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80

CORRECTION

Local 701 is part of the Columbia Pacific Building Trades too! In our Jan. 15 issue, a list of unions affiliated with Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council left out International Union of Operating Engineers Local 701. We strive for accuracy at the Northwest Labor Press, and regret the error.

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...Tough as Nails

From Page 1

has only positives to say about the experience.

"There was a lot of love between everyone," Nichols said. "You had a bunch of very competitive people. But we always hugged it out at the end."

Keoghan, the show host, was funny, genuine, and easy to talk to, Nichols said.

"This is a passion project of his. His grandfather was a tradesperson, and he just has a lot of respect for the industry. He wanted to showcase these jobs that people don't know exist. These are essential jobs."

"It's great that people see you don't necessarily have to get on that college track," Nichols said. Nichols would know. After a childhood in Waltham, Massachusetts, she went to Hampshire College, and graduated in 2006 with an English degree, and about $30,000 in debt.

"I graduated with no idea how I was going to make a living," Nichols said. She worked in landscaping, and loved it, but wages were low. After moving to Portland with her future husband in 2011, she found Oregon Tradeswomen Inc. and its program introducing women to careers in the skilled trades.

"They opened my eyes to labor unions. I ended up joining the Cement Masons and within a couple years I had paid all that debt off. I had health insurance. I own a house now. I just can't preach enough."

Nichols loves sports and heavy lifting and was drawn to the cement mason trade by the physicality of it. The local saw something in her too.

"The guys at the hall said, 'We'll put you to work Monday if you want to do this.' I said, 'Sign me up!'"

The next Monday she was out pouring station platforms for Stacy & Witbeck on the Milwaukie light rail project. The $17 an hour apprenticeship wage—55% of journeyman pay—was the most money she'd ever made. Within a month, health insurance kicked in, after she'd been eight years without health insurance.

Now she hopes to inspire others to join. On the set of Tough as Nails, she brought her Local 555 baseball hat, and wore it every chance she got.

"It was so fun," Nichols said of the show. "It was really a once in a lifetime experience."

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