

# LATI Women in Skilled Trades

## Amalia Barrientos – Law Enforcement

**How or why did you become interested in pursuing an education in a skilled trade?**

Law enforcement is a calling it's not a job. In 2013, my parents were going through a divorce, the police responded to our house on a domestic call. It was a traumatic event for myself and my brother. Two officers came to our house and one of them was a rookie. That rookie was Damian Weets of the Brookings police Department. Officer Weets was extremely compassionate and continued to check in on us for over a month, additionally officer Weets helped us move to our new home. That experience during a traumatic event in my life significantly influenced me. I to, want to become a police officer so that I can help others.



## **Why did you choose Lake Area Tech?**

Lake Area Technical Institute offers a superior, comprehensive technical education that changes lives and launches careers. They have integrity, honesty and a caring attitude. They treat all of us with respect. In short Lake Area Technical Institute feels like home and that's why I chose it.

## **Do you have a unique story? (BDS, family business, entrepreneur, etc)**

In 2016 I found myself volunteering for the Brookings Domestic shelter. They serve victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stocking. In fact, they served us 3 years previously. I didn't realize it then but I realize it now that experience with the domestic shelter and with officer Weets has given my purpose in life. My story won't be about me but it will be the hope I can give to others who experience domestic violence.

## **What advice would you give to other young women considering the field?**

Today, more than ever, women and minorities are needed in law enforcement. I am Hispanic and female and as such, I offer unique gifts, talents, and skills that are invaluable to the law enforcement profession. Since the civil rights era, we know as a nation that the police must represent the communities they serve in demographics. It is imperative that women and minorities step out of their comfort zone and join the ranks of law enforcement so that they can make a difference from the inside out.

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## Braydon Davis, Robotics Student

### How did you become interested in pursuing an education in a skilled trade?

I come from a long line of farmers, military personal (including myself), and medical and industry technicians. Growing up, I was told if I wanted something, I had to work hard for it. When it came to choosing a career, I wanted to do something that would be rewarding to others as well as myself. With a family of technicians, my choice was clear. I started the LAT Robotics program this past fall and was a recipient of the full-ride Build Dakota Scholarship. I have a business partner that contributes to half of the full-ride in exchange for an employment commitment when I graduate.

### What advice would you give to other young women considering the field?

If you want it, act like you want it! NEVER let the excuse “she’s a girl” keep you from an opportunity and never use it as an excuse to get out of doing a job. If you want to be in this field, you will have to play by the same rules as everyone else. Believe me, it’s hard, but it’s worth it.

### What does your day to day work (or school) routine look like?

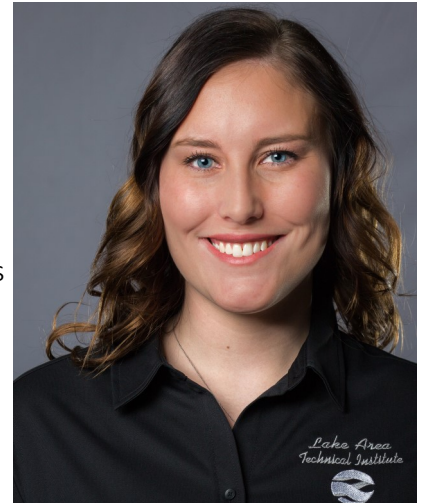
My school routine is pretty basic. I attend class, work on lab assignments, and do homework until the end of the day. I also have an internship with my business partner, Redfield Ethanol. Upon arrival, I head out to various pre-maintenance checks to make sure the equipment is fully functional and complete work orders. After my first day interning, I was so excited the company allowed me to work as an actual maintenance technician. It’s opened my eyes as to the skills I need to improve and things in which I excel. It’s awesome to get hands-on experience in the trade I chose.

### What skills do you utilize every day, be they technical or otherwise?

Besides organizational and communication skills, trouble-shooting is a skill I use every day. In many of my classes, if something doesn’t work right or doesn’t work at all, the instructor will ask “Did you try trouble-shooting it?” As a maintenance tech, I need to be able to find the source of the problem and fix it as safely and effectively as I can. This is a critical skill. If a plant is down, it is not producing and making money. It is my responsibility to fix the problem as fast as possible.

### Working in a male-dominated industry presents its own unique set of challenges to women in the field. How have you navigated these challenges and what recommendations would you give to women looking to ascend the industry ladder?

The best advice I can give any female thinking about going into this field is to be resilient. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and get help. It takes a confident, strong individual to admit you don’t know everything and that you need to step back once in a while and learn new skills to help with your job. Also, have FUN with your career. I’ve met some amazing people since starting college and my internship. I love their enthusiasm and their eagerness to continue learning. Being a woman in this field isn’t scary, it’s empowering!



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## Mikayla Brakke - Diesel Technology

### How or why did you become interested in pursuing an education in a skilled trade?

I was never a girly-girl, never afraid to get down and dirty, and loving anything on four legs or wheels that went fast. I grew up learning how to train performance horses from my mom, while my younger brother was learning how to turn wrenches from my dad. I highly enjoyed horse training and it taught me many life lessons, but I was always envious of my brother and his mechanical abilities. It always drove me crazy, being the competitive person that I am, because he always had more exciting and better paying jobs than I did. I eventually came to decide that instead of trying to beat him, I was going to join him – and then beat him.

### Why did you choose Lake Area Tech?

Like many others, I graduated high school not knowing what I wanted to do with my life, but I did know I dang for sure didn't want to be average! Fortunately, I started out in the Entrepreneurship program here at Lake Area Technical Institute where we spent much time brainstorming ideas based on our interests and hobbies. After much deliberation, my classmates and I picked ideas we could get behind and put all of our energy into for the next year and a half. For me, that idea was a truck shop. I really liked my idea because I believe the trucking industry is the backbone that holds up many other industries. Because repair is vital, it is easier for a shop to survive tough economic times. By successfully running a shop, I want to show other women that they too can thrive in any male-dominated industry!

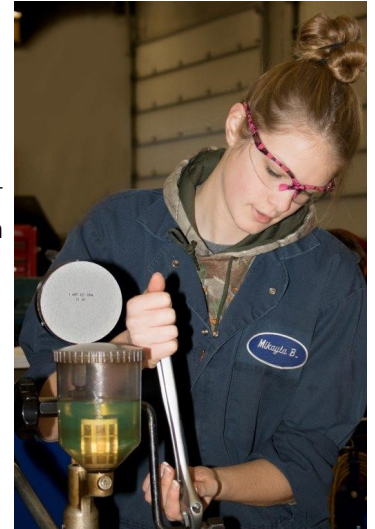
I decided that if I am going to make that happen, I better know what I'm doing when it comes to the actual repair of trucks, so I came back to Lake Area Tech for Diesel Technology. It is the best decision I have ever made. I've learned so much in my short time here, and I've had a blast doing it! The confidence I've gained working on my own pickup alone has been amazing. The credit is all due to the awesome instructors we have here in Diesel!

### Do you have a unique story? (BDS, family business, entrepreneur, etc)

Both of my parents own or have owned their own businesses– dad had a construction business and mom runs her horse training facility. It gave them flexibility to do what they love and make a living doing it. I learned independence and with hard work and self-discipline, you can always be successful. It was only natural that I wanted to be my own boss in life.

### What advice would you give to other young women considering the field?

Be confident. Be assertive. Men are naturally helpful – actually, too helpful. They try to be nice by stepping in and doing the job for you – even if they're doing it wrong. Unfortunately, it doesn't help you at all; you don't learn by simply watching. You have to be confident in what you are doing and assertive enough to make them step back and let you do it.



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**Stephanie Worthington – Automotive Technology**

**How or why did you become interested in pursuing an education in a skilled trade?**

I choose Automotive Technology because my father, Dan, has been working on vehicles for over 45 years. I grew up in the field and he was my source of inspiration to consider this career path. However, what pushed me to start taking the course was the birth of my daughter Samantha, whom I want to provide the best life I can for her and this is the best way I can do that and be happy with my line of work.



**Why did you choose Lake Area Tech?**

After living in Watertown, SD for a few years, I had many people tell me how great Lake Area Tech is and how well trained the students are when they graduate. To me, it was an easy decision to make and even though I hadn't attended school in almost ten years (being homeschooled since the 6<sup>th</sup> grade) it was the best decision I could have made to enroll. I only wish I had done it sooner.

**Do you have a unique story? (BDS, family business, entrepreneur, etc)**

I lived the first 22 years of my life in Post Falls ID going in and out of the school system trying to find where I 'fit in' only to fall through the cracks and feel like a failure in my academic career. I believed that I would never amount to much because I didn't do well in my classes (in the classroom, online, or even on my own) After I had long given up on myself and settled for a work life in retail. I moved to Watertown, SD and realized I didn't have to settle for anything. Lake Area Tech has taught me that I am better than what the mainstream schooling system told me I was and for that I will always be grateful.

**What advice would you give to other young women considering the field?**

I have been asked by a few women what it's like to be in a 'male dominated field' and I tell them the same thing every time, it's just like any other field! We show respect and help each other when we need it and most importantly, we work as a team. Is it easy to learn and understand the technology? Of course not, nothing worth having is easy to obtain, but it is more than worth it! And I would do it all again if I had the same choice two years ago!

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