

The Incredible Women at TAL!



Part of the Browne's Garden Center team in Friday Harbor. From left to right - Nina, Laurie, Jessica, Meg and Alexis.

At TAL, our core value to “be the guide” shines through the many women who mentor, inspire, and lead in our organization and communities. These individuals are blazing a trail in our industry—where just 17% of employees are female—as they navigate change and challenges, mentor and uplift others, and build a more supportive and balanced workplace.

In this issue of TAL Tribune, we’re excited to introduce you to four such women: Tina Kipper, Alexis Riefenstahl, Pamm Smith, and Cameon Viebrock. Please join us in honoring their commitment to our core values and celebrating their contributions to TAL.



Tina Kipper, Market Manager

**Tina Kipper, Market Manager**  
Turn-of-Lum Lumber, Hood River and The Dalles, OR

After graduating college in the early 1990s, Tina took a temp job at Builders Square as a cashier, not knowing it would lead to a lifelong career. She briefly stepped away from the field twice in the past 35 years, but always found her way back to the industry she loves.

**Q: Describe an experience that shaped the way you now mentor and guide others.**  
A: Early in my career, I had a manager who encouraged me to step into areas of the business I wasn't familiar with, which helped me become more well-rounded and diversified. While I was initially uncertain, I ultimately felt empowered and grateful for the growth. I now use this approach as a guide whenever possible to help others grow and develop in the industry.

**Q: What challenges have you faced as a female in an overwhelmingly male industry?**

A: My challenges primarily stemmed from some male customers initially being reluctant to be assisted by me as a woman. I never took offense to this. Instead, I focused on providing exceptional, knowledgeable customer service. Over time many of these customers were directed back to me, and that became a personal achievement. Without needing to say anything, my dedication to excellence earned me a reputation as the go-to person.

“Embrace every opportunity with a commitment to learning. Stay open to new experiences while developing strong relationships with colleagues. Don't be afraid to speak up, share your ideas, and advocate for your growth within the organization.” — TINA KIPPER

**Q: How do you approach the process of hiring, training, and mentoring new employees?**

A: I identify candidates who have a strong work ethic, a willingness to learn, and a positive attitude. I pair our new hires with experienced team members for mentorship, offering guidance and support as they navigate the learning curve. My goal is to empower employees with the knowledge and confidence they need to succeed, while creating an environment where they feel supported and encouraged to grow.



engaged team.

**Alexis Riefenstahl, Manager**  
Browne's Home Center, Friday Harbor, WA

In a society that has traditionally encouraged women to be compliant and people-pleasing, it can be challenging for female leaders to strike the right balance of assertiveness.

“Once we hold a leadership role, especially one in a male-dominated industry, women must unlearn a lifetime of being agreeable and pleasing others, often at the cost of our own health and happiness,” Alexis explains. “Prioritizing self-care is essential to maintaining the energy needed to overcome these obstacles.”

**Q: What qualities or characteristics are most important in women leaders?**

A: The qualities most important in women leaders are the same as for any effective leader: assertiveness, tough decision-making, collaboration, clear communication, and the ability to give and receive honest feedback. Women leaders can also bring strengths like empathy and emotional intelligence, which can result in a more motivated and

“Beyond unique insights and technical expertise, women frequently bring softer skills like compassion, empathy, and strategic communication. These skills are essential to good team-building. Women help create a more inclusive and diverse work environment, which leads to a better understanding of customer needs and market trends.”

— ALEXIS REIFENSTAHL

**Q: What has helped you grow as a leader?**

A: A difference-maker is having female role models and mentors in the industry—women who can share and learn from each other's struggles and successes. Twice a year I have the privilege of meeting with a PNW-based group of garden center managers, buyers, and owners. I've met many women I'm in touch with on personal and professional levels, and I seek their advice when needed.

I'm lucky that my mom was in the building industry. When I was a young teen, she built our house. Watching her operate the excavator, frame the roof, and hang sheetrock taught me that women can do absolutely anything

**Q: How are you helping others grow and learn new skills at TAL?**

A: I share my enthusiasm and offer training and education to the best of my ability. And that's not just work-related guidance. It may mean carrying a team member through a personal crisis or other difficult situation, and that part of leadership is often overlooked.

I also provide training materials from my personal collection, gifting high performers books that have inspired me or taught me something essential. Mostly, I share my passion. When an employee sees their supervisor's enthusiasm, it's infectious!

**Pamm Smith, Branch Manager**  
Gerretsen Building Supply, Roseburg, OR

For Pamm, a cross-country move led to an unexpected career with TAL. Finding no jobs in her established field, she went to work as a part-time cashier—and quickly realized she loved the challenge.

**Q: What challenges have you faced as a female in an overwhelmingly male industry?**

A: In the beginning there were instances of “Sweetie, can you get me to the guy?” “Who are you dating?” “Are you family?” Challenge accepted!

I had incredibly knowledgeable coworkers who allowed me to watch, listen, and learn from them. They never made me feel inadequate or ‘dumb’ for asking questions. I continued to learn from them and my builders and vendors to enhance my knowledge in LBM. I realized I didn't mind being patient and allowing “the guy” to bring the customer back around to me for project answers or guidance.

**Q: What do you look for when recruiting and hiring new staff?**

A: I look for the hungry individual who thirsts for the complete understanding of our industry, those who have the drive to take us through the next 40 years.

**Q: How do you guide future leaders in developing new knowledge and skills?**

A: My approach is to educate, empower, encourage, and acknowledge. I lead by example, encourage them to ask any and all questions, and remind them to have patience, patience, and more patience.



**Cameon Viebrock, Floor Supervisor**  
Lake Chelan Building Supply, Manson, WA

Cameon grew up in a small farming community in Eastern Washington, where good values and a strong sense of community were a way of life. After earning a degree in accounting, she moved to Seattle—but eventually found herself missing the close-knit environment of home. When her aunt and uncle, who opened Lake Chelan Building Supply in 1979, asked her to join their team, she leapt at the opportunity to return to her roots and family while building a new career.

**Q: Describe an experience that has shaped the way you mentor and guide others.**

A: For me, mentoring isn't defined by a single moment but it is a way of life. I've been incredibly fortunate to have support from my family and community throughout my journey. I was mentored by strong women and men who instilled confidence in me and helped me recognize my own abilities. Their guidance shaped the way I approach leadership today. My hope is to pay that forward by being a mentor to those around me—encouraging them to believe in themselves, embrace their potential, and continue growing both personally and professionally.

**Q: What challenges have you faced as a female in a predominantly male industry?**

A: Women like my aunt, Sharon LaMar, faced significant challenges as leaders in this industry 45 years ago. As an owner of Lake Chelan Building Supply, she helped pave the way for women in the LBM industry, proving that leadership isn't about gender but about ability and dedication. The LaMars built a culture of trust and respect, where every employee—regardless of gender—is valued and supported. My Uncle Edd relied on his female employees just as much as the male ones, and over time our vendors and customers embraced that same mindset.

Because of the foundation they built, I didn't face the same level of obstacles that many women before me did. I was fortunate to start my career in an environment where inclusion and respect were already part of the culture. My focus now is on ensuring that this culture continues—mentoring, supporting, and empowering those around me so they too can thrive in this industry.

**Q: How do you guide employees in developing new knowledge and skills?**

A: I always encourage continuous learning, whether through hands-on experience or available courses. The more knowledge and experience an employee has, the better they can relate to customers and vendors. Beyond technical and product skills, I believe in leading by example and treating people like you would like to be treated. Some things you really do learn in kindergarten.

**Q: How do you support and develop the next generation of leaders?**

A: I strive to provide the same supportive environment that I was fortunate to have. I want to help employees believe in themselves, recognize their potential, and continue growing personally and professionally. Leadership isn't just about skills. It's about confidence, problem-solving, and the willingness to keep learning. By fostering a culture of mentorship, trust, and opportunity, I hope to inspire the next generation of leaders to step up, take initiative, and shape the future of our industry.

“True leadership isn't about titles. It's about lifting others up, creating a culture of trust, and inspiring people to see their own potential and worth. It doesn't have to stop at work. Go be a great leader in life!”

— CAMEON VIEBROCK

“When you empower individuals, set high standards, and give them the tools to succeed, they rise to the challenge.”  
— ALYSHA TRYTHALL