



## A Woman's World



Eric Killelea / Wednesday, April 23, 2014

Monique Smith, the housekeeping supervisor at Target Logistics Bear Paw Lodge in Williston, is proud to be among the increased amount of women employed in the oil and gas industry.

Once a high school teacher in Atlanta, Ga., Smith moved to the Bakken in 2012, acquiring a position at the lodge, off 57<sup>th</sup> Street Northwest. Teaching wages were down on the east coast, and she needed work to afford her goal of earning a master's degree in business education.

Smith arrived that summer and has worked 12-hour shifts, six weeks on and two weeks off ever since. With hard work, she has earned enough to enroll and nearly complete an online graduate program with the University of West Georgia, planning to graduate in 2015.

At 33, Smith appreciates the opportunity provided by Target Logistics and the low unemployment rate in the region. Aside from her studies, she currently oversees 25 housekeepers, a majority being women from North Dakota, Montana, Colorado and Texas.

"I'm learning so much," Smith said. "I'm getting hands-on business experience that a lot of teachers are not able to get." Overall, the men residing at the crew camp have treated her with respect. "It's a no ma'am and yes ma'am," Smith said. "I thought it was going to be different. But they are very respectful."

The oil workers often tell Smith about their personal lives. "We're all away from our family and friends," Smith said. "Talking brings a little reality outside our 12 hour days. We're all human beings; all have something back home that we're missing.

Smith is one of many women working for Target Logistics, who has increased its hiring of women in the past years. She said there's plenty of opportunity for women, whether they decided to work at the lodge, as a truck driver or on a nearby rig site.

"If you want to work, go for it," Smith said, adding that her aunt and a hometown friend have moved into Williston to join her at the lodge. "It's not just about the man camp up here—women can come up here as well."

In an effort to increase its presence in the region, Target Logistics, the largest operator of turnkey solutions in the country, has completed the development of its Judson Lodge in Williams County.

On Feb. 5, the company opened its new lodge located on U.S. Highway 2, west of Williston. The first phase opened in October 2012, and the second phase was recently completed—bringing 100 available rooms into the county. Liberty Oilfield Services has contracted all the rooms. "We at Liberty Services place great importance on the comfort and well-being of our workforce, so naturally, we chose Target Logistics to help us consolidate them," Liberty Vice President of Operations Jim Brady said in press release. "We're looking forward to a very productive future."

Target Logistics currently operates 16 properties in the U.S. and Canada with more than 5,300 total beds. With the completion of Judson Lodge, it operates seven facilities in Williams County with the capability of providing 2,631 beds with 100 RV spots.

Target Logistics also has beds in Dunn County, Watford City and Stanley. It also operates in Arizona and Texas, as well as Canada.

"Labor shortages abound in these locations. Further complicating this, companies that are successful in finding labor soon find that a lack of housing is an issue. We provide a well-organized, comfortable solution," Target Logistics founder and CEO Brian Lash said in press release. "Whichever term you use—workforce housing, temporary housing, crew camp, modular housing, emergency housing or extended-stay hotel—having the right accommodations takes more than just four walls."

The right accommodations includes bedrooms with private bathrooms; the Target Logistics Hibernator Sleep System; flat-screen television with satellite or cable access and DVD or Blue-ray Disc player in every room; individual climate control, microwave, refrigerator, a game and recreation room, free Wi-Fi throughout the lodges; self serving laundry rooms; housekeeping services and 24-hour dining room with three hot meals served daily.

The number of facility operations and the upkeep of accommodations have motivated Target Logistics to hire additional staff members, including supervisors like Smith, chefs and receptionists. Smith and her fellow employees have their own story to tell—reasons for relocating to Boomtown USA and applying to Target Logistics, their experiences working in crew camps and what goals they've set for the future.

As Smith suggested, many new employees happen to be women, as has been the trend in the U.S. oil sector, according to ABPM Media Centre.

In its latest report dated December 2013, the media group company 46 percent of Q1 new oil sector jobs were awarded to women while global oil and gas female workforce rose from 7.1 percent to 7.8 percent the previous year. The figures were gathered from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which said roles ranged from advanced petroleum engineering to the more traditional work on drillings rigs and pipelines.

A drive to attract more women to the industry is beginning to have an impact. British Petroleum, for example, has targets in place for improving gender representation among its senior leadership. Active recruitment strategies have led to the percentage of its group leaders that are female increasing from 9 percent in 2000 to 17 percent in 2012. The aim is to achieve 25 percent by 2020.

Locally, Great American Lodge in Watford City has a management team that is 50 percent female. At Bear Paw Lodge in Williston, Smith often works alongside Linda Gibson, a front desk receptionist and Deb Stadum, a baker and server at the lodge kitchen.

Gibson, 58, moved from eastern Washington to North Dakota last October. Her husband passed several years ago and she wanted out of retirement.

Her father was in the timber industry, which she considers similar to the oil business, and thought the work in Williston would fit.

“This is what I expected,” Gibson said. “The people are down to earth, real.” She has three children, 13 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren living in Portland, Ore. Though her family remains far in distance, she is currently pleased with the decision she made to move to the Bakken.

“I could of worked locally [in Washington] for minimum wage 40 hours per week,” Gibson said. “But if you're going to work, I guess work, or else you're burning up time.” Stadum, 59, agrees with the sentiment of her coworker.

Unlike Smith and Gibson, she had experienced oil country, having lived in Esmond, N.D. for 15 years prior to moving to Alexandria, Minn. then back again in 2011.

After a divorce, she reassessed her goals and figured on buying a lake home in Minnesota. Needing to earn the necessary money, she joined hundreds of workers in moving west where she has saved enough to buy that house this summer. “I grew up near a lake and that's what I want—it's my little dream,” Stadum said.

At Bear Paw, Stadum bakes deserts and serves the treats to oilfield workers. She previously managed Perkins Family Restaurant and Bakery in Minnesota and the shift in duties has boded well for her. She enjoys the interaction with the men and women at the lodge, and finds comfort in compliments she receives on her baking. “Their feedback is what keeps me going,” Stadum said. “After they work 18 hour days, you're their shining light. They miss home and need a smile and they love the deserts I make for them.”

Stadum has three grown children scattered in Minnesota, Arkansas and Texas. However, she feels the hiring of additional women in the lodge has helped make a family atmosphere. Stadum and Gibson say they try to help the young men enjoy their stay at the lodge.

“Maybe they think I'm mom,” Gibson said. “When they're young enough to be your kids, I guess you treat them like they are your kids.”