



**JESSIE CANNIZZARO, MASTER PLUMBER, UDCP, CRPM
OWNER MILESTONE PLUMBING, INC.**

JOHN QUAREGNA AWARD

NARI Milwaukee, Inc.'s executive team nominates Jessie Cannizzaro, Master Plumber, UDCP, CRPM for the 2021 NARI John Quaregna Award.

Jessie Cannizzaro has a master's degree in business, but she doesn't stroll into the big corner office with her designer purse, briefcase, business suit and heels for work. She puts on jeans, company logoed apparel, steel-toed boots and pulls her hair into a ponytail with a pencil stuck through it as she leads her team in "quality conscious, customer focused, every job, every day" service and remodeling plumbing work. Jessie is a female plumber and owner of Milestone Plumbing, Inc.



Growing up in a family-owned plumbing business she had no desire to follow in her fathers' footsteps to be a plumber. She occasionally worked and helped in the business growing up but ventured off to college at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (UWM) and obtained Bachelor of Business Administration in 2005. She was planning to go into restaurant management as she had been working through high school and college for a local family-owned respected restaurant

group. While earning her undergraduate degree and working full time for the restaurant group life suddenly changed when Jessie was about 22, her father suffered a stroke. She quit her restaurant job and went back to the family business to help her dad. After about a year, she realized she truly enjoyed plumbing and was no longer doing it to give her dad the helping hand he initially needed. That year Jessie's dad sponsored her, and she began her five-year plumbing apprenticeship program through the Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin (ABC). She spent her first year with her dad and moved to another company during her second year, where she finished her apprenticeship graduating in 2009.

While Jessie was working on her apprenticeship, she went back to UWM to earn her MBA, which she received in 2008. She was starting to get the itch to own her own company and wanted a solid business background. She then participated in the Entrepreneurial Training Program offered by the Wisconsin Small Business Development Center part of the UWM School of Continuing Education. In the program she wrote up a business plan to establish her own company. She completed the program in 2010 and now a journeyman plumber with an MBA, Jessie launched her one-woman business, Milestone Plumbing Inc., on June 1, 2011, just two weeks before she turned 30. It had become her goal to start the business before she turned 30. She made it two weeks early and it was a personal 'milestone' for her – thus the company name.

Milestone Plumbing was established in the basement and garage of her home, with one service truck. But this Wisconsin Cross Connection Control Tester and Master Plumber certainly wasn't going to settle for a one woman show. With her spirit, dedication and enthusiasm to the industry the company has grown to 13 employees and ten service vehicles. Furthermore, gross income rose approximately 55 percent from 2014 to 2017. And in an 'everything-comes-full-circle' moment in 2013, she moved the business, into the location once used by her father's plumbing company. In 2019 she purchased her first building large enough for continued growth and moved her company. Coincidentally, her building is next door to the NARI Milwaukee office building.

In January of 2014 Jessie joined NARI. In all honesty she didn't know much about NARI besides they ran the "big home show at State Fair Park." She was invited by another member to attend a NARI Milwaukee After 5 networking event. At the After 5 she was introduced to Bingo Emmons, MCR, CR, UDCP, CRPM and had a conversation about the trades. She shared her involvement with ABC and how they went into schools to speak to students about the opportunities that the trades offered. Bingo invited, (i.e., TOLD) Jessie to attend the next Remodeling Trades Workforce

Development meeting. Knowing she had to be a member to join the team she submitted her application and was accepted.



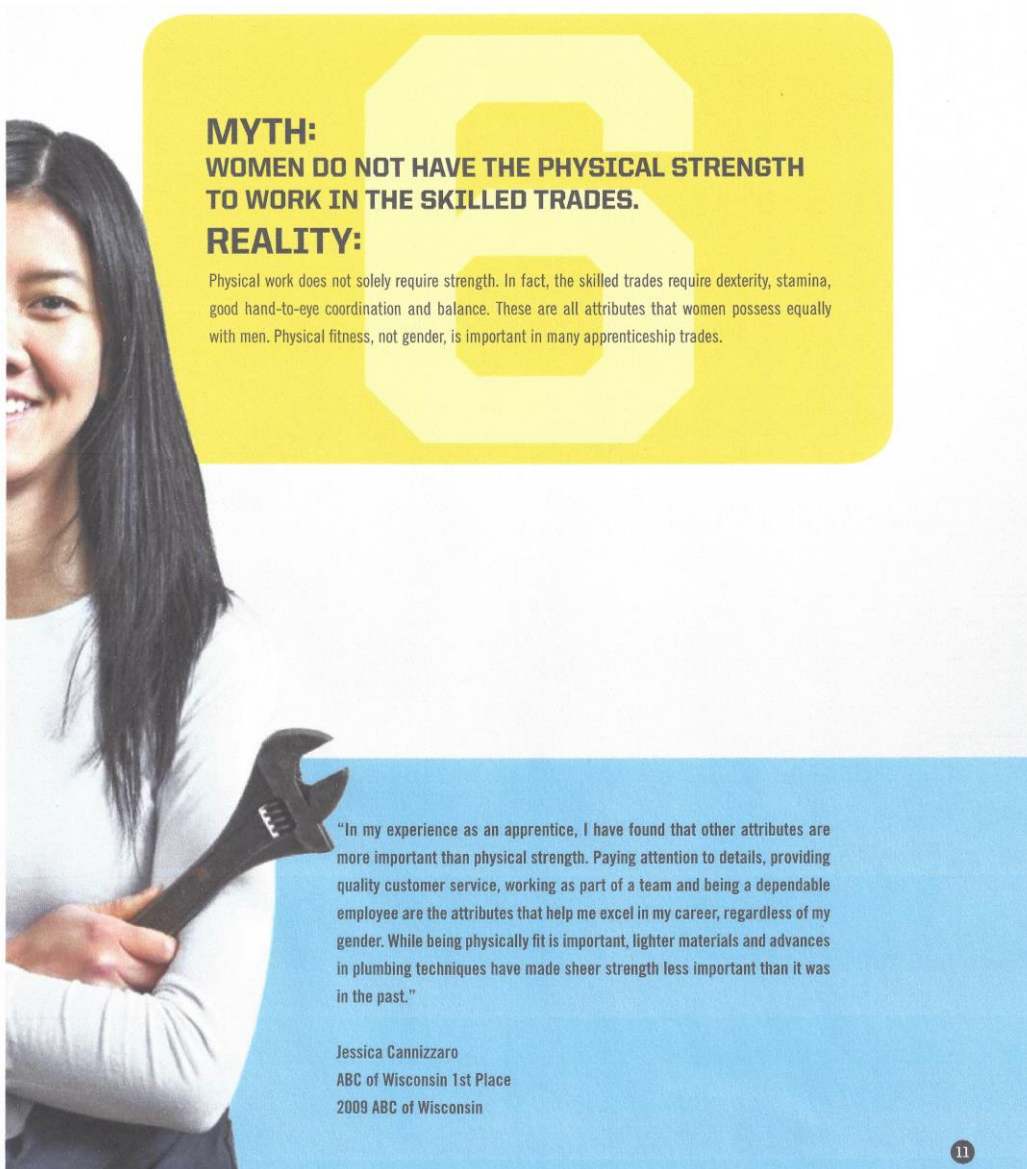
In true stride with everything Jessie does, she immediately gave NARI her all. She joined the NARI Milwaukee remodeling trades workforce development work team to which she is still a member. Inspiring youth to become involved in the trades is a real passion for Jessie. She saw the trend of high school students shunning the trades, attending four-year colleges and earning degrees that lead to low-paying jobs as a detriment to the future of trade work. Remodeling, construction and other trade-related businesses can't find enough qualified employees, which hampers their ability to grow even in a thriving economy. Jessie has led our team and NARI Milwaukee to have a recognized noted presence in the educational community as a resource for trade careers. On NARI's behalf, Jessie attends career fairs, meets with career and technical education leaders about establishing trade classes, presents to students about financially rewarding and personally satisfying careers in the trades and recruits other NARI members to join the force. Jessie not only promotes the trades through NARI she teaches plumbing-apprenticeship classes sponsored by ABC and held at the Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC). She teaches one four-hour class a week each semester, instructing a total of 36 students. Jessie also resides on the Wisconsin Plumbing Apprenticeship Advisory Committee.

Jessie was then asked to join the teaching staff at WCTC because of her unique skill set, which combines plumbing skills with business degrees/acumen. Her female perspective is a valuable bonus as women make up only an estimated 2 percent of all plumbers nationwide.

Although between volunteering and teaching it is a big-time commitment for a small-business owner, but Jessie truly believes we need to do something different and break the stereotypes people have of the trades. Guidance counselors and parents need to stop presenting the trades only as an alternative for kids who can't cut college.

Jessie's passion for the trades can be seen in this video supporting the apprenticeship programs at ABC. [Solving the Construction Workforce Shortage](#) (June 18, 2014)

She is also featured in this Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development trades apprenticeship brochure.



MYTH:
WOMEN DO NOT HAVE THE PHYSICAL STRENGTH TO WORK IN THE SKILLED TRADES.

REALITY:
Physical work does not solely require strength. In fact, the skilled trades require dexterity, stamina, good hand-to-eye coordination and balance. These are all attributes that women possess equally with men. Physical fitness, not gender, is important in many apprenticeship trades.

"In my experience as an apprentice, I have found that other attributes are more important than physical strength. Paying attention to details, providing quality customer service, working as part of a team and being a dependable employee are the attributes that help me excel in my career, regardless of my gender. While being physically fit is important, lighter materials and advances in plumbing techniques have made sheer strength less important than it was in the past."

Jessica Cannizzaro
ABC of Wisconsin 1st Place
2009 ABC of Wisconsin

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In 2016 Jessie took the Certified Remodeler Project Manager (CRPM) certification study group at NARI Milwaukee. She became a CRPM in 2017 and immediately joined the NARI Milwaukee education and certification work team. As a believer in continuing education, she found great value in the class and wanted to help NARI in promoting the educational offerings locally and nationally. In 2018, she then participated in the Universal Design Certified Professional (UDCP) certification study group at NARI Milwaukee. She became a UDCP in 2019. Jessie has found both the CRPM and UDCP valuable certifications to her company and adding that extra level of customer service to her trade partners and clients.

In 2018, NARI Milwaukee reestablished its government affairs team and Jessie joined that work team as well. She joined the finance work team in 2019. She remains on all these work teams today and participates on the NARI national workforce development and government affairs committees. She attended the NARI national business meeting in San Diego April 2019 as a delegate but had to miss the Denver meeting as she gave birth to her second son. She attended the virtual meeting in April and October 2020 as a delegate. But Jessie's NARI involvement doesn't end there.

In 2017, Jessie was nominated and elected to the NARI Milwaukee board of directors as a director for a three-year term. After two years she ran for an officer position and was elected secretary for 2019, advancing to treasurer for 2020 and recently elected vice president for 2021. NARI Milwaukee has an executive team comprised of its officers which means Jessie had additional commitments and responsibility on top of all the others she accepted.

When NARI Milwaukee brought the SkillsUSA Teamworks Carpentry Competition to its annual Spring Home Improvement Show we needed to improve our judging process. Jessie stepped up the plate with helping organize and developing processes. Jessie also resides on the ABC of Wisconsin Skills Competition Committee and had won the plumbing competition in 2009 competing in the national competition in 2010. Her experiences were invaluable in helping NARI Milwaukee develop their SkillsUSA competition. Jessie also helped with getting the plumbing components donated for the competition in 2019 and 2020 for 17 teams and volunteered her time to judge the two-day competition both years.

Jessie has also volunteered her time to NARI Milwaukee to assist with various media opportunities. Click on these links to see interviews Jessie has done on behalf of NARI.

[Ask the Expert: Cold weather tips](#) (January 2019)

<https://fox6now.com/2019/11/19/have-you-prepped-your-home-for-the-cold-weather-yet-tips-to-prep-your-home-for-freezing-temps/> (November 2019)

Jessie has been recognized by her association affiliations and Milwaukee business community for spirit, enthusiasm and commitment to the trades. Recognition began early in her career when she was named the ABC of Wisconsin Apprentice of the Year in 2009. She won the NARI Milwaukee President's Award in 2017 and 2019 for demonstrating outstanding commitment to community, education and support of the association's goals and the NARI Milwaukee Foundation Spirit of Volunteerism Award in 2018 for donating time and resources to lead efforts in education, growth and community awareness that benefit the industry. In 2019 she won the NARI Milwaukee Government Affairs Award for actively pursuing legislative interests of the professional remodeling industry. In 2017 the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation recognized Jessie with the Wisconsin Woman Business Enterprise Award - Outstanding Small Business. Jessie reflects such a strong image of a NARI professional remodeler and industry tradesperson even other business have asked Jessie to promote their services as demonstrated in these two commercials for US Bank.

[Talk Shop: Business Advice](#) (June 2018)

[Portraits of Possible](#) (June 2018)

Besides driven, Jessie is compassionate. She is always thinking of others and ways to give back. Most of that time was dedicated to the industry and now she is giving back in even bigger ways. The COVID-19 pandemic rattled many industries and non-profits in the Milwaukee area. Jessie and her team immediately stepped into action to help. They started with donating a portion of their inventory of applicable personal protection equipment (PPE) to healthcare workers. During the statewide shut down service work continued but some remodeling projects temporarily slowed. During that time Jessie paid her employees to make 700 masks for a local non-profit organization providing them to low-income communities. They partnered with other NARI members and bought and delivered box lunches to various first responders and healthcare workers and wrote checks to organizations unable to have volunteers or accept goods during this time like Boys and Girls Club

and Hunger Task Force. In addition, Jessie has now successfully organized three blood drives to address the shortage in the community.

Looking ahead, Cannizzaro says her goal is continued growth of her business, but in a measured and deliberate fashion. She believes that will enable the company to stay true to its motto: “Quality conscious, customer focused, every job, every day.” One of her long-term goals — having employees eventually run the company after she retires. Jessie wants the company to outlast her, with employees that uphold the same values she started it with.

Jessie also looks forward to her continued support of NARI. She started her business with the goal to be different and not be like the plumbing companies that she had previously worked for. She wanted to build a company that put the customers first and made sure that they are well taken care of. Profit is important because it’s necessary to maintain a healthy company, but it’s not the most important piece - “going the extra mile” with their clients is. In order to do that, Jessie and her team strive to be the best and to build relationships with other trade partner companies that operate the way that they do. Jessie believes NARI is comprised of companies that want to be the best in their respective industries and value a high level of craftsmanship. NARI’s work teams and the NARI Milwaukee Foundation also provide companies a way to continue to give back to the industry and share passion with others about the trades. This is the reason that she renews her membership each year and wants to be involved in the future leadership of NARI. Jessie is posed to be NARI Milwaukee’s second female president in 2022.

Jessie has been, and will continue to be, a valued and highly respected industry professional to NARI, ABC, the home improvement and remodeling industry, and to the community through her work, and spirit, enthusiasm and commitment to young people perusing jobs in the trades. Her commitment, drive and passion to NARI and to the industry is infectious and why she is so respected among all NARI members, her staff, customers and the community. At under 40 years of age, Jessie has accomplished ‘milestones’ the average person doesn’t accomplish in a lifetime. Jessie would be an extremely worthy recipient of the NARI John Quaregna Award.

We ask that you consider honoring Jessie Cannizzaro, MP, UDCP, CRPM for the 2021 NARI John Quaregna Award.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

The NARI Milwaukee Executive Team

Links to other supporting articles:

Pabst, G. (2012, February). From MBA to PVC: After school, woman opens plumbing venture. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Retrieved from <http://jsonline.com>

Green, K. (2016, October). Interview with a Plumber. *Bureau of Labor Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://bls.gov/careeroutlook>

U.S. Bank (2018, July). Driving Milwaukee's Startups to Success. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Retrieved from <http://jsonline.com>

Thompson, C. (2018, September). Depths of Experience: Cannizzaro moves into male-dominated field with own plumbing firm. *Daily Reporter*. Retrieved from <http://dailyreporter.com>

Wysocki, K. (2018, October). The Customer Service Approach that Creates Lifelong Customers for Plumber. *Plumber*. Retrieved from <http://plumbermag.com>

Wysocki, K. (2019, January). Achieving Milestones. *Plumber*. Retrieved from <http://plumbermag.com>

Wysocky, K. (2019, April). Making Her Mark. *Cleaner*. Retrieved from <http://cleaner.com>