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## Program Builds Job Skills

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*Montpelier, Vermont - March 27, 2007*

Hope Bowen has spent more than twelve hours a week for the past nine weeks commuting on the very roads she hopes to maintain. She says, "This is a rural area. To get anywhere or anything, you have to travel."

She heads down from Derby to Montpelier for a job training program called Step Up to Highway Construction. Bowen has worked on road crews before as a flagger, but wanted to learn new skills that would enable her to do more hands-on building, whether it's helping assemble guardrails, build bridges, or pave roads. Bowen says, "I always was watching what other people were doing, so I wondered why they were doing certain things or how it was done. So I wanted to jump in there and learn a trade."

The course brings in contractors who show the students what they need to know on the job. The women also work on safety, communication skills, and physical fitness. The Agency of Transportation partnered with

Vermont Works for Women, a group designed to help workers thrive in well-paying career fields usually dominated by men.

Vermont Works for Women's deputy director Jayne Sheridan says, "Jobs in bridge and highway construction pay money women cannot make in service sector jobs."

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With the unofficial start to the highway construction season in early April, Vermont's transportation secretary is predicting plenty of job opportunities for the graduates of this program. Neale Lunderville says, "This year already we have two dozen projects that our trainees could put their good skills to work on. It is part of our responsibility to make sure we have the workers for tomorrow."

Tuition is entirely funded by federal money for training women and minorities. Graduates can expect to make ten or twelve dollars an hour working for contractors around the state. Barnet's Dorothy McGrath is looking forward to spending the construction season putting what she's learned to the test. She says she wants, "Great employment and a productive summer!"

A graduation celebration is planned for Thursday, March 29th.

[Jack Thurston](#) - Channel 3 News



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