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Letterkenny Army Depot receives its 6th Shingo

By JIM HOOK Senior writer

Robert Miller presented Letterkenny Army Depot its sixth Shingo Medallion and a challenge on Thursday.

"I would love nothing better than to be back here in a couple of years to present a Shingo Prize," said Miller, executive director of the Shingo Prize for Operational Excellence. "If any organization can do it, you can."

The Shingo Prize is considered to be the Nobel Prize of manufacturing. The prize committee also awards medallions for operations that almost qualify for a full prize.

Miller spoke to about 350 workers taking a break in Building 370 for the presentation ceremony. The shop won a Bronze Shingo Medallion for its excellence in rebuilding launch and support equipment for the Patriot missile system. The anti-missile missile is launched and tracked from trucks and trailers.

"This is very, very rare and is something given to very few companies in the world," Miller said. "You ought to be proud of it."

He said the effort that qualified the Letterkenny team for a Bronze Medallion this year would have won the full Shingo Prize five years ago.

"We have raised the standards for the Shingo Prize in the past five years," Miller said.

The committee presented about a dozen Shingo Prizes five years ago and this year presented just two.

Letterkenny won its first Shingo Medallion five years ago for just one aspect of the Patriot program, rebuilding launchers. The depot's most recent application was for the entire Patriot system rebuild, including its launchers and 10 other production lines.

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"You've raised your own bar substantially," Miller said. "You realize the way that the whole system works is of value to the war fighter. Your momentum is growing."

When Miller concluded his remarks, Letterkenny Commander Col. Cheri Provancha stood.

"On behalf of Letterkenny, sir, we accept your challenge," she said.

Provancha said that the pursuit of the Shingo has become a guide to continuous improvement and employee empowerment.

Provancha and Wayne Eichenlaub, chief of the Patriot rebuild, accepted the award.

Eichenlaub told a reporter after the ceremony that shops' areas are swept and tools and equipment

are cared for. Manufacturing processes are better organized.

"The work force has accepted the culture and has recognized the good in lean processes," Eichenlaub said.

Paul Gardner, a shop foreman, said pursuing the Shingo has made the shop more worker friendly. He dressed in a white long-sleeved shirt and tie on Thursday to lead tours. He supervises the testing of the rebuilt missile system.

"It's cleaned up our act," Gardner said. "You have what you need when you need it. The work area is not cluttered up."

Before the competition, workers might mention a problem, then leave it for the supervisor to fix, Gardner said.

"Now they take it on themselves to make it happen," he said. "They do it the way they want it done, not the way someone else thinks it should be done."

When they see production improvements, they take pride in their work, Gardner said.

Miller encouraged Letterkenny managers to understand the Shingo principles and to drive them deeply into the work culture. People are attracted to excellence.

"The award represents a place on your journey," Miller said. "It must be a never-ending journey."



Honoring excellence: Col. Cheri Provancha, left, receives a... (Public Opinion/Markell DeLoatch)



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Other speakers during the hour ceremony offered inspiration:

- "We're here today because of what you've done," U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Holidaysburg, said.
- "As far as I'm concerned you should be standing up here and we should be standing back there," said Lt. Gen. James Pillsbury, deputy commander of Army Materiel Command.
- "You're the ones who keep this going. Keep it up," said state Sen. Rich Alloway, R-Chambersburg.

The Shingo shines a mirror back at the work force, according to Maj. Gen. James R. Myles, commander of Army Aviation and Missile Command.

"We know what right looks like, and it is you," Myles said. "There are no higher standards of work than goes on here at Letterkenny. You are responsible for keeping soldiers alive. You've done it in a most innovative way. Thank you for keeping soldiers alive in Iraq and Afghanistan."

His speech received the warmest applause of the ceremony.

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About the Shingo

The Shingo Prize was established in 1988 to create a culture of continuous improvement through employee-empowerment and effective leadership. The prize, known as the "Nobel Prize of manufacturing," is named for Dr. Shigeo Shingo, who helped create the renowned Toyota Production System.

The Shingo Prize for Operational Excellence awards the prizes and is based at the Utah State University school of business.

The competition was open to government operations in 2005.

Letterkenny Army Depot won a Shingo Medallion in the first year and has won five more since:

- 2009 -- Patriot support vehicles
- 2008 -- Biological detection shelters
- 2007 -- Portable generators
- 2006 -- Humvees
- 2005 -- Patriot missile launcher








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