

## Technician of the Year Awards Supplement

# Dedicated to Company, Customers, Community

Arrow Environmental Services' Matthew Miller always goes the extra mile, whether it's in the field or in his personal life.



By Peter Chakerian

Never mind the term “model employee,” to hear Arrow Environmental Services Operations Branch Manager Dave Johnson tell it, PCT’s 2018 Residential Technician of the Year and colleague Matthew Miller is far more than that.

“It takes an elevated level of integrity, intestinal fortitude, and desire to be exceptional at his profession,” Johnson said. “He epitomizes these traits and so many others.”

Johnson was quick to extoll Miller's virtues on the nomination form submitted to PCT: "[Matt] is always looking for alternative products to help Arrow Environmental Services integrate as many 'green' solutions as possible. His favorite quote is, 'The only safe pesticide is the one we don't have to use.'"

When asked about the quote in an interview with PCT about his award, Miller said that pesticides aren't typically his first course of action.

He told PCT — on a "colder-than-normal Monday morning" in the Sarasota, Fla., market that he lives in and covers — that he talks to customers all the time about the judicious use of pesticides.

"You really don't have to start with pest control products, especially in your house," he added. "If we can come up with alternative solutions by identifying the sources of the trouble — which can be anything from installing new screens, replacing weather stripping, emptying garbage more often or moving it away from the home — that type of troubleshooting, which I love to do, can really help change the storyline of what's happening inside.

"When people think 'pest control,' they often think of 'the guy with the chemical tank, spraying the baseboards,'" Miller said. "We can accomplish a lot without putting anything inside the house. When we look for alternatives, like how the industry has made huge progress with baits for indoor use, everyone wins that way."

**'P.C.' TIMES THREE.** If it seems like Miller is an "everyone wins" kind of guy, you're spot-on, especially when it comes to can-do attitude. It spills over into everything he does. And when you understand his arrival in the pest control (PC) industry, it makes even more sense.

Miller originally had his sights on another "PC" career (personal computers) when he was in high school, but he missed his entire junior year of high school when yet another "PC" (Pectus Carinatum/Excavatum, a very rare concave chest condition) threatened his future with some critical health hand wringing.

"I was pretty excited about computers...but I missed a year of school for corrective surgery on my chest, which could have resulted in collapsed lungs, an enlarged heart and heart murmurs," Miller related.

## In the Community and at Home

Matthew Miller's dedication to community transcends his day-to-day field work, spilling out into many different community channels which he is passionate about. He is an active volunteer for Second Chance Friends — a nonprofit organization that rescues and rehabilitates homeless, neglected or abused animals, fostering them in new homes once they've recovered. He has also coordinated local annual Girl Scout yard sales for more than a decade and he recently signed up with his wife, Crystal, for foster parenting coursework.

In addition, Miller volunteers for the local Get Out and Vote campaign efforts, mobilizing voter registration initiatives in Sarasota and surrounding municipalities. It's something he's very passionate about.

"Everything is so political these days, but the one thing that shouldn't be — the one thing we should all agree upon — is the ability to vote," Miller said. "It doesn't matter what your politics are, you still have that right in this country, and getting involved in that process is important. It's the way to ensure that your voice is heard."

Miller was excited that so many voices were heard in his nomination for the PCT Technician of the Year award.

"It was an exciting thing," Miller said. "Every Friday, we have a morning training, and of course I come in just like everyone else — but this time they had a whole bunch of prizes in the corner and I just assumed it was a quarterly giveaway.



"I was definitely shocked [when I realized I had won]. It was great and wonderful and completely unexpected; I had no idea it was coming. It was a nice reward, because I really strive to represent our industry in everything we do."

How would he celebrate his big win? Perhaps a lot like how he spent this past weekend.

"I do have a lot going on, so this weekend I enjoyed firing up the smoker, making some ribs, watching football... I definitely love cooking out, taking it easy. When you spend a lot of time with work and other projects, as rewarding as those are, you've gotta have some down time to decompress."

Perhaps some golf, too, Miller said.

And yes, as you might expect, his leisure activities all involve "great personal connection time with family and friends."

Miller and his family were hooked up with the Shriners, who helped fly him to Chicago for an experimental procedure "where they cut out your sternum and placed a metal bar in your chest" and, post-surgery, he was required to take night school to make up for his lost year of high school.

"In order to graduate on time, I had to go to night school, and the program there also helped me become a Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)," Miller said. "I ended up working tech support over the summer, but it wasn't long before I determined that computer science wasn't for me. So, I ended up at community college for science and chemistry afterwards."

Miller ended up working at a chem lab while moving in that career direction at the University of South Florida, but then his mother became ill and he dropped out to help take care of her. His soon-to-be fiancée (now wife) Crystal ended up being the segue from that passion for chemistry and best practices into the pest control industry.

"Her father had his own pest control company, and they were looking for help, part-time, and I figured that would work out great for me given all else that was going on," Miller said. "That was my start in the industry."

**FAMILIAL CONNECTION.** State-certified in Florida for Fumigation, Lawn and Ornamental, General Household Pest and Termite, Miller also holds GIBMP Certification — a science-based educational program for green industry workers to help them implement best practices geared to the conservation of Florida's ground and surface waters. He's tackled many of Univar's master technician courses as well. But he has plans beyond those certifications.

"I have all four of the licenses for pest control necessary professionally in Florida," he said. "The next stop would be a degree in entomology. University of Florida has one of the best programs in the world. I never get tired of learning, or tire of watching bugs and how they behave."

Johnson said Miller's dedication to his own training is a major reason Arrow Environmental has an "extremely high employee retention rate" with new technicians. Johnson said that while the national averages suggest a 50% attrition rate within the first-year post-training, he has retained 86% of new hires

within the past year. Outside of those weekly trainings, that congenial attitude is equally important in the field itself. A common customer comment that Arrow Environmental receives about Miller is that he is “a lot like family.”

“It’s important in our industry,” Miller said with a laugh. “You’re coming into their home, and that’s a really personal thing, so understanding that building relationships is critical to this job is what helps build success. It’s that way with your fellow team members, too.”

Being a team member suits Miller well. “At the end of the day, we all want the same outcomes... between great interactions with customers and team members, and problem solving, when everything is going to plan, there’s a lot of job gratification because you know you’re having a positive influence on people’s day-to-day lives. I really love it. There are so many good people on all sides of the business.”

*The author is a Cleveland, Ohio-based writer.*