

TRADESWOMEN BUILD NATIONS – 2019 Conference

Our Sisters, Desiree Wilson & Charlene Beckley Attended



Local 71 Member,
Charlene Beckley
(L) & Steward,
Desiree Wilson (R)



Alaska Women of LiUNA
at the Tradeswomen
Build Nations 2019
Conference in
Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN

Hello Fellow Sisters and Brothers,

Thank you for allowing me to be part of the 2019 Women Build Nations Conference. I am humbled to be chosen to represent Local 71. I joined my sister Desiree Wilson from Anchorage for a truly amazing experience. I am proud to have been part of breaking the record for the World's Biggest Tradeswomen Conference.

Over 2,800 women from all over the United States and Canada attended the conference. The energy was powerful and positive. The conference had a balance of speakers, workshops, and social activities.

We came together Friday evening for an opening reception welcoming us. This was a casual reception allowing women to socialize and meet other women working in the trades.

Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States Ruth Bader Ginsburg greeted the women of the conference with a video. Her words were uplifting and encouraging to all women working in the trade. Her speech was a true eye opener to how far women have come in the trades and gives empowerment to how much further we can take it.

The Banner parade was the largest parade I have ever seen and proudly been part of. The streets were blocked by Minneapolis Police and almost 3,000 women marched through downtown Minneapolis with banners representing their union and trade. This was not a quiet event to say the least. Sisters of all Unions cheered each other on, Unions chanted and represented, bystanders cheered and encouraged us and our work as we passed by.

A cruise for LiUNA members took a boat full of Laborers out on the Mississippi River and provided a night full of empowering women, entertainment, drinks, and an amazing 5 star dinner.

I attended workshops on Saturday and Sunday. I enjoyed the variety of the choices covering a wide range of topics and the ability to choose which workshop you wanted to attend.

Saturday I attended "Kick Ass Certified". Jamie the Founder and Pat the co-founder of Kick Ass Careers bring awareness and promote Trades and Technology. They reach out to students, parents, educators, employees & government. Jamie had an incredible life journey that eventually led her to trades as an Iron worker and boilermaker. They even made a five-part series of kids coloring books to educate and promote the importance of skilled trades and technology.

They founded The Workplace Equality Awareness Ribbon Campaign in an effort to raise awareness and address the need for inclusive working cultures globally. A red ribbon with white dots was created to support the campaign and serves as an awareness piece to support the importance of a diverse and equal workplace.

Sunday I attended two workshops. In my position I usually have new hires working directly under my supervision. The majority of this group is fresh from high school or just starting off in college. I felt the workshop "How Unions Can Best Engage Millennials and Nurture Their Energy" would be educational and helpful for myself and benefit my department and my future co-workers who look to me for guidance. According to the instructors research Millennials have become the largest generation in the labor force in 2016. Younger generations are getting politically involved and outvoted Boomer and prior generations in 2018. This workshop was very interactive and interesting to see how different age groups view the same situation.

The last workshop I took was "Building Kick Ass Women's Committees". Over 230,000 women work in construction which is a higher number than women working as dental hygienist, veterinarians, or librarians. We are a commanding presence out in the field! We need to be a support system for each other. This workshop had a panel of three women who have all started their own committees from the ground up within their unions. They shared their stories and had open Q&A for the room to ask questions and learn how to successfully start a committee and how to overcome challenges they may face. The committees spend an extensive part of their efforts on recruiting and supporting women in trades work. They hold meeting to address struggles they face, they come together and build rapport by going bowling and doing community service as a team, and they spend time teaching and sharing their skills with one another. These committees are all about offering mentorship and guidance. They continuously bringing each other up and encourage each other to be successful and grow in their trade.

This experience was very uplifting as a woman working in the trades. Woman have come a long way and after this conference I can guarantee you we aren't stopping anytime soon!! The growth, energy, empowerment, and bonding during this conference was unlike anything I have ever experienced. I humbly thank you for choosing me to represent Local 71.

~ Charlene Beckley