



Barb VanderMolen, A. O. Smith vice president-finance, receiving recognition with a Women in Manufacturing STEP Ahead Award

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MILWAUKEE, March 8, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Barbara L. VanderMolen, [A. O. Smith](#) vice president-finance for North America Water Heaters, will be recognized by The Manufacturing Institute with a Women in Manufacturing STEP (Science, Technology, Engineering and Production) Ahead Award on April 10. The STEP Ahead Awards honor women who have demonstrated excellence and leadership in their careers and represent all levels of the manufacturing industry, from the factory-floor to the C suite.

Barbara VanderMolen, A. O. Smith Corporation

President and Chief Operating Officer Kevin Wheeler said, "We're thrilled that Barb is getting the recognition that she deserves. She has been a great conduit between our North America, India, and Europe teams, encouraging more international collaboration. She's also been instrumental in expanding the A. O. Smith Women's Resource Network to other countries, such as India and Canada."

VanderMolen has finance and accounting responsibility for the North America, India, Europe and Export areas of the business. This group represents a significant portion of the revenue and profit for A. O. Smith and operates in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, India, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Turkey. Her role includes leading analytical and pricing teams that provide business and financial insight and ensures business decisions are based on solid financial criteria.

VanderMolen joined A. O. Smith in 2008 as director of financial planning and analysis for the former Water Products Company. She was recently appointed to the advisory committee of the A. O. Smith Women's Resource Network, an initiative created to further develop women's talents and leadership capabilities. In 2016, she was recognized in the Supply House Times Women in Industry Top 20, in addition to earning the Nashville CFO award by the Nashville Business Journal in 2015.

"I am honored and grateful to receive this STEP Award, but I know that business or personal success cannot be achieved alone. I am proud to work for a fantastic company that attracts and retains many talented people. And with our development initiatives at A. O. Smith, including the Women's Resource Network, I am hopeful that more employees from our organization will be recognized in the future," VanderMolen notes.

The STEP Ahead Awards are part of the larger STEP Ahead initiative, launched to examine and promote the role of women in the manufacturing industry through recognition, research, and leadership for attracting, advancing, and retaining strong female talent. In five years, STEP Ahead Award winners have impacted more than 300,000 individuals — from peers in the industry to school-aged children. Women constitute one of manufacturing's largest pools of untapped talent. Women totaled about 47 percent of the U.S. labor force in 2016, but only 29 percent of the manufacturing workforce. Not only does the STEP Ahead initiative bolster manufacturing's attractiveness to women, it also plays an important role in improving the perception of careers in the industry among younger generations.

"Companies across the U.S. agree there is a talent shortage in manufacturing. Through the STEP Ahead Awards, we hope to take another step toward closing this gap by highlighting the stories of successful women in manufacturing and giving them a platform to encourage other women to join the industry and be role models for the next generation," said Carolyn Lee, executive director of The Manufacturing Institute. "The women being honored demonstrate what modern manufacturing careers are all about: making an impact in their communities with meaningful careers that offer significant opportunities for growth."

The Manufacturing Institute will recognize VanderMolen and all other recipients of the STEP Ahead Awards at a reception in Washington, D.C., on April 10. The STEP Ahead Awards program will highlight each honoree's story, including their leadership and accomplishments in manufacturing.

VanderMolen is the second A. O. Smith employee to receive a STEP Ahead award. Carol Peters, director-operations at the company's Johnson City, Tenn. plant, was recognized with a STEP Ahead award in 2013 in her previous role as production manager.

About The Manufacturing Institute

The Manufacturing Institute (the Institute) is the 501(c)(3) affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers. As a non-partisan organization, the Institute is committed to delivering leading-edge information and services to the nation's manufacturers. The Institute is the authority on the attraction, qualification and development of world-class manufacturing talent. For more information, please visit www.themanufacturinginstitute.org.

About A. O. Smith Corporation

A. O. Smith Corporation, with headquarters in Milwaukee, Wis., is a global leader applying innovative technology and energy-efficient solutions to products manufactured and marketed worldwide. The \$3.0 billion company is one of the world's leading manufacturers of residential and commercial water heating equipment and boilers, as well as a leading manufacturer of water treatment products. For more information, visit www.aosmith.com.

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