



Mitch Wilson received the Longview Partnership's 2010 Entrepreneur of the Year Award, nominated by his business partner Laura Rectenwald, PhD, of Titanium Environmental Services, LLC (TES). "It's a great surprise and honor. Frankly, I've been so busy keeping up with the demands of our clients that I have forgotten that our business has grown so exponentially."

Wilson has had a longtime interest in the environment prior to his career. As a child, his three aquariums full of turtles, tadpoles and insects allowed him to closely observe nature. And with maturity grew an increasing respect for the environment. "I realized that we humans are a part of the natural world and though we try to insulate ourselves from the impacts of weather and other natural forces, we cannot avoid the need for clean water, clean air and adequate food," he explained.

Wilson graduated from Ohio State University in '77 with a major in Zoology. He moved to Texas and worked at Ana-Lab Corporation, an environmental testing lab, and was the lab manager by age 24. In 1981, he landed a job as a chemist at Mobley Environmental in Kilgore.

At Mobley, Wilson was the vice president of environmental affairs for facilities in Baltimore, Florida, New York and Mexico. He worked with the company for 15 years with a special interest in landfills, hazardous waste, disposal management and pesticides. At Mobley, Wilson experienced first hand why some consulting firms were effective and some were not. "Some seemed focused on developing large reports that had no practical application. Others would rack up huge bills and constantly try to expand the scope of the task they had been given," he recalled. "Few consulting firms actually listened to the client and attempted to solve problems in a practical manner."

Wilson was in the beginning stages of forming his own firm when he met Rectenwald. She was working at another consulting firm in Longview and had just completed her PhD studies in environmental science. He recalled, "When the company I was working for sold its assets to a company based in Houston, I decided to attempt to start a business in Longview rather than relocate to Houston." Rectenwald was interested, and both partners share a similar philosophy of how to treat clients. "I knew that the only truly useful consulting firms that I had used were those that put solving my particular problem first."

So, in 2000 Wilson and Rectenwald started TES to provide industrial consulting services and later added oil and gas operations.

Right now the business is growing, primarily due to their clients in the oil and gas industry. Most of TES's clients are local and within a 100-mile radius. However, they do have national clients. "We have clients that are refineries in California. We are working today on a client with a refinery in Chicago, Ill.," he said. Wilson clarified what they actually do in the field to tell if clients are in compliance with laws and regulations. "We don't go out and chase bunnies in the woods much," he joked. "Basically, we are actually sitting in our offices looking at numbers and results saying, 'OK, that's safe because of this,' or 'It's not safe because of that,' and write reports on it." The majority of what his employees do involves intense, in-office number crunching – and a lot of writing.

TES also does a lot of work with environmental permits, specializing in air permits. "The air we breathe is a shared resource," he explained. "You can't just go out and start [air emissions] and do what you want to do. You have to get a license or permit to emit those compounds." TES examines the types of compounds the client will use, the emissions they will have, the types of controls they will have and the type of device that will clean the air for the permit to be issued. The down-wind impact must be also assessed – and there are permits for that too. And while preserving the environment for the future is Wilson's business, it's also an obvious passion. "If we don't minimize the negative impacts of our economic activity on the environment, we will pay the price with an increase in human health problems and a decrease in the quality of life in general," he disclosed. "Balancing environmental health and increasing human demands for food and resources is one of the most significant challenges we will face in the next 100 years."

Outside of work, Wilson spends time with his wife of 29 years and their daughter. He enjoys playing disc golf or frisbee golf for fun and has also been an avid cyclist for years. In fact, his cycling hobby is partially responsible for the name of the company ... "I had a (cycling) wreck back in '98 ... I got hit by a pick-up truck going about 70 miles-an-hour. It broke my face, back and my leg shattered in three or four places," he said. "So out of that process I got a lot of titanium screws, rods and all kinds of stuff," he said. Laura also has a titanium rod in her leg. When they started the company, Wilson suggested 'Titanium' because it is light, hi-tech and is literally in Wilson and Rectenwald's bones. And, of course, the company's logo pays homage to his collision – a titanium bicycle cog. **B** by Holly Head, hhead@h3-media.com