

# Kohlmann Electrifies Her Field



Katie Kohlmann has her heart set on becoming a journeyman electrician.

At the age of 19, she's already well on her way.

Last year, she signed a five-year apprenticeship contract, co-signed by a state committee and Eland Electric Corp. in Ashwaubenon, WI. She also proved her skills by bringing home a silver medal in the "Residential Wiring" contest at the national SkillsUSA Championship in Kansas City, MO.

She took a written test, answered questions and completed calculations and a hands-on project during the competition.

She was glad to see that she wasn't the only female in the group of nearly 30 competitors. She competed against two other women.

"It's good that there's other girls out there," she said.

Does she ever think about the fact that there are so few women in the industry?

"It doesn't worry me at all," she said.

In high school, Kohlmann leaned toward a career in carpentry until she took an electrical course her junior year. At the urging of a teacher, she decided to pursue the career and signed up for an electrician class at the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, where she was the only female in her class.

The class was so challenging that of the 19 students who started it, only six remained at the end.

She often sought advice from Lil LaRue, an electricity program instructor at the school. LaRue, the first woman in Wisconsin to earn her master's license, said it's a tough world out there for women, but she's confident Kohlmann will succeed.

"Katie has all the right skills," LaRue said. "She's very bright, and she picks up on everything immediately. She also has the eye-hand coordination she needs."

Now, as many of her friends attend college, Kohlmann is pursuing a very different route.

At Eland Electric, she focuses on commercial and industrial projects. Her male counterparts expect her to do the same work they do. She hangs lights, makes connections and helps with other tasks.

As Kohlmann, who would like to earn her master's license, climbs the ladder, she'll be joined by many other women who aren't afraid to enter a man's world.

"She'll have a very positive impact on the trades," LaRue said. "She already has."



<http://www.thesuccessfulcontractor.com/winter09-article07.asp>