

10 WAYS TO INTRODUCE A GIRL TO CONSTRUCTION

NAWIC offers the following tips to educate young girls about the construction industry.

1. Arrange a tour of a project that your company is involved in.

2. Tell her what blueprints are and how to read them.

3. Teach her about different construction tools and then have her build something small like a birdhouse.

4. Give her a copy of *Cool Careers for Girls* by Ceel Pasternak and Linda Thornburg along with her own hard hat to have mementos of the special day.

5. Teach her about Computer-Assisted Drafting (CAD) and help her design a simple project.

6. Arrange a luncheon and invite various individuals from your company to come and share what they do.

7. Arrange a special equipment tour. Teach her about safety procedures and then let her operate a few things with your supervision.

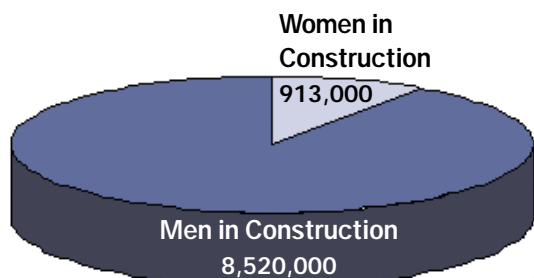
8. If several girls are visiting an office, have them role play the different careers involved in the building process. For example, one girl could be an architect, another an estimator and another a project manager. Use props from the real world to enhance their learning curve. Bring blueprints; show them the estimating costs.

9. Have her go through an industry magazine and pick an article that interests her. Then ask her to give a report on what the article was about and any interesting things that she learned from it.

10. Have her get on the Internet and go to a search engine. Search for information on construction careers and then share what career(s) she has found.

Source: National Association of Women in Construction

SKILLED LABOR SHORTAGE STATS



Total Workers in Construction 9,433,000

•By the year 2008, 952,000 net construction skilled, trade jobs will be vacant and 1 million or more new people will be needed every year.

•Those born during 1945-1950 will start retiring in 2010-2015. There were not enough kids born in America between 1990-1995 to replace them.

•By 2005, 37 out of every 100 jobs will be service technology and 33 out of every 100 jobs will be all of the professional careers combined.

Source: Construction Career Days Web site

Wiring Women

As the labor shortage worsens, more women are breaking new ground in the construction industry.

By Amy Fischbach, Staff Writer



Master Electrician Veronica Rose (far right) started her own business, Aurora Electric, in 1993. She is pictured here with her crew of women electricians at the Korean Air Cargo at the JFK Airport, Jamaica, N.Y.

Master electrician Veronica Rose donned her hard hat, strapped on her tool belt and joined the wave of women entering the electrical industry in the late 1970s.

Today she owns her own \$5 million electrical contracting firm, Aurora Electric, Jamaica, N.Y., with 20 electricians, four of whom are women. Rose said women electricians can make a valuable contribution by helping alleviate the severe skilled labor shortage in the construction industry.

"We are underutilizing 51% of our population," she said. "We need to start targeting the high schools and educating young women and letting them know that construction is an occupation that is available to them."

In 1978, when Rose became an electrical apprentice, the Department of Labor predicted that women would make up a quarter of the construction work force by the turn of the millennium. More than two decades later, women only comprise less than 2% of electricians and 10% of construction workers.

Marcia Rackley, national president of the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), said all aspects of construction are short on manpower. "We tend to focus on the field, but even your management and engineering disciplines are hurting also," she said. "Of course, women can fill any of those positions as well as the trades positions."

The average age of the skilled worker is 48, and many of these Baby Boomers will retire between 2015 and 2020.

"They can work until they are 65—that is not the problem," Rackley said. "The average age needs to be a lot younger. What we're facing now not only is a labor shortage, but in the next five to 10 years, a lot of retirement without replacement. That is going to compound the problem."

Barbara Adams, a California journeyman electrician, said it is imperative to train young people for the trades before it is too late.

"What I see is little information or encouragement for young people to enter the electrical trade apprenticeship or training programs," she said. "The high schools seem to only promote college, and let me tell you, college is not for everyone. In this country, I fear a huge fall of the American Empire once us baby-boomers leave the electrical industry. There don't seem to be a whole lot of kids behind us with the skills or knowledge of the old-time conduit bending, wire pulling, the craft of metals formation, foundation installing or welding."

Monda Mathis, a journeyman electrician from Fort Gaines, Ga., agreed.

"So many young people have become computer experts and programmers," she said. "The people who are out there building, wiring and testing the equipment are almost a dying breed, and the work force is not as strong as it used to be. What's happening is when these people retire, that knowledge is going to go with them."

Currently, construction ranks 498th out of the 500 careers surveyed by high school students and their parents nationwide. Only commercial fishing and topless dancing rank lower. NAWIC is trying to change the perception of construction to get more young people, including girls, into the industry.

"We want young people to choose construction instead of it being a default career," Rackley said.

Women have more opportunity now than ever before to join the construction industry, Rackley said.

"Right now, with the demographics in the United States, there's more women than men and more women in the work force," she said. "We can do most anything with the right training. There's a great potential for women in the construction industry."

This article will explore women's role in the electrical industry through the experiences of three veteran electricians: Veronica Rose, president and CEO of Aurora Electric, Jamaica, N.Y.; Barbara Adams, journeyman inside wireman in Napa, Calif.; and Monda Mathis, president and owner of DMS Services Inc., Fort Gaines, Ga.

**VERONICA ROSE,
MASTER ELECTRICIAN
AND PRESIDENT AND CEO OF
AURORA ELECTRIC,
JAMAICA, N.Y.**



Rose joined the electrical apprenticeship program in 1978, the year the government paid the unions to take in women and minorities under the President Carter's CETA program.

"Not only did they have any able body, but they were paid to have an able body," she said. "What they basically told the unions is for every woman and minority you take in, we'll pay for their tools, books, education and half of their salary while you train them. The contractors and the unions loved it. In a class of 25, 12 of us were women and nine are still in the business."

Rose is not only still in the business, but she is now the president and CEO of her own electrical contracting company. She said more women are choosing nontraditional careers, such as one in the electrical industry, to earn competitive wages and perform challenging work.

"It was the only occupation that paid women the same money that men earned for the same job back in the 70s," she said. "Today union electricians are making \$37/hour. When the construction industry is booming, there is also unlimited overtime."

The union also pays for a college education, so Rose pursued her degree while working full-time.

"One of the union benefits is as long as you are going for a degree, they will reimburse you 100% for your college education," Rose said. "It took me 11 years to get my bachelor's from the State University of New York."

She also became one of the first three women to earn their master's electrician license in New York City. "It felt both wonderful and disheartening," Rose said. "It was disappointing because there weren't women before me. I was surprised New York wasn't as progressive as other parts of the United States. What was wonderful was being one of the first. Someone has to do it."

To make it easier for the next generation of electricians, New York City's Local 3 has set up a mentor program that pairs each new female apprentice with a female journeyman or master electrician.

"They said, 'We've taken a lot in. They're not staying,'" Rose said. "So, they set up a program so that any woman that comes into the apprenticeship program has at her disposal, a female that has already turned out and gotten her A-card. Local 3 has done miles above any other trade union that I've seen in my life trying to up their retention. The women have established a fabulous network in Local 3."

Rose now works with a new female apprentice

every year.

"It's different for them because now there are other women in the electrical industry," Rose said. "I always felt like I was an explorer like Lewis and Clark and they are now the pioneers. They at least have someone there to say, 'No, no. There's a big river and a cliff. Don't go that way.'"

Women used to drop out of the program because of lack of support, Rose said.

"The first time you had a problem, you might drop out if you had no one that you could call," Rose said. "For example, if you have a child that has chicken pox and can't go back to school for 10 days, your boss may not be used to getting a call from a woman saying, 'I can't be in for 10 days.'"

Speaking of children, Rose, a mother of five, said the hours are conducive for a woman to raise a family. "The hours are seven hours a day, 35 hours a week," Rose said. "The jobs usually start at 7 and are over at 2:30. I was home 10 minutes after my children got out of school. What I tell my employees all the time is if you can raise children, raising a building will be less physical work."

Aurora Electric now has four women electricians, but at one time, had as many as six.

"We actually did one project for the Dormitory Authority, where they called me in because they thought I had filled out the forms wrong," she said. "I had six women on the project. That's all I had on the project, and two of them were minorities. They said, 'You did something wrong. You have 130%.' I said, 'What do you mean I did it wrong?' Then they said, 'What? You mean they're all women?'"

Rose said she enjoys the challenge of running her own business, but misses the hands-on work she performed as an electrician. She said more women aren't running their own electrical-contracting firms for two reasons.

"I think women can get ahead any way they want to in the electrical industry," Rose said. "Many women, however, don't know the potential for earned income and the job description. There are also certain men and women that just don't fit with outside work and heavy construction."

WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION ON THE WEB

Visit the following Web sites to learn more about women in construction.

National Association of Women in Construction

<http://nawic.org/>

NAWIC was founded in 1953 by 16 women and now has 6,200 members.

Women Contractors Association

<http://www.womencontractors.org>

The WCA is for women business owners and executives in the construction industry.

OSHA

<http://www.osha.gov/doc/accsh/haswicformal.html>
This comprehensive OSHA research report offers recommendations for health and safety for women construction workers.

Barbara Adams' site on women electricians

<http://members.tripod.com/barbijo/hers.html>

VERONICA ROSE, JAMAICA, N.Y.

Company history. Incorporated in 1993 and hired her first employees in 1996.

Years in industry. 24.

Work experience. After serving as an apprentice in Phoenix, Ariz., she relocated to New York and worked with L.K. Comstock, Arc Electric and Fischbach and Moore Inc.

Recent projects. Museum restoration project at the New York Botanical Garden; fire alarm and security system at the Jamaica Train Station and high-rise buildings in Manhattan.

Favorite project. 98th floor of the World Trade Center.

Family. Married to a commercial electrician with five children and four grandchildren.

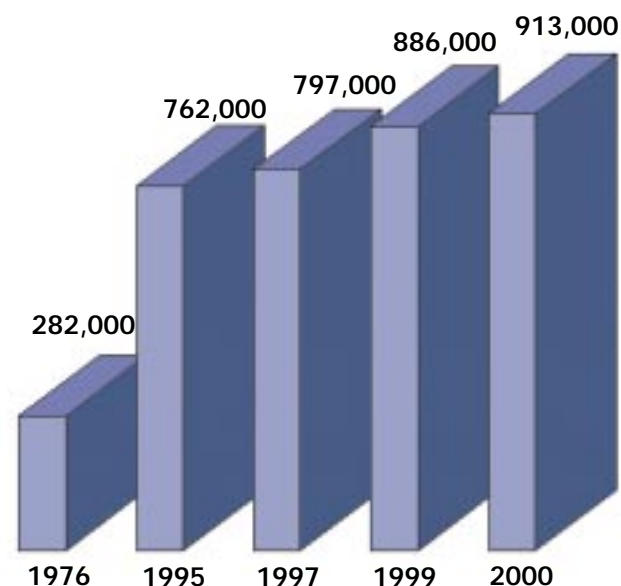
Most rewarding aspect of working in the electrical industry. "The fact that at the end of a project, you can look up and see something that you actually built. You feel like when you're done, you've made the world a better place by helping to build something."

Most challenging part of being a woman electrician. Learning how to use the tools. "Men's center of gravity is their upper body. Women's center of gravity is their hips. A man in all earnestness would try to teach me how to do something, but because I didn't have the upper body strength, it didn't make sense."

Advice for other women electricians. Start working out, don't ever give up and find a mentor. If you show an interest and you have the ability, you couldn't ask for a better education. Pay attention to what your male coworkers have to teach you as an apprentice and outperform them in work.

Qualities she looks for in her electricians. I look for someone who is not afraid to sweat, can think outside the box and has integrity and commitment. If I mentor someone, I want to make sure that they know the value of what they are getting. I like an attitude of gratitude.

GROWTH OF WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION



Source: NAWIC

- Between 1992 and 1999, the number of women-owned construction firms has grown 68%.
- Women's share of the labor force will increase from 46% in 1998 to 48% in 2008.
- Women only account for 10% of construction employees, compared to 21% in transportation and 28% in manufacturing.

Source: NAWIC and the Bureau of Labor Statistics



Barbara Adams climbed this nuclear cooling tower in California for her job as a journeyman electrician.

BARBARA ADAMS, JOURNEYMAN INSIDE WIREMAN NAPA, CALIF.

Journeyman Electrician Barbara Adams climbed a vertical ladder 550 ft to the top walkway of a nuclear cooling tower to replace the navigation lights.

"It was a vertical climb on a straight ladder," Adams said. "The ladder points outward during the last one-third of the tower because of the curvature of the top lip, so you have to face out to finish the climb. I was told that some other people had stopped at that point and returned to the ground, but I figured that my safety equipment would keep me from falling, so I continued to the top. The towers are 550 ft tall, which I understand is higher than the highest building that existed in downtown San Diego in 1995."

Adams said she collapsed on one landing but managed to get enough energy to finish the climb and make it to the top of the tower.

"My boss sent me and a guy up to the top walkway to change the light bulbs, which were there to warn aircraft from hitting it," Adams said. "If I remember correctly, there were 30 or more huge light bulbs, which were bigger than my head. The bag of light bulbs feels like lead weight at those heights. Since we could not carry them up the ladder, we had to drop a rope down from the top and pulley them up."

Reaching the top of the tower and overcoming the challenge was nothing new for Adams, who said she has had to prove herself on every job.

"I usually surprise them with my expertise and ability to figure out even the most complicated electrical control problems that have kept others puzzled and bustling for answers," Adams said.

Adams' electrical career can be traced back to 1978, when she stood in line with 4,000 people to wait for a federal apprenticeship application for the submarine shipyard in Vallejo, Calif. After spending eight hours completing a written aptitude test, earning a perfect score of 100% and then passing an optional algebra exam, she did not automatically earn an apprenticeship. Instead, she had to wait two years for an interview and then another six months until she became eligible for a coveted electrical apprenticeship. On her first day on the job at the shipyard, Adams was paired with Connie, another female apprentice, and assigned to two journeymen electricians. One of their first assignments was to go get fish tape.

"We had just attended a lecture given to only the women about the kinds of practical jokes and tricks

that them men may try to pull, so I was super wary," she said. "I told Connie that we were not about to go into the shop and ask for such a foolish sounding thing as a fish tape, because it had to be the first joke they were planning for us. We silently slipped into the shop and got a roll of sticky electricians plastic tape out of the cupboard and proudly brought it back to those men. They roared with laughter, because there truly is a thing as fish tape, which is metal, could be hundreds of feet long and is used to guide a wire or rope through an area."

For the next four years, she lived by the motto, "I did it my way," like Frank Sinatra's famous song.

"Some women in that apprenticeship liked to let the guys do their school work assignments for them like building or drilling," she said. "I always said, 'No, I want to do it.' Then they slinked away. They did their work and I did mine. Most of the women who had the men do their work are no longer in the trades."

Carolyn Hoehn and Shirley Hurd, two women who had already completed their four-year apprenticeships by 1980, served as role models for Adams and the other women in her apprenticeship class.

"If it weren't for those two intelligent, tough and successful women, it would have been difficult," she said. "I don't think the women in my electrical class would have been able to stand it if we had to follow fools."

One woman dropped out of the apprenticeship program when she found out she was pregnant with twins, but the other four women finished a grueling four years of study and on the job training.

"The homework was heavy and the tests were tough," she said. "The pressure was on to perform."

Adams spent her free time working on the submarines as an apprentice, which allowed her to work on challenging projects alongside the journeymen electricians. She finally became a journeyman electrician, but still had to work hard to gain her coworkers' respect.

"My foreman announced to me that while I was one of his apprentices, I was not allowed to do any work other than electrical work because of the apprenticeship guidelines," Adams said. "But now that I was an independent journeyman, and they did not assign secretaries to the trade foremen, he told me that I could work in the office, arrange documents, blueprints and tech manuals, make the coffee and fill out time sheets. I told him that I had waited and studied four long years to get my own jobs and I wanted my own job, not to share it but to do it on my own."

Not being familiar with the work assignments given by his department, the foreman assigned Adams a "little job," which ended up being a research project that took two years to complete.

BARBARA ADAMS, NAPA, CALIF.

Years in industry. 22.

Electrical roots. "I thought my dad was an electrician when I was a teenager, but once I became an apprentice electrician, I figured out that he was actually an electronics engineer with the Space Shuttle program, not an electrician as I had thought. In 1973 he told me about a science called computers and said it was going to be a pretty good field to go into, but wires and math sounded better to me."

Work experience. Microsoft, Intel, Proctor and Gamble, Exxon, Kaiser Permanente, Budweiser, Beringer, Apple, Genentech, Sacramento Municipal Utilities District, Sunsweet Prunes, Ocular Sciences, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Kent schools, City of Seattle, State of California, U.S. Navy, Department of Defense and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Experience with the union. Barbara joined the IBEW as an electrician during the first month of her apprenticeship in 1980. "The swearing in ceremony consisted of me and one journeyman ex-Navy sailor. We stood at the front podium and took our oaths. Right afterward he said it felt like a wedding ceremony that made him all jittery. I told him it wasn't true, we were not married, so relax."

Proving herself on the job site. "I have to be better, faster and smarter to even get an ounce of on-the-job respect and recognition as a journeyman. I cannot relax for one moment, or I will fail and get my lay-off slip."

Rewards of working in the electrical industry. "It is a great feeling to be able to fix things. Whatever I do for the rest of my life, I will always be an electrician. It is me, not a part of me, and it can never be taken away from me."

What it takes to become a successful woman electrician. Stamina, physical strength, a sense of humor, blinders, forgiveness and intelligence. You also need to be able to accept that sometimes you will be exposed to things that you normally wouldn't, like asbestos, radiation, lab viruses or sewer water.

Wearing clothes made for a man. Adams said she would like someone to make a woman's work clothing line that can be accepted on the job by the men and be as practical, but not look so manly. "I find myself wearing black a lot to fit in, but I wish I could wear pink flowers too."

Educating high schoolers. Barbara spoke at a high school program for girls called "Expanding Your Horizons" in Seattle. "I listened to the girls, and they did not seem to be that interested in electrical work. I think you can only light the fire of the ones who seem to be interested and then it will burn."

How to recruit the next generation of electricians and alleviate the labor shortage.

1. Reduce the approved apprenticeship from five back to four years.
2. Get high school trade tech school training in place.
3. Hire and retain the women who work on the jobs as long as you would keep a comparable man. Don't pay people to wait for work but hire the people waiting in the halls.
4. Allow women, especially qualified ones, an equal chance to do the more challenging and interesting assignments on a job or project.



ADVICE FOR NEW WOMEN APPRENTICES

1. **Be tough**, be strong, don't accept less than your morals allow.
2. **Don't ever cry** in front of your coworkers.
3. **Never ask men to "stop cussing."** They will cuss even more then.
4. **Don't be lazy**, especially not in front of your coworkers because they are a thousand times more critical on your presence on the job than the contractors who are your employers could ever dream of being, legally or otherwise.
5. **Work hard**, play hard, have fun and remember that you are not there to make friends. You are there to earn money, so do it.
6. **Love math** and learn the names of tools and their uses.
7. **Try getting your hands really dirty** and not washing them for eight hours.
8. **Practice eating lunch in 15 minutes** with dirty hands with your lunch balanced on your knees while you stoop down in a dirty trailer and listen to stories about sports and women-chasing and fishing news, and remember to smile while you are doing that. Spread the word! You're only good for one thing on the job—**WORK!**

MONDA MATHIS, JOURNEYMAN ELECTRICIAN PRESIDENT AND OWNER OF DMS SERVICES INC., FORT GAINES GA.

Forty-three-year old Journeyman Electrician Monda Mathis's nine-year-old daughter, Sarah, has already begun to learn about the electrical industry.

"She comes to the plant with me in the evenings, and I set her up in a little area where she can wire things," Mathis said. "She loves it and wants to understand how it works and what it does."

With an electrician for a mom, Sarah is learning that she can pursue a traditional or nontraditional occupation.

"My goals in life changed when she was born," Mathis said. "Now I am even more determined to break down those walls for her. I want her to understand that there is absolutely nothing that she can't do if she wants to do it bad enough."

"It had never been installed on a submarine before and it was constantly needing changes, updates, parts and materials re-ordering," Adams said. "This job encompassed more than 150 different interconnecting electrical environmental and mechanical control systems on the submarine. I had to study all the systems, and I became so familiar with all of the systems involved that he started dragging me along to his meetings to have someone to answer specific questions about his department systems."

Adams then hung up a poster by her work bench that said, "Behind every successful woman is a man who is surprised."

"I ended up with a whole round-the-clock crew to keep my project rolling 24 hours every day of the week to get all of the work done," she said. "At one point, my whole crew was women. We finished that job with only one deficiency, which is unheard of in the Navy shipyards. I had to draw and develop some of my own blueprints for the job because they just didn't exist. Those original pen drawings of mine were used for testing purposes until the day that submarine went down to the scrap yard to meet King Neptune for the last time."

When her shipyard closed, she found it necessary to join the IBEW local as an inside wireman to become marketable for the new jobs.

"I knew this involved learning some skills that I did not have and did not need before on submarine work," Adams said. "The type of electricity is different and the sub had no conduit, so I honed my skills and petitioned for membership in the new classification."

Adams said it was more difficult to join the union as a journeyman than an apprentice.

"In 1980, it was a cinch," she said. "I just had to be there. The second time, it was practically like breaking through a moat and a castle wall and fighting off the warriors."

Getting the opportunity to do the actual work has also been a challenge.

"You do not know how many assignments I have 'assisted' on when in reality I could have been more easily able to diagnose and correct an electrical

"I've belonged to the brotherhood of electrical workers for 22 years, but I'm still a sister."

**Barbara Adams,
journeyman electrician**

trouble," she said. "Sometimes I refer to myself as an 'electrical nurse' because I have assisted on so many 'surgeries.' Some tasks I have seen first-hand performed literally thousands of times, yet some of them I have never ever been allowed to do, because we all know, on every job, there is always a man on-site," Adams said.

Adams said she has frequently been the only woman on a construction job.

"I have been on many jobs, many companies, many places that I was the very first woman they ever saw as an electrician," she said. "I regret that it took them so long to be willing to risk hiring their very first woman electrician."

Adams said her fellow tradesmen are some of the nicest men she has ever met, with a handful of exceptions.

"In 1981, one sheetmetal worker told me outright that he felt that I had 'taken' a job from a man who had a family to feed," Adams said. "I quickly told him that I also had a son to feed, as a divorced mother of one young son. About 50% of the population is women, and only 2% of the electrical workforce in 1997 was women. Back then it had to be even less. The way I figure it now, there's a whole lot of men in the electrical trade that are holding down women's jobs."

Women have inched, rather than leaped ahead in the electrical industry, Adams said.

"In 2002, as a woman electrician, I find it even more difficult to be an unnoticed part of the crew," she said. "We are still in a man's world. Too many of them have our share of the jobs and apprenticeships and the union halls still print newsletters that tell of upcoming jobs that need 39 men, and it is still the brotherhood. I wonder what would happen if the newsletter said the job needed 39 women?"

Adams said it's not easy to be a woman electrician in a male-dominated profession.

"A wise man in Washington, D.C., once told me, 'Once you accept that it's a man's world, you're gonna be much better off, girl,'" Adams said. "I still haven't accepted that. I think we can all work together. I have belonged to the brotherhood of electrical workers for almost 22 years now, but I'm still a sister."



Journeyman Electrician Monda Mathis said she hopes her daughter, Sarah, will have a world of opportunity.

MONDA MATHIS, FORT GAINES, GA.**Years in industry.** 24.**Company's specialities.** Government procurement, industrial controls, specialty metal fabrication and electronic drawings.**Recent projects.** DMS Services is serving as a subcontractor for VATECH VOEST MCE Corp. at the Walter F. George Powerhouse and Dam. The general contractor and manufacturing facility is also building substation control panels for Georgia Power/Southern Co. and working on an expansion project at Merck & Co, a pharmaceutical company.**Policy requiring contractors to have 6.9% of hours on a federal project completed by women.** "The key to that issue is that in those contracts, it says, "If available." What happens is that if you don't get your face and your business in front of them and make yourself predominant, then they don't have to fulfill that criteria. That's the honest truth."**Women in the construction industry.** "If women have the opportunity to get a good education, break into this field and get experience, they can be a tremendous asset to the electrical industry."**Educating young people about construction.** Mathis, a member of NAWIC since 1997, will speak to the Georgia high schools. "When they are high school age, it is a time to approach them. They are at the deciding point in their life and have a better grip on what they want to do and the challenges they will face."

Monda Mathis started DMS Services Inc. with her husband, electrician Don Mathis (far right), and his son, Stephen (far left). Also pictured is her mother-in-law, "Mama Gracie" and her 9-year-old daughter, Sarah. Photos by Nancy Evelyn of Small Business Outreach Services.

Women can make great electricians because of their attention to detail, Mathis said.

"As a woman, details are very important to me," Mathis said. "It not only has to function, but it has to look good. Attention to detail has helped build the client base we have now."

Mathis, who is certified to build UL508A control panels, started her own business in January 2000 following the expansion of one of the area plants. DMS Services Inc. is now building control panels for New Heights Inc., which manufactures mobile solar-powered surveillance towers.

"The Sky Watch Towers are being used at the base where they are holding the Al Qaeda prisoners," she said. "We know a piece of us is supporting our country in an effort to fight terrorism."

She said as the owner of an electrical contracting company, she strives to keep up with technology and go beyond the call of duty on projects.

"It's been the biggest challenge of my life besides raising my child," she said. "It's always a challenge

to get a business started, no matter what you're in. In the field of industrial controls and equipment, you have to get out there and prove yourself. Once you've done that, you're on your way."

Proving herself is nothing new for Mathis, who has been the only woman in many of her endeavors.

"When I was in the military, I was the only woman out of 300," she said. "I was the first woman to work as an industrial maintenance technician at Wells Aluminum and the first electrician at Harris Balers. I can count on one hand how many women I have worked with over the years."

Not much has changed since 1978 when she first became an electrician, she said.

"In general, every job I went on I had to prove myself," she said. Even now. Every project, every new project and every new client, there is proving time. Actually, I get such satisfaction out of getting through that proving time. It just increases the challenge."

Mathis said her solid communication skills have helped her develop a good rapport with the men.

"I take great pride in what I do," she said. "If you approach a job position professionally, then you earn their respect."

Mathis, who married an electrician a year ago, now runs her own family business. Her 49-year-old husband, Don, runs the shop while his 23-year-old son, Stephen, works as an electrician.

"It's a family business, so there's a lot of heart and soul in it," she said. "It's neat having Don's son here. He's getting to work side by side with his dad."

In the future, as her business grows, Mathis said she would like to hire some women electricians.

"We are still small, but my goal is to hire and train women electricians," Mathis said. "I see a bright future for women in this industry." **CEE**

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