

K2Workshops offers help for do-it-yourself crowd

WRITTEN BY LOREN STANTON

WEDNESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2009 00:00



Ben McCall/Sun Photo ... Krista Williamson recently opened K2Workshops, where she teaches classes on home repair and maintenance in the Windmill Square Shopping Center at 97th Street and Metcalf Avenue. Overland Park.

"Guys would tell me they never had anyone teach them how to do these things either, so we opened it to men and now we only really have just one class that is for women only," Williamson said.

The classes can handle up to a dozen students at a time. Two rows of adjoined individual work stations are supplied with 12 tools for each person. All pupils also have their own small section of unfinished sheetrock wall on which to practice various cutting, installing and patching skills.

"The most important thing we try to do is reach people in a way they can't be reached on a TV show or through a book," Williamson said. "We give them a chance to pick up tools and mess up our walls, all in a

Do you fear that replacing an electrical switch will be a shocking experience?

Do you hesitate to hang a new towel rack?

Krista Williamson wants to help.

As a child, Williamson began learning how to do various home improvement jobs from her father, and she gradually built on that knowledge in her first job and in fixing up her own home.

Realizing that many people, especially women, never have the opportunity to learn such skills, she got an idea. And the idea became a business.

Earlier this year, Williamson opened K2Workshops, which offers instruction on basic home repair and improvement tasks. In addition to a general Basic Home Repair Workshop, some of the other class offerings include Understanding Your Toilet, Beginning Electrical, Plumbing Clogs and Leaks, and Tiling 101.

Initially, the workshops were aimed strictly at women, but after hearing interest and inquiries from men, she decided to open the lessons to both genders.

safe setting. That way, when you do it in your home you have confidence. Learning by having those tools in your hands is everything. Maybe I feel that way because that's how I learned."

That learning process began in earnest for Williamson when she was about 15. Her father, **Tom Williamson**, had started a remodeling project in the basement of their Overland Park house and decided to put his daughter and a stepson, **Steve Lunsford**, to work.

"He showed us how to cut and hang and mud the sheetrock, and then he turned us loose. I'm not sure where he went, but the two of us ended up sheetrocking the entire basement," Williamson said.

Even before that, she started picking up some knowledge about tools and home repairs from her father and grandparents.

"We grew up in an environment where you try to figure out how to do things yourself," she said.

After receiving a graphics design degree from the University of Kansas, Williamson went to work for a company that designed trade show exhibits and also operated a custom cabinetry shop. Though her main responsibilities did not involve the finish carpentry work, she spent time there when she could in order to learn skills from the pros.

Her first house in the Waldo area also was an extended teaching moment.

"That house needed everything. It was a heck of a house to learn on.

"We did electrical work, plumbing, rewiring, you name it," she said.

After that, she did some home improvement work for people on a contract basis.

"Whenever I did a job like that, people would ask me how I know how to do all these things. It made me realize that many people didn't grow up around people who teach you this stuff and get you started," Williamson said.

And that got her thinking that a business based on teaching those do-it-yourself skills just might work.

So far, K2 is a part-time endeavor, but Williamson is hoping it could grow into something more.

"In my restful moments, and there aren't many of those, I love the idea of taking this a little further. There are not a lot of companies around the country that do this. Places like Lowe's and Home Depot offer some weekend classes, but few businesses do just the instruction," she said.

The young business already has undergone some change. In addition to opening lessons to men, she and the shop's two other instructors now teach more advanced classes. And if an individual would like one-on-one instruction on a specific task, that can be arranged.

A recession normally is not good for a new business, but Williamson sees her service as something that has particular value right now.

“With the economy the way it is, this is the perfect time for homeowners to gain basic skills in home maintenance and repair,” she said. “These workshops are designed ... to help homeowners prepare for routine as well as emergency situations and to save money.”

For more information, call 439-1581, or go to www.k2workshops.org.

Contact Loren Stanton at 385-6068, or e-mail lorenstanton@npgco.com .