

1. Please tell us how you ventured into the underground utility construction industry?

I worked in Giant Food's (grocery store chain) construction and quality assurance departments for 14 years; my husband was also a Teamster for Giant. I met my husband while he was in the utility construction trade. He then took a union job with Giant Food because we felt at the time that this was a safer option and would help us raise a family. Once we had our daughter, and then my son in 1998, we had a business proposition presented to us that we could not pass up. We were approached by a mutual friend who explained that he had an abundance of work in the cable industry and asked if we would be interested in buying some used equipment to start a crew. Immediately, I was in. I saved money from working at Giant Food since I was 19 and had quite a bit of money in my 401k. So, I withdrew \$15,000 and bought the equipment. We worked for the next ten years, and during this time I ran all managerial aspects, took care of all the financials, hired the proper people to run the field, and each day learned more and more about the industry. After 10 years, and the start of my second company, I was successful in getting both companies MDOT certified as a DBE/MBE/SBE.

2. What obstacles have you overcome to be successful in this industry?

In the beginning, it was quite challenging being a woman in a predominantly male field. I had to be sharp and learn quickly to make sure I was able to answer my customers' questions or know where to go to get the answers. Initially, networking events were a bit awkward because most people expected me to be a florist, caterer, or another industry predominantly filled by women. Now, I am respected within the utility construction industry and have built a great reputation for GREAT BUSINESS!

3. What is your view on other women considering this field?

I truly believe we can do whatever we put our mind to; don't give up, learn, educate yourself, don't be afraid to take chances, be assertive, confident, and most of all realize your potential in any field. The utility construction industry is for anyone who wants to work hard.

4. How is your business dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and what health and safety precautions are you taking now?

I am very grateful that we were classified as an essential business during the state shutdown because we are in the communications industry (fiber, 911, internet). We have continued to keep every employee working, made arrangements for our office staff to work from home, and took all necessary tools and paperwork out to our field employees so they did not have to enter our building to support social distancing and their safety. Now, we are gradually bringing back our office staff on a rotating weekly schedule so there are no more than 6 people in the office at one time. During this time, we were able to completely renovate the building with all new flooring and fresh paint and made sure our cleaning staff sanitized from top to bottom. I am so excited to report this week that I will still be able to provide every employee with the bonus I give to them each quarter. I am so blessed and grateful.

5. What is your vision for the industry post COVID-19?

I know that we are all eager to get through this trying and frightening time. I feel this time has made us all stronger and grateful. I am truly proud of the staff I have and am so glad they have all stayed with Absolute Underground, Inc. and Advanced Underground, Inc. so we can ride this out together. I intend to take care of all my employees. I truly believe this has made our business and our customer relationships stronger, because they know no matter what, they can depend on us to get the job done. I hope we can continue to grow our business and help others.

6. Do you admire any women business leaders and why?

There are so many women that have made it to the top despite their obstacles and their success stories are truly inspiring and notable, so it is hard to choose just one. Gina Rinehart inherited 76% of her business from her father and is now one of the wealthiest and influential female entrepreneurs in the world. Also, Oprah Winfrey is ranked among the greatest black philanthropist in the history of America and is often ranked as one of the most influential people in the world. She is a truly inspiring woman and is incredibly generous; these are examples of what I like to do, work hard and help others.

7. Would you support a woman becoming President of United States and why?

I am not sure I can properly answer this question. I believe a woman could be president without a doubt. Women are intelligent, strong, great communicators, fair, and honest. However, I will vote for the person who is best suited for the job, not solely based on gender.

8. How do you enjoy your downtime?

During my downtime, I truly enjoy spending time with my beautiful family, boating, bike riding, and exercising. My husband and I love to travel, volunteer and help others, and most importantly take time to be grateful and thankful for the wonderful life we have along with the great people in it (friends, family, and staff).

9. What's your view on racism in America and why should it end?

Racism is unacceptable and I believe that everyone must be treated equally. In the past social injustices have been displayed upon many communities. The time for change is now and we must make a stand in order to reprogram the hate in some hearts. Preach love!