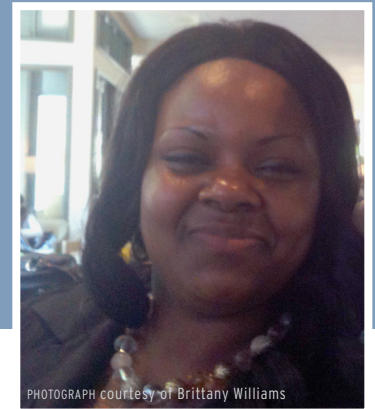




# IMPACT PROFILE: BRITTANY WILLIAMS



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF BRITTANY WILLIAMS

## FATE LEADS TO “ANEW” OPPORTUNITY

BRITTANY WILLIAMS has had a tough life. After her mother abandoned her and her brothers, she was drawn into street culture and dealt drugs. She was homeless for awhile and spent time in prison. Her future looked bleak.

Then last fall an unusual flyer caught her eye. Apprenticeship & Non-Traditional Employment for Women (ANEW) was looking for women who wanted to learn construction trades.

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Recalling the pay a person she knew had earned as an ironworker, Brittany saw an opportunity to turn her life around. “I said to myself, ‘If I let

this pass me by, I’ll be stuck for a long time to come.’ ”

## A CLEAR PATH FORWARD

This past January, Brittany and 14 other women enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship class at ANEW. By spring Brittany was ready to apply for a coveted, paid trade apprenticeship: joint industry-labor-government training that leads directly to well-paid jobs in the construction industry.

ANEW is part of Washington State’s GreenForce Initiative, one of several projects in JFF’s national GreenWays initiative. ANEW has been training Seattle-area women for nontraditional jobs for more than 30 years. Funding from GreenWays and SkillUp Washington, a collaborative of philanthropic and public agencies, has helped the nonprofit expand its offerings.

The pre-apprenticeship class introduced Brittany to 12 trades in 12 weeks. She and her classmates visited various work sites to see workers in action, as well as to meet employers, which can be an important advantage when they later apply for apprenticeships.

Brittany also learned a range of transferable skills—like applied math, reading comprehension, and safety techniques—that are necessary for all construction apprenticeships. Plus ANEW helped Brittany and her classmates master a set of essential life skills, from managing family finances and understanding credit to handling a job interview and using networks of resources to find child care and transportation.

**77** women have participated in ANEW’s GreenWays pre-apprenticeship training thus far; 56 have graduated. 31 have entered training-related employment, and the rest are waiting to hear.

## CLIMBING THE CAREER LADDER

Brittany was overjoyed recently when she received the apprenticeship she had worked so hard for: a highly coveted spot with the Ironworkers Local 86. Her pay is about \$25 per hour for the apprenticeship. And when she reaches the next rung on her career ladder—journeyman ironworker—she’ll make \$43 per hour.

“When I got a chance to weld [during ANEW’s trades rotation], I was drawn to it,” she says. “Hands down, that’s what I wanted to do.”

Brittany says she will always be grateful for the many occupational and life lessons she learned at ANEW, from the technical aspects of welding to handling bias against women on the job.

As for her next big challenge—learning to work hundreds of feet in the air as an ironworker—she’s ready to face that, too. “It’s something the streets have actually built me for,” she says. “I’m very excited.”



The \$16 million national GreenWays initiative, led by Jobs for the Future and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, is training thousands of low-income, lower-skilled adults for green jobs with potential for career advancement, including the construction of energy-efficient buildings and emerging careers in the clean energy, lean manufacturing, and automotive sectors. These sectors show particular promise for women and traditionally underserved minorities because wages are higher than the national median, yet jobs are accessible to workers with little formal education.



**Jobs for the Future** aligns education with today's high-demand careers. With its partners, JFF develops policy solutions and new pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for struggling and low-income populations in America.



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TEL 617.728.4446 FAX 617.728.4857 info@jff.org

88 Broad Street, 8th Floor, Boston, MA 02110  
122 C Street, NW, Suite 650, Washington, DC 20001

[WWW.JFF.ORG](http://WWW.JFF.ORG)

