



## **Blazing a trail for women in construction**

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The shadow of her hard hat's brim casts a shadow over Maryam Mohammad Amin's cellphone. She's taking a call about the construction site she's standing on. Inspired by her father's hard work building their home years ago in Afghanistan, Amin is working in the career she dreamed of as a child.

Over the course of six months in the city of Mazar- E-Sharif, circa 1992, "I was on site and would go with him to watch him to do the excavation and the foundation," says the 29-year-old Toronto resident. "He was a mechanical engineer, but he knew construction."

And now, so does his daughter.

Amin graduated last year from an intense 28-week program sponsored by RESCON, the voice of the GTA's builders, at George Brown College in Toronto. This industry-education partnership is one of the ways the builders' association is trying to get youth into the industry.

In May 2015, 14 graduates from the college's construction engineering technology program began courses in the RESCON residential construction management certificate program. And recently, they began 14-week internships with builders around the GTA.

The lone woman in her class of nine, Amin took a placement with Great Gulf Homes as site administrative clerk at the King Oak site in King City and went on to be hired full-time. She's now working in Brampton at the Westfield community.

Other builders who have participated in the program include The Daniels Corporation, Tridel, Empire Communities, Brookfield Residential, Sorbara Group, Menkes and Starlane Homes. The students they trained have gone on to take junior positions such as residential project manager, project coordinator, site coordinator, superintendent or estimator.

“This program gave the students more specialized training in residential construction management,” says Clint Kissoon, chair of George Brown’s Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies (CCET). “Before, we were the choice of employers looking for residential construction managers, but our high-value partnership with RESCON consolidated this.” The tuition is \$3,444 per year, taxes included. But RESCON provides students with \$1,000 scholarships.

Amin says the certificate program taught her skills that she uses on the job every day, including computer skills, how to read drawings, project management, the Ontario Building Code, safety, surveying, report writing – even team-building skills.

“If it wasn’t for my understanding of working with a team, I wouldn’t survive,” she says.

Amin is happy to help blaze a trail for other women to follow in a male-dominated industry and draws inspiration from one of her supers on the job, Lisa Belo, who has worked in the field for over 20 years.

And she encourages women to pursue a career in construction. “They can do it,” Amin says. “Working with people in construction, it’s easier because they’re very straight up. There’s no routine. Every day, there is a new challenge and you have to solve it right away.”

For more on the program, email Dorothy Rogowski at [dorota.rogowski@georgebrown.ca](mailto:dorota.rogowski@georgebrown.ca) or drop me a line.



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