



Even before the construction industry began actively recruiting women, some like Tamie Taylor still found their way into the business by accident.

# Alaskan to lead the National Association of Women in CONSTRUCTION

BY HEATHER A. RESZ

In college, she sometimes worked alongside her boyfriend doing miscellaneous jobs for his father, a general contractor.

On the job site, she'd question the contractor about details such as materials that weren't on-hand when needed and delayed work.

After graduating with her degree in biology and unable to find work in that field, Taylor took that experience with her to a job doing secretarial work.

But her employer saw potential and began training her to be an assistant contract administrator, she said.

Ever curious, Taylor insisted on working as a laborer on a job so she could better understand what goes on in the field, she said.

"They thought I was nuts."

Next she went to work in the job site office doing ordering and purchasing.

She compared the skills project managers use to those many women use day-to-day to meet the challenge of preparing a meal so everything is ready to go on the table at once; while simultaneously juggling the laundry, cleaning, child care, settling disputes, the children's extracurricular activities, a career and a husband.

"That just brings you right into the basics of project management," Taylor said. "Initiating, planning, executing, controlling and closing."

Nationwide, women make up about 12 percent of the construction industry, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Between 2004 and 2005, the number of women working in construction increased by 41,000, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## National leader

Today Taylor is the General Manager of Tatitlek Contractors Inc. Before joining the company in April, she was the vice president of construction for NANAPacific for two years.

"I learned all my construction just by wanting to know," Taylor said. "I'm not a carpenter and I'll never tell you that I am. But I know the basics to get the job done."

Her career in the construction industry includes more than 20 years of experience in construction, 15 in government contracting and 12 in project management.

Since graduation, Taylor said she's worked a total of about a year using her biology degree. "I choose to stay in the construction industry."

Whether talking to students about opportunities in the trades, or giving a speech to a national audience Taylor's



## Women in the construction industry

Between 2004 and 2005, the number of women working in construction nationwide increased by 41,000. About 12 percent of the total construction workforce in the U.S. is female.

Type of work	Number of women workers	Percent of the total workforce
Sales and Office .....	581,000 .....	78.9 %
Professional & Management .....	248,000 .....	14.7 %
Natural Resources, Construction & Maintenance ....	54,464 .....	2.6 %
Service Occupations .....	22,000 .....	28.9 %
Transportation & Material Moving.....	12,896 .....	2.4 %

SOURCE : U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS - CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY, DEC. 31, 2005, HTTP://STAT.BLS.GOV



message is the same: The construction industry needs men and women – skilled and professional – to pursue construction careers.

"This is something you can get into and do for the rest of your life," she said.

Over the years, Taylor has often spoken about the opportunities and challenges facing the industry in her various roles with the National Association of Women in Construction and the organization's Alaska Chapter No. 197.

She will be installed as the national president of NAWIC in September at its national convention in Orlando, Fla.

NAWIC is a volunteer organization to enhance the success of women in the construction industry with more than 5,000 members nationwide.

Since joining the local NAWIC chapter in 1992, Taylor has served as local chapter president, chapter corresponding secretary, chapter treasurer, chapter board director, and various committee chairs. Nationally, her service includes regional director, national treasurer, national vice president and national president-elect.

"If you are a woman in the industry NAWIC is there to provide you with leadership growth, communications growth and personal growth to help you be a stronger leader, employee and person as a whole," Taylor said.

## NAWIC is an awesome resource

Evelyn Clark, of Kiewit Building Group Inc., was so green when she got her first job at an architectural firm years ago, she said she didn't even know for sure what architects did.

But her boss's wife belonged to NAWIC and she invited Clark to come along and learn more about the industry.

Now Clark's been an NAWIC member for 25 years and

was the first Alaskan to serve as its national president in 1996-97.

"NAWIC is an awesome resource, she said. "I can always find someone to answer my question. There are always questions and always more to learn."

A few years after becoming a member, Clark began taking classes through NAWIC's Education Foundation. She was the first to earn a certificate in Alaska – a Certified Construction Assistant.

The nonprofit education foundation offers its classes to everyone.

"No matter what I do I can keep learning," Clark said.

Whether it's through the presentations by guest speakers at NAWIC's monthly meetings or job site tours, she said NAWIC is a great tool to learn more about the many careers included in the construction industry.

"When we go to the schools and talk to kids – that's one of the things we try to get across," she said. "Surveyors, engineers, architects, project managers – so many different disciplines are required to work together from start to finish."

## National president by 2018

Misty Dawn Crim has volunteered for years as an officer in the Alaska chapter of NAWIC. Two years as the corresponding secretary and two years as vice president. This year she is chapter president.

But Crim has her eye on the organization's top post, which Taylor will occupy beginning in September.

She has her plan mapped out year by year on a series of notes stuck under the glass on her desk where she works as a contract administrator for Wilder Construction Company. Each item on the list represents an NAWIC office at the local, regional and national level she must hold before she can be elected national president.



Photo: Heather A. Resz  
xxx caption Tamie Taylor



"I fell in love with NAWIC after the national convention in Salt Lake City," Crim said.

It was there in 2003 that she told Alaska NAWIC president Kathy Carlisle she'd like to be the national president by 2018.

But Carlisle didn't keep the notion to herself. Back home, she told the other NAWIC chapter members about Crim's goal.

Crim said women like Taylor, Clark and Carlisle have helped nurture her career. Crim even described Clark as her mentor.

"I don't think I'd be where I am today without her," Crim said. "She's a great resource."

In addition to working at Wilder as a contract administrator and leading the local chapter of NAWIC as president, Crim also is active in AGC and is raising two small children with her husband.

"Wilder's support has been amazing," Crim said. "Their support is what makes me want to do it."

Wilder is a business member of the Alaska Chapter of NAWIC, which will celebrate its 35th anniversary in Alaska in 2008. The Alaska chapter has 52 members in Fairbanks, Kenai, Soldotna and Anchorage.

Last year during the chapter's annual "Women in Construction Week," Wilder had four female employees honored with NAWIC's "Constructive Women Awards." That's half of the total awards given, Crim said.

"Ask any one of my bosses about how I've changed," she said. "Being a member of NAWIC really opens your eyes to the variety of careers for women."

**There is no such thing as a normal day**

Taylor admits she is a multi-tasker who can't stop working, or networking, even on vacation.

While she has her picture taken for this story she checks her voice mail, returns a few e-mails and goes over a page of numbers on her desk.

Even when she takes a vacation, she said her husband Paul teases her for in-

## NAWIC aims to enhance success of women in construction

From tradeswomen to business owners, National Association of Women in Construction has advanced the causes of women in the industry for the past 51 years. In 1953, 16 females from Forth Worth, Texas, founded the organization to enhance the success of women in the construction industry.

Two years later it gained a national charter as the National Association of Women in Construction and today has a membership of more than 5,500 with nearly 200 chapters in nearly every state.

NAWIC also has international affiliates in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Canada.

The group is governed by a 20-person board of directors who serve as volunteers, along with 14 regional directors, the president, president-elect, vice president, secretary, treasurer and immediate past president.

For more than 30 years, NAWIC's Education Foundation also has offered educational programs for students from kindergarten through high school.

Its award-winning Block Kids program, Building Design program, and the CAD/Design/Drafting Scholarship Awards competitions introduce students to careers and opportunities in construction.

The education foundation also offers three certifications administered through Clemson University: Certified Construction Associate, Construction Document Specialist and Construction Industry Technician.

It has also set-up the NAWIC Founders' Scholarship Foundation. Nationwide it has awarded more than \$4 million in scholarships.

For more information, visit [www.nawic.org](http://www.nawic.org), which also contains links to the NAWIC Education Foundation and the NAWIC Founders' Scholarship Foundation, and [www.nawic-ak.org/](http://www.nawic-ak.org/), the Alaska Chapter Web site.



specting the work at other companies' job sites.

"They could be doing that more efficiently," Taylor tells her husband.

"You're on vacation," he reminds her. "And those guys don't work for you. Let's keep walking."

All across Alaska, Taylor can point to the skyline and tell stories about the shipments that were delayed for that building, or how her team solved this or that logistical challenge related to doing business in remote Alaska. Every project has its stories, she said.

"At the end, that project is there and you get to see it again and again. Or you can take friends and family by. It's a lasting reminder," Taylor said.

She came to Alaska in 1989 after her then-husband got a job working on Adak. They'd planned to see each other on the weekends until they figured out that a plane ticket between Anchorage and Adak cost \$1,264; it was a quick lesson on how construction in Alaska is different than other areas.

#### Education is huge

When Taylor talks to students about her chosen career in construction she encourages them to study hard.

"You need the education. You need math and science. You need physics," Taylor said. "Education is huge."

Taylor works with NAWIC to get the message out that it takes a diverse group of individuals to take a project from start to finish. Math and science skills are critical skills in the construction industry – whether a person is an engineer, architect or a trades person, she said.

Part of the national volunteer organization's mission also is to enhance women and girls' knowledge about the construction industry and the opportunities for top pay and good benefits that the careers offer, she said.

To that end, NAWIC operates the nonprofit NAWIC Education Foundation, and the NAWIC Founders' Scholarship Foundation.

One of the NAWIC Education Foundation's initiatives specifically aims to interest students in kindergarten

through 12th grade in the industry, she said.

Taylor said NAWIC has worked with Alaska youth to interest them in construction careers for about 13 years.

NAWIC offers three separate age-appropriate learning opportunities for students in kindergarten through high school.

- Block Kids is NAWIC's national contest for students in grades first through sixth.
- Build Design is for middle school students.
- AutoCAD/hand-drafting program is for high school students.


"The more you know the more valuable you are as an employee and employer," Taylor said.

The NAWIC Construction Education Foundation also offers an adult education certification program. The training offers certification as a Construction Industry Technician, Construction Document Specialist and Certified Construction Assistant.

The education courses are offered to everyone – members or non-members, female or male.

Taylor's earned her Construction Document Technologist certification through the Construction Specifications Institute and was the first person in Alaska to earn both the Certified Industry Technician and Construction Document Specialist certifications through the NAWIC Education Foundation. And she has a Master's Certificate in Project Management from George Washington University.

Taylor said she also promotes the certification programs in the Alaska NAWIC chapter by conducting study groups and encouraging other individuals in the construction industry.

Crim, who holds a CIT certificate, said, "We're looking to enhance what you know or if you are looking for new skills." 

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