

[Print Page](#)

Cynthia O'Banner honored as National Code Enforcement Officer of the Year

By Kim Nguyen, Staff writer

(Created: Wednesday, November 5, 2008 9:02 PM CST)

Thursday night, the American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE) announced Cynthia O'Banner, the city of Plano's Director of Property Standards, is the 2008 Code Enforcement Officer of the Year. The presentation was made during the AACE's 2008 Annual Educational Code Conference in Portland, Ore.

The nomination came as a surprise to O'Banner as she was attending the conference.

"I had no idea," she said. "What makes it even more overwhelming was that my colleagues -- my co-workers, my boss and the city manager -- went through so much to secretly nominate me."

O'Banner was nominated for the award by her colleagues in Plano's property standards department, for which she has served with and mentored the past 12 years. During her tenure in Plano, O'Banner has built a small nine-person division of the building inspections department into a 26-person stand-alone department.

"Cynthia has been an integral and invaluable member and mentor of the City of Plano Property Standards Department for twelve years," said Scott Lussier and Scott Neumeyer, Plano property standards supervisors, in their joint letter for O'Banner's nomination. "Over that time Cynthia has altruistically provided and fostered a level of leadership, education, professionalism and integrity that has established the city of Plano Property Standards Department as one of the premier code enforcement departments in the nation."

O'Banner took the department to a new level of environmental consciousness by developing the first full-hybrid vehicle code enforcement fleet. Today 18 hybrid vehicles buzz around Plano monitoring code violations while saving Plano significant fuel costs. O'Banner reduced costs further by equipping her team with wireless laptops, allowing them to access, research and process cases in the field.

Another notable accomplishment began when O'Banner implemented a multi-family rental registration and inspection program. The program started as a pilot to assure residents living in apartments were able to live in safe and properly maintained homes. In the nearly three years of the program, 3,576 life-safety violations have been identified and corrected.

Today, O'Banner focuses on earning Plano's property standards department the National Code Enforcement Accreditation, which would make it the first accredited independent code enforcement department in the nation.

"From the time Cynthia came on board, she has literally changed the way we view property standards," said City Manager Tom Muehlenbeck. "She's built a strong team of community-oriented employees who rally to find innovative solutions to complicated code enforcement issues. This acknowledgement from her peers has been a long time coming and we are very happy for Cynthia."

On a professional level, O'Banner has actively participated in the Texas Code Enforcement Association and AACE. She has shared her experiences by working on regional projects, programs and networks to develop and improve the code enforcement profession locally and nationally. She has been involved in the North Central Texas Council of Governments DFW Code Enforcement Milestone Project, City Council Neighborhood Roundtables, University of Texas at Dallas Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management program and Chamber of Commerce Leadership Plano program.

Most recently, Plano's property standards department was the first city department to participate in the Gatekeeper Program, a program developed in coordination with the Geriatric Wellness Center of Collin County (GWCCC), Adult Protective Services and the North Central Texas Council of Governments' Area Agency on Aging. A team, led by O'Banner, was trained to identify older residents in need of social services to easily connect them to local providers.

"This is definitely, definitely a tremendous honor," O'Banner said. "But even though I was the recipient of the award, the award is a reflection of all the hard work and dedication of all the city employees I work with: the city council, city manager and the property standards department.

"Working with them and their high standards has allowed me to excel."

For information about the property standards department and the codes that the city of Plano enforces visit www.plano.gov/departments/propertystandards.

The American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE), founded in 1988 by representatives from five states, now represents all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Canada.

AACE is the only association representing housing, property maintenance and zoning officials in the United States. Its members are employed by cities, towns, parishes, counties and state government for the enforcement of housing, property maintenance and zoning ordinances intended to provide minimum standards for the protection of the public's health, safety and welfare.

For information about the American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE), visit <http://www.aace1.com>.

Contact Kim Nguyen at knguyen@acnpapers.com

Copyright © 2009 Star Community Newspapers
624 Krona Drive Suite 170, Plano, Texas 75074 - Contact Star Community Newspapers at 972-398-4200