

Guest Article: The Pipe Trades Are a Smart Place for Women

Submitted by UA 400

In 2021, the number of women working in trades reached the highest level ever, at just over 314,000. During the last five years, the number of tradeswomen increased by almost one-third (32.1 percent).

Kristen Vera joined UA 400 and received her apprenticeship through Team Industries in March 2014. By August 2019, Kristin graduated and received her Journeyman's card while working for Tweet/Garot Mechanical as a fabricator.

"My interest in the trades didn't really begin until I was attending college and my brother (a UA 400 member) brought up the idea of welding," said Kristen. "The pipe trades are a good fit for me because I enjoy working with my hands and learning new skills."

Kristen will be a panelist at the 2nd Annual Women in the Pipe Trades Open House on March 8th at the UA 400 Training Center in Kaukauna from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The event is open to any women looking for an apprenticeship or currently working in the pipe trades industry. Three other women will be joining Kristen for a one-hour panel discussion including Bassett Mechanical CEO Kim Bassett, Tweet/Garot Mechanical Chief Operating Officer Hope Voigt, and Wisconsin Workforce Development Apprenticeship Training Representative Lynn O'Shasky. The panelists will discuss career opportunities for women in the pipe trades followed by a question and answer session.

Money isn't the only reason the pipe trades are a smart place for women. Other benefits include job security, no student debt, advancement opportunities and pride in a job well done.

"The apprenticeship program was a great opportunity for me to get the certifications and training I needed to succeed while getting paid through the whole schooling process with on-the-job training," said Kristen.

"Now, I enjoy supporting my family of seven with my excellent pay and benefits. I will never forget working at Tweet/Garot through both my pregnancies and getting taken back with welcoming arms and an open weld booth, and with the support and understanding of my obligations to my new babies."

Many women have very little or often misinformation about the trades and are pleasantly surprised to hear about both the quality of career opportunities and their ability to meet apprenticeship requirements.

UA 400 is committed to recruiting more women to the pipe trades and the success of last year's event was evident with nearly 100 people in attendance. UA 400 believes improving women's participation in construction careers is in everyone's interest because it expands women's career choice with access to high-wage employment and increases the talent pool that's available to local contractors.

"UA Local 400 is an inclusive organization that knows the value of women in the trades," said UA 400 Business Manager Doug Dokey. "With worker shortages around the country, now is the perfect time for women to explore the piping industry and we are proud to be the leaders in that area."

Recently, Kristen was promoted to the position of Virtual Design Coordinator at Tweet/Garot Mechanical and we can't wait to share more success stories like hers.

"I enjoy reaching out and advocating for more women in the trades and am excited to see what the future has in store," said Kristen. "I would tell any young women interested in getting into the pipe trades that it takes hard work and dedication to succeed but it is such a rewarding feeling in the end."



