

# Women nail down construction jobs, equal pay

Women in the construction business are discovering that they have plenty of company.

Instead of settling on being the loneliest women in town, 73 employees of Michigan construction firms are using Women in Construction as a clearinghouse for job information and education.

For women who work in the offices of contractors, builders and utility companies, the organization also provides a social outlet.

"Women in Construction meetings provide opportunities for exchanging information and a social resource," said Marilyn Eskey of Farmington.

Her first-hand knowledge of what it's like to be the only woman trekking through a construction site stems from her job as an industrial marketing consultant for Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. She determines when consumers will need a pipeline installed.

"I FOLLOW a job from blueprints to gas pipes," she said.

When she dons a hard hat and overalls to see a construction site, she's treated like any other member of the construction team.

"I haven't run into any problems because I'm one of a few women in construction," said Ms. Eskey, who is the first woman in her position at Michigan Consolidated Gas.

"There are very few women and a lot of opportunities. If you make a commitment to the construction field



MARILYN ESKEY

and if you're flexible, the opportunities are there."

The organization helps the women in management positions in the field open up new opportunities for themselves and for others.

Workshops in blueprint reading and other construction-related skills are conducted through the group. It's now possible to earn a certified construction associate degree through Wayne State University. The course is available through the mail.

IT COVERS management courses, labor relations, construction ethics,

training and building code regulations and safety, according to Ms. Myrtle Hagood, Women in Construction president.

Besides formal education in the industry, the group promotes such projects as the publication of a construction industry jargon dictionary.

"It's full of good things," said Ms. Hagood. "If you don't know what they're talking about in the field, it can be confusing. When you start out you don't know that mud is a type of mortar they use."

The group originated 25 years ago in Fort Worth, Texas, when women connected with management of construction businesses discovered they had the same problems, such as understanding the worker's jargon.

Through the years, they have assisted office workers by sponsoring workshops and offering tuition for further study.

But the groups shy away from becoming involved with women in the trades.

"There aren't that many women in the field. And if they are, they belong to a union, which helps them. We feel our concerns are more with management's. We are the business side of construction," said Ms. Hagood.

IN ADDITION to insisting that only office workers join the group, the

organization stops short of backing feminist issues.

"We're not a women's lib organization. We believe there is a need for women's opportunities to be greater than they are but we believe that we should work for women's lib on an individual basis," said Ms. Hagood.

Ms. Eskey seems to agree with the attitude that liberation is a private decision.

"I'm not a staunch libber," she said. "I believe in equal pay for equal work. But I'm just old-fashioned in a lot of ways."

Helping the outside community is within the realm of the group's actions. Each year it takes on a project. Last year, they helped outfit a boy scout troop with camping gear.

This year, they are considering projects to help either Children's Hospital

of Detroit or the Sarah Fisher Children's Home in Farmington Hills.

Either project would include some renovation work which the group will try to arrange through individual employers.

Nationally, the group has chapters in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and Canada. Each chapter meets yearly to discuss problems shared by women in construction throughout the nation and the Western Hemisphere.

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## Nursing home lecture

Selecting a nursing home will be the topic of discussion at the Farmington

Hills Community Library at 7 p.m. March 2.

Sandra Jenkins, director of the Catholic Social Services, will point out factors to look for in selecting a nursing home.

Alternatives to a nursing home and different types of homes, from skilled care to intermediate, will be discussed.

Steps in selecting a nursing home and the physical limitations in a building that should be considered will be included in the discussion. Fire safety, activities and types of therapy should be considered.

A question and answer period will follow the lecture. A reading list and pamphlets will be available.

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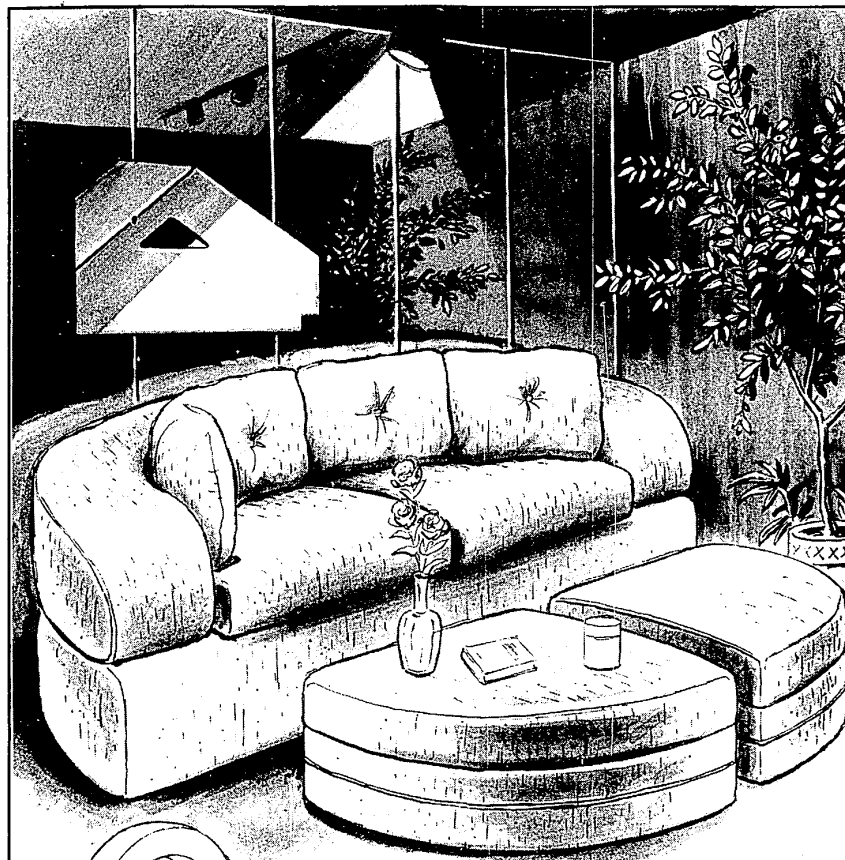
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