

Eager students learn the (driving) route toward success

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More than anything, Jehan Attiyeh wants to be a truckdriver.

As a kid, Attiyeh accompanied her uncle on his Daily News delivery routes, and now she's following him into driving - hoping to land a job with the city Sanitation Department.

"A lot of people think it's a man's job," said Attiyeh, 22, of Bushwick. "I guess I'm proving them wrong."

Despite the stereotype, Brooklyn Workforce Innovations' program - where Attiyeh is enrolled - has trained 1,200 drivers over the last 10 years, about 20% of them women.

"A lot of jobs, after I learned it, it bored me," Attiyeh said. "With driving, you never know your next move. It's not the same route, or if it's the same route, you see different people."

Brooklyn Workforce Innovations is hoping to enroll more women this year, said Tracy Anderson, program development director.

"Women complete our training at an even higher rate than men - and complete the road test at a higher rate," she said.

Last year, 98% of women trainees - and 95% of the men - completed the program, and 92% of the women and 84% of the men passed the road test.

"I love trucks," said Wanda Castro, 38, her eyes widening with enthusiasm. "Somebody said a school bus is easier, and you have time with your family on weekends. But I like trucks."

Castro, who said her father taught her to drive a car when she was 10, was just about to begin her road training after a week in the classroom, learning about setting air brakes, operating a school bus safety and driving defensively.

"Driving is my dream," said Castro, who has two children, and spent nine years on welfare.

"This is for my future - no more welfare," she added.

A whopping 88% of Brooklyn Workforce Innovations drivers are placed in jobs with average starting wages of \$14 an hour, most with benefits.

The four-week program also hones other job skills such as interview techniques, customer relations, basic computer skills and résumé preparation.

"I always liked to drive," said Lucy Bell, 28, a life-long East Flatbush resident, who worked as an aide at a group home for five years before deciding she needed a change.

"My mother used to tell me, 'You drive like a trucker.'"

Her mother was apparently right: "I like big vehicles," Bell said.

For more information on the driver training, call (718) 237-4846.