

Women are breaking barriers

Nov. 22, 2018

By Richard Lyall

Tiffany Morin loves to solve puzzles. In fact, the new graduate from the Women In Skilled Trades (WIST) program says she considers every house she works on to be a puzzle.

“If that door isn’t closing right, you have to fix the puzzle – you have to find the missing piece,” said the 21-year-old from Baden (near Kitchener). “You see something that’s not working, you re-evaluate what’s wrong and try the first solution, then the next solution.”



Morin recently graduated from the program at the Centre for Skills Development in Burlington. It is an important cog to train and educate women to join the male-dominated construction trades.

“We’re chipping away every year to change the gender makeup of the trades,” says instructor Lawrence Farrell.

Among 19 women in the 22-week program, Morin was considered one of her class's top problem-solvers. She has taken those skills and her new education with her to a job in Kitchener with Timeline Journey Renovations.

"It's going really great. So far, we've put in a few doors, bathroom vents and a fence job where we replaced all of the old posts with new ones. Every day, I learn something new," Morin says.

Farrell was not surprised to learn Morin was hired the Monday following her graduation in September.

"Tiffany is a very capable worker, and is an excellent problem solver with an eye for detail," Farrell says. "She excelled in theory and was admired for her ability to grasp concepts quickly and apply what she learned for hands-on use. She is a leader, and that will shine through as she develops in her career in the trades."

Because she excelled in leadership skills, academics and technical ability, Morin joined classmate Nico Varkevisser of Hamilton in being awarded with a \$500 bursary from the **Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON)**.

Morin describes Varkevisser, a former daycare worker, as a quiet leader. "She was always so patient. All of the students got frustrated at different points but we all understood where people needed to take a second to catch their breath; no one was good at everything," Morin says.

"Nico was definitely the most patient and understanding of all of us. She was always level-headed and if she ever got frustrated, it didn't show."

While she has plenty of patience, Varkevisser says she's focused on improving her professional qualities. "I have a whole skill set that I didn't have six months earlier, and I have the confidence that I can learn different skills if I didn't learn them before."

Varkevisser, 25, says that while it's intimidating to be a woman stepping into construction, it shouldn't be. "I think it needs to be more normalized so that women can be seen as being just as efficient as men in the construction world." Couldn't agree more.

Richard Lyall is president of [RESCON](#).