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### Building Confidence One Girl at a Time

Thursday, 9 July 2009 08:13 by [Tom](#)

During World War II the enduring image of 'can do' America was that now iconic image of Rosie the Riveter. As their men went off to fight the war, thousands of "Rosies" suited up and went off to build armaments and materiel for the war efforts. Their efforts contributed as much as any man to our success and, in retrospect, began to cement the view that women are as capable as men in blue and white collar worlds.


A little-heralded gem that emerged ten years ago in Vermont is a program, run by Vermont Works for Women, called Rosie's Girls. The program takes middle school girls and introduces them to what those of us old enough to remember "shop class" call the trades. These are non-traditional areas of employment for women like welding, masonry, carpentry and the like. Over the past years, it has expanded to ten sites within Vermont and has been exported to 4 other states. It takes only a peek under the hood to realize the multiple levels of value in this program.

It is great that the program opens up areas of employment that many girls would not usually consider but that, in reality, pay an honest wage for an honest day's work. It opens up jobs that have a true value in our computerized, web-enabled, 4-nanosecond world. Just ask anyone who has a burst pipe in the winter, a plugged toilet, a wall outlet that needs to be re-wired, or a car that just won't start whom the most important person is to them at that moment!

More importantly, I think it does something even greater. Despite all the advances that we have made in pushing for gender equality, there is still a belief that girls just can't compete in certain avenues. Rosie's Girls works with girls who are at the point of becoming young women: a time that is often rife with all sorts of 'growing-up issues.' It meets them where they are at and teaches them that they can do and be anything that they put their mind to. The program breaks stereotypes and erases self-doubt. As Vermont and this country look for people to confidently lead us in the future, we need programs like Rosie's Girls not only for the tangible skills that it teaches but for the intangibles that it infuses. Congratulations to Tiff

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...and the staff at Vermont Works for Women for ten years of building skilled workers and strong Vermonters.



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