

# WOMEN IN MANUFACTURING

Council of Industry | BY SERENA CASCARANO

## HUDSON VALLEY MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE CENTER STRIVES TO

## INCREASE VISIBILITY OF WOMEN IN MANUFACTURING



Jennine Arasim,  
Industrial Manufacturing  
Technician (IMT)  
Apprentice at Fair-Rite  
Products in Wallkill, NY.

EARLIER THIS YEAR THE ROWLEY FAMILY FOUNDATION BEGAN WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF ORANGE AND SULLIVAN TO AWARD 15 GRANTS IN SUPPORT OF EMPOWERING WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

The Hudson Valley Manufacturing Workforce Center, Inc. (HVMWC) was awarded \$16,000 to create videos targeting the young women of the tri-county region.

These videos will spotlight women and showcase the many possibilities for success available throughout the region. They will encourage young women to visualize themselves in rewarding careers, allowing them to earn a living wage, raise their families and thrive in the Hudson Valley community.

“This grant will go a long way in helping increase the visibility of the career opportunities available in manufacturing right now and hopefully encourage more women to consider this as an option. From middle school girls learning to code or design on computers, to women re-entering the workforce and those interested in a STEM career, manufacturing is an excellent path to pursue,” explains Johnnieanne Hansen, Executive Director, Hudson Valley Manufacturing Workforce Center, Inc.

The manufacturing industry has long been dominated by males, but demographics are changing and there continues to be more diversity within the manufacturing workforce. The challenge now is reaching girls at a younger age and making them aware of the opportunities that are available. Our hope is that these videos will help start the conversation and continue to spread awareness about the reality of modern manufacturing and the high-quality jobs available.

We reached out to a handful of women who work in manufacturing and asked them exactly what motivated them to join the industry. For those who are familiar with the sector their

answers weren't surprising as they highlighted many of the features that make these jobs so appealing. We captured their responses to share their first-hand perspectives with our readers.

We first spoke with Jennifer Clark, Director of Manufacturing Operations at Global Foundries, (see her Leader Profile on page 11) who told us that her interest in the manufacturing industry was first sparked as a junior in high school. Growing up with a passion for math and science she naturally transitioned into studying Chemical Engineering in college, a major that she chose for three reasons: her love for chemistry, her discovery that the field had more diversity and female representation than similar options and the flexibility it would provide her to go into a variety of different fields. With the freedom to explore many industries with her degree we asked Clark why she chose manufacturing: “What got me so interested in manufacturing specifically was the fact that you're actually creating something tangible. Manufacturing allows you to work with your hands and physically see the progress and products you're creating.”

Jennine (Jen) Arasim offered a unique viewpoint as a woman who just recently joined the manufacturing industry after several years in retail. She now works as an apprentice at Fair-Rite Products Corporation and told us that she's enjoying the change and the flexibility it's provided her. “I went from hectic and crazy to steady and stable.” Said Arasim. “And because it's something new and there's so much to learn it's much more stimulating than going in and doing the same five tasks every day. At Fair-Rite every day is different.” These are quality positions that offer additional benefits to women that many other industries don't or

...women are helping to change the long-held belief that manufacturing is dirty and overly laborious and shining a light on the great opportunities available.



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Benefits were also a major factor for Alicia Zito, Inventory Technician at Bell Flavors and Fragrances, when she was ready to enter the workforce again after several years as a stay at home mother. Zito has three children and she recognized the importance of finding a position that would allow a healthy work-life balance. "Bell offers great benefits for parents." Said Zito. "We're able to take up to 8 hours per-month for when our children have events like concerts, field days or graduations without having to dip into our paid time off." Finding a career with that type of freedom is a necessity for many women and Zito told us she feels fortunate to have that convenience.

The manufacturing industry has also opened the door for many women to advance their careers. Phylliss Masselli, Controller and Office Manager at Orange Packaging, shared with us that not only has her career grown and developed within this industry, but she's also been fortunate enough to watch and help others advance as well. Starting out as the bookkeeper she's covered many departments throughout her time at Orange Packaging including customer service, ordering and anything else that was needed to get the product out the door. In her role today she's able to help identify those top performing employees and do her part in promoting them. "We have two women from Honduras, Brenda Benavides and Brenda Maldonado, who started out on the assembly line and later moved on to becoming line leaders, when I recognized their talent and abilities I brought them up to the front office." Said Masselli. "Today Benavides is a Senior Project Manager and Maldonado is her assistant. They both know the business inside and out."

This type of promotion is not uncommon at Orange Packaging.

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Masselli also mentioned Abigail Sanoja, a woman who also started out on the assembly line and today serves as the Production Manager overseeing the entire plant. Many manufacturers provide internal training and strive to promote current employees before looking for outside hires. “I think there is a lot of opportunity in manufacturing.” Said Masselli. “No matter where you start if you show an interest in the business, and you want to learn, any manufacturer should recognize your potential to move forward and grow within the company.” With the Council of Industry as a resource many manufacturers in the Hudson Valley take advantage of the leadership training and apprentice program available to continue developing their workforce from within.

By speaking out and sharing their stories these women are helping to change the long-held belief that manufacturing is dirty and overly laborious and shining a light on the great opportunities available. Arasim summarized this point perfectly when she told us, “When people think of manufacturing they usually think of a dirty guy in overalls but the reality of today is that the overall atmosphere is focused on cleanliness and safety.” Modern manufacturing is no longer the dark and dirty career that its perceived to be, there are promising careers that require skill and precision. We hope to capture more stories like these in our videos and encourage women throughout our community to consider manufacturing as a viable career option.



*Serena Cascarano,  
Administrative Marketing Assistant,  
The Council of Industry.*

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From left to right: Brenda Benavides, Senior Project Manager; Phylliss Masselli, Controller and Office Manager; Brenda Maldonado, Assistant Project Manager at Orange Packaging in Newburgh, NY.

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