



## Women in the Building Industry

By Walt Hibner, Executive Director  
Home Builders Association of Dayton

According to Mark W. Avera on [www.topbuildingjobs.com](http://www.topbuildingjobs.com); “Traditionally, the public views the construction industry as one dominated by males. Still ingrained in American cultural ideology is the iconic image of a young boy playing with a dump truck next to his sister, who is holding a doll. How about those countless holiday commercials featuring a yellow construction vehicle with a bow conspicuously attached under a tree, or the numerous others showing a doll sticking halfway out of a stocking on the hearth, bathed in the warm glow of a dwindling fire? To some extent these perceptions survive, but may now be in a position to start fading away. Gender inequality and sex discrimination in the construction industry have plummeted since the 1980’s, but there remain two obstacles for women to overcome: a nearly complete absence from the absolute highest positions, and a tremendous disparity between the percentages of male and female workers. Opportunities for women in construction are more prolific today than at any point in American history. Up until the 1980’s, women were virtually excluded from the construction industry.”

With that said, this week, the Home Builders Association of Dayton witnessed a watershed moment in the history of its organization. The HBA Board of Directors elected the first woman president of the Association in its 66-year history. Jenny Diorio, president of R.L. Diorio Custom Homes will take the helm as the 2008 president of the Home Builders Association of Dayton. Jenny’s accomplishments have earned her new office with dedication to the home building industry, leadership of the HBA, and her knowledge and expertise as a builder.

Diorio has held every elective office in the HBA, including treasurer and president-elect. She served as co-chair of the 2006 and 2008 Homearama, co-chair of the 2007 Budget Committee, and 2007 chairwoman of the HBA Registered

Builder Committee. She and her father also built the 2006 HBA Holiday House to benefit Dayton Children's Hospital.

Locally this is a historic moment, within the perspective of the National Association of Home Builders, there are 235,000 member organizations of which approximately 20,000 are women members representing only about 8.5% of the membership. In the United States, 47% of privately-held U.S. firms have women as the majority owner—more than 650,000 of these firms are in the construction industry.

While the status of women in building jobs has improved by leaps and bounds over the past few decade, the fact remains that the uppermost executive positions of the largest companies are filled almost exclusively with men. There are only a handful of women leading companies in the top 100, as ranked by Professional Builder. One reason could be that women have been involved in the industry for a relatively short period of time.

The other difficulty facing women in the industry is their disproportionately small numbers. The difference in the percentage of women that make up the construction workforce and the percentage of women that make up the total U.S. workforce is a telling sign that public perception has not changed significantly. The U.S. Department of Labor's numbers in 2004 purport that only 2.5 % of the total construction workforce was composed of women (216,000 out of 8,522,000). Meanwhile, the numbers show women constituted 46% of the United States workforce in 2006. While women in the industry have made successful gains in being treated equitably, their numbers have yet to show serious signs of growth.

For women interested in rewarding careers ofin the building industry, there are some resources that may be useful. For an organization that represents mainly tradeswomen and manual workers ([www.Tradeswomen.org](http://www.Tradeswomen.org)). Alternatively, the organization Professional Women in Construction (PWC), focuses on professionals and women owned businesses in the industry ([www.pwcusa.org](http://www.pwcusa.org)). For broader, national organizations, you may wish to explore the website of the National Association of Home Builders ([www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org)) and the National Association of Women in Construction ([www.nawic.org](http://www.nawic.org)).

Whether you are a male or female, the only way to achieve success in any business is to be extremely passionate about the business and industry and especially the people you work for and with and never lose focus that it is up to you to create your opportunities.