



# Women IN CONSTRUCTION

## Chanel Waits

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“Becoming a Union Carpenter has given me fulfillment, success and a sense of purpose but it all started with a wobbly, doubtful step of courage.”



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People say that you need to be tough to make it working in construction and only the strongest will survive. While there is truth to that, I can't help but think back to who I was when I started my career in 2017 as a Union Carpenter. In fact, if there were ever an under-qualified, seemingly incapable and completely unexpected candidate for becoming a carpenter it would have been 21-year-old me. I walked into my pre-apprenticeship with my default setting as fear, I was full of self-doubt, paralyzed by insecurity, timid and had nearly no experience. The odds of me being successful in this industry seemed to be stacked against me since I clearly wasn't prepared like everyone else seemed to be. I didn't have all the qualities that people assume you need to even step foot onto a job site. I didn't feel ready by any means or even believe that this was where I belonged yet.

But what I did have was a peaked interest and a tiny flame of passion for building things. I might not have known much, but I did know that.

The first year of my apprenticeship I was constantly muttering to myself, "You can do this, Chanel," because everything about this trade intimidated me. But as I kept going the consistency of never quitting is what eventually made me feel qualified. It was the

day in, day out attitude of being ready to learn and ready make mistakes that finally produced the confidence that I now pride myself in having. If I waited to be ready and to feel prepared, I would probably still be waiting. Had I let the fear of failing get the best of me I would never know that buried within was someone who could have strength, confidence, skill, courage, and purpose.

If I could give any advice to those who feel like they don't have what it takes, then it's this: Stop giving fear the power to rob you of the experiences that life has to offer (yes, that includes the failures.)

It's not always about being ready, sometimes it's about learning on the way there. You may not feel like you have what it takes but what it takes is simply the attitude to try it anyway. To never give up even though that would be easier, to prove to yourself that you can do hard things and most of all to be proud of who you are at the end of every day. Life is going to be full of moments you feel under qualified for and with that comes the fear of failing; but your chance of failing is the same as your chance of succeeding. So you owe it to yourself to try. Because who knows? You might have walked right into the greatest decision of your entire life.

Becoming a Union Carpenter has given me fulfillment, success and a sense of purpose but it all started with a wobbly, doubtful step of courage. But that one step, turned into multiple and before I knew it the best version of me came out and my once flickering flame of passion turned into a full-blown forest fire. My love for the trade has turned into a desire to someday spark the next generation of apprentices to give it their all and fall in love with carpentry like I have.

It may have started small but the only thing that matters, is that it started at all.