Construction Training and Support for Women: Sisters in the Building Trades

Sisters In The Building Trades is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation founded in 2006 to provide women working in the construction trades with individual and personal support as well as mentoring and assistance in what has predominately been a male-dominated industry. According to Sisters in the Building Trades, women have remained at 2.5% of the construction-trades skilled workforce for the last 30 years.

More specifically, the mission of the Sisters in the Building Trades is to "expand a network of active women that will affirm building trades sisters as a positive and growing part of the construction workforce; increase the number of trades women through cooperative recruitment efforts and mentoring support for enhanced retention; hold regular meetings allowing women to network and share their experiences; match mentors to new trades women; enter into partnership with disadvantaged women to provide encouragement and hope; reinforce appropriate workplace conduct; increase public awareness of construction careers; provide speakers to career fairs and other outreach opportunities; support recruiting efforts of apprenticeship programs; and use our skills in volunteer work."

Melina Harris, President of Sisters in the Building Trade and Carpenter’s Union Local 1797 member in Renton, Washington was selected as one of Engineering News Record's Top 25 Newsmakers of 2010. Harris’ efforts have helped Tradeswomen in the U.K., Australia and South Africa, among other countries, learn about workers’ rights, career paths and mentoring opportunities in their construction markets. She was instrumental in helping Australian Tradeswomen form their first-ever networking group.

At the first national conference for women in the trades held on April 30, 2011 in Oakland, California, more than 625 craftswomen gathered to learn how to boost their share of the workforce. The meeting, co-sponsored by the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Dept., included women from the U.S. and Canada (ENR 5/4/2011).

Disaster Training

Harris is using the group’s expertise and contacts in local emergency response to develop the Building Trades Disaster Response Project, an initiative in Seattle and beyond to coordinate training efforts between building trades’ members and local, state and federal officials.

As a method of preparation for the unforeseen, the Sisters in the Building Trades uses its unique ability to reach out across trade and political lines and barriers and is:

- Offering OSHA 7600 Training, OSHA 10, HAZWOPER 40 and First Aid/CPR.
- Reaching out to All Building Trade Crafts, and their Apprenticeship Instructors as well as Contractors and their Safety Personnel
- Coordinating an effort to build a local database of trained volunteers
- Coordinating an effort for shared training of First Aid/CPR, OSHA 10 and HAZWopper 40

Sisters in the Building Trades is working on coordinating training with Search and Rescue, FEMA, Red Cross, and CERT Community Emergency Response Training. Sisters in the Building Trades is also working to connect disaster training and its skilled workers and volunteers with:

- City Emergency Management
- County Emergency Management
- State Emergency Management
- Federal Emergency Management
- Washington State Labor & Industries/DOSH/WISHA
Members Of The Sisters Alliance Project

Allied Cleveland Tradeswomen
Anew Apprenticeship An Nontraditional Employment For Women Wa
Puget Sound
Canadian Construction Women
Cluw Coalition Of Labor Union Women
Us Department Of Labor, Women’s Bureau Region X
Green For All Hard Hatted Women
Institute For Women And Work
Legal Momentum
The Seattle Majestics
Moxie Trades
Nawic – National Association For Women In Construction
National Committee On Pay Equity
National Organization For Women Nevada
Port Jobs
Professional Women In Construction
Sheet Metal Local 66 Women’s Group
FaceBook Page
Sisters In The Trades – Canada
Susan Eisenberg On Equal Terms
Tradeswomen, Inc (Ca)
Washington Women In Trades
Wild Labor Women’s Institute For Leadership Development
Commission On Women
Women ironworkers
Women’s Council Of The Master Builder’s Association
Womens Tool Shed

Alaska Women’s Network
American Society Of Professional Estimators
Blue Collar Women
Chicago Women In Trades
Construction Center Of Excellence
Electrical Workers Minority Caucus
Ibew Local 46 Women’s Group
Jobs With Justice Wa
Lower Nine
Missouri Women In Trades
National Alliance For Partnerships In Equity
National Association Of Women In Masonry
National Organization For Women Seattle
Oregon Tradeswomen
Pride And A Paycheck
Sawic South Africa Women In Construction
Sisters In The Brotherhood Ubc
NY Sisters In The Brotherhood Ubc
Southern Oregon Tradeswomen’s Network
The Union Edge Talk Radio Show
Vermont Works For Women
W.I.N.T.E.R. Women
Women Count For The Presidential
Womantalk Live Radio
Women In Construction Shop
Workshop For Women

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