Name: Katie Kost  Age: 32
Trade: Material Manager/Laborer Foreman
Wage before joining trades: $9.60/hour working at Lowe’s
Current Wage: $29.69

Anyone who thinks that major construction sites are no place for a woman to spend her professional life should talk to Hoffman Construction Material Manager/Laborer Foreman Katie Kost. She’s found a unique job in the building trades that fits the arsenal of skills she gained in college and in various jobs. Plus, it’s meshed well with her life outside of work. Kost was on the job up until two weeks prior to giving birth to her baby last year.

Not to say that life has been free of challenges. “You have to have tough skin,” says Kost. As a female, “you just have to work hard. It’s not an easy trade. But for me, who has been to college, and wanted to do sports marketing, it’s been great.”

Before Kost got on the job, she says, losses in materials per job could sometimes total $200,000. She’s been able to keep that figure down to $1,000, as was the case when Hoffman worked on Portland’s Cyan Building. “I would say that’s when I gained the most respect,” Kost says, looking back on that project. She’s a very important part of the job,” affirms Duane Meduna, Hoffman Superintendent. “When no one is in her position, the guys slowly stop taking care of business,” he says.

Timeline of Experience

31 Had a baby; worked on site up until two weeks before giving birth
28 Achieved record savings for Hoffman Construction while working on Cyan Building, recording nearly no loss in inventory
24 Started at Hoffman Structures, Inc. managing inventory; joined Laborer’s Union “to be a more versatile worker”
23 Managed inventory at wholesale auto dealer
22 Worked at Lowe’s after graduating from Portland State University with business management degree
21 Graduated from Barlow High School; Attended North Carolina State on a full ride scholarship for volleyball
17 Delivered Domino’s pizzas for $7/hour plus tips

www.oregon.gov/boli/atd
www.tradeswomen.net
It’d be impossible to talk about female leaders in the NW construction trades without mentioning Jodi Guetzloe Parker. As the second woman to ever lead a building trades council in the United States (she was elected Executive Secretary Treasurer of the 25-craft Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council in 2012), Guetzloe Parker has become somewhat of a role model for women, even beyond state lines.

She has now spent over two decades in the trades – initially as a Cement Mason, then at the Laborers Local 320 as a rank-and-file member, elected official, and staffer. The mother of one, stepmother of three, and grandmother of four came to the trades for the same reason many do: she couldn’t afford not to.

The self-deprecating Guetzloe Parker says the catalyst many years ago was losing her wallet, and with it, a bonus she’d received from her minimum wage job with a clothing company. “My friend [a Cement Mason] said, if that small amount of money is so impactful in your life, you need to join our apprenticeship program,” Guetzloe Parker says.

The rest, as they say, is labor movement history.

**Timeline of Experience**

- **51** Elected Executive Secretary Treasurer of Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council
- **48** Helped elect Barack Obama through political organizing
- **45** Ran for Office of Auditor at the Laborers Union; became a Union Organizer
- **41** First of four grandchildren born
- **38** Became Traffic Control Supervisor at Stacy and Witbeck
- **36** Was picked up by Laborers – started as a secondary list Traffic Flagger
- **32** Joined the Cement Mason Apprenticeship Program. Shortly thereafter, suffered disabling back injury on the I-5 to I-84 Connector Project
- **21** Moved to Vancouver, Washington and started cleaning hotel rooms
- **20** Gave birth to daughter
- **15** First official job as carhop serving hamburgers at drive-in café in Kamiah, Idaho

**Name:** Jodi Guetzloe Parker  
**Age:** 52  
**Title:** Executive Secretary Treasurer of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council  
**Highest wage before joining the trades:** $8.10/hour  
**Current Wage:** $39.93/hour
Name: Dan Rodriguez  
Age: 49

Trade: Heavy Equipment Operator

Operating Engineer Apprenticeship Starting Wage: $26.97
Operating Engineer Apprenticeship Journey-Level Wage: $33.71
Current Wage: $35.40+ per hour

After graduating from high school in his hometown of Klamath Falls, Dan Rodriguez worked for five years in a machine shop. It was there that he realized he was best suited for a life working outdoors.

“I learned I actually liked the smell of diesel engines and working with dirt.” On his father’s advice, Rodriguez signed up with Local 701 Operating Engineer Union for heavy equipment operator’s training. Now, after 23 years as a dedicated “dirt hand,” he’s never looked back. He loves the connection he enjoys with coworkers on far-off job sites, the never-ending learning process of working in the trades, and travel. His career has brought him to Astoria, Boardman, the Portland metropolitan area, and for a memorable three-year stint, Hawaii.

Still based out of southern Oregon, the ability Rodriguez has developed to adapt to new job sites has aided in his journey from Oiler to Operator to Crew Chief to occasional Foreman – though he’s still at his happiest on the job when he’s “in the seat.”
Name: Thea Zander       Age: 55
Trade: Superintendent
Starting Wage: $11/hour as non-union Laborer
Current Wage: $35/hour

Despite a level of commitment that led her to be named “Safe Person of the Year” by her Walsh Construction peers, Thea Zander finds time to go off the beaten track to help community rebuilding projects. After Katrina struck New Orleans, Zander joined an all-female framing crew with Habitat for Humanity to apply her skills to post-hurricane relief efforts.

Zander now serves in a leadership position on her worksite. To women considering a career in the trades, Zander counsels forethought. “It’s hard work, but it’s very tangible, you can see what you’ve done every day,” she says. “Respect your coworkers. Treat them with respect and they’ll do the same.”
Name: Cory Naranjo  Age: 32  
Trade: Journey-Level Carpenter/General Carpenter Foreman  
Starting Wage: $12.50/hour as a Carpenter Apprentice  
Current Wage: $38.86/hour  

"I wasn't in the trades?" General Foreman Cory Naranjo considers the question as the walkie-talkie affixed to his vest crackles to life. He’s stumped. “I never really considered it,” he concludes. “I’d probably be working an office job, hating life.” Laughter.

It’s true that Naranjo does seem incredibly suited to his leadership role at Hoffman Construction. He is currently working at the Intel building site Hoffman Construction has been developing in Beaverton and he has spent his entire career in construction at this very company, starting as a Carpenter Apprentice. “I guess that’s a big accomplishment,” he reflects somewhat modestly.

How did Naranjo manage his relatively quick rise up the building trades ladder? He reckons it has to do with being a hard worker and that “a good leader has to be knowledgeable, willing to listen to the group of workers that you got, willing to admit when you’ve made a mistake.” Now his goal is to be a Superintendent – and as a young leader, it seems certain he’ll meet his goal.
To see Dao Dang today, striding around the Building Module 2 Intel site, coordinating a team of Carpenters for his longtime employer Hoffman Construction, you would never guess that the man moved here from Central Vietnam not knowing a word of English at age 18. But once you do have an idea of what it took for him to get to where he is today, Dang’s leadership role on his worksite seems even more admirable.

After Dang moved to Oregon with his father and brother, he took a janitorial job at the Oregon Zoo. After 3 months, he enrolled in a Job Corps Carpentry Program and learned both English and Carpentry at Timer Lake Job Corps Center.

“I like being able to show people how to do things, to help,” says Dang. He encourages others to try the trades as a career — his paycheck is now substantial enough to support his wife of seven years, Mong Chinh, and their two sons.
Back when Lisa Ostrom was growing up in Clark County, Washington, there were no opportunities for the young tomboy to play sports. But there was woodshop. Lisa Ostrom took four years of woodworking classes in high school. Small wonder that now she’s a Foreman on Hoffman Construction’s Intel project in Beaverton.

In the early days of the Carpentry Foreman’s career – Ostrom began as a Laborer, moving to Carpentry after a few years’ time – it was rare to see a woman on the job. “I was known as ‘the girl’ for a while,” she says, looking back. But she took it upon herself to find team equilibrium, studying the way her coworkers did their jobs – right down to what they wore.

Nowadays, she runs her own team when she’s working (at the moment, she’s fighting ovarian cancer, and envisioning returning to work with a schedule that allows for chemotherapy.) Being a good leader, she says, is all about listening. “You get the job done faster if you can all communicate,” Ostrom reflects. “You have to know when to diffuse certain situations.” Luckily, her longtime employer Hoffman Construction places a premium on positive feedback – the value of which Ostrom knows very well from her years in the trade.
Union Ironworking? Danielle Zoller-McKenzie has it in her blood – her father, brother, cousin, and uncles were all in the trade. But as a woman, entering the profession still didn’t come easy.

“I knew when I got into this trade that it’s a man’s world,” she says. But despite double standards and adversity, Zoller-McKenzie persisted, eventually becoming a journey level worker who supervises entire crews, with a welding certification to boot. “It’s always paid off for me to take the high road.”
Name: Bobby Lewis  
Age: 54  
Trade: Laborer foreman  
Starting Wage in Shipyards: $13/hour  
Current Wage: $28/hour

It’s clear from watching the good-natured, easygoing Bobby Lewis go about his own duties that he enjoys his work. On the Intel building site that Hoffman is developing in Beaverton, he oversees a crew of six. “Laborers are the backbone of this whole operation,” he says.

And so, despite challenges, Lewis recommends the trades to anyone who has considered their options and thinks they’re up to the job. He will often say as much to young people he meets out in the world, such as stopping to advise the security guards he passes at work on his way to clock in. “Work hard,” he advises. “Be caring. Listen. Get to work on time. Be sure of yourself.”
Tyrone Belgarde

**Age:** 38

**Job:** Construction and Estimation Manager

**Starting Wage:** $12.95/hour

**Current Wage:** $90,000+/year

It’s hard to believe that at one point Tyrone Belgarde had an attitude problem. Nowadays, the Oregonian is a valued, longtime member of the team at Knife River’s Tangent, Oregon offices. The 39-year-old has been with the company for nearly 20 years, and has risen from an entry-level Laborer’s position on the grading crew to his current position as Construction and Estimation Manager.

Belgarde elevated his career through dedication and tenacity, often taking educational opportunities that didn’t initially mean a pay raise. He now teaches occasional paving classes for Grand Ronde and Siletz Native Americans. He honors his father’s heritage by participating in tribal events, sending his kids to culture camp to learn about being Native.

When he’s asked about advice for beginning building trades folks, Belgarde is not at a loss. “Always move forward. Always ask questions about what you need to work on. Don’t expect others to do it for you.”