

New *agender* in construction signs

By DEAN BALSAMINI

It's a sign of the times.

A Manhattan construction company has rolled out gender-neutral "Men and Women at Work" signs — believed to be the first of their kind in the city.

Plaza Construction began replacing archaic "Men At Work" signs at the entrances to their job sites Sept. 4 as part of a "female-friendly initiative" that "encourages women to enter the industry by creating a gender-neutral workplace environment," CEO Richard Wood told The Post.

Hardhat Ayesha Butt, 22, an apprentice electrician at 100 Varick St., where a 25-story condo is being built, said the new sign language helps combat the "stigma" faced by female construction workers.

"It makes people know there are females doing the job and getting into the field," she said.

Still, her own family can't understand her career choice.

"My parents don't like this. They want me to do something 'normal,' like be a doctor," Butt told The Post. "They tell me, 'We will pay you to stay home.'"

Her male co-workers have accepted her as one of their own.

"We bust her balls as much as anybody," said a fellow electrician. "She gives as much as she gets."

When she first started, Butt recalled, "They'd say, 'Make sure to use gloves. Your hands will get messed up. Your boyfriend won't like it!'"

The diamond-shaped signs are opening the

eyes of women passing by, too.

Texas native Leslie Arellano, 23, a graphic designer from Brooklyn, first got the message while walking to work last month on Murray Street.

"I applaud whoever designed them," she said of the signs. "I didn't realize there are women interested in doing that sort of work."

Besides Murray and Varick, the signs are posted on Greenwich Street in the Financial District and Charlton Street in Soho, along with 30 other Plaza job sites in Brooklyn, The Bronx, Resorts World Casino NY in Queens, New Jersey, Washington, DC, Miami and Tampa, Wood said.

When it comes to equal pay, the construction industry is actually more progressive than most, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. While women nationally make only 80 percent of what men earn, in construction they earn 91.3 percent against their male counterparts.

Women accounted for 9 percent of the construction workforce nationally, and 7 percent in New York City in 2017.

Plaza said women comprise 25 percent of its workforce.

Neither the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York nor the Professional Women in Construction group were aware of any other gender-neutral signs in the city.



YES SHE CAN: Hardhat Ayesha Butt says these Plaza Construction signs help alleviate the "stigma" women face on the job.

Working
toward
equality