



2007 Holiday Appeal

Dear Friend:

Kids love newly-fallen snow because it allows them to let their imaginations run wild, they head for the park and begin making snow angels, snow forts, and snow giraffes; every once in awhile a really creative young girl will even make a snowwoman.

Chicago Women in Trades is all about those girls – the industrious ones who look at a traditionally male role, a snowman for instance, and proclaim “I can do that.”

From a very early age our children are taught there are “men’s jobs” and “women’s jobs.” That message is taught with baby dolls and toy trucks, doctors and nurses, sports heroes and beauty queens, and the media image of a working dad, married to a lunch-making mom. It is a lesson enshrined in pink and blue.

Our daughters will later learn that as a nurse’s assistant, a job normally held by women, they can make an average of \$9.90 per hour, or \$20,592 a year – a total of \$617,760 in earnings over a thirty-year period. Our sons will find out that as a journey-level carpenter, a job normally held by men, they can earn \$37.77 an hour, \$78,562 a year – or \$2,356,848 over the same thirty years.

If they do the math, they’ll discover the difference between these traditionally “men’s jobs” and traditionally “women’s jobs” is \$1,739,088 in lifetime earnings.

Because of this inequity, we must make sure our daughters also know they have career choices, and that their earnings potential is a legitimate criteria to use in making one. Most importantly, they need to be aware that entering a so-called “male occupation” is a viable option for them.

The mission of Chicago Women in Trades (CWIT) is to improve women’s economic equity by increasing the number of women working in well-paid, skilled trade jobs traditionally held by men and to eliminate the barriers that prohibit women from entering and succeeding in these fields.

Our organization was founded in 1981 as part of an effort to implement federally mandated affirmative action guidelines for the construction industry. Since then, it has become a nationally recognized leader in the movement.

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CWIT structures its activities into three distinct program areas.

Policy and Advocacy – As women and minorities learned long ago, just because the federal government mandates affirmative action guidelines, this does not mean they will be adopted with open arms. In the early years CWIT marched, picketed, and when necessary took legal action to garner the promised access to construction jobs and job training. This included a precedent setting lawsuit against the Washburne Trade School. Today's efforts include advising and monitoring affirmative action programs in the Chicago area, and a focus on helping women build networks within their unions.

Tradeswomen of Tomorrow – While we have proudly adopted the pink hard hat to represent women in the building trades, the origin of the symbol, the pink and blue gender roles we are all taught from birth, remains a challenge. To help address this, CWIT works with the Chicago Public Schools, holding Career Fairs and organizing Aspiring Tradeswomen field trips for female students. At these events girls thinking about their future careers can hear about building trade jobs from working tradeswomen, and then consider pursuing a career in the trades.

Technical Opportunities Program – A pre-cursor to a construction job is union membership and is normally earned through an apprenticeship program. CWIT provides classroom and workshop training for women preparing to take entrance exams at multiple apprenticeship programs covering the entire spectrum of the building trades. With a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, we've recently expanded this program with workshop space where women can stop by on their own schedule to continue to work on their skills and build a support network with other women. The workshop is open to all tradeswomen.

The women we assist at CWIT are real people, not labor statistics. Most come from low income households and many are single-mothers. For each of them the paychecks they bring home are what pays the rent, puts dinner on the table and sends the kids to school.

Chicago Women in Trades relies on the support we receive from donors to help these women, without that support our help would not be possible. If our mission is important to you, please remember us with a tax-deductible gift this Holiday Season, and take a moment to consider pledging an even larger amount. Your financial support is critical to changing the lives of the women in our programs, and is also changing the face of construction in the Chicagoland area. Thank You and Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,



Lauren Sugerman,
Executive Director

PS – This winter, when you or your child builds a snowwoman, send a picture to us at t Drake@cwit2.org and we'll post it on our webpage (www.chicagowomenintrades.org).