REGINA GILILLAND is blazing a trail as she cares for the campus.
UCH HEAVILY USED WORK GLOVES SUGGEST a certain image of their owner: tough, industrious, hardworking, rugged and hands-on. They pose questions, too: What does their owner do for a living, and what do they work on while wearing the gloves? You might have an immediate sense of the person and what they look like — but don’t be fooled: These gloves belong to a woman. This remarkable woman has been breaking barriers as she cares for the expansive and complex landscapes of the Texas Tech University campus.

Meet Regina Gilliland, one of only two female groundskeepers at the university, whose unwavering determination and passion have earned her respect and admiration in this traditionally male-dominated field.

Regina, who grew up on a farm near New Deal, is the grounds maintenance leader for the roving crew. She is responsible for two to three crew members and addresses the needs of numerous satellite campuses in Lubbock County. These include Reese Center, the New Deal Farm, the east campus, the Preston Gott Observatory, the Innovation Hub at Research Park and remote Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center campuses.

Before she was promoted to a grounds leader, she solely maintained the most recognizable parts of central campus: the Administration building and Memorial Circle areas.

While Regina wasn’t the first woman ever to be a member of the grounds crew at Texas Tech, there haven’t been many before her — and her presence there was the impetus for the other current female worker, Joyce Rodriguez, to sign on. “I thought, ‘If another woman can do it, I can do it, too,’” recalls Joyce, a groundskeeper for the west campus crew.
Regina’s day begins with the rising sun, donning her trusty gloves, ready to tackle the array of tasks that await. From mowing lawns to planting new flora, and from trimming hedges to managing the irrigation system, her dedication and expertise are evident in every aspect of her work.

She meets the physical demands of the job head on while approaching each task with meticulous precision and enthusiasm. Together with the entire 60-person grounds crew, she ensures the campus remains a picturesque haven for students, faculty and staff.

Regina admits she faced some skepticism when she first joined the team.

“It took a while for me to feel comfortable,” Regina says. “I’m living in a man’s world on a daily basis.”
However, her skills and passion soon won over even the most cynical colleagues. Through hard work and a profound love for what she does, Regina gradually gained the trust and respect of her male counterparts, proving that gender should never be a yardstick for measuring capabilities.

“I turn 60 this year and I can outwork some half my age,” Regina says. “I love that the guys see me doing these things out here, like driving the equipment around and doing all the same things the guys are doing. I keep thinking, ‘Do you see me? I’m a girl. It’s not just a man’s world out here.’”

Of course, it takes the whole Operations Division working toward a common goal to make the campus its best.

“Working here is such a blessing,” Joyce says. “It makes it easier when you have great people to work with.”

“Often, the women put the final touches on the spaces,” Regina adds. “I’m the same way at my own house. I’m very particular about how things look, and the guys know it. I treat this campus like it’s my own.”

Through the seasons, Regina’s passion remains unwavering. The autumn leaves fall, the winter frost covers the campus, and the tulips bloom in the spring, but her commitment to maintaining a vibrant and welcoming campus never falters.

“I take pride in what I do,” Regina says, “and I love that it’s a reflection on the university as well.”

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