



## Brandi

### Statistics:

Age: 38, 5'2" and 130 lbs of energy

A 3rd year refrigeration mechanic (GII) employed through the week at Johnson Controls (SW Ontario). On weekends (at time of interview) taking required courses for her GI.

### How did you end up where you are now?

Brandi describes her path as anything but a straight line! Growing up she liked working with her hands with her Electrician father and wanted to enter the trades. However, at the urging of her parents entered University at age 18 in a business and economics program before transferring to a college program and graduating with a degree in advertising. Having no interest in pursuing this field as a career, she worked as a waitress for 6 years while banging on doors and trying to land an Electrical Apprenticeship with no success. Over and over she heard, "you have no hands-on experience".

### What was the turning point?

A Women in Trades course offered at Conestoga College provided experience in a number of trades and a placement opportunity that opened the door to a plumbing apprenticeship. In her third year, Brandi realized that she had no real "passion" for her work. She could see herself in HVACR and at that point moved into a refrigeration mechanic apprenticeship.

### Why HVACR as a career choice?

1. Initially a secure job and figured with HVACR it was recession proof.
2. The money as a refrigeration mechanic was attractive and more opportunities for advancement than plumbing.
3. Variety to keep her interest.

### Has it been the right choice?

"You bet!" Brandi says the original reasons she wanted in be a refrigeration mechanic in HVACR are still part of the attraction but their importance has changed. Now mainly it is the excitement of the job. In her words, "It makes you feel alive to do something like this. There is variety; there is excitement; there is the challenge!"

### How does the job differ from what she thought it would be? Were there surprises?

- The importance of social skills; the need in service work to develop customer relationships because in service work this and knowledge allows the mechanic to make suggestions for equipment repairs and maintenance and is instrumental in sales.
- The level of commitment for ongoing learning. "You are exposed to everything from chiller to heat pumps and lots in-between. You need to stay on top of technological changes while retaining knowledge of older systems."
- The freedom: although often working as a part of a team there are times when you take your truck and go out to work on your own.
- The enthusiasm: Brandi says was not prepared to get more enthusiastic about working in HVACR.

### Is being a woman in a physical job like this a challenge?

The real challenge was getting experience and into the trades. Now it is not so much her sex as her stature at 5'3" and 130 lbs. Her size means that she has had to learn how to leverage herself and her tools in order to complete certain tasks. She learns what works for her and what doesn't as she gets the job done.

### And where she is going?

Brandi says that she "lucked out" with Johnson Controls! In her words, she, "works with the best of the best" and sees her opportunities as *limitless*. Her immediate goal after becoming a red seal journeyman refrigeration mechanic is to grow into the position of branch foreman. She is interested in continual growth and sees herself taking her trade to other countries if Johnson offers her an international opportunity.

