

# Too 'girly' for this kind of job?

By **BRANDY LEROUX**  
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Sydney Cliff is almost a typical "girl-just-out-of-high-school." She wears make-up, hangs out with her friends, has a cell phone, and drives a car — and she is also a heavy equipment operator for the Kansas Department of Transportation.

She drives dump trucks and snow plows and in the summers, drives a tractor mower.

"I like the looks of surprise I get when people see me driving one of the trucks," Miss Cliff says. "People have said I'm too 'girly' for this, but I like it."

She graduated from Norton Community High School in 2008, and is the daughter of Mike and Laurie Cliff.

She's lived on a farm and said she is used to the outdoors and likes working outside, though this wasn't what she imagined she'd be doing out of high school.

"I've always been a tomboy," she said. "My friends tease me, but my dad loves it. He thinks it's perfect for me."

She saw an ad in the paper for a heavy equipment operator for the department of transportation, applied for it, and got the job.

"They helped me get my commercial driver's license," she said. "They helped me train for it and pay for it."

She said she works with a lot of fun people, and she's usually smiling throughout the day.

"We pick on each other," she said. "But it's in a good way."

She said one of the hardest things to learn was how to parallel park with a 40-foot trailer.

"It was something I had to do to get my commercial driver's license," she said. "I was nervous, but I did it on the first try!"

Miss Cliff said she thinks she'll probably stay working there, where she makes more money than she did working in a restaurant, and the benefits are better.

"The department has been one of the nicest environments to work in," Miss Cliff said. "Everyone here is willing to help you."

She said her future plans include staying in Norton, working for the Department of Transportation as a heavy machine operator.



Sydney Cliff works for the Kansas Department of Transportation as a heavy equipment operator. She drives a dump truck, snowplow, and tractor mower.

- Telegram photo by Brandy Leroux

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*Ruth Hartman*

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From left, Danielle LeClair, Debbie Graham, Karen Carter  
 Not pictured, Marilyn Donahey