



Amanda Carlson, contributing editor, can be reached at amandac@thefabricator.com.

Finding MAGIC in the trades

Summer construction camp for girls changes perceptions, builds confidence



FIGURE 1 Wearing pink gloves and safety glasses, the girls at the 2011 MAGIC Camp assemble metal toolboxes from precut pieces of material. Photo courtesy of Tina Vervoorn.

It may not be every girl's dream to become the next Rosie the Riveter, but thanks to the efforts of David Maquinaldez, the Tri-Counties SMACNA, and the Ventura/Oxnard and Simi/Conejo Valley Chapters of the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), girls in Ventura, Calif., and the surrounding communities have an opportunity to at least consider it.

The weeklong MAGIC (Mentor A Girl In Construction) Camp held at the ACE Charter High School in Camarillo, Calif., last July introduced 22 high school girls to the construction industry and educated them about the various careers available.

MAGIC Camps are held across the country in an effort to provide a supportive environment for girls to explore and develop basic skills while instilling self-confidence in their ability to work with their hands and think creatively.



FIGURE 2 David Maquinaldez demonstrates how to use a folding machine. Photo courtesy of Tina Vervoorn.

And there's no better time for these camps than the present. A report released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics states that the number of women involved in the construction industry sector has been on a steady decline since 2005. In that year approximately 1,079,000 women had occupations in the construction industry. In 2010 that number had dwindled to just over 800,000.

Part of the problem in attracting women to the trades, said Maquinaldez, training coordinator for the Tri-Counties Sheet Metal Apprenticeship Program in Ventura, Calif., is the stigma attached to those types of careers.

"There's a perception that it's a man's job to be the laborer. But with the new technology that we have in the trade, it's not the hands-on manual labor type of trade anymore," Maquinaldez explained.

In his two years as a MAGIC Camp instructor, Maquinaldez has worked to change that perception and build confidence in each of his students.

Clad in pink safety glasses, pink gloves, and working with pink-handled tools, the girls spent the week learning about the skilled trades and getting hands-on experience by making their own toolboxes (see Figure 1). Using several precut pieces of material, the girls learned how to fold and then assemble the toolboxes under Maquinaldez's guidance (see Figures 2 and 3).

Without knowing what to expect, Maquinaldez walked away from the camp very impressed with how quickly the girls learned.

"These girls never cease to amaze me. They are always looking at me like, 'Why are you telling me in

these layman's terms? I'm way smarter than you think.' Then they just bang it out. They always impress me."

Maquinaldez said another problem is the lack of exposure girls have to careers in the trades.

"A lot of them don't even know what the trade is. All they ever hear about is college, so I wanted them to know that there are other options out there for them."

One of those options is entering an apprenticeship program, Maquinaldez said. "It's training while you're getting paid. You're earning while you're learning."

At the Tri-Counties Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association, for example, apprenticeships are offered in heating, ventilating, air conditioning, architectural and industrial sheet metal, kitchen equipment, specialty stainless steel work, custom fabricating, service, siding and metal roofing, testing and balancing, and energy management and maintenance.

In other words, the construction industry provides diverse and challenging career paths that suit women just as much as they suit men.

"It's really a knowledge-based trade, and you can pursue different avenues. All you need is a good work ethic. We can teach you everything else that you'll need to know." **FAB**

David Maquinaldez, 805-642-2211, dmtri-cosmwjac@att.net



FIGURE 3 One of Maquinaldez's goals is to change the perception that construction careers are just for men. Photo courtesy of Tina Vervoorn.

The FABRICATOR® (ISSN 0888-0301) is published 12 times yearly by FMA Communications Inc., 833 Featherstone Rd., Rockford, Illinois 61107-6302. The FABRICATOR is circulated free upon request to those who qualify and who are involved in metal fabricating; subscription to all others is \$75.00 per year. International subscription is \$140.00 per year. Periodical postage paid at Rockford, Illinois, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address change to The FABRICATOR, 833 Featherstone Road, Rockford, Illinois 61107-6302. Printed in the U.S.A. ©Copyright 2011 by FMA Communications Inc. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher is prohibited.

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 12345678 (41467014)
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:
PITNEY BOWES INTL MAIL SVCS, STATION A,
11PO BOX 54, WINDSOR ON N9A 6J5,
EMAIL: RETURNIL@IMEX.PB.COM