



Women In Trucking: About Time They Got Some Credit

Used to work with a guy whose favorite phrase was “Nothing in trucking has changed in 20 years.” He was quite wrong, of course. Change – in technology, in management techniques and in the people who work in this industry – is constant.

One such change has come gradually and, for the most part, unnoticed: The growing importance of women in trucking.

Women, who represent a huge talent pool, are taking their place in what has always been perceived as a man’s world. They’re in all walks of the industry. As drivers, dispatchers and recruiters. As fleet managers. In dealerships, manufacturing and parts and service. In public relations, marketing and trucking journalism.

Now, a group of them has formed Women In Trucking (WIT), an organization promoting career opportunities to that talent pool, and working to make

THIS GROUP WORKS TO GENERATE INTEREST IN TRUCKING CAREERS AND IMPROVE INDUSTRY RELATIONS.

truckings more female-friendly.

“We want women to think about this industry as one that pays women comparable wages to men,” says WIT Chairwoman Ellen Voie, who is Schneider National’s retention marketing manager. “After all, carriers pay by the mile, not by whether you’re male or female.”

Voie, who formerly managed the popular Trucker Buddy image-building program, says WIT will urge truckstops to stock more products (such as clothing and toiletries) for women. Another project: Encourage truck manufacturers to make their designs “more ergonomically correct” for women.

WIT has 11 board members representing an array of careers in trucking: Engineering; marketing; driving, and fleet management, to name a few. Its first meeting will be during the Truckload Carriers Association convention in Las Vegas next month.

The new organization’s web site, located at www.womenintrucking.org, is up and running. It offers details on membership and a forum for lady truck drivers. It will soon feature a newsletter, calendar of events and a section called “Is Trucking for You?”

that is designed to show women what employment opportunities are offered.

Driver membership is open to men as well as women (Voie says one man has already joined). An experienced driver can join for \$25 a year; a student driver gets the first year for just \$10. Corporate memberships are also offered.

The group has already attracted some major backing. Schneider National has committed as a corporate member, and International Truck & Engine Corp. will sponsor a WIT reception during the Mid-America Trucking Show. The reception, open to all show attendees, will be at 5:30 p.m. Friday, March 23, in the Stars & Stripes Truck Beauty Show tent.

Current board members are: Secretary/Treasurer Lenora Hardee, Navistar International; Vice Chairwoman Leigh Foxall, Internet Truckstop;

Elisabeth Barna, American Trucking Associations; Susan Fall, Launchit PR; Maggie Peterson, Roadway professional driver; Val Liese, Jack Jones Trucking; Lana Batts, Transport Capitol Partners;

Karen Konecny, Rush Enterprises Inc.; Marge Bailey, LadyTruckDrivers.com; and Deb Whistler, *Heavy Duty Trucking*. Char Pingel, formerly with Trucker Buddy, is office manager.

WIT plans to hold its own convention and to honor carriers, truckstops and suppliers who have proven to be female-friendly in their hiring and retention practices. A Woman of the Year in Trucking award for both the U.S. and Canada is also in the works.

The organization can play a major role in bettering this industry. It will build interest among women to join the ranks of much-needed drivers, as well as other jobs in trucking. And it’s about time the outstanding female performers in this industry got some credit for their accomplishments.

We wish them well.

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