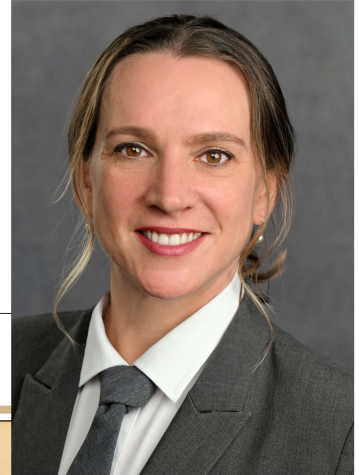


Rodeos and Recruitment

by Special Representative Laura Ceja, Training and Outreach



In the late 1800s, the West was wild. Movies, television, and books have created an image of the Old West where rugged men—cowboys—tamed the land, but this picture is inaccurate. The West wasn't only tamed by rugged men; it was also tamed by rugged women. Out of necessity, women worked right alongside the men. One of these women was Lucille Mulhall. Lucille was born in Missouri on October 21, 1885. On their father's ranch, Lucille and her sister learned how to wrangle cows just as the men did. She became so adept at her craft that in 1903, at the age of 18, she held the world record for steer roping, competing directly with men. She wasn't the best woman roper; she was the best roper, period! She could rope and tie a 500-pound steer faster than anyone, and she did it in a skirt! (see picture) After witnessing her prowess with a rope, President Theodore Roosevelt called her the "First Cowgirl."



So, what does a cowgirl have to do with recruitment? The answer is simple: It's the Old West all over again. The UA needs tradesworkers—men, women, everyone! There are a lot of hard jobs to be done. We need to recruit more women. When I attend recruitment seminars, I am there to encourage everyone to join, but especially women, and not because they are women, but because we need members. I love traveling across the country and hearing stories about women who were recruited by their fathers, brothers, and occasionally, a brave husband.

We must continue to reach out to everyone, but it makes particular sense to reach out to women because they need to know the trades are here for them. Every year, Tradeswomen Build Nations (TWBN) is the single biggest recruitment and retention event for the trades and the UA. Last year, more than 5,500 tradesworkers attended TWBN, and 1,061 of those were UA members, the largest delegation of any trade ever. This year, TWBN will be held in Houston, TX, not far from where Lucille Mulhall broke the roping world record. I hope everyone reading this will send representatives from their local to help the UA stay the biggest delegation and to help us recruit more women.

We need women just as much now as we needed women in the Old West to do the hard jobs and help this country grow. Nobody thought twice about allowing women to work on the ranch in the 1800s. Now, the need for workers has forced us to look beyond traditional recruitment pools and diversify our efforts.

Selling the trades to young men is easy. They have watched men in those jobs their entire lives, just as they have watched cowboys on TV and in movies. My job has been, and will continue to be, to recruit everyone, but if we want to grow, we need to sell these jobs to young girls and women. They have to know that the job has changed. New tools, equipment, machines, and methods make it possible for anyone, big or small, man or woman, to do the job. It is no longer a job of brute strength; now the trades require someone who works smarter, with the right tools, techniques, and skills. If in 1903 a 100-pound cowgirl used skill and technique to rope and tie 500-pound steers, today women can use skill and technique to do all the hard jobs at the UA.

If we want to continue to provide the skilled labor this nation needs, and we want to continue to grow, we need to recruit everyone. Don't let a lifetime of TV and movie watching make you think that only certain jobs are for women. Break the mold and think outside the media. When you see a girl or young lady, tell her about the UA. Tell her about the career, education, and growth opportunities available to her at the UA. You might just recruit a real-life UA cowgirl. Yee-haw!