

Kayla Vander Molen

Tradeswomen Heroes Award

Winner - May 2022



Level of Experience: Journeyworker

Years in Trade: 6

Union: Boilermakers

Local: 46

City: Calgary, Alberta

Bio

Kayla Vander Molen's story is an account of true passion and perseverance in order to learn and perform the craft she loves. She began her college education in fashion design, but after striking her first arc she discovered a new desire. Wanting to pursue a career in welding, she found herself in a position of having to start her educational journey over. She took night classes, volunteered at fabrication shops and eventually found a welding course to learn the skills she needed to be able to work. Kayla, however, was unable to find work available in her area. This meant she was unable to indenture as an apprentice, so she wasn't considered a certified welder. She did not let this roadblock deter her from pursuing her dreams.

Despite her years of experience, she began her schooling again in Calgary, Alberta through the Local 146 Boilermakers Union "Work Start" Apprenticeship program. Through her hard work and determination, Kayla earned her journey person ticket. She continued to rise through the ranks and became the pre-apprentice instructor and welding examiner-in-training for the same program she once trained through.



An artist through and through, in her spare time, she flexes her creative muscle by fabricating unique, stylish and useful leather products that are used in the welding world. She is also married to another Boilermaker member. Outside of the trade, you can find them together on adventures and hikes with their beloved Burmese Mountain Dog/Australian Shepherd mix, Hazel.

Why Kayla Was Nominated

Kayla Vander Molen is a tradeswoman dedicated to her craft and devoted to being a part of a support network for apprentices, women in the trades, youth and underrepresented groups. As a female Boilermaker, she feels a personal responsibility to get involved and change any lingering gender stereotypes in the trades and help to develop an industry that is all-inclusive.

Over time, her confidence has grown exponentially. She volunteers at union social events, job fairs, and speaking events to tell people about the benefits of becoming a union Boilermaker. Although initially hesitant, she now shines when speaking to others.

Kayla possesses a special quality that draws people in. She not only inspires fellow members, but potential members as well.

"Kayla's ability to inspire and mentor new potential members to our local is a skill on its own," says Boilermakers 146 facility coordinator and welding examiner Shawn Ouellette. He says, "When mentoring students, Kayla actively listens and observes, empowering others to follow a path she has blazed. When I think of the famous quote by John Quincy Adams, 'If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader', I think of Kayla."

Also weighing in on her contributions, Boilermakers 146 director of apprenticeship and education, Robert James says, "During her time as an instructor, Kayla has gone out of her way to mentor aspiring young women in our trade. Kayla has a knack for pushing new apprentices out of their comfort zone, challenging them to grow in ways they did not expect."

Kayla, a 6-year Boilermaker member, has fascinated many and merely brushed the surface of her skills and talents. We are all excited to see what her future holds.