

## Ashley Deschenes

Tradeswomen Heroes Award  
Winner - September 2023



**Level of Experience:** Journeyworker

**Years in Trade:** 7 years

**Union:** SMART

**Local:** 2

**City:** Kansas City, MO

---

### Bio

Ashley has been a member of Local 2 Kansas City since 2016. However, this is not where her journey began. Ashley has broken stereotypical gender norms. When she was pregnant, she shoveled asphalt and finished concrete. She has never been afraid of challenging work or learning new skills. In 2016, after driving a tow truck 24 hours a day, she decided she wanted a more family-friendly career.

Nervously handing in an application in March, she started as a sheet metal apprentice in May of 2016. She finally got the opportunity for equal pay, good benefits, but most importantly time to be a mom to her two children. Her career currently enables her to support her family of 8, where they love to travel and participate in union activities.

Ashley was asked to be the main contact for her local women's committee in 2018. The program was in its beginning stages, and she made a commitment to break barriers and grow the local women's committee. The committee is now up and off the ground with the help of her local and committee members.

Ashley now serves as chairperson of her Local Women's Committee and is dedicated to the growth of the committee. During her time as



chairperson, she has been able to collaborate with other members and her local to implement paid maternity/parental leave. She also orchestrated participation in Kansas City's local PrideFest where the Women's Committee, local members, and volunteers reached out to over 2,500 people of all demographics about the benefits of joining SMART, which resulted in numerous applications.

Sister Decshenes is continuing to stay active in the LGBTQ+ community. She is a firm believer in equity and inclusion. In 2020, Sister Decshenes was awarded the MVP of the week from The Greater Kansas City Building and Trades Council and was a Safety Award winner at the Arrowhead Stadium job site. In 2021, she was presented the Flynns Lifesaver Award after witnessing and helping with a scaffolding collapse incident, where two workers were severely injured. In 2021, she ran for Conductor of her local union hall and was the first female voted into that position. In February of 2022, she was appointed to the SMART International Women's Committee.

---

## Why Ashley Was Nominated

It is a great honor to nominate Sister Ashley Deschenes, a member of SMART Local 2, for the NABTU Tradeswomen Heroes Award.

Ashley's all-around passion has proven the leader she is. She is dedicated to supporting women and underrepresented groups. She feels a personal responsibility to get involved and goes above and beyond to support the LTGBQ+ community.

Ashley is not afraid to have hard conversations. She is a firm believer in equality and will not stop until she is heard. She prides herself on being able to connect with anyone in a conversation. Ashley has a special quality to draw people in. She inspires her fellow workers and potential members too. She has worked hard to create an environment that is inclusive for all workers.

Business Manager, Greg Chastain has been a huge supporter and advocate in Ashley's journey, and with getting Maternity/Paternity benefits added to the Local Health Plan. Jay Lind, Financial Secretary-Treasurer of SMART Local 2 stated; "Ashley is a valued employee, a leader on the job site, and not afraid to stand up for those who can't or won't. She is an open ear and has the willingness and desire to help on several levels regardless of gender, race, or orientation. She respects everyone and can see the good and potential in everyone she works with. I am proud to have her as a member of Local 2, and even more proud to call her my friend."



Sister Deschenes is extremely dedicated to SMART and is committed to giving back to her Union. Due to her commitment not only to her family but her union family as well, she is a role model as a mother and a role model to her union sisters and brothers and has made a great impact within SMART. Sister Deschenes has been instrumental in improving working conditions for all members of SMART and we are proud to have her as a member and Leader.