

Queen of the Road Awards



Presented by

REAL
WOMEN IN
TRUCKING



WELCOME TO THE SIXTH ANNUAL “QUEEN OF THE ROAD” AWARDS

Presented by the
REAL Women in Trucking, Inc.
a 501 (c)(6) Driver Membership Organization



March 2023

MILESTONES

“Our advocacy on behalf of commercial drivers has been constant for over a decade. We have ramped up our efforts by working with dedicated labor advocates to raise the alarm on the major safety issues related to commercial driver’s license programs, gender-based violence and harassment in entry-level driver fleets, misclassified workers, discrimination, and we have remained active on the truck parking issue.

In December 2022, RWIT filed a EEOC gender and age hiring discrimination complaint against Meta, the parent company of Facebook for algorithm bias. This news has been covered by almost every major media outlet including NPR, Washington Post, USA Today, Bloomberg, The New York Post, and this has raised the exposure of our organization work significantly.

RWIT President Desiree Wood, was appointed in 2022 to the prestigious Transportation Research Board National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine – Freight Planning and Logistics Committee. She been a speaker two years in a row at the TRB Women and Gender in Transportation panel to provide insight and feedback for researchers who strive to improve the work culture, freight mobility and reduce truck parking challenges.

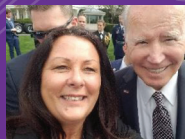


We have grown to become respected and known worldwide as the most credible and outspoken advocacy organization focused on tackling gender and equity issues in trucking. Cited, interviewed, and quoted in research documents produced by Yale University, The TimesUp Foundation, and the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Our work to raise awareness of gender-based violence in truck driver training fleets has been cited in TIME Magazine, The New York Times, The Guardian, and Center for Public Integrity notably, a recent televised investigative report titled "Attacked Behind the Wheel".



In 2022, RWIT President Desiree Wood was invited to the White House for the Biden-Harris Trucking Action Plan event, followed by "A Day of Action to Address Sexual Violence in the Trucking Industry" hosted by the Department of Labor Women's Bureau, The Cornell University ILR Worker Institute – Equity in



Labour Organization - Uniting to End Gender-Based Violence and Harassment in the Workplace Summit.

Six RWIT members became appointed members of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Subcommittee (MCSAC) and the Women of Trucking Advisory Board (WOTAB).

REAL Women in Trucking is also credited in the motion picture "Paradise Highway" released in Summer 2022. You can watch the movie on Amazon or Netflix. As a consultant for the movie starring Academy Award Winning Actors Juliette Binoche and Morgan Freeman, RWIT President Desiree Wood performed stunt driving scenes, acted as driving stunt double for Juliette Binoche and taught her to drive a tractor-trailer for the movie. Desiree also plays the character of "Patty" in the movie and RWIT member Dianne McNair-Smith plays the character "Dolly".



www.realwomenintrucking.org

ORGANIZATION MISSION:

**To Deliver Highway Safety Through
Leadership, Mentorship, Education, and Advocacy**



QUEEN OF THE ROAD AWARDS

Friday, March 31st
at 2:30 p.m.

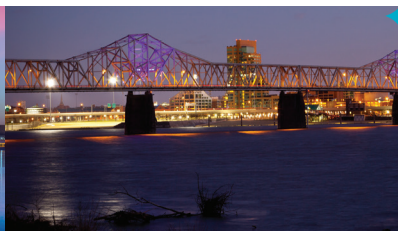
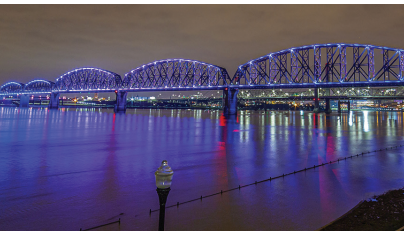


Join us as we celebrate the remarkable women who work as truck drivers, during the 6th Annual Queen of the Road and Trucking Industry Trailblazer Award Ceremony.

Location: **Mid-America Trucking Show**
Kentucky Exposition Center
937 Phillips Lane
Louisville, KY 40209

North Hall Lobby, Booth #40577

*The event will also be live streamed on the
REAL Women in Trucking Facebook page.*



QUEEN OF THE ROAD AWARDS



Purpose

To create a dignified recognition award for women who work as truck drivers that have overcome personal challenges and demonstrate a “Pay it Forward” approach to help others with gratitude.

Must be either a past or present Commercial Driver’s License holder. Must have hands-on experience to operate a tractor-trailer without assistance and ability to deliver freight. Must fit the **R.E.A.L.** criteria.

- R.** Reaching Out
- E.** Encouraging Others
- A.** Achieving Personal Success
- L.** Leadership

TRUCKING INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZER AWARD



President’s Choice Award to recognize outstanding individuals that have served the trucking industry with distinction, dedication and professionalism.

Women who become truck drivers are often invisible in the industry and to the public. Women are not new to truck driving, but their history and contributions have largely remained unnoticed except for a chosen few that fit an image that does not represent authentic diversity. The Queen of the Road and Trucking Industry Trailblazer Awards are the 1st dignified recognition for women who work as truck drivers. In 2023, we have added two new recognition categories, Trainer of the Year and Rookie of the Year. We hope you enjoy this keepsake booklet featuring the many remarkable women we have been honored to spotlight in this event.

2017 QUEEN OF THE ROAD AWARD WINNERS



**Adriesue
"Bitzy" Gomez**



**Dee
Sova**

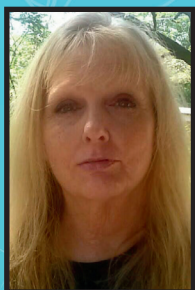


**Daisy
Delaney**

NOTABLE NOMINEES



**Alison
Morris**



**Janet
Steverson**



**Candace
Marley**

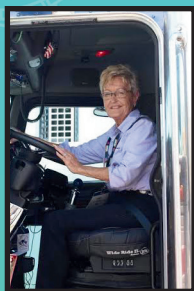


**Naza
Silva**

TRUCKING INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZER AWARD WINNERS



**Idella
Hansen**



**Sandi
Talbott**



2018 QUEEN OF THE ROAD AWARD WINNERS



**Cheryl Lynn
Ibana-Bean**



**Sandy
Long**

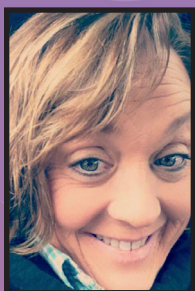


**Carolyn
"Reanee" Swiger**

NOTABLE NOMINEES



**Kimberly
Bali**



**Ingrid
Brown**



**Jacinda
Duran**



**Connie
Miller**



**Joyce
Brenny**



**Ramona
Buentello
Sexton**



**Shelle
Litchi**



**Sonja
Tucci**

2018 TRUCKING INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZER AWARD WINNERS



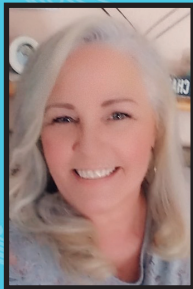
**Tracy
Ellis**



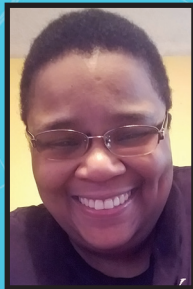
**Tracy
Livingston**



2019 QUEEN OF THE ROAD AWARD WINNERS



**Ramona
Hogue**



**Audrey
White**



**Michelle
Scolari**



**Elizabeth
Sweet**

HONORABLE MENTIONS



**Michelle
Corson**



**Jessica
Graham**

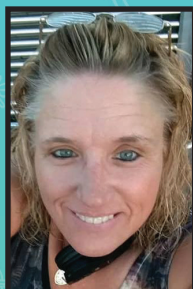


**Tamara
Brock**

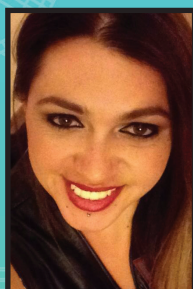


**Rebekah
Meadows**

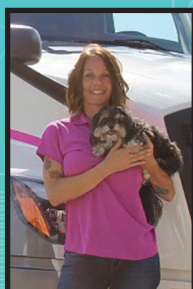
NOTABLE NOMINEES



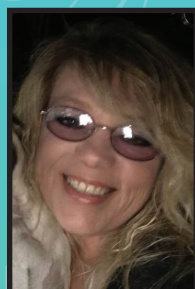
**Molly
Walker
Bulger**



**Natalie
Jassopadilla**



**Shannon
"Shay"
Palmer**



**Phylisia
Compton**

NOTABLE NOMINEES



**Ikea
Coley**



**Teri
Nycum**



**Candy
Bass**

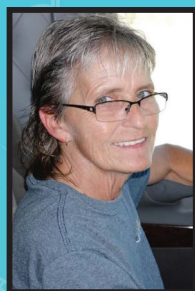


**Kristy
Mathews**



**Brita
Nowak**

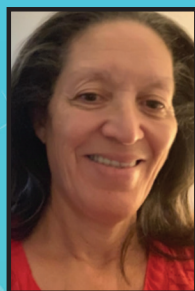
2019 TRUCKING INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZER AWARD WINNERS



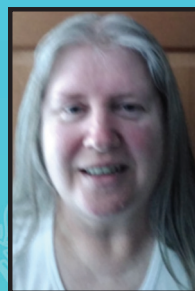
**Michelle
Kitchen**



**Alta
Brown**



**Karen
Shank**



**Julie
Hedglin**



**Ronihazel
Sherman**



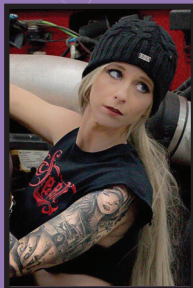
**Sharae
Moore**



2020 QUEEN OF THE ROAD AWARD WINNERS



**Edwina
Webb**



**Kristy
Mathews**

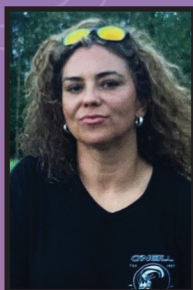


**Vonnie
Whitemaggie**

2020 HONORABLE MENTIONS



**Cheryl
Pollard**



**Jacinda
Duran**

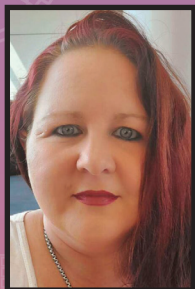


**Shundora
Bell**

2020 NOTABLE NOMINEES



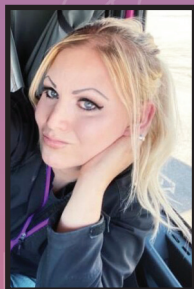
**Rebekah
Meadows**



**Michelle
Braithwood**



**Donna
Sleasman**



**Brittany
Richardson**

NOTABLE NOMINEES



**Ellie
O'Daire**



**Nickie
Pointer**



**Shelly
Burton**



**Kandy
Qualls**



**Dale
Estwick**

2020 TRUCKING INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZER AWARD WINNERS



**Deb
Desiderato**



**Tamara
Brock**



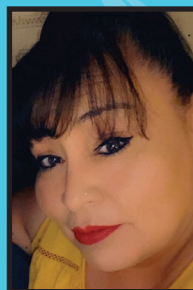
2021 QUEEN OF THE ROAD AWARD WINNERS



**Darnise
Harris**



**Angie
Baum**



**Mary
Gomez**

2021 HONORABLE MENTIONS



**Kenyette
Godhigh-Bell**



**Cathy
Vanderveer**

2021 NOTABLE NOMINEES



**Linda
Arnone**



**Chelsey
Warren**



**Lesa
Worley**



**Christal
Ruth**

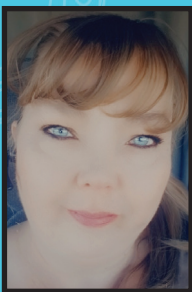


**Nancy
Brown**

NOTABLE NOMINEES



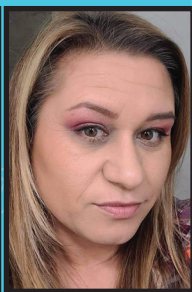
**Tamie
Cole**



**Amie
Cochran**



**Robin
Mills**



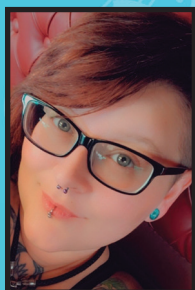
**Veronica
Twyman**



**Siobhan
Clark**



**Constance
Moseley**



**Rebecca
Tosh**



**Linda
Armone**

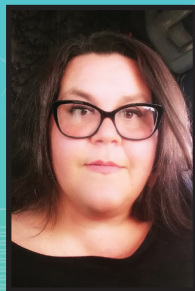


**Kearsey
Rothlander**

2021 TRUCKING INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZER AWARD WINNERS



**Brita
Nowak**



**Jess
Graham**



2023 QUEEN OF THE ROAD AWARD WINNER

Candace Marley



Candace has been driving for 14 years. She got started in the trucking industry when her husband (who was a truck driver) was diagnosed with melanoma. Sadly, he passed away 7 months after his diagnosis. Candace jumped into the industry to support her family, faced multiple obstacles in the transition, but made it through as a fighter!

Earlier in her training days, Candace came across some hostile male truck drivers, and almost walked away from the profession after one of the trainers assaulted her. Rather than let this break her, this inspired her to become a trainer. Candace trained 16 female truck drivers at her last company position and took part in their first Driver Advisory Panel. She also was recognized with a couple of Safety Awards.

15 years ago, she would have never imagined that she would be an Owner-Operator, with her own authority! She participates in many charity functions such as the Mother's Day Make-A-Wish Convoy, Special Olympics Convoy and in 2022 attended her 1st Wreaths Across America event. She is a member of REAL Women in Trucking, OOIDA, and NASTC.

Candace continues to provide encouragement to women looking to join the trucking industry. She believes that a common misconception about female drivers is that they are not well-qualified due to their gender. Candace urges that it is up to us as women to show the world that we are great and safe drivers. Her advice for new drivers is to have a thick skin but remain courteous to other drivers.

Fun Fact: Candace was once an avid bowler, belonging to 3 leagues at once, won 1st place in her local competition and 7th in the state.

2023 ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Emely Renoso Ceballos



Emely became a qualified solo truck driver in May 2022. She is 35 and a native of the Dominican Republic. Emely is happily married and has two boys. She has been working for 10 months at NFI as a female truck driver.

Most of her previous jobs were in customer service and tech. Emely never thought of a career that would keep her on the road for multiple hours, but she doesn't regret it! Emely loves being a part of the trucking industry! From her point of view, truck driving is simple but it's not for the faint hearted. Emely believes that truck drivers must be highly responsible, as the role requires for them to be highly cognizant and attentive of daily lives, while on the road. She is thankful for the support that she has received from her husband, the CDL school that prepared her to take on this journey, and the team at NFI who encouraged her.

Based on Emely's experience, she believes that women are more cautious while driving, in comparison to the popular misconception that men are better truck drivers. She would like to encourage the need for more responsible truck drivers and wants people to always remember that a lot of lives are dependent on how truck drivers maneuver through the roads. When she engages other women thinking about entering the trucking industry, she explains to them they might see it difficult, but is not.

Fun Fact: Emely was inspired to enter the trucking industry by her husband, from the Dominican Republic with a vision to grow within the trucking industry, and she decided to join him in the process.



2023 TRAINER OF THE YEAR

Vontyna Durham



Vontyna is recognized as a barrier breaker and game changer! She has over 15 years of experience as a truck driver and 2 years' experience with training truck drivers. In her earlier years, Vontyna was presented with the option to attend college or trade school - she chose trade school. She enrolled in the Tennessee College of Applied Technology. She currently operates her own trucking business and is currently training students to gain their CDL and eventually begin their own trucking businesses. Vontyna is a CDL instructor at Southwest Community College and was previously a CDL instructor at Class A Driving Academy, both in the State of Tennessee.

Vontyna received the Leaders and Legends Award on December 1, 2022, from the City of Memphis for her work in the community, to help low-income mothers learn skilled trades. She also was a recipient of the Kindle Humanitarian Award. She was previously recognized by the Midsouth Atlantic Region of the U.S. Department of Transportation as a Leading Lady in the Trucking Industry. She believes in teaching, recruiting and sharing her passion for trucking with others.

Vontyna was recently approved for her CDL Apprenticeship Program in the State of Tennessee.

Fun Fact: Vontyna grew up as a tomboy.



2023 HONORABLE MENTIONS

Jessica Anne Glover Lydecker



Jessica has 17 years of driving experience as a truck driver. A boyfriend of hers taught her how to drive a truck and instantly fell in love with it. Jessica proceeded to get her permit and then obtained her CDL. She does her best to try and help women build up their confidence and empower them to continue soaring through the trucking industry. She has been recognized as Driver of the Month in the past and is a member of Treat A Trucker program where she gifts Truck drivers all over the USA with gift cards.

She overcame anxiety and realized that the key to excelling as a truck driver, is to stop overthinking. Jessica broke her foot recently and did not overthink. She found ways to be creative with her daily tasks and activities and pushed through!

In her earlier years, Jessica was not in the proper mindset nor had the right outlook towards life. Jessica was a team driver with her former husband for a while and suffered verbal abuse. After taking time to reevaluate certain life choices, she went back to what she knew best - she hopped back on that truck and got into action to become a highly responsible solo driver while on the road! She built herself back up again and made her mark! Jessica also began dealing with her internal wounds, got healthy and happy. Jessica has come a long way from losing around fifty pounds, gaining her self-confidence back and now becoming an owner/operator of her own truck.

Jessica believes that we should seek to change the narrative of female truck drivers by sharing and promoting our talents with others. She would like to remind others about the GOAL: Get Out and Look while on the road! If you need a spotter, ask for help, pull ups are free, pull up as many times as you need and do not let anyone rush you.

Fun Fact: Jessica's CB handle is Hurricane Bunny.



2023 HONORABLE MENTIONS

Justine Baldwin



Justine became a solo qualified driver in December 2021. She got a local flatbed job and currently drives oversized loads of lumber. She has always enjoyed driving. Growing up, she wanted to be a NASCAR driver. Justine decided to become a truck driver because she wanted to create a steady foundation for her future. When she was younger, she taught dance, then traveled as a wildlife educator. She then pursued a career in horticulture and floriculture because of her love for physical labor and the outdoors. Justine was diagnosed with a genetic disease (HNPP) that put limitations on her ability to landscape. She decided that trucking would allow her the satisfaction of skilled labor as well as a positive financial future.

Justine's biggest challenge during training was throwing straps to secure the load. When the height was 13+ ft, she couldn't get the straps over. When people in her workspace criticized her abilities, she took it as a challenge to learn various tricks and techniques.

Women are good drivers who care about meeting or exceeding the expectations of male drivers. We prove that we can not only do the job well, but we can do it with a smile and style. Truckers don't have to be unhealthy and crabby. We can be fit, funny and fabulous!

Justine encourages new female drivers to learn as much as they can from as many people as you can. You should learn something new every day for your entire career. Choose to take each challenge as a learning experience and ask questions. Someone somewhere has experienced what you are struggling with. Don't be afraid to ask for advice. By continuing to challenge your own trucking knowledge every day, you will be able to share your knowledge with someone else in the future.

Trucking taught Justine that she could care for herself independently. She was able to take charge of her life and make the executive decisions while overseeing her own destination literally and figuratively. She was able to gain financial stability through trucking. Justine wants to build a future where she can start personal businesses, own at least one truck stop as well as a trailer rental business to increase her earning potential. She is interested in exploring niche markets for trucking. Her dream is to deliver oversized items such as windmill parts, homes, and military equipment.

Justine is active on social media where she posts videos of her daily driving adventures. She enjoys the interaction between lady truckers and her hope is to see women succeeding in trucking inspiring.

2023 HONORABLE MENTIONS

Pauletta Wood



Pauletta has 30 years' experience driving and 28 years training drivers within the trucking industry. When she resided in Indianapolis, she decided to take on something that felt like an adventure, and she chose to venture into the trucking industry. She was focused and determined to make an impact in a space not so common amongst women.

Pauletta possessed years of extensive training experience from her earlier days, so truck driver training came natural for her. She started out training only women in the "Over the Road" experience. She worked for Schneider National as a Sr. Driver Trainer assisting in the creation of their Intermodal Driver Training Academy. There were not a lot of female trainers, so she wanted women to have an option to team with another woman and made it happen!

Since Pauletta joined the J.J. Keller & Associates team in March of 2020, she has trained over 1,000 new drivers in Last Mile Delivery and is currently part of their Safe & Smart Driver Training team. This team crosses the country certifying trainers in the J.J. Keller Safe & Smart Trainer Certification Program for Entry-Level Driver Training and Defensive Driver Training. Through her efforts, J.J. Keller & Associates has helped over 200 clients create FMCSA compliant Entry-Level Driver Training programs. Pauletta also delivers Direct-to-Driver training for Yard Driver, CMV Defensive Driver Training, CDLA Experienced Safe Driving, and Road Testing. She has received high praise for her patience, adaptability, attention to detail, and knowledge of safe driving practices from all the clients she has served.

Pauletta holds certifications in: Haz-Mat, Forklift, Accident Investigations, and Driver Training & Coaching. She currently holds a Class-A CDL with 'X' endorsement for Tanker & Hazmat.

Pauletta would like to encourage new female truck drivers to give themselves at least two years to understand and educate themselves about the trucking industry. She encourages new drivers to observe the best practices, safety and legal laws in all professions while being hyper aware of their surroundings.

Fun Fact: Pauletta started volunteering at 14 years old in a Humane Society. She helped other kids during their OJT program to learn job skills. She was also a firearms instructor in a State Prison.

2023 NOTABLE NOMINEES



**Janelle
Grapes**



**Kathy
Knepp**



**Francis
Chandier**



**Heather
Barr**



**Sandy
Boswell**



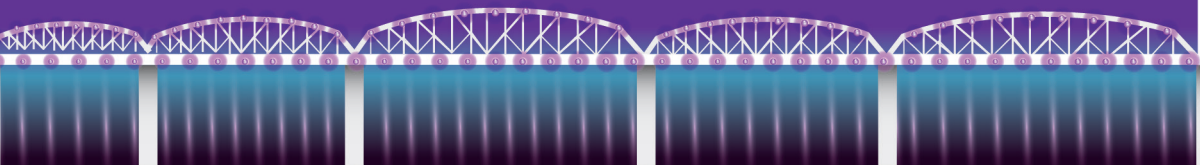
**Whitney
Walker**



**Kieshan
Longmire**



KNOW THE DIFFERENCE



2023 TRUCKING INDUSTRY TRAILBLAZER AWARD WINNER

Dianne McNair Smith



Over 30 years ago Dianne was a victim of domestic violence and became a truck driver as a way to get out of that situation. Trucking helped Dianne reach her goals and this led her to become a trainer so she could be able to come back home and save her community by giving back to others who are trying to find a way to change their lives. Dianne is the owner of 3 Girls Trucking Academy in Magee, Mississippi.

Safety is Dianne's main goal. Her advice for a new driver, take your time to learn all you can learn about the trucking industry. But most of all safety and respect come after prayer. She puts herself in her students' shoes, every one of them. Her training style is like no other school. Dianne says, "I make them stay as long as it takes to get what they need from the training." She engages with her students by talking to them, eating with them, and listening to them. Her greatest joy in training is finding a student's weaknesses and making it their greatest strength. Dianne loves meeting new people and to make them laugh and smile.



Dianne's commercial driver's license school is 3 Girls Trucking Academy and is registered under the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) provider program. She also teaches various ways to be successful in the industry through brokering, dispatching and truck ownership. Dianne was appointed as one of the inaugural members of the Women of Trucking Advisory Board (WOTAB).



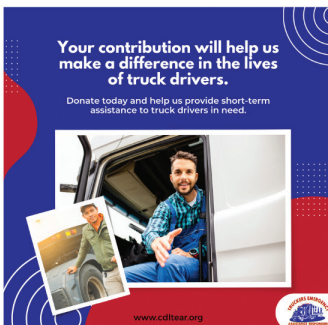
Who We Are:

Truckers Emergency Assistance Responders – TEAR was formed by three working truck drivers who have become known as advocates for others in the industry. Their courage to be outspoken on sensitive topics and assist others with their networking ability and social media presence inspires others to speak up on the causes that are close to their heart. Desiree Wood, Idella Hansen, and Michelle Scolari are the Founders of T.E.A.R..



Our Mission Statement:

Truckers Emergency Assistance Responders (TEAR) is a non-denominational nationwide 501c3 charity relief fund to help truck drivers in distress that require immediate assistance due to carrier abandonment, wage theft, carrier retaliation, accident, weather, illness or injury that leaves a driver in sudden distress



→ Truckers Helped in 2022

In the year 2022 TEAR was able to assist over thirty-three drivers. At a total cost of \$14,376.00.

→ Make A Donation

To donate to the Truckers Emergency Assistance Responders please send checks to Truckers Emergency Assistance Responders 631 Lucerne Ave. #27 Lake Worth, FL 33460 CashApp us Through \$CDLTEAR or PayPal is cdltear@gmail.com

→ Testimonial

Heard about the organization on channel 146 Road Dog Truckers. You are doing amazing things! I have no part in the industry other than a compassion for all individuals that work in it and wanted to say thank you to them. This is a great way!

CONTACT US TODAY



www.cdltear.org



In Memoriam

Sandy Long



Sandy had over 40+ years' experience. She was recognized posthumously with a 2018 Queen of the Road Award. She passed away on 12/21/17. She was known by many in the truck driver community as a passionate and eloquent writer. Many knew her only through social media, though she wrote extensively to help other organizations gain credibility with the drivers. Sadly, some of the very organizations and groups she helped to build have largely moved on without honoring her significant contributions to their growth. One lady driver who was her friend remarked that "it's as if she never existed".

Sandy began her trucking career driving a big truck for the carnivals. She would share stories of how hard it was for women to be respected and to be validated as "legitimate" truckers. When she started in OTR, the lack of respect was (and still is at times) loud and clear. "There were many truck stops that didn't have a women's bathroom, let alone showers!" Sandy gave back countless times over to potential drivers, students and to the seasoned drivers learning to deal with new regulations and new equipment. She was all about helping and mentoring truck drivers. Her last thoughts before she passed, were about truckers.

Many are not aware that Sandy Long was a founder of a women's trucking organization many years ago called the "The National and International Women's Trucking Association", or WTA". The Mission was more closely aligned with the need to address the violence that women truck drivers faced rather than recruiting.

The Mission read:

"We are the first National & International Women's Trucking Association dedicated to the betterment of Women in the Trucking Industry in North America. The WTA was formed to provide women truck drivers a safe and secure site in order that they can find knowledge to help them become professional drivers, instill in them the professionalism needed to promote the positive aspects of the industry and to give them aid as they need it to combat sexual harassment and/or problems inherent to their jobs and personal lives. Furthermore, we will promote the trucking industry by providing accurate data, statistics, and information to the industry and the general public in regards to women in the trucking industry by internet, personal contact, appearances at seminars, and in contacting industry and governmental leaders."

Sandy Long was a LADY TRUCKER through and through. A pioneer that paved the way for all of us. Sandy Long was nominated by Deb LaBree. Sandy was named as a TA/Petro Citizen Driver in 2015, the Oak Grove, Missouri location was renamed in her honor. Her award money was donated to the "Truckers Final Mile" organization and a plaque with her name was created and requested to be hung at the TA/Petro location named in her honor. We are unaware if this request was granted.

Alta Brown



She overcame a childhood that included incest, sexual assault in addition to racial prejudice, difficulty learning and being publicly ridiculed. As a young woman she battled addiction and later had to learn how to reinvent her life after incarceration. As a woman of color with few resources, she found truck driving like so many other similarly situated women have done. Being vulnerable without much knowledge of the industry, she ended up doing her truck driver training at CRST van expedited but had to abandon the carrier when her trainer told her she would have to have sex with him to pass. Though she refused him and had to abandon her training, she did not give up trucking. Finally, in 2017 she was able to realize a dream to become an owner operator with Jim Lawrence trucking bringing over a decade of experience as a truck driver. She has overcome many challenges with determination, endurance and grace. However, now she is fighting the battle of her life after taking a load across I-70 through Colorado in the Spring of 2018 where she was affected by the altitude and had to be rushed to the hospital. They found not only fluid in her lungs but also that she had a 6 lb. malignant tumor and needed to come off the road to go through radiation and chemotherapy treatments immediately. Despite her battle with cancer, she always had a big smile on her face and a positive attitude. Alta passed away March 2020.



Donna Brackbill

“Living the Dream ... Chasing the Rainbow.”

Donna was an active member of Real Women in Trucking and a strong supporter of all women in the trucking community. Donna was ever present in the trucking world since 1986, with 35 years of experience and 16 years as an owner operator. Her kind smile, jovial attitude and her compassion for her fellow drivers was unmatched! She hauled theatrical productions for plays and the performing arts like ballet, orchestra, dance troupes, bands and musical groups. Diagnosed with cancer in 2021, Donna lost her battle one year later. Her kind spirit will forever live on in our memories.





Adriesue “Bitzy” Gomez

During the late 1970's Adriesue “Bitzy” Gomez found truck driving as a means to support her three Daughters as a single Mother. Truck driving paid about \$500.00 per week which was good money for a woman managing a one parent family in those days.

Since she lacked family support that could help with her girls, she sought out neighbors and friends to babysit while she was away. The compensation she was able to provide was barely enough to cover their food and laundry while she was gone. Without truck driving, her alternative to provide for her children was to remain in an unhappy relationship or go on welfare, both she said left her feeling degraded.

A common practice she encountered when she entered truck driving when seeking employment was to be told that she would have to have sex with the instructor to pass her road tests.

Rather than walk away from truck driving discouraged she fought back by exposing the “Sleepor Test” a form of “Quid Pro Quo” Harassment that still exists today, and that is most commonly reported to be occurring at some of the larger truck driver training fleets that train new students who require team driving as part of the training.

Bitzy often said that women entering trucking must stand up for themselves and adopt to their vernacular the statement that “...co habitation with a man they have no relationship with is not a requirement for employment...”. She began working with other women truckers to file hiring discrimination lawsuits against a number of trucking fleets. These women worked together to identify carriers that would deny employment based on gender and challenge their practices in court.

Bitzy was a founding member of the “Coalition of Women Truckers” that was formed under the NOW organization. She was written about in TIME Magazine, Women's World Magazine and numerous newspaper articles. She was known internationally according to her Daughter Dolores who said that she remembers women truckers from the United Kingdom coming to visit her Mother in California during the late 1970's. The Coalition also pushed for women's restroom facilities at truck stops and they walked picket lines to support other driver causes.

During one of her over the road trips, Bitzy's babysitter's home was raided by welfare investigators who came in the middle of the night. They were suspicious that the babysitting activity was additional unreported income, a common practice in the late 1970's. As a result of the raid, the children were placed into foster care.

Bitzy returned to California to search for her Daughters and fight the State of California to get them back.

Her job as an over the road truck driver had been deemed unfit for a woman. She lost custody of the children but eventually she was able to afford representation from a young lawyer by the name of Gloria Allred according to Daughter Dolores Gomez.

During their time in foster care the girls were harmed emotionally and sexually. Bitzy was finally able to be reunited with her kids. She later went on to become a truck driver with the teamsters. The Coalition of Women Truck Drivers at one time had international membership and chapters throughout the United States.

It ceased to exist after the custody battle. Today, women truckers rarely recognize the sacrifices that Bitzy Gomez and her three Daughters made on behalf of all of the women who have entered truck driving as single women that had no advocate. Bitzy simply had a deep desire and determination to become a qualified truck driver and to earn a living.

Bitzy loved truck driving. It gave her the financial support and self-confidence to live with a level of dignity despite the other hardships she endured during her life as a child and a single mom. She was once quoted as saying, "...a good truck is what a man ought to be, ... big and strong, and takes you where you want to go..."



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