Transport Association. At the state level, Suzio participates within the Connecticut Construction Industries Association’s (CCIA) Safety and Health Committee.

After expanding her involvement on a broad scale, she took on increasing leadership positions within NSA and, subsequently, the NSSGA. She rose from Safety and Health Committee’s vice chairman to chairman and later to chairman of the Environmental, Safety, and Health Division. Along the way, she had to pare back her involvement with some of the organizations.

“I was on the road all the time,” she says. “Being in a small business, it got to be ‘enough is enough.’ I had to focus on one. National Stone has taken my top priority.”

Staking a claim to safety

As Suzio sought to narrow her focus, the mining side of the business continued to demand the most attention, even though the family business has more employees in its concrete subsidiaries. “Mining seems to be on the forefront at all times,” she says. “Things seem to change faster.”

Biannual inspections from the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) have provided both a challenge and an educational opportunity, Suzio says. “I actually like seeing MSHA coming through the door every six months,” she laughs. “It keeps you on your toes.”

Throughout her nearly 25 years of working with inspectors, Suzio says they have often provided hints on how to improve operational practices while ensuring regulatory compliance. “They did their job,” she says. “But, in general, it was a good give-and-take educational session. They were here to help.”

As a new assistant secretary takes the helm at MSHA, Suzio says she hopes MSHA maintains its Small Mines Office. Although York Hill Traprock is just above the threshold to qualify as a small mine, Suzio says she believes that the educational component is an important resource for people seeking assistance. Because inspectors visit each and every mine, she says they also have the potential to share the important safety training and messages with mines through the impact of a face-to-face meeting. Although budget difficulties will likely make it a challenge, Suzio says she believes the agency relies too heavily on its Web site — particularly with small producers who are often too busy to research

safety online — and advocates a return to the days when a portion of each inspection was dedicated to education. “I certainly think that education will improve safety,” she says. “You don’t always get better results with an iron fist.”

Suzio speaks from experience both in dealing with MSHA and in making a commitment to improve safety throughout the industry. In 2003, she was one of four aggregate producers who joined NSSGA President and CEO Joy Wilson and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health Dave Lauriski as the association signed the first industry alliance with the regulatory agency. At the time, she served as the chairman of the association’s Safety and Health Committee.

The alliance formalized an agreement to establish “a collaborative relationship to foster safer and more healthful aggregate operations in the United States” through the use of performance goals and metrics, education and training, and technical assistance. “I have liked the alliance because it puts a human face on the agency,” Suzio says. “I always tell the alliance team that they are the best means of reaching the entire industry with safety messages.” Since the MSHA-NSSGA Alliance was signed, fatalities within the metal/non-metal sector have dropped from 42 in 2002 to 22 in 2008.

“Her service on the NSSGA Executive Committee and on the MSHA-NSSGA Alliance team has helped us reach a record low level of injury and illness rates,” notes Wilson. “In just this one way, Cheryl Suzio stands as an inspiration to all in the aggregates world.”

Taking on local leadership

While many throughout the aggregates industry know Suzio for her work in safety, she has followed in her family’s tradition of local community involvement as well. Like her mother and grandmother before her, she served as a board member for Girls, Inc., the female corollary to the Boys Clubs of America. She has served on the board of Curtis Home, a home for the elderly and wards of the state, and serves on the board of Gaylord Hospital, which specializes in long-term rehabilitation efforts.

She continues to fulfill her passion

for working with the developmentally disabled. She served on the board of Easter Seals of Connecticut and currently serves as a board member of the John J. Nerden Regional Training Center, which operates a camp for developmentally disabled youth. She is also a strong supporter of the Connecticut Special Olympics and next year hopes to combine her love of sailing and working with children through the organization’s Special Olympics Sailing Team. Although she’s been asked to serve on numerous other boards, Suzio says she volunteers her time with organizations where she feels a connection to the beneficiaries. She managed to combine numerous aspects of her life in a submission for a local charity auction — a Christmas tree decorated with a construction theme. It’s often the charity’s top-bid auction item.

“I would describe Cheryl as a giver,” Kelhart says. “She is always quietly on the move, teaching the new, guiding the groups, and quietly giving counsel to any who ask. She is the ultimate mentor... Everyone’s day is lighter with her in their presence.” **AM**



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