

Linda Warner – Tomboy Tools

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Imagine walking into a shop where all the tools are pink. The hammer is pink. The cordless drill is pink. The screwdriver is pink. What happened here? Have you fallen into Candyland? No, this is for real. This is a new business about tools specifically designed to fit women's smaller hands – but beyond that, it's about educating and empowering women and creating opportunities for independent business. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Linda Warner is a consultant for Tomboy Tools, an innovative business and educational organization for women and girls that helps inspire them and builds their confidence in using tools designed just for women. Linda grew up in Minnesota and lived on a farm for years. She came to Kansas on a scholarship to McPherson's Central College, married a Kansan and went on to a career with the State of Kansas, settling near Topeka.

When she recently took early retirement from the state, she helped out in her husband's business, Warner Electric. Linda had always wanted to have her own business as well.

One day she was looking through a country magazine and came across a business name which intrigued her: Tomboy Tools. She found that Tomboy Tools had been founded in Denver in 2000. It started with Janet Rickstrew helping out her friends, who seemed always to need her advice with their home projects. Janet and friend Mary Tatum created Tomboy Tools. They wanted a unique company that would offer women hands-on education, quality tools and the opportunity to learn, share and earn additional income in a fun setting.

Last fall, Linda contacted the company and asked how many people they had selling for them in Kansas. "Two," she was told – both located in northeast Kansas. "Now you have three," Linda said. "This is just the business opportunity I've been looking for."

Linda explains that the products are top quality tools, ergonomically designed for women as well as being colored pink. There is a full line of products and accessories, from pink hammers and hard hats to garden tools, power tools, automotive supplies, plumbing, and much more. Wow, talk about being tough enough to wear pink.

The sales model is based on a home party plan. For example, a host will invite friends to gather for a fun social time where they will be introduced to Tomboy Tools and have the opportunity to try them before purchasing. At the tool parties, women are taught how to use the tools for various home repairs, gardening, and craft projects.

Of course, a person can also order from Linda online. "Tomboy Tools is the perfect gift if you are looking for a useful product or unusual gift for that special someone," Linda said.

Tomboy Tools also has a "Pink for a Purpose" initiative which supports worthy causes - the Avon Foundation for Women: the Breast Cancer Crusade and Speak Out Against Domestic Violence. This remarkable business was even named a Top 100 Brilliant Company by Entrepreneur magazine.

“I’m a country girl,” Linda said. “My husband is an electrician. My father and brothers worked in construction, so I’m used to having tools around. But many women may not know how to use tools or may feel intimidated by the power tools. Many women don’t know how to unplug a drain, fix a screen or hole in the wall, or even hang pictures. I thoroughly enjoy teaching women how to fix things and how to use the tools, which, in turn, empowers them to become more independent while saving time and money.”

Linda works from her rural home near the unincorporated town of Grantville, which has a population of fewer than 200 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information, go to www.tomboytools.info/lindawarner.

It’s time to leave this place where all the tools are pink -- an example of what is possible through Tomboy Tools. We commend Linda Warner and all those involved with Tomboy Tools for making a difference by empowering and educating women and creating business opportunities in this creative way.

Every great company starts with a stroke of genius. With Tomboy Tools, it happened to be a stroke of a pink hammer.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.