

Jessica Drake

First-year carpenter's apprentice
KentuckianaWorks Construction Pipeline Program

I originally found out about the KentuckianaWorks Construction Pipeline program through the unemployment office. I was a factory worker at Ford Motor Co. in Avon Lake, Ohio. I was laid off, and after a year I was told that I could come back to work if I took an \$8 pay cut. And \$8 is a lot of money. There was no jobs in Ohio. I decided to take a leap of faith and come to Kentucky.

I'm the type of woman, I don't like sitting in the office. I'm very hands-on. I was in the military. I was on a boat. I'm used to doing manual labor. The funny thing is originally when I came into the program I wanted to be a heavy equipment operator. Just so happened, the door opened up for me to be a carpenter.

Right now, I'm a first-year carpenter's apprentice. So, I'm learning a lot of things. I'm currently employed with a reputable bridge crew in Simpsonville. And, the program helped me to prepare for exactly what's going to be going on in the field and to know that it's hard work but it's rewarding and it pays off in the end.

I was very intimidated in the beginning because I know there is not a lot of young women in the field. You just have to have the drive to want to work.

I think that if you start it, you have to finish it. You have to see it through. And, sometimes, I mean, I went to KentuckianaWorks it was a year ago. So it took just about a year for me to start working. You have to be patient sometimes. But they're willing to work with you. They're not going to forget about you.

I've realized I'm very, very strong. I mean for me to move from Ohio. I have no family here at all. KentuckianaWorks, all the people that were in the Construction Pipeline Program, I talk to them regularly. They keep in contact with me. They care.

I'm a single parent of two children. And, eventually they're going to go to college. And, I've been in a lot of dead-end jobs. I wanted to have a career. I wanted something stability and longevity.

The biggest thing my children like is previously at Ford I worked nights. I work in the daytime while they're in school so I'm there in the evening for them. We have a lot of family time together.

I know at the end of the day I'm going to go home to my kids, and they're going to be proud of me. They think it's wonderful. My daughter thinks I'm Superwoman.