

Veronica Leal

Tradeswomen Heroes Award
Winner - May 2023



Level of Experience: Journeyworker

Years in Trade: 29 years

Union: IUPAT

Local: 265

City: Chicago, IL

Bio

Veronica Leal has been a union member of IUPAT District Council 14 for 29 years, Local 265. She is a full-time instructor at the DC 14 Apprenticeship Program from December 2016 to present. She is grateful for the privilege and honor to be able to train future apprentices and journey-level upgrade classes. She had 23 years in the field before having the opportunity to educate at the DC14 Apprenticeship Program.

The American Dream of a 16-year-old female Hispanic immigrant in this country, born in Mexico, who couldn't speak English, read, or write, would seemingly limit her chances of a successful career.

She attended Atterbury Job Corps Center Job 1991 waiting for a position to open in the union paint shop. After completing that in 1993, she started her new career with IUPAT/PDC14 Apprenticeship School.

She has assisted in helping wallcovering manufacturers create installation guidelines for new products and helped them resolve existing installation issues, she has aided in developing, and endorsed training for materials.

She also educates members in special finishes, wood grain classes, and teaching



safety classes in Spanish. She has extensive knowledge of this trade.

Veronica has taken the previous wallcovering curriculum and structure to the next level of education, growth, and knowledge for the current and next generation. Over the last 6 years, she has been invited to train the trainers in several wallcovering classes throughout the IUPAT industry.

A first-generation painter in her family paved the way. She is the first female Instructor at the DC 14 Apprenticeship Program.

Why Veronica Was Nominated

Veronica has volunteered through various functions to aid in the PDC14, DC14 Apprenticeship Program, DC14 Womens Committee, Chicago Young Lions, and IUPAT. She was and is very enthusiastic and instrumental in helping:

- Working with other nonprofit organizations to help get more diversity in the trades.
- The DC14 Women's Committee.
- Working with all IUPAT union members with knowledge of the industry.

- She takes time before or after working hours to help and support members in the trades if they have issues on the job situations with installing or applying materials.
- She is a mentor to many of our union brothers and sisters.
- Changing people's lives.
- She is a great advocate, having a voice for females/sisters who wanted to get in the trades.

One of her quotes:

"I was even able to go back to college and earn my Associate's degree. I can finally focus on the training, and I can share with the apprentices and journey people the knowledge that all these years of experience have given me. I'm committed to bringing in more qualified members into the union painting trade and helping them succeed in their apprenticeships and journey people upgrading classes. As an active member of the DC 14 Women's Committee and the DC 14 Young Lions, I'm able to use myself as an example and show the apprentices and journey people that everything is possible if you work hard for what you want.

My life in the IUPAT has been a crazy and exciting roller coaster. I can only hope that with my struggles I have helped make the way for the rest of the members a bit easier."