

# BREAKING THE MOLD

## Brittany Bragg

## Structural Welding

Brittany Bragg will complete her Structural Welding program this May and expresses how her experience at Northern Maine Community College has been transformative.



Brittany in the NMCC welding lab working on an unlimited vertical test, using 7018 rods.



Brittany never imagined herself following a traditional college path. After completing high school online, her parents encouraged Brittany to continue her education, and she enrolled in Maine Maritime Academy for engineering. After a semester, she knew it was not a good fit for her, and after being medically separated from the Navy due to an injury, she returned home to Aroostook County. Then came a broken tractor on the family farm and the simple question, “Can you weld this for me?” That experience led Brittany to apply to the Structural Welding program at NMCC.

Brittany has loved her experience in the program and felt encouraged by her instructors. She says, “[NMCC] feels like a family environment where they want to see you succeed in school and outside of school.” Rick Taggett, the Structural Welding instructor at NMCC, says, “Brittany is a hardworking, safety-conscious student in the welding program. She follows directions and takes constructive criticism well. I am sure she will succeed in whatever she puts her mind to.” One of her favorite parts of working in this field is the diversity in work opportunities it can lead to. From manufacturing and farm equipment repairs to welding destroyers, submarines, shoe racks, or coat hooks, welders can use their skills in an impressive variety of jobs. After graduation, Brittany’s goal is to work locally, possibly in fabrication. With two young kids at home, Brittany also hopes to set a positive example showing them how hard work and determination can lead to meaningful opportunities.

As a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field, Brittany has found her environment at NMCC to be welcoming and supportive. She says her instructors “don’t treat you any differently; everybody’s treated the same.” She explains that everyone in her class is held to the same standard regardless of gender. While Brittany recognizes some challenges to being a woman in the program, such as not having as much upper body strength as men for overhead welding, there are also other challenges she faces in the trade like being short and left-handed. Eventually, practice and hard work build skills that help overcome all of these challenges. Brittany encourages other women to try out a trade such as welding. She says, “You’re going to be nervous, and there’s going to be some fear that you’re going to mess up or be judged or get picked on, but just get out there and do it.” Brittany continues, “It may be out of some people’s comfort zone, but it’s 100% worth it.”

# QUICK FACTS

## STRUCTURAL WELDING

### Job Duties

- Operate safety equipment and use safe work habits.
- Examine workpieces for defects and measure workpieces with straightedges or templates to ensure conformance with specifications.
- Weld components in flat, vertical, or overhead positions.
- Detect faulty operation of equipment or defective materials and notify supervisors.
- Recognize, set up, and operate hand and power tools common to the welding trade, such as shielded metal arc and gas metal arc welding equipment.

### Skills Needed

- Quality Control Analysis
- Operations Monitoring
- Critical Thinking
- Active Listening

### 2024 National Average Pay

\$24.52 hourly, \$51,000 annual

### Projected Job Openings (2024-2034)

45,600 jobs



Source: O'NET Online (2024)