

# City of Madison: Meet 2026 Women in Construction Week profile: Shelley Johnson

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## Women in Construction Week 2026

March 1-7, 2026

Learn more on the City of Madison Engineering Division Facebook, X, YouTube and website for videos, written stories and photos of each unique journey and career path.

“It’s supposed to be hard. If it wasn’t hard, everyone would do it. The hard... is what makes it great.”

While Coach Jimmy Dugan in the movie “A League of Their Own,” had a point, Parks Division Leadworker Shelley Johnson may also add, the “hard” is also rewarding.

“Our job ranges mainly because of different seasons...,” Johnson said. “So we’re

taking barrels out, putting picnic tables out, putting in trees, taking down hockey boards, taking down ice rinks, getting restrooms ready for the public to use. We are checking basketball nets, tennis nets, volleyball nets, everything we need to do to get the parks ready to go.”

Johnson oversees approximately 90 parks in the City of Madison and has been making sure they’re ready to go for the public in some form for an impressive 36 years.

Johnson started her career at the City in Parks in 1982 right out of high school. She worked at Olbrich Gardens from 1982-1989, then she became a full-time maintenance worker for east side parks. While at Warner Park, she did ice work, winter duties, snow plowing, shoveling and eventually was promoted to do softball diamonds daily while working at Sycamore Park.

“Me and a coworker did 14 softball diamonds a day, and 7 soccer fields a week,” Johnson said.

Taking care of the softball diamonds taught her a lot, especially thanks to a great boss.



"I had Kenny Smith as a boss, out of Warner Park. He was a perfectionist, and when it came time to do softball diamonds, or putting in a base anchor in, or putting in a pitcher slab or home plate, if you were an eighth of an inch off, that was not good enough. So you had to fix it," Johnson said. "He taught me how to be a perfectionist, and to care, and care about what you do, and always look back at what you do. You need to admire your work."

Johnson mowed lawns for five years, which she said may be one of the best jobs in the City.

"You get to listen to music. You have a route. You're pretty much by yourself," Johnson said. "It's really rewarding, very satisfactory looking at the parks and seeing how nice they look after mowing the grass."

In each season, Johnson learned a lot about how to work, how to take pride, but within each passing natural season, she also entered a new season of life: motherhood.

"I have two girls. I had my first baby in 1991. I was doing soccer fields and softball diamonds at that time," Johnson said. "My water broke at work. My coworker ran around crazy bringing up the [softball diamond measuring] string, getting me back to Sycamore. They got me to the hospital."

Five years later, Johnson would have her second daughter.

"I worked all the way to my due date," Johnson said.

Both of her girls are proud of her for being at the City for so long, and for taking pride in what she's done for nearly four decades.

"They're [Johnson's kids] like, 'Mom, you're not at work right now, you don't need to look at that stuff when we drive by,'" Johnson said. "But yes, they appreciate mom worked at the Parks Division for 36 years."

Now Johnson is a Leadworker, helping others grow through their seasons too.

"One thing I actually got out of working at the City is I've actually a lot of lifetime friends that I have made working here with coworkers," Johnson said. "A couple of gals I've met here are lifelong friends, and I do consider some of the people here like my brothers."

There were a lot of hard days in the hot sun mowing, or drawing lines perfectly to measurement on the softball diamonds, but one thing holds true for Johnson all these years later as she looks back and admires her work: the hard was worth it.

“Women in the field, we’re working with mainly a lot of men,” Johnson said. “They [everyone] enjoy what they’re doing, otherwise they wouldn’t be out there doing it.”

The hard was worth it, because she enjoyed what she did, and that is what makes the hard... great.

[Watch the video highlight on the City’s social media platforms.](#)