

Women building careers in construction

Samantha Sheppard (pictured) has always had an entrepreneurial spirit. She juggled three jobs when she was just 11 and 12 years old, then established a cabinet-making business at the age of 17 — while also purchasing her first house to renovate.

These days, she runs her own building company and is a driving force in the Sunshine Coast construction industry.

Sam — a licensed builder and real estate agent — established the Buildmore Group in 2002, which specialises in development and renovation projects for second or third home buyers.

“I had big plans right from the start, but steady as she goes,” Sam says. “I make sure that I pace Buildmore’s growth at a rate that is sustainable and that we are capable of completing quality workmanship on time, every time.”

As well as running her business, Sam is passionate about creating opportunities for women to start a career in the Queensland construction industry. She initiated

Australia’s first Women into Building Housing Showcase, where a small lot home is designed, constructed and supplied predominantly by women.

“The objective of the showcase is to elevate awareness and acceptance of women who choose the building industry as a career choice,” Sam says.

“This project is an opportunity for women to network and build links with established women in the industry.

“Mentoring is a strong element of the project with young participants receiving first-hand guidance and encouragement from successful key figures and role models.”

Sam has captured the imagination of people across the industry with this project, which she says is a career highlight.

Other highlights include receiving a swag of awards including, more recently, the Master Builders 2009 Sunshine Coast Region Rising Star Award; Mentor of the Year at the 2009 Stevie Awards for Women in



Business (an international competition recognising the accomplishments of outstanding women executives and business owners); and the 2009 Caloundra Regional Business President’s Award for Outstanding Contribution to Caloundra.

Looking ahead, Sam plans to draw on her Diploma in Environmental Sustainability to further develop sustainable housing design and construction principles.

She also plans to continue mentoring women and disengaged teenagers. “I enjoy getting up in front of a group and instilling self-worth principles,” she says.

Sam would also like to see more Women into Building projects around Australia.

“Judging by the response and success of this first one, this is an initiative that works. Women from far and wide have expressed interest in getting involved.

“This is only one little house. If we can inspire the right people who can make it happen, this sort of opportunity could be offered to other women who seek to enter the industry or are already in the industry and would love to move into a mentoring role.”

Visit www.buildmoregroup.com.au or www.womenintobuilding.com.au

Each year on 8 March, women around the world celebrate International Women’s Day (IWD) to pay tribute to their achievements and highlight the needs and concerns of women at the regional, national and global level.

Contact the Office for Women on 1800 177 577 for free resources to celebrate IWD 2010 and for information on the range of programs available to help increase women’s participation in leadership roles, such as the Women on Boards Strategy and Leadership Seminars for Indigenous Women. For information about IWD events and other relevant events being held throughout 2010, view the Office for Women’s online calendar at www.women.qld.gov.au