

Writing Professor Is Also Professional Welder

By Jo Mackiewicz

Although I have a good gig as a full professor at Iowa State University, I’ve daydreamed about learning a trade—something that required both my mind and my hands.

So in 2018, I started night courses in welding at Des Moines Area Community College. For three years, I studied different types of welding and during the day worked on a book about the communication between welding teachers and students. I wasn’t the only woman who became interested in trades work during this time. Recognizing the good pay and job security, United States women have moved in greater numbers into skilled trades such as welding and fabrication within the past ten years.

From 2017 to 2022, the number of women in trades rose from about 241,000 to nearly 354,000. That’s an increase of about 47 percent. Even so, women still constitute just 5.3 percent of welders in the United States.

When I received my diploma in welding in May 2022, I’d already found the place I wanted

to work: Howe’s Welding and Metal Fabrication. I’d met the owner, Jim Howe, when I visited his three-man shop in Ames, Iowa, in January 2022 for research on a second book about communication in skilled trades.

Howe’s shop focuses on repairs and one-off fabrication, not large-scale production of single items. Under Howe’s tutelage, I’ve fabricated skis for the machines that make the rumble strips in the road, shepherd’s hooks for bird feeders, fence poles, and stainless-steel lampshade frames. I’ve repaired trailers, wheelchair ramps, office chairs, and lawn mowers.

Both my experience at Howe’s and my research at nine other fabrication facilities in Iowa have shown me that—at least for the time being—tradeswomen must find workarounds for commonly encountered challenges. Some of these challenges are physical. These could include being unable to easily reach or move necessary material and tools. Or they could be emotional, such as encountering sexism. As I explore in my forthcoming book, *Learning Skilled Trades in the Workplace*, this is true even in a welcoming environment like Howe’s shop,



Writer Jo Mackiewicz welds headboard where I work with a supportive and helpful boss and coworkers.

Being a tradeswoman means being scrutinized for competence. One of the tradeswomen that I interviewed for the book told me this story about

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Selling to the Federal Government Webinar
Thursday, November 14, 2024, 12:00 pm–3:00 pm CDT Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: George Tapia, 610-382-3086, george.tapia@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required
Did you know that the federal government is the largest purchaser of goods and services in the world? Interested in learning how your business can market your services or goods to the federal government? Register on line at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/how-to-sell-to-the-federal-government-tickets-21790713611> SBA helps to ensure small businesses get fair opportunities to share federal government prime contracts. Topics will include: How to Register, Small Business Certifications, Finding Opportunities, Marketing Your Firm, Federal Supply Schedules, Getting Paid, Tips to Prepare Your Offer, How to Seek Additional Assistance. All training sessions are held via Microsoft Teams Meeting. Participants must ensure Microsoft Teams is functioning.

Federal Contracting: Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Certification Program Webinar
Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 1:00 pm–2:30 pm CDT Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: Patrice Dozier, patrice.dozier@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required
Welcome to the WOSB webinar series! Are

you a woman owner of a small business? The federal government's goal is to award at least five percent of all federal contracting dollars to woman-owned small businesses each year. Join us for training on how to register for SBA's Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) program, which helps eligible small businesses to qualify for federal contracting opportunities. The monthly sessions will include an overview of the self-certification process, as well as a discussion of the NAICS codes that qualify as WOSB or EDWOSB. Register for this free webinar at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/woman-owned-small-business-wosb-certification-program-tickets-853225690007>

8(a) Orientation and SAM Registration Webinar
Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 9:30 am–10:30 am CDT Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: SBA Illinois District Office, 312-353-4528, illinois.do@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required
Join the Small Business Administration (SBA) Illinois District Office for a virtual workshop providing an overview of the 8(a) Business Development program, eligibility requirements, and program benefits. Also learn how to increase your potential for federal contract opportunities through System for Award Management (SAM) registration, including information that you need for the registration process. SBA presenters will offer additional tips, address FAQs, give directions on where to get further assistance, and answer your other questions. To register for this free webinar, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/8a-orientation-sam-registration-tickets-518989961947>

CERTIFICATION

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